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The Changing Nature of School Principals’ Work: A Commentary
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Editorial Note

In the autumn of 2015, *International Studies of Educational Administration* (ISEA) released a call for a Special Issue focusing on the changing nature of school principals’ work. The global response from scholars in the field was overwhelming, so much so that we decided to publish not one, but two Special Issues. The level of interest expressed in reaction to the call demonstrates that there is indeed ‘something going on’ out in the field that is driving scholars to explore and attempt to explain the changing nature of principals’ work. The original call for submissions posed four questions meant to help meet the objectives of the Special Issue:

1. What do principals and headteachers actually do?
2. How, if at all, does their work vary from region to region?
3. How can we encourage the development of cross-cultural models, frameworks and analytical tools to understand the work of school leadership in different contexts?
4. What leadership approaches exist outside Western frameworks?

The responses to these questions in the two Special Issues of ISEA illustrate that the work of school principals/headteachers is changing considerably across the globe. For example, in the first of the two issues, contributors argue that principals’ current work is increasingly complicated by factors such as growing levels of diversity (Ryan), changing professional expectations and increasing demands (Forde & Torrance), new national and international reforms (Wilson, Zhang, Tu & Liu), shifting organisational structures of schooling (Gibson; Shankar & Allison), and eroding principal and headteacher autonomy (Gibson).

The articles in this first Special Issue focus on the work of principals and headteachers that includes, but goes beyond, their official role. Defined as ‘labour or effort expended to achieve a particular set of goals’ (Pollock, Wang & Hauseman 2015: 538), this conception of work allows for a comprehensive examination of what principals do, and the motives behind their actions. Principals’ work encompasses employment-related activities that are carried out both within and outside of position-related roles, actions that are paid and unpaid, and labour that occurs on and off school property and outside of official school hours. Importantly, this work extends beyond observable actions to also include the cognitive, spiritual, and emotional labour (Applebaum 1992; Gamst 1995; Leithwood & Beatty 2007) of principals/headteachers.

The explorations into principal’s work contained in this Special Issue endeavour to expand understanding and knowledge about work associated with school leadership, while raising salient questions about existing practices and broadening current theories in the field of educational leadership. The issue provides a collection of articles that consist of both conceptual arguments (Ryan) and empirical research. The empirical studies include a mixture of research approaches from qualitative, such as interviews (Forde & Torrance; Gibson; Wilson et al.) and policy analysis (Forde & Torrance), to quantitative methods (Lapointe et al.).
In this issue, all articles address some aspect of what principals actually do in their work. The two Special Issues focus on expanding the field of educational leadership with rich and applicable research. Both volumes attempt to: (a) encourage scholars to consider more vigorous conceptual, methodological and analytical approaches to leadership research; (b) inform the field of educational leadership about school principals and headteachers beyond their assigned role; and (c) continue this effort for the purposes of enriching knowledge in the field of educational leadership.

The Special Issues welcome research conducted in countries around the world, from England to China, Canada, Scotland, Israel, Malta, Sweden, Turkey, the United States, Hong Kong, Australia, Nepal, Jamaica, Haiti and the Philippines. In this first issue, research in single contexts includes Ryan’s research in Ontario and Forde and Torrance’s work in Scotland, while Lapointe et al. and others present research across countries. Still others adopt a comparative approach within single contexts. Bin Shankar and Allison compare principals in high- and low-performing schools in Kathmandu, Gibson contrasts ten academy schools in England, and Wilson and colleagues relate three different kinds of school cases in Zhejiang province, China. Most significantly, these articles have the potential to reveal how each country/jurisdiction interprets the work of school leaders. In doing so, they can generate a broader global discussion about the work of school principals and present complementary and competing theoretical, policy, and /or practical implications.

Braukmann, Geibler, Feldhoff and Pashiardis use a chronological approach to present an evolutionary perspective of instructional leadership in Germany. The authors challenge the reader to consider how the national policy-related context frames and shapes the understanding, roles, and meaning of instructional leadership from an historical perspective. In many ways, Braukmann and colleagues are demonstrating, in the German context, what Gronn and Ribbins (1996) more than 20 years ago argued – that ‘all national cultures… “Program” their citizens (through socialization) to learn and solve problems and to lead and to follow in culturally sanctioned ways’ (p. 458).

Forde and Torrance, following the lead of other scholars (Murakami, Törnsén & Pollock 2014) argue that principals’ work is changing because expectations of principals are changing. They show how the expectations and experiences of headteachers in Scotland have changed over a 20- year period. The authors demonstrate the tensions that exist between policy and practice as definitions of the principals’ role have expanded.

Other authors demonstrate how the changing structure of schooling is influencing the work of school principals. For example, Gibson’s exploration of the relationships and roles of principals and their sponsors in newly formed school academies in England reveals that the one major difference between sponsored academies and maintained schools is reduced principal autonomy. He also illustrates that the structural organisation of the schooling system has changed the way in which some principals go about doing their work.

In terms of tools, Lapointe and her international colleagues address issues of analytic tools in their study of principals’ work. They address the question of how we can encourage the development of cross-cultural models, frameworks and analytical tools to understand the work of school leaders in different contexts. Specifically, Lapointe et al. illuminate the process of verifying the cultural consistencies of the Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ).

Westernised frameworks meant to capture and influence the work of principals are also challenged in this Special Issue. For example, Ryan argues for the recognition of the kinds of work in which inclusive-minded principals engage. He contends that some of the general categories of principals’ work fail to capture what inclusive-minded principals do. Indeed, their work extends beyond usual Western frameworks and conceptualisations.
Last but not least, Wilson, Shang, Tu and Liu’s article explains the shift in priorities and work practices of Chinese school principals in response to national curriculum reforms. The article demonstrates the tensions that exist when global, neoliberal pressures meet with traditional culture and practices.

This first of two issues on principals’ work culminates with a commentary written by Alma Harris. She offers some reflections, insights and observations on the articles in the first of two Special Issues. Referring to her seven-system leadership study, Harris suggests this Special Issue makes a strong and compelling case that a comparative or cross-cultural exploration is required in order to fully understand the complexities of the changing nature of the principal’s role. I will leave it to you, the reader, to determine if the articles in this Special Issue do in fact support her argument.

These new understandings of principals’ and headteachers’ work are meant to ignite debate and interest within the field. The findings of this research can also provide school districts, governments, and universities responsible for administrator preparation with insights into the new knowledge, skills, attitudes and understandings that school principals need for their work. Finally, new insights presented in this Special Issue can impact school districts’ policies around selection, preparation, hiring and support of principals. My hope is that this new knowledge will at some point help to improve principal practice.

Katina Pollock

Editor of the Special Issue of International Studies in Educational Administration

Western University

References


Instructional Leadership in Germany: An Evolutionary Perspective

Stefan Brauckmann, Gert Geißler, Tobias Feldhoff and Petros Pashiardis

Abstract: Comparative studies on school leadership so far provide little information on the national contexts underlying school principals’ actions. Framing school leadership in this sense includes the underlying legal framework (setting) and the structure of its regulations, as well as state-organised support systems (e.g. qualification and training programmes) aiming to empower school leaders to do what they are supposed to do. Stemming from the above, the guiding question of our approach is as follows: In what way does the German policy-related context frame and shape the understanding, roles and meaning of instructional leadership from an historical perspective? In order to answer this question, this article focuses on how the historical understanding of leading pedagogical and instructional development processes, of the legal framework as well as the empirical findings of the German research literature on instructional leadership contributes to the variety of German contexts and prerequisites for the use and understanding of instructional leadership. It outlines the importance of examining instructional leadership in the context of broader political and cultural debates within national school systems.

Keywords: Leadership activities, accountability, pedagogical autonomy, contextual factors, empirical perspective, German education system, educational history.

Why Does Instructional Leadership Still Matter?

Across the world, educational systems are not only deeply rooted in national traditions and characterised by specific national features, but are also affected by global economic, social and cultural changes that impact the role, understanding and meaning of educational leadership. Such (inter-)national changes strengthen the need for school leaders to learn more about malleable and non-malleable factors of their national education systems (Brauckmann & Pashiardis 2016). Reforms strengthening the role of educational leadership with regards to school quality assurance and development have generally been imposed on schools via a top-down legislative process (Eurydice European Unit 2007). Whatever the chosen model – be it through general education legislation, specific legislation or more flexible regulation – reforms include provisions for the transfer of duties affecting teachers’ and principals’ professionalism. Although policy contexts change and vary – from the need for more democratic participation, to more efficient public management and, today, the concern to improve the quality of education (Wößmann, Ludemann, Schutz & West 2007) – two main governance strategies (although they differ from state to state) can be observed:
more accountability for the performance of the individual school

a greater degree of freedom for the individual school.

School leadership, not just in Europe but worldwide, is faced with strategic management tasks, because school principals are not only charged with the everyday management of administrative and pedagogical routines, they also have to establish and lead the instructional and pedagogical development processes within schools in order to assure the implementation of externally determined standards and accountability demands. With regard to their workloads, some principals remain in a state of critical assertiveness rather than compliance in response to the externally imposed reformist cultures, for instance with respect to the mix of autonomy and accountability settings (Pont, Nusche & Hopkins 2008). Others try to find strategies or work harder to live up to global expectations and demands (Mulford 2008; Shields 2006; Tsiakkiros & Pashiardis 2002).

The increasing global emphasis on accountability seems to have reignited interest in instructional leadership. Until recently, the considerable and growing body of research on principal leadership styles (Mangin & Dunsmore 2015; Neumerski 2013; The Wallace Foundation 2012) suggested that the instructional leadership construct was still alive in the domains of policy, research and practice in school leadership and management. ‘Instructional leadership’ is a term that has been derived from the effective schools research, primarily in the USA (Hallinger 2005; Nettles & Herrington 2007; Waters, Marzano & McNulty 2003). This leadership style has a strong focus on the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning as the core practices of the school. Within the instructional leadership framework, different conceptualisations of leadership have been developed (Brauckmann & Pashiardis 2011; Hallinger 2010, 2011; Heck & Hallinger 2010; Pashiardis 2014).

More concretely, the basic goals of instructional leadership are: (1) improvement of the teaching profession and teachers, (2) the promotion of effective teachers, and (3) genuine improvement of the deep learning that takes place in schools. Using teacher evaluation practices, efforts are made to improve classroom teaching, to improve the qualitative development of school life, to accelerate the implementation of educational programmes, to identify strengths and weaknesses with regards to teaching and learning, and generally to improve the quality of the schooling process. A number of researchers claim that monitoring and evaluation are primary constituents of an effective instructional leader (Daley & Kim 2010; Danielson 2011; Marshall 2012; Papay 2012). In Germany, instructional leadership, as an important leitmotiv of school effectiveness research, has been acknowledged and described (Wissinger 2014), but not critically revised or contextualised so far.

Although there is a growing homogenisation of expectations and approaches of school leaders, especially with regards to effective leadership styles such as instructional leadership, it is interesting to observe that these approaches often do not take national and cultural traditions into consideration (Hallinger 2005). For instance, the form and degree of accountability pressure might differ from place to place, since accountability is deeply rooted in cultures, on both national and local levels, that interpret these changes in various ways. This might also bear consequence for the implementation of the accountability-driven instructional leadership style (Brauckmann & Pashiardis 2016). Framing school leadership in this sense includes the underlying legal framework (setting), and the structure of its regulations, as well as state-organised support systems (e.g. qualification and training programmes) aiming to empower school leaders to do what they are supposed to do.
It must be noted that so far, comparative studies on school leadership provide little holistic information on the national contexts underlying school principals’ actions. More theoretical and empirical light needs to be shed on the ongoing debate about the contextualised adaptation processes of a postulated transnational construct of leadership (Dimmock & Walker 2000; Murakami, Törnsén & Pollock 2014; Walker 2014).

Policy studies on instructional leadership can reveal how international trends are adopted as well as how national and local cultures influence principals and their work. Stemming from the above, the extent to which the historical foundation and the legal and organisational framework of the German school system legitimate the use and, even more so, frame the understanding of instructional leadership in terms of adherence, coherence and consistency between expectations, formal regulations and historical foundations has remained unanswered. As a result, there is a great deal of uncertainty over the extent to which German principals actually engage in instructional leadership tasks (Brauckmann et al. 2014).

Sound evidence-based knowledge of the differences and commonalities in leading instructional development processes which might contribute (in the long run) to a discussion on the benefits and detriments of a transnational model of instructional leadership, as often envisioned in the internationally oriented leadership community, is lacking within the German context. Thus, the guiding question of our approach to this study was as follows: In what way does the German policy-related context frame and shape the understanding, roles and meaning of instructional leadership from a historical perspective? In order to answer this question, this article focuses on how the historical understanding of leading pedagogical and instructional development processes (the legal framework, as well as the empirical findings of the German research literature on instructional leadership) contribute to the variety of German contexts and prerequisites for the use and understanding of instructional leadership. Furthermore, this article outlines the importance of examining instructional leadership in the context of broader political and cultural debates within national school systems.

By using the above-mentioned multi-perspective approach, this study seeks to clarify two issues: (1) the underlying concepts, foundations and theoretical beliefs that shape the German perspective on instructional leadership; and (2) the theory-driven model of instructional leadership. A report on the empirical evidence of the effects of this model of instructional leadership is then given. Thus, by contrasting the underlying concepts, on the one hand, and empirical operationalisation on the other, we intend to discuss alternative, distinct models of instructional leadership that might be more pedagogy-driven and aligned with the experiences, values, orientations and professional self-understanding of German school leaders. Implications for further research, policy and practice will also be discussed, from a more global perspective, as a result of the German experience on this profoundly interesting area of educational leadership. In a nutshell and with reference to the four guiding questions for this special issue, this article:

1. describes what German high school principals used to do and now do in terms of instructional leadership practices, and some of the historical reasons why
2. provides information about principals’ expectations and practices in Germany, allowing for comparisons with other countries
3. illustrates how instructional leadership, as a concept, is applied in German schools, which in concert with the other articles in this issue, will deepen the understanding of this concept across countries
4. provides a description of instructional leadership outside of a North American context. While Europe and North America are both viewed as ‘the West’, it is clear that there are differences between European and North American schooling and leadership.

Facets of Instructional Leadership in Upper Secondary and Lower Secondary Schools in Germany

Starting with the example of Prussia, which became the largest, most populated, and thus most important actor in Germany with regards to matters of schooling in the early 19th century, many regents in Germany declared the state to be the organiser of schooling. Instructional institutions were to be administrated according to state rules and legislation, and running a school required prior permission by the state.

In the process of allocating power to the state, priority concerning the content taught and supervision of teaching staff was awarded to ‘educated schools’. These schools were known as Gymnasium (upper secondary schools) in northern Germany and Prussia (Tenorth 2008). State school governance authorities defined precise content for teaching and exams, decreed school orders and disciplinary rules, demanded and controlled the regularly submitted annual school reports, and supervised, inspected and advised teachers and principals. As a consequence, compliance with instructional standards became far more evident (Geißler 2013).

The following is a historical account of instructional leadership expectations and practices in Germany. It should be noted that the use of instructional leadership has to be understood as an evolutionary process. The various instructional leadership functions categorised below did not become obsolete at a certain point in time and others practices suddenly begin; on the contrary, these functions can be seen as operating on a continuum, with overlaps between historical periods and the associated instructional leadership activities and expectations. For instance, teacher evaluation was seen as fulfilling two functions – formative and summative (Harris 1986; Pashiardis 1994, 1996; Stronge 1997) – and the perceived role of the school leader varied accordingly; teachers were seen either as instructional leaders who improved teaching and learning, or as judges who would grade other teachers and thus influence their promotion and career path. The information below is presented as objectively as possible, even though it is understood that the interpretation of rules and regulations will always entail some degree of subjectivity and discretion.

The Paternalistic Leader in Terms of Instruction

Given the conditions of a school system that is largely governed by the state, high school principals were no longer able to select their own teaching staff. Instead, personnel were appointed by the competent disciplinary body, which was also in charge of transfer. To assure the functionality of an institution, a principal therefore had to cultivate a constructive relationship with the teaching staff – who were tenured, and thus actually led the school and instruction – as well as secure his own lawful position. This stressed the rather paternalistic approach to leading the teaching staff, since school leaders had no instruments of power over their teachers (Strutz & Nevermann 1985).

High school (Gymnasium) principals had a right to visit all lessons and all classrooms, and were also allowed to inspect any of the students’ written work. Even so, teachers at the time were highly qualified and principals tended not to interfere in their lessons, as doing so was perceived as interference with pedagogical autonomy. Collegial conduct did not change, even if a principal was

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1 ‘His’ represents both genders, although teachers/principals were mainly men during this period.
promoted. As a school inspector, the former school principal was expected to assess the principal and his staff at the schools for which he was responsible. While occupying this role, the inspector acted as a superior, but still perceived himself as part of the collegial-scientific community from which he himself had emerged. He issued recommendations instead of directives, unless a violation of norms was evident. Announcements in ministerial bulletins were worded in such a way as to uphold the aforementioned culture of autonomy, at least as far as instructional procedures were concerned (Geißler 2013). Principals could expect their teaching staff to be reliable and to teach and educate according to official orders. Teachers were bound by their university backgrounds and social milieus, as well as their ambition, academically; most teachers held doctorates (Geißler & Brauckmann 2015).

Like upper secondary principals, school heads at lower secondary schools were also entitled to visit lessons. They were allowed to select individual, permanently appointed and experienced teachers as heads for specific areas of instruction (Geißler 2013). After the turn of the century, however, this type of instructional supervision became less significant, due to progress in teacher training seminars and the growing interest of teachers in their own training. Thus, lower high school teachers became more active. Teachers organised into unions and their social status improved; moreover, they were increasingly less willing to submit their pedagogical authority to the outdated conditions of subordination. Teacher associations demanded ‘collegial leadership’ (Strutz & Nevermann 1985), and suggested that the school principal’s office be restricted to management and coordination duties. At the time, this demand was unsuccessful.

The Instructional Leader

By the mid-19th century, all high school teachers had acquired university training and the practice of schooling, and particularly instruction, was therefore the decisive factor when school authorities decided whom to appoint as principal. As a rule, a high school principal was appointed after many years of teaching at a school. It was their teaching experience rather than their superior qualifications that rendered principals acceptable to other teachers (Geißler & Brauckmann 2015). The same notion was later applied to the appointment of general school principals (Wöhe 1933). It can be argued that the system implicitly ‘rewarded’ excellence in teaching, and thus emphasised pedagogical leadership as a key factor for promotion to principalship, albeit in a subtle way. By the final third of the 19th century, school principals had gained an outstanding and important status within education establishments by running assigned administrative operations, thanks to their influence on instruction, their educational relationships at school and their relationships with teachers (Pretzel 1909).

The School Principal as the First Teacher of his School

Despite his principalship position, a principal leading a high school with between 200 and 700 students taught regularly; in Prussia, for example, a principal taught between 6 and 16 lessons per week. Regarding his function as a role model, the principal could thus practically demonstrate mastering the art he demanded from his teachers. It can therefore be said that the high school principal, having an academic teaching background, was a leader who was familiar with all aspects of school and instruction. His knowledge of teachers’ strengths and weaknesses enabled him to purposefully deploy them in the system of subjects and classes. He was an administrative officer and the first teacher of the school who also supervised the entire instructional operations; he was responsible for organising order within the school. The principal was dependent not least upon tactful communication to inspire collaboration among colleagues, and he was the teachers’
highest-ranking representative when facing parents and the public. Regarding all these aspects, the principal was able to shape the profile of his institution within the limits of legal provisions. In a sense, this is the third era of educational administration, wherein human resources are ‘matched’ into the ‘right’ positions within the organisation (Geißler & Brauckmann 2015).

**Distributed Instructional Leadership**

After the Empire years (1871-1918), the Weimar Republic era (1918-1933) began (Fend 2006). Given the growing complexity of schools and a socially disparate, conflict-prone environment, school leadership in general became more challenging. Hence, the distribution of management and leadership tasks even beyond deputy heads became necessary (Held 1980).

Principals working for the school authority were urged to perceive their duties in a new light by granting teachers professional autonomy and freedom (‘creative room’), and were advised to meet teachers in the role of ‘leaders, counsellors, and colleagues’. The implementation of official curricula by principals meant that teachers were granted considerable freedom with respect to contents and methods taught. An even more distinct digression from tradition is evident in the diverse forms of ‘collegial schools’, which were introduced in nearly all of the 26 states in the Weimar Republic (Preußischer Lehrerverein 1931). The customary right of a principal to visit classrooms was delimited or even relinquished, as it was regarded as an undemocratic instrument of school control. Staff elected a school principal – either directly or from a list recommended by the school authority – who was now considered to be ‘primus inter pares’. In his voluntary office, the principal represented a school and its decisions externally. Within a school, he was responsible for technical and administrative operations. All these changes enabled teachers at schools that were open to reform to take instruction into their own hands (Held 1980). Similar to high schools, and depending on the subject, teams of experts established themselves in instructional matters. The principal was important for individual teachers as a motivator and adviser; he could serve as a moderator or guide (Geißler 2013).

With regards to school leadership in our time, the principal represents the school externally. He is also responsible for organisational and budgetary processes at his institution. Moreover, as a public officer appointed by the school authority, the principal acts on a permanent basis (Flossner 1980; Holtappels 1989; Müller & Diedrich 1980; Neulinger 1990). Until recently, there was no specific training or qualification for principals; only a few attempts were made to introduce such measures (Hildebrandt 2008; Hops 1983).

**Instructional Leadership in Germany from an Empirical Perspective: What Do We Know So Far?**

For a long time in Germany, school leadership matters were not subject to educational scientific reflection or theory-driven empirical observation. Leadership issues were nearly exclusively treated by norm-giving school administrations and their legal experts, focusing on organisational and practical matters. In the 1970s, however, school improvement research began to rise in prominence (Feldhoff & Brauckmann 2015). Initially this research was ambitious (i.e. investigating the overall organisation of a school system) but by the 1990s, research had begun to focus on individual schools. In this regard, it was not possible to identify school leadership as the crucial instrument, particularly regarding instructional leadership (Feldhoff & Brauckmann 2015). In the early 21st century, new school improvement processes were introduced (Bonsen 2002), along with new school programmes, autonomy and accountability (Brauckmann 2012). School autonomy in particular, in terms of increased individual school responsibility, invoked a focus on school leadership, and its
legal position was reinforced. Yet, leadership at the individual level remained tied to the overall governance of the system (e.g. the relationship between autonomy and accountability) and the systemic, legal, professional and cultural history of a given school’s development (Nevermann 1982).

Few findings have been documented concerning school leadership in the past 15 years, and most of these originate from school improvement studies or re-analyses of large-scale assessments, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) or the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). During this period, only six studies provided analysis with indications of instructional leadership by principals in Germany. The findings can be categorised into three areas: (1) workloads of school leaders with respect to instructional leadership, (2) teacher perceptions of instructional leadership style of their principals, (3) the relationship between instructional leadership and meaningful factors of school improvement and school effectiveness.

**Workloads of School Leaders with Respect to Instructional Leadership**

Wissinger (2002) analysed data from a survey of principals in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in 1995. A total of 1,006 lower secondary school principals in Germany, Austria, France, Sweden and the USA were asked how much time they spent on different tasks per month. Principals in Germany spent most of their time preparing, conducting and processing their own lessons (49.63 hours per month), as well as on internal administration (41.10 hours per month). Only 34.24 hours per month were spent on instructional activities (i.e. dealing with disciplinary issues, further training and guidance of teachers), whereas colleagues in the USA spent 57.02 hours per month on these tasks.

About ten years after Wissinger’s study, Brauckmann and Schwarz (2015) showed similar results. They analysed the relative workload\(^2\) of school leaders in different tasks in a project called ‘School leaders’ activities between more responsibility and more power’, using data from 153 school leaders in primary and upper secondary schools (Gymnasium) in six German federal states. On average, leaders spent only 18.64 per cent of their weekly working hours on teaching-related management activities, which are similar to activities in the context of instructional leadership. Leaders spent most of their time working on their own lessons (32.98 per cent), followed by administration and organisation tasks (19.38 per cent).

**Teachers’ Perceptions of the Instructional Leadership Style of their Principals**

Feldhoff, Kanders, and Rolff (2008), in the pilot project ‘Self-governing school in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany’, investigated school leadership actions longitudinally in 82 schools of various forms/types (special education schools, primary schools, and different secondary school tracks). According to teacher estimations, leadership actions are distinctly evident in the fields of management, organisation and participation (Table 1). By comparison, leadership action in the field of instructional leadership is less pronounced.

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\(^2\) Workload was measured as hours per week, from which we generate the relative workload in each task area (i.e. the seven individual relative workloads sum up to 100 per cent of the working hours per week). The relative workload reflects the proportion of weekly working time spent on each area of leadership activity, and may indicate priorities given by school principals to specific tasks of their acting as a leader.
Table 1: School leadership actions from the teachers’ perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scales</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership competence in autonomous schools</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>0.282</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>0.321</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>0.287</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation competence of school leaders</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>0.392</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>0.446</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>0.353</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence of school leaders regarding organisation of school operations</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>0.354</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>0.419</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>0.334</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management competence of school leaders</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.273</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.330</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.226</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional leadership</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>0.337</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>0.315</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>0.332</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Response categories in the used scales: not true (1) to true (4)
Source: (Feldhoff et al. 2008: 148)

Similar results were reported by Harazd (2010), who presented a study on leadership concepts in ‘good’ and ‘healthy’ schools based on a survey of 2,876 teachers from 123 schools in North Rhine-Westphalia. In the perception of the teachers, school leadership actions in the area of management and organisation scored highly (M=3.12/SD=0.61). Transformational leadership (M=2.73/SD=0.64), and most of all instructional leadership (M=2.37/SD=0.66), were the least pronounced.3 An analysis of identification with different types of school leaders also showed that instructional leadership is the weakest of the three leadership styles in all of the identified types of school.

Pietsch (2014) compared instructional leadership at 50 schools in Hamburg in 2014 with data on instructional leadership as assessed in a national, non-representative online survey of teachers (the Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft, or GEW, survey) conducted by the national union of teachers (Demmer and von Saldern 2010), and data from the 2008 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) (OECD 2009; Schmich, Schreiner & Pointinger 2009), all based on teacher ratings. Somewhat surprisingly, the level of instructional leadership in schools in Hamburg is roughly equal to the school leadership average in OECD countries and the EU-TALIS countries (Table 2). In contrast, teachers participating in the GEW survey rated instructional leadership significantly lower, which corresponds to the findings of Feldhoff et al. (2008) and Harazd (2010). The high scores in Hamburg might be attributable to the fact that the city recently became the first competent authority in Germany to grant schools the right to decide for themselves whether or not the members of a leadership team should teach. Leaders might therefore be able to spend more time on other matters. Moreover, Hamburg also places a strong emphasis on data-based school improvement and focuses on instruction.

3 Response categories of the used scales: not true (1) to true (4)
Table 2: National and international comparison of frequency of instructional activities for school leaders in Hamburg from the teachers’ perspective (percentage of ‘rather often’ and ‘very often’ responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Hamburg</th>
<th>TALIS-GEW</th>
<th>OECD / EU-TALIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The principal ensures that teachers work according to the school’s educational goals.</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal ensures that teachers are informed about possibilities for updating their knowledge and skills.</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a teacher has problems in his/her classroom, the principal takes the initiative to discuss the matter.</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal gives teachers suggestions as to how they can improve their teaching.</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal or someone else in the management team observes teaching in classes.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Pietsch (2014: 25); a Demmer & von Saldern (2010); b Schmich & Schreiner (2009).

Relationship between Instructional Leadership and Factors of School Improvement and School Effectiveness

Besides the descriptive findings presented above, evidence exists regarding the relationship between instructional leadership and relevant factors from school improvement research and school effectiveness research. In their analysis, Feldhoff and Rolff (2008) used instructional leadership, together with participation, management, organisational competence and instructional leadership, as part of an overall scale referred to as ‘leadership competence in autonomous schools’. They demonstrated a positive influence of instructional leadership as part of the overall scale in the interplay of a steering group mediated via readiness for innovation and teamwork. This positive influence was observable regarding the structured nature and comprehensibility of mathematics and German instruction from the students’ perspective (Feldhoff 2011). Moreover, instructional leadership as a part of leadership competence at autonomous schools, in cooperation with a steering group, has a positive influence on human resource development at the school and on its evaluation culture (Feldhoff 2011).

Based on school inspection data from Hamburg, Pietsch (2015) demonstrated a direct influence of instructional leadership on teaching practice. Moreover, an indirect influence on teaching practice exists through the mediation of variables such as cooperation, participation, school improvement, innovation capacity and job satisfaction. All these effects are positive, apart from job satisfaction. Besides analysing the different effects of different leadership styles (including instructional leadership), Pietsch (2015) also tested whether a global factor of leadership style exists, which includes the four different leadership styles: transformational leadership, transactional leadership,
laissez-faire leadership, and instructional leadership. The global factor exists and had an immediate positive influence on cooperation, participation, school improvement, and commitment. Via these factors, leadership also impacts on the structuring of instruction.

Taken together, the empirical findings indicate a relationship between the the workload of leaders and teachers’ estimations of instructional leadership, with the exception of Hamburg. This might be interpreted by the realisation that a low workload is reflected in less pronounced instructional leadership. However, the analyses of correlations show that schools with pronounced instructional leadership also have a positive influence on school improvement processes and on teachers’ instructional actions.

What Do We Make out of This?

Based on the historical and empirical analyses that were presented in the first sections of this paper, it can be argued that Germany has swung from one end of a pendulum to the other. Specifically, it has swung from: (1) the ‘best’ teacher as the best teacher/principal, to (2) the best teacher as administrator/manager, and then to (3) the best teacher as a part-time pedagogical leader, amongst other (primarily) teaching duties. Thus, it seems that the German education system is slowly but steadily moving towards the instructional model of school leadership, in the sense that instructional ability is the prevailing mode of elevating someone to principalship. It seems that within the German system, excellence in teaching has been the main prerequisite for someone to become the school principal in a process of ‘natural’ progression towards the position. Through the years, the German system has held in high esteem the idea that the principal is above all else the ‘best’ teacher. Actually, this idea has been prevalent in many parts of the world, with the exception of Anglo-Saxon countries such as the USA, Canada, the UK, Australia and New Zealand, where principalship was constructed first and foremost as a managerial/administrative position. We believe that the requirement that principals be excellent teachers will continue to exist, and will possibly even be enforced in the thinking of policy-makers in German states; the current worldwide research on principalship suggests that the instructional/pedagogical style of leadership is the main vehicle for the academic improvement of students and the overall enhancement of school improvement. At the same time, it should be noted that it is not an either/or situation; pedagogical leadership should go hand-in-hand with organisational management, thus producing the ‘new ideal’ for school principalship in Germany.

It might be the case that Germany will not have to go through the debate over whether a managerial and administrative type of school leader or an instructional and pedagogical one is superior (Mintrop 2015). The direction Germany will take is still unfolding, and is still an open question. However, as mentioned previously, it seems that the ‘pedagogy’ factor (or aspect) is stronger than the administrative aspect of the principalship, and a more ‘pedagogical’ leader will probably become manifest in the German education system. This is due to the influence that school principals can have on the culture of teaching and learning that takes place in their school. As principals essentially come from the ranks of teachers, they will be able to influence the pedagogical processes at their schools by creating comradeship in pedagogy and discussing the common understandings about what constitutes excellence in teaching. Based on current research, it seems that school leaders can have a profound effect on improving teachers within their schools not just individually, but also collectively (Heck & Hallinger 2014). In this way, the impact of a pedagogical principal can be enormous. By creating a true pedagogical culture through more pedagogical
dialogues, more classroom observations and high expectations of pedagogical objectives, it seems that those measures will have an impact on the teaching force of the school that will inevitably elevate everybody to higher levels of quality teaching and learning in their school.

The previous assertions are further reinforced by the fact that, in Europe, the main goals for the general area of teacher evaluation and instructional and pedagogical leadership are: (1) to find out which are the abilities that teachers should have based on the knowledge society, and (2) to provide all the necessary support to teachers in order for them to be better suited for the challenges of the knowledge society through initial teacher education as well as through continuous professional development (European Union 2000, 2001).

Where Do We Go from Here?

In essence, when it comes to teacher evaluation of instruction, we need to move from the ‘I’ to the ‘we’, meaning that we need to create cultures of excellence in learning and teaching and, at the same time, reinforce organisational management towards pedagogy within our schools. We need to collectively create the pedagogical philosophy of our schools and make sense out of it, both as individual teachers as well as a collective community. This can be manifested via a school principal, who is most importantly the best teacher in a given school, and thus can lead the school forward in the creation of a pedagogical model that fits that school best. In order to do this, we need to use the plethora of research findings with regards to the Effective Schools Research Movement, which has been evolving for the last 40 years around the world, and see how we can incorporate research findings about excellence in teaching into current thinking about instructional and pedagogical leadership. Moreover, teacher expectations about instructional and pedagogical leadership should be taken into consideration when reconsidering the philosophy which is to be taken as the foundation of our instructional and pedagogical leadership system (Zepeda & Ponticell 1998).

In closing, we argue that there is a need to find a way to keep excellent teachers in the classroom and not promote them into other positions or force them to leave classroom teaching in search of higher monetary or other rewards. Thus, we probably need to rethink monetary promotions and rewards while teachers are still in the classroom. In this way, we can create a cadre of excellent teachers and mentors who will also play the role of instructional and pedagogical leaders in a complementary way to other school leaders. In this way, teacher leadership becomes a profound way to enhance instructional leadership, mainly through organising and managing the activities that lead to improved teaching.

In general, proponents of instructional leadership should think of incentives for school leaders in Germany to have a different view of their traditional roles as administrators rather than instructional quality developers. German school leaders have to see the value of a developmental and formative approach rather than a summative approach when it comes to instructional processes. One approach in the future could be to establish rituals and events to acknowledge, in a discreet but effective manner, the best instructional leadership practices within the German education system. Doing this would enable principals to be more closely involved in instructional practices in the classroom in a positive way. This could change the perspective from a rather pedagogical to a more instructional management one. Thus, acting as a pedagogical leader for an organisation in order to create an environment that fosters and stimulates stronger coordinated self-reflection on the instructional processes which can be observed in and across classes becomes a major new
responsibility. Creating an environment in which staff members begin to have exchanges on their instructional practices could be a subset of pedagogical leadership at the principalship level, which then turns into instructional leadership at the middle management level.

References


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Changing Expectations and Experiences of Headship in Scotland

Christine Forde and Deirdre Torrance

Abstract: In Scottish education, school leadership is regarded as central in realising the policy ambitions to raise attainment. This article examines critically the policy expectations and demands made on headteachers. These expectations are set out in successive sets of a professional standard – the Standard for Headship – particularly the codification of the key purpose of headship. These expectations are interrogated first through a textual analysis to identify codes of meaning, and second through interview data relating to the lived experiences of headteachers. These data were collected as part of a larger study and the issues explored included the range of tasks the headteachers undertake routinely, their motivations and experiences of the role and the means of coping with demands. The discussion highlights some of the tensions experienced by headteachers as they work to meet expectations. From this investigation, it is clear that the codified expectations placed on headteachers relating to learning and to leading people chimes with the headteachers’ aspirations for their role. However, operational matters and administrative demands dominate the day-to-day work of headteachers. The article concludes by identifying some critical issues for the preparation of headteachers.

Key words: headship, principalship, professional standards, leadership standards, headteacher role, school principal role.

Introduction

The role of the headteacher has become increasingly pivotal as education systems take forward improvement strategies. However, like many other educational systems, Scottish education is facing issues related to the recruitment of headteachers (Hancock & Muller 2010; MacBeath 2006). These issues relate to headships in small primary schools as well as to difficulties in recruiting headteachers for schools experiencing difficulties (Association of Directors of Education Scotland 2013). The increasing shortage of headteacher applicants has been exacerbated by both a demographic trend, with large numbers of headteachers retiring, and the phenomenon of the ‘career deputy’ (Cranston 2007), where experienced deputy headteachers do not want the responsibilities of headship (Forde and Lowden forthcoming). A strong suggestion is that the difficulties of recruitment are due at least in part to the perceptions by teachers of the expectations and pressures of the role of headteacher (MacBeath, Gronn, Opher, Lowden, Forde, Cowie & O’Brien 2009). Scottish education is poised to take forward a National Improvement Framework (Scottish Government 2016) and the role of the headteacher is pivotal in this reform: ‘Leadership is key to ensuring the highest possible standards
and expectations are shared across a school to achieve excellence for all’ (p. 10). This article explores critically the way expectations of the role of headteacher have evolved over a period of 20 years and how these expectations relate to the lived experiences of serving headteachers.

The article draws on an ongoing project exploring educational policy, social justice and leadership, and leadership development in Scottish education, where one of the key strands is the relationship between policy and the lived experiences of headteachers. The main focus of this article is to interrogate the expectations and demands made of headteachers by examining successive sets of professional standards which codify expectations of headteachers. We first examine these expectations through a textual analysis. We then draw on data gathered on the lived experiences of headship to interrogate these expectations. We begin the article with some of the issues related to the experience of headship. We then outline the policy and governance context of Scottish education, which is influential in shaping the headship role. We present data from a textual analysis of policy which tracks the evolution in the official articulation of the role of headteacher in successive sets of a professional standard, The Standard for Headship (General Teaching Council Scotland 2012; Scottish Executive 2005a; Scottish Office Education and Industry Department 1998). We then use data on the lived experiences of headteachers to interrogate these expectations further. Here, we draw on a larger study on the recruitment and retention of headteachers funded by the Scottish Government (MacBeath et al. 2009) and pay particular attention to the demands on headteachers and their reflections on their experiences of the role.

The Role of Headteacher

Thompson’s (2009) sobering study of headteachers in England indicates that multiple demands are made of headteachers, sometimes with tragic consequences for incumbents. Across numerous educational systems, it is widely recognised that there are increased demands on headteachers and limits on their ability to shape expectations (Gronn & Rawlins-Sanæi 2003). MacBeath (2006) identified a number of issues related to the recruitment of headteachers, including the pace of change associated with the job, intensification of work and the range of accountabilities and bureaucratic demands of the role. Bauer and Brazer (2013) also make the point that there is not one factor alone that will affect job satisfaction, but that the isolation of the role mediates a range of other factors:

Isolation has to do with the principal’s sense of feeling alone at work. It is less a structural reality than an emotional response to one’s experiences as a school leader. Professional isolation is embedded in the legacy of how principalship developed (p. 157).

Though Bauer and Brazer focus on new principals, this sense of isolation has long been identified as a feature of the role of the headteacher (Mercer 1996). The complexity of the role of headteacher is equally evident in larger urban schools as it is in small rural schools, but headteachers in different settings may adopt different strategies to cope with this complexity. Hayes (1998) and Southworth (2003), for example, found that when faced with the competing tasks of teaching and leading in a small school, headteachers tended to sacrifice their leadership activities. Nevertheless, Southworth (2008) noted that while the external environment and its administrative demands, inspections, financial responsibilities and rapid changes in policy were demotivating, there were many motivating aspects of the headteachers’ role, especially related to teaching and pupil progress. There seems to be a paradox at the heart of headship, with a tension between the range of demands on headteachers and their concern for teaching, learning and the pupils.
Policy, Governance and Accountabilities

The wider policy and governance context of Scottish education is a critical factor in determining the expectations placed on headteachers and their day-to-day experiences. With the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1997, education became a devolved function. This has led to considerable divergence in policy, governance and provision between Scottish and English education (Arnott & Menter 2007). One of the most notable differences is the maintenance of a strong public education system in Scotland, where more than 95% of provision is in the public sector (Scottish Government 2014). Further, Scottish education policy is developed through the interplay of central government (the Scottish Government) and local government (the local authorities). There is considerable variation in size and location across Scotland’s 32 local authorities (LAs), ranging from large to small and from urban to rural or remote. There is also considerable diversity in terms of the socioeconomic profiles of LAs. For instance, Glasgow City Council is the largest LA and has some of the poorest areas as well as the most ethnically diverse population within its boundaries, whereas two neighbouring LAs – East Renfrewshire and East Dunbartonshire – have a suburban profile with high home ownership and professional populations. While in urban areas there will be a mix of school sizes, in other areas small primary schools make up a considerable proportion of the overall school provision.

The LAs are responsible for the provision of compulsory education (ages five to 16, though secondary education continues to age 18) within their local area and overseeing pre-5 education. Furthermore, LAs are accountable to the central government for the performance of schools, especially in meeting the improvement agenda for pupil attainment. Under the Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc. Act (Scottish Parliament 2000), LAs are legally obliged to ensure all schools have an annual school improvement plan through which they take forward the national priorities set by the minister responsible for education. Currently, this demand is encapsulated in a national improvement framework (Scottish Government 2016) where year-by-year information on literacy and numeracy, child health and well-being and school leaver destinations will be collected ‘to provide a level of robust, consistent and transparent data across Scotland’ (Scottish Government 2016: 5). This performance-driven agenda is critical in shaping the relationship between headteachers and their LA. At the same time, financial constraints on public spending have led to changes in the administration of education within LAs. Education remains the largest budget for local councils in Scotland, but as Forde (2014) highlights, the local administration of education services is being merged with the administration of other public services. There is now a strong emphasis on headteachers following local policy and procedures in matters such as strategic planning, financial and human resource management, alongside the national improvement strategy.

While the interplay between central and local government is one dimension of the governance of education, there are other bodies at the national level that are important in shaping the expectations on headteachers in Scotland, in particular Education Scotland and the General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS). Education Scotland has a dual responsibility for curriculum development and for the inspection of educational provision. In the quality assurance framework, ‘How good is our school? The Journey to Excellence’ (Education Scotland 2015), leadership is one of the key quality indicators and so the inspection process places particular demands upon headteachers. The GTCS, as the professional body for teaching, is charged with the task of setting professional standards for teaching which includes the Standard for Headship (GTCS 2012). All teachers appointed to the post of headteacher must demonstrate their achievement of this standard (Scottish Executive 2005a).
Further, as part of a programme of recertification—Professional Update (GTCS 2014)—headteachers are expected to evaluate themselves against the Standard for Headship to demonstrate their ongoing development and retain their registration.

**Specifying Headship**

Professional standards are a major element of both professional development strategies and accountability systems. However, professional standards have been the focus of much debate, with some arguing that they may constrain practice and development (Gronn 2000; Kennedy 2005) and others claiming a developmental contribution of professional standards (Forde, McMahon, Hamilton & Murray 2015; Murphy 2005). The term ‘professional standards’ covers a wide range of constructions, with early standards having a functional orientation (Esp 1993). The Scottish standards have moved away from a purely functional orientation and, in addition to setting out the required professional actions, the standards articulate the professional values, knowledge and understanding as well as the professional qualities and attributes headteachers are expected to develop (O’Brien & Torrance 2005). Standards do exert considerable influence on shaping expectations. Ceulemans, Simons and Struyf (2014) illustrate the ways in which a set of professional standards for teaching shape different processes, ‘standardarising’ teacher education in the Netherlands. Similarly, in Scotland professional standards have multiple uses. Specifically, the Standard for Headship is used to:

- structure the assessment process of award bearing programmes including the professional qualification for headship
- provide criteria for recruitment and selection processes for headteacher posts
- provide a tool for self-evaluation
- structure headteacher professional review and development activities
- design, plan and review professional development opportunities.

The first Standard for Headship was published in 1998 (SOEID 1998) following a consultation programme with different stakeholders within and beyond the teaching profession, and was revised in 2005 (Scottish Executive 2005a). The Standards for Leadership and Management (GTCS 2012) includes the third iteration of the Standard for Headship.

**Analysis of Changing Constructions of the Key Purpose of Headship**

Successive sets of the Standard for Headship (GTCS, 2012; Scottish Executive 2005a; SOEID 1998) have mapped out the actions, skills and qualities expected of headteachers, framed by a statement of the ‘key purpose of headship’. This key purpose is important in providing a coherent and succinct articulation of the expectations of the role of headteacher.

To explore the changing expectations of headteachers in Scotland, each edition of the Standard for Headship was subject to a content analysis. A content analysis can be used as a quantitative method of analysis to examine what Graneheim and Lundman (2004) refer to as the manifest content of texts, where the frequency of specific terms is tracked. Graneheim and Lundman also indicate that content analysis can be used as a qualitative tool to identify the latent content of texts, where the focus is on identifying codes of meaning (Cohen, Mannion & Morrison 2007). In this study, a qualitative content analysis was undertaken to examine the evolution of expectations on headteachers. Through a process of reading and re-reading these texts, codes of meaning were
identified. These codes were then clustered around four themes: (1) leadership and management, (2) leadership and learning, (3) culture and community, and (4) the wider context. Each key purpose was further scrutinised to identify similarities and differences in relation to each of these themes.

**Table 1: The key purpose of headship**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>The key purpose of headship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOEID (1998)</td>
<td>To provide leadership and management which enables a school to give every pupil high quality education and which promotes the highest possible standards of achievement (p. 3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish Executive (2005a)</td>
<td>The headteacher acts as the leading professional in a school and, as an officer of the local authority, provides vision, leadership and direction to ensure high standards of education for all the children and young people in their care. To achieve this, the headteacher works with and is accountable to others to ensure that the school is organised and managed to meet its aims and targets, and is a creative, disciplined learning environment. In so doing, the headteacher works with a range of others – staff, children and young people, parents, local community members, local authority officers and other agencies involved in services for children and their families (p. 2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTCS (2012)</td>
<td>The headteacher acts as the leading professional in a school and as an officer in the local authority. Headteachers lead the whole school community in order to establish, sustain and enhance a positive ethos and culture of learning through which every learner is able to learn effectively and achieve their potential (p. 10).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Leadership and Management**

The interdependency of leadership and management is clearly stated in the key purpose of the first Standard for Headship: ‘To provide leadership and management’. Perhaps the most noticeable aspect of the second Standard for Headship is the absence of the word ‘management’; this document reflects the privileging of leadership over management and coincided with the publication of the government’s Leadership Agenda (Scottish Executive 2005b). Gronn (2003) picks up this point, noting that leadership is enjoying a periodic ascendancy over ‘management’ in education, and demonstrates the significant problems posed by this privileging of leadership. Despite the eschewing of management, there is a strong managerial element in the 2005 version of the Standard for Headship: the headteacher ‘works with and is accountable to others’ and ‘ensures that the school is organised and managed to meet its aims and targets’. In the most recent Standard for Headship (GTCS 2012: 10), the relationship between and importance of both leadership and management is reified in the title, Standards for Leadership and Management.

**Leadership and Learning**

One idea consistently repeated through the three sets of standards is the emphasis on the progress of every student learner, but equally noteworthy is the change from ‘all children and young people’ (SOEID 1998: 3) to ‘every pupil’ (Scottish Executive 2005a: 2) and then to ‘every learner’ (GTCS 2012: 10); this latter term encompasses other members of the community, including staff. In the first Standard for Headship, the relationship between leadership and learning is shaped by the dominant discourse of quality and standards: ‘high quality’ and ‘highest possible standards of
achievement’ (SOEID 1998: 3). The development of this Standard for Headship coincided with the launch of a national quality assurance framework, How good is our school? The Journey to Excellence. The drive for attainment continues in the second Standard for Headship: ‘to ensure high standards of education for all the children and young people in their care’ (Scottish Executive 2005a: 2). What is noticeable in these first two versions of the Standard for Headship is that the word ‘learning’ is not used except in the term ‘disciplined learning environment’ in the second iteration (Scottish Executive 2005a: 2). The latest standard has repositioned ‘learning’ as the central driver and reflects the growing focus on forms of leadership centred on learning, such as pedagogical leadership (Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe 2008). Thus we see a widening of the scope of the role of the headteacher, with a stronger focus on pupil learning and learning across the community: ‘a positive ethos and culture of learning’ (GTCS 2012: 10).

Culture and Community
Ideas about leadership and culture have evolved through these statements. The focus of the first key purpose is the school and the pupils. However, in the second Standard for Headship, there is a stronger sense of the importance of the role of the headteacher in shaping the culture of the school: ‘a creative, disciplined learning environment’ (Scottish Executive 2005a: 2). And alongside this is a much more developed idea of participative approaches. The school is part of a wider community to which the headteacher has a responsibility, and very much reflects the growing inclusive education agenda. Thus, in the second Standard for Headship, ‘the headteacher works with a range of others: staff, children and young people, parents, local community members, local authority officers and other agencies involved in services for children and their families’ (Scottish Executive 2005a: 2). Inclusion remains a central tenet of school leadership, but in the most recent Standard, the core educative purpose has been reified. The ‘children and young people’ of the second Standard (Scottish Executive 2005a: 2) have become ‘learners’ (GTCS 2012: 10), and there is a subtle but significant development from a headteacher being expected to ‘work with’ different stakeholders to build a ‘learning community’ that includes pupils, parents, community partners and professional agencies. ‘Head Teachers lead the whole school community in order to establish, sustain and enhance a positive ethos and culture of learning through which every learner is able to learn effectively and achieve their potential’ (GTCS 2012: 10).

Wider Contexts
The first Standard for Headship makes no reference to any external context. In later versions of the Standard, the interface between the schools and the external context becomes marked. In the second Standard, we can see a tension between autonomy and accountability: headteachers are the ‘leading professional in a school’ and ‘an officer of the local authority’ (Scottish Executive 2005a: 2). Whereas underpinning the idea of ‘professional’ is an assumption of autonomy (Hoyle 2001) in determining the educational processes, wrapped up in the idea of being an officer is the sense of being directed from elsewhere. In the most recent Standard, this tension of headship around being a professional versus a public-sector manager remains.
Table 2: Evolving expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Changing expectation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership and management</td>
<td>Moving from leadership and management to a privileging of leadership to the positioning leadership and management as interdependent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership and learning</td>
<td>A consistent focus on inclusion (‘all’), but the scope of this changes from all pupils to all learners across the school community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community and culture</td>
<td>The scope of headship changes from ‘the school’ to working with a range of partners, the headteacher is creating and sustaining the school as learning community which involves a wide range of stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider contexts</td>
<td>A move from the role of head teacher of a school to leading a community with the tension between being the leading professional and an officer of the LA.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The successive Standards for Headship set out in detail the expectations of the role of headteacher and, from the analysis of the statements of the key purpose, the scope of the responsibilities and influence headteachers are expected to exercise has widened to cover the school’s wider community. There has also been a sharpening of the focus on learning across this community. The textual analysis above has highlighted tensions between expectations related to leadership in headteachers’ roles and their extensive range of management responsibilities. We now further interrogate this official codification of headship by using data gathered from serving headteachers regarding their role and experiences of headship.

The Experiences of Headteachers in Scotland

Overview of Study

In this second part of this article, we draw on a larger study on the recruitment and retention of headteachers in Scotland (MacBeath et al. 2009). We focus on using the data gathered through a survey (n=1,137) and through individual interviews (n=47) to explore the lived experiences of serving headteachers in Scotland. This sample of headteachers ranged from newly appointed with less than a year in the post (n=158) to highly experienced with more than 16 years in the post (n=157). The majority of the sample had between three and ten years in the post (3-5 years n=263; 6-10 years n=217). The samples for both the survey and the individual interviews included headteachers from primary, secondary, special schools and combined schools (with primary and secondary provision). The qualitative interview data were analysed to identify key themes, and the quantitative data were subject to a factor analysis to identify clusters of activities undertaken by headteachers. The questionnaires and interviews covered a range of questions related to the respondents’ journey to headship, their motivations for becoming headteachers and aspirations for the future, as well as their lived experiences of headship. In this discussion, we explore key themes related specifically to the respondents’ experiences of headship: the hours headteachers routinely work, the tasks they routinely undertake, the emotional demands of the role, and their experiences of working to address the demands of educational policy. Quotations from interviews are used to illustrate the key findings.
The Length of the Working Week

In 2001, following a national agreement – the Teachers’ Agreement (Scottish Executive 2001) – the teacher contract (including that of headteachers) was based on a 35-hour working week, with an additional 35 hours per year for continuing professional development (Scottish Executive 2001: 5). A study of the implementation of this agreement (Menter, McMahon, Forde, Hall, McPhee, Patrick & Devlin 2006) revealed that working beyond the 35 hours specified in the contract was common across the teaching profession, including headteachers: ‘The average number of hours worked for all respondents (including classroom teachers, principal teachers, deputy headteachers and headteachers in all sectors) in the time-use diary was 45 hours per week’ (Menter et al. 2006: 23). The issue of length of the working week remains a concern in Scottish education, with the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), the largest teaching union, continuing to highlight the pressures created by the increased pace of change:

[T]he additional pressures on managers and teachers will increase at a time when research shows that the levels of stress and workload among teachers continue to intensify due to a combination of curriculum change, new qualifications, increasing numbers of children with additional support needs in mainstream schools, and the accumulation of 5 years of cuts with more to come according to budget forecasts (EIS 2014).

The survey of headteachers conducted as part of the study on recruitment and retention (MacBeath et al. 2009) indicated that less than 1 per cent of headteachers reported working a 35-hour week. As we can see from Table 3, the vast majority of headteachers worked well above this 35-hour threshold, often over 45 hours per week, with a significant proportion working over 60 hours per week.

Table 3: Average hours worked per week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35 hours</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40 hours</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45 hours</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-50 hours</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-55 hours</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-60 hours</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-65 hours</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66-70- hours</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+ hours</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The interviews reported by MacBeath et al. (2009) also highlighted the long hours worked by headteachers as well as their sense of responsibility; many study participants spoke of being the first to arrive at work in the morning and the last to leave at night, and of a need to fulfil commitments in the evening such as parents’ meetings and school and local community events. Within these data there was no discernible pattern in terms of the type of school or hours worked; the all-consuming nature of the role is evident across different school contexts. One secondary headteacher reflected, ‘[i]t’s to do with what’s in your head and this feeling that something’s niggling away at you – a job yet to be done’, while another stated, ‘all I do is go home to sleep’ (MacBeath et al. 2009: 22).
Regardless of context, a strong theme across the interviews was the notion that the headteachers’ commitment to their role had consequences, as only 9 per cent of respondents reported feeling that health and well-being was not an issue in relation to their role as headteacher.

**Tasks and Activities of the Headteacher**

The activities that headteachers undertake can vary to some degree in relation to the particular type of school they are in. For example, teaching headteachers in small primary schools have a regular teaching commitment (Wilson 2008), whereas larger primary and secondary schools have senior and middle management structures. Nevertheless, the study highlights the extensive range of activities in which all headteachers engage. This wide range of demands made on headteachers is highlighted in Table 4. Although these are broad estimates of the type of activities and the time spent on these by the headteachers, they provide a sense of the range of demands.

**Table 4: Time committed to activities in a typical week (per cent of respondents)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>&lt;3 hours</th>
<th>3-5 hours</th>
<th>6-10 hours</th>
<th>&gt;10 hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of teaching &amp; learning</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic planning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgeting &amp; finance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school building &amp; fabric</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence cover</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing cover for teacher release</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom teaching</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing matters</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matters for parent council/Board of Governors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations with external agencies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with challenging pupils</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


These demands cover matters associated with the leadership of teaching and learning, the strategic development of the school, management activities and working with the wider community. Also noteworthy is the teaching commitment on the part of a substantial proportion of headteachers. While 24 per cent of study participants indicated that they did not teach, others reported having routine teaching commitments, covering teacher absence, or providing cover to enable teachers to have their weekly non-class contact time under the terms of the Teachers’ Agreement. (Under this agreement, all teachers are contracted for a 35-hour working week, but the maximum class contact time is 22.5 hours out of the 25-hour pupil week). In addition, dealing with challenging students was an area of activity reported by the majority of headteachers, with some indicating substantial periods of time spent on this: 28 per cent of respondents reported spending between three and five hours per week dealing with challenging students, and 21 per cent between six and ten hours. A much smaller number of headteachers (11 per cent) reported spending more than ten hours in the
week on this issue. The external community was another duty routinely covered by headteachers, with the majority of headteachers reporting up to three hours spent on this task. Staffing matters was a major area for the vast majority of headteachers, with only 1 per cent reporting they had not engaged in dealing with staffing matters in a given week. The focus of the current key purpose of headship revolves around the idea of building and sustaining a learning community, but Table 3 highlights some variation in this area. A substantial proportion of headteachers spend more than three hours on dimensions of leading a learning community, but a minority of headteachers is not involved in curriculum management or the development of teaching and learning.

A factor analysis of the responses to the question of the types of activities in which headteachers are engaged in a working week was undertaken, and this highlighted three broad clusters, two of which relate to the key purpose of headship: ‘the leadership of people’ and ‘strategic leadership’. The third cluster of ‘other’ contained a range of often unplanned operational activities. As we can see from Table 5 included in ‘leadership of people’ were personnel management processes, and included in ‘strategic leadership’ were the improvement and organisation of the school.

Table 5: Roles of the headteacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Strategic leadership</th>
<th>Leadership of people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elements</td>
<td>School improvement planning</td>
<td>Developing &amp; providing continuous professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishing school priorities</td>
<td>Supporting new staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establishing &amp; planning the school budget</td>
<td>Evaluating teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reviewing and / or developing teaching practices and curriculum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developing the school timetable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These clusters in Table 5 reflect the key purpose of headship in the third Standard for Headship document. However, it is the ‘other’ category that is particularly revealing of the extensive and often unpredictable range of demands made on headteachers. The data highlight the headteachers’ responsibility for the whole school and everything that happens there. This could entail headteachers having to find pupils who had left the premises, patrolling at lunchtime and supervising arrivals and departures on school buses, or dealing with floods, leakages and hazardous waste in the school. This multiplicity of tasks in any one week was both a source of satisfaction and frustration, and this tension is evident if we look at the emotional demands on headteachers.

**Emotional Demands**

Crawford (2009: 88) argues that the core of a school ‘lies in relationships teacher/student, parent/teacher, teacher/teacher, child/child’, and so the emotional dimensions of leadership are critical to successful leadership. Part of the emotional dimensions of leadership is the emotional labour headteachers undertake in managing the emotions of others, whether staff, pupils or parents (Purdie 2014), as well as managing their own emotions. A strong theme in the interviews was this emotional dimension where, on the one hand, headteachers reported being tired and worn out, while on the other hand highlighting their commitment to and satisfaction from their role as a headteacher: ‘I was trying to get the best job done – a commitment …a calling almost – I felt I wanted to do well…the work / life balance is still an issue…’ (primary headteacher). Table 6 sets out the nine different aspects of the emotional dimensions of leadership reported by the headteachers.
Immediately noteworthy are the range of aspects and the high ratings of the majority of these aspects as concerns. With the exception of the item, ‘The loneliness of the job’, where the scores were spread across the four categories, well over 60 per cent of headteachers were ‘concerned’ or ‘very concerned’ about all the other aspects.

Table 6: Aspects of the role that concern headteachers in percentages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Not concerned</th>
<th>Somewhat concerned</th>
<th>Concerned</th>
<th>Very concerned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The demanding nature of the job</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall accountability for learning quality</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public grading of school performance</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The impact of the job on my personal health and wellbeing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility that I might be exposed to litigation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The emotionally demanding nature of the job</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The impact of the job on my life outside work</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May ability to manage my working time</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The loneliness of the job</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Again, we go back to the expectations set out in the third Standard for Headship document around learning, and while headteachers are either concerned (36 per cent) or very concerned (25 per cent) about being held to account for the overall quality of learning, perhaps more revealing are the pressures that come with the public nature of the role. These pressures include the ‘exposure’ from the ‘public grading of school performance’ (the grade of the school awarded in an inspection is published in a public report). Headteachers were also concerned about being held personally legally responsible for incidents in the school (‘possibility that I might be exposed to litigation’). Many of these incidents are unpredictable and often beyond the control of headteachers. The headteachers’ concerns about the impact of the job on their own well-being is another dimension of the intersection of leadership and emotions. The ‘demanding nature of the job’ overall was very highly rated as a concern, but associated with this were the emotional aspects of the role and headteachers’ ability to manage their time as well as the impact on life outside of work. While isolation was a concern for a substantial number of headteachers (40 per cent across ‘concerned’ and ‘very concerned’), the data highlight ways in which headteachers looked for support, whether through building and working with a senior leadership team in school, or by having a supportive network, working with other headteachers, or having confidence in their role.
**Working with a Policy Context**

The policy context in Scottish education is complex, and it is clear from the data that this wider context has an impact on the experiences of headteachers. The data depicted a continual playing out of the tension between professional autonomy and the accountability of the headteacher as an employee of the local authority. A working group recently assembled for the purpose of tackling bureaucracy (Scottish Government 2013) highlighted concerns about the amount of paperwork associated with the planning undertaken by teachers. However, while there have been attempts to streamline planning processes for teachers, there has been no focus to date on the administrative demands faced by headteachers. In the survey of headteachers (MacBeath et al. 2009), the study participants reported that administrative demands were a significant part of their workload. Repeated requests by different agencies for information and the lack of scope in making decisions about the budget and about staffing were recurring themes. As one primary headteacher noted:

> [P]aper work driven from the centre has no sense or clear purpose and hugely frustrating and takes time away – for example the number of returns and questionnaires that come from the local authority when new initiatives or posts have been created.

However, Table 7 illustrates that again there were mixed results. Accountability demands of the local authority were a source of dissatisfaction for some headteachers, but 44 per cent reported being satisfied in this regard. There were also variations in the respondents’ experiences of support from their local authority. Some headteachers reported that they felt unable to seek help from their local authority, but many reported positively on the support they received, particularly through Quality Improvement Officers. In times of difficulty, even in a supportive context, the loneliness of the role could be particularly acute. One primary headteacher reported being able to access LA support, but highlighted one episode over a staffing issue where it was ‘the depths of loneliness ... if you don’t get the support that you desperately need in that dark moment ... you don’t sleep ... things are really black’.

**Table 7:** Satisfaction with elements of the headteacher role: policy context (percentage of respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Very dissatisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Very satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability demands of local authority</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The amount of support provided to me by my employer</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current government policies</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability demands of national inspection</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MacBeath et al. (2009: 29).
Part of the tension comes from the three layers of decision making, with central government and local government seeking to exert influence at the school level in order that policy ambitions are taken forward. Therefore, headteachers are accountable on two levels, both within their local authority and nationally, particularly through Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education (HMIe) inspections and attainment rates. The national policy context had mixed results, with slightly more responses of dissatisfaction with the current government policy. While 37 per cent of headteachers reported they were satisfied with national inspections, there was greater dissatisfaction with this process. Headteachers were able to report on an extensive range of audit and review activities conducted by HMIe and other bodies such as the Care Commission (which oversees pre-5 education). Reviews are also conducted by the local authority in preparation for and as a follow up to this regular cycle of HMIe inspections. Other audits were reported covering areas such as hygiene, health and safety, and fire, indicating the range of activities that headteachers were responsible for. When asked why teachers do not aspire to headship, one primary headteacher’s response sums up this sense of being held to account: ‘[The] buck always stops here … one reason why people don’t go that step further into headship because of accountability, at the end of the day you are accountable for everything’.

Discussion

Headteachers are placed as central to the improvement agenda in Scottish education. The professional standard, the Standard for Headship, sets out the expectations framed by a statement of the key purpose of headship, which has evolved through successive standards. Through these sets of standards, this key purpose has been concerned with ‘learning’, though the scope of what comprises learning has widened, with the focus moving from ‘high quality learning’, to ‘effective learning’, and then to ‘leading a learning community’. For headteachers, this emphasis on learning lies at the heart of their role and is an important source of satisfaction. However, the data on the lived experiences of the headteachers highlight the way the multiple demands on headteachers limit their engagement in teaching and learning.

From this interrogation of successive professional standards, we can see a strong alignment between the principles underpinning the Standard for Headship and the aspirations of headteachers. There are, however, a number of issues emerging from this comparison of official expectations and lived experiences. The data highlight the demanding public role of headteachers and the significant pressures they experience in their day-to-day work. The range of accountabilities requires constant negotiation and reporting at national and local levels, and the public nature of these accountabilities is a clear source of pressure. Further, headteachers are charged in the professional standards with providing strategic leadership, and indeed this is an important dimension of their motivation to become a headteacher. However, a considerable amount of their working week was spent on dealing with operational matters, particularly management tasks associated with following policies and reporting to a local authority or with extreme or crisis issues, especially pupil behaviour and well-being. The wider policy context was another source of pressure that detracts from the role of the headteacher in teaching and learning. These sometimes conflicting expectations are captured in the tension between being ‘leading professional’ and ‘an officer of the local authority’. On the one hand, the data highlight that at times, headteachers experience the overwhelming nature of their role where they feel they will be held to account for everything that happens in the school. On the other hand, there is the strong sense of purpose and the notion that, ultimately, satisfaction comes from the headteachers’ leadership of learning across a learning community. One primary headteacher sums up: ‘Working with children: seeing them develop… groups of children grow more confident, progress in their learning and seeing individuals develop … yes, pupils and staff’.
This exploration has raised issues for the preparation of headteachers. An important element of headship preparation in Scotland has been the deepening of the professional values through the interrogation of practice using the Standard for Headship as well as building professional practice (Forde 2011). From the reports of aspirant headteachers, this is highly significant in their development (Forde 2014). However, this exploration reveals the ‘back of the tapestry’ where there will be points at which demands – sometimes contradictory and always relentless – create barriers that limit opportunities for headteachers to realise fully the key purpose of headship and to achieve sustained improvement. The examination of the lived experiences of headteachers highlights the emotional dimensions of leadership and the importance of resilience and determination. The Standard for Headship sets out four clusters of personal and interpersonal attributes which aspirant headteachers should demonstrate, and included in this is a cluster around ‘Self-awareness, inspire and motivate others’ (GTCS 2012: 10). This cluster largely concerns actions headteachers take to engage others, but there are some aspects related to the emotional demands of headship and the attributes needed: ‘manage self’; ‘build personal credibility’; ‘display confidence and courage in the way they deal with criticism and conflict’ (GTCS 2012: 9). These dimensions could be attributed to personality, and limited attention might therefore be paid to these as areas of development. This study has highlighted the importance of the emotional dimensions of leadership forming a central area in headship development. Consideration needs to be given to the building in of learning approaches – particularly mentoring, coaching and peer learning processes – that support and enhance the development of, and reflection on, the emotional dimensions of school leadership, whereby aspirant headteachers can explore and reflect on their day-to-day experiences, as well as more critical incidents, and forge responses.

Conclusion

The key purpose of headship in the Scottish professional standards is firmly focussed on teaching and learning, which aligns with headteachers’ own aspirations. Nevertheless, headteachers are still heavily involved in the operational matters to keep the school going day-to-day. These are not trivial matters, and include issues related to pupil behaviour and care that are often urgent and critical. Where professional standards are used primarily as regulatory documents, as a means of determining the competence of individual headteachers, then the context of that headship is critical. This article points to the structural barriers preventing headteachers from focusing predominantly on the stated key purpose of headship. However, leadership standards are also a powerful developmental tool for self-evaluation and professional learning. Here, standards can assist headteachers to keep a focus on the central issues of learning and teaching and to move between an operational and a strategic role.

This article suggests several areas for further study. The data from two research studies were drawn on to compare official expectations and lived experiences. An extension would be to investigate headteachers’ views of professional standards and how they use them. The study highlights the importance of the voice of headteachers and their experience, and there are questions to be asked about the role of the profession, and in particular serving headteachers, in the design of leadership standards.
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Sponsored Academy School Principals in England: Autonomous leaders or Sponsor Conduits?

Mark T. Gibson

Abstract: Sponsored academy schools are independent, state-funded schools in England managed by charitable trusts (the ‘sponsors’). Originally created in 2000, they have often replaced underachieving schools in socially deprived areas and have grown significantly in number, and sponsor type, since 2010. This article seeks to explore the relationships and roles of the academy principal and sponsor in newly formed academies. The study is a nested case study with a purposive sample organised by sponsor type. It is qualitative work, and 19 semi-structured interviews were held with key actors, including academy principals and sponsor representatives. A constant comparison method analysis was undertaken and emergent themes were developed. Depending on the relationship between the academy and its sponsor – which can range from autocratic to laissez-faire – a principal’s autonomy can vary significantly from one institution to the next. Two key areas of autonomy are discussed: finance and school curriculum. The article explores implications for policy and practice, indicating that neoliberal structural reforms such as academy schools have implications for the role of the school principal. It concludes that whilst academies were created to give schools greater freedom from local authorities, the autonomy of an individual principal in certain academies is reduced compared to that of their maintained school counterparts; the sponsor–principal relationship is fundamentally that of employer–employee.

Key Words: academies, leadership, governance, autonomy, school principal

Introduction

The schooling landscape in England has changed significantly in recent years. The emergence of independent, state-funded schools (ISFS) known as ‘academy schools’ forms part of an international pattern that has emerged across several countries as a manifestation of the neoliberal agenda (Chapman & Salokangas 2012). One neoliberal belief is that a range of schooling increases market choice and competition in the public sector, thereby enabling an increase in standards. Academy schools are one new agent in this change, allowing for greater consumer choice. In this article, I critically analyse the power dimension in the leadership roles of academy principals and their sponsors. Following an exploration of the context, empirical findings are used to indicate that the level of principal autonomy in academy schools varies according to the sponsor. It is argued that this
has a two-fold importance: for school leadership and its preparation, and for the democratic control of schooling whereby elected controlling bodies – local authorities – are replaced by unaccountable academy sponsors.

**Literature Review**

**Academies and their Context**

Although the development of academies has not been a rational, linear, planned policy, there have been three phases to the policy evolution. The initial phase (2000-2007) required a £2 million trust fund, often from philanthropic business people. These academies were either new schools or replaced existing schools, and the funding was used for capital costs, for a new school rebuild, the remainder being funded by the state. The running costs came directly from the national government as opposed to via the geographical local authority as with other state-funded (also known as ‘maintained’) schools. The governance of academies was removed from the local family of schools, and stakeholder groups such as employees and parents were not mandatory, unlike other maintained schools.

The second phase of the academy school policy evolution (2007-2010) included the lowering, then removal, of the £2 million fund, and the involvement of public sector sponsors, and also the creation of sponsorship ‘chains’. Certain sponsors operated several academies under a single governance, referred to as a ‘chain’ (a term typically associated with business). This governance model is now referred to as a Multiple Academy Trust (MAT).

The third phase, beginning in 2010 with the election of the coalition government, was that of converter academies. The 2010 Academies Act permitted designated schools that were judged to be ‘outstanding’ by inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) to convert to academy status, removing themselves from local authority control and gaining a potential financial advantage. At this point, the concept of academy schools changed significantly. There were now two categories of academy schools: converter academies (outstanding schools) and sponsored academies, which were underachieving schools that, following inspection, were required to become academies (Woods & Simkins 2014). The present article investigates sponsored academies only.

The first academy school opened in 2002, and originally the concept was for a small number of low-achieving secondary schools (some 400 by 2010) to be sponsored by business leaders. By 2010, there were 203 sponsored academies; by March 2015, most secondary schools in England were academies, and 1,375 of the 4,580 listed academies were sponsored (Department for Education 2015a). This rate of change, when considered alongside the fact that there was little empirical evaluation of the reform, appears to indicate an ideology-based policy as opposed to one founded on school improvement. This is in marked contrast to charter school development in the United States, the numbers of which remain low with growth of 5 per cent per annum seen as a maximum (House of Commons Education Committee 2015).

There has also been an increase in the range of providers of state-funded provision in England, including international actors from European countries such as Germany and Sweden (Gibson 2013), to the extent that there is a call for ‘further study of the ways in which the values, purposes and power of key actors interact as decisions are taken about schools’ futures’ (Simkins 2015).
Academies are funded through public taxation but are ‘free’ of local controls, and can be perceived as part of structural school reform common across other countries. ISFS schools manifest themselves as charter schools in the United States, while in Sweden they are free schools. ISFS schools provide policy-driven schooling across a range of countries, including Chile, Australia, Columbia and New Zealand (Chapman 2013). The change towards ISFS schools in England has gained momentum since 2010, but can be traced to a lineage of policy from the 1970s (Woods & Simkins 2014). Stevenson (2011) argues that there is nothing new in the 2010 coalition government’s education policy, claiming it is the ‘latest and decisive phase of a neo-liberal restructuring of state education in which the long-term aim has been to dismantle a publicly provided system accountable to local communities, and replace it with a state-subsidised market dominated by private providers’ (p. 178). Stevenson suggests that there has been a privatisation of schooling, resulting in a state-subsidised and market-led private system. I wish to argue in this article that some academy sponsors are more operational – that is, they have greater say in the day-to-day running of the school – than the present literature suggests (Hill 2010; Leo, Galloway & Hearne 2010; Macaulay 2008; National College 2011; PricewaterhouseCoopers 2011).

The implication of private providers entering a state-funded education system has been explored by Hatcher (2006). According to Hatcher, sponsors of academies are ‘new agents’ and are part of the ‘re-agenting’ of the school system, or the ‘replacing of older forces for change by new agents capable of driving the government’s agenda’ (Hatcher 2006: 614), which for Hatcher is undemocratic and results in diminished accountability. This has led to a marketisation of the school system in England, where parental choice becomes the market driver (Hatcher 2010). The subsequent governance of academies is seen as undemocratic – staff, elected local representatives and parents are under-represented in governing and trust bodies (Hatcher 2011). The governance of academy schools differs in this regard to the schools they are replacing (i.e. maintained schools). The process of academy policy-making is undemocratic in that public assets (i.e. schools) are being turned into privately owned property with no public accountability; there is a lack of community voice (Hatcher 2011).

**Academy Sponsors**

An academy sponsor is:

an organisation or person who has received approval from the Department for Education (DfE) to support an underperforming academy or group of academies. Sponsors work with the academies they support through the academy trust. An academy trust is the charitable company that runs an academy or a group of academies. (Department for Education 2015b)

The DfE guidance lists the responsibilities of sponsors, which include monitoring the performance of the academy, selecting the leadership team and governing body, and ensuring the academy’s funding is spent effectively. The power of an academy sponsor is considerable. For example, the sponsor also has ownership of the estate (Curtis, Exely, Sasia, Tough & Whitty 2008) and provides leadership in such areas as setting the ethos and vision for the academy (Gibson 2015). Although some work refers to tensions between academy principals and their sponsors (Gibson & Bisschoff 2014), work that specifically mentions leadership and academies is often coaxed into a narrative of compliance in that it refers to sponsors in a consultant – as opposed to operational – role (Hill 2010; Leo et al. 2010; Macaulay 2008; National College 2011; PricewaterhouseCoopers 2008, 2011).
In the pre-2010 era, Curtis (2009) provided a typology of eight academy sponsors: business entrepreneurs; companies; non-profit organisations; faith-based organisations; ‘successful’ schools; further education colleges and universities; local authorities and City Technology College conversions; and independent school conversions. This typology applied to a class of school that, at the time, were fewer than 200 in number, but the landscape has changed significantly. In 2015, there were some 800 separate sponsors, 265 of which had at least three academies in their chain (NFER 2015). The largest chain governed 69 schools (NFER, 2015). The range of types of academy school sponsors is changing, and analysis of sponsors’ work ought to reflect this change, since there may be variation within the diversity of providers.

Pike (2009) and Green (2009) discuss sponsors who take an operational lead within their academies, particularly when it comes to the creation of value sets and school ethos. Green’s (2009) study is an ethnographic analysis of ethos in an academy foundation. The sponsor in Green’s study has a Protestant Christian faith background, and the study shows that ‘[t]he mission statement of the sponsoring foundation is officially operationalised via core values. These consisted of seven values: honourable purpose, humility, compassion, integrity, accountability, courage, and determination’ (Green 2009: 137). The sponsor in Green’s study ensured each child in the school had a pocket-sized card with the seven values printed on it; the sponsor was active at an operational level.

School Autonomy

The present article explores the concept of school autonomy within the context of sponsored academy schools in England. In particular, the focus is upon the autonomy that a given academy principal may have from their sponsor. There has been an increased focus on school autonomy in England since the 1970s and the growth of neoliberal thought. The 1988 Education Reform Act is often cited as a milestone in creating a change in landscape, with greater powers given to individual schools and parents (Glatter 2012; Woods & Simkins 2014; Stevenson 2011). The resulting trajectory has seen a further decline in the role of the local authority and seemingly greater autonomy for individual schools (Ranson 2011). However, since 1988 there have also been a number of policy reforms that have worked alongside the devolution of autonomy and have ensured greater control from central government (Woods & Simkins 2014). Changes such as the creation and implementation of an inspection service (Ofsted), a National Curriculum and a national system for student testing create a paradox whereby greater autonomy theoretically exists for schools, but in reality a greater accountability to the centre ensures this autonomy is a myth (Fisher 2012; Glatter 2012). It also appears that school leaders in England anticipate having greater power over matters of school management, but not over the aims and purposes of schooling (Higham & Earley 2013).

The notion of autonomy and principalship is sometimes researched in reference to the autonomy that a school has from the local authority. Keddie (2014), for example, describes the autonomous gains that a principal has in a converter academy. However, this article focuses on the autonomy that a sponsored academy principal has from his or her sponsor.

The Academies Programme in England can be considered as having come about within a shift from the ownership of schools by the state to the private sector, and has been well documented by Ball (2007, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). Ball coined the term ‘education services industry’ (ESI) and documents at length the areas of private sector involvement in state education. The ESI includes school administrative services, the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, whole local
authority provision, school services such as Continuing Professional Development (CPD), and services such as school meals and cleaning. For Ball, the privatisation of state assets is not simply a technical change, it brings with it different values:

...it involves changes in the meaning and experience of education... It changes who we are and our relation to what we do, entering into all aspects of our everyday practices and thinking. ... This is not just a process of reform; it is a process of social transformation. (Ball 2007: 186)

Ball argues coherently and cogently that the Academies Programme is part of the reformation of the public sector into state-funded, private operations. Academies are private schools using public funds; the state contracts and monitors rather than directly delivering the service. Academies become an experiment in state provision, including organisational changes such as governance arrangements, and they ‘drastically blur the welfare state demarcations between state and market... they introduce and validate new agents... within policy’ (Ball, 2007: 171). For Gunter (2011), ‘the Academies Programme is more about capital accumulation and the dominance of private interests, than giving children opportunities for a better education. That is a smoke screen’ (p. 638). Woods, Woods, and Gunter also comment that the Academies Programme blurs the boundaries between public and private, and creates ‘challenging contexts and implications for how and where educational decisions are made’ (Woods, Woods, & Gunter 2007: 237). They conclude:

Many questions are raised. More needs to be known about the actual, developing relationships of sponsors to their academies and the nature and degree of their influence. To what extent is private sponsors’ influence moderated or shaped by the professional perspectives of principals and other teaching staff and by local communities and other stakeholders? (p. 254)

The relationship between the academy principal and the sponsor has many implications for the defence of public education and its values.

Framework: Leadership Styles and Relationships

In addressing the professional relationship between an academy principal and his/her sponsor, it is useful to look at the leadership style literature. Early and Weindling (2004) suggest a chronology of leadership theory under five headings based around human behaviour: trait, style (Lewin, Lippitt & White 1939; McGregor 1960), contingency (Hersey & Blanchard 1977), power and influence (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach 1999), and personal trait theory (Forde, Hobby & Lees 2000; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). Early and Weindling see the journey of leadership style theory as returning to some of the original concepts around leaders’ personal traits. Lewin et al. (1939) describe three main leadership styles: autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire. An autocratic leadership style involves keeping control over followers by ensuring that regulation of the policies and procedures of an organisation is in place. Democratic leaders share decisions through discussion and promote members of the group to enable them to participate in the decision-making process. A laissez-faire leadership style offers a high degree of autonomy and decision-making, with followers receiving advice when they seek it.

The concept of leadership style, albeit adapted at times, can be a useful analytical tool. Fundamentally, the above-mentioned leadership theories concern the relationships between leaders and their followers. In the following sections, the concepts of the autocratic leader and the laissez-faire leader will be used as frameworks through which to analyse the principal–sponsor relationship.
Methodology

This research may be described as a ‘nested’ case study (Thomas 2011). In order to obtain a range of data, a purposive sample was pursued by sponsor type (Curtis 2009). The sponsors and academies were initially contacted via email, and then with follow-up phone calls. Ten cases were perceived as being small enough to gain in-depth data from face-to-face interviews, but large enough to indicate some patterns. These ten cases were grouped into ‘nests’ according to their sponsor. The organisation of the nests by academy sponsor type was designed to gain insight into how the relationship between the principal and the sponsor might differ with different providers. Table 1 shows the sample arrangement and relationships within the nests.

Table 1: The Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nest</th>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Principal description</th>
<th>Notes on sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 ‘Successful’ school sponsorship</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male, second principalship*</td>
<td>Both cases were urban underachieving schools in the West Midlands that had become academies. The sponsor in each case as a local high-achieving selective schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male, headteacher of predecessor school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Faith-based sponsorship</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Male, second principalship</td>
<td>The sole case here was an urban school in northern city, although the sponsor was based in London.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Chain sponsorship</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Female, headteacher of predecessor school</td>
<td>All these cases were urban schools based in the West Midlands. Cases 4 and 5 had separate sponsors, both of which were based in London. Cases 6 and 7 had a single sponsor based in the West Midlands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Male, headteacher of predecessor school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Male, headteacher of predecessor school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Male, headteacher of predecessor school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 International sponsorship</td>
<td>8**</td>
<td>Male, first principalship</td>
<td>Both of these academies had separate sponsors who had UK bases but were European in origin. Both schools were rural.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Male, first principalship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Public sector sponsorship</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Female, first principalship</td>
<td>This case was an urban academy based, along with its sponsor, in the West Midlands.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *All principals were new to working in a sponsored academy, though they may have been a headteacher in a maintained school previously. **All cases involved secondary phase schooling (eleven years of age and upwards) apart from Case 8, which featured educated children from age three to sixteen.

Hour-long, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with academy principals and sponsor representatives from each of the ten academies. All the academies were pre-2010 Act, or ‘phase 1’, academies, although the interviews were carried out in 2012 and 2013. Pre-2010 academies were selected for this research as the principals were likely to have been in their posts longer than would principals in academies formed in 2013. All the academies chosen were sponsored rather than converter academies.
The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the transcripts were analysed using the constant comparative method (Thomas 2009). Themes from across the interviews emerged from the participants’ responses. The interviews explored the participants’ working relationships with their sponsor or principal, including areas such as conflict and areas of demarcation. Codes were used for emergent themes and comparisons made within and across nests.

Findings

The participants in the study described areas of the roles of the principal and sponsor. Four main interrelated themes emerged across all participant interviews: (a) vision creation and principal induction, (b) the principal as sponsor conduit, (c) principal autonomy and accountability, and (d) sponsor/principal conflict and collegiality.

Vision Creation and Principal Induction

The process by which academies are created requires potential sponsors to apply to the national government, and part of this process involves sponsors proposing the ethos and vision of the future academy. This occurs prior to the appointment of the principal. Each of the sponsors was emphatic about their vision and their role in creating it. Typical comments included:

So if you in fact are talking about the opening of a new academy, my staff, until the Principal arrives, the vision, the ethos, the... erm... school organisation, the staffing structure, the community strategy... all of that is produced by us... (Sponsor, Case 6)

There were characters from [the Sponsors] who sat down and wrote the vision statement. They wrote the curriculum statement. They wrote other documents associated with an application to go forward for this school to become an academy. (Principal, Case 7)

The sponsors set the vision for the academies. In Case 10, a small group of representatives from the sponsor met to complete an expression of interest (EoI):

In this very office [we created the EoI]. A few of us sat down and said ‘Right, if we are going to do this let’s start from the basic principles about, what do we collectively believe? What are the things that drive us?’ And we then said ‘Well how does that start to shape... something that can be articulated into a vision and ethos?’ (Sponsor, Case 10)

The academy principals were clear that the lead on the vision typically came from the sponsors. However, the principals do have some influence, and this is expected by the sponsors: ‘then, more recently, with the appointment of the principal, she’s been able to add another perspective onto [the vision]’ (Sponsor, Case 10).
The sponsors in nest 4, *International sponsorship*, had a clear vision for their academies, as they were to be based on other schools operating in the same chain. Between 2005 and 2010, the concept of chains was on the rise in England – sponsors would create new schools modelled after previous successes. In the case of both academies in nest 4, there were opportunities for the principals to lead and to affect change. However, the input of the principals could not be fundamental to the ethos and visions of the academies; the unique ethos and visions brought to the table by the sponsors in nest 4 were the *raison-d’etre* for the sponsors in the school context. These sponsors were allowed to be part of the state schooling system as they offered a different type of educational experience and, in so doing, increased the diversity of offer to parents. Fundamental change could mean the academies deviating from the typical schools that belonged to the sponsors’ organisations. One of the sponsors in nest 4 was unequivocal:

The benefit of having a sponsor like [ours] is that there is no doubt the school we want you to run... And as part of the recruitment process we took the short-listed candidates, the final three in each case, to Sweden for a day and on the flight home said, ‘If you don’t want to run a school that looks like this, then don’t join’. ... So we don’t have any conflict really around the vision... They have partner schools in Sweden and so it’s more about the implementation rather than the vision. (Sponsor, Case 9)

All sponsors reported having a principal induction programme, ranging from a small number of ad hoc meetings with the sponsor to a large corporate programme that occasionally included international visits. The following sponsor and principal quotes give an indication of the importance and purpose of such programmes:

There are a number of stages of induction. I suppose there’s the systematic things that just need to be understood. ‘This is how this works, this is how we do this and...’ So there is a Principals sort of guidance documentation that takes them through those sort of practical things... there will be further induction through the year, in terms of how ethos and practice are working out. (Sponsor, Case 3)

I went down to London... given an A-Z of what it’s like to be a Principal with [the Sponsor]. (Principal, Case 3)

Each of the sponsor chains in nest 3 had an organised induction programme for principal designates, although these varied in scope and length. The programme for the principal in Case 4, whose sponsor had based their schooling around some US charter schools, included visits to charter schools in Chicago: ‘I was based in London at [Sponsor]’s centre office. I spent time in other [Sponsor] academies in London. I went to Chicago for a week on a [Sponsor] trip... I had two terms to prepare’ (Principal, Case 4). It is notable here that the principal designate was the headteacher of the predecessor school, but he was removed from the school and spent several months based at the sponsor’s offices in London preparing for the new academy. A similar process also occurred in Case 5:

Or take an example. Take [Principal, Case 5] was running the school when she was appointed Principal Designate, she moved out of the school. She based herself in an office [in London]. So she wasn’t actually in the school. Because she had to set up the academy. (Sponsor, Case 5)

The relationships between the sponsors and principals in the above examples appear to be cast from the time of their appointment, to the extent that the principals were even required to move to a different part of England in order to ‘learn’ what being a principal for these organisations required. The sponsors clearly felt that this could only be achieved by the principals spending months in
their locality. There is a clear connection between the induction and the relationship between the principal and sponsor, which will be further addressed in the discussion section of this paper. Following the induction programme, the principals’ role entered a period of acting as a conduit between the sponsor and staff.

**Principal as the Sponsor’s Conduit**

Following induction, the role of the academy principal becomes one of acting as a conduit for the sponsor’s message to the rest of the staff. Evidence of this trend varied across the sample, but was apparent in all cases. One participant described how he shared the vision and ethos of the sponsor and attempted to enact it for his academy:

> To enable outstanding progress... I took their vision... to the staff directly from the vision of [the Sponsor]... That’s what I asked the staff to buy into. And to be honest they have bought into that ethos of what we’re trying to do. (Principal, Case 3)

All of the sponsors in the present study were responsible for more than one school, and there seemed to be something of a development of a corporate feel across their schools: ‘That is the concept we are trying to develop with the principals and senior leadership teams that says “Right, these are the things we believe in and want to see happening, and how can you translate that into practice?”’(Sponsor, Case 10). It is relevant that the sponsor is using the plural here; he sees the sponsor’s role as leading two academies into affecting change in a similar way. Reference to agreeing with an academy’s vision was made by several principals. The principal in Case 10 also saw a conduit role for herself: ‘...the challenge to make sure that what we are doing delivers the vision’ (Principal, Case 10).

Nest 4, *International sponsors*, is unique within the sample in that there was little opportunity for principals to instigate a different educational experience to that required by the sponsors; the principals’ job was simply to ensure that the concept of education suggested by the sponsor was instigated and then maintained. In Case 9, for example, principals were required to visit the company’s schools in Sweden, which was followed by a period of induction to ensure the principals were aware of the sponsor’s specific requirements.

**Principal Autonomy and Accountability**

There were differences in the degree of autonomy that principals were allowed from the sponsor within the sample for this study. In creating their ethos and vision, the sponsors would sometimes take charge of areas that in a maintained school would normally be the domain of the headteacher. There were occasionally structural non-negotiables from the sponsor. For the academy in Case 1, the sponsor articulated this as follows:

> In terms of the House system. The Science introduction. The Science specialism and the Sixth Form objective. Those are the broad objectives but delivering on them and how that’s to be achieved, we’ll let [the Principal] and his team lead on that. (Sponsor, Case 1)

The sponsor here had laid down structural changes within the school that the principal was required to adhere to – he described them as ‘non-negotiables’. The principal’s role thus becomes one of leading and managing change, but the change is set by the sponsor.

The sponsors’ involvement in the curriculum varied. In one academy, the sponsor’s involvement was collaborative in trying to build, along with the senior team in the academy, a new Year 7 curriculum. In other cases, however, sponsor involvement was more prescriptive. Other examples of sponsor involvement in the curriculum include an emphasis on ‘stage not age’, whereby students...
are able to progress through the curriculum at their own rate, or an emphasis on ‘depth before breadth’, whereby students are given a high proportion of mathematics and English in their diet before being allowed to address a breadth of other subjects. In both of these examples, instructions stemmed directly from the sponsor and the principal was required to adhere to the curriculum model. In one instance, all the academies in one chain were asked to introduce the teaching of Singapore Mathematics in Year 7. These examples point towards reduced principal autonomy in the academies mentioned. Reduced principal autonomy is one major difference between sponsored academies and maintained schools, where traditionally a headteacher has complete autonomy in delivering the curriculum model.

The institutions that provided greater principal autonomy also required greater accountability of principals. Accountability was often based around students’ academic performance as measured in nationally produced tables. Case 3, for example, allowed greater freedom to the principal on the curriculum model. The sponsor articulated this, stating, ‘areas like curriculum, again we’ll be sharing good practice, we’ll be sharing… models. But we won’t be saying “There’s just one common fixed curriculum… and you’ll see exactly the same in every academy”’ (Sponsor, Case 3). The sponsor continues to refer to the practice of holding principals to account:

...one thing we do... insist on is a monitoring and evaluation process across the year. So that every academy has to return key performance indicators… then twice a year we have, what we call, a strategic review, which is... erm… a formal review meeting… we do like pre-Ofsted reviews… we have got a number of experienced Ofsted inspectors who work with us on that. (Sponsor, Case 3)

This hands-on approach from the sponsor was also indicated in the management structure of the organisation, with principals line-managed by sponsor officers as opposed to the governing group (as they would be in a maintained school).

The lack of autonomy and the levels of accountability in some cases also produced sponsor–principal conflict, particularly in the arena of the curriculum.

**Sponsor–Principal Conflict and Collegiality**

The national government’s introduction of the English Baccularate (Ebacc) became an area of conflict between principals and sponsors in several of the academies. Most of the academies in this study cater to socially deprived communities, and so curricula in these academies tend to be more vocational and there tend to be fewer children studying traditional academic subjects. Since the introduction of the Ebacc, national school performance tables have been the metric used to judge the relative success of English schools. However, these tables tend to place an emphasis on traditional subjects such as English, mathematics and foreign languages, which poses a problem for schools whose curriculum is more vocational. One sponsor was very clear that they believed the academy needed to change its curriculum to have a greater proportion of students studying Ebacc subjects; the academy’s principal, however, thought differently and saw this challenge as a threat to his autonomy. The power play between the two became structural, with the sponsor ensuring their own representatives were represented in the Governor’s Curriculum Group (in the form of either university academics or previous leaders from other schools in their chain) as a means to constrain the principal’s autonomy. The following two quotes – one from the sponsor and the other from the principal – reflect the conflict and tension over the curriculum in the academy:
But recognising that... that the next stage from getting your results up and looking good in the leagues tables, is actually then start moving your students and recognising, that you know, that having Hairdressing is not necessarily the best GCSE to have. I quote that as a generalisation but you know what I mean? (Sponsor, Case 2)

I don’t go and ask permission from governors to do things, I go and tell governors what I’m doing. (Principal, Case 2)

There is clearly a dispute here regarding the demarcation of authority over the curriculum. Most of the principals taking part in this study, particularly those in chains, were very clear about the relationship of tenure. As one participant put it, ‘You know, and “We’ll be watching very carefully”… and ultimately if there was any kind of serious dispute and difference in strategic direction between the [Sponsor] and the Principal, the Principal would just be sacked, presumably’ (Principal, Case 4). This participant is not referring to principal competence, but rather differences in educational strategic vision. The sponsor–principal relationship is fundamentally one of employer–employee, and as such is not egalitarian. The principal is subservient to the sponsor, who ultimately holds the power of employment.

While the principal in Case 10 reported no conflict with her sponsors, all other participants in this study reported examples of tension. There were two key areas for conflict: finance and the curriculum. All of the sponsors kept aside part of the national government funding for their academies, although this amount varied across the sample. This ‘top slicing’ allowed for certain support services such as finance, HR and professional development of staff.

Sponsors described the management of funds being moved from the academy site to a central organisation, particularly in academy chains. Several sponsors referred to the importance of a financial ‘back office’ from the chain to support the academy. One of the original concepts for academies was for the funding to come directly from the national government with no middle tier such as local authorities. In the schools in this study this was not occurring; the government funding was given directly to the sponsor rather than to the academy. The sponsor then distributed a delegated budget.

The sponsors of academies in nest 4, International sponsors, dictated the schools’ teaching methodologies and even the design of the buildings. The educational organisations had created plans for how the academies were to be organised; the blueprints were already in existence. The relationship between the sponsor and principal is clear: the principal becomes a conduit for the sponsors, ensuring that the concept of education put forward by the sponsor is instigated and then maintained. In Case 8, the appointed principal was one of the educators involved in the organisation’s movement – in effect, he was one of the sponsors.

Academies that give greater autonomy to principals work under an air of collegiality within their chain, often referred to as a family of schools, and with the sponsor. However, all principals who participated in this study reported being aware that this would not be the case if the performance of their academy were to change. Collegiality and support is emphasised in a following from one principal: ‘...we use the school improvement team at [the Sponsors] a lot. But generally... the team from [the Sponsors] are helpful and supportive, rather than coming in and telling you what to do’ (Principal, Case 6). Another quote that emphasises support came from the sponsor in Case 6:
…forums of teachers in English, Mathematics, and ICT from right across the piece and we have an annual conference which is funded from the centre, not residential, the conferences to share best practices. Sharing best practice is important and we have a marketing team which helps each school to develop its own distinctive image and market it through the most effective way through its prospectuses. (Sponsor, Case 6)

The following quote exemplifies how principals knew that their own employment could be at risk depending on their school’s academic performance: ‘I think I’m a lucky chap, and “So far so good.” Things have gone well for us but... erm... but I suppose, like any football manager really, if things aren’t going well, you have to accept the consequences’ (Principal, Case 6). Finally, one principal stated: ‘And if I don’t achieve [the targets] I pay the price’ (Principal, Case 5). All the principals in the study were aware of the possibility of losing their job, and that this could be based around the school’s academic performance, but the decision would be made by the employer – that is, the sponsor.

Discussion

The role of the sponsor can be significant in operational matters – for some academies in the present study, the sponsor determined the name of the school, the uniform, the curriculum, certain staffing posts and particular school policy. All of this reduced principal autonomy. When asked about their autonomy, all the principals who participated in the study mentioned feeling that they had considerable autonomy, but when asked in detail about other areas such as the curriculum, more in-depth answers revealed a feeling of having less autonomy.

The concepts of autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles (Lewin et al. 1939; McGregor 1960) were introduced earlier. It seems appropriate to analyse the relationship between academy principals and their sponsors in the light of these terms. There appears to be a continuum from autocratic to laissez-faire in the relationship between the sponsors and the principals of academies. Some sponsors in this study had a very clearly defined vision of what should occur in their academy, even in terms of such specifics as teaching methodologies. Other sponsors were fundamentally concerned about the educational attainment of students as measured by performance in external examinations, and the sponsor–principal relationship was characterised by performance matched against quantitative outcomes. In these latter academies, there is a more laissez-faire approach to how the raising of attainment occurs; the principal has greater autonomy within the academy than the principals with sponsors who were more autocratic, and the relationship is one of accountability. Figure 1 presents a diagrammatic summary of where each of the academy cases in this study falls along the continuum.
Clear patterns have emerged in the research sample for this study. In particular, academies that are autocratic in their sponsor–principal relationship tend to have a stronger sponsor motivational factor based on a belief around the sponsor’s philosophical approach to educating. Table 2 indicates the emergent patterns that have occurred in the sponsor–principal relationship.

**Table 2: Key components of the poles of the sponsor–principal continuum**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Laissez-faire</th>
<th>Autocratic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High level of scrutiny</td>
<td>Control over (parts) of curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ofsted-style inspections from sponsor</td>
<td>Branding: name/logo/uniform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater amount of principal autonomy</td>
<td>Control over teaching methods to some extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes in terms of external examinations results driven</td>
<td>Greater emphasis on principal induction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philosophy of education driven</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Patterns such as those demonstrated in Table 2 seemingly occur across all academies that are led by a specific sponsor chain, where ‘sponsor’ refers to corporate identity.

**Implications for Policy and Practice**

The implications of these findings concern two particular areas: leadership preparation and the issue of a democracy deficit. It would seem important that future principals are aware of differing role requirements from different sponsor employers, and finding a value match may be important to both employer and employee. If principals are to move from one sponsor to another, how will they be prepared for these differing expectations?

There is a larger issue that follows the work of Ball and Hatcher, namely, the concept of a democracy deficit in the creation and expansion of a private schooling system being funded by the state. The sponsor MATs do not have a stakeholder representation in their governance, but operate more akin to the commercial market with a board of trustees. This differs from maintained schools where there is a legal requirement to have parents on their governing bodies. How do communities influence control over the schools that ought to serve them?
Conclusion
The initial government argument for the creation of academy schools included autonomy for schools from local authority control (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2008). Supporters of the Academy Programme emphasised academy autonomy and the creativity this could bring. The argument was that by removing some of the local authority constraints, underachieving schools would improve. In the present study, however, the focus has been on the autonomy that a given academy principal may have from his or her sponsor, as opposed to academy autonomy from the local authority. There is a paradox here that warrants further work, as there is evidence to support the view that some academy principals may have less autonomy than their maintained school counterparts. In fact, principals may not have full control over such fundamentals as school budgets, policies, school uniform, staffing structure, the curriculum, building design, and even some teaching methods. This is in contrast to the role of the principal in maintained schools.

The data here suggest that the role of a principal in a sponsored academy differs from the role of a headteacher in a maintained state school, and may well be different to that of a principal in a converter academy. The principal’s relationship with the sponsor provides an added dimension. It has been argued in this article that some academy school sponsors have greater operational control than much of the literature suggests and that, certainly in early stages, some academy principals are merely conduits for the educational purpose of their sponsors.

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An International Cross-Cultural Validation of the Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ)

Claire Lapointe, Lyse Langlois, Pierre Valois, Mualla Aksu, Khalid H. Arar, Christopher Bezzina, Olof Johansson, Katarina Norberg and Izhar Oplatka

Abstract: By investigating the ethical perspectives of school principals in five different countries and verifying the cultural invariance of the Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ), this paper addresses the need to develop cross-cultural research instruments to better understand the work of school leaders in different contexts. In order to verify the invariance of the ELQ according to culture, school leaders from Canada (n=668), Israel (n=117), Malta (n=130), Sweden (n=260), and Turkey (n=460) completed the ELQ. A measurement invariance analysis was then conducted using the multiple indicators multiple causes (MIMIC) approach, followed by a verification of item translation and equivalence of meaning. Invariance analyses demonstrated some differences in factor loadings (i.e. the regression coefficients indicating the strength of the relation between the items and the constructs they are assumed to measure). Results showed that the ELQ was culturally invariant, and that only one item out of 23 needed to be modified.

Key words: ethical leadership, cultures, questionnaire, invariance, ethic of care, ethic of critique, ethic of justice, ethical sensitivity

This article deals with significant ethical challenges school principals from around the world are facing today – challenges that are having a weighty impact on their work yet are often unacknowledged (Burford & Bezzina 2014; Cherkowski, Walker & Kutsyuruba 2015; Holte 2014). Principals who are aware of ethical issues and face ethical dilemmas – i.e. conflicts between personal, professional and organisational values that make decision-making problematic (Langlois 2004) – experience cognitive and emotional reactions which can lead to a sense of inadequacy if their ethical skills remain undeveloped, or to a sense of empowerment if they are developed (Langlois & Lapointe 2009, 2010).

By culturally validating a research instrument for the study of, and training in, ethical leadership, this paper directly addresses the fourth question of this special issue: how can we encourage the development of cross-cultural models, frameworks and analytical tools to understand the work of school leaders in different contexts? This paper also provides a reliable instrument for international comparative studies of principals’ ethical leadership.
Problem Statement

In the international corporate world, ethics has become an inescapable issue following numerous scandals (for example, involving Arthur Andersen, Parmalat, Exxon and Bernie Madoff) and the subsequent collapse of major companies. Although educational organisations around the world have not been put in the spotlight to the same degree as large corporations, they are not above reproach. Sadly, misuse of financial resources, theft of equipment, falsification of student lists in order to increase funding, and favouritism are all too commonly observed in the field of education (Hallak & Poisson 2007; Pliksnys, Kopnicka, Hrynevych & Palicarsky 2009; Poisson 2014). Therefore, when investigating the work of school leaders that goes beyond their official role, one major element which comes to mind is the challenges they face with regard to ethical decision-making, and the need for effective training which would stimulate and consolidate their ethical competency (Cherkowski et al. 2015; Kristinsson 2014; Langlois & Lapointe 2014).

Numerous scholars agree there is a pressing need for educational leaders to acquire ethical decision-making skills (e.g. Aquino, McFerran & Laven 2011; Begley & Tuana 2007; Branson & Gross 2014; Cranston, Ehrich & Kimber 2014; Shapiro, Stefkovitch & Gutierrez 2014; Tuana 2014). In order to offer sound training programmes in ethics, it is essential to create instruments with which to evaluate if and how ethics skills grow from latency to full development (Brown, Trevino & Harrissone 2005; Karlshoven, Den Hartog & De Hoogh 2011; Langlois & Lapointe 2014). However, if instruments are to be used in countries or cultures other than those in which they were validated, their cultural invariance must be ascertained in order for the results they produce to be considered reliable, since values and norms are culturally informed and can vary significantly between societies. In the same manner, moral priorities can differ from one cultural context to another (Bass 1996; Truong & Hallinger 2015). Moreover, legal structures and administrative organisations vary between school systems, influencing the role and responsibilities attributed to principals (Hofstede 2001).

In this paper, we briefly recall how the Ethical Leadership Questionnaire (ELQ) was developed and initially validated for the Canadian context in its French and English language versions, and with regard to gender (Langlois, Lapointe, Valois & de Leeuw 2014). We then explain the research methodology used in the present study to verify the invariance of the ELQ across cultures, and share the results. We conclude with a discussion on the need to further investigate the complex and globally diverse realities facing school principals who aspire to become ethical leaders.

Overview of Research on Ethical Leadership in Education

Research on the ethical dimension of leadership in education has seen a significant rise in the past 20 years, inspired in part by the work of Kohlberg (1981) on moral reasoning based on justice, and that of Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984) on the ethic of care. Hodgkinson (1978) suggested restoring a moral foundation to theories on educational leadership. Greenfield (1981) emphasised the need to study the ethical and moral aspects of educational leadership, while Farquard (1981) wrote about the almost total lack of moral dimension in educational leadership theory. Supported by Kuhn’s (1962) insights, Farquard’s conclusion led some scholars to question the dominance of the positivist paradigm in the study of leadership in education, while others started investigating the axiological and ethical dimensions of the practice of leadership. The work of Hodgkinson (1978), Griffiths (1979), Greenfield (1981) and Foster (1989) gave new impetus to research in educational administration by emphasising its moral dimensions.
Starratt’s (1991) paper was the first to offer a cohesive and clear theoretical model of ethical leadership in educational administration. Thereafter, several scholars addressed the issue of ethical leadership in education (Aksu & Kasalak 2014; Arar 2015; Beck 1994; Begley & Johansson 2003; Bezzina 1999; Bezzina & Bufalino 2014; Crowson 1989; Duignan 2012; Langlois 2004; Marshall, Paterson, Rogers & Steele 1993; Maxcy 2002; Norberg 2009; Norberg & Johansson 2014; Oplatka & Arar 2016; Sergiovanni 1992; Shapiro & Stepkovich 2001; Starratt 2004; Starratt, Langlois & Duignan 2010). These studies provided a framework to identify the characteristics of an ethics-oriented practice of educational leadership, i.e. a way of leading where one’s conduct – whether making a landmark decision, modelling a behaviour or interacting with people – is firmly rooted in an ethically-based, auto-regulated, professional judgement (Langlois 2010; Langlois & Lapointe 2010).

Development and Validation of the Ethical Leadership Questionnaire

Before presenting the research design used to ascertain the ELQ cultural invariance, we summarise the three research phases that, over a period of 20 years, led to its construction and to the psychometric validation of its three-factorial structure for the Canadian context, as well as with regard to gender. A more detailed description of these phases is provided in Langlois et al. (2014).

Phase 1

In the mid-1990s, Langlois (1997) decided to empirically verify Starratt’s theoretical model in order to help educational leaders develop their ethical decision-making skills. Starratt’s model is based on three interdependent dimensions of ethics: the ethic of care, which reflects a significant concern for others and their well-being as well as an ability to show empathy (Gilligan 1982; Noddings 1984; Tronto 2011); the ethic of justice, which helps to safeguard the common good and maintain normativity, neutrality and rationality (Kohlberg 1981; Sullivan 1985); and the ethic of critique, defined as a means to emancipate individuals and disclose inequities and undue privileges (Adorno 1978; Freire 1970). To this framework, Langlois added the construct of ethical sensitivity, defined as an awareness of ethically challenging situations and a capacity to discern the values at stake (Rest et al. 1986; Tuana 2007).

Between 1994 and 2000, over 200 qualitative interviews were conducted with Canadian school leaders (Langlois 1997, 2004, 2010). The data allowed Langlois to describe how these leaders resolved ethical dilemmas. Between 2000 and 2016, while developing the initial version of the ELQ, another 200 interviews were conducted in various organisational and professional settings in Canada and France, such as hospitals, police forces, engineering firms, international business corporations and public service organisations (Bégin & Langlois 2012; Langlois, Centeno & Filion 2012; Langlois & Lapointe 2007).

Phase 2

Langlois’ initial 200 interviews allowed her to develop a typology of ethical dilemmas and decision-making rationales linked to each of the three ethical dimensions proposed by Starratt. Using this rich empirical dataset, Langlois created a first version of the ELQ, which measured five components of ethical leadership: (1) the ability to identify an ethical dilemma, (2) the ability to solve it, (3) the types of decisions made when facing an ethical dilemma, (4) the influence of organisational culture on the process, and (5) the pressures felt while resolving the ethical dilemma. For each component, response items were linked to one of the three ethical dimensions proposed by Starratt, as well
as to ethical sensitivity. This initial version of the ELQ was then used as an experimental pre- and post-test instrument during an action training study on ethical competency. It was found that the use of the ELQ greatly helped participants to understand the meaning of the three ethics – both conceptually and practically – and that it had an important triggering effect on their decision to take ownership of their professional development with regard to ethical leadership (Langlois & Lapointe 2010).

Phase 3

The third phase of the research programme involved the psychometric validation of the three-factorial structure of the ELQ (care, justice and critique), as well as the demonstration of its invariance with regard to gender. The latter is a prerequisite when carrying out comparative analyses between women and men as, in order to be able to reach a conclusion on real gender differences in leadership characteristics, gender invariance of the items needs to be first ascertained (Brown et al. 2005). As a very detailed description of this third phase is available in Langlois et al. (2014), only a brief summary of how it was achieved follows.

Data were collected from a sample of 668 Canadian educational leaders from Quebec and Ontario; 50.3 per cent of the participants were male and 49.7 per cent were female. This sample was divided into four random subgroups of 167 participants, one for each of the four steps of data analyses: use of item response theory (IRT) for item analysis; confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and ESEM analysis; invariance of the ELQ items across gender; and structural equation modelling. The results confirmed the validity of the ELQ in terms of measuring the presence of ethical leadership based on the ethics of justice, critique and care linked to ethical sensitivity, as well as its invariance with regard to gender. Finally, as there was a sufficient number of items to assure the content validity of each of the three ethical dimensions, items that had much higher loadings on a factor other than the one intended were removed, resulting in a 23-item version of the ELQ (Langlois et al. 2014).

Testing the Cultural Invariance of the ELQ

Testing the cultural invariance of the ELQ – a prerequisite in the use of such instruments in order to produce reliable results (Meredith 1993; Vandenberg & Lance 2000) – constituted the fourth and final phase of its validation.

Participants

An international team was brought together by means of an invitation through the TERA1 website as well as through contacts made at international conferences. Scholars from four distinct cultures offered to collaborate in the study: Khalid Arar and Izhar Oplatka (Israel), Christopher Bezzina (Malta), Katarina Norberg and Olof Johannson (Sweden) and Mualla Aksu (Turkey). For participants from Sweden, Turkey and Israel, the ELQ needed to be translated from English into Swedish, Turkish and Hebrew, respectively. In each country, investigators collected data using paper and/or online versions of the questionnaire, and forwarded these data to the Canadian team for processing. Participation was as follows: Israel (n=117), Malta (n=130), Sweden (n=257), Turkey (n=460). The Canadian sample was made up of 637 participants. We wish to emphasise that, although sufficient for testing invariance across culture, the convenience samples used in this study are not representative of the entire target population of each country.

**Israeli Context**

In 2016, Israel had a total population of around eight and a half million people, comprising 74.8 per cent Jews, 20.8 per cent Arabs and 4.4 per cent other (Central Bureau of Statistics 2016). As citizens of what is officially considered a Jewish state (Smooha 2002), the Arab population in Israel contends with a constant identity conflict, while the Jewish population includes many ethnic and religious subcultures. Though average income is significantly higher for Jewish than for Arab families, the gap between wealthy and poor Jews has gradually reached worrying proportions (Ben-David & Bleikh 2013).

Education in Israel is segregated, with separate school systems for religious and secular Jewish children, and separate state and religious schools for Arab children. Parents have the legal right to enroll their child in any of these systems. The first three systems share similar structures, reforms, matriculation exams, national core curricula, labour relations (tenured teachers) and student configuration (grades 1-6, 7-9, and 10-12), but differ from each other in terms of cultural and religious affiliations. The Jewish education system serves 74 per cent of all the student population, 45 per cent in the state secular system and 29 per cent in the religious system. The Arab educational system serves 26 per cent of the children in Israel (CBS 2013). Unequal resources allocated to Arab schools (Arlosoroff 2014) and undefined educational aims lead to lower achievement for Arab students in both national and international standard exams (Arar 2012). Several problems – such as scholastic disparities, low achievement, low teachers’ salaries, major deficits in the fields of knowledge and inefficient utilisation of resources – have led to the introduction of two major reforms: New Horizons and Power to Change (Arar 2012; Gibton 2011). In addition, an Authority for Research and Assessment has been established as part of Israel’s Ministry of Education, and several national and international examinations have been introduced into schools, including the National Mitzav exam for 4th and 8th grades and the PISA and Perl exams, which have ramped up the pressure on those working in the Israeli education system (Blas 2014). In 2007, the Israeli National Centre of School Leadership was founded, taking up the mission of improving the Israeli educational system through the reinvention of school principals as a leading professional community (Avney Rosha Institute 2009). At the end of 2011, Israel’s total principal population numbered 3,186, 58 per cent of whom were female and 42 per cent of whom were male. (Blas, Gavooli, Hayman & Ofarim 2012).

**Maltese Context**

Located in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, the Maltese Archipelago covers an area of 316 square kilometres and has approximately 420,000 residents. It is a democratic republic, with a president as the constitutional head of state and a prime minister. Education in Malta is compulsory up to the age of 16 and is offered by three different providers: the state, the church and the private sector. Whilst the state sector still caters to the majority of students (60 per cent), the church sector is growing and will cater to over 40 per cent of students within a few years. The private and fee-paying sector caters to approximately 7 per cent of the student population. The state is responsible for promoting education and instruction, and for ensuring universal access to education for all Maltese citizens. The objectives of education in Malta include intellectual and moral development.
and the preparation of every citizen to contribute productively to the national economy. Malta’s educational system is structured in four stages: pre-primary (ages 3-5), primary (ages 5-11), secondary (ages 11-16) and higher (16+). Those wishing to pursue a position of headship in the Maltese school system are required to follow a two-year postgraduate diploma (or equivalent) at the University of Malta. All current heads are either in possession of this degree or hold a Master’s degree in educational management and leadership.

In the Mediterranean and European contexts, migration raises many concerns of an ethical nature as school leaders need to learn how to understand students (and parents) that come from different cultural and religious backgrounds, a situation that is further complicated by language barriers (Eurydice 2009; Pace 2013). For the people of Malta, for example, the challenge of moving from an insular and Catholic reality to one which is more multicultural has to be handled with care (Bernardie-Tahir & Schmoll 2014; Cassar 2013). Recent studies (e.g. Cassar 2013; Pace 2013) have shown that migration raises ‘normative and ethical considerations such as the issue of solidarity’ (Pace 2013: 20), and have shone light on the ‘impact that unregulated migration is having on the domestic politics of southern European countries as reflected in the increase in racism and xenophobia’ (Pace 2013: 20). Furthermore, Bernardie-Tahir & Schmoll (2014) note that ‘Malta reveals the complexity of migration issues and offers a remarkable “site of condensation” of the ambivalences of the Euro-Mediterranean region where one can observe new cartographies of power and resistance in the making’ (p. 53).

Maltese Participants

After discussing matters with top officials and garnering their support, ethical clearance for the present study was sought. All school leaders currently in post within the three sectors were then invited to participate through information made available online. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and informed that their participation was voluntary. A total of 130 participants filled out the ELQ online.

Swedish Context

With 50 years of social democratic governments, Sweden is a welfare state with well-established social democratic values. With fewer than ten million inhabitants (14 per cent immigrants), Sweden has a history of open elections and debates which frame democracy and freedom of speech as fundamental societal values. Government services operate pre-school, schools, university and healthcare, subsidised through the tax system. The Swedish Parliament and the government set out the goals and guidelines for pre-school (optional educational and day-care services starting at the age of 1), pre-school class (optional kindergarten at ages 5-6), compulsory school (ages 7-16), leisure time centres and upper secondary school. Municipalities and independent schools are the principal organisers or school owners in the school system.

Over the last decades, neoliberal ideas have influenced Swedish society. Consequently, many independent schools have opened and most agree that they are a permanent fixture, despite claims that they profit from public taxes. The Swedish State School Inspection controls all schools and provides official reports on the schools’ administration and their compliance with laws and regulations. The current curricula and the School Act (Skollagen) stipulate that schools must impart a world-view and shape pupils’ fundamental values, including the inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, equality between women and men, and solidarity with the weak and vulnerable. These values are meant to saturate all school activities and constitute a common frame of reference.
Principals and pre-school heads are appointed before they commence the National Principal Training Program, a Master’s level in-service programme which runs for three years and has been mandatory since 2009 for all newly appointed principals. Training providers are payed by the state and school owners pay for the participation of their principals (20 per cent time-release from work). Two years after the end of the programme, the state offers all principals voluntary in-service training in leadership and quality work.

**Swedish Participants**

Ten groups from the three-year National Principal Training Program were selected to participate in the present study, which resulted in a total of 257 participants from various rural and urban regions of Sweden. There was an even distribution between groups in their first semester and those in their last semester.

**Turkish Context**

Although a modern republic that was founded in 1923, Turkey is still a developing country in which not all people embrace democratic values. With a population of 78 million citizens, a growth rate of 13.3 per thousand and the recent arrival of 2.7 million Syrian refugees, significant issues are negatively affecting national income and the quality of education. The Turkish educational system is a highly centralised one wherein the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) controls all aspects of the 12-year compulsory system (age 6-17), including all public and private primary and secondary schools. After the military coup in 1980, Turkish governments were influenced by neoliberal ideas, diminishing their financial support to public schools while encouraging the development of private schools. Although civic values are taught at all levels of schooling, religious values are promoted in the new curricula and regulations. At the high school level conservative parents often send their daughters to open high schools where attendance is not compulsory.

Currently, all candidates for educational administration positions, regardless of their educational degree or experience, are evaluated through a written and oral examination. After appointment, a free-of-charge, 90-hour compulsory initial training programme is conducted by local educational authorities in cooperation with universities. Principals and other educational administrators are also given in-service training when needed.

**Turkish Participants**

All educational administrators working in the province of Antalya were invited to fill out the ELQ voluntarily via a formal email message. Of the total 3,860 potential participants, 460 (12.5 per cent) completed the questionnaire.

**Canadian Context**

A federation of ten provinces and three territories, Canada has a population of over 35 million, 96 per cent of whom are descendants of immigrants who arrived either 400 years ago (French), 300 years ago (British) or more recently. Less than 4 per cent of Canadians are aboriginals (First Nation, Inuit and Metis people). Canada is a socially oriented country where individual and collective rights tend to be balanced. Although education is under provincial jurisdiction and each province and territory has its own ministry of education, school systems are quite similar, with a more distinct structure in the province of Quebec. Provincial governments operate kindergartens (ages 4-5), elementary and middle schools (grades 1-7 or 1-8), and high schools (grades 8-12 or 9-12). In Quebec, the structure is as follows: subsidised early childhood centres and day-cares (ages 1-5),
kindergarten (ages 4-5), elementary school (grades 1-6) and high school (grades 7-11). Compulsory schooling ends at grade 11, after which students attend CEGEP, which offers free pre-university and professional training programmes.

Elected school boards constitute an intermediate level of governance for resource allocation and educational service supervision and evaluation. As regulated by the Canadian constitution, all provinces financially support an English and a French language school system. Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia have private and public schools which are significantly subsidised, while Ontario has public non-denominational and public Catholic fully subsidised schools. In all provinces, principals complete a graduate programme in educational administration before being appointed, or do so as an in-service requirement.

Canada’s school systems face three pressing issues: dramatically low graduation rates among its indigenous peoples, significantly lower success rates of French-language official minority students in national and international testing, and a general deterioration of the situation with regard to educational equity.

**Canadian Participants**

The Canadian sample for the present study is made up of 637 principals, schoolboard counsellors and college administrators from the provinces of Quebec and Ontario who participated over a period of three years. In both provinces, participants were free to complete the questionnaire in either French or English.

**Measurement Invariance Analysis**

When using an instrument such as the ELQ, an important prerequisite to enable unambiguous interpretation of latent mean differences according to culture is for the measurement of the latent constructs forming its underlying model to be invariant (equivalent) across cultural groups; in other words, it is important that the measured latent constructs are comparable across groups (Byrne 2013; Gardner & Qualter 2011; Morin, Marsh & Nagengast 2013; Vandenberg & Lance 2000). Therefore, we performed tests of measurement invariance to evaluate the extent to which measurement properties of the ELQ generalise across different cultural groups. Different approaches can be used to test measurement invariance: multiple group, longitudinal, and multiple indicators multiple causes (MIMIC). We used the MIMIC approach because it is the most suitable when research is based on modest sample sizes, as is the case in the current study (Morin et al. 2013). More specifically, the MIMIC model is much more parsimonious than the other approaches mentioned, and does not require the separate estimation of the model in each cultural group. In the present study, parameters in the MIMIC model were successively constrained to invariance across cultures or countries (Canada versus Turkey, Malta and Sweden, etc.) in a series of hierarchically related (nested) models to ensure that the measurement and meaning of the latent constructs remained the same for each group, an important prerequisite for group-based comparisons (for more details, see Morin et al. 2013).

The first model (M1: null model) predicts that culture (the predictor variable) will have no effect on the latent variables (ethic of care, ethic of justice and ethic of critique) and items intercepts; this means that the paths from the predictor to the latent factors and their indicators are constrained to zero. The second model (M2: saturated model) allows the paths between the predictor (culture or country) and the items (Q1-Q23) to be freely estimated, but the paths from the predictor to the
latent factors (ethic of care, ethic of justice and ethic of critique) are still constrained to zero. In the third model (M3: invariant intercept model), the paths from the predictor to the latent factors are freely estimated, but all the paths between the predictor and the indicators or items are constrained to zero.

The comparison of M1 with M2 and M3 tests whether there is any cultural effect on the responses to the ELQ items. If M1 fails to provide an acceptable fit to the data, this suggests that at least some effects of the predictor variable (cultural differences) on the ELQ factors should be expected. If M2 fits substantially better than M3, the implication is the presence of differential item functioning (DIF). To find which item has a problem of DIF, different hierarchical partially invariant models (Models 4, 5 and so on, depending on the circumstances) are performed in which the invariant constraint is relaxed for some item intercepts. For instance, in the case of M4, the path between the predictor and item X is freely estimated rather than constrained to zero. M5, with paths between the predictor and items X (item freely estimated in M4) and Y are freely estimated rather than constrained to zero, etc.

With the software Mplus, the command ‘modindices’ is used in M3 to identify which path or paths between the predictor (culture) and the items have to be freely estimated (biggest modification indices). The different models were tested by structural equation modelling (SEM) using Mplus 7.0 (Muthén & Muthén 1998–2015). Given the known over-sensitivity of the chi-square to sample size, minor deviations from normality and minor model misspecifications, model fit is usually assessed with sample size-independent fit indices, which in this case were the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) and the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA). According to conventional rules of thumb (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2011), acceptable and excellent model fit is indicated by CFI and TLI values greater than .90 and .95, respectively, and by RMSEA values smaller than .08 and .06, respectively.

For the model comparisons:

[t]here has been an increasing tendency to argue for evidence of invariance based on a more practical approach involving one, or a combination of two, alternative criteria: (a) the multi-group model exhibits an adequate fit to the data, and (b) the ΔCFI (or its robust counterpart) values are negligible. (Byrne 2012: 256)

According to Cheung & Rensvold (2002) and Chen (2007), the imposition of additional constraints is justifiable if it results in a ΔCFI of 0.01 or less and a ΔRMSEA of 0.015 or less between a more restricted model and the preceding one in the case of samples larger than 300.

**Explaining Differing Items**

The final methodological step in the present study consisted of explaining why certain items seem to be problematic (i.e. they have a different meaning in different countries or cultures). This was done in one stage for Malta, where the English ELQ version was used, and in two stages where it was translated (i.e. in Israel, Turkey and Sweden). For the countries where the ELQ was translated, we first verified whether the translation of the differing items was accurate by translating them back to English and comparing with the original version. We then wrote short descriptions of how people in Canada and in the participating countries understood the items which seemed problematic, and compared those descriptions in order to ascertain whether the items had the same meaning in each language.
Results

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the 1,632 ELQ participants included in this study, of which 545 were tested in English, 253 in French, 460 in Turkish, 260 in Swedish and 117 in Hebrew.

**Table 1: Participants’ characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>No. years’ experience in educational administration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The MIMIC approach indicated that a number of items scored differently for each participating country, ranging from three items for Israel to seven for Sweden (see Tables 3 to 6 for paired comparisons). Table 2 presents a summary of the ELQ items showing a different metric across countries or cultures.

**Table 2: Summary of the ELQ items showing a different metric across countries or culture**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Verification of the Translation for Israel, Sweden, and Turkey**

**Israel and Turkey**

As shown in Table 2, three items scored differently between Israel and Canada (13, 14, 15) and four items scored differently between Turkey and Canada (5, 6, 13, 15). When verifying the translation of these items from English into Hebrew or Turkish and then back to English, we found they had been translated correctly.

**Sweden**

Seven items scored differently between Sweden and Canada: 6, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, and 16. We found changes of meaning in translation only for item 6. In the English version, item 6 referred to *making people aware that some situations privilege certain groups*, whereas the Swedish version was more specific and referred to *making the staff aware that some children get more privileges than others*. The six other items had been translated accurately.
Table 3: ELQ comparison between Canada and Israel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Canada - Israel</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>$\Delta$RMSEA</th>
<th>$\Delta$CFI</th>
<th>$\Delta$TLI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1: MIMIC NULL effect model</td>
<td>811,615</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td>0.826</td>
<td>0.771</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2: MIMIC SATURATED model</td>
<td>445,251</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>0.925</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3: MIMIC invariant intercept</td>
<td>578,133</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>0.892</td>
<td>0.857</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>0.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4: MIMIC Partially (DIF: Q15)</td>
<td>557,908</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>0.898</td>
<td>0.863</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M5: MIMIC Partially (DIF: Q15, Q14)</td>
<td>532,462</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>0.905</td>
<td>0.872</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M6: MIMIC Partially (DIF: Q15, Q14, Q13)</td>
<td>499,012</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>0.915</td>
<td>0.884</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: ELQ comparison between Canada and Malta

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Can - Malta</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>$\Delta$RMSEA</th>
<th>$\Delta$CFI</th>
<th>$\Delta$TLI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1: MIMIC NULL effect model</td>
<td>840,192</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>0.106</td>
<td>0.798</td>
<td>0.734</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2: MIMIC SATURATED model</td>
<td>351,977</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.947</td>
<td>0.922</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3: MIMIC invariant intercept</td>
<td>510,631</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>0.074</td>
<td>0.903</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>0.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4: MIMIC Partially (DIF: Q9)</td>
<td>465,771</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>0.917</td>
<td>0.888</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M5: MIMIC Partially (DIF: Q9, Q3)</td>
<td>439,991</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>0.925</td>
<td>0.898</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M6: MIMIC Partially (DIF: Q9, Q3, Q6)</td>
<td>417,710</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>0.931</td>
<td>0.907</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M7: MIMIC Partially (DIF: Q9, Q3, Q6, Q11)</td>
<td>402,703</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.936</td>
<td>0.913</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M8: MIMIC Partially (DIF: Q9, Q3, Q6, Q11, Q8)</td>
<td>388,857</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.918</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 5: ELQ comparison between Canada and Turkey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Can - Turkey</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>$\Delta$RMSEA</th>
<th>$\Delta$CFI</th>
<th>$\Delta$TLI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1: MIMIC NULL effect model</td>
<td>1240,736</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>0.889</td>
<td>0.855</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2: MIMIC SATURATED model</td>
<td>585,425</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.957</td>
<td>0.937</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3: MIMIC invariant intercept</td>
<td>924,707</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>0.923</td>
<td>0.897</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4: MIMIC Partially (DIF= Q6)</td>
<td>814,640</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>0.935</td>
<td>0.913</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M5: MIMIC Partially (DIF= Q6, Q5)</td>
<td>773,091</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>0.939</td>
<td>0.918</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>0.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M6: MIMIC Partially (DIF= Q6, Q5, Q15)</td>
<td>730,806</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>0.943</td>
<td>0.924</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M7: MIMIC Partially (DIF= Q6, Q5, Q15, Q13)</td>
<td>693,456</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>0.947</td>
<td>0.928</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6: ELQ comparison between Canada and Sweden**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Can-Sweden</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>$\Delta$RMSEA</th>
<th>$\Delta$CFI</th>
<th>$\Delta$TLI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1: MIMIC NULL effect model</td>
<td>1091,613</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.793</td>
<td>0.728</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2: MIMIC SATURATED model</td>
<td>456,201</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.937</td>
<td>0.907</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3: MIMIC invariant intercept</td>
<td>741,825</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>0.875</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>0.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4: MIMIC Partially (DIF: Q6 )</td>
<td>718,239</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.839</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>0.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M5: MIMIC Partially (DIF: Q6, Q14)</td>
<td>696,497</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>0.885</td>
<td>0.845</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>0.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M6: MIMIC Partially (DIF: Q6, Q14, Q13)</td>
<td>622,568</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.902</td>
<td>0.867</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M7: MIMIC Partially (DIF: Q6, Q14, Q13, Q15)</td>
<td>579,546</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>0.912</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>0.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M8: MIMIC Partially (DIF: Q6, Q14, Q13, Q15, Q8)</td>
<td>551,844</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>0.064</td>
<td>0.918</td>
<td>0.888</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>0.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M9: MIMIC Partially (DIF: Q6, Q14, Q13, Q15, Q8, Q16)</td>
<td>528,000</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>0.923</td>
<td>0.895</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M10: MIMIC Partially (DIF: Q6, Q14, Q13, Q15, Q8, Q16, Q9)</td>
<td>508,848</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.928</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Verification of Meaning for Remaining Items

As a final step, we needed to compare the meaning given to the ten items which, although used in the original English version or translated correctly, scored differently with MIMIC. Co-authors looked at the list of problematic items for their country and wrote a short definition of what each meant to school principals in their own context. Canadian authors did the same for the ten items in question. Definitions were then compiled as shown in Table 7.

When comparing the definitions, we found that the meaning given in each country to items 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, and 16 was similar, and that each of them referred to their intended ethical dimension. However, distinct meanings were found for item 14, *I conduct an investigation*, which was intended to refer to the way one would gather a series of facts before making a decision (ethic of justice). This item proved to be inconsistent in the way it was understood in Israel and Sweden, given the various ways the word *investigation* can be interpreted.

**Table 7: Verification of item meaning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ELQ</th>
<th>I don’t tolerate arrogance.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>When I see individuals behaving like they know better than others, I make sure to intervene.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>I would engage through verbal communication with staff who may not express respect to others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ELQ</th>
<th>I try to preserve everyone’s safety and well-being.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>I try to keep a safe and secure working environment so that people feel well at work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>I make an effort to provide a safe environment and conditions for well-being for everyone.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ELQ</th>
<th>I try to make people aware that some situations disproportionately privilege certain groups.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>I find it important to make people aware of situations where individuals or groups of people have more advantages than others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>I do my utmost to provide the support when and where needed, with the consent of the management and staff.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T*</td>
<td>I know that there are privileged groups and I want other people to be aware of this situation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ELQ</th>
<th>I seek to protect each individual’s dignity.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>I try to do what is necessary to make sure that neither my behaviour nor that of other people diminishes the way they feel about who they are as a human being.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>I do my utmost to ensure that people are treated with respect both through my acts and words.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S*</td>
<td>I find it important that no pupil, staff member or parent be harassed, insulted or exposed to something that makes them feel worthless.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ELQ</th>
<th>I expect people to make mistakes (it’s human nature)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>It is normal for people to make mistakes, people are not infallible.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>It is normal to make mistakes, we are all learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S*</td>
<td>It is no problem if people make mistakes, no one is perfect.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ELQ</th>
<th>I am concerned when individuals or groups have advantages compared to others.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>I feel bad when individuals or groups have privileges that others don’t have.</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>I want to make sure that there are no advantaged individuals/groups and do my utmost to help those in need.</td>
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### Discussion

Based on the results presented above, we decided that only one item of the ELQ needed to be modified following the intercultural validation procedure. Given the ambiguous signification of the word *investigation*, we modified item 14 from *I conduct an investigation* to *I conduct an inquiry into the situation*. Aside from this one instance, it is reasonable to assume that the remaining ELQ items have the same meaning in quite distinct cultures, and that any differences observed between countries will not be the result of a faulty instrument. A final 23-item version of the ELQ is therefore presented at the end of this paper (in the Appendix).

As for the challenging, albeit very stimulating, work required to verify the cultural invariance of the ELQ, the exercise resulted in a realisation by team members of just how rigorous one needs to be when translating a research instrument from one language into another, and from one culture to another. In order to avoid attributing to reality results affected by errors made in the translation process, it is essential to first apply a transcultural validation technique, such as the one developed by Vallerand (1989), wherein one verifies the accuracy of a translation by translating the content back into its original language. A second prerequisite is the verification of the transcultural validity of correctly translated items, as even when using an instrument in its original version, meaning attributed to items can differ significantly from one cultural context to another.

With regard to the limits of this study, we agree that in order to get a better grasp of the meaning of educational ethical leadership around the world, our findings need to be further analysed through discussions held with school leaders in the countries where our study has been conducted, and

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<td>C</td>
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Note: ELQ refers to original item in English; C stands for Canadian definitions, S for Swedish, and so on. * indicates countries where the ELQ was translated from English to another language.
elsewhere. Just as we did in Canada, this would allow for school leaders to openly debate issues of an ethical nature and to address the dilemmas they are facing, resulting in the identification of specific issues that are central to the ethics of care, critique and justice in different cultural contexts.

**Perspective**

Given the great challenges facing educational leaders today – such as maintaining equitable access to quality education for all in a time of financial crisis, learning to live together in an ever more diverse world, and appreciating the beauty of this diversity and its important contribution to humanity’s ongoing progress towards peace and social wellbeing – we posit that the ethic of justice constitutes a promising starting point for principals who wish to bring about positive changes in their schools. Indeed, the ethic of justice provides principals with solid ground as it is based on adopted norms and regulations that must be applied to all. However, educational leaders must move beyond the mere application of rules and norms and apply the ethic of care, which offers an authentic framework for dialogue and human understanding. Finally, through the adoption of a perspective inspired by the ethic of critique, principals will be able to engage in transformative and emancipatory action within their schools and in wider society.

**References**


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Appendix

**Ethical Leadership Questionnaire**

**DEFINITION:** An ethical dilemma is a situation that involves an apparent conflict between values in which to support one would result in transgressing another.

**Referring to the scale below, circle the number of your choice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Very often</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>N/A (not applicable)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>X</td>
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When I reflect on the way I act at work, I can see that...

| 1. I establish trust in my relationships with others. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
| 2. I try to ensure harmony in the organization. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
| 3. I don’t tolerate arrogance. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
| 4. I follow procedures and rules. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
| 5. I try to preserve everyone’s safety and well-being. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
| 6. I try to make people aware that certain situations disproportionately privilege some groups. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
| 7. I speak out against unfair practices. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
| 8. I seek to protect each individual’s dignity. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
| 9. I expect people to make mistakes (it is human nature). | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
| 10. I speak out against injustice. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
| 11. I am concerned when individuals or groups have advantages compared to others. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |

When I have to resolve an ethical dilemma...

| 12. I check the legal and regulatory clauses that might apply. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
| 13. I check my organization’s unwritten rules. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
| 14. I conduct an inquiry into the situation. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
| 15. I sanction mistakes in proportion to their seriousness. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
| 16. I try to oppose injustice. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
| 17. I take time to listen to the people involved in the situation. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
| 18. I seek to preserve bonds and harmony within the organization. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
| 19. I avoid hurting people’s feelings by maintaining their dignity. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
| 20. I pay attention to individuals. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
| 21. I promote dialogue about contentious issues. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 X |
My decision in the resolution of an ethical dilemma is based on...

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<tr>
<td>22. the statutory and legal framework.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. greater social justice.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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Care = mean of items 1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21
Critique = mean of items 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 16, 23
Justice = mean of items 4, 12, 13, 14, 15, 22
Promoting Inclusion in Ontario: Principals’ Work in Diverse Settings

James Ryan

Abstract: Motivated in part by a changing context, researchers have once again begun to study principals’ work. But despite the increase in diversity and inequality in schools and communities over the past few years, scholars have yet to pay sufficient attention to these issues. This article attempts to put right this lack of attention by presenting research on principals’ work in the area of inclusion. In doing so, it draws on research on principals’ work on inclusion over the past 15 years in Ontario, Canada. Towards this end, I document the expanding nature of exclusion and inequality in communities and schools. This is followed by an outline of selected research studies in the area of principals’ work. Finally, I describe the work of inclusive-minded principals in Ontario.

Key Words: Principals, Work, Leadership, Inclusion, Social Justice, Ontario

After years of minimal treatment, scholars have once again begun to focus their attention on the issue of principals’ work. Motivated in part by an awareness of the changing nature of this work—the product of a technology-driven, contractually bound, litigious-conscious, pressure-filled and diverse context—and a curiosity about the relationship between principals’ work and student achievement, researchers have documented its increasingly complex, intense and demanding nature (Pollock, Wang & Hauserman, 2015). But inquiry into principals’ work is not restricted to job intensification studies. Scholars have also explored what principals do on a daily basis, developing generic frameworks to illustrate the specifics of their work (Bolman & Deal 2008; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Hopkins & Harris 2006;) and establishing relationships between work tasks and effectiveness (Hendricks & Sheeren 2013; Horng, Klasik & Loeb 2010; Lee & Hallinger 2012). While this research has its use, it has not done enough to help school administrators understand the increasingly diverse settings in which they work and to take action to combat the growing inequalities in their schools and communities. This is unfortunate, given the burgeoning nature of diversity and the alarming increase in inequalities in schools and communities around the world (Ryan 2012).

This article attempts to put right the lack of attention to diversity and inequality issues in the area of principals’ work by presenting research on principals’ work in the area of inclusion. In doing so, I draw on research on principals’ work and inclusion over the past 15 years in Ontario, Canada. My hope is that readers will learn from the documented work practices of principals who promote inclusion in their schools and communities. The article is organised in the following manner. First,
I document the expanding nature of exclusion and inequality in communities and schools. This is followed by an outline of selected research studies in the area of principals’ work. Finally, I describe the work of inclusive-minded principals.

**Diversity and Ex/inclusion in Neoliberal Times**

The motivation to study principals’ work originates, at least in part, from the awareness that the contexts in which these administrators work is changing. These evolving contexts, scholars maintain, influence the things that principals do. Technology, labour issues and prescriptively detailed policies, for example, have changed principals’ work over the past few years (Pollock, Wang & Hauseman 2015). Increasing levels of diversity have also influenced what principals do. As many recognise, the world is becoming more perceptibly diverse (Ryan 2010a). Ironically, it is not any more diverse than it was 50 years ago. Diversity has always been part of the human condition, but this was not always evident in the relatively sheltered communities of the past. All this has changed over the past half century. As the global community has contracted – the product, in part, of changing technologies – diversity has become more obvious (Ryan 2010a). Contemporary global citizens see difference all about them in the people with whom they interact, the practices in which they engage, and the media images to which they are exposed. People can hop on a plane and travel to just about any place on the globe, communicate instantly with their friends and colleagues whenever and wherever they wish, and learn about distant lands at their whim through any number of media platforms.

Perhaps the most apparent aspect of diversity is the people. Communities and schools are more obviously diverse than they once were. These changes are the product, in part, of changing immigration patterns in Western countries. More immigrants are now entering Western countries in greater numbers than they did in the past, and more of them are coming from non-Western countries (Ryan, Pollock & Antonnelli 2009). This is particularly the case for Canada. Between 2006 and 2011, 56.9 per cent of immigrants who arrived in the country came from Asia (Statistics Canada 2011), in contrast to the mostly European immigrants who arrived before 1960 (Ryan 2003). But current diversity in Canada is not just the result of the increasing immigrant population; it is also the product of a more diverse native-born Canadian population. The numbers reflect this diversity. Statistics Canada (2011) reported the presence of 200 ethnicities in the 2011 census. Urban areas are particularly diverse – schools in larger cities in Canada, and particularly in Ontario, routinely cater to students who display over 50 different languages, religions and ethnicities (Ryan 2012). But diversity involves much more than just ethnicity, language and place of origin. In Canada (and Ontario), as in other Western countries, communities and schools display differences in race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and ability, among other aspects of diversity.

Diversity has consequences for students’ experiences in school and in their communities. Indeed, the way in which differences are interpreted, valued and judged can positively or negatively affect the way in which students learn in school, and also shape their prospects for life after school. This occurs, in part, through the way in which students and their parents are included in and/or excluded from the institutions of which they are a part. Over the past two decades, scholars have begun to employ an inclusive/exclusive lens to understand the differential prospects of men, women and children (Byrne 1999; Madanipoir, Cars & Allen 1998; Munck 2005). This approach has allowed researchers to explore the extent to which people have access to current social, economic, political and cultural systems – how they are able or not able to participate in decision-making and political processes, to access employment and material resources, and to become part of cultural
processes such as education. From this perspective, individuals and groups are excluded when they lack the resources to obtain certain types of diets, to participate in various activities, or to enjoy the living conditions and amenities that their fellows do.

Groups of students are routinely excluded in schools. Indeed, differences associated with culture, ethnicity, race, social class, sexual orientation, gender and ability can dictate the fortunes of students (Ryan 2014). Unfortunately, in most contemporary schools in the Western world, non-white, female, LBTGQ, poor and differently abled students tend to achieve at lower levels, drop out in greater numbers, and are less likely to attend post-secondary institutions than their white, male, straight, middle-class, and physically able counterparts (Crouch, Keys & McMahon 2014; DeMitchell, Eckes & Fossey 2009; Durbin & Fleetwood 2010; Lareau 2014; Simson 2010). In Ontario and elsewhere, these marginalised students and their parents are routinely excluded not just from the physical space of schools (e.g. through expulsion), but also from the curriculum, instruction, language of instruction, extra-curricular activities and structures, among many others (Ryan 2006). Of course, not all students in the aforementioned groups are affected in this way. But even those who perform well academically suffer from other significant consequences of this differential evaluation and exclusion; many, for example, are subjected to harassment and discrimination (Datnow 1998; Lugg 2003; Orenstein 2002; Ryan 2006; Stein 2002; Tabor 1992).

Despite an increasing awareness of certain types of injustices over the years, many students continue to be excluded from what contemporary schools have to offer. More than this though, these exclusions have taken on new and more intense forms with the recent introduction of neoliberal policies (Ryan 2012). Two of the most influential of these policies include testing and choice initiatives. The various elements of gaming tactics that some schools employ to improve their standings in test score rankings exclude already-excluded students (Darling-Hammond 2010; Hursh 2007; Ryan 2012), while choice options end up excluding those whom resource-rich institutions believe to be the least worthy (Saldivia & Anderson 2016).

Ontario sponsors some of the same testing and choice measures evident in other jurisdictions. They do not, generally speaking, reflect the high stakes mentality that other places do, however (Ryan 2012). Even so, students in grades three, six, nine, and ten are required to write province-wide tests every year, and the results are routinely posted. Some districts go out of their way to emphasise the importance of these tests to school principals, and so many schools have little choice but to emphasise them, often at the expense of other issues (Ryan & Tuters 2014). Public schools in Ontario also operate in quasi markets, and schools that attempt to attract certain kinds of students end up, like other jurisdictions that more openly promote schools of choice, excluding less desirable and already-marginalised students (Ryan 2012).

These and other policies do more than exclude students; their unique character also makes them difficult to resist (Ryan 2012; Saldivia & Anderson 2016). In the past, principals and teachers could retreat into their schools and classrooms where they could do what they thought was appropriate. This is no longer the case. Principals and teachers have little choice but to prepare students for mandated tests and ensure that schools in quasi-market situations attract the best students. Failure to take action of this sort penalises test takers and individual schools. At the same time, however, partaking in them also extends already existing exclusive practices.

Despite the challenges presented by neoliberal policy and practice, principals in Ontario and elsewhere continue to address the exclusive practices that they see in their schools and communities. Neoliberal policies do not rule over every aspect of experience and practice in schools, and principals do what they can to counteract these and other policies. They do so by finding ways
to include students in various aspects of their schools. In education, inclusion has for some time
been associated with the education of ‘special needs’, ‘exceptional’ or ‘differently abled’ students
(Ainscow 2005; Booth 1996; Lupart 1998; Slee 2001). Inclusion has become an issue because many
have challenged the belief that such students need to be identified, removed from classrooms and
subjected to unique treatment in order to cope with their supposed cognitive, psychological and
physical deficiencies. Unfortunately, segregation has not worked out for these students; Slee (2001)
and others contend that exclusion has neither equipped them to exercise their rights as citizens or
to accept their responsibilities. The solution for many critics of segregation, like Slee (2001), is to
include these students in mainstream classrooms.

Other scholars have recognised that students with exceptionalities are not the only ones who are
unfairly excluded. They recognise that exclusion extends beyond these sorts of exceptionalities
to other areas of difference, such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and so on (Dei, James,
Karumancherry, James-Wilson & Zine 2000; Riley & Rustique-Forrester 2002; Ryan 2006). One
advantage of seeing the misfortunes of people in terms of inclusion/exclusion is that it avoids
blaming individuals, emphasising instead the relational and structural nature of their misfortunes.
In this view it is the structural processes rather than individuals that create the barriers that prevent
the social advancement of the poor, disempowered and oppressed. Viewing injustice as inclusion/
exclusion also provides a path for action. While it does highlight the negative and unjust side of
life – helping us see exclusion for what it is – it also provides a sensible alternative: inclusion (Ryan
2012).

The goal of inclusion, then, is to enable everyone to be included in social processes common to
schools and communities. It is useful to see inclusion in education as a process that: (1) targets
exclusive systemic practices, such as ableism, classism, sexism, racism and homophobia; (2)
emphasises the importance of access, participation and achievement of all students; and (3)
advocates for the meaningful participation of all members of school communities in the decision-
and policy-making activities of schools and the school system (Ryan 2012, 2014). The work of
inclusive-minded principals in Ontario and elsewhere attempts to ensure that these things occur
in their schools and communities. Unfortunately, there is not much in the current research on
principals’ work that sheds light on this process.

The Work of Principals

Inquiry into principals’ work has taken a number of forms over the years. Inspired by the work
of Mintzberg (1973), the first efforts to describe principals’ work in the late 1970s and early 1980s
(e.g. Martin & Willower 1981; Willis 1980) generated lists of what they did: sitting at their desks,
going on tours, walking corridors, writing memos and attending meetings. These descriptions,
however, proved to be of little use for those wishing to understand the work of principals, much
less the work of inclusive-minded administrators. Amounting to little more than a catalogue of
bodily movements, these descriptions barely scratched the surface of principals’ work. Gronn
(1982) points out that, among other things, these studies were unable to account for what principals
actually did at their desks and in the halls with their talk and writing. Gronn’s insightful article
suggests that, like other human activity, principals’ work is complex – certainly more complicated
that these studies were capable of capturing.

More recent inquiries – both theoretical and empirical – have employed or developed conceptual
lenses to describe the work of principals. Some scholars have attempted to categorise leadership
activities of leaders, while others have used these leadership categories to establish their
effectiveness. Bolman and Deal (2008), for example, employ the idea of a ‘frame’. They contend
that frames – structural, human resources, political and symbolic – provide a lens through which
leaders see their worlds and orient their actions. Other scholars have developed more empirically
based and detailed templates. Leithwood et al. (2006) supply a list of categories that depict in a
comprehensive way what school leaders do (or should do). These include setting direction,
developing people, redesigning the organisation and managing the instructional programme.
Each of these categories contains more specific areas of conduct. For example, the setting direction
category includes building a shared vision, fostering the acceptance of group goals and establishing
high performance expectations. Yet other scholars have developed categories of work and establish
relationships with various measures of effectiveness. Hallinger and Heck (2010), for example,
explore the impact of principal leadership on school capacity and student learning.

These and other inquiries into principals’ (and leaders’) work are useful, at least to a point. First
and foremost, they shine a light on the much-neglected work of leaders and principals. In doing
so, they help us understand the complex, challenging and demanding environments in which
administrators currently work. However, they fail to provide enough information about issues of
diversity in schools and the kinds of things principals can do to promote inclusion. Three issues
that preclude inquiry that sheds light on diversity and ex/inclusion include the general nature
of the areas of practice that these scholars develop, the nature of their normative stances and the
neglect of the issue of context.

The dimensions that scholars propose to document school leadership are, for the most part, very
general. For example, the framework of Leithwood et al. (2006), even with sub-categories, is very
general; the dimensions can involve a universe of practices. Another issue associated with the
general nature of the framework is the meaning of the specified actions. What, for example, does it
mean to foster, manage, develop or build? What kinds of things do principals have to do in order
for them to be seen as being engaged in these activities? More than likely, the actions taken by
principals involve parts of many of the action items that specified in the framework; managing, for
example, may also involve developing, fostering and building. More than this, though, Leithwood
et al. (2006) also fail to specify the ends for which developing, fostering and building, for example,
are directed. In many of these inquiries, researchers assume or imply that principals aim for (a
particular measure of) effectiveness, and not necessarily to understand diversity issues or promote
inclusion.

Many scholars who study leaders’ work do so within a stated or implied normative framework.
Both Leithwood et al. (2006) and Hallinger & Heck (2010), for example, do not merely describe
school leaders’ work, they also prescribe what administrators should do. The implication in their
work is that in order to be successful, principals need to engage in particular kinds of activities.
For example, Leithwood et al. (2006) imply that as part of their efforts to set direction in their
institutions, successful leaders should build shared visions, foster the acceptance of group goals
and direct attention to high performance expectations. The problem with this sort of normative
approach is the implied end for which researchers believe leaders should strive. Given that the
measure of effectiveness is more often than not test scores (e.g. Leithwood, Patten & Jantzi 2010),
the researchers assume that leaders should aim to increase such scores. Unfortunately, a desire to
improve student test scores does not necessarily reflect a concern with understanding diversity or
doing something about exclusion in schools and communities. In fact, this sort of preoccupation
may actually increase exclusion (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Ryan, 2012).
The other issue with general frameworks of principal practice is context. Generic frameworks, no matter how comprehensive, cannot accommodate the vagaries of multiple contexts. Every school displays a universe of unique elements that will have an impact on what principals do. These include the size, level, history and culture of the school and the community it serves, the diversity of the students and staff, and the experience, orientations and personalities of teachers and administrators, among many other things. Principals cannot possibly engage equally in all of the areas of principals’ work that Leithwood et al. (2006) de/prescribe. They will inevitably base their actions on their priorities and the circumstances in which they find themselves. Principals will have to choose the areas at which they direct most of their actions (e.g. instruction) and the manner in which they go about addressing these areas (e.g. fostering). So for example, inclusive-minded principals might have to spend a lot of time persuading their teachers to adapt their instruction to accommodate students in schools where the student population has become much more diverse over the past few years (Tuters & Ryan 2013).

Recent research on principals’ work, while useful in some respects, has not provided much insight into how these administrators might go about promoting inclusion in their schools. The general nature of these approaches to work, the normative stance and inattention to context leaves us with little useful knowledge about how to combat the various ‘isms’, promote student access and achievement, and include students, parents and staff in decision-making and policy-making processes. Research that is more helpful in this respect does exist; however, it does not go under the moniker of ‘work’. Instead, scholars who conduct inquiry in this area refer to it as ‘inclusive’ or ‘social justice’ leadership (Anderson 2009; Dantley 2003; Furman 2012; Hoffman 2009; Ryan 2006, 2012; Shields 2003; Theoharis 2007). While it may also display its own shortcomings, it does tend to focus on issues of inclusion, providing snapshots of what inclusive-minded leaders and principals do in their workplaces.

The Work of Inclusive-Minded Principals

Over the past couple of decades, researchers have explored issues associated with leadership and inclusion. Building on the pioneering work of scholars such as Bates (1980) and Foster (1980), scholars have generated theoretical, empirical and prescriptive treatments of exclusive practices and policies, accounts of leaders’ day-to-day experiences, and lists of the kinds of things that schools and school systems need to do to promote inclusion and social justice (Anderson 2009; Dantley 2003; Furman 2012; Hoffman 2009; Ryan 2006, 2012; Shields 2003; Theoharis 2007). Among other things, they have stressed the persistent ways in which sexism, racism, classism, homophobia and ableism marginalise groups of students, parents, and staff, excluding these individuals from decision-making and policy-making processes, preventing students from accessing school processes, and inevitably obstructing learning opportunities. Research that provides insight into how leaders – including principals – might promote inclusion in their schools focuses on how they can counteract these exclusive practices.

Much of the research into inclusive and social justice leadership has avoided the issues that have plagued the mainstream literature on leaders’ work. Many of these studies are qualitative, and the researchers acknowledge their context-specific nature and concentrate on specific practices in which principals are engaged. The problem with these context-specific studies is that it is difficult to generate general statements from them. The best that we can do is present some of the common elements from stories about these administrators. In this respect, I present research on the work of inclusive-minded principals in Ontario, Canada that has been carried out over the last 15 years.
Most of the research presented in this article was conducted in the heavily populated southern portion of Ontario, which contains both urban and rural areas. Many of the city schools serve student populations that display a high degree of diversity – the product, at least in part, of changing immigration patterns. One of the most obvious indicators of this diversity is the number of language groups; in some schools over 60 are represented. But diversity also surfaces in other forms. For example, economic status often cuts across geographic regions, ethnicity and immigration status. Some schools cater to middle-class Asian students, while others serve children of working poor who were born in Canada. Still others schools accommodate students who display various mixes of ethnicities and economic backgrounds. Rural schools in Ontario are less diverse, but they display differences in religion, culture, social class and parental occupation.

This research indicates that inclusive-minded principals focus on particular aspects of their practice instead of, in addition to, or in concert with practices in which most principals are engaged (Ryan 2006, 2012, 2014). These principals maintain that they concentrate on communicating, interacting with their communities, learning and advocating. They approach these tasks in ways that best enable them to combat the ‘isms’ in their schools and communities, provide access and academic opportunities for marginalised students, and include all groups in decision-making processes.

Communicating

Inclusive-minded principals in Ontario pay particular attention to communication practices (Ryan 2002a, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2012; Ryan & Rottmann 2009). Of course, these administrators are not the only ones to do so. All principals communicate in some fashion – this is perhaps the most basic and pervasive aspect of their work – and the space devoted to this topic over the years in popular texts testifies to its importance (e.g. Hoy & Miskel 2001). But the value that inclusive-minded principals attach to these practices, the time they spend on communication, and the manner in which they go about communicating with their various constituencies will differ from colleagues who are not as concerned about issues of diversity and inclusion. This is because certain leaders recognise the disadvantage that marginalised groups experience in communication situations in ways that others do not, and take actions that they believe will overcome these disadvantages. Communicating, however, is a complex practice; it can refer to many related practices and it often overlaps with other practices, such as interacting with community, learning and advocating. Even so, many administrators speak exclusively of their communication efforts.

Many inclusive-minded principals recognise the importance of communicating in diverse schools. They know about the challenges associated with understanding different others, making themselves understood, and helping different others participate fully in communication practices as well as in other school activities. As a consequence, inclusive-minded administrators seek to communicate in ways that provide bridges to bring together disparate communities and enable them to overcome the powerful barriers that prevent them from sharing in what schools and communities have to offer (Ryan 2007, 2012, 2014). Administrators speak of inclusive communication strategies in two ways. The first is in terms of communication practices themselves; the second is associated with the ends for which communication is employed. Administrators attempt to ensure that communication practices are inclusive. To do this, they favour a particular type of communication: dialogue. They believe the two-way interchanges that characterise dialogue are the best way to include different others in communication practices.
Inclusive-minded principals do a number of things to encourage meaningful dialogue (Ryan 2002a, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2012; Ryan & Rottmann, 2009). These include establishing relationships, understanding others and listening. In order to be able to engage in these practices, administrators need to first provide the conditions that make dialogue possible. The first and most important of these is to cultivate relationships with the people in their schools and communities. They do this by connecting with individuals and groups, establishing informal networks, making themselves visible and approachable, putting themselves in places where they will encounter others, and coming out of their offices and meeting people in the halls, classrooms, on school grounds and in the community. They understand that they also need to present themselves in ways that prompt others to want to engage in dialogue with them, which means they must get others to trust, respect, appreciate and like them (see also Burbules 1993). In order to accomplish this, administrators display their caring nature, vulnerability and sense of humour (Ryan 2012; Ryan & Rottmann 2009).

Inclusive-minded principals also devote efforts to issues of understanding. They acknowledge the challenges of communicating across differences and take measures to better understand their constituencies. They tend to see understanding in two complementary ways: as knowledge of particular groups, and as a means to comprehend what others are saying in conversations (Ryan 2012; Ryan & Rottmann 2009). In order to acquire knowledge of groups in their communities, inclusive-minded administrators circulate surveys, talk to people in the community, and consult staff members, parents and community groups. Knowledge of this sort puts them in a position to decode what others are saying, making it possible to read verbal and non-verbal cues so they can ascertain whether both partners have understood one another. When partners have reached an understanding, they can then exchange information about one another.

Inclusive-minded principals also acknowledge the importance of listening to others (Ryan, 2002a, 2006). They take measures to ensure that their communication partners have space to express themselves, by (among other things) attending to eye contact issues, taking up a suitable distance from them, refraining from interrupting speakers, comparing the speaker’s experience to their own, asking questions and not speaking too much. Some principals take Levine-Rasky’s (1993) advice to provide comfort to other speakers so they will be free to say what is on their mind in situations where there is a power difference between speakers. Levine-Rasky recommends that a good listener should: (1) displace him or herself as a knower and evaluator, (2) abandon the tendency to evaluate what they observe, (3) reflect on their privilege, (4) suspend their personal authority, (5) be willing to admit their ignorance, and (6) temporarily forsake their identity.

Inclusive-minded principals in Ontario also employ communication practices to promote inclusion, exposing and resisting exclusive practices such as racism, sexism and classism. But there is no guarantee that communication practices will always achieve these goals. In fact, in some cases they may actually generate exclusive practices. For example, principals of diverse schools frequently find themselves communicating with others in the capacity of mediator (Ryan 2007). Mediation communication can support inclusion; refereeing conflict, for example, can provide administrators the opportunity to even out unequal relationships. But mediation can also impede inclusion. Given the responsibility to legitimate school practices, inclusive-minded principals may find themselves overriding their inclusive values by prioritising efforts to ensure harmony in their schools, doing such things as filtering information, imposing particular meanings on information, and withholding information from teachers, students and parents (Ryan 2007, 2012).
Learning

Inclusive-minded principals in Ontario pay specific attention to learning. Like most school administrators, they are concerned with student learning, particularly the learning of disadvantaged students. But most principals are not directly involved in student learning, so the way in which they influence learning is through others – such as teachers – and through general appeals to the school and community. In this regard, inclusive-minded principals tend to focus on two kinds of learning: understanding different others, and learning about exclusive practices such as sexism, racism and classism (Ryan 2003, 2006). Learning about these things is important in diverse settings because administrators, parents, teachers and students often know too little about each other and about exclusive practices. Thus, the goal of many inclusive-minded principals is to educate their constituencies, but also to learn from them. In these school communities, everyone is both a learner and teacher.

Educators engage in a variety of activities to learn about their communities and about exclusive practices. Most of these practices are informal, that is, they do not come as the result of activities organised by institutions specifically for teaching people about particular issues. Rather, administrators claim that most of this learning occurs on the job through their experiences in schools and from their colleagues and communities, and not from so-called experts (Ryan 2003). They value this informal learning, although some do also say that they have acquired useful knowledge from formal sources, such as workshops and conferences that are directly related to their daily experiences. Unfortunately, university initiatives that make connections between learning and practice are all too rare. Those programmes that do manage to make these links generally feature in-depth fieldwork, internships and real-life situations (Herrity & Glassman 1999). Other kinds of local- or school-based sessions that bring educators and parents together to share experiences and various approaches to organisational learning also generate useful knowledge (Ryan 2006). Programmes specifically designed to address inclusive issues in classrooms and schools have had mixed results, however. Most have had a limited impact on teachers' willingness and ability to deliver inclusive curricula (Sleeter 1993). The success of these programmes often depends on support and the respective climates in schools where they are offered.

Many inclusive-minded principals engage in critical types of learning. As part of this process, they attempt to develop forms of critical consciousness not just in themselves but also in teachers, parents and students (Ryan 2003, 2006). This is important to many administrators because they recognise that critical understandings can assist everyone to comprehend the circumstances in which they find themselves, including often difficult-to-identify exclusive practices. Exclusive practices are so ingrained in everyday life that educators often simply take them for granted (Taylor 2006). It is common, for example, for teachers and administrators to display colour-, spiritual- and class-blindness (Larson & Ovando 2001; Shields 2003). Critical skills can help people overcome such blindness, making it possible for them to recognise unstated, implicit and subtle points of view and the often taken-for-granted conditions that provide the basis for exclusive views and practices. These skills can assist people to understand the basis of claims, the assumptions underlying assertions, and the interests that motivate people to take certain positions (Ryan 2014). One way that administrators speak of doing this is to engage different others in critical conversations (Ryan 2003, 2006). These conversations can help school communities recognise, understand, critique and eventually change the often-invisible practices that impede inclusion (Ryan 2014).
Principals take action to promote critical conversations in their schools and communities (Ryan 2006). First and foremost, they support atmospheres that encourage and foster critique. Members of their school communities will be more likely to engage in critique if it is the norm and they feel safe doing so. Principals can also help others reflect if they sponsor activities that are specifically designed to help them do so. Such activities include testing out platforms with diverse others, modelling, maintaining records of meetings, examining case records, using comparative analyses, employing scenario analyses, and participating in simulations and value audits (Coombs 2002). Arts-based methods and ‘jujutsu’ techniques can also be useful (Ryan 1999). Principals can also stimulate critical conversations by asking pointed questions such as: ‘What is happening here?’, ‘Who says this is the way things should be?’, ‘What other purposes are being served?’, ‘Whose voices are being excluded and silenced?’, ‘What action can we take?’ and ‘Who can we enlist to support us?’ (Smyth 1996).

**Community**

Inclusive-minded principals in Ontario look to include the community in school activities (Ryan 2002b, 2003). They recognise that for schools to be truly inclusive, they need to include the wider community in what their institutions have to offer. These efforts also involve communication and learning, two of the other practices that inclusive-minded administrators emphasise. Efforts to include the community – particularly diverse communities – revolve around efforts to communicate and to exchange knowledge. But many administrators talk about the importance of including community, aside from communication and learning activities. They generally speak about community involvement in one of two ways: as a form of enablement, or a type of empowerment (Lewis & Nakagawa 1995). Administrators who sponsor empowerment initiatives hope to give parents and community members a voice in governance by altering prevailing hierarchical structures. Those who favour enablement arrangements, on the other hand, endorse current structures, and instead tend to sponsor incentives for parents to become involved in their children’s education without questioning or changing current power configurations.

Principals in Ontario tend to be more concerned with enabling rather than empowering community members and parents (Ryan 2002b, 2003). One of the things they do to involve parents in their children’s education is to exchange information with them. They believe that the right kinds of information can help reduce the gulf between mostly Anglo administrators and teachers, and diverse communities that do not always understand one another. Principals employ a variety of strategies to exchange information with diverse communities (Ryan 2002b, 2003). Administrators at the secondary level often use newsletters and handbooks that contain news and information about school personnel, school programmes, schedules, rules and regulations. Elementary principals, on the other hand, employ newsletters to heighten parents’ awareness of the school. Some send out newsletters in community languages, but many simply do not have the resources to do so. On the other hand, administrators acquire knowledge about their communities by sending out questionnaires and surveys to get a sense of these communities and to accomplish such things as creating school visions.

Inclusive-minded principals also recognise the importance of interacting directly with parents (Ryan 2002b, 2003). They adopt a number of strategies to include community members, including recognising and approaching key community figures, initiating interactions, waiting to greet parents before and after school hours, going out into the community and encouraging teachers to do the same, and establishing connections with religious, cultural, social service and business groups. Administrators also employ strategies to bring parents into the school. Many find, however, that
traditional parent-teacher nights tend not to attract parents from diverse communities. Therefore, some inclusive-minded principals employ alternate approaches that include students in parent nights, barbecue days at the beginning of the school year, and education sessions to help parents understand the school system. Others invite parents to come into the school to help out with various tasks, such as checking out library books, helping out with lunch supervision, accompanying students on field trips, and getting parents to display their various skills. Administrators also claim that translation services, drop-in centres, English as a Second Language (ESL) courses and coffee hours encourage parents to come to school. Among other things, many principals have discovered that the best way to get parents from various communities into the school is to ensure that their presence is a routine part of everyday activities; parents are more comfortable coming and going as they like in schools where this happens (May 1994).

Fewer school administrators work toward empowering than enabling parents (Ryan 2002b, 2003). Those who attempt to encourage parents to become involved in governance activities report poor results. For example, many principals have difficulty convincing parents to participate in school councils (where they exist), particularly those from diverse backgrounds (Hatcher, Troyna & Gewirtz 1996; Ryan 2003; Wang 1995). But even when members of traditionally marginalised groups participate in school council activities, their influence tends to be minimal because these councils are often dominated by middle-class Anglos who do not always share their views or interests, and educators (particularly administrators) who are able to master the abstract language employed in these settings better than parents (Hatcher et al. 1996; Malen & Ogawa 1992; Ryan 2003). A final issue concerns the influence of school councils – in Ontario, these councils only have an advisory role. Despite this impotence, some administrators do attempt to honour decisions taken by school councils.

**Advocating**

Inclusive-minded principals in Ontario advocate for inclusion and for excluded groups in their schools and communities. They actively promote inclusive practices for the marginalised because they understand that institutional beliefs, policies and practices do not always favour inclusive approaches. More than this, though, the people with whom administrators work and interact often do not believe in these practices, and as result, frequently resist them (Ryan 2012). Many excluded groups do not have the resources to push for their inclusion like other groups do, and so if inclusion is to be achieved, administrators understand that they have to exercise what power they have to ensure this. In some contexts, administrators have the resources to help them promote inclusion; in others, they do not. In whatever circumstances they promote inclusion, though, principals need to be strategic in their advocating (Ryan 2010b).

The kinds of tactics that principals employ to advocate for inclusion will depend, in some respects, on the resources they have at hand. Those who have assets put them to use when they need to. They may, for example, make the adoption of inclusive practices a non-negotiable option (Ryan 2006). If sometimes, administrators may have no alternative but to insist that members of their school communities adhere to inclusive practices (e.g. Keys, Hanley-Maxwell & Capper 1999). These sorts of dictatorial tactics, however, are not ideal, even though resisters may leave principals with few other options. This is because authoritatively imposing inclusion is a decidedly exclusive act; it contradicts most inclusive philosophies, at least in the short run. It may be necessary, however, to employ these questionable practices to ensure the longer-term success of inclusion. Of course, only those administrators with the ability to mobilise certain resources can realistically expect these tactics to work. Another problem in exercising this option, though, is that the imposition of
inclusive practices may nurture resistance where none existed before. People may decide to resist forceful actions, and this may cause problems for principals who do not have the resources to deal with such resistance (Ryan 2006). A more ideal strategy is to get people to embrace inclusion on their own.

Principals do a variety of things to get students, teachers and parents to voluntarily embrace inclusion. One often-employed practice is persuasion. Administrators engage in a number of practices to persuade people of the value of inclusive initiatives. They use a variety of information circulating, prompting, discussion, questioning and argumentative techniques to get their points across (Ryan 2010b). They also provide educators with academic articles and student data and make available stories, videos and people’s experiences to get students, teachers and parents to buy into the idea of inclusion. Others acknowledge the importance of the language they use in interactions, and of tailoring it to the situations in which they find themselves. Some administrators, for example, note the importance of using policy language to make their points to central administrators (Ryan 2006). Virtually all administrators maintain that the best way to get others to buy into their initiatives is not to preach, but to present their positions in ways that prompt colleagues to accept these views willingly.

Another tactic inclusive-minded principals employ is to forge links with like-minded others. Colleagues will be more likely to be open to various overtures, requests and initiatives if they have good relationships with the people with whom they work; people will be more likely to embrace the ideas of others whom they can trust. One place in which administrators can find allies is among disadvantaged groups. Principals can work with these groups to align themselves with social movements, create networks, support local activism, frame stories about groups’ identities and purposes, and develop the means to acquire resources to advance the groups’ goals (Oakes & Lipton 2002). As ideal as these strategies may be, they may not always work out, and therefore principals may have to adopt more aggressive strategies. Among others, these may include trading, bargaining and stalling. Administrators may find that in order to get something they have to give something up, or that delaying may help them to plan and explore other options when exclusive policies are unexpectedly foisted on them (Ryan 2006).

Many inclusive-minded principals acknowledge that in order to overcome the low priority of inclusive agendas and the resistance of colleagues, they have to approach their work strategically (Ryan 2010b, 2016). This means that they need to acknowledge and understand the political nature of their organisations and take appropriate action in resistant contexts. It is important for principals to understand school cultures, community dynamics and wider system idiosyncrasies. Doing so requires that they come to know or know about the people who work in their organisations – such as teachers, parents and central office people – as well as the values and priorities of these people, and imperceptible system conventions. Politically astute principals claim that it is important to know who has power, what kind of power they possess, and how they use it. They need to understand the kinds of relationships that they have with powerful others so they will know who is likely to support their initiatives and who will not. One way to get to know these people is to sit on district-wide committees (Ryan 2010b).

Strategically inclined principals carefully assess situations before deciding what actions to employ, when to use them, and when to pull back. In doing so, they consider, among other things, the history of a situation, who is involved, the ‘readability’ of the situation, and how much they can ‘push’. Given the difficulty of promoting inclusion, principals often employ covert or subtle tactics that do not ruffle the feathers of powerful others (Ryan 2016; Ryan & Tuters 2014). These include
positioning themselves for future action by establishing particular kinds of relationships with their colleagues, keeping low profiles, projecting credibility and managing their emotions. They also favour actions such as aligning priorities with system initiatives and playing ignorant. But not all situations demand this kind of action, and some leaders speak of more aggressive tactics, such as keeping colleagues on edge (Ryan 2010b). Of course, whatever strategies principals employ will be tailored to the particular set of circumstances in which they find themselves.

Conclusion

Inclusive-minded principals in Ontario choose to engage in particular kinds of work practices at the expense of, or in addition to, those in which other administrators are normally engaged. They devote their time to these practices because they understand that they must do certain things in order to achieve inclusion in contexts where groups of students and parents are routinely excluded. Engaging in particular kinds of communication practices, learning initiatives, community relationships and advocacy strategies enables them to confront the exclusive conventions that routinely punish already-marginalised groups. Given the resistance that they regularly encounter, though, principals have to put these practices into play in particular ways. For many, this means approaching their inclusive work strategically, which can lead to another kind of unseen work: emotional labour.

Inclusive- or social justice-minded principals, perhaps more than most administrators, engage in emotional labour. Emotional labour, according to Hochschild (1979), occurs when people strategically attempt to manipulate their emotions to achieve organisational purposes. Leaders may do things like masking their feelings because it may be the best way to achieve the sometimes unpopular ends that they seek. Expressing what they actually feel, on the other hand, may get in the way of their goals. So, for example, administrators may suppress feelings about new legislation (Blackmore, 1996) or hide their anger in confrontational situations (Ryan & Tuters 2015). Unfortunately, emotional labour can take a toll on administrators who suppress their emotions. Two of the participants in Blackmore’s study left the profession, while the principal in Ryan and Tuter’s study displayed other negative side-effects.

The work of inclusive-minded principals is important. It is geared to deal with increasing levels of diversity in schools and communities and to counteract exclusion in these places. The more we know about what these administrators do, the greater the assistance we can provide them in their crucial quest to include everyone in what schools and communities have to offer. For this to happen researchers, policy-makers and practitioners need to prioritise principals’ inclusive work.

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The Changing Nature of the Work of Chinese School Principals in the Wake of National Curriculum Reform

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Abstract: The purpose of the article is to explain shifts in the priorities and work practices of Chinese school principals in response to national curriculum reform. The research focused on three school case studies based on semi-structured interviews with the principals of the three schools and focus group interviews with the senior management teams, department heads and classroom teachers in each of the schools. Supplementary evidence was obtained from school documentary sources and informal observations. The results of the study indicate a shift in school principal priorities and work practices from routine administration to the leadership of external relations and networking, teaching staff and teaching quality, and curricular and pedagogical change. The conclusions indicate broad commonalities in leadership purpose towards these three objectives, but also indicate significant differences related to leadership style and organisational context. The findings contribute to a deeper international understanding of changing school principal work practices and priorities.

Key words: Chinese school principals; school principal priorities and work practices; case study; curriculum reform

Introduction

While there has been extensive international research on the changing nature of the role of school principals in response to curriculum reform and other externally driven change, relatively little is known about the precise impact on the priorities and day-to-day behavioural practices of school principals. In China, there has been over two decades of national curriculum reform requiring fundamental shifts in approaches to teaching, student learning, and attitudes to disadvantaged groups. The purpose of this article is to provide fresh evidence on how Chinese school principals have responded to new challenges through adjustments to their priorities, leadership styles, behaviours and work patterns. The focus is internationally significant because, while most research literature relates to Western contexts, the pressures of incessant, externally driven educational reform have become a global phenomenon.

1 The authors would like to acknowledge the contribution of the anonymous referees whose constructive feedback resulted in significant improvements to the original draft.
The article begins with a critical review of the international literature in relation to the impact of national reform on the nature of school principals’ work, followed by a review of the Chinese context. It then focuses on the research conducted, describing the design and methodology, reporting the key findings, and finally discussing their significance to a wider understanding of the changing work patterns of school principals. A short conclusion considers implications for further research.

**Literature Review: National Reform and its Impact on School Principals’ Work**

This section focuses on three fundamental issues that place the Chinese experience in a wider framework of understanding of the impact of national reform: the purpose of the national reform, the effects of the national reform on principals, and managing national reform to ameliorate the negative impact on principals.

**Purpose of National Reform**

National educational reform has become a global phenomenon, associated with central government efforts to improve school effectiveness and educational standards through a combination of: (a) neoliberal policies to enhance market competition between schools, and (b) diverse mechanisms of accountability supported by evermore rigorous systems of school inspection (Møller 2007, 2009; Pollock & Winton 2015). The impact on educational professionals has been well documented in Western countries, especially the effects of ‘high-stakes’ testing in schools, which is symptomatic of an emphasis on the measurement of educational outcomes rather than attention to educational processes. Although well intentioned, some reforms aimed at raising test scores through what Pollock & Winton (2015) describe as ‘performance-based accountability’ have been criticised for their negative impact on the emotional welfare of teachers (Leithwood, Steinbach & Jantzi 2002) and school principals (Bennett 2002), creating what McGhee and Nelson (2005) describe as a ‘culture of fear, driven by unanticipated consequences of the system’ (p. 368).

**Effects of National Reform on Principals**

The effects of externally driven reform on school principals’ work, values and emotions are emerging from research findings. Lunenburg’s (2010) study of the work of American principals draws attention to: (a) the increasingly heavy and fast-paced workload, dominated by meetings and punctuated by unexpected interruptions and disturbances; (b) the variety, fragmentation and brevity of activities, necessitating quick responses and little time for reflection; and (c) the high percentage of time (between 70 and 80 per cent) spent on electronic and oral communication, both internal and external. Mulford’s (2003) study of the changing roles of school principals in the UK and the USA highlights evidence of principal shortages arising from job-related stress due to a wide range of negative factors, including long hours of work, budget cuts, a shortage of well-qualified teachers, the pressure of unrelenting policy changes, time fragmentation, a feeling of isolation, facing the harsh realities of the impact of social disadvantage, and an unsupportive political environment. In his architecture of educational leadership, Gronn (2003) describes the changing nature of school leadership in terms of three perspectives which have had a negative effect on school principal recruitment and job satisfaction: (a) design, determined by mandatory standards of assessment and accreditation; (b) distribution, in the sense of more distributed forms of leadership in response to the intensification of principals’ work; and (c) disengagement, characterised by a culture of abstention.
Managing National Reform to Ameliorate the Negative Impact on Principals

Recently commissioned research in Ontario, Canada has cast more light on the changing work patterns of school principals as a result of national reform and the ways in which associated difficulties might be ameliorated through changes to policies and practices. The study by Leithwood and Azah (2014) acknowledges the excessive workload of school principals, but suggests it can be avoided by focusing on priorities, especially aligning the structure of the organisation to support what they describe as the ‘learning imperative’ (p. 62). Another observation from their report is the significance of effective departmental functioning, because ‘high functioning departments and effective leadership from heads make the workload more manageable; when neither of these prevail, workload increases significantly’ (p. 63). These observations emphasise the importance of subject departments as pivotal centres for initiating and implementing school improvement, with significant implications for both leadership development opportunities for department heads and more distributed patterns of leadership.

A complementary Ontario study by Pollock, Wang and Hauseman (2014) highlights the significance of the influence of provincial educational policies and mandates on the work of school principals, including the need to cope with staff resistance to change and the ‘emotional toll of their work’ through self-medication and the support of family and friends. The study concludes that in order to navigate their way successfully through reforms, principals require three essential leadership skills to help to determine their priorities and shape their work pattern behaviours: (a) emotional intelligence and relationship building; (b) interpersonal communication; and (c) knowledge of effective teaching and learning (Pollock et al. 2014). All three skills are dependent on leadership behaviours to build school cultures that are more ‘humane and interpersonally connected’, characterised by virtues of mutual trust, openness, respect, care and support, and bolstered by strategies that facilitate ‘teacher empowerment’, ‘more collaborative relationships’ and a ‘departure from traditional hierarchies’ (Beatty 2011: 221). As the gatekeepers of externally determined reforms that must be implemented, school principals all too often see turning to teachers for support and companionship as a sign of professional weakness and representing a loss of the security of positional authority. Removing hierarchical barriers to bolster collaborative working and mutual trust requires what Beatty (2011: 231) describes as ‘breaking the silence on emotion’. Earning respect and winning support from teachers is crucial for principals. In this way, they will be better placed to mediate and filter reform agendas that are increasingly ‘rooted in compliance’, leave limited opportunity for ‘professional judgement’ (Pollock et al. 2014: 3) and are frequently at odds with their educational values (Hammersley-Fletcher 2015).

Changing Work Patterns of Chinese School Principals

In turning to a review of the impact of national curriculum reform on the work of Chinese principals, there are three focal points for discussion: the national curriculum reform context, the objectives of the reforms, and their impact on Chinese principals.

The Chinese National Curriculum Reform Context

The Compulsory Education Law (1985) marked the beginning of three decades of educational reform in China by first establishing nine years of free, compulsory basic education, consisting of six years at primary school (xiaoxue) (6-12 years) and three years at junior middle school (chuzhong) (12-15 years). Admission to senior middle school (gaozhong) (15-18 years) remained competitive, based on success in the zhongkao examination at age 15. The expansion in pupil enrolment was
a remarkable achievement, rising from 95.9 per cent to 99.3 per cent in primary schools, and from 53.5 per cent to 97 per cent in junior middle schools, between 1985 and 2006 (Law & Pan 2008). In the wake of this reform, the principal responsibility system entrusted school principals with greater delegated powers for school-based management. The responsibilities were largely administrative and managerial, and included recruitment, reward, discipline, and supervision of staff; management of school funds; and deployment of school resources (Lin 1993). However, in spite of more than a decade of mandated national curriculum reform, after 2001 the official role of the Chinese school principal had hardly changed.

A study of 81 Chinese principals by Yang and Brayman (2010) found that principals perceived their role as that of a government officer accountable only to higher-level officials in local and national government, with less autonomy than their counterparts in the West. As a result, ‘normally in Chinese culture the role of principal is not directly connected to student achievement’, but is perceived in terms of external coordinator, planner, decision-maker, guide and supervisor (Yang & Brayman 2010). A combination of lack of autonomy and a pre-service and in-service leadership training agenda determined by government priorities, rather than the expressed needs of the principals themselves, resulted in Chinese school principals feeling ill-equipped to cope with the far-reaching curricular reforms (Wilson & Xie 2013).

**Objectives of the Chinese National Curriculum Reforms**

The reforms of the national curriculum called for a new approach to leadership in Chinese schools. The progressive implementation of the new curriculum over the past decade has focused on two primary objectives of the Chinese Ministry of Education: first, *suzhi jiaoyu* (quality education) by easing the schoolwork burden on students and introducing more progressive, child-centred approaches to teaching (Ministry of Education 2010); and, second, achieving greater fairness and equality of opportunity for disadvantaged groups, including ethnic minorities (Ministry of Education 2010), children with special educational needs (Ministry of Education 2010), and the children of migrant families (Ming 2014; Zhu & Lin 2011). Added to these initiatives is the ongoing reform of the traditional examination system, which has been out of kilter with the progressive reform programme because of its emphasis on rote learning.

The national reforms have expected Chinese school leaders to take more direct responsibility for curriculum change and implementation. As a consequence, progressive Western ideas have entered the discourse of Chinese academic literature, including instructional leadership (Chu, Lu & Liu 2010; Hu 2013) and distributed leadership (Feng 2012; Jiang 2013). This revision of government expectations was formalised in 2013 with the publication of the *Professional Standards for Headteachers in Compulsory Education Schools* by the Chinese Ministry of Education (Liu, Xu, Grant, Strong & Fang 2015; Ministry of Education 2013).

The aforementioned fundamental changes put pressure on Chinese principals to adjust their priorities and work practices. Not only have Chinese principals had to cope with tensions and contradictions in educational policy, particularly between the requirements of the new curriculum and an out-dated examination system, but they have also had to cope with the pressures of intensified market competition arising from public access to school examination results and parental choice of school. Law (2012) explores the cultural impact of reform inspired by progressive Western ideas surrounding teaching, learning, leadership and management, which are seen as being at odds with traditional Chinese values of hierarchy, compliance and deference for authority. Evidence suggests that Chinese leaders in both educational and commercial organisations have
responded pragmatically by integrating Chinese and Anglo-American leadership values according to context (Gao, Arnulf & Henning 2011; Law 2012; Tang & Ward 2003). However, this is not to underestimate the challenge facing Chinese principals in adapting their leadership values and work practices to satisfy the complex demands being placed on them. Qian and Walker (2011: 205) sum up the tensions, highlighting the conflict between ensuring good student examination performance while complying with new curriculum policies, and adopting a leadership style that can be both caring and ruthless – what they describe as a ‘disconnection between enduring and new policy expectations [which] inevitably tears principals apart’. The implications are further examined from the evidence of the research investigation.

Research Design
This study was underpinned by a single research question: ‘How has the reform of the Chinese national curriculum impacted on the role, work priorities, and leadership behaviours of school principals in the province of Zhejiang?’ Zhejiang was selected for this study because research collaboration had been established between the partner universities, local government and the three participating schools. Zhejiang is also one of the most advanced provinces in China, and it has been particularly innovative in its implementation of the national reforms.

Case Study Profiles
The three schools were selected for this study because they could provide evidence of how school principals operate and adapt their work priorities across the three key stages of schooling and in significantly different contexts. The first case study school was a well-resourced experimental school (shiyuan xue xiao) with 1,900 students and 150 teachers. Its experimental status brought additional government funding and resulted from the merger of a primary and junior middle school (6-15 years). Combining the nine years of compulsory education in a single school was an experimental strategy for easing the primary-secondary transition for its 80 per cent majority of students drawn from relatively disadvantaged rural migrant communities. The pressures facing the school related to overcoming socioeconomic barriers to educational opportunity and achieving improvements that could be disseminated both regionally and nationally, thus justifying its privileged status as an experimental school.

The second case study was a key junior middle school with 1,600 pupils, aged 12-15. As a result of its privileged status as a key school, it was oversubscribed and allowed to generate additional income from up to 15 per cent intake of fee-paying students from outside the district. The pressures facing this school were maintaining its reputation, measured in terms of its success rate in the zhongkao examination and the percentage of its students progressing to senior middle schools.

The third case was a senior middle school with 1,100 students (aged 15-18) and 88 teachers. The school did not have a high reputation in traditional academic subjects, so its main challenges were improving the results in the gaokao (university entrance examination) and coping with strong competition from other more prestigious senior middle schools in recruiting able students from feeder junior middle schools.

Overview of Methodology
Qualitative data were collected from semi-structured interviews (Brinkman & Kvale 2015) with the principals of three schools, based on relatively open questions about how the national curriculum reform influenced their priorities and work practices, perceived positive and negative effects of
the reform, and leadership implications. Five focus group interviews were also conducted in each school (Krueger & Casey 2008) with the senior management team, the department heads of the three core subjects (Chinese, English, and mathematics), and a sample of teachers from each of the three departments in three separate focus groups. In all, 75 people were interviewed. The focus groups were made up of staff of equal status to facilitate free expression in the absence of more senior colleagues, with agreed guarantees of confidentiality within the group. In supporting the principles of methodological and respondent triangulation, data were generated from multiple sources, including the interviews, school prospectuses, school development plans and informal observations while touring the school premises and attending lessons.

Rather than applying a preconceived theoretical framework, the data analysis followed the principles of grounded theory and the constant comparative method (Boeije 2002) by: (a) comparing data in each school from a single interview, between interviews within the same group, and between interviews in different groups; (b) comparing data between the three schools for each of the three focus groups and the three school principals; and (c) complementing the interview data with observational and documentary data. The data sets were revisited and reworked, involving an iterative process of revised thematic coding and data categorisation.

Research Findings

Four key themes emerged from the data analysis. The first was contextual in providing evidence of the new challenges in the wake of the reforms. The others related to leadership priorities for action in response to those challenges: external relations and networking, teaching staff and teaching quality, and curricular and pedagogical change. Each is examined below.

The Challenges

Principals and teachers in each of the three schools experienced contextual challenges. At the experimental school, a fundamental challenge was the pressure of the top-down, uncompromising nature of the reform process on the school principal. The principal explained how a top official in the education bureau ‘checked all the time regarding whether or not we are following the policy’, and bemoaned the fact that the controls were so tight that what schools can do is very constrained. Implementation not only affected the principal but inevitability increased pressures on other staff because of a need to comply and conform to ‘external criteria of evaluation’ (deputy principal). Teachers complained of the long hours, the tensions between the new curriculum and the examination system, and a failure of textbooks to keep up with the reforms. The department head of English expressed resentment of the osmosis of managerial control over professional practice within the school, stating: ‘Our leaders check our teaching plans or homework every month. This is a big burden for us. I think I know how to teach English; I needn’t be checked by others!’ Similarly, the department head of social studies summed up the mood:

We set off at half past six in the morning and get back home at half past six in the evening. Despite this, the time we spend on teaching is very limited because there is too much unnecessary administration work … All the work we do needs to be recorded for inspection … It should not be necessary to record everything, but our leaders will check everything.

Sentiments such as those above reflect a lack of trust and excessive accountability, with serious consequences for what is perceived as an unnecessarily heavy burden.
Teachers at the experimental school also perceived the large intake of disadvantaged migrant children as a serious challenge in terms of lack of student motivation and parental engagement. However, the school was largely spared the pressure of the zhongkao examination, because most migrant children had to return to their home provinces to take the examinations in accordance with the requirements of the hukou (household registration system). A Chinese language teacher also discussed the way in which the district authorities now mainly look at value-added measures when evaluating school performance, rather than raw examination scores.

Turning to the key junior middle school, the principal commented on the enormous pressures resulting from the reforms, saying: ‘Junior middle school principals’ faces are as pale as wax’ on account of being ‘sandwiched between two requirements’: the stress of pressurising children through the zhongkao at the same time as ensuring the overall wellbeing of children by reducing the burden of academic work. Teachers expressed their frustration at the impossibility of the conflicting demands of the new curriculum and the out-dated examination system, referring to the demands as ‘a paradox’ and ‘not realistic’.

In her commitment to the values of the new curriculum, the principal of the key school increased the pressure of teacher accountability directly to the students, saying in the interview: ‘It’s not just about your subject knowledge or new curricular ideas but also about your personal characteristics. We ask students to vote their top teachers every term.’ A large billboard observed in the school playground displaying pictures of the teaching staff with their stated educational values for children to read reinforced this image of direct accountability to students.

Finally, the pressures and challenges described at the senior middle school echoed the sentiments of staff at the other two schools. The principal drew attention to the influence of the gaokao as a barrier to more progressive approaches to teaching and learning. Attention was also drawn to the increased demands on timetabling to accommodate the additional optional modules in the new curriculum. Although this had reduced some class sizes, it had increased the number of lessons to be taught.

There can be no doubt that the national reforms created immense pressures for all three school principals and their teaching staff, prompting a leadership response which prioritised external relations and networking, teaching staff and teaching quality, and curricular and pedagogical change.

**External Relations and Networking**

The importance of external relations and networking is consistent with the traditional role of the Chinese school principal as ‘external coordinator’. However, the evidence clearly suggests that networking is a significant consequence of the new curriculum reforms. The schools in this study cultivated partnerships with: (a) higher education institutions to assist with school-based research and innovation; (b) ‘sister schools’ to share best practices; (c) local companies to sponsor innovation and provide student work experience; and (d) parents to build effective home-school collaboration. Teachers in the three schools drew attention to the importance of provincial and district government in supporting such partnership initiatives.

The principal of the experimental school placed particular emphasis on forging stronger links with the local migrant community and home-school partnerships. As parents were initially reluctant to visit the school, the principal made the school the hub of the community, offering adult courses for parents and access to the school’s sports and other recreational facilities for community use. There was also a policy of home visits by staff concerned about a child’s progress. The strategy
was paying dividends in breaking down relational barriers. An active researcher himself, the principal also appreciated the support from academics and his school’s affiliation with the Zhejiang Institute of Education. He said, ‘After all, experts and academics are ahead of us at a theoretical level … We often say that ideas go before behaviour. We can use this to change our teachers and it is effective.’ Inter-school networking was valued particularly for its contribution to shared thinking and expertise in finding more effective ways of easing the transition from primary to junior middle school education. The deputy principal explained how ‘the education bureau has helped us build connections with other schools, but they are organised by ourselves’, resulting in students being ‘in a better position when they start junior middle school’.

At the key junior middle school, emphasis was also placed on parental support and engagement. The school’s director of studies described how the launch of a parents’ representative system had facilitated teacher-parent communication and eased conflict. Teachers in the mathematics department also made reference to the value of visiting ‘sister schools’ and sharing school-based curriculum materials online to reduce preparation time.

At the senior middle school, parental engagement was also actively encouraged through the formation of a parents’ committee. The principal explained that this provided an additional learning resource for the school: ‘For example, we have a parent of one of our students who is researching water conservation at Zhejiang University, so we invited him to give a lecture on his project.’ The school’s growing national and international reputation in robotics as a new curriculum option encouraged the principal to seek sponsorship from the industrial Supcon Group, which also provided opportunities for student work experience. Overseas partnerships, including one with a ‘sister school’ in Germany, were facilitated by local and international student competitions in robotics.

**Teaching Staff and Teaching Quality**

Staff recruitment, reward and discipline, along with the supervision of teaching, are well-established leadership responsibilities in Chinese schools. However, the research findings indicated a subtle shift towards addressing two key challenges: (a) the lack of preparedness of teachers for the successful implementation of the reforms, and (b) improving staff motivation. How each principal responded to these challenges is discussed below.

The principal of the experimental school first criticised the government’s teacher training policy for failing to prepare teachers for changes in the national curriculum, most notably in terms of the switch from individual subjects to combined natural sciences and social sciences. He concluded that ‘training is behind, to be honest, and few teachers are able to train others’. In order to address these deficiencies, the principal deployed most of the school-based funding for professional development in the establishment of a School Teaching and Research Society – an internal school committee of teachers and senior staff – to take responsibility for school-level training which, he said, ‘is better than the higher-level training because it is more specific, and teachers’ specific problems can be dealt with’.

Conscious of the increasing demands on teachers, the principal of the experimental school was anxious to avoid conflict and to motivate staff by ‘selling’ professional development as an opportunity for personal enrichment: ‘We don’t judge who teaches well anymore; we give teachers opportunities to improve themselves through action research. There is a lot of support in this respect.’ Official recognition of individual achievement was also built into the mandatory appraisal system to ensure transparency in staff appraisal and performance-related pay. In the words of a
year 7 Chinese language teacher: ‘Schools give prizes which are taken into consideration when they carry out school-level appraisal; for example, if your papers are awarded certificates.’ A particular challenge for the experimental school was the motivation of older staff unwilling or unable to adapt their teaching methods. Rather than invite confrontation, the principal mediated between the demands of the new curriculum and the aptitudes of his teaching staff. He explained: ‘We have different requirements for different teachers. This is our way to implement the new curriculum; otherwise it won’t work. We refer to young teachers’ classes as learning-based lessons and old teachers’ classes as classic lessons.’ Such flexibility was seen by the principal as a motivating factor, allowing older colleagues to avoid losing face and minimising their stress in adjusting to the demands of the new pedagogy.

Turning to the key junior middle school, the principal and her senior management team had similar concerns regarding the reluctance of many experienced colleagues to comply with the requirements of the new curriculum. The director of moral education gave an example: ‘Teachers, especially experienced teachers … don’t want to implement the new concept homework and teaching after learning’, initiatives which focus homework on research and discovery along with reading and question formulation in preparation for the lesson. However, the principal was determined to eradicate old-fashioned approaches to teaching through school-based training, stating:

> Decisions are made by me, the Deputy Head in charge of Teaching and Learning and teaching and research teams. We have a training programme called ‘school-based training,’ which is based on the situation of the school. It is held weekly.

The principal also delegated responsibility for the effective implementation of change to her department heads, saying: ‘the most important facilitator of the new curriculum is the effective leadership at subject level’, coupled with ‘attention paid to teacher training’. Nevertheless, conscious of the need to motivate teachers, she also displayed a softer and more caring side, stating:

> We care about our teachers. We renovated our refectory to make our environment better. We decorated teachers’ offices and gave bonuses, not money but gifts including sports clothes and uniforms. As most of our teachers are female, we also washed food for them before they left school so they could use prepared food when they got home. Teachers work hard during the day. If they go to market to buy food after work, they’ll arrive home late.

In addition to providing teachers with specific subject-knowledge training, the principal also provided teachers with opportunities for wellbeing and personal development every Friday from 3.30pm to 4.30pm. With the assistance of guest speakers and various experts, recreational courses focused on managing personal finances and promoting both physical and psychological health (e.g. aerobics training and anger management). She also conducted a survey of teachers’ perceptions of their wellbeing, finding that holidays topped the list of positive school influences on their wellbeing, whereas ‘parental obsession with their children’s exam results’ and ‘being told off by managers’ were seen as the most negative influences.

In the case of the senior middle school, the principal added his concern about a lack of teacher incentive for implementing the new curriculum, drawing attention to a wide disparity between the average budget of 45,000 renminbi for results-based bonuses and 10,000 renminbi for the new curriculum incentives. He was also mindful of the frustrations of veteran teachers having to learn new skills from scratch and the way that this could undermine confidence and morale. An
empathetic leadership style enabled the principal to engineer change as a positive vehicle for staff learning and development and to cushion teachers from the worst impact of the reforms by playing to their strengths. He explained:

Experienced teachers who knew their stuff inside out are now back at the starting point, but it is an opportunity for development … For example, we had a teacher who couldn’t teach Chinese well but became an outstanding teacher in supervising students’ research thanks to the research-based study made possible under the curriculum reform … These activities provide teachers with a platform to show their strengths.

The principal also referred to two strategies of ‘emotional communication’ to enhance motivation. The first related to training, not only as an opportunity for development but as a reward, including learning opportunities abroad and the gift of books from the school library. The second related to supplementary benefits, including prizes, recreational classes and free suppers for teachers who worked late into the evening, concluding that ‘all these things enrich teachers’ lives and make them feel our school is providing a good environment’.

Motivation at the senior high school was also conceptualised collectively as well as individually, in the sense that overall motivation within the school could be enhanced by forging closer bonds between stakeholder groups. The director of moral education explained how the school had created a ‘teacher-student festival to develop communication between teachers and students [so] students to feel cared for by the school’. This was extended by launching a ‘teachers and friends’ programme to facilitate better communication between teachers, students and parents.

Evidence from all three schools indicated how a subtle combination of pressure and support had become a major strategic priority in motivating staff to implement the new curriculum.

**Leading Curricular and Pedagogical Change**

In response to the mandates of the new curriculum reform, all three school principals perceived the leadership of change in teaching and learning as fundamental to raising student achievement and the effective delivery of the reform programme. All three reported that they had gained approval and support for their innovations from district government.

The principal of the experimental school introduced a number of general projects to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning, including a ‘learning-based classroom project’ that limited teacher talk and maximised student engagement. Arguably, however, his most significant initiatives were those that addressed the transition from primary level year 6 to junior middle school level year 7, and raised the achievement of the academic ‘bottom third’ – mainly underachieving migrant children. In addressing the first of these, the deputy principal explained how the teachers of years 6 and 7 were asked to familiarise themselves with each other’s textbooks and to communicate teaching strategies in order ‘to make the transition smoother and to help students settle better in the junior middle school’. The director of student development referred to the benefits of an exchange of ideas resulting from mutual lesson observations, while a Chinese language teacher drew attention to the advantages of ‘teachers carrying out lessons together’.

With respect to addressing the second priority of improving the motivation and attainment of the ‘bottom third’ of students, the principal’s initiative was warmly welcomed by teaching staff. A mathematics teacher explained how many migrant children lacked ‘education, care and love at home … but some of them are very clever’. The head of year 6 similarly added how in the past, the bottom students were not liked by themselves or their parents or even by their teachers, but ‘now
The principal of the key junior middle school had an equal commitment to improving the quality of teaching and learning through uncompromising and rigorous implementation of the new curriculum through the school’s three-year development plan and regular meetings of the teaching and research teams. The principal’s motto is ‘light burden and high quality’, with a focus on reducing the workload for both teachers and students. She explained her principle of ‘smarter approaches’ to teaching with an example: ‘Why do maths teachers set 20 questions, which have to be marked, when 10 will do? Teachers and students can reduce the burden together and still achieve high quality education.’ Thus, although teachers complained of an externally imposed excessive workload, the principal pointed out how this was also partially self-inflicted.

Three whole-school initiatives were recently introduced to facilitate improvements in student learning: (a) ‘teaching after learning’, to encourage exploration and independent learning; (b) ‘same topic with different structures’ as a basis for observing and debating different approaches to teaching; and (c) ‘new concept homework’, requiring independent, enquiry-based learning. The school had also developed differentiated, personalised approaches to learning to cater to student differences in ability and aptitude. In facilitating improvements to student learning, the department head of English highlighted the importance of peer support among teachers in the ‘same research teams’ (e.g. history and geography) in preparing lessons for the new integrated subjects. A mathematics teacher also highlighted the benefits of cross-departmental collaboration, stating that, ‘although the subjects are different, we can learn a lot about the way of teaching’.

The principal of the senior middle school welcomed the reforms for ‘caring more about students’, stating: ‘In the past we only concentrated on teaching, but now we attend to learning.’ He was particularly enthusiastic about the greater flexibility made possible by the introduction of optional modules. He referred to two examples of former extracurricular activities which had become optional modules in the new curriculum: a course in robotics, for which the school had earned an international reputation; and a creative writing course in the Chinese department, which had emerged from voluntary classes offered by the school’s Chinese Literature Society. The principal concluded by saying, ‘It is a good opportunity for schools with a lower-than-average student intake to develop into a specialised school.’ Nevertheless, he was also mindful of the constraints imposed by the gaokao examination and how he had tackled these to minimise the negative effects on student learning. He explained:

We need to survive the gaokao, otherwise nobody would come to our school. We have to combine both. In the first one and a half years we explore, while in the other one and a half years we concentrate on the gaokao.

The success of these initiatives had been attributed to the quality of the pedagogical leadership of the principal, an indication of a marked shift in leadership behaviour towards curricular innovation and greater distribution of leadership responsibility. One of the year leaders praised the principal’s introduction of flatter management structures, including the delegation of power to year leaders as a ‘very practical approach because we year leaders deal with students all the time and know what students need’.
Discussion

The research findings reported in this study confirm the negative impact of national curriculum reforms on Chinese principals and teachers reported in the literature. These include the stress of performance accountability, the conflicting demands of a quality education and an outdated examination system, a culture of compliance undermining professional judgement, and a perceived deficiency in leadership training to meet new challenges. But the research findings also provide evidence of resilience and leadership ingenuity. All three principals who participated in this study worked relentlessly to satisfy the expectations of government, teachers, parents and students. They demonstrated a radical shift from routine administration to a reconfiguration of organisational values focused on curriculum development and more meaningful approaches to learning and teaching. This was achieved through two key leadership innovations: (a) the cultivation of supportive school networks with local communities and parents, ‘sister schools’, international collaborators, commercial organisations and universities; and (b) the motivation of teaching staff through an optimal combination of high expectation and strong support.

Although the common nature of external pressures facilitated similarities in the leadership response, there were also differences in leadership style, particularly in the management and motivation of teaching staff. While the principal of the key junior middle school cared about the wellbeing of her teachers, the initiatives were prescribed in a top-down fashion and characterised by a centralised approach to strategic decision-making, although department heads were entrusted with school policy implementation. This leadership had much in keeping with the traditional Chinese values of deference and respect for authority. In contrast, the principal of the senior middle school introduced a flatter management structure with far more delegation of power, in keeping with the principles of distributed leadership. The principal of the experimental school was positioned in between. He was critical of government policy and clearly protective of his staff, especially of older teachers finding difficulty in adapting to the reforms. On the other hand, he was perceived by others as demanding in his teacher accountability.

The work practices of all three principals illustrated the difficulty of balancing the role of ‘caring parent’ with the ruthless imposition of performance requirements as identified by Qian and Walker (2011). Mindful of the need to meet performance targets, the principals nevertheless protected their staff and promoted their wellbeing in ways that made them feel valued, especially in providing extra support and perquisites, including bonuses, overseas study opportunities and the provision of free leisure courses to promote staff wellbeing. All three principals displayed qualities of ‘emotional intelligence’, ‘relationship building’ and an effort to build cultures that were ‘humane and interpersonally connected’, in keeping with insights of best practice from Western literature (Beatty 2011; Pollock, Wang & Hauseman 2014).

The normative and cross-cultural evidence from this study indicates the importance of mutually supportive relationships, both within the school as an organisation and through external networking. This, in turn, suggests relational leadership theory (RLT) (Uhl-Bien 2006) as a useful theoretical framework for further understanding the behaviours and work practices of school principals in response to pressures of national reform. Indeed, the research evidence indicated potential benefits from a conflation of two RLT perspectives with contrasting but complementary ontological and epistemological implications. The first is an entity perspective, focused on individual agency and cognition of principals as bounded entities in their interactions with significant others. This was most evident from the face-to-face interviews with the three Chinese principals exploring their inner thoughts, reflections and motivations. The second is a relational perspective, focused on
leadership action as a socially constructed, interdependent and unbounded process. This was most evident through the focus group interviews and informal observations, which illuminated such interrelationships.

Conclusion

Based on rich qualitative data drawn from both leader and teacher perspectives, the findings provide a deeper understanding of the changing work patterns and priorities of Chinese school principals than would be possible from the application of role theory, a framework which is limited in its capacity to account for either change or agency in school leadership practice, especially at a time of major educational reform and transformation. The findings indicate a number of important similarities, both in terms of the pressures facing school principals in a climate of externally driven educational reform and in the strategic responses of school principals. Significant priorities and normative work practices include external relations and networking, the investment of both time and emotional energy in supporting and motivating teaching staff, and a greater emphasis on curricular and pedagogical innovation despite bureaucratic constraints.

Further research within the conceptual framework of relational leadership theory could apply a wider range of innovative data-collection methods to build on these findings in other school contexts. Observation through shadowing (McDonald 2005; Polite, McClure & Rollie 1997) offers a particularly promising means of advancing understanding of school leadership, as it captures the detail and essence of activities, encounters and communications of school principals in daily work practices.

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The Changing Nature of School Principals’ Work: A Commentary

Alma Harris

Introduction
This commentary offers some reflections, insights and observations on the articles in this Special Edition. It reflects upon the changing roles of principals, in a number of countries, and highlights some of the central arguments and some of the issues raised by the contributors. The commentary concludes by sharing some emerging findings from an international comparative project focused on principals’ leadership preparation and development.

Without question, the work of school principals is changing dramatically and irrecoverably around the world (Harris & Jones 2015; Pollock 2010; Pollock, Wang, & Hauseman 2015; Stringer & Hourani 2016). As policy-makers in different countries place much greater emphasis on school leaders as the drivers of school improvement and system change, the role of the principal is being radically reshaped and profoundly redefined. This Special Issue takes a critical and contemporary look at the changing nature of school principals’ work through an international lens. The articles make a strong and compelling case that in order to fully understand the complexities of the changing nature of the principal’s role, a comparative or cross-cultural exploration is required.

Many scholars in the field of educational leadership (Dimmock & Walker 2000; Hallinger 2011; Walker & Hallinger 2015) have argued, for some time, for a stronger comparative and cross-cultural stance. The educational leadership field is replete with case studies of principals from different countries, but in-depth, cross-cultural empirical studies still tend to be relatively rare. Of course, there are many descriptive accounts of the work of principals in different systems, and many collective accounts of principals’ work in various countries. Without question, such compilations offer a useful point of comparison, but research studies that share the same empirical frame and focus on leadership issues across different countries and contexts are still in rather short supply.

Undertaking good comparative work in any field, it could be argued, is inherently difficult. Not only are there issues of language and culture to deal with, but there are also vastly different structures and systems that shape the practices and daily work of principals. In their article in this Special Edition, Lapointe and colleagues look at some of the methodological issues that arise from cross-cultural research. The article outlines and reinforces the need to validate research instruments that are to be used across different countries or settings. In the article, the authors argue that it is imperative to ensure the transcultural validity of any instrument when collecting data across different countries and cultures.
The remaining articles in this Special Edition look at the changing nature of principals’ work in specific contexts, and focus on particular issues that are emerging. For example, the article by Ryan focuses on the issue of promoting inclusion in Ontario by drawing upon research that has taken place over the past 15 years. The article concludes that the work of inclusive-minded principals is both important and essential. The article by Brauckmann and colleagues looks at instructional leadership in Germany and asks in what way the German policy-related context shapes the understanding, roles and meaning of instructional leadership from an historical perspective. The article highlights some of the tensions and challenges facing principals as they move towards becoming instructional leaders.

The article by Forde and Torrence focuses on the changing expectations and experiences of headship in Scotland. The article examines the current policy demands and expectations placed on principals in Scotland, paying particular attention to the Standard for Headship. The article identifies some critical issues facing headteachers in Scotland, and highlights the notion that despite certain policy aspirations, headteachers are still heavily involved in the day-to-day operational matters of keeping the school going. The article by Gibson explores the role of headteachers in England and focuses on the way in which the changing educational landscape, in the shape of academies, is impacting the work of headteachers. The data outlined in the article suggest that the role of the principal in a sponsored academy differs from that of a headteacher in a maintained school. The article proposes that some academy school sponsors have greater operational control over their school than do headteachers.

The final article in this special edition, by Wilson and colleagues, considers the changing nature of the work of Chinese school principals arising as a result of national curriculum reform. The evidence from the article indicates a shift in the priorities of the school principal from routine administration to broader leadership practices that encompass curricular and pedagogical change. The national reforms in China currently require school principals to take on more direct responsibility for curriculum change and implementation. The article suggests that this shift is taking place gradually, and that the work patterns and priorities of principals in China are therefore changing.

As outlined at the start, the latter part of this commentary provides an outline of an ongoing, comparative empirical study that is collecting data from seven different education systems or sub-systems. Some initial findings and reflections about the changing nature of the school principals’ work are highlighted and shared.

**Seven System Leadership Study (7SLS)**

In 2012, a research study commenced with the core purpose of exploring principals’ leadership preparation and development approaches in seven very different countries and contexts (Harris & Jones 2015). This ongoing study aims to address two questions: ‘How much variability is there between leadership preparation and development programmes across very different education systems?’ and ‘What has been the impact of these programmes on school leaders, their leadership practice, and school/system improvement?’ The study will contribute to the comparative work that has focused upon leadership development and training (Bush 2012; Huber 2004; Moorosi & Bush 2011). Primary quantitative and qualitative data are being collected in each of the seven education systems, and the same data collection methods are being used across the different settings (Harris & Jones 2015; Harris, Jones, Adams, Perera & Sharma 2014).
The 7SLS adopted a mixed-method design, incorporating principal surveys and in-depth qualitative case studies involving semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observation and documentary analysis. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used for cross-validating data and reporting findings (Harris & Jones 2015). The aim of the mixed-method approach is to discover significant patterns and relationships by using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Case study accounts of each system have been developed using a common analytical framework that has enabled systematic comparison (Yin 2014). Qualitative data collection and data analysis have been closely integrated and dialogically linked.

Reviews of the leadership literature in each system have been compiled, and primary data collection has taken place in all systems, except England. In each system, there are experts to advise on and support the work of the project and to assist in the data collection process, in context. The expert teams assist with contextual and culturally specific information that will enrich and enhance the individual and cross-system case-study accounts. Country experts are also ensuring that the same ethical processes are followed in each setting, and that translated instruments are properly validated.

Some Findings

While the data collection process in the 7SLS is still ongoing, there are some initial findings that can be highlighted. First, the trajectory of principal leadership preparation and development across the very different education systems looks surprisingly similar. All have introduced, or are in the process of introducing, national leadership standards, national leadership qualifications and national leadership programmes, with dedicated agencies overseeing quality and delivery (Harris, Jones, & Adams 2016). Second, the data show that principals in the various systems predominantly view the national leadership programmes as necessary, but not sufficient to prepare and equip them for their role. The data shows that many principals are advocating for more localised, contextualised and needs-based training and development. Third, the evidence shows that, in all the countries in the study, the pressure to deliver change and improvement has shifted much more towards principals, with far greater responsibility placed upon them to deliver school and system improvement. The data show that many principals in the study are struggling to meet the new requirements, demands and expectations.

Overall, the emerging evidence from the study shows that all of the seven education systems in the study are investing heavily in principals’ leadership development and training as a deliberate strategy to raise school and system performance. In particular, the 7SLS has found that the larger education systems in the study (i.e. Indonesia and Russia) have been building leadership capacity for some time, and are aiming to produce effective school leaders, on a large scale, through dedicated leadership development and training (Harris & Jones 2016). Inevitably, there is also a concomitant expectation that the resources allocated to this particular investment will secure better educational performance and outcomes.

The evidence from the 7SLS shows that, to date, any clear, significant comparative advantage from investing heavily and extensively in principals’ leadership development and training is yet to be firmly established. While accounts from the better-performing systems, such as Singapore and Hong Kong, point towards the importance of leadership development and training in securing and sustaining superior performance, evidence from the other education systems is less conclusive (Harris & Jones 2016).
The point here is not to suggest that an investment in principals’ leadership development and training is unimportant, as clearly there is a wealth of literature which suggests the very opposite, but rather to argue for more critical and empirically robust comparative studies of the processes, outcomes and impacts of such leadership training and development approaches. In conclusion, I suggest that the point made by Brauckman and colleagues in this Special Edition is a poignant one: 

[S]o far comparative studies on school leadership provide little holistic information on national contexts underlying school principals’ actions. Therefore more theoretical and empirical light needs to be shed on the ongoing debate about the contextualized adaptation processes of a postulated transnational construct of leadership.

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