LISA

Leadership Improvement
for Student Achievement

The leadership cocktail

A highly contextual mix

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Dear European colleagues,

With pleasure we present to you the outcome of the international LISA-project. With seven European countries we have been trying to assess the impact school leaders have on their pupils' achievements. Everywhere in Europe school leadership in secondary education is in the public eye. In many countries school leaders get more and more tasks and responsibilities. At the same time we hear critical voices about 'management clay layers': impermeable layers through which no light can pass. The question is addressed whether school leaders do make a difference.

Together with school leaders from seven countries, for the first time a theoretical and practical study was conducted into the impact of these school leaders on the learning achievements of pupils. This study was done because we recognize the importance of the role and position of school leaders. After all, good school leaders make a good school. Competent school leaders enable the teachers to get the most out of their pupils. This is still their key role: giving optimal support to teachers carrying out their teaching tasks. School leaders do this by shaping their strategic leadership: they have a vision with regard to the pupils of their school. In developing this vision, they involve the school environment as well. Their vision goes hand in hand with inspiring leadership, thus challenging teachers to get the most out of their pupils and prepare them for participation in society. Being a school leader is a profession, requiring specific skills. A school leader is increasingly less a teacher and more and more a policymaker. A 21st century school cannot exist without the strategic leadership of the school leader!

The role and responsibilities of school leaders have changed over the past years. This requires continuous professionalisation. School leaders in Europe want to continue to contribute to the education of the future and the maximisation of pupils' talents. That is clearly shown by the results of this study.
Our appeal to employers and politicians in Europe is therefore: invest in the quality of schools, of teachers and school leaders. That is the best guarantee for the future of our pupils and our society.

On behalf of the participants in the LISA-project,

Sjoerd Slagter
Chairman VO-raad
(Board of Secondary Education),
the Netherlands

Bob van de Ven,
project leader LISA

Origins and aims

Bob van de Ven

LISA does not originate in extensive research programmes or large scale educational studies. The idea was conceived by a group of school leaders who felt a genuine need to know more about their own impact on their schools and pupils. A short retrospective.

The first ideas for what later would be called the LISA-project arose three years ago, after a discussion in the international committee of the Dutch School Leaders' Association. Committee members were surprised by good PISA-results obtained by Dutch 15-year-old students. The satisfying results also gave rise to many questions: 'Why didn't we realise this before?' 'How is it possible that many or our school leaders have never even heard of PISA?' It was 2006 and for most of us the research programme was a novelty. At the same time Germany was in a 'PISA-shock'.

When the initial surprise was gone, we realised another question should be asked. What do we, school leaders, contribute to the results of our students? Do school leaders make the difference? We started our own project, PISA II, and invited six countries to participate. Thus the official European LISA-project came to life.

LISA in a nutshell

Increasing cooperation among European countries and growing complexity of educational decision making processes in most of these countries have led to an increased interest in leadership styles of school leaders. This interest is related to growing empirical evidence that leadership is a variable critical to school improvement. The core question of LISA was:

what contribution do leadership styles, attitudes and practices of school principals make towards improvement and effectiveness of a school? More specifically: towards the basic skills of students as examined under PISA?

From PISA to LISA

European dimension in school leadership

LISA was short for 'Leadership improvement for student achievement'. The project started in 2007. It was funded by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. The EACEA is responsible for the management of certain parts of EU programmes in the fields the agency's name describes. The overall purpose was to explore how school leadership, directly or indirectly, affects student achievement. An international comparative approach was chosen to uncover relevant differences between countries against the background of differences in national educational systems. Equally important was that we hoped to find a common core, which might be interpreted as a European dimension in school leadership.

Aims and objectives

In its methodological design the study was a mixture of research methods and collaborative action research shared by acting school leaders and researchers. Together, they worked towards the following objectives:

1. To study the way the functions of school leaders in secondary education in the participating countries are shaped by patterns of decentralisation and centralisation as well as accountability requirements.
2. To develop an own conceptual framework for measuring the effectiveness of school leadership in an international context.

3. To design and to explore empirically hypothetical models of effective school leadership styles by specifying intermediary factors between school leadership characteristics and student outcomes.
4. To find an answer on the question: How can school leaders succeed in creating a positive school climate and in improving the quality of a school?
5. To promote cooperation and collaborative research activities between school leaders and researchers in a learning environment at a European level.
   The latter objective of this project is unique: never before have school leaders and academics worked together in a research program like this one.
6. To collect meaningful data about school leadership in Europe to enhance our understanding of the relationships between leadership, the educational system and school results, such as PISA and TIMMS.

These aims and objectives of the project were linked to the main objectives and aims of the Lifelong Learning Programme:

- They contributed to the development of high performance, innovation and a European dimension in systems and practices in school leadership and outcomes for students.
- They helped to improve the quality preparation for lifelong learning and the willingness of students leaving school to engage in it.
- They ensured an adequate supply of comparable data, statistics and analyses to underpin engagement in lifelong learning and the development of policy.

From PISA to LISA

Output

The output of LISA had to be relevant to researchers, policy-makers, school principals' organisations and school leaders.

- Research had to benefit from the knowledge and research instruments that will be yielded by the study.
- Policy makers had to be served with information about the school level implications of decentralisation and accountability oriented programs.
- School management organisations had to be able to use the results for determining their strategic agendas and providing a European dimension to them.
- The school leaders who were directly involved in the project had to be able to learn from their new role as co-researchers. The results were to be disseminated to a larger audience of schools and school leaders.

Bob van de Ven

'Quantitative analysis doesn't give all answers'

Name: ***Rinnie van der Horst***
Role: ***LISA coordinator The Netherlands / member steering committee***
School leaders' organisation: ***VO-raad***
Position: ***President Central Management Meerwegen scholengroep***

"LISA shows us that the differences between the educational systems of countries are not as important as we thought they would be. The context of a school is far more important for the leadership style that a school leader needs. LISA also makes clear that quantitative analysis doesn't give us all the answers we need. Qualitative research is necessary to find out what leadership style is effective in which situation. Because that is also one of the thoughts I take home from LISA: school leaders need different leadership styles in different situations."

Highlights

Searching for the right leadership mix across EU countries

Petros Pashiardis and Stefan Brauckmann

- For the majority of LISA countries the Instructional style is a significant, positive influence. School variables (teacher commitment, teaching and learning practices, student-teacher interactions and student expectations, taken all together) according to international research have an impact on the quality of schools and student achievement, both academic as well as affective.
- The Instructional style forms the baseline of effective school leadership across the seven European countries which participated in the project.
- There is no 'best cocktail of school leadership styles' mix for all school leaders; one size does not fit all.
- Instructional, Structuring, and Entrepreneurial styles of leadership seem to be essential components of a useful school leadership mix, irrespective of context.
- In most of the European countries the Entrepreneurial Leadership style has acquired the highest score: it is the most dominant leadership style according to the perception of leadership styles by teachers.
- School leadership is highly contextualised. Not only at the system level, but also, and particularly, at the school level. A school leader would be wise to look what his or her particular school context calls for and act on that.
- Especially the Participative and Personnel Development styles turned out to be more situational and contextual in nature.

The leadership cocktail

Petros Pashiardis

Stefan Brauckmann

The LISA-project has served as a reality check of effective leadership behaviours and practices in seven countries. Irrespective of context, the Instructional, Structuring, and Entrepreneurial styles of leadership seem to be essential components of a useful school leadership mix. However, it is wise to realise school leadership is highly contextualised.

In view of the complex and changing context of education, school leadership has gained growing attention by educational policy makers. As a result, various stakeholders have increased their expectations from school principals, demanding, for instance, higher academic results and performance standards. There is wide agreement about the need to have school leaders who exhibit the capacity to improve the quality of teaching and learning that takes place in their schools. School effectiveness as well as school improvement research has demonstrated the importance of the role of the leader in school life. Research evidence produced so far indicates that the principal's role is indeed crucial for improving students' academic achievement (e.g. Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

Furthermore, we live in an era of complexity. The only stable factor is constant change. In the last thirty years we have seen change as never before. Educational leaders around the globe will need to work in this context and lead the way in the educational arena for the decades to come (Pashiardis, 2009).

This means that school leaders will need to operate in an era which is becoming increasingly more turbulent and less predictable and where paradox, ambiguity, and uncertainty are becoming the norm. In line with these changes as well as other developments, the roles and responsibilities of school leaders have expanded and intensified and have led to an increased interest in the examination of leadership styles and their impact on producing better results, basically: high quality leadership.

In this novel school environment, where various pressures and external challenges are identified, there is an increasing recognition of the importance of school leadership in supporting change and providing for educational quality.

1. The LISA-project as a reality check of effective leadership behaviours and practices in seven countries

In the current era of globalisation, school leadership issues need to be explored in an international and comparative context. This was pursued through the adoption of a European, comparative approach, in order to uncover leadership differences within different educational systems across the EU. As stated in the LISA evaluation report, 'particularly interesting is the effort to link school leadership and research at a European level, developing transversal instruments and techniques to improve quality and effectiveness of the schools in terms of teachers' job satisfaction, students´ achievements, etc. The results of the project can have an impact on the formulation and design of new educational policies and new learning patterns' (Evaluation report, call for proposals EAC/61/2006, proposal number 135140-LLP-2007-NL-KA1SCH).

The core question of LISA therefore was concerned with the role that principals' leadership styles, attitudes and practices can play in contributing to the improvement and effectiveness of a school, specifically the basic skills of students as examined in PISA. In particular, the focus lay on the enhancement of the leaders' self-concept, the increase in their research capability as well as their gain in knowledge and awareness of various leadership models and action research. The main interest consisted in examining the leaders' perceptions of their context and how this interplay produces the best 'cocktail mix' of effective leadership behaviours and practices. For example, does a leader have to adopt 20% of the Instructional style and 50% of the Participative style to be best effective within a particular context?

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2. What are effective leadership styles and in what way can they be structured?

Five leadership styles were extracted and labelled. This was based on a thorough literature review over the last few decades on school leadership, educational governance and school effectiveness, and according to the heuristic theoretical framework as developed by Pashiardis and Brauckmann. Each leadership style consists of specific behaviours or practices which are likely to be exhibited by school principals. (The complete framework appears at the end of this chapter). The five leadership styles are:

- **Instructional style, representing leadership practices that enable achievement of instructional objectives**
  i.e. providing instructional resources, encouraging higher order forms of teaching and learning, promoting the implementation and use of knowledge in a variety of forms, monitoring standards of teaching and learning, providing concrete feedback to staff, utilizing evaluation data in order to improve personnel

- **Participative style, representing leadership practices that promote cooperation and commitment**
  i.e. promoting open communication with the staff, leaving instructional autonomy to teachers, creating a common vision for school improvement, actively involving staff in planning and implementing this vision, solving problems in cooperation with the teachers, implementing participative decision making processes, facilitating decision making by consensus, discussing school affairs with the teachers

- **Personnel Development style, representing leadership practices that promote training and development of teachers**
  i.e. providing recognition for excellence and achievement, rewarding teachers for their special contributions, encouraging the professional development of teachers, registering outstanding performance of teachers, making informed recommendations to personnel placement, transfer, retention and dismissal, complimenting teachers who contribute exceptionally to school activities, informing teachers about possibilities for updating their knowledge and skills

- **Entrepreneurial style, representing leadership practices that promote the involvement of external actors**
  i.e. encouraging relations between the school and the community and parents, promoting cooperation with other organizations and businesses, discussing school goals with relevant stakeholders, utilizing appropriate and effective techniques for community and parental

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'No school without a good leader'

Name: ***Dr. Burkhard Mielke***
Role: ***LISA dissemination worldwide***
School leaders organisation: ***European School Heads Association***
Position: ***Honorary President***

"In all school types and countries, school leadership has a high influence on school quality. There is no good school without a good school leader. Quantitative analysis underlines this but cannot clearly point out what really makes a good school leader. Good school leadership can be a cocktail mix of different leadership styles and the ability to use different styles in different situations. To answer the open questions we need to go on with a more qualitative analysis."

involvement, promoting two-way communication between the school and the community, projecting a positive image to the community, building trust within the local community, communicating the school vision to the external community

- **Structuring Style, representing leadership practices that promote establishment and implementation of clear rules**
  i.e. ensuring clarity about the roles and activities of staff, ensuring clarity about work priorities, providing clarity in relation to student behaviour rules, ensuring that school rules and consequences of misconduct are uniformly applied to all students, working on the creation of an orderly atmosphere, providing clarity regarding policies and procedures to be implemented)

The leadership cocktail

3. How do styles of school leaders / leadership contribute to school improvement and effectiveness of their schools in general?

School leaders have a measurable, mostly indirect influence on learning outcomes. The impact of school leaders on student learning is generally mediated by other people, events and organisational factors (Hallinger and Heck 1998). By practising different leadership styles school leaders can directly influence the motivations, capacities and working conditions of teachers who in turn shape classroom practice and student learning. Below is a list of significant intermediary variables (meaning each of those variables is 'reloaded' by one or more of the above mentioned leadership styles and their implicit leadership activities) which are responsible for creating conditions under which teachers can perform well, which can lead to improved student achievement.

REFERENCE OF STUDY	SIGNIFICANT INTERMEDIARY VARIABLES
Hallinger and Heck, 1998	Learning climate Principal's instructional efforts
Hallinger, Bickman and Davis, 1996	A clear school mission
	Students' opportunity to learn
	Teachers' expectations
Hill, Rowe, and Holmes-Smith , 1995	Teacher student interactions
	Professional climate
Bosker, De Vos and Witziers, 2000	Teachers' job satisfaction
	Teachers' achievement orientation
	Evaluation and feedback practices
Kythreotis & Pashiardis, 2006	Teachers' commitment to the school
	Teachers' academic emphasis
	Personal achievement goal orientations
	Classroom performance-goal structure

4. School leaders as mediators and moderators within a variety of challenging contexts

In such an international and comparative context dealing with the perception of differently practised leadership styles, it is important to contextualise school leadership policies. Those contextual factors could be located at the system level or at the school level (for instance the degree of autonomy a single school has) and can influence the action radius, the array of tasks, and the prioritising of tasks that school leaders perform. The context (factors) within which schools and school leaders operate, can vary markedly across countries depending upon their historical traditions, social structures and economic conditions. They can furthermore vary in terms of weight, pace and criticalness.

It depends on the positions or roles that leaders have in a school organisation and their contextual embedment, to what extent and how leadership can influence student achievement. 'There is no single model of leadership that could be easily transferred across different school-level and system-level contexts. The specific contexts in which schools operate may limit a school leader's room for manoeuvring or provide opportunities for different types of leadership.

Depending on the school contexts in which they work, school leaders face very different sets of challenges' (OECD, 2008: p.20). Approaches to school leadership policy need to be based on careful considerations of the context in which schools operate. It should be borne in mind that policy initiatives that work well in one country cannot necessarily be transferred across national borders.

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5. Unity in its diversity? The most predominant leadership styles practised across the EU

In 5 out of the 7 LISA countries the Entrepreneurial style came first. Furthermore, in 5 out of the 7 LISA countries the Structuring style came second. More variation was evident with regards to other leadership styles, such as the Personnel Development style and Participative style. Apparently, there is a general trend towards the Entrepreneurial style. This could be seen as strategic approach (one among others) to (potential) budget cuts or generally limited resources in terms of money, time, and personnel: make more out of less. It could also be a strategic way to create different support systems which were originally located at another governance level. For instance: privately organized systems that close a gap left by support systems organized and provided by the state. School leaders thus enhance their radius of influence in areas of decision making where the school cannot decide autonomously.

Apparently, there is also a general trend toward the Structuring style, which could be understood as a response of institutions to the expanded roles and responsibilities of the school. An effort to mark unmarked territory by a clear division of tasks and responsibilities. It could also be understood as a measure to enable restructuring of the school by establishing clear roles, responsibilities, and goals.

The predominance of Entrepreneurial and Structuring styles could be interpreted as an increased level of awareness with regards to the expanded responsibility of the school. It can also be seen as maintaining internal organizational stability in order to cooperate with leaders outside the school at an equal footing (guaranteeing the willingness of the school to cooperate). It can be regarded as further stimulation of the school development process by creating a community of shared responsibility between internal and external stakeholders of the school (realising the educational landscape region/community). Or it can be seen as a means of reference to show leadership competence and authority (e.g. by inviting VIPs into the school).

'Leadership is about a complex and dynamic blending of styles'

Name: ***Ian Bauckham***
Role: ***LISA coordinator United Kingdom***
School Leaders Organisation: ***Association of School and College Leaders***
Position: ***Head teacher / Chair of International Committee ASCL***

"LISA project partners have developed a network of professional friendships spanning a range of European contexts. We have engaged with the challenges of research across education systems, and have a growing understanding of the relative value of quantitative and qualitative educational research. Two robust validated instruments questionnaires have been developed which could be used more widely. Clearer, more objective definitions and concepts relating to school leadership styles have begun to emerge, as has an approximate correlation of leadership styles with contexts. It has become clear that school leadership is always about a complex and dynamic blending of leadership styles for different contexts and needs."

6. It is the context stupid! Leadership styles differ according to the context within which school leaders are operating

The most frequently used leadership style is not always the one positively associated with school performance; sometimes it is even negatively associated with it. Sometimes the highest scoring leadership styles differ between rural and urban schools within one education system. A leadership style which might be positively associated with school performance in one secondary school of a LISA country can have the opposite impact in another LISA country. To cut it short, school leaders are responsive to the context in which they operate but they do not depend on it; apparently, they can adapt to the context of their individual schools, sometimes irrespective of the national (system) context in which they operate.

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7. Which leadership style has a positive influence on creating conditions under which teachers can perform well?

At a European level, it was found that the Instructional leadership style significantly predicts each separate variable as well as the combined school variables (teacher commitment, teaching and learning practices, student-teacher interactions and student expectations) which have a positive influence on creating conditions under which teachers are performing well. In some cases a leadership style positively predicts a school variable in one or more countries (like the Participative style does for student-teacher interactions), but negatively predicts the same variable in another country. In one country, the Entrepreneurial style positively predicts one school variable (professional development), but negatively predicts another school variable (student expectations).

8. Concluding remarks from the European learning community

- **Every leader his/her own unique mix**
  What remains to be seen is if we will ever reach a formula about what the best leadership styles mix looks like. Maybe it will remain a secret recipe for every individual principal, who should be made aware of the necessary ingredients, but, in the end, creates his or her own unique mix.
  There is no real pattern in importance of leadership styles because every leader's situation is extremely contextualized. Therefore, school leaders should go their own way, using their own recipe and expertise. But the recipe should be constructed by the school acting as a learning organisation. In a sense, it could be what is called 'distributed leadership', forming alliances among different sub-groups within the school and creating a school community of shared responsibility.

- **More and varied leadership styles**
  One of the most important findings is that school leaders should be knowledgeable and able to utilize more and varied leadership styles from the Pashiardis-Brauckmann Framework. This can help them in different problematic situations arising from the different contexts in which they operate. Indeed, through the LISA-project, school leaders have a holistic framework which they can use as a school improvement framework.
  Further, we have developed and validated a leadership instrument in six European languages (English, Dutch, German, Slovene, Italian, and Hungarian) which can be used as a professional growth tool for school leaders in these countries. Other countries and organisations have requested our instruments for examination and probable use (such as Turkey and the OECD).

- **Common vocabulary**
  Also, an important finding is that we have created a common vocabulary and a shared language to use among our LISA group and by creating these common definitions and language we are furthering and advancing our ability to theorize in the school leadership field using more precise and concrete terminology. Maybe we should not be talking about the most effective leadership style but rather about the most useful leadership styles.

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- **More than the sum of its parts**

Certainly through this project, school leaders were able to critically review their self-understanding about what school leadership means in their own country as well as in other settings and what leadership actually means to them with regards to their own individual school. Although the concept of Leadership is a complex mixture of the five styles explored in our research, the sum of the component styles nevertheless does not really constitute the essence of Leadership as a construct. On the contrary, it seems that the concept of Leadership is more than the sum of its constituent parts and should be investigated further bearing this fact in mind.

Petros Pashiardis and Stefan Brauckmann

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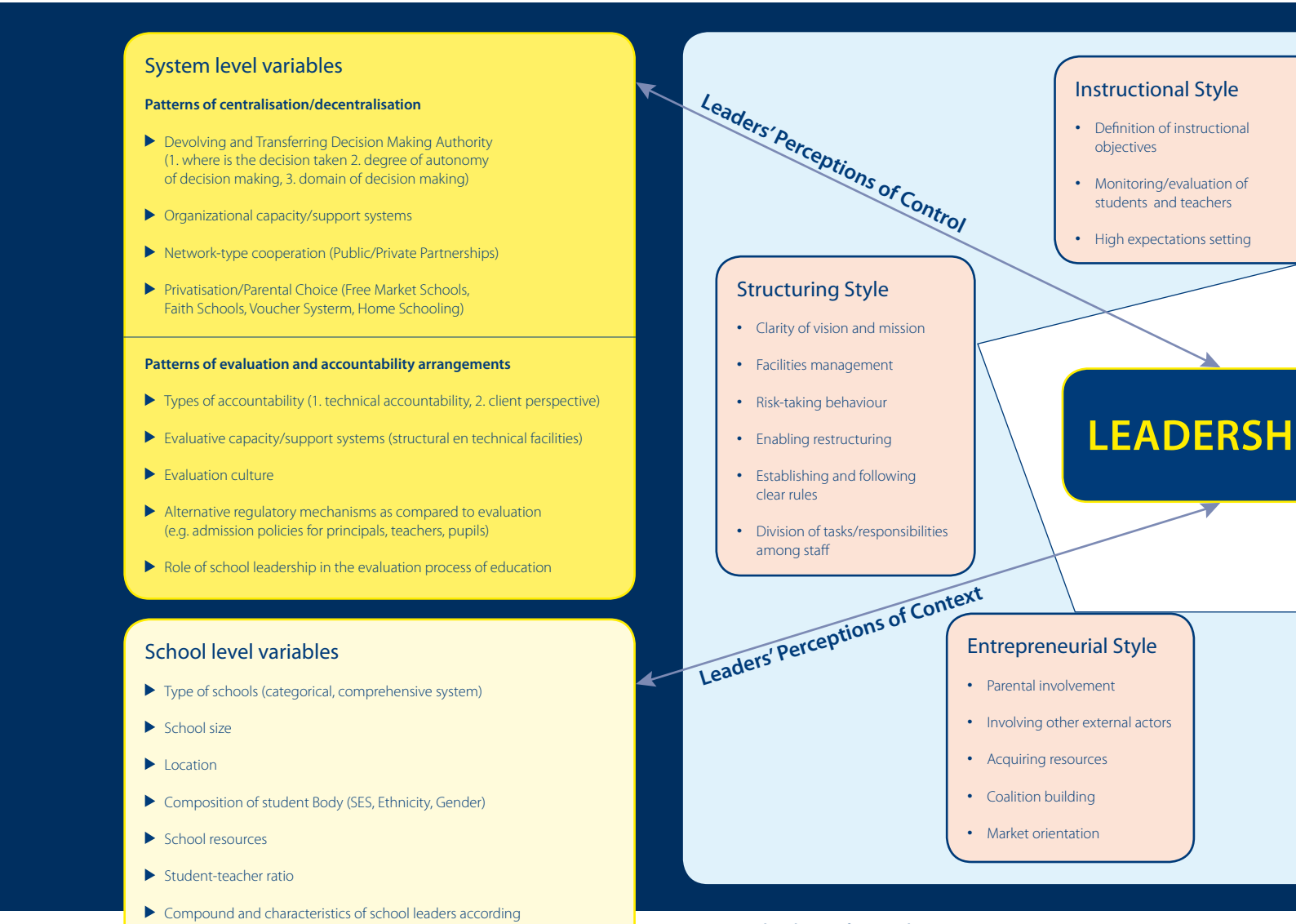
'Insight into school systems and leadership thinking'

Name: ***Jens Nicolaisen***
Role: LISA coordinator, Norway
School leaders' organisation: ***Norwegian Association of School Leaders***
Position: ***Vice-president***

"In addition to its actual results LISA has contributed to an insight into different school systems and leadership thinking from which all the participating principals and schools will benefit. This has been made possible by LISA's unique structure of researchers and school leaders working together. This interaction between both parties has also given school leaders valuable knowledge about how research is done and what kind of challenges working across borders presents."

Context Variables



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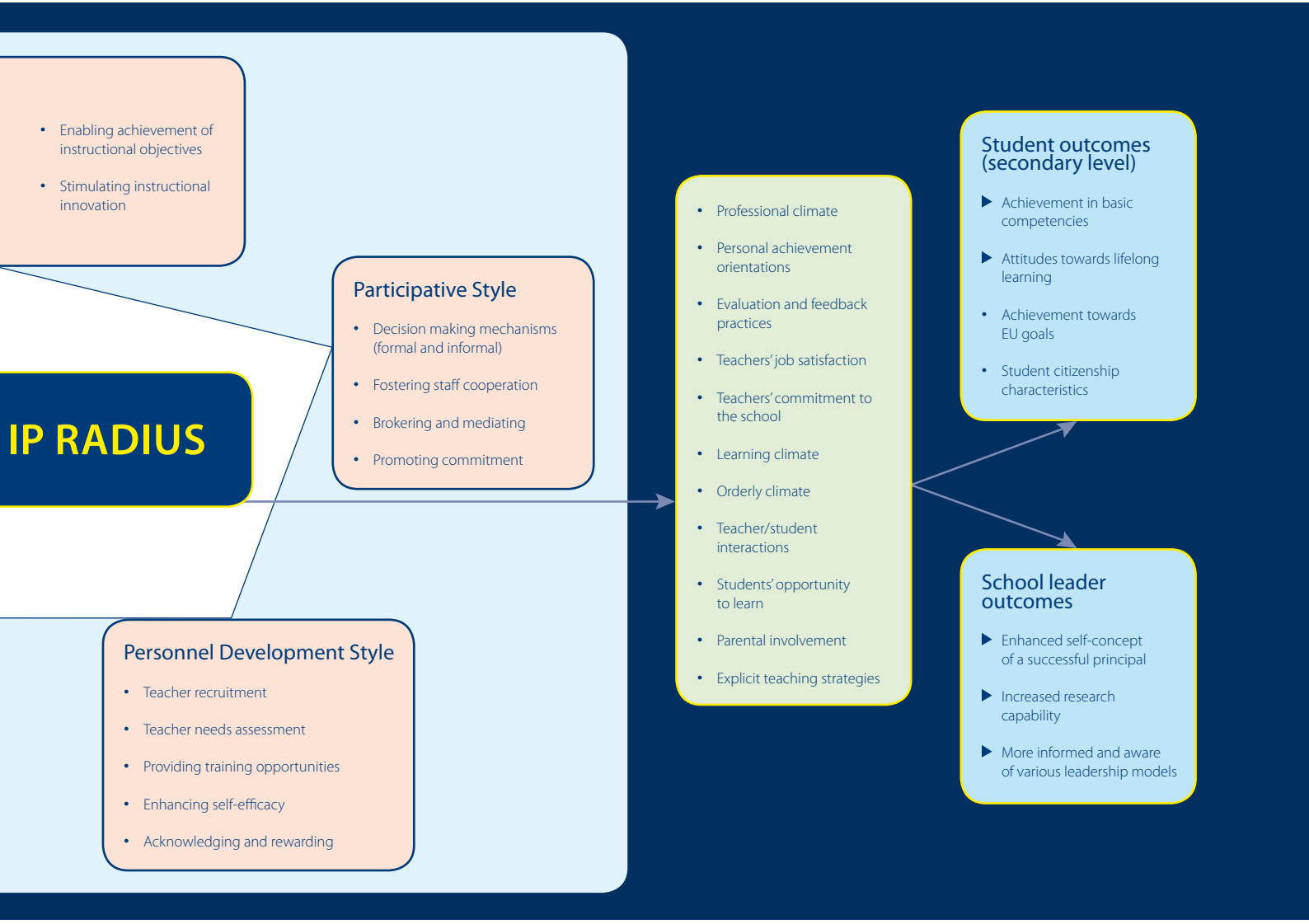
Holistic Leader
Pashiardis -

ship Framework
Brauckmann

Intermediate
School Variables

Dependent
Variables



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'To analyse 'soft skills' we need 'soft tools"

Name: ***Antonino Petrolino***
Role: ***LISA coordinator Italy***
School leaders' organisation: ***ANP***
Position: ***responsible for International Activities***

"It was somehow surprising to find out that the direct impact of school leadership on students' achievement was not so great as expected. On the other hand, we all know that good leadership does really matter for school effectiveness. In my opinion, this leads us to the core problem: a leader's role is not to 'teach'.
It's rather 'to make things happen' and the more smoothly they happen, the more effective he (or she) is. This is why a quantitative approach is not sufficient to give us significant explanations. To analyse 'soft skills' we need 'soft tools'."

Highlights

Searching for answers in quantitative analysis

Jaap Scheerens

- Instructional leadership had a place in all three studies.
- In the Dutch study and in the TIMSS analyses some negative direct effects of leadership were found.
- Each study showed different intermediary variables as relevant.
- It is important to include aspects of curriculum and instruction as intermediary variables in indirect models of school leadership.
- Two core facets of school climate are important: teacher-student relationships and classroom disciplinary climate.
- There may be alternative roads to success.

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The LISA-project has served as a reality check of effective leadership behaviours and practices in seven countries. Irrespective of context, the Instructional, Structuring, and Entrepreneurial styles of leadership seem to be essential components of a useful school leadership mix. However, it is wise to realise school leadership is highly contextualised.

Three studies were used for quantitative analysis. A Dutch study, which investigated a leadership model in Dutch secondary schools. Secondly, a re-analysis of the TIMSS data set on mathematics achievement in secondary schools, across a range of countries. And finally a re-analysis of the international teacher survey from the OECD, the TALIS study.

1. Indirect effect models of school leadership as the central issue

It makes a lot of sense to think that teachers influence student achievement indirectly, through various intermediary school processes and factors, such as the school curriculum, the professional development of teachers, the school climate etc. This idea is presently also used in research and leads to the investigation of more complex models of the way leadership in schools may take effect.

2. Different conceptualisations of leadership in the three studies

The Dutch study (Chapter 1) has a more comprehensive conceptualisation of school leadership than the two other studies. By using the Quinn and Rohrbaugh framework, the

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relative effects of basic leadership orientations could be compared. The open system orientation and the rational goal model came out strongest, in comparison to the human relations and internal process orientation. It should be noted that in other cultures the outcome may be different, and that this study has results that apply solely to the Dutch context.

In the secondary analysis of TIMSS, a relatively narrow conception of school leadership was used, nevertheless allowing for distinguishing instructional, administrative and external representation facets of leadership.

TALIS contains more extensive scales of leadership, which were synthesized to two main facets: instructional leadership and administrative leadership. In our analysis two subscales of the larger construct of instructional leadership were used: management of school goals, and instructional management. Administrative leadership appeared to have no effect on teachers' sense of efficacy.

3. Different outcome variables

The three studies also differed considerably in the outcome variables that were used. In the Dutch study, promotion rates of schools in secondary education were used as an

'The principal's role depends on the situation, not on the system'

Name: ***Katalin Acs***
Role: ***LISA coordinator Hungary***
School leaders' organisation: ***ESHA-Hungary***
Position: ***President***

"For me personally, it was interesting to play the new role of researcher. To see the other side in an interview, to be the questioner, was a good experience. After having worked together with a common aim, we'll have good contacts concerning other activities too. Our Hungarian LISA-family has developed into a small network. With regard to the project results: although we're all in different circumstances in an international project like this, our common conclusion is that the principal's role depends on the situation and not on the educational system or on the cultural effects."

'Information and best practices will work as a trigger'

Name: ***Mrs. Nives Počkar***
Role: ***LISA coordinator Slovenia***
School leaders' organisation: ***Društvo ravnatelj Slovenia***
***Position:* President**

"We find it very important that Slovenian headmasters will be informed about management in the European schools that participated in this project. Information and best practices from other EU schools will work as a trigger for Slovenian headmasters to start think about implementing new methods and innovative approach regarding management in our schools. It is very important that as many schools as possible are involved in this research. Main benefits for me are socializing and exchanging information, examples of best practice and meeting new people."

educational attainment indicator, while average marks on the final examination were used as a student achievement indicator. Of the three studies, TIMSS clearly has the most elaborate student achievement measurement, in the sense of mathematics achievement. For TALIS we had to resort to a proxy outcome indicator, assuming that teachers' sense of efficacy could be seen as a subjective perception of effectiveness.

4. Heterogeneity in intermediary variables

Finally, the three studies also show considerable heterogeneity in the choice of intermediary factors. In the case of the Dutch study this was due to the specific conceptual model that was the starting point. In this model, named after Bossert, Dwyer and others, school culture and school organisation are the main intermediary constructs. For the two international studies the choice was dictated by the variables that were contained in the data set. School climate variables are well represented in both of these studies. A strong feature of TIMSS is the inclusion of topic coverage (as an 'opportunity to learn' indicator), the absence of which in the other two studies can be seen as a regrettable limitation.

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5. What are the main results?

- The studies used, were quite heterogeneous. The Dutch study looked at educational attainment (exam passes) and examination marks. The TIMSS analyses had mathematics achievement at lower secondary level as the outcome variable. The TALIS analyses used Teachers' sense of self efficacy as a proxy outcome variable.

- Instructional leadership had a place in all three studies; the conception of school leadership in the Dutch study was broader, based on the Quinn and Rorhbauch framework (rational goal, open system, human resources and organisational process orientation).

- It was striking that in the Dutch study and the TIMSS analyses some negative direct effects of leadership were found. This might be explained by changing the direction of causality, considering leadership as reactive, and trying to compensate low achievement.

- Each study showed different intermediary variables as relevant. The Dutch study indicated that a development oriented culture supported by a human resources and entrepreneurial (open systems view) leadership has a potential for school improvement.

- In the TIMSS analyses students' appreciation of mathematics and topic coverage came out as the most significant intermediary variables. The importance of topic coverage as an instance of opportunity to learn stands out in meta analyses of educational effectiveness. This result underlines the importance of including aspects of curriculum and instruction as intermediary variables in indirect models of school leadership.

- The TALIS analyses underline the importance of two core facets of school climate: teacher student relationships and classroom disciplinary climate. Both variables are supported by outcomes of other international studies, like PISA, and meta-analyses of educational effectiveness.

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- The tentative exploring of other indirect models of school leadership indicates that there may be alternative roads to success. In this report the chain instructional leadership - result orientation - curricular emphasis received support in one study (the one based on TIMSS) but less in another study (the Dutch study). In the latter, there were indications that a combination of human resource oriented and entrepreneurial leadership might do well in fostering a development oriented school culture and teacher cooperation, factors which in their turn appeared to have a positive link with educational attainment and achievement.

What can be learned from this study?

Instructional leadership is the most frequently used concept of school leadership and also the most promising one, as far as influence on student achievement is concerned. Of the variables that play an intermediary role between school leadership behaviour and student achievement, factors that represent school culture and climate appear to be promising, next to topic coverage, or opportunity to learn. This variable generally points at the degree to which content that is taught at school matches the content that is used in tests, evaluations or examinations.

Jaap Scheerens

A highly contextual mix

'School leadership is so complex that we need more intensive qualitative research'

Name: ***Margret Rössler***
Role: ***National coordinator for ESHA Germany and LISA***
School leaders' organisation: ***Allgemeiner Schulleitungs-verband Deutschlands (ASD)***
Position: ***President Schulleitungsverband Nordrhein-Westfalen (SLV NRW), Council Member ASD***

"It is interesting and important as school head to have feedback from your staff. The questionnaire therefore is a useful instrument even in a single school, not only for international comparison. The interviews showed that the challenges for school heads from different schools are similar regarding location aspects and conditions in the educational system.
But they are also different and request a variety of strategies without losing authenticity and contact with your staff. The results of quantitative analysis confirmed what we knew before. School leadership is so complex that we need more intensive qualitative research."

Appendix

Project team

In LISA, seven school leaders' organisations from seven countries worked together:

- VO-raad (Netherlands)
- Association of School and College Leaders (United Kingdom - England)
- Association of Norwegian School leaders
- National School leader Association of Slovenia
- European Secondary School Heads Association of Hungary
- National Association of Principals (Italy)
- School leader Association of Nordrhein-Westfalen / European School Heads Association (Germany).

The scientific part of the project was conducted by

- Prof. Dr. Jaap Scheerens, Twente University (Netherlands)
- Prof. Dr. Petros Pashiardis, Open University Cyprus
- Dr. Stefan Brauckmann, German Institute for International Educational Research

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