

LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE



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Leadership and school performance

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Introduction

MERCEDES DE ESTEBAN VILLAR

Vicepresident of European Foundation Society and Education

Leadership and school performance represents a specific contribution to the study into the main challenges faced by school directors in European educational systems. On the basis of analyses of other models applied at an international level, the authors present a diagnosis of the resources available to researchers, political agents and institutional bodies to promote the quality and effectiveness of school leadership and to collaborate in improving it.

En el año 2007, gracias a la colaboración del CRELL, la Fundación Europea Sociedad y Educación organizó en Madrid el seminario internacional *Is Educational Leadership measurable?* con el objetivo de cooperar, desde la investigación educativa, con aquellas organizaciones comprometidas con la mejora de los resultados escolares, poniendo el foco de atención en los desafíos a los que se enfrenta la función directiva.

Sociedad y Educación, fundación de ámbito europeo, privada e independiente y con sedes en Madrid y Bruselas, tiene, entre sus líneas de actuación, la de promover debates interdisciplinarios sobre aquellos aspectos que inciden más directamente en el objetivo de mejorar la calidad de la educación, eje del desarrollo y competitividad de la sociedad europea, tal y como se estableció en la Agenda de Lisboa.

Con este Informe, que reúne las conferencias pronunciadas en las sesiones que se desarrollaron en Madrid, la Comisión Europea, a través del CRELL y con la colaboración del departamento de publicaciones de Sociedad y Educación, se propone invitar a la reflexión sobre las relaciones entre la dirección escolar y el rendimiento de los alumnos, a partir de una aproximación científica basada en criterios de carácter cuantitativo y cualitativo. Además, abre la perspectiva del debate a propuestas y reformas emprendidas en otros países, con el fin de disponer de una visión internacional acerca de un nuevo modelo de dirección escolar basado en la creciente incorporación de la noción de liderazgo.

Este concepto, más ambicioso en su significado, supera tareas tradicionalmente asignadas a la dirección escolar –de carácter administrativo y burocrático- para explorar nuevas funciones que competen a los llamados a liderar organizaciones cada vez más complejas, como son hoy nuestras escuelas. En efecto, las modificaciones en el mapa

escolar por el efecto generalizado de la inmigración, el impacto de la organización administrativa de los sistemas educativos –centralización y/o descentralización-, la alta cualificación y competencia de sus profesionales, las exigencias y adaptación al entorno en que se desenvuelven, la creciente reclamación de procesos de rendición de cuentas basados en la transparencia, la credibilidad y la confianza que depositan las familias en los centros, convierten a los directores en catalizadores de una mejora social que la sociedad reclama también a sus sistemas educativos.

Como se comprobará en este trabajo, si bien las miradas se dirigen al líder escolar como gestor del cambio, son también de manera indirecta las administraciones educativas quienes, a través de adecuados procesos de descentralización, deben garantizar la disponibilidad de los recursos necesarios para hacerlo posible. Por último, se explica también que la sociedad en su conjunto debe comprometerse con sus escuelas, ayudando y colaborando para hacer de ellas auténticas organizaciones inteligentes, basadas en la transmisión de conocimiento, y también organizaciones emprendedoras, lideradas por personas que llevan a cabo sus tareas de manera eficiente y con objetivos evaluables.

Las entidades que nos hemos implicado en la dirección del Informe, *Center for Research on Lifelong Learning* y *European Foundation Society and Education*, esperamos haber contribuido, gracias a la colaboración de los autores que participan en este informe y cuyas aportaciones agradecemos especialmente, a la revisión y actualización de la discusión sobre el papel del director. Si las conclusiones de su lectura permiten comprender algo mejor su tarea y ayudar a resolver parte de la complejidad que conlleva su función en la escuela, ambas organizaciones habrán conseguido gran parte de los objetivos que guiaron este proyecto. Hemos sido siempre conscientes de la importancia de su misión ya que, junto a su equipo, el líder escolar asume también la responsabilidad de formar futuros ciudadanos con competencias para vivir juntos y alcanzar sus propias metas, Ahí reside la importancia de diseñar los medios más adecuados para mejorar su cualificación, su formación, su prestigio y su función.

First part

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN SPAIN

School management in Spanish educational system

MIGUEL ÁNGEL SANCHO GARGALLO

President of European Foundation Society and Education

Brief overview of the organization of the education system in Spain

The current education system is implemented in the *general system of education* (pre-primary education, primary education, compulsory secondary education, baccalaureate and vocational education). The latter two stages of education are not compulsory. The *special system of education* focuses more on providing education in specific areas such as languages, music and dance, dramatic art, applied arts and design, as well as sports technologies.

In the following page we present a table summarizing the education system and a short description of each educational stage and level.

Pre-primary education. Educational stage. It is organized into two cycles; the second is free.

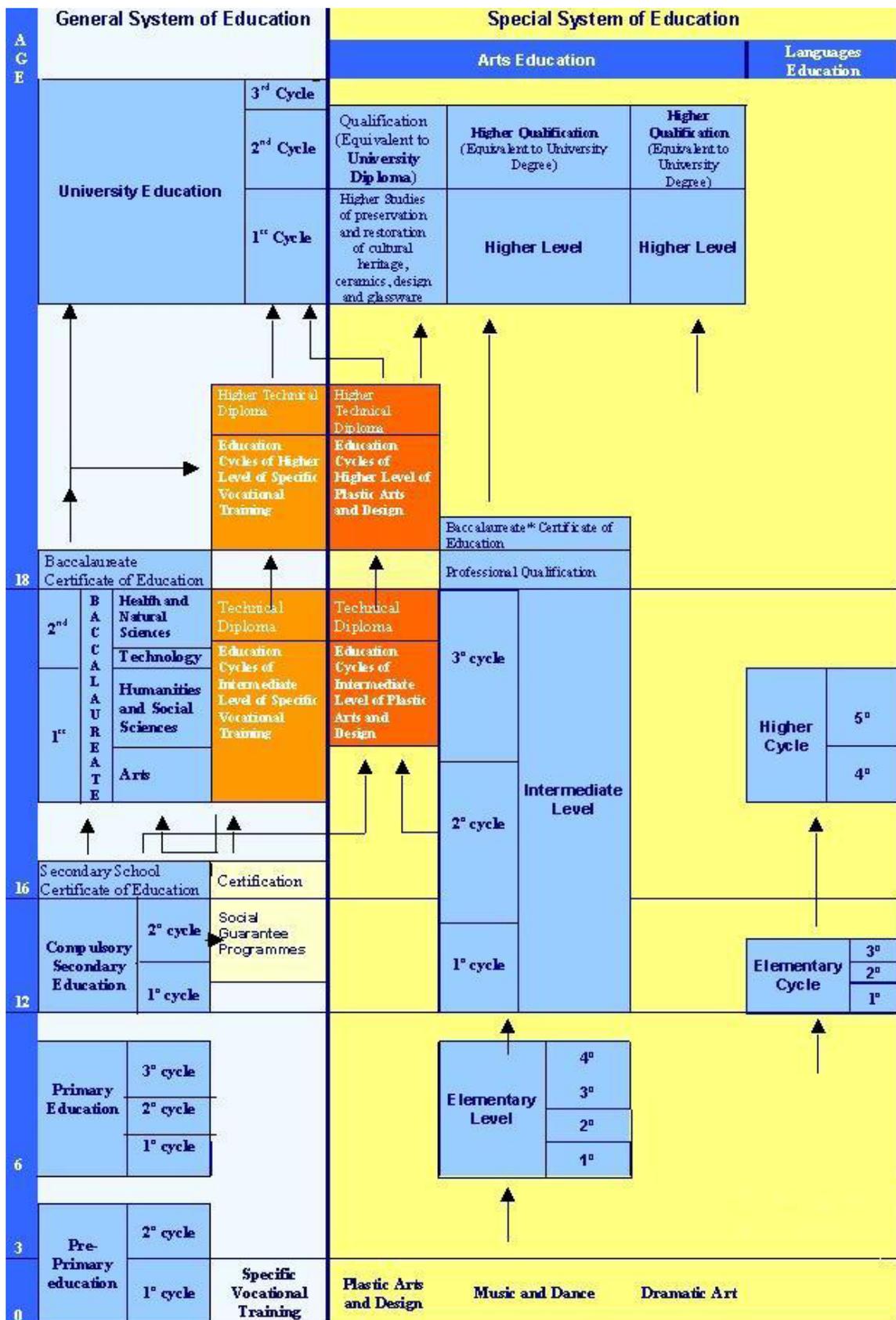
Basic education. This consists of primary education and E.S.O (Compulsory Secondary Education); it is free, compulsory and organized according to the principles of common education and attention to diversity.

Primary education. This consists of six courses, which are normally studied between the ages of 6 and 12.

Secondary education. This is divided into compulsory (ESO) and post-compulsory (baccalaureate, intermediate-level vocational training, intermediate-level vocational education of plastic arts and design and intermediate-level sports education).

Compulsory secondary education (E.S.O.). This consists of four courses that are normally studied between the ages of 12 and 16. There are curricular diversification programmes from the 3rd year onward aimed at obtaining the certificate. The ESO Secondary School Certificate gives access to post-compulsory secondary education.

Source: Education and Science Ministry (2006)



Initial vocational qualification programmes (P.C.P.I.). For students over the age of 16, exceptionally 15. It includes three types of modules:

- aimed at obtaining a vocational qualification,
- training of a general nature, and
- voluntary studies aimed at obtaining the ESO Secondary School Certificate.

Baccalaureate. This consists of two courses with three modalities: Arts, Sciences and Technology and Humanities and Social Sciences. The baccalaureate certificate gives access to higher education.

Higher education. This consists of university education, higher artistic education, higher level vocational training, higher level vocational education in plastic arts and design and higher level sports education.

University education. This is regulated by Royal Decrees 55/2005 and 56/2005, of 21st January. In order to enrol, it is necessary to pass an access exam.

Vocational training. It may be accessed without academic requirements by passing an entry exam (at intermediate level for those aged over 17 and at higher level for those aged over 19 or 18 if they hold the technical qualification relating to the specialization).

Special regime education. This includes language teaching, art education and sports education.

Education in languages. Students must be over 16 years old to obtain access, except those older than the age of 14 if they study a language different from the one studied in ESO (Compulsory Secondary Education). A baccalaureate certificate confers direct access to intermediate level in the first language studied in Baccalaureate.

Education in sports. Access to higher levels requires possession of a baccalaureate certificate and the intermediate-level qualification in the corresponding specialization. Some specializations require candidates to pass a specific entry exam. Access may be granted without the academic requirements by passing an entry exam (at intermediate level for those aged over 17 and at higher level for those aged over 19 or 18 if they have the technical qualification relating to the specialization).

Vocational art education. This is vocational education in music and dance and intermediate and higher levels of plastic arts and design. Access requires passing a specific test. Students who finalize vocational education in music and dance obtain the baccalaureate certificate so long as they pass the subjects common to baccalaureate.

Access can be granted to vocational education in plastic arts and design without academic requirements by passing an entry test (at intermediate level for those aged over 17 and at higher level for those aged over 19 or 18 if they have the technical qualification relating to the specialization).

Higher art education. Access requires, apart from the baccalaureate certificate, passing a specific test. Agreements may be made with universities to organize the doctorate studies involved in this kind of education.

Education for adults. This is intended for persons aged over 16. Its methodology is flexible and open. To enable adults to enter the educational system, tests are prepared to grant qualifications and access to the different modalities of education.

1. Legal and competence framework

Section 27 of the Spanish Constitution, under Part I, chapter II, regarding Rights and Liberties, regulates the right to education. Its first section lays down that "Everyone has the right to education. Freedom of teaching is recognized." It thus establishes a fundamental right in terms of right to freedom and right to provide services, subsequently stipulating the series of liberties and rights that arise thereof plus other duties and guarantees with regard to other members of the educational community and the State Administration. In this respect, a recent publication (Gómez Montoro, 2003), referring to the constitutional framework regulating the Right to Education, highlights the "harmonious coexistence established between everyone's right to education and the freedom of teaching, which are stipulated jointly and with the same effect in the first part of section 27", which has led to the widespread acceptance of a formula (attributed to professor Martínez López-Muñiz) establishing the right to education in freedom. The Constitution stipulates a "framework of coincidences", as expressed by the Constitutional Court itself, which allows for a harmonization of freedom and equality, quality and fairness, widespread access and freedom of choice.

Notwithstanding this general constitutional framework, the result of consensus, educational legislation in Spain has undergone continuous change according to the political party in power. At present, the system is regulated at Organic Act level by the LOE (Organic Education Act) (2004) which revokes the previous law LOCE (2002), approved by the foregoing government, and which never came into effect. The current law has the peculiarity of repealing all previous laws except for the LODE, which

remains in force with the necessary amendments laid down in the additional provisions of the LOE. At the present time, we are engaged in applying and implementing this Act.

Another particular aspect of the educational system is the competence framework of the Autonomous Regions, who assume the majority of competencies, so they are responsible for implementing and applying the basic regulations. The different regulatory implementation carried out by the Autonomous Regions has highlighted the need to structure our educational system and revealed the possibility of fragmentation, according to the varying regional regulations, and endangering equal opportunities and the principle of interterritorial solidarity.

2. Figures for the Spanish educational system

Forecast of student numbers in non-university education for the year 2008-09

	2008/2009	2007/2008	Variation	%
Total	7.419.989	7.226.664	193.325	2,7
Pre-Primary Ed ⁽¹⁾	1.765.719	1.639.741	125.798	7.7
Primary Ed.	2.662.532	2.600.466	62.066	2.4
Special Ed.	30.225	29.448	777	2.6
ESO	1.822.885	1.826.163	-3.278	-0,2
Baccalaureate ⁽²⁾	617.828	619.939	-2.111	-0.3
Vocational Training	520.800	510.907	9.893	1.9

(1) Students schooled at centres authorized by the Education Authorities

(2) Also includes students enrolled in the Distance Learning modality

As stated in the Report published by the Education and Science Ministry in September, 2008, the 2008-2009 school year is starting out with a forecast for the number of students in non-university education of 7.419.989, which means an increase of 193.325 students (+2.7%) over the 2007-2008 course.

This continues the growth in the number of non-university students, which began five years ago. The main reasons behind this growth include the significant increase in Spain's birth rate since the year 1999 and which has now reached the third year of Primary Education, plus the ongoing incorporation of students from overseas.

As regards the recovery of the birth rate, it is significant that, in less than a decade, the number of yearly births has risen from 365,193 (1998) to 481,102 (2006). Part of this increase stems from the growth in the number of births from foreign mothers (in the year 2006, they represented 16.5% of total births).

By educational levels, a significant aspect is that increases in student numbers for Pre-Primary Education (+125.978) and for Primary Education (+62.066). In Pre-Primary Education, the growth over recent years has remained stable. The increase predicted for the coming course is distributed, between its two cycles, as follows: 85.932 (+30,2%) in the First Cycle, age 0-3, and 40.046 (+3%) in the Second Cycle, aged 3-6. This is due, together with the increase in birth rate, to a greater offer in schooling at centres authorized by the Education Authorities for children in the First Cycle. As regards Primary Education, it is important to highlight a consolidation in the change of trend that has occurred over the last three years, interrupting the continuous fall that has taken place over the last twenty years. For the 2008-2009 course, an increase of 62.066 (+ 2.4%) students is expected.

Numbers of students at the educational levels of Compulsory Secondary Education, Baccalaureate and Vocational Training remain stable, due to the fact that population decreases corresponding to these age groups have been mitigated and neutralized with the incorporation of foreign students (mainly in Compulsory Secondary Education, where 10.81% of all students enrolled were of foreign origin).

As regards distribution by gender in 2006/2007 course, females represent a percentage of 48.5% in compulsory education, less than that of males, on account of the population structure; this situation is inverted in post-compulsory education, where the presence of females increases to 51.3% of students in Baccalaureate and Vocational Training and 54.0% in University Education. This fact is confirmed by their higher level of schooling: at the age of 16, the rate of schooling among females surpasses males by almost 6 points (90.9% females and 85.1% males) and, at the age of 17, the difference is even greater (81.1% females and 70.6% males).

The differences in the level of schooling, in favour of females, increase when observing educational results. Accordingly, 77.5% of females obtain the Secondary School Certificate after studying Compulsory Secondary Education, compared with 63.7% of males, which represents a difference of about 15 points. A similar situation can be seen in the percentage of population that obtains a Baccalaureate Certificate (52.5% of females and 36.7% of males) and that obtains a University Qualification (females: 21.0% diplomas and 22.0% degrees; males: 11.9% diplomas and 14.9% degrees). Only in Vocational Training studies are closer percentages obtained by gender, although favourable to females (Technical: 17.8% females and 15.0% males; Higher Technical: 19.0% females and 15.3% males).

Special Regime and Adult Education complete the information regarding the Educational System as a whole. The offer in Special Regime teaching is channelled almost entirely through state schools (91.6% of students), numbering 716.177 students in the 2007-2008 course.

Musical Education (278.428 students) and Official Language Schools (379.597 students) are the studies with highest enrolment levels. As for Adult Education conducted through the Educational System, in the 2007-08 course, a total of 383.444 people received formal teaching and 179.553 people took courses of an informal nature.

Statistics for the 2007-2008 course number the overall figure of foreign students in non-university education at 695.190, showing an increase with respect to the foregoing course of 85.579 students (+ 14,0%), representing, in the case of General Regime non-university education, 9,4% of students

According to data for the 2007-08 course, the relative volume of foreign students in General Regime non-university education showed significant differences between Autonomous Regions and Cities: those with the greatest percentages were La Rioja, 15.1%, the Balearic Islands, 14.4%, and Madrid, 13.9%, and those with the smallest percentages were Galicia, 3.2%, Extremadura, 2.9% and Ceuta, 2.1%. There also existed considerable differences in their distribution around the centres where they received schooling: foreign students represent 11.5% of pupils in state schools, more than twice as much as in private schools (5.1%).

As regards nationality of origin, students from South and Central America continue to stand out, with 45.5% (mainly from Ecuador and Colombia), followed by Europe, with 29.2% (particularly Rumania) and Africa, with 19.4% (mostly from Morocco).

The study of foreign languages begins early on in education (in the 2006-07 course, 56.3% of pupils in Second-Cycle Pre-Primary Education received teaching in a foreign language), although in general it begins in Primary Education (92.8% of pupils at this stage study a foreign language). Secondary Education also offers the option to study a second foreign language, an option that is chosen by 41.8% of students in Compulsory Secondary Education and 28.9% of students in Baccalaureate. In the 2007-08 course, the implementation of the LOE (Organic Education Act) in the First Cycle of Primary Education includes, as a innovation, the obligatory teaching of a foreign language from the age of 6, and establishes the possibility for autonomous regions to introduce a second foreign language from the age of 10. The foreign language studied

by almost all students is English (92% in Primary Ed.; 98% in Compulsory Secondary Ed.; 96% in Baccalaureate). French is studied by a significant proportion of Secondary Education students (39.6% in Compulsory Secondary Ed.; 28.3% in Baccalaureate), the vast majority as an optional second language.

The teaching staff in non-university education in state schools has increased by 29.4% in the last ten years, while the corresponding number of students has increased by 1.8% over the same period. It is predicted that a total of 659,590 teachers will give classes in state, private subsidized and private education over this course, which means an increase of 23.607 (+ 3.7%) teachers compared with the foregoing course.

The proportion of females is notable in the teaching staff of General Regime non-university education, and is higher in all categories except among Technical Vocational Training teachers. Women represent 67.8% of the total, a percentage that increases among Subsidized and Private Education to 70.4%, and in State Education teachers, where the female staff represents 66.8% of the total.

The average number of students per unit in Pre-Primary, Primary and Compulsory Secondary Education has dropped over the years, stabilizing at a little less than 20 students per unit in Pre-Primary Education, around 21 in Primary Education and below 25 in Compulsory Secondary Education.

The governance and management of schools

The LOE deals with the governance and management of schools in its Part V regarding *Participation, autonomy and governance in schools*, aiming to highlight, from the outset, a kind of leadership where participation and autonomy establish a model of governance that is conditioned by both.

The reference to participation, as a basic value in educating the population, falls among the objectives of the Spanish educational system as both an operating and organizational principle. This is reflected as much in the spirit that underlies the drafting of our last educational law, as in the structure of governance expected from each school.

Participation is also reflected in the right of parents, teachers and, as the case may be, students, to intervene in the management and control of schools financed with state funds, as laid down by Section 27.7 of the Constitution, which establishes shared responsibility in schools' governance and takes shape as the creation of collegiate entities for their educational administration and coordination. Accordingly, the School

Council, the Teachers' Board and other educational coordination bodies under Chapter III, Heading V of the LOE (Organic Education Act). The School Council, whose composition includes representatives from the educational community and even from the local authorities, has the most important competencies (Section 127) and is even involved in selecting the school's head teacher.

Chapter IV regulates the management of state schools. The provisions of the new law represent a change in the way school governance is conceived as regards other laws and particularly as regards the LODE.

Although the LOE stipulates, in article 118.2. *The participation, autonomy and management of schools which offer education regulated by this Law will comply with the stipulations of the Law and with the Organic Law of 8/1995 of July 3rd, on the Right to Education, and with the regulations stated therein.*, the differences are significant.

There are a number of aspects in management that change significantly. It seems that the intention is to give more importance to exercising leadership as a decisive factor in school operation with a more professional approach.

1. The management team is expressly mentioned as a basic governing body with greater functions and collegial work sense with distribution of tasks. Article 131 entitled "The management team" provides:
 - 1.1. *The management team, the executive body governing the school, will be composed of the head, the director of studies, the secretary and whoever else the Education Administrations decide.*
 - 1.2. *In carrying out their functions, the management team will work in coordination with each other on the instructions of the head and the legally-established specific functions.*
2. The team sense is stressed as it is proposed by the head and appointed by the administration. The school council is only aware of the proposal. Accordingly, article 131,3. provides that *The head, after reporting to the Teachers Council and the School Council, will make proposals to the Education Authority for the appointment and cessation for the posts of director of studies and school secretary from among the school teaching staff.*

3. The head is no longer selected by the school council but by a specific committee appointed for the purpose by the administration, with mixed composition. It is the administration who subsequently appoints the head.
 - 3.1. Article 133. 1. *The selection of the school head will be made through a process which involves the participation of the education community and the Education Authority.*
 - 3.2. *This process must give rise to the selection of the most appropriate candidates in professional terms and those who obtain the most support from the education community.*

4. Some initial training is required if the person has no management experience and only after this is the candidate appointed by the administration.
 - 4.1. Article 136. *Appointment. Selected candidates must pass a programme of initial training, organised by the Education Administrations. Selected candidates with at least two years accredited experience as school head will be exempt from the initial training programme.*
 - 4.2. *The Education Administrations will appoint the candidate who has passed the training programme head of the corresponding school for a period of four years.*

These four aspects represent an innovation with respect to the LODE, by highlighting the management aspect. The School Council continues to have a relevant governance function when approving the educational project and taking part in other important aspects of school operation. But there is a clear strengthening of the head's position and his team on one hand, and on the other hand of the role of the school owner; that is, the Administration.

In the Report drawn up by the Education Ministry for the OECD (MEC March-2007), the competencies of the different bodies of governance are described as follows:

“The LOE establishes that the collegiate bodies of governance are the school councils and teacher’s assemblies, and that the executive body is the leadership team, comprising the head teacher, the head of studies, the school administrator and those persons appointed by the education authorities.

The competencies of the school council in state schools, in which the leadership team, teachers, parents, students and members of the local community are represented, include: the approval and evaluation of school projects (educational, leadership and the annual general plan of activities) as well as the regulations for the organisation and the functioning of the school, participation in the head teacher selection process, admission of students, pupil behaviour, renovation of materials, collaboration with the wider community and an analysis and evaluation of the general performance of the school.

The teachers' assembly is responsible for planning, coordinating, reporting and, where appropriate, deciding on all the educational aspects of the school. Thus, its competencies, among others, include: the approval and evaluation of the curriculum content as well as the pedagogical aspects of other projects, the analysis and evaluation of students' results, the resolution of disputes and setting out the criteria in matters of student guidance, tutorials, evaluations and learning support.

The distribution of leadership tasks within schools is normally as follows: the head of studies focuses on the academic processes, organisation and disciplinary matters, the school administrator on the administrative and financial processes and the head teacher on institutional and external relations and on the coordination of the leadership team. When the coordinators of the departments or the cycles do not have periodic meetings with the head of studies, they sometimes attend the leadership team meetings.

The proposals submitted by each one of the members at the coordination meeting are decided on the basis of consensus and in the event of a disagreement, the head teacher decides. Nevertheless, the head teacher, as the maximum authority within the school, must safeguard that the decisions respect the regulations or any other fundamental criteria. Issues that require an immediate decision can be resolved by the head teacher and the persons involved, without having to wait until the next meeting”.

In my opinion, the key aspect in the way leadership is addressed lies in the concept of Autonomy, laid down as a general principle in Section 120. Schools are said to enjoy “autonomy in educational, organizational and management terms within the framework of the current legislation”. In practice, the margin of real autonomy is very low, both in economic terms and as regards people management, so framing leadership within the real autonomy that schools enjoy is actually merely theoretical and proves to be poorly conceived upon implementation.

In presenting some provisional conclusions (International Seminar Educational Leadership (Madrid. September 2007) of a recent report on leadership drawn up by the

OECD, (Beatriz Pont 2007) attention was drawn to the need to expand the margin of schools' autonomy so that conditions of genuine leadership could be achieved. It then underscored the low levels of autonomy within the Spanish educational system and its relationship with a leadership model that sees the head teacher as a team leader and a mediator who, although exhibiting positive aspects, is urged both by the educational sector as a whole and by teachers to be given more authority, professionalism and social recognition.

A key, controversial aspect has been determining the selection method for the head teacher. The LOE (Organic Education Act) derogates a system intended to highlight professional aspects by establishing an appointment by the educational authorities, replacing it with a system where candidates are selected by the School Council and the authorities appoint the selected candidate. Such candidate must have passed an initial training programme, although candidates who can demonstrate two years' experience in a management position are exempt from this training. In practice, although the aim is to introduce a system combining election and appointment, the former prevails, with the resulting risk of not fully professional profiles. The idea of participation arises again, conferring a relevant role to the educational community, with the aim of guaranteeing the acceptance of chosen candidates and, as a consequence, endorsing the effectiveness of their work.

The foreseen requirements do not include prior, specific training for performing management tasks, which reflects a lack in providing resources and undue attention to the professionalism that this position requires. However, it does require five years' experience and the presentation of a management project that includes, among other things, objectives, lines of action and evaluation as per stipulated in Section 134. Finally, candidates from within the school have priority.

There is little tradition in Higher Studies and Masters' courses that involve specific training programmes for school heads. Nevertheless, little by little, and often through private initiative, specialized programmes are being incorporated to respond to the growing complexity that a head teacher faces with regard to the demands imposed upon schools. These are, in fact, just a reflection of the complexity inherent to society itself and, in order to address this, policies must be developed with regard to professional recognition, assistance in specific training and a greater availability of resources.

Programmes offered by universities have a two-fold purpose: some are aimed at working professionals and are oriented towards professional development; others

involve initial training, providing the skills to perform management tasks. These courses harmonize the principles of efficient management with their proper application to the educational sector in managing teams and people, forming a transformational, transcendent, mission-based leadership, certainly responding more fully and effectively to an educational centre's needs. In this respect, some of the research conducted in business schools (Cardona, 2005) is very interesting. However, as mentioned above, these programs are an exception in the existing general training offered to school heads and not the rule.

Although it is true that programmes have also been promoted by regular or employer organizations at private schools and universities, they are aimed at meeting manager training needs within these entities themselves and, occasionally, are extended to the sector. They usually consist of a training programme that is not limited to educational aspects and address other fields such as people management, relationships with the environment or analysis of economic management and communication. In short, they conceive management tasks as general administration that integrates and harmonizes the different areas, based on development of the school's mission involving everyone, and a project promoted by the whole organization.

There are increasing numbers of professional head teachers' associations that are highlighting these problems, drawing attention to the challenges faced by educational leadership. Recently, the Head Teachers' Federation (FEDADI), which comprises numerous head teachers' associations at regional level, requested recognition for the specific nature of head teachers' tasks, their stability and their importance as a quality factor within the system, in developing the regulations of the LOE (Organic Education Act). Increasing professionalism also implies adequate preparation to address the complexity mentioned above, the planning and coordination needs of educational action and, in general, training to re-orient and resolve conflicts in educational centres.

The Head Teachers' Associations, also suggest increased professionalism in selection processes and, in short, propose that evaluation of the management project should meet certain objective criteria, previously published. The head teacher's competencies under Section 132 appear, at first sight, to be broadly outlined, although, in practice, the decision-making process carried out by the management team at present is limited to proposing and informing, confusing the School Council's control function with powers of decision and execution.

Furthermore, the schools' real autonomy must be increased in both economic and educational terms and as regards the organization of people. They should be able to appoint department heads and other educational managers, to increase their capacity for economic management, because decentralization in decision and control always proves to be more efficient. Educational autonomy would involve flexibility in the curricula and the organization, enhancing the response capacity to specific, mission-based and value-based educational projects that confer schools with a diversity of profiles according to the social environments where they perform their educational functions. The representation that head teachers assume must be accompanied by recognition of their authority, together with presence and position in their social environment, in accordance with their responsibility. All of the above increases schools' evaluation so that the required autonomy goes hand in hand with the corresponding accountability, where there would be assessment of such management tasks and, in accordance with the school's project, its mission and vision.

Spain is, after Holland, Belgium and the United Kingdom, the fourth European country with the greatest proportion of the private sector in education, at around 30%. In turn, this private sector shows a marked differentiation in its composition, between schools that receive state funding, called subsidized private schools, and private schools. This organization is mirrored at employer, trade union and sector policy level and, naturally, in the legal framework that regulates them, showing varying degrees of autonomy and, as a consequence, a broad diversity of management models.

Subsidized private schools, private schools that receive state funding, run the risk of acquiring similarities to state schools and, in practice, losing their own character and autonomy, by having to "assimilate" in order to receive the funding that allows students free access. The tension that arises on either side between freedom and autonomy, the obligatory compliance with certain requirements to be organized in a similar way to state schools, considerably hampers the performance of genuine leadership with respect to the school project. It would be preferable to implement evaluation or control for subsidized private schools in terms of results, leaving greater scope for autonomy and eliminating bureaucratic processes that impose limits and uniformity on schools and prevents them from adapting to the diversities of the social context they operate in.

Private schools, on the other hand, enjoy greater autonomy as regards internal organization and people management, according to the guidelines that their owners

establish. They can implement a leadership model with greater impact on schools' quality, by enjoying greater scope for development and responsibility.

Autonomy and leadership

An important aspect that in the provisions of a number of articles affecting school governance is the role assigned to education authorities to determine the scope of competences that correspond to them. That is to say, the law provides that the educational authorities shall be who determine the specific competences of schools on matters of personnel, organisation and financing, by virtue of the degree of autonomy they establish.

In the framework of the LOE, each Autonomous Region is therefore responsible for determining how far it goes in the practice, scope and nature of school leadership, as this is decisive in the real autonomy assigned.

Accordingly, art. 123,5 provides that *The Education Administrations may delegate certain competences to public school management bodies, including those related to staff management, giving responsibility to head teachers for the management of resources at the school's disposal.*

And art. 131 5: *The Education Administrations will foster the exercise of the management role in schools, by adopting measures which help to improve the performance of management teams in relation to staff and material resources and through the organisation of training courses and programmes.*

It remains to be seen how the Autonomous Regions implement the regulations allowing schools to have real, specific competences. The last report from the Commission on monitoring the objectives of the Lisbon strategy stated, in the chapter on modernising educational systems, school leadership in the framework of independent financing, allowing management teams to be trained in the scope of their own projects.

Effective people management as regards selection, capacity to create new teams, clashes with the civil service statute, and specifically with the Education Statute, currently at draft stage and under negotiation with the trade unions.

Difficultly without flexibility, mobility of teaching staff, capacity of management teams to choose the most appropriate teachers for different projects, may all advance significantly.

On this matter, the LOE simply mentions school management teams' faculty to describe the professional profile required but does not authorize them to conduct the selection process. It is the very personnel circulating round the educational system, according to certain criteria, who do not always correspond to what makes people management efficient: their degree of commitment and identification with the organisation. There is a major area here to offer greater flexibility to the education system, to make leadership effective, because it affects the most sensitive point and with greater repercussion on education: the suitability of the teaching staff carrying out this function because they make it more effective. Without a doubt, this it is one of the greatest challenges facing education.

To sum up, effective leadership that enhances the school requires a clear, broad scope of autonomy in decision-making. In fact the PISA Report 2003 confirmed this analysis by presenting a series of statistical results which show that Spain is below the OECD average (see Table 1 and Table 2):

Table 1
Decision-making by head teachers (PISA 2003)
Head teachers have responsibility over: (Percentage of students in schools whose head teachers report that they have competencies over the following matters)

	Spain % (State)	OECD % average
Hiring teachers	30 (0)	60
Firing teachers	31 (0)	51
Establishing salary increases	5 (0)	23
Student disciplinary policies	46 (30)	67
Student assessment	31 (18)	51
Course content	11 (1)	20
Courses offered	38 (13)	57

Table 2
Autonomy of schools (PISA 2003)
Schools have responsibility over: (Percentage of students in schools whose head teachers report that they have competencies over the following matters)

	Spain %	OECD %
Hiring teachers	36	64
Firing teachers	36	56
Establishing salary increases	7	27
Student disciplinary policies	98	94
Student assessment	96	85
Course content	65	67
Courses offered	57	70

These figures indicate that both in people management and in the management of resources, curricula and school environment, the level is low, which determines the role and responsibility of the Spanish educational system's leadership model. Head teachers' decision-making powers is 3.5 out of 12 compared with an OECD average of 5.8 and the overall level of autonomy in Spanish schools is clearly lower than the OECD average (a quarter of a standard deviation over a mean value 0 which is equivalent to the average OECD value).

In the above-mentioned OECD study, Spain appears in the leading group which is ascribed a role and a responsibility characterized by communication and team-management-based factors; in short, a concept of leadership according to a participation-based approach with significant team involvement, in contrast to the individual action of head teachers. Accordingly, decision-making, as per the principle of "democratic participation" is greatly affected by the points of view of educational community members and stakeholders.

However, we cannot ignore the fact that, together with participation, full accountability is also fundamental in management activities. In this respect, professor Luisa Ribolzi (2007) has recently stated that (International Seminar Education Leadership) "the head's most important skill becomes *to organize a learning environment in a highly changing context*, bonding the teachers in the school and addressing the human resources to realise a common aim. The connection between the principal and the quality of the school climate is both direct and strong. A good head empowers the teachers, through a transformational leadership, improves the resources

Current challenges facing school leaders

The challenges faced by leadership in schools are closely related to those faced by the schools themselves. The role assigned to educational centres has undergone considerable change in recent years. The crisis affecting some institutions has the effect of passing on greater responsibility to schools. They are assigned fields and functions they previously never had. The breakdown of certain family models and other social factors, such as the phenomenon of emigration and the consolidation of multicultural societies, confer schools with new functions and areas of work. In this context, the management role takes on new competencies that surpass traditional managerial or bureaucratic/official tasks. The head teacher's role takes shape as a guide and team-leader, a mediator and an agent capable of involving the professionals he or she is responsible for in shared projects and values.

In my opinion, leadership in schools must be considered outside its strictly managerial function. Stakeholders are required to take part in such leadership as schools are increasingly required to interact with their environment, to represent a key setting for socialization and to call for the presence and implication of the families involved. Consequently, it is essential to strengthen the position of the school project as a reference framework for educational activities in which everyone assumes their share of responsibility.

On the other hand, schools should not be passed on the responsibility of providing solutions, from their educational role, to the multiple deficiencies that society exhibits. It is also necessary to act decisively on the basis of creating mechanisms of cooperation with those responsible for designing and implementing social policies as a whole. Only integrated actions can bring about the advances for the necessary social cohesion (strategic objective laid down by the Lisbon Agenda 2010) and generate the appropriate environment for effectively improving the social conditions to allow, in the long term, integral development for the whole population (Juan Carlos Tedesco, 2007). In this assignation of responsibilities, the social media has a major role to play, along with, in general, the whole leisure and entertainment sector, which particularly affects - educating or un-educating - the teaching-learning and socialization process of our young students.

Another important aspect, resulting from characteristics existing in many countries due to state ownership, is the civil-servant status of most teaching

professionals, which, as in the case of Spain, hampers the development and implementation of effective leadership. This civil-servant status itself, bureaucratization, lack of mobility, lack of flexibility, temporary staff with high turnover - sometimes reaching 50%, and the total absence of competencies when selecting personnel, greatly limit the performance of such leadership responsible for managing this change. Significant experience in the different scenarios where educational diversity occurs would help to mitigate this, encouraging strategies of mobility throughout state, private and subsidized private sectors. An article on this matter (Díaz Lema, 2004) advocates greater "transfer from public to private or from private to public, helping to energize the educational system by making it more flexible and competitive". In this respect, Spain's current review of the "Estatuto de la Función Docente" (Statute of the Educational Role) does not at present appear capable of solving people management, educational careers and salary remuneration - to mention a few aspects - from parameters of agreement, effectiveness and rationality, more in accordance with the new requirements demanded of schools.

Pending challenges include a review of the current legal framework for setting up schools with different ideologies and projects that meet the different existing requirements of a pluralistic society. The Spanish Constitution covers the freedom to create schools but there exists no obligation to finance all educational initiatives, so the access and inauguration of such schools is subject to economic rationality. Consequently, a greater freedom of choice gives rise to plurality of educational offers and, as a result, greater diversity in how leadership is implemented according to each school's characteristics, as occurs in many other sectors of social and economic activity. Uniformity and rigidity are not good companions of leadership and even less of education, where freedom is inherent to the task of educating. Accordingly, different methods of exercising leadership would arise in accordance with different schools, projects and environments.

Another of the challenges confronting the development of a leadership style that transforms schools and has an effect on the quality of their results is the existence or absence of a culture of assessment or accountability, which permits progress in autonomy and enhancement of professional performance. All professionalization involves a clear framework of competencies and responsibilities and, therefore, an appraisal of results with the corresponding creation of processes to bring about improvement. Quality of organizations stems from the quality of the work done by the

people who compose them. Insofar as the so-called evaluation culture is not implemented professionally and with guarantees throughout the education sector, it will also be difficult to implement effective leadership that merges widely-ranging fields of decision-making capacity with the accountability required. As Bezzina (2007) notes the role of the head is evolving demanding a move from administration to leadership and from individuality to collegiality. We have to move to work with and for individuals. A need to focus on strategic planning; curriculum design, development and implementation; staff development and appraisal; monitoring and supervision of the quality of teaching and learning.”

Concluding remarks

We should advance towards a harmonious system where autonomy, school leadership and accountability are brought together and reciprocally structured. In short, the aim should be to increase decision-making and self-evaluation powers to reinforce a style of leadership that works efficiently in the context of the complex, changing reality where the school operates.

We have to reconsider the selection and training of head teachers. The school's role has changed and, consequently, so has the head teacher's. This should strengthen the values shared by the educational community as a whole, exercising mission-based or transformational leadership. We should not limit the promotion of candidates to within the school and open opportunities to other sectors which, with the necessary preparation, could occupy professional positions in schools.

In order for such aperture to be possible, it is necessary to design professional training programmes, prior to any managerial action, which provide qualification for such tasks, comprising all the different areas that require attention in a school: not only educational, organizational and administrative, but also involving other aspects relating to communication and institutional relationships, conflict resolution, knowledge management and collegiate development.

Greater social recognition is necessary, accompanied by a reinforcement of authority and economic motivation to compensate for the growing responsibilities and "plurifunctionality" of managerial tasks. At present, the salary difference of a head teacher does not amount to 20% of what the rest of staff is paid. Intrinsic motivation is

not enough. Extrinsic motivation must be encouraged to compensate the lack of candidates and scant appeal of such managerial positions among teaching professionals.

In general, the educational sector requires an effort towards modernization that combines a guarantee of universal access to education, conceived as a basic human right exercised under conditions of freedom and fairness, with certain standards of quality. Only with an appropriate legal framework that reflects the performance of this right under conditions that respect the diversity of projects and by implementing a flexible, open educational function can progress be made in the transformation-based leadership that schools of today require.

If the evidence provided shows that proper school board governance can make a difference to school performance, priority must be given to actions aimed at improving managerial functions in schools to further improve their results. Lastly, it would be advantageous for the necessary structural reforms that our educational system requires not be subjected to the ups and downs of partisan ideology and for them to involve everyone in providing recognition and training for our school leaders. They are also, to a large extent, responsible for achieving better school results, with positive effects on the overall quality of education.

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*Educational leadership and school autonomy
from the Spanish point of view*

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Introduction

Even if the concept of leadership admits several dimensions and approaches, it can be said, in broad terms, that leadership is the art of efficiently guiding, orienting or directing human groups. Throughout the following pages, I will repeatedly use the term “educational leadership”. This is a concept that admits several interpretations – e.g., it is possible to speak of educational leadership within the Departments, and even within the framework of the classroom itself- but, for practical reasons, in these pages I will associate it with management leadership, which in fact is the subject matter of this paper.

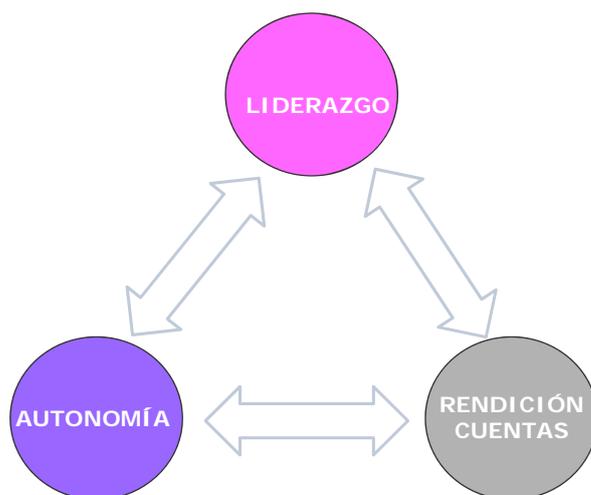
At present, a broad consensus has been reached – within international organisations, among university researchers and even among governments in the most developed countries in terms of education – on considering educational leadership, school autonomy and accountability as key strategic issues when designing and implementing improvement policies in schools. These three action areas, far from being independent, are deeply interconnected and represent, as a whole, an example of a systemic approach to public policies in the field of education.

If analysed separately, the education system's factors or variables are hardly ever capable of explaining in an indisputable way the results of students' performance. The problem partly results from methodological issues, but is also partly due to the very complexity of the subject matter analysed. Precisely because of this, because we are aware of the complexity of the factors that come into play when explaining the good performance of an education system (or of a school), the policies adopted will only be effective if they take into account the complexity of the framework on which they intend to have an impact. This is the main characteristic of systemic approaches: they

consist of an integrated series of policies which reinforce their actions and consolidate their positive effect on individuals and society as a whole.

Within the context of schools, it may be asserted that management leadership has an influence on the schools' autonomy or, more exactly, on the effective exercise of autonomy and its final impact on school performance. In other words: an increase in autonomy, if not accompanied by management leadership capable of enhancing and making the most of the potential benefits of that increased autonomy, will probably lead the school to a chaotic situation rather than to order and quality. But, in addition to management leadership, autonomy will only be effective –in the opposite direction – if a sufficient level of autonomy is granted (see figure 1).

Figure 1
Relationships between leadership, autonomy and accountability



It should also be noted that educational leadership increases the efficiency of the policies concerning responsibility or accountability for results. But, as was the case above, the validity of the opposite direction of the causal relationship is supported by facts. This means that accountability has an impact on leadership, which in fact is conditioned and guided by accountability (see figure1).

In addition, it is thanks to accountability that autonomy policies may achieve maximum efficiency. OECD has recently published several studies (Wößmann, 2007),

which reveal that schools' autonomy has practically no impact on students' performance if it is not accompanied by accountability systems, through national and external tests. Conversely, in countries having external tests at national level – associated with effective responsibility procedures – schools' autonomy becomes a key factor in educational improvement.

The Spanish case has several particularities – which are only shared, and to a limited extent, with the Portuguese system – regarding the treatment given by its education system to each of the three key areas: accountability, school autonomy and educational leadership. This is the complex framework, based on determining factors and mutual influences, into which the policies for improving our education system should be implemented, making the most, in any event, of the information flow, the experience and the good practice available at international level.

The first part of this paper contains a non-exhaustive reflection on educational leadership and its conceptual environment, which will set up the framework for the following analyses. I will then tackle, in a summarised way, the issue of school autonomy, while providing several figures concerning the extension of such autonomy in Spain's education system and its impact on students' performance. Thirdly, I will analyse some of the obstacles faced by leadership as a result of the current organisation and development of Spain's education system. Finally, I will provide three practical suggestions that may help to define improvement policies.

About educational leadership

Within the framework of organisations operating in the production sector, it has long been admitted that management leadership is a key, or critical, quality factor. In the field of quality management, it is commonplace to assert that quality is transmitted vertically, from top to bottom, and that no possibility of improvement exists without managers showing leadership towards quality.

Focusing now on the issue of schools, it should be said that teachers are no singular species or – if I may say so – no particular category of mammals. Schools are made up of people. They are human organisations which, as such, share the key to their success with other types of organisations. It is obvious that a school is not a car factory. But, if thoroughly analysed, it may be observed that the principles on which their

success is based are basically the same. In other words, all human organisations share an invariance or mainstreaming principle if analysed from a general perspective.

In 1993, while preparing a paper (López Rupérez, 1994) which would later provide the basis for the development, by the Ministry of Education and Culture, of *Management Quality* policies for schools (López Rupérez, 2000), I made a comparative analysis, on the basis of the results of organisational research and the movement of efficient schools, concerning the things that efficient company leaders and efficient school managers have in common. These two research areas had been developed separately. However, when we compared the behaviours of these two leadership groups, we found that they were practically identical.

More recently, the Australian project LOSLO (*Leadership for Organisational Learning and Student Outcomes*) has described a series of characteristic features of transformational leadership, which are consistent with the conclusions reached by previous studies. Once again, they remind us that the manner in which people are treated, guided and involved is the key element of an improvement-oriented transformational leadership. The typical behaviour of transformational leaders exhibits the following characteristics (Mulford, 2003):

- *Individual support.*- The manager provides moral support and shows appreciation for the personnel's work, while taking their opinions into account
- *Culture.*- He/she endeavours to create an atmosphere of confidence among people at the school, while promoting respectful relationships with students and showing will for improvement
- *Structure.*- He/she establishes a structure that encourages participation, delegation of responsibilities and decision-making
- *Vision and goals.*- The manager is open to consensus on the school's priorities, and communicates them efficiently in order to build strong cohesion around the goals.
- *Expectations regarding performance.*- He/she has high expectations regarding students' performance, and demands innovation and efficiency from teachers
- *Intellectual stimulation.*- He/she encourages teachers to think of their objectives relating to their students and of the efforts required to achieve them, while promoting a learning atmosphere among teachers.

As highlighted by a number of studies, management leadership is a key element of organisational success, and is key in leading human groups, in all their complexity, with all their virtues and defects, strengths and weaknesses, to the objectives previously defined. Educational leadership also plays an essential part in school success. The fact that the empirical evidence available in this case is not fully consistent is not something rare in educational research. In fact, we are aware that no evidence is totally consistent. In other words, no evidence is free from contradictory empirical elements.

In addition to the numerous research studies available, the sentence which best summarises the impact of school leadership on schools' quality was pronounced by the highly-renowned US academician F.M. Hechinger who, in the final years of his professional career, with long experience in the field of education, said the following:

“I have never seen a good school with a poor manager, or a poor school with a good manager. I have seen poor schools becoming good and, sadly, highly efficient schools sliding quickly into decline. In all cases, the rise or the decline was clearly reflected in the quality of the manager” (Hechinger, 1981).

To sum up, educational leadership has now become one of the factors which are most taken into account in promoting school improvement. Not only is it admitted that leadership contributes to improvement – there is a number of detailed empirical studies concerning the ways or intermediate factors that lead to such improvement (Miles, 1987)-, but, very recently, Richard F. Elmore, from Harvard University, one of the academicians who has best analysed the issue of leadership and improvement, has reached the conclusion that leadership consists in the actual practice of improvement (Elmore 2007). On the basis of personal experience, of the empirical evidence available in the field of education and of the outcome of the transversal analysis of different kinds of organisations, it may be asserted that leadership is a key factor in achieving school success.

About school autonomy

After this short description of the conceptual framework of management leadership, I will focus on school autonomy. Without intending to insist excessively on its extension and its pros and cons, it seems expedient to analyse and describe the

different models of school autonomy that are currently being implemented in developed countries.

Models of autonomy

A first approach to the semantic richness of the term *school autonomy* implies classifying the different models of autonomy according to the stance adopted by the Administration in monitoring the procedures and supervising the results achieved through such procedures. Table 1 below shows the four possible models of autonomy resulting from this classification.

Table 1
Models of autonomy, as classified according to the type of supervision exercised over procedures and results

Model of autonomy	Type of supervision over	
	Procedures	Results
A	CENTRAL	CENTRAL
B	CENTRAL	REGIONAL
C	REGIONAL	CENTRAL
D	REGIONAL	REGIONAL

Model A represents a limited form of decentralisation, where the Administration regulates and supervises both procedures and results. In its most consistent form, it is typical of countries with a strong centralist tradition and a culture showing respect to the State's role and responsibility. Even if it is slowly progressing to Model C (DEP, 1993), France has probably been, until very recently, the best example of Model A: well structured from the top, with a professional management of schools, rigorous supervision and an efficient external evaluation system implemented at national level (Le Guen, 1994).

Model B represents a pernicious form of decentralisation, as it combines considerably rigid procedures and strong control over means of funding and, more generally, over school management and organisation – through an often very high number of regulations – with little concern for the results. In recent decades, Spain has represented, to a certain extent, an example of survival of this lesser version of the centralist model, which is doubly inadequate to the task of providing citizens with a high-quality education service; however, in fact, Spain has been trying for some years now to evolve into Model D, in practical terms, as a spontaneous way to gradually progress to Model C.

Model C is a balanced combination of centralisation and autonomy, and is the model currently implemented by most developed countries' education systems. For instance, the Netherlands abandoned its previous school management system in the 90s and replaced it with the more advantageous Model C. The objectives pursued by the Dutch education system in recent years are summarised in the following institutional statement (OECD, 1991):

"Reduced levels of control over procedures – especially over bureaucratic ones – and increased freedom of action in budgetary and personnel-related matters, at school level. Greater capacity of management and action at school level, leading to increased innovation and efficiency. Stricter control over the assessment of school efficiency, in accordance with the objectives set, thus ensuring that society will benefit from this greater freedom".

The Dutch government has recently summed up its approach to autonomy in the following sentence: "Strong schools, an accountable State" (OECD, 2003).

The United Kingdom has also developed in recent years a model of autonomy that assumes the principles underlying this distribution of roles between schools and the Administration, and creates highly autonomous schools which are also highly efficient. On the basis of the principle that the Administration's intervention in schools is inversely proportional to their level of success, the intention is to delegate new responsibilities to schools as the school system as a whole continues progressing (Barber, 2003).

This British approach to school autonomy – which may be identified with Model C – has been described as the “paradox of decentralised centralism”, insofar as its basic approach implies at the same time centralisation and decentralisation: the former within the scope of school programmes, education priorities and results, and the latter in respect of the room for manoeuvre granted to schools in developing said priorities (Glatter, 2002).

Model D represents the highest level of autonomy, which may lead to autarchy if not accompanied by some kind of efficient social control mechanism. This model is fully compatible with an extreme version of freedom of choice in education, in which “market” forces become the main element of regulation, but is also compatible with the school management system known as *community democracy*, under which schools become small-sized governments, and social control is directly exercised through the involvement of parents (Taylor and Lowe, 1998).

The scope of school autonomy in Spain. An international comparison

In determining the position of Spain in terms of school autonomy within the framework of developed countries, I have used as reference, for comparison purposes, the average of OECD countries, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, Finland, as a country that, as is well known, is now an undisputed benchmark in terms of school performance as measured through PISA tests. For these purposes, I have considered four essential dimensions in the field of school autonomy: management of people, resources, curricula and school life, as I had already used them when preparing a previous paper on the basis of information provided by Eurydice (López Rupérez, 1995).

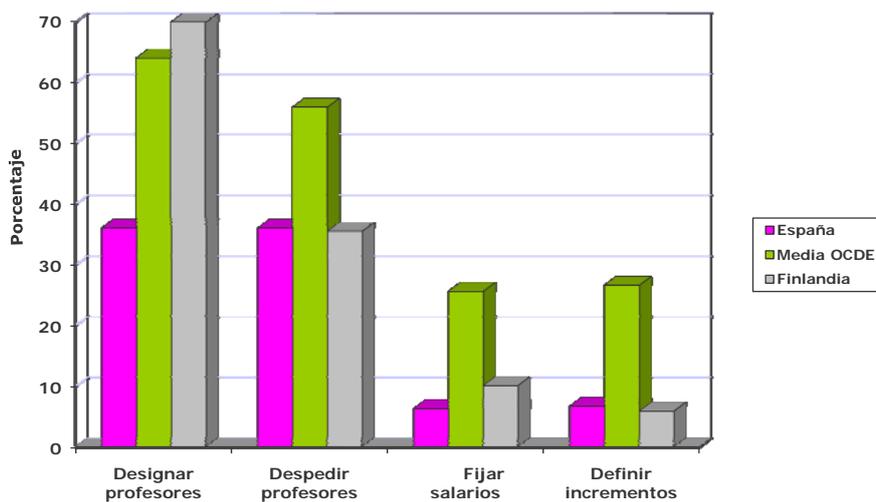
In this case, I have updated the analyses on the basis of valuable empirical data contained in OECD’s 2003 edition of the PISA programme (OECD, 2004). The results of the study are supported by questionnaires that provide a faithful picture of the extension of autonomy, as measured by the managers of participating schools. In addition, the resulting picture combines, as is well known, the results obtained both by public schools and by fully private and private state-subsidised schools (which in Spain approximately account for 60% and 40%, respectively).

Autonomy in managing people

Figure 2 provides a clear comparative picture as regards four aspects or powers of schools in terms of managing people. As it may be observed, Spain is lagging behind with respect to the average pattern seen in other OECD countries, and is not so far behind Finland, except for the power to appoint teachers, where there is even a larger gap between Spain and Finland. If we take into account the fact that fully private and private state-subsidised schools have a much heavier weight in Spain than in Finland and, on average, in other OECD countries, it may be asserted, in light of this data, that our public schools have practically no autonomy when it comes to appointing teachers. In other words, most of the policies dealing with the management of human resources in Spain are beyond the schools' control.

Figure 2
Headteacher's autonomy in managing people

Fig. 2 – Porcentajes de alumnos en centros cuyos directores indican que las decisiones sobre los diferentes aspectos considerados se delegan en el nivel propio del centro



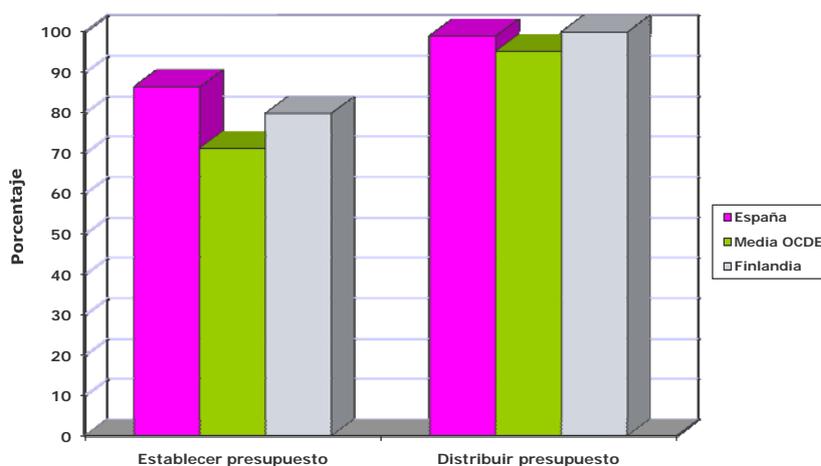
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Autonomy in managing resources

As regards school autonomy in managing resources, as expressed by the schools' ability both to establish their budgets – obviously, on the basis of predefined principles – and to distribute said resources, the Spanish position, as shown in Figure 3, is similar to that of the two benchmarks considered.

Figure 3
Headteachers' autonomy in managing resources

Fig. 3 – Porcentajes de alumnos en centros cuyos directores indican que las decisiones sobre los diferentes aspectos considerados se delegan en el nivel propio del centro



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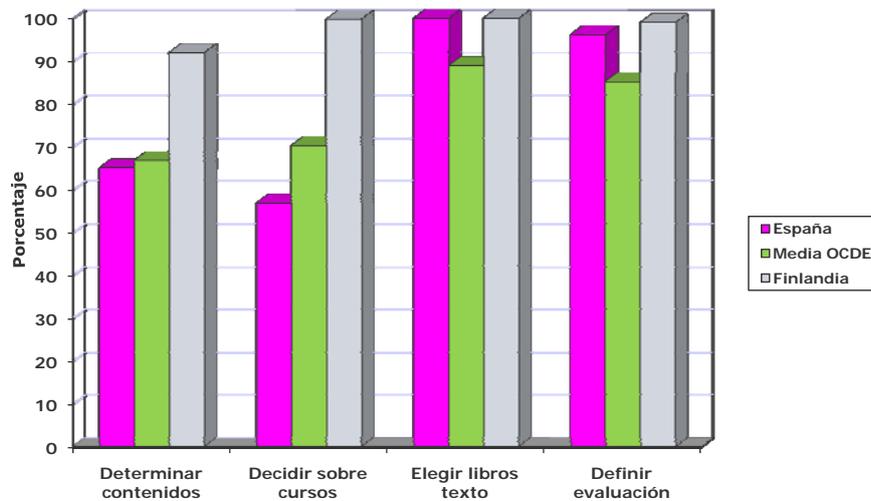
Autonomy in managing curricula

The results shown in Figure 4 reveal that, in terms of curricula, the autonomy granted to Spanish schools is equal to, or slightly lower than, the OECD average as regards the power to determine the contents and deciding the subjects to be taught, but is far behind Finland in these two aspects of curricular autonomy. Conversely, when it

comes to choosing student books and defining the procedures for assessing students, Spain's position is similar to that of the two benchmarks considered.

Figure 4
Headteachers' autonomy in managing curricula

Fig. 4 – Porcentajes de alumnos en centros cuyos directores indican que las decisiones sobre los diferentes aspectos considerados se delegan en el nivel propio del centro



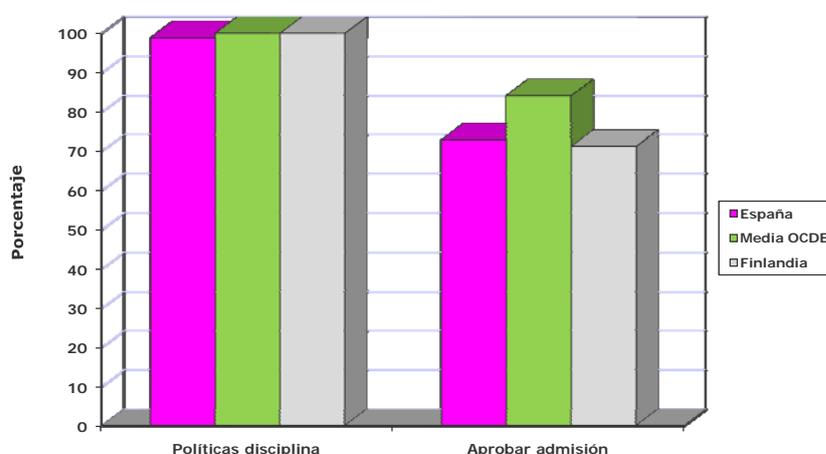
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Autonomy in managing school life

PISA 2003 was mainly focused on two essential aspects of “school life”: discipline policies and student admission policies. As shown in Figure 5, the comparison used in this paper reveals no major differences between Spain, Finland and the OECD countries' average in respect of this school autonomy area.

Figure 5 Headteachers' autonomy in managing school life

Fig. 5 – Porcentajes de alumnos en centros cuyos directores indican que las decisiones sobre los diferentes aspectos considerados se delegan en el nivel propio del centro



FUENTE: López Rupérez, F. – *El Legado de la LOGSE*. Ed. Gota a Gota, 2006

The impact of autonomy on school performance

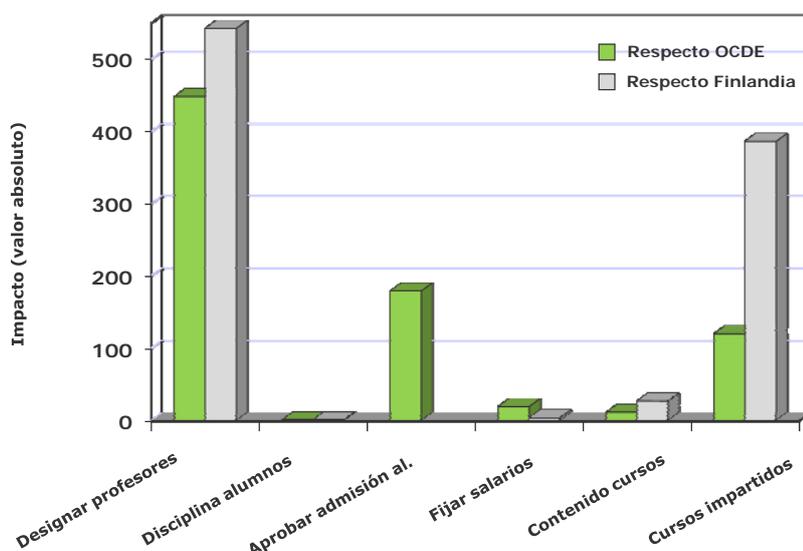
The comparative analyses explained below are part of a broader study (LOPEZ RUPEREZ, 2006) that I completed in 2004 on the basis of PISA 2003 data, with the aim of identifying such factors relating to the school environment – and their potential relations – as might contribute to explaining the poor results obtained by Spain in mathematics, with respect both to Finland and to the OECD countries' average. One of the factors considered was school autonomy.

Figure 6 shows the impact of the different autonomy factors which might partly explain Spain's lower results. I will not describe here the methodological details of that study, as they may be found in the aforesaid paper. However, it should be highlighted that the *impact* results from the combination of two parameters: the *large gap* existing between Spain – in this case, in respect of the autonomy factors considered – and

Finland and the OECD average; and the *intensity* – or relative force with respect to that presented by these two international benchmarks – of the ratio between the schools' autonomy variables and the students' results in mathematics.

Figure 6
Impact of the different autonomy factors
which might partly explain Spain's lower results

Fig. 6 – Impacto de los diferentes factores de autonomía que podrían explicar, en parte, los inferiores resultados de rendimiento del sistema educativo español (PISA 2003) respecto de las dos referencias consideradas, Media OCDE y Finlandia



FUENTE: López Rupérez, F. – *El Legado de la LOGSE*. Ed. Gota a Gota, 2006

When analysing, in relative terms, the *impacts* of the different autonomy factors considered in the study, it is observed that the impact of the school's power to designate teachers is, in relative terms, considerably strong; in other words, among the different components of school autonomy, this is the one which most contributes to explaining, to a large extent, our poor results in mathematics with respect to the OECD average and, even further behind, with respect to Finland.

An additional factor that is especially relevant in this kind of empirical analyses is the schools' power to design the educational offer. As in the previous case, we observe some consistency in Spain's behaviour with respect both benchmarks: Finland and OECD countries' average. Finally, when it comes to explaining the reasons for our poorer results, the schools' ability to approve admission of students is only observed when the benchmark used the OECD average (see figure 6).

To sum up, there are several aspects or dimensions in school autonomy that help to explain our poor results in terms of school performance with respect to OECD and to Finland. And, among these factors, the most relevant one concerns the schools' power to designate teachers.

Obstacles in developing educational leadership in Spain's education system

Even the most superficial analysis of the obstacles faced by Spain's education system in developing an efficient, extensive educational leadership at schools would have to take into account the approach outlined in the introduction.

First of all, the exercise of management leadership at schools requires a sufficient level of school autonomy. Below this threshold, even natural-born leaders would face serious difficulties in exercising efficient leadership, i.e., in enhancing processes and, eventually, improving the results.

As indicated above, the Spanish model is clearly lagging behind in terms of school autonomy. Despite the statements of principles contained in the numerous acts of Parliament on education, there has been little progress in the regulatory development of school autonomy. In addition to the ideological resistance of those who think that school autonomy represents a risk of progressing to the privatisation of public schools, some cultural resistance also exists, resulting from a long centralist tradition, which is reflected not only in the mentality of public school teachers, who have civil servant status, but also - and more particularly - in the bureaucracy of the Administration departments - such as public Administrations or the Ministry of Economy and Finance - which are most concerned by this extension of powers in the fields of civil servant staff and management of economic resources, respectively, that school autonomy entails.

In addition, the fact that there is no system of accountability for results in Spain - which is not independent from the fact that there are no rigorous external assessment procedures - has fuelled the mistrust of State officials towards any increase in school autonomy if it is not accompanied by a corresponding increase in schools' accountability for results. All this has led to the perpetuation of the type of autonomy described above under Model B, without avoiding its undesirable effects on leadership and improvement.

Secondly, the increasing complexity of the school environment has resulted in efficient leadership being more difficult to exercise in a spontaneous way (and therefore less likely to be so exercised). In the last decade, managing a school in Spain has become an increasingly difficult task, partly as a result of changes in the social context, but also because of the organisational complications resulting from the development of regulations concerning education, mainly in secondary education schools. This rings particularly true for schools where the number of immigrant students or of students from socially disadvantaged environments has grown considerably in recent years.

In these conditions, the exercise of school management leadership becomes a highly sophisticated task, as reflected in the extensive range of skills that an efficient school manager must possess. In Spain, an efficient school principal must perform, at the relevant level, management tasks – or management guidance tasks – in financial matters, in the field of human resources, in settling conflicts, in dealing with institutional relationships with the people around him/her and with education authorities, in defining and collaborating with public assistance organisations, in the field of pedagogical approaches and school organisation, etc. In these circumstances, an increased professionalism in management would be – as the very meaning of the term implies – the most obvious rational way to improve the schools' chances of success.

Thirdly, one of the particular characteristics of Spain's education system is its significant weakness in respect of the procedures for appointing school managers. Taking into account the difficulties associated with the profile required from an efficient school manager, and despite the well-known impact of management leadership on schools' results – mainly in socially disadvantaged areas - the procedures for selecting school managers in Spain fail to guarantee, in a high number of cases, the quality of the managers appointed, as it is the education community, i.e. parents, teachers and students, that virtually decides who will be, among the teachers in their school, the one that will be appointed manager, on the basis of the management project presented by each candidate.

It is hard to imagine that the manager of a major hospital or of a large company could be selected through similar procedures. Students, parents and teachers are unlikely to be capable of assessing, with the sound judgement needed, the suitability of a candidate to perform such an extensive range of skills and to grasp the complex issues lying behind the success of an efficient school manager.

It is obviously possible to resort to training as a way to develop the management skills required from the newly appointed manager. “All you have to do is elect your school principal through democratic procedures, and we will offer him/her training later”, is basically the message delivered by Spain’s current legislation. Even if there are managers who possess specific social interaction skills, great intuition, a special ability to grasp the complexity of certain issues and considerable personal initiative, and many are capable, without specific training, of leading their schools to excellence, it is a fact that leadership may be promoted through a proper approach to in-service training.

However, training is not an all-powerful tool capable of correcting the mistakes made during the selection process. If the selection process was flawed, training is not likely to turn a mediocre manager into a transformational educational leader. It is necessary to do well the first time around as often as possible. The success of education policies lies not only in their relevance, but also in how efficiently they are implemented. In other words, if a given policy is correctly implemented, for instance, only in 20% of cases, the policy will not lead to significant progress in the results of the system as a whole, given the multi-causal nature of the improvement.

It is necessary to design policies that may be implemented with a high level of efficiency. It has to be ensured – in this case, through well-targeted selection processes – that most of our school principals possess the personal skills needed to become efficient educational leaders in their respective schools.

Final recommendations by way of conclusion

To sum up, by way of conclusion, I would like to make the following three recommendations, based on the analyses above, which may help to achieve significant progress in terms of management leadership in Spain’s educational system:

1. *Evolve into increased professionalism in selecting school managers.* The professionalization of school management in Spain has been associated with authoritarianism, probably because of the negative connotations that, on account of our past, are linked to the term “authority” in Spain’s education environment. The professionalization in the selection of managers should be focused on the skills possessed by transformational leaders. But deciding that school management should be so focused does not imply that the participative approach

has to be also present in the selection process. On the contrary, given the complexity of this approach, it is even more necessary to make the right choice at the end of the selection process itself. Together with selection, training, assessment, acknowledgement and promotion are the pillars of a modern human resources policy linked to professionalization.

2. *Improve in-service training activities for school managers.* Their current training activities, in addition to being obsolete, are often focused on bureaucratic aspects that ignore the fundamentals of school improvement and the keys to efficient leadership.
3. *Progress to a C-type school autonomy model.* This model, that combines autonomy, responsibility, delegation of powers to schools and accountability for results, fosters management leadership and contributes to improving schools' performance.

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Is it possible to measure educational leadership?

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Assessment studies and direct and indirect indicators

Even if autonomy is not the only problem to deal with when analysing the issue of management and leadership, we have to admit that the autonomy of schools and management teams is condition precedent without which there is no such thing as leadership.

Knowing implies assessing. At present, international assessment studies are aimed at evaluating the extent to which management contributes to improving the education and learning processes, the schools' activity and, consequently, education results as a whole. More specifically, assessment studies such as PISA –which is OECD's current “flagship study” – have also incorporated the assessment of management into their initial project, together with its impact on education results.

PISA includes a questionnaire to be filled out by the principals of participating schools, which contains a series of questions concerning school organisation, how the school operates, its level of autonomy, etc.: the idea is to assess on a qualitative basis, through this opinion survey of school principals, all aspects pertaining to management.

OECD has launched a new study, whose international report is being presented now, called *Improving school leadership*, which is aimed at assessing the current status of this issue and, on the basis of this analysis, proposing actions for improving school leadership and its influence on education.

However, there is another study – also launched by OECD- concerning *added value*, which I think is essential in properly assessing a few major issues, including: What added value can be brought by schools to their students' training and education? What added value can schools offer to their students? To assess the results properly, all determining factors have to be taken into account: the starting point, the frameworks

and all the circumstances that surround learning. It is key to analyse what added value can be brought by schools, and, in this respect, the work of management teams and teachers is indispensable; consequently, if this study – in which Spain is taking part - is finally completed, we will be able to enhance our knowledge concerning this issue.

Spain's Act on Education (Ley Orgánica de Educación or LOE) incorporates diagnosis assessments into the general evaluation of the education system. These assessments, which we have just started to carry out in cooperation with autonomous communities, also envisage the need to study the schools' organisation and operation, their autonomy, their education processes and their managers' operation. We have been entrusted with the responsibility of starting a general assessment of management and leadership. And, however inexperienced as we are in this field, the education indicators – whether Spanish or international – that we know best consistently bring to light, in a more or less direct way, the positive effects of good management.

Diagnosis assessments in Spain will be completed by implementing two different but complementary processes:

- The first one is to be carried out, at national level and on a sampling basis, by the Assessment Institute, in cooperation with autonomous communities.
- The second one, at regional level and on a census basis, will be carried out by autonomous communities themselves.

Both processes assess the level of acquisition of basic skills among students in 4th year of primary education and 2nd year of compulsory secondary education (ESO).

In carrying out general diagnosis assessments, three types of information sources are being selected – as is always the case with international studies:

- students' notebooks, which make it possible to assess both their performance and other issues related to the education framework and environment;
- teachers' notebooks, with the aim of gathering information concerning teaching resources and other materials available to teachers, as well as the education processes they implement;
- school managers' notebooks, which are aimed – through the answers of management teams – at gathering information concerning the schools'

frameworks, resources and any other elements which have an impact on the students' performance.

I will briefly go through education indicators, including Spanish and OECD indicators as well as those which are being used by the European Union and those providing information on the achievement of the education goals set for 2010. All these indicators intend to provide thorough information concerning education frameworks, resources and processes, while representing an indirect way to assess the efficiency of our schools' operation and of their management teams. Therefore, this information has to be added to the inputs provided by research, studies and assessment works.

Conditions for good management

Taking into account different analyses based on the experience gained not only from local contexts, but from the education world as a whole, we present below the conditions for good management (and I insist on the word "management" rather than "leadership", because in Spain – just like in Italy – we still have to speak of management and managers, rather than leaders and leadership):

- Preparation and training
- Commitment and responsibility
- Decision-making: autonomy
- Accountability: assessment

To perform their tasks well, managers have to be properly prepared and trained; however, in Spain neither of these two conditions are required to perform management tasks; at best, training is acquired after taking on the job. In addition, managers have inescapable responsibility for the difficult tasks associated with management and with their commitment to the education process, which go beyond mere administrative and management tasks. Responsibility and commitment are only possible through autonomy.

Autonomy in management requires being accountable. The only way for students, families and the education world as a whole to be aware of the efficiency level of education processes and of the outcome of the work jointly carried out by teachers

and management teams is through accountability. The implementation of any improvement measures requires knowing how the school is operated and being aware of its different processes. It is therefore key to set up goals, design proper policies, assess the extent to which such goals and policies are being achieved and implement the relevant improvement measures.

The debate in Spain: the management model

In Spain, since the years of democratic transition, the main debate concerning management has been essentially focused on the type of model which should be implemented – more or less democratic, more or less participatory – rather than on other issues which can also determine good school management. In fact, there have been continuing discussions concerning the participation of the education community in electing school principals, as per the so-called “democratic model”, as opposed to other models which mainly focus on preparation and professionalism. Consequently, we have been able to experience both models’ strengths and weaknesses. The graph below intends to illustrate this issue.



The democratic model was born from the Act on the Right to Education (Ley Orgánica Reguladora del Derecho a la Educación or LODE), within the framework of Spain's transition to democracy. Under this model, good school management requires the democratic participation of the education community, which should be responsible for electing the candidates. Teachers, families and students as a whole know who the candidates to management positions are, and are therefore aware of whether or not each candidate has the skills a good leader should demonstrate. They also know which teachers are best suited for the job, on account of their specific virtues: proper preparation, a good education and the authority required to run the school. In other words, candidates are elected after their virtues and their ability to show leadership have been assessed.

Under the second model, the education community also has a certain level of participation, but in this case priority is given to guaranteeing the candidates' professionalism and previous preparation. However, there are only limited differences between both models.

The problem of decision-making and PISA 2003

In my opinion, most management problems in Spain have been the result of lack of resources, limited decision-making power and the mistrust of the administration and the education community towards the managers elected or appointed. Running a school becomes a very difficult task if its managers have no autonomy when making decisions, if their available resources are limited and if the education community, and even the administration, do not really trust them; it becomes impossible to demonstrate leadership skills or to run a school properly when the principal does not even feel accepted, not to mention supported. This has been the main problem faced by management in Spain since the 90s, and it has not been solved yet. In practice, then, managers often limit themselves to presiding, organising, channelling the resources available... and not much else.

The answers provided in the PISA 2003 survey by managers from the different countries taking part in the study allow us to infer the level of autonomy exercised both by schools and management teams. Thus, if we focus on the possibility of hiring or firing teachers, or of admitting or refusing students, as shown in the graph below, we may conclude that the level of autonomy granted to school principals in Spain is clearly

lower, on average, than that exercised by principals in other OECD countries; and that in issues concerning teachers, the level of autonomy exclusively corresponds to the answers provided by principals from private schools and from state-subsidised private schools participating in the survey.

Poder de decisión de los directores (PISA 2003)

Los directores tienen la responsabilidad sobre:
(Porcentaje de estudiantes en colegios cuyos directores informan que...)

	España % (públicos)	OCDE % media
Nombrar profesores	30 (0)	60
Despedir profesores	31 (0)	51
Determinar aumentos salariales	5 (0)	23
Políticas disciplinaria de alumnos	46 (30)	67
Evaluación alumnos	31 (18)	51
Contenido cursos	11 (1)	20
Enseñanzas ofrecidas	38 (13)	57

This graph does not exactly reflect the autonomy of managers, but that of schools as a whole. In Spain, the figures refer to the level of autonomy of school boards, the decision-making units that are responsible for most of the aspects relating to education. Then again, as is the case with managers, the decision-making power granted to school boards is much lower than that exercised, on average, by boards in other OECD countries.

La autonomía de los centros (PISA 2003)

Los centros tienen la responsabilidad sobre:

(Porcentaje de estudiantes en colegios cuyos directores informan que...)

	España %	OCDE %	Finlandia %
Nombrar profesores	36	64	70
Despedir profesores	36	56	36
Determinar aumentos salariales	7	27	6
Políticas disciplinaria de alumnos	98	94	100
Evaluación alumnos	96	85	99
Contenido cursos	65	67	92
Enseñanzas ofrecidas	57	70	100

The data above may be summarised in the following two tables:

Menor poder de decisión de los directores

	España	OCDE
Nº decisiones del Director (sobre 12)	3.5	5.8

Menor autonomía en España

Autonomía	España	OCDE
	- 0.27	0.00

El índice global de autonomía de los centros en España es claramente inferior a la media de la OCDE (un cuarto de desviación típica)
Variable tipificada cuya media de valor 0 se hace equivaler al valor medio de la OCDE

In the first table, out of the 12 possible decisions that managers are entitled to make, managers from OECD countries, on average, have enough autonomy to make six decisions, whereas in Spain they have no autonomy to make hardly any decisions at all.

The second table shows the OECD average, and reflects the level of variance placing Spain – as it may be observed – below the average. In other words, in accordance with the answers provided by managers, PISA concludes that the level of autonomy granted to Spanish schools is much lower than the OECD average.

Perspectives and proposals in the Act on Education (LOE)

If we go back to the two school management models I mentioned earlier, it should be highlighted that LOE has extended their scopes of responsibility, as the Act establishes that higher responsibility is essential, whether focus is placed on one model or the other. In other words, the idea would be to promote an intermediate model reflecting the virtues of both, so that, on the one hand, the education community may take part in the designation of managers and in the schools' management, and, on the other, it is ensured that management is as professional as possible.

Under this intermediate model, participation is guaranteed by the actual exercise of co-responsibility (autonomy), while the school administration can be assured that the candidates elected or appointed meet the preparation and professionalism standards required.

In addition to proposing broad autonomy for schools, LOE has launched an ambitious assessment programme. However, for assessments to be effective, the autonomous communities – which are responsible for the organisation and operation of schools, teachers and managers – should go more deeply both into the framework of options provided by the Act and into other possible measures which have proved to be efficient in several education systems.

Autonomy is necessary in all the tasks performed by schools. It is obvious that managers and school leaders have to be autonomous, in pedagogical, organisational and management terms, and most of all in their relationship with teachers. This latter issue is a particularly sensitive, complex one. Should managers have the ability to propose to the administration the teachers their school needs? It is obvious that they should. But should they have the power to fire them? Probably not. Should education communities

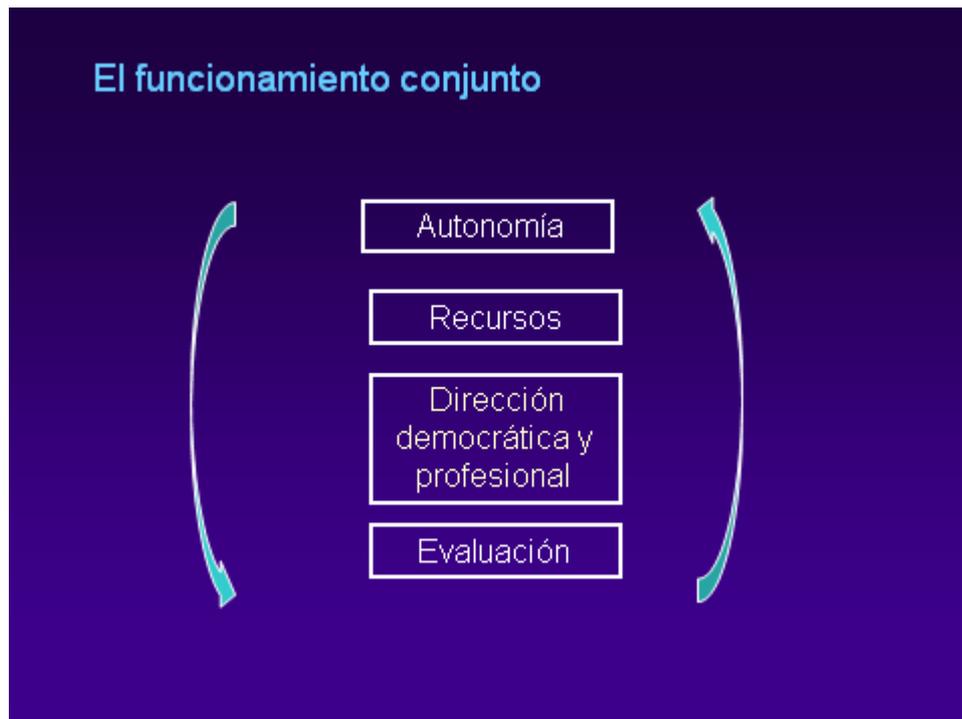
have the ability to assess which conditions are required to develop a specific project? It is obvious that they should.

If the project is approved by the administration, it is only logical that the managers should have the possibility of choosing the type of teachers that are most suited to its specific needs; accordingly, managers should also be capable of letting the administration know – if necessary – that certain teachers are not suited for the education project, and therefore of removing teachers.

I am aware that this type of proposals could cause considerable commotion and concern (which is why I am suggesting them as carefully as possible), but it is a fact that they would make it possible to better cater for the needs of autonomous managers and schools with room for improvement, while respecting at all times the teachers' rights and guarantees. Every school should be capable of deciding how to best use its resources, while providing its teachers with a sufficient guarantee that their work will be properly valued, appraised and remunerated. Ideally, a perfect balance would be achieved between these two needs: an achievable balance, however delicate it may be.

If schools were granted actual autonomy, in addition to the other factors I have mentioned above, management in Spain would probably be more efficient. And, I have to insist again, I mean *management* rather than leadership, as Spain's education culture still has a long road ahead before it achieves the type of leadership model existing in other countries.

The graph below proposes a balance between autonomy, resources, democratic and professional management, and assessment: such is the balance imposed by LOE, which – if achieved in a coordinated way – could lead to an improvement in school quality.



Education policies

Which policies should therefore be implemented to ensure adequate leadership and, consequently, to guarantee the ongoing improvement of schools?



The graph above leads to the following thought: on the one hand, we see the resources which are made available to schools and managers, and the autonomy granted to them; and, on the other hand, we see that schools' operation has to be monitored and supervised. Well, in broad terms our education system has always had limited access to resources – I do not think there is one school manager that thinks that his/her school has access to sufficient resources – and has hardly been supervised.

On the basis of the studies launched by OECD, it may be asserted that, given the current circumstances (insufficient resources, little autonomy, high demands, lack of control), it is very hard to attain high performance in schools; in most cases, schools are likely to limit themselves to repeating routines and to experience difficulty in improving their performance.

It is a fact that, if resources and autonomy are limited and demands are high, conflicts are likely to take place, and the different sectors will blame each other for them. When we demand that schools be efficient and that assessment results, such as PISA's, be satisfactory, and the opposite happens instead, conflicts are triggered and the search for the "guilty ones" commences: the administration, families, teachers... Well, there is no point in trying to find who is to blame, in demoralising each other or in sowing discord in the education community: what needs to be done is to provide sufficient resources and supervise the proper use thereof.

If resources start being provided in a sufficient number, but the demands and supervision are limited, only partial improvements will be achieved. The regions, the schools or the education centres having access to these resources will experience certain improvements, but education performance as a whole will never improve consistently.

The most efficient management teams and the schools with the highest performance levels need sufficient resources, autonomy and the commitment of society as a whole, in addition, obviously, to supervision and demand for quality in their work; consequently, the solution is likely to be found at the angle formed by sufficient resources and assessment-based supervision.

Even if the problem is not too difficult to understand, the solution is extremely complex, as funding is costly, resources are limited and it is very difficult to fully understand what school autonomy is or how management teams or schools actually operate. It would be wrong to use school performance as the only valid barometer: this performance has to be linked to its context, processes have to be analysed and all

organisational aspects have to be reviewed. This is the only way to check that, given the circumstances, the results obtained are as good as possible.

There is still a lot of work to be done in improving assessments, and a great responsibility lies with the persons in charge of carrying them out, as the risk always exists that inadequate policies are implemented on the basis of assessments that are not accurate enough.

These are the challenges faced by the education administration, which is ultimately responsible for ensuring proper management: to make progress in its own improvements, and to promote the enhancement of management teams, so that – as seen in the graph – they are capable of achieving higher school performance levels and of consistently improving schools as a whole.

Finally, I have taken the liberty of closing this qualitative analysis with these words from Lord Kevin:

When you can measure what you are speaking about and express it in numbers, you know something about it; but when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meagre and unsatisfactory kind; it may be the beginning of knowledge, but you have scarcely, in your thoughts, advanced to the stage of a science.”

Second part

***THE QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE
IN THE MEASUREMENT OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP.
THE RETURNS FOR POLICY***

Educational leadership between competition and cooperation

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Introduction

This article analyses school management and leadership in different models of governance by evaluating competitiveness and cooperation in modern educational systems not as two opposing categories of analysis, but in terms of their coexistence. Cooperation, together with autonomy and competitiveness, is a basic factor in a school's success and in increasing the level and fairness of students' learning. A considerable amount of literature on school effectiveness has shown that the level of learning of basic disciplines is mainly due to out-of-school factors relating to students' cultural environment, to their families' socioeconomic conditions and to the context in which they grow up. However, this same research has shown that, by activating management and leadership resources, schools can play a decisive role, provided they are able to cooperate with students, families and communities to focus, within a coherent educational project, the expectations and efforts of different stakeholders that contribute to school success.

This paper also presents the different patterns of change applied by education systems, all focusing on recognising school autonomy, but also on developing collaboration between schools and stakeholders. These patterns not only refer to quasi-market leadership models (as is the case in England and the Netherlands) based on a high degree of autonomy, but also to other models - like the Italian one - where schools' low autonomy goes hand in hand with a management system distributed among schools, state, regions, local entities and the civil society. Accordingly, the Italian context has been chosen for presenting the results obtained starting an empirical study carried out on the distribution of networks and associations in the light of recent legislative measures adopted to stimulate cooperation among schools, and between schools and other stakeholders.

1. Management of education systems

Analysis of the different educational management systems is subject to studying two variables: school autonomy, on one hand, and the promotion of inter-school cooperation, on the other.

Degree of autonomy can be assessed on the basis of how decision-making is distributed among institutional levels with management responsibilities. This first variable focuses on the hierarchical-vertical structure of management involving the Ministry, the local school authorities and the school. Studies by the OECD-PISA (OECD, 2004; 2007) provide empirical evidence at international level on the predominance of different environments of educational management:

- who decides on hiring and firing, on starting-levels of salaries and on pay rises for personnel;
- who is in charge of admissions, new matriculations, internal regulations and evaluating students;
- who establishes the school budget and how funds from the school balance sheet are distributed;
- who decides what courses to offer, with what content and which text books to use.

Although in certain management areas, responsibility lies mainly with the school, the fact is that, on educational matters, some decisions are taken under the direct influence of other institutional actors. Table 1.1 shows how decisions are distributed among the system's different stakeholders. In most countries, aspects like educational organisation, choice of text books, educational criteria in the classroom or student evaluation methods correspond - very often exclusively - to schools.

In other aspects of autonomy, however, the situation is quite different. In personnel management (hiring, training, career, evaluation), schools in the Netherlands, England and Sweden have considerable autonomy which, as regards hiring and firing personnel, for example, is practically absolute. In England and Sweden, on the other hand, only teachers' minimum salary is determined at central level, and whose final amount is subject to later negotiation with school directors. On financial matters,

English schools have almost total autonomy in assigning and managing resources, while in the Netherlands, Sweden and Finland, decisions in this respect are shared with local councils (Woessmann, 2006).

In the case of Italy, most decisions relating to schools (64%) are not taken at school level; and of 46% of the decisions that usually correspond to this school level, only 26% are fully autonomous, because the remaining 20% includes decisions shared between school institutions and other stakeholders - such as national and local school authorities.

Table 1.1
Percentage of decisions taken on educational matters
by different level of government

	Central	State	Provincial/ regional	Sub-regional	Local	School
OECD COUNTRIES						
Australia		76				24
Austria	27	22			23	29
Belgium (Fr.) ¹		32	25			43
Czech Republic	7		1		32	60
Denmark	19				38	44
England	11				4	85
Finland	2				71	27
France	24		10	35		31
Germany	4	30	17		17	32
Greece	80		4		3	13
Hungary	4				29	68
Iceland	25				50	25
Italy	23		16		15	46
Japan	13		21		44	23
Korea	9		34		8	48
Luxembourg	66					34
Mexico	30	45	2			22
Netherlands						100
New Zealand	25					75
Norway	32				32	37
Portugal	50		8			41
Slovak Republic	33		2		15	50
Spain		57	15			28
Sweden	18				36	47
Turkey ²	49		27			24

(OECD, 2004)

1.1. Fostering inter-school cooperation

Institutional encouragement of collaboration among schools affects the series of actions deliberately implemented by governments with the aim of fostering both cooperation between schools and cooperation between schools and other stakeholders who influence educational processes: students, families and associations made up of them, local entities, school authorities, universities, companies and non-profit entities with different social and cultural goals, which range from integrating immigrants to promoting sports activities.

Inter-school cooperation, apart from being a decisive instrument in learning activities, is something implicit in the very nature of education as an asset (Hanushek, 2005), as it is an asset co-produced from the simultaneous, interdependent contribution of teachers, students, families and other stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in the educational process.

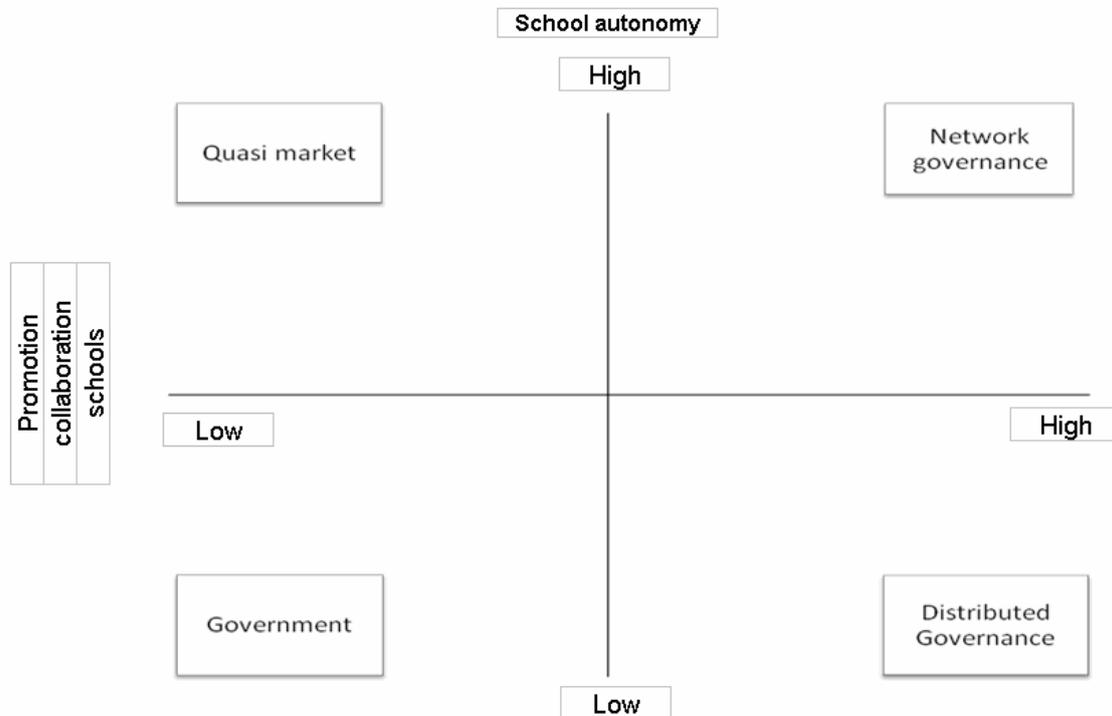
As shown by a considerable volume of literature on the school effectiveness (Teddlie, Reynolds, 2000), as well as recent studies by the OECD-PISA, the factors that best explain the basic disciplines learning level are those that refer to students' cultural environment, families' cultural and socioeconomic conditions and the reference context. Nevertheless, by activating management and leadership resources, schools are involved both in the autonomous decisions taken by students and their families on educational matter, and in their reference context: in fact, schools that make an effort to take care of their students education endeavour to foster the participation of resources from the territory in educational processes; resources that are autonomous, but interdependent on school activities¹. As a consequence, the school's collaboration becomes - together with autonomy - a decisive element in achieving institutional goals.

As mentioned above, in OECD countries and as regards autonomy, there exists considerable diversity and significant differences in relation to the means by which collaboration is encouraged; accordingly, we can outline the four main management models in educational systems (figure 1.1):

¹ In national systems - such as the Italian one - where no hierarchical power exists in schools (school board and school head) over staff, this means promoting relationships of cooperation with teachers.

Figura 1.1

Management models in education



This model can be applied to comparative analysis among different States, analysed at the same time (synchronic or spatial analysis) and to longitudinal studies (diachronic or temporal analysis) to outline the evolutionary dynamics of management in one educational system in particular. From this two-fold perspective, the basis is represented by the model of government (or governance) characterised by low autonomy and low inter-school cooperation. In fact, in many countries, it is a management model with solid historical roots, which reforms in the 80s and 90s had to address, characterised by the new public management. This model's features are well-known: schools that are an integral part of a Ministry, without legal, organisational or financial autonomy, essentially uniform and with hetero-defined objectives (Paletta, Vidoni, 2006).

1.2. Quasi-markets in education

In the framework of management models, high school autonomy associated with a low relevance of institutional mechanisms for fostering cooperation determines "quasi-market" structures.

The quasi-market concept is based on the principle that the economic organisation of supply and demand for a service is controlled through price substitutes (such as financing and evaluating the offer based on results, or coupons and subsidies intended for the demand) whose purpose is to make schools compete when obtaining resources: students and qualified personnel, financial resources from public entities, donors and companies, etc. (Le Grand, 1991; Glennerster, 1991).

Resource-based competitiveness is the factor that characterises quasi-markets, because the net resources available to stakeholders in defining the service offer and being economically efficient is redefined according to the results of such competitiveness (Hanushek, Rivkin, 2003). Accordingly, demand is free to move among alternative offers, comparing schools and educational projects, which tend to be sufficiently differentiated to permit resources to be allocated more effectively. In fact, each school shows a high level of control over all the resources it needs to compete and uses its "strong points" to beat the competition (Bradley et al., 2000). This confrontation can even end up being resolved in a "zero sum game" in which the supremacy of one or more participants leads to a loss of resources by other participants in the competition.

A quasi-market system can accentuate the differences between schools, sending more and more resources to those with greater quality and distancing them from their competitors, trapped in a spiral of low yield, low demand and scarce resources (Bradley, Taylor, 2002). If students and their families lack quality information on the diversity of offers, or if their choices are not linked to factors closely tied to considerations of service quality (for example, the high cost of transport to schools further away, or the existence of access conditions), then the freedom of choice is only potential. Therefore, the weaker demand for economic, social and cultural reasons will continue without taking advantage of the educational system's opportunities, increasing injustice and social segregation of students from less wealthy or less caring families (Bottani, 2002). These are genuine market "failures" that reinforce the need for regulatory intervention by the State to correct distortions in the interests of fairness and social justice (Tanaka, 2004; Bradley, Taylor, 2007).

The quasi-market concept applies an organisational structure of educational service supply and demand in which competitiveness does not exclude cooperation between schools and between schools and other institutional stakeholders.

Quasi-markets allow room for agreements, strategic associations and "networks" of varying characteristics (Bastia, 1988). In short, the educational system frequently involves:

- collaboration between schools of similar types operating in the same area of influence and, therefore, in direct competition;
- collaboration between schools belonging to different orders and levels, aimed mainly at encouraging students' orientation and the continuity of educational processes;
- collaboration between schools and other public and private stakeholders, non-profit or otherwise. In this case, a series of stakeholders creates, for different reasons, structures and cooperation processes by virtue of which each stakeholder remains autonomous, but shares resources and implements the necessary complementary activities to carry out a mission shared with other partners.

In a quasi-market structure, by setting up agreements and participation in networks, each school, by virtue of its own autonomy, is not in a position hierarchically subordinate to other partners. It enjoys a level of autonomy that is not just legal, but also in terms of economic government with regard to "what to do, and why and how to do it" (Coda, 1988).

The most characteristic feature of networks and associations in quasi-markets is that schools and other partners choose to cooperate - in all or in some sectors of activity - when they see the possibility of obtaining mutual advantages in a cooperative game different from the zero-sum game. In fact, they decide - partially and in some aspects - to give up their own autonomy, sharing resources and activities on the basis of trust, mutual knowledge and convenience (O'Toole, 1997; Provan, Milward, 2001).

Conversely, if relationships between schools were based exclusively on competitiveness, relationships between those offering the service would be depersonalised. There would probably be mutual knowledge in order to better define each user's proposal of value and thus differentiate themselves from competitors, but

this knowledge would be only an instrument in improving their own competitive position.

1.3. Network governance

The network governance model is when the school's autonomy is associated with a system which also systematically - fosters inter-school cooperation. In this case, such cooperation is not only the result of autonomous choice, but also of the conditions of the institutional context that encourages it.

A recent comparative study by the OECD (2007) on how to improve school leadership provides us with a series of case studies as a basis for this management model. The studies carried out by a number of nations show the existence of different approaches, in addition to countries that have deliberately re-designed their own system through new national or regional educational policies. The main goals of fostering inter-school cooperation are to share and rationalise resources, to improve the coherence of the educational offer and to increase students' and teachers' learning opportunities.

The instruments chosen to foster cooperation among schools not only differ from one country to another, but also within each country, and they range from loose cooperation - often informal - to official plans designed to create management structures to coordinate between different schools which continue to be autonomous (table 1.2).

The English case shows an attempt to move from a quasi-market model, based on strong school autonomy, towards a network leadership model which seeks to combine competitiveness and cooperation.

A recent report drawn up by PricewaterhouseCooper (2007) for the DfES (Department for Education and Skills) states that school leaders are aware of the transformation their role is undergoing, and that the complexity and scope of their tasks have grown significantly over years. This is due to a series of initiatives that affect the role of school heads - including Every Child Matters and 14-19 Agenda - whose implementation requires new competencies and, especially, greater collaboration between schools and those responsible for setting up cross-disciplinary associations with the child services sector², and with schools, universities, companies, occupational

² The aim of the government consists of creating an interconnected system of health, educational services and family support whose main objective is children. In accordance with the initiatives described in Every Child Matters, organisations offering child-related services (schools, hospitals, local entities, police, etc.) must work in collaboration and share information, so that all children - and especially the most vulnerable

training entities, in response to the "14-19 Agenda" initiative.

Table 1.2
School collaboration in different countries

Belgium	School communities have been created as voluntary collaborative partnerships between schools. They aim to have common staffing, ICT and welfare resources management.
Denmark	In Denmark cooperation in post-compulsory education has been promoted by way of the creation of administrative groups that can be set up locally or regionally between self governing institutions to optimize their joint resources.
Finland	2003 legislative reform has enhanced school cooperation aiming to ensure integrity of students' study paths.
France	School basins have been implemented to ensure collaborative partnerships between schools to work together in student orientation, educational coherence between different types of schools, common management of shared material and human resources.
Hungary	Micro-regional partnerships based on economic and professional rationalization were created in 2004 and have resulted in the spreading of common school maintenance in almost all Hungarian micro regions. These network-type cooperation are the scenes of professional and organizational learning in the way that can function as new forms of education governance and efficient frames of innovation.
Korea	Small schools cooperate to overcome problems of size in teacher exchange, curriculum organizing, joint development activities, and integrated use of facilities.
Netherlands	In primary education, upper management takes management function responsibility for several schools. About 80% of the primary schools boards have an upper school management bureau for central management, policy staff and support staff.
New Zealand	School clusters based around geographical communities and communities of interest have been facilitated.
Norway	Tendency to merge several schools to form an administrative unit governed by a school principal. Three level municipalities require that networks between schools are created.
Portugal	The common patterns of school governance are that schools are grouped together with a collective management structure —executive, pedagogical and administrative councils are responsible for their areas.
Scotland	Important political promotion of collaboration. "Heads together" is a nationwide online community for sharing leadership experience.
Sweden	Municipal director of education steer principals. Most of them are members of director of education steering group where strategy, development and results are discussed.
UK (England)	There are different approaches to cooperation stimulated by the government – federations of schools, national leaders of education, school improvement partners...

Source: OCDE (2007)

- obtain the aid necessary to grow healthy and safe, to play and learn, and to make a positive contribution to achieving economic well-being.

Promoting forms of system leadership lies within this new institutional strategy of cooperation. In *Every School a Great School*, Hopkins (2007) introduces the concept of system leadership by defining it as “a form of leadership where a headteacher or principal is willing and able to shoulder wider system roles and in so doing is almost as concerned with the success and attainment of students in other schools as he/she with his/her own”.

The guiding principle of system leadership was endorsed in the *White Paper Higher Standards, Better Schools for All* (DfES, 2005), set out the Government’s intention to:

- develop better career path for: school leaders who have the talent and experience to be considered as national leaders of educations; those with the ability to run our most challenging schools; and those with the talent to be school leader of the future;
- ask the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), working in partnership with the National Strategies, to develop the leaders of our most complex schools, those facing multiple disadvantage, and federations;
- encourage the growth of federations and other partnership arrangements which ensure our most successful school leaders are used to best effect and are able to support our less successful schools.

Federated models are characterized by varying degrees of collaboration between schools and sometimes between schools and other providers. According to PricewaterhouseCooper Report (2007), almost one in ten headteachers reported some sort of formal federation arrangement. The majority of schools reported informal collaborations with other schools, however a relatively large minority of primary schools reported no collaboration. Formal federations can be organized in a large number of ways: create supra- or meta-strategic governing bodies; establish executive head or chief executive posts to oversee several schools; share middle leaders and consultant teachers; or federate with colleges of further education or work-based learning providers in response to the 14-19 agenda. The main potential benefits of the federated model are greater capacity and more sustainable and distributed leadership; economies of scale achieved through sharing teaching staff or senior support staff such as bursars across schools; smoother transitions for children and young people between all phases; improved career opportunities for all members of the school workforce; and

increased community cohesion. We should note that the main barriers to inter-school collaboration include the current competitive environment in which schools operate and the need to ensure agreement regarding the sharing of resources and ‘pooling’ of governance arrangements.

In Flanders, in an education system based on school choice and competition among schools, communities of schools cover more than 95% of schools, with an average of 6 to 12 schools belonging to a community (Day, Moller, Pont, 2007). The government’s aspirations were that this new system would enable the enhancement of student guidance systems, particularly in relation to their educational career trajectories; the lessening of the managerial-administrative burden on principals in order that they might become pedagogical leaders; the increased use of ICT; and the rationalization of resourcing both in relation to staff recruitment, functioning and evaluation and in relation to cooperation in curriculum. The government incentivized their creation with additional resources. The immediate effects of the innovation were to establish internal markets which regulated competition for students between schools and increased opportunities for collective action to be taken.

In a decentralised environment, Finnish municipalities are developing different approaches to school leadership distribution and cooperation to respond to pressures brought about by declining school enrolments and resources (Hargreaves et al, 2007).

Their reforms are geared to improve schooling for local children in a new environment by ensuring that principals are responsible for their own schools but also for their districts, and that there is shared management and supervision as well as evaluation and development of education planning. These reforms are seen as a way to align schools and municipalities to think systemically with the key objective of promoting a common schooling vision and a united school system.

Overall, there are reflected benefits from cooperation, as analyzed in the Finnish systemic approach (Hargreaves et al, 2007):

- rationalization of resources may be a benefit, as resources – teachers, buildings, and classrooms - may be shared in increasingly budgetary pressures;
- the integration of services to accommodate more diverse populations and to cater to the welfare of children;
- improving problem-solving through intensified processes of interaction, communication and collective learning;
- through cooperation, enhancing a shared culture of trust, cooperation and

responsibility in the pursuit of increased effectiveness;

- developing leadership capacity and attending to succession and stability by increasing the density of and opportunities for local leadership in the school and municipality.

1.4. Distributed governance

There exists another form of governance in educational systems that differs from quasi-market and network leadership, where cooperation between schools and between schools and other stakeholders is not the result of autonomous considerations of convenience, or - in other words - of collective strategies aimed at reinforcing school autonomy. In this case, and due to low autonomy and to a polycentric administrative system, cooperation becomes a necessary and the school's dependence on other stakeholders is institutionalised by subdividing administrative competences among schools, State, regions and local entities.

Partiality in autonomy gives rise to a systematic lack of control over the points on which schools should base their own institutional mission. Suffice to consider contexts - such as the Italian one - where the State and other regional and local school authorities control part of the curriculum and, to a greater extent, financial and personnel policies, leaving the school to control educational matters. Under these conditions, the school must try to influence areas of shared management, such as the allocation and use of personnel, the adaptation of infrastructures (space, equipment, etc.) and the possibility of using allocated funds for other purposes more appropriate to its real needs.

When low autonomy is associated with small and medium-sized school networks, coordination problems and lack of resources become structural. In distributed leadership model, these circumstances should lead schools to form associative networks that make processes of coordination with school authorities more effective and increase negotiating power, accessing a level of resources that would otherwise be out of reach. Nevertheless, we may also be faced with the paradox that schools may join the networks to compensate for a lack of resources, and not through strategic choice. A school, for example, may decide to participate in a network to attract financial resources that school authorities make available for a certain type of personnel training, even though that type

of training does not respond to their real needs.

In fact, low autonomy and small school size simply expose such schools to external interference because other stakeholders have resources that are decisive to achieving their institutional goals.

All this represents a fundamental difference with regard to a network management system in which relationships of interdependence among schools, and between schools and other stakeholders - especially territorial entities - are implemented through voluntary relationships and based on trust established under conditions of equality (Agranoff, McGuire, 2003).

1.5. Polycentrism in decision-making and leadership distribution in Italy

In Italy, the amendment to Heading V of the Constitution, approved in 2001, has significantly changed relationships between different institutional levels. The new constitutional structure individualises the multiple centres of educational policymaking in a complex inter-institutional network made up of State, regions, local entities and the civil society, respecting the competences of autonomous schools (Poggi, 2001).

Summarising as much as possible, the direction in which Italy has moved is characterised by the following institutional pillars:

- Strengthening the role of the State as a centre of national competence that defines the general standards for education, establishes the contents and national guidelines of curricula, unitary standards and basic levels of services, governing a national evaluation system, programming the territorial need for teachers in the medium to long term and, consequently, determining financial resources
- A new competence among regions which, apart from exclusive legislative powers as regards occupational education and training, and shared as regards education, programme the regional school network according to the availability of human resources and financiers defined by the State.

The new article 117 grants the regions considerable competence as regards education but, by virtue of the principles of vertical and horizontal subsidiarity (art. 118), the assignation of powers to the regions does not seek to add or to substitute a "state monopoly" with a new "regional monopolist" model.

In short, the new institutional structures dilute regional management, bringing it as close as possible to schools through the new role attributed to provinces and municipalities. Local entities become educational policymakers according to a polycentric decision-making model that grants the State only general orientation and evaluation tasks, intended to provide the system with unity. The rest of the competences are defined at territorial level in the interaction between school, region, province, local council and civil society.

Local entities in particular assume a fundamental role in supporting school autonomy, which is explained through the decisions taken as regards aggregating, merging, setting up schools, defining plans for organising the territorial network for the offer in training, school buildings and plans for using them, providing equipment, supporting the right to education and integrating the own resources and financial resources allocated to schools.

According to the new institutional architecture, cooperation between schools, local councils, provinces and regions is considered the most important institutional factor when determining the effectiveness of schools and of territorial educational systems (Benadusi, Consoli, 2004). However, and if we bear in mind the low autonomy of Italian schools, local entities and the peripheral State organisation are able to exert considerable influence on the operation of schools, penetrating directly or indirectly in the field of educational autonomy and guiding it in different ways. Some local councils and provinces, for example, draw up a "plan for territorial training offer" which, against the negotiating weakness of schools in the territory, devotes resources to projects and educational activities defined by the local entity without even previously consulting the schools and without involving them in their decision.

The formal distribution of functions and tasks between the schools and the rest of institutional stakeholders is not by itself enough to generate territorial networks based on relationships of cooperation. It is plausible to think that the legislative provisions are not by themselves enough and that, in the absence of other mechanisms of shared management, the fragmentation of tasks prevails over the operative integration of competences (Paletta, 2007).

On this hypothesis, the following chapters address two questions:

- The meaning and role of the networks and associations, with special attention to the education sector

- An empiric analysis of the trend in Italian schools to participate in creating networks and associations or of those instruments which, in the distributed management model, represent a necessary counterbalance to compensate the low autonomy and lack of direct control over resources.

2. Organisational forms in shared management

Studies carried out in the area of the new institutional economy have shown, both in the private and public sector, the growing function of alliances, associations and other forms of collaboration as mechanisms of government alternative to the economic activities of both bureaucracy and the market (Williamson, 1975; 1986).

Collaboration between organisations represents a hybrid form that differs not only from bureaucracy, based on hierarchical relationships of authority, but from a market based on spontaneous, depersonalised relationships between possible economic stakeholders thanks to the exchange of information implicit in prices.

There exist different classifications in hybrid forms of government of certain economic activities that can assume different structures. In the Green Paper on this matter, the European Commission (2004), in the area of associations, distinguishes between:

- associations of a purely contractual type, based exclusively on conventional bonds
- associations of an institutional type that involve cooperation between two or more legal persons within a different legal entity controlled jointly by the partners, and which can take shape as a consortium, a foundation or a partnership.

In addition to these two forms, weaker forms of cooperation exist, frequently informal in nature and without written agreement. The "network organisation concept", broader than the concept of association, includes other, less institutionalised situations.

Boerzel (1998) defines a network as "a set of relatively stable relationships which are of non-hierarchical and interdependent nature linking a variety of actors, who share common interests with regard to a policy and who exchange resources to pursue these shared interests, acknowledging that co-operation is the best way to achieve

common goals."

In the specific case of the educational sector, Chapman (2003) states that networks are important constituents of the "meso" level, lying between the macro level of government policy-making, on the one hand, and the micro level of individual schools, on the other. This intermediate level of action and decision-making, through creating linkages and connections, becomes especially important as schools acquire considerable autonomy. They risk to be isolated and unconnected while the centralised authorities have fewer direct planning powers. Without close attention to the mediation between the macro and micro, educational provision could disintegrate into an assembly of disaggregated actions and units.

This view of the role of networks in education is backed by Hopkins (2003), who says that in the past, most school systems have operated almost exclusively through individual units and such isolation may have been appropriate during times of stability. But now in a context of change, there is need to "tighten the loose coupling" in order to increase collaboration and establish more fluid and responsive structures.

In the field of education, networks play a decisive role in supporting innovation and change. In fact, they represent the "meso" level of support for innovation in professional and organisational practices in schools, acting as an evolutionary stage with respect to the "meso" level of support traditionally provided by other structures like the local school authorities, school districts, local universities and other agents.

School networks can come in different forms. Above all, they can be based on temporary bonds - as is the case of networks set up around a specific project - or they can be more stable in nature and work within a wide spectrum and with an indefinite time horizon (Paletta, 2007).

School networks can be institutionalised, or be set informally upon more or less transparent and socially acceptable alliances.

On the other hand, the networks in which schools participate can operate at different levels and with different goals (Hopkins, 2003) :

- at a basic level, the network can be formed to share good professional practices among teachers;
- at a more ambitious level of cooperation, the network can involve groups of schools and teachers who work together with the explicit goal of improving the conditions of teaching and school organisation, and not only for sharing already-

existing good practices;

- apart from the goals of knowledge transfer and producing new knowledge, a network can bring together several parties involved in implementing specific policies in a territorial area, as is the case of preventing school dispersion or integrating foreign students;
- the network's scope increases even more when several groups of networks - inside and outside the education sector - work together with a view to improving the systems in terms of social fairness, inclusion, etc.

Putting "network management" into practice can generate major benefits (Castells, 1996; Goldsmith, Eggers, 2004; Meier, 2004). In short, in the educational sector:

- it centres the focus of attention on students seen individually as the last cell in a chain of many independent services aimed at bringing about learning (support for families, recreational services, aid and subsidies, transport, canteens, pre- and post-school, classrooms, laboratories, etc.)
- it opens the perspective of "organisational silos" and combines important competences, but frequently broken down into fragments, among legally autonomous stakeholders
- it contributes to building "social capital" among those taking part in the network as a result of interactions and the creation of trust-based relationships
- it allows negotiating power to be scaled and increased by attracting appropriate financial, human and material resources
- it shares the resources and reduces costs by absorbing overheads in preparing supply capacity.

Nevertheless, the literature regarding networks and the practice of setting up networks suggests that, along with its benefits, it may have major disadvantages, which are usually associated with the organisational fragility of school networks (Sliwka, 2003).

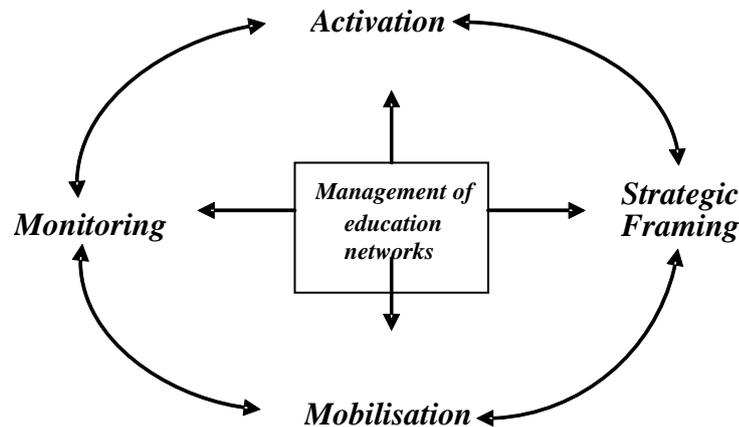
If taking part in networks can be stimulating, at the same time it can also generate frustration and have negative effects not only on each school, but on the local system itself. These are some of the causes mentioned in the literature (Provan et al., 2005):

- little agreement on the goals of the network by the parties involved in it, mainly in the initial stages of the network's life-cycle;
- coordination difficulties ("who does what?") leading to overlapping actions or, what is worse - some activities and services are left void through weakness of information and communication processes;
- the enormous energy required in building the network, its strategic orientation and operative coordination, without adequate returns in terms of image and social recognition (even before economic and financial) to the partners and public opinion;
- transparency of organizational action and the allocation of responsibilities ("Who has the responsibility for results?) according to the intervention of partners who are autonomous, but interdependent in the way they operate;
- individualistic deviations when each partner seeks their own individual interest .

Networks cannot be considered a panacea capable of automatically solving the problems of quality and efficiency in education systems. They are forms of organisation that require leaders able to implement a management aware of interdependences. The presence of interdependent but autonomous partners in a network means that the coordination and control instruments used by the organizational hierarchies are not applicable. Network management of education services must reconsider the traditional categories of analysis, built on the supposition that there exists a chain of command and control that binds the organisation in achieving a set of institutional goals.

While the literature has dealt with administration functions in the field of networks, it has mainly focused on companies; theoretical analysis relative to educational networks is not very well developed though. With the aim of summarising some contributions in this respect (Agranoff, McGuire, 2003; Goldsmith and William, 2004; Provan and others, 2005), figure 1.2 shows the circle of "network management" in its four main functions:

Figure 1.2
Educational network management



- The network's *activation* represents the first stage of the cycle: it specifies the mission and the participants and identifies other parties involved in the network. This function is crucial to defining the social architecture of the most effective network, or to choosing the appropriate partners according to cultural values, resources and competences that can be activated to give a view of the network's development .
- The activity called *strategic framing* is based on defining the cognitive map of the network according to which administrators and educational leaders try to reach a shared vision of their strategic objectives and of the inter-relations between them, and the most effective distribution of these objectives among the different partners according to their competences. With this activity, and due to the lack of hierarchical power, the stakeholder promoting the network tries to lay out, together with his partners, a strategic route to give organisational sense to the reasons behind setting up the network.
- The third function consists of *mobilising* resources and of coordinating network participants' efforts in a way that is coherent with the strategic map. Participation and involvement cannot be simply random, but rather require careful planning of management mechanisms to mobilise partners. The crucial element in this stage is the choice of institutional structures - understood to mean the set of rules and

regulations - that define the legal and organisational scope in which partners are coordinated in achieving their objectives and the network's institutional goals. Defining the institutional structures involves choosing from a wide range of options that include stable, "institutionalised" structures - such as the creation of autonomous legal entities (consortiums, partnerships, etc.) - to much more flowing, more flexible systems of collaboration, such as theme-based platforms, territorial boards, forums, structural urban development plans, laboratories and other many forms of participation and cooperation (Provan et al., 2005).

- The *monitoring* function conceptually closes the circuit of educational network management. One of the weak points in networks' effectiveness is the lack of information that partners are able to share regarding the results that the network is generating in accordance with resources used (often divided among the balances of different legal entities) and the activities, projects and other initiatives promoted by partners. The true challenge of working in a network is measuring the value it generates, and not just the value produced in an isolated way by partners. A network's effectiveness must be demonstrated according to the results it is able to bring about, and this is more decisive the more difficult it is to define the results. In the education sector, in fact, we have complex results in human capital (students, teachers and other personnel) and in social capital (of the school, of the territories and of the group as a whole) which require time for evaluation and, especially, unconventional measuring methodologies (Paletta, 2007).

3. The role of networks and association in the Italian education system

Existing literature on the trend towards collaboration in Italian schools does not yet provide consolidated methodologies or sufficiently detailed data to reach exhaustive conclusions on the conditions of networks' and associations' effectiveness.

Below, we present the results of a first exploratory study for a general analysis of the phenomenon according to two legislative interventions - the Decree of the President of the Republic No. 275/99 on the autonomy of school institutions and Decree-Act No. 7/07, whose article 13 lays own "urgent provisions on matters of technical-occupational education and fostering school autonomy" - which have greatly encouraged collaboration between schools.

Art. 7 of Decree No. 275/99 provides that "school institutions can promote network agreements or adhere to networks to achieve their institutional goals."

The regulation does not provide a formal definition of "network agreement", but rather merely indicates its purpose, by way of example, which can be summed up as³:

- Educational activities or research, experimentation and development
- Training and recycling personnel
- Administration and accounting
- Acquisition of goods and services
- Organisation and other activities coherent with institutional goals

While network agreements are exclusively set up among schools, the schools connected to networks can specify agreements with other partners such as "state or private universities, institutions, entities, associations or agencies that operate in the territory and who wish to contribute to achieving specific objectives."

Even beyond the hypothesis provided by the network agreement, school institutions can promote and take part in agreements and conventions to coordinate activities of common interest that involve more schools, entities, volunteer and private associations in certain projects. Finally, they can set up or adhere to public and private consortiums to carry out institutional functions coherent with the training offer plan and acquire services and goods that enable the training tasks to be implemented.

In accordance with art. 7 of the Decree mentioned above, forms of collaboration among schools basically coincide with the theoretical categories presented in the previous paragraph. In fact, they are three the main instruments of shared management:

- Network agreements
- Agreements and conventions
- Consortiums, foundations and societies.

³ The listing included as an example takes on legal importance because, when the agreement includes the activities mentioned in the first two sections, it is not only approved by the board of the institute, but also by the board of teachers in each school interested.

3.1. Network agreements

According to studies carried out by the Invalsi⁴, schools show a significant level of participation in network agreements. Between 2004 and 2006, schools that do not participate in networks have dropped from 26.3% to 19%. The situation, however, shows some differences.

In 2006, and in relation to the first cycle - that is, kindergarten, primary school and first-level secondary school (table 1.3 a, see annex) - around 85% of state schools said they participated in at least one network of schools. Participation is also very high in non-state kindergartens; on the other hand, 43.4% of the other non-state schools said they did not participate in any network of schools.

In the second cycle of education (second-level secondary schools) - table 1.3b - non-state schools who said they did not participate in networks was 34%, compared to 11% of state schools. In this case, the frame of reference does not refer to all schools in the second cycle (5,287), but only to institutions that voluntarily participated in the study (1,123 institutes).

It is interesting to note that state schools - 14% in the first cycle and 25% in the second - showed a strong tendency to work simultaneously in several networks⁵ and a strong implication in terms of effort and organisational coordination capacity.

Although the available data does not allow deep analysis of the implications for management of these special structures of "multiple networks", there are evident risks for school institutions that conceive the network superficially as "wanting to be there" and, only drawn by the perspective of receiving funding from the state administration, they reduce their participation to what we could call a "dummy" behaviour.

Regarding cases of low participation, the regions whose percentages are below average are all in the south, with peaks higher than two thirds on the islands and Campania. Among the other regions, Umbria and Liguria stand out. However, very high participation is registered among schools in Veneto and Emilia Romagna, regions traditionally backed by strong social capital (Putnam, 1994).

⁴ National Institute for Evaluation of the Education System, whose institutional tasks include assessing the operation of schools.

⁵ There are schools who said they were adhered to at least five different networks.

A significant aspect of the networks is the degree of distribution of network leadership positions, measured through the number of schools with "pole school" functions designated by the school administration, or else of "head school of a local network". In the year 2006, in the first cycle of education, more than 41% of state schools said they played a coordination role.

Communication and coordination within networks use a wide range of instruments: from impersonal - fax, ordinary mail and new technologies such as e-mail and web pages - to other instruments and mechanisms (telephone or, mainly, meetings) which bring about greater personal involvement of participants.

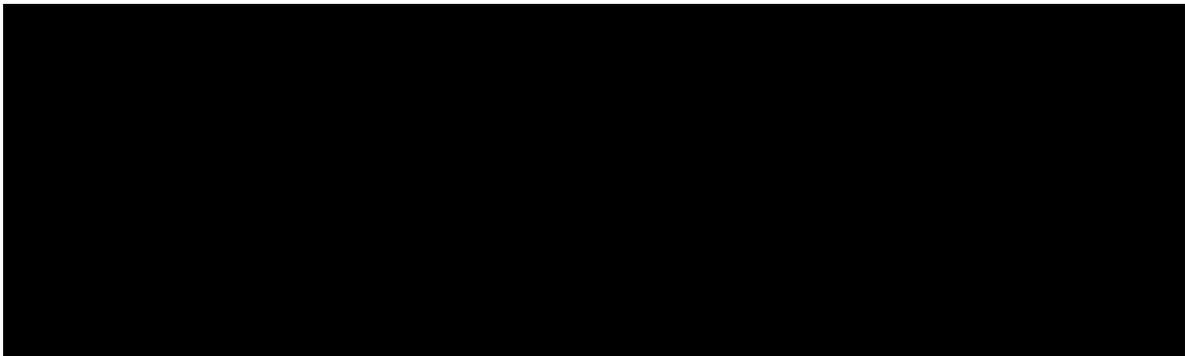
From the study, we get a clear differentiation in methods of coordination in non-state kindergartens, which prefer traditional but emotionally involving instruments, such as meetings (88.3% of schools) and the telephone (79.3%). On the other hand, a quarter of state schools that participated in networks do not include meetings among their methods of coordination.

Table 1.4 shows the activities implemented through networks of schools. All the schools coincide in the main reason: training and recycling for personnel. The educational-pedagogic core represents the primordial goal in state and non-state schools, but referring mainly to routine activities; and there are fewer networks of schools set up to carry out research and experimentation activities, or to jointly address specific issues such as orientation or integration for handicapped and foreign students. Comparatively, non-state schools show some activity when jointly addressing more strictly organisational issues like monitoring, evaluation and self-assessment; but there still exists little sensitivity to other issues - like managing common services - which also require major potential for improvement to reduce the costs and the effectiveness of administrative and support services.

Networks of schools can play the role of instruments of coordination between legal persons that are autonomous, but relatively homogeneous (training networks); or involve heterogeneous partners such as universities or training entities, local health units, local entities, non-profit entities and companies (inter-institutional networks).

On the other hand, the creation of networks, far from being static, is in constant evolution. Some of the data obtained from schools in Emilia Romagna gives some insight into these trends (Gianferrari, 2007):

Figure 1.3
Number of networks in Emilia Romagna

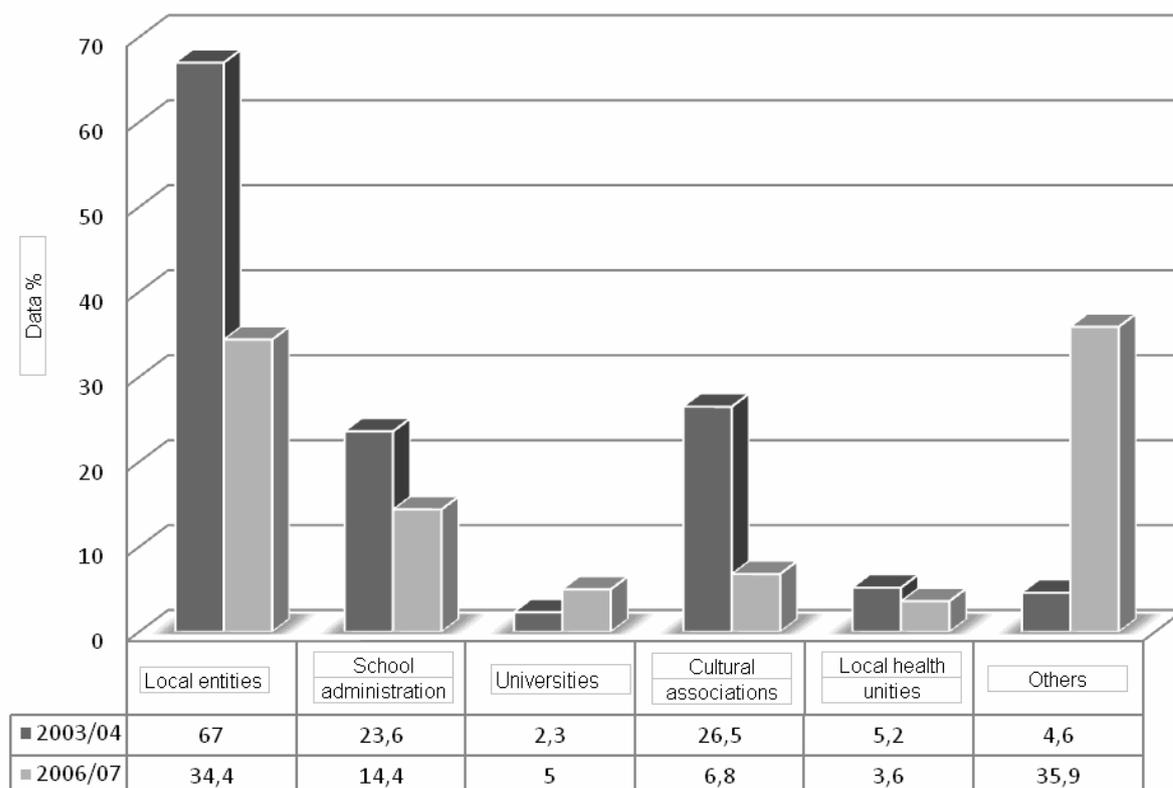


The figure above shows a rapid growth in the number of networks in the Emilia Romagna region, which in 2006-07 reached 502 and involved 402 institutes in the region, that is, 71.6% of all school institutions.

And the not only number of networks and school institutions in networks increased, but also the social architecture of networks varied substantially. Comparing measurements from the periods 2003-04 and 2006-07, networks have undergone a process of transformation from networks of schools to "inter-institutional networks" (figure 1.4). In 2003-04, 48% of schools only had other schools as partners, while in 2006-2007 the percentage had fallen to 13%.

Furthermore, in that same period, there was a drop in the number of traditional partners with which schools initially began establishing more or less structured collaboration relationships. In short, there was a significant fall in the type of networks with "local entities" and "school administration", giving way to greater openness to the resources and competences available in the territory.

Figure 1.4
Changes in the social architecture of networks



3.2. Agreements and conventions

Formal agreements and conventions represent one of the most commonly used methods of collaboration among schools, which used them to establish relationships both between one another and with the different categories of involved parties.

In Italy, there is a marked trend among schools to establish agreements and conventions (table 1.5a-b of the annex).

In the area of first-cycle state schools, only few schools (196 in the whole national territory) say they have not established agreements or conventions. The percentage rises to more than 15% in the case of non-state schools.

Stakeholders with whom the school collaborates include all types. State schools appear especially active in terms of formal collaboration with universities and public

entities. Non-state schools, on the other hand, are usually less open, often due to the existence of religious communities that set up networks with each other by virtue of their adhesion to a common educational project.

These conclusions are confirmed thanks to the data available on the second cycle, where fewer differences are registered between state and non-state schools as regards each category of involved party, due to the existence of more private schools decoupled from religious communities. In the second cycle, non-state schools show greater activity when establishing formal agreements particularly with private institutions and companies (44.6%), universities (40.6%) and public entities (37.7%).

3.3. Institutionalised forms of association

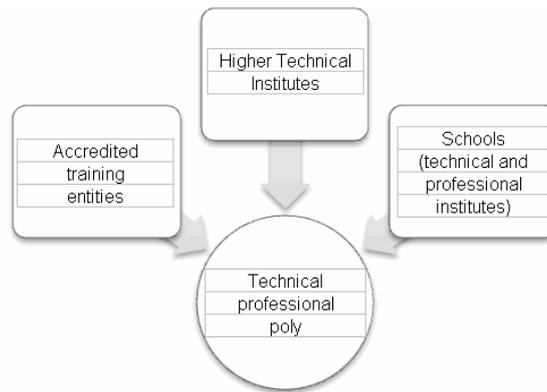
As mentioned above, recent changes to Italian law included reorganising the system of Higher Technical Education and Training (IFTTS) provided in the Budget Act 2007 and in the Decree-Act No. 7/07.

This system has been reorganised by virtue of promoting higher occupational training in order to foster the technical-scientific sector of the education system. This initiative is included in the process of redefining the second cycle⁶ and provides that the current IFTTS curricula be reorganised in stable centres known as "Higher Technical Institutes".

Furthermore, without prejudice to school institutions' autonomy and respecting the competences of regions and local entities as regards programming the training offer, the possibility is provided to create "Professional Polytechnical Schools" to stably and organically promote the diffusion of scientific and technical culture and the measures for the country's economic and productive development.

The polytechnical schools, with their own administration bodies, have had the collaboration of several partners: technical institutes and professional institutes that form part of the national education system, the new "higher technical institutes" and the entities accredited for occupational education and training, included among those that allow compliance with obligatory education:

⁶ Legislative Decree of 17 October 2005, n., 226.



The legal nature of the polys is that of a consortium set up on a specific agreement between stakeholders who, on their own initiative, decide to participate in it. The operating environment depends on regional programming of the training offer, which can be on a provincial or sub-provincial basis.

Polys' social structure, and especially the level of participation and involvement of interested local parties (local entities, companies, social partners, universities and research centres, associations and non-profit partners), will depend mainly on the legal and organisational configuration of the new "higher technical institutes" (ITS).

These institutes, whose institutional goal is to support the measures for economic development and scientific-technological innovation, have their own autonomous legal status and may even operate outside of the polys. Furthermore, it does not only seem appropriate that ITS have a stable base within the polys, but rather the institutes themselves should be configured to ensure the institutional participation of all stakeholders directly interested in promoting higher occupational training.

ITS represent a type of public-private associations that can involve participation from schools (technical and professional institutes), accredited occupational training entities, universities, companies, research centres, territorial entities, interested Ministries and other public and private partners.

The ITS's preferred institutional form is that of "participation foundation": a legal institution of private law that fosters stable collaboration between public and private partners, reducing uncertainties and difficulties in coordination in less stable, less structured forms of cooperation. It is a non-profit entity that combines the personal

aspect of associations (detailed identification of partners) with the ownership aspect typical of foundations (decisions by majority vote of the founders), and which can be adhere to by contributing capital or tangible or intangible assets.

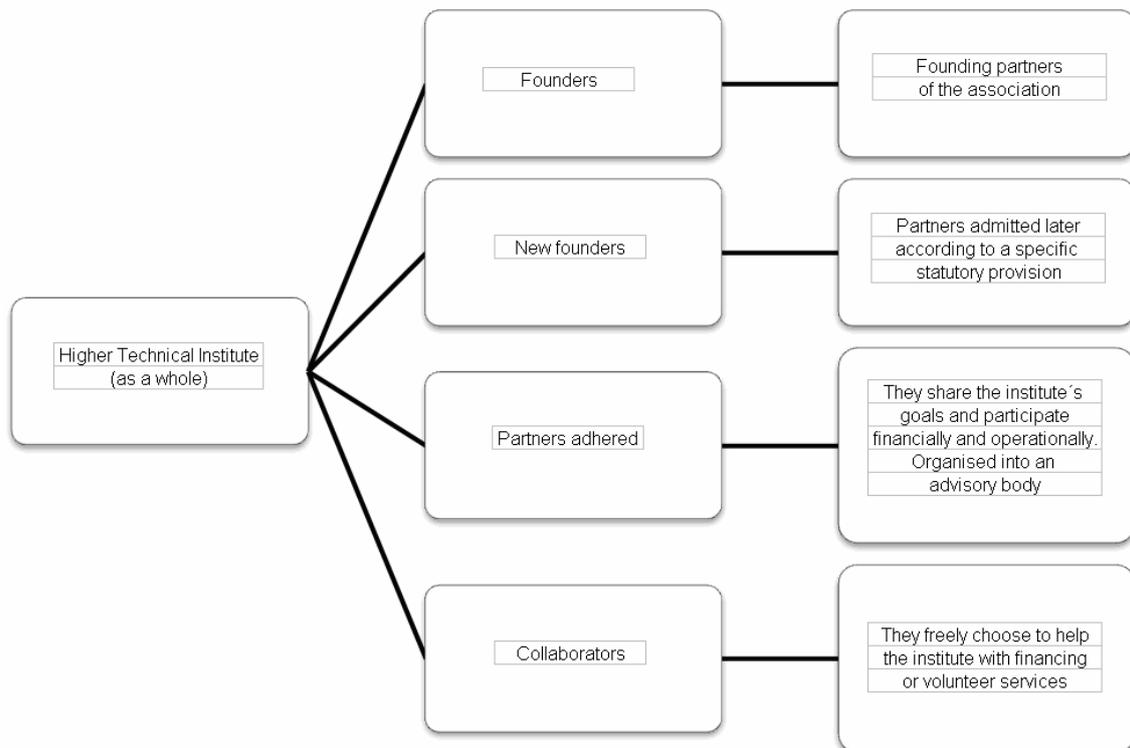
The interest - still recent - in Italy for "participation foundations" has been mostly taken shape as initiatives in the areas of health, culture, scientific research and the environment, that is, in socially useful, non-profit entities. This legal configuration combines the characteristics of pluralism, stable control and flexibility in forms of participation, taking into account the participation of different partners with differentiated roles to achieve institutional goals in accordance with the effort and contribution made in processes of orientation, administration and control of the foundation (figure 1.5).

Use of this instrument offers interesting aspects, reflecting, on one hand, those mentioned above for networks in general, and those which contribute other aspects relating to the foundations' institutional structure, which may be expected for higher technical institutes:

- Particularly if they are comprised in the polys, ITS create stable, visible structures - and not just at local levels - for training in technical-scientific fields, overcoming what could be considered the main weak point of the previous system, that is, the precariousness of the IFTS programmes and of the connections between partners in the IFTS association. The management of higher technical training is strengthened from the moment when IFTS programmes are recognizable, even from a legal point of view and in terms of strategic orientation, management and financial responsibilities.
- Bearing in mind the significant links between training, research, innovation and technological transfer, the new structures offer the possibility to become a reference point for small and medium-sized companies, which represent the country's economic and production framework. Polys and ITS can be closely associated with educational contracts and represent specific aid for companies' demands for ongoing training. Furthermore, these structures can offer privileged programmes of experimentation and education distributed in initiatives and research programmes that frequently meet the demands for aid in innovation for an entire industrial district. In other words, small companies and their lesser possibilities of access to training and qualified research services find a solution

- in the polys' economies of scale, introduced in industrial districts in a stable way.
- Polys and ITS constitute a base from which to address the problems of fragmentation in initiatives in the field of education, of occupational training and of the work carried out by territorial entities and Ministries (Public Education, Work, Economic Development, Agriculture, Infrastructures and Transport, etc.) intervening in this sector, in many ways and under different forms.
 - Finally, the new institutional structures offer schools with consolidated experience and recognized quality in technical and occupational education the chance to offer themselves as the basis of a new management model, strengthening the capacity to integrate the financial, logistical and instrumental resources from public and private partners around a "human capital project".

Figure 1.5
Higher Technical Institutes as Partnership Foundations



Conclusion

Management models in educational systems seem to be at a transition stage in all developed countries. In a society based increasingly on knowledge and on the transfer of notions and information, autonomous schools playing an exclusively antagonistic role run the risk of being isolated. This paper has defended the development of cooperation between schools, considering the nature of education as an asset and considering the social and economic dynamics that schools must face.

In countries like Italy, where schools have less autonomy and little control over personnel and budgets, distributed management makes it necessary to seek cooperation by distributing competences among different institutional and organisational levels, without it being too clear who is responsible for school operation and performance. In fact, this management model could be used perversely if its deficiencies were used as excuses to justify bad praxis in management.

As distributed management is not enough to generate territorial networks based on relationships of cooperation, and because schools could take advantage of fragmented management, developing collaboration-based relationships takes on even greater importance than in other contexts where schools enjoy more autonomy. Particularly in distributed management models, inter-school cooperation represents a way of making schools responsible, because it avoids the risk of self-referentiality. Furthermore, cooperation is also an instrument that allows schools to replace the structural lack of resources, to increase negotiating power and to establish conditions of equality in their relationships with school authorities and local entities.

The empirical data and analysis offered here show a strong trend of Italian schools to create networks and set up contractual and institutionalised associations. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether the school leaders have developed the necessary organisational competences to establish a new cooperative management. School leaders promote networks and participate in them, but there is a lack of data on their effectiveness, especially as regards improving educational practices and students' learning.

Consequently, new analyses are required into the different methods of organising the cooperative management applied by schools, into the implications of

collaboration as regards instrumental, relational and strategic competences of school managers, and on the methodologies for measuring and evaluating the impact of networks.

ANNEX

**Table 1.3 a:
Participation of schools in networks**

First cycle of education	Type of school					
	State		Non-state		Only non-state kindergarten	
	No. of Institutes	%	No. of Institutes	%	No. of Institutes	%
1 network	1669	26.9%	340	32,4%	814	42.9%
2 networks	1277	20.6%	143	13.6%	301	15.9%
3 networks	1012	16.3%	62	5.9%	81	4.3%
4 networks	547	8.8%	21	2.0%	48	2.5%
5 or more than 5 networks	759	12.2%	39	3.7%	263	13.9%
Participate in networks of schools	5264	84.8%	605	57.6%	1507	79.4%
Do not participate in networks of schools	946	15.2%	446	42.4%	391	20.6%
Total	6210	100.0%	1051	100.0%	1898	100.0%

Participating schools: 9,159 of 9,579 (95.6% of all schools in the first cycle)
Source: Datos Invalsi 2006.

Table 1.4 a:
Activities carried out by schools in the network (first cycle of education)

First cycle of education	Type of school					
	State		Non-state		Just non-state kindergarten	
	No. of Institutes	%	No. of Institutes	%	No. of Institutes	%
Educational planning	2290	43.5	298	49,3	860	57,1
Training and recycling	3752	71.3	410	67.8	1269	84.2
Implementing educational activities	2002	38.0	222	36.7	483	32.1
Research and experimentation	1128	21.4	102	16.9	320	21.2
Monitoring, evaluation, Self-assessment	1208	22.9	160	26.4	546	36.2
Orientation	1280	24.3	106	17.5	0	0.0
Integrating handicapped students	1903	36.2	59	9.8	106	7.0
Integrating foreign students	1704	32.4	20	3.3	103	6.8
Managing common services	1130	21.5	91	15.0	151	10.0
Other activities	348	6.6	26	4.3	66	4.4

State and non-state institutes participating: 7,286 of 7,376 that participate in networks of schools (98.8%)
Source: Datos Invalsi 2006.

Table 1.4 b:
Activities carried out by schools in the network (second cycle of education)

Second cycle of education	Type of school			
	State		Non-state	
	No. of Institutes	%	No. of Institutes	%
Educational planning	366	46.6%	55	54.5%
Training and recycling	505	64.2%	53	52.5%
Temporary exchange of teachers	42	5.3%	3	3.0%
Educational activities	336	42.7%	37	36.6%
Research and experimentation	207	26.3%	21	20.8%
Monitoring, evaluation, self-assessment	220	28.0%	25	24.8%
Orientation	310	39.4%	35	34.7%
Integrating handicapped students	184	23.4%	5	5.0%
Integrating foreign students	216	27.5%	4	4.0%
Managing common services	170	21.6%	15	14.9%
Other activities	76	9.7%	7	6.9%

Source: Datos Invalsi 2006

**Table 1.3 b:
Participation of schools in networks**

Second cycle of education	Type of school					
	State		Non-state		Just non-state kindergarten	
	No. of Institutes	%	No. of Institutes	%	No. of Institutes	%
1 red	194	21.90%	58	37.90%	252	24.30%
2 networks	148	16.70%	24	15.70%	172	16.60%
3 networks	163	18.40%	14	9.20%	177	17.00%
4 networks	83	9.40%	3	2.00%	86	8.30%
5 or more than 5 networks	198	22.30%	2	1.30%	200	19.20%
Participate in networks of schools	786	0.887	101	0.66	887	0.854
Do not participate in networks of schools	100	11.30%	52	34.00%	152	14.60%
Total	886	100.00%	153	100.00%	1039	100.00%

Participating schools: 1,123 of 5,287 (23.1% of all schools in the second cycle)

Source: Datos Invalsi 2006.

Table 1.5 a:
Partners with whom the school has made
formal agreements and/or conventions

(first cycle of education)

First cycle of education	Type of school					
	State		Non-state		Just non-state kindergarten	
	No. of Institutes	%	No. of Institutes	%	No. of Institutes	%
Public or private universities	2657	41.4%	190	16.8%	149	7.3%
Professional training entities, research entities	1153	18.0%	108	9.5%	142	7.0%
Other schools	3683	57.4%	274	24.2%	287	14.1%
MUIR Administration, Regional School Offices	1086	16.9%	242	21.4%	200	9.9%
Sports Associations	2628	40.9%	240	21.2%	145	7.1%
Other associations (cultural, volunteers, parents, category, etc.)	2294	35.7%	251	22.2%	315	15.5%
Public partners (local entities, ASL, security forces, etc.)	3970	61.9%	298	26.3%	919	45.3%
Private partners (Financial institutes and foundations, private companies, religious communities, cooperatives, etc.)	1623	25.3%	222	19.6%	378	18.6%
External experts	3709	57.8%	294	26.0%	487	24.0%
No conventions and/or agreements stipulated	196	3.1%	177	15.6%	311	15.3%
Other conventions	99	1.5%	28	2.5%	157	7.7%

State and non-state institutes participating: 8,864 of 9,579 (92.5%)

Source: Datos Invalsi 2006.

Table 1.5 b:
Partners with whom schools have made formal
agreements and/or conventions
(second cycle of education)

Second cycle of education	Type of school			
	State		Non-state	
	No. of Institutes	%	No. of Institutes	%
Public or private universities	532	67.7%	41	40.6%
Professional training entities, research entities	447	56.9%	32	31.7%
Other schools	549	69.8%	44	43.6%
MUIR Administration , Regional School Offices	222	28.2%	8	7.9%
Sports Associations	193	24.6%	20	19.8%
Other associations (cultural, volunteers, parents, category, etc.)	316	40.2%	34	33.7%
Public partners (local entities, ASL, security forces, etc.)	505	64.2%	38	37.6%
Private partners (Financial institutes and foundations, private companies, religious communities, cooperatives, etc.)	406	51.7%	45	44.6%
Individual external experts	469	59.7%	34	33.7%
No conventions and/or agreements stipulated	15	1.9%	5	5.0%
Other conventions	17	2.2%	1	1.0%

Source: Datos Invalsi 2006

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Does leadership matter? A comparative analysis

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Abstract

Does school leadership style make a measurable difference in promoting school quality? In this comparative study of 18 countries, nationally representative datasets are used to examine the association between the leadership style of school principals and the results of their students on the TIMSS 2003 mathematics and science tests. The theoretical framework adopted for the study is a modified version of Scheerens' integrated model of school effectiveness (1990); the data is modeled using a three level multilevel model with random effects that aims at evaluating the interaction effect between a particular school level variable (the time used by the school principal in managerial or leadership activities) and the explanatory variables describing school and student characteristics. The key result of the study is that principal specialization is correlated to a lower impact of family SES on student achievement, and the replication of the analysis on a country-by-country level confirms the existence of the aforementioned effect. The last part of the study takes a step forward by contextualizing them within the legal and operational frameworks of the analyzed educational systems, and it identifies a relationship between the leadership style and institutional architecture of the school system under investigation.

Introduction

The Conclusions of the Council on efficiency and equity in education and training (2006/C 298/03) indicate that: “the quality of school leadership ... [is one of

the] key factors in achieving high quality learning outcomes.” Numerous researchers have demonstrated some form of association between the effectiveness of a school and the type of leadership practiced (Hallinger & Leithwood 1994). Yet, we are still lacking conclusive evidence on a statistical relationship between school leadership and educational achievement (Van de Grift and Houtveen, 1999; Scheerens & Bosker, 1997, Scheerens, 2000). On one side, the failure can be partially attributed to the fact that there is no consensus on the meaning of “school leadership” and what this profession entails, especially because the duties and the competences of the school principal change on the basis of the structural and contextual characteristics of each school system. On the other side, some of the existing studies present methodological problems related to the validation of instruments (the questionnaires used, scarce contextual information) or lack of the appropriate statistical techniques in the analysis.

The latter problems can be overcome by having *reliable and comparable micro data* in terms of *school, teachers, and individual student characteristics* and in terms of *student knowledge* (possibly proxied by their scores in standardized tests). Two major international surveys – the OECD-PISA and the IEA-TIMSS – provide reliable and comparable data in Mathematics and Science, and collect substantial background data on individual, teacher, and school characteristics. Moreover, the surveys involve dozens of countries and allow comparative analyses at country level. Most countries of the European Union are involved in the PISA study, while only 14 do the TIMSS.¹ For these reasons, the analyses specifically referred to Europe – such as this study – generally refer chiefly to the PISA datasets. However, as emerging from Jaap Scheerens’ research, the projects that, in the “wake of the main PISA study, have tried to explain these performance differences educational leadership has not received much attention. This is not surprising, because the PISA school questionnaire does not contain items on leadership” (Scheerens & Witziers, 2005: 12). The TIMSS School Questionnaire, on the other hand, provides some items that are better fit to investigate the issue by looking at the amount of time that the school principal uses in a variety of activities.² Some researchers have already used these variables (i.e. Wiseman, 2001;

¹ The European Union countries involved are: Belgium - Flemish Community, Bulgaria, Cyprus, England, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Romania, Scotland, Slovenia, and Sweden. To inscribe the European situation in the world scenario, this study investigates the European Countries involved as well as Australia, Japan, Norway and the United States of America.

² These variables indicate the % of time that the school principal spends on a yearly basis on:
Administration – “BCBGAPAD”;
Public relations – “BCBGAPPR”;

Suskavcevic and Blake, 2001); nonetheless, these studies are either referred to the US sample only, or they limit the investigation to the direct relationship between school leadership and student achievement.

The present analysis takes a step forward with respect to the previous studies and attempts to quantify also the indirect impact of school leadership on student achievement.

Review of the literature

Academic research has long debated – and is still debating – about the relative role of school and family characteristics as determinants of student achievement. The section presents some key results of literature relevant to the topic of school leadership and management, and it provides a brief overview of the TIMSS 2003 highlighting some background information on how the characteristics of the study have been interpreted and used in this analysis.

Effective leadership is accepted by many as a central component in implementing and sustaining school improvement. Evidence from school improvement literature, starting with seminal studies in the United States (Brookover et al., 1979; Edmonds, 1982) and the United Kingdom (Mortimore, 2000; Rutter et al., 1979; Southworth, 1995), highlights that effective leaders exercise a direct or indirect but powerful influence on the school's capacity to implement reforms and improve students' levels of achievement. Bolman stresses the fact that participative leadership, mediated through teacher activity, contributed effectively to student outcomes (Bolam et al., 1993). Louis refers to the same participative dimension, and he highlights how leaders of high achieving schools “worked effectively to stimulate professional discussion and to create the networks of conversation that tied faculty together around common issues of instruction and teaching” (Louis et al., 1996: 194).

Although it is teacher performance that directly affects student performance, quality of leadership matters in determining the motivation of teachers and the quality of their teaching (Evans, 1999; Sergiovanni, 2001; Cheng, 2002). Indeed, a number of researchers points to the role of “transformational leadership” and to the school

Residual non teaching activities – “BCBGAPOT”;
Instructional leadership – “BCBGAPIL”;
Supervision of teaching – “BCBGAPST”;
Direct teaching – “BCBGAPTE”.

principal capacity to build a “shared vision”. Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) suggest that “transformational leadership” has strong direct effects on school conditions, which in turn have strong direct effects on classroom conditions. Moreover, the more distributed the leadership is throughout the school community, in particular to teachers, the better the performance of that school in terms of student outcomes (Silins et al., 2002).

These studies go in the direction of defining school leadership as a complex phenomenon that influences student learning (mostly) by means of intermediate variables. Such broad conceptualization, however, entails major challenges when trying to draw substantial conclusions on the role of school leadership on student achievement. Indeed, Hallinger & Heck (1996, 1998) point out that the effects of leadership on student achievement are indirect if not difficult to measure because, despite the traditional rhetoric concerning school principal effects, the actual results of empirical studies in the U.S. and U.K. are not altogether consistent in size or direction. Hence, “even as a group the studies do not resolve the most important and practical issues entailed in understanding the principal’s role in contributing to school effectiveness. These concern the means by which principals achieve an impact on school outcomes as well as the interplay with contextual forces that influence the exercise of school leadership” (Hallinger and Heck, 1998: 186).

In general, the critiques to the studies on school leadership effects on student learning relate to two main orders of causes. In theoretical and conceptual terms, we are yet far from a unique definition of leadership; which makes the concept difficult to measure. Moreover, the different studies are difficult to compare due to the existing contextual differences and to the lack of a complete understanding of what are the intermediate variables between leadership and student achievement. In methodological terms, problems can be identified with respect to the validation of instruments (the questionnaires used, the scarcity of contextual information collected, and the reliability of the student achievement measures). Moreover, many of the studies – especially the earlier ones and those referred to some of the largest datasets – do not make use of the appropriate statistical techniques. Zirkel and Greenwood (1987) list is an absence of “multivariate, longitudinal studies designed to trace causation” (Zirkel and Greenwood, 1987:256), while other studies do not take adequately into account the fact that the data has a hierarchic structure (students are nested in classes that are nested in schools that are nested in regions that are nested in countries and so on) so that the characteristics of

the study-units at each level of reference must be considered separately in the regression.

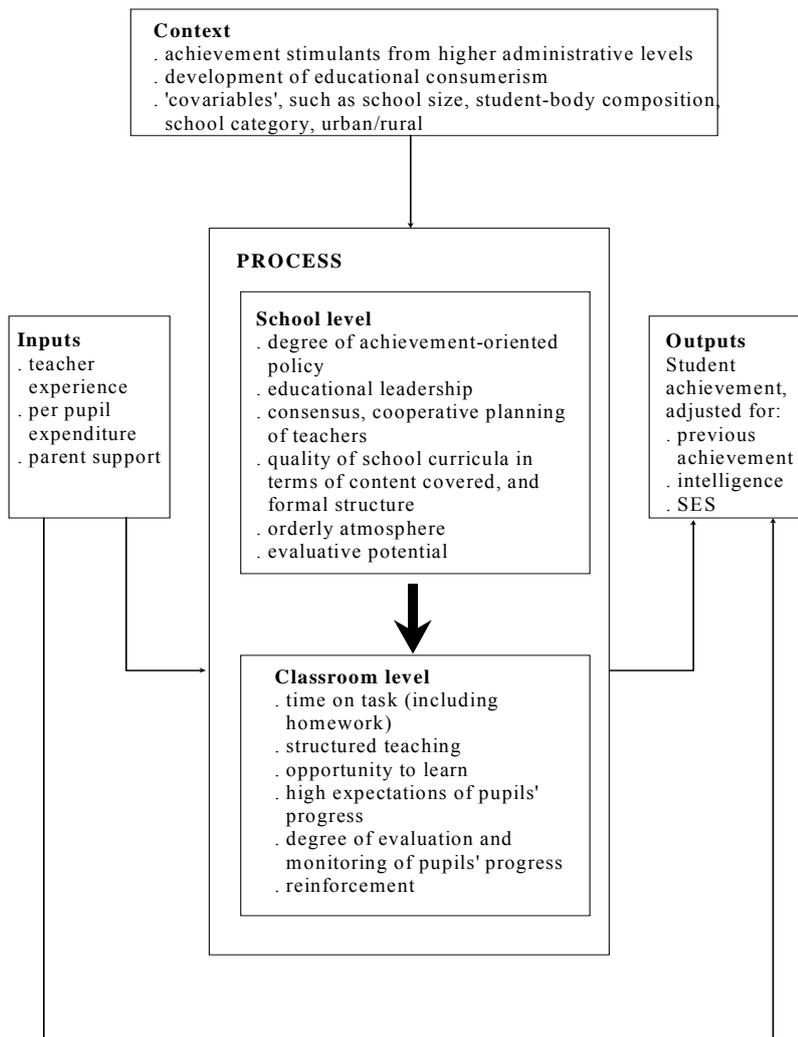
Witziers, Bosker, and Krüger perform a quantitative meta-analysis on 42 studies (37 for direct effect and 5 for indirect effects) examining to what extent school principals affect student outcomes. Their research indicates that not more than 1% of the variation in student achievement is associated with differences in educational leadership, and – in general – suggests the existence of heavy limitations to the direct effects approach to linking leadership with student achievement (Witziers, B., Bosker, R. J. and Krüger, M. L. 2003). In their review of 70 studies, Marzano et al. (2004) show the existence of contradictory evidences ranging from effect size for leadership and achievement as high as .50 (which translates mathematically into a one-standard-deviation difference in results) to studies in which leaders who displayed the very same leadership qualities had only a marginal – or worse, a negative – impact on student achievement (correlations as low as -.02).

Analyses using data from the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in multilevel regression models suggest that although instructional leaders tailor their behaviors to their schools' environments, variations in behavior are not consistently associated with variation in instructional effectiveness as measured by instructional outcomes such as student achievement (Wiseman, 2001). The recent analysis of Miller and Rowan (2006) on two Australian databases to estimate a series of three-level growth models of student achievement at the elementary and secondary levels indicates that organic forms of management are not a particularly powerful determinant of student achievement at either of these levels of schooling. Moreover, numerous in-depth studies performed in the Netherlands fail to find a significant correlation between leadership and educational achievement (Van de Grift and Houtveen, 1999; Scheerens & Bosker, 1997, Scheerens, 2000). To add one extra little piece to the confusion on school principal leadership, recent research – as indicated previously – is also dealing with the issue of leadership distributed to other individuals within the school context, such as the teachers. The most recent and comprehensive review of the teacher leadership literature (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; see also Murphy, 2005) was able to locate only five empirical studies of teacher leadership effects on pupils and none reported significant positive effects.

For these reasons, recent research has often dwelled more on the role of intermediate variables such as school climate (Scheerens, 2000). Indeed, the problem

relates to identifying exactly the relationship between the different elements intervening in the determination of student results. Especially within the field of SE, various structures have been proposed for modeling these interactions.

Figure 1
An integrated model of school effectiveness



Source: Scheerens, 1990

Scheerens' integrated model of school effectiveness – depicted in Figure 1 – highlights the interaction among the various dimensions that ultimately influence outputs, and looks inside the school's "black-box" by identifying a set of crucial variables. Scheerens and Bosker (1997) used this model as the starting point for a re-analysis and meta-analysis of existing studies and datasets. On average, their results indicate that resource-input factors have a negligible effect, school factors have a small effect, and instructional factors have an average to large effect. However, as Scheerens points out, "there is an interesting difference between the relatively small effect size for the school level variables reported in the meta-analysis and the degree of certainty and consensus on the relevance of these factors in the more qualitative research reviews."

These latter studies debate the strong emphasis on leadership reported in the earlier, but they do not dismiss the issue. Indeed, it is very likely that – as previously indicated – the shallowness of results were due to theoretical and conceptual problems existing in the definition of leadership, together with the methodological issues related to the adequate models of analysis and the availability of data.

TIMSS 2003

The TIMSS 2003 international database contains student achievement data in mathematics and science as well as student, teacher, school, and curricular background data for the 48 countries that participated in TIMSS 2003 at the eighth grade and 26 countries that participated in TIMSS 2003 at the fourth grade. The database includes data from over 360,000 students, about 25,000 teachers, about 12,000 school principals, and the National Research Coordinators of each country.

The TIMSS 2003 data files reflect the result of an extensive series of data management and quality control steps taken to ensure the international comparability, quality, accuracy, and general utility of the database in order to provide a strong foundation for secondary analyses. They contain responses to background questionnaires administered to students, their teachers, and the school principals of their schools. As part of the international data files, variables derived for reporting in the international reports are also included. The database also contains student achievement data and scoring reliability data, as well as the responses to national curriculum questionnaires provided by the National Research Coordinators.

Students' achievement results in mathematics and science were summarized using Item Response Theory (IRT). The method provides calculation of test scores by averaging student responses to each item, taking into account the difficulty level of each item.

Student, teacher, and school background questionnaires were collected linking their information by means of class and school identification codes. The information about student achievement was then connected to the other information building a full comprehensive archive.

In many cases, students are linked to more than one mathematics and/or science teacher, and in these cases there will be one record for each student-teacher link. The Student-Teacher Linkage files contain one entry per student-teacher linkage combination in the data. In the analysis presented hereinafter, only the first teacher file was considered for each student. This simplification is connected with the marginal importance of the linkage problem. In fact, the phenomenon of multiple linkages presents a very low frequency. Moreover the teacher variables, entering the final model specification, have a relatively low effect on the model estimation.

An important characteristic of the TIMSS studies, and one that has crucial implications for data analysis, is that they use data from carefully-drawn random samples of schools, classes, and students to make inferences about the mathematics and science achievement of the fourth- and eighth-grade student populations in the participating countries (see Foy and Joncas, 2004). For analyses based on these sample data to accurately reflect populations' attributes, it is necessary that they take the design of the sample into account. This is accomplished in part by assigning a sampling weight to each respondent in the sample, and weighting the respondent by its sampling weight in all analyses. The sampling weight properly accounts for the sample design, takes into account any stratification or disproportional sampling of subgroups, and includes adjustments for non-response (see Foy & Joncas, 2004).

The student sampling weight, known as TOTWGT in the international database, must be used whenever student population estimates are required. The use of TOTWGT ensures that the various subgroups that constitute the sample are properly and proportionally represented in the computation of population estimates, and that the sample size will be inflated to approximate the size of the population.

The core of this study relates to the estimation of a multilevel model in which the response variable is collected at the individual (student) level. The weighting

variable “TOTWGT” enters the model specification adjusting the variance structure for the real population data structure.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical model used in this project is based on Scheerens’ model of school effectiveness presented in the previous section. As already discussed, this model of school effectiveness provides a framework for investigating at all the factors and processes that intervene in the formation of the outputs, and school leadership is necessarily only one of the relevant school-level-variables.

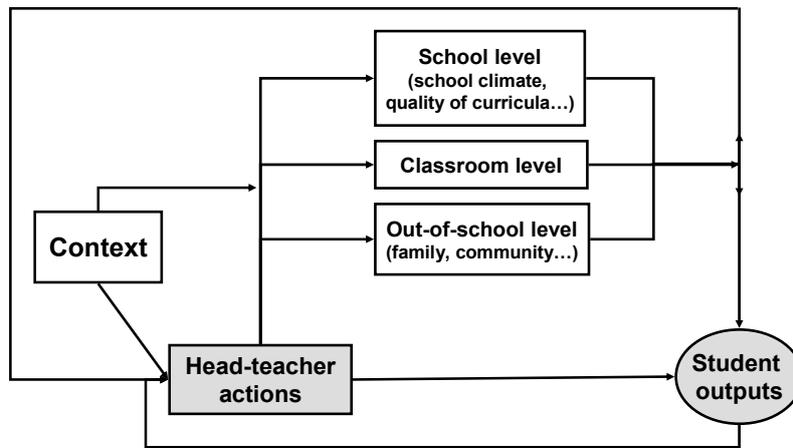
For the aims of the present study, the base model was modified by considering explicitly the role of the school principal (Figure 2). In this representation, school principals’ actions are influenced by the specific context in which they operate. In turn, their actions can either:

1. Influence students directly (direct teaching, mentoring...),
2. or impact on a range of different policies and situations inside or outside the school.

In this second case, the school principal’s impact on student outputs is mediated by other agents and cannot be directly measured. The other agents respond to the school principal solicitations and modify their behavior, which affects directly student outputs; the same pattern holds for the school principal intervention on resources and background situations.

School principals perceive the results of their interactions with students, system agents, and background conditions and use this feedback to further modify their actions.

Figure 2
Influence of school principal actions on student results



On the basis of this approach, the assessment of school principal’s influence on student outputs depends both on the direct and the indirect effects. Hence, the study will investigate both instances.

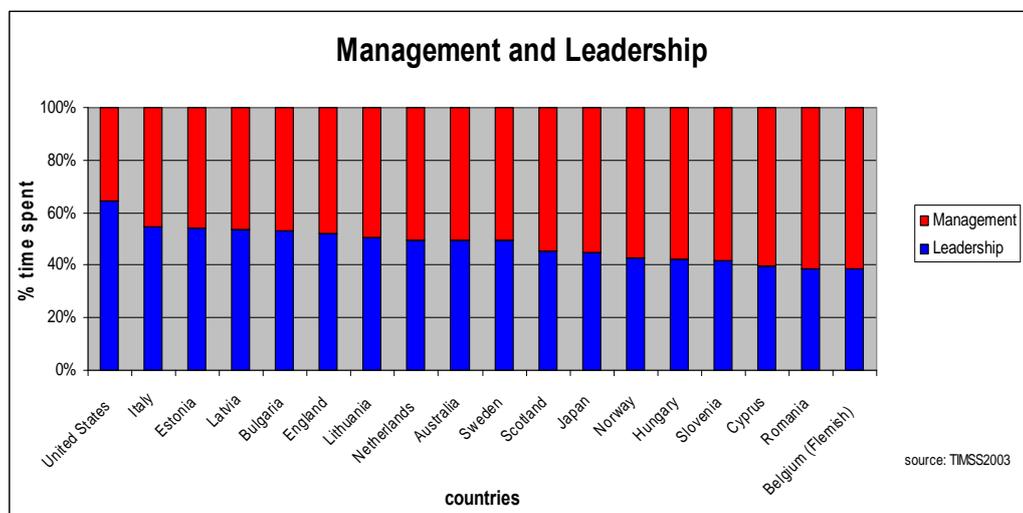
Methodology

Addressing the indirect-effects-issue implies answering the question: “*Do the school principal actions make a difference?*” An answer to this issue cannot be measured directly, but we can consider that principals allocate their time in a variety of activities as they consider best for incrementing school quality. Hence, the principal time allocation can be interpreted as a mediating variable between the measured dimensions (context, school, class and individual characteristics) and student results.

The variables of interest in the TIMSS dataset are derived from item 9 and indicate the % of time spent by school principal on instructional issues (teaching, supervising teachers, and instructional leadership – i.e. giving demonstration lessons, discussing educational objectives with teachers, initiating curriculum revision and/or planning, training teachers, and providing professional development activities), and the % of time spent on non-instructional issues (internal administrative tasks, representing the school in the community, representing the school in official meetings, talking with parents, counseling and disciplining students, and responding to education officials’

requests). The variables indicating the % of time spent by the school principal on non-instructional issues were aggregated in the variable “Mana” (Management), while the variables indicating the % of time spent by the school principal on instructional issues were aggregated in the variable “Lead” (Leadership). The variables Mana and Lead add to 100% of the school principal time and Figure 3 presents the school principal time allocation on the basis of the derived variables Management and Leadership.

Figure 3
Average school principal time allocation in management and leadership activities



The two aggregate variables are a crucial component of the analytic model described hereinafter. In fact, a dichotomous version of the variable Mana is used to identify the cases in which the management activities are prevalent, and the variables are also to study the model behavior with respect to changes in school principal specialization in management or leadership. The differential impact of these characteristics when the school principal focuses on Management or Leadership, minus the impact of the school principal direct effect, allows us to gauge whether school principal actions make a difference at all, whether any of the two strategies (management or leadership) yields more substantial differences, and – eventually – the magnitude of this difference.

The Model

This application considers the individual observations as grouped within schools and the schools grouped within countries. This hierarchical structure correspond to a nested multilevel with three levels. The dependent variable y can be indexed as y_{ijk} where i correspond to the pupil level, j to the school and k to the country. In general, the model can be formulated as follows:

$$y_{ijk} = \alpha + \beta x_{ijk} + \gamma z_{jk} + \eta z_k + \theta_k + \delta_{jk} + \varepsilon_{ijk}, \quad (1)$$

where the stochastic part of the model considers three residuals. Their variances can be denoted by:

$$\text{var}(\varepsilon_{ijk}) = \sigma^2, \quad \text{var}(\delta_{jk}) = \tau^2 \quad \text{and} \quad \text{var}(\theta_k) = \varphi^2. \quad (2)$$

The explicative variables at any of the three levels can be added.

The model used in the empirical analysis presents a peculiar formulation which aim is to evaluate the interaction effect between a particular school level variable (the prevalence of management in school principal activities) and the student level variable summarizing the schooling level of the family members. The management prevalence dummy variable (defined as $I_{(\text{Mana} > 60\%)}$) produce a classification of the observed values. The model specification reflects this classification. In fact, the fixed component of the model is defined by separated equations for the two data clusters:

$$SCORE_{ijk} = \begin{cases} \alpha_0 + \beta_0 x_{ijk} + \gamma_0 z_{jk} + \theta_k + \delta_{jk} + \varepsilon_{ijk} & \text{for } Mana > 60\% \\ \alpha_1 + \beta_1 x_{ijk} + \gamma_1 z_{jk} + \theta_k + \delta_{jk} + \varepsilon_{ijk} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \quad (3)$$

The stochastic part of the model is otherwise invariant to the classification. The three error components are considered independently distributed with zero mean. The estimation process requires an ulterior assumption: the normality. Under this assumption the estimation can be based the maximization of the likelihood (or log-likelihood) function. The ML approach supplies the researcher with estimates of the

coefficient of the deterministic part of the model ($\{\alpha_0, \beta_0, \gamma_0, \alpha_1, \beta_1, \gamma_1\}$) and of the error components variances ($\{\sigma^2, \tau^2, \varphi^2\}$).

The model specification is then completed considering a particular variance structure, which is supposed to depend on the “TOTWGT” covariate. The software used for the model estimation is R-Statistics and in particular the Linear Mixed Model estimation library “nlme”. The adopted computational methods are described in Bates, D.M. and Pinheiro (1998) and follow on the general framework of Lindstrom, M.J. and Bates, D.M. (1988).

The analyses reported in this work make use of a sub-sample of 21 variables, for 52,036 students observed in 1,901 schools clustered in 18 different states. This sample is taken from the 8th grade TIMSS dataset and is used to study the effect of a set of control variables on the student achievement in mathematics and science. The reasons for concentrating on the 8th grade data are both practical and theoretical. On the practical level, only a smaller set of countries was available in the 4th grade database. Second, in the case of the indirect effects, the ratio is that the school principal can create conditions that the students can ultimately profit more for their learning. This conception implies – at least partially – an active role of the student that is aware of the background conditions and is responsive to an entire set of solicitations coming from different sources. Such awareness could be more easily expected from student of about 13 years of age than from their much younger peer of about 9 years old.

Apart of the response variables “Math” and “Science” scores, the analysis involved a set of explanatory variables, 7 of these are student-level characteristics and 14 are school specific characteristics. The analysis did not consider any country specific variable, and the variable selection process adopted in the model specification is based on a backward search.

The individual level dependent variables (referred to as Y_{ij}) are:

1. Average score in Mathematics – “BSMM”. It is the arithmetic mean of the five plausible values generated for the Math test;
2. Average score in Science – “BSMS”. It is the arithmetic mean of the five plausible values generated for the science test.

Even though the TIMSS database offers five math and science achievement plausible values, with no particular preference toward the use of any of these values,

numerous analyses have been conducted using only the first plausible value. This approach can be justified when considering that “the imputation error can be ignored” (Gonzales and Smith, 1997: ch.6, p. 3). Gonzales and Smith reach this conclusion upon conducting inter-correlations among the five plausible scores. Although any of the five plausible values would represent equally well student scores in mathematics and science, the project used the mean of the five plausible scores in mathematics and the mean of the five plausible scores in science, as measures of student achievement in these areas.

The individual level independent variables (referred to as X_{ij}) are student age, sex, possess of a calculator, possess of a computer, number of possessed books, highest level of parental education, whether the student speaks the test language at home, age of Math (Science) teacher, experience of the Math (Science) teacher, sex of the science teacher, level of teacher understanding of school goals, evaluation of school climate in Math (Science) class, permanence of principal in the school, highest grade level in school, level of parental collaboration to school activities, absenteeism rate, size of the community of the school, evaluation of Science courses in the school, Percentage of time dedicated by the school principal to management activities – “Mana”, described in the previous section.

Table 1
Sample sizes (raw and after cleaning for missing observations)

	Data	dMat	dSci
Australia	4791	3274	3044
Belgium (Flemish)	4970	3385	3243
Bulgaria	4117	3162	2354
Cyprus	4002	1980	1991
England	2830	853	565
Estonia	4040	3188	3195
Hungary	3302	2584	2511
Italy	4278	3504	3603
Japan	4856	4256	4208
Latria	3630	2607	2472
Lithuania	4964	3481	3277
Netherlands	3065	2389	2021
Norway	4133	3124	2972
Romania	4104	2106	2152
Scotland	3516	1334	1043
Slovenia	3578	2845	2766
Sweden	4256	2414	2215
United States	8912	5550	5243

The model was estimated separately for Math and Science scores; yet – given the similarity of the results of models and due to space constraints – the following sections will dwell only on the results for mathematics and present their implications in terms of policy and further research.

The results

1. Aggregate results

The model was first run on the subgroup of European Union member countries (Belgium - Flemish Community, Bulgaria, Cyprus, England, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Romania, Scotland, Slovenia, Sweden), then on the group of non-EU countries considered (Australia, Japan, Norway and the United States of America), and then on the entire dataset of the 18 countries.

The variables used in each model are reported in the table below.

Table 2
Variables entering each of the models

Model for Math

Size of the community
Age of the teacher
Years of Experience of the teacher
School principal time in management >60%
Sex of Student
Number of Years Principal of the School
Highest grade in the school
Level of parental collaboration
Teacher Understanding of school goals
Student absenteeism
School Climate
Presence of calculator at home
Age of student
Presence of computer at home
Number of books at home
Maximum level of parental education

Although the mix of significant variables would likely be different in each country, the same set was also used when replicating the analysis on a country by country basis; the decision was taken to allow for a direct comparison of the results.

Statistical significance for all statistical analyses was set at .05. The three level random effect model used for the analysis does not provide us with any R-Squared measure for gauging the amount of variance explained. However, as indicated by Snijders, we can approximate this figure by looking at the total variance of the basic linear model (Var_0) and the total variance for the multilevel model (Var_x). With these values, the percentage of variance explained by the model can be calculated as follows: $(\text{Var}_0 - \text{Var}_x)/(\text{Var}_0)$.

Table 3
Total, Residual and Explained variance for Math

Math	Var_0	Var_x	% Explained Var
EU27	2343.845	878.910	62.51%
Non-EU	2822.555	1390.971	50.71%
All	2416.078	1070.966	55.67%

The models appear to be extremely convincing, as they generally explain more than 50% of the variance. The first point to highlight regards the extremely high impact of student SES and family characteristics in all the models. Indeed, this effect is consistent with the literature (Coleman, 1966; Voelkl, 1995; Crane, 1991; Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992; Rumberger, 1995; Janosz et al., 1997; Raudenbush & Kasim, 1998; Johnson, Crosnoe, & Elder, 2001), and in all the models the highest level of parental education appears to be the most influential factor; the main difference between EU and non-EU countries is the existence of a threshold at ISCED3 for the non-EU countries. In fact, in Europe any level of parent attainment above primary school is related to better student outcomes,³ while in the non-EU countries under analysis the differences become relevant only if parents have attained at least middle school. The possessions in the house – a proxy for the family SES – are relevant, and not having a calculator or a computer accounts for a lower performance of at least 10 points in all the models. Similarly, the possession of a larger amount of books is associated with better results, with effects ranging between 7 and 9 points. In EU countries, children older than their peers perform worse; while this is not the case in the other countries under exam. The

³ The same effect is visible in the comprehensive models as the EU countries outnumber the non-EU countries.

reason of this effect could be linked to the fact that TIMSS is a grade-based examination, and the school cycles in Europe are more fixed than those of the other countries under analysis, so that older children are likely to be students who have not achieved passing marks during the previous year. Girls perform slightly better than boys in Europe, while the opposite is true for the non-European countries. European students in comprehensive schools perform slightly better than their peers; for non-EU countries the difference is non relevant. The size of the community has only little impact; the students in cities of 500.000 or more perform 1-2 points better than their peers. Student absenteeism has a negative effect on student results; while more parental support to the study and the parental involvement in school activities lead to better results.

With respect to the school level and consistently with the literature (e.g. Scheerens, 2000, 2005), a positive school climate appears to be the most influential variable on student achievement. The teacher understanding of school goals and the years of presence of the school principal in the school have a positive effect in Europe, but no effect in the other countries. The negligible impact of the school principal actions on student achievement is consistent with and further confirms the large body of literature presented through the text (e.g. Scheerens and Bosker, 1997; Hallinger and Heck, 1998).

Table 4
Significant variables, Math.

Math	EU			Non EU			Tot		
	Value	Std.Er	p	Value	Std.Er	P	Value	Std.Er	P
(Intercept)	523.743	18.70564	0	386.3136	44.9587	0	511.1803	16.66953	0
Effect of the variables for the subset of schools where the principal spends 60% of the time or more on managerial activities:									
Parental education: ISCED6	251.995	17.71836	0	211.5556	30.4972	0	251.3913	14.84026	0
Parental education: ISCED5	215.446	15.61305	0	164.6597	28.2514	0	213.0897	13.14763	0
Parental education: ISCED4	179.959	15.51887	0	116.5495	28.1532	0	175.9441	13.07275	0
Parental education: ISCED3	134.286	15.50414	0	77.4626	28.1402	0.006	131.2686	13.06162	0
Parental education: ISCED2	94.3956	15.5563	0				91.4718	13.10307	0
Parental education: ISCED1	48.4223	16.0542	0.003				44.747	13.52551	0
Number of possessed books	6.937	0.486227	0	7.9214	0.60883	0	6.9966	0.395482	0
Highest grade level in school	3.8747	0.852965	0	5.5483	1.90999	0.004	3.9824	0.783394	0
Permanence of school principal in the school	0.4738	0.228278	0.038				0.3851	0.188283	0.041
Sex of student: female	-2.7444	1.078986	0.011	4.0197	1.33768	0.003			
Absenteeism rate	-7.2604	3.039646	0.017				-6.6471	2.368062	0.005
Students' age	-10.9891	1.119829	0				-9.7171	0.937424	0
Possession of a computer	-11.5418	1.469228	0	-16.2274	3.47857	0	-11.7266	1.256451	0
School climate	-13.5417	2.022903	0	-9.7764	2.49128	0	-11.9923	1.653523	0
Possession of a calculator	-20.1899	3.478476	0	-11.7444	4.85245	0.016	-19.636	2.865011	0
Effect of the variables for the subset of schools where the principal spends less than 60% of the time on managerial activities:									
Parental education: ISCED6	300.413	11.63786	0	175.9543	29.5504	0	296.0834	9.933589	0
Parental education: ISCED5	246.927	9.879046	0	148.4426	27.7451	0	244.7764	8.493333	0
Parental education: ISCED4	202.16	9.828009	0	103.4589	27.6942	0	200.0919	8.451963	0
Parental education: ISCED3	155.796	9.813013	0	64.2942	27.6842	0.02	154.5883	8.440147	0
Parental education: ISCED2	109.257	9.827514	0				108.3889	8.452209	0
Parental education: ISCED1	72.0168	10.19432	0				70.247	8.764599	0
Number of possessed books	6.9633	0.311368	0	7.7852	0.47034	0	6.9473	0.258937	0
Level of parental collaboration to school activities	3.7729	1.889017	0.046	9.7734	4.34668	0.025	4.8699	1.734616	0.005
Highest grade level in school	2.9318	0.576141	0				2.8218	0.54048	0
Permanence of school principal in the school	0.4738	0.228278	0.038				0.3851	0.188283	0.041
Community dimension	-1.8573	0.518635	0	-2.5966	0.94539	0.006	-1.8596	0.464269	
Sex of student: female	-2.2899	0.666587	0	2.9229	1.06497	0.006	-1.8079	0.556555	0.001
Absenteeism rate	-3.5672	1.71664	0.038	-7.6282	2.73684	0.006	-4.3471	1.491222	0.004
School climate	-5.1141	1.231455	0	-4.8993	1.82668	0.008	-5.3635	1.053157	0
Teacher understanding of school goals	-5.5718	2.114633	0.009				-4.7972	1.902201	0.012
Possession of a computer	-11.7483	0.844352	0	-9.4098	2.47662	0	-11.6537	0.72779	0
Students' age	-12.6182	0.746987	0				-11.7179	0.633483	0
Possession of a calculator	-23.0025	2.296922	0	-13.657	3.9669	0	-22.4036	1.932125	0

Regardless of these negligible direct effects, the Leadership and Management variables appear to have *strong and significant indirect effects*. Indeed, recalling equation (3), the model used in the empirical analysis presents a peculiar formulation whose aim is to evaluate the interaction effect between the prevalence of management in school principal activities and the other explanatory variables, and it has the following specification:

$$SCORE_{ijk} = \begin{cases} \alpha_0 + \beta_0 x_{ijk} + \gamma_0 z_{jk} + \theta_k + \delta_{jk} + \varepsilon_{ijk} & \text{for } Mana > 60\% \\ \alpha_1 + \beta_1 x_{ijk} + \gamma_1 z_{jk} + \theta_k + \delta_{jk} + \varepsilon_{ijk} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

The subsequent analytic step investigated whether the explanatory variables behaved any differently in the two parts of the model, and whether these differences were significant. Of course, 60% time in Management activities is only one very specific strategy; hence, the model was replicated to test the differences for a wider range of strategies (20 to 80%). For each degree of concentration of the school principal activities in management (20% to 80%), the model clusters the students who pertain to schools where the school principal devotes an amount of time lower than the threshold and compares them to the rest of the students. The differential effect of each variable⁴ is then tested for significance; if significant, the difference is sketched and the analysis goes on to the following level of concentration. The table below shows (in % and in number of units) the size of each cluster analyzed.

Figure 4
Size of the clusters for the analysis

Leadership <=80%	5.68%	2954	
Leadership <=70%	12.61%	6564	
Leadership <=60%	20.11%	10466	
Leadership <=50%	26.12%	13593	Management <=50%
	18.80%	9785	Management <=60%
	10.54%	5485	Management <=70%
	6.13%	3190	Management <=80%

⁴ Meaning (magnitude of the effect of the variable in the cluster where the school principal devotes less time than the threshold) – (magnitude of the effect of the variable in the cluster where the school principal devotes more time than the threshold)

Accordingly to how the variables have been constructed, the sum of management and leadership activities covers the entire span of the school principal available time; i.e. saying: “At least 50% time on Management activities” is equivalent to saying: “No more than 50% time in Leadership activities” and so forth.

The results suggest the existence of two main types of results. Results of “type-1” indicate that the school principal actions have generally a small impact on the role of the variable; this result regards the majority of individual and school variables.

The “type-2” effect, instead, shows an interaction effect between principal actions and the influence that a variable has on student achievements. This effect regards the variables related to family SES, and it specifically suggests that the school principal actions have an extremely high impact on the role of “highest level of parental education” on student outcomes.

Figure 5
Differential impact of highest level of parental education on student outcomes in Math for the different school principal behaviors, EU countries

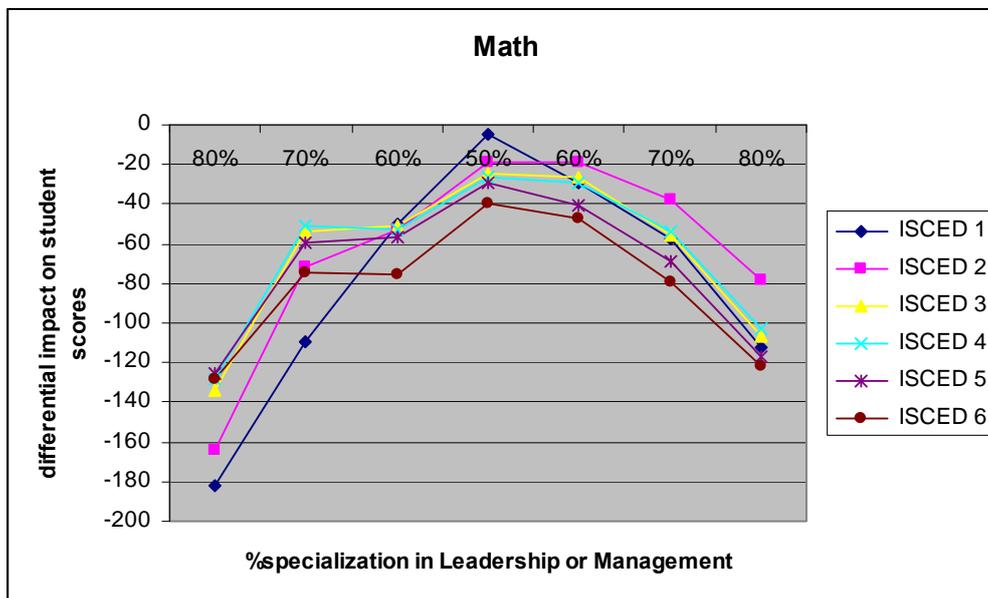


Figure 5 shows the results for the European countries. What is striking in this case is that *principal specialization in either management or leadership reduces substantially the impact of parental education on student outcomes*. As shown earlier, the highest level of parental education – a very strong proxy of the family SES – is the most influential factor for the determination of student results, and this result is true in

for all the combinations of Management and Leadership. The literature confirms this result (Bielby, 1981; Jencks et al., 1979; Reynolds et al. 1992; Heckman 2000); in fact, the family SES summarizes a vast range of characteristics ranging from availability of material and intellectual resources, to choice of school and area of dwelling. Still, the magnitude by which its importance is reduced tells us that, by specializing in the activities that are most appropriate to the specific situation, the principal can modify the existing situation and create conditions that support the students in their learning process. The specific elements vary greatly (school climate and teacher understanding of school goals are the most relevant throughout), but altogether the school is responsive to the different managerial strategies so that – in the end - it does make a difference. In sum “education *can* compensate for society”.

Moreover, if we split the impact of the school principal activities by level of student’s highest level of parental education, we can see how 70% time spent on leadership activities is especially beneficial to students of lower level of parental education (thus, likely, lower SES), 70% time spent on management is especially beneficial to students of higher level of parental education (Figure 6-7). The effect is consistent also for the other levels of specialization, although the differences are a little less accentuated. This effect suggests that school principals highly concerned with educational issues obtain relevant results in terms of *equity* and create environments with characteristics supportive for the low achievers. On the other hand, principals with a strong managerial focus create resource-rich environments that are best profited by the students of higher SES. In this sense, the focus on management could be related to *excellence*.

Figure 6
Impact of leadership at 70% on students from different SES

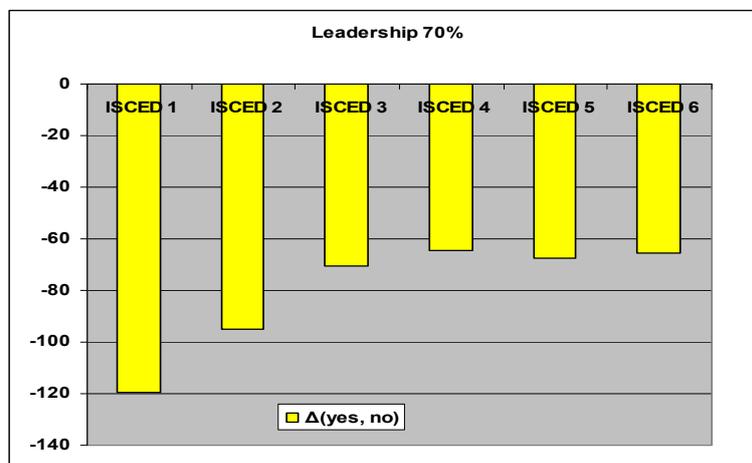
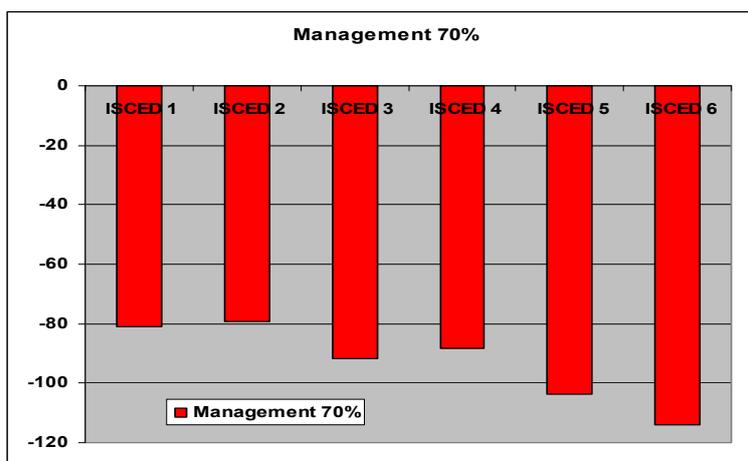
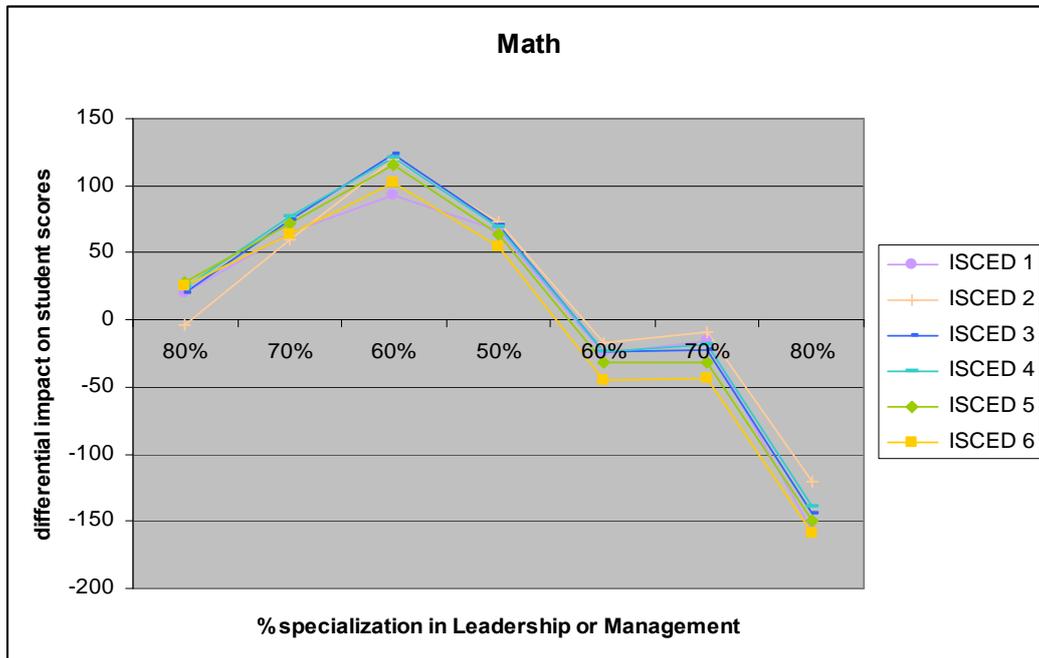


Figure 7
Impact of management at 70% on students from different SES



Although the mayor impact of principal strategies is confirmed, in the analysis of non-EU countries the picture comes out somewhat different (Figure 8). In this case, in fact, the positive results in reducing the impact of family SES are only associated to a specialization in management. A specialization in Leadership, on the other hand, enhances the relevance of family SES for the determination of student results. Further research is required to understand whether this phenomenon is more general, but a first possible consideration regards the structure of the educational systems under investigation. The educational systems investigated in Europe (ranging from the very centralized cases of Italy and Cyprus to the extremely decentralized case of the Netherlands and Belgium) obey to different logics. In some cases, the principals have a variety of responsibilities also in relation to hiring/firing staff, acquiring resources, chasing funding. In other cases their actions can only regard the educational sphere. Thus, principals must be malleable and play the system with the tools that they have in hands – whether they are administrative or educational. Once we include in the analysis the non-EU countries, on the other hand, there is a prevalence of Anglo-Saxon and decentralized systems where the principal is often the real manager of the institution. In this case a too-heavy-involvement of the school principals in educational activities could be considered as a form of “micro-management” that goes to detriment of their ability to govern the school effectively.

Figure 8
Differential impact of highest level of parental education on student outcomes in Math for the different school principal behaviors, EU and non-EU countries



2. Results by country

The analysis was then replicated on a country-by-country basis to investigate whether the aforementioned effects could still be identified in the individual countries.

More specifically, the aim of this part of the research was to understand for the individual country:

1. With respect to a situation of non-specialization (50% time in management and 50% time in leadership), which kind of school principal specialization would appear to be most correlated with a reduction of the relevance of the family socioeconomic status on student results;
2. Whether the effect of the declared school principal specialization appears to go *in the same direction* as it could be predicted by looking at the macro-level institutional characteristics of the school system. I.e. whether the specialization in leadership appeared to be most effective in countries with centralized school

systems and vice versa the specialization in management appeared to be most effective in the countries with more decentralized systems.

The first step for the analysis involved the definition of the analytic models for the individual countries. This task presented some unexpected difficulties due to the low (or null) number of observations for some variables. The result is the impossibility of using for the individual countries the same analytic model used at aggregate level. Hence, the analysis was carried out making the following modifications to the initial model:

1. the analysis was carried out only looking at the variable management for the values of 40, 50, 60, and 70%;
2. some of the explanatory variables were eliminated because of the limited number of available observations for some specific countries. This limited number of observations caused perfect collinearity among the variables considered in the model;
3. Cyprus and Romania (country code: 196 and 642) were excluded from the analysis because their inclusion would result in an excessive limitation of the explanatory variables for the model;
4. in the variable EDUP (maximum level of parental education), only categories 3, 4, 5, and 6 were considered (ISCED level 2 to 5).

The graphs showing in each country the differential impact of highest level of parental education on student outcomes in Math for the different school principal behaviors have been produced by considering the difference between the coefficients of $Mana \leq k$ with $k = \{40, 50, 60, 70\}$ (TRUE) and $Mana \leq k$ (FALSE).

With respect to the original multilevel model, the model for the country-by-country analysis considers a smaller set of variables. This decision results from the application of a criterion aiming at maximizing the statistical comparability between the countries.

The final model includes the following variables and is the same in all the countries:

- % time spent in Management $\leq k$, with $k = \{40, 50, 60, 70\}$;
- Size of the community where the school is located;
- Sex of the student;

- Possession of a calculator;
- Maximum level of parental education;
- Students' age;
- Number of possessed books.

Regardless of the reduced number of explanatory variables, the model still explains over 50% of the variability among student results.

As discussed earlier, the variable identifying the highest level of parental education is an ordinal variable organized in 7 categories; the analysis was run considering only categories 3-6 (ISCED level 2-5) because the number of cases in the other categories was insufficient for estimating the model. For the same reason, the levels of management (Mana) considered are those between 40 and 70%.

- Hungary, Japan, Lithuania, and Romania for “Mana \leq 70”;
- Scotland for “Mana \leq 40”;
- And is completely non usable for the data of England and Cyprus.

As apparent, the limits to the availability of data reduce to a large extent the range of analyses that could be performed on a country-by-country basis. Still, the individual-country model results can be used for answering the questions sketched at the beginning of the paragraph.

The first step would be to investigate which kind of school principal specialization would appear to be most correlated with a reduction of the relevance of the family socioeconomic status on student results. For the reasons afore expressed, not all levels of parental education could be considered; moreover, the main problem at stake relates to detecting the possible existence of a differential effect between the effects of school principal specialization and non-specialization on the role of family SES on student results. Thus, the attention has been devoted to the *average* differences among the impact of family SES at the various levels of management and leadership on family SES. Looking at the mean of the differences among the coefficients is justifiable because the variable maximum level of parental education (BSDGEDUP) has a quasi-linear effect so that the mean of the differences at is equivalent to the difference among the means of the coefficients.

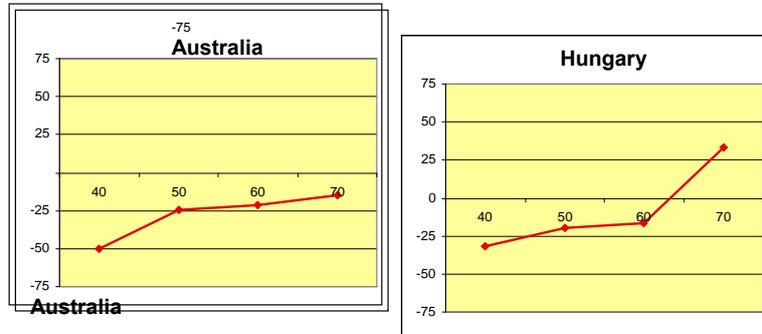
Graphically speaking, 4 effects were detectable:

1. **Leadership effect**, the school principal specialization in leadership activities reduces significantly more the dependence of student results from family SES than no specialization or than a specialization in management activities;
2. **Management effect**, the school principal specialization in management activities reduces significantly more the dependence of student results from family SES than no specialization or than a specialization in leadership activities;
3. **Bidirectional Specialization Effect**, the school principal specialization in either leadership or management activities reduces significantly more the dependence of student results from family SES than no specialization;
4. **Null or Unclear Specialization Effect**, the school principal specialization in either leadership or management activities did not bring about any significant difference in the dependence of student results from family SES than no specialization.

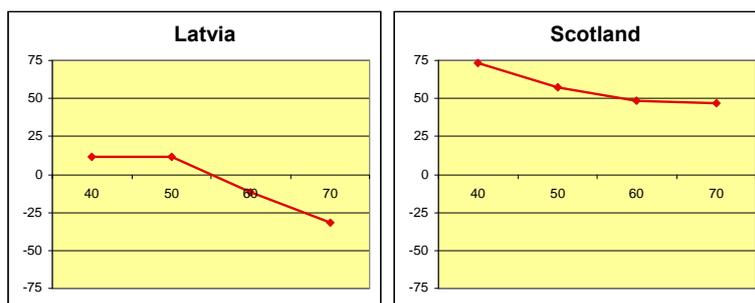
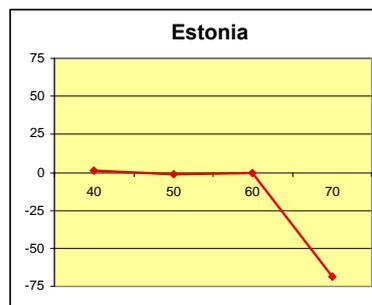
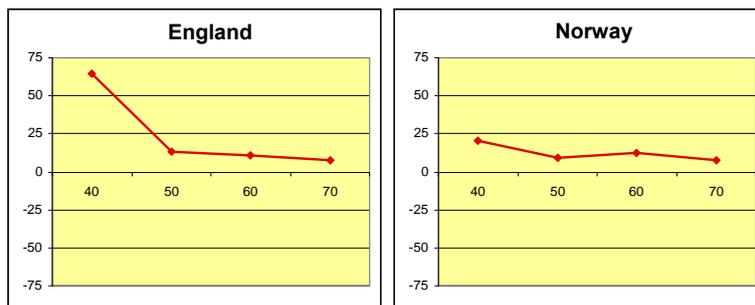
The graphs below show the results for the various countries analyzed. Australia, Hungary, Slovenia, and Sweden show a prevalence of the Leadership effect; while England, Norway, Estonia, Latvia, and Scotland show a prevalence of the Management effect. In Bulgaria, Netherlands and in the United States, either specialization appears to be fruitful while not much can be said for Belgium (Flemish community), Italy, Japan and Lithuania.

Figure 9
Differential impact of highest level of parental education on student outcomes
in Math for the different school principal behaviors, Country-by-country analysis

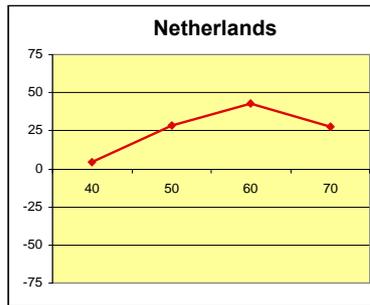
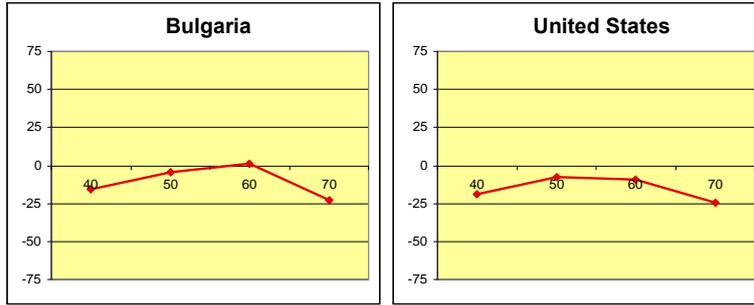
a. Leadership Specialization Effect



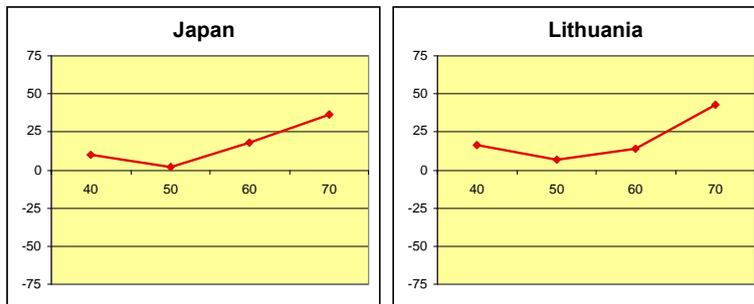
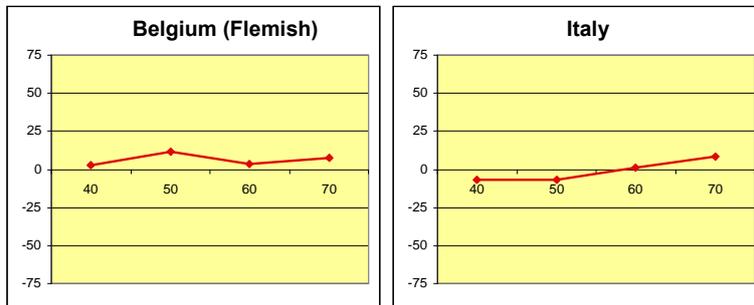
b. Management Specialization Effect



c. Bidirectional Specialization Effect:



d. Null or Unclear Specialization Effect



These first results suggest that, in the majority of cases, the principal specialization appears to be correlated with positive results in terms of reduced dependence of student results from their family socioeconomic status. The same effect can be identified in most countries: in Australia, Hungary, Slovenia and Sweden, the Leadership specialization effect is prevalent; in England, Norway, Scotland, Latvia and Estonia, the Management specialization effect prevails; in the United States, the Netherlands and Bulgaria both specializations appear to bring about the same positive results; while in Belgium (Flemish community), Italy and Lithuania no relevant difference exists between the results in the cases of specialization or non-specialization.

Still, the identification of a specialization-effect does not say much in terms of the reasons for its existence. The hypothesis would be that the school principals are professionals that try to use at its best the opportunities provided by the institutional setup of the school system. In the more decentralized school systems that leave to the schools responsibilities in terms of monetary sanctions/incentives (hiring and firing, salary upgrades...), the school principals would tend to make use of these opportunities and focus most on management activities. Vice versa, in more centralized school systems, which leave to the schools only responsibilities that do not involve a monetary side, the school principals would stress their roles as role-models, educators, and motivators for their staff and collaborators. Hence, the issue would be to understand whether the effect of the declared school principal specialization appears to go *in the same direction* as it could be predicted by looking at the macro-level institutional characteristics of the school system.

To address these issues, a two-steps procedure was adopted. First, the earlier specified grouping of countries in terms of prevalent specialization effect was further specified by adding trend-lines to the country level results. A positive gradient implies that the more time the school principal spends in leadership, the lower is the weight of family SES on student results. Vice versa, a negative gradient suggests that the focus on management is the strategy that reduces the most the weight of family SES on student results. Gradients between -1 and 1 indicate a substantially invariant effect of school principal specialization on student results. The calculated trends are linear, so that we lose the convexity effect that can be perceived in some countries, but using the gradients allows us to group the countries on the basis of the overall prevalent effect. The results of these calculations are reported in table 5.

Table 1
Gradient of school principal specialization effect per country

Country	Math	Gradient
Estonia		-21.03
Latvia		-15.33
England		-12.30
Scotland		-8.86
Bulgaria		-2.93
Norway		-2.52
United States		-1.79
Belgium (Flemish)		0.46
Italy		4.55
Lithuania		8.65
Japan		9.50
Sweden		10.92
Australia		11.08
Slovenia		13.26
Netherlands		13.53
Hungary		19.81

The following step regarded the clustering of the educational systems on the basis of their institutional characteristics. The educational systems investigated in Europe (ranging from the very centralized cases of Italy and Cyprus to the extremely decentralized case of the Netherlands and Belgium) obey to different logics. In some cases, the school principals have a variety of responsibilities also in relation to hiring/firing staff, acquiring resources, chasing funding. In other cases their actions can only regard the educational sphere. Thus, school principals must be malleable and play the system with the tools that they have in hands – whether they are administrative or educational. In the non-EU countries under analysis, on the other hand, there is a prevalence of Anglo-Saxon and decentralized systems where the school principal is often the real manager of the institution. In this case a too-heavy-involvement of the school principals in educational activities could be considered as a form of “micro-management” that goes to detriment of their ability to govern the school effectively.

Table 6 provides a framework for the levels of governance of the systems in the analyzed countries.

Table 2
Overview of educational systems organization

	National level	Second level	Third level	Institutional level	Notes
Australia	National (commonwealth) government	6 states and 2 territories	Districts	School councils	Responsibility for education rests with the States and Territories. The Commonwealth (federal) Government promotes national consistency and coherence.
Belgium Flemish	Ministry	school groups and Council of the Community Education		school principal (directeur) and the school council (schoolraad)	Devolved responsibility to schools/school governing bodies. Educational policy mainly results from interaction between the governing body at the national level, the intermediate level and the local level
Bulgaria	Ministry	Regional Education Inspectorates		School principal	Policy determined at national level; organizational decisions at local and school level.
Cyprus	Ministry	6 districts		School governing bodies	Centralized management and policy making.
England	Ministry	c.150 local authorities (LAs)		School governing bodies	Devolved responsibility to schools/school governing bodies. Recent legislation allows for the creation of integrated children services departments, at local level, responsible for education, children and young people's health and social services.
Estonia	Riigikogu (Parliament) and Ministry	county governor	Local authority	state school councils and school school principals	Centralized management and policy making.
Hungary	Ministry	3000+ municipalities or counties (local authorities)		Schools	Policy determined at national level; organizational decisions at local and school level.
Italy	Ministry	20 regions	Provinces and comuni	School councils	Centralized policy making. Increasing delegation of administrative powers from central government via regions, provinces and communes to schools.
Japan	Ministry	47 prefectures	3400+ municipal/ local boards of educ.	School principal	Ministry oversees; prefectures operationally responsible for upper secondary, municipalities for compulsory education.
Latvia	Ministry	Regional Gov.ts	Local authorities	School principal	Devolved responsibility to schools for hiring the teaching and non-teaching staff, managing the financial resources, ensuring the implementation of the regulatory enactments concerning education. The school head may hire deputy directors, who ensure qualitative organization of educating process.

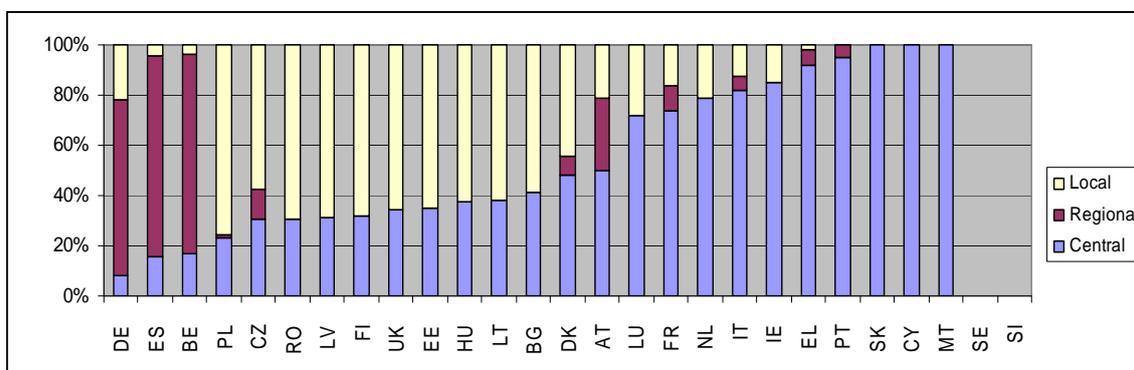
Table 3 (Cont)
Overview of educational systems organization

	National level	Second level	Third level	Institutional level	Notes
Netherlands	Ministry	Provinces	Municipalities (local authorities)	c. 6300 competent authorities	Devolution of financial and management responsibility to the competent authorities.
Norway	Ministry	County (upper secondary ed.)	Municipalities (primary and lower secondary ed.)	School principal	Policy determined at county and municipal level, decisions enforced by school principals
Romania	Ministry	County School Inspectorates	Local Councils	School principal	Policy determined at national level, decisions enforced by school principals
Scotland	Ministry	32 local authorities		School boards	Devolved responsibility to local authorities/schools.
Slovenia	Ministry	Municipalities (primary and lower secondary ed.)		School principal	Centralized management and policy making.
Sweden	Ministry	2 national agencies, plus county administrations	289 municipalities	School principal	Municipalities decide how schools are run, following national Ministry guidelines.
USA	Federal government	50 states	Local district school boards	School	Individual states provide policy guidelines; local districts operate schools within these guidelines. Some national (federal) initiatives influence state policy guidelines.

The different strategies adopted in the various systems entail indeed an extreme variability of the action tools available to school principals. Going a little more in depth, we can investigate whether this variability is reflected in the access to and control of resources and whether there is any significant trend and in what direction. The literature on New Public Management has identified the strands of activities that facilitate and characterize system decentralization (Hood, 1991; Barzelay, 2001; OECD, 1995, Paletta & Vidoni, 2006). Such reforms do not follow a unique pattern. For example, in the Netherlands the movement towards the decentralization of education started at the higher education level (university and higher VET), then reached lower secondary education, and is now moving towards primary education. Moreover, the intensity of the process varies greatly between countries, and is more visible in some Scandinavian and Central Europe countries than in many Southern European countries. Still, all these reforms insist on three core areas (Kickert, 1997):

- The introduction of institutionalized market or quasi-market structures;
- The development of networks, techniques, and managerial instruments derived from the business sector;
- The transformation of citizens into clients and clients into public service producers.

Figure 1
Sources of public funding of education by administrative level (ISCED 1-6), 2001



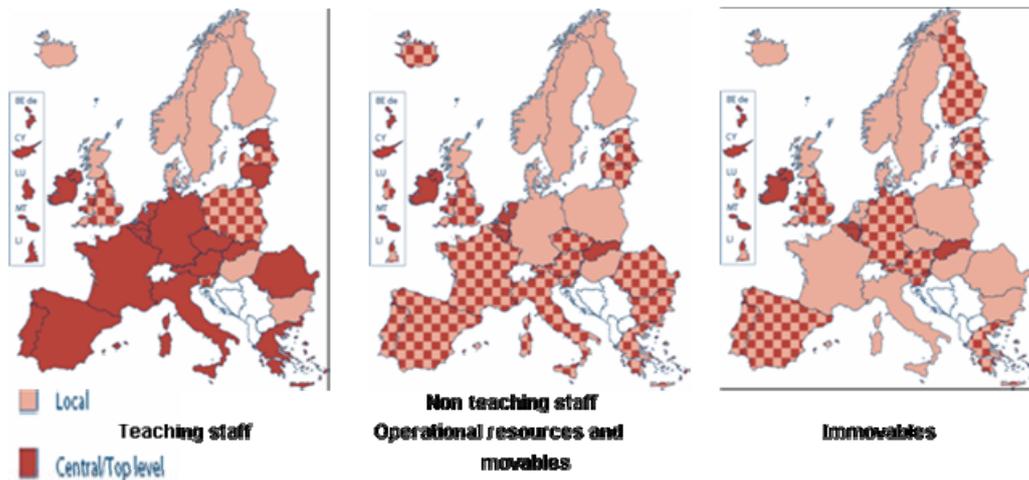
With respect to the European situation, there are three basic strategies that identify the administrative levels at which public funds are allocated.

As shown in figure 10, the federative nature of the German, Belgian, and Spanish school systems is apparent also in terms of sources of funding. The rest of the picture is quite mixed, but strongly characterized by centralized funding in Southern Europe and local funding in Central and Northern Europe.

Rather than the sources of funding, however, the key characteristic of decentralization pertains to the financial independence of the schools and freedom for using the allocated budgets¹¹. In terms of school management, financial independence influences the possibility that school principals have of choosing staff who shares their view of the school mission and of defining the objectives of the school. The maps reported below – which indicate the level of the decision making authority in a number of core areas – confirm the initial indication of a mixed picture where Scandinavian countries tend to allow for more autonomy at the local level, while Southern Europe is still highly centralized, especially with respect to the selection and payment of the Teaching staff.

¹¹ For an exhaustive description of the models currently adopted in Europe please refer to: ATKINSON, M., LAMONT, E., GULLIVER, C., WHITE, R. and KINDER, K. (2005). School Funding: a Review of Existing Models in European and OECD Countries (LGA Research Report 3/05). Slough: NFER.

Figure 2
Location of decision-making authority to determine the overall amount of public expenditure earmarked for schools providing compulsory education, public sector or equivalent, 2002/03



On the basis of this information, the school systems of Australia, England, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, and Scotland could be considered as the most decentralized. In Belgium, Hungary, Italy, Sweden, and the United States, the school system is either organized around a system of local control or is in a transition period from a centralized situation. Estonia, Japan, Slovenia, and Lithuania are the school systems where the centralization is still strong.

The table below presents the school systems of the various countries investigated and clustered in terms of *levels of school autonomy*. The last 2 columns recall the gradients for school principal effectiveness in Math and Science.

Table 4
School systems by level of school autonomy and gradient in Math

Country	Notes	Type*	Math
Australia	Responsibility for education rests with the States and Territories. The Commonwealth (federal) Government promotes national consistency and coherence.	a	11.08
England	Devolved responsibility to schools/school governing bodies. Recent legislation allows for the creation of integrated children services departments, at local level, responsible for education, children and young people's health and social services.	a	-12.30
Latvia	Devolved responsibility to schools for hiring the teaching and non-teaching staff, managing the financial resources, ensuring the implementation of the regulatory enactments concerning education. The school head may hire deputy directors, who ensure qualitative organization of educating process.	a	-15.33
Netherlands	Devolution of financial and management responsibility to the competent authorities.	a	13.53
Norway	Policy determined at county and municipal level, decisions enforced by school principals	a	-2.52
Scotland	Devolved responsibility to local authorities/schools.	a	-8.86
Belgium Flemish	Devolved responsibility to schools/school governing bodies. Educational policy mainly results from interaction between the governing body at the national level, the intermediate level and the local level	b	0.46
Bulgaria	Policy determined at national level; organizational decisions at local and school level.	b	-2.93
Italy	Centralized policy making. Increasing delegation of administrative powers from central government via regions, provinces and municipalities to schools.	b	4.55
Sweden	Municipalities decide how schools are run, following national Ministry guidelines.	b	10.92
USA	Individual states provide policy guidelines; local districts operate schools within these guidelines. Some national (federal) initiatives influence state policy guidelines.	b	-1.79
Estonia	Centralized management and policy making.	c	-21.03
Hungary	Policy determined at national level; practical organization decisions taken at local and school level.	c	19.81
Japan	Ministry oversees; prefectures operationally responsible for upper secondary, municipalities for compulsory education.	c	9.50
Slovenia	Centralized management and policy making.	c	13.26
Lithuania	historically centralized management and policy making, in transition towards a more decentralized management	c	8.65

- *Type a: decentralized school systems characterized by school autonomy
- *Type b: school systems characterized by the control of local authorities or in transition from a centralized situation;
- *Type c: more centralized school systems.

In general, in the more decentralized school systems, the managerial focus of the school principal seems to be the winning strategy in terms of correlation with a reduced dependence of student results from their family SES; while the leadership specialization appears to be the best option in the more centralized systems. The school systems characterized by local control or in transition are a mixed picture. In fact, this cluster

groups the schools where no clear specialization effect can be detected, but it also includes some systems such as Sweden or Hungary typified by the leadership-specialization effect and the USA where the management-specialization effect appears to be stronger. A possible reason for such variety is that the definition of “control of local authorities or in transition from a centralized situation” is sufficiently general to allow for many different institutional setups to co-exist. Examples of these different situations are certainly Italy and the United States. For a long time Italy has been a highly centralized system that left little or no space of maneuvering to the individual schools. After the Constitutional reform of 2001, the Legislator has intended to create a more decentralized system built on autonomous schools; many progresses have been made in this direction, but much is left to do. In fact, the Italian school system has not yet completed its transition-phase towards decentralization, and presently the school principals have some authority with respect to budget allocation, non-permanent staff selection, and calendar organization, but they cannot take any substantial decision in terms of monetary incentives and sanctions so that they must rely on non-monetary incentives to motivate their staff. Moreover, school headship is not yet a career per se so much as it is the last step of the teaching career; thus, the new school principals do not necessarily have the professional training to attend to the most managerial parts of the job. Training courses and activities are now being organized, but the path towards a clear shaping of the school principal profession is still long (Paletta Vidoni, 2006). This sketch depicts a situation in which the school principal could slowly specialize more and more in management, but the leadership-specialization would presently be the most probable choice. In the United States, the fact that education is a responsibility of each of the 50 federal States implies that each State is autonomous with respect to the organization of the school system. In practical terms, most of the times the responsibility for the practical arrangements and management falls on the Local School Boards, which are more than 15.000. On one side, this situation explains why the U.S. is often referred to as a “laboratory”: so many different micro-cosmos can experiment an enormous variety of solutions in school organization and practices. On the other side, having the *de facto* responsible authority (Local School Board) so close-by means that the school principals must dedicate a large share of their efforts to respond positively to the requests of the Board. Moreover, school headship in the U.S. is per se a profession with specific training and formation requirements different from the requisites for a teacher and aiming more at developing the managerial know-how of the perspective

principals. These facts would therefore point towards the existence of a management-specialization effect.

Three systems behave differently than expected; while being some of the most decentralized systems, in Australia and in the Netherlands there is a strong leadership-specialization effect. Vice versa, Estonia is a centralized school system where the school principal specialization effect tends towards management. The reasons for these discrepancies should be investigated more in depth as they are likely to be indicators of more complex dynamics. For example, in the Netherlands both public and private schools are fully-funded by the Government, which – in turn – lays down a complex set of statutes and regulations that the schools must comply with. By giving the schools organizational autonomy and freeing them from the need of seeking many resources, the Dutch government implicitly frees the school principals from the need of investing too much time on administrative issues such as fund raising or public relations and allows them to invest their efforts “to develop distinctive approaches to meeting ... [the school] goals. The sponsor has the responsibility of defining its distinctive character and government must take care not to interfere with this legally-protected distinctiveness, which extends to the worldview reflected in instruction and school life, and also to many of the details of management” (Glenn, 2005: 20).

As often pointed out throughout the text, the variables and the data available for this analysis are limited; given these limitations, no causal link should be searched between the results and the underlying socio-economic processes. Still, the existence of a parallelism between the institutional characteristics of school systems and the prevalent school principal specialization effect suggests that school principals are professional that do their best to favor the good functioning of their schools *by using the tools that the existing regulations give them*.

Discussion and conclusions

“*Do school principals make a difference?*” This study tried to shed some further light on this long-debated question by looking at subset of 18 countries in the TIMSS 2003 8th grade dataset and investigating whether the school principal’s specialization in administrative or educational tasks (management or leadership) has an influence on student outputs, both in terms of direct and indirect effects.

The key-variables of interest considered in the analysis indicate the % of time spent by school principals on instructional issues (teaching, supervising teachers, and instructional leadership – i.e. giving demonstration lessons, discussing educational objectives with teachers, initiating curriculum revision and/or planning, training teachers, and providing professional development activities) and the % of time spent on non-instructional issues (internal administrative tasks, representing the school in the community, representing the school in official meetings, talking with parents, counseling and disciplining students, and responding to education officials' requests). For the purposes of the research, these variables were aggregated in the two derived variables Management and Leadership that indicate the total amount of time spent by the school principal in non-instructional (Mana) and instructional (Lead) activities.

These notes on the construction of the variables also indicate the first limitation of the study; in fact, a self reported measure of the % time used in a range of activities does not give any indication on the *outputs* of those tasks. It is impossible to discern whether larger amounts of time spent in one activity instead of another were the result of specific choice or simply of the individual school principal's inability to carry out the task effectively.

Maybe due to this limitation, the school principal's focus on Management activities (60% time or more) does not have a statistically significant impact on student achievement. This result is consistent with the large body of literature presented through the text (e.g. Scheerens and Bosker, 1997; Hallinger and Heck, 1998) and could be partly due to the definition of the variable, but – most likely – it depends on the fact that the school principal effects on student outputs are mostly indirect and that the range of actions that school principals can implement is necessarily limited by the institutional set-up of the system (macro level) and by the environmental conditions of the school (micro level).

The subsequent step of the investigation built a three-level multilevel model for evaluating *whether the focus of school principal's actions makes a significant difference in the behavior of the other variables*. If so, what are the variables that are mostly affected, and what is the magnitude of this difference. The analysis carried out on the whole 18 countries (clustered in EU and non-EU countries) indicates that model is stable, it explains above 50% of the variance among student results, and it shows a *strong link between the school principal's actions and how much student achievement depends from the maximum level of parental education*. The analysis was then

replicated on a country-by-country level, and it showed that, *in the majority of cases, the school principal specialization appears to be correlated with positive results in terms of reduced dependence of student results from their family socioeconomic status.*

Still, the identification of a specialization-effect does not say much about the reasons for its existence. One possible explanation is that *school principals are professionals that try to use at its best the opportunities provided by the institutional setup of the school system.* In the more decentralized school systems that leave to the schools responsibilities in terms of monetary sanctions/incentives (hiring and firing, salary upgrades...), the school principals would tend to make use of these opportunities and focus most on management activities. Vice versa, in more centralized school systems, which leave to the schools only responsibilities that do not involve a monetary side, the school principals would stress their roles as role-models, educators, and motivators for their staff and collaborators. Hence, the issue was to understand whether the effect of the declared school principal specialization appears to go *in the same direction* as it could be predicted by looking at the macro-level institutional characteristics of the school system.

In general, this hypothesis was confirmed. In the more decentralized school systems, the managerial focus of the school principal seems to be the winning strategy for reducing the dependence of student results from their family SES; while the leadership specialization appears to be the best option in the more centralized systems. The school systems characterized by local control or in transition are a mixed picture. In fact, this cluster groups the schools where no clear specialization effect can be detected, but it also includes some systems such as Sweden or Hungary typified by the leadership-specialization effect and the USA where the management-specialization effect appears to be stronger. A possible reason for such variety is that the definition of “control of local authorities or in transition from a centralized situation” is sufficiently general to allow for many different institutional setups to co-exist.

Three systems behave differently than expected; while being some of the most decentralized systems, in Australia and in the Netherlands there is a strong leadership-specialization effect. Vice versa, Estonia is a centralized school system where the school principal specialization effect tends towards management. The reasons for these discrepancies should be investigated more in depth as they are likely to be indicators of more complex dynamics.

Of course, further research would be needed to adequately contextualize the results within the different educational systems. Indeed, the first suggestion for further research strongly points to the need of blending quantitative and qualitative research methods so to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth picture.

The second suggestion, instead, regards an issue of variables. By making explicit the indirect role of the school principal in the manner previously described, the role of other school organizational variables (teacher collaboration, evaluation of courses, distributed leadership...) was strongly reduced. It is very likely that the problem is linked to the definition of the variables, but the existence of evidence suggesting their relatively lower importance would need further research to identify what are the areas that – in a situation of scarce resources – would need to be prioritized in terms of investments.

One school variable that proved again to be extremely relevant is school climate. However, this subject could also be further analyzed. In fact, the direction of the causal chain is unclear and the issue could be flawed by problems of endogeneity – i.e. is “climate” a cause of better result, an effect, or a concurrent factor?

The last – but not least – point regards the intimate structure of the research project, which was conceived and implemented on a “one shot” database. Although “forced” to use the TIMSS 2003 database for the limitedness of alternative internationally comparable data sources, doubts still remain on the real possibility of gauging a long-term process such as school leadership on a picture taken at one very specific instant in time. Teaching and learning are activities that require years to produce results, even more so an indirect activity such as school leadership, which would mostly produce influences on teaching and learning opportunities. The results of the students tested in the TIMSS, therefore, are very likely to be dependent from the *past history* of the student rather than on the specific activity of the current school principal. For this reason, the availability of longitudinal, reliable, and comparable data is perceived as the only possible way out.

Nonetheless, these analyses have produced results. Of course, the variables that enter in the process of determining the school principal time allocation are too many for suggesting any specific policy direction based on average country behaviors. Still, the existence of a parallelism between the institutional characteristics of school systems and the prevalent school principal specialization effect suggests some new insights on the role of school management and school leadership for fostering the quality of education

in general and, especially, for creating environments that are conducive to learning. Although not directly related to the data, the inference that could be drawn from these analyses is that school principals are professional who do their best to favor the good functioning of their schools *by using the tools that the existing regulations give them*. If this were the case, I would consider necessary to give some further thought to two main areas:

- *The individual dimension of the school principals*, including their formation and professional development.
- *The institutional dimension of the school principals and their responsibilities*, with the aim of finding the best balance between school autonomy and State responsibility.

The first issue is a problem of *knowledge of the available space of action and availability of the adequate tools, know-how, and incentives*. As often reiterated through the text, the analyses presented are necessarily limited in scope because of the limits of the available data. Among others, one issue that could not be investigated relates to the specific roles and responsibilities of the school principals in the various countries. Even in situations non-dissimilar in terms of the practical space of action of the school head, the actual conditions may vary greatly. For example, school principals in Italy and in the United States have about the same level of individual freedom of action; still, the Italian school principals are theoretically responsible for a variety of tasks ranging from the school administration, to the management of staff and staff relations, and of the student matters. Their U.S. counterparts do certainly cover the administrative and managerial areas, but they are also assisted by other institutional figures, such as the assistant-principal in charge of student matters. This difference can partly explain the relatively higher specialization in management of U.S. school principals, and should therefore be taken as an extra caution to the interpretation of the data. In this case, however, I am mostly concerned with the prescriptive side of the issue. In fact, in many cases, the definition of the specific tasks and duties of the school principals is just as foggy as in Italy. Such confusion poses an unnecessary extra-burden to an already demanding profession, and it complicates the definition of effective training and formation programs. Indeed, however limited in their actions and responsibilities, school principals need to acquire some specific knowledge and skills distinct from the

knowledge and skills of teachers, at least because they are applied to different age-groups (adults instead of youngsters) and to different objects (the school as an institution instead of specific subjects). Although some people may be born leaders, this natural inclination is not the rule, but many more could become competent leaders with adequate coaching. In many countries training is not a requirement for appointment as a school principal so that many find themselves in leadership positions, without being adequately trained, prepared or exposed beforehand. Some teaching experience would certainly be a requirement, as it would provide the necessary knowledge of the specific institutional characteristics of the school world, but headship also requires some specific know-how and – especially – a practical component that current leadership training and development programs often tend to neglect. The University must and will keep playing a central role in the development of school principal training, but synergies with other actors and cross-fertilization projects should be favored for they would give to the prospective school principal useful background experiences of the logics and rules that shape institutions and organizations other than the schools. In this sense, experiences and programs such as those promoted in the UK by the National College for School Leadership (<http://www.ncsl.org.uk/programmes/npqh/>) appear to be very promising. Of course, creating the conditions for a true professionalization of school principals must necessarily be accompanied by the provisions necessary to make school-headship an attractive career choice. Indeed, apart from being expensive to provide, the training just suggested (theoretical study of specific areas ranging from management, to coaching, from economics, to sociology; practical experience in teaching; experience in environments other than the school) implies a substantial investment by the individual. Thus, if they are to select a career in school headship rather than in another profession, individuals must be able to foresee returns to their investments. Moreover, if being a school principal is also related to bearing a specific load of responsibilities above and beyond those of the fellow teachers and staff members, the pay-offs for the school principal career should also be sufficiently different from those of the teaching career so to create the conditions for convincing current teachers to undertake the extra-efforts and investments necessary to “cross the border”.¹²

¹² To the point, at least 2 projects are studying these problems and could provide some useful insights:

- ✓ the OECD Activity on Improving School Leadership (<http://www.oecd.org/edu/schoolleadership/>), dealing with continental Europe, and non-European OECD countries;
- ✓ the CRELL – Euromed project (<http://crell.jrc.ec.europa.eu>), dealing with the problem of educational leadership in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

The second issue relates to the need of *finding the right balance between school autonomy and central control*. Indeed, this issue is both a prerequisite and a logic result of the just-presented-considerations. Professional school principals, professionals in general, are useful *if and only if* they have some decision-making power and are responsible for the results of their decisions. Thus, for school principals to exist the schools must have some autonomy, the question is *how much*. In Europe, the already recalled Communication “Efficiency and Equity in European Education and Training Systems” states that “the combination of local autonomy for institutions and central accountability systems can improve student performance. However, accountability systems should be designed to ensure a full commitment to equity and to avoid the potentially inequitable local consequences of decentralized decisions, e.g. on the definition of school catchments.” The use of “school autonomy” not as a mere tool, but as a new organizational principle to clarify how responsibilities are distributed and shared can open the way to finding the right balance between central demands and local and individual needs. The *Charter school* movement in the U.S. is a good example of this tension; Charter schools depend on the initiative of private stake-holders (a group of teachers, of parents, a confessional or pedagogic community) but are classified as public schools, fully-funded by the State, and allowed to be distinctive so long as they meet various State standards. In such environments, the professional dimension of the school management team is magnified: the general performance objectives to be reached are clearly set out by the public authority. The community of stake-holders that the school serves identifies the specific mission and vision of the institution, and the management team has the freedom of implying a variety of tools (budget allocation, employment of staff, specific curriculum, extra curricular activities, calendar organization) to achieve the required goals enlght of the existing mission and vision. The movement is still young and further research needs to be done to gauge its effectiveness, but the charter schools and similar experiences are important pieces in putting together the puzzle of “what schools for tomorrow”, which will need to mediate between central, local, and individual interests and will need professionals able to implement different managerial strategies that could exploit local knowledge leads to foster the system’s equity and excellence.

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*Leadership and learning in a context of change
in the Small Island State of Malta*

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Throughout the following pages I will be focusing mainly on leadership and learning. What I will try to emphasize, is that there are different forms of learning taking place in my context, and I'll be using Malta as an example of the learning that is taking place. Basically, the points that I'll be looking into are some of the major developments that are taking place in Malta, and looking at the implications behind the reform process. I will explore the major reforms that have taken place over the past decade in our island. The focus will be on leadership and to look at leadership from a critical perspective. I will also present attempts to link Malta with other educational institutions and will focus on the link between the University of Malta and the University of Bologna, and an initiative within the Euro-Mediterranean region.

I'd like to start off by looking at some of the major reforms that we are experiencing in Malta. I consider them major reforms because the education authorities, mainly spearheaded by a dynamic minister, have embarked on a different approach to policy-making, one that places schools at the centre-stage of reform. This is a critical departure from a highly-centralized education system we had been used to over the years, one in which policy-makers used to dictate what schools had to do. This shift can be traced back to just over ten years ago. Back in the mid-90s, a new national curriculum came into being, which practically brought all stakeholders into the discourse. The national curriculum arose out of a national discourse involving not only educators but practically all stakeholders, and anyone who wanted to be involved, government and non-government institutions. That initiative was the start of a new era in the reform process.

We have seen quite a move, therefore, from a centralized, restrictive model of decision making to one that encourages greater devolution of authority to the school site. Reforms range from preschool education, assessment, 11+ examinations, inclusion, post-secondary education, vocational and tertiary education. All developments that are being proposed have come about thanks to a commitment by the Ministry of Education that commissioned locally-based research to appreciate and contextualise the needed reforms.

Furthermore, attempts are aimed at challenging the culture of dependency to nurturing a culture of collaboration and sustainability. These are two terms that we have been presented with even today: the whole idea of collaboration and sustainability, of course proves. And this has been done through a major initiative, that of networks working on the island. All our schools now, as from this scholastic year, will be networked, and therefore they are brought together, roughly, say, ten primary schools leading on to two or three secondary schools on the island, and we have roughly 10 networks across the island. So, practically, all our schools are being encouraged to network. Again research attempts, research work is being done (...) at that level.

Behind the concept of networking one appreciates the importance behind principles and values. There are certain attributes that leaders need to have. It is most appropriate to see that in a context of complexity and change we are also learning to appreciate that the key to reform, lasting reform, are values, principles and beliefs. The emerging approach to reform needs to uphold and value authenticity, collegiality, trust, respect, commitment and wholeness.

These are values which are finally being espoused in all present documents, but as we all know – and hence the statement – it calls definitely for a sense of commitment, a sense of sacrifice and engagement at different levels. Ultimately, what it is calling for is a new work ethic, maybe going back to the whole idea that education is after all, mainly, a vocation, and we should not lose sight of that. Over the years the best educators have been ones who have given themselves to others and consequently do so in spite of the repercussions. I think the leaders that have mattered over the years -and I have seen such leadership qualities even in people working in highly centralized systems- were ones who truly believed and upheld strong values that nurtured relationships.

And really, it is thanks to them that some of us, if not all of us, are here today. It is essential to create a work ethic where people do make sacrifices, where people do model what they believe in, that they truly walk the talk.

Let us look briefly at some locally-based research we are – have been undertaking, especially in the area of leadership. As a starting point one has to appreciate that we are an extremely small island state, a country that before gaining independence back in 1964 was subject to one ruler or another. We were a British colony for over 150 years and therefore our systems have been heavily influenced by their policies and practices. Education was no exception. However, one can now safely argue that whilst the system still retains particular characteristics that were introduced many decades ago, we are creating an educational system that respects our context, our history, our heritage and our value system. Quite a number of educators have studied in various countries abroad and this has offered us an opportunity to challenge what is, to introduce new ideas, and create new opportunities.

I do believe that is what is now happening in the field of leadership. Back in the mid-1980s the Faculty of Education introduced a diploma programme in educational administration and management. This degree was initiated thanks to the support provided by a number of key British educators who taught the management credits, which I then started teaching when I returned home from New Zealand where I had read for a Masters degree in the field of administration and management. This diploma programme was so well received that in 1994 it was recognised as a requirement for headship. This meant that anyone who wished to be considered for headship needed this degree. Since then the Faculty of Education has introduced another degree – a Masters degree in educational leadership which provides an alternative route to headship. It is also worth mentioning that many undergraduates are pursuing further studies abroad, both on a fulltime or part-time basis. This means that, on the one hand many are gaining experiences from a foreign context, and secondly that we are witnessing a proliferation of studies which in turn is effecting policy making on the island.

The research work, the people involved in furthering their education, the findings themselves, show that heads play a critical and crucial role in determining student learning. Yet, what is critical is the way they lead their institutions which impacts on learning, amongst other things. At the same time we are also seeing a move away from individuality toward collegiality. Two minds are better than one. Educators are slowly realising that coming together to share ideas, to engage in a dialogue can leave a

positive impact on adults and children alike. The move towards networking implies people within a network of schools coming together to develop a vision that can take them forward. However, I do believe that networks, or the whole philosophy of networks, whilst building on collegiality, actually cause networks to be unique. This is an interesting paradox. Whilst networks aim to challenge the culture of isolation teachers work in, networks calls for creativity and being different. Whilst appreciating the need to establish particular national policies, frameworks and standards, it is within these set parameters that the individuality has to surface. And, that is where the leadership capacity of people in schools, hopefully, will surface.

There is definitely a need to work with, and for, individuals. The leaders that matter are making a difference in this domain. Various local studies especially over the past decades have clearly shown that discrepancy between what school heads are expected and wish to fulfil and what, in reality, they do. Research into headship time and again has shown that they spend most of their time doing administrative work and hardly anytime focusing on the critical issues of schooling. However, the latest education reforms are showing a critical departure from past practices. The education authorities are calling for decision and policy making which is backed by locally carried out research. As a result of such a move we are seeing that, for example, new posts of responsibility are being created so that new personnel can take care of the school buildings, rather than the head having to, for example, handle matters that have to do with maintenance. We will now have project managers handling such issues. That is just one example where research is finally influencing policy.

The latest reforms are calling for a move which sees heads, and now principals of colleges, who create and empower others. We need heads who are working for and alongside their middle management and teachers to address the critical aspects of schooling such as curriculum design, development and implementation, and the teaching and learning taking place. Heads need to create learning opportunities which help teachers analyse, review and improve their practices. New studies on networks are shedding light on 'new' problems that need to be addressed, on new challenges.

Within a context of change, a context which respects research and places it at the forefront of reform; a context where learning and unlearning is essential, helps to contextualise the importance of the role the professional development has to play.

As a person who is directly involved in running professional courses for school leaders whilst also co-ordinating a masters programme locally and teaching on others

locally and abroad I took this as an ideal opportunity to create a new masters programme that acknowledges these new developments.

The degree of Master of Education (Educational Leadership) is an advanced level, field-based programme which is targeted at educational leaders seeking to develop their organisations to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex and independent world. The course investigates leading edge research and critical thinking about the creation of the effective learning environments needed to meet the demands of the information age. Participants will be engaged in the design, maintenance and development of learning organisations through a mixture of taught modules, open learning materials and reflective learning.

The programme is designed to confront the problems of leadership in the educational setting. It will focus on the development of managerially-oriented competencies and on leadership development. The aim of the course is to assist practitioners to reflect more analytically and constructively on the nature of their own management experience. We seek to present an intellectually challenging, developmental opportunity to experienced practitioners who aspire to bring leadership to senior level educational administration positions in schools, post-secondary institutions and level. On successful completion of the course graduates should be able to provide increased professional leadership as they contribute to the decisions shaping the institutions in which they work.

The programme is designed to provide participants with the knowledge base, and rigorous intellectual analysis, and experience that will equip them to harness the human and other resources necessary to assure highly effective educational institutions. It is organized around what educational leaders need to know and to be able to do in order both to understand societal needs and demands regarding education, and to be able to create transformative change that is responsive to societal requirements. Graduates will have a deeper understanding of leadership theory and contextual knowledge to the solution of problems in education as well as to foster and sustain excellence. The programme will also develop the analytical and communication skills required for successful leadership.

We are also recognizing that leaders need to experience different forms and styles of learning. I think the traditional concept of “topping-up” – by attending short courses, is not the only model that should be used. We need to create opportunities for critical discourse within the schools themselves. We need to bring school leaders together at

regular moments in time, outside their network, outside their schools, in order to share ideas, share their concerns, thus learning from each other.

What I have shared so far mainly aims to illustrate attempts introduced in Malta that help to, on the one hand, acknowledge the role that research should play in the reform process, and on the other, the need to create degree programmes that are directly relevant to participants. It has been emphasised that we need to review the role that heads play by respecting local and international literature, and moving towards the creation of learning opportunities that acknowledges the importance of learning.

However, such changes do not take place overnight. Change is incremental in nature. It calls for courage and commitment often by the few. We have to appreciate the fact that for many decades school heads and teachers alike followed the directives from above. They had to follow the prescription of their superiors. Teachers worked in a centralized system which generated an insular mentality. Teachers were expected to work on their own, to teach on their own. There was no call for collaborative work, for sharing ideas, for influencing each others practices.

Yet the latest reforms, international trends and developments are challenging this style of management, if we can call it so. Educators at all levels are being challenged to move away from practising their profession in isolation from each other and to engage in different forms of discourse. We want to create a context in which people learn to question, to challenge what is. This in itself is far from easy. It calls for people to learn new ways of doing things, to unlearn particular habits. It calls for all to recognise that learning is critical, and that learning can only take place when people stop to question, when people communicate, challenge each other, when voice is important. This context is one that respects diversity, that emphasises relationships and focuses on the human dimension.

Furthermore, we need to create a culture of reflection and research. This is an aspect that all beginning teachers start off with in the education programme they pursue. However, this needs to be retained throughout their career and not figure out at one particular point in their lives.

This concern about the need to link the three stages of a teacher's career, i.e. pre-service, induction and continuing professional development (CPD) is critical if we want to see that particular dimension deemed as critical during the pre-service stage are actually retained. This is an important debate which cannot be taken lightly.

Finally, in Malta we are making inroads in establishing the link between pre-service and induction. The latest Amended Education Act (2006) for the first time acknowledges the role that induction needs to play in a teacher's career. This October the first cohort of graduates will be introduced to a pilot induction programme. It will be an experimental year on which to finally introduce a formal programme which hopefully will also be fused into the CPD phase. Years of research into this area of study are finally paying off.

I am also of the opinion that whilst research does influence policy making there are other means of doing so. I am of the opinion that the opportunities we are creating for educators in the area of educational leadership will inform future decisions and policies in the area. In the next sections I will talk briefly about two initiatives that are being undertaken. One deals with an initiative between two universities, another research work within the Euro-Mediterranean context.

The first initiative involves a link between the University of Malta and that of Bologna, Italy. Both universities have different traditions in the way they teach and learn. Our education systems are quite different in spite of the fact that the two countries are so close to each other. The Italians have the gift of the gab, many thanks to a tradition based on oratory. Whereas we followed the Anglo-Saxon model based on reading and writing. Combining the two styles has not been a difficult one. I would dare say that as adults we appreciated the styles of teaching; our focal points; our modes of delivery; the way participants engaged and set expectations. As adults we were quick to appreciate and assimilate such differences. The engagement in itself was a learning experience and never a barrier. Our varied backgrounds helped us all to appreciate new modes of doing things, of learning. Variety is indeed the spice of life.

Whilst we are engaged in this joint work we are also undertaking joint research in the field of leadership and networking. The two countries have been, over the past few years, introducing a system of networking and how networks can have an impact on the achievement and attainment of all students. This initiative is encouraging research work in the field so that policy makers and practitioners can understand and relate better to this area.

One dimension that we have introduced in the Masters programme is that course participants do not only engage in research work but are engaged in two main activities which takes them beyond the traditional paths, so to speak. On the one hand, course participants start engaging in making short presentations right from the commencement

of the course. This takes place within the group itself. However, in the second year of the programme students work in pairs need to make a public presentation as part of the calendar of events that the Malta Society for Educational Administration and Management (MSEAM) organises.

At the end of the two-year course the students have to present their project during a national or international conference. This, in itself, helps to set certain standards. It helps participants (and outsiders) appreciate the importance behind research work, behind developing presentation skills, behind sharing and engaging in dialogue with others.

This opportunity will help us also to provide future school leaders, and leaders at other levels, with opportunities in which they can share their ideas, their concerns, frustrations and their success stories. This morning we could understand the concerns expressed by our Spanish colleagues when they spoke about their role. There is a lot of affinity between countries in spite of obvious socio-political differences. I do believe that the opportunity for leaders to speak out is essential. We need to establish 'voice' as an important and essential platform for all.

Two other initiatives we are considering and hope to address in the foreseeable future are visits to schools in our respective countries. This would help us to appreciate the context and culture of the respective institutions. Furthermore, we would like to introduce shadowing as a learning experience both within our own schools and abroad.

The last initiative that I would like to share with you involves an initiative being undertaken in the Euro-Med region and one supported by CRELL. Briefly the aim behind this project is to explore how the area of educational administration, management and leadership has evolved as a discipline of study and research in the region. The main intent is to see how the current educational reforms in our respective countries and how they impact on governance. Secondly, define the current and future challenges facing school leaders. Thirdly, explore school leader preparation licensure/certification, selection, evaluation and ongoing professional development.

We are confident that such initiatives will help us not only to understand the area of leadership better but also, in turn, how it can have an impact on what happens in schools so that all children can succeed.

These are indeed exciting times and it is so great to be amongst educators who believe that educators, working at all levels, can leave an impact on educational

improvement and student achievement. Being able to understand the impact that leaders can have is important.

*Is educational leadership measurable?
The qualitative evidence*

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Introduction

The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is currently undertaking a major international Activity on “Improving School Leadership”. This Activity sets out to:

1. Identify recent policies and strategies targeting the relationship between school leadership, learning and school outcomes in a range of OECD countries.
2. Examine the ways in which policies targeting the relationship between school leadership, learning and outcomes have been conceived and developed.
3. Provide evidence from research and country experience that might help governments to identify innovative and successful policy initiatives and contribute to the further development of effective and efficient policies for strengthening the relationship between school leadership and improved learning and school outcomes.
4. Consider the extent to which transformational change in education and learning might be brought about by learning-centred leadership.

In this chapter I will draw upon the findings of work undertaken in association with this Activity. In particular I will highlight the findings of qualitative research addressing the relationship between leadership and learning outcomes and examine the implications of both the review of research and reports of country based practice submitted to the OECD Activity on “Improving School Leadership” for leadership and learning. Participants in the Activity included Australia, Austria, Belgium, Chile, Denmark,

Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, England, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

A review of selected qualitative research studies

The conceptual and methodological challenges faced by those seeking to investigate and establish the links between school leadership, student learning and school outcomes are widely acknowledged in the theoretical and research literature. Leithwood and Levin (2005), having undertaken an extensive analysis on behalf of the National College of School Leadership in the United Kingdom, have argued that linking leadership to outcomes in a direct way is a very difficult undertaking, particularly as leadership effects are hard to detect because they are mostly indirect.

For more than a decade, the conceptual and methodological complexities of linking leadership, learning and school outcomes led to a reliance on smaller-scale research studies involving limited numbers of specific cases. Many of these studies began with the identification of successful schools and then moved to an identification of features of successful leadership in such case-study schools. Rather than establishing the existence of a direct observable impact of leaders on student learning and school outcomes, most of the case study research highlighted the more indirect, mediated influence of the activities of leaders.

Bolam and Cubillo (2003) in a review of eight studies set in Britain, Hong Kong, Canada, Netherlands, the USA, and Australia found the effect of leadership on student outcomes is mediated through key intermediate factors, namely: the work of teachers; the organisation of the school; and the relationships of schools with parents and the wider community. They tentatively conclude that leadership that is “distributed” among the wider school staff may be more likely to have an effect on the positive achievement of effective student learning outcomes than that which may be described as largely, or exclusively, “top-down”.

Harris (2004) drawing upon evidence provided by two studies of successful school leadership in England and studies of school improvement, explored the extent to which ‘distributed’ forms of leadership can contribute to school improvement. The Harris study can be considered as significant because it shifts the focus away from the characteristics of ‘the leader’ and more upon creating shared contexts for learning and developing leadership capacity.

Also undertaking research in England, Day (2005) selected head teachers for study in nine schools where the DfES improvement data for their schools showed an upward trend over the previous four years and OFSTED reports designated the schools as 'excellent' or 'outstanding'. The themes which emerged from the research indicate some of the intellectual, social and emotional complexities of successful leadership. These themes related to (p575-79): a sense of moral purpose and social justice; the capacity to create organizational expectations for high achievement by staff and students and build internal capital and capacity; identity, trust and passionate commitment.

In the Norway, Moller et al. (2005) found that the focal point of the good practice schools philosophy, as well as practice, was embodied in a learning-centred approach. This 'learning-centred' approach emphasised concern for the individual student's learning, the development of conducive learning environments and good teacher-student relations was guided by the curriculum visions and goals. They observed that effective leadership was almost entirely characterised by collaboration and team effort.

Moos et al. (2005) undertook a study of six schools chosen from schools regarded as successful by the superintendents of a number of school districts in Denmark. It was found that in these successful schools leaders were all 'child-centred' and committed to improving teaching and learning. Students in these schools stressed that their principals listened to them and that they thrived in this type of school environment.

In the USA, Jacobson et al. (2005) in a study of seven schools, in which leaders had been successful in improving student performance in high need, challenging environments, found that all the principals demonstrated facility with the core leadership practices of: direction-setting, developing people and redesigning the organization. Leaders were exemplary at modelling the behaviours and practices they desired. Although different in their individual approaches, all of the principals leveraged the external pressure of high stakes standardized testing to focus their school's performance objectives.

In another study in the USA, Marks and Printy (2003) examined the potential of active collaboration between principals and teachers, in respect of instructional matters, to enhance the quality of teaching and student performance. The authors conclude that 'when the principal elicits high levels of commitment and professionalism from teachers and works interactively with teachers in a shared instructional leadership capacity,

schools have the benefit of integrated leadership; they are organizations that learn and perform at high levels' (p393).

Cross-national analyses of findings from case studies suggest that a wide range of factors is potentially important in shaping the relationship between leadership, student learning and school outcomes, and that these factors are not independent of the broader cultural, social and organizational context in which leaders operate. Leithwood (2005), in a review of the findings of case studies in seven countries, found features of the 'organizational or wider social context in which principals work that depress, neutralize or enhance the strength or nature of relationships between leadership practices and their effects on students and the school organization'. These features include: (p624):

- Student background factors
- School location (eg urban, rural)
- School size
- Extent of mutual trust and respect to be found in the relationship between leaders and teachers and/or teachers and students
- Government or public vs non-government designation of schools
- School level (elementary, middle, secondary)

Leithwood also identifies other variables that can moderate leadership effects, identified from previous research including: prior student achievement; family educational culture; organizational culture; shared school goals and coherent plans and policies.

The Leadership for Learning Project *Carpe Vitam* which involved seven countries (Australia, Austria, Denmark, USA, England, Greece and Norway) and operated on the basis of a set of democratic values about leadership and learning, identified from research, experimentation, reflection and collective debate, a number of "principles for practice" for transformations in educational practice through leadership for learning (MacBeath; Frost; Swaffield; Waterhouse 2006). These key principles include:

- Maintaining a focus on learning as an activity
- Creating conditions favourable to learning as an activity
- Creating a dialogue about leadership for learning
- Sharing leadership

- Fostering a shared sense of accountability.

These principles are put forward by the international team associated with this project as a framework for promoting learning conversations at the school level, designing professional development activities, selective school focus activities, school self evaluation and school improvement planning. This work provides a practical and useful approach for putting in train a set of programmes to bring about school-based change in a range of different country contexts.

Meta-analyses of research

Recent research efforts, employing meta-analyses of research data, are now broadening and strengthening the knowledge base upon which larger scale policy reform targeting leadership and learning can be based . In a study undertaken in the USA, Marzano et al (2005:7) claim that research over the last thirty-five years ‘provides strong guidance on specific leadership behaviours for school administrators and those behaviours have well documented effects on student achievement’. Synthesizing the research literature using a quantitative, meta-analytic approach they identified the following twenty-one leadership responsibilities as correlating with student academic achievement (p42). These include: affirmation; change agent; contingent rewards; communication; culture; discipline; flexibility; focus; ideal/s beliefs; input; intellectual stimulation; involvement in curriculum, instruction and assessment; knowledge of curriculum, instruction and assessment; monitoring and evaluating; optimizer; order; outreach; relationships; resources; situational awareness; and visibility.

One of the most helpful pieces of recently-published research is that by Robinson (2007), who sought to identify and explain the types of school leadership that make an impact on a range of academic and social student outcomes. In her investigation a systematic search produced twenty-six published studies that sought to characterize and quantify the relationship between types of school leadership and a range of student outcomes; eleven of the studies included sufficient data from which the effects of particular types of leadership could be calculated. From her analysis five dimensions of leadership were identified as having an impact on learning outcomes (p8):

1. *Establishing goals and expectations*: relating to the setting, communicating and monitoring of learning goals, standards and expectations, and the involvement of staff and others in the process so that there is clarity and consensus about goals.
2. *Strategic resourcing*: involving aligning resource selection and allocation with priority teaching goals; including provision of appropriate expertise through staff recruitment.
3. *Planning, co-ordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum*: relating to direct involvement in the support and evaluation of teaching through regular classroom visits and the provision of formative and summative feedback to teachers. Direct oversight of curriculum through school-wide co-ordination across classes and year levels and alignment to school goals.
4. *Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development*: involving leadership that not only promotes but directly participates with teachers in formal and informal professional learning.
5. *Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment*: protecting time for teaching and learning by reducing external pressures and interruptions and establishing an orderly and supportive environment both inside and outside classrooms.

Implications of research and reports of country based practice: lessons learned

A review of Country Reports submitted as part of the OECD Activity on “Improving School Leadership” has shown that there is immense variation among countries in the degree to which they have put in place policies and strategies that target the relationship between leadership and learning and facilitate the change in those dimensions of leadership that research suggests might have the greatest impact on learning. In many country contexts there is still much work that needs to be done. Nevertheless, an intensive examination of particular countries, with very different histories and traditions in the provision of education, demonstrates that significant advances are being made in some settings. Improvements in student learning and school outcomes have been a priority in each national setting where significant change is evident. Such countries are moving, in varying degrees and within varying time frames, with the development of policies and strategies that link student learning outcomes and learning-centred leadership.

From an examination of research and country-based practice it is clear that change can be brought about in linking leadership with improved student learning and school outcomes, and that many lessons can be drawn from successful reform efforts that have applicability to other settings:

1. The complex “web” of relationships and effects

The effects of leadership on learning and school outcomes can be both direct and indirect. It is linked to:

- an evidence-based approach to learning and school outcomes; and
- a range of leadership skills, commitments, capacities and beliefs, working through a range of mediating conditions and moderated by features of the wider social, demographic and organizational context.

2. An evidence-based approach to learning outcomes

Change is occurring in those contexts where:

- concern for quality and expectations of schools are high and subject to public debate;
- where there is close attention to accountability in national, state, school and classroom assessments of learning;
- where there is increasing responsiveness to the results of international assessments of learning performance and concern for national assessments in key learning areas;
- where attention has been given to the development of benchmark data to assess the relative performance of students and schools and there is available software packages, surveys and other instruments to provide data for decision making;
- where there is attention to locally developed strategic plans and the articulation of targets and reporting and the development of early warning systems based on diagnosis of student learning difficulties, followed up with parent consultation.

3. The development of school leadership skills and attributes

Reform efforts are supported by leadership that displays:

- an emphasis on distributed, collaborative leadership; the ability to build internal capacity and bring about collective action and responsibility;
- the capacity to create organizational expectations for high achievement by staff and students;
- the development of a learning-centred philosophy and approach;
- the ability to implement school improvement through changes in structure and culture;
- the capacity to leverage external pressures for achievement to focus on the school's performance objectives and student learning;
- the preparedness to integrate transformational leadership with shared instructional and pedagogical leadership;
- the ability to develop a shared sense of accountability for learning and school outcomes;
- the ability to communicate effectively about learning and open up dialogue about learning with students, staff and parents; and
- the ability to "centre" the school on learning as its central purpose.

4. An awareness of the need to attend to mediating conditions

In bringing about improvements in student learning and school outcomes leadership works with, through and upon a number of mediating conditions including:

- the degree of school and leadership autonomy;
- the professionalism, engagement, suitability, selection, evaluation and accountability of staff;
- access to relevant resources including information to analyse, monitor and assess individual and school performance;
- the professional learning culture of the school;
- the level of engagement and support for learning by staff; curriculum organization, development and flexibility;

- the management structure, especially in regard to middle management;
- system-wide support for school improvement, quality assurance and performance assessment; and
- the nature of the relationship with education system authorities and school decision-making bodies.

5. Consideration of factors that might moderate, enhance or depress leader effects

These include:

- student background and socio-economic status;
- school location;
- school size;
- family educational background; and
- type of school.

6. Policy emphases

Successful reform efforts appears to share some common emphases, including:

- multi-level, inter-relational change efforts integrating national, system, school, classroom, and leadership reform focussed on learning;
- a movement away from input-controlled to goals and results-based steering systems; national bodies/academies created and maintained to enhance leadership learning and professionalism;
- policies granting more autonomy to schools and school leaders in areas such as teacher selection; transparent strategies for standard setting; assessment and reporting at all levels;
- systematic quality assurance; reconsideration of the responsibilities of a range of leadership positions to strengthen the focus on leadership for learning.

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Autonomy and the principal's role in Italian school

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“It is vital to recognise that management is, by definition, expected to produce a degree of predictability and order, to meet the short-term expectations of stakeholder groups, to plan and to work to a more or less rational model. Leadership is more at home in the world of the unpredictable, the spontaneous and creative” (J.McBeath, K. Myers, *Effective school leaders*, Financial Time Prentice Hall, Pearson Education Lt, London 1999, p.19).

Introduction

Educational policies are embedded in the organizational culture of each nation: the possibility to be an effective leader is connected to the extension of the autonomy, and in Italy this extension is very reduced, even in an autonomous school system. Context influences both the exercise of the leadership and the characteristics of the pupils (sometime, of the teachers too). The head's most important skill becomes the ability to organize a learning environment in a highly changing context, bonding the teachers in the school and addressing the human resources to realise a common aim. If we agree that Italian teachers are now in a situation of deskilling or “proletariatization”, the relational leadership means that the principal has to move with the staff towards a common aim, motivating and empowering the teachers. Finally, the role of the heads has greatly changed since they had a managerial institutional role (d.l. 59, March 1998), and the field research is very small. More, in the last three years more than 40% of the heads has retired, and so it is really not easy to say who they are and how they act.

Skills and tasks of a principal

There is a number of preliminary questions that we have to answer to before analysing the principal's role in Italian school: what are the specific challenges and tensions facing schools leaders within the context of decentralisation, and how can research inform policy making? I'm starting from a very short hypothesis about the role of the leader in an autonomous school, and then I will examine the Italian context, well knowing that educational policies are not context-free: they are embedded in the organizational culture of each nation. What is relevant is how this relation determines or affects the educational structure and processes (in this case, the images and practices of leadership). So, even if Italian school is an anomaly for a number of reasons (centralised model still strong, no real power for LEAs, reduced autonomy for the schools, marginal role of private schools, bureaucratisation of the staff...), the status of the principals would provide some general ideas. For this purpose, I would like to retrace the possibilities she/he has to do what is supposed to be done, the limits to her/his action, the perspectives for the future.

In the context of globalisation, the tasks of headship have changed, and we could argue that a new set of skills and new intellectual assets become essential to lead a school. In my opinion, nevertheless, if we agree that education is a relational good, the leadership in the school, apart from changes, is always a relational leadership: it means that there is a balance between the ideas of the head, and the way they are put in act in the every day life by the staff. Mintzberg has criticised the model of the "heroic leadership" casting a big shadow that crowds out the rest of the staff¹. Possibly, he can move with the staff towards a common aim, motivating and empowering the teachers. So you can't speak of the leader without speaking of the followers: and the educational research on autonomous schools in Italy shows that the performing schools are the schools where there is a strong leader, supported by the consensus of the staff and the families². So, we could say with Daniele Vidoni that "school leadership is a complex phenomenon that influences student learning (mostly) by means of intermediate

¹ Mintzberg, H., *The rise and fall of strategic planning*, Prentice Hall, New York 1994.

² This is the same effect working in the denominational schools, that are often more performing than the public ones, SES controlled.

variables”³, difficult to measure. Contextual forces influence both the exercise of the leadership and the characteristics of the pupils (sometime, of the teachers too); in the head / pupils relationships, there are intermediate factors embedded with the context, and creating a kind of network where the knots act as a turning point in the once linear process of “teaching / learning”. The head’s most important skill becomes the ability to organize a learning environment in a highly changing context, bonding the teachers in the school and addressing the human resources to realise a common aim.

In an autonomous school, the traditional dichotomy “manager – leader” (see the colophon by Mc Beath) could be formulated as the question if a principal is mainly an education expert and / or a teacher or, better, to which extent he has to be this way. The principal’s role has evolved in the early 80’ from “building manager” to “instructional leader”, but with the (late!) starting of the autonomy in Italian school, this “instructional leadership” is distributed, and the different roles connected to the functioning of the autonomous school (experts in teaching, learning, curriculum and assessment) mainly are not skills requested to the principals. An in-depth analysis of the practice of school leaders is necessary to render an account of how school leadership works, and school leadership is best understood "as a distributed practice, stretched over the school's social and situational contexts"⁴, because social context is an integral component, not just a container, for their activity. The capacity to produce an effective teaching and learning environment is a function of the interaction among elements of the instructional unit, not the sole province of any single element.

In fact, he or she can not embody all of the knowledge and skills the organisation requires. Accountable autonomous schools have to distribute leadership responsibilities in different ways among a team, and the principal is not only what Romans called *primus inter pares*, but a leader able to organise all internal and external resources, leadership included, to structure an educational complex environment. Distributed leadership means that the school essential needs can be met by a team working together. There is a general consensus on three points⁵:

³ Vidoni, D., *The role of school leadership on student achievement: evidence from TIMMS 2003*, Ph D Thesis, University of Boston, 2007.

⁴ Spillane, J.P., Halverson, R., Diamond, J.B., *Investigating school leadership practice: a distributed perspective*, in *Educational Researcher*, April 2001, pp. 23- 28.

⁵ See *Better leaders for America’s schools: a Manifesto*, Thomas B.Fordham Foundation, May 2003.

- principals must understand teaching and learning processes, in order to shape a vital school environment;
- people with an administrative background must possess certain skills and dispositions before they assume leadership roles;
- a third consideration, perhaps a consequence, could be that for a better efficacy the head staff could be selected to support the weak side of the leadership, i.e. a “managerial” staff for an “educational” leader, and vice-versa.

In the educational organisations, sense making is enabled, and constrained, by the situation in which it takes place⁶, and any particular social or cultural situation is identified by "mediational means" as the language, that enable intelligent social activity. In every school, actors develop common understandings, cultural, social and historical norms in order to think and act, and the socio-cultural context is a constitutive element of leadership practice, shaping its form. Leadership "involves the identification, acquisition, allocation, co-ordination and use of the social, material and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning. This definition supports a transformational perspective on leadership, defining it as "the ability to empower others" with the purpose of bringing about a major change in form, nature and function of some phenomenon"⁷.

While there is an expansive literature about which school structures, programs and processes are necessary for instructional change, we know less about how these changes are undertaken or enacted by school leaders in their daily work. Nevertheless, the critical nature of principal's role in promoting change is well established in literature, and it is perceived as fundamental by teachers: as Triant says “autonomy is useful only when someone actually uses it”⁸. In a recent research on a sample of teachers in 23 primary Italian schools, Donna Ferrara listed the obstacles that might otherwise impede progress, asking to choose the more relevant: three of seven (first, second and forth) were related to principals attitudes or characteristics: lack of skills / competence in the principal, lack of preparedness, lack of motivation.

⁶ Resnick, L., *Shared cognition: thinking as social practice*, in Resnick, L., Levine, J., Teasley, S. (eds.), *Perspectives on socially shared cognition*, American Psychological Association, Washington, 1991.

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Triant, B., *Autonomy and innovation. How do Massachusetts charter school principals use their freedom?*, The Fordham Foundation, Washington 2002, p.14.

Data suggest that “principals are responding in ways that support successful school reform, especially in the areas of assuming the role of facilitator in the change process, commitment to their own professional development, and encouraging teachers to develop and implement new activities”⁹. Principals appear to have more information about reforms and to be in control of the communication system, both internal (with teacher and with the local and central organisation) and external, with parents and community: but there is a lack of communication towards teachers, probably because the information is filtered by the centre, but even because the teachers’ motivation to be informed is lower than the principals’ motivation (or need). Similarly, in his “classical” researches on reforms in Texas and teachers’ burn out, Gary Dworkin noted that three of seven factors supporting teachers were connected to the principals (principal seen as supportive, principal seen as influential among high level administrators and principal seen as protective for the level of stress)¹⁰. Later (1991), Dworkin describes the principal as “a builder of teacher efficacy”.

The managerial dimension of leadership is concerned with maintaining the conditions necessary to help an organisation to achieve current goals: the schools' goals are both micro and macro functions, and the day-to-day work is inevitably connected to the large scale tasks, essential for instructional leadership, as building norms of trust and collaboration, supporting teacher development, monitoring innovation. For instance, a good principal knows well that macro function of building norms of collaboration within the school may involve micro tasks such as creating opportunities in the school day for teacher collaboration: the way in which principals enact leadership is probably the most important factor influencing what the teachers do. The leadership practice is influenced both by the theories and the challenges of unfolding action, and to understand the knowledge, expertise and skills that the leaders bring to the execution of the task, we need to examine a typology of organizational cultures connected both to exposed theories and to theories in use¹¹. The Sporn’s model, elaborated for higher

⁹ Ferrera, D.L., *Perceptions of school – based education communities and policy makers regarding adoption and implementation of reforms in Italian school*, paper presented to the annual meeting of the International society for educational planning, Atlanta, Oct. 2001.

¹⁰ Dworkin, G., *Teacher burnout in the public schools. Structural caouses and consequences for children*, State University of New York Press, New York 1987; Dworkin G., Le Compte, M., *Giving up on school*, Corwin Press, Newbury Park (Ca) 1991.

¹¹ Argyris, C., Schon, D.A., *Theory in practice. Increasing professional effectiveness*, Jossey Bass, San Francisco 1974, analysing the efficacy of organizational practices, make a distinction between *theories in use* or *non-canonical practice* and *canonical practices*. In their opinion, theories are inadequate for the leadership, because they are separated from the daily practice and they can’t cope with the context challenges.

education (fig.1) enhances the role of a strong school culture, whose main responsible and builder is the principal.

Figure 1
Typology of organizational school cultures

School culture strength	School culture orientation		
		Internal	External
	Strong	Strong and participated values, oriented to conservation. It works in <i>stable contexts</i> .	Strong and participated values, oriented to change, efficacy and making better.
Weak	Many competing subcultures, concentrated on internal tasks. No motivations to make better.	Many competing subcultures, low coordination, oriented towards change, low efficacy.	

Source: adapted from Sporn, B., *Managing university culture: an analysis of the relationship between institutional culture and management approach*. In Higher Education, Vol.32, 1996, 41-61.

In an autonomous school, that is a complex organisation, the execution of leadership tasks is often distributed among "multiple" leaders in two different ways: a group of leaders working together to enact a particular task, that is potentially more than the sum of each individual's practice, or two or more leaders working separately but interdependently in pursuit of a common goal, and co-constructing an instructional change. In both cases, leadership practice is a product of the interaction of leaders. Analysing leadership practice involves understanding how school leaders define and carry out micro tasks, exploring how they interact with others. We need to study leaders in action in a variety of situations: anyway, the peculiar structure of the school organisation needs not only interaction, but supervision: Lortie¹² described the school as an "egg-carton organization", where the teachers are isolated in their classroom. If there is not a principal to break such individualised and privatised work, improving changes that target interactions, teachers' action will remain ineffective. While individual leaders are not all that matters in constituting educational change, they do matter probably more than any other element.

¹² Lortie, D.C., *Schoolteacher: a sociological study*, university of Chicago Press, 1975.

Finally, the discourse of autonomy and the head role is not only connected to innovation, but is also strictly connected to the discourse of quality in education: more successful schools appear to have decision-making structures in place that facilitate teacher influence over school matters¹³: additionally, there is some evidence of a relationship between professional community (where the principal has a proactive role) and higher level of climate conducive to organisational learning. Schools that have developed a more professional community also have environments that are more supportive of innovation and experimentation.

Leading an Italian school

The possibility to be a leader is connected to the extension of the autonomy, and for this reason, we must consider that the role of “principal as a leader” in the Italian schools started recently (1997), with the introduction of school autonomy and the organisational change from a highly standardised and centralised model, to an autonomous and "quasi market" model. The principal traditionally was a kind of guarantee towards the central administration, responsible for the conformity of his/her school to the central prescriptions: she/he is now becoming accountable towards the schools' stakeholders (students, families, entrepreneurs, the community itself). From the formal point of view, this change has been marked by the fact that the principal is now seen, more than as a manager, as something like the CEO of his/her school.

The idea of leadership was out of the general “frame” of Italian school¹⁴. We didn't have a person “leading” the school towards any destination, because where and how the school has to move to were centrally fixed and were not up to the school. The centre was the sole real leader, the “preside”, from the Latin verb *prae-sidere*, was just “sitting ahead of” the teachers, a very static image of the leadership. The idea of “leading” was introduced by the autonomy¹⁵ but still connected to the bureaucratic form of the organization, even if the principal was expected to organise at best the educational resources of the school. Three main limits to the principals' authority are still strong:

¹³ Marks, H. M., Louis, K.S., *Teacher empowerment and the capacity for organisational learning*, in Educational Administration Quarterly, vol.35, 1999,pp.705-750 (supplement).

¹⁴ Serpieri, R., *La costruzione sociale della leadership*, in Benadusi, L., Serpieri, R., *Organizzare la scuola dell'autonomia*, Carocci, Roma 2000.

¹⁵ Ribolzi, L. (a cura di), *Il dirigente scolastico*, Giunti, Firenze 1999.

1. even if they are now fully responsible for how their school performs, they have marginal authority over the people who work for them. They can't fire teachers, they can't give them bonus pay, and they can't put their best / worst performers in the different situations¹⁶: finally, the part of the budget they can decide about is small, no more than 2 – 2.5% of the state expenditure. In an accountable school, the principal's authority must be equal to its responsibility, including control over personnel, budget and program. If not (and this is the reality facing school principals across the Italy), no wonder many are bailing out, and the quality of the pool of new candidates is alarmingly low. Educational policy in short time will have to cope with the problems surrounding recruitment, retention and remuneration of high quality school leaders, a kind of "superstar leaders", particularly in inner cities and in rural areas¹⁷.
2. in the Italian school system, the system of recruiting, training and employing school leaders is unable to cope with the leadership demand, and is not designed to train them for the challenges of leading an autonomous schools. The course work and teaching experience often do not prepare candidates for leading schools in an age of accountability, competition and technology, not to speak about the so-called "presidi incaricati", whose competencies has never been assessed, and appointed through a preferential path¹⁸. Ironically enough, a formal procedure started when in other countries educationalists and policy makers were wondering if, to have performing principals, could not be better to forget traditional credentials, qualifying people with a different job experience through new programs¹⁹, instead of promoting them within the ranks of veteran educators.
3. The school itself lacks any new form of governance: first, the so called "organi collegiali" have to be reformed since 1997, and at the moment they are not keen to manage the problems of a quite different form of organisation. We are facing

¹⁶ A proposal to give the school the possibility to appoint at least 25% of the teachers is at the moment originating a real fight between the ministry and the Unions. The establishment itself is against it.

¹⁷ This problem is a common one: see Tucker, M.S, Coddling, J.B., *The principal challenge: leading and managing schools in an era of accountability*, National Center on Education and Economy, 2002.

¹⁸ A blended program of at distance education is still working for about 1.800 teachers, that since a number of years (sometimes more than five) were performing as principals in a school that lacks any form of governance, for a number of reasons (mainly because the former principal has retired).

¹⁹ In U.S., there is a program called "New leaders for new schools", started on spring 2000, and designed by a team of five graduates at Harvard, aiming to select people without formal qualifications, training them to become principals, in a summer full time course, and then through 10 months of assisted work (payed \$45.000) www.nlms.org*

the paradox that a brand new school (at least in theory) is managed by old bodies, not working even in the old conditions: in the relationship between the individual responsibility of the headteacher and the collegial responsibility of the governing bodies, “the intertwining of different levels of responsibility does not allow for a sufficient degree of decision-making power”²⁰. Secondly, there is not a formal “middle management”, i.e. a number of senior teachers supporting the principal for educational or organisational matters. I’m speaking about the idea of diffused leadership, enhancing participation in the management of education and based on the concept of school connectedness.

In an autonomous organisation, the more common form of management is the management by objectives, but in the Italian school it is possible to describe the head’s leadership mainly using two different organizational models: management by procedures, typical of bureaucratic organizations and connected to the traditional image of a very centralized school, and collegial management, typical of the practice or learning communities, where the personal characteristics of the leader give an image of charismatic power. It is not the case to use the management by objectives model, for two main reasons:

1. The strategic planning of the school is only partly free (20% maximum), and the objectives that have to be reached by the head teacher are neither fixed, nor measured; so it is sometime difficult to say if the head has succeeded or not. His/her aim is to enhance the differences, characterising the school: in this way, the head generates a diversification in the educational offer that has more possibilities to cope with the needs of the community. The autonomous planning only works where the State supports a strong unity principle, allowing to the schools to adopt different strategies. In the specific case of improving students’ performances, an aim fixed by the Ministry all over the country, I agree with the idea that there is not a direct connection between the leadership style and the pupils assessment: but we have to point what we intend for “direct”. The relationship between the head and the pupils are not frequent, but the pupils spend a great amount of time dipped in the school climate, and this climate

²⁰ Barzano, G., *Headship and accountability in three European Countries*, Institute of Education, London, PhD. Thesis, 2007.

affects the learning level: and the connection between the principal and the quality of the school climate is both direct and strong. A good head empowers the teachers, through a transformational leadership, collects, organizes and improves the resources, and has both a bonding and bringing role, building a school community and assuring its connection with the society. The fact that, in Italy, the principal can't appoint his staff makes more difficult this task of creating a practice community: he / she can only rely on his / her professional and personal characteristics, as in the old weberian idea of charismatic power.

2. The protean nature of the school asks for a quick change in strategies, making useless a number of pre fixed behaviours, and the conflicting interests of the stakeholders have the same effect. We could say that in an autonomous school the correct strategic planning is a "rolling planning" in the sense of the "rolling" reform: it changes interacting with the circumstances. To enhance flexibility, a school system needs a "professional" staff, but the Italian teachers are now in a situation of deskilling, or "proletariatization"²¹, and it is not easy to transform them into a community of reflective practitioners, as in the famous book of David Schön. The head must know that both he and the teachers are not free, as the private professionals, but they are embedded in an organization: Clarke and Newman²² call "bureauprofessionalism" the situation where there is an interaction among the administrative power and the professionals. This interaction operates a transformative order, because the basis of the autonomous school is an agreement among the stakeholders and the school. The stronger the common values, the higher the level of the schools performances: Sporn²³, working on organizational culture in higher education, says that a strong culture oriented towards the exterior, based on strong and shared values generates a positive change and develops the efficacy.

I would like to add two short remarks about the relevance of the research results for the educational policy. First, in Italian education the financing of research (R&D

²¹ Fischer, L., *Sociologia della scuola*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2003.

²² Clarke, J., Newman, J., *The managerial State*, Sage, London 1997.

²³ Sporn, B., *Managing university culture: an analysis of the relationship between institutional culture and management approachI*, in *Higher Education*, vol.32, 1996, pp.41-61.

investments and expenditure) is very low. In ASPIS III²⁴ (expenditure year 2003), the Ministry of education expenditure is composed (for all levels) of 75% for teachers and principals salaries, 19.3% other staff, 0.6% “didactical work”, 1.8% management of materials, 0.8% grants and 0.6% vocational education in the school period, and this lack of funds is worsening. So the range of educational research is really small, not to speak of its influence on policies, which we could describe only as irrelevant. Secondly, and specifically speaking on principals, as we told before, their role has greatly changed since they had a managerial institutional role (d.l. 59, March 1998). Some sociologists²⁵ have worked on leadership, but the field research is very small (on a large scale only Fischer, 2002²⁶): the results of a more recent survey both on teachers and principals²⁷ are not yet been printed. We really don’t know who the principals are and how they act: in the last five years more than 60% of the heads has retired, and we can suppose that their characteristics are quite different from the characteristics of the old ones.

Conclusions

The transition from bureaucratic governance to autonomy, in Italy we still have a problem: in the triangle “school - centre - local authorities” (you could also add a fourth point, civil society), the actors' role are not yet well defined, particularly for the intermediate local authorities (Regions or municipalities). Italian Constitution has been reformed in 2005, introducing direct educational responsibility and power of control for Regions, but this kind of strong de-localisation is likely to have two bad effects: lacking of “buffer organizations”, decentralized local authorities could undermine school autonomy while simultaneously weakening the central government’s sense of responsibility, not to speak about civic education.

Decentralising strategies only work if the connectedness in the school / society system is strong, and it is continuously improved: a real consensus on the roles and aims is requested, and the same for the ways to accomplish them. At the moment, I'm not

²⁴ Invalsi – MIPA, *Aspis III – Linee di ricerca sull’analisi delle spese per l’istruzione*, Rapporto finale, Novembre 2005.

²⁵ Benadusi, L., Serpieri, R.(eds.), *Organizzare la scuola dell’autonomia*, Carocci, Roma 2002; Ribolzi, L., *Un’organizzazione che cambia. Problemi di governo nella scuola dell’autonomia*, in AA.VV., *Il dirigente scolastico*. Giunti, Firenze, 1998; Romano, I., Serpieri, R., *La leadership educativa nel sistema scolastico italiano: tra istituzioni e competenze*, in “Revue suisse de sciences de l’éducation”, 28, 2006, pp.100-200.

²⁶ Fischer, L., Fischer, M.G., *Dirigenti nella scuola dell’autonomia*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2002.

²⁷ Istituto IARD, *Terza indagine sugli insegnanti italiani*, will likely be printed in March 2009.

sure that everyone agrees on the idea that centralisation and decentralisation are not opposed, but they are converging processes. So the role of bridging between school and territory becomes strategic: a school manager in his/her relations with the external contest must look attentively to a number of points:

- which kind of decisions is decentralised? (curriculum, time organisation, human resources management...);
- which level is responsible for every decision?: at the school level (site based management), more qualification is required for people working in the schools, at the community level (local based management) a qualification for the social and political actors is not easy, and it is probably better to enable them to use professionals for their educational decisions;
- which mechanism is more useful to improve school quality? In Italy, the so called limited democracy, has the consequence that the prevailing mechanism (voice and exit) are both difficult to use, because unequal information and inadequate norms hinder participation from progressing, and the costs do the same for the passing to private sector.

I would note, as a final remark, that the official name “dirigenti scolastici” is difficult to translate, not for a lack of words, but because the concept itself of a “state officer” in charge of a school is an oxymoron, and it contrasts with the very idea of school autonomy. As the role has greatly changed, the Italian school needs a quite different way to recruit and train the heads: if this is not possible, or at least not possible in a satisfying way or in a short time, they need a strong in service training to improve their skills. Finally, the Italian school lacks in a system of assessment of the heads, and this is another step in the way towards a more European school.

The returns for policy

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Our focus in this paper will be, on the one hand, on the autonomy of schools; and, on the other hand, on the role of external accountability. An appropriate measure of school autonomy (within a context of accountability) is essential to effective education for a number of reasons. Only with such accountability can a number of the elements that much research has identified as essential to school effectiveness be present.

Autonomy of schools

One of these elements is instructional leadership by the school head, who has the responsibility for ensuring that the contributions of individual teachers are orchestrated together so that one teacher's efforts do not cancel out those of another teacher. Real problem-solving in relation to the particular needs and strengths of particular children can never be formulated into centralized rules: it must be exercised by those who know each child.

Another element of school effectiveness is that the school have a distinctive character based upon specific ideas about how education should occur, and to what end. Only on the basis of such an *ideario* can there be a convergence among all of the adults in the school that will ensure that they act consistently and that the pupils feel safe even as they are challenged. Only a school with a *carácter propio* can develop the character of its pupils. Aristotle tells us that virtue is learned through observing and loving those who are virtuous, and a school in which the adults are pulling in different directions will produce in its pupils a sense of confusion and cynicism.

A third element, related to the other two, is that someone – whether the school’s administrator or the board overseeing an individual school – be able to select the teachers and other adults who work in the school. I realize that this is a sensitive issue in Spain – and other countries – because of the concern that teachers have “freedom in their teaching” (*libertad de cátedra*) – so let me linger over it briefly. As you know, teachers in public schools in Spain are obligated to maintain a neutral posture in their instruction in order to respect the right of conscience of their pupils, while those in independent schools have an additional obligation, to show respect for the distinctive character or worldview (*ideario*) of the school which employs them. The distinctive character defined by the sponsors of the school is legally significant since it may form the basis for selecting particular teachers and for insisting that teachers not undermine the mission of the school; for example, a teacher mocking Catholic doctrine would be dismissible from a Catholic school, though he or she could not be dismissed for refusing to endorse such doctrine contrary to conscience. But of course a school’s distinctive character must be consistent with Spain’s constitutional principles of “liberty, equality, justice, pluralism.”

There are those who argue that the growing pluralism of beliefs and values in societies like Spain and the United States should find its counterpart within each school, and that only a morally-neutral school can teach the lessons essential to democracy . . . indeed, that only in such a school is there real educational freedom. This, others counter, is to use the idea of educational freedom to undermine its reality, as expressed in a diversity of educational offerings. It is absurd, they point out, to contend that, in contemporary society, the control of a religious organization over youth can be anything like as extensive as that of the State, or that a church could be as much of a threat to freedom as a government with monopoly of the power to tax and to punish¹.

The right of the sponsors of independent schools to require such respect, and to fire teachers who fail to comply with this obligation, has been upheld by the Constitutional Courts in a number of countries. In 1981, the Spanish Court pointed out that conflict was possible between the distinctive character of a school and the teaching freedom of a teacher, but concluded that “the existence of a worldview [*ideario*], accepted by the teacher upon freely joining the school . . . does not oblige him, obviously, to become an apologist for that [worldview] or to transform his teaching into indoctrination or

¹ Isabel de los Mozos Touya, *Educación en libertad y concierto escolar*, Madrid: Editorial Montecorvo, 1995, 255-58.

propaganda . . . [but] the teacher's freedom does not entitle him to direct open or surreptitious attacks against that worldview. . . The concrete effect [*virtualidad*] of the worldview will no doubt be greater when it comes to the explicitly educative or formative aspects of the instruction, and less when it has to do with the simple transmission of knowledge . . .”.

Martínez López-Muñiz points out that “[a]n educational program which is definite and stable will permit a larger degree of identification than will a program in which there can be no single established and permanent orientation, as is the case in public schools, which “must be open to all tendencies of thought and all standards of conduct which are allowed by law.”² The freedom of non-public schools to express a distinctive ethos and character is thus the guarantor of the freedom of those teachers who wish to teach in a way consistent with that ethos and character; public school teachers are not free to do so. As a result, “the internal pluralism of public schools is not a model which guarantees in itself the right to education in its full sense, nor the freedom of those who teach; in this way they are denied the possibility of adhering voluntarily to a specific educational project.” It is therefore possible to speak of “the *collective* freedom of teaching or, what is the same thing, the right to direct the school which belongs to the sponsor of the school” and which supports the freedom of teachers to the extent that they work in a school which corresponds to their own convictions about education.³

I have lingered over this issue of the selection of staff on the basis of their support for the distinctive mission or *carácter propio* of a school because, perhaps more than any other, it is the decisive factor in determining whether a school can be a purposeful institution. A few years ago there was a debate in the Netherlands over whether public schools could have what the Dutch call a *richting* or distinctive worldview; in the United States, the flourishing of public ‘charter schools’ – more than four thousand now, with more than a million pupils, and the earlier development of ‘magnet schools,’ were efforts to make it possible for public schools to have the coherence of purpose that characterizes the best independent schools.

It is important to be clear that autonomy is not identical with decentralization. Often that mistake is made. That if the responsibility for education and the move from

² José Luis Martínez López-Muñiz, “El art. 27 de la Constitución: Análisis de su contenido, doctrina jurisprudencial. Tratados internacionales suscritos por España,” in *Cuadernos de Derecho Judicial: Aspecto Jurídicos del Sistema Educativo*, Madrid: Consejo General del Poder Judicial, 1993, 29.

³ Martínez López-Muñiz, 29.

the central government, for example, from Rome to the regions in Italy, from Madrid to the Comunidades Autónomas in Spain, that somehow that will make a fundamental difference in the quality of the school. Autonomy is a different thing. In the US, we have had, for many years, many thousands of local school boards elected by the citizens, which have almost complete responsibility for what occurs in schools, a situation of extreme decentralization. There were once over 100,000 such boards, there are now about 15,000. And yet that does not result in true autonomy for public schools, because those local boards very directly control what occurs in schools.

So autonomy is not achieved by simply decentralizing authority to lower levels, having parents and teachers vote about decisions and elect who will be the school leader. Extensive research in the US and in the EU has shown that often that has the effect of preventing change, of making schools more static, and avoiding any actual confrontation with new challenges.

What does autonomy require?

In 1993, there was a study organized by the association of the fifty state governors in the United States, seeking to give a new direction to education. In the US it is the states, and not the national government, that is responsible for education. The governors called their report “Time for Results”, and in the introduction said they were going to offer educators a bargain – an arrangement, a contract. They said, if you produce results, we will stop telling you how to produce those results.

Unfortunately, the bargain has not been kept on the side of government. In the subsequent years, there has been a great increase in the number of examinations, and in accountability for results, without a corresponding removing of controls over how schools operate, and this has in many ways paralysed the good effects of the external accountability.

There have been some developments, however, which have gone in the other direction. One that I was closely involved with beginning in the 1970s was the creation of thousands of ‘magnet schools’ designed to attract pupils on the basis of a distinctive programme, in order to achieve racial integration in cities. These schools were given a good deal of freedom to be distinctive, but they continued to be part of local public school systems, and so autonomy unfortunately very limited. As in Italy, where there are strict controls over the selection of teachers for schools, such bureaucratic measures prevent schools becoming really distinctive. So in many US cities, these magnet schools were still required to accept the teachers who were next in line for assignment within

the school system, which made it impossible to create a strong team of staff within a school who shared the same vision.

More recently, in about 1990, the reform of so-called charter schools has been enormously popular. A charter school is a public school which is free to operate like a private school, in many respects. A group of parents and teachers propose a plan for a school, and that plan is reviewed and approved by state government; it is then able to operate as a public school with full funding from the government, and yet governed by its own self-selected board.

40 states out of the 50 have now adopted laws that allow charter schools, and there are more than 4,000 of those schools serving more than a million pupils at this time. The demand for more of them is constant, and constantly resisted by the teacher unions and the education establishment who see them as a threat, even though many teachers would rather work in a school that is free to have a distinctive character. Charter schools may not select their pupils – if they have more pupils who wish to attend than they can allow, they must admit on a random basis, that is by lottery. Of course they may not discriminate on the basis of race; in theory, they may not have a religious character, although increasingly many of them do have what could be called that. There's a book – just out by one of our former students – that describes what the legal limits are for the religious character of a charter school.⁴

Charter school pupils must participate in the assessments and testing that is required by government. But the school is free to employ whomever they want. They don't, in many states, have to employ only individuals who have been licensed by the state. They can decide that another person is better qualified, or better fit their requirements. They can decide how much to pay the teachers, have fewer teachers and pay them more, or they can have more teachers and pay them less. They can set their own schedule. They can have their own character. They do not have to follow any prescribed curriculum. But, of course, their pupils do have to be able to do well on standard examinations. And of course parents want their children to be able to get into university. And so charter schools evidently have to, in many respects, be like other schools.

In a way, the most important aspect of charter schools is that they will be closed if they do not produce results. Ordinary public schools, if they do not produce good

⁴ Lawrence Weinberg, *Religious Charter Schools: Legalities and Practicalities*, Information Age, 2007.

results, typically are given more funding in order – in most cases – to keep on doing the same unsuccessful things. Occasionally perhaps a head of school might be removed, although that’s unusual. But if a charter school fails to meet the expectations which were promised when its charter was proposed, loses its charter and the school no longer receives public funding. Several dozen have already been closed. So there is a natural accountability to produce results, and schools that fail to produce results do not survive.

Naturally, there are efforts to subvert this independence, this autonomy. And often those are in the form of demands that charter schools comply with more and more external regulations about how they operate. It’s a constant struggle at a policy level to retain the freedom of charter schools to be distinctive, to have their own characteristic vision of education. This may require that government hold charter schools responsible for producing results that are equivalent to the results of other schools, but not the same as the results of those schools. This is already the policy followed in Finland, in Hungary, and a number of other countries, which have arrangements for alternative standards of the same level but different, for schools that have a different focus, schools that parents have chosen because of that different focus. These are the sorts of things that we are actively debating now.

Are charter schools producing better results? Well, that’s naturally being strongly debated, and one of the inevitable questions that any researcher will recognize, is that the pupils attending charter schools are not random. They are pupils whose parents want that school. But they’re also characteristically pupils who have not done well at other schools. And therefore their parents are looking for a second chance, what the French call “rattrapage”: schools to help children get back on track. It is unquestionable that charter schools are very popular with parents and teachers. And surely that would be one argument in their favour. They have also been what we would call laboratories of innovation and of problem-solving. They have been a way in which new ideas about education can be tried out, safely, within a small context, and then often copied in other schools.

What’s next? Well, we’re beginning to find that in some cities with especially low-performing public school systems, like Washington DC and New Orleans, a large proportion of the public schools are charter schools, while other cities like Boston have adopted their own form of charter schools (called ‘pilot schools’ in Boston) with much of the same autonomy. Some of the school districts, that, in other words, are having the

most desperate problems, are turning to the charter-school mechanism as a way to providing adequate education for children.

External accountability

This chapter deals with current issues in the United States surrounding what we could call the “balance” between autonomy and accountability (Glenn, C.; De Groof, J.), specifically as it pertains to charter schools.

We have already explained that charter schools are publicly funded schools are prohibited from discriminating as to the pupils that they enroll. The main difference between charter schools and their traditional public school counterparts is that charter schools are independently managed and therefore have more autonomy to have a distinctive mission, to hire and fire staff, and to innovate in terms of curriculum and pedagogy. If charter schools don’t produce results—as outlined by the terms of the charter, or document that establishes the school—the state reserves the right to close them. Charter schools are accountable to an approved agent of the state, known as an authorizer. Charter school authorizers are usually state education agencies, universities, or local public school districts. Local school districts, according to some charter school advocates, do not always make ideal authorizers. As charter schools compete with local school districts for students, authorizing districts may have incentive to hamper charter school innovation and success.⁵

The charter school movement began in the United States around 1990. Since that time, the number of charter schools has grown rapidly and the movement has come to include diverse examples of schools that vary greatly in purpose and design. Indeed, because charter school laws and authorizing practices differ from state to state and locality to locality, it is very difficult to generalize about the nature or success of the charter school movement. Nonetheless, in the United States we have now had nearly twenty years to understand a few basic things about how charter schooling works in practice. We have also had time to ascertain whether charter schools in general work to increase achievement outcomes for students.

⁵ Bierlin Palmer, L., Gau, R.. *Charter School Authorizing: Are States Making the Grade?*, Thomas B. Fordham Institute (2003).

Into the twentieth-first-century several interesting studies have been conducted specifically on the topic of student achievement in charter schools. The results are mixed. Some studies conclude that charter schools have little to no advantage over their traditional public school counterparts when it comes to raising student achievement.⁶ Other studies contend that students who attend charter schools are at a slight advantage over students of similar family and social class background who do not have access to charter schools.⁷ Of course, all of these studies have been called into question methodologically, and few of them are able to account for 1) the great diversity that exists among charter schools in the United States and 2) the idea that the charter schooling movement may be valuable for reasons that have little to do with student achievement.

Importantly, however, these studies suggest that successful charter schools most often operate in what we might call “policy friendly” environments. That is, charter schools tend to produce good student achievement results when the state and authorizing bodies allow them a great degree of local level autonomy. Charter schools also tend to flourish when there is a real threat of closure—that is, charter schools must believe that authorizers will close them if they fail to produce desired results. When states limit the abilities of charter schools to innovate by subjecting them to many of the same requirements as local public schools, and/or when they fail to adequately hold charter schools to the terms of a clearly defined charter agreement, charter school student outcomes suffer.⁸

Remarkably, although we are starting to understand the importance of providing charter schools the freedoms that they need to flourish while holding them accountable for outcomes, few studies in recent years have questioned the relationship of the charter school movement to another important reform. In 2001, the United States Congress passed a law that is known to most in the United States as the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). NCLB affects all public schools in the United States, including charter schools, and proponents of the law believe that it is the first real attempt on the part of the U.S. federal government to hold schools accountable for student results.

⁶ American Federation of Teachers. *Charter School Achievement on the 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress*. Washington, DC (2004).

⁷ Hoxby, C. *Achievement in Charter Schools and Regular Public Schools in the United States: Understanding the Differences*. Washington, DC: Harvard University and National Bureau of Economic Research (2004).

⁸ Vanourek, G., *State of the Charter School Movement 2005: Trends Issues and Indicators*. Charter School Leadership Council (2005).

Although it is sweeping in scope and addresses everything from teacher preparation to provisions to provide parents with greater choice with regard to where they send their children to school, NCLB rests on two main components: 1) the establishment of curriculum standards in each state and 2) the establishment of standardized tests in each state that measure student progress in relation to a pre-determined goal. Currently, states are required to test students yearly in elementary school and once in high school in reading, math, and science.

No Child Left Behind is actually the most current reauthorization of the 1965 United States Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The ESEA is the main source of *federal* funding for schools (all federal programs combined amount to only about 10% of total funding form most schools in the US), and it is the primary mechanism that the federal government has to entice states, school districts, and schools to comply with federal requirements. States that choose not to establish standards and administer tests would, by law, not receive Title I funding, which provides billions of dollars to states each year (since the law was passed, no state has decided to “opt out” of its requirements, though many have voiced opposition to some of the law’s testing requirements, especially).

An examination of the impact of NCLB on charter schools is relevant because NCLB stands to affect the very heart of the bargain on which charter schools are based, that of greater school level autonomy for increased accountability for results. By design, charter schools are more accountable for results than their traditional public school counterparts—as mentioned they can be closed if they fail to perform. Since 2001 *No Child Left Behind* has held charter schools to an additional layer of accountability. Now charter schools are not only subject to the terms of their authorizer agreements (which may have goals similar to NCLB), they are also subject to NCLB’s curriculum and testing standards and face a second threat of closure under NCLB should they fail to perform.

Given this, specific questions arise:

1. does a requirement for charter schools to adhere to the same curriculum standards and participate in the same standardized tests as their traditional public counterparts hamper the innovation that charter schools are supposed to bring to education?

2. does being subject to more than one kind of accountability (that inherent in the charter on which each charter school operates and that prescribed by NCLB) unfairly inhibit the ability of charter school leaders to be innovative and elicit innovation from their staff?

NCLB's requirements for standards and testing—though useful to traditional public schools in many ways—may strip charters of a very important kind of autonomy. Specifically, under NCLB, charters schools may be less able to offer innovative curricula and types of student assessments than they were in the pre NCLB-era. While it is important to note that many of the charter schools that existed at the advent of NCLB did employ some form of standardized testing per the terms of their charters, it is equally notable that many charters employed norm-referenced tests, not the state-designed criterion-referenced tests that NCLB requires.⁹ Because criterion-referenced tests, by definition, come with a set of prescribed standards for teachers to teach to and for students to meet, it is possible that NCLB prevents charter schools from designing curricula and forms of assessment that set them apart for their traditional public school counterparts. In doing so, NCLB runs the risk of forcing charter schools to look more and more similar to the schools with which they were designed to compete.

Another important consideration regarding the relationship between charter schools and NCLB is the extent to which charter schools are prohibited from innovating when their students do not meet state standards. Under NCLB, schools that fail to meet state benchmarks for progress for two straight years are labeled “in need of improvement.” Once schools are labeled in this way, the federal funds that they receive must be re-directed to a prescribed set of activities, such as after school tutoring for students and professional development for teachers. Because NCLB enforces exactly the same sanctions for failing charter schools as it does for their traditional public counterparts, and because it uses important federal funding to do so, when a charter school fails it may be prevented from using the very autonomy that was meant to define it as a means to improving student outcomes.

This assessment is not intended to raise questions about the nature or importance of accountability in education. There is no question that in the United States—and in most other places—it is necessary to hold schools that fail to provide equal educational

⁹ Hill, P.T., Lake, R.J., Cielo, M. *Charter Schools and Accountability in American Education*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press. (2002).

opportunities for students accountable for their actions. Instead, this assessment is given to highlight the tension between the top-down brand of accountability that the *No Child Left Behind Act* imposes and the bottom-up brand of autonomous innovation that charter schools were meant to embody. This is not to suggest that government should cease to hold charter schools accountable for failure.

Instead, we wish to question whether holding charter schools doubly accountable under both NCLB and the terms of an authorizer agreement is just and productive. Under NCLB, traditional public schools are in fact held to a softer form of accountability than that upon which most charter agreements are based. While it would not be uncommon for an authorizer to consider closing a failing charter school after a period of three to five years, under NCLB traditional public schools can fail to make progress in bettering student outcomes for up to six years before facing possible closure.

We also wish to question whether the federal government is the appropriate body to hold charter schools accountable. Indeed, if a charter school agreement is properly written to hold a school accountable for student outcomes, then the locus of accountability is local. The authorizer, who in theory cares about and understands local conditions and the unique needs of each school, can work with the charter school and its community to better student results. When a charter school is more accountable to NCLB than to its authorizer, however, the locus of accountability is anything but local. Required to use federal money for pre-determined purposes, the charter school may not be able to implement the changes that local leadership and the local community believe will raise student achievement.

And these concerns relate to another that is more relevant to our topic today: What should school accountability look like if we wish to preserve the autonomy of school leaders? To what level of government should schools be accountable for a focus on student outcomes? On both counts it stands to reason that there could be great value in letting autonomous local governments and school leaders determine best practices for holding schools accountable. While it is necessary that external authorities establish expectations for performance and consequences for failure if those expectations are not met, it is equally important to allow school leaders and local communities to determine how best to meet expectations (in terms of school programs and pedagogy) and how best to assess whether expectations have been met.

Of course, it would be appropriate to wonder why the arguments I have just presented shouldn't apply to all public schools, traditional and charter. Why should any

school be prevented from innovating? Moreover, if local autonomy and accountability are good for charter schools, shouldn't they be good for their traditional public counterparts as well?

We would argue that charter schools, by entering into agreement with a state-approved authorizer, have already met a requirement that most traditional public schools have not. Moreover, I would like to suggest that it is important to respect the charter schooling movement and its central proposition because of the potential for success that the movement, reflected in its many successful schools, has shown thus far. Though NCLB may prove an effective reform—and we should certainly hope that it does—limiting the ability of charter schools to fulfill their promise by taking away great degrees of autonomy could rob some students—especially those poor and minority students that charter schools disproportionately serve—of a path to educational success. In this same way, if it hampers charter school autonomy too much, NCLB may also rob the U.S. educational system of an important path to overall improvement.

Although research and conversation on the effects of NCLB on charter schools is still nascent, it is reasonable to expect that there will be several important changes to the federal legislation within the next year. NCLB is due to be reauthorized in 2008, and if the reauthorization does not take place before the November 2008 election, it is safe to say that it will be a top priority for the incoming administration. Whatever new components are incorporated into NCLB at that time, it is important that interested parties continue to look to charter schools—especially those that are currently flourishing—to understand the degree to which autonomy in terms of school operation and innovation can help students to succeed.

Improving school leadership

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Why school leadership matters

School leadership has become a priority in education policy agendas internationally. It plays a key role in improving school outcomes by influencing the motivations and capacities of teachers, as well as the school climate and environment. Effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling.

As countries are seeking to adapt their education systems to the needs of contemporary society, expectations for schools and school leaders are changing. Many countries have moved towards decentralisation, making schools more autonomous in their decision making and holding them more accountable for results. At the same time, the requirement to improve overall student performance while serving more diverse student populations is putting schools under pressure to use more evidence-based teaching practices.

As a result of these trends, the function of school leadership across OECD countries is now increasingly defined by a demanding set of roles which include financial and human resource management and leadership for learning. There are concerns across countries that the role of principal as conceived for needs of the past is no longer appropriate. In many countries, principals have heavy workloads; many are reaching retirement, and it is getting harder to replace them. Potential candidates often hesitate to apply, because of overburdened roles, insufficient preparation and training, limited career prospects and inadequate support and rewards.

These developments have made school leadership a priority in education systems across the world. Policy makers need to enhance the quality of school

leadership and make it sustainable. The OECD has identified four main policy levers which taken together can improve school leadership practice.

1. (Re)define school leadership responsibilities

Research has shown that school leaders can make a difference in school and student performance if they are granted autonomy to make important decisions. However autonomy alone does not automatically lead to improvements unless it is well supported. In addition, it is important that the core responsibilities of school leaders be clearly defined and delimited. School leadership responsibilities should be defined through an understanding of the practices most likely to improve teaching and learning. Policy makers need to:

1.1. Provide higher degrees of autonomy with appropriate support

School leaders need time, capacity and support to focus on the practices most likely to improve learning. Greater degrees of autonomy should be coupled with new models of distributed leadership, new types of accountability, and training and development for school leadership.

1.2. Redefine school leadership responsibilities for improved student learning

Policy makers and practitioners need to ensure that the roles and responsibilities associated with improved learning outcomes are at the core of school leadership practice. This study identifies four major domains of responsibility as key for school leadership to improve student outcomes:

- Supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality: School leaders have to be able to adapt the teaching programme to local needs, promote teamwork among teachers and engage in teacher monitoring, evaluation and professional development.
- Goal-setting, assessment and accountability: Policy makers need to ensure that school leaders have discretion in setting strategic direction and optimise their capacity to develop school plans and goals and monitor progress, using data to improve practice.

- Strategic financial and human resource management: Policy makers can enhance the financial management skills of school leadership teams by providing training to school leaders, establishing the role of a financial manager within the leadership team, or providing financial support services to schools. In addition, school leaders should be able to influence teacher recruitment decisions to improve the match between candidates and their school's needs.
- Collaborating with other schools: This new leadership dimension needs to be recognised as a specific role for school leaders. It can bring benefits to school systems as a whole rather than just the students of a single school. But school leaders need to develop their skills to become involved in matters beyond their school borders.

1.3. Develop school leadership frameworks for improved policy and practice

School leadership frameworks can help provide guidance on the main characteristics, tasks and responsibilities of effective school leaders and signal the essential character of school leadership as leadership for learning. They can be a basis for consistent recruitment, training and appraisal of school leaders. Frameworks should clearly define the major domains of responsibility for school leaders and allow for contextualisation for local and school-level criteria. They should be developed with involvement by the profession.

2. Distribute school leadership

The increased responsibilities and accountability of school leadership are creating the need for distribution of leadership, both within schools and across schools. School boards also face many new tasks. While practitioners consider middle-management responsibilities vital for school leadership, these practices remain rare and often unclear; and those involved are not always recognized for their tasks. Policy makers need to broaden the concept of school leadership and adjust policy and working conditions accordingly.

2.1. Encourage distribution of leadership

Distribution of leadership can strengthen management and succession planning. Distributing leadership across different people and organisational structures can help to

meet the challenges facing contemporary schools and improve school effectiveness. This can be done in formal ways through team structures and other bodies or more informally by developing ad hoc groups based on expertise and current needs.

2.2. Support distribution of leadership

There is a need to reinforce the concept of leadership teams in national frameworks, to develop incentive mechanisms to reward participation and performance in these teams, and to extend leadership training and development to middle-level management and potential future leaders in the school. Finally, policy makers need to reflect on modifying accountability mechanisms to match distributed leadership structures.

2.3. Support school boards in their tasks

Evidence shows that effective school boards may contribute to the success of their schools. For this to happen, it is crucial to clarify the roles and responsibilities of school boards and ensure consistency between their objectives and the skills and experience of board members. Policy makers can help by providing guidelines for improved recruitment and selection processes and by developing support structures to ensure active participation in school boards, including opportunities for skills development.

3. Develop skills for effective school leadership

Country practices and evidence from different sources show that school leaders need specific training to respond to broadened roles and responsibilities. Strategies need to focus on developing and strengthening skills related to improving school outcomes (as listed above) and provide room for contextualisation.

3.1. Treat leadership development as a continuum

Leadership development is broader than specific programmes of activity or intervention. It requires a combination of formal and informal processes throughout all stages and contexts of leadership practice. This implies coherently supporting the school leadership career through these stages:

Encourage initial leadership training: Whether initial training is voluntary or mandatory can depend on national governance structures. Governments can define national programmes, collaborate with local level governments and develop incentives to ensure

that school leaders participate. In countries where the position is not tenured, a trade-off must be found to make it worthwhile for principals to invest time in professional development.

Efforts also need to be made to find the right candidates.

- Organise induction programmes: Induction programmes are particularly valuable to prepare and shape initial school leadership practices, and they provide vital networks for principals to share concerns and explore challenges. These programmes should provide a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge and self-study.
- Ensure in-service training to cover need and context: In-service programmes need to be seen in the context of prior learning opportunities for school leadership. Where there are no other initial requirements, basic in-service programmes should encourage development of leadership skills. In-service training should be also offered periodically to principals and leadership teams so they can update their skills and keep up with new developments. Networks (virtual or real) also provide informal development for principals and leadership teams.

3.2. Ensure consistency of provision by different institutions

A broad range of providers cater to school leadership training needs, but the training they offer must be more consistent. In some countries, national school leadership institutions have raised awareness and improved provision of leadership development opportunities. In other countries, where there are many providers but no national orientations, it is important to have clear standards and ensure a focus on quality. Many governments have standards, evaluations and other mechanisms to monitor and regulate programme quality.

3.3. Ensure appropriate variety for effective training

A broad body of knowledge supported by practice has identified the content, design, and methods of effective programmes. It points to the following key factors: curricular coherence, experience in real contexts, cohort grouping, mentoring, coaching, peer learning and structures for collaborative activity between the programme and schools.

4. Make school leadership an attractive profession

The challenge is to improve the quality of current leadership and build sustainable leadership for the future. Evidence indicates that potential applicants are deterred by the heavy workload of principals and the fact that the job does not seem to be adequately remunerated or supported. Uncertain recruitment procedures and career development prospects for principals may also deter potential candidates. Strategies to attract, recruit and support high-performing school leaders include the following:

4.1. Professionalise recruitment

Recruitment processes can have a strong impact on school leadership quality. While school-level involvement is essential to contextualise recruitment practices, action is necessary at the system level to ensure that recruitment procedures and criteria are effective, transparent and consistent. Succession planning – proactively identifying and developing potential leaders – can boost the quantity and quality of future school leaders. Eligibility criteria should be broadened to reduce the weight accorded to seniority and attract younger dynamic candidates with different backgrounds. Recruitment procedures should go beyond traditional job interviews to include an expanded set of tools and procedures to assess candidates. Finally, those who are on the hiring side of recruitment panels also need guidelines and training.

4.2. Focus on the relative attractiveness of school leaders' salaries

The relative attractiveness of salaries for school leaders can influence the supply of high quality candidates. Policy makers need to monitor remuneration compared to similar grades in the public and private sectors and make school leadership more competitive. Establishing separate salary scales for teachers and principals can attract more candidates from among the teaching staff. At the same time, salary scales should reflect leadership structures and school-level factors to attract high performing leaders to all schools.

4.3. Acknowledge the role of professional organisations of school leaders

Professional organisations of school leaders provide a forum for dialogue, knowledge sharing, and dissemination of best practices among professionals and between professionals and policy makers. Workforce reform is unlikely to succeed unless school

leaders are actively involved in its development and implementation through their representative organisations.

4.4. Provide options and support for career development

Providing career development prospects for school leaders can help avoid principal burnout and make school leadership a more attractive career option. There are many ways to make the profession more flexible and mobile, allowing school leaders to move between schools as well as between leadership and teaching and other professions. Current country practice provides some examples to draw from, including alternatives to lifetime contracts through renewable fixed-term contracts and options for principals to step up to new opportunities such as jobs in the educational administration, leadership of groups or federations of schools, and consultant leadership roles.

*When mayoral governance matters:
Turning around low performing urban districts in the United States*

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Mayoral governance of school systems is gaining prominence in large cities in the United States. As the public looks for alternative school governance, they no longer rule out the option of direct, formal mayoral control. In 2006 and 2007 the Gallup poll asked the public if they favored mayoral control in schools. In 2006, only 29 percent of the general public was in favor, but in 2007 that number had jumped to 39 percent, with even greater support (42 percent) from parents.¹ Such trends in public opinion, combined with growing media attention to mayoral involvement in urban schools, elevate this topic in today's education policy circles. The 2007 annual meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures drew a huge audience to the session on mayoral control and the future of school boards. Currently, almost two-thirds of the states have passed legislation authorizing either the city or the state to govern and manage school districts that are underperforming. Formal mayoral control, in varying degrees, occurs in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, Baltimore, Cleveland, Providence, Trenton, and Washington D.C., among others.

The growing public support for mayoral control suggests the promise of the reform's core design—an integration of electoral accountability and education performance at the system-wide level. In essence, mayoral control allows the city's public, parents, and taxpayers to hold the mayor and his/her appointed school board and district leadership team ultimately accountable for school performance. This governance reform, which can be characterized as “integrated governance,” is designed as a corrective to sprawling administrative and political subsystems with too much

¹ Rose, L.C. and Gallup, A.M. (2007). *The 39th Annual Phi Delta Kappa / Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools*, p38.

fragmentation.² Mayoral control, when properly designed and implemented, can enhance educational accountability.

Mayors and schools: an evolving relationship

The independence of urban school boards vis-à-vis the mayor has changed multiple times in many American cities. Mayors have often had an interest in their city's school system, but not all mayors' interests were directed at the public good. Especially in the first half of the twentieth century, mayoral involvement in education was frequently motivated by patronage politics.

In response to political interference in the operation of the public schools, the Progressive reforms of the 1920s were designed to use "scientific management" to keep partisan (mayoral) politics out of the school sector (Tyack, 1974; Ravitch, 2000).³ The progressive-corporate governance paradigm dominated the reform phase that roughly spanned the period from the 1920s to the mid 1960s. In this period, previously appointed school boards in big city districts were almost all replaced with elected boards. In a 1938 study, Henry and Kerwin found that of the 191 cities with populations over 50,000, forty-three (over 20%) of the city school systems had appointed school boards. Over the next fifty years that number would drop precipitously. Before Boston turned to mayoral control in 1992, only a handful of appointed school boards remained.

During the first quarter of the 20th century, urban centers were growing rapidly as the manufacturing and industrial sectors created job opportunities for waves of working class immigrants. The new model that originated from the Progressive era continues to dominate many districts even today. The main features traceable to the reform of the 1920s include: a citywide, non-partisan, elected board that appoints the school superintendent as its professional chief executive; an administrative hierarchy and delivery of services led by a professionally credentialed school superintendent and his/her professional cabinet; personnel policies codified in details to guard against political interference; schooling services (such as instructional time) organized in terms of age-specific grade levels and subject matter knowledge; and a taxing authority autonomous from city hall. The result was a school system insulated from city hall.

² Wong, K., "Political Dynamics of Mayoral Control," *Harvard Educational Review*, 2006.

³ Tyack, D.B. (1974). *The One Best System: A history of American urban education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Ravitch, Diane (2000). *Left back : a century of failed school reforms*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Gittell (1969, 158) observed that “the most significant trend in education in New York City has been the isolation of school administration from city government.”

To be sure, the formal separation of school systems and city governments does not mean that mayors were never involved in school matters. For example, instances of informal mayoral influence are scattered throughout Jeffrey Mirel’s (1993) history of the Detroit school system.

In the 1930s, when facing a fiscal crisis, the mayor created a committee to specifically address how to reduce teacher salaries. In 1932, the mayor “met informally” with school board members to gain their support for the budget cuts. Detroit’s example illustrates how, in a system where the mayor had little institutionalized power over the school board, the mayor had to rely primarily on informal means of influence. Within this context, insulated city school systems were able to build and maintain their own institutional rules, enforcing their autonomy from city hall.

Changing urban school politics created new opportunities for mayors to mediate competing demands throughout the 1960s and 1980s. Racial tension over the pace of desegregating schools in the wake of *Brown*, taxpayer dissatisfaction with local property tax burden, the readiness of teachers union to strike when collective bargaining failed, and the declining political influence of the urban population in state legislatures all contributed to heightened school conflicts. These challenges clearly outmatched the capacity of an independent school board and its professional superintendent. As a result, mayors found themselves in a new role in relation to city schools, namely crisis managers. Mayors began to re-enter the realm of school governance during this politically contentious phase of reform.

By the 1990s, big city mayors began to see public education as an important investment in improving the city’s overall quality of social and economic life. Mayors, oftentimes working with the business community, saw schools as a key to improving overall city performance. They saw efforts to improve schools as part of a broader agenda aimed at enhancing safety, parks, and recreational services for families who lived in the city. Mayors became increasingly keen on implementing policies that could turn around declining schools and depressed neighborhoods. Under their leadership, the 1920s model of insulating school governance from mayoral influence became significantly revised.

Mayoral governance as policy and practice

In *The Education Mayor* (2007), we sought to begin to examine the effects of mayoral control in a systematic, national manner.⁴ The study examined the performance of mayor-led school districts over the period 1992-2003, with a special emphasis on achievement performance in the period 1999-2003. We also examined the achievement gap under mayoral control, budget and management outcomes, public support, and the links to classroom activity. Summarizing the cross-district and multi-year analysis of achievement and resources, we found that:

- Even after factoring in strong structural forces such as poverty and a persistent racial achievement gap, moving from the traditional governance regime to a new, integrated governance framework will lead to statistically significant, positive gains in reading and math, relative to other districts in the state.
- Mayor-led integrated governance is simultaneously attempting to raise up the lowest performing schools in the district, while at the same time avoid a “brain drain” by improving schools at the top of the distribution as well.
- In the case of Chicago, mayoral control provided a common structure for system-wide change even prior to the federal *No Child Left Behind*. It facilitated curricular and instructional coherence by holding all schools to common standards of student achievement. At all levels, it focused district and school actors on a common goal and gave them the mechanisms to intervene and improve instruction.
- Accountability-oriented mayors are becoming more strategic in prioritizing their resource allocation and management. The data suggest that mayoral control districts focus on fiscal discipline by containing labor costs and reducing their bureaucratic spending.
- Mayors in integrated governance systems are more likely to stress accountability and outcome-based performance goals for the city’s school districts. They are also more likely to advocate for a stronger city role in managing the school system.

⁴ Kenneth Wong, Francis Shen, Dorothea Anagnostopoulos, and Stacey Rutledge. 2007 *The Education Mayor: Improving America’s Schools*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.