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Special Issue Reprint

Transforming Educational Leadership

Edited by
Tony Townsend

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Transforming Educational Leadership

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Guest Editor

Tony Townsend

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Guest Editor
Tony Townsend
Griffith Institute for
Educational Research
Griffith University
Mount Gravatt
Australia

Editorial Office
MDPI AG
Grosspeteranlage 5
4052 Basel, Switzerland

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About the Editor

Tony Townsend

Tony Townsend was a Professor of Education, with a specialization in leadership, at Monash University in Australia for more than 25 years. In 2003, he became the Chair of the Department of Educational Leadership at Florida Atlantic University in the United States, and later, in 2009, he became a Professor of Public Service, Educational Leadership, and Management at the University of Glasgow in the UK. On his return to Australia in 2013, he worked at both the University of Tasmania and Griffith University. Since retiring in 2018, he has been an adjunct professor at both universities and has consulted with education departments and schools across Australia. He has also been a visiting professor at universities in the USA, South Africa, Canada, Macau, Malaysia, the Czech Republic, and the Republic of Ireland, and has consulted with Ministries and agencies around the world, such as UNESCO, the UK Commonwealth Education Trust, and Governments in Mongolia, Pakistan, Chile, and Cyprus. He has delivered more than 100 keynote addresses and has submitted papers to conferences in more than 50 countries. He has published 13 books and more than 100 articles, chapters, and papers in the areas of leadership, school effectiveness, school improvement, teacher education, and community education and development in Australia, Europe, and North America. He has previously been President of the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI) and the International Council on Education for Teaching (ICET) and is currently a life member of both.

Preface

The past fifty years have seen massive changes to the educational provision for schools in many countries. The 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s saw radical transformations to school governance and management, headlined by a shift towards self-management, which has led to substantial changes in how school leaders operate. This Special Issue reprint considers how countries have worked to improve their education systems by focusing on school leadership in Chile, Japan, and Ireland. It considers what good school leaders must do in Hong Kong and how leaders are developed, supported, and improved over time in Australia, Malaysia, and Germany. It also considers how the modern transformational leader might be compared with some of the heroes of ancient, medieval, and modern times, how new methods of leadership may require new ways of researching leadership, and how the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic may require a different approach to leading schools in the future. This Special Issue will be of interest to those who lead schools and those who educate, support, or manage them.

Tony Townsend
Guest Editor

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Editorial

Transforming Educational Leadership: A Historical Context

Tony Townsend

Griffith Institute for Educational Research, Griffith University, Brisbane 4122, Australia; tonytownsend@hotmail.com

1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to provide a context for this Special Issue, which considers the transformation of school leadership over time, providing some background to the roots of where we are now. This article considers the roots of the term "leadership" and the more recent connected terms of "administration" and "management", and how these might be linked to educational provision from ancient times until the emergence of the term "transformational leadership" in the 1970s, when Downton [1] first introduced the term as a form of leadership for the business sector. This term was later expanded by Burns [2] as a way to enable "leaders and followers make each other advance to a higher level of morality and motivation" [3]. This was further expanded and theorised by business researcher Bass [4] to explain how transformational leadership could be measured, as well as its impact on follower motivation and performance. The proposal that transformational leadership was a viable option in schools was later explained by Leithwood and Jantzi [5], and since that time it has become one of the main theories for educational leaders today.

This Special Issue will bring together the works of colleagues who were tasked with writing a paper within the somewhat ambiguous topic of transforming educational leadership. The subject is ambiguous because the words "transforming educational leadership" can be read in at least two ways: the first relates to leadership that transforms education (currently known as "transformational leadership"), but a second way is to consider how our understanding of educational leadership has changed (or transformed) over time and might do so further in the future. The first considers the specific form of educational leadership mentioned above, but the second enables us to look at a range of leadership approaches that have impacted educational (and particularly school) leadership over time. Both approaches have been adopted by various authors in the current Special Issue.

To frame this discussion, it might be of interest to the reader to consider the roots, both of leadership in general, and educational leadership in particular, and how these two concepts intertwined to lead us to where we are now. To achieve this, this article starts in ancient times, when issues related to education and the leadership of it were first considered, until around 1980, when the way in which education was structured and delivered really started to change. For this period, the connections between the terminology, practice of, and research into, "administration" and "management" and, more recently, "leadership", in society and business on the one hand and education on the other, will be considered. The second period, which forms the bulk of this Special Issue, considers the period of time since the 1980s when the structural change suggestions leading to self-managing schools produced the opportunities for transformational leadership to be implemented in schools from the 1990s onwards. It is in this period, and looking into the future, where this Special Issue seeks to increase our understanding of both transformational leadership and possible further developments that will enhance school leadership into the increasingly complex and rapidly changing environment that is typified by the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Educational leadership can be considered from three perspectives, conceptually and theoretically (what is educational leadership?), practically (how are educational leaders

developed and what do they do?), and methodologically (how do we study educational leadership?), and the papers in the current Issue consider each of these.

Education, especially school education, might be one of what Gaillie [6] identified as an "essentially contested concept", one where most people agree on what the concept is but also dispute how it might be implemented. For whatever evidence might be provided to support one version, there will also be evidence to suggest that another version is equally applicable. The relationship between "leadership", "management", and "administration" might be another essentially contested concept, to the degree where in some languages, the word for "management" and the word for "leadership" is the same word.

This paper starts its story more than 2000 years ago and tries to track the major changes until around 40 years ago when our understanding of schools, and the leadership of them, changed dramatically; it is during this period that the leadership developments that the current Issue focuses upon took place. In that sense, this article provides the background to where we are now.

2. Educational Leadership: The Journey towards the 1980s

Administrators, Managers, and Leaders

The separation of a population into classes has been around at least since Ancient Greece. Plato's *Republic* [7], written around 380 BC, considers a dialogue between Socrates and others about a just society. Plato argues that people were born with different souls, assigned by the Gods. The philosopher-kings (gold people) pursued an education that would give them the knowledge and wisdom to make fair and rational decisions in order to maintain (in other words, lead), a fair and just society. The silver people were responsible for maintaining order, and also needed a robust education to give them the skills they needed to do this. The bronze people were the merchants, the farmers, and those that produced goods. They did not need the same level of education but were expected to be hard-working and honest. Plato argued that the bronze people needed to be led by the gold and managed by the silver. Similar relationships, it could be argued, have happened ever since, where kings or emperors used armies to maintain order for the peasant class, those who produced the goods to keep societies moving. Not all of these societies would be included in Plato's definition of a "fair and just" society.

The same sort of classification emerged when individual traders grew to become businesses and later grew even further to become corporations. However, the terminology changed from kings–soldiers–peasants to owners–managers–workers, but the relationships were much the same. The owners made the decisions, the managers implemented those decisions, and the workers were the ones that actually produced whatever the organisation was designed for. In the 1800s, Carlyle [8] and Galton [9] started to consider what it was that enabled some people to rise to power and positions of authority when others did not. This was the beginning of what came to be known as the trait theory of leadership or the "great man" theory, one that lasted almost a hundred years and became the underlying strategy for establishing order in large organisations. Those who had been with an organisation for a long time and had demonstrated their ability and loyalty gradually moved upwards to more important positions, ones that oversaw other employees. The trait theory suggested that the people that were leaders all had certain characteristics, or traits, that made them successful leaders. Historically, in Western society, and for many years, these leaders happened to be white men.

Just as Plato had argued that gold and silver people needed specialist education, so too was it considered that owners and managers might need specialist knowledge. Universities started to appear in Europe in the Middle Ages: the University of Bologna in Italy around 1180, the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom around 1200, the University of Paris in 1208, Cambridge in 1209, and the University of Salamanca in Spain in 1218. The earliest universities taught law, medicine, the arts, and theology, and early leaders emerged from these disciplines. Education programs in "Administrative Science" have been around since the 1700s. The US model of educating business managers and

administrators is probably the one most accepted worldwide, but it also has quite a long history from early attempts to establish "industrial education for farmers and mechanics" as far back as the 1850s [10]. After the civil war, public universities were established, some of which included departments of trade and commerce, which eventually became business schools. The Wharton School of Finance and Economics was the first of these, founded in 1881. By the early 1900s there were business schools across the country, including the first MBA at Harvard in 1908 [11]. In most other parts of the world, the "art of business management" was learned on the job. The conclusion of the Second World War saw a massive increase in both undergraduate and graduate programs and the MBA started to be offered in other countries, such as Canada, South Africa, India, and Europe [12].

3. A Focus on Education

Although the formation of schools for certain groups within a society can been traced back some thousands of years, and existed in many ancient civilizations, the type of education and who was able to access it has changed over time. Education, once it emerged, followed Plato's approach. For the next nearly 2000 years, most had little or no education, some had enough to allow them to take a specific role in society, but only the rich and privileged had what we might call today "a quality education". For many centuries, for much of a population, the only education received was that provided by parents or the community they lived in. For the wealthy and privileged, education was planned, supported, and used to maintain one's position in society. In the Middle Ages, most European schools were associated with monasteries of the Roman Catholic Church, some of which later became universities. The oldest British school, King's School, in Canterbury, was founded by St Augustine in 597 as a monastic school, to spread Christianity. The influence of the Catholic Church on the development of education was huge.

The notion of modern compulsory education is quite recent. Most early compulsory schooling was for religious purposes, to enable people to be able to read the Bible. In 1559, a German duchy made schooling compulsory for boys and in 1592 another made it compulsory for both boys and girls. By 1616, schools for "everyone" had been established in all Scottish parishes but it was in not until the 1800s, and particularly after 1850, that countries and states around the world made some elementary education compulsory for all. Now, it seems that only Bhutan, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands have no law making education compulsory.

Educational Administrators, Managers, and Leaders

The gold, silver and bronze approach, described above, became a blueprint for education systems as well. Governments made the decisions, regional managers, district superintendents, and principals ensured these decisions were carried out, and teachers produced the goods (student outcomes) that the system was intended for. Successful teachers with years of experience became principals and gradually worked their way into more senior management positions, but the decisions were still made by ministers of education on behalf of governments. Most school systems were highly centralised, some nationally, some at the state or provincial level, and others at district or local authority level, with key policy decisions being made by the national or state ministers or secretaries of education. These policy decisions would be developed and introduced by centralised departments of education at the state, provincial, local authority, or district levels, and then implemented by school principals at the local level. To ensure fidelity between policy and implementation, superintendents or inspectors oversaw the work of schools and principals and reported back to the department whenever there was the need for change, which was not too often.

What we now call school leaders were originally seen as school administrators or school managers and were variously called principals or headteachers. The first school administrators in the USA came with the Massachusetts education law of 1647. "Selectmen were responsible for maintaining these schools, thus becoming the first lay representatives

of school management" ([13], p. 7). Teachers were responsible for their own classes, but as schools grew in size, there was a need for a "principal teacher" who served as a liaison between the teachers and the board of education, whilst still undertaking a full teaching load. The first non-teaching elementary school principal seems to have occurred in 1847 in Boston (p. 8). It seemed that even after the turn of the 20th century, principals "were reluctant to become vigorous, dynamic leaders" (p. 8). Principals were "odd-job and clerical workers whose business it is to keep the machinery well-oiled and smoothly running while other people perform the higher professional functions" ([14], p. 10). It seemed that early principals were "an administrative convenience rather than positions of recognized leadership" ([15], p. 24) and it was argued that the "principalship is missing from both the political history of school administration and the social history of schools. It's as if the principal did not exist at all" ([16], p. 4).

Specific programs to train school principals in the United States have existed since 1881. They were first developed at the University of Michigan. The first professors of educational administration were appointed in 1904 [17]. By the 1920s, there were multiple colleges in the US offering programs in educational administration as the demand for principals increased [18], but the knowledge base for educating school administrators mostly consisted of a focus on school management, teacher supervision, and field experiences, in many cases using "war stories" from past school administrators [18]. Prior to the Second World War, "training programs stressed the 'practical' and have concerned themselves more with techniques than with understanding", but after "administrators have become increasingly aware of the role of theory and have come to recognize the contributions that social scientists can make to our understanding of educational administration" [18]. The connections across the disciplines were identified: "There is administration *qua* administration. . .. The characteristic ways in which administrators behave are essentially the same whether the administrator operates in industry, government, the military, or public education" ([15], p. 159).

4. Transforming Educational Leadership: Articles in this Special Issue

The papers within this Special Issue cover a wide range of concerns. Two of the papers in this Special Issue provide some understanding of some countries' efforts to improve the quality of education since the 1980s. Yokota compares the standards identified by the Toda City SMR, with principal and headteacher standards from both the USA (Professional Standards for Educational Leaders-PSEL) and the UK (Headteachers' Standards-HS), and concludes that on a "preliminary comparison, it is reasonable to argue that the Toda City SMR [School Management Rubric] has a relatively similar function to the PSEL and the HS in terms of its scope (to whom they apply) and usage (how to use them), with some minor differences" (p. 5), but cautioned that policymakers should be mindful not to just "import" promising practices from abroad and end up ignoring cultural and policy contexts unique to Japan (p. 18), while recognising that one limitation of the study was that it compared a "city policy with national policies", making the comparisons tentative rather than definitive.

Wilson Heenan, Lafferty, and McNamara discuss recent developments in Ireland as a means of researching transformational leadership. They argue that ". . .transformational school leadership can reasonably be considered as an underpinning model that can support the sustaining of distributive leadership." (p. 2) and conclude that although it was "discussed by school and system leaders as being feasible and realistic and is discussed by many as being inevitable. . . Practical day-to-day challenges of leadership positions in schools were regarded as hampering the feasibility of enactment given administration overload, with the importance of sharing leadership responsibility" (p. 18). They argued for a "hybrid model of transformational and distributed school leadership. . . that is affective and human-centred and that shares leadership roles and responsibilities among the staff, in tandem with increased administrative support to create space for whole-school community leadership" (p. 32).

This point of view brings into focus English and Ehrich's argument that "the mythologies, battles, trials and triumphs of the heroes of ancient, medieval, and modern times. . . all bear a striking resemblance to current portraits of the transformational leader" (p. 1). English and Ehrich conclude "that exploring transformational leadership through an aesthetic lens, including through stories of leaders such as the legendary El Cid, and their followers, holds great potential for capturing subjective knowledge about leadership in a range of contexts, including educational leadership" (p. 11).

Other articles in this Special Issue focus more generally on what good school leaders must do. Cheng argues that leaders must lead and facilitate "multiple school functions (such as technological functions, economic functions, social functions, political functions, cultural functions and learning functions) . . . in a new era of multiplicities and complexities in education"(p. 1). He argues that a comprehensive typology of school leadership is necessary, for without it "the practice and conception of school leadership may be piecemeal, fragmented and ineffective" (p. 2). He argues that for "different school leaders in different contexts, the characteristics of school leadership styles in pursuing school development and effectiveness may be different" (p. 9) but recognises that "consensus among various stakeholders on choices of leadership models for leading school development and effectiveness is always a dilemma" (p. 11). This supports the notion that anything to do with education is "essentially contested" [1].

Three papers focus on what might be focused upon to improve the quality of school leadership. Caldwell discusses the important issue of how school systems support school leaders in challenging and rapidly changing circumstances. He considers how the work environment for school leaders in Australia has changed in recent times, how this has impacted on the role, and, how school systems might better support school leaders. He considers three connected themes: *Intensification–Intimidation*, *Autonomy–Accountability*, and *System–Support*, all related to changes in school leaders' work environments. He suggests "what is often named as school autonomy is in fact an example of administrative decentralisation of some functions" (p. 7) and considers both the benefits and drawbacks of decentralisation. Caldwell provides six recommendations for future directions considering the work environment, reporting requirements, getting rid of old practices when new ones are introduced, the use of AI, involving leaders in thinking about the future of schools, and researching the impact of any changes.

Kenayathulla, Ghani, and Radzi echo Cheng's argument that "school leaders are expected to embrace multiple school functions" (p. 1) and report on recent efforts by the Malaysian government to improve the quality of school leadership. The researchers identified the following: the introduction of a continuous professional development program; the introduction of the National Professional Qualification for Educational Leaders (NPQEL); and the introduction of the School Improvement Partners Plus (SIPartners+) mentoring program by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to enhance the leadership and management competencies of school leaders and recommend further steps be taken.

Huber and Pruitt argue ". . .neither top-down measures alone nor the exclusive use of bottom-up approaches have the effects desired" (p. 3). They conducted a study of interventions combining multiple approaches for the development of and support for school leadership. They conclude that to "transform education leadership . . . a professional, profound and persistent combination of multiple approaches for the development of and support for school leadership is needed" (p. 22) but argue that "further research is needed" (p. 23).

Bogotch focuses instead on researching leadership and argues that if we are to consider new ways of leading schools, we might also need to consider new ways of researching educational leadership as well. He argues that educational leadership research "has followed the rules of the game concerning research activities and methods" (p. 2) and argues that researchers need "to creatively develop specific methods tailored explicitly to our hypothesized theories" (p. 3). Bogotch argues for a "lever for radical changes in how and with whom we should conduct research publicly and democratically" (p. 5) and

concludes "...the challenge involves remaking the enterprise of conducting research into a collective endeavor instead of a private and privileged practice" (p. 11).

Finally, Townsend considers what we have learned from both the history of educational leadership and the specific issues raised in this Special Issue. He identifies the 1980s as a major turning point for school leadership, as it became no longer effective under the old command and control imperative. This paper considers four educational theories that have impacted schools and were appropriate for their time. It then considers the impact of COVID-19 on school leadership and identifies this as another turning point for schools and school leadership. He proposes leadership for learning as being the most appropriate approach to consider the new and complex issues facing schools.

The papers of this Special Issue consider the specific practice called transformational leadership but situate that approach within a longer history of schools and school leadership, to establish how leadership has transformed itself over time, and may need to do so again to cope with the new challenges that arise. How we meet that challenge is yet to be determined.

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Essay

Educational (De)Centralization and School Leadership in Chile

Carmen Montecinos [1,*] and Robinson Lira [2]

[1] Centro Líderes Educativos, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Valparaíso 2340000, Chile
[2] Ministerio de Educación, Av. Alameda Libertador Bernardo O'Higgins 1371, Santiago, Región Metropolitana, Chile; robinson.lira@mineduc.cl
* Correspondence: carmen.montecinos@pucv.cl

Abstract: Policymakers in Chile have focused on educational leadership since the mid-2000s, recognizing its importance for successful school reforms. This article reviews key structural reforms that promote school autonomy while simultaneously regulating public school leaders' roles to align with policy goals, resulting in a centralization effect through institutional isomorphism. The discussion is divided into four sections as follows: the first addresses historical policies from the dictatorship that transferred public education responsibilities to municipal governments, fostering a quasi-market model; the second examines initiatives aimed at enhancing public school leadership, including defining principal's responsibilities and strategies for attracting qualified leaders; and the third evaluates the New Public Education (NEP) reform, which reverts municipalization and introduces a new Directorate of Public Education, collaborating with the Ministry of Education to promote school autonomy within the Local Educational Services (SLEP). The fourth section analyzes policies for school leadership development. Despite the intention of enhancing autonomy, the article contends that autonomy is limited due to the pressures of policy alignment, leading to centralization through high-stakes performance assessments and performance contracts. Research shows that while principals may have some decision-making autonomy, it is often curtailed by the necessity to meet centrally defined targets and limited financial autonomy.

Keywords: school leadership; school improvement; structural reforms; centralization; decentralization

1. Introduction

As the governance of educational systems changes across diverse jurisdictions, school leadership policies have addressed decentralization, school autonomy, and accountability associated with a country's educational improvement agenda (Pont, 2020). These policies are grounded in research showing that the success of school reforms requires effective leadership at both the system and school levels (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). Flessa et al. (2017, p. 16) concluded that results from large-scale assessments in the Latin American region point "to leadership—especially instructional leadership—as a factor that positively influences students' test scores." Studies examining the improvement trajectory of Chilean schools found that differences in leadership, teachers' professionalism, and school culture were critical to understanding differences in the trajectories taken by schools (Valenzuela et al., 2016). The impact of school leadership as a key driver of school improvement, however, has been questioned internationally (Pont, 2020) and in Chile (Montecinos et al., 2018) as policies do not always cohere in support of leadership practices associated with the implementation of institutional conditions that promote continuous school improvement.

A series of reforms has created a hybrid regulatory system initiated by a dictatorship that promoted a highly marketized system in the 1980s. After the restoration of democracy in 1990, reforms sought to correct, through greater regulation, the adverse effects of marketization, such as the precarization of public education (Bellei & Muñoz, 2023; Valenzuela & Montecinos, 2017). The main objective of this article is to examine some of the key policies implemented after 1990 addressing decentralization, school autonomy, and accountability that have shaped the work of principals leading schools that receive public funding. The remainder of the article is structured into three broad sections. First, we briefly address the decentralization of public education implemented between 1973 and 1989. Next, we examine policies developed after the restoration of democracy in 1990 that emphasized school autonomy while positioning school principals as policy implementers, including the current New Public Education reform. Before concluding, the professional development infrastructure to equip school leaders who can implement those polices is analyzed. In the conclusion we note tensions between school autonomy and accountability mechanisms to align school leadership with goals defined at the central level of the system.

2. Decentralization by Devolving School Administration to Municipal Governments

The history of educational decentralization in Chile dates back to the 1980s, when the dictatorship transferred the administration of state-owned early childhood centers, primary, and secondary schools to municipal governments. Until then, the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) was entirely responsible for providing public education. Following municipalization, MINEDUC retained technical-pedagogical control of the national curriculum, of the national high-stakes assessment system (SIMCE[1]), the distribution of textbooks, school meals, and other forms of aid for schools serving low-income students.

School staff ceased to be civil servants and became employees of municipal governments, the teacher union was dismantled, and the teaching profession was weakened. Each municipal provider defined rules for managing their schools' infrastructure, making administrative, financial, and staffing decisions. The diversity with which each municipality approached the issue of school administration contributed to a fragmented public education system that persists to this day (Bellei et al., 2018).

Although Chile had traditionally offered education with a mixed private-public provision model, the dictatorship introduced a quasi-market governance model to stimulate competition for student enrollment among public schools and between them and privately owned schools. Parents were afforded a choice between tuition-free municipal (public) schools, funded with a state subsidy allocated on a per-pupil basis (considering both enrollment and student attendance), private, state-subsidized schools, many of which charged families a tuition co-payment, and private schools fully funded by families. Competition to attract enrollment, thereby increasing school funding, was advocated as an effective approach to reducing absenteeism, dropout rates, and improving achievement. Privately owned schools could operate as either for-profit or non-profit organizations. All schools were expected to attract and retain students by adjusting their academic offer to meet the needs and interests of students and their families and engaging in various marketing strategies.

These practices led to a decrease in public school enrollments, a highly segregated school system, with low-income students concentrated in public schools that were prohibited from selecting students or charging a co-payment. Between 2004 and 2022, the share of public education enrollment decreased from 51.4% to 36.7%, while the share of private, subsidized schools increased from 41.02% to 54.1%. Enrollment in privately funded

schools rose from 7.6% to 9% (Holz, 2023). This enrollment distribution contrasts with the distribution of schools in 2021: 54.9% are public, 39.1% are private voucher, and 6% private.

3. Leveraging School Leadership

Policymakers in Chile have paid increasing attention to educational leadership since the mid-2000s. In 2003, an OECD commission reviewed Chile's educational policies since the restoration of democracy. Among other aspects, the report concluded that educational policies were weaving a weak link with initial teacher education and school leadership. This, according to the commission, explained why pedagogical practices were not aligned and pertinent with the demanding national curricular goals (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2004). As for principals specifically, the report recommended that they be prepared as instructional leaders and interpreters of available information on school performance in order to supervise and provide feedback to teachers (especially new teachers requiring induction) and support professional development (their own and that of colleagues) by stimulating collaborative learning.

Montt (2012) traced the evolution of school leadership since the restoration of democracy in 1990, identifying four distinct periods. From 1990 to 1995, the author notes an emphasis on what he labeled the recuperation of a new teaching bureaucracy, as the focus was on strengthening the working conditions and status of the teaching profession. The government and teachers agreed on a Teachers' Statute (Law 19.070), which along with ensuring job stability in the municipal sector, committed to strengthening teachers' professional autonomy. The Statute recognized the right of teachers to decide on the contents to be included in their lesson plans, how to evaluate their students, which texts and didactic materials to use, and their interactions with parents and guardians (DFL 1, art. 16). Considering the existence of a mandatory national curriculum, however, the Statute urged teachers to align their decisions with objectives and content defined in the curricular framework. School principals were charged with supporting teachers' adoption and adaptation of the country's curricular definitions to the school context and student intake. Another incentive to remain close to the national curriculum was, and continues to be, the high-stakes standardized assessment results that schools use as a marketing tool and policymakers use as a means to target school-level supports, sanctions, and rewards (Parcerisa, 2021).

In the second period (1995–2001), policies positioned school principals as change agents driving the implementation of national programs to improve educational quality. In the third period (2002–2008), school leaders were charged with implementing educational reforms at the classroom level. In 2004, the Teaching Statute was modified (Law 19.979) as the school day was expanded (Ministerio de Educación, Chile, 2004b). With additional instructional time, schools had to develop new curricular activities, and principals were positioned as leaders of the school's educational project. They were required to monitor and evaluate educational "goals and objectives", implement "study plans and programs" (their own or those offered by MINEDUC), communicate with parents to inform "the progress of their children", and organize the "technical-pedagogical work and professional development of teachers". A shift in principals' work demands from administration to instructional leadership sought to address significant achievement gaps observed when comparing public and private school results on SIMCE. In 2006, Decree 177 introduced an amendment to Law 19.070, positing that the primary function of the director (principal) of a school is to direct and lead the institutional educational project (PEI) as required by Law 19.979 (Ministerio de Educación, 2006). Additionally, they are required to organize and guide the technical-pedagogical and professional development work of the teachers and inform parents about the school's goals and progress.

Soon after, beginning in 2005, a new generation of policies was developed based on a key assumption of the quasi market model, principals and their schools would thrive if provided with entrepreneurial autonomy. Center-left democratic governments, unlike the dictatorship, did not emphasized competition as an incentive for educational improvement, but rather the need to strengthen professional competencies and networking as a condition for establishing and sustaining improvements in students' learning. Policies aimed to enhance quasi market dynamics were complemented by compensatory policies to improve educational quality and equity (Bellei & Muñoz, 2023). These policies explicitly granted school administrators the necessary autonomy to manage financial and pedagogical resources, thereby placing the responsibility for the school's competitiveness and effectiveness squarely on their shoulders.

From 2008 forward, policies sought to institutionalize principals' strategic role in creating conditions for capacity building to drive school improvements. Campos Vergara (2025) reviewed policy documents and statutory regulations defining principals' work, concluding that collectively the 126 documents that currently regulate their work include 551 tasks that principals are expected to execute. Weinstein and Hernández (2016) distinguish four categories of policies enacted over the last 20 years to enhance school leadership. A first set of policies focuses on principals' roles in bottom-up improvement initiatives such as the Preferential Subsidy Law (SEP Law) and Collective Performance Agreement for School Management Teams (ADECO). Other policies focused on defining the responsibilities of principals as instructional leaders and accountability frameworks (the School Leadership Framework and the Indicative Performance Standards for school inspection). A third set of policies focuses on attracting and retaining high-quality candidates and regulating the selection and evaluation of public school principals (Civil Servant Selection Process, ADP). The fourth set aims to prepare a highly qualified leadership workforce that can lead to improvements by enhancing school-based teachers' professional learning.

3.1. Collective Performance Agreement for School Leadership Teams

To incentivize the implementation of several of the policies summarized in Table 1, the Ministry of Education has implemented the Collective Performance Agreement (ADECO) since 2004. ADECO was established by Law No. 19.933 to support the implementation of a bottom-up quality assurance model, which involves the school developing an improvement project tailored to needs emerging from school self-evaluation, external validation, and the development of a school improvement plan (Ministerio de Educación, Chile, 2004a). To participate in ADECO, school leadership teams, with the support of their school's owner (i.e., DEM or Local Educational Services (LES) in the public sector and an educational foundation in the private sector), submit a proposal to the Ministry of Education Center for Improvement, Experimentation, and Pedagogical Research (CPEIP). Public and private state-subsidized schools with an enrollment of 250 students or more are eligible to apply. If accepted, successful completion of an ADECO agreement entails a financial incentive to the leadership team implementing the project.

Although the bottom-up approach has remained, it has been complemented by a top-down approach since 2010 to encourage more applications. CPEIP has defined several Model ADECO projects that leverage the impact of school leadership on school, teacher, and student outcomes. By 2021 model projects seek to support the implementation of four key policies. First, in terms of developing school leaders' capacities, the projects emphasize their role in providing teachers with systematic monitoring, evaluation, and feedback to improve teaching and learning, as stated in the Indicative Performance Standards used by the Education Quality Agency to inspect schools (Ministerio de Educación, 2015a). Second, projects aim to strengthen practices and personal resources outlined in the Framework for

Good School Management and Leadership (Ministerio de Educación, 2015b). Third, projects provide tools and resources to implement the System for Professional Development, which states that teacher professional development is a right and that school leaders must create a school plan to ensure teachers' access to this right. Fourth, all projects connect professional learning to local and national educational priorities. The post-pandemic reactivation of education programs is a key priority for 2024–2025 (e.g., reading and writing). Finally, all projects aim to support collaboration between school leaders and teachers to strengthen teachers' capacities for implementing practices defined in the Standards for the Teaching Profession (Ministerio de Educación, 2021), including collaboration and reflective practices that drive professional learning. The scaffolding provided by CPEIP to prepare each model project also represents an approach to strengthening the professional learning of school leadership teams.

3.2. Preferential School Subsidy Law (SEP): Advancing Decentralization

In 2008, the Preferential School Subsidy Law (SEP) was introduced to reduce the high levels of social segregation and unequal educational opportunities and to increase students' achievement. The state increased the monthly voucher for students from families with an income up to the 50th percentile in the national distribution (priority students) by up to 70%. An additional 10% of extra funding was assigned to schools that concentrated large numbers of these students (Valenzuela & Montecinos, 2017). SEP is open to all schools receiving public funding, and private voucher schools that charge parents a tuition co-payment receive a smaller amount of the voucher. However, they cannot charge a co-payment to priority students. By significantly increasing the value of the voucher for students from the lowest 50% of socioeconomic levels, private schools expanded their potential enrollment, as more funding could be translated into increased profits.

Table 1. Summary of Educational Policies Analyzed for their Impact on School Leaders' Work.

Law 19.070 Teaching statute. Date of Publication: 27 June 1991 **Brief description:** • An agreement between the Ministry of Education and the teachers' union to regulate the work of school administrators and teachers. • Teachers have autonomy in planning their classes and evaluating results, selecting texts and materials that support their work, and interacting with parents and guardians. • Teachers have the right to professional development. School administrators and the Ministry of Education can collaborate in this effort. • School administrators must manage and supervise the school and its staff and ensure the care and education of students.
Law 19.410 Modifies Law 19.070 and other matters Date of Publication: 2 September 1995 **Brief description:** • Establishes that vacancies for principals in public schools must be filled through an open and transparent competitive selection process, which a municipal-level committee will oversee. The principal elected to the position serves for five years and, after completing this period, must participate in a new competition if they wish to continue in the position. • Limits the discretion of municipal mayors to appoint principals and establishes that the selection criteria must be strictly educational and endorsed by a local committee that is representative of different stakeholders. • Accountability is established with respect to the attainment of the school's goals, as principals must report the results of their administration to the school's stakeholders.

Table 1. *Cont.*

Law 19.979 Modifies the full school day Date of Publication: 6 November 2004 **Brief description:** • Amends the Teaching Statute of 1991, establishing that principals will lead the development of the school's educational project, overseeing curriculum implementation, teacher professional development, and engaging parents to support their pupils' education. • The principal is vested with powers to ensure that teaching is geared toward achieving the learning outcomes set out in the Institutional Education Project (PEI), which is developed with broad participation. • Public school principals may allocate, administer, and control the resources delegated to them in accordance with the law.
Law 19.933 Offers a special improvement to professionals in education as indicated Date of Publication: 12 February 2004 **Brief description:** • Defines a salary and bonus structure for professionals working in schools receiving public funding. • It defines a collective performance allowance for education professionals in municipal and private-subsidized schools with over 250 students enrolled. This allowance is awarded annually based on the achievement of goals set for the school leadership team, formalized through a collective performance agreement signed each year in the first quarter. The agreement must outline annual goals, indicators, weighting factors, and verification methods to be shared with the school's stakeholders.
Decree 177 Amends the Teaching Statute Date of Publication: 20 April 2006 **Brief description:** • Redefines the functions of the school principal. Establishes that a public process must be followed to fill positions of the other members of the school leadership team (i.e., the head of the curriculum unit, the inspector general, and the assistant principal). • The local commissions charged with the selection of principals are also responsible for the selection of candidates for other positions in the school leadership team. This measure limits principals' discretion to appoint their collaborators.
Law 20.248 Preferential School Subsidy (Ministerio de Educación, Chile, 2008) Date of Publication: 1 February 2008 **Brief description:** • Authorizes extra funding to the regular base subsidy, according to the students' socioeconomic status. More resources go to schools with the most vulnerable students. • The school principal, in agreement with the municipal school administrator or school owner, must submit to the Ministry of Education an Educational Improvement Plan (PME) that, in addition to contributing to the implementation of the PEI, closes learning gaps reported by the national assessment (SIMCE). • The school's autonomy in defining the PME is dependent on its classification based on SIMCE results: • Autonomous: schools that consistently demonstrate good educational results among their students. These schools have access to greater autonomy to define their plan and use of SEP funding. • Emerging: schools with low educational results and specific problems in some areas of school management. The PME must include specific actions to address the areas identified as needing improvements. • In recovery: schools that show consistently poor results and therefore require greater resources and external support. These schools must hire external consultants to define and implement the PME. However, if poor results persist, they may be closed.
Law 20.370 General Education Law Date of Publication: 12 September 2009 **Brief description:** • Reinforces that teachers must teach what is prescribed in the national curriculum and that keeping up to date and participating in the national evaluation processes is a professional duty. • School principals and other members of the leadership team must supervise classroom teaching through observation and feedback. They must also implement a PME aligned with national policies. • School principals are accountable for results aligned with the general objectives of the Chilean education system and the national curriculum guidelines.

Table 1. *Cont.*

Law 20.529 Quality Assurance System Date of Publication: 27 August 2011 **Brief description:** • Sets up the National System of Quality Assurance of Education (SAC), creating the Superintendence of Education, which audits schools' and their administrators' compliance with legislation. This agency receives and follows up on parents' complaints regarding noncompliance. Schools shown to be noncompliant with regulations receive a sanction. • It creates the Education Quality Agency (ACE) charged with evaluating schools' performance through the SIMCE test and school inspection. • Introduces self-evaluation and external evaluation processes for the PME, based on the Indicative Performance Standards (IPS) for schools. • Refines the categorization of schools, adding personal and social development indicators along with academic results in the SIMCE testing program. • Reinforces that accountability is based on a comprehensive external evaluation (based on SIMCE results, considering contextual factors) that leads to schools being classified as High, Medium, Medium-Low, or Insufficient. • The Quality Agency visits schools rated "High" to learn from their good practices and disseminate them. • Low-performing schools are inspected to suggest changes that local actors, together with the Ministry of Education, should implement. If they do not improve in the medium term, parents should be supported in transferring their children to other schools, especially if the school loses its official recognition.
Quality and equity in education Date of Publication: 26 February 2011 **Brief description:** • Incorporates the procedures followed by Senior Civil Servants (ADP) for the selection of public schools' principals, to provide government institutions with managers who are efficient and effective in implementing national policies • Public school principals sign a performance agreement that contains goals defined by the municipal department of education. This contract guides the employers' annual evaluation of school principals.
Law 20.845 Inclusion, regulating admissions, eliminates co-payment, and profit in schools receiving public funding Date of Publication: 8 June 2015 **Brief description:** • Regulates the process and reasons for expelling students. The school cannot expel or cancel the enrollment of students, unless it is fully justified by the law and the school's manual of conduct. • Prohibits the use of student selection processes in schools financed through a state subsidy. Schools must admit any student who applies, if there are vacancies. This respects the right of parents to choose the school for their pupils. • Prohibits for-profit schools financed through a state subsidy. • Gradually reduces the families' tuition copayment as the subsidy increases. • The principal must ensure the school council meets at least 4 times a year and present to the council a report of the school processes and outcomes.
Law 20.903 Teacher Professional Development System Date of Publication: 1 April 2016 **Brief description:** • Seeks to strengthen the teaching profession within a framework that regulates entry and promotion subject to standards and teacher evaluation, by criteria established by the Ministry of Education and the Quality Agency. • Teachers progress through the following stages: Initial, Early, Advanced, Expert I, and Expert II. From Advanced on, teachers must undergo evaluation through the national system. Results of this evaluation are associated with increasing their opportunities for professional development and salary increases. • In the annual report prepared by the principal, there is an account of the local professional development plan's design, implementation, and results of based on information from the teacher evaluation system and the Quality Agency. • Principals must conduct classroom observation and provide formative feedback to teachers aligned with the expected performance described in the teaching profession standards. • The Ministry should provide teachers in schools with low and insufficient performance with professional learning opportunities to comply with the professional standards that describe the expected performance of schools and the Indicative Performance Standards. • Teachers who, despite the support provided, do not reach the expected level of development (advanced) risk dismissal from the public education system.

Table 1. *Cont.*

Law 21.040 New Public Education Date of Publication: 24 November 2017 **Brief description:** • Ends municipal administration of schools, creating Local Public Education Services (LES) to administer public schools, coordinated by a national body under the Ministry of Education: Directorate of Public Education (DEP). • DEP develops the National Public Education Strategy that guides educational and performance contracts prepared by DEP for the LES Director and by the LES Director for principals, with the agreement of local steering boards.
Law 21.625 Single Teacher Evaluation System (Ministerio de Educación, Chile, 2023) Date of Publication: 24 October 2023 **Brief description:** • Establishes an evaluation system that applies equally to teachers in public and subsidized private schools, based on the National Teaching Standards. • Local professional development plans developed by the principal, in consultation with teachers, should give priority to teachers who have not reached the expected stage of their career. • In response to a request from the teaching staff, principals must allocate time so participating teachers can collaborate as they prepare their portfolios. • The professional development plan should ensure that teachers who do not achieve the standard measured by the national teacher evaluation system do so in the short term. • Principals cannot assign additional tasks to teachers that require them to spend more than 50% of non-teaching contract hours. • Principals prepare reports that include information on actions taken to help teachers advance in the career stages, including results of the teacher evaluation conducted at the central level. Teachers voluntarily provide to principals the results of their evaluation.

The SEP law requires that the extra funding be spent according to an improvement plan developed by the school, based on a self-assessment, which culminates in a contract signed by the school's owner and the Ministry of Education. In terms of school improvement, SEP granted schools greater autonomy to design multi-annual improvement plans (PME) and contract external technical assistance. The amount of autonomy granted, however, differed according to the school's performance on SIMCE (see Table 1). By 2009, nearly all public schools had secured their performance agreements to qualify for SEP funding. Although the SEP aims to promote decentralization, principals are compelled to emphasize instructional leadership by setting high expectations, planning instructional programs, and conducting classroom observations. SEP links public resources, performance, and sanctions, requiring schools to commit to goals for SIMCE results. If schools fail for five consecutive years (Insufficient Performance Category), they face the loss of public funding and potential school closures (Bellei & Muñoz, 2023).

The SEP law shaped educational leadership at multiple levels. At the school level, it reinforced the fact that principals must lead a participatory process to diagnose the school's strengths and weaknesses, define short- and medium-term actions, and frame these actions within the PME, all of which are financed with SEP resources. These actions must directly improve teaching and encourage improvements through financial stimuli that complement the allocations based on the voucher. For example, current regulations authorize principals to submit a professional development plan to the municipal director of education (DEM) for approval, allocating an amount not exceeding 5% of what the SEP law establishes for this item (Law 20.903, Article 18, F).

At the territorial level, it opens the possibility for improvement initiatives carried out by a network of schools financed with SEP resources. In short, the SEP law provides financial support to enable instructional leadership to impact teaching practices, but it also presents challenges. Studies on the investment of SEP resources show that a high percentage of subsidies are returned to the fiscal coffers due to under-execution of actions associated with instructional leadership and professional development for school staff,

among other initiatives. This has been associated with the lack of principals' knowledge of what actions can be funded by SEP monies, as well as insufficient preparation to develop local professional development plans (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo [PNUD], 2023).

3.3. Framework for Good School Management and Leadership (MBDLE)

The framework, first introduced in 2005 and revised in 2015, describes school leaders' practices, knowledge, skills, and dispositions encompassing all positions within a school leadership team (principal, head of the technical-pedagogical unit, inspector in charge of school discipline, and other positions the principal might establish). These practices are organized into five dimensions: Shared Strategic Vision, Developing Professional Capacities, Leading and Monitoring Teaching and Learning, Managing Co-existence and Participation, and Leading and Managing the Organization (Ministerio de Educación, 2015b). The primary purposes of the framework are to foster a shared understanding of the expectations for school leaders' work, to inform professional development financed by MINEDUC for practicing and aspiring principals, and to guide public school principal selection processes.

3.4. The Indicative Performance Standards for Schools and Their Administrators (IPS)

In the context of the National Quality Assurance System (Law 20.529, SAC), the Education Quality Agency designed and implemented the Indicative Performance Standards for Schools (IPS) to guide external inspections of school functioning, support self-evaluation, and inform the school's continuous improvement processes (Ministerio de Educación, 2015a). SAC, however, acknowledges that an essential component for the operations of results-based accountability systems is that schools have enough autonomy and control over their management processes. Therefore, the performance standards are indicative, and schools are not obligated to implement them; their decisions regarding the use of these standards are not subject to sanctions. Moreover, the policy explicitly states that school owners/principals are autonomous in managing their internal processes to comply with mandatory statutory regulations and meet the learning standards and other quality indicators measured through SIMCE.

There are a total of 79 standards, organized into four management areas: leadership (school and intermediate levels, and planning); instructional management (curriculum, teaching and learning, and supporting students' development); formation and co-existence (support student's development holistically, co-existence in a respectful environment, and participation and democracy); and resource management (personnel, finances, and educational resources). The assumption is that if a school implements the standards, then it will achieve the goals defined in its educational project and school improvement plan.

For example, in the Curriculum Management subdimension, one standard states that the leadership team will support and guide teachers in implementing effective instructional strategies. The rubric used by inspectors to judge the school's performance on this standard specifies the expectations that principals will conduct classroom observations to provide pedagogical feedback to teachers. Another expectation is that teacher collaboration is promoted through structures such as professional learning communities. Both practices emphasize job-embedded professional learning opportunities, as these activities take place in the classroom, where teachers interact with students, and are centered on issues of actual practice. These practices are reinforced by the System for Teacher Professional Development, which we address further along.

3.5. Selection of Public School Principals

Law No. 20.501 established standardized procedures for hiring, firing, and evaluating principals following regulations defined for civil servants (ADP). This law aimed to mitigate arbitrary appointments by municipal authorities and political patronage and to increase the recruitment and hiring of qualified candidates by mandating a competitive selection with the municipality's mayor holding final decision-making authority. This legislation introduced incentives for school leaders, including salary increases and performance bonuses, while also allowing greater autonomy in staffing and budget management. Principals gained the authority to dismiss up to 5% of underperforming teachers annually. They could choose two key members of their leadership team: a curriculum coordinator and a general inspector responsible for student behavior. The municipal Department of Education (DEM) was provided with new mechanisms to define their principals' work by mandating a five-year contract in which principals are accountable for achieving specified results (Montecinos et al., 2015). The performance agreement aims to enhance school productivity through the effective management of school processes, as outlined in the SEP law and IPS.

In synthesis, tensions between centralization and decentralization emerge when combining the ADP principal selection mechanism and improvement plans. The performance contract and school improvement plan, on the one hand, must be contextualized within a school-based educational project and self-evaluation. On the other hand, targets are centrally defined to ensure that principals are aligned with the Ministry of Education to implement national policies effectively.

3.6. System for Teacher Professional Development

The System for Teacher Professional Development (STPD, Law 20.903) was enacted in 2016 to strengthen the teaching profession. STPD defines a career ladder for teachers who progress upward based on evaluations that include a portfolio and testing. Advancement to the next career stage brings salary increases and the opportunity to serve as middle leaders who support their peers' professional learning. Additionally, STPD requires that principals, with other members of the leadership team, intervene directly in the professional learning of classroom teachers (providing feedback on their practice), distributing pedagogical leadership to outstanding teachers (e.g., mentoring novice teachers), and supporting professional learning communities to address the national curriculum learning standards and use performance data provided by the national teacher evaluation system. Every 4 years, teachers undergo an evaluation process based on two standardized instruments, a portfolio of pedagogical competencies, and a knowledge test.

School principals are task with ensuring the "professional development of the teachers at the school" by proposing "plans for the professional development of teachers" and promoting "pedagogical innovation and collaborative work among teachers" to acquire "new competencies and the improvement of disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge" (Law 20.903, art. 12 bis). To this effect, non-teaching time for class preparation and collaborative work increased from 30% of the teachers' total contracted time in 2017 to 35% in 2019. The local professional development plan should align with the school improvement plan and be based on data provided by the teacher evaluation system used for determining career advancement (Law 21.625).

An international evaluation of the STPD (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo [PNUD], 2023) has led to the introduction of new regulations (Law 21.625) that encourage linking local plans to the consolidation of teachers' professional competencies, as outlined in the Standards for the Teaching Profession (Ministerio de Educación, 2021). In this sense, the principal is responsible for ensuring that the teacher performance recog-

nition system is institutionalized at their school and guides local continuous professional development, helping teachers succeed in the national teacher evaluation.

3.7. New Public Education Reform: Re-Centralization

Kameshwara et al. (2020) summarized the negative aspects of decentralization, several of which are observed as a result of decentralization through the de-municipalization of public education. Over the last 40 years, the Chilean education system has reinforced school segregation based on class, structural incoherence in educational policy, the financial crises in public schools due to low enrollment, and political patronage (corruption) in the appointment of school principals (Donoso-Díaz et al., 2019; Bellei et al., 2018). The lack of the ministry's control over DEM and the potential divergence of interests between the two diminished the impact of several ministerial initiatives that aimed at medium- and long-term goals at the school level. Additionally, municipal governments varied significantly in their ability to provide quality public education.

To address these problems, the New Public Education System (NEP, Law No. 21.040) was introduced in 2017 to reform the governance structure for the provision of public education. Between 2018 and 2025, the intermediate level of the education system will gradually replace municipalities as providers of public education, with 70 Local Public Education Services (LES). Additionally, this law establishes the Directorate of Public Education (DEP) within the Ministry of Education, which will centrally coordinate and guide these LESs. The primary task of a LES is to enhance the quality of public education by structuring and organizing support for schools under their jurisdiction; a key target is to increase enrollment in public schools by offering a high-quality, diversified educational program.

The Director of the LES is appointed through the ADP process, with the participation of a Local Steering Board and a Local Education Council representing a range of stakeholders of the territory (teachers, parents, local businesses, universities, etc.). DEP develops a national public education strategy and each LES Director develops a Local Strategic Plan (a 6-year plan) and Annual Plan, while each school develops an Improvement Plan (a 4-year plan). Each LES's Local Strategic Plan should define local goals that integrate national ones (developed by the DEP, Ministerio de Educación, 2020) as well as those from each school's Improvement Plan. Each school also creates an Institutional Educational Project, defining its mission, vision, and values, which orients the collective work within the school. All of these plans are developed through participatory processes, ensuring alignment among them (Montecinos et al., 2021).

A key pillar of this reform is the greater autonomy and protagonist role afforded to schools and early childhood centers. Law 21.040, Article 4, defines these organizations as the "basic unit of the system", and as such, they will have autonomy to define their educational projects in agreement with their identity and characteristics. Moreover, the LES has the responsibility to support and strengthen the internal capacities of each school, safeguarding their autonomy and promoting community participation. To safeguard decentralization, the person responsible for managing each of these plans has a certain level of autonomy to define goals and activities, along with some discretion regarding whether to use feedback from advisory groups or upper-level line managers (Montecinos et al., 2021).

A recent survey asked principals working in schools administered by a LES about their current work conditions (Muñoz et al., 2025). Results show their overall positive evaluation of how LESs are administering public schools. However, over 70% of the principals surveyed stated that their administrative work has increased, 61% reported an increased stress level, and 57% noted that the school was receiving less money to support bottom-up initiatives. At the same time, 53% indicated that they were receiving greater technical and pedagogical support from the SLE, whereas 28% reported having greater

autonomy, and 26% reported diminished autonomy. In another study examining changes in principals' perceptions of school autonomy between 2009 and 2019, findings showed that perceived autonomy differs by responsibility areas, mirroring the new regulations discussed above. For example, compared 2009, in 2019 principals reported having less control over teachers' salaries (defined by the System of Professional Development) and student selection (restricted by the Inclusion Law). Additionally, as several of these regulations only affect schools receiving public funding, it is not surprising that principals in private schools perceive greater levels of autonomy.

4. The Continuous Preparation of School Leaders

To complement the policies mentioned above, between 2004 and 2005, the Center for Improvement, Experimentation, and Pedagogical Research (CPEIP) conducted pilot preparation programs for school leaders, which led to the establishment of the Management Team Training Program in 2006. The objective of the Management Team Training Program was to contribute to the strengthening, development, and enhancement of the competencies associated with school management for administrative and technical-pedagogical leaders. This, in turn, led to the establishment of the Educational Leadership Program (ELP) in 2007 (Decree No. 246).

Between 2011 and 2014, the ELP was reformulated as the Preparation of Directors of Excellence program (PDE), administered by CPEIP. The program was a response to an evaluation that identified low professional competencies among Chilean school principals. The objective of the program was to generate professional development opportunities that would enable current and aspiring principals to "acquire, develop, and strengthen competencies to serve as principals of educational institutions" (Decree 44, art.1). The ultimate goal of Decree 44 is to "contribute to the professional development of those who intend to serve as principals of educational institutions, promoting the development of management skills that will lead to actions that contribute to better school management."

Initially, CPEIP invited national and international institutions to submit bids to offer postgraduate degrees, internships, diplomas, and master's degrees in educational leadership. School leaders admitted to the selected programs were provided with a scholarship. The was innovative in that, for the first time, the state invested in preparing a principal pipeline. Teachers aspiring to become principals were given scholarships. After completing the preparation program, they were required to apply for a principal post through the ADP processes. Professional development continues to be a strategy to "disseminate changes or new tools in education policy". For example, each year CPEIP funds programs addressing updates to regulations and curriculum frameworks, changes in government administration, as well as diagnoses made by Local Committees and issues that respond to contingencies.

Currently, an analysis of the professional development infrastructure for preparing educational leaders shows it is implemented at multiple levels of the system, which is consistent with the complexity and continuous evolution of the tasks of leading and managing education (Montecinos & Cortez, 2025). As educational policies place new demands on school and early childhood education leaders, the various agencies responsible for implementing these policies design professional learning and support strategies to ensure their proper implementation. The Education Quality Agency, the Superintendence of Education, the Public Education Directorate, and the Local Education Services have initiatives aimed at preparing school leadership teams, seeking to align their work with their specific priorities. For example, the Education Quality Agency prioritizes training in the use of the tools it has designed as part of its responsibilities for evaluating and guiding the education system. It therefore holds webinars and workshops on the use of data for leaders in the education system. CPEIP emphasizes programs that strengthen the practices

defined in the Framework for Good School Management and Leadership and the Teacher Development System concerning provisions for the Local Plan and the adoption of teaching profession standards.

The Division of General Education in the Ministry of Education offers professional development through its Support for Improvement unit, which provides direct supervision to schools classified as insufficient by the Quality Agency, in addition to activities through the Improvement Networks (RME). The latter promotes peer learning through collective reflection strategies, the exchange of good practices, the analysis of processes and improvement trajectories, and the socialization of educational policies by supervisors (Pino-Yancovic et al., 2019). Alongside these professional development initiatives promoted by the state, evidence suggests that a wide range of master's programs in school management, leadership, and administration are available (Muñoz et al., 2019; Marfán et al., 2021).

5. Concluding Remarks

In this article, we examined a set of policies promulgated mainly in the last 20 years, shaping Chilean school leaders' work demands and priorities as they fulfill the functions defined for their role. The policies examined aimed to mobilize school leaders, and, in particular, principals, as drivers of school improvement. The extent to which the intention of policymakers has materialized is not addressed in this article, as we did not systematically analyze empirical evidence regarding links between school leadership and school improvement in Chile. Our analysis exemplified how policymakers introduce new tasks and reinforce principals' work priorities as they are made responsible for ensuring that diverse improvement policies reach teachers and classrooms. We did not analyze empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of this approach to policy implementation in Chile.

Our analysis suggests that policies advocate for the centrality of school autonomy in defining and developing their educational projects, stressing the delegation of responsibility for school management to school leaders. Our review also suggests that the support for schools' autonomy is placed in tension when the successful implementation of the various planning instruments is determined by targets (outcomes) and practices (processes) that are centrally defined through professional frameworks and accountability mechanisms (Law 20.529, Quality Assurance System). Additionally, our analysis suggests that autonomy is further curtailed by work demands that seek to align principals' work with policy directives and priorities. This alignment effectively produces centralization through the process of institutional isomorphism, facilitated by normative frameworks and coercive pressures resulting from high-stakes assessments and performance contracts (Puttick, 2017). Alignment with educational policy is not the problem; rather, it is when this alignment disregards the necessary "recontextualization." Bernstein (2000) uses this term to refer to the construction of pedagogical discourse and to indicate that the lack of recontextualization of discourse by teachers leads to the national curriculum becoming an irrelevant pedagogical practice. This is replicated (reproduced) at the school leadership level through a non-reflective or a-reflective appropriation of educational policy, encouraged by a central level that aspires to see it "trickle down."

This conclusion agrees with studies showing that principals working in public schools in Chile report having varying degrees of autonomy to make decisions to address local challenges and harness local assets, aiming to improve their school's performance on high-stakes standardized tests (Marfán et al., 2021). School autonomy is "relative," in the sense that it must safeguard the robustness of the local system and contribute to systemic improvement while averting the risk of fragmentation.

The tension between centralization and decentralization in the work of school principals becomes problematic because educational accountability policies make principals primarily responsible for the successes and failures of their schools. NEP reform marks a change by stipulating that schools and the intermediate level, LES, share the responsibility for school-level outcomes. However, NEP has also introduced additional planning and accountability mechanisms, resulting in a greater administrative burden, which distracts principals from their instructional leadership roles (Montecinos et al., 2021). NEP can provide an interesting case study of school reforms that try to reverse decentralization policies advocated by quasi-market governance models of education. NEP aims at redesigning the intermediate level of the public education sector with regulations that seek to strengthen alignment across the educational system while also stressing the need for school autonomy to address their unique mission statements and the needs of the communities they served.

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Notes

[1] SIMCE (Education Quality Measurement System) is a national census standardized achievement testing program that is administered every year in fourth and 10th grades. Each year, testing covers mathematics and language, and on alternate years, other subjects and grades are tested.

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Article

Dissecting the School Management Rubric in a Japanese Reform-Oriented Municipality

Hirokazu Yokota

Childcare Policy Division, Child Development Bureau, Children and Families Agency, Tokyo 100-6090, Japan; hirokazu0116@gmail.com

Abstract: In Japan, there is almost no national policy that details the attributes and abilities desirable for school management staff. However, in March 2023, Toda City in Saitama prefecture, a city famous for its aggressive education reforms, published the Toda City School Management Rubric (SMR) as perspectives to be referred to in the daily practice of school management through a time-consuming hearing from principals and vice principals. By categorizing each dimension of the rubric itself as well as the documents relating to the creation process with the four school leadership styles, while making a comparison to school leadership standards in the U.S. and U.K., this paper aims to illuminate how the magic words of "school leadership" were turned into concrete perspectives for school leaders to reflect on. As a result, there are similarities and differences among leadership standards in three countries. Moreover, a transformational leadership style seems to be the most frequently mentioned among the four school leadership styles, and many of the principals and vice principals referred to instructional leadership in a sense that they need to take a lead in transforming traditional teacher-led instruction into student-centered learning. Furthermore, a distributed leadership style is considered to be important by many school leaders, especially because they continue to seek an appropriate balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches, and some principals and vice principals take the issue of work style reform seriously, which assumes an aspect of transactional leadership. As an arguably unprecedented attempt to comprehensively analyze the detailed policy documents on school leadership in Japan, this article will provide cross-cultural implications for school leadership policy and practice.

Keywords: Japan; school leadership; transactional leadership; instructional leadership; transformational leadership; distributed leadership; educational leadership; educational administration; leadership standard

1. Introduction

The role of school leaders cannot be emphasized enough. As policy reforms are increasingly focusing on the work of school leaders as a way to bridge the gap between policy and practice [1], countries around the world have invested in defining the characteristics of effective leadership. Simultaneously, because school principals are frequently expected to perform unreasonable tasks, especially when supplemental support resources are limited due to district budgetary constraints [2], building the capacity of principals and other school leaders so that they can fulfill these multifaceted roles should be a priority of education policy makers. In this context, within which school leaders' work has been characterized by increasing complexities in expectations for school leaders and greater demands for accountability, there have been more calls for better professional preparation programs, and greater attention to programs tailored to the needs of established school principals [3]. Undoubtedly, school leadership development has taken on more importance than ever in this era of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.

In this worldwide policy trend, Japan seems to be an exception—it neither specifies perspectives on effective leadership in addition to referring to it as a "magic word" [4], nor

implements well-intended, coherent, and systemic capacity-building policies for school leaders [5], at least at a national level. However, to what extent prefectural and municipal Boards of Education have tackled this issue has been under the veil because too little information on policies as well as practices relating to school leadership development is available even in Japanese, let alone in English.

As an interesting case, in March 2023, the Toda City Board of Education in Saitama prefecture, a city famous for its aggressive education reform [6], published the Toda City Version School Management Rubric (Ver 1.0) (Toda City SMR). This city is famous for its innovative approach to learning, with former principal Tsutomu Togasaki spearheading transformative reforms such as cultivating skills resistant to automation, fostering collaboration across sectors, and leveraging data for informed decision-making in education, upon assuming superintendency in 2015 [7]. One of these reform concepts is to study school management, just as to study lessons and give teachers feedback based on quantitative and qualitative data for lesson improvement [8]. Specifically, from the policy document published in November 2022, it seems that the Toda City Board of Education (BOE) situates the SMR as one of the policy initiatives to study lessons and school management for continuous improvement. Additionally, the BOE mentioned that "school leadership has become more important than ever in times when issues surrounding schools are getting diverse and complicated", "the guidance issued by the national government emphasizes assessment and facilitation by school principals in addition to management skills", and thus "perspectives (lenses) for school management staff to reflect on daily school management practices are needed" [9].

In this policy context, the Toda City SMR, as perspectives (lenses) to be referred to in the daily practice of school management, has been developed through a time-consuming hearing from and dialogue with principals and vice principals. Additionally, the rubric will be utilized by school management staff and the school organization as a whole to reflect on daily practices and make improvements as needed [10]. The original SMR, which was written in Japanese, is translated into English by the author and shown in Table 1.

What is striking about the Toda City SMR is that the BOE not only refers to a variety of literature on school leadership but also incorporates views from the ground—from principals and vice principals—when creating this rubric, thus trying to strike a balance between theory and practice. When it comes to the international comparison of school leadership standards, Ingvarson et al. [3], reviewing school leadership standards from the USA, the UK, the Netherlands, and Australia, found that standards did not vary much by national and cultural contexts. Because their study did not include Japan as a subject of analysis, it remains to be seen whether or to what extent the school leadership standard(s) in Japan differs from those in other countries. Additionally, since the knowledge base on the international adoption of school leadership standards is limited, particularly about its associations with various role demands (or imperatives) of school administration [11], the Toda City SMR, with detailed information on what school leaders think about their school management, will fill in this research gap by laying out different leadership styles as demonstrated in this particular standard.

With these research imperatives, the present study, by dissecting the Toda City SMR through the lenses of transactional, instructional, transformational, and distributed leadership styles, will help understand how leadership is shaped in the context of K-12 education in Japan. Additionally, it creates a paradigm for future studies on the evolution of school leadership in Japan, where there is a research desideratum, in comparison with other countries, thus contributing to a global field of research and practice. Specifically, this study is an unprecedented attempt to comprehensively analyze the detailed policy documents on school leadership in Japan, where such research is virtually nonexistent, at least as it relates to the literature written in English.

Table 1. Toda City Version School Management Rubric (Ver.1) ([10]: translated into English by the author).

1. School management staff as a Visionary	1-1. Is the school vision articulated, referred to with the school leader's own words, and revised as needed?
	1-2. Is there any intentional system to make the vision referred to by teachers and children as a common language?
	1-3. Do you identify phenomena contrary to the vision based on data and make regular improvements as needed?
2. School management staff who lead Curriculum Designers	2-1. Does the curriculum reflect the vision, and are resources from private companies, governments, academia and the community fully utilized to realize it?
	2-2. Is there any concrete system to realize "active learning" with ICT as a must throughout the school?
	2-3. Do you establish collegiality and promote information sharing across subjects/grades through in-school professional development and other approaches?
3. School management staff as a Manager	3-1. Do you establish a school organization in which teachers can bring out their potential synergistically?
	3-2. Do you ensure quality time directly related to children for teachers by work style reforms such as leveling burden and Business Process Re-engineering?
	3-3. Do you catch small signs in order to prevent issues and make a swift and apt decision in risk management?
4. School management staff as a Facilitator	4-1. Do you observe what's going on in classrooms with your own eyes and give feedback on learning/instruction to teachers?
	4-2. Do you provide opportunities for growth such as dialogues with encouragement to school staff in a timely manner tailored to each staff's situation?
	4-3. Do you strike a balance between creating value added unique to yourself and ensuring sustainability after you leave?
5. School management staff as a Buffer	5-1. Do you engage stakeholders intentionally in school management in addition to sharing information with and listening to stakeholders?
	5-2. Do you stay informed of national and the Toda City Board of Education's policies and reflect them on school management and educational activities as needed?
	5-3. Do you look objectively at and update yourself, as well as analyse school management from a variety of perspectives, through continuous learning?

2. Literature Review

Given the aforementioned research objective, the relevant literature on school leadership standards, as well as different leadership styles as lenses to dissect school leadership standards, are reviewed to set the stage for the present study.

School Leadership Standards

Assessing school principals' work is an issue that has drawn special attention internationally in recent years, either for recruitment and continuous improvement processes or for research purposes to identify the key characteristics and core competencies for student learning outcomes [12,13]. Allowing principals to identify quality and progress in their performance is especially necessary when promoting self-assessment. For this reason, rubrics are preferred because they allow for identifying specific levels of attainment in addition to assessing their own achievements and their improvement gaps and help principals to determine what they need to do to perform at a higher standard [14]. This resonates with the way the Toda City SMR is constructed, for the BOE officially acknowledges the need to "intentionally create a system where the policy (rubric) is referred to in daily school management and educational activities rather than keep the rubric 'a document on the table'" [15]. Although the rubric does not seem to explicitly include rating scales by numbers,

the policymakers apparently encourage school leaders to use it repetitively over a certain period of time to make continuous improvements.

As one of the most well-known school leadership standards overseas, in the United States, the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSELs) was established by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration, a consortium of professional organizations committed to advancing school leadership. The PSELs were formerly known as the ISLLC standards, when the Council of Chief State School Officers published the first version in 1996, followed by a modest update in 2008 based on the empirical research at the time [16]. The PSELs include ten standards for "educational leaders (who) need new standards to guide their practice in directions that will be the most productive and beneficial to students"; (1) Mission, Vision, and Core Values, (2) Ethics and Professional Norms, (3) Equity and Cultural Responsiveness, (4) Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, (5) Community of Care and Support for Students, (6) Professional Capacity of School Personnel, (7) Professional Community for Teachers and Staff, (8) Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community, (9) Operations and Management, and (10) School Improvement [16]. Each standard includes a detailed description of what effective educational leaders should do in each realm, which mainly applies to principals and assistant principals.

The transition from the ISLLC to the PSELs is regarded as relatively positive, for the new standards support, among others, the need to plan, the need to constantly collect and analyze data to inform plans and revisions of plans, the need to be collaborative and to genuinely seek and value diversity of input, the need to focus all plans on their potential effects on the success of all students, the need for a consistent, strong value and ethical system to guide all plans, the need to focus on how the plan will become implemented and assimilated into the culture of the school, the need to consider organizational readiness for change, and the importance of a shared vision [17]. These elements are also seen in the first dimension (School Management Staff as a Visionary) of the Toda City SMR, which embraces the shared vision of the school that includes the child's vision, the permeation of the vision into teachers as well as students, and the use of data to detect gaps between the vision and reality and make adjustments as needed.

It is also important to mention that the PSELs treat issues related to ethics, equity, and culturally responsive schooling (taking into account students' customs, characteristics, and experiences when designing learning) as discrete topics, each requiring an extensive discussion of its own, whereas, in the former ISLLC standards, issues related to these were grouped together under a single heading. Similarly, the new PSELs offer more detailed guidance related to leadership for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, give more attention to the need for school leaders to create a community of care and support for students, more fully describe school leaders' responsibility to develop the professional capacity of teachers and staff, and stress the value of engaging families and community members in student learning [18]. The Toda City SMR, puts an emphasis on "School Management Staff who lead Curriculum Designers" which includes the curriculum, lesson improvement, and collegiality among school staff, and "School Management Staff as a Facilitator" which entails support for teacher growth including giving feedback, however such issues as the collaboration with family and the community are touched upon as one of the three elements of "School Management Staff as a Buffer" and there is almost no mention of ethics and culturally responsive schooling.

Another renowned example of school leadership standards are the Headteachers' Standards (HSs) in the United Kingdom. The HSs include ten standards as well: (1) School culture, (2) Teaching, (3) Curriculum and assessment, (4) Behaviour, (5) Additional and special educational needs and disabilities, (6) Professional development, (7) Organisational management, (8) Continuous school improvement, (9) Working in partnership, and (10) Governance and accountability [19]. The first six standards build on the teachers' standards, whereas the remaining four focus on leadership responsibilities specific to headteachers. The standards can be used to shape headteachers' own practice and professional development, within and beyond the school, to support the recruitment and appointment

of headteachers, including the development of job descriptions and person specifications, to underpin frameworks for the training of school leaders, including current and aspiring headteachers, and to inform the performance management of headteachers [19]. Just as with the PSELs, the HSs include sentences to specify what each standard actually means.

Although the policy formation processes of the PSELs and the HSs are qualitatively different, with the former promoted by nongovernmental organizations and the latter as an authoritative governmental initiative [20–22], they share some common characteristics. Quinn [23] reports that (1) the standards have come to characterize all training programs for prospective principals; (2) the standards provide the focus for the ongoing training of principals; (3) the standards emphasize instructional leadership as the most important ingredient in professional development (rather than traditional management issues that are previously emphasized); and (4) the standards reflect the changing nature of the work of the principal. Although the latter two points will be explored later while making comparisons with the Toda City SMR, as for the former two points, the Toda City BOE seems to plan professional development opportunities for principals and vice principals with the five dimensions of the rubric in mind [8]. Moreover, according to Ingvarson et al. [3] who researched five countries' systems, they share common purposes for using school leadership standards: clarify expectations about school leadership for all those affected by it; enhance student learning outcomes; enhance the quality of educational leadership; provide a framework for professional development; provide a framework for certification; provide a framework for self-reflection and assessment; and provide a basis for determining eligibility for school leader positions. When it comes to the Toda City SMR, it does not contain the fifth (proving a framework for certification) and last (providing a basis for determining eligibility for school leader positions) purposes because in Japan, prefectural Boards of Education, not municipal BOEs, have the legal authority to fulfill these functions. However, it still covers the remaining five purposes mentioned above.

As a result of the preliminary comparison, it is reasonable to argue that the Toda City SMR has a relatively similar function to the PSEL and the HS in terms of its scope (to whom they apply) and usage (how to use them), with some minor differences. Given the content of each element of the aforementioned standards, the basic inter-relationship among the Toda City SMR, PSELs, and HSs is illustrated in Figure 1, which will be used for detailed analysis in the coming sections.

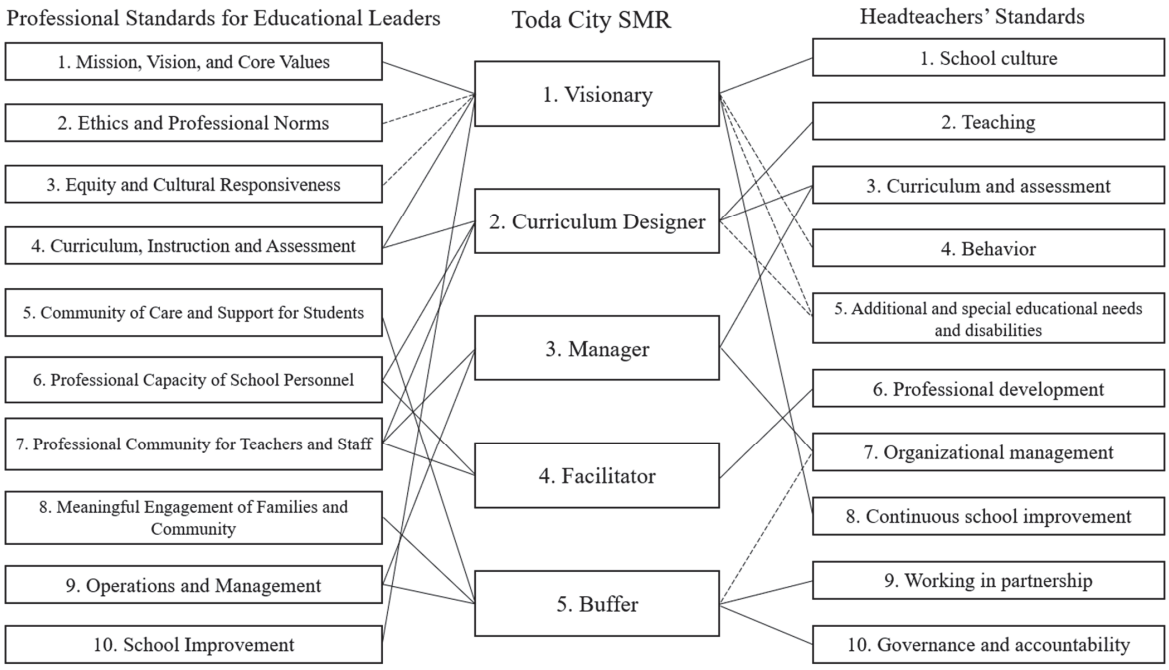

Figure 1. Four school leadership styles.

As a lens to dissect these school leadership standards, this article adopts four school leadership (transactional, instructional, transformational, and distributed leadership) styles articulated by Yokota [4], given the fact that these four styles seem to have been introduced in Japan without substantial conceptual modifications, and this classification was developed specifically for analyzing legislative as well as policy documents in Japan. A review of the literature on these leadership styles as pertinent to the research theme is briefly touched upon to help clarify the relations to and differences from each other.

Firstly, *transactional leadership* is defined as a leadership style that prioritizes organizational achievements that are focused on the organization. The sub-dimensions of transactional leadership are conditional award, management with expectancy, and management with passive expectancy [24]. In other words, this leadership style aims to achieve desirable organizational outcomes by treating individuals equally without attending to their unique different dispositions and changing their behavior through rules and regulations, external incentives, and accountability. Although derived from the management literature, it has also permeated into the education field, but rarely gained currency in comparison to the three leadership styles explained below. Although this leadership style is somewhat unavoidable in the case of an emergency, it is difficult for the *transactional* leadership style to prevail in school management, where the impact of school leaders on students is mediated by teacher behaviors and other conditions.

Instructional leadership, as the second style, is rooted in the belief that if school improvement is to make a difference for children, it has to be in fundamental ways around improving teaching and learning, thus targeting improving instructional capacity centrally [25]. Although the concept of instructional leadership came into prominent existence in the effective school movement in the 1980s, and attention shifted somewhat away from it during the mid-1990s, interests in studying this role of the school principal have remained quite stable since then [1], probably backed up by quantitative research that revealed a positive relationship between this specific leadership style and student achievement. For instance, based on earlier research [26], Bessell et al. [27] found that principals who focused on academic and instructional goals to improve student achievement and who were actively involved and visible in both the school and community, paid attention to local norms and concerns, promoted collaboration for mutual benefits among teachers, and shared decision-making with teachers, tended to also lead schools with higher student standardized test scores in reading, writing, and math. As long as teaching and learning remain the centerpiece of school reform, it is reasonable that policymakers expect school leaders to exercise the *instructional* leadership style to make visible changes in classrooms so that they can provide students with opportunities for them to prepare for the future.

The third *transformational* leadership style places transformation, development, and human values at the forefront [28], and is formed with idealized effects to inspire motivation, intellectual stimulation, and personal importance dimensions. *Transformational* leadership entails thinking, examining, and taking risks in order to realize tasks in the organization, in addition to imbuing certain notions and visions for organizational purposes in the employees of these organizations [29]. This leadership style might better be understood by juxtaposing it with other styles. For example, Burns [30] contrasts transformational with transactional leadership, and Hallinger [1] asserts that interest in effective schools and instructional leadership, which has often been interpreted as being top-down and directive, was displaced by concepts such as school restructuring and transformational leadership. Additionally, with its relatively broad focus on setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization [31,32], *transformational* leadership arguably has emerged as a response to deficiencies of transactional as well as instructional leadership styles.

However, *transformational* leadership itself cannot evade its own limitations of focusing on the role of a single visionary, and sometimes charismatic, leader, which has something to do with the advent of *distributed* leadership as the fourth style. *Distributed* leadership is an analytic lens for understanding leadership as a feature of organizations that recognizes that leadership practice is the product of the interactions of leaders, followers, and their

situations. Thus, leadership is distributed in the sense that it is not simply the sum of individual actions, but it emerges in the dynamic and shifting interactions between leaders, followers, and their situations [33]. This movement away from person-specific leadership theories makes sense in light of real-world situations; sometimes organizations without any specific visionary or charismatic leaders thrive because stakeholders have collective efficacy, accountability, and thus impact.

In Japan, a large-scale survey targeted at municipal BOEs found that principal leadership was considered to be the most important condition for school improvement [34]. Similarly, principal leadership was regarded as the most necessary condition, among others, to permeate the concept of the school curriculum, according to a questionnaire to prefectural and municipal BOEs [35]. Just as in other countries, school leaders are expected to be the change agents who can bridge policy and practice in Japan.

That being said, definitions of these four leadership styles are borrowed from the prior literature [4], as is shown in Table 2, as an analytic lens to dissect the Toda City SMR.

Table 2. Four School Leadership Styles [4].

Transactional leadership *[TA]*	Leadership that is exercised to achieve prescribed outcomes mainly through mutual exchange, conditional rewards or compliance, without necessarily attending to a shared sense of purpose
Instructional leadership *[I]*	Leadership that is explicitly targeted at creating in-school conditions under which teachers can improve teaching and student can enhance learning, sometimes coupled with its focus on school mission and culture
Transformational leadership *[TF]*	Leadership that focuses on creating conditions for improvement by setting a vision, developing people and redesigning the organization (both within the school and its relationship with outsiders), without its explicit focus on teaching and learning
Distributed leadership *[D]*	Leadership that explicitly aims to move away from the notion of a single leader, and instead aims to foster distribution of leadership, mainly characterized by interactions among stakeholders

Because these four leadership styles have been already used to analyze school leadership policy and practice in Japan, the present study can be built on the prior literature that focused on each of them. For example, the *transactional* leadership style was said to have been prevalent from the 1940s to the 1980s in Japanese laws and regulations, but is the least common among the four leadership styles in Japanese policy documents. This is probably because of the nature of policy documents in serving as milestones for subsequent policy reforms, whereas legislative statutes tend to be transactional due to their stipulation of specific procedures that principals are required to comply with [4]. Given that Toda City is famous for its pro-reform education policy, it is reasonable to assume that the SMR is likely to deemphasize the *transactional* leadership style, a similar trend seen in Japanese laws and regulations as well as policy documents that have put an increased focus on the instructional, transformational, and distributed leadership styles over the last few decades [4].

Additionally, *instructional* leadership, which situates principals as "teachers of teachers", seemed to be a major approach until the 1990s in Japan [36]. However, an analysis of documents issued by the Japanese Ministry of Education revealed that principals spent a relatively limited amount of time giving instruction and advice to teachers, which might suggest that principals could not fully exercise educational leadership behaviors in the face of their managerial imperatives [37]. Therefore, there is a possibility that this leadership style cannot fit the reality of school management in Japanese schools. Specifically, research on school leadership in Japan mentioned two inherent limitations of this leadership style. First, *instructional* leadership cannot explain arrangements of organizational structures as well as the transformation of teachers' values, which are important prerequisites for this leadership style to be put into practice. Second, *instructional* leadership, in its definition, does not include school leaders' impacts on parents and community members, who are situated near the organizational boundary of schools [36]. Given that school leaders' daily

tasks include those of a visionary, manager, facilitator, and negotiator, in addition to a curriculum leader, the movement away from the *instructional* leadership style was also unavoidable in Japan.

Furthermore, the *transformational* leadership style has been referred to as a more appropriate approach than the instructional leadership style to explain the realities of school leaders' behaviors in Japan [36]. However, it does not necessarily follow that this leadership style has become prevalent in order to respond to issues inherent in the instructional leadership style. Specifically, the trends observed in the analyses of national policy documents in Japan do not corroborate the idea that *transformational* leadership styles emerged as a response to the criticisms of instructional leadership, for instructional leadership seemed to gain currency in the 2010s, whereas policies targeted at *transformational* leadership were prevalent in the 2000s [4]. On the other hand, since there is almost no research that focuses on how these two leadership styles are materialized in local government policies as well as how school leaders perceive them in Japan, the present study is expected to shed light on these aspects.

Last but not least, research revealed that Japan could not embrace *distributed* leadership in the very ways that were advocated in the Western literature, for its relatively centralized school system, in which principals have ultimate legal responsibilities for educational activities in their school, prevented this style from being fully put into practice; thus, they ended up adopting a modified approach to accommodate *distributed* leadership style within a centralized context [4]. This phenomenon should be taken into account when this study draws conclusions from the results because applying theories dominant in Western countries to Japan without any consideration to its unique culture and policy contexts might run the risk of simplifying differences among countries.

3. Research Design

3.1. Background and Objectives of Research

The objective of this study is to answer the following research question: *in what respects is the Toda City SMR different from standards in other countries, and how might the perceptions of school leaders in the city have affected these differences?*

The aim of this article is to shed light on how the magic words of "school leadership" were turned into the Toda City SMR as concrete perspectives for school leaders to reflect on through a time-consuming discussion with principals and vice principals while making a connection to the school leadership literature and standards in other countries.

3.2. Methodology

In light of the aforementioned research question, the present study employed qualitative content analysis to compare the Toda City SMR to other educational leadership standards: PSELs in the U.S. and HSs in the U.K. Essentially, this study employed a combination of grounded theory and a case study. Firstly, by examining the contents of three standards to search for the relationship between each dimension of the three standards through the lenses of transactional [TA], instructional [I], transformational [TF], and distributed [D] leadership styles, it aimed to clarify fundamental similarities and differences among them (the grounded theory approach). Secondly, by analyzing the document on the dialogue with principals and vice principals during the formation of the Toda City SMR, which is in fact conducted by the author himself (the case study approach), details of the policy context were explored through the lenses of the four aforementioned leadership styles while making comparisons to specific elements of the PSELs and HSs. This methodology allowed the author to delve into a basic, overall picture as well as detailed contextual differences among the three standards, with frequencies of four leadership styles as an appropriate milestone for comparison.

3.3. Data Sources

The present study takes the form of secondary data collection, meaning that it employed already published data on the three standards as well as the interviews that the author himself conducted with school leaders in Toda City during the policy formulation of the SMR. Specifically, information on the Toda City SMR and the interview data themselves were publicly available on the Toda City Board of Education website as the document is discussed at its Education Policy Think Tank (a panel of experts to advise the BOE's specific education reform initiatives) [3]: the rubric itself is in page 4 as well as a detailed memo of the dialogue with principals and vice principals ((1) things that school leaders focus on in school management, (2) issues that school leaders are faced with, and (3) skills that school leaders need to improve and other dilemmas) in pages 10–14. The consent from all the school leaders to the publication of the record of the dialogue was already obtained prior to this study when the document was published at the Toda City Education Policy Think Tank. Since all information is written in Japanese, the author translated the relevant parts of the document into English, which will be presented in the sections that follow.

On the other hand, information on both the PSEL in the U.S. and the HS in the U.K. is available in English, with the former on the National Policy Board for Educational Administration [16] and the latter on the Department for Education, Gov UK. website [19]. As for the PSELs, the document includes sentences that articulate specific elements of each dimension (e.g., standard 1 (Mission, vision, and core values) on page 9 and standard 2 (Ethics and professional norms) on page 10). The HSs take on a similar appearance, except that each dimension and its constructs are put directly on the website rather than in the form of a PDF document.

3.4. Data Analysis

In terms of data analysis, this study employed constant comparison, which entailed coding data to detect relationships between codes and construct theories as the analysis proceeded. The basic comparison of the three school leadership standards was conducted by categorizing each dimension through the lenses of the transactional, instructional, transformational, and distributed leadership styles as defined in Figure 1. Since these four styles are not mutually exclusive, there are some dimensions that hinge on more than two leadership styles. Abbreviations (*[TA]* for transactional, *[I]* for instructional, *[TF]* for transformational, and *[D]* for distributed leadership, respectively) were added inside the box of each dimension to make it easier to understand coding.

Additionally, in order to prove further nuances and policy contexts, detailed information such as the conversation with principals and vice principals (the Toda City SMR) and specific constructs that shape each dimension of the standards (the PSEL and HS) were analyzed by the same definitions of the aforementioned leadership styles. The results are presented in the form of the frequency of the mention of each style, as divided by the total possible number, so that they capture overall trends. Moreover, although information on the detailed categorization of each element of the PSELs and HSs is not presented due to a constraint of the space, the result relating to the Toda City SMR is shown in the succeeding section, with the acknowledgement that this information provides invaluable clues for deeply understanding school management standards in Japan to an unprecedented extent.

The results will be presented in the sections that follow, with the intention that the analysis of the association between the data will shed light on how the Toda City SMR differs from school leadership standards in other countries in its focus on the aforementioned four leadership styles, and to what extent the differences that are detected relate to the perceptions of school leaders in Toda City, who were substantially engaged in the policy formation process of the SMR that will affect their practices.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. A Basic Comparison of Each Dimension of the Three School Leadership Standards

The result of the basic comparison among the Toda City SMR, PSELs, and HSs, is presented in Figure 2, with each element of the three school leadership standards marked with the four leadership styles. There are some implications that readers can draw from this preliminary comparison. Firstly, the *transformational* leadership style is the most prevalent throughout the three standards. This is not surprising considering the fact that this style covers a relatively broad range of elements from setting the vision, developing people, and redesigning the organizational structure in its definition.

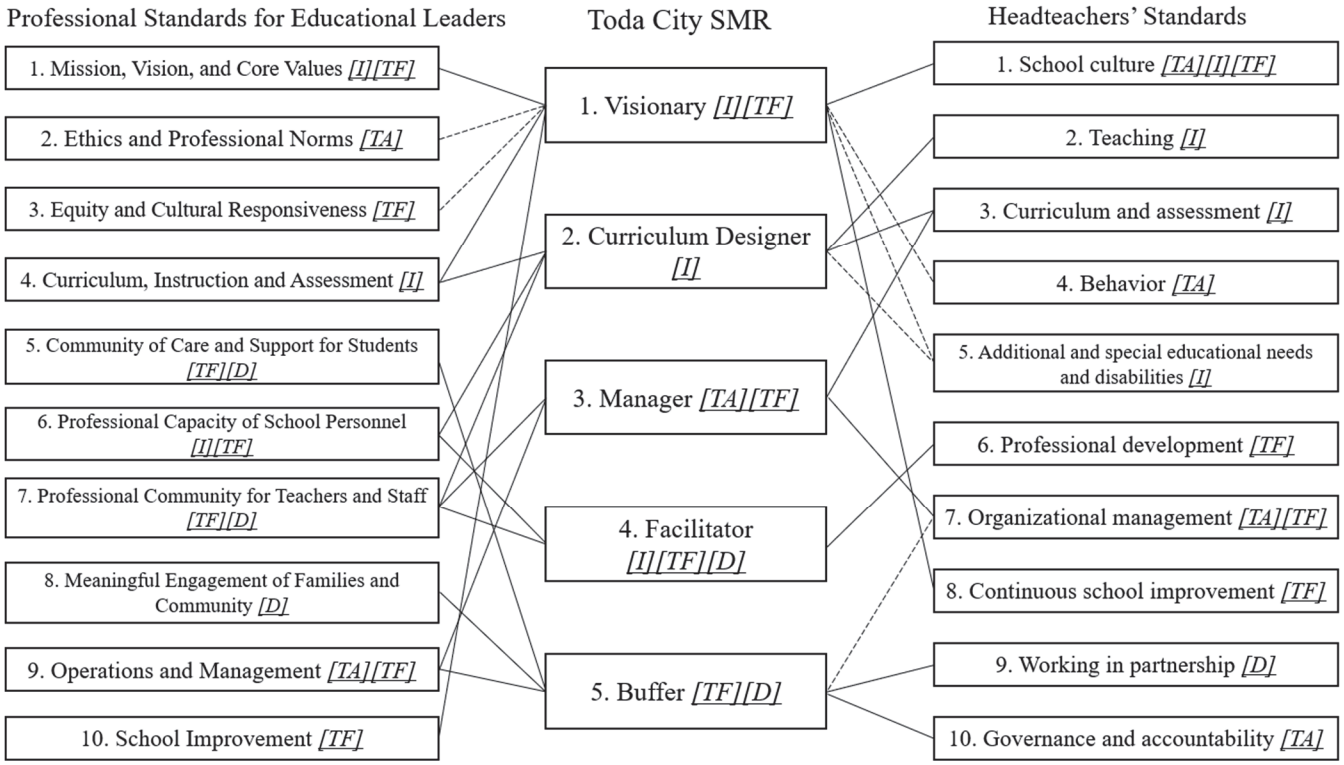

Figure 2. An analysis of the Toda City SMR, PSELs, and HSs through four leadership styles.

Additionally, there is an explicit focus on the aspect of *instructional* leadership ("Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment" in the PSELs, "Curriculum Designer" in the SMR, and "Teaching" as well as "Curriculum and Assessment" in the HSs), whereas the mention of *distributed* leadership is somewhat arbitrary. The former can be taken as a natural consequence given that these standards are education-specific and aim at improving teaching and learning at schools. The latter also seems reasonable since the three standards apply mainly to each school leader. As a result, the *distributed* leadership styles that capture an interaction among stakeholders are hard to be materialized within these standards. This phenomenon, somewhat inherent in studying school leadership standards, is corroborated by the research on the comparison between the U.S. and U.K. standards [32] that concluded the particular version of leadership which is privileged, tends to be individualistic and transformational, and is focused principally on the deeds of senior hierarchical role incumbents (a hero paradigm).

Moreover, there are relatively few elements focused on *transactional* leadership in the Toda City SMR (only 3-3: Do you catch small SOS in order to prevent issues and make a swift and apt decision in risk management?) compared to the PSELs ("Ethics and Professional Norms" and "Operations and Management") and the HSs ("Behaviour" and "Governance and accountability"). This finding is somewhat interesting given the prior literature that revealed overwhelming discursive prominence to leadership, rather than to

management or administration, in both the U.K. and U.S. standards [38]. Japan's reluctance to refer to *transactional* leadership might be reflective of the fact that because most of the obligations and responsibilities are already stipulated in laws [4], there is no need to repeat these transactional aspects in this reform-oriented rubric.

Furthermore, the dotted lines, which indicate relatively weak relationships between standards, are worth mentioning. It is not surprising that such factors as "Ethics and Professional Norms" (PSELs) and "Behaviour" (HSs) do not find corresponding places in the Toda City SMR, which is composed of more concise sentences, although it does not necessarily follow that the Toda City SMR underestimates these things. The same argument applies to "Equity and Cultural Responsiveness" (PSELs) and "Additional and special educational needs and disabilities" (HSs). While the Toda City SMR does not specifically touch upon these issues, the BOE clearly defines the purpose of this rubric as "school management where nobody will be left behind", which consciously or unconsciously includes these factors.

4.2. Analysis of the Dialogue with Principals and Vice Principals through Four Leadership Styles

The aforementioned analysis remains somewhat superficial because it does not touch upon the details and backgrounds of the policy formation of the Toda City SMR. Fortunately, the Toda City BOE published detailed information on the dialogue with principals and vice principals, which formed the basis of the SMR [12]. Each opinion was also coded with the aforementioned four leadership styles, the result of which is shown in Figure 3. The original document was translated from Japanese into English, and then corresponding leadership styles were added in italics and underlines.

Dialogue with Principals and Vice Principals (1)

・In August to September 2022, the BOE had a dialogue with **principals and vice principals at all the schools in Toda City** on **①things that they focus on in school management, ②issues that they are faced with**, and **③skills that they need to improve and other dilemma**. Below is the abstract of the conversation.

Things that they focus on in school management	Issues that they are faced with	Skills that they need to improve and other dilemma
・Principals should talk in their own words. *[TF]* ・Although emotionally supportive, principals should help teachers think and act on their own.*[TF]* ・Teachers should be aware of the fact that they are part of the community and love it. *[D]*	・Make sure that all the teachers have a vision on their instruction/school and the future. *[I]* ・Collaboration with family and the community, especially by teachers with less experience. *[D]*	・School management staff should build their own strengths on their own positions. *[TF]* ・The responsibilities of school management staff are different from those of teachers. *[TA]*
・Know the community, characteristics of children, and aspiration of teachers, which leads to problem detection and solving.*[D]* ・Doubt the idea of "we have done it that way." Keep it simple, and don't waver. *[TF]* ・Regard problems as their own, and have the desire to update themselves. *[TF]*	・Although having a dialogue with teachers on what is the problem, support so that they can take a step forward by themselves when it is not enough. *[TF]* ・Make a relationship with the community so that community members not only approve proposals by the school but also think about how to solve problems together. *[D]*	・There are different styles among school management staff – take a step by step or try out new things, and in between – so respect each other's style. *[TF]* ・Although schools can be reformed from within, it is important to get stimuli and opportunities for change from outside. *[TF]*
・Reflect latest information disseminated by the BOE on school management. Schools can propel by themselves if they have necessary information. *[TF]* ・A project-style organization structure where each PM takes a lead, which works smoothly. *[TF]*	・Would rather give opportunities for teachers to become aware of their areas of growth than just telling, which entails a dilemma. *[TF]* ・Although teachers know the school management vision, they might not fully understand it. *[TF]*	・Strike a balance bet promoting work style reform and maintaining teachers' desires toward study on teaching materials. *[TA]* ・Human resource support is necessary as even school management staff have no choice but to teach lessons (e.g. when some teachers take maternity/paternity leave in the middle of the year) *[TA]* ・How to develop middle leaders. *[TF]*
・Have a clear vision, convey it to teachers with own words, and get their buy-in. *[TF]* ・Give feedback as well as compliments to teachers through classroom observation etc. *[I]* ・Ensure psychological safety as the relationship bet the principal and teachers is analogous to that bet the teacher and students. *[TF]*	・Experience as well as knowledge is important in dealing with student guidance and educational consultation inc. collaboration with institutions concerned. Strike a balance bet taking a initiative and developing teachers. *[TF]* ・As for data utilization, understandable user interface is important as support staff is not enough. *[TF]*	・Principals should enhance their abilities to make use of data. *[TF]* ・Support to make school affairs more effective so that teachers can focus on lessons and instruction is necessary. *[TA]* ・Club activity reform is also unavoidable. *[D]*

Figure 3. *Cont.*

Dialogue with Principals and Vice Principals (2)

Things that they focus on in school management	Issues that they are faced with	Skills that they need to improve and other dilemma
·Develop grit (non-cognitive abilities) through PBL etc. *[I]* ·Ask teachers for their views on scenes where use of ICT is not effective, for instructional skills are needed to tackle new things. *[I]* ·Family and the community becomes supporters of the school, which is invaluable. *[D]*	·Since principals and vice principals have different obligations, craft my own color into a vision, and implement it while tailoring to students. *[TF]* ·Create a comfortable and friendly organization while acknowledging that I cannot talk with all the staff every day. *[TF]* ·Make the School Management Committee self-governing. *[D]*	·Appreciate that BOE provide info on new type of learning and instruction on perspectives other than each subject. As there is an atmosphere to promote it within school, how the school cooks with these raw materials is important. *[I] [TF]* ·In need of a person who has a dialogue with principals on school management vision while listening to their opinions. *[TF]*
·Putting children first is non-negotiable. Serve as a facilitator who observes and considers how to develop children and teachers while bringing out their potentials. *[TF]* ·Strike a balance bet the school vision that the principal aims at and human development that takes into account the movement of the society. *[TF]*	·Teachers should not force children with various characteristics into a box of their desirable class. How to support teachers themselves while taking into account their personalities. *[TF]*	·Although wondered if I should take a strong lead at the beginning of assuming principalship, now I would rather build up what I think is better on what is on the ground. *[TF]* ·Somebody who can take a look at school management objectively from outside makes a difference. *[TF]*
·School management staff should convey their opinions with passion and give feedback to teachers, while making use of Active Learning Instruction Rubric and SAMR Model etc. *[I]* ·Provide PD opportunities where teachers can discuss inter-subject themes and have a sense of ownership. *[TF]*	·Making use of outside resources is needed as new initiatives take time before adoption. *[D]* ·Teachers who have a memory of school violence in the past tend to have students sit down and listen to them. They need to adjust to the contemporary era, so support them as a team. *[TF]*	·Principals tend to become the Emperor's New Clothes. Should be humble to the community and family, and create an atmosphere in which teachers can express their opinions frankly. *[TF] [D]* ·Appreciate the School Management Advisor who was a former principals and gives instruction on school management. *[TF]*
·It's important for teachers to feel outcomes. Evidence without such feeling would not sustain reforms. *[D]* ·Initiate practices proactively and let policies follow them rather than following new directions from the BOE or MEXT. *[TF]*	·Since abilities and attributes of each teacher is different, set an individual goal and provide support as a school. *[TF]* ·Sometimes get nervous about the result of stress check survey although taking a lead without consideration of resistance. *[TA]*	·People cannot grow unless they are given opportunities. Professional development on model press conference after incidents and risk management was a great opportunity for me to hone these necessary abilities. *[TA]*
·Put an emphasis on educational activities that put children in the center as well as special education that is not special. *[I]* ·Management staff should be a coward who anticipates the worst situation and makes a decision while collecting necessary info. *[TA]*	·Would like to provide opportunities for teachers to actually touch upon the wind of education that anticipates future society. *[TF]* ·Never overlook small SOS from children. There is always a reason for what children do. *[I]*	·Don't make work style reform an end rather than a means to an end. There are things that we have to do now for children. *[TF]* ·There are schools that are self-running and always nervous about BOE's move. This is where principal leadership comes in. *[TF]*

Dialogue with Principals and Vice Principals (3)

Things that they focus on in school management	Issues that they are faced with	Skills that they need to improve and other dilemma
·Put well-being first. Let children have their own core so that they can survive after graduation, and teachers fulfill their vocation while taking advantage of their areas of strengths. *[I] [TF]* ·While update visions of school education and students, set aside time for teachers to think on their own and take them as matters of their own, which is important in school management. *[D]*	·Although it is best to self-control, teachers become better by being watched by others, so how to strike a balance between these two is important. *[TF]* ·Assign teachers to school affairs with a sense of foresight so that they become leaders in each team. *[D]* ·Think about what reducing teacher burden is for and whether it leads to learning material study for children. *[I]*	·Dare to wait. Once I immediately took actions when I felt they are necessary. It is as important to listen to teachers and consult with their struggles as strong leadership. *[TF]* ·Although there are many issues on a daily basis, principals should acquire a variety of knowledge. They should adeptly convey what the BOE considers to teachers [TA].
·①Student academic achievement, ②student guidance and educational consultation that supports lesson, ③development of teachers who support these, are my areas of focus. *[I]* ·Talk with my own words about why active learning or ICT is necessary, which sometimes does not work as I imagined. *[I]*	·Although trying to develop abilities and attributes with which children can survive the future, entrance exams still remain traditional is the issue. *[TA]* ·Rather than reactive student guidance, which means responding to issues once they arise, proactive students guidance as well as educational counseling are needed. *[I]*	·Skills to provide opportunities to grow with school staff and develop them with a sense of satisfaction and ownership are needed. *[TF]* ·Make top-down initiatives look non-top-down. Serve as a connection between the BOE and the school staff room. *[TF] [D]*
·Let students feel joy of learning so that they can come to school with a sense of safety and smile. *[TF]* ·In order to realize that, teachers should be happy as well. That's my focus such as having a dialogue with teachers. *[TF]*	·Implicit rules not embedded in the school organization, which turned out after some teachers leave, thus redress this problem. *[TF]* ·Create a school where its vision can sustain regardless of teacher turnover. *[TF]*	·Crisis management skills are not sufficient. *[TA]* ·Educational activities span beyond the school, so make further use of resources outside of the school while examining them. *[D]*
·My No.1 goal is to pursue a student-centered education. Put what kind of students we want them to be and what actions are necessary to realize that first rather than teacher well-being spreading into child well-being. *[I]*	·Have a same picture with teachers on the transformation of learning so that they can understand and change their mindset. ·While utilizing data, teachers should look objectively at their own instruction. *[I]*	·Management and HR strategies, such as starting with the vision and take measures according to it, are not enough. *[TF]* ·How to encourage self-propulsion of school staff. *[TF] [D]*
·How to envision a goal. For example, how to envision students as a result of in-school professional development. *[TF]* ·In addition to the direction of governments, take advantage of originality and areas of strength as a principal. *[TF]* ·Teachers should have a sense of efficacy. *[TF]*	·Except for in case of emergency, bring out originalities of teachers rather than giving detailed directions. *[TF]* ·Where to draw the line bet what the school and community should do. *[D]* ·Be mindful that some people cannot respond to new movements. *[TA]*	·Skills ana the rubric might subject to the specific period. *[TF]* ·Sometimes a position changes a person. This kind of guidance might be useful to school management staff who is striving. *[TA]*

Figure 3. *Cont.*

Dialogue with Principals and Vice Principals (4)

Things that they focus on in school management	Issues that they are faced with	Skills that they need to improve and other dilemma
·To what extent we share the prospect, goal, and vision, is the key. In order to realize that, building the organization is also essential. *[TF]*	·All the staff understand merits of new policies such as active learning and GIGA school initiative, so provide direct advice and support as an organization. *[I]*	·Although obsessed with everyday issues at the beginning, I now have enough space to pay attention to classes and students. *[I]*
·Make schools where people grow – where children as well as teachers can make mistakes, learn from them, and grow. Make the school staff room and classrooms where members can call for help and others provide support accordingly. *[TF]* ·Encourage the self-propulsion and collaboration of teachers through a mission-based organizational structure with project leaders assigned to each team. *[TF]* ·Promote learning that connects to the real society such as PBL and STEAM while collaborating with the family and the community. *[I] [D]* ·Get away with 3Ks (experience, intuition, and spirit) and study scientifically learning. *[TF]*	·Practice up-down management in which teachers themselves think and implement. On the other hand, because I have successful experiences of top-down management, I feel a dilemma when entrusting teachers. *[TF] [TA]* ·Courses of study may come to hallways but not into classrooms. How to provide support to teachers so that they become aware of their own problems. *[I]* ·Although using ICT very adeptly, there are still issues in terms of lesson design and subject education. *[I]*	·Principals themselves need to grow, learn, and change. *[TF]* ·Set a goal and show the ways to achieve it as a basis of organizational administration. While doing these, do not regard the organization as fixed. *[TF]* ·Know-hows of human development largely depend on experiences. *[TF] [TA]* ·Abilities to make use of information connected to the real society is at issue. *[TF]*
·Once teachers grow, children grow. My role is to make the school staff room a psychologically safe place. *[TF]*	·Teachers lack skills to capture the essence of lesson. Although they make efficient use ICT, they should be mindful of the "activities without learning" pitfall. School management staff will also need to update their instructional skills of subject education. *[I]*	·Not necessarily able to collect information on children, families, the community, and teachers, then make decisions and act accordingly. *[TA]* ·As I was a teacher in an old age, how to acquire necessary knowledge to move the organization ahead. *[TA] [TF]*
·My basic principle is to put well-being in the center, and well-being of teachers spread to children, parents, and the community. *[TF]* ·Try to form a shared understanding of the way the school organization ought to be as well as views of the world within the school, while taking into account competencies that children should acquire in the future. *[TF]*	·Convey the necessity of GIGA tablets to the families repeatedly as they might become a cause of troubles. *[TA]* ·There is a linkage between student guidance and work style reform, and teachers have to take actions even at night in case of emergency. *[TA]* ·Overlap children in school education with the latest world situation. *[TF]*	·Although we dealt with student guidance issues as a team, now it becomes difficult due to the capacity of teachers, so I as a principal take a lead from the beginning, which enhances my crisis management skills. *[TA]* ·There are a certain number of children who use the principal's office as a place of cool-down. Although it partly derives from family issues, it is desirable as a structure for the school to provide support. *[I] [TF]*

Dialogue with Principals and Vice Principals (5)

Things that they focus on in school management	Issues that they are faced with	Skills that they need to improve and other dilemma
·Teachers need to look outside the school such as the collaboration with the School Management Committee, disaster prevention education, and reform of club activities. *[D]* ·Abolished school staff meeting when all the staff come together, and make efficient use of the planning committee instead. On the other hand, we come together at in-school professional development, where we are engaged in some group works. *[TF]*	·How to break the wall of subjects and the spirit of "just like before." Starting with chatting, encourage teachers themselves to become aware of the fact that they are talking too much in lesson. *[I]* ·While focused on PBL, instruction on subject education is not sufficient. *[I]*	·Assign vice principals and the chief teacher to each grade, which fostered a sense of focus in them. *[TF]* ·It's easy to give directions top-down, but this tends to hinder everyone's voluntary thinking and action, so take into account their motivation when communicating. *[TF] [D]*
·Update the school education goal while taking into account the child vision. All educational activities such as lesson, class activities, and school evaluation, should be under the umbrella of the school education goal, and everything should be considered in light of this vision. Then the whole school will head toward the same direction. *[TF] [I]*	·Conduct lessons that children feel enjoyable, which will lead to developing their willingness to learn. Take such actions as embedding this element in KPIs and encourage teachers to conduct such lessons with ICT and then give feedback. *[I]* ·Subject education and PBL are two sides of the same coin, but the subject education part is becoming smaller in my view. That's why school management staff should model subject lessons. *[I]*	·Creating a vision as a management staff and let people concerned understand which part of this vision they are implementing is needed. Meticulous support to teachers is still on the way. *[TF]* ·The Curriculum Management Professional Development is unique to the Toda City and very informative. *[I]* ·There needs to be platform where principals, including those working outside of the city, can get together and consult with each other. *[D] [TF]*
·How to motivate teachers by talking with and giving compliments to them rather than taking a top-down approach. It becomes better when examining teachers voices and the result of stress check etc. *[TF]* ·When it comes to lesson study, be mindful to improve lesson design through a interdisciplinary perspective, which benefits children. *[I]*	·How to develop self-esteem of children. Breaking the vicious cycle of teachers giving too much instruction to children with low self-esteem, which further hinders the development of such ability is needed. *[TF] [I]* ·Adopt proposals of teachers who like new things, and spread this practice by having others see his/her lesson. It's basically an extension of what I've done as a teacher to students. *[I]*	·I've developed my own criteria (something like a manual) through a variety of experiences. *[TF]* ·It's somewhat unique to Toda City that we're already heading to the new stage at the time when the current Courses of Study has just been implemented. *[TF]* ·Experience and real contact should be valued as well in this digital society. *[I]* ·Acquiring new knowledge and information utilization ability is at issue. *[TF]*

Figure 3. Analysis of the dialogue with principals and vice principals through four leadership styles.

As in Figure 2, the *transformational* leadership style seems to be the most frequently mentioned among the four. Typical remarks made by school leaders include "*Have a clear vision, convey it to teachers with own words, and get their buy-in*", "*Strike a balance bet(ween) the school vision that the principal aims at and human development that takes into account the movement of the society*", "*To what extent we share the prospect, goal, and vision, is the key. In order to realize that, building the organization is also essential*", and "*Update the school education goal while taking into account the child vision*." This result is somewhat consistent with the prior research that most of the recent national policy documents featured an aspect of transformational leadership [4], although the Toda City SMR is focused more on practice rather than policy. Apparently, school leaders in Toda City are taking a further step to becoming visionaries, beyond their minimum obligations and responsibilities stipulated by national law and regulations.

Moreover, many of the principals and vice principals referred to *instructional* leadership in a sense that they need to take a lead in transforming traditional teacher-led instruction into student-centered learning such as PBL (project-based learning). Remarks such as "*Have a same picture with teachers on the transformation of learning so that they can understand and change their mindset*", "*Promote learning that connects to the real society such as PBL and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) while collaborating with the family and the community*", "*Courses of study may come to hallways but not into classrooms. How to provide support to teachers so that they become aware of their own problems*", "*How to break the wall of subjects and the spirit of "just like before". Starting with chatting, encourage teachers themselves to become aware of the fact that they are talking too much in lesson*", and "*Conduct lessons that children feel enjoyable, which will lead to developing their willingness to learn. Take such actions as embedding this element in KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) and encourage teachers to conduct such lessons with ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and then give feedback.*" support this finding. This phenomenon would be reflective of the fact that the instructional leadership style in Japan is practice-based rather than policy-mandated [4] and that Toda City is famous for its aggressive education reform [7]. Within this policy context, it is not surprising that school leaders in Toda City relentlessly focus on making changes in how teachers teach and students learn, rather than clinging to the status quo.

Another thing worth mentioning about *instructional* leadership is that although most of the principals and vice principals in Toda City promote the use of ICT in lessons, many of them simultaneously put a relentless emphasis on making subject education (i.e., Japanese language, mathematics, social studies, science, and so on), which is deemed to be a strength of Japanese education, more meaningful. Comments such as "*Although using ICT very adeptly, there are still issues in terms of lesson design and subject education*", "*Teachers lack skills to capture the essence of lesson. Although they make efficient use (of) ICT, they should be mindful of the "activities without learning" pitfall. School management staff will also need to update their instructional skills of subject education*", "*While focused on PBL, instruction on subject education is not sufficient*", and "*Subject education and PBL are two sides of the same coin, but the subject education part is becoming smaller in my view. That's why school management staff should model subject lessons.*" are indicative of this trend. Because PBL is one of the distinct policy initiatives of this city [6], this so-called pendulum swinging between PBL and subject education might be unique to school leaders in Toda City rather than a national trend.

Furthermore, the *distributed* leadership style is considered to be important by many school leaders, especially because they continue to seek an appropriate balance between a top-down approach and devolution to teachers. Such comments as "*(I) Would rather give opportunities for teachers to become aware of their areas of growth than just telling, which entails a dilemma*", "*Strike a balance bet(ween) taking an initiative and developing teachers*", and "*It's easy to give directions top-down, but this tends to hinder everyone's voluntary thinking and action, so take into account their motivation when communicating.*" are typical examples of the school leaders' struggles. In the policy environment where school leadership standards continue to focus on role-based expectations of the individual school leader, rather than attempting to assess the quality and effectiveness of leadership distributed across the

school organization [39], the concerns expressed by school leaders in Toda City might be considered somewhat unavoidable, although not desirable. This result resonates with the prior research that revealed Japan's modified approach to the distributed leadership style to accommodate it within the centralized school system [4], which indicates that this phenomenon might not be specific to Toda City.

Last but not least, some principals and vice principals take the issue of work style reform seriously, which assumes an aspect of *transactional* leadership. They express their opinions in a variety of ways: "*Strike a balance bet(ween) promoting work style reform and maintaining teachers' desires toward study on teaching materials*", "*Support to make school affairs more effective so that teachers can focus on lessons and instruction is necessary*", and "*There is a linkage between student guidance and work style reform, and teachers have to take actions even at night in case of emergency*." This trend is somewhat consistent with previous research that found a broad consensus among countries promoting standards on managerial aspects within the policy environment of accountability [11] and is not surprising given the fact that Japanese teachers work for the longest hours among the OECD countries; thus, improving their working conditions is currently high on the national agenda.

4.3. A Comparison of the Frequency of the Mention of Four Leadership Styles among Three School Leadership Standards

As a possible method of cross-country comparison, the frequency of the mention of the four leadership styles among three standards was calculated and is presented in Table 3. In this study, as for the PSELs in the U.S. [13] and the HSs in the U.K. [16], specific constructs that shape each dimension of these standards were analyzed by the same definitions of the aforementioned leadership styles. Although the Toda City SMR does not include corresponding information that shows constructs of each dimension, the detailed information shown in Figure 3 was instead used for further analysis. This decision is considered to be a reasonable alternative given that this dialogue with principals and vice principals set the basis for the formulation of the rubric [15]. The frequency of the mention of each style was derived by dividing the times that each style appeared by the total possible number of times. A similar analysis was conducted by prior research [4] to calculate the frequency of the mention of the transactional, instructional, transformational, and distributed leadership styles in national legislation and policy documents in Japan. Because these leadership styles are not mutually exclusive, there are some constructs that assume more than two leadership styles, and the percentage relating to each standard does not add up to 100%.

Table 3. The frequency of the mention of four leadership styles among three school leadership standards.

	Toda City SMR (JPN)	PSEL (U.S.)	HS (U.K.)
Transational	14.0%	19.3%	39.5%
Instructional	23.5%	27.7%	31.6%
Transformational	57.4%	55.4%	42.1%
Distributed	16.2%	26.5%	21.1%

The international comparison generated five major implications. To begin with, among the four leadership styles, the *transformational* leadership style was the most prevalent throughout the three standards. This result seems reasonable given the fact that this leadership style has in its own sense a broad coverage over vision, people, and the organization. There are both pros and cons; although it is necessary to include *transformational* leadership elements in school leadership standards, it might be difficult to differentiate distinguished leadership components from others solely by using this leadership style. There is a possibility that the comprehensiveness of the framework might discourage its users from engaging in a critical interrogation of their own practices, as was mentioned regarding the Ontario Leadership Framework [40].

Additionally, the HSs in the U.K. contained more *transactional* leadership styles than the Toda City SMR and the PSELs in the U.S. Constructs within the dimensions "Behaviour" and "Organisational Management", such as "establish and sustain high expectations of behaviour for all pupils, built upon relationships, rules and routines, which are understood clearly by all staff and pupils", "implement consistent, fair and respectful approaches to managing behaviour" (the former) and "ensure the protection and safety of pupils and staff through effective approaches to safeguarding, as part of the duty of care", as well as "ensure rigorous approaches to identifying, managing and mitigating risk" (the latter), are typical examples. It is interesting to note that although the accountability movement is more prevalent in the U.S. and U.K. than in Japan, the HSs still put more focus on *transactional* leadership than the PSELs.

Moreover, *instructional* leadership appeared at a stable rate throughout the three standards. The contents are also similar, including "Ensure instructional practice that is intellectually challenging, authentic to student experiences, recognizes student strengths, and is differentiated and personalized" in the PSELs and "establish and sustain high-quality, expert teaching across all subjects and phases, built on an evidence-informed understanding of effective teaching and how pupils learn" in the HSs, among others. This result resonates with the prior literature that school improvement has to occur in fundamental ways around improving teaching and learning and improving instructional capacity has to be the central target of school improvement initiatives [25]. The fact that the Toda City SMR has more mention of the use of ICT in lessons might be reflective of the GIGA (Global and Innovation Gateway for All) School Initiative, in which the national government subsidized one device per one student in all public elementary and junior high schools throughout the country.

Furthermore, *transformational* leadership was the most prevalent in the Toda City SMR. Specifically, in addition to setting a vision, the three standards have in common an element of the use of data to inform school management, seen with "Principals should enhance their abilities to make use of data" in the SMR, "Use assessment data appropriately and within technical limitations to monitor student progress and improve instruction" in the PSELs, and "make use of effective and proportional processes of evaluation to identify and analyze complex or persistent problems and barriers which limit school effectiveness, and identify priority areas for improvement" in the HSs. However, policymakers and practitioners should be mindful not to make the rhetoric of "transformation" in these standards reproduce the status quo, inequities, and achievement gaps, among others [41], and not to contribute to the overall bureaucratization of what should be a comprehensive improvement process and useful tool such as the yearlong School Improvement Plan advanced by the No Child Left Behind Act in the U.S [42].

Last but not least, the *distributed* leadership style is referred to most frequently in the U.S. and less dominantly in Toda City, with the U.K. in the middle. Given previous research that the narrow focus on individual leadership development has excluded the full spectrum of leadership development interventions from being explored and analyzed [43], constructs explicitly relating to distributed leadership ("Develop the capacity, opportunities, and support for teacher leadership and leadership from other members of the school community" in the PSELs and "establish and sustain the school's ethos and strategic direction in partnership with those responsible for governance and through consultation with the school community" in the HSs, among others) should be valued as a way to share responsibility and accountability with the stakeholders concerned.

5. Concluding Remarks

The results acquired through the analysis of the SMR and the dialogue with school leaders somewhat reflected on both recent national policy trends and reforms unique to Toda City. By analyzing the policy formation process through the lenses of transactional, instructional, transformational, and distributed leadership styles, the results illuminate how the same words of "school leadership" hinge on similar as well as distinct elements and nuances in the three countries. One consistent finding throughout Sections 4.1–4.3 is

that *transformational* leadership seems to be the most preferred style among the four in all the three leadership standards. Specifically, the fact that the many school leaders in Toda City mentioned the importance of the use of data in their daily school management might be reflective of the BOE's policy focus on EBPM (evidence-based policy making) [6]. On the other hand, the current study revealed differences in the way the transactional, instructional, and distributed leadership styles are referred to. First of all, the Toda City SMR has less mention of the *transactional* leadership style than the PSELs in the U.S. and HSs in the U.K. However, this finding should be taken with caution given the relatively hierarchical and top-down organizational structure of Japanese schools; the Toda City school leaders still need to comply with laws and regulations, which assume mostly *transactional* leadership elements, in addition to this rubric.

Moreover, whereas the standards in the three countries put a similar emphasis in terms of their frequency of the mention of the *instructional* leadership style, which is unique to the education field, Toda City seems to be leaning toward the use of ICT, project-based learning, as well as subject education. Even though the city's effort to change the "grammar of schooling" (traditional teacher-centered instruction) by continuing past objectives and pioneering the future while developing them [44] might explain this phenomenon, it does not necessarily follow that the Japanese education system as a whole has the same policy preference. Furthermore, the *distributed* leadership style does not appear at a stable frequency among the three standards, and although each standard acknowledges the need to share decision-making with the people inside (school staff) and outside (families and the community) of school, some school leaders in Toda City face a dilemma between giving directions (top-down) and waiting until other people fulfill what they expect (bottom-up). To what extent the leadership trends seen in this analysis materialized in daily school management, as well as how this Toda City SMR is situated in the national policy sphere in Japan, remains to be seen in future studies.

As an arguably unprecedented effort to dissect Japan's school leadership policy documents in detail while making a connection to those abroad, the present study provides a unique foundation for future comparative studies on school leadership policy. Considering the real promise of the standards is to provide a new way to think about leadership and what it looks like in one's everyday work in schools [18], policymakers, by applying the definition of four school leadership styles to their standards, will be able to explore strengths and areas for growth in their standards, and thus lay the foundation for training programs and professional development opportunities. However, given the comparative study that showed American principals were given more positional powers than Japanese counterparts [45], in their implementation, policymakers should be mindful not to just "import" promising practices abroad and end up ignoring cultural and policy contexts unique to Japan.

One of the limitations of this study is that it compares a city policy with national policies, which might make an apples-to-apples comparison difficult. Acknowledging that there is almost no more detailed policy document than the Toda City SMR that is specifically focused on school leadership in Japan, the author expects that the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology will shed light on this issue in the near future. Another issue is that only educational leadership standards in the U.S. and U.K. are referred to as a unit of comparative analysis. Future studies can build on the present study and expand the comparison to standards in other countries as well. Last but not least, as yet another perspective, stakeholder engagement in standard setting could also be examined, for the extent to which teachers, principals, and other stakeholders participate in this process may affect the impact of their perspectives on their interpretations and uses of standards [46]. In this sense, the present study could be situated as a foundation on which future studies will further illuminate school leadership policy and practice in Japan.

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Abbreviations

BOE	Board of Education
HS	Headteachers' Standards
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
PSEL	Professional Standards for Educational Leaders
SMR	School Management Rubric
STEAM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics

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Enactment of Transformational School Leadership—Insights from Primary School and System Leaders

Inez Wilson Heenan [1,*], Niamh Lafferty [1] and Patricia Mannix McNamara [1,2]

[1] School of Education, University of Limerick, V94 T9PX Limerick, Ireland; niamh.lafferty@ul.ie (N.L.); patricia.m.mcnamara@ul.ie (P.M.M.)
[2] Faculty of Education, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Inndalsveien, 28, 5063 Bergen, Norway
* Correspondence: inez.wilsonheenan@ul.ie

Abstract: Transformational leadership has been proposed as an approach that can inspire effective change. How this is manifest in schools is understudied in Irish primary schools, which have undergone significant change in recent years. The focus of this qualitative research study was primary school and system leaders' knowledge of transformational school leadership, perceived benefits, limitations, and feasibility, and how transformational school leadership actually manifests in practice. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling. In-depth interviews were carried out with principals, deputy and assistant principals, and former school inspectors, with the interviews aligned to the following research questions: (1) How can we characterize school and system leaders' knowledge, understanding and perceptions regarding the feasibility of transformational school leadership? (2) How do transformational school leadership behaviours manifest in primary school settings? Data analysis yielded the following themes and sub-themes: (1) Understanding of transformational school leadership: (i) transformation, change and growth, (ii) relationships, (iii) vision, mission, and goals, (iv) leading; (2) Perceptions of feasibility of transformational school leadership: (i) realism, (ii) people and relationships, (iii) practical challenges; (3) Benefits of transformational school leadership: (i) aspiration, (ii) culture, (iii) motivation and modelling, (iv) school community, (v) delivering quality learning; (4) Limitations of transformational school leadership: (i) personality, (ii) pressure, (iii) slow process, (iv) unexpected variables; (5) Manifestations of transformational school leadership: (i) idealised influence, (ii) inspirational motivation, (iii) individualised consideration, (iv) intellectual stimulation, (v) school development, (vi) improving curricular offerings. Participants' positive disposition to transformational school leadership was encouraging and suggests the need for further research, specifically to examine potential synergy between transformational and distributed school leadership.

Keywords: transformational school leadership; primary and system leaders; Ireland; leadership behaviours

1. Introduction

Change is possibly the greatest constant in the lives of schools. Given the often urgent and unpredictable nature of schooling, awareness of and comfort with change is an important leadership skill. Recent years have affected schools, with unprecedented levels of societal change that have impacted school communities globally [1–4] and the changes that educational institutions are experiencing clearly influences individual perspectives [5]. This would suggest that schools need to be comfortable with change processes and to have commensurate change practices while being attuned to some of the trends that are now emerging globally as recognition of the fact that the future is unquestionably unpredictable begins to take hold [6]. In their book, 'Changing Leadership for Changing Times', Leithwood and colleagues, while noting that the reader may question the validity of yet another book on leadership [7], refer to the recent proliferation of leadership texts, and

also point out that as times change, productive leadership remains reliant on the social and organisational context in which it is practised; 'As times change, what works for leaders changes also' (p. 3). So it is with transformational leadership. As authors, we advocate that transformational leadership still has something to offer, and we propose a modified framework that has currency for education leadership. Transformational leadership has been explored since Weber first introduced theories of charismatic authority in the 1940s, describing a charismatic leader as one who could bring about social change [8]. In the 1980s and 1990s, Leithwood et al. led several studies on transformational leadership with application to the educational context [9]. Each of the past five decades has presented varied iterations of the model. Transformational school leadership is today regarded as a leadership practice suited to our changing world, as leaders are required to be open to change and able to adapt their approach to best meet the needs of the organization [10]. Change-management skills are now 'a must have' for effective leadership. Ideally, transformational leadership involves partnership with a range of stakeholders to effectively lead the whole school community, so that ultimately, students develop ethical and responsible behaviours, unique creativity, and resilience [11]. In the context of rapid change and unpredictability, cultural change that transforms the organisation through people and teams is required [12]. The attributes and skills associated with transformational school leadership can deliver sustainable change. Therefore, in this study, the authors sought to qualitatively explore how transformational school leadership is understood and enacted in an Irish context from the perspective of school and system leaders. While transformational leadership is taught as a model of effective school leadership in leadership-preparation programmes, it is noteworthy that transformational school leadership is not explicitly featured in Irish educational policy. Therefore, it was considered of merit to explore interviewees' awareness of, and attitudes towards transformational school leadership, which led to the following research questions: How can we characterize school and system leaders' knowledge, understanding and perceptions regarding the feasibility of transformational school leadership? Is transformational school leadership being practised in schools currently? The question of how transformational school leadership may influence effective change informed the following research question: How do transformational school leadership behaviours become manifest in primary school settings?

The Irish national policy, Looking at our School 2022 (LAOS) [13], outlines how leadership is currently embedded in Irish educational policy. While transformational school leadership is not explicitly mentioned, the policy opens a space in which to reflect on where transformational school leadership may have a place in schools, as the focus in the policy is on capacity building. This aligns well with the literature on transformational school leadership, which points to leaders empowering, encouraging, connecting, coaching, and inspiring stakeholders to oversee and make decisions in their roles in order to bring innovation and transformation for growth, development, and future success [10]. LAOS is a framework for school inspection and self-evaluation that was originally introduced to Irish schools in 2003 by the Department of Education as an aid to School Self-Evaluation (SSE) and incorporating Whole School Evaluation (WSE). [14–16]. LAOS promotes distributed leadership, which is the primary leadership practice considered, rather than looking at 'leaders or their roles, functions, routines and structures' [13] (p. 146). However, one could with confidence argue that the principles of transformational school leadership especially regarding leaders and their roles and functions are implicitly evident in the policy through the recommended leadership behaviours cited in the document. To embed a sustained approach to school leadership in an Irish context, the authors consider distributed leadership as a practice of shared leadership, the values of which are commensurate with transformational school leadership, and as such we advocate that transformational school leadership can reasonably be considered as an underpinning model that can support the sustaining of distributive leadership. We tentatively suggest that this may have international resonance in an ever-changing global educational landscape [17,18].

1.1. Transformational School Leadership

At the core of transformational leadership is that it is relational and social, embodying a human-centred approach that involves followers in the change process [19], and it can arguably be considered a highly effective form of leadership to lead change, develop collaborative and organisational cultures, and set vision and direction. Retrospectively, in the 1990s, transformational leadership had become the model of choice for research and application of leadership theory [20], whereby a leader inspires, motivates, and enables followers with a solid vision, encouraging engagement [21–23]. Transformational leadership as a model in educational leadership encourages the creation of a school culture that inspires and motivates educators to collaboratively improve organisational performance, a change from the previous exclusive focus on instructional leadership behaviours [24]. In this process, principals and other leaders become change agents [25]. The growth in popularity of transformational school leadership in the 1990s was linked to the degree of change in educational policy and initiatives, with findings suggesting that it was a more effective school leadership model than others, which were deemed no longer sufficiently effective [24,26,27]. As a school leadership approach, it is positively associated with creating an innovative school climate, motivating staff members to exceed expected effort and productivity [28,29]. As a key school leadership model, transformational school leadership can facilitate the empowerment of all members of the school community to share in a common vision with shared values and objectives and to make many positive social changes [30–32]. Transformational leaders support their school staff by giving them hope, optimism, and energy, defining the vision as they accomplish goals [33]. Where transformational leadership could have been viewed in the past as 'too much of a concentration of power into the hands of the few' [34], transformational school leadership, in the 2020s, can arguably be understood to be an authentic, collaborative style for whole school communities, as it fosters teamwork and empowerment and develops leadership capacity, leading to learning for all, in a complex process of juxtaposition wherein leaders can also be followers.

Bass built on Burns' concept of transformational-transactional leadership, where transformational leadership was seen as the 'new' style and transactional the 'old' [35]; this shift was a move away from the traditional, autocratic style to a more collaborative and visionary model, raising participants' level of commitment [36]. Bass reconceptualised four components of transformational leadership (charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration [35]) to develop the collective capacity of the organisation to achieve results, encourage participants to reach their fullest potential, and support them in surpassing their own self-interest for a greater good [37,38]. Charisma was replaced by 'idealised influence' [37] and refers to the emotional work of leaders who 'by the power of their person have profound and extraordinary effects on their followers' [35]. Inspirational motivation is an element of leadership that 'inspires and motivates followers to reach ambitious goals that may have previously seemed unreachable' [39]. Intellectual stimulation is a more rational component: the leader promotes problem-solving and awareness of beliefs and values, motivating and committing followers to achieve team goals. Individualised consideration is where the leader provides a form of mentoring, helping participants to self-actualise; the leader provides 'socio-emotional support to followers and is concerned with developing followers to their highest level of potential and empowering them' ([39], p. 267). While each factor seems unique here, there is considerable overlap among them [40,41].

Many researchers have outlined dimensions and principles of transformational leadership and of transformational school leadership. With variation in emphasis, each has contributed to the development of transformational leadership, to its application to education, and to the framework constructed by these authors, in which it is considered appropriate as a leadership model. Rafferty and Griffin identified the dimensions of transformational leadership as (a) vision, (b) inspirational communication, (c) intellectual stimulation, (d) supportive leadership, and (e) personal recognition [41]. Leithwood's factors

for transformational school leadership include (a) building school vision; (b) establishing school goals; (c) providing intellectual stimulation; (d) offering individualised support; (e) modelling best practices and important organizational values; (f) demonstrating high performance expectations; (g) creating a productive school culture; and (h) developing structures to foster participation in school decisions [27]. To facilitate practical application, Sun and Leithwood [42] grouped these components into four categories of leadership practice: (a) setting directions, creating a shared vision and building shared consensus among school staff; (b) developing people, building trusting relationships between them and the leader, who acts as role model of shared beliefs and morals; (c) redesigning the organization, building a positive school culture, strengthening relationships with parents and the community, and providing structures that allow the teachers to carry out their teaching tasks effectively; (d) improving the instructional program, engaging with and building the school's curriculum and teaching methodologies [43]. Duke and Leithwood added transactional/managerial dimensions, including staffing, instructional support, monitoring school activities, and community focus [44]. Transformational leadership factors were also developed by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter for application to schools and include (a) identifying and articulating a vision, (b) providing an appropriate model, (c) fostering the acceptance of group goals, (d) high performance expectations, (e) providing individualised support, and (f) intellectual stimulation, challenging others to think differently [45,46]. Hall and Hord's framework for an effective change leadership includes six elements: (a) developing a shared vision, (b) planning and providing resources, (c) investing in professional learning, (d) checking on progress, (e) providing continuous assistance, and (f) creating a culture supportive of change [47]. These are closely aligned with the tenets of transformational leadership proposed by Kouzes and Posner, including challenging the process, inspiring the shared vision, enabling others to act, modelling the way, and encouraging the heart [48]. Just like Leithwood et al., Marks et al. believed that transformational school leadership could benefit from enhancement and developed a concept of 'integrated leadership', combining transformational school leadership with shared instructional leadership, a practice that involves the active collaboration of principal and teachers on curriculum, instruction, and assessment [49,50]. Their study found that an integrated form of leadership with transformational and shared instructional leadership had a substantial influence on school performance and the achievement of its students. This might suggest how transformational school leadership and distributed leadership can also co-exist for the development and benefit of the whole school community.

A transformational school leadership framework [19] is expanded in this paper below, with the components of transformational school leadership in Table 1, followed with further details of the components, based on the sets of elements of transformational leadership and transformational school leadership from Bass [35]; Bass and Riggio [20], Bennis & Nanus [51]; Kouzes & Posner [52]; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman & Fetter [45], Sun and Leithwood [42], and Leithwood [7,27,53]. The framework is relevant to current transformational school leadership behaviours, with supporting evidence from the extant literature [19,54–57]. Proposing transformational school leadership as a leadership model for a whole school community contrasts with the traditional approach, where it has been considered as leadership behaviour by the school principal, in line with the widespread belief that the principal is primarily responsible for implementing endless school reforms [58–60].

Table 1. Components of a transformational school leadership framework.

1.	Idealised influence	2.	Inspirational motivation	3.	Individualised consideration
4.	Intellectual stimulation	5.	School development	6.	Improving the offerings

The following are the components in further detail:

1. Idealised influence: modelling, authenticity.
2. Inspirational motivation: identifying, articulating, and facilitating a shared vision; developing and fostering acceptance of group goals; setting direction; all leading; leading from within; developing commitment and self-efficacy; collaboration; limitation; democracy; stakeholder involvement.
3. Individualised consideration: relationships, trust, developing and supporting people, building leadership capacity, coaching, enabling others to act, communication, inclusion, intuition, facilitation, agency, creativity, self-positivity, social regard.
4. Intellectual stimulation: encouraging the heart, challenging the process, holding high performance expectations, and bias.
5. School development: assessing, organising, maintaining, and protecting; governance; innovation; culture; ethos; context.
6. Improving the instructional programme: provision of equal educational opportunities.

1.2. Development of School Leadership in Irish Primary Education since the 1998 Education Act

The OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)'s Review of National Policies for Education [61], helped prompt a significant period of educational policy development in Ireland wherein government focused on education as a means of societal development, cognisant of how the 'streams of problems, politics and policies, often operating independently of one another, must come together in order for a policy change to occur' [62] (p. 444). This led to the Education Act [63], which created the first legislation governing policy and practice for Irish schools after 165 years of state funding. The only reference to leadership in the act relates to the school principal, who is tasked with providing leadership to teachers, other staff, and students. In the main, the principal is referred to as the 'manager' of the school in the act. However, the intervening 25-year period has resulted in significant education reform in Ireland and worldwide, with school leadership subject to immense attention and reform [64]. These reforms have impacted leadership practice in schools, with principals expected to ensure enactment of these new policies [65]. In the case of primary schools, the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) was established in 1999 to address school leaders' professional needs. By way of context, there are currently 3300 primary schools in Ireland and 558,143 pupils in these schools, with an increase of over 25.8% in enrolments in primary schools (mainstream and special), from 2002 to 2022 [66]. The management structure of a primary school consists of a patron, board of management, principal, deputy principal, and assistant principals. Schools are established by the patron body, which is responsible for the school's characteristic spirit and ethos. Schools are managed by the board of management on behalf of the patron, and the board is accountable to the education ministry. The board of management is the employer of all school staff, with the principal responsible and accountable to the board for the day-to-day management of the school and staff.

In 2001, the Teaching Council Act, aimed at promoting standardisation of the teaching profession, was passed, and was followed by the establishment of the Irish Teaching Council, which, with statutory responsibility, became the regulator of the teaching profession in Ireland and created the environment for the development of a more professional approach to teacher leadership at all levels in schools [67]. In contrast to the arrangement in other OECD countries, however, Irish primary schools are voluntarily managed, and many are small rural schools, the variability of which presents its own set of challenges to the creation of effective leadership models [68]. In 2008, the effects of the global economic recession could be felt in Ireland and resulted in the loss of leadership and management posts in schools largely due to a moratorium on new posts for many such roles, and a significant reduction in the education budget. These all had adverse impacts on school leadership practice [65]. However, 2016 brought Looking at Our Schools (LAOS) [69], and Cosán, the Teaching Council's Framework for Teacher Learning, introducing an outline of the values and principles that should underpin continuous learning for teachers, with individual

and collaborative reflection as a cornerstone that supports and sustains teachers' learning throughout their teaching careers [67]. The Department of Education (DoE) discharged functions relating to professional development and support of school leaders and teachers to organisations such as the (i) Professional Development Support for teachers (PDST), established in 2010, and the (ii) Centre of School leadership (CSL), which was established in 2014 as a partnership between the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN), the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) post-primary, and the DoE, with the objective of becoming a centre of excellence for school leadership. These were amalgamated in 2023 to form (iii) OIDE and drew together the CSL, PDST, and Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT), a professional development service to support implementation of national curriculum reform and the National Induction Programme for teachers (NIPT).

The Teaching Council's Strategic Plan 2022 to 2027 commits to ensuring quality teaching and learning for all through enhanced leadership, among other strategies. Looking at Our Schools (LAOS) 2022 [13], updated from LAOS 2016 [69], presents the most comprehensive guidance on school leadership available in Irish education and was designed to underpin both school self-evaluation and school inspections, emphasising the principles of distributed leadership. While distributed leadership is specified, with the practice of leadership as the focus, rather than individual leader practices [70,71], components from all six elements in these authors' framework of transformational school leadership behaviours, outlined in the above section, are included as statements of highly effective practice to be carried out by the board of management, principal, deputy principal, assistant principal, and to a lesser extent, teachers, students, and the wider school community. Along with OIDE supporting leadership for all, the government is encouraging 'collaborative leadership' with initiatives funded through the Schools Excellence Fund (SEF), such as Digital Clusters. When Digital Clusters were launched by the then Minister of Education in 2017, he stated that true transformative change 'comes from the ground up', and he advocated for the need to invest in school leaders and staff and the sharing of best practices [72]. Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Education (STEM) are other such initiatives that, along with Creative Clusters, were rolled out at that time and have been similarly led by and in partnership with the 21 Education Support Centres in Ireland. Educational leadership development is offered at universities and higher education institutions across Ireland. Although it is not compulsory, participants include current and aspiring school leaders who build leadership skills and competencies, confidence, collaboration, and networking structures. The IPPN continues to support primary and deputy principals in their leadership development, with OIDE, Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO), and the country's education centres supporting all school staff with leadership training and development.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

Fitting within the research aims of ascertaining school and system leaders' knowledge of transformational school leadership; their views regarding the benefits, advantages, limitations, disadvantages and feasibility of transformational school leadership; and how transformational school leadership manifests in practice, these researchers addressed the following research questions within a paradigmatic framework of interpretivism and constructivism: (1) How can we characterize school and system leaders' knowledge and understanding of transformational school leadership, and is it perceived as feasible? (2) How do transformational school leadership behaviours manifest in primary school settings? The authors were concerned with exploring the lived experiences of primary school principals, deputy principals, assistant principals, and inspectors as system leaders. This cohort was used to represent those specifically tasked with school leadership in Irish educational policy and those who oversee this leadership and represent system leadership in schools. A qualitative approach with an interpretivist paradigm was adopted, integrating human interest into the study [73].

2.2. Data Collection

Data were collected via carefully formulated semi-structured interviews to ensure data were gathered in the relevant key areas, while encouraging interviewees to express their personalities and flexibility of expression [74]. An interview schedule was formulated, with the design influenced by a systematic review of international literature on transformational school leadership [19]. Participants were recruited for interview using a proactive and targeted method, purposive sampling. A poster was prepared and posted online, looking for private responses to the first author (see Appendix A). Interviews were conducted with 15 participants from a variety of school settings, 13 of these in-person and 2 online, all at their place of work; 9 Irish primary school principals, 3 deputy and assistant principals and 3 former primary school inspectors and school leaders who continued to work in education. The authors' institutional research ethics committee granted approval for the study (EHSREC 10_RA01). Two pilot studies were conducted, allowing for refinement of the interview schedule and elimination of surplus and ambiguous terms. The pilot testing also allowed for the consideration of other elements of the interview process, such as the conviction that holding interviews in the participants' place of work would yield the truest data, to what extent to allow the interview to flow, the extent to which the interviewer should contribute, and the length of the interview. These considerations allowed for the ethical and procedural elements of the data collection to be greatly enhanced. Data from the pilot studies were not included in the final data analysis. The first author conducted the interviews.

2.3. Interview Process

Each participant in the research study was provided with a consent form, a research privacy notice, and a participant information sheet thoroughly explaining the nature of the research study. It was made clear to them that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. At the commencement of the interview, upon signing the consent form, interviewees were again reassured (verbally this time) that their identity and any information supplied would remain confidential and would not be disclosed to anyone. They were informed that the interview recordings would initially be retained but then deleted once transcribed. To ensure privacy and confidentiality, it was clarified that when reporting the research findings, case numbers would be used to prevent identification of participants or places of work. Interviews lasted on average one hour. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, and transcripts were returned to individual participants for participant validation prior to data analysis. Interviews were open and conversational in nature [75]. Table 2 gives participant information. Sixteen school leaders initially responded, with fifteen continuing through the process to interview. Data saturation was met and exceeded. Thirteen interviews were held in person in educational institutions across Ireland, with two online at work locations (see Appendix B for interview questions). Audio recordings were made using an iPhone and Dictaphone, with the interviewees' consent. Following each interview, short audio notes were also made, where relevant, to give extra context. These were added to the transcripts, which were imported onto NVivo 14 [76]. The transcripts were triangulated with the three researchers and interviewee transcript review was employed as a technique for improving the rigour of interview-based, qualitative research [77]. The NVivo [76] project was shared with the research team, and each member undertook portions of the coding. Interrater reliability was utilised for data analysis to ensure consistency of the study methods [78].

Table 2. Interview Participants.

Cases	Participant Type	Location	Years as School Leader
1	Administrative Principal	Urban	11–20
2	Teaching Principal	Rural	21–30
3	Administrative Principal	Suburban	31–40
4	Administrative Principal	Urban	11–20
5	Assistant Principal	Urban	31–40
6	Teaching Principal	Rural	21–30
7	Administrative Principal	Suburban	31–40
8	Former Inspector/Assistant Principal	Urban	21–30
9	Deputy Principal	Suburban	11–20
10	Administrative Principal	Rural	11–20
11	Former Inspector/Principal	Urban	21–30
12	Administrative Principal	Suburban	31–40
13	Assistant Principal	Urban	11–20
14	Administrative Principal	Suburban	31–40
15	Former Inspector/Principal	Urban	31–40

2.4. Data Analysis

The six-phase iterative process of reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) developed by Braun and Clarke was undertaken [79,80]. It is a 'Big Q' qualitative orientation, being an interpretive method firmly situated within a qualitative paradigm [80]; the data are collected and analysed with respect to the participants' attitudes, while the reflexive influence of the researchers' interpretations is also embraced as valued and integral to the process [81]. For this study, RTA was preferred over other approaches to qualitative data analysis, such as grounded theory or interpretative phenomenological analysis, as it is independent of theory and epistemology and the flexibility of this process allows the researcher to choose theories and epistemologies requiring the researcher to decide what is considered a theme, as well as to choose the degree and type of analysis [79]. The reflexive element involves examining understandings of ourselves and of the influence that these preconceptions have on the research [82]. The following six phases of RTA are seen as guidelines to be applied with flexibility to fit the data and research questions: (1) familiarizing oneself with the data, (2) generating codes, (3) constructing themes, (4) reviewing potential themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report [80,83]. While the phases are sequential, it is frequently necessary to revisit previous phases throughout the process [80]. An inductive process of analysis was adopted—a 'data-driven' approach, wherein data were 'open-coded' to represent the meaning communicated by the participants [83].

2.4.1. Phase One: Familiarisation with the Data

The first author led the data analysis. Before transcription, each audio recording was listened to three times, to increase the transcriber's familiarity with the content, intonation, and inflection. To ensure accuracy in transcriptions and for further familiarisation with the data, every recording was transcribed orthographically. The audios and transcripts were then uploaded to NVivo 14 [76]. The audio recordings were linked with the transcripts in NVivo to make 15 cases, termed units of observation. The file classifications were then populated with collections of attributes that came from the interview schedule, which were termed Question 1 (a)–(g) and which are given in Table 3. These file classifications were added to the cases to make Case Classifications.

Table 3. Interview Schedule: Question 1. (a)–(g).

Can you tell me about one primary school with which you are/were associated as a school leader?	
(a)	What is/was your association?
	(i) Principal?
	(ii) Deputy/assistant principal?
	(iii) Department of Education school inspector?
(b)	Is the school urban/rural, DEIS/non-DEIS?
(DEIS = *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools*)	
(c)	How many pupils attend the school? 0–100, 100–200, 200–300, 300+?
(d)	How many years' experience have you/the school principal? 0–10, 11–20, 21–30, 31–40?
(e)	How many members are there on the in-school management team? 0–5, 5–10, 10+?
(f)	How many teaching staff in the school? 0–5, 5–10, 10–15, 15–20, 20–25, 25–30, 30+?
(g)	How many non-teaching and ancillary staff in the school? 0–5, 5–10, 10–15, 15+?

The transcripts were then read again while listening to the audio. Transcripts were then reread to ensure familiarity with the content of the interviews and make some preliminary notes.

2.4.2. Phase Two: Generating Initial Codes

Each interview was coded in line with the interview objectives, which were as follows: to establish interviewees' (i) knowledge of transformational school leadership; (ii) views of the benefits, advantages, limitations, disadvantages and feasibility of transformational school leadership; and (iii) expressions of transformational school leadership in practice. The entire dataset was worked through systematically, and the codes were assigned to nodes, the name NVivo [76] gives to codes.

2.4.3. Phase Three: Generating Themes

In this phase, the dataset was reviewed and analysed in its entirety to combine codes sharing common features and create themes and sub-themes. These communicated meaningful responses to the research questions [83]. At this point, miscellaneous prospective themes that were not considered relevant were archived but remained available in case they might be required later in the analysis. Figure 1 maps the initial themes relating to the two research questions: eight themes relating to the first question and six to the second.

1. What are school and system leaders' knowledge, understanding and perceptions regarding the feasibility of transformational school leadership?
    - Understanding of transformational school leadership
    - Transformational school leadership and other leadership styles
    - Contributors to school leadership
    - Opinions regarding core focus
    - Benefits and advantages of transformational school leadership
    - Limitations and disadvantages of transformational school leadership
    - Feasibility of transformational school leadership
    - Inspectors, deputy and assistant principals' leadership
2. How do transformational school leadership behaviours manifest in primary school settings?
    - Evidence and experience of transformational school leadership
    - Leadership styles and experiences
    - Prioritising leadership
    - Teaching principal leadership
    - Opinions of leader performance
    - The mature school leader

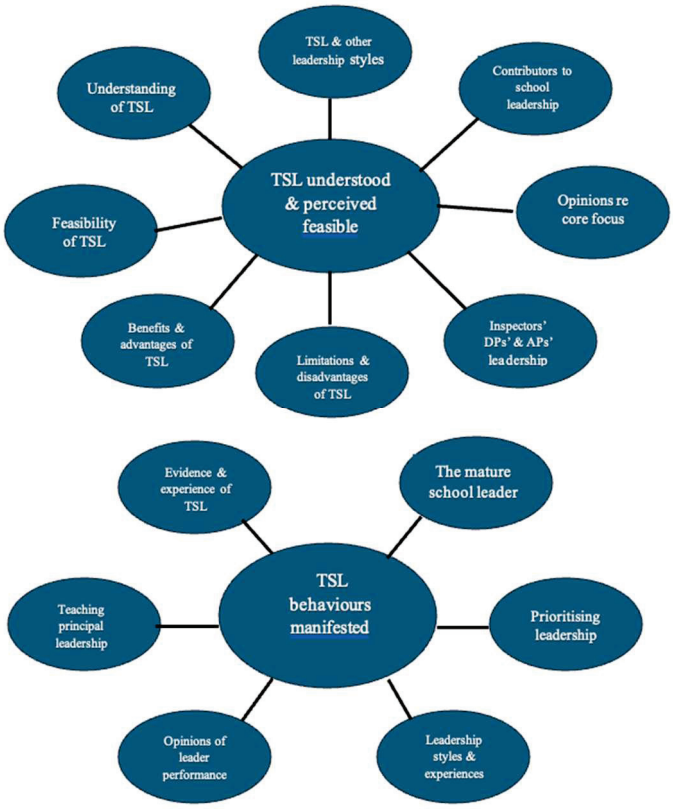

Figure 1. Initial thematic map.

2.4.4. Phase Four: Reviewing Potential Themes

In this phase, the dataset was reviewed at two levels, with level one being an examination of the relationships among the data that inform each theme and sub-theme to allow them to contribute to the data narrative [81]. In level two, the themes were modified and some collapsed together, and some themes and sub-themes were restructured until it was found that the resulting set of themes worked in relation to each other and the full dataset [84]. The fourteen themes brought forward were collapsed into seven: understanding of transformational school leadership, benefits and advantages of transformational school leadership, limitations and disadvantages of transformational school leadership, feasibility of transformational school leadership, which related to the research question 'How can we characterize school and system leaders' knowledge, understanding and perceptions regarding the feasibility of transformational school leadership?', and; evidence and experience of transformational school leadership, enhancing school leadership, and leadership of school and system leaders relating to, 'How do transformational school leadership behaviours manifest in primary school settings¿

2.4.5. Phase Five: Defining and Naming Themes

The seven themes were reduced to five in this phase: understanding of and attitudes to transformational school leadership, feasibility of transformational school leadership, benefits and advantages of transformational school leadership, limitations and disadvantages of transformational school leadership, and transformational school leadership behaviours manifested. Each theme tells its own independent story, with a consistent narrative flow from theme to theme; the narratives are consistent with the dataset and informative in relation to the research questions, in line with the dual criteria of internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity [85]. A set of terms discussed used by the interviewees in each theme section was also compiled to highlight the language used and give a comprehensive overview.

2.4.6. Phase Six: Producing the Report

The results section synthesises and contextualises the data [83]. While the themes created are synthesised in response to the interview questions, the data gathered for each theme were drawn from the entire dataset. The story begins with expressions of what transformational school leadership means to each interviewee and their attitudes towards it, then moves to their perception of its benefits, advantages, limitations, disadvantages, and feasibility, and finishes with examples of manifested, experienced, and intentional transformational school leadership behaviours in primary school education. Where the term 'parent' is used, this includes 'guardian'.

3. Findings and Analysis

In response to the research questions, data analysis yielded the following themes and sub-themes: (1) Knowledge of, understanding of, and attitudes towards transformational school leadership: (i) transformation, change and growth; (ii) relationships; (iii) vision and goals; (iv) leading; (2) Feasibility of transformational school leadership: (i) realism, (ii) people and relationships, (iii) practical challenges; (3) Benefits and advantages of transformational school leadership: (i) aspiration (ii) culture, (iii) motivation and modelling, (iv) school community, (v) delivering quality learning; (4) Disadvantages and limitations of transformational school leadership: (i) personality, (ii) pressure, (iii) slow process, (iv) unexpected variables; (5) transformational school leadership behaviours manifested: (i) idealised influence, (ii) inspirational motivation, (iii) individualised consideration, (iv) intellectual stimulation, (v) school development, (vi) improving the curricular offerings.

3.1. First Theme: Knowledge, Understanding of, and Attitudes towards Transformational School Leadership

In synthesising and contextualising the data, four sub-themes were created for the first theme: (1) transformation, change and growth; (2) relationships; (3) vision, mission, and goals; (4) leading.

3.1.1. First Theme; First Sub-Theme: Transformation, Change and Growth

Transformational school leadership was understood to change people and the system positively, with the transformational element of change and the question 'What has changed?' being central to one responder in relation to school inspection.

> *It changes the individual and the system positively.*
>
> (Participant 2)

> *Transformational leadership is facilitating, enabling a change, a substantial change in the actions of others. . . it's not just happening to the actual leader that's transforming, you know, it's actually that the leader is enabling and facilitating the transformation in others.*
>
> (Participant 8)

> *Potentially the most important type of leadership that there is, because if you understand change, then you can change well, and if you don't change well, you are doing damage.*
>
> (Participant 11)

> *To be transformational is about moving the school from point A to point B.*
>
> (Participant 12)

The role of the principal as leading transformational change is highlighted by some and implied by others.

> *Transformational leadership, I think of it as the type of leadership you need for a school that's changing, for a society that's changing, and a crucial element is the role of the principal in facilitating that creation and vision.*
>
> (Participant 13)

It was appreciated that change for the sake of change is not what transformational school leadership is; rather, it is a measured process of changing where and when necessary.

> *Being a transformational leader is sometimes resisting the bandwagon. So, being a transformational school leader is sometimes resisting change.*
>
> (Participant 7)

Transformation of school culture, experiences and outcomes are understood to be intrinsic.

> *To transform the school culture, to transform the experiences, the outcomes for the children, it's just, it's in the word itself.*
>
> (Participant 4)

It was perceived as being a quite structured model by participants, one requiring that schools have a good deal of knowledge about it before implementation. One interviewee understood transformational school leadership not to be innate, which was in contrast with other interviewees who believed transformational school leadership to be a style that suits certain personality types.

> *I don't think, compared to other leadership styles, that it would be innate, or natural, it seems to be quite structured; this is our focus, how we're going to get there. . . similar to the 'Grow Model' that's very structured.*
>
> (Participant 10)

The value of the sustainability of transformational school leadership behaviours in change was also emphasised.

> *There has to be a sustainability about what you're doing, about what you're moving to, and so I think you have to keep it (transformational school leadership) to the centre.*
>
> (Participant 12)

3.1.2. First Theme; Second Sub-Theme: Relationships

Transformational school leaders were seen to motivate, work with, and encourage members of the whole school community to be part of the school's growth.

> *In transformational school leadership you're motivating staff on an individual basis.*
>
> (Participant 3)

> *You have to bring them along. . .it's how you are going to enable those among you, to engage in their own leadership roles.*
>
> (Participant 12)

> *It's that relationship side of things.*
>
> (Participant 6)

Developing trusting relationships was presented in various ways;

> *Understanding where people are at in their own life, and I suppose developing a rapport and trust with them.*
>
> (Participant 1)

Love, care, and consideration for one another in school was widely discussed as a very significant part of transformational school leadership.

> *I think if you have love at the heart of the place, I think that's the most transformational thing of all. . . Love is supporting your colleague, its treating them right, it's helping them when they need help, its sharing, it's all those.*
>
> (Participant 3)

Another portrayal of the 'relationships' aspect was the reciprocal benefit.

> *Transformational leadership makes so much sense. There's something lovely about it. There's something two-way.*
>
> (Participant 5)

> *It's not just happening to the actual leader that's transforming, you know, it's actually that the leader is enabling and facilitating the transformation in others.*
>
> (Participant 8)

3.1.3. First Theme; Third Sub-Theme: Vision, Mission, and Goals

Expressions relating to 'vision and mission' were prevalent among school and system leaders.

> *I think transformational leadership for me is seeing that big picture, that end goal, which is never an end point, but where you want to be as a school.*
>
> (Participant 14)

There was a strong body of opinion regarding a significant link between transformational school leadership and creating a school vision, mission, and shared goals as a collaborative undertaking.

> *Circular 63 tasks the principal. . . to establish the vision and purpose of the school, and the only type of leadership that I have come across that is connected to that directly is transformational leadership. . . it is the school's vision, not the department's vision, . . . and at the top you have someone keeping all the balls in the air, and with that overarching view of that vision. . . and the principal aligning and marrying professional goals of the teachers with the vision of the school—that has to come from the bottom up.*
>
> (Participant 13)

> *To be a transformational leader and to lead a transformational team, you need to be working very closely with the team.*
>
> (Participant 4)

Respondents differentiated between being the guardian of the mission and contributing to change.

> *As the leader you are the repository of the school mission, and the guardian of it, but you are not the panacea decider. A cleaner could say something and that could lead to great change.*
>
> (Participant 7)

For all interviewees, the principal was perceived as the person central to and leading transformational school leadership, with many examples.

> *With transformational school leadership, the main thing that comes to mind is the principal; the role of the principal aligning and marrying professional goals of the teachers with the vision of the school, trying to build it from the bottom up, and having buy-in from the staff, creating that sense of ownership.*
>
> (Participant 13)

> *With the principal being the leader, the one who has the vision, the one who has to build up the trust, the one who has to ensure that the communication is there, the one who ensures and enables the collaborative work.*
>
> (Participant 8)

3.1.4. First Theme; Fourth Sub-Theme: Leading

Some perceived transformational school leadership as having a positive impact, empowering communities and developing leadership capacity.

> *It's about having a positive impact, I suppose the big word for me is empower, and empowerment of the school community you're in.*

(Participant 1)

One side of it (transformational school leadership) is definitely my work with my in-school management team, with my teachers, and for pupils to become leaders in their own right.

(Participant 12)

For many, school culture was central to their understanding.

Building a positive school culture.

(Participant 6)

Motivation was also discussed as a feature of transformational leadership and as an individualised behaviour.

In transformational school leadership, you're motivating staff on an individual basis.

(Participant 1)

A principal, as a transformational school leader, was also perceived to have the necessary leadership skills to enable transformational school leadership.

Those (transformational leadership) skills really have to inform then, how you are going to enable those among you, to engage in their own leadership roles.

(Participant 8)

Allowing all to lead, resulting in any member of the school community contributing to leadership, was also discussed.

Because our principal promotes transformational leadership, we're all leading. . .I think at certain times, everyone is a leader; I think the broader that base, the stronger the results.

(Participant 13)

Transformational leadership can be for everybody—everyone leads at some point, at some level, be it in their classroom, even the children.

(Participant 6)

Transformational school leadership was understood to be optimised when used with other leadership models such as distributed and instructional leadership. Four respondents believed one would use the most relevant form of leadership for a given situation and that other leadership models blend well with transformational school leadership.

It has to be in conjunction with distributive leadership, but in my mind it is far more important.

(Participant 11)

I don't think you can have transformational leadership without instructional leadership, and distributive leadership; that hybrid model definitely works for us. . . They can certainly work together, depending on the context.

(Participant 13)

The first theme highlighted the empirical data showing positivity in participants' attitudes towards transformational school leadership. It was understood to be a model for change, with leadership shared among the school community, building school culture, and collaborating on working towards shared goals to fulfil the school mission and vision. Transformational school leadership was thus seen as a sustainable model. Motivation, specifically individualised motivation, was viewed as a significant feature of transformational school leadership. The principal was perceived as central to leading transformational school leadership, empowering others, and building leadership capacity. Values of trust, love, care, and consideration were valued and associated specifically with transformational leadership by interviewees, which resonates strongly with these authors researching this model. That the model can be satisfactorily employed with other leadership practices; it was suggested by some school and system leaders that it was most successful when used

in conjunction with models such as distributed and instructional leadership. This insight could have significant implications for application in the Irish context.

3.2. Second Theme: Feasibility of Transformational School Leadership

This theme was created with sub-themes: (1) realism, (2) people and relationships, and (3) practical challenges.

3.2.1. Second Theme; First Sub-Theme: Realism

Transformational school leadership was perceived to be realistic by interviewees.

> *I think it is realistic, and something that we should aspire to, and if you did have transformational leadership in a school, things would be a lot easier. I think there would be better staff morale, better relationships, fewer problems.*
>
> (Participant 9)

Transformation was also seen as not only realistic, but necessary for success in another response.

> *But not transforming is not even on the table. . .The children change every hour. So, you have to have transformation, around what it is you do, and why you do it, in order to have a target in place for the benefit of the young person beside you.*
>
> (Participant 11)

A small 't' for transformational school leadership was discussed as potentially enabling this model to be more feasible, realistic and sustainable.

> *The small 't' is not to lower the aim; it's to make it a more long-term, sustainable maybe slow burner thing. The best things are done slow.*
>
> (Participant 3)

The time that the practice of transformational school leadership requires was also perceived as an important aspect relating to realism for interviewees, time-intentive aspects included the need to invest time in building staff relations and the need to move slowly and incrementally when developing transformational school leadership.

> *It might be a slower process—it requires more time*
>
> (Participant 1)
>
> *You should be transforming your school, in incremental steps.*
>
> (Participant 2)
>
> *It's not show, and it's not forced, it's positive and it's gentle, and it's progressive, together.*
>
> (Participant 12)
>
> *For transformational leadership to occur, you need to invest in your staff, you need to know your staff, you need to give that time.*
>
> (Participant 13)

Contrasting contexts experienced by several participants who have been principals in several schools added strength to this opinion in terms of realism.

> *To build it from the bottom up. . .So, you've to take on board what you have in front of you, and your context.*
>
> (Participant 13)
>
> *It depends on the context in which the leader finds themselves.*
>
> (Participant 8)

Being realistic about expectations or standards that can be achieved was also emphasised by several interviewees as part of making transformational school leadership feasible.

You do have to be realistic as well. I've seen people throw themselves on the rocks of the job, maybe setting the bar too high for themselves. So, I think if you can bring the bar down to an appropriate level—one that you just might be able to jump, you know, rather than one that you're probably going to knock.

(Participant 3)

You need to be realistic about the targets and your vision, and it's important that the vision is realistic and manageable, given the current pressures on teachers.

(Participant 9)

Your terms of reference are very important. So, if there are key areas of transformation and you focus in on them, it's possible, but if you go on a broad front, I don't think it is, because you haven't got the funding to do it.

(Participant 7)

Being strategic was perceived as a significant element of supporting the feasibility of enacting transformational school leadership by participant 15 and others, who expressed that leaders' high adaptability, subtlety, and teamwork skills maximise the realistic element and benefits.

Increasing realism, interviewees recommended a transformational school leader being strategic early in a position.

You should go for quick gains where there's a strong buy-in, so then you get credibility and they realise that you're going to be doing things with them rather than against them, and that they are part of the decision…. It involves looking; you realise that your first change management or innovation must be impactful in terms of student outcomes, or social outcomes or pastoral outcomes, academic outcomes. Otherwise, you're not going to build much credibility. So only fools rush in.

(Participant 7)

A strategic dimension in the realism of transformational leadership, its value and effectiveness, was highlighted particularly where schools were new and in start-up phases.

I would say strategic; there is so much strategy here because it's a start up… The transformational leadership part is how to get from zero, not having a school 3 years ago, how do I get from there, to now, to there, and maintaining it along the way, and how to do that as a community.

(Participant 14)

Despite the practical challenges discussed, interviewees were significantly more positively than negatively disposed to the feasibility of transformational school leadership, which in summary can be seen in these comments.

I think it has to be realistic—if you're going to do the job right. If you get people around you who will support you and not put roadblocks in your way.

(Participant 2)

How realistic? Well, I think it, it has to be.

(Participant 12)

3.2.2. Second Theme, Second Sub-Theme: People and Relationships

This sub-theme was created because leaders' interpersonal and empathy skills and skills in building leadership capacity, healthy relationships, and teamwork among the whole school community were perceived by interviewees as contributing significantly to the feasibility of transformational school leadership.

It's such a people-based business; relationships are such a big part of it, that it does depend on the people you are dealing with.

(Participant 3)

I think for it to work, the interpersonal skills of the school leaders are really important, like empathy, and being able to work as part of a team, and being able to build leadership capacity in others, not seeing yourself as knowing everything.

(Participant 9)

To be a transformational leader and to lead a transformational team, you need to be working very closely with the team.

(Participant 4)

Trust and consistency in relationships amongst members of the school community were also discussed as making transformational school leadership more feasible by several participants. While the importance of inclusivity was referenced, the reality of the challenges of being able to bring everyone in the whole school community on the journey of transformational school leadership was discussed by several interviewees.

There has to be buy-in from everyone in the school, and in that way, I suppose, everyone has to see themselves as having a part to play in the process.

(Participant 9)

So, it has to be broad. You're working from the bottom up, but that has to encompass as many people as you can. I don't think it's realistic that you can bring everybody.

(Participant 13)

Many principals stressed the importance of the school leadership team sharing leadership, not just management, if transformational school leadership was to be realistic and feasible and if the position of principal was to become more sustainable than it is currently. This was the specific reason for one school's leadership team participating in team coaching with the Centre for School Leadership, now OIDE.

With transformational leadership and sustainable leadership, the in-school management team is hugely, hugely important.

(Participant 12)

The improvement associated with the renewed numbers of assistant principals was seen as making a valuable contribution to feasibility of enactment.

We have an in-school management team of 6 now, so at least that has improved.

(Participant 4)

I think at certain times, everyone is a leader; it's very hard to have everyone leading at the same time, but I think the broader that base, the stronger the results.

(Participant 13)

3.2.3. Second Theme; Third Sub-Theme: Practical Challenges

Practical workplace challenges were discussed by participants as restricting the feasibility of all forms of school leadership including transformational school leadership. School and system leaders expressed frustration with a system that does not allow sufficient time for leadership, mainly due to school leaders completing practical tasks that there is no other staff member to cover, a system that does not provide sufficient administration support for school leaders to lead, and a lack of funding with which to implement leaders' initiatives.

Because we've got a lot of responsibilities regarding HR, leave, buildings that distract us and take us away.

(Participant 1)

To get the time to do it, to get away from management duties, to spend more time looking after leading the school, I would see that as the first problem or hurdle. . . So, it (transformational school leadership) is doable absolutely, but the day to day running of the school takes time and effort; dealing with crises, dealing with financial, dealing with

discipline—the amount of time the principal gets to lead his or her vision is probably very small.

(Participant 4)

The question of where responsibility for these challenges lies was addressed by some, who placed it on how 'the system is set up', and the managerial tasks assigned to school leaders.

The system is set up in such a way to encourage principals to be more isolated in their work, and to prioritise administration of tasks.

(Participant 1)

The IPPN report looked at the circulars, in the last 10 years and 67% of them are about managing the organisation.

(Participant 14)

Many participants understood there to be additional work with implementing transformational school leadership, if undertaken by the principal alone, with many respondents concerned about school principals and how they need to be better supported and protected.

There's a lot of work. . . The principal is constantly thinking and plugging and guiding and encouraging; and that must be quite draining, and I would imagine it's intensive to facilitate that.

(Participant 13)

Enactment of transformational school leadership is discussed by school and system leaders as being feasible and realistic and is discussed by many as being inevitable. Strategy, timing, speed, and appropriate extent of enactment were seen as conditions of realistic feasibility, with experienced participants, many of whom have been school leaders in varying contexts, adding strength and substance to these findings through their conviction. The quality of people and relationships is emphasised in relation to the feasibility of transformational school leadership enactment, arguably implying that the degree of success of the model is dependent on skilful leaders capable of trust-building, leadership, exercising empathy and interpersonal skills, building healthy relationships, and supporting teamwork among the whole school community while being consistent, inclusive, and strategic. Sharing leadership with all was indicated as a factor for sustainability, and the restoration of assistant principal positions was appreciated. Practical day-to-day challenges of leadership positions in schools were regarded as hampering the feasibility of enactment given administration overload, with the importance of sharing leadership responsibility discussed. This highlights the potential for incorporating distributed responsibility into transformational school leadership.

3.3. Third Theme: Benefits and Advantages of Transformational School Leadership

Many positives of transformational school leadership were discussed in the opening theme, 'Knowledge and understanding of, and attitudes towards transformational school leadership'. These five sub-themes of additional benefits were created within this theme: (1) aspiration, (2) culture, (3) motivation and modelling, (4) school community, and (5) delivering quality learning.

3.3.1. Third Theme; First Sub-Theme: Aspiration

Transformational school leadership is considered aspirational by school and system leader interviewees, with most considering transformational school leadership to be of immense value as a leadership model and expressing or implying that transformational school leadership is the goal, the ideal.

I think it's a goal, it should be. . .Yes, absolutely, I would see it should be a goal for every school.

(Participant 4)

I suppose we all aspire to be transformational.

(Participant 12)

It is at the core of what everyone is moving towards; the ideal.

(Participant 14)

3.3.2. Third Theme; Second Sub-Theme: Culture

Looking at how interviewees perceived transformational school leadership as benefitting the school's culture, the very process was seen to transform the culture of the school, the leadership culture, and the outcomes for the children.

The word itself, to transform; to transform the school culture, to transform the experiences, the outcomes for the children, it's just, it's in the word itself. If it can be achieved, of course there are benefits, with transforming the leadership culture, the culture itself. To me it's kind of self-explanatory.

(Participant 4)

Creating a school where pupils want to come into in the morning, where staff are happy to come in and enjoy their work but are also doing very hard work while they're here.

(Participant 12)

Well-adjusted, happy, resilient children, supported by similar teachers.

(Participant 11)

The benefits of transformational school leadership to a school's atmosphere were also referenced as an advantage, with a vibrant and positive atmosphere reflecting the school culture, going deep into the fabric of the school community. One principal described the school culture in a school he joined, which he believed exemplified transformational school leadership, as a very valuable light shining for all to see.

I think transformational leadership may not always be very obvious from the outside, but as soon as you get inside, you know. . .. I felt like I was handed a most valuable chandelier.

(Participant 3)

The benefits of high standards of communication came through as a distinct advantage of transformational school leadership in relation to culture, uniting all members of the whole school community and resulting in transparency across all stakeholders, with understanding and appreciation of the where, what, and why.

That's what I see the main advantage of it (transformational school leadership) is; structure and clarity around communication.

(Participant 10)

The adaptability/creativity of the transformational school leader was understood to benefit the school culture through their employing the relevant strategy required at a given time.

Some schools might be very settled in their ways, and transformational leadership is adaptable, so if a school needs things, you need to take that tool out of your tool kit and use that one.

(Participant 3)

3.3.3. Third Theme; Third Sub-Theme: Motivation and Modelling

Motivation was discussed as a significant benefit and advantage of transformational school leadership by interviewees, a finding in keeping with the substantial research evidence regarding a correlation between the impact of transformational school leadership on school staff and teacher motivation, such as the Lee and Kuo study [86], as follows:

The effects of transformational leadership, you know, they're deep and long-lasting; inspire, and motivate.

(Participant 3)

The aspect of transformational school leadership motivating the school community was discussed as having the benefit of building leadership capacity.

You'd be able to build leadership capacity among the staff.

(Participant 9)

Modelling quality behaviours, building trust, and inspiring others were discussed as valuable to interviewees.

Transformational school leadership; that you're leading by example. Others see it without you having to say it.

(Participant 2)

You need to see it modelled; the personality of the principal is huge, and you need to see integrity modelled, you need to see passion and intelligence. Trust has to be there. . . You need to be inspired by your leader, you really, really do.

(Participant 13)

3.3.4. Third Theme; Fourth Sub-Theme: School Community

Responses exploring how transformational school leadership benefits the school community included how a school with transformational leadership would be more dynamic, thus attracting, engaging, and retaining energetic and spirited staff.

So, the benefits are you're a moving school more likely to attract staff with dynamic traits which you want.

(Participant 7)

Four interviewees emphasised how transformational school leadership unites the staff, encourages buy-in, and gives the whole community a sense of agency and ownership, all of which were considered of immense value to the growth of a school.

It's a model that unifies the staff; the vast majority of staff, and buy-in, and there's a sense of pride that comes with that, there's a sense of 'It's us; we're a professional community' and driving that forward.

(Participant 13)

Buy-in; if you have a top down or hierarchical model, you're not going to get as much engagement, and I think the most important aspect is agency, that there's a level of freedom.

(Participant 7)

I think that buy-in is a huge thing. . . Ownership, big time. A feeling of being proud of something, being responsible for it, being critical of it.

(Participant 5)

Better staff morale, relationships, collaboration, and interest in the process were also referenced.

I think there would be better staff morale, better relationships, fewer problems. . . and there's a greater sense of cohesion.

(Participant 9)

That whole feeling of collaboration and great interest in what you're doing when that kind of leadership is meted out to you.

(Participant 5)

3.3.5. Third Theme; Fifth Sub-Theme: Delivering Quality Learning

Transformational school leadership delivering quality learning was discussed by participants.

Transformational school leadership delivers the highest quality product of learning.

(Participant 11)

The third theme encompassed the benefits and advantages of transformational school leadership, highlighting the extent of interviewees' view of this model being aspirational; the goal and ideal. In contributing significantly to enhanced school culture, the process itself was perceived as improving leadership culture, school atmosphere, and student outcomes. Increased standards of communication were also seen to add to transparency, uniting the whole school community. Creativity and adaptability were associated with transformational leadership and enhancing school culture. Attracting quality staff and staff retention, having staff engagement, unity and agency, enhanced morale, relationships, and collaboration, and delivering quality student learning were many of the benefits of transformational school leadership referenced.

3.4. Fourth Theme; Disadvantages and Limitations of Transformational School Leadership

This theme yielded the smallest quantity of data from interviewees, with responses mainly centring around the potential problems with incorrect application of transformational school leadership or disadvantages that could be applied to any leadership style. The sub-themes (1) personality, (2) pressure, (3) slow process, and (4) unexpected variables, were created. These are additional to the 'challenges', which was analysed under the second theme, 'Feasibility of transformational school leadership'.

3.4.1. Fourth Theme; First Sub-Theme: Personality

In response to the interview question 'What might you consider as the disadvantages or drawbacks to transformational school leadership?' most of the opinions centred around the first sub-theme, 'personality', in that the personality of any member of the school community may impose a limitation on transformational school leadership; conversely, it was discussed that energetic, enthusiastic, and positive personalities will be an asset.

I think there's a personality, and a characteristic trait there that is required, and then I think it can be misused by people.

(Participant 13)

If there's a bad apple in the barrel.

(Participant 2)

However, it was remarked that the practice of motivating members of the school community on an individual basis and developing shared goals should reduce this number. Whether transformational school leadership comes naturally to some people and not to others was another area of varying opinions, with some believing that it could be a learned behaviour style, especially if a framework was clearly developed, but two interviewees considered that it might be a style that does not suit all, making the need for a fit a disadvantage of transformational school leadership.

Does it have to be something that comes naturally? It can't be something that's forced, because maybe it's not going to work then, and it's not going to come as easy.

(Participant 6)

Potential to misuse one's power in a transformational school leadership model was also referenced.

I think it can be misused by people; it's very important that it's not the principal's vision, that it's something that's organic, and forever changing, and even that the children have a sense of ownership around the vision of the school, and external; parents, or whatever, but I think that it might be challenging for a principal to let that happen'.

(Participant 13)

3.4.2. Fourth Theme; Second Sub-Theme: Pressure

This sub-theme was developed as a potential disadvantage of transformational school leadership, as it could put pressure on school leaders, and could affect one's health, especially where the process was experienced as being enacted by the principal alone.

> *And then I suppose does your holding your staff to a higher standard, bring pressure, always wanting to do your best, put pressure on your personal life; to try and balance everything.*
>
> (Participant 6)

> *I think it's a great aspirational term, but I think it comes with a health warning.*
>
> (Participant 7)

3.4.3. Fourth Theme; Third Sub-Theme: Slow Process

Another disadvantage of transformational school leadership was that it was seen by two interviewees to possibly be a slow process to implement, as it needed to be worked on by the whole staff.

> *It might be a slower process—it requires more time.*
>
> (Participant 1)

3.4.4. Fourth Theme; Fourth Sub-Theme: Unexpected Variables

There was a perception that transformational school leadership might not account for unexpected variables that are a daily reality of school life.

> *Not giving enough leeway for the variables; being too structured and rigid; not allowing for the flexibility, maybe, on the day to day interaction of anything that can happen any day in a given school.*
>
> (Participant 10)

The disadvantages or limitations of transformational school leadership were few and were seldom repeated by participants, but the model was seen to be personality-dependent, and it was believed that if it were enacted by an individual leader, particularly, it could lead to a misuse of power. It was perceived as putting additional pressure on leaders and as taking time to put in place. While it was also understood by two participants to be quite structured, and potentially inflexible as a result, not accounting for incidentals. This was considered different to leading for, or in times of, change.

3.5. Fifth Theme; Transformational School Leadership Behaviours Manifested

This theme was generated by mapping the transformational school leadership behaviours demonstrated or experienced by interviewees onto the framework of elements of transformational school leadership, as outlined earlier in the paper: (1) idealised influence, (2) inspirational motivation, (3) individualised consideration, (4) intellectual stimulation, (5) school development, and (6) improving the curricular offerings.

3.5.1. Fifth Theme; First Sub-Theme: Idealised Influence

The most frequent manifested behaviour in this sub-theme was 'modelling': being an exemplar, leading by example, setting a standard, and demonstrating presence and visibility.

> *If everything is escalated up to me, then I'm pulled into the operational, and I can't be strategic. So, I would have talks about that to my leadership team. And if you've got young leaders, they need mentoring in that way. But, by doing it, you get a role-modelling trickle down.*
>
> (Participant 7)

This was followed by 'authenticity'.

I think I'm practising what I preach, and the staff know that I care and that my motivations are genuine.

(Participant 10)

Another priority was that all leaders would have a strong work ethic and not expect others to work harder than them. Being strategic was also strongly evident, ranging from expressions of the vast amount of strategising required in start-up situations to ensuring that the operational does not distract.

3.5.2. Fifth Theme; Second Sub-Theme: Inspirational Motivation

'Identifying, articulating, and facilitating a shared vision,' was the leading provider of data under this sub-theme and was seen by many as fundamental to effective leadership. Various strategies and priorities to achieve this were discussed, such as having a shared vision, reflecting the intention to put the student at the centre of the work, and facilitating the realisation of the vison. This was discussed in terms of it being an area of increased awareness and importance for school leadership, identification, and credibility.

We would have a shared vision in terms of where we want the school to go'; aligning Department of Education policy with survey results from staff and parents; developing a vision for the whole school community from core values; formulating and communicating a shared vision.

(Participant 9)

What it is you do, and why you do it, for the benefit of the young person beside you, and how the vision is actioned.

(Participant 11)

Enabling the shared vision to become realised.

(Participant 8)

Pushing on our vision.

(Participant 13)

The second-highest number of codes came from 'developing and fostering acceptance of shared goals', with behaviours again reflecting the value and priority of working as a team to develop shared goals for the benefit of all. School staffs were seen to work on developing these goals initially, with 'In-school management team' members, in several cases, working on fostering whole school acceptance and overseeing responsibility for implementation of specific areas.

Creating a charter that we can all agree to; what are our non-negotiables, what are we committed to? What are the promises we are making to one another here?

(Participant 1)

The need to prioritise an achievable number of goals was also discussed, including the importance of working collaboratively on shared goals, and 'buy-in' was highlighted by some interviewees as a benefit and positive outcome.

You can't have 46 fridge magnets, but you can have 3.

(Participant 7)

'Inspirational motivation' behaviours were next most discussed by participants, where the principal, predominantly, was seen to inspire and motivate staff, students, and stakeholder groups to perform and collaborate beyond perceived expectations, building whole school community confidence and mindset.

So, a bit like parenting; giving the kid wings, but letting them feel the motivation is intrinsic.

(Participant 7)

Participants discussed an increase in leadership teams collaborating and sharing leadership responsibilities. All leading and leading from within, non-hierarchical leadership among staff, establishment of student councils and an increase in teamwork, were discussed by interviewees as representing a change in the recent past. This was seen as a significant contrast from leadership being in the hands of the principal alone; anyone in the school community can now show leadership in different ways and at different times, with examples given of members from across the whole school community.

> *I set out my stall—it was going to be very non-hierarchical; anyone can show leadership—a newly qualified teacher can show leadership. It's not the exclusive domain of the in-school management team.*
>
> (Participant 1)

'Setting direction' was also evidenced in several cases, with behaviours such as conducting surveys with various stakeholder groups and implementing the agreed-upon outcomes, inclusive initiatives, and laying out a 'roadmap' based on the school's vision; additionally, policies on leadership resulting in focused actions and school positivity were considered an outcome.

Principals being democratic and not permitting ego to interfere was witnessed, with school leaders happy to share the leadership profile, to listen to staff, and to allow them lead, especially on specific initiatives.

> *I love sharing the limelight.*
>
> (Participant 3)

3.5.3. Fifth Theme; Third Sub-Theme: Individualised Consideration

The third sub-theme also yielded many behaviours related to a transformational leadership style. 'Individualised consideration' was discussed by several who understood the need to treat the whole school community as a collection of individuals requiring individualised relationships.

> *You contextualise your engagement with people. Some people prefer or require more direct communication. Some people need a more gentle, soft touch.*
>
> (Participant 1)

Building relationships was evident and seen to be of immense value by many.

> *I think relationships are so important; within the school, within the board, the whole way down and I think everyone feels like a valued member of the school community.*
>
> (Participant 8)

Developing a positive relationship from the start with all stakeholders was emphasised as important in school leadership, as was having emotional intelligence in leading people, showing empathy and care.

> *Understanding where people are at.*
>
> (Participant 1)

> *There is a very positive atmosphere in the school, there is confidence among the staff, and understanding towards each other, and that's probably led, I think, in a large part, by the empathetic approach of the principal.*
>
> (Participant 9)

Attending Parents' Association meetings, meeting students, staff, and parents in the mornings, and successfully handling relationships in a school merger were further examples of school leaders developing and maintaining relationships. The well-being of the whole community was understood to be of tantamount importance in developing and maintaining relationships, with school leaders ensuring student and staff well-being, but potentially at the expense of their own; such are the demands of senior leadership positions

in schools. 'Trust' was the next-most-coded behaviour, with interviewees passionate about the value of building trusting relationships and the time needed to achieve this.

> *My leadership style would be all about developing trust and to do that requires legitimacy and time.*
>
> (Participant 1)

'Communication', communicating the vision and communicating with staff and the whole school community, was also prioritised by interviewees, where several discussed how they value the investment of time in communication; fostering relationships to build trust and 'buy-in' and enhance school culture via positive methods of communication with staff was discussed by many.

> *Check-ins rather than check-ups.*
>
> (Participant 1)

Be it gathering or sharing information and opinions, people discussed valuing inclusive communication. Behaviours related to 'building leadership capacity and enabling others to act' were also clearly enacted by each cohort of interviewees. They discussed feeling appreciation and satisfaction and experiencing a growth in leadership capacity, where principals

> *Found the person's strengths and played to them.*
>
> (Participant 5)

Others discussed modelling behaviours to build leadership capacity and enable others to act, with developing a positive mindset and harnessing leadership capacity amongst staff discussed by several interviewees. Behaviours cultivating leaders and building a senior leadership team were seen, where staff and school leadership teams were participating in leadership programmes. An increase in building student leadership capacity and enabling others to act was also discussed, with student councils established in many schools and students 'stepping up' to leadership roles in the playground. 'Developing and supporting people' was evidenced in many leaders and principals especially as well as challenging and empowering staff, enabling to act, and facilitating collaboration and leadership behaviours.

> *Our principal would be very good at encouraging us and standing behind us and supporting us.*
>
> (Participant 13)

> *I work and communicate and connect and cajole and praise and try and encourage people.*
>
> (Participant 12)

Fostering 'agency' was discussed as another more recent behaviour in school leaders, with several interviewees embracing the potential therein for staff and students, and ownership of the learning experience being a valued component.

3.5.4. Fifth Theme; Fourth Sub-Theme: Intellectual Stimulation

The practice of engaging in and facilitating continuous professional development (CPD), leadership courses, and giving students exciting opportunities to learn and grow through new learning initiatives featured here. Interviewees also discussed how the culture in their schools encouraged sharing their CPD learning with other staff, welcomed the introduction of initiatives, and invited experimentation in trying out new learning and teaching strategies, technology innovations, and inclusive, accessible education for all.

> *There is the expectation obviously that CPD would then be shared with staff, and that's really, really important.*
>
> (Participant 13)

'Encouraging the heart' was evidenced in interviewees facilitating staff and being facilitated to follow their passion in areas of curricular and co-curricular development. In

one interview, a leadership initiative involving building a research culture was introduced by the interviewee, with analysis of work and skills growth facilitated and supported by the principal and other colleagues. 'Holding high performance expectations' showcased school leaders' confidence in their colleagues' capabilities, with the principals in some cases knowing that they had more competency and capacity than they knew of themselves. Being an exemplar in leading the curricular work to high standards while being hard-working and setting high performance expectations for themselves before looking to their staff was also discussed by participants.

You would have the same expectations of what you're actually doing yourself in practice.

(Participant 8)

'Challenging the process and bias' was conveyed in how interviewees sought out challenging opportunities to improve their schools, questioning approaches, and looking for innovative methods to develop new systems and behaviours to suit their school communities while embracing change, cognisant that continuous learning by all is essential for growth and well-being.

How are we challenging our own biases?

(Participant 1)

3.5.5. Fifth Theme; Fifth Sub-Theme: School Development

'Assessing, developing, organizing, maintaining, and protecting the school', involves transformational school leadership behaviours again primarily manifested by principals. Expressions regarding change are the most frequently coded. Examples include several interviewees expressing the importance of changing well, inspectors also valuing and seeking out change, and others emphasizing that they consider it equally transformational to resist change and initiatives unless they are appropriate and beneficial.

Being a transformational leader is sometimes resisting the bandwagon.

(Participant 7)

Consideration of context and being adaptable were also valued and apparent here.

You just have to be adaptable; you have to play it where it lies.

(Participant 3)

Implementation of transformational school leadership was acknowledged by several interviewees as requiring time and patience to build it well and to ensure sustainability.

The slow burn, build it, make it solid, make it sustainable.

(Participant 3)

Ensuring the student is at the centre of the work was also widely evidenced and supported. Behaviours related to enhancing culture and developing ethos awareness were significantly prominent, and there was passion in the interviewees' responses in this area, with the belief that a positive culture and clearly outlined and understood ethos go to the very heart of schools' endeavours.

You give the students the metacognition of ethos and tell them they are part of it, and the parents. You must try and get a common front on how to be; and a quality of being.

(Participant 7)

The influence of transformational school leadership on school culture is widely evidenced in international literature [19,28]. Discussions with participants echoed this, with enhanced school culture attributed to transformational school leadership.

3.5.6. Fifth Theme; Sixth Sub-Theme: Improving the Curricular Offering

The sixth sub-theme encompassed transformational school leadership behaviours presented in school and system leaders leading learning for the whole school community, with

developing learning and growth for all perceived as a fundamental objective. This priority was viewed by many as being difficult to achieve due to the burden on school leaders of administrative and managerial tasks, with the endeavours to succeed contributing to potentially make the position of school principal, specifically, unsustainable. Some interviewees referenced always working to improve the learning and teaching in the school as pertaining to an 'instructional leadership' style, although our framework of transformational school leadership and that of others includes this behaviour. School leaders' efforts to ensure quality instruction was evident.

> *It's curricular content; making sure that's done. There'd be a big emphasis on supervision of teaching instruction.*
>
> (Participant 13)

School leaders were seen to understand the value of developing high-quality policies, procedures, and practices, with the belief that experience as a school leader is valuable in knowing how to prioritise these and other responsibilities. Assistant principals were seen to contribute significantly to policy formulation and review and were appreciated as significant contributors to school development and governance.

Inclusion of curriculum in the goals and vision was highlighted.

> *We would have a shared vision in terms of where we want the school to go, and the educational opportunities within the school.*
>
> (Participant 9)

> *We are successful as a school that's working within a transformational leadership capacity, or framework, because there are learning experiences for the children, outcomes, and progression, feeding into the vision.*
>
> (Participant 13)

'Inclusion' and 'giving all pupils and staff equal opportunities' were seen to be of value by school and system leaders. Many positive comments were made in relation to transformational school leadership; it was seen to include school and curricular goals ensuring that pupils and parents are treated fairly and equally; accessing resources for all students and especially for those with additional needs; enabling leadership growth in all staff; leading from within to allow all members of the school community lead in their respective roles; visible pictorial images and signs in schools and school leaders' offices; encouraging, leading and supporting inclusion; playing to the personal strengths of staff; facilitating implementation of recommendations from the inspectorate; and responding to parents' and board of managements' priorities.

4. Discussion

The authors set about investigating transformational school leadership through Irish primary school and system leaders due to the unprecedented levels of societal change affecting schools [87]. Transformational leadership has been proposed as an approach that can inspire effective change and reform in educational settings [48,88–92]. In conducting this study through the lens of change and transformational school leadership, responses were analysed to the following research questions: (1) How can we characterize school and system leaders' knowledge, understanding and perceptions regarding the feasibility of transformational school leadership? (2) How do transformational school leadership behaviours manifest in primary school settings? The first of these created five themes and sub-themes from the codes generated from interview transcripts using NVivo [76] and reflective thematic analysis after Braun and Clarke [79,80,83]. Given that transformational leadership is not explicitly referred to in Irish educational policy, government guidelines or procedures, the empirical data showed that interviewees had good understanding and discussed considered opinions of transformational school leadership, but had less specific knowledge of the principles of transformational school leadership as portrayed in the literature [20,26,27,32,35,37,38,42,45,46,51,52]. Many participants understood the

principal to be central to transformational school leadership, echoing elements of 'principal leadership' [93]. One participant, having experienced it as a shared leadership model, commended its effectiveness across many aspects, including sustainability, due to the sharing of leadership responsibilities across the school community. The positivity in opinions expressed regarding transformational school leadership enactment was significant, and it was observed by these researchers that school and system leaders would welcome it as a formal leadership model in Irish schools if they were adequately supported, with shared responsibility for enactment with the school leadership team primarily and involvement of the whole school community.

Transformational school leadership was understood to be a model for positively changing people and schools, a measured process of enacting change where and when necessary, including sometimes resisting change where it may be 'change for change's sake'. A mix of opinions was expressed regarding transformational school leadership being a structured approach or innate ability, with a middle ground suggesting that for effective implementation, school leaders should be positively disposed to the model. The traits of transformational school leadership most frequently referenced were trust; positive impact; empowering; developing leadership capacity; collaboration; allowing all to lead; sustainability of self, others, and position; and motivational, trusting, loving, and reciprocal relationships. Participants also associated transformational school leadership with building school culture, creating a school vision and mission and shared goals as a collaborative undertaking. People and relationships within the school community were considered a significant factor in transformational school leadership being feasible, with participants being very positive regarding the quality of the staff across the entire school. Individualised motivation was also viewed as a valuable feature of transformational school leadership and a significant positive in the current climate of the challenge of staff retention [94]. School and system leaders envisaged transformational school leadership to be feasible in being realistic, and many described it as urgent and inevitable. There was significant positivity in the responses from experienced leaders in education regarding the feasibility of enacting transformational school leadership, especially where such factors as interested people and quality relationships, strategy, timing, speed, and appropriate extent were present despite the practical challenges, primarily administration overload, currently present for school leadership.

Interviewees' opinions regarding the advantages and disadvantages of transformational school leadership included motivation, positive culture, shared vision, group goals, love, empathy, high standards of communication, leadership capacity development, empowerment to lead, increased relationship-building, growth for all, collaboration, and agency as some of the many benefits. The advantages of transformational school leadership significantly outnumbered the disadvantages according to all participants interviewed, with disadvantages expressed in a small number of responses that could arguably be applied to any leadership style. These limitations focused on the potential problems including poor application of transformational school leadership, personalities of staff inhibiting cooperation with transformational school leadership, problems associated with behaviours being embodied in one leader if transformational school leadership is not shared, the pressures of leading schools currently, and the perception that implementation of transformational school leadership can be a slow process. Congruent with research by Leithwood and Jantzi, transformational school leadership was seen to enhance school culture [19,87], which was viewed by interviewees as a major advantage of transformational school leadership. The metaphor of a 'chandelier' was used by a participant in reference to one school leader's practice of transformational school leadership, representing how transformational school leadership fostered a delicate but wonderful positive school culture, resulting in a very happy, high-functioning whole school community that foregrounded learning for all. A lived ethos was seen to give a whole school community a strong identity, building confidence for all. Positive school culture was discussed as yielding rewards for many schools, with positivity, happiness, and love emphasised as contributing significantly. In

ensuring that there was sustainability of culture and ethos, several leaders were seen to be working to ensure that a school was not perceived as the principal's school, supporting the conceptualisation of transformational school leadership as a whole school leadership style [58,95]. Another expressed advantage of transformational school leadership was that school communities achieved beyond individual expectations, but a few viewed this as a potential limitation in that it creates extra work and pressure for school leaders and staff. However, throughout the interviews, the additional work perceived to be involved in its implementation was seen to yield results that are well worthwhile. The time allocated to the implementation of transformational school leadership was seen as an advantage on the one hand, as the time taken created a strong cohesive model, but on the other was seen as a limitation and a pressure, as time is not readily available in busy schools.

While attitudes towards transformational school leadership were positive and participants were enthusiastic about the potential multiplicity of benefits for a whole school community on implementation, a major concern of these school and system leaders in implementing leadership, in general, is how 'the system is set up', where management responsibilities (people and resource management) end up being almost the exclusive remit of the school principal, taking time from what was seen as leadership activity (capacity building and staff empowerment). As Leithwood and associates acknowledged, school principals are also most often tasked with the implementation of new policies [58,96] and are obliged to be administrators, change agents, and leaders of learning [71]. Educational management carries responsibility for the functioning of the educational institution, where educational leadership is more focused on influencing of those in the setting to achieve goals [97]. Interviewees distinguished between management and leadership, where management duties were primarily understood to focus on administration, policies, and governance; they were considered office-based and were viewed negatively. In contrast, leadership was seen to be positive, uplifting, and human-centred, involving creating the opportunity for growth and working with the school community outside the office.

The implementation of transformational school leadership in primary schools in Ireland was perceived to be feasible, albeit with challenges associated with the demands placed on the principal and the pressures of the role that come with undertaking many tasks that could potentially be carried out by administrative personnel. These management responsibilities and administrative and operational duties, including staff recruitment and allocation, finance, budgeting, managing expenditures, account returns, furniture and technology supply, school-building maintenance, staff training, and external staff liaising, are perceived to be resulting in the increased number of principals leaving the system early and the decrease in the application rate for school-principal positions, as evidenced in the Irish and international literature [98,99]. Also seen to limit the potential for focusing on leading learning and teaching and curtailing the time available for leading in all other facets of school life, the challenge of excessive administrative workload was viewed to be independent of the leadership model in place and a feature of the Irish primary-education system. Discussed as a significant frustration by interviewees, especially principals, excessive workload is also reflected in the Irish Primary Principals (IPPN) report on the sustainability of the role of the principal [98].

Transformational school leadership was viewed by interviewees as a model that can be employed with other leadership practices; it was viewed by some as more successful when used in conjunction with distributed leadership and by one as more successful when instructional leadership is also included. The authors consider the merits of instructional leadership to be covered within the element of 'improving the curricular offer' in transformational school leadership. However, synthesising transformational and distributed leadership could result in a sustainable model of shared leadership. Distributed leadership has many interpretations but is generally understood to be a leadership practice wherein the leadership function is shared among many individuals, who interact to achieve required results [71,99–101]. In Ireland, distributed leadership is recognised as the default leadership response implemented by schools to manage the increase in pressure [102] on

principals especially; it has been promoted in Department of Education policies, procedures, guidelines, national strategies, and leadership programmes and is the recommended practice in Irish educational policy [103,104]. LAOS 2022 [70], while promoting distributed leadership, also outlines many leadership behaviours that could arguably be achieved effectively and sustainably through the employment of transformational school leadership by the whole school community. With value in its potential for interpreting school-level decision-making practice [105], distributed leadership has enjoyed an increase in popularity in recent years [106–109], is valued for being an inclusive leadership model [110] and improves organisational culture; principals relinquish power and authority, and leadership practice takes the form of interaction built on reciprocal trust [101]. Distributed leadership also has value in times of crisis and change [110] and principals specifically see the value of collaborative practices in terms of sustaining themselves and their school communities [111]. Distributed leadership has been seen to enhance accountability [112], and although it has been challenged and seen as the 'new orthodoxy' [113], it remains a relevant and respected concept for those working within the field of educational leadership [114].

The second research question was, 'How do transformational school leadership behaviours manifest in primary school settings?'. This question generated the fifth theme, where the transformational school leadership behaviours discussed, demonstrated or experienced by the interviewees were mapped onto the framework of elements of transformational school leadership, which consists of idealised influence, inspirational motivation, individualised consideration, intellectual stimulation, school development, and improving the curricular offerings, with each of these factors sub-divided to include the range of transformational school leadership behaviours. These categories reflected the wide range of practices of transformational leadership and transformational school leadership identified by such researchers as Burns, Bass, Avolio, Leithwood, Sun, Jantzi, Duke, Tomlinson, Genge, Bennis, Nanus, Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, Fetter, Kouzes, and Posner. The transformational school leadership behaviours discussed included a positive impact on school culture, modelling, motivating, empowering, using emotional intelligence, and developing leadership capacity, with any member of the school community potentially contributing to leadership. The positivity and behaviours experienced revealed the extent to which this cohort of school and system leaders embody and practise so many of the transformational school leadership principles, although not one participant described themselves as a transformational school leader or described the school leadership model in their school as transformational school leadership. However, the behaviours showed the principal to be the driver of transformational school leadership in the main, which is not new and has been previously identified in the literature [19]. Acton asks whether school principals have the 'tools' to be change leaders [48]. In proposing transformational school leadership as a human-centred change-leadership model, distributed leadership, with its 'chameleon-like' quality is recommended as the supporting practice [115] to ensure shared leadership behaviours, involvement of the whole school community, and increased sustainability. This hybrid model was recommended by interviewees; transformational school leadership was seen to be optimised when it was used with other leadership models such as distributed leadership or instructional leadership. To maximise the potential of school leadership, school leaders would be advised to undertake CPD in leadership [101,110], including middle leadership staff [116], and for this hybrid model, training, CPD and coaching would be of immense benefit in allowing all staff to embrace leadership for reciprocal benefit. Prioritising the development of a shared purpose and meaning, with shared values, will result in a culture of healthy school leadership [117].

It was discussed that in Ireland, school and system leaders remain in positions for more years than their international counterparts, with many remaining in the one leadership position from the time of appointment to retirement. Leadership experience was a factor in interview responses. Those who had been leaders in more than one school setting were more confident in their opinions, having more contexts to reference. They believed that moving schools had increased their confidence and offered opportunities to use experience

for improving leadership practice. There was a wisdom, an almost 'sage-like' broad perspective to responses from those nearing the end of their careers. They had passion for school leadership, their whole school communities, and the future sustainability of education and leadership. Those less experienced were expressing opinions with urgency and frustration and also with passion, expressing a need for action and leadership support to prevent further attrition of school leaders. Concerns regarding the sustainability of the model, position, behaviours, and self were present across responses. This was almost inevitable due to how prevalence of the discourse on sustainable leadership in school leadership [118]. The principal was referenced by all participants as leading the whole school community and was understood to have significant influence in the implementation of transformational school leadership. Several leaders viewed themselves as custodians of the school and discussed a responsibility to leave the school in an improved position, delivering an enhanced educational offering, for those coming after. Participants questioned the sustainability of principals' school leadership, and the danger of their 'well running dry' was referenced, with respondents describing a lack of time to lead as they endeavour to both lead and manage schools. Three described their conclusions regarding how to prioritise leadership and necessary management responsibilities over 'ticking all the administrative boxes' and reported that this practice supported the sustainability of the school leader's role. Reliance on the personality of the principal as school leader was seen as another potential disadvantage. However, the concept of transformational school leadership being a shared model of leadership, in partnership with the whole school leadership team, could potentially alleviate the risk of the leadership model relying on one personality and facilitate changes in personnel, including the principal, more satisfactorily, enabling the leadership 'baton' to be passed on and the model sustained. Interestingly, Community National Schools, following a relatively new model of governance in Irish primary schools, with the first opened in 2008, receive support from the Education and Training Board in relation to finance, HR, and building projects which could arguably make the position more sustainable. Sustainability of 'self' was discussed as a concern that requires specific focus going forward in a drive to maintain the school leaders currently in the system and make leadership positions attractive to aspiring leaders.

In a result congruent with results from international research, the team and school context [38] one inherits or joins, specifically the personnel and levels of commitment [119], integrity [120], and trust [121], were also considered to influence the feasibility of implementing transformational school leadership. From such extremes of context as leading start-up schools to school mergers, from COVID-19 and an educational technology revolution to war and the rapid increase in the inflow of immigrant students and system leaders interviewed have been involved in every aspect of leading through change. Those who had been involved in start-up schools discussed the alignment of transformational school leadership with the priority of all staff leading in the early years; the urgency and scale of putting all learning and teaching programmes in place; developing school systems, policies and practices; creating a dynamic school culture and leading the new whole school community in understanding the school ethos and how it can be embraced and built upon; and working collaboratively. Participants' expressed views that change is inevitable, and that transformation is occurring all around us in our schools, and this suggested that having a framework for a transformational school leadership model incorporating whole school leadership that is relevant, communicable, and achievable had become a necessity. A comprehensive and realistic model would provide a guide, reference, and support for school leadership enactment in Ireland and beyond, where there is currently a lacuna in the absence of a leadership-behaviour framework. Further, outlining of a clear leadership model would facilitate school evaluations and aid collaboration between schools, as similar leadership guidelines would be available for all. Explicitly detailing these practices could provide a clear reference code, enabling a light to be shone on educational best practices, facilitating those practices and giving confidence to all leading learning. The transformational-school leadership framework developed by these researchers, as outlined

earlier in the paper, encompasses six elements. This framework could assist principals in leading learning for all, with a human-centred leadership approach and an increased possibility of professional and personal growth for all involved. This may also mitigate further negative effects that leadership roles in education, especially the role of principal [122–124], are having on school leaders' health, energy, and turnover [125]. Further, it was consistently discussed that there is a requirement for educational success that leadership be shared, and this is where a shared model of transformational school leadership with distributed leadership practices can support leaders.

5. Conclusions

Change is ubiquitous. It is proposed that the paradigm of transformational school leadership is an effective model for leadership in education in times of unprecedented change, which is understood to be the new societal reality [126,127], and it is believed that change is fundamental to successful schools [128]. Theorists have argued that transformational leadership and change are interlinked and that its goal is to transform people as well as organisations, with transformational leaders working to influence shared beliefs and values, creating change and innovation [129–133]. They aim to nurture a school culture with a learning ethos, seek to expand staff members' capacities, enhance thinking, and promote individual ambition, facilitating learning and growth as a shared responsibility [33]. The authors sought to investigate how transformational school leadership manifests in Irish primary schools via interviews with school and system leaders in response to the following research questions: (1) How can we characterize school and system leaders' knowledge, understanding and perceptions regarding the feasibility of transformational school leadership? (2) How do transformational school leadership behaviours manifest in primary school settings? The Braun and Clarke six-phase iterative process of reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) was undertaken [79,80], with data analysis yielding the following themes and sub-themes: (1) Knowledge of, understanding of, and attitudes towards transformational school leadership: (i) transformation, change and growth; (ii) relationships; (iii) vision, mission and goals; (iv) leading; (2) Feasibility of transformational school leadership: (i) realism (ii) people and relationships, (iii) practical challenges; (3) Benefits and advantages of transformational school leadership: (i) aspiration; (ii) culture (ii) motivation and modelling, (iii) school community, (iv) delivering quality learning; (4) Disadvantages and limitations of transformational school leadership: (i) personality, (ii) pressure, (iii) slow process; (iv) unexpected variables (5) Manifested elements of the transformational school leadership framework: (i) idealised influence, (ii) inspirational motivation, (iii) individualised consideration, (iv) intellectual stimulation, (v) school development, (vi) improving the curricular offerings.

School leadership was seen by the school and system leaders as fulfilling and rewarding, and theoretically, if not always practicably, as a significant part of their role. Knowledge and understanding of transformational school leadership was comprehensive, possibly due to most participants having undertaken post-graduate study, with two thirds specifically having studied educational leadership. The findings revealed that all participants were very positively disposed towards the concept of transformational school leadership and discussed or implied it to be aspirational and the ideal. With the changing nature of society, participants pointed to the need for a sustainable school leadership model that is affective and human-centred and that shares leadership roles and responsibilities among the staff, in tandem with increased administrative support to create space for whole school community leadership. The model we propose is an appropriate school leadership model serving schools in a world of accelerated change, using a framework constructed from traditional and more recent tenets of transformational school leadership and is shaped into six clear principles. Balanced with distributed leadership we argue that a practice of shared leadership underpinned by transformational leadership principles can help towards sustaining school leaders. This hybrid model of transformational and distributed school leadership is proposed to deliver on leading learning, growth, and development for the

whole school community, in Ireland and internationally, given the rise in curiosity, research, and development regarding leadership within the field of educational leadership, management and administration (ELMA) [108]. The creation and application of a 'transformational and distributed leadership school' model that facilitates the whole school community in growing and learning together merits examination and discourse, as does an exploration of the facilitating and inhibiting factors influencing the implementation of transformational school leadership in the Irish setting.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

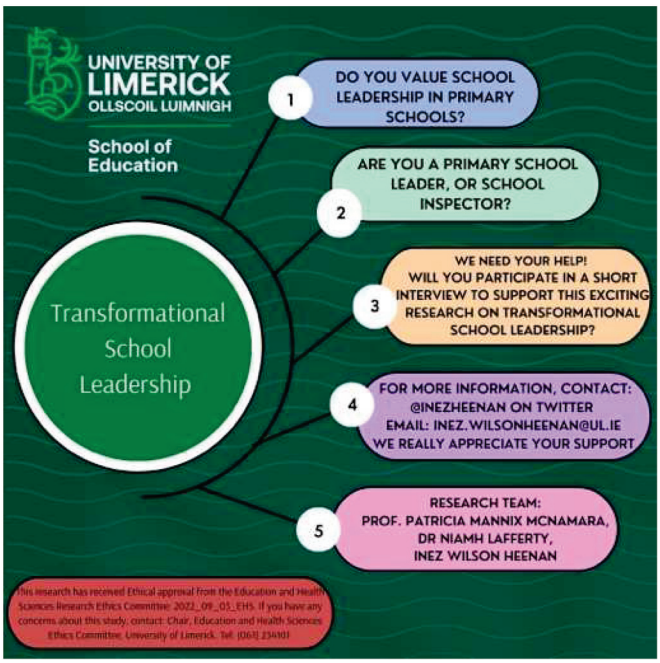

Figure A1. Participant Advert.

Appendix B. Interview Questions

- Can you tell me about one primary school with which you are/were associated as a school leader?
  - (a) What is/was your association?

(i) Principal?
(ii) Deputy/assistant principal?
(iii) Department of Education school inspector?

(b) Is the school urban/rural, DEIS/non-DEIS?
(DEIS = *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools)*
(c) How many pupils attend the school? 0–100, 100–200, 200–300, 300+?
(d) How many years' experience have you/has the principal? 0–10, 10–20, 20+?
(e) How many members are there on the in-school management team? 0–5, 5–10, 10+?
(f) How many teaching staff in the school? 0–5, 5–10, 10–15, 15–20, 20–25, 25–30, 30+?
(g) How many non-teaching and ancillary staff in the school? 0–5, 5–10, 10–15, 15+?

- What does the term transformational school leadership mean to you?
- How realistic is being a transformational school leader in an Irish Primary school, in your opinion?
- How do you experience the leadership style in your school/the school with which you are associated?
- How does it impact your work?
- What would you consider to be the benefits of transformational school leadership?
- What might you consider as the disadvantages or drawbacks to transformational school leadership?
- Would you consider that transformational school leadership can take place in conjunction with other leadership behaviours such as distributed leadership?
- To conclude the interview, participants will be offered the opportunity to ask any questions, express any queries, and to share thoughts, insights or experiences related to the interview.

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Article

El Cid: Can an Aesthetics Lens Save Transformational Leadership from Itself?

Fenwick Walter English [1] and Lisa Catherine Ehrich [2,*]

[1] College of Education, Florida Gulf Coast University, Fort Myers, FL 33965, USA; fenglish@fgcu.edu
[2] School of Education, College of Arts, Law and Education, University of Tasmania, Launceston, TAS 7250, Australia
* Correspondence: lisa.ehrich@utas.edu.au

Abstract: Countless articles and books have been written about transformational leadership theory since the late 1970s when it first appeared in the literature. The purpose of this conceptual paper is to illustrate that transformational leadership contains both logical and psychological problems when explaining the nature of leadership and as an empirically supportable and verifiable construct. It aims to show that its failure to garner evidence from a scientific methodological analysis may not invalidate its efficacy if it is viewed from an alternative lens, such as aesthetics. An aesthetic frame is one that recognizes sensuous ways of knowing since feelings and emotions are just as important as reason and logic. An aesthetic approach to leadership would see leadership as more of an art than a science. This paper is not arguing for the abandonment of transformational leadership theory; rather it is saying that an aesthetic lens is likely to yield a richer, more artistic, and more nuanced account of what is understood and enacted as transformational leadership. This way, the manifestations of transformational leadership may live on in the arts and continue to inspire and motivate us.

Keywords: archetype; transformational leadership; scientific management; charisma; line of demarcation; point of scientificity; scientific empiricism; aesthetics; El Cid

1. Introduction

Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar (1043–1099), known in Spain as El Cid or El Campeador (the Champion), is an example of historical and literary transformations that propelled him to be feted as an unparalleled battlefield and political leader and the national hero of Spain portrayed in the medieval Spanish epic poem *El Cantar de mio Cid* [1]. For purposes of this paper, El Cid is the symbol for confronting the realities and mythology of the concept of the transformational leader, even in death. It is said that after he died, his wife had his corpse set into his armor and set aside his horse to lead a charge into the enemy lines [2]. Thus, El Cid is a transformational leader who refuses to die.

One of the most enduring archetypes in the stories of human struggle across the ages is that of the hero archetype. In his classic work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces,* Joseph Campbell [3] chronicled the mythologies, battles, trials, and triumphs of the heroes of ancient, medieval, and modern times. They all bear a striking resemblance to current portraits of the transformational leader.

It is the purpose of this paper to illustrate that transformational leadership contains both logical and psychological problems in explaining the nature of leadership and as an empirically supportable and verifiable construct. It aims to show that the failure of transformational leadership to garner evidence from a scientific methodological analysis may not invalidate its efficacy if it is viewed from an alternative lens such as aesthetics. Indeed, the manifestations of transformational leadership live on in the Spain of El Cid, and in the arts, and continue to inspire and motivate followers to this day. The paper begins with a discussion of the conceptual approach used and then discusses how the field of

educational administration embraced scientific thinking in school leadership in the first part of the twentieth century. It then considers "charisma", a key construct in the history of leadership understandings and one that remains an important dimension within transformational leadership theory. Following this is a critique of transformational leadership that underscores some of the conceptual and methodological problems associated with it. The final part of the paper makes the argument that transformational leadership may be better understood if it is explored within an aesthetic framework.

2. Methods

This paper is a critique of some of the conceptual and methodological issues within transformational leadership theory and makes an argument for an alternative lens through which to examine transformational leadership. As such, it is a conceptual paper as opposed to an empirical study where researchers make decisions concerning the data they collect to answer the research questions they pose [4]. Good conceptual papers are said to "bridge existing theories in interesting ways, link work across disciplines, provide multi-level insights, and broaden the scope of our thinking" [5] (p. 128). According to Jaakkola [4], there are common types of research design for conceptual papers. One of these is called "theory adaptation" which is a process that involves revisiting current understandings about a topic or theme and then introducing a new theoretical lens in which to understand the topic/theme [4]. Theory adaptation also involves "problematizing an existing theory or concept and resolving identified dilemmas by introducing a new theoretical lens" [4] (p. 22). In this paper, we follow theory adaptation by exploring some of the extant literature on transformational leadership, critiquing it, and then providing an alternative lens, aesthetics, in which to expand its conceptual scope. To achieve this, we drew upon a wide selection of the literature in order to "provide multi-level insights" [5] (p. 128).

3. Discussion

3.1. From Charisma to the Point of Scientificity (POS)

For an area of study to be elevated to a position where it is recognized conceptually and academically, and in today's university and larger global contexts, it must make some claim that it is scientific. This claim is one that does not involve so much an historical argument, but one regarding an epistemological field, or an *episteme* in Foucault's [6] view.

While the arts and humanities have long dealt with topics of leadership and the moral dilemmas of leaders throughout the ages, they do not enjoy the prestige and status of a field defined by and supported by science and scientific studies. Educational administration was founded on just such an event when departments of educational administration were established in American universities at the turn of the last century [7–9]. The specific intellectual event was the publication of Frederick Taylor's 1911 book *The Principles of Scientific Management* [10]. Its impact was huge and no less monumental than in education and the founding of graduate course work in school administration [11]. The near immediate infatuation of former educational administrators with scientific management was as profound as in the latter half of the century with Edward Deming's total quality management (TQM) [12].

Early professors of educational administration were emboldened by claims of establishing a science of school leadership [13]. For example, in his multi-year best-selling textbook, early founder of educational leadership, Elwood P. Cubberley (1929) wrote, "Wholly within the past two decades one of the most significant movements in all our educational history has arisen . . . We refer to the test and measurement and efficiency movement, the aim of which has been to give scientific accuracy to the educative process" [7] (p. 497).

Cubberley, former Dean of the School of Education at Stanford University, went on to observe, "The scientific purpose of the movement has been to create standards of measurement and units or norms of accomplishment which may be applied to school systems, to individual schools or classes, or to pupils, to determine the efficiency of the work being done . . ." [7] (p. 499). Presciently, Cubberley concluded, "In another decade or

two we shall probably need to rewrite our books on school administration in terms of this new scientific development" [7] (p. 501).

The elevation of course work cloaked in science helped create the autonomy early professors needed to be free of competing areas of interference and control, because while there might be other departments, disciplines, or studies that claimed to be involved with preparing leaders (i.e., the arts and humanities, business), this program prepared *scientific leaders.* Science provided the legitimacy for the power of preeminence. To use a poker game of legitimacy, it was the "ace" in the deck.

While the creation of a separate department of educational administration was in reality an extremely humble beginning and the early "research" was, by today's standards, trivial [14], what had been established is a line of intellectual and conceptual demarcation or LOD (line of demarcation). According to Lakatos [15], the line of demarcation is "the central problem in [the] philosophy of science" (p. 168). The LOD creates the conceptual border between a science and a non-science. Upon the LOD rests the establishment of a *field*, or in this case the episteme of a *scientific field.*

The event itself that created the LOD is known as the *point of scientificity* or POS. Created by Foucault [6], the *point of scientificity* represents the event or time period where an area of knowledge was transformed into a science [16]. Foucault's [17] example occurred in the field of psychiatry. Once the *line of demarcation* is established, then Foucault [18] marks out three distinctive fields. First there is the *field of memory*. This comprises topics, theories, ideas, concepts, and knowledge that ". . . are no longer accepted or discussed and which consequently no longer define either a body of truth or a domain of validity" [18] (p. 58). In this they are not relevant because they are not scientific.

Then there is *the field of presence*, ". . . by which is understood all statements formulated elsewhere and taken up in a discourse, acknowledged to be truthful, involving exact description, well-founded reasoning, or necessary presupposition" [18] (p. 57). Foucault [18] adds, "in this *field of presence*, the relations established may be of the order of experimental verification, logical validation, mere repetition acceptance justified by tradition and authority, commentary, a search for hidden meanings, the analysis of error; these relations may be explicit (and sometimes formulated in types of specialized statements: references, critical discussions), or implicit and present in ordinary statements" (p. 57).

Finally, there is the *field of concomitance*. This comprises concepts, ideas, and theories that belong to "quite different domains of objects, and belong to quite different types of discourse . . . either because they serve as analogical confirmation, or because they serve as a general principle and as premises accepted by a reasoning, or because they serve as models that can be transferred to other contents, or because they function as a higher authority than that to which at least certain propositions are presented and subjected" [18] (p. 58).

The field can also be understood as comprising social/cultural relations where the players compete for positions of influence and dominance [19]. "Players" can be individuals and groups. Whatever they advocate usually advances their own sphere of influence and power because knowledge is rarely neutral [20]. What is selected as the knowledge base of a field represents a series of choices regarding both epistemological and ontological assumptions because, as Maxcy has observed, "leading does not occur in a vacuum, but rather is rooted in our deepest beliefs about humankind, nature, and the real world around us" [21] (p. 65). Human morals and morality hinge on these assumptions. Nowhere is that more important than in educational administration and schooling.

In this paper, we review the work of scholars and other researchers pursuing transformational leadership who are struggling hard to function within an episteme of scientific empiricism, a derivative of logical positivism [22]. In this, the results are inconclusive at best, a flat-out failure at worse. Part of the problem is that transformational leadership involves dimensions that defy the rubric of scientific empiricism. This paper begins by dealing with the legacy of charisma, which once underpinned the concept of transformational leadership but ended up "swallowed whole by the model it underpinned" [23] (p. 369).

3.2. The Historicity of Charisma: Two Illustrations

Long before the idea of the "transformational leader" came of age, charisma and leadership were linked together. Images from antiquity are replete with sketches of the extraordinary charisma of legendary leaders. For example, from Plutarch [24] we piece together a portrait of Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.) displaying charismatic qualities. "He [Alexander] made the longest address that day to the Thessalians and other Greeks, who answered him with loud shouts, desiring him to lead them on against the barbarians, upon which he shifted his javelin into his left hand, and with his right lifted up towards heaven, besought the gods, as Callisthenes tells us, that if he was of a truth the son of Jupiter, they would be pleased to assist and strengthen the Grecians" [24] (p. 166).

In another story, Plutarch referred to the eleven days during which Alexander and his soldiers marched 3300 furlongs to seek Darius and his army. The long journey was a very difficult one and Alexander's soldiers were tired and ready to give up mainly due to a lack of drinking water. Plutarch [24] says: "While they [his soldiers] were in distress it happened that some Macedonians who had fetched water in skins upon their mules from a river they had found came about noon to the place where Alexander was, and seeing him almost choked with thirst, presently filled a helmet and offered it to him. He asked them to whom they were carrying the water; they told him to their children, adding, that if his life were but saved, it was no matter for them, they should be able well enough to repair that loss, though they all perished. Then he took the helmet into his hands, and looking round about, when he saw all those who were near him stretching their heads out and looking earnestly after the drink, he returned it again with thanks without tasting a drop of it. 'For', said he, "if I alone drink, the rest will be out of heart'. The soldiers took notice of his temperance and magnanimity upon this occasion, but they one and all cried out to him to lead them forward boldly, and began whipping on their horses. For whilst they had such a king they said they defied both weariness and thirst, and looked upon themselves to be little less than immortal" [24] (p. 174).

Another example of a more modern version of charisma, influence, and malevolency is in the life of the Siberian-born mystic, peasant, and semi-literate monk Grigory Rasputin (1872–1916). At the age of 28, he was said to have transformed his life and moved toward Christ [25]. He became a wanderer visiting temples and churches, where he came across Khlyst communities, "sects in which fanaticism, lechery, and faith in God were blasphemously joined together as one" [25] (pp. 47–48). Key ideas of the Khylsty can be found in his writings [25]. In his travels, he became famous for his exceptional gifts in healing and prophecy. He was called upon by Tsar Nicholas II (1868–1918) and Tsarina Alexandra (1872–1918) to help their son who suffered from hemophilia. He alleviated the child's symptoms and from that time on was very close to both Nicholas and Alexandra, especially Alexandra. In letters written by Alexandra, Radzinsky noted how Rasputin "was able to relieve her nervous anxiety. With his soothing words of forgiveness and love and of the future divine reward for all her sufferings. And with his remarkable hands that dispelled the constant migraines that drove her made with pain. The tormented Alex [Tsarina Alexandra] needed him just as much as her doomed son did" [25] (p. 127).

He also was able to charm religious leaders and members of society. For example, when Bishop Feofan first met Rasputin he said, "he amazed us all with his psychological perspicacity. His face was pale and his eyes unusually piercing—the look of someone who observed the fasts. And he made a strong impression" [25] (p. 62).

There was a group of devoted society women who both defended and supported Rasputin. E. Kazokova said these women "looked after him and considered him a man of great righteousness, and who cut his nails and sewed them up to attach to their bodices as mementoes." [25] (p. 91). He earned the respect and admiration of those persons he was able to heal. For example, Olga Lokhtina, a society woman, reflected on her experience at meeting Rasputin: "I saw Rasputin for the first time on 3 November, 1905. By then I had grown disenchanted with society life, having undergone a spiritual change, and I was, besides very sick with an intestinal neurasthenia, which tied me to my bed . . . The

priest Father Medved [at the time one of Rasputin's loyal admirers] took pity on my and brought Rasputin . . . From the moment of Father Grigory's appearance in my home, I felt completely restored, and from then on was free of my illness" [25] (p. 92).

Rasputin was a charismatic person because of his extraordinary gifts. Those people whom he cured or advised developed a strong emotional attachment to him. He was also a divisive figure who created many enemies because of the unnatural influence and control he had over the royal family, and he was assassinated because of it. We would argue that both of these illustrations of leaders from history are helpful in illuminating an understanding of the nature of charisma and transformational leadership. This is because these illustrations or stories bring to life the leaders within their historical context and times and help to reveal how and why followers were attracted to them.

3.3. The Re-Birth of Charisma in Transformational Leadership

According to Bass and Bass [26], transformational leadership as a phenomenon was first described in 1973 by sociologist J.V. Downton in his book *Rebel Leadership: Commitment and Charisma in the Revolutionary Process* [27]. His on-going research areas were activism, new religious movements, and charismatic leadership. He also wrote in the area of creativity [27]. Downton's text was followed by a book chapter by Robert House [28], in which he identified the dependent variables of a possible theory of charisma. First, he acknowledged that the charisma of a leader is defined by the leader's followers and not the leader per se. These were followers who

- Demonstrated trust in the veracity of the leader's beliefs;
- Are isomorphic to the leader's beliefs;
- Showed great affection towards the leader and emotional attachment to him/her;
- Showed unquestioning loyalty and obedience to the leader;
- Held the belief that their goals will be accomplished if they are linked to the leader's mission [28].

House [28] called these variables the "charismatic effects" of one person on another. His empirical approach was to identify a number of persons who could be called "informed observers" such as superiors or peers who are in agreement with the effects on them of a charismatic leader and then on a leader who was not as charismatic, or failed to produce the same effects. The responses could then be categorized and eventually scaled. Over time with a period of repetition and refinement, a clearer picture of a charismatic leader could be produced. The other is the methodology involved, which would say nothing about the behaviors or actions that produce such effects. House [28] admitted that this was the scientific challenge that had to be addressed.

So what does a charismatic leader do? House [28] created a kind of behavioral codex of plausible hypotheses. These revolved around such assertions that charismatic leaders

- Have a high need for influence and a dominant belief in the righteousness of their beliefs;
- Understand they are role models for their followers to emulate;
- Engage in actions that are likely to be seen as complimentary and attractive to their followers [29];
- Portray their competence, confidence, and past successes in their appearances;
- Create common or shared visions often based on the accomplishment of ideological goals that appeal to followers [28].

House's [28] chapter presciently anticipates some of the later works' notions of transformational leaders who have incorporated charisma into their indices, which have remained a conceptual issue with the concept [30,31]. In fact, Bryman [32] conceptualized transformational leadership as involving charisma, vision, inspiration, vision, and change-centered leadership, which House and Aditiya [33] termed *neocharismatic.*

We see such traces in the earliest and most cited work of transformational leadership, that of James McGregor Burns [34]. Burns' work masterfully combines charisma and transformational leadership. He noted that, "The concept of charisma has fertilized the

study of leadership. Its very ambiguity has enabled it to be captured by scholars in different disciplines and applied to a variety of situations" [34] (p. 243). However, Burns lamented that the term *charisma* had become so overused that it had lost its zest and announced that he would substitute the words "heroic leadership" for the idea. He defined it as "belief in leaders because of their personage alone, aside from their tested capacities, experiences, or stand on issues; faith in the leaders' capacity to overcome obstacles and crises; readiness to grant to leaders the powers to handle crises; mass support for such leaders expressed directly—through votes, applause, letters, shaking hands—rather than through intermediaries or institutions. Heroic leadership is not simply a quality or entity possessed by someone: it is a *type of relationship* between leader and led" [34] (p. 244).

Burns [34] then goes on to describe such a leader in the Madhi of the Sudan (also known as Muhammad Ahmad, 1844–1885), who rose from poverty and with unusual intellectual prowess (he had memorized the entire Koran by the age of nine) and courage, went on to confront the established social order, build an army, and capture the city of Khartoum. The Madhi's "main strength seemed to lie in the force of his message, his ability to adapt it to the needs of different classes and groups, his promise of salvation to believers who fell in battle, and his ability to win sophisticated theological debates with the opposition" [34] (p. 245). Like the Madhi, El Cid was a soldier of great military prowess who was able to attract soldiers from Portugal and other parts of Spain to serve him. He achieved much fame and fortune from his exploits as a mercenary where he fought against Muslims and Christians alike. Yet it was his "virtues and heroic conduct [that were said to have] encapsulated the essential spirit of the Hispanic nation" [35] (p. 520).

Burns [34] exposed the "ideological leader," as one who is motivated by explicit goals linked to change. Burns described ideological leaders as leaders who "embody and personify collective goals so intensely that other human wants and needs and aspirations—those of both the leaders and the led—may be swallowed in the *purposes of the movement.* The leaders, at least, have 'thrown themselves' into a transcending cause and quest" [34] (p. 248). Such leaders are judged ". . . not by peoples' delight in a performance or personality but by actual social change measured by the ideologists' purposes, programs, and values" [34] (p. 249). The modern mantra of transformational leadership, especially in business, is strongly echoed in this passage [36].

3.4. The Establishment of the Great Binary and Other Methodological Problems

Burns contrasted transformational leadership with that of transactional leadership. He referred to transactional leadership as "opinion leadership" [34] (p. 257). By this he meant exchanges of gratifications in a political marketplace. "They are bargainers seeking to maximize their political and psychic profits" [34] (p. 258) he observed. "In this marketplace bargaining is restricted in scope because the process works only in easily identifiable, calculable, tangible, measurable properties . . . because sellers and buyers cannot repeat the identical exchange, both must move on to new types and levels of gratifications. Most important, the transactional gratification itself may be a superficial and trivial one" [34] (p. 258).

Later research showed that leaders engage in both transformational and transactional relationships [37] and that there was not a hard and fast categorical line of demarcation between them as they were multidimensional. Part of the reason is that as in all binaries, the oppositional term is silently suspended in the other. So when one thinks of something being "true", the oppositional term of "false" is present but unspoken in order to grasp the full meaning of something being "true" [38]. Given this linguistic phenomenon, categorical distinctions resting on binaries often can be deconstructed, consolidated, collapsed, and even dissolved because one term is always suspended but present in the other. This is also perhaps the reason that Yukl [31] has criticized the behaviors identified with transformational leadership as ambiguous, with overlapping content resulting in high inter-correlations that "raise doubts about their construct validity" [31] (p. 288).

Still another issue which is similarly present is the circularity of the construction of the theory of transactional leadership. As sketched out methodologically by House [28] and later used in the construction of the two popular surveys (the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire and the Transformational Leadership Inventory) to assess transactional and charismatic properties in a leader, the researcher begins with the descriptions of the nature of charisma from a variety of accounts. Then those same characteristics are isolated and reified via factor analysis in a survey and employed in another construction of a survey of those highly loaded factors. This procedure results in a descriptive synopsis (a score) rendered as to whether a leader is charismatic and/or transformational.

Lakatos points out that "the idea implicit in the methodology of scientific research programmes is that a fact may not be used twice, first in the construction of a theory and subsequently in support of it" [39] (p. 111). This circularity, so common in the social sciences using survey methods, produces high intercorrelations but little else, leading Lakatos to comment, "empirical content has nothing to do with truth or falsity" [15] (p. 36).

Criticisms of the circulatory nature of transformational survey data highlight the lack of distinction "between the definition of transformational leadership and its effectiveness to be problematic because transformational leadership theory borders on the tautological and as such it cannot be refuted" [40] (p. 611). Furthermore, it has been observed by Van Knippenberg and Sitkin that the inclusion of the notion of charisma transformational theory contains "a logical deductive loop [whereby] if it is not effective, by definition it is not charismatic-transformational" [40] (p. 611).

Transformational leadership theory has been criticized for its lack of conceptual clarity as well as its bias towards the concept of the hero leader [41]. In the context of educational leadership, Gronn sees transformational leadership as "a resurrected version of a long since discredited and virtually defunct leader type . . . the hero" [42] (p. 14). Dugan [43] lists, as weaknesses of transformational theory, that it does not account for all leadership behaviors and it has produced scant evidence of how followers or organizations are "transformed" as a result of being directed by a transformational leader. Lastly, transformational theory, while dependent upon followers to identify a transformational leader, is relatively minimalist when identifying follower agency, which is allegedly stimulated by the theory.

The bias of transformational leadership theory to a single leader struggling against enormous odds (El Cid personified) has not only established in the popular mind an individualist image of leadership, but one in business that has produced a "savior" mentality as corporations that have fallen on hard times in the search for new leadership. The "cult of individualism" distorts the role of a CEO and raises impossible expectations and a warning by Khurana who said, "the widespread, firmly held belief in the overriding importance of the CEO is all the more noteworthy considering that there is no conclusive evidence linking leadership to organizational performance. In fact, most academic research that has sought to measure the impact of the CEO on firm performance confirms Warren Buffett's observation that when good management is brought into a bad business, it is the reputation of the business that remains intact" [44] (p. 21).

The efforts of the leadership industry to cast the heroic leader into the realm of science has been called out by Wilson who wrote, "I propose that what is revealed in the archive is the skillful deployment of the discursive norms of science, all the while relying on largely unquestioned yet problematic assumptions and aims which are profoundly political rather than scientific in nature" [45] (p.101). Wilson's troubling concern is that dominant form of leadership, now regnant in academic studies, "insidiously seeks to control leader subjectivity so as to bring about its complete conformity with organizational interests" [45] (p. 101).

It is interesting and ironic that Thomas Carlyle [46], a writer on heroes, hero worship, and leadership, largely dismissed in Foucault's *field of memory* [18] as an anachronism to be scorned, should have remarked in his text that "science has done much for us; but it is a poor science that would hide from us the great deep sacred infinitude of Nescience [the unknown, no science], whither we can never penetrate, on which all science swims

as a mere superficial film. The world, after all our science and sciences, is still a miracle; wonderful, inscrutable, *magical* [italics in original] and more, to whosoever will *think* [italics original] of it" [46] (p.10).

We turn now to an alternative perspective that we believe offers a more promising understanding of transformational leadership, that of aesthetics.

3.5. Towards an Alternative Perspective to Understand Leadership

When examining the so-called "scientific" studies of transformational leadership Gronn opined, "... the claims made for TF leaders far outrun the data's capacity to sustain them ... the very idea of transformed individuals and organisations, carries with it all the hallmarks of a religious crusade and being born again ... any argument about the uniqueness, superiority and effectiveness of the TF leader has to remain substantially unproven" [42] (p. 25).

Empirical science is unlikely to penetrate very much more deeply into the act of leadership, especially with the use of seeking information through tautologically flawed surveys. Breaking out of the circulatory logic of that research approach, we proffer that a different frame may offer an expanded understanding of leadership. Ladkin [47] explored a similar approach with the concept of charisma when she also turned to aesthetics.

Henry Kissinger [48], a long-time experienced diplomat, negotiator, statesman, and historian, commented about an artistic approach to leadership when he said, "leaders need also the qualities of the artist who senses how to sculpt the future using the materials available in the present. As Charles de Gaulle observed in his meditation on leadership ... the artist 'does not renounce the use of his intelligence which is, after all, the source of 'lessons, methods, and knowledge'. Instead the artist adds to these foundations 'a certain instinctive faculty which we call inspiration', which alone can provide the 'direct contact with nature from which the vital spark must leap'" [48] (p. xxiii).

The call for aesthetics as a frame for viewing leadership is not a recent newcomer in the educational leadership field [49]. Among these alternative perspectives have been insights from the arts, humanities, and aesthetics. For example, over 30 years ago, Drucker argued that leaders would do well to consider music, such as improvisation in jazz, as a way of thinking about how they interact with teams [50]. In an earlier paper, the authors of this article [51] explored the metaphor of dance as an entry point to understand leadership anew. In the article, a whole new vocabulary—emotion, bodily knowledge, energy, rhythm, grace, improvisation—was introduced that opened up a different way of thinking about leadership, providing a clear departure from the dominant metaphors of the machine and accounting, often associated with leadership within a bureaucracy [51].

While an aesthetic frame has gained interest in leadership studies in recent times [52], its intellectual history is over a half-century old. For example, Chester Barnard wrote in his classic work *The Functions of the Executive* [53] that, while managerial actions were logically derived, "the essential aspect of the process is the sensing of the organization as a whole and the total situation relevant to it. It transcends the capacity of merely intellectual methods, and the techniques of discriminating the factors of the situation. The terms pertinent to it are 'feeling', 'judgment', 'sense', proportion', 'balance', 'appropriateness'. It is a matter of art rather than science, and is aesthetic rather than logical" [53] (p.235). A person is said to use their aesthetic sensibilities when they make a judgement as to whether something is considered beautiful or ugly, pleasant or unpleasant, and so on [54].

Aesthetics provides an alternative to traditional and instrumental views of leadership that see it in terms of technical competence and behavioral roles. Aesthetics is concerned with "sensory experience and sensemaking, and the felt meanings that are both produced by and guide our interactions and decisions" [50] (p. 255). It recognizes that feelings and emotions are just as important sources of knowledge as reason and logic; all guide our thoughts and actions [52].

Shusterman posits that within the last century, "Anglo-American aesthetics has displayed two characteristic forms deriving from two distinctive philosophical sources: ana-

lytic philosophy and pragmatism" [55] (p. 1). Analytical philosophy, and hence analytical aesthetics, became the dominant perspective inasmuch as this branch of philosophy was more heavily influenced by science, and "the idea that there are at least some logically independent facts or things in the world (even if these be only sense-data) which constitute an immutable foundation for reality, truth, and reference, and which are somehow represented to us in experience through our conceptual scheme" [55] (p. 5).

Analytical aesthetics have striven to delineate the various forms of art and formulate the attendant definitions. One project has been a focus on "projects of distinction" [55] (p. 17). Some analytical theorists have differentiated within categories of art by dividing them into two compartments, the descriptive and the evaluative. The former is believed to be more uncontested in definitional status.

3.5.1. The Aesthetic Concept of "Beau Geste"

One example in examining leadership using an aesthetic frame is via the concept of "beau geste" [56]. This descriptive metaphor helps explain the aesthetic dimensions of a leader's actions or behavior; these dimensions lie in stark contrast to a set of general behaviors that transformational leaders are set to exhibit. Beau geste is "not a physical gesture in itself; it is the metaphor used to describe a beautiful behaviour naming an action symbolically perceived as an aesthetic gesture" [56] (p. 1099). It is a behavior whose essence is "virtuous" yet triggers controversy since it challenges establishes rules and acceptable behaviors [56]. Bouilloud and Deslandes claim that beau geste is not a self-interested act; it is intended for a group or a community, and it is a not deliberate in any way; it is a "surprising emergence" [56] (p. 1107). It is an example of analytical aesthetics, a way of differentiating certain leadership actions.

An historical illustration of beau geste [56] is evident in the actions of Eleanor Roosevelt. In the late 1930s, Eleanor Roosevelt and her black female friend, Mary McLeod Bethune, attended a conference hosted by a racially integrated organization in Alabama. Not everyone approved of the integrated conference and officials used police to enforce the law so that white participants sat on one side of the hall, and black participants sat on the other. Rather than comply with segregation, Eleanor moved her chair into the center aisle so that it sat between the two sections [57]. This spontaneous, beautiful, controversial, and aesthetic gesture [56] was an act of defiance. An example of beau geste within an educational context was relayed to the authors of this article by a superintendent who shared with us a decision he made that led to schools in his district being closed due to poor weather. He told us that on a particularly volatile day in winter, he delayed the school opening rather than closing it altogether. After a short while, he then decided to close the school and the children were sent home. When questioned by his critics why he opened the school in the first place, he told us that "... for some of his children, school was the only warm place they would have that day and the only place where they could have a meal." [58] (p. 150). The rationale underpinning his decision was one of compassion and care for the children in his district.

Not only does aesthetics have much potential in providing a nuanced, context-rich description of leadership, as it is enacted as revealed in the previous illustration of the decision made by the superintendent, but it also holds much promise in understanding the dynamics of the relational aspects of leadership [59] "through the lens of 'sensitivity and 'sensuous' interactions'" [60] (p. 65). The next section considers this.

3.5.2. Aesthetics and the Relational Experiences of Leadership

To explore the notion of the relational in leadership, Beau [60] carried out empirical research on a conductor-less orchestra in Paris. Based on interviews with regular audience attendees and musicians from within the orchestra (some of whom were professional and others who were amateurs), and participant observations of sessions led by conductors and without conductors, Beau found that leadership within the conductor-less orchestra was co-constructed and negotiated between the players to a greater extent than in an

orchestra with a conductor. This negotiation was evident during rehearsals and as well as the performance. Musicians in the study indicated that compared to an orchestra led by a conductor, being in a conductor-less orchestra provided them with a greater emotional intimacy and that they were "more receptive to the expressions of others. Not only the sound is important but also the attention to breaths, to gestures, to people stamping their feet, to the general enthusiasm, to visual expressions" [60] (p. 70).

In Beau's study, an aesthetic lens was used to understand subtle aspects of leadership, including the exploration and meaning of facial expressions, body gestures, and other interactions as indicators of changes in the relationships among players [60]. The study's findings reinforced the point that an aesthetic lens is one that "open[s] up possibilities and widen[s] the understanding of leadership by becoming knowledgeable about the hidden and unrecognized sensuous ways of knowing" [52] (p. 553). Thus, an aesthetic perspective provides an alternative entrance point into understanding the nature of leadership.

3.5.3. The Strengths of an Aesthetic Lens

The lens of scientific empiricism enables some aspects of leadership to be examined, but historically blocks out emotion, intuition, hunches, and, most importantly, context. The purpose of a quantitative method is to engage in context-free generalizations. It is supremely reductionistic. In the case of transformational leadership, the empirical approach seeks to identify dimensions of charisma and to verify them as transportable to a wide variety of organizational situations and contexts, such as business, the military, and the public sector.

Aesthetics as a frame includes dance, theatre, music, sculpture, architecture, and the visual arts. These media are rich in symbolic and expressive stimuli that bypass the brain and human systems based on logic, and deal with reality that may be irrational to them. Yet, it is the emotional aspect of leadership that often moves people to act, to dare, to dream, and to lead. Analytical aesthetics is the bridge to understanding how one moves and connects to others. Although, to date, aesthetics has not been embraced by researchers of educational leadership, it could be employed to illuminate the humanity underpinning the connections, negotiations, and relationships between and among leaders (both assigned and emergent) and others within schooling contexts. Aesthetics enables leadership to be envisioned as a type of performance. That performance can be described as beautiful rather than effective or functional [58] when it involves "the courage to envision possibility, even at the risk of being labelled naïve . . . [61] (p. 213) [and when it enables us] "to out our own humanity and that of the people we have the privilege to work with" [61] [p. 217). And as Derrida observed, "There is no science of the beautiful, only a critique of the beautiful" [62] (p. 89).

4. Conclusions

Transformational leadership theory came on the scene in the 1970s, and since that time, countless articles and books have been written about it and research studies have endeavored to measure followers'/subordinates' perceptions of managers/leaders regarding their behavior. It was the work of Leithwood [63,64] and Leithwood and Jantzi [65,66] that did much to promote transformational leadership theory as a useful way of understanding leadership practices within schools. The multi-factor leadership questionnaire, alluded to earlier, continues to be a commonly used survey used in both education and business contexts to measure transformational leadership [67]. A recent trend in transformational leadership educational research has seen it compared to "instructional leadership" (i.e., leadership concerned with teaching and instruction) in respect to its effect on enhancing student outcomes (see Robinson et al., 2008) [68]. Kwan's [67] more recent study investigated the integrative effect of instructional leadership and transformational leadership on student outcomes and concluded that there has been a blurring of leadership practices within both perspectives. Given the ongoing interest in transformational leadership and the new

angle tying it to instructional leadership, it appears that it is not going to disappear in the immediate future.

In this article, our main intention was to critique transformational leadership regarding its validity, usefulness as a theory, and claims to scientific status. As we have argued, not only does transformational leadership lack conceptual clarity, including the ambiguous notion of "charisma" that is a dimension within it, but it also has methodological difficulties arising from overlapping behaviors within surveys (such as the MLQ) that purport to measure it. One of our strongest reservations about transformational leadership, as a universal theory, is that it provides only a superficial glimpse into the nature of leadership. In the final part of this paper, we argued that leadership studies would profit by using an aesthetic lens that would extend our understandings of transformational leadership by highlighting it as a type of artistic performance concerned with human feelings, emotions, and sensory perceptions. Promoting an aesthetic rather than a scientific approach to transformational leadership opens up new ways of thinking about educational leadership. Using the construct of "beau geste", as well as revealing the relational aspects of leadership within a specific context that aesthetics is able to do, provides an intimate and novel way of understanding it.

Over the generations, stories told about El Cid, national hero and defender of the Spanish people, and other heroes, continue to capture our imaginations and inspire us. These stories keep legends alive and there will always be a place for a good story. Yet, stories are rarely "factual descriptions, they manifest and convey implicit knowledge and are thus inescapably . . . experienced in aesthetic terms" [69] (p. 44). Hansen et al. [52] point to leadership narratives, including those from charismatic and transformational leadership, for their potential to reveal emotions and provide aesthetic descriptions, especially if they are constructed within an experiential context.

We believe that exploring transformational leadership through an aesthetic lens, including through stories of leaders such as the legendary El Cid, and their followers, holds great potential for capturing subjective knowledge about leadership in a range of contexts, including educational leadership. Moreover, such explorations are likely to reveal a more nuanced and novel understanding of leadership away from roles, functions, and context-free generalities. While the scientific studies of transformational leadership are profoundly leader-centric, the artistic perspective creates in followers more active connections and dynamic relationships because artistry by nature is relational between artist and audience. Both require the other to be realized. A painting, a play, or a ballet only come alive when they live in the minds and hearts of the viewer as a co-participant. In that, there is reciprocity between the artist and the viewer that is non-hierarchical. This is the leader relational perspective that scientific empiricism has erased under the false guise of objectivity. The co-relational exchange between leaders and followers is the true bridge of the process of transformation itself.

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A Typology of Multiple School Leadership

Yin-Cheong Cheng

The Department of Education Policy and Leadership, The Education University of Hong Kong, Tai Po 999077, Hong Kong; yccheng@eduhk.hk

Abstract: In facing the challenges of huge transformations in different areas of society, many educators, policy makers, social leaders, researchers and other stakeholders may doubt how schools and their leadership and management remain relevant to and effective for the future of education. Given that multiple school functions are needed to serve society at different levels, the required roles in school leadership are inevitably multiple, diverse and demanding. In past decades, many studies have been conducted with a focus on some aspects of leadership functions and processes. Unfortunately, there is a lack of a typology of school leadership to map out comprehensive leadership profiles and understand their multiple characteristics for leading school development and effectiveness in a fast-changing environment. Based on the framework of multiple school effectiveness, this paper aims to propose a typology of multiple school leadership that can provide a new, comprehensive way to re-conceptualize the multiple nature and characteristics of school leadership in a complicated context. Depending on the rationalities, concerns, actions, outcomes and contexts of leadership in practice, the typology of multiple school leadership may include six models: technological leadership, economic leadership, social leadership, political leadership, cultural leadership, and learning leadership. Within this typology, new possibilities and approaches to school leadership can be drawn for research, practice and development towards the future.

Keywords: school leadership; leadership change; leadership effectiveness; leadership models; leadership typology; technological leadership; economic leadership; social leadership; political leadership; cultural leadership; learning leadership

1. Introduction

School education is crucial to the future development of young people and society. In response to increasing challenges from technological innovation, international competition, economic transformation, globalization, pandemic disasters and regional demands for development, numerous reforms and changes in school education have been initiated in different parts of the world since the beginning of the new century. Policy makers, school leaders, educators, parents, researchers and other key stakeholders in many countries have embraced high expectations of developing competent school leaders to implement school changes, perform multiple school functions and achieve new educational aims at different levels for the future [1,2].

The conceptualization and practice of school leadership is expected to be more closely relevant to the multiple functions of schools in a new era of transformation. For example, how school leaders can lead and facilitate the achievements of multiple school functions (such as technological functions, economic functions, social functions, political functions, cultural functions and learning functions) at multiple levels (such as the individual level, institutional level, community/society level and international level) has become a burning issue in school reform and leadership development [3–5].

Even though some literature on school leadership types has been reviewed, such as [6–10], there is a lack of a comprehensive typology of school leadership to address the crucial concerns of how school leadership can be conceptually and practically linked with multiple school functions in a new era of multiplicities and complexities in education.

Without such a typology, the practice and conception of school leadership may be piecemeal, fragmented and ineffective, focusing on limited perspectives and biased ideas. It is difficult for school leaders, educators, change agents and researchers to have a holistic picture to understand what types or models of leadership are relevant to the issues of school functioning in transformation and globalization [11–13] and propose appropriate leadership strategies for school effectiveness and innovation in education reforms [14].

To address the above concerns and issues, this article aims to develop a new typology of school leadership with multiple perspectives to bridge the gaps between school leadership and multiple school functions and enhance the practice and effectiveness of school leadership.

Adapted from the frameworks of multiple school functions [15] and contextualized multiple thinking [16] and previous empirical groundwork in leadership [10], a typology of leadership is proposed to reconceptualize the nature and characteristics of multiple school leadership in a coherent way for research, practice and policy formulation in a complicated and changing context. It assumes that six key models of school leadership, including technological leadership, economic leadership, social leadership, political leadership, cultural leadership and learning leadership are needed in a typology to comprehensively address the basic issues in different aspects of school functioning, development and change.

In different models, the conceptualization and related concerns and characteristics of school leadership are different, as shown in Table 1. Accordingly, the rationalities used in the process of leadership for school change and development may be completely different. The characteristics of each model of school leadership in the typology will be discussed in terms of rationalities, ideologies, beliefs about action, beliefs about outcomes, beliefs about planning/development and the context in which the leadership is salient. It is hoped that this typology can provide a comprehensive spectrum of models and related perspectives to understand the nature and characteristics of school leadership, particularly in the context of pursuing multiple school functions.

Table 1. A Typology of Multiple School Leadership.

Characteristics	Models of School Leadership					
	Technological Leadership	**Economic Leadership**	**Social Leadership**	**Political Leadership**	**Cultural Leadership**	**Learning Leadership**
Rationalities	Technological Rationality	Economic rationality	Social rationality	Political rationality	Cultural rationality	Adaptive rationality
Ideologies	Methodological effectiveness; Goal achievement; Technological engineering; Technical optimization	Efficiency; Cost–benefit; Resources and financial management; Economic optimization	Social relations; Human needs; Social satisfaction	Interest, power and conflict; Participation, negotiation, and democracy	Values, beliefs, ethics and traditions; Integration, coherence and morality	Adaptation to changes; Continuous improvement and development
Key concerns in leadership	What structures, methods and technologies can be used? How can the aims be achieved more effectively? Can any technical innovation and improvement be made or the process be reengineered?	What resources and costs are needed and what benefits can be generated? How can the aims be achieved with minimal cost? How is it possible to innovatively maximize the marginal benefits?	Who are the stakeholders involved? How can they affect the aims, processes and outcomes? How can social synergy be maximized?	What diversities, interests and powers are involved? How can the conflicts and struggles be minimized? How can alliances and partnerships be built?	What values, beliefs and ethics are crucial and shared? How do they influence the aims and nature of action? How can integration, coherence or morality in values and beliefs be maximized?	What learning styles, thinking modes and knowledge can be changed? How can school action be more adaptive to the changes and challenges? How can new thinking modes be achieved?

Table 1. *Cont.*

Characteristics	Models of School Leadership					
	Technological Leadership	**Economic Leadership**	**Social Leadership**	**Political Leadership**	**Cultural Leadership**	**Learning Leadership**
Leadership action	To use scientific knowledge and technology to solve problems and achieve school aims	To procure and use resources to implement plans and achieve outcomes	To establish social networks and support to motivate members and implement plans	To negotiate and struggle among parties to manage or solve conflicts	To clarify ambiguities and uncertainties and realize the school vision including key shared values and beliefs	To initiate new ideas and approaches to achieving aims
Leadership outcome	A predictable product of good technology and methodology	An output from the calculated use of resources	A product of social networking and relationship building	A result of bargaining, compromise, and interplay among interested parties	A symbolic product of meaning making or culture building	A discovery of new knowledge and approaches to enhancing school functioning
Beliefs about planning/ development	To find the right technology and methods to overcome difficulties and problems and get things done; To study technological possibilities, strengths and weaknesses	To find out how minimal resources and efforts can be used to produce outcomes; To calculate any economic value added or hidden costs	To find out the optimal social conditions for action and satisfying human needs; To identify any social capital to be accumulated	To find the balance among various political forces for achieving compromise; To search for any possibility for reaching the "win-win" situation and alliance building	To find out cultural meanings behind alternative actions; To derive meanings from possible overt and hidden outcomes	To reflect on the existing modes of thinking and practice and find new modes; To deepen the level of understanding and thinking
Context in which that leadership is salient	When the aims of school action are clear and it is very urgent to achieve them	When resources for action are scarce or economic values are strongly emphasized	When school success heavily depends on human and social factors	When the school involves diverse interests and resources are limited to meet expectations	When the school environment is uncertain and the aims and nature of action are not so clear	When the school context is changing fast and adaptation to the changes is crucial

Adapted and re-developed from the author [10,15,16].

2. Technological Leadership

Technological functions. Advances in new technology are creating great impacts, transforming nearly every aspect of human life worldwide. People often believe that the use of technology can enhance the opportunities and capacity for schools and members to pursue their future development in an era of new technology [17]. In education reforms worldwide, the development of technological literacy is becoming a necessary part of students' learning [18–21].

Schools can play different functions and roles in the technological development of society. They can be a place for the transfer of technological knowledge, skills and tools. They can prepare young people to serve the needs of their community in transforming towards an intelligent city or a smart city with infrastructures and capacities for applying innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), big data analytics, cloud computing, mobile technology, etc. [17,22,23]. In the long run, this can support the globalization of technology and the pervasive application of innovative ideas and technologies globally to benefit more people in different parts of the world.

Technological rationalities. In school, there may be two different roles in *technological leadership*. One is leadership that plays a leading role in promoting the use of technology and its development at different levels in school, as mentioned above. The other is leadership that is based on technological rationalities or structural rationalities in the practice of school leadership. Both types of technological leadership are closely related to the school's technological functions, emphasizing the achievement of planned goals and targets through objective and scientific methodologies and structures.

As shown in Table 1, technological engineering, methodological effectiveness, and technical optimization are the key ideologies and values in the leadership process to pursue

school effectiveness and development. Management traditions such as F. Taylor's principles of scientific management [24,25] or Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy [26] are mainly based on such a technological or structural rationality.

Technological concerns. With these rationalities, common concerns in technological leadership may include the following [27]:

- What structures, methods, procedures and techniques can be used to achieve the planned goals and targets of a school?
- How can aims and related tasks be achieved more effectively through changes in the structure, methodology or technology of a school? Why?
- Can any technical innovations and improvements be made or the process of school functioning be reengineered to ensure sustainable development and effectiveness?

The basic objectives of technological leadership's actions are to use scientific knowledge and technology to solve existing problems and achieve planned aims [28]. Therefore, the outcome of leadership is a predictable product of the right technology and methodology being used in leadership action. If any defect occurs in school outcomes, it means that there will be some mistakes in structures, procedures or technology in school leadership or actions.

Technological planning. In planning school development, technological leadership leads to find the right technology and methods to overcome potential difficulties, obstacles and problems in school and get things done. It often needs to study technological possibilities and alternatives and compare their strengths and weaknesses in considering technical optimization.

The process of technological leadership is characterized by scientific reasoning, technological imagination, and methodological considerations. In different contexts, the appropriateness of technological leadership may be different. When the aims and objectives of school action are clearly defined and commonly accepted by the school members and other concerned constituencies and it is very urgent for the school to achieve them, technological leadership seems to be more salient and appropriate than other models of school leadership because the major concern in this situation is how to carry out the action to achieve the clearly defined aims and objectives successfully using appropriate technology and methods. But if the aims of a school are vague, uncertain and controversial and the timing of school action is not so urgent, it means that methodological consideration and technological effectiveness are not yet the top priorities in school leadership [27].

3. Economic Leadership

Economic functions. Schools often have an important role contributing to the economic development and needs of society. They can help students develop economic intelligence, knowledge and skills and plan their future career with the necessary job competencies and attitudes for survival in a competitive economy [29–31]. Schools serve the economic needs of the local community by supplying quality labor forces to the economic system, modifying or shaping the economic behaviors of students (future customers and citizens) [32], and contributing to the development and stability of the manpower structure of the economy [16,33]. Given the importance of economic functions in schools as described above, how can school leaders successfully play a role of economic leadership in launching initiatives for economic development and functions in schools?

Economic rationalities. Similar to technological leadership in schools, there are two different roles in *economic leadership*. One is leadership for promoting economic functions at different levels in schools; the other is leadership based on economic rationalities in practice and planning. Both of them concern maximizing benefits and achieving planned aims and targets in a school through the optimal use of various resources. As shown in Table 1, efficiency, cost–benefit analysis, cost-effectiveness, resources and financial management and economic optimization are some key values and ideologies of economic thinking in pursuit of school effectiveness [34].

Economic concerns. From the economic rationalities, some typical questions or concerns are often raised in the conceptualization and practice of economic leadership [35]:

- What resources and costs are needed and what benefits can be generated in the action cycle of a school or its members?
- How can the planned aims of a school be achieved with minimal cost or resources in the action process?
- In what way can the marginal benefits be innovatively maximized from the action process of a school in general and its members in particular?

In school action, the role of economic leadership is to procure various types of resources from internal and external sources and use these resources to organize and implement the action plan and finally achieve targeted outcomes and other implicit and explicit benefits from the whole process. Thus, the outcome or effectiveness of economic leadership results from the calculated use of various types of resources in school action.

Economic planning. In planning development, economic leadership leads to find out how minimal resources and effort can be used to produce the targeted outcomes and benefits from the school action process or how the returns of school action can be maximized with the given resources. Calculating added values and hidden costs is inevitably necessary in the planning process. Economic leadership concerns economic calculation of costs and benefits and therefore is salient and powerful in a school context where the resources for school action are scarce and very limited but the economic values and benefits are strongly emphasized in pursuit of school development. Given the limited resources available for the school, how resources can be procured, managed and used to achieve the planned aims and produce the expected economic benefits efficiently is inevitably a major concern in such a context. Therefore, economic leadership becomes crucial and necessary in school action for sustainable development.

4. Social Leadership

Social functions. The social functions of schools are crucial, contributing to human development and social relationships at different levels of society [36,37]. As indicated in nearly all formal education goals, schools help students to develop themselves psychologically, socially and physically and help them to develop their potential as fully as possible. Development of students' social intelligence in general and emotional intelligence in particular is important and necessary in school education [16,38,39].

School leadership and related actions are mainly carried out in a social context, in which human factors such as human needs and development, social relations and social expectations can deeply influence and shape the nature, aims and outcomes of leadership. There is a long tradition in areas of social leadership and organizational management with a focus on the impacts of social relationships and human needs on organizational performance and human behavior [40,41].

Social relationalities. Social leadership reflects concerns and values about the human and social factors involved in school action. It is based on social rationalities that emphasize the importance and necessity of social relationships and human initiative to the completion of action and the achievement of the aims of a school (Table 1). In social leadership, the school leader is supportive to school members, fosters participation, enhances staff commitment and satisfaction and encourages positive interpersonal relationships [9].

The major task of social leadership is to establish social networks and support to motivate members and promote initiative and synergy to implement the action plan and achieve the aims of the school [42,43]. Leadership outcome or effectiveness is the product of successful social networking and solidarity in action. Enhanced social satisfaction, personal or staff development, working relationships and morale among school members are also often perceived as important outcomes for a school to remain effective and sustainable (Table 1).

Social concerns. According to the logic of social leadership, its role in planning sustainable school development is finding out the optimal social conditions for implementing

school action, meeting the human needs and expectations of involved school members and establishing social networks and social capital for supporting the action process and achieving outcomes for the school.

Some typical concerns in social leadership for pursuing school effectiveness and development may be listed as follows:

- Who are the major stakeholders and actors involved in school action and what are the social relationships among them?
- How can relationships with these members affect the aims, processes and outcomes of the school and its development?
- How can human needs be satisfied and synergy be maximized among involved members to pursue school effectiveness and development? Why?

Social contexts. The appropriateness of social leadership depends on the nature of the context and the actions of the school. When the success and sustainability of a school is heavily dependent on human and social factors and its outcomes are closely related to or defined by the social expectations of involved members and stakeholders, the role of social leadership may be more salient, powerful and relevant in pursuit of school effectiveness and development. Of course, if the nature and success of school action do not depend on social factors and human initiative, the role of social leadership may not be so significant. In fact, school education is a collective endeavor, heavily depending on various types of cooperation among teachers, educators, experts, parents and community leaders. Therefore, the role of social leadership is important for leading members and developing a positive social climate for all members to perform, develop and work well together [37,38].

5. Political Leadership

Political functions. Due to increasing diversity in expectations and struggles for resources and power among various stakeholders in a complicated competitive environment, the political functions of schools are receiving increasing attention at different levels. School education and political socialization are expected to help students develop political intelligence, positive civic attitudes and skills to exercise their rights and carry out the responsibilities of citizenship [44,45].

Schools act as a place for systematically socializing students into a set of political norms, values and beliefs or for critically discussing and reflecting on existing political events. Schools often become a political coalition of teachers, parents and students that can contribute to the stability of the political power structure. Schools play an important role in serving the political needs of the local community, legitimizing the authority of the existing government, maintaining the stability of the political structure, promoting the awareness and movement of democracy and facilitating planned political developments and changes [16].

Political rationalities. School leaders have the responsibility and role to lead the school and its members to successfully perform multiple political functions as mentioned above. Leaders are persuasive and effective at building alliances and support and resolving conflicts among members in school operations [46]. Similar to technological leadership, there may be two key roles in political leadership. One is leadership that leads initiatives and activities to develop the school's multiple political functions at different levels; the other is leadership that is based on political rationalities emphasizing the recognition and significance of the diversity of the interests and demands of involved stakeholders in action.

School political leadership involves the resolution and management of conflicts and struggles through various strategies such as alliance-building, negotiation, compromise, participation and democratic process. As shown in Table 1, the major ideologies in political leadership include competition for interest, struggles for power, conflicts among members or parties, negotiation and compromise, participation and democracy in decision-making in school improvement and development [46,47].

Political concerns. Some typical concerns of political leadership in pursuing the multiple political functions of schools are listed below:

- What diversities, interests and powers of school actors and other stakeholders are involved in leadership efforts for achieving school effectiveness and development?
- How can the conflicts and struggles in a school be minimized or managed to sustain school development and stability through alliance building, partnership, negotiation, democratic process and other strategies or tactics? Why?
- How can "win-win" strategies be built to overcome political obstacles, facilitate school action and maximize the achievement of school aims in the long run?

Political context. Political leadership in a complicated school context involving multiple and diverse members inevitably induces a process of negotiation, struggle and conflict management among various parties. To a great extent, leadership outcome is a result of bargaining, compromise and interplay among interested parties during school practices. In planning school development, political leadership makes efforts to find the balance among various political forces for achieving compromise and to search for any possibilities for reaching a "win-win" situation and building alliances among the interested parties of a school. Political leadership involves sophisticated consideration of the impacts and results of micro-politics among interested parties. It is also a calculation of political costs and consequences among alternative strategies or tactics for dealing with the political conflicts in action [44,47].

The applicability of political leadership is somewhat limited by the characteristics of the school context. It is salient and significant only if the school is a context involving diverse interests and competing members and the resources available are limited to meet their diverse expectations. In other words, if there is strong solidarity among members and the resources are sufficient to fulfill their diverse needs and implement school action, political leadership may not be so salient in comparison with other types of school leadership in pursuing school development.

6. Cultural Leadership

Cultural functions. Schools have cultural functions, affecting students' consistency and confidence in their values and beliefs and grooming their cultural intelligence and skills [48–51]. They help students develop their creativity and aesthetic awareness and become successfully socialized with the norms, values, and beliefs of society.

Schools can act as a place for systematic cultural reproduction and transmission to the next generation, cultural integration among multiple and diverse school constituencies and cultural re-vitalization from outdated traditions [52]. Schools often serve as a cultural unit carrying the explicit norms and expectations of the local community, transmitting important values and artifacts of society to students, integrating diverse sub-cultures from different backgrounds and revitalizing the strengths of the existing culture such that the society or the nation can reduce internal conflict and wastage and build a unifying force for the benefit of the nation. Schools can foster appreciation of cultural diversity and the acceptance of different norms, traditions, values and beliefs from different countries and regions and can contribute to the development of global culture through the integration of different cultures. [16].

Cultural rationalities. Given the importance of the multiple cultural functions of schools at different levels, school leaders should play a leading role in developing them. There are two different meanings of *cultural leadership*. One is leadership for launching initiatives in developing and sustaining multiple cultural functions as mentioned above; the other is leadership practice that is based on cultural rationalities assuming the significance of shared values, beliefs, ethics and traditions among school members to the nature, aims, and effectiveness of school action. With cultural leadership, the school leader is inspirational and charismatic, and builds a school culture which can transform the directions, goals, values and norms of individuals, groups or the whole school [51].

Sharing values, beliefs and ethics, integration and coherence among school members and morality in school practice are often key ideologies in cultural leadership. The role of cultural leadership is to clarify ambiguities and uncertainties in the context and realize

the school's vision and related key values and beliefs shared by members (Table 1). In a cultural sense, leadership outcome or performance is a product of meaning making or cultural actualization by school members in an ambiguous context.

Cultural challenges. Currently, there are numerous challenges from internal and external environments to schools' survival and development and, therefore, school goals are often ambiguous, uncertain and fast-changing, creating great impacts on school members' performance. In such a context, how can school members remain consistent and confident in their values and beliefs in work? How can the school leader inspire and stimulate members to make greater effort and commitment to realize the school vision and related school goals for future development? How can integration, congruence or morality in values and beliefs be maximized in the practice of cultural leadership? These are concerns related to cultural leadership influencing the future development and achievements of students, teachers and the school [50].

Cultural context. In planning school development, cultural leadership leads to find the cultural meanings behind alternative actions, choose the one most consistent with the values and beliefs strongly shared by key members, and then derive meanings from possible overt and hidden outcomes.

In general, cultural leadership is a process of searching for, clarifying and making meanings in line with shared key values, beliefs and ethics and the morality of the school. When the school environment is full of uncertainties and the school goals are ambiguous, the role of cultural leadership will be significant in clarifying the school's vision and goals, transforming members' affective, behavioral and cognitive performance and building up a shared school culture [53,54]. But, if the environment is certain and the aims of the school are clear, further investigating and clarifying the meanings of school action in this context may not be the top priority compared with other concerns (e.g., technological or economic considerations). In other words, cultural leadership may not be as urgent and salient as other types of school leadership.

7. Learning Leadership

Learning functions. Numerous local and global changes are challenging the development and survival of individuals, schools and society in an era of transformation. How to learn and adapt to these challenges has become a burning issue in ongoing education reforms in different parts of the world. Inevitably, schools are expected to perform multiple functions to support the development of learning at different levels.

Traditionally, learning is often perceived only as a means for achieving technological, economic, social, political and cultural functions or goals in schools. Due to rapid developments in the world, people are beginning to view learning itself as an important value for their life. Particularly, lifelong learning becomes increasingly important in a changing society [55–57].

It is important for schools to help students achieve learning, intelligence and skills, learn how to learn, and pursue lifelong learning. In addition, schools have multiple roles to play in supporting the development of learning. For example, schools often serve as places for systematic learning, teaching and disseminating knowledge, and as venues for experimenting and implementing educational innovations and developments.

Schools can provide services to meet the diverse educational needs of the community, facilitate the development of educational professions and education structures, disseminate knowledge and information to the next generation and contribute to the formation of a learning society [16].

Learning rationalities. In achieving multiple functions in learning, as mentioned above, school leaders encourage professional development and teaching improvements, diagnose educational problems, support innovation, and give professional opinions and guidance on instructional matters. They often need to play a role in instructional leadership or learning leadership [58–60]. In response to fast changes in education, they also play a

role as transformational leaders [61], leading continuous adaptation, development, change and innovation in school functioning.

Playing a role in learning leadership, school leaders lead various initiatives and activities for learning development and school functioning. Learning leadership is based on adaptive rationalities emphasizing the importance of continuous learning in terms of development, improvement and adaptation. This leads school members to practice with professionalism, maintain continuous professional development and improvement, promote new thinking, new knowledge and new initiatives, adapt to internal and external changes and achieve optimal educational outcomes [62–64].

Learning concerns. With the above rationalities, some typical concerns of learning leadership may be listed as follows:

- What kinds of learning styles, thinking modes and conceptual knowledge can be used in the practice of learning leadership for pursuing multiple learning functions and sustaining school development?
- How can the aims and nature of school action be re-conceptualized to be more adaptive to changes and challenges in the context?
- How can learning gaps be minimized and how can new thinking modes and new understanding about multiple learning functions be achieved?

As the values of learning are strongly emphasized, leadership outcome or performance includes success in the discovery of new knowledge and approaches to action implementation and the enhancement of school actors' intelligence to understand and deal with challenges from the changing environment.

Learning context. In planning school development, learning leadership involves a process of reflecting on the experiences of previous action cycles, including the strengths and weaknesses of modes of learning, thinking and practice as well as the characteristics of the context, and investigating new modes of school action for more effective learning and deeper understanding in the next cycles. Learning leadership is a process of the generation, accumulation and management of new knowledge about the action, learning and outcomes of a school [65].

Learning leadership is salient and relevant to sustainable school development, particularly when the educational environment is fast-changing and adaptation to contextual changes is crucial to the development and survival of the school and its members. Therefore, it is not a surprise that the learning leadership type, particularly in terms of knowledge management, is receiving more and more emphasis in this new era of huge transformations and serious competition.

8. Profiles of Multiple Leadership

For different school leaders in different contexts, the characteristics of school leadership styles in pursuing school development and effectiveness may be different. Some leaders may strongly emphasize performing certain models of school leadership, such as social leadership, cultural leadership or technological leadership, separately. But other leaders may focus on the use of a combination of models (such as social leadership plus technological leadership, economic leadership plus cultural leadership or other combinations) in their practice of school leadership and management.

With the implications of the above leadership typology (Table 1), a full typology of the six models of school leadership can be used to provide multiple and all-round perspectives to pursue school effectiveness, identify practical problems, understand complicated issues, develop action strategies and achieve school goals and objectives.

Based on the typology, Figures 1 and 2 provide two examples to show how to map out the profiles of multiple school leadership with varied strengths (from strong to very strong) and weaknesses (from weak to very weak) across different models. Figure 1 shows the profile of concerned leaders, with "very strong" performance in social leadership and economic leadership, "strong" performance in technological leadership, learning leadership and cultural leadership and "weak" performance in political leadership. To

a great extent, this profile represents "strong or very strong" school leadership in most models of multiple leadership.

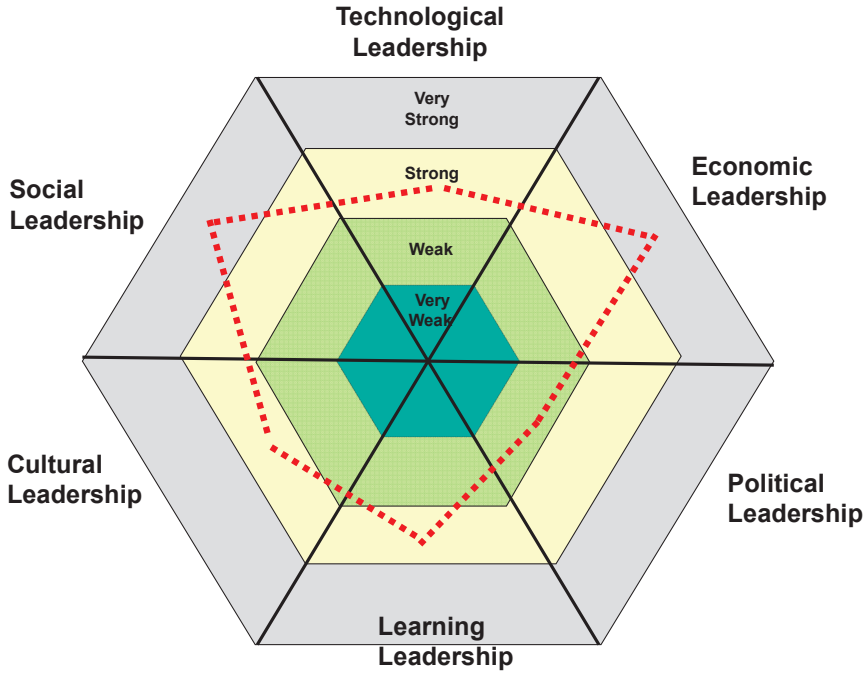

Figure 1. Profile of "strong" school leadership (Example 1).

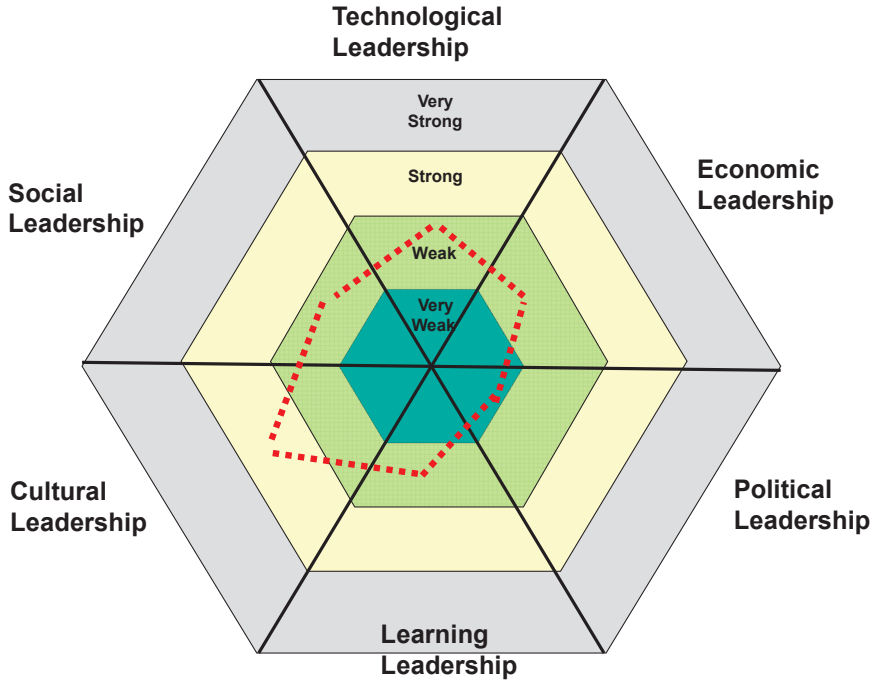

Figure 2. Profile of "weak" school leadership (Example 2).

In Figure 2, no model of leadership in the typology arrives at the level of "very strong" performance. Only the cultural leadership of the concerned leaders shows "strong" performance and all other models of leadership are at the "weak or very weak" level of performance, including weak technological, social, learning, economic and political leadership. To a great extent, the profile in Figure 2 represents "weak" or "poor" leadership in most models of the typology.

Profiles of multiple school leadership can provide all-round information to understand the strengths and weaknesses of concerned school leaders' multiple leadership across six models and develop different strategies for leadership development and school effectiveness [66,67].

9. Concluding Remarks

The above typology and related models of school leadership are associated with different knowledge trends and disciplinary traditions in technology, economics, business and industry management, sociology, political science, cultural studies and learning psychology. For research, they provide a wide spectrum of multiple conceptualizations of school leadership for diverse expectations in various situations and conditions [68,69].

Different stakeholders may have different expectations of leadership performance and outcomes. For example, some may be more concerned with leaders' technological effectiveness or economic returns while others may prefer social relationships or cultural inspiration. How to achieve consensus among various stakeholders on choices of leadership models for leading school development and effectiveness is always a dilemma troubling leaders in practice, particularly when the available resources and capacity for implementation are quite limited.

It is important to point out that relationships among the various models of school leadership may be complicated and not necessarily positive. For example (as shown in Figure 1), leaders who perform very strongly in economic leadership and social leadership do not necessarily do as well in political leadership, although people often assume the existence of such a positive relationship.

The six models of school leadership in the typology are based on different sets of rationales, ideologies and functional characteristics. In general, the enhancement of performance under one model of leadership (e.g., the political leadership model) may not necessarily result in an increase under other models. More research based on the leadership typology may be needed if we want to understand the complicated relationships among various models of school leadership.

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Review

Enhancing Quality Appointment, Preparation and Support System for Malaysian Principals

Husaina Banu Kenayathulla *, Muhammad Faizal A. Ghani and Norfariza Mohd Radzi

Department of Educational Management, Planning and Policy, Faculty Education, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur 50603, Malaysia; mdfaizal@um.edu.my (M.F.A.G.); norfariza@um.edu.my (N.M.R.)
* Correspondence: husaina@um.edu.my

Abstract: Educational leaders in the 21st century are under increasing pressure since they need to consistently upskill and reskill themselves so that they can adapt to rapid changes and be prepared to improve the quality of future education, as well as meet the demands of diverse stakeholders. Previous studies in the Malaysian context mostly focused on leadership training for newly appointed school principals, but there has not been much emphasis on continuous professional development for school leaders. This article provides an in-depth analysis of the appointment, preparation, and support system for Malaysian principals. In this study, a qualitative methodology has been applied, which involves document analysis based on policy documents, media, and previously published journal articles. The findings suggest that internal and external supports are currently being provided to principals. However, it proposes a wider framework of support for principals comprising internal and external support, including smart partnerships with diverse stakeholders such as industries, non-profit organizations, and international counterparts. The results provide insights to policymakers on the importance of consistently supporting school leaders to upskill with multifaceted skills to perform multiple functions, such as technological, economic, social, cultural, political, and learning leadership.

Keywords: appointment; internal support; external support; leadership; Malaysia

1. Introduction

The development of education in Malaysia has witnessed a continuous change covering various aspects, such as pedagogy, teaching technology, leadership transformation and a more competitive education system. This demand for change is necessary to prepare for education that is contemporary and capable of producing competent human resources in line with the development of human civilization. Therefore, educational organizations play an important role in the development of a nation, as well as the production of a society that is knowledgeable and aware of the skills necessary for the 21st century.

Among the main elements that need to be paid attention to is effective leadership for the mobilization and development of educational organizations. The educational leadership of the 21st century requires leaders who have special characteristics that will bring added value to the main attributes of educational leaders, such as the ability to influence followers, skills in dealing with various problems, having a clear vision and mission, and more. These future education leaders should be ready to transform their leadership style in line with the country's aspirations that require leaders who are futuristic and ready to build world-class education. The fourth Sustainable Development Goal in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aims to offer quality education globally [1]. Regarding this, the Ministry of Education, Malaysia (MoE) has the main responsibility to ensure that the education system in Malaysia functions effectively to achieve the fourth SDG goal [2]. For that, the MoE has already implemented the appropriate education policies according to the needs of the times.

Among the main concerns for educational leadership development nowadays is the appropriateness of traditional leadership ways in leading current school organizations.

Competence in classical leadership does not have sufficient capacity in the context of the new world, especially to meet the ever-changing environment of the educational world [3]. The speed of technology and digital progress also demands school principals to have competencies in various aspects of leadership to bring about a new transformation in the school climate. With reference to the Comparison of Competence Levels and Training Needs by the Institute of *Aminuddin Baki*, the principalship training institute in Malaysia shows that the level of competence of principals in Malaysia, in several dimensions of leadership, is still moderate and requires immediate training [4]. This includes aspects such as strategic management, law and policy compliance, curriculum-based instructionals, and several other important administration aspects.

In producing future high-performing leaders, the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2013–2025 has outlined an action plan based on three waves [5]. The first wave (2013–2015) aims to improve the selection standard of principals and head teachers and create a support system that can produce competent school leaders. The second wave (2016–2020) sets targets to dignify the teaching profession through the improvement of new career paths and a shift towards distributed leadership. Distributed leadership will open opportunities to empower other leaders in schools, such as Senior Assistant and Head of Department, to lead the school collectively towards achieving the targeted objectives. Next, the last wave, which is the third wave (2021–2025), will strive to create a culture of professional excellence as an example to colleagues. This effort will ensure that each school leader acts as a guide to other teachers to both meet the professional standards of teaching and further drive school improvement through continuous progress and innovation.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the specific training and development, systematic selection, and continuous professional development of principals in Malaysia to ensure a high-quality school leader. The need for the formation of future school leaders is also illustrated through several requirements for leadership competence. In the proposed principal/headmaster performance evaluation framework, the leadership domain will cover aspects of policy and direction, teaching and achievement, people and relationships, resources, and operations, as well as change and innovative management. The aspects of change and innovative management outline the need for the competence of school leaders in the 21st century through the ability of leaders in: (i) solving problems; (ii) changing management; (iii) making informed decisions; (iv) managing school improvement and (v) creativity and innovation [5]. Clearly, school leadership is expected to be able to face the changes and transformation of education in the future as well as technological development as the vehicles of management and decision-making.

In the context of education in Malaysia, leaders were highly inspired to build the character attributes of being open to change and improvement [5]. This includes the leader's competency to focus on dynamic problem-solving abilities, teamwork for achieving the organization's goals, and leading with motivation, as well as a high desire and tendency towards knowledge and the education of the entire organization's members. In addition, the power possessed by a leader should also be used to increase his or her influence on all members. Leaders also need to be professional in appreciating the work of the organizational members, empowering them, and encouraging a culture that produces creativity and innovation among the members of the organization.

Overall, it can be concluded that the world of education today needs educational leaders who can transform and mobilize all members of the organization to jointly drive excellence. Educational leaders in the 21st century need to understand the need for changes in the current educational context, the challenges in improving the quality of future education, as well as setting a clear vision and being able to inspire teachers and students. This article will describe how school leaders in Malaysia undergo specific training and development, systematic selection, and continuous professional development to ensure a high-quality school leader. In addition, the process of preparation and appointment as a school leader will also be discussed to understand the procedures that have been taken by superiors to ensure the appointment of quality leaders in each school. This article provides insights

to society worldwide on the appointment process, preparation, and support system for school leaders, especially principals. It also proposes a wider framework of support that includes internal and external support, and smart partnerships with diverse stakeholders.

2. Literature Review

Leadership is a two-way process that is intertwined between leaders and followers to achieve a goal or objective [6]. The initial concept of leadership was defined by Cowley (1928) in the 1920s. He associates the leader with his official position. The statement refers to a specific individual or group of individuals who hold a position based on accepted power and authority [7].

Starting from that era, researchers in the field of leadership have continued their studies by using more recent and systematic research methods. Stogdill [8] described the statement by stating the implications of using research methods that are more extensive in sample size as well as recent mathematical methods, in which the researcher has found an accurate definition and concept of leadership. They define and give the concept of leadership as the art of persuasion to ensure that subordinates obey the instructions given by the leader.

According to Peter Drucker, leadership is a situation where an individual has followers who want to work with him [9]. Warren Bennis, in another book, states that leadership is the ability to produce reality from vision [10]. The statement of Bill Gates, a successful billionaire, about leadership, has also been used in many books such as by [11], stating that the concept of leadership occurs when there is an individual or a leader who can empower other individuals to jointly achieve a goal. There is no doubt that leadership is an ability that appears in an individual that allows him to be called a leader and directly or indirectly lead an organization or group.

Mamat [12] has listed the concept of leadership as follows: (a) the process of encouraging subordinates to work towards a goal, (b) the process of influencing the activities of individuals or a group of individuals to achieve a goal, and (c) the action of influencing individuals or a group of individuals in an organization so that they work voluntarily to achieve the organization's goals. In explaining the statement, Daft [11] divided the concept of leadership into six important elements, namely focus, responsibility and integrity, change, common goals, followers, and influence. Since its inception centuries ago, the concept and theory of leadership has often changed with time. The paradigm of leadership is no longer something new. It is a sharing of minds and ways of thinking that change the concept and theory of leadership over time. Table 1 presents the movement of the old paradigm of leadership to a new one.

Table 1. Leadership paradigm.

The Old Paradigm of Leadership	The New Paradigm of Leadership
Competition	Collaborative
Control	Division of power
Self-focus	High ethical values
Informality	Diversity
Stability	Change

In a technologically driven, rapidly evolving, culturally diverse, and globalized environment, principals are under increasing pressure, since there are great expectations and demands from various parties such as Ministry officials, parents, teachers, students, the community, and international counterparts [13]. Tintoré, Cunha, Cabral and Alves [14] contended that previous studies on principals' leadership challenges consistently pointed out inadequate job preparation, the severe shortage of qualified educational leaders, weak leadership practices, changing and stricter standards and procedures, increasing accountability, difficulties in handling school-based operations (such as financial management, addressing teachers, students, and parents' concerns) with limited resources, managing

change, ensuring equity while maintaining efficiency, maintaining good relationships with teachers and staff, and poor professional development programs.

Educational leadership in the twenty-first century requires more than a set of skills—leaders should lead and empower others, while being together in the implementation process, addressing implementation challenges, and conducting proper monitoring to ensure schooling is meaningful. In the post-COVID-19 pandemic era, school leaders are encountering various challenges in making sure that learning losses are recovered. In many instances, principals need to make concrete decisions based on their school context. Principals need to refine the curriculum, teaching and learning materials, oversee pedagogy to overcome learning loss, readjust learning objectives, and prioritize students who are left behind [15]. In this case, we need effective and well-trained leaders who can focus on instruction and meeting the needs of all students.

In proposing an effective program for principals, scholars [16,17] have outlined several measures for an effective professional development program: the program should be more practical, allow for the reflecting on and providing of feedback on past experiences, able to incorporate research-based elements, cater to principals' needs, and ensure continuity and sustainability. Such programs should be able to employ group-based activities through coaching sessions [18].

3. Methodology

This study aims to explore how school leaders in Malaysia undergo specific training and development, systematic selection, and continuous professionalism development to ensure a high-quality school leader. To achieve the aims of this study, a qualitative methodology has been applied which involves document analysis, especially on important documents in the development of principal leadership in Malaysia, as well as some other secondary data. A literature review was also conducted to examine the findings of previous studies as well as discussions involving educational leadership. Document analysis is a method that involves the analysis of documents and written sources that can help in achieving the objectives of the study [19]. Finding material that is relevant to the question and purpose of the study is the first step in the process of using documents. It is also a systematic procedure that develops from the topic of study.

The use of documents involves a specific analytical approach called content analysis. According to Merriam [20], this analysis interprets document materials, including written texts and artifacts, and requires consideration of the definition of context and time. When a text is read in a different context, it will be given a new meaning and interpreted according to the social background where the text is read. Qualitative researchers can also use secondary data in building concepts and placing the study in a local and global context. These data can also contribute to the process of initial discussion and exploration of a matter in depth, comprehensively and systematically.

For the purpose of this study, the documents involved are the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025, the Education Development Plan 2001–2010, the School Partnership Improvement Programme: Interim Report, and several more important documents. The documents involved are analyzed according to the objectives of the study that have been set. The main instrument is the notes of the document, to record the important content of each document and the main information of each document involved. The decisions about obtaining data, managing, and analyzing include the following; (i) the process of text search, text management, and program analysis, (ii) decisions about analytical procedures, (iii) decisions about when to use data and in what form and (iv) how to combine data (triangulation) with other data [21]. Table 2 shows the content of specific documents analyzed in this study.

Table 2. Data Analysis Based on Documents.

Documents Selected	Data Analyzed
Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013–2025	Leadership program for Principals, NPQEL
Education Development Plan 2001–2010	Training for educational professional leadership
School Partnership Improvement Programme: Interim Report	Specialist Coach
Professional Meeting No. 7/2007	Professionalism Enhancement Training in Teaching and Learning and Leadership
Malaysia School Leaders Competency Standard 2.0.	Quality of school leadership

4. Results

The findings from the document analysis, such as policy reports and the previous literature, point out that there are three phases of school leadership that have been consistently emphasized in the policy documents. The following section will provide insights on the process as well as the challenges encountered.

4.1. School Leaders Preparation Process

The teaching and learning process can be improved through strengthening school leadership and increasing the supply of qualified teachers. This requirement is in line with the findings of UNESCO [22] and VVOB [23], which stated that two main factors contribute to the significant impact on student learning: leadership factors, such as the leaders' style, and teacher factors (teaching method).

For decades, the Malaysian government has emphasized strengthening school leadership, and this has been carried out with a particular focus to identify potential leaders. This statement is illustrated further by Circular 175 in the 1979 Cabinet Committee Report to review the implementation of the education policy. The report stated that a school leader such as the principal or head teacher is selected based on a 'time-based' approach. This means school leaders are appointed for leadership positions based on seniority. However, there was a change in policy commencing January 2007, and individuals who are interested in holding the position of school leader need to have leadership experience, such as being the Senior Assistant and Head of Department [24].

Before appointing a school leader, potential leaders will go through a continuous competence development process. This is because teacher institutes just prepare them with fundamental knowledge related to specific disciplines and pedagogy to equip the teachers with the competency to teach [25]. Currently, teachers are encountering great challenges due to rapid technological changes and the insistence of stakeholders such as the superiors from the Ministry, parents, and the community. Teachers should develop their competence to lead the challenge by applying leadership skills. This effort is consistent with the requirements of the Education Development Master Plan 2006–2010, which has six main strategies to strengthen the Malaysian education system, namely: Building a Nation; Building Human Capital; Empowering the National School; Bridging the Education Gap, Elevating the Teacher Profession and Boosting the Excellence of Educational Institutions [26].

To achieve these goals, based on the Ministry of Education's meeting report, Professional Meeting No. 7/2007, dated 21 November 2007, has approved the proposal paper for the Operation Concept of Professionalism Enhancement Training in Teaching and Learning and Leadership for Education Service Officers. The Ministry of Education emphasized its operation on a 'school-based' basis, in line with the concept of "let manager manage". Some operational guidelines for In-Service Training have been issued to ensure successful implementation. The In-Service Training Program is a competency development program implemented to improve the professionalism of an organization's civil servants. The program differs from the Pre-Service Training for civil servants who are already in

service. In-service training is a place for school leaders, teachers, and support staff to gain knowledge related to their professional careers. The focus of the partnership is related to the needs of the field of leadership, curriculum, co-curriculum, and support for their career development. The program is usually held outside teaching hours, usually during weekends. Every civil servant must attend 7 days of training in a year. The training is conducted on the school's premises and a total of 6 h is considered one day of the training.

Table 3 shows a basic guide to handling the program that can be organized by the school and/or teachers can attend those types of programs to obtain yearly performance marks.

Table 3. Credit Allocation for Continuous Professionalism Development Programs.

No.	Discipline	Maximum Credit (Mark)
1.	Training/Workshop/Seminar/Colloquium, Convention/Symposium/Forum/Conference/Counselling Clinic	15
2.	Knowledge Discourse, Briefing, Professional Talk, Knowledge Sharing/Dialog Session/Talk	15
3.	Coaching and Mentoring	10
4.	Academic Improvement	20
5.	Professional Learning Communities	20
6.	e-Learning/e-Teacher Portal	15
7.	Research	20
8.	Creative Writing	20
9.	Benchmarking	10
10.	Book reading	20
11.	Ministry Internal and External Attachment Program	10
12.	Other Professional and None-Professional Contributions	10
13.	Innovation	20

Note. Guidelines for the Implementation of Continuous Professionalism Development Credit Points for Education Service officers, Ministry of Education Malaysia (https://splkpm.moe.gov.my/bahan/Surat_Siaran_MyPPB.pdf (accessed on 23 February 2024)).

4.2. School Leaders Appointment Process

Quality education begins by improving the quality of all stakeholders involved within the school community, starting from school leaders, and including middle leaders, teachers, and support staff. The quality of education has a relationship with the competence and performance of a leader within an educational organization. Therefore, efforts to produce quality leaders must start from the selection stage up to the continuous development stage. This process begins with an application to join the National Professional Qualification for Educational Leaders (NPQEL) training. The NPQEL training is a program to train potential leaders, organized by the Institute of *Aminuddin Baki* under the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. The NPQEL program includes face-to-face programs and e-learning (e-NPQEL). The study period is for fifteen (15) weeks, which is virtual (online) for three (3) weeks, face-to-face sessions for six (6) weeks, and an Apprenticeship session for seven (7) weeks. The apprenticeship session is divided into two (2) namely Apprenticeship 1 for one (1) week and Apprenticeship 2 for six (6) weeks. The prospective principal/head teacher (PGB) will then receive a certificate that qualifies him to apply for the position if there is a vacancy. The detection of post vacancies is carried out through the School Leader Replacement Module (MPPS) dashboard. Candidates will apply and will sit for the P-PGB assessment, which is an assessment specifically designed to evaluate the ability of the candidate to become PGB.

A holistic assessment in selecting future education leaders is important to achieve the goal of quality education in line with current and future education demands. The school leader's personality and core competencies need to be emphasized to fill today's educational needs [5]. An assessment for PGB Selection (P-PGB) under the new conditions is important in the effort to select competent and high-performing PGBs through a more comprehensive assessment process. P-PGB emphasizes core competencies and personal

qualities to select high-quality leaders. Personality and high imperative values are the basis for quality leadership and high achievement. Referring to the Core Competency Framework for School Leaders, there are 10 competencies based on six (6) domains that need to be fully mastered and possessed by a person before leading a school. The six (6) domains are the (i) domain of policy and direction (strategic thinking competency), (ii) domain of instruction and achievement (development of curriculum-focused instruction competency), (iii) domain of managing change and innovation (analyzing, problem-solving competency and decision-making competency), (iv) domain of resources and operations (managing finances competency and comprehensive monitoring competency), (v) domain of human relations (developing capacity competency and communicating effectively competency) and the last one is the (vi) domain of personal quality (value and professional behavior competency, and realizing and managing oneself competency).

There is a specific process in the PGB appointment method. It started with a reference to the *e-Pangkat* school leader replacement module and continued with advertisements about acting PGB positions through *e-Pangkat*. Candidates who meet the new requirements will make an application, which will then be certified by the Head of Department. The next important process is the PGB Assessment, and candidates who pass this assessment will finally be certified by the Division or State Education Department and their names will be sent to the Human Resource Management Division, Ministry of Education, Malaysia. The assessment for the PGB selection under the new conditions involves three assessment methods. The three (3) methods are Portfolio, Unguided Group Discussion, and Structured Interview to assess the core competencies of school leaders based on the framework, instruments, and assessment procedures that have been set. A portfolio is written documentation based on experience and evidence of the implementation of projects/innovations/improvement programs to assess the candidate's competence and performance in managing and leading the organization/school. Unguided Group Discussion is a method of assessing a candidate's communication skills and strategy-making based on the discussion of the given situation/stimulus. A Structured Interview is an interview using a set of open-ended standardized questions that are organized face-to-face to all candidates to assess the candidate's competence and performance through the actions and achievements that have been implemented.

After receiving confirmation, the candidate will attend the Principal Residency and Immersion Programme (PRIme) for 1 month before taking over the duties as principal/headmaster [27]. The Residency Program refers to the new induction program that requires them to follow a mentoring program for one (1) month under the guidance of the PGB who will move or retire. After that, the candidate then will act as a PGB and implement the Immersion Program with the principal coach for 7 days (42 h) during the first six (6) months. It is a period of guidance and mentoring from an experienced PGB or School Improvement Partner (SIPartner+) of the district as soon as they start their new duties officially as a PGB. Opportunities for Continuous Professional Development will continue to be obtained by the PGB throughout their services. This training will be provided by the Institute of *Aminuddin Baki*, the same institute that provides NPQEL training to the PGB.

4.3. Support System for School Leaders

In this 21st century era, school leaders are expected to embrace multiple school functions such as technological, economic, social, political, cultural, and learning at various levels (individual, institutional, community, international) [28]. Despite diverse challenges encountered in terms of the pandemic, technological innovation, economic downturns, and global, regional, and societal demands, the school principal remains the most important individual who drives the school for excellence. Though the principal works collaboratively with other subordinates in school, it is important to realize that principals are the heads of schools who spearhead transformational change for school effectiveness. Leadership is a crucial element of an effective school and school leaders will lead their subordinates to be more effective [29,30]. Thus, principals need to be consistently supported not only

at the early stage of their career but throughout their service. Support systems need to be comprehensive, not just as a mentor to help them with their daily routines, but extending to assist principals in carrying out the responsibilities that come with these multiple school functions.

In the Malaysian context, there has been a lack of studies on the need for in-service or continuous professional development programs for principals. Previous studies on principals' professional development in Malaysia mostly focused on pre-service NPQEL programs for principals. However, there has been evidence that Malaysian principals requested more courses on financial management and school law [31,32]. NPQEL's mandatory training program for principals has been criticized as a training program to ensure compliance with national policies [33].

In addition, a nationally representative study that involved 570 principals showed that most principals demanded planning and administration skills (n = 79) followed by skills on the improvement of the school's curriculum (n = 55), coaching and supporting subordinates (n = 50), assessment of school performance (n = 23), budgeting (n = 23) and engaging parents and the community (n = 13). On the other hand, time management and work–life balance tend to be topics that are of less interest (n = 3) [1]. Recent evidence showed that principals are more receptive towards technology-based learning such as online and hybrid sessions [34–36]. They also preferred delivery methods that are non-formal, practical and involve group discussions.

Lokman Tahir [37] proposed a conceptual framework that involves internal and external support for school principals. He has categorized the internal support as support from deputy principals in completing school-related tasks, decision-making that adheres to school culture, values, norms, and visions, mid-level leaders in department-related matters, and senior teachers in dealing with teachers' attitudes and performance. On the other hand, the author has conceptualized external support in terms of knowledge and skills in managing and leading, professional identity, and information on the school's policies and procedures from various stakeholders, such as The SIP Partners+, State Education and District Education officers, other principals, and former principals.

4.3.1. Internal Support

Principals regarded their school deputies and mid-level leaders as their closest friends who assisted them with internal tasks in leading and managing the school. Deputies and middle leadership teams act as intermediaries for principals to comprehend the school's culture, norms, and teachers' attitudes, as well as ensure the completion of school-related tasks. Through mid-level leaders, principals were regularly updated on subject-based performance, financial resources, and teacher performance. Senior teachers are commonly referred to when challenges are encountered in the school system.

4.3.2. External Support

School Improvement Partners Plus (SIPartners+) was formed by the Ministry of Education (MOE) under the District Education Office to enhance the leadership and management competencies of school leaders. This is consistent with the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 which emphasizes quality leadership as an important factor that contributes to students' outcomes. The SIPartners+ program aims to support leaders to manage schools more effectively [38], improve students' achievements, and bring the school to a higher performance level [39]. The mentoring process enables an education leader to discuss any issues directly with their mentors without any complicated processes or protocols [40,41]. SIPartners+ needs to be competent, mentally, and emotionally strong to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of this program [42]. The primary step of the SIP program is to assess schools and motivate and assist principals in leading and managing schools based on the school context and climate. In addition, this mentor also provides coaching for principals in low-performing schools. The SIPartners + mentoring program was introduced

in 2013 as a pioneer project in Kedah and Sabah and only extended to all states in Malaysia in 2014.

There have not been many studies that evaluate the effectiveness of this program; some studies have only focused on small samples, making it difficult to generalize findings [43,44]. There has been some evidence that the mentoring practice was less acceptable to school principals, as they viewed SIPartners+ as an outsider intervening within school management. Hence, principals do not want to disclose school issues that will lead them to be seen as inexperienced school leaders or managers [45]. However, in some contexts, principals accepted SIPartners+ visits more positively as a link to the District Education Office to solve school problems, such as insufficient teachers, infrastructures, and funds [46].

4.4. Officers from District Education Office and State Education Office

Principals also referred to the SDE and DOE officers whenever they felt undecided about obtaining clear information on recent and relevant school procedures. These officers are the individuals most often referred to by principals, as most of them have in-depth relevant information related to the Ministry's operations and policies on school leadership.

4.5. Principal's Continuous Professional Development Program

Tahir et al. [47] have proposed a framework for principal professional development for principals. For continuous professional development, mentoring and coaching, informal discussion, benchmarking visits, continuous workshops, and effective leadership are seen as potential supporting programs. In this framework, principals are to be introduced to strategies for school improvement, such as managing conflict between teachers, problem-solving skills, decision-making skills, handling teachers' attitudes effectively, interpersonal skills, and managing stress and well-being.

Principals are also exposed to advanced syllabi for school-based management, such as financial management, school law, managing and developing staff, developing teacher competencies, managing conflict, managing school ICT facilities, instructional leadership and curriculum and assessment, and networking. These professional development courses can be conducted through sessions by retired/senior principals, seminars or conferences on school leadership, reflection, hands-on education, and practicality [47].

4.6. Professional Development for Multiple Leadership Functions

In a typology of leadership, principals perform multiple leadership functions [28]. Thus, support is essential for school leaders to perform these functions effectively. When carrying out the responsibility in technological leadership, principals need to be equipped with knowledge of technological planning. For instance, the leader needs to find and decide on the right technology to overcome potential difficulties or school problems. Such knowledge can help the leader to finalize the technological innovations that are appropriate for their school to ensure sustainable development and effectiveness. Recently, we have the generation of Artificial Intelligence, where school leaders need to be competent with digital literacy, since the younger generation has started using AI in education such as Chat GPT to help with their homework. In this case, school leaders need to be proficient so that they can distinguish the work that is generated by AI from what is accomplished by humans.

In addition to being a technological leader, principals need to be supported with economic leadership competencies, such as the ability to weigh costs and benefits in finalizing the best option (for instance in technological innovation) that maximizes the effectiveness of the school with the least cost. In this case, the knowledge of cost–benefit analysis, cost–effectiveness analysis, resources, and financial management becomes an important part of the knowledge needed for a principal [42,48]. As a principal, one needs to be consistently supported with financial knowledge, so that they can find alternative sources of financing for schools and be able to continuously plan to achieve the best output with the least costs.

In terms of social leadership, the principal needs to be supplemented with the continuous professional development of social skills. In daily routines, principal communicates with diverse stakeholders such as parents, students, teachers, support staff, Ministry officials, and others in the community, including international counterparts when dealing with student exchange programs and other discussions. These require communication skills, teamwork, problem-solving skills, conflict resolution skills, and more. The principal plays an important role in communicating with diverse stakeholders to promote school improvement.

As a political leader, principals encounter challenges in managing various school actors with diverse interests and power. The principal needs to be equipped with conflict negotiation skills so that a win–win situation can be created, as the principal needs to be able to resolve conflict across various competing parties. This leadership requires a lot of negotiation, struggle, and conflict management among various parties.

In terms of cultural leadership, the principal needs skills to inspire the school members to remain committed to this shared vision and goals. The principal needs to ensure that any decision-making complies with the culture and norms of society. Multicultural competence is an important skill that needs to be included so that principals are culturally sensitive and address the needs of students and staff

Learning leadership means leaders need to consistently reflect on their experiences, consequently identifying strengths and weaknesses so that they can make better decisions in the future. Principals need to familiarize themselves with new learning modes and encourage subordinates to continue learning so that a culture of continuing to better oneself is developed. Principals need to encourage professional learning communities among teachers so that teachers can collaborate within and across schools with their innovative teaching methods.

Mentoring and coaching, informal discussions, benchmarking visits, continuous workshops, and effective leadership are seen as potential supporting programs. There are also informal discussions with the Association of Principals or National Union Teaching Profession (NUTP), especially when there are pressing issues that involve teacher's rights or students' rights that are often discussed before making any official press release.

In addition to internal and external support to enhance principal competency, smart partnerships with diverse stakeholders are important for the success of school activities. Adams [18] argued that school leaders should collaborate with the wider community and not operate within the school as a separate entity. In this case, such competencies need to be prioritized and trained.

4.7. Smart Partnerships with Industry and Non-Profit Organizations

Among some of the notable efforts to support online teaching during the pandemic observed in Malaysia are YTL Foundation's 'Learn from Home Initiatives'. This initiative provides free smartphones with 120 GB of one-year internet connectivity to students in need. In addition, telecommunication companies allocated an additional 1 GB worth of data to their users, while Time and Telekom have increased the capacity of fiber optic connectivity to ensure stable bandwidth performance [49].

In collaboration with UNICEF Malaysia, the government has curated teaching and training resources to support educators in enhancing virtual teaching skills via the *Komuniti Guru Digital Learning Bersama KPM* [26]. This effort has equipped existing teachers with the necessary competence to assimilate and integrate technology into their teaching.

Smart partnerships have been established with various industries, such as NGOs, health providers, and financial institutions. For example, mental health issues have become an important concern recently, and psychometric assessment and awareness programs with clinics and hospitals have been established.

Financial literacy programs are conducted by schools in collaboration with financial institutions to equip the school community with financial knowledge. This skill has become

very important, especially in post-COVID-19 eras. Financial institutions such as Bank Rakyat, Yayasan Maybank, CIMB are important sponsors of such programs.

Smart partnership with international counterparts, such as benchmarking visits, student exchange, and international leadership training programs, is often highlighted. For instance, University Malaya academics have conducted workshops to train principals from Indonesia, the Philippines, and Nepal.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This paper has highlighted the importance of preparing and appointing quality school leaders. Quality leaders are an important factor that contributes to students' performance and school effectiveness. The findings from document analysis revealed that various initiatives have been taken by the Malaysian government to ensure the appointment and preparation of quality school leaders. Previously, only those leaders who were very senior and near retirement age were appointed as school principals, and in some instances, it has proven to be ineffective. Recently, there has been much emphasis on ensuring school leaders are well-trained and have 21st-century leadership skills. The Malaysian Education Blueprint has emphasized the need for training and professional development for middle school leaders. This paper highlights the support given to principals in terms of internal and external support. To be a globally competitive school leader, continuous professional development is important, especially for principals. Principals should be given more opportunities to upskill themselves, particularly regarding leadership training, which should not be limited to the initial NPQL training only. Thus, principal leadership training should incorporate practice, policy, theory, and previous research [50]. Principals can share their experiences and learn from each other. However, principals should be able to reflect on their context and make independent decisions based on their school needs. In addition, this program should also incorporate analytical skills, such as data collection, analysis, and data usage for decision-making [51]. Previous studies also pointed out that leaders need to be equipped with analytical skills so that the available data on teachers, students, examination results, health insurance, and financial resources can be used for school improvement [52]. Mentoring serves as an important strategy to develop effective leaders with skills and knowledge, and instill professional values. Though SIPartner+ is a good initiative, the Ministry needs to ensure that the mentor is fully competent, trained, and possesses more experience than the school principal that is being mentored, so that the effectiveness of the coaching program can be maximized [42].

In addition, this paper recommends a more comprehensive framework for producing outstanding Malaysian school principals (Figure 1). The process of producing Malaysian school principals begins with identifying potential school leaders among senior assistant teachers. This is represented through the input variable. The potential school leaders will go through three phases as shown by the process variable to produce principals who fit into the Malaysian context as depicted in the outcome variables. The three phases include preparation, appointment, and continuous support. Support for school leaders includes internal and external support as well as smart partnerships with non-profit organizations such as Parent Teacher Associations, NUTP, and industry and international organizations. In other words, the support system is not only focusing on principals' competency but also negotiations with various stakeholders to ensure the success of school programs, and endeavors that lead to overall school improvement and effectiveness. The principal will be tested in the evaluation variable in terms of school effectiveness. If they fail in the evaluation phase, they will reiterate through either input or process variables. However, the effort to produce an outstanding principal as described in the five variables is greatly influenced by contextual factors, such as the government's education policy.

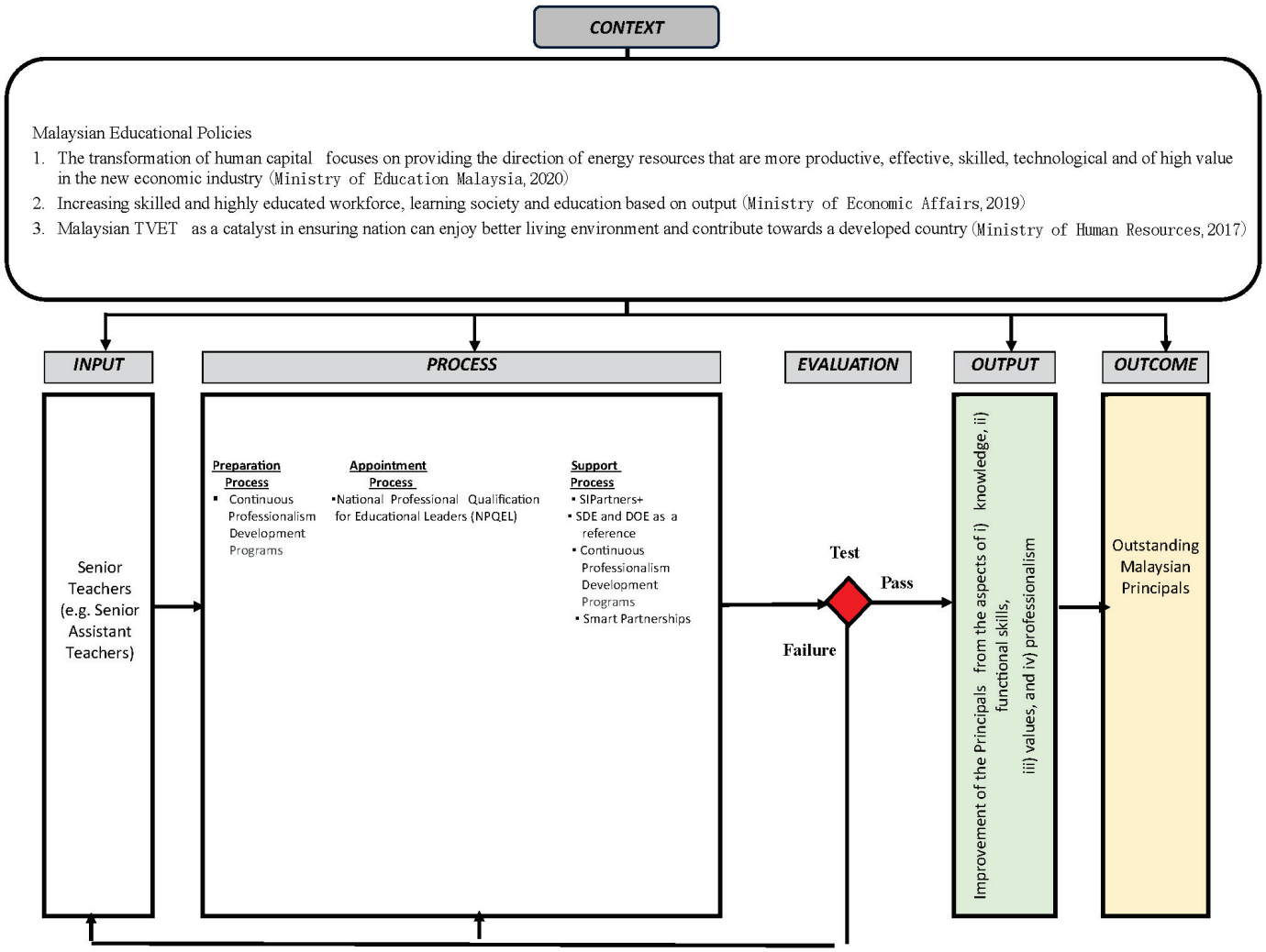

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Producing An Outstanding School Principal [53–55].

Author Contributions: Introduction, Literature, Methodology, N.M.R.; Principal appointment process and Framework, M.F.A.G., Abstract, Principal Support System, Discussion & Conclusion, H.B.K. Reading draft, editing and proof reading, all authors. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Essay

The Work Environment of the School Leader in Australia: The Case for Sustained Change in Role and Practice

Brian J. Caldwell

Graduate School of Education, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne 3010, Australia; brian@educationaltransformations.com.au

Abstract: The questions addressed in this essay are (1) how has the work environment of school leaders changed in the early years of the 21st century, (2) how have these changes affected the role of the school leader, (3) what is the association between an evident deterioration in the work environment and the trend to more autonomy for schools and their leaders, and (4) how can school systems be more effective in supporting school leaders? The essay is organised into three domains that emerged from a review of the literature on changes in the work environment: intensification–intimidation, autonomy–accountability and system–support. Six recommendations are derived from the evidence: principals should have greater control over their work environment, system leaders should remove many reporting requirements from schools, there should be "organised abandonment" of outdated practices, the potential benefits of AI should be realised, there should be more engagement in planning for the future, and there should be further research on processes and outcomes through randomised controlled trials of new practices. It is not so much new theories in leadership but rather new roles and new practices within different arrangements for governance, informed by ongoing research as the context changes, amid evidence of deterioration in professional wellbeing.

Keywords: abandonment; Australia; centralisation; decentralisation; intensification; leadership; principals; schools; standards; systems; transformation; turbulence; wellbeing; work environment

1. Introduction

School leaders in Australia are endeavouring to cope with far-reaching changes to their work environment in the early years of the 21st century. The main features of these changes are well documented [1] and these include a higher level of turbulence in the wider environment; abandonment of principal-focused leadership in favour of more collaborative styles; intensification of the work itself, with far more tasks to be completed in the same amount of time; shifts along the centralisation–decentralisation continuum toward decentralisation on some matters and centralisation on others; demands for a higher level of accountability, especially on indicators of quality and equity; and expectations of parents that the individual needs and interests of their children will be addressed. Concurrently, school leaders are coming to terms with advances in technology, the latest manifestation being innovation in Artificial Intelligence (AI) [2].

There are presently two over-arching issues of national concern in Australia. The first is the achievement of students. Despite many schools being world-class on any measure, overall, the performance of students in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) [3,4] and the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) [5] continues to decline. Similarly, results in the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) administered by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) have mostly declined or flatlined [6]. The second is the shortage of teachers, especially at the secondary level, occurring while surveys consistently report teacher overload and threats to wellbeing, both of particular concern to school leaders [7,8]. This essay responds, in particular, to the second, including the finding

that more than 40 per cent of principals reported they had experienced violence and bullying [8,9].

2. Methodology and Theoretical Background

2.1. Methodology

The key questions addressed in this essay are (1) how has the work environment of school leaders changed in the early years of the 21st century, (2) how have these changes affected the role of the school leader, (3) what is the association between an evident deterioration in the work environment and the trend to more autonomy for schools and their leaders, and (4) how can school systems be more effective in supporting school leaders?

The author has been engaged in research on governance, policy and leadership in school education for many years, broadly in many countries but with a special focus on Australia. Particular attention was given in this work to the shift of authority and accountability in schools within system-determined frameworks [10].

As noted above, there have been recent accounts of a deterioration in the work environment of school leaders. This essay arises from a desire to examine the evidence for this phenomenon and offer recommendations on how it can be ameliorated. Including selected sources in the previous broad-based studies, the current review of related literature paid special attention to 46 items related to the aforementioned deterioration and its remedy and the context in which this is occurring. This essay thus contains a limited review, with the starting point being the findings in three broad-based national surveys. Overall, preference was given to large-scale longitudinal studies in national and international settings. While individuals are cited, priority is given to national and internationally recognised scholars and commentators.

The findings of related research by the author are included where relevant to these questions, especially those reported in [10–14]. While the focus is on leadership at the school level, attention is also given to leadership at the system level because aspects of the work environment of school leaders are determined to some extent at that level. Strategies to enhance that environment through the actions of system leaders were framed by the characteristics of successful school systems identified in an OECD study.

The approach in this essay is policy- and governance-orientated while keeping a focus on leadership. Historical perspectives, both past and future, are included. There is a nexus throughout of leadership, governance, policy and wellbeing.

2.2. Theoretical Background

This essay does not provide a comprehensive account of leadership theory and research. The literature on each is substantial and relevant. Gurr [15,16] provided broad-based and up-to-date international reviews.

The distinction between leadership and management is pertinent, and this is the essay's only foray into leadership theory. The framework of John Kotter [17] is helpful in this regard. Leadership is a process for establishing direction, aligning people, motivating and inspiring, and achieving change. Management is a process that calls for planning and budgeting, organising and staffing, controlling and problem solving, and producing a degree of predictability. Elements of leadership line up with elements of management, so that the counterpart of establishing direction (leadership) is planning and budgeting (management). Aligning people (leadership) matches up with organising and staffing (management), motivating and inspiring (leadership) with controlling and problem solving (management), and achieving change (leadership) with producing a degree of predictability (management). The distinction is relevant now [18] more than three decades after it was proposed by Kotter. Two observations are in order: first, that leadership and management are essential if there is to be change, and second, that leaders are to some extent engaged in management, and managers often have a leadership role. It is the balance of the two that is important.

3. Context

It may be helpful to provide a brief description of how school education is governed in Australia and compare it to that in other federations. The country has a population of about twenty-five million and is a federation of six states and two territories. It was constituted from existing colonies in 1901 as the Commonwealth of Australia, with a federal parliament and a federal government. The Constitution leaves the responsibility for schools in the hands of the states, but there are factors that explain why and how a key role for the federal government emerged. One is because Section 96 of the Constitution allows it to grant money to states under whatever terms and conditions are mutually agreed upon. States are not permitted to levy an income tax, but they receive the proceeds of a Goods and Services Tax (GST) levied across the country, currently set at 10 per cent. The upshot of this vertical fiscal inequity is that government (public) schools in states and territories, as well as non-government (private) schools, are dependent on the federal government for significant amounts of public funding. National School Reform Agreements (NSRAs) reflect the outcomes of negotiations between the two levels of government on how federal funds should be allocated. Reference to states is taken to include territories.

States have responsibility for their public schools, which they build, own, operate and fund. Prior to federation, schools were operated by colonial governments, local committees and churches. Public schools were brought under the arm of education departments, which also implemented legislation and regulations applying to private schools.

There are two sectors in school education. Government (public) schools are owned by the government and may not charge tuition fees. Non-government (private) schools are owned by churches or private bodies and charge fees. Across the country, about two-thirds of students attend government schools. There appears to be no counterpart internationally, with about one-third of students attending fee-paying non-government schools. This proportion rises to about half at the upper-secondary level in major cities, where some schools charge more than AUD 40,000 annually for Year 12 students.

The role of the federal government has expanded over the last half-century. The last 15 years have seen the creation of ACARA, established in federal legislation and jointly funded by the Commonwealth and states, and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), owned and funded by the Commonwealth. Ministers for education at both levels have agreed that the key recommendations of each body shall be implemented in all schools, although states may establish their own approaches, provided they are consistent with the national versions. The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO), jointly funded by the Commonwealth and states, was established to undertake or review research that provides evidence to guide the work of schools.

International comparisons with two other federations are of interest. Canada is a top-performing federation in international tests, and it is frequently paired with Australia in international comparisons. The federal government has no role in school education, being barred from doing so by the country's constitution. A national approach on matters of common interest to the provinces is achieved through projects of the Council of Education Ministers, Canada (CEMC). Provinces may levy an income tax and a value-added tax.

Aspects of governance in the United States are like Australia's, including the roles of federal and state governments in school education. Education stands in its own right at the federal level, with a Secretary for Education in the President's cabinet. Receiving federal funds usually depends on states meeting federally set requirements. States may also levy an income tax and a value-added tax.

4. Themes in the Review of Research

Three themes related to changes in the work environment of leaders at the school and system level were selected from the review of literature, these being the most relevant to the four questions that are addressed in this essay.

4.1. Intensification–Intimidation

The Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey of a national sample of principals has been conducted annually since 2011 with the support of principals' associations at all levels in government and non-government settings. It is the best-known and most frequently cited longitudinal study of principals' occupational health. Results consistently show high levels of stress and increasing levels of offensive behaviour directed at principals (threats of violence, physical violence or bullying).

4.1.1. Workload and Burnout

Responses reported here are drawn from the aforementioned surveys. There were 2248 participants in the 2020 survey [19], with 87.8 per cent being principals, deputy/assistant principals or head teachers. 2020 was a year of the pandemic and catastrophic bushfires and, while many responses reported issues specifically related to these events, the general pattern of responses was similar to 2019, before these events.

School leaders worked an average of 54.5 h per week with 22.1 per cent working more than 60 h. The top-ranked of 19 sources of stress were (1) sheer quantity of work, (2) lack of time to focus on teaching and learning, (3) mental health issues of students, and (4) expectations of employers. Among 15 sources of support, the top-ranked was a partner, and the bottom-ranked was the department/employer. Alarmingly, 83 per cent reported that they had been subjected to some form of offensive behaviour in the previous 12 months.

Participants in the survey completed the COPSOQ-11 survey on Occupational Health and Safety, responding to a well-validated instrument administered to hundreds of thousands of people in different countries and occupations. There are seven scales: (1) demands at work, (2) work organisation and job contents, (3) interpersonal relations and leadership, (4) work–individual interface, (5) values at the workplace, (6) health and wellbeing, and (7) offensive behaviour.

Responses were compared to those in the "general population", from people in a variety of occupations in many countries who completed the survey. Overall, responses from participants in the Australian survey of school leaders compared unfavourably with responses from the general population on all items on all subscales. The following conclusion was drawn:

> Historically, school leaders are at risk of burnout, working in demanding and stressful environments with multiple stakeholders, who often have conflicting priorities and demands . . . The position requires them to always be alert and aware of all matters that relate to their schools, communities, and the reporting requirements, at times dealing with the most stressful of situations in life . . . School leaders, as a group, are at risk of fatigue, mental health decline, and burnout. (p. 7) [19]

This response from a primary (elementary) principal was typical of open-ended responses:

> The job becomes more complex with every passing year and the volume of work required of a school principal continues to grow. This is clearly unsustainable . . . The resourcing levels in primary schools are totally unsatisfactory to deliver the sheer size of the agenda expected by our employer, and then when coupled with the increasing complexity of the job makes for a particularly concerning situation that is also unsustainable. (p. 51) [19]

Despite the foregoing, just 6.8 per cent planned to retire in 2021. In making recommendations, the authors recognised that the combined efforts of several stakeholders are required to improve the health and wellbeing of school leaders, including governments, professional associations, communities, schools and the research community. These were described in the report along with differences in the responses of participants according to gender, sector, location of school and a range of demographics.

A more favourable environment was generally evident in the responses of leaders in non-government (Catholic and independent) schools compared to their counterparts in

government schools, but the differences were not large, leading the authors to conclude that "problems and their solutions are very similar in all sectors, highlighting those differences between the sectors is more superficial than substantive (p. 8) [19].

4.1.2. Threats of Violence

The survey reported above gathered information in 2020. A subsequent survey conducted in 2022 pointed to a further deterioration of the work environment of principals: threats of violence were reported by 48.8 per cent of respondents (up 4.5 per cent over the previous survey); physical violence by 44.0 per cent (up 4.6 per cent); and gossip and slander by 49.7 per cent (up 4.3 per cent) (p. 4) [9].

The report of a review commissioned by the federal minister for education to inform the next National School Reform Agreement between the Commonwealth and states cited a submission from the Australian Secondary Principals' Association that raised the issue of "increasing threats of violence that school leaders are exposed to", confirming the earlier survey findings noted above. The report stated that "they would benefit from additional support to help them manage occupational violence safely and effectively"(p. 148) [8]. However, the issue of violence or threatened violence was not mentioned in the report's formal findings or recommendations.

4.1.3. Experience of Teachers

The work environment of principals is determined to a large extent by that of their staff, and related studies are therefore pertinent. For example, surveys in the Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) project found the following with respect to the intentions of teachers as far as their future in the profession was concerned. These and related findings included the responses of principals and other school leaders:

- One-quarter of teachers reported their intention to leave the profession before they retired, with 56 per cent of these intending to leave within 10 years;
- The greatest proportion (38 per cent) intending to leave were teachers aged 30–39;
- A high fraction (87 per cent) of those intending to leave cited reasons related to their work: load is too heavy (71 per cent), levels of stress impacting on wellbeing or mental health (68 per cent), and desire to achieve a better work–life balance (61 per cent);
- Insufficient pay was cited by 29 per cent of those intending to leave; issues associated with student behaviour were cited by 26 per cent (p. 10) [7].

When responses were analysed by sector, it was concluded that data were not "suitably representative of Catholic and independent school sectors to justify examining quantitative analysis of the different kinds of non-government schools (p. 114) [7], Consequently, no sectoral analyses were reported.

The ATWD findings are consistent with those in a 2022 survey [20] of about 5500 teachers in Australia, about 16 per cent of whom were school leaders.

> A large majority of teachers indicated that they were planning to, or would like to, leave the profession. Most were dissatisfied with their roles. However, a large majority reported a sense of belonging to the profession. A considerable majority of teachers reported that their workloads were unmanageable, and a quarter of teachers reported feeling unsafe in their workplace. Only one in three teachers would recommend teaching as a career. (p. 4) [20]

A report commissioned by the New South Wales Teachers Federation [21] noted the large number of federal and state policies that have had an impact on the work of teachers. Among initiatives in play at the time were eight mandated by the federal government and twenty-one bilateral projects of both governments, all to be implemented by the end of 2023. A total of 81 initiatives were identified for 2004–2020. These data demonstrate a high degree of turbulence in the work of teachers and school leaders in New South Wales.

4.1.4. International Comparisons

Responses on the safety of school leaders are consistent with self-reports by principals in Australia, as gathered in TALIS 2018. TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey) is conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on a five-year cycle, with the fourth undertaken in 2023. Reports provide internationally comparable data on the learning environment and working conditions of teachers and principals. Information was collected from a representative sample working at the lower-secondary level in 48 countries/economies. Those at the primary level were also included for Australia. The Australian report by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) [22] included a comparison with high-performing countries in PISA 2015: Canada (Alberta) Estonia, Finland, Japan and Singapore. The following was reported in TALIS 2018:

> Incidents related to school safety are a particular concern to Australian principals compared to the OECD average. Intimidation and bullying of students is a particular issue, with 37 per cent of principals reporting that this occurs at least weekly in their school. Also of concern is the relatively high incidence of intimidation or verbal abuse of teachers or staff. Twelve per cent of Australian principals reported that this happens at least weekly, compared to three per cent on average across the OECD. The incidence of cyber-bullying, measured for the first time, was also relatively high compared to the average across the OECD. (p. xiv) [22]

4.2. Autonomy–Accountability

The deterioration in the work environment of school leaders in Australia has overlapped with the trend to decentralise more decisions to schools that found themselves with authority, responsibility and accountability in areas in which they had little engagement in the past. While the extent of this decentralisation varied from state to state, it included matters related to the curriculum, staffing, allocation of resources in the school's budget and program evaluation. All occurred within a framework determined centrally for each state.

There has been significant decentralisation in Australia since 1973 when the Whitlam government adopted the recommendations of the Karmel Report [23] that called for the "devolution" of important decisions to schools. There were similar developments in other countries, reflecting in part societal trends on empowerment and participation in decision making that were building at the time. There was decentralisation of some functions and centralisation of others.

4.2.1. International Context

Internationally, "many schools have become more autonomous and decentralised, as well as more accountable to students, parents and the wider public for their outcomes" (p. 318) [24]. School leaders in Australia do not have the high level of autonomy that is often claimed. The OECD constructed an index of school autonomy based on lower-secondary principals' ratings in PISA 2015 (p. 110) [24]. Australia ranked 23rd out of 68 countries/economies, lower than other federations (United States at 18th) but higher than Canada at 40th. Highly ranked were the United Kingdom (3rd), Estonia (8th) and Hong Kong (China) (12th). Singapore was lower (28th). Finland (26th) was about the same.

A finer-grained analysis revealed differences according to the function for which the school has autonomy. Australia, for example, ranked 18th on autonomy for the allocation of resources, 10th for curriculum and 13th on student assessment. It may be that there is too much autonomy in the curriculum as it may contribute to the time that school leaders and their colleagues must invest in searching for resources to support teaching.

4.2.2. Conceptual Considerations

It is helpful to examine the concepts of centralisation and decentralisation, especially since the trend to decentralisation is often referred to as "school autonomy" when, in fact, there is invariably a robust centrally determined framework within which schools must operate.

Each of centralisation and decentralisation is a process and a condition. Centralisation occurs or exists when the authority to make decisions is located at the centre of an organisation or system rather than at or toward the periphery, usually at the highest level of a hierarchy rather than in a subsidiary unit. Decentralisation occurs when the authority to make decisions shifts from the centre toward the periphery, often to a lower level in a hierarchy.

Such definitions are of ideal types, for there is complexity in practice. The authority to make some decisions is located at the centre and the authority to make others is located at the periphery or at a lower level. In Australia, the authority to set the curriculum for all schools is located in a central unit, such as ACARA, or a state counterpart, whereas the authority to make decisions about approaches to teaching that curriculum is usually made at the periphery, that is, at school or classroom levels. In education, as in most fields, there is a centralisation–decentralisation continuum for various functions, with points at which different kinds of decisions are made.

The foregoing refers to the point in a continuum at which a decision is made. There is also the mode in which that decision is made, for there is invariably a process of consultation. In school education, for example, a decision on the curriculum that should be addressed by all schools may be made in a central unit, but that decision may have taken account of views of a range of experts and other stakeholders, including representatives of subsidiary units such as schools.

It is necessary to distinguish between political and administrative when describing centralisation and decentralisation. Political centralisation exists when authority resides at the centre and cannot by law or constitutional arrangement be assigned to a lower level. Political decentralisation occurs when authority moves from the centre to a lower level, or resides at that level, and cannot be retracted or recentralised. Administrative decentralisation occurs when authority moves to a lower level, but this authority may be retracted by a decision made centrally.

What is often misnamed as school autonomy is in fact an example of administrative decentralisation of some functions, and that is the case in Australia and comparable countries including Canada, England, Finland, Hong Kong, New Zealand and the United States.

4.2.3. Professional Standards

The first two decades of the 21st century saw higher levels of school autonomy being assumed by schools in Australia. The role of the school leader, especially the principal, became more complex. There was potential if not a reality that the ways these roles were exercised would vary greatly. A call for professional standards was understandable, and these were prepared by AITSL and approved by federal and state ministers for implementation across the country.

The Australian Professional Standard for Principals was initially developed in 2011 and updated in 2014 [25]. There are three Leadership Requirements (vision and values; knowledge and understanding; and personal qualities, social and interpersonal skills). Each is applied across five areas of Professional Practice (leading teaching and learning; developing self and others; leading improvement, innovation, and change; leading the management of the school; and engaging and working with the community). They are also applied in different ways according to the required Leadership Emphasis (operational, relational, strategic and systemic). The mix and match of these standards varies according to context, and AITSL developed four "profiles" for each of the five areas of Professional Practice, described as pathways to higher levels of proficiency. The profiles may be used in one or more of six ways: self-reflection—a Leadership Reflection Tool has been developed—professional growth, professional learning, selection and recruitment, talent development and succession, and performance and review.

The expectations of principals may be illustrated in two of the five standards of Professional Practice. In each instance, they describe the extent of professional autonomy

at the school level. They also indicate the extensive demands on school leaders should they be expected to provide evidence that each expectation has been satisfied.

> *Leading improvement, innovation and change* Principals work with others to produce and implement clear, evidence-based improvement plans and policies for the development of the school and its facilities. They recognise that a crucial part of the role is to lead and manage innovation and change to ensure the vision and strategic plan is put into action across the school and that its goals and intentions are realised.
>
> *Engaging and working with the community*. Principals embrace inclusion and help build a culture of high expectations that takes account of the richness and diversity of the wider school community and the education systems and sectors. They develop and maintain positive partnerships with students, families and carers and all those associated with the wider school community. They create an ethos of respect taking account of the spiritual, moral, social and physical health and wellbeing of students. They promote sound lifelong learning from preschool through to adult life. They recognise the multicultural nature of Australia's people. They foster understanding and reconciliation with Indigenous cultures. They recognise and use the rich and diverse linguistic and cultural resources in the school community. They recognise and support the needs of students, families and carers from communities facing complex challenges. [25]

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers were also developed in 2011 [26]. They were intended to be "a public statement of what constitutes teacher quality. They define the work of teachers and make explicit the elements of high-quality, effective teaching in 21st century schools that will improve educational outcomes for students". There are 37 standards for each of four categories of the professional journey—Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished, and Lead, with leadership expected in the last two, thus making these standards relevant to matters considered in this essay.

One criticism is that both sets of standards have reduced a complex field of professional practice to a large number of discrete elements. The use of standards may become a time-consuming tick-the-box exercise, leading to role overload and low morale, an issue explored in Section 4.1. There is no evidence that a standards-based approach in and of itself has had a directly measurable impact on performance. For example, one study "provided no evidence to suggest that the inclusion of The Standards will have a positive impact on the effectiveness of an individual teacher, where they are embedded within a tool to evaluate teacher performance, and to inform professional development"(p. 153) [27],

Efforts at the system level to monitor the use of standards have had limited success. In New South Wales, for example, teachers must be accredited "against the standards" and principals have an important role. However, the Auditor-General found in 2019 that the New South Wales Education and Standards Authority (NESA) "did not oversight principals' decisions to ensure that minimum standards for teaching quality are consistently met" and that "The Department does not effectively monitor teaching quality across the state . . . The Department's Performance and Development Framework does not adequately support principals and supervisors to effectively manage and improve teacher performance or actively improve teaching quality" (Overview) [28]. Three recommendations were made: work with stakeholders to ensure adequate training, clarify the quantity and quality of evidence and reduce duplication in the process, and implement a program of "risk-based reviews" to ensure alignment with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

4.2.4. Principals' Views on School Autonomy

Principals' views on a higher level of autonomy in Australia were sought in a national survey as part of the International Study on School Autonomy and Learning (ISSAL) conducted from 2014 to 2017 [11]. The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) provided a stratified random sample of public schools. More than half of respondents re-

ported a higher level of autonomy than five years earlier. Most identified factors associated with autonomy enabled them to make decisions that helped achieve improved learning outcomes. They identified strategies that were employed to build the capacity of staff. Their school systems supported schools in a variety of ways. A majority would prefer a higher level of autonomy.

Noteworthy were responses for constraints on autonomy. Six factors were generally viewed as clearly constraining and four were perceived to be both constraining and supporting. In the first category were national/system curriculum, national/system testing, expectations/demands on principals' time, expectations/demands on teachers' time, national/system targets for improvement, and compliance requirements. In the second category were performance management requirements for principals, performance management requirements for teachers, system requirements for school review, and system requirements for accountability. The most constraining factor was compliance requirements. The most supportive was performance management requirements for teachers. These responses underpinned the following recommendation:

> There were simply too many concerns raised or implied about these matters which are seen as a constraint on autonomy. The open-ended responses, in particular, make this clear. While school systems can offer good reasons why these exist, they should re-double their efforts to reduce the demands on principals, especially as far as compliance requirements are concerned. (p. 44) [11]

Has the additional load associated with increased autonomy contributed to the stresses and strains reported in national surveys? A literature-based study reported a "tsunami of paperwork" associated with a trend toward school autonomy [29]. However, the issue was illuminated in longitudinal research at the Institute for Positive Psychology at Australian Catholic University, which conducted the Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey since 2011, some findings from which were reported in Section 4.1. The researchers [30] were able to draw on six years of longitudinal data from thousands of responses from principals in the aforementioned national surveys who had participated in two initiatives in "controlled" autonomy, one the Empowering Local Schools (ELS) initiative that allocated AUD 40,000–50,000 of Commonwealth funds to selected schools for local decision making between 2012 and 2014, the other the Local Schools Local Decisions (LSLD) program that gave government schools in New South Wales the opportunity from 2012 to manage resources and staffing to the extent that about 70 per cent of the state's recurrent budget was available for local decision. Decisions in each instance were decentralised to schools, not principals.

Findings included that (1) principals of schools in both initiatives felt that they had a higher level of autonomy ("felt autonomy"), (2) there was no significant change in job demands or burnout when respondents took up a higher level, and (3) respondents in ELS schools reported a significant decline in job satisfaction when the program was discontinued. While differences were statistically significant, they were nonetheless small, so the researchers urged caution in drawing implications. However, there was no evidence in this study of a cause-and-effect relationship between an increase in autonomy and a deterioration in the work environment.

Factors associated with the deterioration, as reported in the national surveys, were not connected to the domains of decisions that were decentralised but were more associated with administrative paperwork, unrealistic demands in respect to accountability and matters related to personal wellbeing/safety ("intimidation") (Section 4.1). This view was supported by findings from an international interview-based study of autonomy, intensification and accountability in Australia, Canada, England and New Zealand that concluded that "The most important factor inflecting work intensification is not school autonomy; rather it is the form and extent of accountability expectations that a system imposes on schools and school staff" [31].

4.2.5. Association of Autonomy and Student Performance

Research for OECD in recent decades has consistently found an association between autonomy and student performance. For example, analysis of the results of PISA suggests that the most successful systems of schools secure an optimal balance of autonomy, accountability and choice. Particularly striking are two studies at the Ifo Institute for Economic Research at the University of Munich based on results in PISA 2003. For student achievement,

> On average, students perform better if schools have autonomy to decide on staffing and to hire their own teachers, while student achievement is lower when schools have autonomy in areas with large scope for opportunistic behaviour, such as formulating their own budget. But school autonomy in formulating the budget, in establishing teacher salaries, and in determining course content are all significantly more beneficial where external exit exams introduce accountability. (p. 59) [32]

As far as equity is concerned,

> [R]ather than harming disadvantaged students, accountability, autonomy, and choice are tides that lift all boats . . . there is not a single case where a policy designed to introduce accountability, autonomy, or choice benefits high-SES students to the detriment of low SES students, i.e., where the former gain but the latter suffer. (p. 34) [33]

In more recent analyses of results in PISA 2015, in relation to the leadership of principals and achievement in science,

> . . . students score higher in science when principals exercise greater autonomy over resources, curriculum and other policies, but especially so in countries where achievement data are tracked over time or posted publicly more extensively or when principals show higher levels of educational leadership'. (pp. 230–231) [34]

These findings are relevant to an essay on the work environment of school leaders. Why persist with a relatively high level of school autonomy if there is no link, either causal or by association, with student performance? While the answer might be in the affirmative, there is no claim in the evidence that autonomy is a panacea, neglecting curriculum and pedagogy. Ben Jensen, CEO of Australian consultancy Learning First, expressed it this way: "... across the past 10 to 15 years the dominant narrative in education has emphasised variation, driven by policies promoting autonomy, choice and individual agency . . . This narrative has overwhelmed the earlier focus on a curriculum entitlement for all students" [35].

4.3. System–Support

Constraints reported by principals under conditions of autonomy and dysfunctional aspects of the work environment reported in Section 4.1 suggest that these may be open to change by those setting policy at the centre, i.e., "the system". The responses of principals and other school leaders reported in the Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey and TALIS 2018 built the case for serious attention to and concerted action by system leaders. It is acknowledged that the intimidation they report is partly due to societal forces and the expectations of parents and students.

4.3.1. Benefits and Drawbacks of Centralisation

There is no universal approach to centralisation in school education nor is there a uniform set of benefits and drawbacks that will address issues at the school level [12]. However, the results of surveys conducted by OECD, in which respondents have been either system personnel in each country with deep knowledge of policy and practice or school principals, offer a general guide. Benefits are related to efficiency, providing a service or support for subsidiary units; securing a degree of uniformity where this is needed or desired; building commitment to a common set of values; and securing alignment and

coherence among different levels of a system. Centralisation is intended to achieve a high level of equity or fairness in the allocation of resources. Progress has been made in some jurisdictions in developing funding formulae that are sensitive to differences among schools and the needs of students. Among the drawbacks, centralisation, and indeed decentralisation, has been associated with additional and burdensome loads on school-level personnel, as documented thus far, due in part to compliance requirements.

The concept of the "system" in Australia is complex, including the two levels of government, as well as schools, recently created entities such as ACARA, AITSL and AERO, and the teacher unions and professional organisations. It can be extended to initial teacher education (ITE) offered by universities, of which there have been three reviews in the last decade [36–38].

4.3.2. Benchmarking System Leadership in Australia

Before suggesting change that involves leaders at the system level, it is worthwhile to establish a framework for action and then provide an assessment of Australia's educational system. Andreas Schleicher, head of education at OECD, identified seven characteristics of high-performing school systems (pp. 62–64) [24] drawing on the findings from successive iterations of PISA and TALIS, and these provide a benchmarked starting point. They are listed in the first column of Table 1.

Table 1. Strategies for system leaders in Australia, adapted from p. 182 [10].

Characteristics of High-Performing School Systems (Adapted from Schleicher, [24])	Sample Strategy to Improve Australia's System Performance	Author's Assessment of Progress in Implementation of Sample Strategy
1. Leaders have convinced their citizens that it is worth investing in the future through education.	Every leader at every level in public and private sectors must continually and consistently send this message in all media, and act to show they mean it.	This is a long-term strategy to help build a supportive culture for schools, including support for school leaders as they go about their work. There is presently occasional support from some leaders outside the immediate school setting.
2. Parents and teachers are committed to the belief that all students can meet high standards.	Schools should set high standards for all students, choosing wisely from national and state curriculums, and communicate with parents accordingly.	National and state curriculums have been adopted but debates continue publicly and professionally as to their merit, including the extent to which high standards have been set for all students, and these standards are communicated to parents.
3. The diversity of student needs is addressed through differentiated practice, without compromising on standards.	Australia must saturate schools with scalable illustrations of how this is done: evidence-based and differentiated to suit the range of settings.	Good progress has been made by national bodies (ACARA, AITSL, AERO) and state counterparts, but reports of overload by school leaders and their colleagues suggest that time cannot always be devoted to determining which are suited to the local setting.
4. Teaching staff are carefully selected and educated.	Implementation of recommendations in Australia's three reviews of initial teacher education	Implementation has been slow in an environment in which there are nearly forty semi-autonomous universities offering ITE. The third of these reviews calls for financial incentives to adopt recommendations. Not all jurisdictions give school leaders an opportunity to select the best graduates.
5. Ambitious goals are set, there is clarity on what students should be able to do, and teachers are empowered to determine what they need to teach. They have moved on from administrative control and accountability to professional forms of work organisation.	Related capacities must be developed where necessary to ensure that all teachers are fully empowered. Accountability is appropriate and makes sense to the school. Unnecessary paperwork should be eliminated.	Progress must be accelerated. Successive reports cited in this essay indicate that workload and paperwork are excessive in the eyes of school leaders and teachers. Intentions to address the issue have been declared in most jurisdictions but a degree of urgency in implementation is suggested by the evidence.
6. There is provision for high-quality education across the system so that all students benefit from excellent teaching. These countries attract the best principals to the toughest schools and the most talented teachers to the most challenging classrooms.	Significant forms of "compensation" are required to attract and reward those who take on the challenge.	Most jurisdictions have provided incentives for able school leaders and teachers to move to regional, remote and other challenging settings where there are inequities when these settings are compared to most urban counterparts. Inequities continue so further attention to this strategy is necessary.
7. There is a tendency to align policies and practices across the entire system.	Every effort should be made to align national, state and school policies, allowing for a measure of state and school autonomy, and acknowledging the difficulty in achieving this alignment in a federation of six states and two territories where constitutional responsibility resides.	Progress has been made through National School Reform Agreements, but Australia may have reached the limit of what is possible given current approaches to governance in the federation.

4.3.3. Sample Strategies for Australia

The second column in Table 1 provides sample strategies that call for action by system leaders. Good management of the status quo may be necessary, but it is not sufficient: leadership is an essential energiser. Each has the potential to enhance the work environment of school leaders. The author's assessment of progress in implementing each strategy is summarised in the third column, drawing on his knowledge of policy and practice in Australian school systems.

For Item 1, the sample strategy in the second column is "Every leader at every level in public and private sectors must continually and consistently send this message in all media, and act to show they mean it". This is one of many long-term strategies to help build a supportive culture for schools, including support for school leaders as they go about their work. There is presently occasional support from some leaders outside the immediate school setting, often in response to "bad news" when results on national and international tests are released.

There is a complementary role for the school leader who should also work to improve relationships with and build the support of the community, as illustrated in the standard for principals for engaging and working with the community (elaborated on in Section 4.2.3 above).

Good progress has been made for Item 3 ("Australia must saturate schools with scalable illustrations of how this is done: evidence-based and differentiated to suit the range of settings"). ACARA, AITSL and AERO have developed hundreds of examples. Teachers and school leaders must spend time searching for those that suit their circumstances. Perceptions of work overload raise the issue of whether school leaders have the time to search well.

Also, consider Item 5 ("Accountability is appropriate and makes sense to the school. Unnecessary paperwork must be eliminated"). Consistent with evidence cited elsewhere in this essay, leaders at the school level have expressed concern for many years; system leadership is required to determine and "abandon" what is not necessary.

In his listing of the characteristics of high-performing school systems, Schleicher stressed the importance of setting the "right" level of school autonomy, and this is important in what should be done at the system and school levels. He drew on the findings of successive iterations of PISA and TALIS to confirm earlier findings reported in Section 4.2.5 of this essay.

> The data from PISA suggest that, once the state has set clear expectations for students, school autonomy in defining the details of the curriculum and assessments is positively related to the system's overall performance. For example, school systems that provide their schools with greater discretion in student assessments, the courses offered, the course content and the textbooks used, tend to be the school systems that perform at higher levels on PISA, whatever the causal nature of that relationship. (p. 109) [24]

Schleicher also stressed the importance of school leaders and their colleagues having the requisite skills to perform their roles well, hence the importance of adequate training.

5. Discussion

The questions that provided the focus for this essay, as specified in Section 2.1, are (1) how has the work environment of school leaders changed in the early years of the 21st century, (2) how have these changes affected the role of the school leader, (3) what is the association between an evident deterioration in the work environment and the trend to more autonomy for schools and their leaders, and (4) how can school systems be more effective in supporting school leaders?

For (1) ("how has the work environment of school leaders changed in the early years of the 21st century"), the scale of change was set out in the Introduction (Section 1) in terms that are likely to be recognised by school leaders in other countries. Details were included in other sections of this essay as national concerns shifted to the performance of students when data from PISA revealed a disappointing outcome for Australia's students.

A national curriculum with state counterparts was developed. A national testing program (NAPLAN) was introduced for students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9. Professional standards for principals and teachers were approved by ministers for adoption throughout the country. Limited autonomy was granted to schools. National agencies, notably AERO, generated an increasing body of evidence and associated resources that were intended to assist schools in delivering the curriculum.

For (2) ("how have these changes affected the role of the school leader"), the work environment of school leaders changed in several ways. One aspect of the shift to a limited form of school autonomy was that leaders assumed new responsibilities that were added to the work they were already doing. This is the intensification factor. It is not surprising that well-designed national surveys contained reports of overload. Alarmingly, more than 40 per cent of principals reported that they had experienced actual violence at work. This was backed up in other reports. This is the intimidation factor. International comparisons indicate that the situation for principals in Australia is worse than in many other countries. This factor alone warrants urgent action, especially as it has been reported in national surveys for over a decade.

Any expectation that more collaborative or distributed approaches to leadership would necessarily lighten the load of principals has not been met. More staff exercised a leadership role, but this was not just a delegation of the principal's responsibilities. For example, a leader at one level in a school or in one discipline area assumed responsibility for the work of a team of staff, requiring expertise in gathering and analysing data on student performance and setting priorities for action in lifting that performance. These expectations along with those of principals were embodied in national professional standards adopted by ministers for education for implementation throughout the country. Reaching the most appropriate balance of autonomy and accountability thus became a challenge and a priority within the school without overloading the principal and other school leaders with unnecessary paperwork if written evidence was sought that each standard was satisfied and all processes had been faithfully implemented.

For (3) ("what is the association between an evident deterioration in the work environment and the trend to more autonomy for schools and their leaders"), early evidence [30]) suggests that there is no association between an increase in autonomy in and of itself and a deterioration in the work environment of school leaders. A national survey [11] found that principals generally preferred more autonomy than existed at the time. The deterioration of the work environment summarised above that coincided in time with the implementation of a higher level of autonomy appears to result from burdensome accountability requirements and other constraints. The findings of the Horwood et al. survey [30] suggested the need for further research on the matter.

For (4) ("how can school systems be more effective in supporting school leaders") it is important to note that the support of "the system" is appreciated by principals. However, the findings of a national survey included a number of factors that principals found constraining. At the same time, principals generally acknowledged the need for accountability [9]. A benchmarked assessment of the characteristics of a good school system suggested a number of strategies for leaders at the system level. Some called for relief of the aforementioned administrative burden on schools and their principals. Others were more concerned with improving system performance, each of which may enhance the work environment of school leaders. Good progress has been made in creating curriculum-related materials to assist teachers but an issue for apparently over-worked teachers is whether they have the time to search for those best suited to their needs. It may be that school leaders need more guidance on the matter and they and their colleagues need more training in the use of research and other evidence-based resources. The Q project at Monash University has developed frameworks and procedures to address this issue [39].

While enhanced control over the work environment should be seized by principals and other school leaders, even under current constraints, it is evident that leaders at the system level have an important role to play. However, there appears to be inertia in this

respect because the issues reported at the school level have existed for several years. Further research may reveal the reasons.

Part of the problem may be that structures and power relations in Australia have not changed in significant ways since the creation of systems of public education 150 years ago. Comparisons with two other countries illustrate what is possible. In England, for example, now performing better than ever on several key indicators [3] the role of the local authority (LEA) has diminished as a higher level of school autonomy has been implemented. An increasing number of schools have become "academies", receiving their funds directly from Westminster [40]. Many have formed themselves into multi-academy trusts (MATs) that involve between two and fifty schools, with small units that provide support as determined by member schools. Unnecessary and burdensome paperwork is not countenanced by members. School inspections through what was formerly known as Ofsted still occur and schools must assemble evidence for accountability purposes. These developments remain contentious in England, but counterparts could be trialled in Australia where MATs may be suited to urban and some regional areas but not to rural and remote settings that may require the support of a more centralised unit.

Similarly, and equally contentious, would be to grant more autonomy through the creation of charter schools. These are usually associated in professional eyes with their creation in the United States, where there are now more than 9000, still a very small fraction of all public schools. It may be better to shift our gaze to Alberta, the best-performing province in Canada and one of the best in global terms. Its 36 charter schools are autonomous public schools that must follow the Alberta curriculum but offer a specialisation that is not available in the local public system [41]. Like England's academies and MATs, the point in the context of this essay is their autonomy and capacity to control their working conditions and those of their staff to a larger extent than at present in Australia, minimising as far as possible the intensification trap.

6. Future Directions

6.1. Recommendations

Six recommendations are offered to ameliorate the deteriorating environment of school leaders. An over-arching recommendation is the adoption of long-term strategies to create a more supportive culture for schools so that violence and threats of violence along with bullying are not experienced. It is acknowledged that some of the sample strategies for leaders at the system level (Table 1), and others, serve a larger purpose such as raising levels of student achievement. The following recommendations also contribute to this purpose but the intention in offering them is to illustrate a direct connection between the evidence cited earlier and the actions that are proposed.

1. Principals should have greater control over their work environment. The starting point for action in the years ahead should be acceptance of the case for a relatively high degree of school autonomy, reflecting the reality that each school is a unique mix of the needs, interests and demographic circumstances of its students as well as the value placed on the participation of professionals in decision making according to their stake and expertise. Evidence over many years, as reported by the OECD, has consistently shown the association of autonomy and student outcomes providing that autonomy and accountability work in tandem. Building the capacity of principals and other school leaders to exercise the former is critically important. Greater control provides principals with an opportunity to minimise what they and their colleagues describe as administrative overload. Two Australian autobiographical studies [42,43]) illustrate how principals can seize the initiative.

2. School systems should remove reporting requirements and other constraints that schools find burdensome. Leaders in schools and school systems should work together to determine what can be discarded. Sample strategies at the system level are contained in Table 1. Some require a tightly focused allocation of additional funds, such as Item 6, which calls for substantial increases in compensation to attract top-flight leaders to very challenging schools. Item 5, focusing on dysfunctional, often debilitating practices that are the bane of

school leaders, must be addressed immediately. An obvious recommendation is for the school system to allocate more staff to schools to help them cope with overload and what is perceived to be unnecessary paperwork. Aside from schools often needing additional staff, a better strategy is to eliminate what is not necessary and work with schools and a wide range of stakeholders to change the culture of schools.

3. "Organised abandonment" should be adopted as new practices are added to old. Organised abandonment was advocated by management guru Peter Drucker in *Leadership Challenges for the 21st Century* [44]. The need for abandonment is not limited to education. It seems that intensification is a feature of work in the first quarter of the 21st century and that many leaders and managers at the school and system levels have failed the challenge set by Drucker in 1999. Most training programs tend to focus on doing as well as what is currently expected, and this is appropriate, but other programs should be devoted to abandoning what is no longer necessary. Steven Cook, principal of Australia's School of the Year in 2021, described it this way:

> If I can make a plea to government at this point: no more forms, no more statistics collecting and no more new bureaucratic processes. Sit down with educators and cull at least half the paperwork—there will be plenty of suggestions, believe me. (p. 124) [42]

4. The potential of AI to assist in the abandonment of dysfunctional practices should be taken up at all levels. The possibilities of AI should not be overlooked, although it is still largely an unknown known when it comes to school and system leadership. Scores of thoughtful articles have been written, as summarised in a comprehensive review that concluded the following:

> The power of AI could be used to reduce much of the mechanical load of teachers and even to provide some basic support for students under the direction of teachers who would be freed to work with each other, with students, parents, and others in the community to maximise support and learning for all students. (p. 6) [2]

A survey by the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA) found that in responding schools, 24 per cent of primary teachers, 34.5 per cent of middle school teachers and 39 per cent of secondary teachers had used generative AI by mid-2023. The top five teacher-assisted tasks were concerned with lesson plans or learning designs, learning resources, ideas for curriculum unit outlines, discussion questions, and rubrics for assessing student work. This application of AI both adds and subtracts to roles and practices in a manner that can contribute to the effectiveness of school leaders and hence to improved outcomes for students.

5. More leaders should be engaged in deep thinking about the future of schools. A 2020 OECD project [45] resulted in four generic scenarios for the future of schooling. The titles of these are (1) schooling extended, (2) education outsourcing, (3) schools as learning hubs, and (4) learn-as-you-go. Leadership at all levels will change in profound ways for these and similar scenarios. Scenarios are not predictions or proposals but credible "stories" of what may emerge. At the very least, their formulation is an outcome of disciplined data-driven analysis of emerging trends and issues.

It is understandable, given the evidence cited in this essay [11], that school leaders are constrained in current contexts should they wish to engage in scenario-type planning in the local setting. There appears to be no unit anywhere at the system level that is so engaged, although it is within the remit of AITSL to work in this area. AITSL considered the future of the profession as a whole, declaring that there is "an urgent need for national focus on understanding future challenges" (p. 30) [46]. In 2010, it published a book and associated school planning resources based on findings in 18 future-focused workshops in every state and territory involving about 500 school leaders, commissioned by Teaching Australia, AITSL's predecessor [14]. There is scope for similar work by the various institutes

established around the country such as the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership and professional associations such as the Australian Council for Educational Leaders.

6. There should be more research on the processes and impacts of these changes, constructing, where possible, randomised controlled trials or natural experiments as projects are designed and implemented. There is a need for further research such as that proposed [30] in exploring the association between higher levels of autonomy and the debilitating aspects of intensification. The need for such effort is illustrated in a three-year Australian Research Council project at Monash University under the title "Invisible Labour: Principals' Emotional Labour in Volatile Times".

6.2. Getting Started

While what is to be implemented is relatively clear, an important issue is how to get started, given the complexity of the education system in Australia. Recognition of role overload, for example, has been documented in a number of reports for several years, but recognition alone is insufficient. Recommendations in a national plan may not result in action at the school level. This is the case with respect to curriculum, where states set their own curriculum, providing it is consistent with the national one, and schools may then adapt the state curriculum to their own contexts. Leaders at the system level must take the initiative to reduce demands on schools and their leaders, and principals and other school leaders must do the same for themselves and their colleagues. Consistent with Recommendation 6 above, trials involving a sample of schools should be organised in some instances. In the final analysis, change is likely to occur on a school-by-school or network-by-network basis. A higher level of trust and risk than currently exists must be nurtured, so immediate impact on a large scale is unlikely.

7. Conclusions

It is concluded that the evidence presented in this essay builds a strong case for sustained change to the roles and practices of school leaders. This change does not rise to the level of transformation if transformation is considered to be a change that is significant and systematic as well as sustained; what is proposed is not a comprehensive change to the work of school leaders. However, what *is* proposed is not a minor change. Thus far, the issues appear intractable, defying a simple solution. While concerns such as work overload, violence and threats of violence have been documented for several years, there is an absence of strategy, especially at the system level, to improve the situation.

It is not so much new theories in leadership but rather new roles and new practices within different arrangements for governance, informed by ongoing research as the context changes, amid evidence of deterioration in professional wellbeing. Abandonment of dysfunctional practices, a reordering of priorities, new and reconfigured existing resources, or all three, are required. The Australian scene must be characterised by a spirit of rejuvenation and excitement, honouring at the school level the claim made by AITSL that "The role of the principal of a school in the 21st century is one of the most exciting and significant undertaken by any person in our society. Principals help to create the future" (p. 1) [25].

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Abbreviations

ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
AERO	Australian Education Research Organisation
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
ATWD	Australian Teacher Workforce Data
CEMC	Council of Education Ministers, Canada
ELS	Empowering Local Schools
ISSAL	International Study on School Autonomy and Learning
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
LSLD	Local Schools Local Decisions
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy
NESA	New South Wales Education and Standards Authority
NSRA	National School Reform Agreement
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey
TIMSS	Trends in Mathematics and Science Study

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Article

Transforming Education Leadership through Multiple Approaches to Develop and Support School Leadership

Stephan Gerhard Huber [1,2,*] and Jane Pruitt [1,2]

[1] School of Education, Johannes Kepler University Linz, 4040 Linz, Austria; jane.pruitt@bildungsmanagement.net
[2] IPN–Leibniz Institute for Science and Mathematics Education, Olshausenstr. 62, 24118 Kiel, Germany
* Correspondence: stephan.huber@jku.at

Abstract: This article elaborates on the multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership. In a 5-year quasi-experimental longitudinal mixed-methods study based on a sample of 122 schools in three regions in a German state, 75 school leaders and their teams participated in a 3-year program using multiple approaches; the rest served as the control group. The multiple approaches covered the school leaders' (a) professional development, comprising (i) a professional development program, (ii) individual coaching series, and (b) support for them, including (iii) school consultancy and (iv) additional financial resources. The quality of the interventions (regarding both the process and didactic qualities, as well as outcome qualities) and how the quality of both the school leadership and the schools changes over time as a consequence of these interventions are analyzed. The study's results show a highly positive assessment of the quality and advantages of the multiple approaches and their benefits for the quality of school leadership and further aspects of the school. The regression analyses demonstrate that positively perceived outcome qualities of the interventions are associated with improvements in numerous dimensions of school quality.

Keywords: leadership; school leader; principal; professional development; training; consultancy; coaching; school development; school improvement; school effectiveness

1. Introduction

Leadership has been perceived as a key factor in the effectiveness of organizations [1] and schools [2], as well as in continuous reforms of education systems throughout the world [3–5] over the past decades.

In view of school leaders' responsibilities to ensure and enhance the quality of their schools, school leadership has become one of the central concerns in many countries' school systems [6,7]. Among scholars, policymakers, and practitioners in the field of education, there seems to be a broad international agreement about the need for high-quality leadership and thereby comprehensive professionalization of school leadership in all phases of a professional career.

This interest in school leadership has been accompanied by greater scholarly effort aimed at understanding how leadership contributes to school effectiveness and improvement, e.g., [2,5,6,8–10], and how school leaders are prepared, introduced, and continuously supported and developed.

Professional development (PD) plays an important role in the quality of aspiring, new, and established school leaders. Promoting high professional standards in school leadership and practices is the aim of many PD efforts. For this reason, extensive and comprehensive programs have been developed in many countries, e.g., [11,12]. On one hand, some initiatives accompany school leaders in different phases of their careers by offering preparation and induction programs and continuous PD. On the other hand, various short-term interventions address particular development needs identified by the leadership in specific school contexts.

So far, little research has focused on the continuous PD of school leaders. In this article, we contribute to bridging that gap by elaborating on multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership. In a 5-year quasi-experimental longitudinal mixed-methods study based on a sample of 122 schools in three regions in a German state, 75 of the school leaders and their teams (the intervention group) participated in a 3-year program using multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership; the rest served as the control group.

All schools and their leaders, comprising both the intervention and the control groups, shared the characteristic of being in the challenging circumstances of having a high percentage of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

The multiple approaches aimed at the school leaders' PD, including a comprehensive program consisting of nine modules, each lasting 2.5 days. This program featured presentations, exchanges of experiences, joint planning, networking opportunities, feedback sessions, and individual readings. Additionally, a personalized one-on-one coaching series comprising approximately 10 sessions was intended to address the specific challenges and individual problem(s) faced by the school leaders. The approaches that provided support for the school leaders included school consultancy for 12 h each in the 1st and the 2nd years and 9 h in the 3rd year. The school consultancy offered process support and guidance in structuring the pedagogical and organizational development processes of the school. Additional financial resources amounting to EUR 3000 were allocated to development projects and school development processes.

In this article, our analyses focus on the quality of the interventions (regarding the process, didactic, and outcome qualities) from the participants' perspective, as well as how the quality of school leadership quality and schools changes over time as a consequence of these interventions, from the perspectives of the school leaders and their staff members, and in comparison to the control group.

Our analyses are based on two different surveys (administered to the staff and the school leaders) about the work situation (school quality) and on the multiple approaches (interventions) assessed each year. In addition to a descriptive evaluation of the quality assessments of the staff and the school leaders, we conduct regression analyses to examine the impacts of specific components of the multiple approaches on selected school-quality characteristics during the program period.

Our study's results show highly positive assessments of the quality and advantages of the multiple approaches and their beneficial consequences for the quality of school leadership and further aspects of the school. Our regression analyses demonstrate that positively perceived outcome qualities of the interventions are associated with improvements in numerous dimensions of school quality (e.g., cooperative leadership). The multiple approaches result in reduced role ambiguity from the school leaders' perspective. Additionally, from their staff members' perceptions, these approaches foster improved coordination of actions of the school leaders and the middle management, as well as greater coherence of the leadership team, more cooperative leadership, better communication, and increased cooperation on behalf of common pedagogical goals and strategies.

Our overall findings provide evidence for the effectiveness of the multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership as interventions to transform education leadership. These initiatives can secure and enhance school quality when applied coherently and consistently, in accordance with each school's strategy and context, and as a combination of different interventions, with a persistent, clear, and comprehensive approach that includes congruent and complementary aspects.

2. Education Leadership

2.1. School Leadership and School Effectiveness

In recent decades, school leadership has become a central focus in school systems around the world due to the critical role that leaders play in ensuring and enhancing school quality [6,7]. Their pivotal role as a factor contributing to effective schools has been

corroborated by research findings. Extensive empirical efforts of quantitatively oriented school effectiveness research have shown that leadership is a central factor in school quality e.g., [13–27].

The research results show that schools classified as successful are characterized by competent and sound school leadership (with a highly significant correlation between these variables). The central importance of educational leadership is, therefore, one of the clearest messages of school effectiveness research [28]. In most of the lists of key factors (or correlates) that school effectiveness research has compiled, "leadership" plays such an important part that the argument starting with the message "schools matter, schools do make a difference" may legitimately be applied to school leadership: "school leaders matter, they are educationally significant, school leaders do make a difference" e.g., [9,29–32].

"Professional school leadership" is described as firm and purposeful, sharing leadership responsibilities, involvement in and knowledge about what happens in classrooms. It means that it is important to enabling staffs' decisive and goal-oriented participation in leadership tasks, there is real empowerment in the true delegation of leadership authority (distributed leadership), and school leaders demonstrate a dedicated interest in and knowledge about what transpires during lessons (effective and professional school leadership action focuses on teaching and learning and uses each school's set of goals as a benchmark) e.g., [31,32].

2.2. School Leadership and School Improvement

Studies on school development and improvement also emphasize the significance of school leaders, especially from the perspective of the continuous improvement process targeting individual schools, e.g., [8,33–43].

In many countries, the efforts made to improve schools have illustrated that neither top-down measures (e.g., reform measures from education ministries and authorities) alone, nor exclusively bottom-up approaches (e.g., changes initiated by individuals) produce the desired outcomes. Instead, the combination and systematic synchronization of both has proven most effective e.g., [44]. Moreover, improvement is viewed as a continuous process with different phases, which follow their individual rules e.g., [38,45,46]. Innovations also need to be institutionalized after their initiation and implementation at the individual school level so that they will become a permanent part of the school's culture, comprising its structures, atmosphere, and daily routines [47]. The goal is to develop problem-solving, creative, and self-renewing schools that have sometimes been described as learning organizations. Therefore, the emphasis is placed on the priorities to be chosen by each school since it is the center of the change process. Thereby, the core purposes of schools—education and instruction—are the focal points because the teaching and learning processes play a decisive role in student success [48]. Thus, both individual teachers and school leaders are of great importance. They are the essential change agents who will have significant influence on whether a school will develop into a learning organization or fail to do so, e.g., [5,32,49]. For all phases of the school development process, school leadership is considered vital and is held responsible for keeping in mind the school as a whole and adequately coordinating individual activities during the improvement processes (for the decisive function of leadership in the development of individual schools, see, e.g., studies conducted as early as the 1980s [50–52]). Leaders are also required to create the internal conditions necessary for the continuous development and increasing professionalization of teachers and are held accountable for developing a cooperative school culture. In this regard, research emphasizes the "modeling" function of school leaders e.g., [53–55].

2.3. Professional Development (PD) and Support

PD is essential for both aspiring and experienced school leaders, focusing on maintaining high standards of leadership. Many countries have implemented comprehensive programs that support leaders through various career stages and offer targeted short-term interventions for specific developmental needs [56].

The past decades have witnessed a growing knowledge base in the field of education leadership development. Distinct characteristics of leadership development programs are beginning to form, and there is a rising demand for studies on the associated effects and outcomes [57].

Several international trends in PD can be identified. We have followed up on an earlier study on the PD of leaders in 15 countries (see also [58,59]). We also draw on the project called Professional Learning through Reflection promoted by Feedback and Coaching (PROFLEC, see CPSM.EduLead.net (accessed on 1 July 2024)), funded by the European Union (2012–2014). PROFLEC reviewed international trends focusing on the training and development of school leaders in 10 countries: Australia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, England, the German-speaking countries (Austria, Germany, and Switzerland), Norway, and Sweden [56].

Key perspectives in PD curricula demonstrate increasing attention to the needs of participants and recommend that demands derived from school evaluations be considered and practices be improved by bridging theory and action. This orientation toward needs and application is expected to improve the impacts and sustainability of PD [60,61]. To become better aligned with the needs of participants, a few PD approaches integrate diagnostic means, audits, assessments of needs, and feedback opportunities as components of training and PD.

In general, the use of a wide range of strategies and methods will likely be the most-effective approach. Those responsible for planning and implementing professional training and development are strongly advised to use a variety of methods. This approach helps individual participants learn and be motivated to apply the lessons for performance improvement.

Despite differences in cultural and institutional traditions, a number of internationally shared trends in the PD of school leaders can be observed, including holistic approaches (not only content instruction but also promotion of motivation and reflection), personal development instead of training for a role, orientation toward each school's core purposes (from knowledge acquisition to its creation and development), experience and application orientation, and multiple methods of using different ways of learning (e.g., workshops, self-assessments, and feedback) [56].

A study on preparing school leaders [11] shows that "effective principal preparation and development programs could transform principals' practice and increase their success by proactively recruiting dynamic, instructionally focused educators; developing and applying strong knowledge of instructional leadership, organizational development, and change management practices; and offering coaching, feedback, and opportunities for reflection in purposeful communities of practice" [12] (p. v). Key factors include meaningful, authentic, and applied learning opportunities; curricula focused on developing people, instruction, and organization; expert mentoring or coaching; and collegial learning. Further studies demonstrate the importance of reflection and practice-oriented leadership approaches used for effective learning and for their impacts on the organizational level e.g., [11,12,62–67]. Even though PD differs in each career phase of a school leader, these mechanisms are shown to be general key factors.

A study suggests multiple learning approaches that integrate courses, self-study, problem-based learning, simulation or practices, and peer learning in communities and networks (see Figure 1) [61].

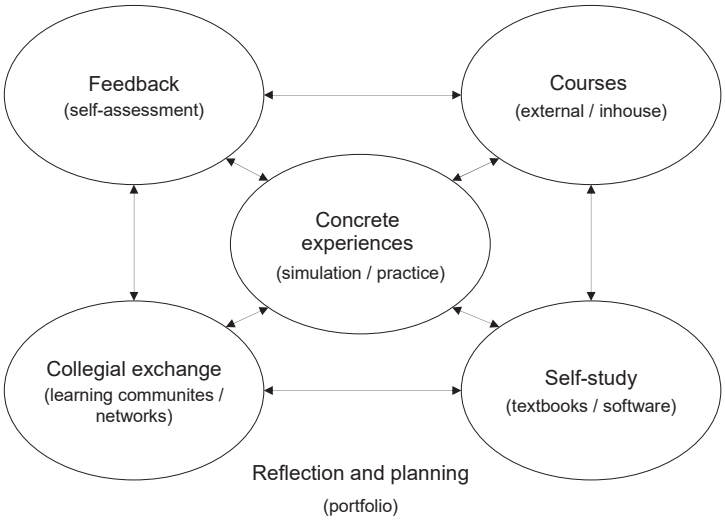

Figure 1. Approaches to learning in professional development [61] (p. 841). (Copyright © International Professional Development Association (IPDA), reprinted by permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd., http://www.tandfonline.com (accessed on 20 June 2024) on behalf of International Professional Development Association (IPDA)).

We conclude that it is not only the use of different learning approaches that matters in general but also, in particular, how they are conceptually linked and how this linkage is implemented and then experienced by participants.

Models of the effectiveness of other learning environments, such as those known from school and teaching research, can be used as starting points for a model of the effectiveness of PD. In teaching research, models of learning opportunities have become widely utilized, whose origins can be traced back to Fend's work [68,69]. One of the numerous modifications and further developments of such models is Helmke's utilization of that of teaching effectiveness e.g., [70–72]. Another model is presented by Ditton [73], who (in addition to the processual nature) focuses on the multilevel character of the school system.

In determining the different levels of impact, we assume that the perception of the program—in terms of its expected relevance for practices, usefulness, and participant satisfaction—should be considered as processes involving the participants themselves. The perception of the program thereby does not represent its impacts. Our definition of impact goes beyond the subjective views of participants; it includes an external perspective and measurable indicators.

Different levels in the evaluation of PD have been described. For instance, Kirkpatrick describes four levels of evaluation [74]:

- Level 1. Reaction (participant satisfaction based on setting, content, methods, etc.)
- Level 2. Learning (cognitive learning success and increase of knowledge)
- Level 3. Behavior (success in transferring content to action)
- Level 4. Results (positive organizational changes as results of the above)

Guskey [75,76], Mujjs and Lindsay [77], and Muijs et al. [78] each describe a model of evaluation comprising five levels:

- Level 1. Participants' reactions
- Level 2. Participants' learning
- Level 3. Organizational support and change
- Level 4. Participants' use of new knowledge and skills
- Level 5. Student learning outcomes

The issue of the impacts of multiple approaches to PD and support is closely connected to those of school leadership and school effectiveness. Regarding school leadership, Muijs and Huber [6] provide a literature review of studies and meta-studies of school

leader effectiveness showing indirect impacts on student achievement through various school qualities.

The framework for our empirical research differentiates between qualities of the intervention and qualities of the school (see Figure 2).

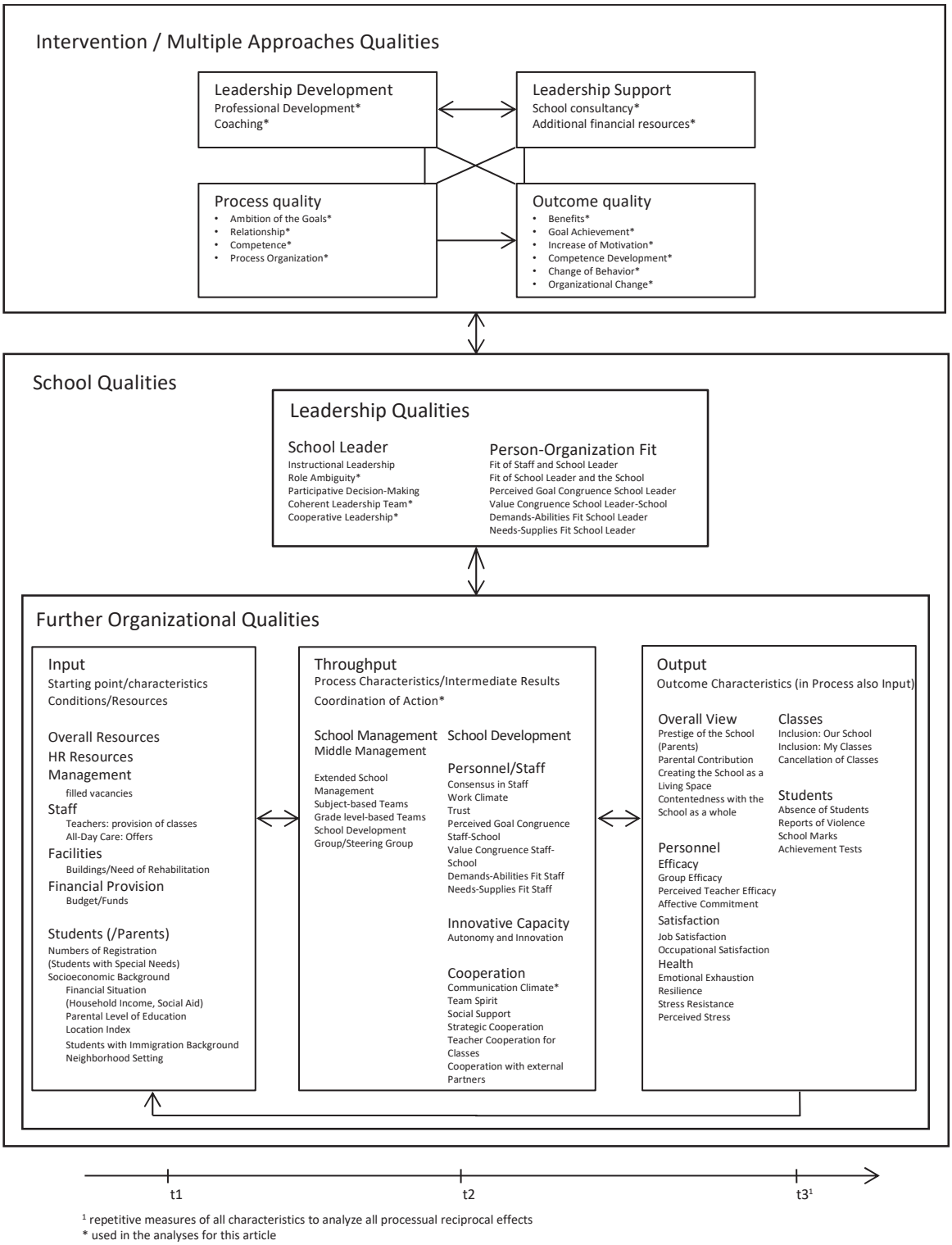

Figure 2. Theoretical model for empirical research of the quality of the multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership.

The quality of the interventions demonstrates different but complementary approaches to leadership development, on the one hand, and leadership support for school development on the other hand. Each approach is analyzed with a set of process qualities, as well as outcome qualities.

The model integrates the various forms of impact level, as stated above. Moreover, as a structural component model building on Cronbach's work [79] (see also [80] (p. 776)), school quality is organized into input, throughput, and output characteristics.

School quality is analyzed with various forms of leadership qualities, particularly focusing on the school leader. Further organizational qualities in the form of various input, throughput, and output characteristics are considered, too.

For the schools involved in the multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership, general conditions and resources can be described as input characteristics. These include personnel, material, and financial resources, as well as the characteristics of the student body. Examples of operationalization are provided in the visualization (see Figure 2) (e.g., whether the school management position is filled). The coordination of action can be regarded as throughput, which is shaped by school management and school development. Characteristics of school quality are modeled as output at the organizational level, while learner characteristics, especially student results (e.g., performance outcomes), are modeled as output at the student level.

Theoretically, in this study, we assume a moderation of effects, from process qualities to outcome qualities, that can be outlined as follows: The support of the school management by concerted action following the interventions promotes the school's coordination of action—that is, the promotion of strategic and tailor-made personnel management strengthens the school management—and thus, above all, new, strengthened, or further developed in its competence. This, in turn, expands middle management and the work of the school development steering group. This expansion increases the management capacity of the school as a whole, in turn promoting the work of school development. As a result, strategically oriented cooperation, geared toward learning processes, can be expanded, the coordination of actions can be increased, and the quality of the school can be further developed. This increase in quality can then have beneficial impacts on teaching–learning arrangements and student results. Good student results in turn lead to a higher prestige for the school and to an enhanced professional image and self-image for those working in the school.

Of course, quality characteristics at the student and organizational levels also influence the coordination of actions in terms of school management and school development. The visualization (see Figure 2) marks these interdependencies with arrows.

To strengthen schools in their overall coordination of action and to ensure their further development within the framework of traditional school development work, various stakeholders need their own scopes of actions and responsibilities, as well as resources. School improvement also requires the professionalization of school stakeholders, who increase their motivation, competence, legitimacy, and social acceptance through intensive school development support, further training, and coaching.

3. Description of the Multiple Approaches to Develop and Support School Leadership

The multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership aim to assist school leaders (used as a synonym for principal) in disadvantaged social environments, specifically:

- To professionalize and strengthen their central fields of activity, educational leadership, and school management;
- To support further development of their schools through a specific project focusing on instructional development; and
- To appreciate their work and to foster a network with their dedicated colleagues.

This initiative was implemented as a pilot project by a foundation in collaboration with a German federal state from 2015 to 2020. Three groups (G1, G2, and G3) were launched at

different times in three administrative districts, each with 25 school leaders. Thus, in total, 75 schools were the beneficiaries of the multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership, provided by the foundation. The schools voluntarily applied to participate in the project.

These multiple approaches were designed as a comprehensive 3-year support program, consisting of five components that can be used according to school-specific needs and the progress of the project. The interventions were coordinated in terms of content and followed the process architecture of a school development project over 3 years. They started at the levels of leadership development, school development, and networking, as described in the following subsections.

3.1. Leadership Development

3.1.1. PD

PD comprised nine modules over 3 years. Each module lasted 2.5 days. The modules offered keynotes and information input, cross-school networking, peer counseling, and process-oriented reflection. They supported leadership development by strengthening existing management and leadership skills. The nine modules supported school leaders in planning and implementing their individual school development projects with thematic input, keynote speeches, and practical reports. At the same time, the PD modules offered a protected space for personal development, readjustment, reassurance, and recharging, as well as the development of a professional learning community.

3.1.2. Coaching

Professional coaches were available to the school leaders to support their personal development in confidential one-on-one meetings. The coachees could choose the areas of focus and goals of the 10 sessions.

3.2. Leadership Support

3.2.1. Regular Reflection Time and Mutual Peer Exchange

Half-day events in the afternoon were conducted with the aim of promoting the exchange of experiences and networking among school leaders and various groups of people outside the PD module.

3.2.2. School Consultancy

School consultancy is the intervention that was explicitly intended to support the implementation of the school development project onsite. It was designed as process support and supportive structuring of the pedagogical and organizational development process at the school. It was aimed at the school management and the school committee, such as a steering or project group, responsible for the school development process. This team was supported in the definition of its goals, the planning of measures and resources, the involvement of the entire college, implementation, and much more. The constitution of the committee, the clarification of the members' roles, and their cooperation could also be considered. The school consultancy supported the impact-oriented planning of a specific school development project. The results were recorded in a project plan, which was also used as a management tool. Each school was allocated 12 h of school development support in the 1st and the 2nd years and 9 h in the 3rd year.

3.2.3. Additional Financial Resources

To (partially) finance development projects or school development processes, all school leaders could request additional financial resources amounting to EUR 3000. The distribution was based on the project plans that the schools drew up at the end of the 1st year. Each project plan also described the intended use of the resources.

3.3. Combining Multiple Approaches in a Coherent Way to Transform Education Leadership

The multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership targeted several levels. The interventions, such as coaching and the PD modules, were primarily aimed at school leaders. Measures such as school consultancy or additional financial resources were intended for the development of each school as a whole, (i.e., comprising the school leaders, as well as the steering group and the entire staff).

The interventions considered the school leaders and their schools at their respective stages of development and initiated further individual school development measures onsite. The schools set different priorities and took various measures due to their diversity and their distinct needs and requirements.

The connecting element at all levels and the common thread across the multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership was the school development project or plan that the school leaders guided and developed, prepared, implemented, and evaluated with their teams over 3 years.

The school development project was intended to contribute to school and instructional development and, ultimately, improvements in student learning. The local stakeholders—school management, teachers, other educational staff, and external supporters—worked together to change teaching and learning to optimally support and promote the students at their locations. At the same time, the project served to develop examples of central routines for school and instructional development and to anchor them in the schools in the long term.

4. Study Design

4.1. Aims of the Study and Research Questions

In this article, we aim to elaborate on the multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership. In a 5-year quasi-experimental longitudinal mixed-methods study based on a sample of 122 schools in three regions in a German state, 75 school leaders and their teams participated in a 3-year program that implemented these multiple approaches; the rest served as the control group.

Therefore, we analyze the quality of the interventions from the participants' perspective (on the process, didactic, and outcome qualities), as well as how the quality of the school leadership and the schools changes over time as a consequence of these interventions, from the school leaders' and their staff members' perspectives, and in comparison to the control group.

In this article, we answer the following questions:

i. What is the quality of the multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership?
    a. What goals and contents are formulated for coaching and for school consultancy?
    b. What are the additional financial resources used for?
    c. What are the process qualities of these multiple approaches?
    d. What are the outcome qualities of these multiple approaches?
ii. What is the quality of the combination of these multiple approaches, assessed as a comprehensive 3-year support program?
iii. What are these multiple approaches' consequences for school leadership quality and organizational quality and the changes in quality over time?

4.2. Methods

4.2.1. Mixed-Methods Longitudinal Approach with a Quasi-Experimental Control Group Design

In this article, we report the findings of a larger research study that employs various methodological approaches, including both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis, tailored to the study's objectives and the research questions. The

methodological phases and substeps build on each other. As the multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership are designed as a comprehensive support measure, a comprehensive research concept was created based on repeated, comparable data collection. For this explanatory and exploratory sequential research, the mixed-methods approach allows us to better explain and understand the studied field by enriching quantitative data with qualitative insights, providing contextual understanding. Additionally, it enables triangulation, thereby strengthening the credibility and validity of our findings by confirming the results based on multiple data sources.

This 3-year longitudinal mixed-methods study is based on a sample of 122 schools. In our qualitative analyses, we use school documents (e.g., inspection reports, school strategy documents, other reports), semi-structured interviews with different actors in the schools (e.g., school leaders on various levels, teachers, and educators) held twice (at the beginning and at the end of the 3-year period), and logs of the coaches and of the school consultants, each 10 times over the 3-year period.

For the quantitative analyses, we conducted six surveys among the staff and school leaders—three regarding the work situation (school quality) and three regarding the various interventions over the 3-year period. Furthermore, we analyze statistical data from the government and education authorities and student achievement data. In this article, we refer exclusively to quantitative data.

4.2.2. Sample

The sample consists of 122 schools, of which 75 applied to participate in the interventions combining multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership.

All schools are defined by a high percentage of students with low socioeconomic status. However, the first set of analyses of all school quality factors shows a high variation.

A control group design was used for the quantitative questionnaire surveys. The control group and the schools that participated in the multiple approaches (the intervention group) should be similar (i.e., the control group should be comparable to the participating schools in terms of location, social index, student performance data, and the diversity of the intervention group). The control group consisted of 11 schools in G1, 26 schools in G2, and 10 schools in G3, which covered both similar and different characteristics of the intervention group. In the control group, a total of 29 schools participated at the first and the third survey measurement points (T1 and T3, respectively).

The schools belonging to the control group were approached by the research team in cooperation with the respective education authorities. The surveys were administered to the control group to a reduced extent (i.e., the control group only participated in surveys on school quality).

Before each survey on the work situation (school quality), each school's current staff members were identified. Table 1 provides an overview of the sample sizes and the participation per group for each measurement point in absolute and relative numbers, divided into intervention and control groups for the survey on the work situation (school quality). The absolute values for the school leaders and staff, as well as the number of schools that participated in the survey, are shown in each case.

The column heading "in all MP" indicates how many people from the schools participated in the survey at all measurement points (T1, T2, and T3). The comparatively low consistency of the participants can be attributed, for example, to difficulties in allocating the data from different measurement points. The primary reason for the low overlap between the samples from different measurement times is the sometimes-high fluctuation in the schools.

The response rate of the staff across the intervention group is over 50% for T1, T2, and T3. The response rate of the staff across the control group is over 50% for T1 and T2 in G1 and G2 and over 40% for T3. In G3, there is a downward outlier among the schools of the control group at T2, with 32%.

Table 1. Survey on the work situation and school quality—Sample and Participation.

		T1			T2			T3			In All MP		
		SL	Staff	Schools	SL	Staff	Schools	SL	Staff	Schools	SL	Staff	Schools
G1	**IG**	25 (100%)	685 (73%)	25	24 (100%)	609 (64%)	25	24 (100%)	545 (63%)	24	22	258	24
	CG	11 (100%)	369 (52%)	11	7 (70%)	342 (50%)	9	5 (100%)	97 (41%)	5	4	44	5
G2	**IG**	25 (100%)	625 (78%)	25	24 (96%)	504 (66%)	25	18 (74%)	478 (64%)	25	18	247	25
	CG	24 (100%)	448 (64%)	26	24 (92%)	339 (63%)	25	18 (67%)	238 (44%)	20	11	110	18
G3	**IG**	23 (92%)	499 (71%)	25	21 (95%)	388 (72%)	21	18 (82%)	343 (58%)	20	16	154	19
	CG	10 (91%)	147 (60%)	10	7 (88%)	60 (32%)	7	9 (90%)	152 (49%)	9	5	18	7
Total		**118 (97%)**	**2773 (66%)**	**122**	**107 (90%)**	**2242 (58%)**	**112**	**92 (86%)**	**1853 (53%)**	**103**	**58**	**831**	**98**

Notes. IG = intervention group; CG = control group; SL = school leaders who responded to the survey, Staff = staff members who responded to the survey, Schools = number of schools that took part in the survey; G1 = group 1, G2 = group 2, G3 = group 3; T1 = first measurement point; T2 = second measurement point; T3 = third measurement point; MP = measurement point.

Before each survey on the multiple approaches, the current staff members who experienced the interventions (in particular, school consultancy) were identified. Table 2 provides an overview of the sample sizes and the absolute and relative participation per group for each measurement point of the intervention group for the survey on the multiple approaches (interventions). In each case, the absolute and relative values of the school leaders and staff, as well as the number of schools that participated in the survey, are shown.

Table 2. Survey on the multiple approaches (interventions)—Sample and Participation.

	T1			T2			T3			In All MP		
	SL	Staff	Schools	SL	Staff	Schools	SL	Staff	Schools	SL	Staff	Schools
G1	25 (100%)	154 (-) **	25	23 (96%)	97 (74%)	24	24 (100%)	96 (68%)	24	22	63 *	23
G2	25 (100%)	151 (79%)	25	23 (96%)	103 (78%)	24	21 (91%)	90 (71%)	23	21	55	23
G3	23 (88%)	75 (77%)	23	21 (100%)	71 (76%)	21	16 (76%)	37 (61%)	19	15	24	18
Total	**73 (96%)**	**380 (78%)**	**73**	**67 (97%)**	**271 (76%)**	**69**	**68 (89%)**	**329 (67%)**	**69**	**58**	**142**	**64**

Notes. SL = school leaders who responded to the survey, Staff = staff members who responded to the survey, Sch = number of schools that took part in the survey; G1 = group 1, G2 = group 2, G3 = group 3; T1 = first measurement point; T2 = second measurement point; T3 = third measurement point; MP = measurement point; * = only in T2 and T3, as no personal invitation links were sent out at T1, ** = information on G1 T1 Staff cannot be provided as the survey was not conducted on a personalized basis.

The column heading "in all MP" indicates how many people from the schools participated in the survey at T1, T2, and T3.

The response rate for the staff across the intervention group is over 60% for T1, T2, and T3, while the response rate for school leaders is over 75% in each case. The downward outlier at T3 for G3 can be explained by the timing of the survey (during the coronavirus pandemic). The survey was, therefore, conducted later, meaning that some school leaders had already stopped the multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership for some time, and others had left their schools. In addition to the generally high workload in the schools, this led to a lack of willingness to participate in the survey.

The number of school leaders who participated in the PD module surveys comprised the initial number of school leaders from the 75 schools in the intervention group, plus two

additional school leaders who assumed this position during the course of the continuous PD program.

4.2.3. Instruments: Questionnaire Surveys

In this article, we primarily present our analyses using the data from the questionnaires: The questionnaire data are mainly based on two questionnaires, which were used repeatedly in a partially adapted form. Instrument items and scales are available through EduLead.net/impakt (accessed on 26 August 2024). Over the 3-year period, each questionnaire was conducted yearly among the staff and school leaders.

The first questionnaire relates to the school and the work situation. These data are used to analyze whether and in what ways the process and result characteristics of the schools were developing. The subjects of the survey were the school situation and the professional stress experienced by those working at the schools. The school leaders and staff were asked to provide their assessments of topics such as job satisfaction, work conditions, school management, school development, and cooperation among different stakeholders, as well as organization and leadership.

The second questionnaire deals with the assessments of the quality and benefits of the interventions. These data are used to derive the overall assessment of the multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership. The subjects of the survey were the assessments of the quality and benefits of the interventions, as perceived by the school leaders and selected staff. On one hand, the respondents were asked to assess the respective interventions in terms of process qualities such as the ambitiousness of the goals, their relationship with and competence of the coach and the school consultants, and the process organization. On the other hand, the outcome qualities were surveyed, including aspects of the effects experienced in goal achievement, increased motivation, competence development, behavioral changes, and organizational changes. At T3, questions on the overall evaluation of the multiple approaches were included in the form of a final survey, which, for example, depicted the perceived learning gain and personal development. After each PD module, the school leaders (in the intervention group) who attended the respective event of the PD program were invited to participate in a survey in which they evaluated the PD module in terms of its didactic features, the relevance of the content, and the benefits of the program, as well as their own competence development. These assessments were averaged across all groups and PD modules.

4.2.4. Regression Analyses with Longitudinal Data

The intervention survey serves as an implementation check, with the aim of verifying whether the multiple approaches have been implemented effectively. At the same time, variations in intervention quality provide an opportunity to examine whether certain dimensions of intervention quality predict school quality. In the following autoregressive regression analyses, we consider the impacts of specific interventions on selected school quality characteristics over the duration of the multiple approaches. Although the multiple approaches primarily focused on school leaders, the aim was school improvement. Therefore, these analyses are conducted at the school level.

We examine different indicators of the quality of the outcomes of the three interventions (PD modules, coaching, and school consultancy for school development): achievement of the set goals, assessed benefits, increased motivation, competence development (in relation to personal and school goals), behavioral change, and organizational change.

Due to the reduced sample size at the school level, the regression analyses are estimated in separate models for each explanatory variable. In each case, a characteristic of school quality at T3 (dependent variable) is regressed while controlling for the same variable at T1 (control variable t1), as well as a characteristic of the outcome quality (influencing factor, effect variable) of an intervention. This reveals whether the quality of the outcomes is related to the school-quality characteristic after the multiple approaches, regardless of the initial value of the school-quality characteristic before the interventions. The control

or dependent variables are based on the school mean values of the staff's assessments of school quality at T1 and T2, respectively. The influencing factors are based on the mean values of the assessments of the outcome qualities from the surveys at T1, T2, and T3.

4.3. Limitations

This study is partly limited by the use of self-reported data from the questionnaires. Since it is a longitudinal study, we also need to control for intra-individual differences over time, which will be demonstrated in future papers.

5. Findings

5.1. What Is the Quality of the Multiple Approaches to Develop and Support School Leadership?

5.1.1. What Goals and Contents Are Formulated for Coaching and for School Consultancy?

Goals and Content of Coaching

In the surveys on the interventions, school leaders were asked to indicate the (up to) three most important goals of the coaching. In terms of content, this was related to the topics of self-management, personnel management, organizational development, and instructional development. The categorization and operationalization were based on the school design model, the final report of the evaluation of the state pilot project called "School Management Coaching" in North Rhine–Westphalia [81], and an article by Buhl et al. [82]. The objectives were each coded twice and then discussed in a joint meeting. Some of the objectives mentioned by the school leaders may be assigned to different categories as they overlap in terms of content. The fact that they are coaching objectives was, therefore, considered for the assignment.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of coaching goals across all groups and all measurement points, indicating self-management (317 statements, 69.06%) as a central topic for school leaders when formulating goals with their coaches, followed by personnel management (100 statements, 21.79%) and organizational development (39 statements, 8.50%). The fewest goals were formulated on the topic of instructional development (three statements, 0.65%).

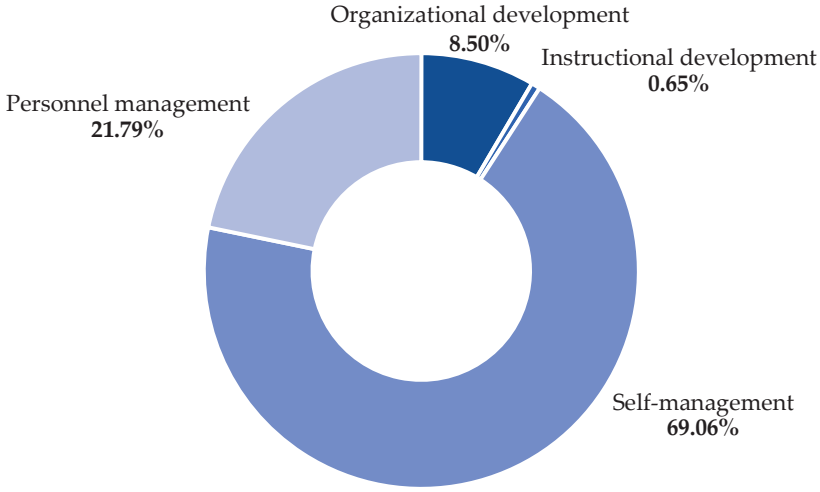

Figure 3. Coaching—Goals and Contents.

The analyses show that the coaching sessions primarily addressed aspects of self-management, personnel management, and organizational development. For example, the focus was on shaping one's professional biography and role and appearance as a school leader or conducting personnel and mediation discussions.

Together with the coaches, the school leaders developed goals and possible solutions to the challenges they faced. Notably, the core of this work lies in one's own attitudes (i.e., the values and the resulting understanding of one's role as a school leader). This focus

was also reflected in the distribution of objectives. However, the challenges that school leaders encountered in coaching primarily involved personnel management. In coaching, challenges with the staff, therefore, provide an opportunity to become aware of one's own values and understanding of one's role.

Goals and Content of School Consultancy

In the intervention surveys, school leaders were also asked to indicate the (up to) three most important objectives of school consultancy. In terms of content, these were personnel management, organizational development, and instructional development. The categorization is analogous to the objectives of coaching (see the preceding subsection). Some of the objectives mentioned by the school leaders may be assigned to different categories as they overlap in terms of content. It was, therefore, considered in the assignment that these were objectives of school consultancy.

The distribution of the objectives of school consultancy across all groups and all measurement points (illustrated in Figure 4) shows organizational development (296 statements, 60.53%) as a central topic in the formulation of objectives with the school consultant, followed by the topic of personnel management (144 statements, 29.45%). Objectives relating to instructional development were formulated the least frequently (49 responses, 10.02%).

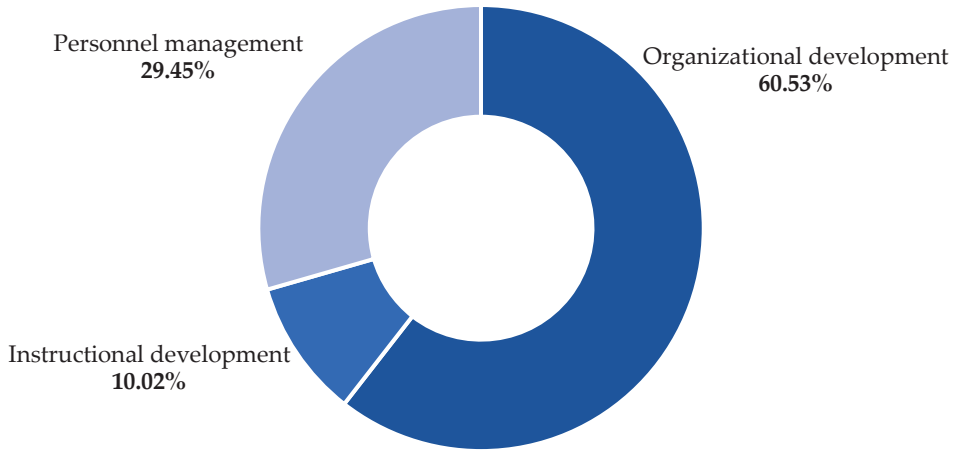

Figure 4. School consultancy—Goals and Contents.

The analyses show that the school consultancy mainly addressed organizational and structural aspects of school development. Cross-project contents of the school consultancy included the formulation, clarification, and specification of a topic or a project goal; the clarification of organizational and financial framework conditions; the analysis of the status of the project topic/goal; the creation of the project and milestone plan; and the reflection of the school development processes. However, aspects of cooperation, structural and process optimization, health-related topics, issues dealing with conflicts and violence, and the concrete implementation of the school development project also formed part of the school consultancy.

5.1.2. What Are the Additional Financial Resources Used for?

Of the possible EUR 213,000, a total of EUR 198,100 was withdrawn, corresponding to 93.00%. An average of around EUR 2790 was withdrawn per school. A more differentiated view shows the following picture:

- Sixty-three schools (approximately 88%) requested the maximum sum of EUR 3000.
- Four schools (approximately 6%) did not withdraw the maximum amount.
- Four schools (approximately 6%) did not withdraw any of the financial resources.

The evaluations of the schools' use of the resources (illustrated in Figure 5) show that the money was spent in a variety of ways. To a similar extent (approximately 37%), the

schools used the additional financial resources to fund further training and to purchase teaching materials. Other materials, such as presentation materials for the school, accounted for around one-fifth of the total expenditure. Around 5% of the resources was spent on literature.

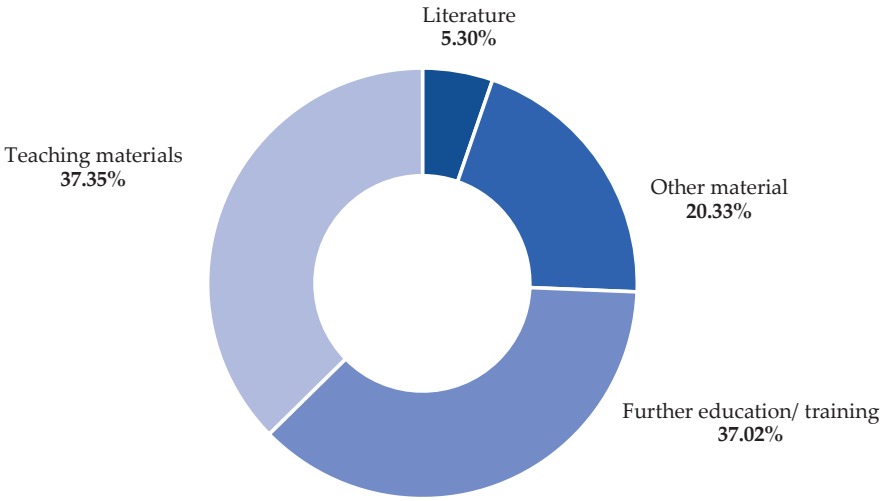

Figure 5. Additional Financial Resources—Evaluation of Expenses.

5.1.3. What Are the Process Qualities of the Multiple Approaches?

To determine the process qualities of the interventions, the averaged values of T1—T3 from the survey on the multiple approaches and the averaged values across the PD module surveys were used. The answers were provided on a five-point Likert scale. Overall, the process qualities of the interventions were rated positively.

Table 3 shows the assessment of the process quality of PD. The school leaders highly rated the relationship among the PD module participants (relationship: professional learning community: M = 4.52), as well as the process organization of PD (M = 4.52); that is, the opportunity to engage in the topic and contribute by speaking. The appropriateness of the range of topics and the level of challenge, as well as the relevance of the PD module objectives to the participants' own challenges, were rated rather highly (content quality: M = 4.41), as was the implementation of the didactic arrangement (M = 4.46).

Table 3. Process quality—Professional development.

Scale	Mean	SD	*n*
Relationship PLC	4.52	0.40	77
Process organization	4.52	0.35	77
Content quality	4.41	0.62	74
Didactic arrangement	4.46	0.40	77

The process quality of the coaching was measured using the four indicators: the ambitiousness of the goals, the relationship between coach and coachee, the competence of the coaches, and the process organization of the coaching. Table 4 shows the assessments. Relationship (M = 4.68), competence (M = 4.73), and process organization (M = 4.48) were rated very highly overall across all measurement points. The ambitiousness of the goals was rated slightly lower (M = 3.85).

Table 5 shows the assessment of the process quality of school consultancy. The relationship between consultant and consultee (M = 4.22) and the competence of the consultant (M = 4.26) received the highest average ratings, although the process organization (M = 4.07) and the ambitiousness of the goals (M = 3.97) were also rated rather highly. Overall, the indicators of the process quality of school consultancy were rated slightly lower than those of coaching.

Table 4. Process quality—Coaching.

Scale	Mean	SD	*n*
Ambition of the goals	3.85	0.87	72
Relationship	4.68	0.41	72
Competence	4.73	0.59	72
Process organization	4.48	0.59	72

Table 5. Process quality—School consultancy.

Scale	Mean	SD	*n*
Ambition of the goals	3.97	0.61	450
Relationship	4.22	0.45	463
Competence	4.26	0.62	447
Process organization	4.07	0.55	459

5.1.4. What Are the Outcome Qualities of the Multiple Approaches?

To determine the outcome qualities of the multiple approaches, the values from T3 from the survey on the interventions and averaged values across the PD module surveys were used. The answers were provided on a five-point Likert scale. Overall, the outcome qualities of the multiple approaches were assessed as positive.

The benefits of the interventions were rated positively. In principle, the participants would recommend the interventions and continue to make use of them. They considered the efforts involved to be justified and highly rated the benefits of the interventions for themselves and for the school.

Table 6 shows the assessment of the outcome quality of PD. The competence development through the PD modules reflects the school leaders' assessments, which were high (M = 4.22). The participants stated that the quality of their work had improved and that they had undergone further personal training. They also gained an idea of how they could improve their ability to act and where there remained a need for professionalization.

Table 6. Outcome quality—Professional development.

Scale	Mean	SD	*n*
Benefits	4.69	0.63	55
Competence development	4.22 *	0.56	77
Change of behavior	4.27	0.51	56
Organizational change	4.65	0.59	53

Note. * = Average value across the professional development modules

The change in behavior as a result of the PD modules reflects the school leaders' assessments, with high ratings (M = 4.27). The participants stated that they implemented the content of the PD modules in their day-to-day work and improved their work performance and occupational health.

The organizational change brought about by the PD modules was rated from high to very high by the school leaders (M = 4.65). This means that the PD modules helped the participants to network with other school leaders, support their own professionalization, and further develop the quality of their schools.

Table 7 shows the assessment of the outcome quality of coaching. The competence development through coaching reflects the school leaders' assessments in two areas. These related to personal goals and leadership behavior (M = 4.33), on the one hand, and to school goals and the leadership role (M = 4.05), on the other hand. The participants, therefore, tended to agree that they perceived their leadership behavior as more effective due to coaching and that they had a better understanding of the challenges faced by school leaders.

Table 7. Outcome quality—Coaching.

Scale	Mean	SD	*n*
Benefits	4.66	0.74	50
Goal achievement	4.57	0.43	42
Increase of motivation	4.40	0.81	48
Competence development in relation to personal goals and leadership behavior	4.33	0.81	48
Competence development in relation to school goals and the leadership role	4.05	0.81	48
Change in behavior	3.73	0.77	48

The change in behavior as a result of coaching reflects the school leaders' assessment, which is in the high–medium range (M = 3.73). They partially-to-somewhat agree with the statements according to which they understood their staff better and could motivate them to actively participate in school development and receive feedback from their staff or friends that they had changed their behavior.

Table 8 shows the assessment of the outcome quality of school consultancy. The competence development through school consultancy reflects the assessments of the school leaders and staff involved in school development, which were within a high range (M = 4.01). They, therefore, tended to agree that they received concrete suggestions for further development of the school and could better define priorities for the school.

Table 8. Outcome quality—School consultancy.

Scale	Mean	SD	*n*
Benefits	4.19	0.70	218
Goal achievement	4.10	0.86	146
Competence development	4.01	0.87	217
Change of behavior	3.77	0.90	217
Organizational change	4.00	0.82	186

The change in behavior indicates, among other things, whether they are better able to cope with school challenges, have conducted an assessment, and regularly review measures and milestones. The school leaders and staff involved placed this item in the high–medium range (M = 3.77).

The organizational change brought about by the school consultancy was also rated highly (M = 4.00). According to the school leaders and staff involved, the school consultancy tended to contribute to supporting them and the school committees in the school development processes, as well as in sustainably anchoring and expanding the process knowledge of school development and improving the role, mission, and work of the school committees.

5.2. What Is the Quality of the Combination of Multiple Approaches, Assessed as a Comprehensive 3-Year Support Program?

The assessment of the combination of multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership as a comprehensive program was based on the process organization indicator, which represented the process quality, as well as the four indicators (increase in motivation, competence development, change of behavior, and organizational change), which were assigned to the outcome qualities. The overall assessment of the combination of multiple approaches as a comprehensive program is part of the final survey, which occurred at T3. Table 9 shows the results.

Table 9. Quality of the combination of multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership assessed as a comprehensive 3-year support program.

Scale	Mean	SD	*n*
Process organization [1]	3.99	0.64	229
Increase of motivation [2]	4.17	0.82	57
Competence development [2]	4.05	0.70	57
Change of behavior [2]	4.12	0.64	57
Organizational change [2]	4.14	0.65	55

Notes: [1] Data from staff and school leaders, [2] Data from school leaders.

The average rating was high for all indicators. The process quality in the form of process organization was based on the assessments of the school leaders and staff involved. The participants partially-to-somewhat agreed with the statements (M = 3.99), for example, that the information about the program was sufficient, the goals were clear to them, and the creation of the project plan for the school development project was helpful.

The school leaders assessed the increase in motivation by combining the multiple approaches in terms of whether they were more motivated to perform a leadership function and to put what they had learned into practice. They tended to agree with these statements (M = 4.17).

Competence development by combining multiple approaches reflects the assessments of the school leaders and is in the high range (M = 4.05). The participants, therefore, tended to agree that they reflected more self-critically on their own activities, for example, and recognized their own strengths and weaknesses better. They were also more likely to develop their communication and professional skills.

Regarding the change of behavior by combining the multiple approaches, school leaders assessed, for example, whether they had a better ability to perceive complex situations and respond to them more appropriately and whether they proceeded effectively and purposefully in further development of the school. They tended to agree with these statements (M = 4.12).

Organizational change by combining multiple approaches was based on the school leaders' assessments, which were high (M = 4.14). According to this finding, cooperation and the learning climate at the school were improved, and the staff showed greater openness toward development projects as a result of their participation and assessed the resulting changes positively.

To sum up, both the process quality and the outcome quality (benefits, competence development, and behavioral and organizational change) of the combination of multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership were rated positively by the participants. This comprehensive 3-year support program provides significant benefits. From the perspective of those involved, positive changes can be observed through combining multiple approaches in terms of increased motivation, competence development, and behavioral and organizational changes.

5.3. What Are the Multiple Approaches' Consequences for School Leadership Quality and Organizational Quality and Their Changes over Time?

The results of the regression analyses are shown in Table 10. They indicate that the school leaders' positive perceptions of the benefits of their coaching ($\beta = 0.20$ **), as well as an increase in motivation ($\beta = 0.15$ **) and competence development in relation to their personal goals ($\beta = 0.13$ *), through their participation in coaching, and behavioral change, through their participation in the PD modules ($\beta = 0.25$ *), are associated with more clearly defined roles in making decisions and taking responsibility, the areas of responsibility, as well as goals and objectives.

Table 10. Results of the regression analyses.

	Effect on DV	Control T1	*N* Schools	R^2
DV: Role Ambiguity				
Benefits	0.20 ** (0.06)	0.25 ** (0.09)	52	0.35
Increase of motivation	0.15 ** (0.05)	0.33 ** (0.09)	52	0.30
Competence development regarding personal goals	0.13 * (0.06)	0.30 ** (0.10)	52	0.27
Change of behavior	0.25 * (0.11)	0.33 ** (0.10)	49	0.27
DV: Coordination of Action (School Leader)				
Increase of motivation	0.13 * (0.05)	0.80 ** (0.08)	67	0.63
Competence development regarding personal goals	0.13 * (0.06)	0.79 ** (0.08)	67	0.63
Competence development regarding school goals	0.11 * (0.06)	0.80 ** (0.08)	67	0.63
Change of behavior	0.21 ** (0.06)	0.83 ** (0.07)	67	0.66
Competence development regarding participation in the PD program	0.25 ** (0.09)	0.77 ** (0.07)	69	0.65
DV: Coordination of Action (Steering Group)				
Benefits	0.32 ** (0.09)	0.51 ** (0.10)	67	0.44
Goal achievement	0.29 ** (0.07)	0.47 ** (0.10)	67	0.47
Competence development	0.27 ** (0.07)	0.50 ** (0.10)	67	0.47
Change of behavior	0.31 ** (0.07)	0.44 ** (0.10)	67	0.51
Organizational change	0.16 * (0.07)	0.57 ** (0.10)	60	0.40
DV: Coherent Leadership Team				
Change of behavior	0.14 * (0.05)	0.77 ** (0.07)	67	0.64
Competence development	0.17 * (0.08)	0.73 ** (0.07)	69	0.63
DV: Cooperative Leadership				
Change of behavior	0.13 * (0.05)	0.73 ** (0.08)	67	0.54
DV: Communication Climate				
Competence development	0.11 * (0.05)	0.52 ** (0.08)	69	0.45
Change of behavior	0.12 * (0.05)	0.49 ** (0.09)	69	0.45

Note. DV = dependent variable at T3. Standard error in parentheses. Significance * = 5% significance level, ** = 1% significance level.

The school leaders' perceptions of an increase in motivation (β = 0.13 *) and competence development in relation to their personal (β = 0.13 *) and school goals (β = 0.11 *), their behavioral change (β = 0.21 **) through their participation in coaching, and their competence development through their participation in the PD modules (β = 0.25 **) are associated with improved coordination of their actions, as perceived by the staff.

The staff members' positive perceptions of the benefits (β = 0.32 **) and goal achievement (β = 0.29 **), as well as their perceptions of an increase in competence development (β = 0.27 **) and behavioral (β = 0.31 **) and organizational (β = 0.16 *) changes through the school's work with a consultant, are associated with improved coordination of the steering group's actions, as perceived by the staff.

The school leaders' perceptions of a behavioral change (β = 0.14 *) through their participation in coaching and competence development through their participation in the PD modules (β = 0.17 *), are associated with an improved coherence of the leadership team.

The school leaders' perception of a behavioral change (β = 0.13 *) through their participation in coaching is also associated with improved distribution of management responsibility and the staff's involvement in decision-making (cooperative leadership).

The school staff's perceptions of an increase in competence development (β = 0.11 *) and behavioral change (β = 0.12 *) through the school's work with a consultant are associated with improved communication.

6. Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Our analyses of the quality of multiple approaches and their consequences for school qualities show that each intervention—whether it is the set of PD modules, coaching, or school consultancy—targeting the school leaders' PD is positively evaluated in terms

of the process quality and the outcome quality. We also investigated the effects of the interventions on school leadership, school development, and school quality. We now briefly summarize our answers to the research questions.

To answer the first research question—regarding the quality of the multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership—we first examined the goals and content of coaching and school consultancy. Those of coaching relate more to each school leader's own role and person and less to strategy and school development (see Figure 3). The objectives and content of school consultancy are linked most to strategy and school development and techniques of coordination of actions and cooperation and least to instructional development (see Figure 4). The development projects initiated by the schools are mainly concerned with the target perspective of teaching and education. They also cover areas ranging from personnel management to structural changes in the organization.

Furthermore, we explored the use of additional financial resources. Our findings show that the additional EUR 3000 funding is used in full by almost all schools and primarily spent on further training and the purchase of teaching materials (see Figure 5).

We also assessed the process quality and the outcome quality of the multiple approaches. Both the process and the outcome qualities of the individual interventions are rated positively by those involved (see Tables 3–8).

As for the second research question—on the quality of the combination of multiple approaches assessed as a comprehensive 3-year support program—our findings suggest that both the process and the outcome qualities (benefits, competence development, and behavioral and organizational changes) are rated positively by the participants (see Table 9). The benefits are perceived as high. From the perspective of the parties involved, positive changes, in terms of increased motivation, competence development, and behavioral and organizational changes, can be observed as results of the combined interventions.

To address the third research question—regarding the multiple approaches' consequences for school leadership quality and organizational quality and their changes over time—we applied autoregressive regression analyses. Our analyses show that positively perceived interventions and the quality of their outcomes are related to the improvement of school-quality characteristics, such as the coordination of actions by the school leaders and the steering group, the clarity of the school leaders' role, cooperative leadership, the coherence of the leadership team, and communication (see Table 10).

To sum up, our study's results show highly positive assessments of the quality and benefits of the multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership and their favorable consequences for school leadership and enhanced quality of the organization. The regression analyses demonstrate that positively perceived outcome qualities of the interventions are associated with improvements in numerous dimensions of school quality (e.g., cooperative leadership). The interventions result in reduced role ambiguity from the school leaders' perspective. Additionally, from their staff members' perceptions, these approaches foster improved coordination of actions of the school leaders and the middle management, as well as greater coherence of the leadership team, more cooperative leadership, better communication, and increased collaboration toward common pedagogical goals and strategies.

The overall findings provide evidence of the effectiveness of the multiple approaches as interventions to transform education leadership. These initiatives can secure and enhance school quality when applied coherently and consistently, in accordance with each school's strategy and context, and as a combination of different interventions with a persistent, clear, and comprehensive approach that includes congruent and complementary aspects.

In this PD program, transforming school leadership works through a multiple approach strategy. We assume that the process and the outcome qualities of the individual interventions and their consequences have positive cumulative effects on personal (motivation, learning, and behavior) and organizational (different scales of organizational change) levels, as described by some researchers [74–78]. Thus, interventions in themselves have impacts, and each is important, but their combination (in terms of a coherent, complemen-

tary but congruent concept) and implementation have positive consequences and create a stronger impact on the changes in school quality.

Applying the knowledge acquired from the multiple approaches onto the school development project follows Gruber's [83] proposition that gaining experience in professional competence means learning in complex application-relevant and practice-relevant situations. New competence is developed by practice, followed by feedback and reflection. Therefore, transforming school leadership and improving school quality requires concerted action.

To transform education leadership for the sake of securing and improving the quality of education and of the school, a professional, profound, and persistent combination of multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership is necessary.

Particularly challenged schools and school leaders need a special and extended form of support. The threshold for participating in additional measures may be high due to the stakeholders' own perceptions of stress. Combining professionalization and school quality management, particularly quality development, seems to create a particular coherence for school leaders concerning their roles and actions. This systematic expansion of school-quality management—pursuing a strategy that fits the organizational context, reinforcing strengths, rapidly intervening with directly tangible success, identifying and tackling quick fixes (low effort and cost and high impact) and "hot topics" (controversial or sensitive issues), expanding personnel and knowledge management and establishing middle management, and using all structures and resources, including different forms of the school environment—makes a difference.

A major strength of school leaders' PD arises when different approaches are combined coherently, yielding a cumulative effect. It is particularly important that leadership learning experiences draw on a professional knowledge base, individual experiences, views, and perspectives, as well as collegial learning from and for the practice in their specific school situations. As school context matters, it also entails the context-specific application of professional knowledge and understanding. As reflection and practice-oriented strategies form a substantial part of the multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership, the context of the individual school leaders is particularly considered.

We recommend focusing on school leaders' needs and requirements and their variations since the context differs from school to school. An innovative aspect of the studied approaches is their persistent approach to process in the combination of interventions and their application to a school development project over a certain period. Research confirms that principal learning programs reflecting these practices (e.g., authentic learning opportunities; critical content focused on developing instruction, people, and the organization, as well as managing change; collegial support; and proactive recruitment) contribute to the development of education leadership, PD, and professionality [11,12,62–67]. In particular, coaching helps school leaders to overcome the missing link from theory to practice as it allows them to reflect on the complex knowledge application in specific contexts. Meta strategies (e.g., problem-solving, communication and collaboration, transfer of knowledge to new contexts, and critical thinking) are also promoted by the multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership.

7. Looking Ahead

The initial analyses of the effect sizes (Cohen's d) in the control group design, that is, between the school leaders and their schools that participated in the multiple approaches to develop and support school leadership (the intervention group) and the school leaders and their schools that were selected as twins in a controlled manner (the control group), suggest that the schools in the intervention group have developed better over the term than the comparison schools, which in some cases have even developed negatively based on the assessments of both the school leaders and the staff. This finding particularly applies to the quality of school management, school development, dealing with heterogeneity, the school as a whole, and professional satisfaction.

Although the effect sizes between the schools belonging to the intervention group and those assigned to the control group indicate positive effects of the multiple approaches on school quality in this quasi-experimental design, we observe some variations within and between these groups. Thus, further research is needed to determine what factors, in addition to the interventions and positive perceptions of their quality, create stronger impacts on the changes in school quality.

Irrespective of this result, there is also a pattern that school leaders in the intervention group are generally more positive about the developments than the staff in the intervention group.

These two findings will be examined in more detail in further studies.

Further papers will elaborate on the qualitative analyses of the interventions (e.g., on coaching or school consultancy), the case studies on leadership and school improvement, the influence of the coronavirus pandemic on the development of the schools, the conditions for the success of the interventions and the mechanisms of school-quality development, the quality and role of school leadership in school quality and quality development, particularly for taking inclusive action and dealing with heterogeneity at the school site, different assessments of school leaders and staff, the role and quality of cooperation among colleagues, and emotional attachment to the school and its consequences for school quality and development, as well as the central role of fit, particularly the school leaders' fit in the school context and culture. Additionally, analyses will be conducted with further information, such as schools' statistical data and students' learning performance data.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: In Germany, approval from the ethics committee is not necessary for studies such as the one we have conducted. A research project involving participants and affected persons, where no risks or harm to the participants are expected and which does not violate basic ethical principles, does not require ethics approval. The surveys in this study do not pose any particular risk or burden to these individuals compared to their everyday lives. All participants gave their informed consent for inclusion before participating in the study. All of them were of age.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

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Article

A Genealogy toward Methodic Doubts in Educational Leadership Research

Ira Bogotch

Department of Educational Leadership and Research Methodology, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL 33431, USA; ibogotch@fau.edu

Abstract: In this critical narrative essay, titled A Genealogy Toward Methodic Doubts, I ask readers not only how and why educational leadership research(ers) detoured from the rigorous pursuits of truths, but also how and why I had missed the signposts which might have alerted me and others that our continuing practices, even with recognizing methodological limitations, were flawed. The empirical examples presented here come mostly from US policies, Western theories, and traditional methods, but likely apply to other contexts worldwide.

Keywords: genealogy; methodic doubts; research methods; theory-method interactions; counter-hegemonic narrative

1. The Purpose(s)

A rule of thumb in writing is to stick to what you know best. In this case, what I know best about the field of educational leadership comes from my readings of the literature, direct observations, collegial relationships, and professional experiences. But in what sense are any of these ways of knowing valid, trustworthy, and reliable as research? All of us have been professionally socialized to know and practice the strict rules of protecting human subjects, designing conceptual frameworks, and asking research questions, followed by research methods and procedures. We then acknowledge the study's limitations and delimitations and remain ethical concerning our participants and our uses of language.

Genealogy can be traced historically through ideas, relationships, and experiences. None of us develop ideas in isolation. We are dependent and interdependent upon others to ignite our minds to diverse ways of knowing. As such, the educational leadership researchers cited throughout this essay have all become members of my academic family. These scholars have been my teachers and my sources of inspiration. At the same time, the historian-philosopher Michel Foucault [1] reminded us that words and ideas change over time and across space. History is as much about the continuity of ideas as it is about the discontinuous surprises and new directions. These twists and turns, too, are part of the genealogy of educational leadership.

Therefore, our combined education from both research and practice is a reckoning of all we have accomplished up to the present. As research, it also points to where we might travel next. At the same time, the repeated calling for the transformation of the field of educational leadership feels, to me, like Groundhog's Day, or as Yogi Berra (Hall of Fame catcher for the New York Yankees baseball team post WWII into the 1960s) supposedly said, "It's *déjà vu* all over again". That is, we seem to repeat ourselves inside the established practices of formatting, academic writing, peer-reviewing, and publishing journal articles that too often confirm already existing knowledge. That, of course, is not the purpose of research nor the function of scholarly journals. Hence, methodic doubt is meant to problematize, ask critical questions, maintain skepticism, and insist that our educational leadership research rigorously pursue truths.

Skepticism as a philosophical disposition has always served scholarship well. In many of my previous conceptual and empirical studies, I have adapted critical theoretical,

postmodern, and post-structural approaches in my analyses and interpretations. But what I had failed to do explicitly was acknowledge my values and underlying assumptions, my positionality, and my epistemologies to question the use of those methodologies to answer research questions. Had I or the field of educational leadership done so, then methods themselves would have risen to the same level of significance as leadership theories. In plain English, academic scholarship calls for iterative processing between specific theories and chosen methods [2].

Until recently [3], I did not try to practice *theory-method interactions*, an idea central to Le and Schmid [2]. I relied heavily on the "usual suspects" methodologically, reflexively reaching for methods texts regardless of the leadership theory under investigation. As I grew more confident as a researcher, I did not wean myself away from these same "usual suspects" or look to bring the same innovative creativity in thinking about methods. I did not make the distinction between learning to do research and researching to learn. For example, as I looked for what might be new understandings of leadership by interrogating the construct of social justice, a new construct in the early aughts, I still relied upon traditional research methods, qualitatively and quantitatively. In other words, although the theoretical construct had changed, my methods had remained the same as those used previously to validate traditional theories of leadership. For this reason, I encourage researchers regardless of their epistemologies or ontologies to experiment and discover the methodologist in us by seeking out *unusual suspects*, some of whom may be hiding in plain sight. In so doing, we dissolve the uncritical distinctions made between those labeled theorists and those labeled methodologists who dominate the profession of educational leadership research. This state of affairs is not true of all researchers, but true enough to limit and delimit our findings. Therefore, I am asking, should not the phrase *educational leadership researchers* suffice?

Let me restate my premise: I do not think the problems of educational leadership are theoretical. There have been brilliant leadership ideas coming from the best and the brightest in our profession for over the one-hundred-year history of our field. To me, the problems lie with methodologies in terms of conceptualizing research designs, interacting with participants, and presenting findings in original and creative ways. One significant hallmark of the field of educational leadership itself is its proximity to power structures and individuals who influence and control the thinking and behaviors of others. This specific privileged position applies to researchers as well. That is, how power operates should encourage us, not inhibit us, to engage in more creative and innovative thinking methodologically.

Yet, that is not what educational leadership researchers have done. Unlike those seated near power, the field has followed the rules of the game concerning research activities and methods: that is, conducting empirical and/or conceptual studies, using quantitative and qualitative methods, publishing in academic presses and scholarly journals, reviewing manuscripts, and revising manuscripts as if all of the above were not prescriptive or formulaic. Moreover, all of the above are entered into the curriculum vita as if such activities themselves quench the thirst for knowledge and potentially transform the field of educational leadership. And even when the field stays in place, we continue doing what we have done previously. In my research journey, I rushed some studies to publication before they were ready. I turned my tentative and hypothetical findings into so-called conclusions (often because that was what editors and peer reviewers had requested). Therefore, if we seriously engage in transforming educational leadership, we must do so through our socially re-constructed thoughts and actions. What now follows are illustrations of how tradition and custom trumped experimentation and trial and error. Enough of romantic notions of transformation!

2. Limitations, in Passing: My Call(ing)

I believe that we are masters at telling partial truths even as we warn readers to view our empirical results cautiously. Education research, unlike poetry, does not favor ambiguity. Yet, partial truths of school leadership mask the full range of values and assumptions

of school leaders, teachers, counselors, etc. The partial truths, too, do not often factor into the historical and contextual information underlying policies and school regulations. Furthermore, in research, our self-reported data from surveys or phenomenologically grounded interviews are often analyzed linearly and coded thematically. Following prescribed methods and procedures, we report one-dimensional findings that do not capture the complexity, messiness, or subjectivities of human affairs within or beyond schools [4,5]. One unintended effect of scholarly publications is that readers will assume more than the evidence presented despite our cautionary limitations. For this reason, we publish statistically significant findings, but not the converse. The Le and Schmid [2] question, again, is how might we be more explicit in terms of our assumptions, values, positionality, and epistemologies while holding to the contingencies of history and contexts. My short answer is that it is problematic, necessitating skepticism: that is, seeking to transform educational leadership on the one hand, and maintaining "methodic doubts" on the other [3].

Practically, I am calling for educational leadership researchers to move away from the idea of *choosing* an already existing method to creatively *developing* specific methods *tailored* explicitly to our hypothesized theories. I believe that despite all the literature on research methods as innovations, our choices in educational leadership (i.e., delimited by laws, policies, standards, accountability, management, and supervision) have remained stuck inside the hegemony of already developed quantitative and qualitative practices. Hence, we publish, but too frequently neither discover nor create.

How then might we capture the spirit of research methods as alive? The spirit of research methods goes beyond research tools such as statistics and coding (In Yvonna Lincoln's *Organizational Theory and Inquiry* she quotes Ray Rists' 1997 *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* as follows:

> Not only does the use of one methodological approach as opposed to another change the means by which one perceives reality under study, but also the very reality to which the researcher has applied a method is itself continually in a state of change. . .Put differently, no methodology allows us to step twice in the same stream in the same place (p. 222)).

My operating principle is that theory drives methods and methods drive theory. More precisely, to liberate educational leadership from its stupor, we will have to disrupt our relationships with participants, scholarly journals, peer reviewers, and publishers. We need to build anew more equitable and socially just relationships throughout the research process. Participants need our respect, and the gatekeepers need to be more responsible for contributing to new knowledge rather than re-producing already existing Western knowledge (We might pay more careful attention to indigenous ways of knowing. For example, the Māori concept of *whanau* as described in *Decolonizing Methodologies* by Linda Tuhiwai Smith captures a new way of relating to participants:

> *Whanau* is "a persistent way of living and organizing the social world. In terms of research, the *whanau* is one of several Māori concepts that have become part of a methodology, a way of organizing a research group, a way of incorporating ethical procedures that report back to the community, a way of 'giving voice' to the different sections of the Māori communities, and a way of debating ideas and issues that impact on the research project. (p. 189)).

The history of educational leadership relies upon dominant (i.e., Western) methodologies—with too few exceptions. Thus, our methods have become both prescriptive and formulaic, rather than descriptive and creatively synthetic, regardless of the intent of the methodologists-authors of the methods' texts. Journal editors and peer reviewers demand to see one dominant format constituting academic scholarship. For example, I received this comment from a journal editor recently:

> *The revision is not related to the content of this section but to the format of the section. We will appreciate your efforts to make this section to be more compatible with a journal article.*

We all know what "compatible with a journal article" means, but we do not know how being compatible relates to contributing to the knowledge base. Thus, the time is long overdue for educational leadership researchers to embrace methods creatively and critically to advance the field conceptually. Unless we are both intellectually curious and skeptical, I do not know how we can engage in the necessary struggles to bring research methods and theories into the 21st century. But unless we first own our complicity, I do not know how the field will proceed. And by complicit, I mean unreflective, ahistorical, and acontextual. The questions I pose are when, where, what, how, and why can we move from learning to do research to *researching to learn*?

3. My Methods as Methodic Doubts

In the following sections, I will trace my research journey, first as a novice researcher writing a dissertation in 1989 and then proceeding to uncover signposts, post hoc (i.e., they were in plain sight at the time, but I was neither able to see them nor to debate them). The signposts should have warned me/us not to proceed along this or that current pathway. But if those past/present specific moments are being lost—ignored, deleted, forgotten—to the field, then of what value is it to reveal new truths today?

In 2005/2011 in A history of school leadership during its first century, I wrote [6].

It is not a sign of good health for any academic field or discipline to have an uncontested, unexamined history, especially when that field is education.

How is it that we lose our histories? Is this a matter of methods and methodology? Maybe. But I also believe our field suffers from the inability to explicitly transition from (a) learning to research (which includes years of practicing research) to (b) researching to learn. While each of us travels our journeys, at some point, we should have arrived at point "b". If not, then the field remains stuck, fixed, and predictable. One courageous scholar, not in educational leadership, but in educational sociology, the Lebanese scholar Dr. Adnan El Amine [7] documents in *The Production of the Void* (Arab) that research has been the victim of researchers borrowing ideas rather than thinking originally about ideas. He sees researchers as conformists because of political control and self-censorship. Cannot the same be said of Western educational research?

In such an atmosphere, research methods that are easier to implement and accomplish prevail, pushing aside the investigative method and replacing it with indoctrination. Thus, it would be difficult to "produce independent thinkers" in such environments, and social science research centers turn into marginal and ineffective ones [8].

If this trap has been set by the politics of education, then how have we self-censored ourselves? Off the top of my head, I think immediately of the processes of promotion and tenure, our tome-like curriculum vitae, and the many publications in peer-reviewed journals. How we can escape from the production of the void to research to learn, therefore, is the central purpose of this essay. In the next section, I will introduce the major signposts of my research journey, writing about each of the signposts beginning with the dissertation and moving to samples of convenience, the predictable failures of educational leadership reforms, the appropriation of old wine poured into new bottles as fads (e.g., turnaround school leadership), and the history of the standards' movement in educational leadership.

4. A Typical Journey into the Void?

My journey, like all our journeys, starts with the writing of a dissertation as we all learn to do research. For me, the dissertation opened the door to academia and an assistant professorship at the University of New Orleans. At each of my career signposts, the lessons learned as part of my professional socialization needed to brew inside me before I was able to see how theory–methods interactions could transform educational leadership. The answers, of course, were always hiding in plain sight: choosing our audience, writing for the public, and being communicatively competent. While at each signpost in my career, I observed and learned new ideas, I nevertheless often failed to effectively and loudly speak out in opposition to the field's helter-skelter reform efforts and dominant discourses. I knew

that what was happening was neither in the spirit of true ethical research in educational leadership nor in the best interests of our publics.

So why do I think that my words today will make any difference methodologically, structurally, or relationally? Our behaviors and our relationships with participants, journals, and publishers are so ingrained and taken for granted. Restructuring jeopardizes established reputations and challenges all that we have become good at: publishing in scholarly journals and writing texts. My writing by itself, like the conscience of Jiminy Cricket, is not likely to change minds or behaviors, including those of some peer reviewers. But I am reminded how individuals—like Dr. Amine above—can and should take a stand when they believe strongly that they are right. I am inspired by the life of Barbara McClintock, an American scientist who, while denied university tenure and who did not publish her works for two decades, continued to pursue her truths, which eventually were recognized by her being awarded a Noble Prize in 1983. I am also inspired by the unpublished speeches of the famous US statistician Donald Campbell [9], who came to believe that if we applied experimental research methods to intractable public problems such as poverty, then, over time and democratically, we could make changes in public policy for the public good.

I do not see this essay as a cautionary tale, but rather as a lever for radical changes in how and with whom we should conduct research publicly and democratically. That said, no one should go two decades without a publication, nor should we all wait until the last chapter of our careers to speak openly and honestly to our colleagues.

5. Understanding the Roots of Educational Leadership Research

Let us begin way back in 1910 with the survey movement to mark the origins of empirical research. This section is not meant to be an in-depth history of educational leadership research, but merely an outline of the parameters set by early researchers. This is necessary primarily because education researchers at any one particular point in time are indebted to those who came before. At the same time, I am inserting methodic doubts into the educational leadership conversations because researchers should not merely follow past practices methodologically, but rather invent new methods to fit their current studies of leadership. From 1910 to 1915, educational research focused on urban district school surveys, covering topics such as the conditions of facilities to school finances, teacher salaries, and student enrollment. The research objective was decidedly practical for use by school superintendents, principals, and teachers to improve practices and inform the public about educational progress [10].

The following years, 1916–1928, saw the beginnings of a shift away from school district- and superintendent-sponsored research to university-driven research and the pushback that it caused inside the research community. It was not only that the venue for conducting research changed, but so, too, did the topics of research. We can call this period a *coming-of-age* of our profession as professional educational researchers. As adolescents, researchers were exuberantly discovering and inventing the field, searching for a new professional identity. It was also at this time a struggle for status, particularly that of the university professor and for the school systems' roles of administration, supervision, management, and what we today call leadership. The notions of hierarchy and expertise emerged. More and more, the words and phrases "scientific study", "efficiency", and "standardized testing" became prominent. The building blocks for statistical measures and accountability were all in place by 1928. Each of these keyword markers reappears again and again up to the present. Methodic doubt, therefore, becomes an alert to question skeptically whether we are truly reforming educational leadership.

6. At the Start: The Dissertation

I can still remember my excitement when another envelope filled with a completed survey arrived in the mail—this was in 1988. I remember, too, teaching myself principal components analysis and enjoying how I was able to label the independent and significant factors within my dataset. For the most part, performing the quantitative analysis erased

some of the dissatisfaction I experienced interviewing school principals. It was not that the school principals were not being truthful; they were just being very cautious in answering my questions. This signaled one of many limitations in conducting educational leadership research with those close to power. Still, I soldiered on.

Whether the dissertation itself becomes a lifelong passion or a one-and-done exercise, something happens inside all of us; we become fascinated by the research process itself. Yet, over time, methodic doubt tempers that enthusiasm by engaging us in similar procedures governed prescriptively and formulaically: the same subheadings, the same number of words, and the process of peer review, revising, and resubmitting. It is a one-size-fits-all format, even as (1) we creativity come up with exciting new projects, and (2) we continue to learn and practice new research approaches and methods. All successful professors have mastered the expected academic rules necessary for journal editors and peer reviewers to shake their heads up and down as they habitually recognize the movements from section to section in the manuscript. We tolerate peer reviewers who genuinely offer their own preferred conceptual frameworks and theories, asking us to consider, revise, etc. And, if we are still learning to conduct research—or still practicing—we continue to rely on "the usual suspects", those introduced to us in graduate programs to keep us in line methodologically. The imbalance between contributing to leadership theories versus not contributing to methods—or genres and formats—takes hold gradually.

7. Reliance on Convenience

The word "convenience" entered my life as a new Assistant Professor. At this point, I have to look at my curriculum vitae to remind myself what research I had conducted. It was that memorable! All of these studies were empirical, meaning that I first framed a problem, formulated a research question, identified a sample or group of participants, and collected data to analyze quantitatively and/or qualitatively.

By "convenience", what I mean is that my teaching and service were all with aspiring school leaders and with beginning school principals. Being in the city of New Orleans gave me access to diverse contexts—urban, suburban, rural, public, private, and parochial. With a grant to train beginning principals in southeast Louisiana, I had access to numerous Parishes (i.e., school districts) and Archdioceses along with a historical southern tradition of private schools. So, from 1990 to 2000, I researched what was directly in front of my eyes: beginning principals, urban and suburban beginning principals, principals' decision-making skills, school-based management, the relationship between the central offices and school building leaders, school governance, principal communications, school cultures, and school principal moral leadership. The studies were deemed worthy of my being promoted from Assistant to Associate Professor. I doubt they were worthy of much else. I was learning and practicing how to perform research and becoming more adept at publishing. That is, at the end of my first decade, I had mastered one specific set of research and writing skills.

8. New American Schools Reform

What I see when I look behind the curtains of the 1990s and 2000s are the power and influence of philanthropy (public–private partnerships), relentless competition, and the dominance of Research One universities worldwide. Over these two decades, the best and the brightest in educational leadership took the reins of government, foundations, and the academy. In other words, educational leadership had the right people in the right places then as they do today.

While still an assistant professor at the University of New Orleans (UNO), I was a close bystander of the New American School Reform movement in which prominent professors competed for public–private monies to change whole school districts. There was Stanford University's Henry Levin and the Accelerated Schools Program. UNO—through a competitive grant with the Chevron Oil company—became a satellite center for Accelerated Schools, with Professor Levin flying in and out of New Orleans to offer training and

guidance in his program. While on the sidelines, I still wanted to be involved in the research and to learn as much as possible about Accelerated Schools. A training with Henry Levin was scheduled to be held at UNO; but when I tried to register, I was told that I would have to sign a non-disclosure form preventing me from using any of the lessons learned about Accelerated Schools. Even though I did not understand why this was necessary, I signed the form. At the training, I was thoroughly entertained by the showmanship of Professor Levin, who dressed in costume entered the room first as the "remediating" teacher and then as the transforming "accelerating" teacher.

Captivated, my interest quickly extended into the area of research, first studying reform districts that had adopted Accelerated Schools [11], and then a quantitative study comparing and contrasting all of the New American Reform movement programs across the US [12]. The well-known universities, programs and professors included The Coalition of Essential Schools (Brown University, Theodore Sizer), Success for All (reading) and Roots & Wings (mathematics) (Johns Hopkins University, Robert Slavin), as well as programs at Yale (James Comer) and the University of Virginia (E.D. Hirsch), and others. I had and still have tremendous respect for the careers of these individuals.

Of course, by now, I was aware of the politically competitive boundaries closing off these programs from one another. It was a deliberate and competitive model established by the federal government and fully supported by the designers. The obvious questions are what was learned and what were the educational leadership effects in the classroom? Empirically, our factor analysis of the New American School projects resulted in six latent factor variables with "reflecting on and questioning past and present practices" as explaining 37% of the variance. At the same time, we found that the national school reform models were not affecting the material conditions of teaching, learning, and administering as much as they were improving the within-school cultural conditions.

Of the many criticisms of New American Schools reforms, the two that stand out most are (a) the delay in conducting research, and (b) the lack of comparative data for learning from the many reform programs. This last criticism describes the lack of openness and cooperation among these elite professors and their programs for contributing to the knowledge base of educational leadership. Unfortunately, that is not a shared value within our profession, although some significant voices such as Joseph Murphy [13] reminded the field that without "connectedness", we are not going to build a body of sustained research.

According to Jeffrey Mirel [14], another research observer of the New American Schools reform, the public–private reforms were driven by venture capitalists for education, looking for strategic investments to fund. Unfortunately, the US ended up with all of these wonderful stand-alone projects always in competition with one another. The work—and it was good work—stayed inside each project, remaining proprietary. This should have been a very important lesson learned; instead, it is now forgotten and lost to the history of our field. More importantly, the school and classroom reforms from these reform programs are also lost to the past.

9. Then Came Leadership Standards

Another signpost during this decade of reform was the state and national leadership standards movement. Those of us who were there at the beginning witnessed and participated in lively conference debates that were published in our scholarly journals. Today, leadership standards are taken for granted all around the world and are not subject to rigorous research. As established policy, leadership standards are rolled over from one legislative session to another without conducting research. There is no independent academic research, only in-house studies. The power of standards has been institutionalized such that new, original research to learn the effects, intended and unintended, in multiple contexts has ceased. We can see clearly how government policies have influenced educational leadership research.

Immediately after US national standards were developed, the Council of Chief State Officers, State Commissioners, Chancellors, and State Superintendents, set up a mechanism

to promulgate the standards in each of the 50 states. In Louisiana, I was hired as a consultant by the Louisiana Department of Education to convene monthly meetings with educators from all around the state. We would meet in Baton Rouge, the state capital, and engage in lively and productive conversations. At the end of the year, we presented the new Louisiana Principal Standards to the Department, our work being done. We were all extremely proud of what we had accomplished in one year.

But what happened next was not at all the outcome we had expected. Because of politics in the state legislature, the leadership standards stalled and remained in limbo. A whole year of hard work on the part of practicing district and school leaders was ignored and bypassed. Why? To say that it was politics is to say that the status of educators and educational leaders is not recognized as an important constituency. I decided that this was a research story that had to be told [15], but to what effect?

The story begins inside of educational leadership but ends quite differently. The US had created national standards that had to be assessed, and thus accountability systems were mandated throughout not only the US but internationally. It is instructive to quote directly from Peter Gronn [16]:

> Standards for school leaders are central to the notion of performativity. . .. The significance of standards is that they provide a vehicle for those who steer systems to micromanage the day-to-day work of institutional personnel by seeking to ensure adherence and conformity to officially sanctioned codes of conduct. As such they embody detailed expectations of preferred (as opposed to best) (pp. 553–554).

Moreover, the power of the standards had become the new driver for school leadership preparation programs in universities. But what happened initially as an exciting new arena for research became almost overnight the mission of the professional association of doctoral programs, the University Council of Educational Administration. In other words, once again, an international research project had become subsumed within Ministries of Education around the world, and a different research agenda was created: designing and assessing leadership preparation programs. This policy called school leadership standards, in fact, became the tail that would wag the independent and autonomous research coming out to the pre-eminent doctoral degree educational leadership programs. And when funding was attached to this enterprise through the Wallace Foundation, well, it made the whole profession of educational leadership complicit in yet another government reform effort. According to Furman and English [17]:

> In the end the ISLLC descriptors represent. . . a new kind of standardization, an attempt to *technologize* leadership, within an organizational context that has for too long been preoccupied with *efficiency* at the expense of social justice (Furman and English, 2002, p. 478).

10. Turnaround School Leadership: Taking a Step or Two Away from Education

Let me ask you a question: When did firing school principals and a third of their staff become an educational reform supported by empirical evidence? And yet, the U.S. Department of Education (2009) implemented just such a policy not research-based.

> *Removing ineffective tenured and untenured teachers and principals after they have had ample opportunities to improve, and ensuring that such decisions are made using rigorous standards and streamlined, transparent, and fair procedures.* [18]

The policy called for principals to be replaced. But who were these laggards? Most were school leaders who had for years worked in the trenches of low-performing schools. They had dedicated their careers to serving low-income schools and communities, as did many of the teachers who year after year chose to teach inner-city students. Demographic research has been quite clear as to who these principals were/are: people of color.

Perhaps it was just a matter of time before the market objectives of venture capitalists who actually practiced turnaround leadership in the corporate world would become the dominant education reform strategy instead of educational leadership research. Again, the confluence of efficiency, standards, and accountability as established policy practices displaced research, both funded and unfunded. Paradoxically, a cottage industry of published books emerged on the topic of turnaround leadership in schools. And who would you guess were authoring such books? As we learned from the New American Schools Reform and from the Standards Movement, Research One professors had the access and resources to perform reviews of the literature and to repackage old wine in new turnaround bottles. As revealed in a previously published work [19], the authors revealed the research in quotation marks on turnaround school leadership.

In rapid succession, internationally known professors Michael Fullan, Joseph Murphy, Kenneth Leithwood, and Daniel Duke each had full-length books in print in short order. The names just mentioned are all in my academic family in terms of scholars whom I have relied on for knowledge. Yet, the fact is conducting research takes time; it is a tediously slow process from design to data collection and analysis. Yet, each of the turnaround authors quickly conducted secondary analyses of already collected data that have appeared in published research. They took that work and adapted it to the hot new reform topic. They used a blend of transformational and heroic leadership theories with business models of accountability and applied that to those low-performing schools that had achieved measures of success academically. Methodologically, the new narrative was filled with limitations and delimitations.

In 2006, Fullan offered ten turnaround leadership lessons in his new book titled *Turnaround Leadership* [20]. Fullan recycled the same familiar list of variables from moral purpose, high expectations, building capacity, restructuring roles, sharing knowledge laterally, learning as you go, building on productive conflicts, and establishing external partners—all change theory axioms previously published. What might be considered original to the concept of turnaround was Fullan's targeted investments and emphasis on district/system levels as the appropriate unit of analysis to be leveraged by system leaders for turnaround changes. As always, he argued persuasively that for turnaround leadership to work, it had to extend beyond short-term behavioral changes, especially those measured by annual test results on student achievement.

The following year, in 2007, Joseph Murphy co-authored (with Coby Meyers) *Turning Around Failing Schools: Leadership Lessons From the Organizational Sciences* [21]. Murphy viewed the turnaround processes in stages, and like Fullan, he, too, called for shifting emphasis to targeted resources. But unlike Fullan's model, Murphy's synthesis of literature [22] led him to his opposing the practices of mandating turnaround changes from afar, which even included the role of school district superintendents. Thus, both Fullan and Murphy adapted their previous frameworks to turnaround school leadership.

Kenneth Leithwood, both alone and with colleagues, and Daniel Duke, also alone and with colleagues, set out to re-analyze case study data they had collected over the past years on various leadership topics within their respective conceptual frameworks on expert, transformational leadership, and school improvement, respectively. Leithwood, Harris and Strauss, [23] and Leithwood [24] extracted "outlier districts" (n = 31) that were based initially on a series of studies from 2002 to 2005. Throughout the turnaround literature, the empirical cases often utilized previous data that were now repackaged under the new educator category named "turnaround". Like Fullan and Murphy before him, Leithwood supported targeting interventions toward the lowest-performing schools and their students. All four of these school improvement researchers cited here supported a needs-based approach to turnaround. Yet, even as Leithwood's finding connected student achievement and economic and social conditions, he retreated into the within-school variables of school improvement, stating:

> . . . while student and family poverty is a part of the 'presenting symptoms' in the majority of underperforming districts and schools, it is also largely unalterable by their leaders. . .There is not much practical point in defining it as the cause of underperformance. If you did, you would be defining a problem you could not solve. [23]

Previously, in 2004, Duke [25] had conducted 15 case studies of elementary schools, out of which emerged his eight dimensions of change. From that database, Duke now concluded that turnaround had to be customized to fit the situation/context. As for the now proverbial "targeting", Duke wrote of specificity concerning instruction, that is, additional learning time and expert help for struggling students, ongoing staff development based on student needs, and—at least in intent—intensified efforts to inform and engage parents and community members (p. 27).

Seven years later, Duke argued that turnaround must go beyond technical school-based changes—a finding confirmed by Mette and Scribner [26]. That is, successful implementation of turnaround efforts involves transforming the intentions of the turnaround school policy by supporting cultural changes that, in part, come from the school's surrounding community. Thus, it is community involvement that extends turnaround school leadership beyond within-school variables or a coherent list of school improvement steps/stages. It is community involvement that helps educators confront the challenges of sustaining change beyond raising test scores in the short term (Duke & Landahl, 2011) [27].

My takeaway is simple: this was an enticing bandwagon that exemplified the cliché: old wine in new bottles. Each of the texts cited contained important school leadership insights worthy of publication; but, the outside packaging was not only deceptive, it was also not transformational.

11. Disrupters among the Best and the Brightest

The field of educational leadership has not confronted its low status among social science researchers. This status was inevitable, as the field became subservient to established policies, vested political interests, and external funders. I have suggested embracing methodic doubts, essentially melding methods with theories in educational leadership, so that researchers' talents and insights might drive new directions. Being developers of theories while remaining consumers of methods, we delimited our abilities to move the field as a whole. I say as a whole because in piecemeal fashion, we have had researchers like Daniel Griffiths (i.e., practice over theory), T.B Greenfield (i.e., human values over science), Roland Barth (i.e., practice over expert knowledge), William Foster (i.e., human affairs over management theory), Edwin Bridges (i.e., problem as pedagogy over pre-packaged solutions), Richard Bates (i.e., social justice over narrow accountability outcomes), Jill Blackmore (i.e., feminist ideas as theory and method), among many others, who have conceptually carried the field forward.

In the last paragraphs, I will highlight another group of innovative researchers who have been practicing theory–methods interactions: Fenwick English and Linda Tillman. This list would be much longer if we looked beyond educational leadership into curricular inquiry and studied the writing of Maxine Greene, Paolo Freire, Elliot Eisner, Joe Kincheloe, Gloria Ladson-Billings, and Dilys Schoorman—all of whom have integrated theories and methods.

In his prolific writings, English has explored postmodern conditions, drama, theatre, dance, biographies, and autobiographies as ways of knowing and developing leadership practices. Typical of his critiques is the following sentence in his infamous *Anatomy of Professional Practice* [28] (The text was an expansion of English's UCEA Presidential Address in 2007. This would be his last appearance at UCEA as his analyses of the status of our so-called theories were not well received. As a field, we figuratively shot the messenger because he raised methodic doubts about almost everything we have been doing in research (and policies and practices).

Surveys of practice by practitioners may contain significant ideologies that go unquestioned and are passed off as the epitome of professionalism. It is possible, then, to enshrine bad practice in the process of upgrading it (p. 30).

Likewise, Tillman has moved seamlessly from Afro-centric leadership theories to her culturally sensitive research approaches. Neither English nor Tillman, however, fall into the category titled methodologist; however, they represent how more of us could embrace theory–methods interactions in the field of educational leadership.

12. Not the Last Words

Throughout the history of educational leadership, we have engaged in continuous, parallel, contradictory, and more than a few nonsensical conversations surrounding schools. But is it true that our continuing ignorance of education has outpaced our pursuits of truths (Wagner, 1993)? [29].

Throughout his career, William Foster warned us not to become seduced by the trappings of leadership or our proximity to power. With school reforms heavily linked to governmental power, foundations, and policies along with vested interests, our measured outcomes of research and practice have been reduced to comparing test scores, following standards and benchmarks, and whatever the next rubric holds. In this brief essay, I have tried to understand why and how we made so many wrong turns that were in plain sight.

Change is hard, especially when the challenge involves remaking the enterprise of conducting research into a collective endeavor instead of a private and privileged practice. But my methodic doubts—yours, too?—come only with question marks, not readymade or fully formed answers. If there are any lessons here to be learned, they are linked to traditional practices, for example, sprints for publishable results/answers instead of marathons asking important questions sequentially and in non-linear directions. My methodic doubts have led me today to hold tight to the methodologist inside each of us.

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Review

The Challenge to Change: Leading Schools beyond COVID-19

Tony Townsend

Griffith Institute for Educational Research, Griffith University, Brisbane 4122, Australia; tonytownsend@hotmail.com

Abstract: This paper considers the articles presented in this Special Issue and argues that, in most developed education systems in Western countries, there have been four major shifts in how school education is understood and delivered over the course of human history, from a time when only the wealthy and privileged received an education to the present day. It tracks changes in school leadership since the 1980s, when a combination of efforts to improve the effectiveness of schools and efforts to decentralise schools led to self-managing schools and changed responsibilities for school leaders. It reflects on whether the recent impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school communities may lead to a fifth major shift in school education. This article discusses four different school leadership approaches that have emerged in Western education since the 1980s, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, distributed leadership, and leadership for learning, and argues that of these four, leadership for learning would be the most appropriate leadership approach in a post-COVID-19 future.

Keywords: educational change; COVID-19; self-managing schools; leadership for learning

1. Introduction

The articles of this Special Issue represent authors from Europe, Asia, the United States, and Australia. Although trends in school change are well researched in Western countries, the impact of changes to school leadership made in the west also impact on many other countries across the world. Terms such as "school self-management" and "instructional leadership" are freely used in many countries, and the impact of international comparisons of student achievement (such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS)), by which many countries judge the health of their education systems, has led to countries from widely different social and cultural demographics using similar approaches to improve opportunities for students.

The overview of this Special Issue [1] considered how our understanding of leadership, educational leadership, and especially school leadership has changed historically. From ancient times, until around the 1970s and 1980s, those who led schools could be seen as middle managers, following the decisions made by those above them to ensure those decisions were implemented faithfully by those below them [2,3]. Most decisions were made by centralised departments of education that were themselves tasked with implementing policies made by governments: decisions about curriculum, about teaching standards, about assessment, about school facilities, and about financing. However, in the 1970s, changes in society created the impetus for schools to change [4,5]. Typical of monolithic structures, it took some time for the impetus for change to become action for change. What followed was an environment when two opposites, articulated by the same words, "the Challenge to Change", created both problems and possibilities for those who led schools. On the one hand, school leaders were "challenged to change" their understandings and practices of leading, but on the other hand, many people challenged the need for change at all, thus slowing progress somewhat. But over time, change happened anyway. It could be said that in recent times, those in education have been experiencing something that brings

two concepts together: the impact of change [6] and the rapidity of change [7]. Drucker ([6], p. 1) once argued:

> Every few hundred years in western history there occurs a sharp transformation. We cross. . . a divide. Within a few short decades society rearranges itself, its world view; its basic values; its social and political structure; its arts; its key institutions. Fifty years later, there appears a new world.

Phillips [8] talked about how transformations occur. New products or innovations are first accepted by a few "early adopters", followed by the "early majority", the "late majority", and then the "laggards". Cumulatively, when graphed, the proportions of the population that have accepted the innovation over time form an S-curve. In education terms, the role of school leaders in the process is to be "early adopters" and to help those they work with to move from the old curve to the new one. To do this, the leader must become a learner before leading others.

The history of successive transformations over time can be depicted by a series of overlapping S-curves. But also, now more than fifty years ago, Toffler [7] defined "future shock" as being people's psychological response to too much change in too little a time. It was his response to the fact that the amount of time between when something was invented and it becoming commonplace was diminishing. An example would be the transformation of telephones, from analogue phones at home (invented around the 1850s, and patented by Alexander Graham Bell in 1869) to mobile phones (with the first in the 1970s being the size of a brick), to smart phones (Palm Pilot and Nokia in the 1990s and the first iPhone in 2007), to what we have today—mobile access to text, photographic, and video data, instantaneously, from anywhere in the world. Whereas moving from a stationery analogue telephone to the mobile phone took around 100 years, with another 25 years to develop a smart phone, the developments since that time in terms of personal communication devices have been nothing short of astounding.

Education moved from one S-curve (centralised command and control), a product of centralised school systems from the 1880s, to the next S-curve (decentralisation of some decisions related to school activity) in the 1970s and 1980s, a "sharp transformation", in Drucker's terms, with different education systems, in different parts of the world, experiencing decentralisation, but with some experiencing it more than others (see Caldwell [9] in this Special Issue). It could also be argued that since that time, with increasing rapidity, other transformations to school leadership have occurred. From the principal being responsible for implementing the decisions made by others, to having to make critical instructional decisions themselves, to being solely responsible for transforming the school, from the principal being a singular leader, to leadership teams, to distributed leadership.

It might also be argued that the latest S-curve to impact school leadership came with the COVID-19 pandemic. All of what we knew about leading schools had to be reassessed as students were unable to attend schools for extended periods, teachers had to develop an online presence almost overnight, parents were now tasked with teaching their children, and many parents and teachers not only had to support their own children's learning at home, but also had their own work to do. This created stresses on those in schools in ways that had not been experienced before and school leaders were tasked with not only overseeing the learning, but also the wellbeing of their whole school community, in ways that had had not even been considered just a few months before. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic seems to have changed education again. Parveen et al. ([10], p. 10) conducted a literature review identifying the leadership challenges brought about by the disruption caused by the pandemic. They found that the most significant challenges related to "(1) self-care, wellbeing, and safe school opening; (2) learning continuity and quality of education; (3) ensuring distributive leadership; (4) emotional and mental health; (5) equity gaps; (6) digital divides; and (7) cyber security of online education". A report by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) [11] suggests a "Three T's framework" comprising triage, transition, and transform as a means for helping principals to understand and respond to challenges. Triage is an "initial sorting process on the basis

of urgency. . .to separate the now from later". Transition focuses on increasing "stability and reducing uncertainty for teachers, other school staff, students and their families". Transform "may be less about minimising the loss of student learning time and more about the role schools play in emotional and social recovery".

We cannot yet make judgements about whether this is just a brief interruption to regular programming or will have a long-term impact on how school leaders view their role into the future; however, recent reports, in many parts of the world, suggest that school systems are having difficulty finding school leaders. An Australian report [12] suggests that one in three principals is facing stress and burnout.

This special issue focused on transforming educational leadership and looked at both a specific practice (transformational leadership), but also considered how educational leadership has transformed itself over time. Using the articles in this Special Issue, the current paper considers the changes made to school leadership during the S-curve that we might call the era of decentralisation, and then makes some tentative comments about how school leadership might need to further transform to adapt to the new S-curve, which might be called the post-COVID-19 era.

2. Educational Change since the 1980s

The introductory article [1] in this Special Issue traced our understanding of educational leadership, and its connections to business administration, from ancient times until around 50 years ago. It argued that those involved in educational leadership, like business leadership, perhaps fell into three categories: those who made decisions (administrators), those who were tasked with implementing those decisions (managers), and those who produced the outcomes required (workers). Within an educational framework, governments would be the administrators, education departments (and those that worked in them at central or regional levels) would be the managers, and those at schools would be the workers. So, for most of history, school leaders (principals, headteachers) within government education systems would just be seen as workers. Boggs argued [2] that principals were seen as "odd-job and clerical workers whose business it is to keep the machinery well-oiled and smoothly running while other people perform the higher professional functions" (p 10). As such, historian Kate Rousmaniere [3] argued that the "principalship is missing from both the political history of school administration and the social history of schools. It's as if the principal did not exist at all" (p. 4).

In the first half of the 20th century, most Western countries had focused successfully on increasing the proportion of their populations having access to schools, both through compulsory education laws and by increasing the number and locality of schools. As well, students were encouraged to stay at school for more years by increasing curriculum offerings. After a period of rapid population growth in the 1950s and 1960s after the Second World War, a downturn in birth rates in the 1970s in many parts of the Western world followed, and countries turned their attention away from expanding education towards assessing the quality of what was offered. But as Bisschoff and Rhodes argued [13], not all countries have had similar histories when it comes to how education was developed and structured. Some countries have had compulsory education for around 150 years, but for others, an education system was not created until the 1970s or even later. Some countries did not have a single university until the 1990s. The current article focuses on changes in the Western world, considered by authors in the current Special Issue. Although other countries (such as Malaysia—[14] in the current Special Issue) have not had the same lengthy history, they have attempted to reach the same levels of performance in much shorter time periods. In this sense, what was trialled by the Western countries was often taken up by other countries as well.

Research that considered how schools affected the equality of educational outcomes emerged in various countries in the 1960s and 1970s, with reports such as those by Coleman et al. [15] in the United States, Plowden [16] in the United Kingdom, and the Karmel Report [17] in Australia being influential. The Coleman Report, which investigated the

relationship between the equality of educational outcomes and school effectiveness, has been identified as a key report in the development of early school effectiveness research in the United States. The conclusion of this report can be summed up by the following paragraph ([15], p. 325):

> Schools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context. . . this very lack of an independent effect means that the inequalities imposed on children by their home, neighbourhood and peer environment are carried along to become the inequalities with which they confront adult life at the end of school. For equality of educational opportunity must imply a strong effect of schools that is independent of the child's immediate environment, and that strong independence is not present in American schools.

Coleman found that schools accounted for only a small part of the variance in pupil achievement, a finding that was replicated by other large-scale studies such as those by Jencks et al. [18] and Thorndike [19].

Despite changes being argued for in many parts of the world, the formal centralised relationship between government and schools lasted until the 1980s, when arguments to encourage higher levels of local participation in the governance of schools started to take hold. In Australia, the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission ([17], p. 10) had argued for "less rather than more centralised control over the operation of schools. Responsibility should be devolved as far as possible upon the people involved in the actual task of schooling, in consultation with the parents of the pupils whom they teach and, at senior levels, with the students themselves".

Such arguments led to real moves connecting the quality of education with how schools would be structured, managed, and led later in the 1970s. Governmental concerns for school effectiveness in the United Kingdom and the United States of America were exacerbated in the 1980s by these countries having a diminished status as economic superpowers of the world, when other countries such as Japan and West Germany attracted increased economic and political status in world affairs. In the United Kingdom, works in the 1960s such as *The Home and the School* [20] and *Parents and Teachers: Partners or Rivals* [21] considered the relationship between family background and success at school. When these were followed up in the 1970s by such documents as *The Crisis in Education* [4] and *Black Paper 1977* [22], the standard of students' academic performance in the United Kingdom became a critical issue. The British Government's response to these concerns was the establishment of the Assessment of Performance Unit within the Department of Education and Science in 1974.

In the USA, formal 1980s reports such as *A Nation at Risk* [5], *Education and Economic Progress* [23], *Investing in Our Children* [24], and *Who Will Teach Our Children?* [25] indicated the level of government and public concern about the issue and created a climate in which the relationship between education and economic competitiveness on the international market became inextricably linked. This led to the situation where schools were charged with turning out, in the most cost effective way, the maximum number of graduates with the "right" skills and knowledge as possible. As Chapman ([26], p. 5) pointed out, "such pressures have forced educational authorities to reassess educational needs both qualitatively and quantitatively".

It could be argued that the US standards movement actually started when *A Nation at Risk* was published. Comments by the lead author, James J. Harvey, such as "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people" and "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war" set the tone for reform. Bogotch, Townsend, and Acker-Hocevar ([27], p. 130) reported:

> It is interesting to note that in the 1980s and 1990s, when discussions of the changing nature of leadership were at their height, the most innovative activities that emerged were driven from the top down. During this period the intervention of government into the knowledge and management issues surrounding schools led to perhaps the greatest period of change in school history.

One example of this top-down change happened in Victoria, Australia ([28], p. 4), when the new government of 1982 changed the responsibilities of school councils to promote higher levels of decision-making at the school level, with parents and the local community involved, with the system providing support, but also overseeing issues related to effectiveness and equity issues for educational outcomes. Previously, school councils had been advisory bodies to the principal (who, in turn, was charged with implementing decisions made by the centre) and supported the school in fundraising for additional buildings and keeping the school grounds tidy. Now, they had real decisions to make about the directions the school would take. This changed the role of both the council and the principal and further government decisions led to the strengthening of both roles.

By 1992, a new conservative state government had implemented the *Schools of the Future* program [29], where the key features included increased responsibilities for decision-making in the areas of curriculum, financial management, staffing, and policy for school councils and principals at the school site. The major implication of this development was a substantial increase in the role of the principal to lead, rather than just manage, the school. Townsend ([30], p. 5) argued that the underlying rationale for *Schools of the Future* was "that quality outcomes of schooling can only be assured when decision making takes place at the local level". The introduction of a school charter as the central accountability document provided schools themselves with "the opportunity to determine the future character and goals of the school".

Part of the argument for changing the way schools were managed was that in doing so, schools would become more effective. However, as Caldwell pointed out ([31], p. ii), there were other reasons as well.

> Forces which have shaped current and emerging patterns of school management include a concern for efficiency in the management of public education, effects of the recession and financial crisis, complexity in the provision of education, empowerment of teachers and parents, the need for flexibility and responsiveness, the search for school effectiveness and school improvement, interest in choice and market forces in schooling, the politics of education, the establishment of new frameworks for industrial relations and the emergence of a national imperative.

However, there was substantial criticism about the reason why decentralisation was occurring (for instance, Bell [32] argued that the main thrust of the legislative changes in the United Kingdom in the late 80s and early 90s was to create a "centrally controlled national curriculum that gives children an entitlement to specific curriculum content and enables direct comparisons to be made between all schools through national assessment. . . Quality here is conceptualised in terms of specific outcomes, test results, and efficient use of resources rather than of processes or relative achievements" (p. 3)). This might be seen as an instance where "devolution of responsibility" could be considered as a "displacement of blame" [33] that reflected a "naive confidence in schools' ability to effect change without support" ([34], p. 189). However, the use of the school effectiveness research to justify moves toward a greater degree of decentralization was a powerful argument [35]:

> . . .when we do look at schools that have improved, or if we look at schools that are so-called effective schools, we've seen that in all cases, people have taken the initiative to make decisions for themselves, to solve their own problems, to set their own priorities. They've usually been schools that have been able to select their own staff in some way. So the characteristics of improving schools one can find in a system of self-managing schools.

However, later, Caldwell, who had been instrumental in theorising self-managing schools [36], admitted "There is also no doubt that evidence of a direct cause-and-effect relationship between self-management and improved outcomes is minimal". But the school effectiveness research since the late 1980s has been very influential. It is to this research that we now turn.

2.1. Fifty Years of Educational Research: Effectiveness, Improvement, and Innovation

The early reports of Coleman et al. [15] and Jencks et al. [18] stimulated a large body of research on both sides of the Atlantic that attempted to establish that schools themselves, in addition to family or social backgrounds, made a difference to the educational achievements of the students passing through them. The early school effectiveness research focused on two main issues: achievement and social justice. Edmonds brought these two things together when he argued the following ([37], p. 16):

> Specifically, I require that an effective school bring the children of the poor to those minimal masteries of basic school skills that now describe minimally successful pupil performance for the children of the middle class.

Results from research in the 1980s clearly established that schools did make a difference, and that pupil achievement was not just a product of socioeconomic background. In fact, Murphy ([38], pp. 166–168) argued that there are four factors that can be considered as the legacy of school effectiveness. The most fundamental of the four is that "given appropriate conditions, all children can learn". Others were a rejection of the historical perspective that good schools and bad schools could be identified by the socioeconomic status of the area in which they were located; a rejection of the view that "poor academic performance and deviant behaviour have been defined as problems of individual children or their families"; and that "the better schools are more tightly linked—structurally, symbolically and culturally—than the less effective ones".

Reynolds and colleagues [39] identified four phases of school effectiveness research, the first being the reaction to the seminal studies of Coleman et al. and Jencks et al. Subsequent phases came about as methodologies and research objectives became more nuanced. Phase two saw the use of multilevel methodologies [40] and methodologically sophisticated studies that considered differential effects upon students of different background characteristics, their size, and their impact in the long term. Phase three started to explore why schools had different effects, where "the black box of what happens in schools is opened" ([41], p. 66) and research started to consider "input/process/output" of what happened at school, rather than just "input-output". The fourth phase saw increasing internationalisation of the field and collaboration between school effectiveness and school improvement researchers. During this phase, international collections of research were published (for example, [42,43]), demonstrating that the school effectiveness movement was something happening in many countries simultaneously and led to an understanding that schools perhaps should be judged by their own progress over time rather than being compared to other schools that may have very different circumstances facing them.

However, like the move towards school self-management, the school effectiveness research was not without its critics. The early research was the topic for a debate at the American Educational Research Association conference in April 2000 between proponents and detractors of school effectiveness research. Four papers [44–47] were presented. The three main issues that were raised as criticisms of the research were "the overclaiming of SER; the continued under-theorising of SER and the inability of SER to control political use of its findings" ([48], p. 115).

These criticisms brought into focus three areas for consideration: whether or not the definition of "school effectiveness" was broad enough, either in terms of the range of activity that it included or the students that it served (put simply "effectiveness for what?" and "effectiveness for whom?", elaborated later in [49]); whether the methodologies used by school effectiveness researchers and their analyses justified their conclusions on differential student outcomes; and whether the relationship between school effectiveness

research findings and the political use of these to change education systems and educational practice could be justified. What these criticisms did was flag the need for considerations related to school culture, relationships, multiple outcomes, and the development of self, to be included within the concept of effectiveness, which, over time, saw multiple changes in the way in which "effectiveness" was defined.

One important shift in effectiveness research was the move from considering "school effectiveness" to considering "educational effectiveness", where the research saw "a dynamic, not static, set of relationships and moved away from seeing education in particular as an inherently stable set of arrangements towards one that sees the various 'levels' of the educational system interacting and achieving variable outcomes" [50].

Because the dynamic model of educational effectiveness recognised that the influences on student achievement are multilevel, the model is multilevel as well (see [50], p. 295). There are four different levels: student characteristics; teacher and classroom factors; the school level; and the system level. This suggests that there needs to be not only support (through leadership development) for school leaders, but some consideration needs to be given to the possibility of providing training programs for system leaders, at regional or central office, as well. Just as principals need the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to lead teachers and their school communities, there may also be knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes required for system leaders whose task is to support a team of principals.

The movement towards an international use of the term "educational effectiveness" was confirmed with the publication of *The International Handbook of Educational Effectiveness and Improvement: Research Policy and Practice* [51]. When research of effectiveness is undertaken in the future, there is an expectation that the research will go beyond what happens in classrooms and at the school level and will consider the ways in which systems support what happens at the school as well. Sometime in the not-so-distant future, we will stop talking about effective schools and start talking about effective school systems.

2.2. From School Effectiveness to School Improvement

Connecting theory to practice is not easy to do. It is hard to scale up improvements from a specific set of schools undertaking a sponsored research and development program to a whole system ([52], p. 2):

> . . .reformers have invariably found that it is difficult to improve learning in a sustained way across more than a handful of schools at any one time.

Brian Caldwell became a key player in the movement towards self-managing schools internationally. His work with Jim Spinks proposed a system of self-managing schools [53]. The Victorian *Schools of the Future* program created a system where the schools were self-managing but were framed by a state-approved curriculum and standards framework. Schools were given their own budgets, and they developed a school charter that embodied both state and local priorities as a framework for accountability. The charter's goals and objectives were assessed over a three-year period, when a new charter that built upon previous school achievements would be created [54].

The concept of school-self management was necessarily accompanied by the concept of school self-evaluation. MacBeath and McGlynn [55] argued "while the evaluation of schools' performance has traditionally been the work of government inspectors and other external agencies, it is now widely believed that schools should also evaluate themselves". The Scottish government took up the challenge of inviting schools to evaluate themselves and supported them with the document *How good is our school?* [56]. They identified the relationship between school effectiveness and school improvement as an "inwards (knowing ourselves inside out), outwards (learning from what happens elsewhere), forwards (exploring what the future might hold and planning how to get there)" approach. They argued for a triangulation of evidence: quantitative data, direct observation, and people's views when engaging with specific self-evaluation questions.

One thing that has been consistent, over all the years and forms of research, is that leadership has been identified as a key element for the development of any school effec-

tiveness or school improvement process. The key to ensuring that the need for the school to improve over time is focused upon, and that school goals are hopefully achieved over time, is the leadership shown by the principal, the school council or board, and others in the leadership team. An effective school will have effective school leadership, and it is to this that we now turn.

3. Leadership and School Effectiveness in a Time of Self-Managing Schools

Late into the 1970s, leadership (or management) of schools was system-based and hierarchical. Ministers of education made decisions that were implemented by education departments. The fidelity of the implementations was ensured by inspectors or superintendents who oversaw the work of school principals. School principals' responsibilities were to implement (faithfully) the decisions made by others and to ensure that teachers followed the requirements related to their employment. The 1980s and 1990s saw that hierarchical approach start to change as more and more responsibilities were shifted from the system level to the school level. This was brought about, in part, when business leadership terminologies entered educational conversations.

An OECD report ([57], p. 4) argued:

> As countries struggle to transform their educational systems to prepare all young people with the knowledge and skills needed to function in a rapidly changing world, the roles and expectations for school leaders have changed radically. They are no longer expected to be merely good managers but leaders of schools as learning organizations. Effective school leadership is increasingly viewed as key to large-scale education reform and to improved educational outcomes.

The standards movement, the school effectiveness research, and moves toward school self-management changed the responsibilities of the person in charge at school. There have been multiple studies over the years that have highlighted the importance of school leadership for the effectiveness of schools. From the early research of Edmonds [37], to the dynamic approach to educational effectiveness [50], right through to Dempster, et al.'s [58] and Grissom et al.'s [59] reviews of the impact of principals on student learning and school effectiveness, the evidence is clear. The school leader has always been seen as a critical, if not the main, identified component of school improvement.

In 2006, the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) sponsored a meta-analysis titled "Seven Strong Claims about School Leadership" [60]. This study was reviewed and updated by Day et al. [61], who identified ten strong claims, but with a great deal of overlap. Later, Leithwood et al. [62] revisited their original seven claims. The seven claims identified the importance of school leadership for teaching and learning by influencing what happened in the classrooms, that there were certain things that all good leaders did, that how a leader acted was as important as what the leader did, that distributed leadership was important, but so too were the "personal leadership resources" that the school leader was able to use.

The decade long International Successful Principalship Project (ISPP) produced more than 100 case studies of successful principal leadership [63–65]. The I SPP confirmed that leadership by successful principals comprised the four core dimensions of setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organisation, and managing the instructional programme previously articulated by Leithwood and colleagues [60,66] but there were additional practices such as strategic problem solving, articulating a set of core values, building trust and being visible in the school, building a safe and secure environment, introducing productive forms of instruction to staff, and coalition-building [67].

Grissom et al. ([59], Foreword) argued that "the impact of an effective principal has likely been understated". Using six studies as the data base for their findings, they concluded that the effect of an above-average principal was about the same as the effect of an above-average teacher, much more than had been previously assumed in Leithwood, et al. [60]. However, they also argued that "principals' effects on students come largely through their effects on teachers, including how principals hire, retain, develop, and

encourage teachers and create appropriate conditions for teaching and learning" (p. xiv). They further argued that "how principals approach school leadership directly affects schools' outcomes" (p. xv).

This suggests that school leaders in the modern world need to go beyond simply knowing a series of specific steps to follow and now need to consider the context in which those steps will be taken. Any list of what a principal must do in itself does not take into account the differences brought about by geography and culture. The school effectiveness research has shown us that context matters. As Hopkins [68] points out, leading a poorly performing school is different to leading one that is doing well. So, simply implementing the list of expectations handed down by departments in the same way but in different schools does not work. It is not only what we know that is important, but how we use that knowledge—how we implement it in practice—that becomes critical, especially when it comes to the task of education.

Bogotch and Townsend ([69], p. 3) argued:

> Educational leadership, like many other facets of human life, can be looked at from two different points of view. We have chosen to call these points of view the 'what' and the 'how'. The 'what' in this instance is the knowledge required to do the job well. It is 'knowing' about curriculum, about management, about human relations and about the various factors, both inside and outside the school, that are required to keep those within the school, students, teachers, and others, safe and productive. However, it is only when this 'knowing' is joined by the 'how' that school leadership is successful. The 'how' in this instance is the set of processes used by the school leader to communicate, implement, evaluate, and relate the knowledge base to those with whom the leader interacts, together with the attitudes and values that are shared between both leader and followers. We would argue that the practice of educational leadership is artistry, when these two factors come together in a way that promotes both simultaneously.

The *what* of school leadership is to a large extent determined by the standards of school leadership identified by governments or departments of education as a means for providing consistency across the system. In some parts of the world, departments of education adopted a market approach to education [70], similar in nature to what some large corporations were doing. In business, each individual office within a corporation needed to demonstrate its profitability or be closed; departments of education now needed each self-managing school to be "successful" or face some form of intervention. In the most extreme case, in the United States, schools were reconstituted [71], where school leaders and staff were all fired over the summer and students arrived in the new school year to a totally new regime. Such situations placed an enormous burden on school leaders and increased their responsibilities.

In [72], Townsend compared what key western countries suggest are important leadership and managerial skills for school leaders within their systems. These are the standards by which good school leadership can be judged. Table 1 (from ([72], p. 6)) compares five jurisdictions with similar national standards for school leadership professional practices. All are Western countries, and it might be assumed that other countries may apply different or additional standards for school leadership. However, Yokota's article [73] in this Special Issue suggests that the standards identified below form a basis for those adopted in other countries.

What Table 1 demonstrates is that in a generic sense, all jurisdictions place emphasis on similar professional practices. They are teaching and learning, development of people and culture, improvement and accountability, school management, and community engagement. However, each of the jurisdictions uses different terminology and seems to place emphasis on different areas based perhaps on structural circumstances, which differ from country to country. This leads to the position that, although countries may have similar overall approaches, each one will have their own unique focus and agenda. For instance, where New Zealand focuses on building school culture, the United Kingdom

identifies professional development, and the United States considers professional ethics and capacity-building. In the current Special Issue, Cheng [74] argued that leaders must lead and facilitate "multiple school functions (such as technological functions, economic functions, social functions, political functions, cultural functions and learning functions) . . . in a new era of multiplicities and complexities in education" (p. 1). This seems to be another list of what school leaders need to do but is still similar to that identified in Table 1. What Table 1 and Cheng's list show is the contested nature of not only education, but what school leaders must do.

Table 1. National principal/head teacher standards in selected countries.

Australia	New Zealand	England and Wales	USA	Canada (Alberta)
Leading teaching and learning	Pedagogy	Teaching	Curriculum, instruction, and assessment	Providing instructional leadership
		Curriculum and assessment		Supporting the application of foundational knowledge about First Nations people
		Behaviour	Community of care and support for students	
		Additional and special educational needs		
Developing self and others	Culture	Professional development	Ethics and professional norms	Fostering effective relationships
			Professional community for teachers and staff	Embodying visionary leadership
			Professional capacity of school personnel	Developing leadership capacity
Leading improvement, innovation and change		School improvement	Mission, vision, and core values	Modelling a commitment to professional learning
			School improvement	Leading a learning community
Leading the management of the school	Systems	Organisational management	Operations and management	Managing school operations and resources
		Governance and accountability		
Engaging and working with the community	Partnerships and networks	Working in partnership	Meaningful engagement of families and community	Understanding and responding to the larger societal context
			Equity and cultural responsiveness	

The main dilemma for school leaders into the future, however, is that it is likely that all six forms of leadership discussed by Cheng [74] might be expected at once, something that might be beyond any individual. It is here that transformational leadership, where the charismatic leader takes responsibility for everything, suffers from the concerns identified in this Special Issue by English and Ehrich [75] and previously by Gronn [76]. The heroic leader is no longer a viable concept and the need for other forms of leadership, such as distributed leadership or leadership for learning—both of which refer to the importance of sharing leadership (and sharing accountability)—might need to be considered. But as Townsend and Bogotch ([77], p. 215) argue: "...when state mandates, educational laws, leadership standards, ministerial pronouncements, curricular designs and professional development programs are presented as ready-made answers to be delivered by school

administrators to teachers and students then we are failing to make education come alive in ourselves and in others".

Bogotch and Townsend [69] argued that the *how* of school leadership was just as important as the *what* of school leadership. The movement of responsibility from the system level to the school level in many school systems around the world in the 1980s and 1990s changed the way in which the administration of schools was undertaken. This movement has accelerated over the past 30 years to the point where we now see school leadership in a different light. Three major theories about the role of school leaders occurred in the literature subsequent to the development of instructional leadership, transformational leadership [78], distributed leadership [79–81], and leadership for learning [82], and these resulted in new understandings of leadership in schools.

These shifts in understanding are discussed in Townsend ([83], p. 6): The first shift is that leadership previously was seen as being the sole responsibility of a single person. There is now an acceptance that leadership is a collective activity, as the increasingly complex environment that schools face cannot be addressed by a single person for an extended length of time, no matter how skilled and committed that person is. The second shift is that leadership previously was seen as being positional. Principals were the leaders because they were the principal. Now, we see leadership as being an activity. Principals now must understand how to lead other people and have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enables them to do so. The third shift is that we used to think that leadership was generic. If you could lead in one place, you could lead anywhere. We now recognise that leadership is context and purpose specific and that leading a school that is successful is not the same as leading a school that is not. Leading a small rural school is not the same as leading a large inner-city comprehensive school. Leaders must know why they are leading and be sure to build a common, moral purpose within the school community if they are to be successful.

Attempts at identifying the *how* of school leadership are often connected to establishing strong learning in that most basic of skills, literacy. Hill and Crevola ([84], p. 13) identified eight activities that a school should focus on when trying to promote whole school improvement: beliefs and understandings; leadership and coordination; standards and targets; monitoring and assessment; classroom teaching strategies; professional learning teams; school and class organisation; intervention and special assistance; and home, school, and community partnerships. However, underpinning the other seven was the category of "Beliefs and understandings" (to the extent that in the graphic design of the model beliefs and understandings was the central point around which the other seven "spokes" revolved). They argued, "It is important, for example, that there is a belief in the capacity of all students to achieve high standards given sufficient time and support" (p. 2) and "Beliefs that enable effective teaching to occur need to be accompanied by expert knowledge. Effective teachers are professionals who are able to articulate what they do and why they teach the way they do" (p. 3). Townsend [85] suggested that beliefs and understandings were connected and interacted in a continuous way, so that first, teachers needed to believe that all students could learn, which then involved developing an understanding of why some students were not learning. This leads to teachers developing an understanding of what they need to learn (and do) to enable students to start learning, and be supported in ways that help them learn, which then required teachers to have the belief that they (the teachers) could do this. It could be argued that beliefs and understandings together make up our moral purpose. In this case, the school leader's task is to have shared beliefs and understandings around the moral purpose of the school [86,87].

Since the 1980s, leadership theories have been used to describe what "good" leaders are and do. Many of them focused on specific characteristics (moral leadership, team leadership, and authentic leadership, among others), but others, it might be suggested, encompassed a much more broadly based consideration. An investigation of four of the theories of school leadership that have attained some prominence over the past four decades may be instructive when looking at the *how* of school leadership.

3.1. Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership emerged in the early 1980s and was researched and conceptualised by Hallinger and Murphy [88]. The authors proposed three main dimensions—defining the school mission, managing the educational program, and promoting a positive school learning climate—with eleven specific tasks that are undertaken within those dimensions. However, the terminology used when identifying the specific tasks show that the principal is expected to do the heavy lifting when it comes to decision-making and managing implementation. The two responsibilities within "defining the school's mission" are framing the school's goals and communicating the school's goals; "managing the instructional program" identifies three leadership functions: supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress; and "promoting a positive school learning climate" includes protecting instructional time, providing incentives for teachers, providing incentives for learning (students), promoting professional development, and maintaining high visibility. Each of these verbs indicate actions from a dominant position. Ng ([89], p. 17) argues that for "managing the instructional program", "This dimension is broader in scope and intent than the other two. It conforms to the notion that effective schools create an 'academic press' through developing high standards and expectations and a culture of continuous improvement". With the principal being in charge of providing incentives for both teachers and students, it could be argued that this is a classic example of management (transactional leadership) in practice. Clearly, the principal is the one that makes all the critical decisions within the school. Such a leadership approach fits very well into the "command and control" model that had existed in education departments around the world for most of school history. It was also evident that the American system continued to maintain this form of control when other school systems were starting to investigate other forms of leadership within their schools. For Hallinger, "effective instructional leadership results when leaders align both instructional and managerial roles with their personal values".

The managerial approach of instructional leadership as it was originally conceptualised might be considered as a form of transactional leadership, where schools, principals, and teachers are rewarded for following successfully the requirements set down by the system but in other cases are punished if the required standards of student achievement are not met. Schools that had been "reconstituted", showed little academic improvement but came at a substantial human cost (see, for instance, [70] above).

Leithwood ([78], p. 8) argued that instructional leadership had been an idea that served many schools well in the 1980s and early 1990s, but that restructuring initiatives (by then happening in many countries) suggested that this form of leadership "no longer appears to capture the heart of what school administration will have to become". This supported Sarason [90], who blamed "the predictable failure of educational reform" on the relationships between each of the players in schools: administrators, teachers, students, and parents. Leithwood proposed transformational leadership as "a more appropriate range of practices" than instructional leadership and argued that "it ought to subsume instructional leadership as the dominant image of school administration, at least during the 1990s".

Although a focus on teaching to ensure certain student outcomes still maintains a strong position for leadership practice, whether school systems are centralised or not, there is a tendency for other terms, such as "learning-centred leadership" to now be associated with the instructional leadership focus. A second change of approach in more recent times has been the consideration that other school leaders are now more actively involved in the processes of instructional leadership, which originally focused solely on the work of the principal.

3.2. Transformational Leadership

The overarching theme of transformational leadership is the need to build relationships with teachers in ways that would support their working together, rather than simply

managing and supervising what they did as individuals. Leithwood argued that school administrators needed to focus their attention on "using facilitative power to make second-order changes in their schools" ([78], p. 9). Leithwood's early research proposed three fundamental goals: helping staff develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture [91]; fostering teacher development [92]; and helping them to solve problems together more effectively [93]. Later in their review of transformational leadership studies, Leithwood and Jantzi [94] argued that four conclusions about transformational leadership were warranted: effects on perceptions of organizational effectiveness are significant and large, and although less well documented and uniform, they are nevertheless modestly positive but significant; that evidence about its effect on student outcomes is promising though limited in amount; and effects on student engagement in school are also positive, but modest. These findings suggest that Leithwood is prepared to accept that the results from the research are moderate.

In this Special Issue, Wilson Heenan, Lafferty, and McNamara [95] provided a practical example of how transformational leadership is perceived by primary principals. They found that transformational leadership was seen "as a sustainable model" (pp. 14–15) but that "Practical day-to-day challenges of leadership positions in schools were regarded as hampering the feasibility of enactment given administration overload, with the importance of sharing leadership responsibility" (p. 18). Also in this Special Issue, Yokota argued ([73], p. 6): "transformational leadership itself cannot evade its own limitations of focusing the role of a single visionary, and sometimes charismatic, leader". This point of view supports English and Ehrich's argument in the current Special Issue [75] that "the mythologies, battles, trials and triumphs of the heroes of ancient, medieval, and modern times. . . all bear a striking resemblance to current portraits of the transformational leader" (p. 1). English and Ehrich argue that scientific analysis cannot prove or disprove the effectiveness of this form of leadership and suggest that, instead, an aesthetic lens would enable researchers to collect "subjective knowledge about leadership in a range of contexts, including educational leadership" (p. 11).

It is clear that the main issue with transformational leadership is the critical focus on the leader as central to any and all development ("the hero"). It would seem that a charismatic leader that focuses on the development of staff in ways that will support improvement in student learning is one step further on from instructional leadership, but is still not enough for the rapidly changing, complex times we are currently living in. The suggestion that the addition of distributed leadership to transformational leadership indicates a need to review this form of school leadership as well.

3.3. Distributed Leadership

The two major conceptual discussions of distributed leadership, rooted in activity theory [96] and distributed cognition, [97] come from Gronn [76,98] in Australia and Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond [80,81] in the United States. Gronn [76] suggested:

> The first known reference to distributed leadership was in the field of social psychology in the early-1950s. The concept then lay dormant for more than three decades until it surfaced briefly once again in social psychology, and then again in the early-1990s in organisation theory.

Gronn described distributed leadership as "emergent work-related influence" (p. 17) that encouraged a shift in focus from the traits and roles of "leaders" to the shared activities and functions of "leadership". He further argued that distributed leadership was not about adding leaders to the system but aimed to facilitate pluralistic engagement to generate concerted action. Gronn used the activity theory of Engestrom [96] as a tool to establish a bridge between agency and structure leading to where the product of a group of people working together is greater than the sum of their individual actions.

Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond [80] argued that distributed leadership was actually a new way of *thinking* about leadership. Later, Spillane ([99], p. 144) explained:

> Distributed leadership is first and foremost about leadership practice rather than leaders or their roles, functions, routines, and structures. . . A distributed perspective frames leadership practice in a particular way; leadership practice is viewed as a product of the interactions of school leaders, followers, and their situation.

Spillane and his colleagues argue that distributed leadership is leadership stretched over a group of individuals and that the tasks are accomplished through interaction between multiple leaders. It is a practice that is distributed over leaders, followers, and their situations, and incorporates multiple activities.

However, some scholars have suggested that distributed leadership remains a somewhat fuzzy concept that cannot be clearly connected to practice. Bogotch and Shields [100], when considering how educational leadership impacted on social justice, identified one of the key issues with distributed leadership—although education systems might promote distributed leadership as part of a policy framework, in practice, it relied on the dispositions of the principal for it to happen at the school level.

> By the late 1990s, academic leadership theory in education was moving from images of heroic leaders at the top of a hierarchy to the notion of leadership as distributed across multiple members of an organization [79,81]. While diffuse notions of leadership among school professionals became popular, such diffusion typically ended at the school door.

Leithwood et al. ([101], p. 280) were even more negative about the impact of distributed leadership, suggesting that the proponents of distributed leadership had failed. . .

> . . .to assess the contribution of greater leadership distribution to the long list of desirable outcomes typically invoked by advocates—greater student learning, more democratic practices, greater commitment by staffs to the mission of the organization, increased professional development for a wider range of organizational members, better use of intelligence distributed throughout the organization outside those in formal roles, and the like.

All three leadership theories already mentioned have had critics suggest that ultimately each one cannot stand on its own as a totally effective leadership practice. With instructional leadership, the focus is solely on student outcomes, and the leader's role is to "manage" teachers and the school environment so that everything is focused on these outcomes. This could be considered as a remainder from the "command and control" version of leadership. The modesty of the impact of transformational leadership practice on both student outcomes and engagement, together with the view that transformational leadership contains an underlying perception of the leader as a "hero", suggests that although it may have positive effects on leader–follower relations, it cannot be considered as being a leadership model that answers all the questions about school leadership. Distributed leadership, with its focus on leadership practice, by connecting leaders, followers, and situations, and with it focusing on *how* leadership is distributed rather than *what* elements of leadership are shared or undertaken by followers, has little focus on what outcomes this has for students. This suggests that it might not be as theoretically powerful as either instructional leadership or transformational leadership, both of which have a strong focus on student achievement. In this Special Issue, Wilson Heenan, Lafferty, and McNamara argued for a "hybrid model of transformational and distributed school leadership" ([95], p. 32). It might be argued that taking the positive elements of all three theories to create something different might be the way to go.

The three leadership theories mentioned above had the benefit of having powerful research groups in North America that were able to generate many publications related to each (although Peter Gronn from Australia was influential in theorising distributed leadership). One thing that was common however to all three was that many of the citations (up to 90% of the citations within any particular article) in the early research also used North American sources. It might be argued that North America, with its somewhat

unique system structure where national, state, and district policies all impacted on schools, together with large amounts of financial support, and the academic strength and influence of its research, created the conditions where these three approaches gained acceptance in other countries as well. Instructional leadership in particular has maintained a prominent position across many American states [102]. However, as can be seen from the above, none of the theories has gained universal acceptance, again reflecting the idea that anything about education is "essentially contested".

In the United Kingdom, with far less research influence, and a very different educational structure (national, local authority, school), a different theory, leadership for learning, that seems to encompass many of the strengths of the other three, was being developed. The relative importance of this theory can be seen from the fact that both Hallinger (with Heck) [103] and Murphy (with others) [104] have used the term "leadership for learning" in more recent times. However, Ref. [103] suggests that leadership for learning ". . .represents a blend of two earlier leadership conceptualizations: instructional leadership and transformational leadership" (p. 237). In addition, seven of the eight factors that describe [104]'s version of leadership for learning neatly fit into the original three main leadership responsibilities identified two decades previously in instructional leadership. The one new criterion seems to relate to the leader's need to be able to find and use resources that support learning.

However, an investigation of leadership for learning is warranted, to establish how it might be similar to the three other mainstream leadership theories, and how it might be different, in our search for a leadership approach that will support schools into the future.

3.4. Leadership for Learning

Leadership for learning was developed by the University of Cambridge through its Carpe Diem project [82]. Leadership for learning describes five leadership principles: a focus on learning (but for everyone in the school, not just students), focusing on the conditions that support learning, engaging in dialogue about learning, shared leadership, and shared accountability. In this sense, it might be considered to have a focus on student achievement similar to instructional leadership, but as MacBeath and Townsend ([105], pp. 1245–1246) point out:

> Whereas much of the instructional leadership literature reduces learning to 'outcomes', leadership for learning embraces a much wider, developmental view of learning. Nor is its focus exclusively on student achievement. It sees things through a wide angle lens, embracing professional, organisational and leadership learning. It understands the vitality of their interconnections and the climate they create for exploration, inquiry and creativity. Its concern is for all of those who are part of a learning community.

A similar argument might be made as to the differences between transformational leadership and leadership for learning. The focus of transformational leadership is squarely on the leader, although there are some similarities in the attempt to transform schools into learning organisations. Leadership for learning has shared leadership similarities to distributed leadership, but uses a different approach to leading, inasmuch as the leader is to be seen, through dialogue, as part of a team of leaders "embracing professional, organisational and leadership learning". What leadership for learning provided was the opportunity to consider associated forms of leadership that extended and added detail to the understanding of leadership that was designed to transform schools and to encourage school leaders to become much more than managers of others.

Dempster [106] responded a to a question posed in [107]: "Are instructional leadership and leadership for learning two sides of the same coin or are they two very different approaches to leading school improvement?" (p. 403). He argued that "leadership for learning (LfL) is very different from the more widely known and more frequently cited concept, instructional leadership" but that "there are discernible elements of instructional leadership resident in leadership for learning". Instructional leadership "was individu-

alist in perspective with power vested in the principal, reinforcing leadership as supervision", a position that has changed over the years since "to shared instructional leadership (Marks and Printy, 2003), to transformational leadership (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Leithwood, 1992), to integrated leadership (Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe, 2008), to distributed and networked leadership (Harris and Spillane, 2008; Johnson, Dempster, and Wheeley, 2016; Spillane, 2006)".

He identified seven themes associated with leadership for learning:

- Embracing moral purpose;
- Listening to student voice;
- Promoting learning and pedagogy;
- Engaging people;
- Downplaying hierarchy;
- Networking leadership for collective impact;
- Understanding context;

and concluded:

> . . .we have come a long way from the three dimensions and ten functions Hallinger arrived at in a review of instructional leadership in 2005. While (a) defining the school's mission, (b) managing the instructional programme and (c) promoting a positive school learning climate are observable in leadership for learning practice today, they are there, not as an unmodified mantra for principals, but as elements embedded in a much more comprehensive view of what it takes to lead learning for student and school improvement. . .leadership for learning, seen in this light, is much more than instructional leadership. It relies less on positional power and more on principals, teachers, students, and community agents exercising autonomy in collective actions committed to making a difference in the life journey of learners.
>
> ([106], pp. 417–418)

Both Leithwood and Dempster have suggested that Instructional Leadership might be seen as a successful school leadership approach for its time, but that its time has passed.

One way of looking at the issue might be to ask school leaders: "At the end of your career would you like to be known as a leader of instruction, or a leader for learning?". How they answer that question would have implications for how they would go about leading their school. While the various principal standards indicate *what* we expect from school leaders, in some cases, at various levels of proficiency depending on principals' level of experience, the best practice research looks at *how* school leaders go about their business. In some cases, these align, but in other cases, they do not, as knowing what needs to be accomplished is not the same as knowing how you go about accomplishing it.

What we might conclude from recent research into school leadership is the movement towards higher levels of decision-making and responsibility at the school level has rapidly and substantially changed the role of the school leader, from one that manages the implementation of decisions made by others to one that leads their school community to make and implement decisions that will support a wide range of student learning. Research also tells us that leadership does have a positive impact on student achievement, but that leadership is not the sole province of the school principal. We could suggest that the principal might be seen as being something like the conductor of an orchestra, with each of the players having their own very important role to play if a symphony, rather than just noise, is to emerge. What we now have to accept is that each of the players in a school setting has to be a leader in their own right.

4. Leadership in Post-COVID-19 Times

It is clear that COVID-19 impacted on the quality of education able to be offered for millions of students around the world, but it may also have identified a new step that needs to be taken if the goal of having a quality system for all people is to be achieved. It may

also be useful to reflect on what type of educational leadership might be needed to achieve that goal.

McLeod and Dulsky ([108], p. 1) suggested "most school leaders have little, to no, training in crisis leadership, nor have they dealt with a crisis of this scale and this scope for this long". They found that an emphasis on vision and values; communication and family community engagement; staff care, instructional leadership, and organizational capacity-building; equity-oriented leadership practices; and recognition of potential future opportunities were the major themes identified in their study of 43 school organisations around the world.

Freed [109] argued that COVID-19 has changed the game and put caring for employees' wellbeing front and centre—post-COVID-19, the trend for leadership practices includes communicating and interacting with courage, compassion, and empathy with all employees. Nash (in [109]) argued that "Styles such as command and control are not effective for organizations in the 21st century. Organizations are ambiguous and complex environments. Leaders must shift their mindset and place people and relationships before projects and tasks." Carucci (in [109]) suggested that "Leaders have had to learn to be vulnerable and realize it is not possible to have all of the answers. For some leaders, COVID-19 has been a crash course in empathy and compassion. . . I hope they won't put these skills back on the shelf when the crisis is over". Behar (in [109]) suggested that "the understanding that a leader's primary role is to help people achieve what they want in their lives—to help them grow as human beings. When you do that well, they want to help you and the organization achieve and grow".

Thornton [110] interviewed 18 secondary school principals about their experiences in responding to the COVID-19 situation and found three common factors—relational leadership, distributed leadership, and networking and collaboration—but concluded: "While it has been suggested that the school leadership practice in times of crisis differs from that which is needed in usual times [111], this research suggests that it may be just the emphasis that needs to change. . . it reflects the findings of other research highlighting effective leadership practices in time of crisis." (p. 37).

Independent Schools Victoria commissioned Monash University to undertake a study of the impact of the pandemic on 42 school leaders in independent schools. The report ([112], p. 5) found that principals adapted their priorities and leadership approaches, with relational leadership being the dominant style. Many principals saw their role as shifting from the leader of the school to the leader of the community. It was necessary to shift their focus to mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic. Principals had felt high levels of stress and anxiety themselves, but some saw the opportunity for the school to grow. Others felt that it was important to embrace uncertainty and to show vulnerability to encourage a growth mindset to encourage disruptive innovation. Overall, principals performed a delicate balancing act of making decisions without fully knowing the consequences, while often dealing with financial pressures and questions about school sustainability. The report focused on the need for agile leadership and asked school leaders to be flexible, be concerned, be strategic, focus on community building, be self-reflective and use research, and embrace the uncertainty and use the technology, findings that support the need for leaders to have many facets simultaneously, supporting Cheng's [74] argument.

The issue of relational learning is addressed by Otero [113,114], where he suggests a pathway for professional development for school leaders: "Instead of looking at families and communities through the lens of the school, leaders are then immersed in a multitude of communities, seeing firsthand what life is like for others and what education means to a variety of families and communities, both modern and traditional" ([114], p. 15). Clearly, the pandemic has changed, perhaps forever, the ways in which school leaders must lead their schools. It might also be argued that if such strategies work "in a crisis" and that many recent reports suggest that schools have been in crisis (lack of staff, inability to achieve learning objectives, etc.) for some time, then perhaps the use of many of these strategies might need to be built into "normal operations".

Some arguments suggest that what has happened in the past forty or so years may just be a precursor to what needs to come. Even prior to COVID-19, Richard Elmore [115] made the argument that:

> Education alone has remained more or less in its original institutional structure, dominated by traditional policy and governance structures, composed of highly interest-based constituencies and massively complex pluralist political alliances, heavy monopolistic control through finance and accountability structures, human resource models relying on old-form industrial organisation and labour relations practices, and a ground-level delivery structure composed of atomised, self-contained physical structures—designed as much for custody and control of the youth population as for the cultivation of learning.

If we adopt the S-curve terminology to consider the major changes in education over history, there seems to have been five eras, of different lengths of time. In the first era, from ancient history until around the 1880s, only the rich or privileged were given what we would today consider to be a quality education. For the next hundred or so years, in the second era, most education was managed by centralised education systems. Only a small proportion of the students who started school completed a full school education and an even smaller proportion went on to higher education. School leaders at this time were managers who implemented decisions made by others. By the 1980s, moves towards decentralisation brought about the third era and this was accompanied by higher proportions of students completing school. School leaders were now responsible for engaging teachers and focused on student performance, reflecting an instructional leadership approach. The adoption of a market approach to education in the mid-1990s could be considered a fourth era, when schools were rewarded (or punished) based on the performance of their students. The task of the leader was to transform their school into a productive organisation. A fifth era emerged around 2000, when recognition that the task of leading a school became too complex for a single school leader to be successful, so we started to see leadership teams and widely distributed leadership approaches in many school systems. Each of the above can be identified by both the effectiveness of education during that time and the style of leadership that was dominant for the circumstances. It might be argued that a new S-curve for education and school leadership may have emerged due to the COVID-19 pandemic years, where school leaders now must support families and the community as a way of ensuring the best possible education for students in the school.

5. From Improvement to Innovation

Just as the term "educational effectiveness" is starting to supplant "school effectiveness", the term "innovation" is now starting to appear whenever we talk about school improvement. It is a recognition that leaders of schools have to manage the circumstances brought about by rapid and disruptive changes within the community. It is now common for any statement of professional standards for school leaders to include the terms "innovation" and "change". For instance, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) identifies five leadership professional practices [116]:

- Leading teaching and learning;
- Developing self and others;
- Leading improvement, innovation, and change;
- Leading the management of the school;
- Engaging and working with the community.

The Centre for Strategic Education published a series of monographs [117–119] that considered the future of education and educational leadership. Hannan and Mackay ([117], p. 3) identified both the problems and possibilities that school leaders now face: "Leadership is more important than ever but is faced with profound challenges: the legacy of health-related disruption; unacceptable and unsustainable growth in inequality; mental health problems amongst learners and teachers; leadership burnout; and difficulties in

recruitment. At the same time, the rapid development of convergent technologies and the awakening of new sensibilities, taken together with new sources of power, offer the most astounding opportunities for humankind".

They identify what they call five intertwined signposts to the future: the need to create a new education narrative; the need to lead within ecosystems of education "which are dynamic, evolving, and enable greater diversity (p. 9); the need to lead for equity (p. 13); and leading for innovation through agile leadership (p. 17). They argue (p. 16) "The task is no longer one of improvement of the existing paradigm; and certainly not one of systems maintenance. It has been observed that we need not just innovative solutions, but system innovation". Finally, they argue for leading for futures literacy to "enable a culture that supports the freedom to think and plan in non-linear ways, and views uncertainty as a material to build with, not as a risk to be mitigated" (p. 19). This last comment suggests a major revision of current curriculum to ensure that what students learn today will be relevant for them tomorrow and into the future.

In the third monograph, Hannan and Mackay ([119], p. 3) argue "debates about the future direction of education have, for the last 30 years, been dominated by narratives of reform and improvement". They argue that this has largely failed the education system and those within it and argue that "we need to be in the space of **transformation**, and not merely improvement of the old model" (p. 4). They identify what they call a 20th-century paradigm of education, one that largely serves the society and the economy and compare it to a 21st-century paradigm where education focuses on empowering the individual and argue that while "educators increasingly are adopting the 21st century paradigm, politicians almost invariably speak in the language of the former" (p. 6). They argue there are a series of misalignments, where politicians are bound by the time between elections, but where transforming factors that support learning sometimes take much longer; where many politicians might be seen as some of the successful graduates of the current education system and fail to work through some of the issues for those that are not as successful; and that most politicians focus of the next election and what they might do to get re-elected, rather than on a long-term agenda.

They suggest that it is unachievable to disassociate education from politics and argue that a different type of alignment, a strategic alignment, be employed to identify and then use lessons that might be drawn from the campaign to address the climate crisis in a way that influences politicians "…to be key actors in shaping a Learning Future of meaning and hope for all humanity" (p. 35).

Conigrave and Mackay ([119], p. 4) argue that "To effectively lead the adaptive challenge of delivering transformative learning for all, leaders need to prepare to step into the place of not knowing [120], letting go of the ego [121] to engage in the learning required to 'work out what's really going on' [122]" and that "Leading this transformation will require leaders to take a system perspective of their adaptive challenge" (p. 5). They argue that those that will lead transformation will need to build their self-awareness about what they know and do not know and what they can do or not do, but also recognise that others can (and should) be involved in this process; they will need to know and make sense of the environment in which they work and connect with key stakeholders; and then use good transformative leadership theories to develop practice.

Clearly, if we consider future moves towards higher levels of learning for all students within every system, then innovation might replace transformation and improvement as the terms we use. We then need to consider the role of the school leader when school innovation is the goal. de Jong et al. [123] focused their attention on the behaviours associated with collaborative innovation in Dutch schools. They interviewed 22 primary, secondary, and vocational principals where the same collaborative innovation program had been implemented, one that aimed at enhancing collaboration between teachers and school principals. They identified 11 leadership practices (bottom-up, involvement, facilitation, top-down, motivation, vision focus, progress, role model, student focus, transparency, and connect), with student focus and transparency being identified as comparatively new

additions to the suite of leadership practices. They identified two main leadership patterns, team player and facilitator, that were seen as appropriate, whereas the other pattern, key player, was seen as being less useful when innovation was the goal.

Kenayathulla, Ghani, and Radzi [14] in this Special Issue echoed Cheng's [74] view that "school leaders are expected to embrace multiple school functions" (p. 1) and reported on three waves in the Malaysian Education Development Plan [124], which aimed to improve the selection of principals and head teachers, improve career paths and leadership distribution, and create a culture of professional excellence. After investigating the progress made, they recommended further steps be taken to identify "potential school leaders among senior assistant teachers" and then to provide them with professional development prior to appointment and, subsequently, ongoing support. Such efforts are needed if school leaders are to move from being competent in the present to being innovative in the future. One way of doing this is to consider what it means to move beyond competence and towards capability.

Lewis [125], when elaborating on the Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL) Capability Framework, argued:

> . . .that influential leaders require more than leadership knowledge and competencies to engage in developmental, empowering, and inspirational ways with colleagues in the workplace. There is considerable critique of competency-based models of leadership development in the literature. Critics, such as Kaplan & Norton [1996] and Onsman [2003], question the idea of fragmenting leadership into key result areas, competencies, and performance indicators.

Lewis referred to Stephenson who had pointed to a distinction between leadership capabilities and leadership competencies.

> Capability depends much more on our confidence that we can effectively use and develop our skills in complex and changing circumstances than on our mere possession of those skills.
>
> ([126], p. 1)

Capable leaders have confidence in their ability to "take effective and appropriate action within unfamiliar and changing circumstances" ([127], p. 2).

> Competency is about delivering the present based on past performance; capability is about imagining the future and bringing it about. Competency is about control; capability is about learning and development. Competency is about fitness for (usually other people's) purpose; capability is about judging fitness of the purpose itself.
>
> ([127], p. 4)

This movement from competence to capability suggests the need for school leaders to be strategic in their practices. Pisapia [128] argued that the "complex and changing circumstances" referred to by Stephenson could be also characterised as the period of overlap in the S-curves referred to previously, that period where what was previously accepted as practice is gradually replaced by a new innovation. This creates a period of confusion when we are unsure whether to use the old or the new and creates dilemmas about what the next steps might be. Pisapia argued that the task of the strategic leader in times of confusion is to anticipate changes, challenges, and opportunities in the internal and external environments (anticipating); create and articulate common values and the broad general direction of agreed development (articulating); establish the social capital necessary to mobilise others (aligning); and build the capacity of the organisation by anchoring new learning through engaged, self-managed teams of followers (assuring) (adapted from [128], p. 14).

For Pisapia, these four activities continue to repeat themselves over time, creating what he calls the leader's wheel. Driving this wheel forward are two strategic leadership skills that he calls agility and artistry.

Agility, highlighted as part of innovative leadership in [117], refers to a strategic mindset that uses a set of three cognitive skills—reflection, reframing, and systems thinking—that "allows leaders to be successful in many different contexts and under conditions of ambiguity, complexity and chaos" ([128], p. 16). In Pisapia, this is known as strategic thinking and is a precondition for the actual actions taken by a strategic leader. Artistry, a term also used by Bogotch and Townsend in [69], or strategic execution, comes from being able to select from a range of leadership actions to guide the organisation forward. For Pisapia, traditional leaders "used a limited set of leader actions and employed a command and control, task and relationships, transformational or transactional style" but ". . .as artists, strategic leaders are flexible and able to adapt to different circumstances and conditions" ([128], p. 15).

But it is now clear that the school leader is just one piece in the puzzle that leads to a complete picture of successful student learning. As Creemers and Kyriakides [50] argued, the move from school effectiveness to educational effectiveness has to not only consider the impact of factors at the student level (for instance, aptitude, SES, gender, motivation) and the quality of teaching (environment, assessment, questioning, structuring, and application of lessons), but also to consider school policy and how that might be improved through evaluation, as well as regional and national policies and how they are improved over time, together with the overall environment for education within this framework—how systems support teachers and school leaders and how the public perceive the importance of education affect what happens within schools.

The connection between how school systems support school leaders in challenging and rapidly changing circumstances will be one of the critical issues associated with improving student learning in the future. Caldwell, in this Special Issue [9], considers how the work environment for school leaders in Australia has changed in recent times, how this has impacted on the role of the school leader, whether any deterioration in the work environment is associated with recent moves towards decentralisation, and how school systems might better support school leaders. He identified three connected themes—intensification–intimidation; autonomy–accountability; and system–support—that were related to changes in school leaders' work environment and provided six recommendations for future directions that suggested, among others, that school leaders have greater control and less reporting about their work environment, that new practices should replace older ones, rather than just being added, and the use of AI. These factors would all release school leaders from tasks that take time, time that could then be used to enable leaders to engage in deep thinking about the future of schools.

Perhaps one possible way forward for improving the quality of school leadership is considered by Huber and Pruitt [129] in this Special Issue. They argue that "the goal is to develop problem-solving, creative, self-renewing schools that have sometimes been described as learning organizations" (p. 3).

To enable this to occur, "holistic approaches (not only content instruction but also promotion of motivation and reflection), personal development instead of training for a role, orientation towards the school's core purpose, from knowledge acquisition to creation and development of knowledge, experience and application orientation, multi-method using more different ways of learning, e.g., workshops and the workplace" (p. 4).

They researched interventions combining multiple approaches for the development of and support for school leadership and concluded that to "transform education leadership for the sake of securing and improving the quality of education and the school quality, a professional, profound and persistent combination of multiple approaches for the development of and support for school leadership is needed" (p. 22) and highlighted the importance of coaching as it "helps to overcome the missing link from theory into practice" but argued that "further research is needed to determine what factors. . .create a stronger impact on the changes in school quality" (p. 23).

If schools as learning organisations might be seen as the future post-COVID-19, then leadership for learning might be the way forward. With its focus on learning, for everyone

in the school, and thinking about the resources required to enable this, using dialogue to support learning, and by having an acceptance that both shared leadership and shared accountability will lead to the school becoming a learning organisation, leadership for learning is a leadership approach that is appropriate for a time of crisis. It effectively takes key elements of other leadership styles (instructional, transformational, and distributed), but also considers the whole school community as the place for learning.

To help us understand how new forms of leadership can impact on school communities within this new post-COVID-19 S-curve experience, we might need to heed Bogotch's challenge in this Special Issue [130] for a "lever for radical changes in how and with whom we should conduct research publicly and democratically" (p. 5), which creates a further challenge that involves "...remaking the enterprise of conducting research into a collective endeavor instead of a private and privileged practice: (p. 11).

6. Towards the Future: School Transformation or Just Changing the Toys around in the Toy Box?

The arguments above might suggest that there has been substantial and rapid change over the past fifty years in schools, but the big question is "Has the experience of school for an individual student changed in that time?" One might argue that the actual experience of students in big picture terms has not changed all that much. Moore Johnson [131] argued that fifty years ago, Tyack [132], among others, "...depicted the school as an organizational 'egg crate', where teachers work in the isolation of their classroom. In egg-crate schools, teachers focus on their own students largely to the exclusion of others, and they interact minimally and intermittently with their colleagues". Twenty-five years ago, Beare ([133], p. 1) posed the question:

> If, as an educational planner, you were presented with a greenfields site on which a new town or suburb was to be built to accommodate dwellings for approximately 22,000 people, what schools or educational buildings would you offer the developer?

He argued that there are some things that you would not have, including the egg-crate classrooms and long corridors; the notion of set class groups based on age–grade structures; the division of the school day into standard slabs of time; the linear curriculum parcelled into step-by-step gradations; the parcelling of human knowledge into predetermined boxes called "subjects"; the division of staff by subject specialisation; the allocation of most school tasks to the person called "teacher"; the assumption that learning takes place in a place called "school"; the artificial walls that barricade school from home and community; the notion of a standalone school isolated from other schools; the notion of a school system bounded by a locality such as a state or even country; and the limitation of "formal schooling" to twelve years and between the ages of five and eighteen.

Now, we might ask ourselves, which of the items identified above can we say is now different to 1997 when Beare asked the question? The old story that if a surgeon from 1924 walked into an operating theatre of 2024, he would not know where to start, but if a teacher from 1924 walked into a classroom of 2024, she would feel right at home, may no longer be totally true, but the point could still be made. Can we say the same for the school principal? Twenty-five years after Beare, despite attempts by education systems all around the world, one could argue that changes to education for students, and perhaps teachers, still remain somewhat cosmetic, rather than having the fundamental shifts proposed by Beare. Around the turn of the millennium, views on what schools would become varied widely, from "...the formal education system could be said to be in its last throes" ([134], p. 1) to "... the most probable state of schools in 2007 is that they will be much the same as they are now" ([135], p. 1). Neither is wholly true.

Townsend, Clarke, and Ainscow [136] considered how schools might need to be reconstructed to enable students to develop what they called third-millennium skills. They identified what they called second-millennium thinking and proposed third-millennium thinking to enable schools to cope with what Townsend and Otero [137] called "rapid

pervasive change" and "increasing global interconnectedness". They suggested changes needed to be made in how we thought about curriculum and how it is delivered, technology, the role of teachers, governance, and measures of success.

What the movement towards self-management of schools did was change the relationships between the centre and schools. Schools were seen as individual enterprises that remained part of a broader corporation (the education system). In 2000, Hedley Beare [138] used a series of metaphors for education that reflected the S-curve view of change mentioned above and suggested that we had moved through the pre-industrial age (where education was for the few who were rich and privileged) and the post-industrial age (where we saw schools as factories) to what was then the current enterprise-based system of education (where we saw schools as businesses), as a way of describing how the provision of education had changed. Townsend saw this slightly differently, but added a caveat [139]:

> We have conquered the challenge of moving from a quality education system for a few people to having a quality education system for most people. Our challenge now is to move from having a quality education system for most people to having a quality education system for all people.

This Special Issue has mostly focused on how educational leadership has transformed itself over many decades of development. We have looked into the distant and recent past, we have considered where we are now, and we have taken some tentative steps to look into the future. Educational leadership has moved from using a transactional, command and control approach to managing schools, through many alternative styles identified in the past few decades. We have used research that has promoted one leadership style or another, with this research sometimes suggesting that some leadership styles have passed their use-by date or did not meet the exacting standards that education systems now require. Perhaps the one thing we might agree on is, if there is a magic formula that would ensure that all students—whatever their personal, community, social, and national backgrounds—receive high-quality education that provides them with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to enter their society with a positive outlook for their future, but also provides them with what is required to keep changing and learning as society makes new and different turns, then we have not yet found it.

It is clear that resorting to a system that considers the gold, silver, and bronze view of society of ancient Greece, referred to in [1], is no longer viable. Perhaps two concepts are critical. The first relates to the concept "school" itself and how we may need to transform our understandings of how we can create a system that guarantees what we hope to achieve. Perhaps the critical question would be to ask, to paraphrase Beare [135]: If schools did not exist right now and we wanted to create a system that ensured successful learning of the knowledge necessary for all people to thrive, knowing all the things we have at our disposal right now, what would that system look like? Perhaps "school" might not be the result.

The second concept relates to the people who are in the school, families, students, teachers, support staff, and school leaders (and maybe communities as well). Is there something that we could suggest might be our aim for these people? It is clear that schools, or whatever might replace them, will still need to be led. The person or persons involved in this process will need imagination to create a shared vision, artistry to use all the leadership tools available in ways that will support increasingly diverse and complex populations and situations, and resilience to enable leaders of the future to survive and thrive, with their communities, for extended periods of time. If we are to reassess what the term "school" means, we might also need to reconsider what the term "school leadership" encompasses. For me, the most effective and successful school would be one where everyone that is involved in the school is a learner (is motivated to continuously learn), is a teacher (freely shares what they know with others), and is a leader (supports others to be the best they can be). If we adopted this position in schools as they currently exist, then the next step to transforming schools would be for school leaders to be the lead learner to support others in

the school, and teachers would be the lead learner to support others in their classroom, with the end purpose of enabling students to become leaders of their own learning. Ultimately, this is what leadership for learning aims to do.

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Grosspeteranlage 5
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