



A Comparative Analyses of Educational Leadership Practices in European Countries: The Role of Neuroleadership Consulting Services

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A major emphasis on educational leadership is placed on the continuing demand for greater responsibility to increase student achievement. The expectations of educational stakeholders require educational institutions to ensure that all students adhere to curricular objectives, and institutions involved in education focus on implementing the requirements for achieving key performance indicators. The purpose of the comparative study of best educational leadership practices related to pre-university education in different European countries is to provide educational leaders in Romania with validated models of managerial strategies and policies to increase the performance of the institutions they coordinate. Furthermore, neuroleadership consulting could lead to better performances in the educational system.

Keywords: educational leadership, neuroleadership, educational performances, cross-country research

1. Introduction

Educational leaders in pre-university education at European level play a vital role in ensuring quality educational services and in ensuring equal educational opportunities for all relevant stakeholders (students, teachers, parents, community members). Educational leaders create the optimal conditions for effective teaching and learning in their institutions, provide the necessary resources for educational activities, support and motivate their teachers and students. Educational leaders contribute to the creation and maintenance of an organizational culture based on equity, inclusion, cooperation and performance in their institutions, for the benefit of the entire school community.

At European level, the management teams of pre-university education institutions operate in diverse and dynamic educational contexts. The roles of educational leaders have continued to evolve in response to new societal challenges, including decentralization and a greater need for accountability. As European countries try to adapt their education systems to the needs of contemporary society, the expectations of pre-university institutions and their leaders have changed profoundly. Many European countries have succeeded in transforming pre-university institutions into more autonomous organizational entities in the decision-making process, while centralizing accountability requirements and requiring schools to adopt new approaches based on experiential learning. The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has affected all European countries, has created new challenges for educational leaders, who have been forced to accelerate the digital transformation of educational processes (Azorin, 2020). As the COVID-19 pandemic spread rapidly across Europe, educational leaders struggled to react both quickly and appropriately. Schools were one of the most important

social institutions affected by the pandemic. However, most educational leaders have shown that they have too little training in managing such a crisis, which has required a rapid transition to digital educational technologies, and has not even faced such an impact (McLeod, S., & Dulskey, 2021).

2. Peculiarities of pre-university education leadership practices in different European countries

European models of educational leadership have a major impact on educational performance insofar as they can proactively address the following challenges (Christophidou, 2018):

- Quality assurance for the development of educational institutions: balancing autonomy and responsibility is a significant and ongoing challenge for European education systems, which seek to improve in several areas. Decision makers recognize the urgent need to improve the interaction between the quality assurance mechanisms of educational services, in order to enable schools to adapt to the changing needs of educational stakeholders.
- Permanent adaptation of the curriculum personal and professional development of students: educational policies must ensure that the trajectories of development of students' skills are sufficiently flexible and create the conditions to provide adequate guidance and support to all students.
- Teachers and educational leaders perceive the institutions in which they work as organizations focused on learning actionable knowledge: teachers, supported by management teams, have a crucial role in supporting student development and are key agents of change in institutional development. However, they are under significant pressure from many different areas of the education system. Policies are needed to promote teacher collaboration, autonomy and distributed leadership within the professional learning communities and to motivate and engage all educational actors to bring about change.
- Connecting to learning networks and collaboration between European education systems: effective relationships and communication help a national education system to achieve its objectives, assimilating good practices at European level. Maintaining an interaction between educational actors from different European countries is a challenge, but networking offers great potential for this approach. A deeper understanding of the purpose and nature of educational innovation networks is crucial for the positive and lasting impact of any educational leadership action.

2.1 Germany

Regulations on the recruitment of pre-university education managers differ between the 16 Länder in Germany, although most Länder have common requirements for management qualifications, along with teaching experience. Up to five years of professional experience in a management position may be required for a candidate for the post of director of a pre-university educational institution. Usually, at least five years of teaching experience are required for such leadership positions. Therefore, a strong link of an educational leader with the school system is also a precondition in Germany. As educational managers have a great influence on issues affecting the teaching and development processes of the school, German teachers' unions consider that teaching skills are essential in this regard.

The instructional leadership adopted by high school principals in Germany focuses on improving the teaching profession and teachers, promoting effective teachers and improving

learning (Brauckmann et al., 2016). Using teacher evaluation practices, efforts are made to improve classroom teaching, to improve the quality development of school life, to accelerate the implementation of educational programs, to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning, and, in general, to improve the quality of the schooling process. Transformational leadership, specific to a significant share of high school principals in Germany, shows that they develop a compelling vision and, by virtue of their exemplary, motivating, inspiring and supportive behavior, ensure that teachers adhere to organizational goals and thus are motivated to get involved in achieving these goals (Klein and Bronnert-Härle, 2020).

2.2 France

A peculiarity of educational leadership in France is the creation of advisory boards coordinated by principals, involved in projects to develop educational strategies to benefit their high schools. These advisory boards have been implemented nationwide, in the hope that the task of improving the performance of high schools could be shared among more people and that principals will thus feel less overwhelmed by the tasks of developing educational strategies. Another feature of French educational leadership is the administration of high schools focused on maintaining the status quo, by managing budgets, programs, reporting tasks to the school inspectorate, identifying solutions to increase performance, resolving disputes and encouraging relationships, mediation and counseling, activities related to the improvement of the image of high schools, such as systematic and sustained efforts aimed at changing learning conditions and other related internal conditions, with the ultimate goal of achieving educational goals (Tulowitzki, 2013).

Divided between past traditions and largely business-inspired management models, French high school leaders need to create a new identity under the influence of international comparisons, in a context of diverse work environments and with increasing pressure for educational outcomes. getting better. Their debates explore the strategic aspects of this change, in particular with regard to the development of an independent and responsible method of school management and educational management. The professional practices of French high school leaders must adapt to the profound changes that are taking place in the institutions they coordinate, which are trying to keep up with technological developments (Barrere, 2012).

2.3 Finland

Finland has been selected by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as an example of a systemic approach to educational leadership, due to its particular approach to sharing educational values systematically. When aiming to increase the magnitude of the effects of educational leadership on learning performance, Finnish high school principals adopt the lateral leadership style, through which they assume decision-making autonomy and responsibility, regardless of their role or place in the hierarchy. In practice, strengthening decision-making capacity requires time, commitment at all levels, the desire to change, to prepare the organizational environment that influences their own work of coordinating the team of teachers and non-teaching staff. Sustainable leadership promoted in Finnish high schools includes the systemic development and articulation of leadership efforts, skills and learning processes and connects them to the achievement of decision-making activities and effects over time through effective management of the succession of educational

activities, as well as the successful coordination of improving performance in the medium and long term (Hargreaves et al., 2007).

The key feature of Finnish educational leadership is that the relationship between the state, the education sector and communities has been based on mutual trust and solidarity, framed by political consensus and pragmatic reasoning, where all stakeholders have developed the ability to pursue a common goal, to act in the national interest to increase educational performance (Uljens and Nyman, 2013).

2.4 Great Britain

In the United Kingdom, a hegemonic perspective on the purpose of educational leadership is summarized by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) as facilitating learning for all students. It is assumed that educational leaders are dedicated to this goal, leading to a vision of schools, incorporated into training programs, as models focused on equity in learning and working for the good of communities. The starting point is not to reach consensus, but to improve self-knowledge and understanding the managerial position, so that leadership practices cannot be aligned, but mutually influenced. Transformative and distributed concepts offer both an agenda for training and development programs for educational leaders, and an end point - achieving performance in line with the expectations of the management teams of educational institutions (Lumby, 2006).

Another important feature that emerged from the analyzes of distributed educational leadership in the UK is that, since things like leadership and expertise are not focused on a single person, then it is more effective for education managers to ask teachers to engage in leadership activities if they feel they have the necessary expertise. Moreover, as some faculty members may have considerable experience in project management, it is recommended to redistribute efforts to coordinate educational activities in order to take advantage of these skills (James et al., 2008).

2.5 Netherlands

Transformational educational leadership contributes to improving the quality of educational services in the Netherlands, indicates the intention to use the results of the evaluation to improve the functioning of the organization and change it, and this can be done both from the perspective of external control (responsibility) and internal management. process improvement). The management of the schools is entrusted to the teachers, but the final decision-making power is entrusted to the management entity which, in the field of public education, is the local authority. Both general and deputy directors must be qualified teachers and must have adequate teaching experience and management experience. Candidates who have completed management studies are preferred, although this is not a decisive criterion. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has the competence to design and provide training programs for educational leaders. Such training programs are implemented by inspectorates in which teachers aspiring to leadership positions participate voluntarily (Derring et al., 2005).

Education managers in the Netherlands must be able not only to initiate and formulate a vision, but also to communicate and disseminate it. The cognitive perspective of Dutch educational leadership assumes that the intentions of school principals are more important for effective leadership than their actual efforts. A study coordinated by Kruger (2009) highlights two forms of educational leadership in the Netherlands. One factor is associated with instructional leadership and consists of those elements that indicate that high school managers



are directly involved in the education and training system at the operational level. Examples are behaviors designed to promote a safe learning environment, to work closely with teachers who have problems teaching students, and to discuss classroom issues with parents. The other factor is associated with strategic leadership and refers to leadership behaviors that can influence school life in various ways, but which are considered outside of what happens in the classroom. Setting educational goals and developing the school's mission are the main concern for high school principals who get a high score on this factor.

2.6 Spain

Education managers in Spain are more deeply involved in instructional leadership than in administrative activity. This gives them the opportunity to become more closely involved in increasing the performance of pre-university institutions. The roles and tasks performed by high school managers cover a wide range of possibilities, such as fostering the integration of ICT in the organization and functioning of the school; maintaining external contact and coordination; planning teaching and learning tasks using ICT with other teachers; conducting a control and supervision of teachers; solving and making decisions about problems that may arise.

Educational leaders in Spain can have considerable influence in the context of their schools, given that they have the autonomy to develop the school curriculum, and their leadership is recognized because they were elected on the basis of a validated managerial program. They can thus contribute to change by updating and promoting curriculum updates, changing teaching methods, developing new approaches to the use of educational materials, and promoting different ways of evaluating students' learning outcomes. They can also have an influence on teachers' job satisfaction and on the fact that it leads them to adopt and use innovative work practices (Moreira et al., 2019).

2.7 Italy

The cultural values that underpin the new model of educational governance in Italy were based on the concept of the school as a "community". Educational leaders bring to the forefront new ways of interacting and managing activities internally (e.g., through thematic departments) and externally, both nationally and locally (e.g., school district council, provincial school board, national council of public education). The influence of the Italian educational authorities is directed towards cultivating a system of self-assessment and school improvement, which is based on the presentation of the community with what schools achieve as educational outcomes. Thus, educational leaders in Italy must respond to the community through a participatory model that allows parents to get involved in choosing the school (Paletta and Bezzina, 2016). The lack of autonomy in financial matters, such as funding and budget agreements, limits the strategic powers of Italian high schools and the type of leadership they can provide in school initiatives. Currently, in Italy, the state still funds schools, although schools can attract other sources of funding through regional, local and private entities. High school principals have limited control over the motivating factors of teachers because there are no middle management positions in Italian high schools and therefore there is no way to influence career opportunities or the progress of teachers in their schools. The only facility given to high school principals is to assign specific responsibilities to teachers beyond their teaching responsibilities. This makes it very difficult for Italian educational leaders to introduce distributed leadership initiatives.

3. Conclusions

To meet the challenges associated with the expectations of educational stakeholders, European pre-university education leaders have demonstrated skills to focus on sharing the vision of interactive teaching and experiential learning among colleagues - especially in terms of measurable progress in student performance. As a result, high school principals in Europe focus on building a vision for the institutions they coordinate, adopting participatory management to turn high schools into collaborative learning communities. Achieving these essential efforts to improve educational leadership requires the collection and evaluation of actionable information to determine educational needs and curriculum monitoring to determine if identified needs are being properly addressed.

Clearly, there are multiple role expectations for leaders in European pre-university education. All high schools need principals capable of acting as leaders who ensure and influence the quality of training. Fulfilling these multiple responsibilities implies a vision of sustainable education, which should constantly show leaders the strategic lines for the future development of high schools, without losing sight of the missions and objectives of their institutions. Successful high school principals at European level have understood the importance of setting clear learning goals and achieving a commitment at school level - and even at the community level - to these goals. The development of a clear vision and goals for learning is emphasized by high-performing high school principals. They have high expectations for teachers and students to meet these goals, proactively involving them in organizational projects. True educational leaders provide emotional support to colleagues and are seen as having the ability to encourage the development of interpersonal relationships.

The comparative analysis of the good practices of educational leadership related to pre-university education in different European countries, carried out in the first part of the research report, highlights transferable ideas in the Romanian educational environment, illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 – Educational leadership practices transferable in Romania

Country included in comparative analysis	Insights specific to educational leadership that can be transferred to Romania
Germany	➤ Focus on instructional and transformational leadership; ➤ Organizational cultures conducive to the achievement of educational performance.
France	➤ Orientation towards participatory management (advisory boards for strategic decisions); ➤ Increased pressure from the authorities on increasing educational performance.
Finland	➤ Offering educational leaders various training programs; ➤ Adoption of lateral leadership, which ensures decision-making autonomy.
Great Britain	➤ Leadership is considered a process of influence that facilitates the achievement of performance targets in the educational field; ➤ Adopting the principle: facilitating learning for all students.
Netherlands	➤ The role of transformational leadership on improving performance through increased responsibility;

	➤ Supporting predictable learning processes.
Spain	➤ The role of transformational leadership on improving performance through increased responsibility; ➤ Supporting predictable learning processes.
Italy	➤ The school is perceived as an open community; ➤ The system of self-evaluation and improvement of educational performance is periodically reviewed by the relevant ministry.

Source: own contribution, based on comparative analyzes on educational leadership practices in different European countries

Neuroleadership consulting services in education will be explored in future agenda, considering some benefits retrieved from a research conducted by Gocen (2021): Neuroleaders conduct emotion management effectively; Neuroleaders are aware of the processes that make learning poor; Neuroleaders use solutions that will provide optimum learning; Neuroleadership studies can show the way in the selection and training of leaders. Being aware of the value of neuroleadership consulting services in transformational leadership and collective responsibility, managers in pre-university education in Romania need to implement mechanisms for systematic and continuous involvement in decision-making, while ensuring that attention and support is given to members of teaching and non-teaching staff who feel excluded from to participate in decision making.

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