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联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

# Leading better learning: School leadership and quality in the Education 2030 agenda

## Regional reviews of policies and practices

*This is a preliminary version, not for quotation*

UNESCO Education Sector  
Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems (ED/PLS)  
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## List of acronyms

ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
ADEC	Abu Dhabi Education Council
ADEM	Agency for the Development of Education and Management
AEO	African Economic Outlook
AEW	Africa Education Watch
AfDB	African Development Bank
AS	Arab states
AU	African Union
BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information & Statistics
BG	Bulgaria
CA	Central Asia
CapEFA	Capacity Development for Education for All
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCEM	Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers
CfBT	Centre for British Teachers
CommSec	Commonwealth Secretariat
CSF	Central Square Foundation
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Distance Education
DfID	Department for International Development
DoSE	Department of State for Education
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DSIB	Dubai School Inspection Bureau
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EE	Eastern Europe
EI	Estonia
EEDP	Enhancing Education Development Project
EFA	Education for All
EIT	Eritrea Institute of Technology
EMIS	Education Management and Information Systems
ESP	Education Sector Plan

EU	European Union
FFr	French Franc
FPE	Free Primary Education
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEMS	Global Education Management Systems
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratios
GES	Ghana Education Service
GILO	Girls' Improved Learning Outcomes
GLOBE	Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness
GOP	Government of Pakistan
GPI	Gender Parity Index
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation Agency
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HR	Croatia
HU	Hungary
I/NGOs	International / Non-Government Organization
IBE	UNESCO International Bureau of Education
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IICBA	International Institute for Capacity-Building in Africa
IIE	Institute of International Education
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRFOL	International Research Foundation for Open Learning
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Sham
KHDA	Knowledge Human Development Authority
LDC	Least Developed Countries
LfL	Leadership for Learning
LINS	LUI's International Service
LRS	Leadership Reflective Space
LT	Lithuania
LTD	Leadership and Teacher Development

LV	Latvia
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MLJ	Ministry of Law and Justice
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
MPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
NAHT	National Association of Head Teachers
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NPM	New Public Management
NPQP	National Professional Qualification for Principals
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NUEPA	National University of Educational Planning and Administration
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OEI	Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura
OREALC	Oficina Regional de Educación para América Latina y el Caribe
PD	Professional Development
PEDP III	Primary Education Development Project III
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
PL	Poland
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
PSI	Program on School Improvement
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RBM	Result Based Management
RESAFAD	African Network for Education at a Distance
RO	Romania
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programs
SAQA	South Africa Qualifications Authority
SBM	School-Based Management
SDB	School Development Board
SEC	Supreme Education Council
SERCE	Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study
SGB	School Governing Boards
SI	Slovenia
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency

SITEAL	Sistema de Información de Tendencias Educativas en América Latina
SK	Slovakia
SMB	School Management Board
SMC	School Management Committee
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SSRP	School Sector Reform Program
STI	Science, Technology and Innovation
SWA	South and West Asia
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Study
TI	Transparency International
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TR	Turkey
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollars
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VSO	Volunteer Service Overseas
VVOB	Flemish Association for Development Cooperation and Technical Assistance
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization



## **Acknowledgments**

INSERT TEXT

## Preface

*In today's schools, strong and effective leadership is considered to be the critical ingredient in driving change and strategic innovation. Leadership is seen to be at the hub of transforming: values into actions, visions into realities, obstacles into innovations, separateness into solidarity, and risks into rewards (Kouzes and Postner, 2007).*

The current focus on school leadership is the result of a combination of three factors: evidence from research, changing and complex expectations about the school system, and the imperative to improve quality, as expressed in 2015's national Education for All (EFA) assessment reports. School leadership has emerged as a key policy priority in line with the new vision for education articulated in the fourth Sustainable Development Goal, to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'.

The twenty-five years of the EFA movement have been marked by a shift in focus from quantity (access, enrolment and retention) to quality, as most countries have reached or are approaching universal enrolment at the level of primary or basic education. In their search for quality, countries have invested in teacher training, learning materials, equipment and facilities, but few have attempted to tap the potential of school leadership as a lever for improving teaching and learning outcomes. The latest EFA global assessment (Incheon, 2015), however, suggested that this was beginning to change, with many countries emphasizing school governance, management and leadership in their pursuit of better quality, effectiveness and efficiency in education delivery.

Nevertheless, school leadership development is a new challenge for many countries, particularly developing ones, where school principals, whose role has traditionally been an administrative one, are required to become instructional leaders. This implies a need not only for appropriate preparation for the role, but also for relevant in-service professional development and support for serving principals and managers. Policymakers must draw on research and examples of best practice to deliver successful reform in this area.

With its mandate to champion education development, particularly with regard to the challenges of the Education 2030 agenda, UNESCO is committed to supporting member states in addressing these issues. A first step in this process is knowledge production and

dissemination to inform the global debate about effective school leadership and its potential role in enhancing school performance and students' learning outcomes. The present report is a contribution to this effort. It consists of a comparative review of policies and practices in six regions: Arab states, East Asia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, South-West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

These reviews reflect important contextual differences in terms of history, politics, culture, and economic and demographic factors, which are shaping school leadership policy and practice in different countries and regions. But they also reveal a number of features and concerns shared across and within regions and countries. There is wide recognition of the need to establish and strengthen effective school leadership, as a means of improving education quality, school performance and students' learning outcomes. The reviews confirm Townsend's (2011) observation that there is a global trend towards reinforcing school leadership, though the approaches to leadership development vary according to national and local context.

It should be noted that this report is a compilation of regional reviews prepared by individual researchers. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the content, it is not possible for UNESCO to validate every statement made, nor can we vouch for the completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the content. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors, and are not necessarily endorsed by UNESCO.

## **Chapter 1 - Introduction: Why a focus should be put on school leadership in the 2030 education agenda**

### ***1.1. The urgent need to address the quality imperative***

Economic globalisation, with the increased levels of competition and technological development it brings, puts pressure on education systems to give young people the knowledge and skills they need to adapt and function well in a rapidly changing environment. This reinforces the need for continuous improvement in the quality of education, not only for individual development and fulfilment, but also for economic productivity and growth, social cohesion and national wealth.

However, a number of international surveys and studies, including the EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR), the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and the SACMEQ and PASEC assessments of students' abilities in reading and mathematics, have raised concerns about the quality of education in many countries. As countries have been approaching the EFA and Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets, the challenges are shifting from school access/enrolment to quality.

The EFA Global Monitoring Report (2005) warned that, in many parts of the world, students are graduating from school without the required set of cognitive skills. It is estimated that around 250 million children in schools do not master basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics (GMR, 2013/14). Urgent and concerted action to address this challenge will be needed if the 2030 agenda is to be achieved. The search for new levers to improve school performance and education quality becomes particularly critical in a context of increasing global competition and tight fiscal constraint.

### ***1.2. School leadership: A new lever for effectiveness, efficiency and quality enhancement***

In their efforts to improve education quality and effectiveness, policymakers, inspired by a range of research, have emphasized the dynamics of teaching and learning, as well as the role of instructional materials. Better and more efficient learning outcomes can be achieved by optimizing the levels of inputs in the educational process. The 2006 Global Monitoring Report noted, among the main educational inputs, learning time, the core subject (literacy), pedagogy (structured teaching), the language of instruction, learning materials, facilities and leadership. While most of these factors are well-known determinants of learning quality, the leadership role of school principals requires further attention (Bush, 2013), especially in the developed world.

Evidence from a number of reform initiatives undertaken in countries belonging to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) suggests that effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency, equity and quality of education, particularly when schools are granted autonomy and principals receive appropriate support to make important decisions (Pont et al., 2008). It also demonstrates that successful school leaders can improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their support and influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions (Leithwood et al., 2008).

### ***1.3. School leadership matters, but its potential is yet to be fully exploited***

While school leadership reform has become a high priority among the more developed countries of the OECD, its potential has not yet been adequately explored and exploited in many countries, particularly the developing ones.

These developments have led policymakers in many countries to attempt to identify and promote the factors most critical to effective school leadership in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Many countries have, as a result, reformed their education governance structures, moving towards greater decentralization and school autonomy, with schools held more accountable for results. As a corollary, evolving expectations of school leaders have necessitated a redefinition of their responsibilities and a review of policies regarding their training, recruitment, working conditions, professional development and remuneration.

There is a danger that these developments will benefit only the more developed countries of the West, and have limited impact on developing countries where the education challenge, particularly concerning quality, is most acute. UNESCO commissioned these regional reviews as a first step in supporting all its members states in the development of sound policies for effective school leadership.

## **2. Analytical framework**

### ***2.1. Definitions***

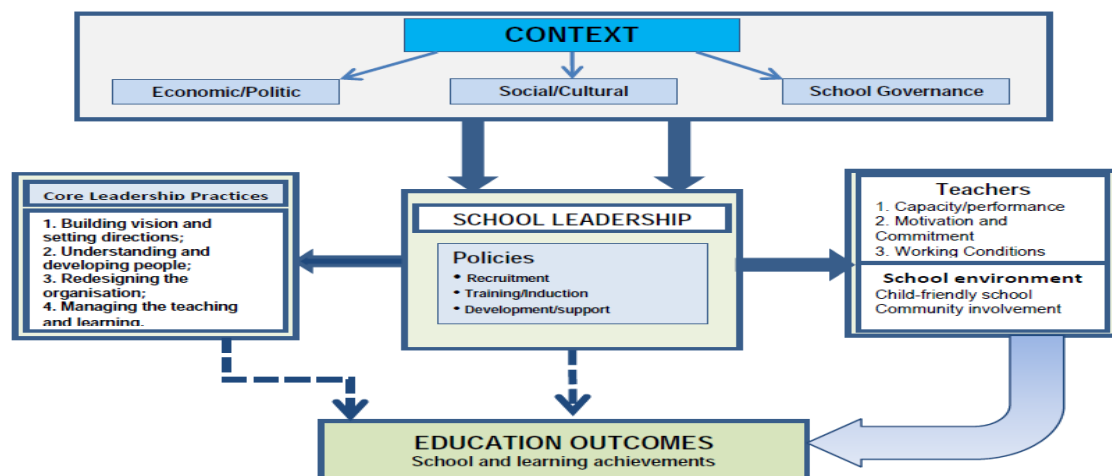
The literature defines school leadership as a process of enlisting and guiding the talents and energies of teachers, pupils and parents towards the achievement of common educational aims. It differs from the concept of school administration and management, which concerns the exercise of control and supervision. The concept of school leadership, in contrast, implies influence, dynamism, empowerment and pro-activity for school reform and improved performance, particularly in terms of better learning outcomes.

School leadership is also viewed as a strategic, forward-looking process that involves the development and communication of a strong vision and attendant goals or objectives, along with a relevant plan for implementation, monitoring and review. Leadership entails convincing others of their value, and influencing the way they think, feel and behave in order to realize their potential. Successful school leaders are motivated and motivating visionaries – skilled communicators who listen, reflect, learn and empower their staff (Smith and Riley, 2012).

The term ‘school leadership’ encompasses the roles of principals, assistant principals and other executive-level staff members. This suggests that leadership can be distributed within schools and among staff. Recent studies of OECD countries show that, while principals are vested with overall operational authority, school leadership is increasingly shared or distributed, with a growing expectation that principals will facilitate and work effectively with other staff in leadership roles (Anderson et al., 2007). School leaders, therefore, include those staff who, from their formal positions of authority in a school, work with others to provide direction and exert influence in order to achieve organizational goals, with particular focus on improving teaching and learning outcomes (OECD, 2006).

While school leadership responsibilities should, ideally, be distributed within the school and its wider community, the principal’s role is key. Figure 1 shows that while the roles and responsibilities of school leaders are defined by policymakers in line with a country’s political, socio-economic, cultural and educational contexts, school principals act as mediators between policymakers and teachers, parents and students, and are, therefore, at the hub of the education process.

**Figure 1. Conceptual framework for school leadership**



The impact of school leadership on school performance and pupil learning is indirect (Hallinger and Heck, 1996). Successful leaders apply core leadership practices (Leithwood et al., 2008) to create an enabling school environment, and to support and motivate teachers, who, in turn, improve teaching and learning outcomes.

## ***2.2. Core leadership theories, practices and styles***

### **2.2.1. Leadership theories**

School leadership research is informed by theories drawn from an extensive literature on management and organizational science. Table 1 gives a brief overview of the main leadership theories, showing the evolution of related definitions and hypotheses concerning leadership characteristics, behaviour and actions. As can be seen, a number of assumptions and considerations are being used to define and/or identify leaders, including innate skills, personal background, character traits, perceptions, and typical behaviours and actions (Jamal, 2014).

**Table 1. Leadership theories**

<b>Theories</b>	<b>Assumptions/considerations</b>
<b>Great man theory (1840s)</b>	This theory assumes that competence for leadership is inborn, that great leaders are heroic people, born with natural quality and destined by birth to become leaders. In 1860, Herbert Spencer, an English philosopher disputed the theory by affirming that heroes are simply the product of their time and their actions the results of social conditions.
<b>Trait theory (1930s–1940s)</b>	This theory suggests that people are either born or made with certain qualities, such as intelligence, sense of responsibility, creativity and other values, that make them excel in leadership roles. Many studies have vainly attempted to identify the traits among existing leaders, highlighting the many shortcomings of the theory.
<b>Behavioural theories (1940s–1950s)</b>	This theory posits that leaders are made, rather than just born, and that successful leadership is based in definable, learnable behaviour. It focuses on the behaviours of leaders, what they actually do rather than their mental, physical or social characteristics. Two general types of behaviour exhibited by leaders are: concern for people and concern for the organization or the production. Research on this theory has sometimes led to contradictory findings.
<b>Contingency theories (1960s)</b>	This theory argues that there is no single way of leading and that every leadership style should be based on specific situations, which means that there are certain people who perform at the maximum level in certain places; but at a minimal level when out of their element.

<b>Transactional leadership theories (1970s)</b>	This theory assumes an exchange between leader and followers, such that the leader must find a means to adequately reward (or punish) his followers for performing leader-assigned tasks. The theory states that humans in general want to maximize pleasurable experiences and diminish unpleasurable ones. Thus, people are more likely to associate themselves with individuals who add to their strengths.
<b>Transformational leadership theories (1970s)</b>	This theory contends that: (i) people will follow a person who inspires them; (ii) a person with vision and passion can achieve great things; and (iii) the way to get things done is by injecting enthusiasm and energy. Thus, transformational leaders create and embrace a vision for an organization that inspires and brings the best out of people, while reflecting a belief system based on integrity and inclusiveness.

### 2.2.2. Leadership practices and styles

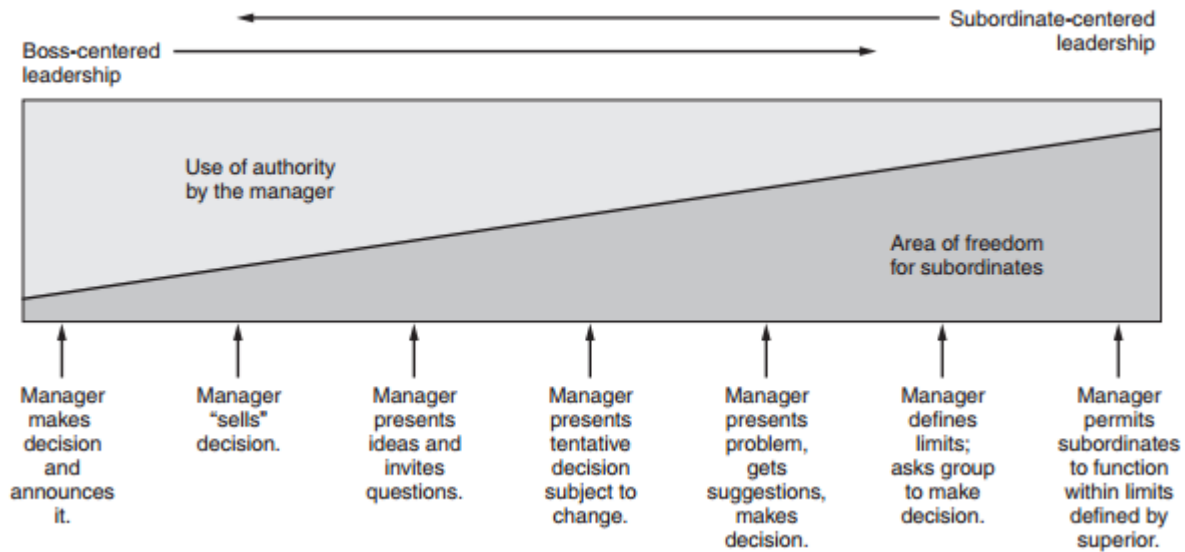
Drawing on an extensive literature review and relevant empirical evidence, Leithwood et al. (2008) found that ‘almost all successful [school] leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices’. These are: (i) building vision and setting directions; (ii) understanding and developing people; (iii) redesigning the organisation; and (iv) managing the teaching and learning programme. Each of these basic practices is associated with numerous, more specific competencies, orientations and considerations (Leithwood et al., 2004). While the authors identify these practices as necessary for leaders who wish to improve student learning in their schools, they also acknowledge that they are, by themselves, rarely sufficient. Other policies and strategies must be in place to ensure the effectiveness of good leadership practice.

Evidence from the literature suggests that leaders use this common repertoire of basic leadership practices in diverse ways, adopting different styles or models to achieve organizational goals or to meet targets. ‘Leadership style’ refers to the methods leaders use to provide direction, get plans implemented, and keep staff motivated in performing leader-assigned tasks. Effective leaders vary their methods according to the context, the stakeholders affected and the desired outcome.

While several leadership styles have emerged from the research, all can be located on a continuum between autocratic and laissez-faire leadership. Between these two extremes is democratic or participative leadership, the third of Kurt Lewin’s three leadership styles or behaviours. These styles influence the leader-follower relationship, group success, group risk-taking, group problem-solving strategies, group morale and group relations.



**Figure 2. Continuum of leadership behaviours and styles**



Source: Rowitz, 2014 (Reprinted from *Harvard Business Review*. 'How to choose a Leadership Pattern' by R. Tannenbaum and W. H. Schmidt, May-June 1973. Copyright © 1973 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College; all rights reserved).

In Figure 2, the extreme left corresponds to autocratic or authoritarian leadership. Under this style of leadership, the manager makes all the decisions without involving staff whose role is simply to execute those decisions. While the evidence shows that autocratic leadership is the most mis-used leadership style, it can be effective in some situations, for example: (i) when the leader alone has the expertise to bring the task to completion; (ii) where the decision would not change as a result of employees' input or participation; (iii) where employee performance is unaffected by their involvement, or otherwise, in decision-making; and (iv) when the task is time bound, as in an emergency situation, for instance. Authoritarian leadership is not appropriate in environments where members need to share opinions or their participation in decision-making is deemed useful. Critics suggest that the autocratic style is most likely to lead to high levels of dissatisfaction, turnover and absenteeism among staff (Gastil, 1994).

The more participative approaches to decision-making clustered around the centre of Figure 2 correspond to the democratic leadership style. The democratic leadership style is characterized by collective decision-making. The manager involves subordinates in decision-making, though he or she may have the final say. Democratic leaders gain their authority through accountability, active participation, cooperation and delegation of tasks and responsibilities. While Lewin (cited by Rowitz, 2014) found democratic leadership to be the most effective of the three leadership styles, he also suggested that it would be particularly suitable for group process-oriented activities. The democratic style has been found to have a positive impact on team members' feelings (Jamal,

2014), but it can also be problematic when there is a wide range of opinions and no clear way of reaching consensus and an equitable final decision.

The extreme right of Figure 2 illustrates the laissez-faire leadership style, which is characterized by minimal leadership involvement in decision-making. Group members are granted responsibility for decisions, self-monitoring, problem-solving and producing successful end products. The leaders' role involves trusting group members to make appropriate decisions and bringing highly trained and reliable members into the group or organization. This style is most successful and appropriate in environments where there is no requirement for central coordination, and where staff are highly skilled, motivated and self-directed. Otherwise, as Lewin suggests, laissez-faire can result in less coherent work patterns and less commitment and energy than can be observed when staff are actively led.

Leadership styles in education organizations draw on the same repertoires as other organizations, while including additional aspects of task orientation and orientation towards people. The literature identifies different school leadership styles and models which, in most cases, depend on the governance structure of the education system and the development context. For example, in systems where school principals do not receive specific preparation, leadership tends to be autocratic and bureaucratic, with principals generally operating on the basis of what they learned from their leaders when they were teachers (Bush, 2013).

Discussion of the most suitable model for school leadership suggests that the transformational model is the most effective for enhanced school performance and outcomes (Leithwood, 2004; Oyetunji, 2006). According to Jamal (2014), transformational leadership has proved to be appropriate to complex and dynamic work environments with intellectual challenges, such as those faced by education managers and their teams. These debates have recently been focused on the two dominant models in school leadership literature, namely instructional leadership and transformational leadership (Heck and Hallinger, 1999; Stewart, 2006). These two models differ from others in that they focus on how administrators and teachers can improve teaching and learning. Instructional leadership focuses on the importance of establishing clear educational goals, planning the curriculum, evaluating teachers and teaching, and creating an enabling school environment. Transformational leadership focuses on vision, inspiration and relationships, with the aim of restructuring the school by improving teachers' working and pupils' learning conditions (Stewart, 2006; Robison et. al., 2009). Further analysis (discussed in the next section) reveals that these two

models are close and complementary, and that their optimal combination is most likely to lead to better school results.

The research shows that there is no single school leadership model for achieving success (Day et al., 2009). Successful school leaders make use of a mix of leadership models, and are responsive to context, i.e. school goals, school organizational structure and culture (Leithwood, 2007; Bush, 2013). While instructional leadership is particularly useful in guiding teaching and learning, experienced leaders combine different styles, depending on school environment and the broad educational context.

### **3. Emerging trends in school leadership**

#### ***3.1. The influence of new public management reforms: Decentralisation, school autonomy and accountability***

In many countries, the growing focus on effective school leadership and related changes in the roles of school leaders has been influenced by parallel reforms in school governance structures in a context of increasing decentralization and greater accountability (OECD, 2005). Increased autonomy has been granted to schools, not only to allow school-level management and control over decentralized budgets and staff, but also to ensure instructional leadership through resource (budgetary and human) management. While this autonomy creates opportunities for school leaders to allocate resources to priority development areas, it also raises the accountability pressure on them. Increasingly, school leaders are becoming accountable for the results achieved by teachers and students, whereas previously they were held accountable only for their inputs into learning processes (OECD, 2009). This trend reflects not only the need for optimal use of limited resources, but also a recognition of the paramount importance of quality education for individual, social and economic development, especially in a rapidly changing, competitive and knowledge-based world.

These developments have significant implications for school leadership policy, as experienced in many OECD countries. School autonomy alone is not a guarantee of effective school leadership, unless accompanied by appropriate policies and strategies to create an enabling environment and develop school leaders' capacities (GMR, 2005). In other words, effective leadership can be achieved only when school leaders have an explicit mandate and capacity, motivation and support to use their autonomy to focus on the responsibilities most conducive to enhanced school and learning outcomes. There is growing evidence that effective reform in the area of school leadership must be coupled, as it is in many OECD countries, with the revision of policies on principal recruitment, training, professional development, working conditions and remuneration.

An OECD (2009) study of school leadership, covering twenty-two education systems in nineteen participating countries, concluded that, in many cases, school leaders' roles were at odds with reforms intended to deliver greater decentralization and more school autonomy and accountability. The findings led many of these countries to redefine and expand the roles and responsibilities of school leaders, in ways that had important implications for the way in which school leadership is developed and supported. This was in line with the study's recommendations, which highlighted the need to: (i) ensure a clear (re)definition of school leaders' responsibilities; (ii) distribute school leadership among school staff and stakeholders; (iii) develop the knowledge and skills of school leaders to enhance their effectiveness; and (iv) make school leadership a more attractive profession (OECD, 2009).

A number of OECD countries have since undertaken reforms in these areas, with the aim of reinforcing the instructional role of school leaders.

### ***3.2. New international evidence connecting school leadership with learning outcomes***

The importance of quality education and lifelong learning in ensuring countries can compete in a globalized and knowledge-based economy cannot be over-emphasized.

Faced with resource constraints, countries are exploring innovative ways of enhancing school performance and student outcomes, including through exploiting the potential of school leadership. Research has traditionally identified three main determinants of student success, namely: (i) students' socio-economic and cultural background; (ii) factors related to the education system at a macro level; and (iii) school factors, namely teachers' commitment and teaching practices. The attention given to school leadership owes a great deal to the large body of research that has found a causal link between school leadership and student achievement (Day et al., 2009; Leithwood et al., 2006, 2008). The international evidence suggests that school improvement rarely occurs in the absence of effective leadership and that school leadership accounts for up to 27 per cent of variation in students' learning achievement, second only to classroom teaching (Leithwood et al., 2006; Robinson, 2007).

The correlation between school leadership and students' outcomes is not direct. Research indicates that school leadership affects students' learning achievement by exerting a positive influence on the work of other staff, especially teachers, as well as on the conditions or characteristics of the school (Leithwood et al., 2006).

An array of factors interacts in the complex chain of variables linking leadership to student learning. School principals play a central role in this interaction process. For

example, case-studies from London's Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating Centre suggest that students' learning achievement is affected by leadership actions that support teachers' activities, school organisation and relations with parents and communities. Similarly, Leithwood et al. (2006), in studies conducted for the UK Department for Education, highlight the importance of school leaders' personal skills and values in developing strategies geared to influencing teachers' capacities and motivation as well as creating an enabling school environment, conducive to better learning achievement.

A systematic review conducted by Robinson et al. (2009), for New Zealand's Ministry of Education, suggests that instructional leadership is more likely to enhance students' performance than transformational leadership. Their analysis found the impact of pedagogical leadership to be nearly four times that of transformational leadership. However, these two leadership models should not be considered as opposed, since transformational leadership incorporates elements that are specifically educational, while pedagogical leadership attends to relational matters, such as consensus on school goals.

The study also revealed that, the leadership dimension most effective in relation to students' performance was 'promoting and participating in teacher learning and development'. The strength (effect size) of this dimension was estimated to be twice that of any other dimension, which means that 'when school leaders promote and/or participate in effective teacher professional learning this has twice the impact on student outcomes across a school than any other leadership activity'. This supports the claim, reported by Leithwood et al., (2006), that 'teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions'. The impact of school leadership on teachers' professional development, commitment, motivation and working conditions are key determinant of students' outcomes.

All of these findings have radically transformed expectations of school leaders. They are no longer expected to be merely good managers and administrators; rather, they must become instructional leaders, able to guide and support teachers in fostering continuous improvement in students' learning achievement. Effective school leadership is now viewed as the cornerstone of successful, large-scale and sustainable education reform (Fullan, 2002).

Recent reforms in school leadership, especially in OECD countries, have emphasized the school leadership responsibilities most conducive to enhanced learning outcomes. Research has shown that some leadership roles influence teaching and learning more than others. They include: (i) supporting, evaluating and developing teacher quality; (ii)

goal-setting, assessment and accountability; (iii) strategic resource management; and (iv) system leadership or leadership beyond school borders (OECD, 2009).

While school leadership has become a priority issue in the educational reform agenda of OECD countries, the knowledge base for this domain is still weak in most developing countries. Therefore, it is worth considering how school leadership reforms and trends in OECD countries can inform education policies in other countries or regions, and to what extent the knowledge base, developed in the context of the OECD countries, can be useful for other countries or regions, particularly those with different cultural and political contexts.

### ***3.3. Exploring school leadership in the context of developing countries***

As stated above, the increasing focus on school leadership is a response to a number of outcome-based pressures, dictated by growing competition among education systems in a rapidly globalizing world. As effective school leadership is about enhancing school effectiveness, efficiency and students' outcomes, the need for it should be felt particularly acutely by developing countries where most of the indicators related to school performance and quality are weak. This echoes an assertion made by Leithwood et al. (2004), that 'effective leadership has the greatest impact where it is most needed', i.e. in the most challenged schools. Education systems in developing countries are replete with challenging school contexts, including schools deprived of basic infrastructure and equipment, schools in conflict or post-conflict situations, and small, poor rural or remote schools.

However, while there is an abundant and growing literature on school leadership in OECD countries, this field is still to be explored in most developing countries. The few existing research studies suggest that most developing countries still lag far behind with regard to the development of effective school leadership, despite the intentions of policy documents and discourses. For instance, a recent study by Ebot Ashu (2014), of Cameroon, stressed the need, expressed by headteachers and teachers, for the alignment of national school leadership policy development with international best practice in this area. According to the same study, headteachers and teachers also called for a structured leadership development programme to enhance the preparedness and performance of the head teachers.

Research suggests that school leadership in developing countries is largely authoritarian and bureaucratic, as well as being an ineffective way of educating for peace and democracy, and a cause of weak school service delivery (Harber and Davies, 1998). As, in general, headteachers are appointed from the teaching staff and receive little or no specific training, they tend to maintain the authoritarian, top-down leadership style they

experienced as a teacher. The research also identified a mismatch between the prescribed roles of headteachers and their day-to-day work.

Oduro et al. (2007), in analysing policy initiatives related to issues of educational quality in Ghana, Tanzania and Pakistan, came to the conclusion that ‘with some notable exceptions, school leaders are still locked into a technicist, civil-servant transactional mode, where they are seen as being responsible for carrying out Ministry orders rather than acting as professional educators leading fellow colleagues in an endeavour to improve the education received by pupils’. Their paper also highlighted the weak evidence base on school leadership in developing countries, and called for further focused research in this area, particularly in relation to education quality improvement.

#### **4. Research questions and methodological approach**

The regional reviews of policies and practices on school leadership featured in this publication are part of a UNESCO initiative to address this knowledge gap and raise awareness of the potential of school leadership as a means of enhancing school and learning outcomes, particularly in developing countries. This is a first step of an applied research programme to produce and share knowledge and best practice, and to inform the global debate about the potential of effective leadership in enhancing school results and students’ learning. The intention is to support countries’ efforts to develop sound policies for effective school leadership.

This report comprises reviews of six regional groupings, including Arab states, East Asia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, South and West Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. The groupings (EFA regions) used are as presented in the EFA Global Monitoring Report.

Six researchers conducted the desk reviews (one researcher per regional group), drawing on secondary sources and following a common structure proposed by UNESCO in order to facilitate comparison between regions/countries. Each researcher was asked to conduct a critical analysis of cross-cultural policies and practices regarding school leadership in a particular regional group, by addressing the following questions:

- What is the profile of school leaders in the region concerned? This referred mostly to demographics and qualifications, both for primary and secondary education (ISCED levels 1, 2 and 3).
- What are the current regulatory frameworks, involving requirements for access, training, contractual arrangements, work tasks and responsibilities as well as

supervision and support? Particular attention was given to qualification frameworks when they exist.

- Are there recent and/or ongoing reforms of the profession or policy debates about the transformation of the role of school leaders and the implications for training, both initial and in-service?
- Are there evidence-based policies and research about school leaders; topics and issues of common interest across countries?
- Based on the above (expected findings), what policy recommendations would make sense, from the perspective of promoting/reinforcing school leadership to improve learning outcomes and school environment?

In accordance with these terms of reference, the authors collected data from as many of their region's countries as possible, so as to capture fully the regional status and trends concerning school leadership. The collection of first-hand or primary data was not possible, given the time and resource constraints. This approach proved to be a constraint, as all the authors reported the paucity of relevant and reliable information and documents on school leadership in the regions studied. According to the authors, this constitutes the main limitation for this study.

It is important to note that these reviews have been a learning and interactive process, involving the authors and their UNESCO counterparts, as well as other relevant partners (researchers, practitioners, education officers, etc.), in research and expert discussions, including a peer review expert meeting, hosted by UNESCO, in December 2014.



## **Chapter 2 - Policy review of school leadership in the Arab states**

**A policy review of school leadership in the Arab states**

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## **Executive summary**

UNESCO's 2011 report on the progress of Arab states towards the Education for All goals raised concerns as to the poor quality of education in the region. Despite government investment, rates of dropout and repetition remain high, and there is a substantial discrepancy between the skills students acquire and those the economy needs.

A growing body of research suggests that school leadership must be transformed before education can be reformed (Leithwood et al., 2008; Day et al., 2009; OECD, 2009; Ghamrawi, 2010, 2011, 2013*a*, 2013*b*; Bush, 2013). Distributed forms of leadership, establishing school communities of shared decision-making, can play an important role (OECD, 2009; Ghamrawi, 2010, 2011; Bush, 2013).

This paper investigates the profile of school leadership in the Arab world. It shows that hierarchical bureaucratic and authoritarian styles of leadership prevail in the region, with more democratic approaches limited to a small minority of schools. School systems are under the direct control of governing bodies and are held to account through detailed monitoring and inspection. Democratic leadership is rare, with leaders often acting simply as administrators. And while investment has been made in the professional development of school leaders, in most cases such efforts are sporadic rather than strategic and lack the sort of grounding in research or needs assessment that would promote reflective practice. In some cases, they run counter to policies that govern school principals' work, inhibiting them from practising in school what they learn in training. Unfortunately, there is little research to attest to the impact of professional development on leadership and school improvement.

School leadership positions are dominated by women in the majority of primary schools, with men more strongly represented at secondary-school level.

In almost all Arab countries, the ministry of education (MoE) is the lead policy-making institution with regard to schools. The MoE finances public schools and formulates policies and programmes for the development, management and administration of primary and secondary education. School leaders are meant to ensure that MoE policies are implemented.

Various agencies support the supervision and management of primary and secondary education, including national centres for training, research and development, and inspectorates. While these agencies often lay claim to democratic and distributed forms of leadership, most, in practice, behave in an authoritarian way.

In private schools, where MoE control is often limited, distributed and democratic forms of leadership are more common. Power-sharing and more collaborative approaches tend to be

more prevalent in schools characterized by autonomy and independence. However, these remain a minority and are rarely the result of robust national policies and strategies.

The paper attempts to generate a typology of school leaders, useful in designing subsequent primary research as well as in reflecting on current leadership practice. The paper concludes with recommendations based on a review of current policies.

## **2.1 Introduction**

### **2.1.1 Overview of the Arab region**

The Arab states (AS) region stretches from the Indian Ocean in the east to the Atlantic Ocean in the west and expands over two continents: Asia and Africa. The region's Asian countries are Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, as well as the Gulf states, which include Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The African countries are Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia.

The region's states can be clustered into four sub-regions, based on characteristics such as identity, culture and resources. The Mashreq region comprises Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. The Maghreb region is composed of Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. The Gulf region comprises the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. And while Yemen is sometimes seen as part of the larger Gulf sub-region, it is also part of a fourth cluster of states classed by the World Trade Organization as 'least developed countries', which also includes Djibouti, Mauritania, Sudan, the Comoro Islands and Somalia.

In all most all Arab state countries, the ministry of education (MoE) finances public schools and formulates policies and programmes for the development, management and administration of primary and secondary education. School leaders are meant to ensure that MoE policies are implemented.

### **2.1.2 Structure of the report**

This paper offers a critical review of published and unpublished work on school leadership in the Arab states. It utilizes research studies as well as national and regional policy reports and documents on school leadership and management, critically analysing cross-cultural policies and practices in different countries. While it focuses on primary and secondary education, and considers both private and public schools, it looks particular closely at primary/basic education, asking how school leadership at this level can help accelerate progress towards the Education for All goals.

Particular attention is given to regulatory and policy frameworks, as well as practice, intended to develop effective school leadership. Roles and responsibilities are scrutinized to explore how school leaders create cultures which motivate and empower teachers and lead to improvements in teaching and learning. Important socio-economic, cultural and educational contexts are considered (Ghamrawi, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2008; OECD, 2009).

The paper asks how school leadership is conceptualized in different educational contexts and governance structures in the region, examines current policies and practices in school leadership, and reviews the emerging issues, trends and patterns. It offers an overview of the political, economic, social and educational situation in the region, before describing school leadership profiles, scope of influence, and roles and responsibilities. The policies and framework underlying school leadership practice in various countries in the region is presented, and the prevailing leadership styles analysed. The final section considers the emerging issues and trends in school leadership in the region and offers recommendations for policy-making.

### **2.1.3 Methodology of the review**

The study is based on information obtained from relevant published and unpublished reports, most of them available online. The information and other relevant data were used to conduct a situational analysis of the area. Key indicators have been cross-analysed, and additional information sourced, to improve understanding and ensure the conclusions are sound.

### **2.1.4 Scope and limitations**

The study faced a number of challenges and limitations. First was the paucity of research undertaken in the Arab world. UNDP (2009) reports that US \$10 per capita is spent on research and development in the region, compared to \$33 in Malaysia and \$1,304 in Finland. UNESCO's Institute for Statistics (2010a) states that Arab states' expenditure on scientific research represents between 0.2 per cent and 0.4 per cent of GDP, compared to between 4 per cent and 6 per cent in developed countries.

The second challenge concerned the dearth of reliable data on school leadership in the region. There are no databases providing standard benchmarking information covering all Arab states, while MoEs rarely possess statistically reliable data. Some MoEs lack written protocols or reliable documentation describing the operational scope of the bodies affiliated to them (UNESCO, 2003, 2010b).

## **2.2 Regional context: Development, challenges and priorities**

### **2.2.1 Economic, political, social and human development context**

#### ***2.2.1.1 General overview***

The region's population grew from 300 million people in 2003 to 357.4 million in 2010, and is projected to grow to 467.9 million by 2025 (United Nations, 2010). The majority are Muslim, speak Arabic, and consider themselves to share a common history, heritage and culture. However, there are important differences, too, in terms of geography, demography, wealth, governance, currency, tradition, and socio-economic and political systems. Over 30 per cent of the population of Arab countries is under 15 years of age (UNESCWA, 2007). It is estimated that there are 65 million illiterate Arabs, two-third of them women (UNDP, 2003; United Nations, 2010).

#### ***2.2.1.2 Political context***

Readers wanting to understand the social and human development challenges facing many states in the region need to understand the political context. An understanding of the history of the region is useful also in understanding the region's general approach to leadership and its consequences. It could be argued that the type of leadership exhibited by the region's rulers has influenced leadership in various governmental bodies, including schools.

##### **2.2.1.2.1 Political context of AS after the First World War**

The geographical map of the region was built on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, which was dismantled after the First World War. The 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement divided the region into spheres of British or French influence. Their attempts to establish a permanent role in the region were, however, thwarted by Arab nationalism. At the end of the Second World War, the region's states achieved independence. However, the creation of the state of Israel and the failure of attempts to create Arab unity left the Middle East deeply divided. The partition of Palestine, proposed by the UN, was rejected by the Palestinians and neighbouring Arab states, leading to long-standing conflict.

##### **2.2.1.2.2 The Arab Spring**

The 'Arab Spring', which has resulted in transformational change throughout the region, has been described as a revolt against corruption, authoritarianism and poverty. It began in Tunisia in December 2010, when political demonstrations spread from city to city, leading Tunisian president Ben Ali to flee the country. The downfall of Ben Ali spurred popular political action in Egypt in January 2011, resulting in the resignation of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak. A few days later, Libyans rebelled against the dictator Muammar Qadhafi and a brutal war broke out.

The domino effect continued with rebellions in Bahrain, Yemen and Syria, where ongoing conflict has resulted in the greatest humanitarian disaster of our time. Other countries, such as Morocco and Jordan, introduced reforms inspired by events elsewhere in the region. Most of the states in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which includes Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, were comparatively unaffected (ICG, 2011; Al-Sakkaf, 2011; WFP, 2014).

With the exception of the GCC countries, the political context of the AS remains unstable, and not conducive to educational development and enhancement. In countries where political systems have been transformed, such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, the revision of the education system has become a priority. This has implications not only for school curricula, but also for the management of education and approaches to teaching (EFA, 2012). It remains to be seen what effect the rebellion against non-democratic forms of government will have on school leadership.

### ***2.2.1.3 Economic, social and human development context***

The Arab region is often classified into three sub-regions based on per capita income. The first sub-region includes the Gulf states, and is characterized by relatively high GDP per capita, ranging from US \$93,352 in Qatar to US \$22,181 in Oman. Thirty-seven million (11 per cent) of the AS population live in this sub-region, which includes the relatively oil-rich states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (World Bank, 2013).

The second sub-region comprises Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia, and accounts for approximately 70 per cent of the AS population, some 219 million people. The GDP per capita in this sub-region ranges from US \$12,167 per capita in Libya to US \$3,314 per capita in Egypt. With the exception of Iraq and Libya, countries of this sub-region have little or no oil production (World Bank, 2013).

The third sub-region includes states classed as among the least developed in the world, such as Djibouti, Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen. The GDP per capita varies from US \$1,753 in Sudan to US \$1,070 in Mauritania (World Bank, 2013).

The GDP figures for all Arab countries, with the exception of the GCC nations, are expected to shrink further as a result of the ongoing fall-out from the Arab Spring, while political novices in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt are challenged by seemingly unrealistic requests to advance education, minimize poverty and renew civil society (ICG, 2011). The situation is made worse by the lack of security and stability in almost all these countries, further limiting the chances of growth and development. As a result, the main markets for export and tourism stagnate, while millions of people desperately seek work.



## **2.2.2 Education context, priorities and challenges**

### ***2.2.2.1 New education systems***

One third of the region's population is aged under 15 (EFA, 2012) and it is younger people who have felt much of the impact of the Arab Spring. The turbulent political backdrop has created tempestuous social and human development contexts, as well as significant changes to the education offer, with some countries initiating a complete review of curricula and education systems. Examples include Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. However, the impact is also being felt in neighbouring countries which have not experienced political upheaval but are striving to avoid it by increasing investment in public services such as education. The economic and political context should be kept in mind when considering the educational challenges and priorities.

### ***2.2.2.2 Challenges and priorities***

The 2012 Education for All Global Monitoring Report found that education systems in the AS region were failing to meet the challenges of modern economies. The prospects for young people in the region are limited by the mismatch between what schools teach and what the market requires, and the problem is compounded by weak or non-existent economic growth.

#### **2.2.2.2.1 Centralization**

Education systems in the AS region are heavily centralized. Ministries of education, which, in general, lack the capacity to develop systems that meet international norms, are in full control, with little or no accountability (Al-Jammal and Ghamrawi, 2013*b*; Alesco, 2008; Bashshur, 2005). The majority of MoEs in the region lack even the sort of modern database (Masri and Wilkens, 2011) that would enable them to perform genuinely evidence-based decision-making.

Some states, such as Egypt, Morocco, Qatar and Iraq, have implemented ambitious decentralization policies within their education systems over the last decade. Unfortunately, there is scant evidence of either the successes or failures of such endeavors.

#### **2.2.2.2.2 Teaching and learning**

The 2012 EFA report suggests an outmoded approach to teaching and learning in schools in the Arab region. Most classrooms are teacher-centered, and the teaching of higher-order thinking skills is rare – rote learning is much more common. The situation is compounded by a lack of basic education resources necessary to address the needs of an array of students.

#### **2.2.2.2.3 Participation in primary education**

It is estimated that 88 per cent of primary-age children are enrolled in school (EFA, 2012). Girls' enrolment constitutes 47 per cent of total enrollment. Several reasons are given to explain lower participation among girls, including religious, ethnic and geographical factors, and post-

conflict security. When girls do participate, they tend to stay longer in school and perform better than boys.

Overall enrolment rates in Djibouti, Mauritania and Yemen fall below the regional average. Djibouti has a very high dropout rate (36 per cent), as has Mauritania (29 per cent). Some countries, however, maintain almost all their students and have negligible dropout rates, for example Algeria, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates. It is estimated that 50 per cent of the region's out-of-school children come from Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Yemen (EFA, 2012).

#### **2.2.2.2.4 Participation in secondary education**

The gross enrolment ratio (GER) for secondary education is 69 per cent, with many countries scoring much lower than the average value for the region, including Mauritania, Djibouti, Sudan, Yemen, Iraq and Morocco, where GER ranges, respectively, from 24 per cent to 56 per cent (EFA, 2012). Other countries score much higher than the average, exceeding 90 per cent, among them Kuwait, Oman, Algeria and Qatar.

Students in technical and vocational education account for 8 per cent of total enrolment in secondary education (EFA, 2012). Some countries score well above this average (19 per cent in Egypt, for example) or well below (2 per cent in UAE, Qatar, Palestine, Sudan and Kuwait).

#### **2.2.2.2.5 Quality of education**

The overall quality of education in the region is low, with education systems offering relatively good-quality education for a privileged minority and low-quality education for the rest. To achieve improvements, governments in the region have prioritized basic literacy and lifelong learning, and focused on empowering learners by enhancing their critical thinking and problem-solving skills and making them more socially responsible.

#### **2.2.2.2.6 Education financing**

Expenditure on education in the region varies significantly. Lebanon, where the majority of schools are private, spends the lowest proportion of its overall budget on education, just 7.2 per cent, while Morocco spends the highest, 25.7 per cent. Most countries in the region spend more than 15 per cent. This is reflected in pupil-teacher ratios in primary education, which are below 30:1 in all countries apart from Djibouti, Mauritania, Sudan and Yemen (UNDP, 2013). In 2014, Saudi Arabia set a record by allocating the equivalent of US \$228 billion to education (Flanagan, 2013).

## **2.3 School leaders in different educational contexts and governance structures: Profiles, roles and responsibilities**

### **2.3.1. School leadership and governance structure**

#### ***2.3.1.1 Inconsistent portrait of school leadership and governance in the AS region***

School leadership and governance in the AS region is hard to describe as there are many important variations both between and within countries. Private schools, for example, have a major role in some countries. Some are owned by businessmen, while others belong to chains of international schools or are run by charities or religious groups (Ghamrawi, 2013b).

There are also significant variations among public schools, with those based in major cities tending to deliver better-quality education (EFA, 2012). Variations in government expenditure on education mean that there is also considerable variation between countries in terms of the quality of public schooling. Within this varied picture, different governance structures are at work, each having a specific impact on school leadership.

#### ***2.3.1.2 Governance structures and leadership in public schools***

Public schools are owned by governments and governed by ministries of education. An illustration of a typical governance structure within a public school would show all arrows pointing to the school principal. The principal, in turn, is accountable to the MoE (Al-Jammal and Ghamrawi, 2013a); he must comply with regulations set by the MoE, and is answerable to ministers for performance and outcomes.

In most cases, school leadership is a 'one-man show' with all units and sub-units in a school referring back to the principal (Al-Jammal and Ghamrawi, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c; Ghamrawi, 2010, 2011, 2013b). The principal, however, is often little more than a 'school keeper' (Ghamrawi, 2013a, 2013b), whose work is defined by the tight, bureaucratic control of the ministry of education. School leaders have very little freedom over curriculum, staff salaries or teacher professional development.

This is not an entirely uniform picture, however. As noted above, some countries in the region have attempted to decentralize their education systems, granting schools more autonomy over certain decisions. Qatar's independent schools, for example, are government-funded but define their own educational mission and appoint teachers and staff, subject to compliance with the directives of the Supreme Education Council (SEC), the country's equivalent of a ministry of education. The SEC has made significant progress in regulating school standards in Qatar by requiring obligatory accreditation and board approval of school staff, and enforcing stricter

building regulations (RAND, 2009). However, the paucity of research on these schools means that, despite these improvements, caution is required in assessing their overall impact.

Egypt too has pioneered new approaches to decentralizing its education system, granting schools freedom to pursue centrally set goals and standards in their own way (UNESCO, 2006). In addition, every public school was required to constitute a board of trustees (El Baradei and Amin, 2010) to support the decentralization of administration and decision-making. In practice, however, the devolution of authority has not always filtered down to school level (Hammad, 2012).

Morocco and the United Arab Emirates have also embarked on reforms intended to bring about greater decentralization. In Morocco, structural reform begun in 1999 and included plans to devolve control over administration and improve access to schooling. The United Arab Emirates created two new education bodies, the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) and the Dubai Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA), to take over the responsibilities of the national MoE. This led to improvements, for example, of school inspections in the United Arab Emirates, which are now translated into school improvement plans, with professional and financial support for schools in danger of being judged unsatisfactory (KHDA, 2013*b*). One of the aspects addressed during inspections is school leadership and governance, with distributed leadership and transparent governance among the criteria considered by inspectors (KHDA, 2013*a*, 2013*b*).

### ***2.3.1.3 Governance structures and leadership in private schools***

Governance structure and leadership in the region's private schools is tremendously varied. No unified framework could represent all private schools, even within the same country. Some private schools are owned by one person who also serves as school principal. In such cases, there is no governance structure. Other private schools, however, are governed by administrative boards and/or boards of trustees which oversee and hold to account the school principal. This is usually the case in schools owned by associations, missions and other types of organization, as opposed to individuals (El Amine, 1994, 2005).

In Egypt, private schools are of four types: ordinary schools, which teach the national curriculum but also provide moral education; language schools, which teach students a foreign language; religious schools; and international schools (UNESCO, 2011).

International schools, which belong to school chains, tend to have more effective governance structures than the other types of schools, enhanced by greater parent and community involvement in the life of the school (IBO, 2014).

In Djibouti, even private schools are closely monitored by the MoE, which is over-centralized and generally weak, with many units not working at full capacity (World Bank, 2002). In most schools, the principal acts only as a manager of teachers and maintenance staff. In a small number of private schools, school boards set the budget, without interference or accountability.

## **2.4 Policies and practices in school leadership in different countries of the region**

### **2.4.1 School leadership policies and frameworks**

#### **2.4.1.1. Qualification requirements and training opportunities for school leaders**

Within the majority of public school systems in the AS, school leadership is often little more than a pre-retirement reward for tired teachers. There are no policies requiring school leaders to be holders of leadership qualifications, or even education degrees. In Qatar, which has introduced ambitious decentralization initiatives, almost half of school principals do not hold education leadership qualifications (SEC, 2012).

In most AS countries, a new school leader is expected to hold a bachelor degree. However, some current primary school principals are qualified only to a level below the end-of-school certificate. In public schools in Lebanon, for example, few long-standing primary school principals are qualified beyond secondary level. By contrast, some private-school principals possess degrees in business management, engineering, law, journalism, and so on.

There is, however, growing awareness within MoEs of the importance of school leadership skills and their development, as reflected in the large number of leadership development programmes run in the region. Examples include the Leadership Development Programme for public school principals in Lebanon, which offers school principals face-to-face leadership training, followed by distance learning, leading to a school improvement project through which each principal utilizes the skills they have acquired; and the Tamkeen (Arabic for 'empowerment') Programme in Abu Dhabi, UAE, which aims to improve school leaders' strategic and instructional leadership by facilitating a system-wide change in leadership. The on-going programme focuses on building leadership capacity among principals, vice-principals and heads of faculty at almost sixty government schools.

Many other countries in the region have launched leadership development initiatives of their own, including Algeria, Tunisia, Yemen, Kuwait, Bahrain and Jordan. However, there is still not enough evidence being collected to properly assess the impact such programmes have on school leadership and improvement.

#### **2.4.1.2. Role and responsibilities of school leaders**

Although some countries in the region have developed policies to encourage delegation of power to other staff within schools, as well as to the school community, in practice education authorities treat principals as the only accountable figures within the school system. This discourages even the most open school principals from taking steps towards shared leadership in their schools. This is the case in Arab states such as Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Syria and Palestine.

Most MoEs in the region base their evaluation of school success on test scores in national examinations. However, they pay little attention to the factors which advance student performance and achievement. These include the ways in which leadership practice can create positive school cultures conducive to effective teaching and learning and transform schools into learning organizations.

At the same time, MoE policies often inhibit principals from making decisions pertaining to the hiring or firing teachers and administrative staff, and the revision and development of school curricula. These factors combined help ensure that incidences of genuinely modern school leadership practice remain sporadic.

#### **2.4.2 School leadership styles and practices**

The research analysed in this study indicates that authoritarian leadership styles are prevalent in public schools in the region. This is not surprising given how public policy shapes the selection, scope of work and authority of principals. Principals who operate within a non-democratic organizational culture tend to exhibit authoritarian, top-down, administrative and bureaucratic leadership. Transformational, developmental and distributed leadership styles are generally less prominent and sometimes non-existent.

Some studies, such as Lightfoot (2014), Al-Balushi et al. (2014) and Ghamrawi (2010, 2011), show that democratic, participative leadership styles exist in some private-school settings, primarily in international schools, though there is little evidence as to their effectiveness. Even in countries such as Qatar and UAE, where there are opportunities for principals to play fuller leadership roles, there are few interventions to prepare them for this role.

Instructional leadership is rare, despite the fact many principals worked as teachers before moving on to leadership roles. Principals tend, instead, to be preoccupied with routine, bureaucratic and administrative tasks, refraining from delegating tasks and empowering their teams. This deprives their schools of the significant improvements to teaching and learning and student achievement that result when principals assume instructional leadership roles (Crum and Sherman, 2008; Dinham, 2005; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2008; Southworth, 2009).

## **2.5 Emerging issues, trends and patterns of school leadership**

Public education systems in the AS region tend to be very hierarchical, exhibiting a bureaucratic, top-down approach to school management and administration. There is little scope for wider participation in leadership, with the principal focused on efficiency and control. This bureaucracy is reflected at school level where principals work under the pressure of endless circulars and regulations and lack the training and authority to discharge their responsibilities fully.

MoEs generally maintain tight control over the day-to-day running of schools, making it difficult for principals to create autonomous schools in which leadership and authority is distributed across the school community. More democratic forms of leadership, such as participative, delegative and non-directive approaches, are evident in some private schools, especially international schools, in countries such as Lebanon, Jordan and the GCC countries.

Governance structures are inadequate and sometimes non-existent, creating a vacuum in which autocratic and administrative styles of leadership can thrive. The policy of open-ended contracts for school principals makes this situation still more problematic, as does education authorities' approach to selection, which often overlooks candidates' knowledge and experience of education management and leadership.

Instructional leadership, which can contribute strongly to school improvement, is also weak in the region, while other forms of leadership, such as subject leadership, teacher leadership and student leadership, are largely unrecognized.



## 2.6 Keys findings and recommendations

Most education systems within the Arab region are poorly suited to the demands of the labour market. AS schools tend also to be dominated by cultures unhelpful to the development of quality education. There is a correlation in the literature between developmental forms of school leadership, high student achievement and positive school cultures. It is unsurprising, therefore, that top-down leadership styles in the region go hand-in-hand with unhelpful school cultures and comparatively poor attainment.

UNESCO's work in promoting school leadership in the region is important as it passes on a strong message that school leadership is a decisive factor in school improvement and effectiveness.

The following recommendations for policymakers emerge from this study:

1. Schools need to be both more autonomous and more accountable for their decisions and achievements. Greater freedom and less bureaucracy have been shown to have a significant impact on school improvement around the world. School principals should be empowered and be prepared to mirror that approach by empowering their teachers, in turn, giving them greater professional autonomy.
2. The decentralization of schools should be accompanied by external quality-assurance arrangements, closely approximating the Dubai model in which external inspections are conducted annually to monitor and evaluate school performance and improvement.
3. A growing body of international literature emphasizes the importance of principals using instructional leadership to develop their schools. To that end, policymakers should review roles, responsibilities and levels of administrative support for principals, to ensure that they have the time to practice this form of leadership. Schools are hubs for student learning and anything that serves that end is of value. However, school learning communities should extend beyond students to include also teachers, leaders and administrators. Schools should be professional learning organizations which are supportive of learning at all levels. Creating opportunities for school leaders to play instructional leadership roles can lead, over time, to the development of professional learning communities.
4. The highest education authorities in every Arab state need to realize that leadership training programmes must spring from a national strategy with a clear and well-articulated vision if they are to generate the intended outcomes. These authorities should review current laws to ensure they develop parallel to any leadership development programmes. The benefits of such programmes are minimized when principals return from their training to find that they are not allowed to practice what

they have learned. In addition, research should be commissioned to ascertain which aspects of these programmes work and which do not. Programmes should be based on scientific needs assessment and be tailored to the needs of school leaders.

5. Revising the qualifications requirements for the role of school leader is a pressing need. Schools need to be led by experts in school leadership, ideally with a professional qualification from one of the numerous colleges across the region which offer degrees in school leadership. Candidates for school leadership roles need more than just a degree in education and some experience in management. We need to professionalize leadership in schools.
6. Policies determining the period of appointment for school leaders need to be put in place. Principals should be contracted to a school for a specific, fixed period of time, after which he or she moves to a leadership position at another school. This would reduce the chances of leaders taking too authoritarian an approach and encourage them to share and distribute leadership. It would also help motivate and challenge experienced principals across their careers. This, in turn, helps professionalize school leadership.
7. The governance of schools needs rethinking. Policies should be implemented to activate governing bodies, such as administrative boards, boards of trustees, and parent and teacher associations, and make them part of the wider school community.

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## **Chapter 3 - Policy review of school leadership in East Asia: An analysis of five societies**

**A policy review of school leadership in East Asia: An analysis of five societies**

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## Executive summary

This study examines patterns in the administration of primary and secondary schools in five East Asian countries: Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam, China and Hong Kong. It profiles principals in these countries, as well as the qualification and regulatory frameworks, and describes the administrative structures within which principals work, as well as their key roles and responsibilities within each society. Policy trends and debates concerning the role and practice of school leadership are discussed and the implications for pre-service preparation and continuing professional development explored. Finally, the paper highlights the research trends that inform leadership practice in the region and identified key areas for further study.

The report finds both commonality and variation with respect to the role and practices of principals in these societies. Commonalities include:

- In most East Asian societies, principals are ‘government officers’ expected to fulfill a bureaucratic role in the school.
- Each nation has in the recent past adopted basic qualifications for school leadership.
- The job requirements of principals has shifted in response to global education reforms adopted throughout the region over the past twenty years.
- Although the role of principal continues to be dominated by managerial and political expectations, instructional leadership has become an increasingly important part of the job over the past decade.
- Cultural mismatches between reforms originating in the West and local values and norms have magnified the challenge of changing the role’s expectations and practices.
- Each of the five nations has at least one training centre responsible for principal preparation and/or professional development, most closely linked to government.
- The knowledge base underlying leadership practice across the region remains poorly developed and elaborated.

Two notable areas of variation stand out:

- In some East Asian societies (e.g. China and Vietnam), the role of principals is significantly shaped by their role as a ‘political representative’ at the school.
- Some societies (e.g. Singapore and Hong Kong) have made more progress than others in realigning human resource systems so as to support change in principal practice.

## 3.1 Introduction

This study examines patterns in the administration of primary and secondary schools in five East Asian societies: Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore, Vietnam and China. The selection was intended to:

- Represent a range of societies by *size of population*, with small (Singapore and Hong Kong), medium (Thailand and Vietnam) and large (China) societies included in the sample.
- Include a range of societies by level of *socio-economic development* with relatively less developed (Vietnam), moderately developed (Thailand and China) and developed societies (Singapore and Hong Kong) examined.
- Represent different types of political systems, including Communist (Vietnam and China) and other systems.

The goals of the project were to:

1. Profile principals in these countries, as well as qualification and regulatory frameworks.
2. Describe the administrative structures within which principals work as well as their key roles and responsibilities within each society.
3. Discuss policy trends and debates concerning the role and practice of school leadership and the implications for pre-service preparation as well as continuing professional development.
4. Present research trends that inform leadership practice in the region and identify key areas for further study.

### 3.1.1 Methodology of the review

Three methods were used to gather information on these societies: a review of recent studies of principalship in East Asia, including both empirical studies and research reviews; the collection of information from various online sources, including ministry of education websites; and information exchange with the network of scholars in educational leadership involved in the Asia Pacific Centre for Leadership and Change.

### 3.1.2 Scope and limitations

The development of East Asian school leaders' professional capacity depends on a variety human resource-related factors, including recruitment, professional development, evaluation and succession planning. Underlying these factors, however, there must be a knowledge base identifying the personal qualities, knowledge and skills successful principals need.

Unfortunately, the 'knowledge base' on educational administration is largely comprised of theory and research from a limited set of Western societies (Cheng, 1995; Hallinger, 1995; Hallinger and Leithwood, 1998; Walker and Dimmock, 2002). No large-scale efforts to develop this knowledge base appear to have been undertaken in East Asia, although scholars have, in recent years, begun to identify, describe and explore the regional knowledge base in education leadership (Hallinger and Bryant, 2013). This effort has involved a thorough examination of East Asia's contributions to the international literature in this field, as well as ongoing attempts to review the national literature of specific countries.

Generally, though, research and commentary on education leadership in the region has drawn heavily on Western models. There seems to be an alignment between formal policy imperatives and leadership models derived from the West. For example, in China, in discussing reforms to grant schools more discretion over the curriculum, scholars advocate instructional and distributed forms of leadership. In reality, however, the complexity of the context results in a disconnection between leadership policy and practice.

Despite policymakers and academics advocating curriculum and distributed leadership, the continuing emphasis on high-stakes exams across the education spectrum (education officials, principals and even teachers) means that principals tend to pay lip service to these ideals while continuing to do things much as they have always been done (Pepper, 1996, pp. 104–111).

It is clear from the literature that efforts to build a new body of regionally-focused knowledge in education leadership and management are still at an early stage of development. As such, it cannot meet the needs of policymakers and practitioners, and appears to be making only a limited contribution to research more broadly.



## **3.2 Regional context: Development, challenges and priorities**

### **3.2.1 Economic, political, social and human development context**

The East Asia and Pacific East Asia (EAP) region accounts for nearly two-fifths of global economic growth and, while growth slowed slightly during 2015 and is expected to slow further in 2016/17, it remains the main driver of the global economy. Extreme poverty has fallen sharply in the region over the past decade or so. In 2012, 7.2 per cent of the population lived below the extreme poverty line of US \$1.90 (PPP) a day, compared to 29.1 per cent in 2002. Indications are that numbers have continued to fall since. However, an estimated 379 million people in the region still lived in moderate poverty (below US \$3.10 a day) in 2014 and were vulnerable to falling back into extreme poverty.

The region also has substantial infrastructure needs, with 142 million people estimated to have no access to power and 600 million lacking adequate sanitation. Rapid migration to cities is putting pressure on service delivery and creating large urban slums, pollution and environmental degradation. The challenges of urbanization are compounded by the high proportion of the world's natural disasters (70 per cent) which occur in the region. Managing the effects of climate change and rapid urbanization, while improving governance and institutions, and encouraging private-sector jobs growth, are the main political challenges facing the region. They are critical to reducing poverty and building shared prosperity in East Asia (World Bank, 2015).

### **3.2.2 Education context, priorities and challenges**

UNESCO's 2015 Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report regional overview on East Asia and the Pacific found that the region had made significant progress towards the EFA goals. Since 2000, child survival, nutrition and education have improved greatly. The number of primary-age children who are out of school has declined by 42 per cent since 1999 to less than seven million in 2012. However, despite this progress, the report notes that the region faces a number of challenges. Although literacy levels have increased, 74 million adults still lack basic literacy skills, 70 per cent of them women. Poor educational quality remains a challenge in many countries, as do persistent geographic, socio-economic and ethnic disparities in education (UNESCO, 2015).

#### ***3.2.2.1 Primary education***

The region's primary adjusted net enrolment ratio (ANER) has remained high, increasing slightly from 94.5 per cent to 95.6 per cent between 1999 and 2012 (universal primary enrolment is considered to be achieved if ANER exceeds at least 97 per cent). The number of primary school-aged children out of school in the region was nearly seven million in 2012, a 42 per cent

decrease since 1999. The number of children not enrolled has declined in most of the few countries with data. The average rate of survival to the last grade of primary education in East Asia and the Pacific was 92 per cent in 2011, up from 85 per cent in 1999. Some countries have made also significant progress in access to schooling and attainment for the poor. The attainment rates of children from the poorest households increased sizably in Cambodia and Vietnam, for example. In 2010 in Vietnam, the gap between the primary education attainment rate of the poorest children (88 per cent), and that of the richest children (95 per cent), was much lower than the 25 percentage point gap in 2000.

This overall picture, however, masks considerable variation, both between and within countries. Poverty, ethnicity and location continue to affect primary school participation and attainment (UNESCO, 2015).

### ***3.2.2.2 Secondary education***

Increasing transition rates and higher retention rates have meant that participation in lower and upper secondary education has increased since 1999. The lower secondary gross enrolment ratio increased on average from about 75 per cent to 97 per cent in 2012 in East Asia. An important gain was also observed at upper secondary level, with GER increasing by 30 percentage points from 43 per cent to 73 per cent. Inequality in access to secondary education persists, with children from the poorest households and those living in rural areas significantly less likely to progress to or do well at lower secondary level. Many students still combine secondary education with working for pay during the school week, though there are some encouraging signs here. In Vietnam, for example, the percentage of working students aged 12 to 14 who either combined employment and schooling or worked exclusively declined from 46 per cent in 2000 to 21 per cent in 2010 (UNESCO, 2015).

### ***3.2.2.3 Quality of education***

More and more countries have been carrying out national assessments, which aim to provide countrywide information about learning outcomes, according to nationally defined standards. These assessments can help national authorities identify effective strategies to improve student knowledge, skills and competences in different subject areas. The percentage of countries in the region that carried out at least one national assessment between 2000 and 2013 was 67 per cent, compared with only 17 per cent between 1990 and 1999. More countries have also joined cross-national comparisons of student achievement, such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS. The average primary pupil-teacher ratio fell from 24:1 in 1999 to 19:1 in 2012 (UNESCO, 2015).

### **3.3 School leaders in different education contexts and governance structures: Profiles, roles and responsibilities**

#### **3.3.1 Profiles of school leaders**

This section provides background on principalship in each of the five countries, profiling the occupants of the role and the relevant qualification frameworks. It also describes the preparation and development models in place in each country, as well as the selection and evaluation procedures.

##### ***3.3.1.1 Thailand***

According to Thailand's Ministry of Education there are approximately 34,000 school principals in the country: 31,000 in government schools and 3,000 in private schools. Candidates for the position of principal must have a professional teaching certificate and a degree in education administration (or equivalent) and provide evidence of academic leadership and education management. They must have at least five years' teaching experience and two years' experience in middle-level management (for example, as head of subject).

Thailand's Teacher Civil Service and Educational Personnel Commission selects principals of government schools via an examination all candidates must sit. Candidates must also submit a biography and work portfolio to the examination committee for review. Principals who wish to apply for higher positions must engage in additional professional learning, either through a master's degree course or a programme of professional learning.

The National Institute for the Development of Teachers and Educational Personnel (NIDTEP) oversees the training of school leaders in Thailand. It offers pre-service and in-service training for school leaders at all levels, usually organized around government policies and project frameworks rather than a comprehensive conceptualization of the leadership requirements of school principals.

The preparation and training of school leaders in Thailand has been criticised for lacking a clear framework of skills and dispositions and for focusing more on implementation of regulations than on knowledge of teaching and learning (Hallinger and Lee, 2011, 2013). Accountability is organized around the completion of courses rather than the capacity for using knowledge.

##### ***3.3.1.2 Singapore***

Singapore has 357 school principals, appointed and employed by the Ministry of Education. Each must possess a standard set of qualifications and experience prior to appointment, and commit to ongoing professional development. The requirements of principalship include a post-

secondary degree or diploma, attendance on an education leadership programme and lower-level leadership experience in education.

Principals are identified, selected and prepared for their roles in a much more systematic and centralized way than is common in other countries in the region. Teacher monitoring and appraisal are used to identify leadership potential. Once identified, prospective leaders are encouraged to take the leadership track through which they are provided with a range of opportunities designed to test and develop leadership capacity. Middle leaders, for example, are enrolled on a 17-week full-time management and leadership programme to develop their operational capacity. Vice-principals identified as potential principals undergo a six-month preparation programme.

After their appointment, principals continue their learning through various formal and informal channels, including conferences and overseas visits to study educational reforms and innovations. Principals are also rotated every five to seven years so that senior principals gain experience of different school cultures and contexts (Dimmock and Tan, 2012). The national policy of 100 hours of professional development applies to all educators, including principals, for whom it is the baseline. Superintendents chart the development of principals through yearly review, identifying local and overseas courses for principals' ongoing professional development.

### ***3.3.1.3 Hong Kong***

The government controls the certification of principals in Hong Kong. It is not necessary to complete an academic qualification, such as a master's degree, to become a principal. A certification framework aims to equip principals with the knowledge, skills and attributes they need to become competent leaders (Cheng, 2000, p. 68). It is underpinned by a set of six core areas for school leadership and aims to meet the needs of aspiring and practising principals at various stages of their development. The framework delineates levels of leadership development, sets mandatory requirements and encourages school leaders to take responsibility for their own and their colleagues' learning. A range of continuing professional development programmes – including principal certification (which all aspiring principals must possess), in-training programmes for newly appointed principals and CPD activities for serving principals – are designed to promote a culture of continuous learning culture among principals (Education Department, 2002a).

Subsequent adjustments to this programme have included a new foundation element, to be delivered prior to principals taking office, and the development of a structured support programme to further embed a culture of continuous learning in schools (Walker and Quong, 2006). This new programme offers structuring supported leadership learning to new principals from the end of their first year in post to the end of their second year. It was decided that new

principals would not be subject to time-intensive programmes during their first year (Walker and Quong, 2005, 2006). The programme is overseen by the Education Department. Principals can also participate in a range of other leadership development programmes offered by university leadership centres, school sponsoring bodies and others.

#### ***3.3.1.4 Vietnam***

Vietnam has about 24,000 school principals in public primary, secondary and high schools. Candidates for principalship are expected to have at least five years' teaching experience (four years for those who have worked in disadvantaged or remote areas). They will also usually have spent some time as department/subject chair and/or vice principal, although this is not a legal requirement. For primary school principalship, the candidate must hold at least a diploma in primary education (two years of study after K-12, the end of formal schooling). For lower secondary school, they must hold at least a diploma in secondary education (three years after K-12) or other majors and a professional teaching certificate. For upper secondary they must hold at least a diploma in upper secondary education (four years of undergraduate study after K-12) or other majors and a teaching certificate.

Further study of education management, via a short undergraduate or graduate course, is required for a first appointment as a principal. Candidates must also complete a political sciences programme with a focus on Marxism-Leninism and the thoughts of Ho Chi Minh. A candidate should not be older than 55 years old (for men) or 50 years old (for women). The applicant must also be a member in good standing of the Communist Party of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Principals are not allowed to serve more than two terms of office at the same school.

Generally, the Communist Party Committee (CPC) for the school leads the principal selection process at school level. The head of the lower local department of education and training (DOET) for the district appoints primary and lower secondary school principals. The director of the upper local DOET for the province or city appoints upper secondary school principals.

#### ***3.3.1.5 China***

There are about 560,000 school principals in mainland China. Principals are government officers and must be members of the Communist Party. Candidates for principalship must also hold certification prior to appointment, though most training takes place after appointment. Usually only teachers who have been identified by the local education bureau as candidates, or newly selected principals, are eligible for the Principal Qualification Certificate. It is not open to people who have not been shortlisted by the local education authorities.

The selection system is intended to be performance driven. Award-winning teacher-leaders with rich teaching experience and solid knowledge of curriculum are most likely to be principal aspirants, although their faithfulness to the CCP ideology is still an important criterion. The local education bureau usually organizes selection committees with members drawn from central office personnel and practising school leaders. The committees conduct 360-degree assessments of candidates, which usually includes focus group interviews with colleagues. The final decision rests with the local education bureau. However, county-level school principals are selected, appointed, evaluated and rotated by the Municipal Organization Department, while section-level school principals are selected, appointed, evaluated and rotated by the County Organization Department. Others are selected, appointed, evaluated and rotated by the Educational Administration Department (Zheng, Walker and Chen, 2013).

Principals are required to undertake ongoing professional development. The latest National Ministry of Education document (August, 2013) stipulates that serving principals should receive no less than 360 hours of development per year. Courses are provided in areas such as school development, school culture, leading curriculum and teaching, leading teacher development, optimizing internal management and adapting to the external environment, and professional and moral ethics (Walker and Qian, 2008).

### **3.3.2 School leadership and governance structure**

The focus on developing 'leadership capacity' is a relatively recent phenomenon which, in most parts of East Asia, emerged in the mid-1990s, as global education reforms reached East Asian societies. The adoption of these reforms has resulted in new policies and programmes aimed at making school principals, usually government officers accountable to the ministry of education, assume greater responsibility as 'change leaders' and 'instructional leaders' (Hallinger, 2003, 2010; Huber, 2003). These reforms have reshaped the role of school principals in the region, though the degree of penetration varies from country to country.

#### ***3.3.2.1 Thailand***

Thailand's education system has traditionally given the greatest weight to the managerial and political dimensions of the principal's role (Hallinger, 2004; Hallinger and Lee, 2011, 2012). Thai principals are civil servants within a highly centralized national system of education. Ministry of Education officials have tended to view principals as local guardians of the nation's education policies (Hallinger, 2004; National Identity Office, 1991; Hallinger, Taraseina and Miller, 1994). Thus, principals have traditionally been cast as implementers of government policy, rather than as initiators, innovators or leaders (Fry and Bi, 2013; Hallinger, 2004; Hallinger and Kantamara, 2001; Hallinger and Lee, 2011; Taraseina et al., 1994). Thai education has no normative tradition of 'instructional leadership', even in professional rhetoric.

These emphases were reflected in the Ministry of Education's formal training requirements for principals, set out in the early 1980s. These required incoming principals to participate in formal training programme, offered by the MoE's Institute for the Development of Educational Administrators (IDEA), which focused primarily on disseminating knowledge of government policies and procedures rather than the capacities needed to lead learning and school improvement.

The policy context changed with the passing of the National Education Act in 1999. The Act focused explicitly on reshaping the rote-learning methods of teaching and learning in Thai schools and on creating 'a learning atmosphere to encourage students to think analytically' (Bunnag, 1997, p. 2). It set ambitious educational goals and provided a new legal framework for education in Thailand (Fry and Bi, 2002; ONEC, 1999; Thongthew, 1999). It aimed to decentralize authority, engage communities in the management of educational services, support the integration of 'local wisdom' in the curriculum, empower principals, teachers and parents, create a more active learning environment for pupils, and refocus the system from *quantity of graduates* to *quality of learning* (Fry and Bi, 2013; Hallinger, 2004; ONEC, 1999).

Despite these changes, however, the current profile of leadership among principals in Thailand suggests that they still do not engage actively in developing instruction, monitoring student progress and coordinating curriculum. This finding applies to all school levels and regions of the country (Hallinger and Lee, 2012), and reflects the fact that, despite having to make significant changes in their own practice, few – if any – principals have received in-depth, skills-oriented training on instructional leadership in ministry-sponsored programmes. The reforms require principals not only to develop the new skills and knowledge necessary to support teachers and improve learning outcomes, but also to change their perception of their role to focus more on interaction with others in the school and its community.

### ***3.3.2.2 Singapore***

Singapore has done well in international attainment tests, such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and expectations of principals have been high, particularly with the growing policy focus on decentralization (Gopinathan and Ho, 2000). Since the early 1990s, principals in Singapore have functioned as 'chief executive officers' responsible for 'designing the future of their schools' (Chew, Stott and Boon, 2000, p. 4). New curricular demands have promoted more spontaneous collegiality among teachers, resulting, in turn, in a change in the working style of principals, with a greater focus on staff development (Gopinathan and Ho, 2000, p. 180).

Policy initiatives aimed at shaping a more diverse educational system have required schools to drive curriculum innovation and granted principals greater autonomy to lead and manage

change. Principals are expected to experiment and drive improvements in learning and teaching, while establishing structures and cultures that promote distributed leadership with a clear focus on instruction. Major policy statements have stressed the need to develop creative, instructional school leaders capable of creating and implementing innovative programmes for diverse learners (MoE-Singapore, 2005; NIE, 2010). Principals are expected not only to plan and adequately resource teacher professional development but also to become actively involved in these, as well as in their own professional learning.

Research shows both the significant pressure placed on school leaders in Singapore to perform and the tension they encounter in sharing power with teachers while ensuring overall school goals are achieved (Chew and Andrew, 2010; Ng et al, 2005; Stott and Low, 2000). Ng's review of principalship in Singapore (in press) found that while Singaporean principals work hard to develop the skills and knowledge to be effective leaders, their near-identical training produces a high degree of uniformity in leadership styles and approaches. It found their two most prominent roles to be leadership of school vision and reform, and leadership preparation.

### ***3.3.2.3 Hong Kong***

Twenty years of constant reform in Hong Kong's schools sector have created new responsibilities for principals but not the resources to deliver them (Cheng and Walker, 2008; Cheung, 2000a, p. 62). Major reforms have included new visions for education, curriculum change, the expansion and restructuring of education and a greater emphasis on the quality of education. This quest for quality education has been manifest in policies targeting, for example, student needs, thinking and problem-solving skills, improving teacher qualifications and skills, and developing and improving the curriculum. Other reforms have focused on accountability and quality assurance, privatization, strategic planning and the use of information technology (Walker and Ko, 2011; Lee, Walker and Chiu, 2012). Attempts have also been made to reform examination and evaluation practices and the professional development of principals and teachers (Walker and Dimmock, 2006), involving a marked shift to decentralization.

Decentralizing reforms have included school restructuring, school-based curriculum development, school development planning, increasing teacher and parent involvement, delegating budget and human resource management, centralized curriculum planning using a learning outcomes framework, increased accountability to the central bureaucracy, increased parental choice and greater competition between schools. Dealing with these demands has changed how principals control and take responsibility for curriculum, personnel and budget, as well as how they share decision-making power with parents, teachers and other community members. This means that principals confront not only the complexities of devolution at a school level, but also the redistribution of power within the school community itself.



With increased autonomy has come increased accountability, and an expectation that principals relinquish some of their power and authority (Walker and Ko, 2011; Ko, Hallinger and Walker, 2012). The involvement of parents and teachers in change and policy is problematic for many principals used to exercising unquestioned authority. A 1991 report argued that principals in Hong Kong were insufficiently accountable for their actions and that they 'see their post as an opportunity to become "little emperors" with dictatorial powers in the school' (Education and Manpower Bureau and Education Department, 1991, p. 14). It should be noted too, however, that teachers and parents can often be reluctant to engage in share decision-making and that principals can be seen as neglecting their leadership role when they try to devolve power (Cheung, 2000b; Walker, 2004).

Principals are also being driven to shift from a traditional management role to one of educational, curriculum or instructional leader. The implementation of curriculum reforms has required a shift for principals more accustomed to playing an administrative rather than an instructional role. Cheng (2000) found that principals in Hong Kong displayed low levels of direct involvement in curriculum leadership and higher levels of indirect involvement.

#### **3.3.2.4 Vietnam**

Schooling in Vietnam is first and foremost a means of political and cultural transmission, and only secondarily a means of educating students for 'general knowledge' and skills (Doan, 2005; Duc, 2008; Duggan, 2001). Vietnamese principals hold the formal title of 'government officer'. As such, they are the government's representative at school level. In recent years, consistent with global and regional trends in education management (Dimmock and Walker, 2005; Gamage and Sooksomchitra, 2004; Hallinger, 2010), policies in Vietnam have sought to decentralize governance in education (Duc, 2008), with the broad goal of increasing grassroots democracy and staff participation in school management (Thang, 2013). Despite these trends, however, the relationship between school and state has changed little over several decades.

The hierarchical system gave central government officials power over not only education policy, but also other major areas such as school policy, internal management and deployment of human and financial resources. Schools were not even authorized to determine the number of students they enrolled each year. Senior government officials, within, for example, the Ministry of Education and Training or the People's Committee, played important roles in shaping schools' short- and long-term development plans (Thang, 2013, pp. 136–137). The role of the Communist Party as the 'leading force' in both state and society remains embedded in the decision-making structures of the education system (Doan, 2005; Duc, 2008; Duggan, 2001).

The type of staff involvement in decision-making envisioned in recent Vietnamese policy documents remains a remote goal. The practice of seeking out divergent opinions from

subordinates conflicts not only with the Confucian norm of deference to hierarchical status, but also with assumptions underlying the political authority of the single party state (Thang, 2013). Leaders interpreted the policy through their 'cultural lens' with 'implicit understanding' that implementation incurred the risk of upsetting stakeholders at every level and could threaten their credibility as leaders. Although staff involvement (at every level) of decision making has been advocated, relevant practices, in reality, tend to be regarded as 'weak' and in conflict with primary system goals (Thang, 2013). This highlights an apparent contradiction between decentralization policies and traditions embedded in the political, cultural and bureaucratic context of Vietnam's education system.

### ***3.3.2.5 China***

Recent reforms of education in China have encouraged schools to be more competitive, promoting school-based management, granting schools more autonomy in terms of curriculum development, increasing student participation in class activities, and giving more emphasis to formative student assessment (Walker and Qian, 2011). These reforms inevitably clash with traditions such as respect for authority and embedded practices such as the emphasis on high-stakes examinations and the over-reliance on teacher-centred pedagogy. Principals are buffeted by contradictory forces, leading in a society characterized by a strong state presence but with a growing market influence and susceptibility to global trends.

Almost all principals in China are Party members and, as such, work within a system in which a person's political knowledge is integral to their career development (Cai, 2000; Li, 2005; Wang, 2004). Commitment to Chinese socialist ideology is reflected in principals' job descriptions and in preparation and training programmes (Chen, 2006; Feng, 2003; Li, 2000*a*, 2000*b*; MoE, 1999; SEC, 1989). Principals are expected to serve others 'wholeheartedly'; devote themselves to the realization of moral education; work hard; put collectivistic interests before individual benefit; abide by Party policies and state laws; maintain unity; be loyal and honest to the Party; resist corruption; promote communist moral codes; and be ready to sacrifice their lives in times of difficulty and danger (Jia, 2005; MoE, 1999; SEC, 1989).

Given the link between student achievement and a principal's reputation (Guo, 2006; Li and Ma, 2006; Wang, 2005), school leaders focus on academic results and student destinations. This has become even more important, and much more complicated, with increased competition, financial constraint, and the emphasis on quality education. While principals emphasize the central place of instruction and curriculum in their schools (e.g. Tao, 2008; Wang, 2007), they generally see their role as administrative only (Zhang, 2004), providing indirect support, rather than direct supervision, through teacher evaluation schemes. Principals are minimally involved in quality assurance, tracking instructional effects, providing feedback or mentoring, and are more likely to see their instructional function as limited to raising funds to support the

curriculum (Li, Xu and Li, 2006), rather than through direct involvement with the curriculum or instruction (Huang, 2008; Li, 2006; Liu, 2005; Wang, 2007).

## **3.4 Policies and practices in school leadership in different countries of the region**

### **3.4.1 School leadership policies and frameworks**

Education reforms in East Asia over the past twenty years have sought both to restructure the education system and to reshape the teaching and learning methods used in schools in order to produce more active, capable and independent learners (Fry and Bi, 2013; Hallinger, 2010). As the Secretary General of Thailand's Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC) noted ten years after the passing of the National Education Act, the success of these reforms depends on the 'skillful leadership and active support' of school principals (Varavarn, 2008).

Various scholars have sought to assess the impact these reforms have had on schools and classrooms (e.g. Cheng and Walker, 2008; Dimmock and Walker, 1998; Fry and Bi, 2013; Hallinger, 2010). Consistent with studies in other countries, progress has found to be been slower than reformers expected. For example, Hallinger and Lee (2011, pp. 155–156), in their study of reform implementation in Thailand, reported 'a lack of deep penetration of the reforms in a large percentage of schools', with progress generally slow and success mixed.

#### **3.4.1.1 Policy trends**

A number of policy trends relevant to school leadership appear to cut across all of the countries featured in this paper. Asian principals' role as 'government officials' is a significant factor in understanding change, or the lack of it, in principals' behaviour during the reform era. This has shaped their role orientation to the extent that managerial and political activities have remained central in the face of reforms demanding more active instructional leadership. East Asian societies have no historical orientation towards leadership as an *instrumental* activity and tend, instead, to think of the leader as 'figurehead'.

Our analysis highlights the cultural difficulties East Asian societies can face when they borrow policies and practices from Western societies (Dimmock and Walker, 2005; Walker and Dimmock, 2002). Shared leadership in schools, for instance, is a new concept to principals and teachers in East Asia, and, in some cases, may be incongruent with cultural values and norms (Cheung, 2000b). Indeed, prior to the late 1990s, terms such as 'instructional leadership' and 'leadership for learning' had no equivalents in Asian languages. Incorporating instructional leadership into the practice of Thai principals, for example, involves not only the development of capacity (e.g. knowledge and skills), but also a more fundamental change in normative expectations and role identity. Although the latter represents the more significant challenge, neither has been addressed adequately to date.

Nevertheless, in most countries in the region (Vietnam is an exception), there is now an expectation that principals will actively lead teaching and learning development to an extent that simply did not exist in the past. The concurrent implementation of 'school-based management' has, furthermore, created a new expectation that principals will involve a broader variety of stakeholders in formal decision-making in their schools. This was a major change as East Asian principals had traditionally acted as unitary leaders. They were now expected to lead more actively, while, for the first time, their leadership became subject to broader scrutiny. Empirical evidence suggests that although principals have accepted these changes, many remain uncertain when it comes to enacting their new roles effectively.

### **3.4.2 School leadership practices**

There is a disconnection between the reforms outlined above and their implementation at school level. Although East Asian nations have invested considerable resources in supporting specific education reforms, there is a lack of systemic integration. For example, training is typically provided on a project-by-project basis, in the absence of an over-arching framework or curriculum. The supporting mechanisms required to bring about change in practice are too seldom evident (e.g. ongoing development and coaching). Changing the focus of the work of school principals in East Asia will require a concerted effort to reshape the human resource systems embedded in the region's ministries of education. In some settings (e.g. Singapore), this type of change has been reasonably successful. In others (e.g. Thailand, Vietnam), much additional investment will be required to support change in the capacity of school-level leaders.

The top-down approach to change used in East Asia is not unique as a strategy for large-scale system reform. However, our analysis and the informants' responses suggest that the strategies implemented in the region may differ in character and expression. The large power distance that characterizes the cultures of East Asia creates respect for authority and a passive receptivity to change, at least at a surface level. The high value placed on education, as well as a strong cultural belief in the central role of educational attainment in social mobility, further strengthen societal receptivity to educational reform.

Receptivity to change does not necessarily translate into higher engagement or real changes in practice at school or classroom level. Cultural norms of power distance as well as collectivism (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1997; Hofstede, 1983, 1991; Holmes and Tangtongtavy, 1995) create tendencies to avoid public dissent and maintain group harmony. Thus, although resistance tends to be passive, it can be even stronger than in societies in which questions are openly asked. The fact that dissent remains hidden may also result in a longer process of mutual adaptation. There appears to be a process of consensus building that over time modifies top-down proposals for change. However, this seems to occur only *after* the change has stalled due to lack of local understanding and support.

McLaughlin (1990) observed that, 'You can't mandate what matters to people'. Large power distance has bred a cultural tendency for East Asian principals to lead by decree and to focus more on 'telling' staff what they must accomplish, with relatively little two-way communication. This was the case even in Singapore, which was an exception to the trend in several other respects. There is a shared cultural assumption that leading change entails giving orders and applying pressure where it is needed. Even twenty years ago it made sense for a few smart decision-makers at the top of education ministries across East Asia to make system-wide decisions and pass these along through the principals to the schools. This is, however, an impractical approach to leading change today, when the pace of change is simply too rapid for a few smart decision-makers to keep up.

Reliance on 'telling people to change' reflects the tendency to give weight to formal authority and accept top-down commands, at least on the surface. However, pressure cannot be applied continuously and, once it isn't, behaviour may return to its prior state. One principal put it this way: 'If they know it's the law of the land they will comply with it, at least as long as they know I am watching or until it has been ticked off on the checklist'.

In summary, cultural norms such as power distance and collectivism are not, in and of themselves, obstacles to change. If the *interest* of relevant social groups in collectivist societies can be engaged, the groups can provide even greater momentum for change than might be the case in more individualistic societies. However, the reverse is also true. Failure to tap into the interests of the relevant stakeholder groups will create an even higher degree of resistance. Although the resistance may be passive, it will be difficult to overcome.

### **3.5 Emerging issues, trends and patterns of school leadership**

The pressures described above together produce an environment of excitement, uncertainty, confusion and paradox. Faced with often-contradictory demands, many principals struggle to find their place and make sense of their new roles. On the one hand, they are expected to retain their traditional role as 'stabilizer' in the school and uphold tradition. On the other, they are increasingly called upon to change, reform and redefine their schools. In the midst of such demands, principals are also pushed to reshape their own place and power in relation to parents and teachers. More positively, while reforms such as decentralization threaten the traditional role and comfort of principals, they also bring unheralded opportunities to change schools and improve student outcomes.

#### **3.5.1 Reforms in context**

Reforms in the East Asian nations have, to varying degrees, advocated a change in principals' leadership style, from an authoritarian to a more collaborative, participative style. There has been a clear attempt to disperse some of the power and authority exercised in the upper levels of the education bureaucracy to principals and to encourage them to lead more collaboratively (Cheng and Wong, 1996; Thang, 2013). Broad involvement, or shared leadership, in schools is a new concept to principals and teachers in East Asia, and, in some cases, may be incongruent with existing cultural values and norms (Cheung, 2000b).

As the reforms continue to evolve, East Asia's principals face a number of challenges; the first being the cultural bias. With globalization, education stakeholders in Asian nations are increasingly exposed to hitherto unfamiliar values, knowledge and skills, and school leaders are confronted with policies and practices that may not work in their social, political or cultural context. For example, studies have found that the ways in which East Asian principals perceive, manage and solve dilemmas are profoundly influenced by entrenched values that highlight the importance of relational/organizational harmony (Hallinger, 2004; Thang, 2013; Walker and Dimmock, 2000). If decentralizing reforms overtly clash with such values, or are implemented too quickly, it becomes more difficult for principals to adopt new ways of working.

The real test of the suitability and efficacy of policies adopted from elsewhere comes at the implementation stage, where the role of the principal is pre-eminent. If the formulation and adoption stages do not act as effective filters, the policy may meet its first real opposition at the school and principalship level. When reform policies aimed at reshaping the role of the principal fail adequately to account for cultural and contextual conditions it is unlikely the role will be genuinely transformed.

### **3.5.2 Support for principals**

A second challenge to the meaningful reshaping of principalship in East Asia is the preparation and professional support provided to new principals (Cheung and Walker, 2006; Hallinger, 2003). The extent to which this occurs varies widely across the five countries. Singapore and Hong Kong appear to provide considerably more systematic support to new principals than the other systems.

It is important for principals to have access to meaningful professional development. For such development to be relevant and contribute meaningfully to change it should be developed in concert with principals and be adequately resourced and rewarded by departments and ministries of education. It should also be linked closely to the reforms principals are expected to implement and shaped to form a coherent programme rather than the piecemeal, fragmented attempts with which principals in the region are familiar.

### **3.5.3 Reform implementation**

A third challenge concerns the degree to which decentralization and other reforms have or have not been implemented, and whether the depth of reform is either too extensive or too narrow to encourage a meaningful reshaping of principalship. For principals to reshape their role in line with the demands of decentralization, it may not be enough to implement piecemeal reforms which, for example, force principals to share power with teachers but give them no say over the hiring of teachers.

On the other hand, some commentators suggest that reform of the role of principal in East Asia has gone too far. The effect of too many reforms, and, indeed, reforms that tend in different directions, has been to present principals with contradiction, incoherence and conflict, and thus to deepen their confusion (Cheng and Walker, 2009; Hallinger, 2010; Hallinger and Lee, 2012, 2012; Walker and Qian, 2012). Reforms that seem incoherent are unlikely to encourage a meaningful reshaping of principalship. An overly demanding and incoherent reform environment can also create a situation where potential leaders simply do not want to become school principals, as well as holding back efforts to reshape the role.



### 3.6 Key findings and recommendations

This assessment highlights a need for more focused efforts in cooperation and collaboration to accelerate the development of a regional knowledge base, grounded in capacity building, making local knowledge accessible to other countries in the region, as well as to international scholars, and cross-national coordination of research through collaborative structures.

Capacity-building strategies should include instrumental activities as well as those that can, over time, shape more productive research cultures in universities. This has implications for faculty selection, evaluation and reward, course load assignments, inter-institutional research collaboration, faculty mentoring, and the provision of advanced training to faculty at all ranks.

Efforts should also be made to review research in countries in which there may be a ‘hidden literature’ on educational leadership written in the indigenous languages in these countries. Walker and colleagues (2012) uncovered a large Chinese-language literature largely inaccessible to an international audience and they may be similar ‘hidden literatures’ in other Asian countries.

A number of research questions emerge from this consideration of principalship in East Asia. By addressing these and similar questions, scholars can expand the knowledge base of the East Asian principalship and contribute to the field, both locally and internationally.

- How do East Asian principals manage change modelled on Western education systems?
- What practices and beliefs have principals inherited from traditional East Asian education systems? How do traditional beliefs either clash or cohere with the demands of modern reforms?
- How do East Asian principals balance change and stability?
- How do East Asian principals understand, interpret and implement major reform initiatives, such as the promotion of instructional leadership, and how do patterns of practice vary across the region?
- What is the nature of the human resource management frameworks and systems that guide school leadership in East Asia?
- What patterns of variation characterize the recruitment, selection, training and evaluation of East Asia’s school leaders?

A number of broad recommendations for policymakers also emerge from the study:

- Decentralizing reforms should be introduced slowly and take due account of the often poor fit between such reforms and the cultural and policy context in which they are

implemented. Distributed leadership is a new concept to principals and teachers in East Asia and may be incongruent with existing norms and values.

- Principals are being asked to change their approach to leadership, from an authoritarian to a more collaborative, participative style. But, in most cases, they are not provided with the skills and knowledge they need to make this transition. Principals need to have access to programmes of professional development which offer them support both in developing new skills and in changing their professional identity.
- To be meaningful, principal professional development should be developed in concert with principals and be adequately resourced by departments and ministries of education. Programmes should be closely linked to reforms and implemented in a coherent rather than piecemeal way.

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**Chapter 4 - Policy review of school leadership in South and West Asia**

**A policy review of school leadership in South and West Asia**

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## **Executive summary**

This review is a comparative study of school leadership policy and practice in the South and West Asian (SWA) countries of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan. It aims to ascertain how school leadership is understood in the region, what policies and practices exist, and what the emerging issues are. The study found that not all countries in South and West Asia are at the same level in terms of documenting and facilitating access to their policies and practices. Some, for example, have made important policy documents available only in national languages. This presented the authors with a challenge when it came to accessing and reviewing reference materials.

South and West Asian countries have achieved tremendous success in increasing access to schooling for their children but this has not been matched by quality of schooling. Poor achievement in schools has put SWA countries under pressure to improve the quality of their school systems, with the development of school leadership recognized as a key factor. A more powerful role is now demanded for head teachers, as well as for other teachers and school bodies. Countries in the region have sought to adopt more democratic practices and to develop policies and programmes to facilitate a more decentralized approach, with increased roles for head teachers and school bodies.

These efforts have resulted in some good practice but there remain challenges and issues, including the wide gap between policy intent and practice. Lack of political commitment, systemic inefficiency due to weak capacity development, an overt focus on technical fixes, hierarchical social structures, and legacies from the colonial period are largely responsible for the gap. The problems highlight both the lack of transparency and accountability in the school system and an unwillingness to collaborate with school actors. The lack of research-based evidence on school leadership is another critical concern. Strengthening school leadership and governance in South and West Asian countries demands a concerted effort to eliminate the commitment gap, supported by a robust research and information base, systemic enhancement through capability strengthening, a participatory and collaborative approach, and the empowerment of parents and other school community members. Another key requirement is to eliminate the gap between schools and their local cultural context.

## 4.1 Introduction

South and West Asia is a region of great tradition in learning and teaching, with countries developing their own ways of knowing and educating. The spread of modern, non-traditional approaches to schooling in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, proved so powerful that even these societies succumbed to their influence (see Arenas, 2007). Colonization by European powers also played a major role in the expansion of modern schooling, creating conditions in which local systems of knowing and educating either atrophied or disappeared altogether. More recently, globalization and the marketization of education have played a role in changing schooling and the role of leaders in the region's education systems.

This review explores some of the leadership policies and practices that have emerged in South and West Asia as a result of these traditions and influences. It aims to contribute to the discourse on school leadership by addressing three main concerns: how school leadership is understood in the region, what policies and practices exist, and what the emerging issues are. It is expected that the review will help raise awareness of the importance of school leadership in enhancing school quality and learning of children.

School governance practice in SWA is varied. Although decentralization has been a theme of policymaking in the region, it is not clear that devolution of power has always been meaningful. This is true of large countries like India, where school governance is to a great extent the shared responsibility of federal and provincial government, and of small states like Maldives, where school leaders have very limited roles to perform (Govinda, 2002; Kandasamy and Blaton, 2004; Ngang, Abdulla and Mey, 2010; Paivandi, 2012). The function of local school leaders in the region is largely confined to administrative and managerial tasks. They have little authority and play a limited role in improving students' learning (UNESCO/UNICEF, 2012). In most cases, they also lack the knowledge and skills or the incentives to do so.

The review is based mainly on regional and national policy and research documents from SWA, although literature from other national and international agencies was also used. Email consultations with educational professionals in three SWA countries also provided important country-level insights on school leadership. However, it should be noted that difficulties in accessing key information on the topic in all the countries of the region meant that not every important dimension of school leadership could be fully explored.

## **4.2 Regional context: Development challenges and priorities**

### **4.2.1 Economic, political, social and development context**

SWA is a region of great diversity – geographically, socially, culturally and economically. While this diversity poses challenges to political and economic stability in the region, it also creates opportunity, which the region is yet to fully exploit. South Asia remains a region of extreme and extensive poverty, with almost 600 million people living on less than US \$1.25 a day (World Bank, 2012). The region's poor development status is illustrated by its low Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.558, compared to an average of 0.694 across the world (UNDP, 2013).

There is a significant disparity between and within countries in the SWA region, with some countries and areas relatively affluent and others highly deprived. Iran and Sri Lanka have a high level of human development, while Maldives, India and Bhutan belong to the medium-level group. Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Afghanistan have low levels of human development. Within countries, disparities between different geographical areas and social groups are reflected in resource allocation, access to information, services and opportunities, and participation in political and developmental decision-making. This disparity, a result of the historical, economic and political exclusion of large swathes of the population, represents one of the region's greatest social, political, economic and developmental challenges.

### **4.2.2 Education context, priorities and challenges**

Despite these challenges, the region has made significant progress on several fronts, reducing poverty, improving quality of life and increasing participation in education. Thanks to efforts to expand educational access to children, the region is now ahead of the world average for primary school children, with a net enrolment rate of above 90 per cent. The region has also achieved gender parity at primary level. At secondary level, however, the situation is less encouraging, with only half of children in the age group attending school. The region is also far behind in terms of adult literacy, with only 62 per cent of adults literate and an enduring gender gap between male and female literacy rates.

Another critical challenge for the region is the poor quality of its education, as illustrated in low learning achievement. In South Asia, where thirteen million children aged between eight and fourteen never attend school, 'one-quarter to one-third of those who graduate from primary school lack basic numeracy and literacy skills' (Dundar, Béteille, Riboud and Deolalikar, 2014, p. 2). Across SWA as a whole, one third of primary-age children who reach Grade 4 have not learned the basics. As with other indicators, there is a wide disparity among countries and groups of people in terms of learning achievement. While, in some countries, 90 per cent of primary-age children learn the basics in reading, only about 30 per cent do so in Pakistan. Such

poor-quality education undermines the progress achieved and investments made in education in the region and demands a serious reconsideration of schooling and its design, delivery and governance.

As noted above, the dominance of Western worldviews and later colonial practice spread the Western model of schooling in SWA and elsewhere. Although positive in some ways, it also, less happily, helped marginalize local wisdom and practices of knowing and educating. The 1955 report of the Nepal National Education Planning Commission stated that 'the country is in a state of utter barbarism and ignorance' (Pandey and Wood, 1956, p. 74), and adopted the ideas of Thomas Babington Macaulay, a British politician who sought, through education, 'to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect' (Macaulay, 1835). This was the beginning of modern school education in South Asia.

Although this led to an expansion of schooling in the region, it could not be said to have served all of the people of the region well, as reflected in high rates of failure and dropout, poor learning achievement and the large number of out-of-school children in the region. Despite these problems, education in the region still follows the same design philosophy, with interventions implemented in SWA largely copied from those developed in the West.

The neglect of local cultural contexts and needs has resulted in confusion and conflict in education planning, implementation and management, as well as in the classroom (Caddell, 2005; Gupta, 2007). The severe challenges SWA faces must be addressed in a coherent way. Education is, of course, greatly influenced by the social, political and economic context of the region, and can play a key role, in turn, in enacting change on these fronts. It is imperative that countries in the region work together to achieve broad-based, participatory, inclusive and socially just development practices that derive from the strength of the region itself and focus on stability and sustainability. A quality education for all, providing a broad base for individual as well as societal development, should be the priority. Such education should aim to promote a cohesive, environmentally friendly and sustainable lifestyle, and address the needs of marginalized children so they can improve their own status and participate in the political, social, cultural and economic life of their country. Achieving this means thinking about development and education in terms of local, rather than external, constructs.

### **4.3 School leaders in different educational contexts and governance structures: Profiles, roles and responsibilities**

This section discusses patterns of governance structure and the profiles, roles and responsibilities of school leaders in SWA countries. The first of two sub-sections discusses school leaders and their roles, while the second considers school committees. Changes in the political situation, slow progress in learning achievement and deteriorating accountability arrangements have propelled the region's traditionally centralized school systems towards more decentralized and participatory structures, at least in policy terms. Financial constraint also obliged countries to adopt more participatory structures at local level so that schools could seek resources from their communities. Donor pressure and the influence of international organizations have also played a part, as has growing internal pressure for change.

#### **4.3.1 School leaders and their roles**

As school governance structures have changed, so too have expectations of the role of school leader. In Sri Lanka, the devolution of responsibilities to schools meant that school principals became responsible for learning outcomes, resource management, personnel development programmes and monitoring (Lekamge, 2010). Similarly, in Bangladesh, head teachers are now expected to take more responsibility for decisions that affect school operation (MPME, 2011). In Iran, school principals have been given total management responsibility for schools, which includes planning, mobilizing in-school and out-of-school resources, and improving the capabilities of teachers. The same is true of other countries in the region (Salahuddin, 2011).

Throughout the region, school leaders carry out officially prescribed functions and are accountable to the education authorities and their communities. These official roles are in some cases set out in law, while, in others, the role is defined in education policy documents. In Nepal, the functions, duties and powers of head teachers are defined in the country's official guidance on education policy, rules and regulations, and laws, the *Education Rules* (GoN, 2010).

The number of leaders per school generally depends on the size of the student population and the qualifications of the teachers. For example, in Nepal, a school providing education from primary to higher-secondary levels (grades 1 to 12) may have three leaders, at primary, secondary and higher-secondary. An independent primary school, on the other hand, would have only one head teacher. The magnitude of their duties and responsibilities differ. However, generally, a head teacher is required to perform both administrative and academic functions.

For most of India's school leaders and teachers, whether they work in government or private schools, or in rural and urban areas, professional support and development are in short supply. Sixty per cent of primary schools are two- or three-teacher schools and do not have an official position of school head. The government appoints a head in schools where there are five or more teachers, with the most senior teacher expected to fill the position without specific training in leadership or management. In private schools, the position is usually filled by a candidate with strong marketing and 'public relations' skills. Pedagogical interests, leadership skills, and the ability to facilitate a differentiated curriculum, tend not to be valued. Consequently, in most schools, basic notions of educational leadership, support for teacher development, curriculum facilitation and organizational management are non-existent. Educational leadership is considered an administrative role, focused on data entry, monitoring of schedules, report writing and testing, rather than specialized aspects of pedagogical guidance, mentoring, management and knowledge development. The school head has to learn on the job with little or no institutionalized support. Consequently, wide gaps exist in the interpretation of curricular needs, teacher preparation and team development throughout the school years (Batra, 2010).

A UNESCO study of primary school leadership in a number of countries, including four Indian states (Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu) and Sri Lanka, found that women accounted for one third of primary school leaders in India and 28 per cent in Sri Lanka (Zhang, Postlethwaite and Grisay, 2008). The extent to which conditions in these countries are unfavourable to female headship is thrown into sharper relief by the fact that in Sri Lanka about 86 per cent of primary school teachers are female while in India they account for 45 per cent of all teachers. The same study also noted that 22 per cent of Indian primary school head teachers had achieved only upper secondary education while 60 per cent had tertiary-level education. In Sri Lanka the figures were 38 per cent and 55 per cent, respectively. More than half of Indian primary-level head teachers had teaching obligations of eight hours a week while in Sri Lanka only 13 per cent of head teachers had teaching duties to that level.

#### **4.3.2 School committees and their roles**

SWA countries have, in the main, adopted distributed leadership styles in order to facilitate better school performance. These countries are following the concept of school-based management practised in North America and Europe, with a school management committee (SMC) overseeing school improvement and development. In some countries, a governing or managing entity of this sort is required by law (MLJ, 2009; GoP, 2012; GoN, 2002) and in others by policy frameworks. In some countries, there is provision for more than one such organization. In Iran, for example, school councils, teacher councils and parent teacher associations all have roles, with the school council playing a particularly important role in decision making and school improvement. In Sri Lanka, there are two school bodies – the school

development board (SDB) and the SMC – to which leadership is distributed. The SDB comprises the principal, the deputy principal and representatives of teachers, parents, past pupils and the education authority (Aturupane, Kellaghan and Shojo, 2013), while the SMC involves the school's SDB representatives, other deputy principals, assistant principals and section heads.

Bangladesh too practises a form of distributed leadership for improved school outcomes and accountability. A primary school has an SMC with representatives of parents, teachers and the local community (MPME, 2011). The committee is responsible for overall management, including school improvement planning, while the head teacher is responsible for day-to-day administration and supervision (ibid). Research on the impact of distributive leadership practices in the primary schools of Bangladesh found a positive relationship between this form of leadership practice and teacher satisfaction (Mullick, Sharma and Deppeler, 2013).

In Nepal, SMCs play roles in school operation, supervision and management (GoN, 2010). Their key responsibilities can include resource mobilization, teacher selection for training, supervision of teachers, formulating the code of conduct for students, keeping school documents and records, communicating with the district education office, selecting a financial auditor, and recruitment of teachers. SMCs can form sub-committees to undertake specific tasks.

Afghanistan takes a community-based approach to the management of schools (MoE, Afghanistan, 2011). The school council – or *shura* – is the main mechanism for delivering this. Shuras involve parents and community members in school-related matters, including selection of teachers, inclusion of local content in the curriculum, student behaviour, and so on (Bethke, 2012). They have been actively engaged in improving access, making schools safe, and seeking support from influential people in their communities (Bethke, 2012; MoE, Afghanistan, 2013).

Bhutan has made a strong commitment to ensuring good governance in education (UNESCO-IBE, 2011). There is a school management board (SMB) in each school, comprising a leader from the local community, a representative from the national assembly, the head teacher, representatives of parents and members of the district development committee. The SMB is responsible for overall managerial and planning activities (UNESCO-IBE, 2011; National Action Plan for School Earthquake Safety, 2013).

Policymakers in Maldives have sought to delegate various functions to schools as well as strengthening partnerships with parents and communities to enhance school expansion and development (MoE, Maldives, 2008). In a similar way, Sri Lanka has focused on school-based management by empowering schools, school boards and principals (Perera, 2011).

Unfortunately, SWA countries do not provide information on school leadership specifically, making it difficult to cover in depth the profile of school leaders in the region. However, the

discussion above shows that SWA governments are trying to improve the outputs of basic education by democratizing school leadership.



## **4.4 Policies and practices in school leadership in different countries of the region**

Countries in SWA acknowledge the importance of school leadership and devolved responsibility in improving the quality of their education systems. This perspective is, to a large extent, the result of Western-inspired school modernization in the region. International developmental targets, such as Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals, have reinforced the idea of a standardized model of educational quality. Donor dependence in these countries has also contributed to the focus on quality and the role of school leaders in achieving it.

### **4.4.1 School leadership policies and frameworks**

India has the largest education system in the region, with over one million primary schools. The country accepted the importance of school leadership as early as in 1950s, through, for example, its Secondary Education Commission (CSF and NUEPA, 2013), and has continued to place emphasis on it in more recent documents such as the 2009 Right to Education Act and the 12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Development Plan (2012–17). Policy has focused on providing in-service training to head teachers, increasing their financial and leadership authority, and supporting school leaders' capacity development, with the objective of increasing work performance.

The Right to Education Act directed that all government schools be overseen by a school management council with two-thirds of its membership drawn from parents. The SMCs' work includes preparing school development plans and monitoring school finance. This illustrates policy commitment to decentralization in school governance, expanding school leadership to management committees and, through them, to parents. However, the roles given to the management committees are very simple and provide little space to contribute meaningfully to quality improvement within the school. The same could be said of the role of head teacher, which is often confined to carrying out simple administrative functions (CSF and NUEPA, 2013). Improving the leadership capacity of head teachers and members of the management committee is a critical concern and a huge task for the system. Another critical problem is the absence of head teachers in thousands of primary schools.

The story is largely the same in other SWA countries. Despite policy commitments to decentralization in school governance, there is little evidence of school-based governance practice that would result in a more meaningful role for head teachers, teachers, management committees, parents and the wider community (Dundar, Béteille, Riboud and Deolalikar, 2014). This illustrates a gap between policy and practice and severely undermines the role of leadership in making the school a centre for quality learning and social transformation.

Nepal is a case in point. The country's policy documents espouse the importance of decentralization and community participation in school governance, giving emphasis to the empowerment of head teachers and school management committees. The School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP), in force in Nepal since 2009, promotes 'building the capacity of local governments and schools with a focus on the SMC, head teacher, and PTA to successfully carry out decentralized management functions' (MoE, Nepal, 2009, p. 12). The SSRP makes it clear that school governance is the shared responsibility of the head teacher, SMC and local government. The head teacher and SMC are meant to have authority over a school's academic work, including making pedagogical choices, teacher management, preparing and implementing school improvement plans, and setting academic targets, as well as for administrative and financial matters. In practice, however, head teachers and SMCs do not carry out many of these functions. Their roles are confined mainly to simple day-to-day functions only.

#### **4.4.2 School leadership practices**

School leaders in SWA countries have not been able to contribute a great deal to instructional and learning processes, with most of their time spent on administrative and management tasks (Zhang, Postlethwaite and Grisay, 2008). This is not to say that good leadership practice is unheard of in the region, though examples are few. It is important, therefore, to consider leadership in the context of different school practices and governance structures and advance strategies for school leadership development accordingly. There are important differences in terms of the degree to which school governance is centralized, the resources available to a school and its location, with rural schools, for example, facing a different set of challenges to urban ones. All these types of school require different leadership development strategies, based on rigorous groundwork and research.

There is, thus, a clear gap between policy and what is happening at school level. Certainly, more effective education policy has been developed in the region, with programme strategies, systems and structures in place, human and financial resources allotted, and additional support from international agencies and donors. Whatever their position on the Human Development Index, all countries in the region have emphasized decentralized school governance and strengthening school leadership in one way or the other.

##### ***4.4.2.1 Qualifications requirements and selection process***

Efforts towards decentralization in school governance run parallel to other provisions, such as moves to ensure head teachers are appropriately qualified. As in most other countries, school heads in SWA must have a teaching background and are generally appointed on the basis of seniority, thus limiting progression opportunities for younger teachers. In some countries in the region (the available information, here as elsewhere, is patchy) head teachers are not required

to hold any specific qualification, and often have the same qualifications as their teacher colleagues. In India, a primary school head teacher is required to have twelve years of general education and two years of professional training, while a secondary head teacher must have a bachelor's degree in education and 10 years of teaching experience (CSF and NUEPA, 2013). Similar provisions are made in Pakistan (GOP, 2012) and Bangladesh (MoE, Bangladesh, 2010).

In Nepal, primary school (grades 1 to 5) head teachers must have achieved Grade 12 in general education, while lower-secondary head teachers (grades 6 to 8) must hold a bachelor's degree in education or its equivalent. Upper secondary school (grades 9 to 10 or 9 to 12) head teachers must have a master's degree or equivalent (MoE, Nepal, 2010). A secondary-level permanent teacher with a bachelor's degree in education and ten years' teaching experience is also eligible for a secondary-level head teacher position. The head teacher recruitment process is decentralized, with a selection committee formed at the local level to consider candidates recommended by the school management committee. In practice, however, most SMCs recruit head teachers on ad hoc basis, which means that many head teachers are appointed 'provisionally' without the required qualifications.

In countries like Sri Lanka, where no specific information is available on head teachers' qualifications, levels of teacher qualification can give some idea as to head teachers' qualifications. In the national schools of Sri Lanka, almost half (48 per cent) of teachers held bachelor's degrees, while 46 per cent were qualified to A-level (MoE, Sri Lanka, 2012). Among the rest, 3.7 per cent were qualified to O-level and 2 per cent to master's degree level (ibid.). In Iran, primary school head teachers are required to hold a bachelor's degree or above and must pass educational management courses or proficiency exams (Aqdamy, 2011). In Afghanistan, the challenge is to upgrade the qualifications of huge numbers of under-qualified teachers, particularly in the poorest parts of the country (Bethke, 2012).

In Iran, school principals are appointed on the basis of merit, as per the directives of the related by-law approved by the High Council of Education (Aqdamy, 2011).

#### ***4.4.2.2 Preparation and professional development opportunities***

A critical concern for many SWA countries is the lack of intervention to prepare school leaders for their expanded roles. Apart from some small-scale, sporadic efforts, there are few programmes for leadership preparation and development. Short-term in-service programmes are most common, focusing on aspects of leadership and management as part of moves to improve quality or decentralize school management. Most SWA countries include some provision for leadership development in their national education development plans or sub-sectoral development plans. Likewise, universities and other academic institutions run long-term courses on aspects of school leadership and management. There are even specialized

institutions devoted to leadership development. The Sri Lankan Centre for Educational Leadership, under the National Institute of Education, is one such example (Perera, 2011), while in Iran, the education administration centre of the Iranian Ministry of Education provides management training to school heads (Aqdamy, 2011). Despite these developments, it remains the case that head teachers, and school leadership more generally, in SWA countries are unprepared to perform the tasks envisaged by policymakers.

According to a UIS study conducted in 2005/06, almost 92 per cent of Sri Lankan primary school heads had received management training of about 68 days on average (Zhang, Postlethwaite and Grisay, 2008). However, the situation was less favourable in India (Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu) where only about 35 per cent of primary-level head teachers had received management training of 40 days. More worryingly, about 22 per cent of them were unaware of any such training. This suggests that the professional development of school leaders is still not a priority in the region, despite acknowledgement in policy documents that it has a key role in enhancing school performance and the quality of school education.

Although cooperation with international development partners is common, it rarely focuses specifically on school leadership development; nor is there much cooperation in this area among countries of the region. SWA countries should develop means of networking and sharing experiences so they can learn from each other regarding challenges and opportunities for leadership development.

Despite efforts to improve quality and promote good governance through transparency, participation and empowerment, schooling in SWA continues to struggle, as reflected in the poor attainment of students. The available literature, including government policy documents, highlights the obstacles, including weak system capacity, a lack of technical and financial resources, a lack of clear planning and strategy, and so on. These are, of course, important issues. However, perhaps more important is the gap between schooling in the region and the culture and everyday needs of the vast majority of local people. This underlines the need to rethink the meaning of education itself, to develop culturally contextualized interventions, to improve political commitment and to set implicit objectives for leaders and managers.

## 4.5 Emerging issues in school leadership and governance

Children, teachers and school leaders in SWA countries face contradictions between their own cultural values and the practices they are asked to follow in schools. One result of this tension is poor system output. The issue for the region is to redefine education so that it coheres with the agency of the actors and creates space for them to engage fully. Efforts to develop school leadership should be seen in this context, as recognized by Saeed (2003, cited in O'Shaughnessy, 2009) in her calls for an education built on indigenous roots of Maldives, and by Gupta, who wrote of the 'powerful connection' between teaching and learning practices and 'the social-cultural-historical past and the present of a society' (Gupta, 2007, p. 10).

Lack of political commitment is another constraint. National leaders often use education to pursue the interests of their regime. In countries such as Nepal, Iran and Afghanistan, political leaders have used schooling to legitimize their rule and stay in power. This is true, to one degree or another, in all SWA countries. Lack of political commitment is also in evidence when governments do not put in place the structures or resources necessary to achieve stated policy goals for education. Another sort of 'commitment gap' (MoE, Pakistan, 2009) can be seen when leaders are focused more on achieving power than on meeting educational goals (Little, 2010).

School leadership development in SWA should be seen in these broad historical and social contexts. The legacy of hierarchical social structures and colonialism, and the wide gap in the education status of local community members, including parents and education leaders and managers, have created barriers to the smooth transformation of school governance and leadership. Interventions to change principals' approaches to leadership often founder because school management still follows colonial practices (Arachchi, 2012).

Issues such as transparency, accountability and good governance remain prominent. Another concern is the reluctance of leaders to involve stakeholders in school development, coupled with an unwillingness to act by themselves. The issue is to motivate school leaders to become proactive, willing to contribute and open to working with other stakeholders. This requires fostering a sense of belonging and a spirit of partnership among head teachers, sentiments that point to a need for cultural change (Hasan and Hynds, 2014).

This is not to say that there are no examples of good leadership in SWA. The problem is that there is not enough good research on the dynamics of school functioning and too little dissemination of good practice. It is important that people in SWA know that they do not need to go far to find examples of success. Developing the practice of working for change, and overcoming the view that good things come from elsewhere, are critical challenges.

## **4.6 Key findings and recommendations**

### **4.6.1 Key findings**

Some good models of dynamic leadership practice are available in the region, and, while they are sporadic, where they exist they provide a strong base for the creation of contextualized school leadership development models. National policies recognize the importance of school leadership and school-based governance. Legal frameworks have been created for the effective functioning of decentralized governance and school leadership practice. However, inherent weaknesses mean that they are not functioning well. Headship is focused on administrative and managerial activities, rather than instructional or learning-related activities. The gap between policy and practice is one of the abiding issues for school leadership development, illustrating a lack of political commitment to decentralization.

School leadership is, by and large, still guided by the norms of hierarchical social structures, despite some positive interventions to develop more school-based management, and has not embraced the voices of the community members, including parents, to the extent envisaged in policy. This has reinforced existing power relations and weakened stakeholders' sense of ownership. There is a cultural gap between the design of schooling and local and national cultural values, which constrains the development of more collaborative relationships between schools and their stakeholders. This, in turn, negatively affects the quality of learning.

The shortage of leadership development programmes suggests that leadership development is not yet a priority for the region or recognized as a key policy agenda. Existing programmes tend to focus on technical skills and neglect factors such as motivation, democratic values and commitment to creating a participatory environment capable of improving school quality. The focus on building technical capabilities has distracted SWA countries from engaging local communities and parents in school leadership reform. This gap has led to an elite capturing school leadership, offering only token participation to uninformed parents.

There is a lack of localized, research-based knowledge and interpretation of different aspects of schooling and school leadership in SWA countries, hampering efforts to link schooling with the context people's lived experience. Similarly, little information is available on key aspects of school leadership, such as its profile, design and composition, or on the relationship between leadership and school performance in the region.

### **4.6.2 Recommendations**

Networking and information-sharing will help school leaders and policymakers learn from other countries and regions. The importance of local worldviews, cultural values and ways of knowing

and educating needs to be recognized. Building on local cultural context will help students link their learning with the realities of their day-to-day lives. It will also help stakeholders take ownership of school governance. Efforts are also needed to inform schooling practices with knowledge achieved elsewhere. Such bridging will help create the synergy effect in school leadership development. This will eventually support the development of more inclusive, open and democratic school leadership practices.

SWA countries need to focus on eliminating gaps in culture, commitment and implementation. Strong political commitment, combined with administrative and technical measures in line with the principle of participatory and good governance, is essential for empowering local school leadership, including community members and parents. Provisions for parental and local participation and partnership in school leadership need legal and institutional backing. Similarly, informing parents and other community members about government policies, programmes and provisions, and their rights regarding school leadership, is crucial.

A strong system of information and research is essential for the development and effective functioning of school leadership. This would improve understanding of the different aspects of school leadership, and contribute to the creation of legal and organizational structures in which school leadership and governance can be practised, with clearly delineated roles and responsibilities for all actors. It would also support capacity development for school leaders.

School headship needs to be developed as a professional activity with well-defined roles and responsibilities. Countries should develop headship as a distinct profession with the prospect of career advancement and professional development. It is important that schools attract the best candidates for the position of headship. Headship preparation and development needs to be recognized and practised as an ongoing process, with opportunities for participating in higher academic degree courses, diploma courses or short-term training courses on school leadership, as need dictates. Opportunities for professional networking are also important. Sharing and discussion among head teachers, parents and members of school boards would also greatly contribute to the professional enhancement of headship.

It is important that school leadership is shared or distributed. While sharing leadership responsibility among associate heads and teachers is important, recognition of the key roles other actors can play in leadership is equally significant. Strengthening the roles and capabilities of immediate school actors, such as members of the school board, parent-teacher association or any other committee/board present in the school, as well as student and staff representatives, is critical.

Countries in SWA need to build a collaborative relationship between local government and schools, focusing particularly on areas such as resource mobilization and planning, as well as

localizing learning and school processes. Such relationships will strengthen local school leadership while, at the same time, enhancing student learning.



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## **Chapter 5 - Policy review of school leadership in sub-Saharan Africa**

**A policy review of school leadership in sub-Saharan Africa**

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## **Executive summary**

This report offers an extensive comparative review of school leadership in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). It examines and presents evidence from selected educational contexts, to educators, policymakers and other stakeholders interested in successful schools.

Effective school leaders are central to school performance, as they provide direction, motivation and support to teachers, administrators and students, in order to improve education service delivery and learning outcomes. However, this review shows that most SSA countries have no adequate policies to ensure that school principals become effective instructional leaders.

Key challenges in school leadership include inadequate preparation and limited professional development opportunities; limited ICT skills for transformative teaching and learning; corruption, which denies students learning resources; and gender inequality. In many SSA countries, teaching experience remains the main path to principalship; this means that many school heads are ill-prepared to meet the challenges posed by the changing nature of their job. Besides, the recruitment of school leaders is unsystematic and not always based on professional competence. Mechanisms for recruitment include promotion by seniority, rewarding political allegiance, corruption, nepotism and favouritism.

The available literature shows that most countries have introduced governance reforms, including decentralized school models, that require principals to have appropriate skills and knowledge in financial management, instructional leadership and people management in order to meet the challenge of demanding school contexts. However, strategies for training, support and professional development of school leaders remain inadequate.

Hence, the demand for high-quality learning outcomes, combined with additional responsibilities for human and financial management, put pressure on poorly trained school leaders. To address this challenge, most SSA governments should strengthen their policies on school leadership. Education authorities need to identify the school leadership responsibilities that are most effective in improving student learning. Governments should increase resources for training, so that current and future principals can develop relevant skills and attitudes for effective instructional leadership. Policymakers should make the principals' role more attractive by improving status and remuneration to attract high-performing leaders.

This regional review should help policymakers across the region make the most of their professional development resources, based on evidence of effectiveness.

## **5.1 Introduction**

### **5.1.1 Overview of school leadership in the sub-Saharan region**

Recognition that school leadership is ‘crucial for improving students’ academic achievement’ has led to increased expectations of the role and ‘growing recognition that the professional development of school leaders could contribute significantly to the improvement of their practices’ (Pashiardis and Brauckmann, 2009, pp. 121–122). There is ‘broad international agreement that school leaders need the capacity to improve teaching, learning, and pupils’ development and achievement’ (Huber, 2010, p. 25).

The rapid expansion of basic education in SSA during the past two decades has seen a sharp rise in demand for high-quality school leaders. With spending constrained, governments have sought more effective and efficient approaches to the recruitment, preparation, support and retention of qualified school leaders. However, despite changing roles and higher expectations, many SSA school leaders receive little formal or structured preparation for the job (Biamba, 2012; Oplatka, 2004; Otunga, Serem and Kindiki, 2008).

This study reviews and analyses emerging issues related to these themes, examining secondary sources to explore the profile of school leaders in the region, current regulatory frameworks for access, training, work tasks and responsibilities, and policy debate and reform concerning the role of school leaders and its implications for training.

### **5.1.2 Methodology of the review**

The study reviewed the available literature to identify status, current trends, challenges and opportunities in the recruitment, retention and retraining of school leaders in sub-Saharan Africa, based on UNESCO’s analytical framework. Accordingly, a systematic review methodology was used to identify, appraise and collate evidence from studies by UNESCO, OECD and the World Bank, reports from international NGOs and national policy documents. Literature databases were searched together with Google Scholar and online scholarly journals. Grey literature studies and informational papers were also captured.

### **5.1.3 Scope and limitation**

A key challenge concerned the comparability of achievements in different countries in the region. Insufficient information differentiating primary and secondary education was another limitation. A similar dearth of information was found in the literature on school leaders and on gender issues at secondary schools. Most countries in the region lack relevant data, which affected the quality of the analysis and the validity of the generalizations made. Despite these

challenges, the review has attempted to provide a wide-ranging analysis of the diverse contexts within Africa's Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone countries.

## **5.2 Regional context: Development challenges and priorities**

### **5.2.1 Economic, political, social and human development contexts**

#### ***5.2.1.1 Political context***

Political governance in Africa has improved since 2000. Elections have become more peaceful, and more women participate in politics. There is also marked improvement in the collection and management of tax revenues, and increased resolve to fight corruption. Public protests for jobs and better wages have increased, especially in countries undergoing democratic transition. People are more prepared to question their leaders and use digital media to raise awareness of issues. Armed conflicts have reduced and the business environment is improving (AEO, 2014).

#### ***5.2.1.2 Socio-economic and human development contexts***

Africa is home to a quarter of the global poor, and the number of people living in poverty has doubled since 1981 (AfDB, 2012). In 2010, 48 per cent of the population lived on US \$1.25 per day or less, and almost 70 per cent lived on US \$2 per day or less (World Bank, 2014a). The number of people living in extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa reached 414 million in 2010 (UN, 2014). Unequal access to education and barriers to the labour market still exclude women, the disabled and young people living in rural areas, from skilled work, and many young people are out of work or stuck in low-skilled, poorly paid jobs (World Bank, 2014b).

### **5.2.1 Education context, priorities and challenges**

Education systems in SSA reflect differences in geography, cultural heritage and economic development, and are often based on the policies of former colonial rulers (AEO, 2014). Twenty-five of the thirty-nine African countries featured in the 2014 Millennium Development Goals report have attained net enrolment rates of 80 per cent or above for primary school children, and are progressing well with the other targets (UNDP, 2014, p. 33). However, some 33 million African children of primary-school age remain out of school (UN, 2014, p. 17). Seychelles is the only African country which has achieved all the EFA goals, and while thirty-one may attain them by 2022, for twenty-two the challenges are still enormous (UNESCO, 2015).

#### ***5.2.2.1 Learning context***

The region's classrooms are often overcrowded, with qualified teachers in short supply. Lack of basic services such as drinking water and electricity is also a big problem (UNESCO, 2012a). The 2009 EFA Global Monitoring Report stated that 'poor and unequal provision of school resources is widespread in sub-Saharan Africa' (UNESCO, 2008b, p, 9).

### ***5.2.2.2 Corruption***

The cost of corruption in education is very high in many countries in the region (TI, 2013, p. 3). The main corrupt practices noted in the 2010 Africa Education Watch (AEW) report were: '(i) abusive demands for fees that by law have been abolished, (ii) embezzlement of resources and (iii) abuse of power by teachers or officials' (Antonowicz, Lesné, Stassen and Wood, 2010, p. v). Lack of political will is the biggest barrier to fighting corruption (Brinkerhoff, 2010; Odero, 2013; Post, Raile and Raile, 2010), with little action taken to prosecute those involved.

### ***5.2.2.3 Absenteeism***

Absenteeism among teachers and school leaders is a significant issue. Headteachers do not monitor teachers' classroom performance, creating a situation where teachers act independently and 'report to school at will and in most cases very late' (Okurut, 2012, p. 28). High levels of teacher absenteeism, 'negatively impact student achievement, school reputation, contribute to the decline of the profession and incite student absenteeism' (Steiner-Khamsi, Harris-Van Keuren, Omoeva and Shiotani, 2009, p. 63).

### ***5.2.2.4 Teacher remuneration***

Teachers are among 'the worst paid civil servants in East Africa' (Makuma, 2012, p. 3). In Kenya, teachers frustrated at the government's failure to increase pay went on strike for the first two weeks of 2015. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, school principals struggle to retain teachers who are poorly paid and teach in under-resourced classrooms. Teacher attrition across SSA is very high, a significant issue for a region that will need to 'create 2.3 million new teaching positions by 2030, while filling about 3.9 million vacant positions' (UNESCO, 2014, para. 1).

### ***5.2.2.5 ICT integration***

As more African countries develop ICT policies for teaching and learning in schools, it is important that school leaders have sufficient ICT knowledge and skills to lead implementation. African countries have taken various routes to acquiring ICT tools such as computers to facilitate learning in schools. In Rwanda, for instance, the One Laptop per Child project has improved access to and interaction with new technologies for many schoolchildren.

### ***5.2.2.6 International community***

Recognizing training and development gaps in many African countries, international agencies, such as the British Council, VSO International and UNESCO, offer school leadership programmes across Africa. In 2011, for example, UNESCO partnered with the Varkey GEMS Foundation to train 10,000 school principals in Kenya, Ghana and India (UNESCO, 2011).

## 5.3 School leaders in different educational contexts and governance structures: Profiles, roles and responsibilities

### 5.3.1 School leadership and governance structure

Structures of school governance in sub-Saharan Africa have changed in line with educational reforms intended to produce decentralized governance systems. All SSA countries have engaged in decentralization, ‘though the pace has been quite uneven’ (Naidoo, 2005, p. 99). The aim of these policies is to increase autonomy and accountability in the education sector, empowering schools to respond ‘to local priorities and values, increasing client satisfaction and improving educational outcomes overall’ (Hermosilla, Anderson and Mundy, 2014, p. 4), and shifting professional responsibilities to school principals and boards (Lugaz et al., 2010).

However, the organization of SSA education systems is still characterized in some way by the legacy of policies and frameworks established during the colonial period. Non-governmental actors, such as churches and boards of governors, are responsible for managing secondary schools in many Anglophone African countries, though they are subject to strict regulation by national governments. They receive meagre public funding and depend on fees from students. Within Francophone Africa, historically centralized systems for managing secondary schools are gradually adjusting to deconcentration policies, though the roles of stakeholders are often ill-defined and poorly observed in practice (Verspoor, 2008, p. 262).

Many national governments in SSA continue to finance education, since local governments do not have effective income generation or taxation powers. In South Africa, Mali and Tanzania, the provision and management of education services are shared among communities, schools and governments (Naidoo, 2005).

The participation of parents and community members also varies from one country to another. A study of rural schools in South Africa found that principals were suspicious of the participation of parents in school governing boards and felt they interfered in school management. Since community members were poorly trained and did not understand their roles, their relationship with the school leaders was eroded (Joubert, 2006). A study in Ghana found that while well-educated people were able to influence governance, other community members were unable to participate (Essuman and Akyeampong, 2011).

#### Box 2. Good school governance has eight major characteristics

**Participation:** Participation by parents, teachers, community members and pupils is a cornerstone of good school governance. This can be either direct or through representatives.

**Rule of law:** Good school governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced

impartially. It also requires the promotion and protection of human rights.

**Transparency:** Transparency means that decisions are taken and enforced in accordance with the rules and regulations of the school. It also means that information is freely available and accessible to all those who will be affected, e.g. parents, teachers, pupils and sponsors.

**Responsiveness:** Good school governance requires that school bodies and processes serve all stakeholders, especially parents, teachers and pupils, within a reasonable timeframe.

**Consensus oriented:** Good school governance requires mediation of different interests to reach a broad consensus as to what is in the best interest of the whole school community and how this can be achieved.

**Equity and inclusiveness:** Ensuring that all members of the school community feel they have a stake in it and are not excluded. This requires all groups, particularly the most vulnerable, to have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being.

**Effectiveness and efficiency:** Producing results that meet the needs of the school community while making the best use of resources. The concept of efficiency in the context of school governance covers the sustainable use of resources and protection of the environment.

**Accountability:** In general, an organization or an institution is accountable to those who will be affected by its decisions or actions. Accountability cannot be enforced without transparency and the rule of law.

*Source:* Obondoh, Nandago and Otiende, 2005, p. 14.

### 5.3.2 Profiles of school leaders

The qualities, attitudes and perceptions of school leaders contribute to the success of their institutions (Bush, 2007; Kamper, 2008; Oduro, 2009; Oduro et al., 2007). According to Henevald and Craig (1996), effective school leaders in Africa must articulate a clear vision and demonstrate commitment to it, combining coordination and management of the instructional process with a willingness to engage with staff, parents and the school community.

The most common profile of school leaders in SSA is a man, with more or less long experience in teaching profession and without particular training or preparation for leadership responsibilities.

While teachers in sub-Saharan Africa are more likely to be women than men, women remain under-represented in senior positions and usually only occupy leadership roles in primary schools and small secondary schools. In South Africa, for example, although more than two-thirds of teachers are women, only 36 per cent of principals are female (Government of South

Africa, 2013). In Zimbabwe, too, women remain under-represented in leadership positions within the education system, despite efforts to improve the situation (Gwirayi, 2010, p. 285). Rwanda has one of the best gender equality policies in Africa, with women occupying 30 per cent of all decision-making positions and making up the highest proportion of women parliamentarians anywhere in the world. However, within the education sector, women account for only 29 per cent of heads of public primary schools and 16.7 per cent of heads of public secondary schools (Shrestha, Richards and Moxham, 2012, p. 18).

A variety of factors contribute to this picture, including cultural resistance to women's leadership, a lack of female role models in education leadership, discrimination in recruitment and limited provision of paid maternity leave.

### **5.3.3 Roles and responsibilities of school leaders**

The principal's role has become broader and more challenging under the dual pressure of increased accountability and the need to improve student outcomes. A study of school principals in Ghana, by Oduro (2003), noted that their diverse roles could include such tasks as inspecting building projects, supervising school cleaning, and ensuring safety and care for pupils and teaching staff. In another study, Oduro (2009) found that school principals in Ghana did not regard themselves as leaders, but as keepers of school possessions and implementers of government policies. In Cameroon, the wide-ranging responsibilities of school leaders include involvement with different regional and local services, the safety and security of students, and participation in community activities. In Kenya, the Teachers Service Commission defines the school leader as 'the accounting officer of the school, interpreting and implementing policy decisions pertaining to training, overall organization, coordination and supervision of activities in the institution as well as maintaining high training and learning standards' (Ibrahim, 2011, p. 292). In Mozambique's decentralized school system, school leaders are expected to handle new and complex tasks, particularly financial management, building maintenance, teacher professional development and the implementation of new curricula (Bazo, 2011).



## **5.4 Policies and practices in school leadership in different countries of the region**

### **5.4.1 School leadership policies and frameworks**

School leadership has become a priority in education policy discourse globally, with school leaders increasingly recognized as pivotal in enhancing access to quality education for all students (Biamba, 2012; Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; Piggot-Irvine, Howse and Richard, 2013; Teddlie and Stringfield, 1993). However, many school leaders in sub-Saharan Africa are unprepared for their new roles and responsibilities. The selection of principals, often on the basis of teacher seniority, means that few have either management experience or specific training in their new responsibilities (Mulkeen et al., 2007). In most parts of Africa, potential or current school principals are not required to have any formal preparation and/or professional development (Arikewuyo and Olalekan, 2009; Biamba, 2012; Bush and Oduro, 2006; Eacott and Asuga, 2014; Oduro and MacBeath, 2003; Pheko, 2008). There is a need to establish sustainable capacity-building initiatives to motivate school leaders and develop their professional and psychological competencies (Oduro, 2009).

Scott and Rarieya (2011) observe that, in East Africa, leadership programmes are based on achieving certification rather than acquiring new knowledge and skills. The content is mostly theoretical, with very little analytical discussion or consideration of how to put what is taught into practice. The importance of this is stressed in school leadership guidelines published by the Ministry of Education in Mozambique. They note that investment in teacher training is unlikely to have much impact 'if school directors do not create a climate supportive of innovation and collaboration in their schools' (MoE, 1998, p. 15). This is also recognized in Seychelles, where the MoE has partnered with the University of Lincoln (UK) to provide training at master's level to principals, and in Tanzania, where the Agency for the Development of Education and Management (ADEM) offers training for serving principals (Nzeli, 2013).

In Ghana, education policy is guided by the Education Sector Plan for the period 2003 to 2015 (Bosu, Dare, Dachi and Fertig, 2009). The plan provides the framework within which Ghana has sought to achieve MDGs related to gender parity in primary education by 2005, and universal primary completion by 2015. It also stresses the theme of decentralization in education policy, with the role of the Government Education Service (GES) focused primarily on establishing and scrutinizing national educational standards linked to the promotion of quality education. The management of schools has been devolved to district level, with the district education office assuming responsibility for issues such as the provision and performance of teaching staff.

Ghanaian schools must have a school management committee, including representatives from local community stakeholders. The work of the committees, in practice, often centres on the provision of resources in one form or another. Despite this apparent devolution of powers, key aspects of educational activity and school leadership agency remain outside the direct control of the school. Furthermore, the role of the headteacher is strictly prescribed by the *Headteachers' Handbook* (GES, 1994), which stipulates role requirements.

In South Africa, aspiring and practising school leaders must obtain the National Professional Qualification for Principals to qualify professionally. This qualification provides an entry point to school leadership. The country has also introduced the Advanced Certificate in Education, a practice-based two-year, part-time course which addresses the professional development concerns of school leaders by providing opportunities for current and aspiring head teachers to develop their competencies, change their career paths and adopt new roles (Eacott and Asuga, 2014, p. 925–926). For the most part, however, head teachers in the region are not required to undertake any formal training or preparation for the role, and have little professional development support thereafter. In most cases, teacher seniority is the critical factor.

This is reflected in approaches to the selection across the region. In Eritrea, school directors are selected by district management on the basis of performance as a teacher. In Zambia, too, heads are selected at district level from the ranks of senior teachers. Gambian head teachers must have held a teaching post for three years and are selected on the basis of qualifications, length of service and performance. In Lesotho, the school management body is responsible for recruitment, overseen by a senior education officer. Primary head teachers are required to have a diploma-level qualification and five years of teaching experience, while secondary head teachers are required to have a degree and 11 years of experience. However, where an appropriate candidate cannot be found, a senior teacher may be appointed acting head, with the position re-advertised annually until filled (Mulkeen, 2010, p. 110).

Some countries in the region, such as Eritrea and Gambia, provide mandatory training for head teachers. In Eritrea, this takes the form of a short management course for newly appointed school directors, while Gambia offers a one-year certificate for head teachers, also focusing on school management. The Eritrea Institute of Technology (EIT) provides an additional full-time, two-year diploma in education management, on which 137 school directors are currently enrolled. Lesotho, Malawi, Liberia and Zambia are among the countries which offer no mandatory training for school principals, although the Zambian National Distance Education College for Teachers offers a two-year course by distance learning and the Teacher Education Directorate is considering expanding the scope of training for head teachers. Uganda has recently begun to offer short induction courses for head teachers (*ibid.*, p. 111).

In general, head teachers in the region receive little preparation for their roles and little ongoing professional development. Deputy principals and senior teachers are appointed to principalship with little or no knowledge and experience of leadership or management. It is assumed that a good teacher will become an effective school leader and that no specific expertise is required. Although school leadership positions are advertised and appointments made after interview, favouritism and nepotism are still rife in countries such as Kenya and Sierra Leone. Appointees often lack even basic management skills. Where training is offered, it usually focuses on finance and administration rather than pedagogical or instructional leadership, which can make a real difference to learning outcomes. Training programmes tend to focus on certification rather than real-world application (Scott and Rarieya, 2011, pp. 70–72).

#### **5.4.2 School leadership practices**

In many sub-Saharan African countries, school leaders are appointed on the basis of the time they have served as a teacher and have little or no formal preparation or professional development for the role. Otunga, Serem and Kindiki (2008) report that, across Africa, most school principals lack knowledge and skills beyond those acquired in pre-service teacher education and ‘have to make deliberate efforts to up-date themselves through individual initiative and experiences on-the-job’ (p. 379). In some cases, headship appointments are the result of political intervention or the undue influence of factors that have nothing to do with teaching or learning. For example, according to Moriba and Edwards (2009), school leadership appointments in Sierra Leone are subject to corruption, with nepotism based on tribal considerations a more significant factor than quality or competence. In other cases, however, efforts have been made to ensure transparency and to offer some professional development support to principals and aspiring principals.

With the context of education changing and diverse stakeholders taking a more prominent role, policymakers are paying more attention to effective school leadership, which helps to establishing good working relationships with teachers and other stakeholders in order to contribute to a positive learning environment. Kamper (2008) found that an open, inclusive leadership style, focused on ‘upliftment’ and empowering others, contributed to the success of high-poverty schools in South Africa. However, in practice, few principals in the region have any preparation for these new responsibilities. Where training is provided it is, according to Mulkeen et al., unsystematic and inadequate in both content and coverage. Principals often lack a firm understanding of how the education process works and the inputs and processes that contribute to improved student learning. The selection of principals, often on the basis of teacher seniority, means that few have either management experience or specific training in their new responsibilities (Mulkeen et al., 2007). In most parts of Africa, potential or current school principals are not required to have any formal preparation and/or professional

development (Arikewuyo and Olalekan, 2009; Biamba, 2012; Bush and Oduro, 2006; Eacott and Asuga, 2014; Oduro and MacBeath, 2003; Pheko, 2008).

Moreover, there are growing expectations of good learning outcomes and of the role of school leaders in delivering them (Pashiardis and Brauckmann, 2009, p. 121). In the absence of specific preparation for their role, principals have to utilize what they have learned from those who led them when they were teachers. Pattern of leadership within sub-Saharan Africa continue to be based on bureaucracy, hierarchy and managerial leadership (Bush and Oduro 2006). Cultural diversities also influence school leadership. The location of institutions and the dominant cultural underpinnings influence the leadership style and performance of the school principal.

Though there are many models of educational leadership, instructional leadership is 'the longest established concept linking leadership and learning' (Bush, 2013, p. 6). Leithwood and Seashore-Louis (2011) argue that knowledge and understanding of classroom practice play a significant role in instructional leadership, allowing principals to provide teachers with detailed feedback and make suggestions for change (p. 6). Although school leaders have little direct influence on student achievement, 'they can indirectly influence students' progress by supporting those in the school who work most directly with the students: classroom teachers' (Hallam, et al., 2013, p. 510). Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) argue that leadership is second only to classroom instruction as an influence on student learning (p. 9).

A study of secondary schools in Kenya found that principals who exhibited instructional behaviours were supportive to teachers, and provided guidance to maintain high performance. 'From the study findings, the students' achievements were found to correlate significantly with provision of learning resources, presence of principal in school, motivation of students by principal and sharing of visions and goals of the school by principal' (Machoya, Mugwe, and Musau, 2014, p. 390).

Oplatka's (2004) comprehensive study of emerging leadership styles in developing countries highlights 'limited autonomy, autocratic leadership style, summative evaluation, low degree of change initiation, and lack of instructional leadership functions' (p. 427). School leaders in these countries face the challenge of improving basic physical and human resources, which are not core issues in the Anglo-American context, where much contemporary research in leadership models has been developed. Oplatka cautions against applying a 'single model fits all' approach to educational theories, and suggests that other conceptualizations of leadership need to be formulated. Educational policies transferred from the North cannot be unproblematically implemented in sub-Saharan Africa. There is a 'need to change the narrow definitions of principalship towards instructional issues and provide principals with greater autonomy, prior to any attempt to implement education policy that focuses on teaching improvement' (p. 442).

Oduro et al. (2007) highlight the limited research evidence to support effective school leaders in developing countries. Moreover, little research has been conducted as to how principals can effectively apply instructional leadership in improving their schools. African countries require more investment in classroom instruction and teacher professional development, to achieve effective learning.

#### **5.4.3 School leadership initiatives by international partners**

A number of international organizations operate school leadership initiatives in the SSA region. The International Research Foundation for Open Learning (IRFOL) reports improvements in the quality of primary education as a result of a distance education programme, delivered by the African Network for Education at a Distance, to support principals in Burkina Faso (UNESCO, 2004). Another programme, led by the British Council, trained SSA school leaders to drive sustainable and effective change and improve learning outcomes. Nine out of ten secondary school head teachers in Mauritius completed the programme while, in Rwanda, it helped put pedagogical leadership on the policy agenda by supporting the articulation of Rwanda's first national standards for school leaders.

The Leadership for Learning (LfL) programme, offered by the Centre for Commonwealth Education in Ghana, has improved the leadership capacity of 124 head teachers, helping them improve the quality of their students' learning, while also introducing a further 3,000 teachers to LfL principles and practice. The Ghana Education Service (GES) has embedded LfL principles in national policy and in the GES headteacher handbook.

## 5.5 Key findings and recommendations

This review demonstrates that the development of organizational and leadership skills among school principals requires an understanding and appreciation of context. The literature reveals the dominance of Anglo-American perspectives on school leadership which are often not directly applicable to the context of sub-Saharan Africa.

Despite the enormous diversity among countries in the region, it faces common, systemic problems concerning school leadership, such as inappropriate recruitment and appointment processes, the lack of professional development opportunities, the excessive workload of school leaders and accountability pressures, which may deter prospective school leaders. New, contextualized policy initiatives need to be developed to make school reform meaningful.

Adequate preparation prior to appointment would help principals overcome the shock of transition and enable them to come to terms with their new role. Professional development should continue after appointment to support principals in tackling diverse challenges at school. Despite global acknowledgement that school principals require preparation and professional development to respond to the complexities of school leadership and improve learning outcomes, possession of a teaching certificate is often seen as sufficient qualification for the role of principal. Where school leadership development is offered it does not always take into account the importance of national cultures and contexts. Changing the behaviour of school leaders will require richer and more extensive training than is currently available. The importance of quality training for school principals, both prior to appointment and on an ongoing basis, is a recurrent theme in the literature.

The findings support the view that enhancing the capacity of school leaders is key to improving the quality of teaching and learning in SSA schools. The following recommendations emerge from the report:

Country-specific needs for school leadership should be included in pre-service training and a deliberate move should be made to connect various facets of the school system, for instance, ministries of education, teacher education programmes and school leadership programmes, with leadership activities in sub-Saharan Africa. Empowering principals is important in the execution of their duties, and in implementing quality education initiatives. Without the necessary skills, principals cannot deliver the changes required by policymakers.

- Develop strong supportive supervision structures, with increased role for school principals. For instance, teacher absenteeism can be reduced through formal

supervision, disciplinary action by school principals and frequent visits to schools by senior government officials.

- School leaders should be strategic planners and custodians of ICT infrastructure. Various models, such as working with ICT-savvy children, co-teaching and peer coaching among teachers, can help address concerns about ICT integration.
- More research in general, and within school leadership in particular, is necessary. Better empirical data could also help validate a lot of the findings in the vast literature on school leadership.
- Reliable data can be collected, processed, analysed and reported through an EMIS. The production and dissemination of reliable education statistics is an important global public good. Reliable data is essential for effective school leadership planning, and for monitoring progress towards meeting national and global education targets.
- Educational researchers should investigate how predominately Western leadership theories are being transferred to developing countries. Emerging and alternative models should also be considered. More studies are required also within post-conflict countries to understand how they are coping with school leadership issues.

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## **Chapter 6 - Policy review of school leadership in Eastern Europe and Central Asia**

**A policy review of school leadership in Eastern Europe and Central Asia**

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## **Executive summary**

As more countries approach the Education for All (EFA) targets, the challenge has shifted from ensuring access to education to improving its quality. School leadership can be one of the main factors in meeting this challenge. This regional review critically examines the policies and practices of school leadership in Eastern Europe (EE) and Central Asia (CA), from the point of view of improving the quality of education in the region.

The countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia share, to some extent, a common political past. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, they faced the challenge of establishing democracy, civil society and a market economy. Despite these common features, each has its own unique political, socio-economic and developmental characteristics, shaping its education context, demanding different strategic and contextual policy decisions and priorities.

Most of the countries in the region have rapidly developed their education systems in past decades, in order to respond to urgent social and economic needs. One major area of focus has been the decentralization and democratization of educational leadership and management as a means of securing more efficient and flexible resource management, more community involvement, greater autonomy at all levels and further empowerment for decision-makers. This implies greater school autonomy and greater involvement of stakeholder groups in the decision-making processes. Attempts to democratize education leadership have, however, encountered serious difficulties, and in some cases failed, chiefly because of the lack of up-to-date relevant formal training for school leaders. Many countries in the region face major challenges in relation to leadership development and training, as well as in retaining and recruiting education staff. Other issues, such as transparency in decision-making and accountability of funding and resources, as well as serious gender and age imbalances in education leadership positions, have an impact on school leadership effectiveness.

This regional review demonstrates the urgent need for further improvements and actions. Although there is no universally accepted model of school leadership which would suit each and every country, common core guidelines can be developed to enhance its effectiveness. Both nationally and regionally, there is a need to develop action plans with legal frameworks for designing and implementing school leadership policies and practices. Capacity development is a prerequisite of such policy initiatives. The major stakeholders involved in school leadership need further training. Policy design and implementation should be based on evidence-based research and studies looking at factors influencing the quality of school leadership and students' learning outcomes, both within and across the countries of the region.

## 6.1 Introduction

### 6.1.1 Overview

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia were faced with the challenge of building nation states, and establishing democracy, civil society and a market economy. Legacies of the Soviet period, such as institutional bureaucracy, governmental centralism and cultural and social distrust, remained serious obstacles to change. All countries, with the exception of Turkey, strove to end ideological control of the education system and emphasized the importance of creating a curriculum that promoted national languages and culture. Educational change took the form of decentralization and liberalization in school management. The variety school types increased with the creation of specialist institutions such as gymnasiums, lyceums, technical schools, and private schools.

Efforts to decentralize school administration soon encountered difficulties, however. In many countries, the new national education governing officials lacked the managerial capacity to assume the full range of administrative and managerial tasks required. There was a lack of consensus regarding the allocation of roles and responsibilities, communication flows, reporting relationships, the distribution of authority across levels of education and the degree of decentralization between national and local government bodies.

Although many of the countries share a common political past, they are, nevertheless, diverse nations at different stages of political, economic and social development. The overall educational situation is very mixed, with each country facing a unique set of challenges that require special prioritization and policy decisions. Educational progress in the region is uneven and, in some cases, appears to be going backwards, with countries facing challenges such as high numbers of out-of-school children, low quality of education, bureaucracy, lack of transparency and corruption. Others, particularly those enjoying greater political stability, have, at the same time, advanced remarkably.

Despite this unevenness, it is clear that many countries are increasingly focusing on quality of education rather than access. This should lead policymakers to pay increased attention to the role of school principals as an important determinant of the quality of education and students' learning outcomes. Research suggests that successful leadership has a positive impact on the learning achievement of students. It demonstrates that school leaders can improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their support and influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions in schools (Leithwood, 2008).

### **6.1.2 Methodology of the review**

The review analyses the educational context, policies and practices of school leadership in Eastern Europe and Central Asia using UNESCO's analytical framework. It draws on an extensive and systematic review of literature on school leadership, as well as of key policies and practices in the region. The study is based on evidence and data collated from studies conducted by the European Commission, UNESCO, UNICEF, OECD and the World Bank, as well as reports from international NGOs, national policy documents, and research journals.

### **6.1.3 Scope and limitation**

This report provides a comprehensive review and addresses relevant issues concerning school leadership, including regulatory and policy frameworks and practices. It examines primary and secondary education levels and reviews 1) the wider educational context; 2) school leadership under different educational contexts and governance; 3) current policies and practices in school leadership in the countries; and 4) emerging issues, trends and patterns of school leadership.

Effort has been made to collect data and information from as many countries as possible in order to reflect regional status and trends in school leadership. However, the study faced some limitations due to the lack of data in some Central Asian and Eastern European countries, specifically in terms of the profiles and the roles and responsibilities of school leaders. Data related to leadership development, salaries and appraisal were not available in all cases. Despite these challenges, this report attempts to provide a comprehensive analysis based on the available data.

#### **Box 3. Countries included in the review**

##### **Eastern Europe:**

Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Turkey and Ukraine

##### **Central Asia:**

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan

## **6.2 Regional context: Development challenges and priorities**

### **6.2.1. Economic, political, social and human development contexts**

#### ***6.2.1.1 Political context***

The transition from communism to market-based economies led to severe economic hardship in many of the countries in the region. Economic and political restructuring were accompanied by armed conflict in some quarters as new cultural and political identities gave rise to ethnic tensions and fighting, resulting in large-scale displacement and social turmoil, along with the loss of educational opportunities for some vulnerable populations (Ivanenko, 2014). Other, more stable, countries have made remarkable progress in terms of economic and human development, with a number joining the European Union.

#### ***6.2.1.2 Demographic and socio-economic contexts***

The region has, overall, the world's lowest population growth rate, though there is considerable variation from state to state. Most countries are in the lower-middle to upper-middle income bracket. The exceptions are Tajikistan, which is considered a low-income country, and Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Russian Federation, Slovakia and Slovenia, which are classified as high-income countries. The global financial crisis affected the region more severely than any other, with unemployment rates rising sharply (ILO, 2011). Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Turkmenistan were among the countries with the highest unemployment rates in the world in 2010 at over 25 per cent (IMF, 2011).

##### **6.2.1.2.1 Increasing income inequality**

Countries in the region have relatively low income inequality, a legacy of communist rule. However, the transition to independence has eroded employment and ended extensive state employment (UNDP, 2010), meaning that many countries have higher income inequality than a few decades ago. Macedonia has the highest levels, Ukraine the lowest (UNDP, 2014).

##### **6.2.1.2.2 Poverty**

Throughout the 1990s, poverty increased in Central Asia. However, by 2000, these economies had started to grow due to increased prices for energy and metals. Between 2000 and 2012, the region grew much faster than the global economy, allowing incomes to increase and poverty to be substantially reduced (Asian Development Bank, 2014). In some countries, such as Tajikistan, Armenia, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, poverty rates remain high (UNICEF, 2013).



### ***6.2.1.3 Human development***

Many developing countries in the region report low levels of access to social services and social protection. Ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, the long-term unemployed, migrants and people living in rural areas are especially vulnerable. The countries with the highest Human Development Index ranking in the two regions are Slovenia and the Czech Republic, the lowest are Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (UNICEF, 2013).

## **6.2.2 Education context, priorities and challenges**

Although there are similarities between countries in the region, each faces a unique set of challenges. In Uzbekistan, for example, net enrolment levels in 2009 were higher at secondary level (91.3 per cent) than at primary level (88.7 per cent), reflecting the higher priority given to secondary education. Other countries have nearly 100 per cent enrolment in primary education and lower secondary but low achievement levels. Achievement across the region is uneven, with progress toward EFA targets in retreat in at least five countries and significant earlier gains lost. The percentage of primary-age children out of school has increased in some countries over the past decade, particularly in Montenegro, Moldova, Romania and Serbia (UNICEF, 2013).

### ***6.2.2.1 System of governance and administrative structures***

Following the collapse of communism, newly independent countries struggled with weakened administrative structures, fewer and less stable financial resources and poor governance, stemming from a lack of formal training in public finance and management at various administrative levels, a lack of reliable monitoring and evaluation, and the absence of community from planning and policy-making, as well as non-transparent budget allocations and corruption. In response, many countries introduced educational reforms and new systems.

#### **6.2.2.1.1 Centralization and bureaucracy**

The political, institutional, legal and administrative environment can influence the creation and implementation of effective policies and strategies. In Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkey, highly centralized education systems hinder reform. Local authorities do not have the power and flexibility for independent decision-making or to respond effectively to local needs. In Kyrgyzstan, decentralization has led to greater inequality as wealthier communities create elite schools and poorer communities become further marginalized (UNICEF, 2013).

#### **6.2.2.1.2 Lack of transparency, accountability and high levels of corruption**

A lack of transparency and high levels of corruption are prevalent in a number of countries, Corruption can take the form of exam papers being sold and education officials bribed. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, unofficial payments for free compulsory education have increased (UNICEF, 2012a), while, in a number of countries, there is a lack of transparency on education spending (UNICEF, 2012b).

### ***6.2.2.2 Funding of education***

While Eastern Europe has increased investment, the share of national income devoted to education in Central Asia has declined (UNESCO, 2011). Azerbaijan has the lowest rate in the world, at 1.9 per cent. Moldova, on the other hand, has one of the highest. Kyrgyzstan is among the countries with the highest total expenditure on education in proportion to GDP, yet expenditure per pupil is below the world average due to the large proportion of the population enrolled. The country is also the poorest in the region so while expenditure on education is high as a percentage of GDP, actual spending on education is still low (UNICEF, 2013).

### ***6.2.2.3 Uneven implementation of reforms in education***

Education reforms in the region have included the development of learning assessments, a greater diversity of school types, and new educational pathways and curriculum offerings. Implementation, however, has been uneven, due, in part, to political instability and rapid turnover among high-level decision-makers (UNICEF, 2013). In some countries, such as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, funds have been misused, proved insufficient or been used corruptly. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, separate education systems have been created based on political and religious/cultural division, promoting ethnic separation. By contrast, coherent and systematic reform has occurred in politically stable countries such as Slovenia.

### ***6.2.2.4 A need to improve education quality***

Having achieved close to universal participation in education, many countries need to improve its quality. PISA 2009 found Kyrgyzstan to have the lowest reading, mathematics and science scores among 15 year olds of all participating countries, with almost 30 per cent at the lowest level of literacy. Next was Azerbaijan where around 36 per cent of pupils had not reached the second-lowest reading level (OECD, 2009). In many countries, curriculum and teaching practices are outdated, with an over-emphasis on rote memorization. The language used in instruction can be a barrier to learning. Estonia's PISA success can be partially attributed to its curriculum reform, which addressed these issues. A shortage of qualified teachers, in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, for example, is another issue, with low wages a contributory factor (UNICEF, 2013).

### ***6.2.2.5 Issues of out-of-school children and late school beginners***

Although many countries in the region have high primary enrolment rates, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, have all seen steep increases in the proportion of children out of school. Central Asia has the second-highest proportion of primary-age out-of-school children who are expected never to enter school, after sub-Saharan Africa (51 per cent). Many out-of-school children in the region work in agriculture, trade or unpaid domestic work (UNICEF, 2013).

## **6.3 School leaders in different educational contexts and governance structures: Profiles, roles and responsibilities**

### **6.3.1 From centralization to school autonomy**

#### ***6.3.1.1 Towards school autonomy***

During the communist period, school leadership training in East European and Central Asian countries focused on ideology and control. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, countries became more open, which had an impact on curriculum and school autonomy. Today, there is a general trend towards improved school autonomy in the region, though there are significant differences between countries and areas where schools have more autonomy (UNICEF, 2013).

The Czech Republic, Slovenia and Slovakia grant a large degree of autonomy to schools to manage financial and human resources. Decentralization in the Czech Republic has increased the the power and responsibilities of school leaders, setting out clear roles within a more participative system (Schratz et al., 2009). In Armenia, decentralization has changed the process of school management, delegating it to the school leader (Hunt, 2009). Hungary and Poland are similar, but many decisions are subject to higher-level approval or are taken within established guidelines. Trends are similar in Albania where the school system has been increasingly decentralized and school autonomy has been in continuous growth since the 1990s. However, earlier centralization weakened the role of school management, creating a ‘non-professional’ cadre of managers (Hysa, 2014).

In contrast, Turkey’s education system is highly centralized. The Ministry of Education makes all important decisions, including the appointment of teachers and administrators, curriculum design and the selection of textbooks. Although there have been attempts to decentralize the system, efforts failed due to lack of political will. In Kyrgyzstan and Romania, decentralization has created greater inequalities between well-resourced and poor communities (UNICEF, 2013). In Georgia, decentralization has resulted in inequitable spending, with no clear criteria for allocating resources, compounded by misallocation at local level.

The Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia and Slovakia are the countries in which schools have the highest degree of autonomy in making decisions about curricular issues and student assessment. Most other countries assign a comparatively lower level of autonomy to schools, with Turkey offering them no autonomy in these matters (OECD, 2009).

#### ***6.3.1.2 Democratization of education management***

The democratization of education is one of the most important aspects of educational reform. It includes the democratization of day-to-day educational activities, the decentralization of

school governance, the organization of work according to the principles of autonomy and the involvement of stakeholders in the problem-solving process. Reform to school management and community participation in Uzbekistan, for example, has had positive results. Governance and quality have been improved through the establishment of school trustee councils, the strengthening of parent committees, and increased community involvement in schools (Magno and Silova, 2007). Armenia's education reforms were realized through a programme which democratized in-school management and supported the transition to school board governance and greater parental and community involvement (Mkrtchyan and Tsaturyan, 2008).

School decision-making responsibilities vary depending on the type of decision concerned. In most Eastern European countries, school leaders are responsible for selecting teachers and determining their duties and responsibilities. However, in some countries, such as Hungary, Estonia, Croatia and Romania, the school governing body also has a role in staff management issues. In the Czech Republic, school leaders are involved in choosing textbooks. In Poland and Slovakia they determine criteria for pupil groupings (European Commission, 2013).

In many Eastern European countries, school leadership is shared among formal leadership teams. This means that one or several deputy leaders, and sometimes administrative assistants or accountants, support the school leader. Several countries (Poland, Romania and Slovenia) also engage teaching and non-teaching staff, parents, students and the local community through school boards, student councils and teachers' assemblies in governance.

The responsibilities of leadership teams include deputizing for the school leader, administration and financial management, the coordination of teaching areas and the management of specific tasks. In Slovenia and Croatia, teaching staff are organized as a professional body and make autonomous decisions on professional issues, programme updates and disciplinary matters, as well as offering opinion on leadership appointments. Most of the countries in Eastern Europe, where data is available, create informal ad-hoc groups for specific, time-limited leadership tasks. In these cases, informal distribution of leadership responsibilities complements the work of formal leadership teams (European Commission, 2013).

## **6.3.2 Profiles of school leaders in different school contexts**

### ***6.3.2.1 Gender distribution***

There is a general lack of data on the proportion of female school leaders in basic education. However, it is evident from the available data that in Bulgaria, Poland, Slovenia, and Slovakia women are over-represented as school leaders, with the highest percentage of female school leaders at primary level (European Commission, 2013). However, in countries such as Uzbekistan, traditional divisions of labour mean that while most teachers are women, most school directors are men (Ministry of Macroeconomics and Statistics, 2002). Similarly, in

Azerbaijan and Mongolia, the majority of men employed in education are school administrators and managers (UNIFEM, 2000; Ministry of Science, Technology, Education and Culture, 2000).

### ***6.3.2.2 Ageing population of school leaders***

The ageing of the population of school leaders is a growing issue in the region. In Perm, one of Russia's major cities, 200 of 450 school leaders are aged between 44 and 65. In Kyrgyzstan, 41.5 per cent of teachers have reached retirement age but are still in service (International Crisis Group, 2011) and nothing indicates that the situation would be different for school leaders. Most school leaders in Mongolia are 50 years old or older (Ministry of Science, Technology, Education and Culture, 2000). In most EE countries, the average age of principals is 50 years or over. There is a lack of relevant recent data for CA countries.

### **6.3.3 Roles and responsibilities of school leaders**

The move towards decentralization and autonomy has been accompanied by the emergence of a demanding new set of leadership roles and responsibilities, including administrative and managerial tasks, financial and human resources, public relations, quality assurance and instructional leadership.

Ensuring that teachers have the essential competencies to be effective in the classroom is one of the key means of raising levels of student achievement (OECD, 2014). Research suggests that school leaders' familiarity with the day-to-day practice of the school, the clarity of his or her educational leadership and the ability to communicate and instill the school's goals, are fundamental to a well-functioning school (Swedish Agency for Education, 2014). A study of nine EE countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Russia, Slovakia and Slovenia) in 1997 revealed a positive correlation between students' achievement and school leaders' education-related activities, such as discussions with teachers, students and parents, training teachers, curricular revisions and professional development (Strakova, 1997).

Such studies show that school leaders have a measurable though indirect influence on learning outcomes and that the impact of school leaders on student learning is mediated by factors such as teachers, classroom practices and school climate (Hallinger and Heck, 1998). This underscores the dominant role of the school leader in helping to create the conditions for effective teaching and learning.

School leaders' responsibilities include defining goals and ensuring that instructional practice contributes to them, evaluating teachers, suggesting modifications to improve teaching practice, shaping professional development, helping solve problems that may arise within the classroom or among teachers, and liaising with the community and parents. In practice, however, school leaders can only have an impact if they have enough autonomy and support to

make important decisions and if their major responsibilities are well defined and focused on teaching and learning. This is true in some cases, such as in Romania, Slovenia and the Czech Republic, where leaders are reported to be heavily involved in monitoring student progress and initiating educational improvements, but the overall picture is less clear.

To improve outcomes, school leaders need to ensure that all teachers take part in professional development and get the support they need. For instance, in some countries, induction programmes are available yet teachers do not participate, often because of an absence of incentives, conflict with teaching time, and unsupportive mentors. These barriers to teachers' participation may demand a greater role for school leaders in encouraging teachers and helping them to understand and identify professional development opportunities. School leaders should also provide teachers with time to study and arrange for a mentor with the same subject background (OECD, 2014). National or local authorities can stimulate, support and facilitate school leaders in the development and implementation of professional development programmes, ensuring they have an adequate impact at school level (European Commission, 2010).

## **6.4 Policies and practices in school leadership**

### **6.4.1 School leadership policies and frameworks**

Many countries in the region have been quick to adapt to global education trends, stressing decentralization, school autonomy, parental and community control, shared decision-making, outcomes-based assessment and school choice (Mulford, 2003). Countries outside the EU have found this more difficult, due to limited foreign assistance (Ismail and Ford, 2009), while some countries, such as Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, have failed to plan effective education reform, resulting in conditions which restrict the development of a knowledge society (Kissane, 2009).

School leadership plays a major role in education reform. The success of schools policy depends on the motivation and actions of school leaders and they should be actively involved in policy development (Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008). However, strategies to improve education quality often neglect the role of school leadership and frequently founded due to failings in policy, capacity and implementation (UNICEF, 2007). In Tajikistan, for example, reform efforts failed to take into account some key components of quality education, neglecting school leadership altogether (Ministry of Education of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2005). Education reform in Armenia, on the other hand, was based on an ambitious plan and strategy, though it has not succeeded in practice, with Soviet-era practices holding back efforts to create an inclusive, decentralized education system. The reform of teacher training and leadership in Mongolia, which began in 2002, has been more successful, resulting in school leaders showing more initiative and commitment (Weidman and Yoder, 2010).

#### ***6.4.1.1 Recruitment of school leaders***

In most countries in the region, professional teaching experience is a basic condition for school leadership. In Latvia, this is the only requirement. The same is true of Azerbaijan, where five years' experience in teaching are required for appointment. In Romania, school leaders must have administrative experience and training in school leadership, as well as professional teaching experience. In Turkey, school leaders should have administrative experience, while in Lithuania, leadership and management competencies are also required, in addition to teaching experience. In Slovenia school leaders must have held a senior post for five years.

School leaders are, for the most part, selected through open recruitment in Eastern Europe. The extent to which recruitment is regulated varies. It is usually under the control of the education authorities. There are some exceptions, however, including Poland and Slovakia, where schools enjoy some autonomy in selecting school leaders, and Slovenia where schools have full autonomy (European Commission, 2013). School leaders are selected through centrally organized competitive examination in a number of countries. In Lithuania, leadership

and management and other key competences are assessed by an independent authority. If the applicant passes the assessment, he/she can take part in the selection process organized by the owner of the school.

#### ***6.4.1.2 Professional development of school leaders***

Countries in Central Asia generally offer little professional development and leadership training for principals. In Azerbaijan, for example, school leaders have never had any type of formal preparation (UNICEF, 2011a). Appointments are made on the basis of connections rather than competence, limiting the capacity of schools to serve as truly democratic, efficient and self-reflective institutions. Better arrangements tend to be in place in Eastern Europe. In Hungary, for example, school leadership training is at the discretion of municipal education authorities, with two-year programmes offered by university training institutes. Delivery methods include lectures and seminars, experience-based projects and self-study. Content covers important elements of effective school leadership, such as national education legislation, leadership skills, resource management, organizational development, and pedagogical/instructional leadership.

There are three types of training programme for school leaders: pre-service, induction and in-service. Access to these programmes varies greatly from one country to another. Slovenia is one of the few EE countries to offer comprehensive training covering all three training aspects. Hungary has not implemented a formal induction programme but does offer pre-service and in-service training. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, leadership training takes place shortly after appointment. In Poland, Romania and Slovenia, training is provided prior to appointment. Duration varies from one week in Romania to 210 hours in Poland.

#### ***6.4.1.3 School leader salaries***

Although school leaders are generally paid more than teachers, there are significant differences in leader salaries across the region. Croatia, Slovenia and Turkey pay the highest basic salary for primary school leaders, while salaries in Albania are particularly low. Inequitable distribution is common. In Russia, school leaders in smaller cities are paid between 32,000 and 58,000 rubles per month (€519 to €941 approximately), while, in a large city, the average school director/leader receives 240,000 rubles (€3,882). The average teacher in Russia receives around 70,000 rubles each month (€1,135). In Bulgaria, a school leader with qualifications receives a fixed amount of €51 per month. The annual minimum salary in Hungary is approximately €7,000. Aside from their fixed salaries, school leaders in most of EE countries are able to take on extra work, such as teaching and administration, to earn more income.

Data on school leader salaries in most Central Asian countries are either limited or non-existent. In Tajikistan, one of the most impoverished and least developed countries of Central Asia, education has suffered a rapid decline, with salaries dropping significantly, resulting in teachers



and school leaders leaving for better-paying jobs. In some cases, school leaders have taken over the work of departing teachers, or asked other teachers to take it on, increasing existing staff salaries rather than hiring more teachers.

#### ***6.4.2.4 School leader appraisal***

In Estonia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, there is no central requirement to appraise school leaders, and authorities have no established procedures for appraisal. School leader appraisal typically takes place at local level. In the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia, appraisal is required for the re-appointment of school leaders. The design and implementation of such procedures differ between countries. School leaders in Poland are appraised by local and regional education authorities according to a central framework, while in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, school organizing bodies are responsible for setting and implementing procedures. In Slovenia, school leaders are appraised on a mandatory basis defined through a central framework. There is growing realization that successful school leadership is context-dependent, and that a degree of local adaptation is required (OECD, 2013).

#### **6.4.3 School leadership styles and practice**

School leadership practices in the region vary according to cultural, political and socio-economic contexts. In countries with no national standards for school leaders, cultural practices tend to be influential. The cultural background of post-Soviet countries, for example, along with the communist heritage of bureaucratic management, has encouraged a legacy of powerful leaders and passive followers (Ismail and Ford, 2009; Kets de Vries, 2001).

It is crucial that leaders embody competencies aligned with education policy goals. Frameworks have been developed to capture the elements of school leader competency and effectiveness. The Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) programme, for example, identified the key elements of successful leadership in Eastern Europe as composed mostly of 'charismatic' and 'team-oriented' characteristics (Bakacsi and Sandor, 2002). This picture, however, conceals considerable variation. While the Czech Republic views integrity, performance-orientation, administrative skills, and an inspirational, non-autocratic style as key aspects of successful leadership (Brodbeck et al., 2000); in Russia, a more 'authoritative' style is favoured, with leaders taking responsibility for providing guidance and direction to followers, fostering teamwork and supporting subordinates, but, at the same time, maintaining discipline and control (Fey and Shekshina, 2007; Kets de Vries, 2001).

The GLOBE study highlighted a cultural preference in the region for tolerating uncertainty, high group orientation, hierarchical management practice, and gender equality. Eastern European leaders would prefer their institutions, and their countries, to be much more performance- and future-oriented, and humane. They desire a lower level of power differentiation, a higher level

of structure (uncertainty avoidance) and higher levels of gender equality. Leaders in the region tend to be participative and are likely to ask the opinions of others. However, again, these commonalities disguise considerable variation. Albania, for example, is the least tolerant of uncertainty and has the highest future orientation; while Russia, on the other hand, bears the most uncertainty and has the lowest future orientation (Bakacsi and Sandor, 2002).

An in-depth understanding of specific leadership perceptions, behaviours and requirements would allow policymakers and central and local governments to formulate and develop more relevant and effective leadership policies in the region (Ismail and Ford, 2009).

## **6.5 Emerging issues, trends and patterns of school leadership**

### **6.5.1 Emerging issues in school leadership**

The region has undergone significant change and challenge in the last two decades, prompting national governments to adopt policies from Western Europe and, in some cases, to work closely with international aid agencies.

#### ***6.5.1.1 Insufficient resources and funding***

Most countries in Central Asia and some in Eastern Europe are struggling with poverty, a lack of resources and political instability. In these countries, education is less well developed and the success of policy reforms more limited, resulting in cuts to education funding and school leaders acquiring extra responsibilities, including teaching.

#### ***6.5.1.2 Inequities***

There are disparities between and within countries in the region, including large differences in funding allocation, with some schools receiving a fraction of the funding given to comparable schools. Other differences are in salaries, which are significantly higher in private schools and in urban areas, and gender inequality, which persists in areas where traditional gender roles are observed. In Central Asia, leaders are predominately male, and teachers predominately female. These practices undermine efforts to achieve inclusive, quality education.

#### ***6.5.1.3 Corruption***

Some countries in the region lack resources, which makes policy reform difficult. Another issue is corruption at school level. There is evidence that some school leaders have used the increased autonomy they enjoy under decentralization to gain economically. Lack of funding to schools, lack of resources, and low teacher and staff salaries all result in increased corruption, particularly in the most deprived countries in the region.

### **6.5.2 Trends and patterns in school leadership**

Cultural background and communist heritage have encouraged a legacy of powerful leaders and passive followers in the region. The changing context, including decentralization, has affected school leadership styles to some degree. More local power in education decision-making has changed leadership roles and responsibilities and increased the need for effective leadership in schools. However, the pace of restructuring has been slow and uneven (Ismail and Ford, 2009).

There are several trends, which, while not fully developed, have the potential to improve school leadership within a much broader framework, including school management and instructional leadership.

### ***6.5.2.1 Education reforms***

A number trends inspired by Western education reform are affecting school leadership policy and practice in the region. These include decentralization and democratization, school autonomy, outcomes-based assessment and school choice, all of which have implications for school leadership. These reforms have, however, in some cases, lacked relevance to countries' socio-cultural and political contexts, while leaders have often been unprepared for their new roles and responsibilities. If school leaders do not have the capacity, motivation and support to make use of their autonomy and engage in practices that are conducive to improved learning, school autonomy alone will have little impact on improved teaching and learning.

### ***6.5.2.2 Community and parent participation and school boards***

Many countries include community and parent participation, as well as school boards, in their policy frameworks in order to share the burden of education responsibilities. Although this is a new concept for most of the region's countries, it has the potential to democratize school organization and leadership. School boards and public participation allow for more transparency in the organization and management of schools, reducing school leaders' power and control, and promoting shared responsibility.

### ***6.5.2.3 New management systems***

New systems of management have also been introduced, such as 'new public management' and 'results-oriented management', which emphasize remuneration based on outcomes, and require school leaders to use monitoring and organizational techniques to assess the efficiency of teachers. Despite such interventions, the region faces many obstacles that make further development challenging.

## **6.6 Key findings and recommendations**

### **6.6.1. Key findings**

Despite their common political past, the countries in the region are diverse in terms of their political, social and economic development. The key findings that emerged from this study reflect the distinct challenges the countries face.

#### ***6.6.1.1 Governance and capacity bottlenecks***

Some countries have highly centralized school systems in which school leadership is confined to implementing policies set at higher administrative levels. This is a significant barrier to reform as local authorities often lack the power, flexibility and capacity to respond to local need. Where decentralization has taken place, it has, in some cases, resulted in inequitable spending and misallocation of scarce resources. Decentralization, when not well managed or monitored, opens up opportunities for corruption. The empowerment of communities has not always been successful in reducing gaps between well-resourced and more disadvantaged communities.

#### ***6.6.1.2 Lack of policies for school leadership***

School leadership has been neglected in strategies for improving the quality of education in the region. While a few countries, particularly in Eastern Europe, have made school leadership a high priority, some have given up on school leadership either to focus on policies considered more urgent or because of failures in school leadership practice. Others are only just beginning to make school leadership part of their policy agenda and strategy for reform. For some countries in Central Asia, education reform has failed because of the lack of a vision and single strategy for reform, and a disregard for the importance of school leadership in strategies to improve the quality of education and students' learning outcomes.

#### ***6.6.1.3 Gender imbalance, ageing population and inequities***

There is a lack of recent data on the proportion of women in school leadership positions in both CA and EE. However, in most of the countries, decision-making typically rests with male school leaders, due to the traditional division of labour and the legacy of centralized and hierarchical leadership. In some EE countries, where more recent data is available, female school leaders are overrepresented at primary level though their number is decreasing at secondary level. The age of school leaders is another concern, with very few young people entering the profession.

#### ***6.6.1.4 Traditional leadership distribution***

In the EE region, school leadership is often distributed among formal leadership teams and disregards the importance of instructional leadership in improving education quality. Few

countries engage teaching staff, parents, students and the local community through school boards, student councils and teachers' assemblies in school governance matters.

#### ***6.6.1.5 Lack of policies and programmes for professional development and leadership training***

Countries in the region vary greatly in the availability of training programmes for school leaders and in the degree to which pre-service, induction and in-service programmes are offered. Few countries offer all three possibilities and several countries in CA were found to have no policies and programmes for professional development and leadership training.

#### ***6.6.1.6 An ineffective recruitment system***

In most EE countries, professional teaching experience is a basic condition of school leadership, while some countries also require administrative experience. In some cases, appointments to school leadership positions are based on connections rather than competencies.

#### ***6.6.1.7 Inequitable distribution of salaries***

School leader salaries are, in general, higher than those of teachers, with significant differences across the region. School leaders in large cities in Russia, for example, earn much more than counterparts in rural schools. In some countries in Central Asia, low salaries deter many from working as teachers or school leaders.

#### ***6.6.1.8 Inconsistency of information and appropriate data***

A small number of countries in the region, especially EU member states, have rich data on school leadership. In many countries of the CA region, and in some EE countries, however, there is a lack of national and regional information on school leadership policy and practice.

### **6.6.2 Recommendations**

This review makes the following recommendations for further consideration and improvement:

- The status and profile of school leadership, which should include instructional leadership, should be re-evaluated in order to meet national and international criteria and align with policies to improve education quality and students' learning outcomes. Countries of the region should develop the necessary legal frameworks (laws, decrees, acts, etc.) for the design and implementation of school leadership policies and practices. Structural incentives and reward systems should be developed to revitalize school leadership (including instructional leadership) and to retain high-quality school leaders.
- Large-scale capacity development programmes for research and training in school leadership are needed to meet the needs of results-based management, which is incorporated within the new public management vision, strategy and goals. Policies need to ensure that school leaders have the capacity to develop school plans and goals aligned with national goals and responsive to local need.

- School leaders need knowledge and skills in using data effectively to monitor and improve their practice. An inventory of leaders' training needs is required to identify the most appropriate systems for reaching out to untrained and partially trained school leaders in the region. Disparities within and between countries should be highlighted and addressed.
- Significant efforts are required to improve the recruitment, training and upgrading of young and female school leaders using multiplier-effect schemes such as the training of trainers (ToT) programmes. University-based programmes (certificates, diplomas and degrees) will be required for training and upgrading school leaders and managers.
- School leadership roles should be redefined to focus on improving the capacities and work environment of teachers, the most important school-level determinant of student outcomes. This requires policies that strengthen leadership responsibility in curriculum development and monitoring and evaluation, and enhance the role of leaders in teacher professional development and the promotion of collaborative work cultures.
- Each country should design and implement their own monitoring and evaluation system to improve quality and efficiency in school leadership training and assessment.
- Data should be collected through national, regional and international baseline studies, surveys and research to ensure informed decision-making on school leadership with greater focus on the implementation of such policies and practices.
- Impact studies on the impact of school leadership on students' learning outcomes are advised, and should also make use of qualitative research. This would provide a deeper analysis on the impact of school leadership on learning outcomes.
- Multiple stakeholders and participatory models for school leadership are recommended to ensure that the community contributes to the improvement of school leadership policies and practices at local level.

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## **Chapter 7 - Policy review of school leadership in Latin America and the Caribbean**

**A policy review of school leadership in Latin America and the Caribbean**

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## **Executive summary**

The main purpose of this report is to collate and analyse information about school leadership policies and practice in Latin America and the Caribbean. Analysis is centered on secondary sources and addresses the following main questions: What is the profile of school leadership in Latin American and Caribbean countries? What are the current regulatory frameworks for access, training, contractual arrangements, work tasks and responsibilities, as well as supervision and support? Are there recent changes in the role of school leaders? Are there evidence-based policies and research about school leaders?

Latin American and Caribbean countries organize and structure their education systems in different ways. They also differ as to how they manage the educational system, and its levels of decentralization. Despite this diversity, the report shows that the concept of school leadership in the region is closely linked with the school principal's role. While school leadership can be distributed among different people within and beyond the school, in most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, improving schools and student outcomes requires a strengthening of the principal's pedagogical competencies.

Despite increasing awareness of the pivotal role of principals, empirical evidence on school leadership policies and frameworks is sparse. Most Latin American and Caribbean countries are just beginning to develop systems for the selection, training and coaching of school leaders. There is scant research that adequately systematizes the main characteristics of school principals in the region. School leadership needs to become a key area of concern if we are to validate this variable as a determining factor for achieving quality education and place it at the centre of educational policy.

To better understand the ways in which principals can positively shape the educational outcomes of students it is necessary to identify leadership practices that effectively support teachers' classroom performance. Studies in this area will not only help fill significant research gaps but will also support policymakers in developing programmes to support leadership in schools. The results of these studies will help generate policies and define a leadership profile against which to evaluate a principal's performance.



## 7.1 Introduction

Only in recent years has Latin America shown interest in promoting the leadership of school principals. In the last decade, some countries have begun to develop initiatives to empower principals. However, in most cases, there is neither statistical nor systematic research on school leadership. Policies in this area are often adapted, in a non-contextualized way, from the actions of Northern countries (UNESCO-OREALC, 2014).

Successful school leadership is being debated throughout Caribbean countries. Key issues include: students' outcomes and participation in the regional Caribbean Secondary Examinations (CSEC); teacher recruitment and retention; teacher training and continuing professional development (upgrading); and parental involvement. These issues point to leadership at various levels, whether in its exercise or in its influence, and are examined within and across national and regional education systems. Particular attention is given to debates on improving outcomes for students, teacher development and the role of the principal in leading school improvement (Miller, 2013).

In many Latin American and Caribbean schools, the role of the principal is framed in purely administrative and management terms, and the principal is not expected to provide instructional leadership. The leadership that principals could provide in improving teaching represents an enormous potential resource that is being wasted.

This report reviews school leadership policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, drawing on the work of international organizations as well as academic and empirical studies. It examines primary and secondary education levels, devoting particular attention to the primary/basic education level and striving to understand how school leadership at this level can accelerate progress towards the Education for All (EFA) goals, particularly those related to quality. One serious limitation is the paucity of data regarding the number of principals in a country or province, their socio-demographic characteristics, or their training and work experience. Where this information exists in the region, it generally consists of unreliable, incomplete or outdated approximations.

## 7.2 Regional context, challenges and priorities

Latin America is a sub-region of the Americas, comprising countries where Spanish and Portuguese are primarily spoken. It consists of twenty sovereign states covering an area that stretches from the southern border of the United States to the southern tip of South America. The Caribbean is a sub-region of the Americas, comprising twenty-one sovereign states, most of them English, French or Dutch speaking.

**Table 1. List of Latin America and Caribbean countries**

Latin America		Caribbean	
AR	Argentina	AI	Anguilla
AW	Aruba	AG	Antigua and Barbuda
BO	Bolivia	AN	Netherlands Antilles
BR	Brazil	BS	Bahamas
CO	Colombia	BB	Barbados
CR	Costa Rica	BZ	Belize
CU	Cuba	BM	Bermuda
CL	Chile	DM	Dominica
EC	Ecuador	GD	Grenada
SV	El Salvador	GY	Guyana
GT	Guatemala	HT	Haiti
HN	Honduras	KY	Cayman Islands
MX	Mexico	TC	Turks and Caicos Islands
NI	Nicaragua	VG	British Virgin Islands
PN	Panama	JM	Jamaica
PY	Paraguay	MS	Montserrat
PE	Peru	KN	Saint Kitts and Nevis
DO	Dominican Republic	VC	St. Vincent and the Grenadines
UY	Uruguay	LC	St. Lucia
VN	Venezuela	SR	Suriname
		TT	Trinidad and Tobago

Source: UNESCO-OREALC, 2007

### 7.2.1 Economic, political, social and human development

During the 2000s, Latin America and the Caribbean countries made significant progress in overall development, economic growth and, to a lesser extent, poverty reduction, all of which generated a favorable context for progress in education. Another favourable, though not universal, condition is slow population growth, which has reduced potential demand for education in the region (ECLAC, 2008). However, high levels of inequality

and poverty, and the large proportion of people living in rural areas, pose challenges to the expansion of quality education in most countries (Belei et al., 2013).

Most countries in the region raised their Human Development Index (HDI) status from 'medium' to 'high' during the 2000s. By 2010, Haiti was the only country in the region with 'low human development'. The economic situation was relatively favourable for most of the decade, with sustained growth in GDP per capita, interrupted only by the 2008 global financial crisis (Belei et al., 2013).

Although per capita GDP provides a good overall picture of the economic situation, it cannot disguise deep inequalities in the region. In spite of efforts to achieve economic growth, social development and the democratization of political systems, Latin America still exhibits high levels of poverty and inequality. In 2009, 33.1 per cent of the population was in poverty, with 13.3 per cent in extreme poverty. Income distribution in the countries of the region is among the most unequal in the world (ECLAC, 2010).

## **7.2.2 Education systems**

Latin American and Caribbean education systems differ in terms of education levels, the size of enrolment, and their respective distributions between public and private, and urban and rural sectors. They also differ in how they are managed and their levels of decentralization (UNESCO, 2014).

### ***7.2.2.1 Structure and size of education systems***

Latin American and Caribbean education systems are generally divided into three main levels: primary or elementary, secondary or middle, and tertiary. The compulsory character of education varies at the different levels. For example, compulsory primary and secondary education lasts nine years in Mexico, eleven in Peru, ten in Colombia, and twelve in Argentina, Chile, Ecuador and Dominican Republic (UNESCO, 2014).

Total enrolment in the system (tertiary education excluded) ranges from more than twenty-five million students in Mexico, to between six and ten million in Peru, Argentina and Colombia, and less than four million in Chile, Dominican Republic and Ecuador. Similar variations can be found regarding the number of educational institutions. Although the data differs in composition, in Mexico more than 150,000 centres provide basic and upper-secondary education, while there are 51,000 centres in Peru, 34,000 in Argentina, between 20,000 and 30,000 in Colombia and Ecuador, and less than 14,000 in Chile and Dominican Republic (UNESCO, 2014).

In all countries, with the exception of Chile and Haiti, public education accounts for the majority of enrolments, with figures above 70 per cent in primary and secondary

schools, reaching more than 90 per cent in Mexico. In Chile, private enrolment exceeds public enrolment, corresponding to 57.7 per cent in primary and 61.6 per cent in secondary education (UNESCO, 2014). The Haitian experience is unique, especially considering the level of absolute poverty of the country. Of the twenty poorest countries in the world, Haiti is the only one in which more than 50 per cent of children are enrolled in the private sector (Robison, 2009).

Latin American countries also differ in the organization and administration of their school systems, and more specifically in their respective levels of decentralization. In Argentina and Brazil, for example, central government finances part of the provision of educational services, but sub-national levels retain a high degree of autonomy. In Colombia, Mexico and Chile, on the other hand, educational services have been transferred to local authorities, states and municipalities, through decentralization, but central government retains considerable powers. In Ecuador, Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay, governing authority lies with the national ministry of education, and few responsibilities fall within the orbit of local authorities (UNESCO, 2014).

#### ***7.2.2.2 Education policy, reform and challenges***

The challenges faced in providing universal educational opportunities vary greatly from country to country, depending on the level of educational coverage effectively achieved. Some countries are close to achieving universal primary education and have high secondary enrolment rates, while others have not yet achieved full primary education coverage and are far from doing so in secondary education (OREALC-UNESCO, 2013).

In recent decades, Latin American nations have implemented a vast range of education policies and reforms. The success of the changes undertaken, and the general quality of the policies implemented, vary greatly. This is the conclusion of Grindle's (2004) analysis of the experiences of Mexico, Nicaragua, Ecuador and the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais. Although some countries in the region have made substantial gains, the results have been ambiguous, raising doubts about policies which, so far, have failed to ensure sustainable educational development in Latin American countries.

Two of the most urgent problems facing the region are repetition and school drop-out. Persistent inequalities in the distribution of educational opportunities and low academic performance also beset the region's educational authorities. In several countries, more than 20 per cent of students entering primary school do not make it to the fifth grade; while the repetition rates for this stage are higher than 8 per cent in most cases, reaching 19 per cent in extreme cases such as Brazil (UNESCO, 2010). School repetition

can lead to successive failures in later years and early drop-out from school. It is also a considerable cost for education systems.

Accordingly, although the net primary enrolment rate is above 90 per cent in almost all countries of the region, there are sharp differences in children lagging two or more years behind their year group at school, with rates of 26 per cent and 25 per cent in Guatemala and Nicaragua, respectively, in contrast to Costa Rica with 5 per cent and Mexico with 3 per cent (OEI, 2010).

Figures for access to and timely progression through lower-secondary education are worse still and there are great disparities between countries, with coverage ranging from 97 per cent and 94 per cent in Brazil and Chile, to 41 per cent and 47 per cent in Guatemala and Nicaragua, respectively. These differences are even more marked in upper-secondary education: in Brazil, Cuba and Chile the net enrolment rate is above 80 per cent, while in El Salvador and Guatemala it is 33 per cent and 32 per cent, respectively, and only 15 per cent in Nicaragua (OEI, 2010).

### ***7.2.2.3 Teachers and teacher training***

There are approximately 6.4 million primary and secondary school teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean. The majority (2.9 million or 45.6 per cent) are employed in primary education (OREALC-UNESCO, 2013). A predominant feature in the region is the preponderance of women in the profession: 68.5 per cent of teachers are women, with the percentage even higher in primary education (78 per cent).

Initially, in Latin America and in the Caribbean, teacher training for primary schools was provided in secondary-level institutions. This changed gradually from the late 1970s and more markedly from the late 1980s, as tertiary-level teacher training became common. The average proportion of teachers who met national requirements for certification as primary-school teachers was 74.6 per cent in 2008, while the average proportion of teachers who met the requirements for secondary education in that same year was 64.4 per cent (UIS, 2009).

The need to attract and retain good teachers is a key and recurring issue in most Latin American and Caribbean countries. It is difficult not only to attract good applicants, but also to retain them since teaching also opens the door to other possible studies and occupations. Improving matters requires a professional environment that promotes the teaching profession, making it a top career option for young graduates with good academic results (Vaillant, 2009).

All of the available evidence suggests that the quality of teachers in Latin America and the Caribbean is the decisive constraint on the region's progress toward higher-performing education systems. Low standards for entry into teaching; low-quality candidates; salaries, promotions, and job tenure delinked from performance; and weak school leadership have produced low professionalism in the classroom and poor results. Moving to a new equilibrium will be difficult and will require recruiting, supporting, and motivating a new breed of teacher (Burns and Luque, 2014).

## **7.3 School leaders in different educational contexts and governance structures: Profiles, roles and responsibilities**

### **7.3.1 Governance structure**

The structure of governance, power relationships and decision-making have a significant impact on school leadership. Reflecting a global trend towards decentralization, many Latin American countries have school boards, which operate as control bodies, as well as spaces for engaging parents and other community institutions (UNESCO, 2008).

Degrees of autonomy, decentralization and management vary between countries. In Caribbean countries, while primary schools tend to depend directly on the ministry of education, in secondary education, a board of management grants greater autonomy to schools. Bahamas has an advanced decentralized education system, in which families and school communities participate, along with management teams representative of the community and a district superintendent who has a planning and education programme development role rather than a control function (UNESCO-OREALC, 2007).

International research suggests that school principals show higher levels of satisfaction with their work when they are given a degree of autonomy (Guarino et al., 2004). Evidence also suggests a positive correlation between greater levels of principal autonomy and higher learning outcomes (OECD, 2007). Though some Latin American countries are moving towards this model, the prevailing trend is for school principals to be excluded from key decision-making involving aspects of school management (PREAL, 2006). In most countries, decisions concerning the recruitment and promotion of teachers, budget spending and curriculum content are, for the most part, made at national or provincial level. Few countries give principals the autonomy necessary to decide on these issues.

### **7.3.2 Profile of school leaders**

Research shows that the leadership of school principals is crucial for improving the quality of education and that it is possible to trace certain common traits and basic practices among high-performing principals (Vegas and Petrow, 2008). Most research points in the same direction: teachers are vital for improving educational outcomes, and school principals are vital in enabling teachers to work better (Vaillant, 2013). Despite this, the principal's role has been neglected in Latin America and the Caribbean. There is scant research adequately systematizing the main characteristics of school principals in the region, their working conditions or the training they receive.

A study of primary school principals in six countries in the region reveals that they are mostly middle-aged, with an average age of between 40 and 50 (UNESCO, 2008). In some countries, such as Uruguay and Chile, the average age of principals is closer to 50 years of age. A recent study performed by UNESCO-OREALC (2014), based on data from eight cases in the region, estimates the approximate average age of school directors to be 50 years, with the exception for Ceará, Brazil, where the average is 41.

Regarding gender, although women still constitute an absolute majority of both teachers and school principals, the proportion of men in leadership positions tends to exceed the proportion of men in teaching. More men, in relative terms, are recruited to headship roles than to teaching positions (UNESCO, 2008). In Chile, the proportion of women principals in primary education was 51 per cent in 2008, compared to 85.8 per cent of primary teachers. In others countries the gap is less prominent. This indicates that access to leadership positions in schools operates as an 'inverse corrector' of the well-known gender bias which exists in teacher recruitment (UNESCO, 2008).

### **7.3.2 Role and responsibilities of school leaders**

Although the important role school leaders play in supporting teachers and improving teaching and learning is well understood, principals in Latin America, as in other parts of the world, spend a large proportion of their time on administrative tasks. The time spent on tasks designed to support teaching and learning is comparatively small. Issues such as teachers' professional development, use of textbooks and student evaluation occupy a minor part of the principals' workload. In many countries in the region, they also have little involvement in decision-making, with issues such as recruitment, resource allocation and curriculum content mostly made at national or provincial level.

Murillo's (2007) study of eight Latin American countries found that school managers spend most of their time on bureaucratic tasks (36.4 per cent) followed by activities of pedagogical leadership (20.1 per cent) and other tasks related to professional development (17.3 per cent) and students' families (16.1 per cent). A subsequent study found that while principals in Latin American countries carry out a multitude of tasks, most are administrative, with little time given to pedagogical leadership (Murillo and Roman, 2013). Studies show that schools where principals adopt more instructional leadership styles tend to exhibit more cooperative and innovative teaching practice, and better relations between teachers and students (OECD, 2014a; OECD, 2014b).

Leading a school involves managing people, finances and infrastructure as well as engaging communities and parents in students' education. Principals also play a crucial role in raising school performance, attracting talented teachers and encouraging weaker



teachers to leave. This requires a capacity to assess teaching quality and develop teachers' potential. High-performing education systems pay close attention to how school principals are selected, trained and developed, placing special emphasis on their role as instructional leaders (Barber and Mourshed, 2007).

To improve teaching or to serve as an effective pedagogical leader, principals must be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their teachers. That is why an increasing number of countries involve principals (and other members of the school pedagogical support or management team) in teacher evaluation. The nature and degree of this involvement varies widely and may include interviews, classroom observations, self-evaluation and peer review. As principals' capacity to learn about the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching staff increases, their role in the coordination of in-service training and whole-school development may increase (Burns and Luque, 2014).

Increasing levels of social exclusion in Latin America have generated new responsibilities for schools, teachers and principals. School staff find themselves having to assume new social roles, to the detriment of more pedagogical ones. The school is asked to provide what the family has failed to deliver: affectionate care, moral and ethical guidance and vocational orientations. Being a teacher or a principal in this new context requires the development of new, complex professional skills (Vaillant and Marcelo, 2009).

## **7.4 Policies and practices in the region**

### **7.4.1 The framework for school leadership**

School leadership policy in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean is led by national ministries of education. In nations with higher levels of decentralization, such as Argentina and Brazil, policies are established by the ministry at provincial level. There is little differentiation between the institutional structures devoted to teaching and those specifically designed for principals. Policies regarding principals are usually the responsibility of units or bodies within ministries that also address issues such as fixing wages and working conditions, competition for vacancies, and the development and promotion of training activities. No specialized agencies have been created to address the issue of school leadership (UNESCO-OREALC, 2014).

In many countries in the region, education policies do not promote the leadership of principals. Their powers are often limited. Except for some decisions about in-service training, principals exert little power over teachers. Some countries, such as Cuba and Nicaragua, are exceptions to the rule and grant considerable power to principals to hire and fire teachers (UNESCO-OREALC, 2014).

Despite increasing awareness of the pivotal role of principals, most Latin America and Caribbean countries are just beginning to develop systems for the selection, training and coaching of school leaders. Chile is a good example of a country which has developed policies for raising the quality of school leaders. The 2004 Framework for Good School Leadership set criteria for training and assessing principals in leadership, curriculum management, resource management and organizational management, and established a competitive process for principal selection (Burns and Luque, 2014). Colombia and Ecuador also have standards for principals, while Peru, Mexico and Dominican Republic are in the process of implementing them. Unfortunately, such standards often bear little relation to existing policies, reducing their potential impact (UNESCO-OREALC, 2014).

### ***7.4.2 Qualification requirements, selection process and training of school leaders***

Another important dimension to take into account is the type of formal training that school principals receive in Latin American and the Caribbean. In this regard, evidence shows a remarkable predominance of principals holding tertiary degrees. However, in Argentina and Brazil, the percentage of principals who have only obtained high school degrees or some sort of non-tertiary higher education training is significant (15.3 per cent and 11.2 per cent, respectively).

According to Murillo's research based on data from UNESCO's Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (2012), the vast majority of principals, especially those working in urban schools, have a university degree and a significant number (20 per cent) have undertaken postgraduate study (in Colombia, over 50 per cent of principals are postgraduates, while, in Paraguay, Argentina, El Salvador and Uruguay, fewer than 10 per cent are).

In Trinidad and Tobago, while there is no mandatory entry requirement for principalship, in practice, successful candidates almost always have a master's degree. Although it may signify high levels of academic and professional readiness, possession of a master's or undergraduate degree that is not specific to educational leadership is not, by itself, adequate preparation for the role of school principal (Morosi et al., 2011).

The percentage of the region's primary school principals who received some form of training in school management and administration is relatively high. In Argentina, Chile, Peru and Uruguay, eight out of ten principals have received some kind of management training, while in countries such as Brazil and Paraguay the figure is somewhat lower (almost seven in the first case and six in the later) (UNESCO, 2008).

This, however, tells us little about the length or quality of the management training principals receive. Chile is the country in which primary school principals receive the most management training, amounting to an average 320 days a year. The next best-performing countries in this respect are Argentina (135 days a year) and Paraguay (116 days). In Uruguay, Peru and Brazil the number of hours of specific training received by principals is significantly lower. In Uruguay, the average is 92 days, in Peru it is 75 days and in Brazil it is only 27 days (UNESCO, 2008).

Despite increasing awareness of the pivotal role of principals, empirical evidence on how to build their skills and effectiveness is sparse. It is naïve to expect that all principals will have the aptitude, time and know-how to align resources and pedagogic priorities to maximize the impact on student learning. Educational support is a key part of principals' competencies, but one for which they are rarely trained.

School heads and supervisors are usually hired from among teachers, on the basis of seniority. Transition from teacher to principal is a path chosen by many teachers in order to achieve higher pay and recognition (Vaillant, 2012; Morduchowicz, 2003). TALIS reveals that the average principal in Chile and Mexico has been in post for twelve and eleven years, respectively, and has twenty-five/twenty-four years' teaching experience. Brazilian principals have been in position for a shorter period (seven years) and have less experience teaching (fourteen years) (OECD, 2014a; OECD, 2014b).

### **7.4.3 School leadership styles**

How Latin American principals distribute their time is indicative of their leadership style, suggesting a number of different types of leader (Murillo and Román, 2013):

- Leaders who prioritize the administration and organization of the institution.
- Leaders who prioritize implementing ideas and pedagogical orientation.
- Leaders who prioritize generating resources or building good relations with the school community.

Murillo and Román (2013) found that performance in maths and reading for students in the sixth grade of primary education is increased in those schools where principals spend a larger share of their time on school leadership tasks such as the promotion and development of educational projects, implementation and updating of curriculum, leadership and guidance of teaching, supervision, feedback and evaluation of teaching. In Latin America, as in other regions, the pedagogical leadership of principals affects the cognitive performance of students (Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008). Enabling this type of leadership, and relieving principals from bureaucratic and administrative tasks, evidently improves the quality of education provided by schools.

## 7.5 Emerging issues, trends and patterns

While a review of the literature (Marcelo and Vaillant, 2009) shows the importance of providing support for principals during their first years on the job, in most Latin American and Caribbean countries they are not trained in providing effective leadership or endowed with any type of certification. Principals need to be trained in what to look for in a classroom, and in how to support teachers in promoting change.

Monitoring and supervision are key in enabling leaders to develop the necessary skills and abilities for the job. However, little attention is paid to the monitoring, supervision and evaluation of principals in the region. Supervisors spend most of their time on administrative tasks, rather than providing support and guidance for principals. Mechanisms need to be put in place in order to provide both supervisors and principals with the necessary support.

Despite the lack of attention given to school leadership, it is possible to identify some promising trends in Latin America and the Caribbean. Martin Carnoy (2007), who visited classrooms in Brazil, Chile and Cuba to determine why performance indicators in Cuba were much higher than in the other two countries, found that in Cuba heads of schools provided ample support and regular supervision to teachers, and that both teachers and principals had a sense of shared responsibility for student learning. Although Carnoy points out that the Cuban system has some severe drawbacks, there are, nonetheless, lessons to be learned from the Cuban experience, particularly the state's role as 'a guarantor of quality education for all' (ibid., p. 157).

In Chile, a 2011 law increased principals' autonomy and accountability. Principals may now dismiss up to 5 per cent of their schools' teachers each year on performance grounds and must sign performance agreements with the local governments that hire them. The Programme for the Training of Excellent Principals (*Programa de Formación de Directores de Excelencia*), introduced in the same year, has provided leadership training to more than 1,600 of the country's 7,000 principals. The programme subsidizes fees and subsistence costs for graduate courses (master's degrees, diplomas and others) and externships focused on school leadership. (Burns and Luque, 2014)

In Jamaica, young teachers are evaluated for leadership potential early in their careers and follow a specialized leadership track. The National College for Educational Leadership (NCEL) is charged with training and certifying aspiring and existing principals (Burns and Luque, 2014). In 2014, the Ministry of Education, through the NCEL, launched a course for aspirant school principals. The programme provided a standard credential,

the Professional Qualification for Principalship (PQP), to which the ministry and school boards must refer in hiring principals. Candidates must have a PQP before they can be considered as principal of a public school.

In Colombia, the 2002 teacher reforms established new entry standards, a probationary process and a new career path for teachers. They also gave school directors explicit responsibility for annual evaluations of teachers performance, significant latitude in how to conduct the evaluations and the power to remove teachers who score less than 60 out of 100 points on two successive performance evaluations. The new regime applies only to teachers hired since 2004 (the first year of implementation). In 2012, these teachers represented 16 per cent of the teaching workforce. The limited evidence available suggests that directors have been reluctant to exercise their power to dismiss teachers (Burns and Luque, 2014).

In 2009, Ecuador radically reformed the standards and selection process for school directors, who had previously been appointed for life. Many older school directors were offered early retirement, and a younger, better-trained cohort has now assumed office. Peru's 2012 teacher statute similarly sets higher technical standards for school directors and mandates a formal system for regular evaluation of their performance, currently under development. Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro state, and Rio de Janeiro municipality have adopted new standards and screening procedures for school directors and have invested in training courses to improve directors' ability to evaluate and manage teacher performance and lead school-improvement strategies (Burns and Luque, 2014).

## **7.6 Keys findings and recommendations**

Improving school leadership remains one of the greatest challenges for Latin American and Caribbean countries. Despite the diversity of contexts, it appears that most countries are at an early stage in the development and implementation of policies on school leadership. In many Latin American schools the role of principal is framed in purely administrative and management terms, and the principal is not expected to provide educational leadership. This leaves a significant gap as, while a principal is present in most schools, in many areas qualified inspectors and supervisors are not. The leadership that could be provided by principals in improving teaching is an enormous potential resource being wasted.

The literature is clear and consistent on the need for strong, supportive evaluation of teachers in their first years, so that only effective teachers secure tenure. Nevertheless, in most Latin American countries, principals receive no special training or certification, and are not taught how to provide effective supervision. Effective school leadership, like effective teaching, involves a set of skills and competencies that can be learned. Programmes should be developed to provide principals with the skills and competencies to enable them to provide effective supervision and support for school improvement. Such programmes would logically fit into teacher education institutions. Those institutions that do not already do so should consider offering graduate courses for those who wish to become principals.

Supervision and evaluation of principals also generally receives little attention in Latin America and the Caribbean. Yet the literature shows that principals need supervision and support as much as teachers do. In decentralized programmes, it is not realistic to expect parents to provide knowledgeable supervision of principals. Systems need to be developed to clarify how principals are supervised and evaluated, and by whom. In addition, principals benefit from networks permitting them to visit each other's schools, observe teachers together, share problems and discuss possible solutions.

Policies aimed at enhancing the leadership of school principals in the region have failed to address multiple dimensions such as performance standards, selection and evaluation, status and working conditions, and management training. Normally, policies are focused exclusively on some of these dimensions. While acknowledging the progress made in some countries, the region still needs to design policies to encourage the school leadership of principals. The situation of many public school principals is unfavourable: they are often limited in their power over decision-making; there are notorious deficiencies in the selection, promotion and development of heads of schools; and they

are frequently overwhelmed with bureaucratic and administrative tasks that distract them from more substantial pedagogical concerns. It is essential to consider the various strategic dimensions of leadership: status, working conditions and salaries, roles and performance standards, selection systems, promotion and evaluation, as well as initial and ongoing training.

Education policies should be based on reliable socio-demographic data about principals. This data should be included in educational statistics. The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean normally possess scant information about the basic characteristics of those who occupy the post of a principal of an educational establishment. The region also needs more studies that show the impact of a principal's leadership on student learning. This has been a central preoccupation in Anglo-Saxon educational research, and it needs to become a key area of concern in Latin America and the Caribbean if we are to validate this variable as a determining factor for achieving quality education.

It is important to develop a better understanding of how principals can positively affect educational outcomes by identifying a set of leadership practices that effectively support classroom performance. Studies in this area will not only help fill important educational research gaps but, more importantly, will help policymakers develop programmes to support principals' leadership in schools. The empirical results generated will help develop policies that take into account dimensions such as training, timing and qualifications. This will enable the definition of a leadership profile against which to evaluate a principal's performance.

It should be the responsibility of the school principal, along with his or her team, to define a strategic mission for the institution, to stimulate and coordinate his or her teaching staff, and to motivate students in the learning process. If we wish to see educational institutions reverse inequality, and enhance school results and students' performance, principals must play a more active role in this transformation.

Finally, and as a general recommendation, UNESCO could contribute to this by developing a leadership competency framework for principals and supervisors in Latin America and the Caribbean. Principals and supervisors need to be equipped to lead schools effectively, and UNESCO is well placed to provide such a tool.

Frameworks for successful school leadership are being discussed worldwide. As Leithwood and Seashore-Louis (2012, p. 3) recognize, 'to date, we have not found a single documented case of a school improving its students' achievement record in the absence of a talented leadership'.



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## **Chapter 8 – Synthesis of regional reviews**

## **8.1 Main findings**

This chapter provides a synthesis of the main findings of the six regional reviews. While the reviews highlight important differences of historical, political, socio-cultural, economic and demographic context, all factors shaping the development of school leadership in the regions, they also reveal a number of features and concerns shared between and within regions and countries. Importantly, there is wide recognition of the need to further establish and strengthen effective school leadership, as a means of improving education quality, school performance and students' learning outcomes. This chapter, therefore, builds a bridge between the introductory chapter, which elaborated the analytical framework and methodology, and the analysis, findings and recommendations from the regional reviews.

The first part of this section provides an overview of the profiles of school leaders in the regions and includes information on gender distribution, age distribution and qualifications. The second part discusses the types of school governance structure encountered, and their implications for school leadership, in terms of new responsibilities and models of leadership. As new responsibilities demand appropriate support and development for school leaders, the third part of this section addresses issues related to the working conditions of school leaders, including the support they receive, remuneration and how they are supervised and evaluated.

### **8.1.1 School leaders' profile**

#### ***8.1.1.1 Gender: School leadership is still a male preserve***

Although gender equality in education has been an important policy issue for some time (UNESCO, 2014b), evidence from the regional studies shows that educational leadership remains a male preserve. Although there are a number of exceptions, with women constituting the absolute majority of both teachers and school leaders in some Latin American countries (Vaillant, 2010), the proportion of men in leadership positions at global level tends to be greater than the proportion of men in teaching.

Drawing on a UIS study (Zhang, Postlethwaite and Grisay, 2008), which emphasized that one-third or less of primary school leaders in India and Sri Lanka are women, Parajuli and Acharya (2015) report that the system in these SWA countries is unfavourable to female headship.

Although there are more women than men in the teaching profession, all the regional reviews note that women are, in general, under-represented in senior positions in

schools. Where women do lead, they are more likely to hold positions at primary schools and small schools, as it is the case in some Eastern European countries (e.g. Bulgaria, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia), in some South and West Asian countries (e.g. Sri Lanka and India), in the Arab states and in sub-Saharan Africa. This is the case even in Rwanda, which has one of the best gender equality strategies in Africa. Interestingly though, Ghamrawi (2015) stresses that the Arab region ranks very low in terms of gender equality, with low female participation in government and a significant gender gap in labour force participation. Despite this, school leadership positions are dominated by women in the majority of primary schools in the Arab states.

Some other SSA countries, such as Kenya and South Africa, introduced targeted leadership programmes and/or quota systems to address barriers to women's upward mobility, with varying success. South Africa is also among countries that introduced programmes to improve women's administrative and managerial skills in order to support their participation in leadership positions. For example, the government introduced a management and leadership programme, known as Women In and Into Management and Leadership Positions, in 2002, and, more recently, in September 2014, the Female Principals' Support Programme, which aims to provide a sustainable support network to all women principals in South Africa. Gender discrimination in selection remains a significant barrier to female representation in leadership positions throughout the region, as do lack of preparation for leadership, family responsibilities and social-cultural factors. Leadership remains very much a gender-sensitive concept in diverse socio-cultural contexts.

Egypt specifically targeted 'Girls' Improved Learning Outcomes' and worked towards developing and strengthening the leadership skills of school principals to promote female literacy rates and expand girls' access and participation in education.

In East Asia, school leader's gender distribution does not appear to feature prominently on education policy agendas.

#### ***8.1.1.2 Age: An ageing workforce, near retirement***

The ageing population of school leaders represents a growing issue in some regions. Data collected in the studies reveal that the average age of school leaders is 50 years or over in most countries. Exceptions to this trend in the EE region are Romania and Serbia, where the average age is under 50. Primary school leaders in Latin American and Caribbean countries are also slightly younger, with an average age of between 40 and 50. In Vietnam, in the East Asia region, candidates for school leadership should not be older than 50 years old, in the case of women, or 55 years old, in the case of men.

This general trend reflects the fact that the appointment of school leaders is, for the most part, based on teaching experience. The following sub-section, which investigates the qualifications school leaders are expected to hold, sheds further light on age distribution within the profession.

### ***8.1.1.3 Uncertain qualification and appointment mainly based on teaching experience***

In many countries, school leaders start out as teachers and advance to the position of school leader at the end of their teaching career. This seniority-based transition to school leadership is the main explanation for the high average age of school leaders. It appears that, in some countries, teaching qualifications and experience are the only requirements for school leadership.

The authors of the regional studies report that this practice continues in many countries and highlight the urgent need to develop policies to professionalize recruitment.

In the Arab states, for example, there is an absence of policies requiring school leaders to hold degrees in education leadership. For instance, in Qatar, despite ambitious decentralization and school autonomy initiatives, almost 50 per cent of school leaders do not hold education leadership certificates. Recruitment policies and procedures overlook knowledge and experience of education management and leadership.

In most countries in Eastern Europe, teaching experience is a basic condition for school leader recruitment and appointment. However, in some countries (e.g. Romania and Slovenia), other criteria are also considered, such as administrative experience or leadership training.

Limited information is available in South and West Asia, but it can be said that, in some countries (e.g. India, Bangladesh and Pakistan), the basic required qualification for school leaders is the same as that for teachers at a particular level. Required qualifications for school leaders are different from those required for teachers (except at primary level) in Nepal, though recruitment often takes place on an ad-hoc basis, making it likely that a large number of headteachers do not possess the required qualifications.

Evidence from Latin America and the Caribbean shows a remarkable predominance of primary school principals with tertiary degrees. The available data also show that a relatively high percentage of principals have received some form of specific training in school management and administration.

In many sub-Saharan African countries, school leaders do not need to hold a specific leadership certificate. In most cases, seniority and a successful record as a teacher are sufficient. There are some exceptions, however, for instance in Seychelles where training is offered at master’s level, and in Tanzania, where the Agency for the Development of Educational Management provides in-service training for primary and secondary school leaders.

The review revealed that, in some countries, including Azerbaijan, Cameroon and Kenya, school leaders’ recruitment is sometimes based on connections rather than competence. Also, appointment of school leaders in a number of countries can be subject to corruption. This, in turn, severely limits the capacity of schools to serve as truly democratic, efficient and self-reflective institutions.

Overall, the qualifying criteria for becoming a school leader vary, for the most part, between teaching experience and successful completion of a school leadership training programme. Although master’s degrees and other higher qualifications in education management are emerging trends in several countries, the regional studies report that, in addition to an ageing population of school leaders, countries are facing major difficulties in recruiting quality candidates, mainly because of the lack of support and training, the workload and the inadequate salary.

Finally, as Table 3 shows, there are significant regional differences and commonalities in the profile of school leaders. Some major trends and exceptions can be noted.

**Table 3. Profile of school leaders across regions**

	Arab states	East Asia	South and West Asia	Sub-Saharan Africa	Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>Gender</b> (male-female distribution)	Leadership positions dominated by women in primary schools, with men more strongly represented at secondary-school level.	Partially available data and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data.  Gender distribution does not seem to be a concern.	Female school leaders under-represented except in smaller schools.	Female school leaders under-represented except in smaller schools.	Female school leaders under-represented except in primary schools in some countries.	Female school leaders under-represented.
<b>Age</b> (average number of)	Partially available data	Vietnam:	Partially available data	Partially available data	50+	40-50



years	and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data.	Candidates no older than 50 (F) and 55 (M).  Partially available data and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data.	and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data.	and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data.	Exceptions: Romania, Serbia.  Partially available data and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data in CA.	
<b>Qualification for recruitment</b>	Teaching experience. No requirement of educational degree.	Varies across countries from teaching experience to school leadership training programme.	Teaching experience.	Teaching experience and seniority.  Exception: South Africa, Seychelles, Tanzania.  Often unsystematic recruitment practices.	Teaching experience with additional administrative experience or school leader training.	Predominance of principals holding tertiary degrees. Relatively high percentage of principals having received some form of training in school management and administration.

## 8.1.2 Changing governance structure and school leadership

In the past two decades, across the regions, countries have undertaken a series of institutional, legal, organizational and educational reforms at different levels of the education system to improve its performance and quality. In many countries, changes to education governance, with the aim of rationalizing decision-making and strengthening accountability, have been an important component of these reforms. The expectation is that improved governance will lead to greater school efficiency and better teaching and learning outcomes. However, changing governance conditions also impact on leadership patterns, with school leaders expected to take on new responsibilities or adopt new leadership models.

### *8.1.2.1 Transition from centralized to decentralized school governance*

National authorities are beginning to delegate more responsibility to schools, in the management of human, financial and physical resources. There appears to be a general trend towards greater school autonomy across the regions. However, as reported in the regional reviews, there are significant differences between the countries and areas in which schools have been granted greater autonomy.

Decentralization is a concept prevalent both in the literature and in many education policy discussions in the countries included in this study. The objectives of such reforms — especially those aiming to strengthen local governance and increase school autonomy — commonly involve shifting political, administrative and fiscal responsibilities. Whatever the motivation for education decentralization, it is generally expected that such policies will lead to improvements in the quality of education service delivered as well as in students' learning outcomes.

As it has been shown, the decentralization of an education system can take different forms: deconcentration, devolution or delegation. Deconcentration is the reallocation of decision-making within the MoE and its agencies at regional and district levels; devolution implies a more permanent transfer of decision-making responsibilities from the MoE to municipalities or districts; while delegation, or school autonomy, is the administrative or legal transfer of responsibilities to elected or appointed school governing bodies, such as school boards, school management committees and school councils. This latter form entails 'school-based management' geared at enhancing education performance by transferring significant decision-making authority from state and district offices to individual schools.

Many countries have moved from a tightly regulated, centralized education system to a more open, participatory and autonomous school system. The rationale for these reforms is that improved governance can lead to greater efficiency in the use of resources, which, in turn, can help foster improved school performance. With the growing trend towards decentralization, school leaders are expected to take on additional responsibilities, which may require new skills.

Many countries, however, have failed to implement decentralization reforms, for a range of reasons including inadequate policies, lack of political will and weak national capacities at local level (weak institutions, lack of qualified staff). In some countries, decentralization efforts have been hampered by longstanding traditions and norms, which affect the majority of schools and actors at local level. Therefore, in many of the countries included in the regional studies, the education system remains highly centralized and important decisions are still taken by a higher-level authority, or are subject to its approval.

At the opposite end of the continuum, we find a number of countries which have set up and implemented ambitious policies to decentralize their education systems during the last decade. The devolution of responsibilities to schools led to changes in the roles of school leaders.

The following examples, drawn from the regional studies, highlight commonalities and differences in the degree to which the countries of each region have decentralized their school structures.

#### **Box 4. Case of Latin America and Caribbean**

Three groups of countries can be identified:

1. Countries such as Argentina and Brazil: Central government finances a part of the provision of educational services, but, at the same time, the sub-national levels retain a high degree of autonomy.
2. Countries such as Colombia, Mexico and Chile: Educational services were transferred to local authorities, states and municipalities, through decentralization policies, but central government retains considerable powers.
3. Countries such as Ecuador, Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay: They have centralized systems, in which the governing authority is the national ministry of education, and few responsibilities fall within the orbit of local authorities.

#### **Box 5. Case of South and West Asia**

Two main groups of countries can be identified:

1. Countries such as Afghanistan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka: The participation of parents and local communities is being increased through the empowerment of schools and principals, and by establishing school management committees. These efforts have resulted in some good practice, but challenges and issues remain. The gap between policy and implementation is one of the key issues in the region (e.g. India, Maldives, Nepal).
2. Countries such as Iran and Pakistan: Though they have more centralized systems, these countries also delegate some authority to regions and schools. For example, Pakistan intends to devolve the decision-making process on planning and budgeting closer to implementation level.

All SWA countries have focused on decentralizing school governance and strengthening school leadership, in one way or the other. Accordingly, these countries have created legal bases and developed policies and programmes to facilitate movement towards more decentralized and democratic practices, with increased roles for head teachers and school bodies.

#### **Box 6. Case of East Asia**

Two groups of countries can be identified:

1. Countries such as Thailand, Singapore and Hong Kong: All have a decentralized governance system supported by policies and a legal framework. The *National Education Act* (Thailand) engages local initiative in the management of educational

services, supports the integration of 'local wisdom' in the curriculum, and empowers principals, teachers and parents. For example, in Singapore, since the early 1990s, the role of principal has changed from passive manager to 'chief executive officer' with full responsibilities. In Hong Kong, decentralization reforms have impacted on almost all areas of school operation and aim to substantially alter the role of school leaders.

2. Countries such as Vietnam and China: All principals hold the formal title of 'government officer' and are, in a very practical sense, the government bureaucracy's representative at school level.

### **Box 7. Case of Arab states**

Two groups can be identified:

1. Countries such as Egypt, Morocco and Qatar: These countries have set up and implemented ambitious decentralization policies within their education systems during the last decade. Despite these initiatives, the gap between policy and practice seem to be quite wide and it takes time to reach and empower the local or school level.
2. Countries such as Libya, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen, Algeria and Djibouti: Schools in these countries are dominated by strong hierarchical, directive, bureaucratic and authoritarian leadership. School systems are maintained by: the direct control of governing and managing bodies; close and detailed surveillance and inspection of school activities; and the exercising of austere management rather than shared or democratic leadership.

### **Box 8. Case of sub-Saharan Africa**

Two groups can be identified:

1. Countries such as Ghana, Mali, South Africa and Tanzania: They have decentralization policies, with responsibilities for the provision and management of educational services shared among communities, schools and governments.
2. Countries such as Ethiopia and Mozambique: These countries have engaged in some form of decentralization, albeit to an uneven extent across countries. The decentralization has been driven by two forces, namely 'external pressure from international development agencies and experts, and domestic political expediency in countries where governments are unable to organize or finance basic public services' (Lugaz et al., 2010, p. 21).

Another important aspect in the case of SSA countries is that non-governmental actors such as churches and boards of governors are responsible (with strict regulation by national governments) for managing secondary schools in many Anglophone African countries, while, within Francophone Africa, historically centralized systems of managing secondary schools are gradually adjusting to decentralization policies.

### Box 9. Case of Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Three groups of countries can be identified:

1. Countries such as Czech Republic, Slovenia and Slovakia: MoEs grant a large degree of autonomy to schools for managing financial and human resources. In Slovenia, schools are granted full autonomy in selecting school leaders.
2. Countries such as Hungary, Poland and Albania: Many decisions are subject to the approval of a higher-level authority or are taken within established guidelines.
3. Countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkey: Highly centralized education systems hinder reform and the implementation of policies. Local authorities do not have the power or flexibility to make independent decisions or to respond to local needs. Kyrgyzstan has been moving towards decentralization, but this has led to greater inequality between wealthier communities and poorer communities.

Countries in the same region can present different forms or degrees of decentralization. Although the situation varies across the regions, the countries can be broadly classified in the following way.

In countries such as Vietnam, China, Jordan, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen, Algeria and Djibouti, the governance structure is centrally-led. In these countries, all education policies and programmes are the result of ‘top-down’ decision-making processes.

Ecuador, Peru, Dominican Republic, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Iran, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkey present the weakest form of decentralization. In these countries, decision-making powers and financial and management responsibilities reside with central government, though, in some limited and specific cases, certain responsibilities are transferred to regions, provinces or districts.

In Colombia, Mexico, Chile, Egypt, Morocco, Qatar, Iraq, Afghanistan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Ghana, Mali, South Africa, Tanzania, Hungary, Poland and Albania, governments, to different degrees, transfer some decision-making and administration responsibilities to semi-autonomous organizations that are accountable to them. In some limited cases, the empowerment of schools is increased by the establishment of school management committees. Depending on the degree of autonomy granted, these countries are approaching a more decentralized governance structure.

Some countries in Eastern Europe (Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia) and East Asia (Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong) demonstrate more advanced forms of decentralization. Schools receive substantial or full autonomy in their decisions. They

have authority, but also responsibility, for electing school governing bodies, and for interpreting, collaborating on and implementing curricula.

As these results show, countries within the same region can be categorized in different ways depending on their degree of decentralization. It is also possible to identify broad similarities between countries across regions. The greatest differences between levels of decentralization between countries within the same region occur in East Asia. Historical, cultural and political contexts may help to explain the discrepancies.

Research shows that attempts to decentralize education in developing countries respond to a number of different factors, including: pressure from international organizations or agencies; the inability of governments to respond effectively to the widely varying needs of local schools; common agreement among constituencies that the centrally-led structure is not working well; and growing competition between public and private schools.

Depending on the scope of local empowerment in their country, school leaders are asked to assume different leadership roles, for example in staff/teacher development, mentoring, and curriculum development, and learn and implement different styles of leadership according to their responsibilities and the degree of autonomy granted to them.

#### ***8.1.2.2 Changing school leadership roles, responsibilities and models***

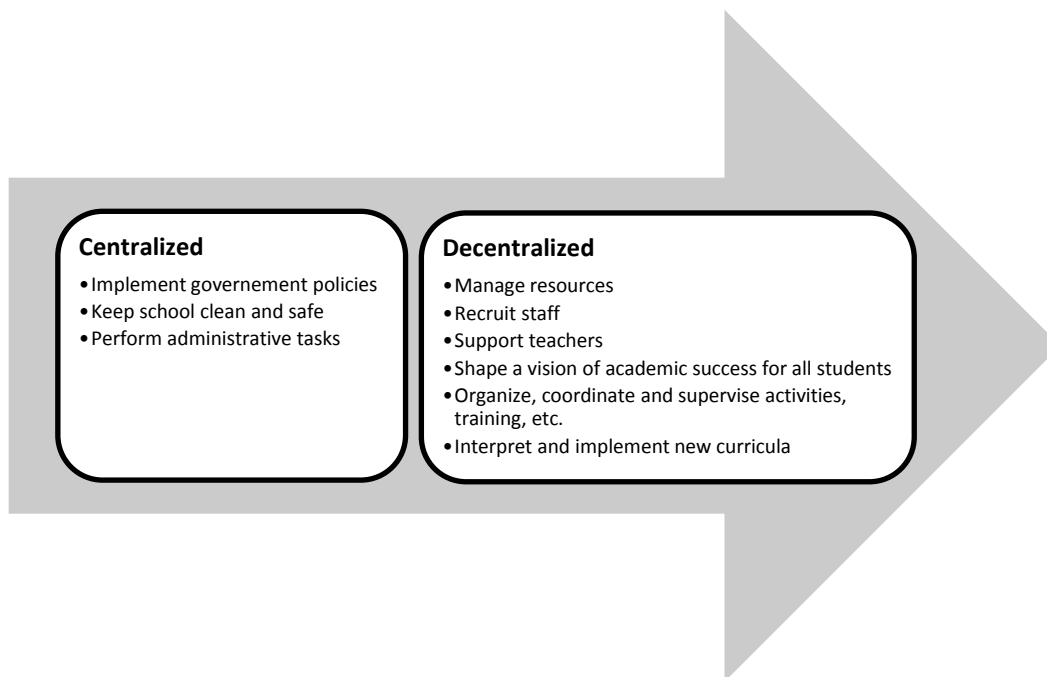
The gradual movement towards decentralization has led, in some cases, to an adjustment or redefinition of school leaders' roles and responsibilities.

Where the education system is centrally led, a school leader is often no more than a government officer, with little or no freedom in resource management, staff recruitment, teacher capacity development, school vision and strategy, or renovation of the school environment. In general, the leadership model in such a centralized governance structure can be described as formal managerial. The nature of the school leaders' role may vary, depending on social, ideological and political realities, but it is necessarily subject to a 'top-down' decision-making process directed by government authorities.

However, as Figure 3 illustrates, with the trend toward decentralized education systems and school-based management, school leaders are being granted more autonomy and resources to lead their school, while also becoming subject to new accountability arrangements. It is expected that they will set clear goals, initiate and sustain school-based reform, support the school community, especially the teacher corps, and

ultimately deliver an improvement in the quality of education within their schools. This has been echoed in many of the countries studied, especially in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, with the adoption of 'new public management' and 'results-based management' systems, which require school leaders to use monitoring and organizational techniques to assess the efficiency of teachers.

**Figure 3. From a centrally-led to a more autonomous school system: Migration of responsibilities for school leaders**



Reflecting the global trend towards decentralization of education, some countries have developed school boards, municipal councils, parent associations and teacher unions, as well as representative groups drawn from community organizations. The participation of these groups in school decision-making is expanding around the world, though with different degrees of success and varying impacts on school leadership. While the trend is undoubtedly global, the pace and degree of decentralization and management reform are quite variable between countries, as are accountability arrangements.

For example, decentralization has resulted in genuinely distributed leadership in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where school leaders are expected to establish structures and cultures that promote collective leadership, and to lead by collaborating and negotiating with teaching and non-teaching staff, parents, students and local communities through school boards.

Current policies in most Arab states, by contrast, practice tight control over school leaders with high levels of bureaucracy and regulation in overtly or covertly centralized systems. Although some policies encourage school leaders to build teams, delegate power to school members and support parent and teacher associations, the actual practice of education authorities runs counter to these aims since school leaders are treated as the sole accountable figures. School success is measured narrowly by test scores at national examinations and the role of school leader in improving student outcomes is disregarded.

Continuous school reform in East Asia has presented school leaders with contradictory demands and made it difficult for them to find their roles. On one hand, they are expected to maintain their traditional role as 'stabilizer' in the school, while, on the other, they are called upon to change, to reform and/or to redefine their school's development plan. With the exception of those in China and Vietnam, East Asian school leaders have been granted greater autonomy to lead and manage changes in schools. They have a responsibility to experiment and drive improvements in learning and teaching, by participating in the definition of the school mission, managing the instructional programme and creating a positive school environment. There have been attempts to disperse power and authority to school leaders, and collaborative leadership is encouraged. However, shared leadership is a new concept in the region and school leaders need to find their role somewhere between the reforms being introduced and the societal context in which they are implemented.

In South and West Asia, while decentralization efforts have led to the adoption of related legal and organizational systems, changes to actual leadership practice and meaningful devolution remain questionable. School leaders often have little authority to bring about meaningful improvement in student learning. In India, for instance, school leaders' main responsibilities are administrative tasks, data entry, monitoring of schedules, report writing and testing. In some areas, small schools function without a school leader as no such position has been created.

However, in some countries of the SWA region, changes in school governance have resulted in an actual redefinition of leadership roles. For instance, in Sri Lanka, school leaders are now responsible for learning outcomes, resource management, staff development and monitoring, while, in Bangladesh, school leaders take more responsibility and authority in decision-making. In Iran, school leaders have been granted total management responsibility in schools. Their roles are officially prescribed and include planning, resource mobilization and teacher development. They are accountable to authorities and the communities.



In sub-Saharan Africa, several historically centralized systems are shifting towards deconcentration, and decentralized management of education is promoted in many countries, at least within policy documents. Nevertheless, in the absence of appropriate policy frameworks and specific preparation, school leadership in the region still appears to be based rather on formal, bureaucratic, hierarchical and managerial leadership. Roles and responsibilities are often poorly defined or not respected in practice.

In Ghana, for example, school leaders regard themselves as no more than keepers of school possessions and implementers of government policies. In Mozambique's decentralized system, school leaders are expected to handle new and complex tasks, such as financial management, building maintenance, teacher professional development and implementation of new curricula. They can also offer professional development to teachers through classroom observation or discussion. In Kenya and Cameroon, too, school leaders have wide-ranging responsibilities. However, they are usually not well-prepared to deal with these challenges. Where preparation is offered it is usually in the form of brief professional training sessions.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, school leaders are often overwhelmed by administrative duties and have little time for tasks of a pedagogical nature. Issues such as teachers' professional development, use of textbooks and student evaluation form only a minor part of their workload.

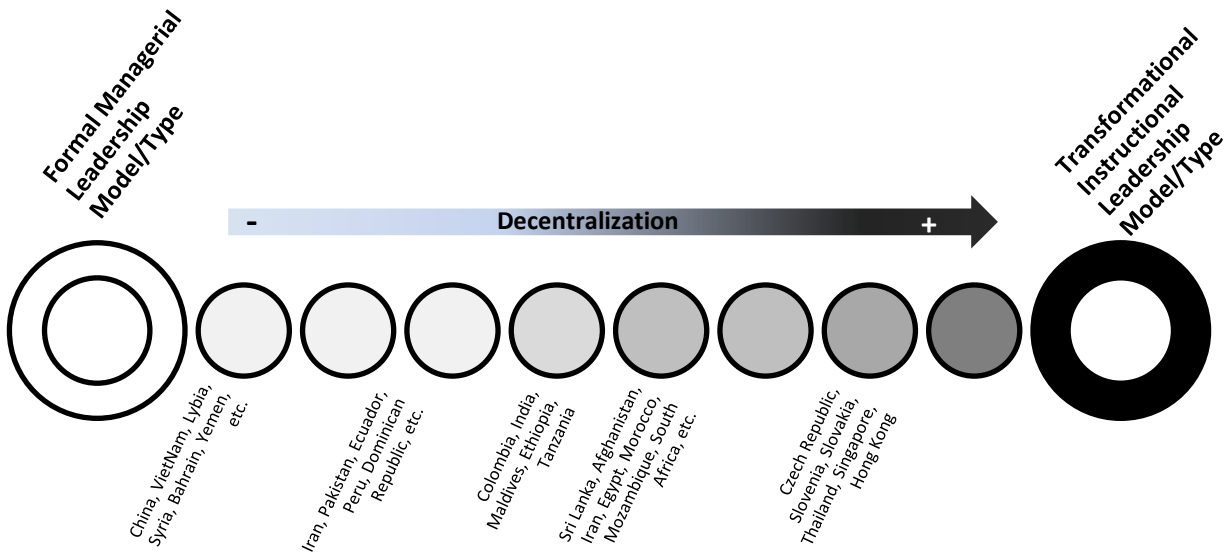
A clear transition from a formal managerial leadership model towards a transformational and instructional leadership model can be observed in countries implementing reforms that aim to decentralize their education structure. Although this transition is not complete, it brings many challenges, particularly regarding school leaders' roles and responsibilities. In fact, while some school leaders struggle with the shift from managerial to more instructional leadership, they are also confronted with poor understanding of their new responsibilities, and poor professional preparation and development support.

These findings suggest a need for a clear (re)definition of the roles and responsibilities of school leaders in most of the countries studied. In fact, as the reviews demonstrate, in several countries, the lack of a competency framework for school leaders is a major issue.

As the levels of decentralization vary from one country to another, the leadership models also vary, depending on the governance context. Figure 4 illustrates how leadership models can evolve, following the levels of decentralization. Selected countries are positioned on this scale according to their degree of decentralization and

the required leadership model, ranging from a formal managerial model to an instructional model.

**Figure 4. Countries' position according to the degree of decentralization and leadership model**



### 8.1.3 Demotivating working conditions

To meet the demands of education reforms, especially the new accountability arrangements, potential and current school leaders need support to better master their new role and responsibilities. The first part of this sub-section will focus on the types of training provided across the regions; the second part will focus on the remuneration in terms of income adequacy; and the final part will present the main findings related to school leader appraisal and feedback. Table 4 captures the major findings from the six regional reviews regarding the working conditions of school leaders.

**Table 4. Working conditions of school leaders across regions**

Arab states	East Asia	South and West Asia	Sub-Saharan Africa	Eastern Europe and	Latin America and
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					Central Asia	the Caribbean
<b>Leadership development training</b>	Growing number of leadership development programmes, little evidence on impact.	Lack of systematic integration of leadership development programmes.  Exception: Singapore.	Lack of systematic integration, mostly short-term in-service programmes.	Varies across countries, from one-year certificate course to short in-service programmes to professional qualification courses (South Africa).	Varies across countries, from pre-service, in-service and induction programmes, with varying length and quality.	Varies across countries, from 1.5-year to short-term courses.
<b>Remuneration</b>	Partially available data and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data.	Partially available data and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data.	Partially available data and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data.	Partially available data and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data.	Varies significantly across countries.  Inequitable distribution of salaries within countries.  Partially available data and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data.	School leadership as teachers' pathway for achieving higher salary.  Partially available data and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data.
<b>Appraisal</b>	Partially available data and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data.	Singapore: Regular monitoring and appraisal.  Partially available data and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data in other countries.	Partially available data and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data.	Partially available data and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data.	Varies across countries of EE.  Some countries have central appraisal framework.  Partially available data and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data;	Partially available data and/or lack of updated, reliable and sufficient data.

### ***8.1.3.1 Training as a support***

As countries move towards a decentralized education system, or indicate an intention to do so in the future, a need for school management and leadership training programmes emerges. This need can be the result of any sort of change to the role of school leaders. Indeed, whether a process of decentralization is underway or not, their roles are expected to evolve, according to the increasingly complex expectations society has of education.

To support school leadership, education authorities and their partners, including universities and international organizations, have developed new leadership and training programmes or have adapted existing programmes to fit the new trend.

Regions vary greatly in terms of the availability of training programmes for school leaders, mostly because of policy and funding constraints. In general, there are three types of programme: pre-service, induction and in-service.

Depending on national policy, school leadership training can take place before or after appointment. Potential and new school leaders can acquire training within a specified time period. The length of the programmes has been identified as an issue in many countries. For instance, the duration of pre-service leadership training, where it is required, can vary from one week (Romania) to the completion of a bachelor degree (Thailand).

As noted in the reviews, effective school leadership involves a set of skills and competencies that can be learned. However, the opportunity for school leaders to access these programmes varies from one country to another. Several countries were found to lack policies and programmes for school leadership training and professional development.

Some countries are supported by donors, international organizations and NGOs in developing guidelines and systems for improving school leadership. The reviews reveal that most of this support is implemented on a project-by-project basis, without an overarching framework or curriculum, sometimes targeting particular areas of the country or principals from specific categories of school (private schools, faith-based schools, etc.). This suggests a need for more coordination by the education authorities in order to ensure better integration of initiatives and projects into the broader national education development agenda.

Across regions, a wide range of delivery methods are used: lectures, discussion, skills training, on-the-job training, case studies, group exercises, role play, etc. The content of

the training programmes covers, in whole or in part, important elements of effective school leadership, including the national education legislation, leadership skills, resource management, organization development and pedagogical/instructional leadership. Yet, despite participation in such training, many school leaders are poorly prepared for their tasks as most leadership programmes are based on achieving certification rather than acquiring new knowledge and skills to put into practice. Content is mostly theoretical and does not provide analytical skills or consider the application of what is taught in school contexts. In addition, while several countries demonstrate a high level of participation in professional development, in some countries induction programmes are being deserted due to lack of incentives.

In some sub-Saharan African and Eastern European countries (e.g. Czech Republic, Slovakia), school leaders attend only in-service training, workshops and seminars on school management, finance and communication. These are not sufficient to meet demanding school contexts. Lack of capacity means that most school leaders are confined to carrying out simple administrative functions.

In the Arab states, awareness of the importance of school leadership skills development is growing. This is apparent in the large number of planned or existing leadership development programmes in the region. However, there is little evidence as to the impact these programmes have on instructional school leadership. In some cases, development programmes lacked vision and were not supported by policies which would have allowed leaders to practice in schools what they have learned.

In East Asia, the lack of systemic integration of training is clear. Programmes are provided on a project-by-project basis, in the absence of an over-arching framework or curriculum. Here again there is little evidence as to changes in practice. However, in the case of Singapore, efforts were reasonably successful, while in other countries, more investment is required to improve school leaders' capacity.

Similarly, there is an absence of systemic efforts and/or programmes for school leadership in South and West Asia. Short-term in-service programmes are conducted with a limited focus on certain aspects of leadership. In most SWA countries, a national education development plan or sub-sectoral development plan focuses on specific areas which include leadership development components.

In sub-Saharan Africa, school leadership development ranges from a one-year certificate course in Gambia to short in-service training courses in Eritrea and Uganda. The MoE of Seychelles has partnered with the University of Lincoln in the United Kingdom to provide training at master's level. Tanzania offers training for primary and secondary

school leaders. South Africa established a National Professional Qualification for Principals. School leaders attend a practice-based, two-year part-time professional development programme. It is the first national qualification of its type in Africa. Other countries in the region were found to offer no training for school leaders.

In Latin American and the Caribbean, a relatively high number of school principals received some form of specific training in school management and administration. Nonetheless, countries differ greatly in the quality and length of the training programmes. It ranges from eighteen months in Chile to just twenty-seven days in Brazil. However, evidence on how to build school leaders' skills and effectiveness is sparse.

Regardless of its type, leadership training should be improved and designed so as to cohere with national policies on education, recruitment and professional development. It is important that training is provided both before and after appointment. Despite the great interest numerous countries have in leadership development, it has not been a top priority on national education agendas.

### ***8.1.3.2 Unattractive status and remuneration***

For most of the regions and countries studied, information on school leader salaries is either very limited or non-existent. The available evidence suggests that their salaries are typically higher than those of school teachers. However, in many cases, the small difference between teacher and school leader remuneration does not reflect school leaders' workload and responsibilities and helps explain why so few teachers are seeking school leadership positions.

There are exceptions, however. In Latin America and the Caribbean, for instance, teachers strive to achieve school leadership positions in order to earn a higher salary.

The reviews also suggest that school leaders' remuneration has not been a priority issue in recent educational reforms, even in countries where their responsibilities were increased or redefined as a result of decentralization. In many countries, poor remuneration is seen as an obstacle to potential school leaders joining the profession, while those already in service often aspire to leave for better-paid jobs.

The inequitable distribution of salaries and allowances according to gender or geography was another important issue in some countries. Teachers (including headteachers) are the worst-paid civil servants in East Africa, and the situation is exacerbated by the gender bias in remuneration. In the Ashanti region in Ghana, for example, female teachers do not get paid maternity leave and are likely to be dismissed

or transferred if they become pregnant, in spite of labour law protection. In Liberia, too, maternity leave is not paid.

In Eastern Europe, there are significant differences in school leaders' salaries across the region. Croatia, Slovenia and Turkey offer the highest minimum annual salary while Albania offers the lowest. Inequitable distribution of salaries is also common. In addition to their fixed salaries, most school leaders in the region are able to take extra work, such as teaching and administration, to earn more income. With the current reform trend towards 'new public management' and 'results-based management', which emphasizes remuneration based on outcomes, some countries may consider adjusting school leaders' salaries in line with school performance and outcomes. Flexible salary scales related to school-level factors can also serve as incentives for school leaders who choose to work in disadvantaged schools or difficult locations.

### ***8.1.3.3 School leaders' appraisal and feedback: A mixed picture***

While most countries were found to have a performance appraisal process, the authors of the regional studies raised a number of issues concerning the quality, mechanisms, responsible authority, period and consequences of appraisal.

In the majority of countries, they noted, there is no central or state requirement to appraise school leaders, and authorities have not established policy frameworks setting out the procedures for appraisal. Instead, school leader appraisal typically takes place on a subjective basis, unsupported by policy.

Where appraisal is required and regulated, the procedures also vary. School leaders can be appraised by local or regional education authorities according to a central framework, though, in some cases, school organizing bodies are responsible for determining and implementing appraisal procedures. For instance, in Poland, school leaders are appraised by local and regional authorities according to a central framework. In some other Eastern European countries (e.g. Czech Republic and Slovakia), school organizing bodies are responsible for the appraisal procedures. There is growing recognition that successful school leadership should always be context-dependent. In other words, school leaders' experience, the geographical location of the school, and the socioeconomic background of student population all need to be taken into account when evaluating leadership quality.

Appraisal periods vary largely, but, in general, appraisals are conducted on an annual basis. In Slovenia, school leaders are appraised on a mandatory yearly basis through a central framework. Singapore is an example of best practice in this area, as all school educators are monitored and appraised on a regular basis, and those with leadership

potential are identified and encouraged to take up senior positions in order to develop their school leadership capacity.

The consequences of appraisal vary from one country to another. In many, salary adjustments and professional development opportunities are common rewards. However, an unsuccessful evaluation can result in sanctions, such as wage freeze and even dismissal. More importantly, the regional studies reveal the scarcity of links between appraisal and the development of improvement plans through induction and in-service training programmes. Nevertheless, researchers and policymakers have become increasingly aware of the shortcomings of current approaches to the appraisal of school leaders and are encouraging stakeholders to consider this factor when developing policies on school leadership.

#### **8.1.4 Research and knowledge gaps: A major barrier to situation analysis and policy formulation for effective school leadership**

The need to develop effective school leadership is increasingly recognized as essential in achieving high-quality education for all. However, as the authors noted at the outset, there is a severe lack of data and information on school leadership, constituting a major limitation on their studies. Very few countries had relevant data and information on school leadership, and there was a general lack of national and regional information and documents related to the school leadership policies and their implementation. Countries with relevant data tend to be in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, with some in Latin America.

While there is a large literature on school leadership, most of it relates to OECD countries. The subject is still not well explored or exploited in the developing world. Yet, as Hallinger (2013) suggests, in the case of East Asia, part of the literature on school leadership, available only in national languages, may not be recognized in international reviews. Clearly, a good deal of Chinese research on principalship is not accessible to an international audience because of the language barrier. A systematic review of this research and documentation would help complete the global picture on school leadership.

Although a wealth of knowledge and evidence is becoming available on key aspects of school leadership, particularly in developed countries, there are still critical knowledge gaps in a number of areas which demand more attention. An expert meeting, organized by UNESCO as part of the regional review process, highlighted a number of research issues which should be addressed in order to further explore the significance of school leadership. These included:



(i) The effectiveness of leadership training programmes: Despite the wide array of school leader training programmes, there is very limited empirical information on their effectiveness, especially in relation to their length and type (pre-service, in-service or induction) as well as their relevance to improved quality of education, and students' learning outcomes in particular.

(ii) The effectiveness of school autonomy: The nature and status of decentralization and reforms to promote school-based management vary between countries. There is, therefore, a need to understand how the degree of school autonomy impacts on student learning outcomes. The literature is replete with normative statements about school autonomy, greater power and responsibilities for school leaders, and closer relations between school and community, but it does not describe the direct effects on students' learning outcomes. Evidence of the benefits of decentralization is less positive in the context of poor rural areas, which re-confirms the need for further comprehensive and systematic research and studies on effective school leadership practice.

(iii) Effectiveness related to roles and responsibilities of school leaders: There is an urgent need, illustrated throughout this report, for comprehensive and systematic research concerning the specificity and appropriateness of job descriptions or task assignments for school leaders, and their effectiveness. In addition, the leadership models described in the literature suggest a common set of skills and competencies that would be needed for school leaders in all countries, without introducing elements from the local context. Further research may help to confirm or refute the suggestion that leadership styles are universally applicable and there is a generic list of competencies for school leaders.

The expert meeting also reinforced the need to keep track of efforts geared to fill these gaps, and to promote a forum for global debate and the sharing of information and best practice, especially for developing countries. It is obvious that the lack of relevant data and information constitutes a major obstacle for the formulation of evidence-based and effective policies on school leadership in the concerned countries.

## 8.2 Policy recommendations

The reviews demonstrate that countries across the six regions are at very different stages with regard to the development of school leadership, ranging from an embryonic stage in some sub-Saharan African countries, to more developed forms of leadership in some Eastern European countries, for example.

The recommendations emerging from the reviews reflect this, ranging from the simplest need for recognition of the potential and importance of school leadership to the need to develop viable and effective policies and practices with regard to the selection, recruitment, training and professional development of school leaders. To effectively address these issues, there is a need to promote research and knowledge production and sharing, including through the facilitation of global debates on school leadership and by supporting regional and international cooperation for the exchange of experiences and best practice.

### **Make school leadership a priority in the education development agenda**

Despite an abundant literature on the importance of school leadership in enhancing school performance and students' outcomes, leadership development is not yet a priority focus of education reform in many countries. Too often, school leadership appears in policy documents only as a strategic action in teacher policy and development reform. However, given its potential benefits, school leadership should be addressed as an issue in its own right and developed as a key policy option for successful education reform and development.

It is therefore necessary to:

- Promote a common understanding and interpretation of the concept of school leadership, particularly instructional leadership, among all education stakeholders

The reviews suggest that, even when the term 'leadership' is used in policy documents, the job descriptions and actual practice of school principals do not support the policy intention, but rather serve to maintain the traditional managerial and administrative role expected of school principals. In many countries, concepts such as 'instructional leadership' and 'leadership for learning' have yet to be translated into policy frameworks or the day-to-day practice of school principals.

- Ensure a systematic integration of school leadership initiatives/projects into the broader national education development agenda  
The regional reviews highlight a number of initiatives intended to develop school leadership capacity in a number of countries. They report that, in many countries, these initiatives are implemented on a project-by-project basis, sometimes in an uncoordinated way, without an overarching framework or curriculum. A strong coordination and systematic integration of such initiatives into national education plans are needed in order to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability.
- Promote and advocate for the development of effective school leadership, using experience, best practice, lessons and evidence-based research from countries that have established successful leadership development programmes. This entails engaging relevant stakeholders (including principals' associations, teachers' unions, civil society organizations, parents and communities) in a policy dialogue to ensure common understanding and recognition of the importance of school leadership, so as to guarantee the adoption, ownership and support of the related education reforms.

### **Establish appropriate institutional and policy frameworks for effective school leadership development**

The smooth development of effective school leadership requires an enabling environment in terms of an institutional and policy framework that clearly sets the rules of the game, namely the criteria for appointment to principalship (qualification, experience, etc.), and the sort of status, remuneration, support and working conditions school principals can expect. This entails a need to:

- Develop a clear vision for effective school leadership, drawn from national education policy and translated into a coherent school leadership competency framework. The competency framework is meant to guide the selection, recruitment, training, professional development and appraisal of school leaders.
- (Re)define the roles and responsibilities of school leaders, which should include instructional leadership, to ensure they reflect national policy on education quality and the need to enhance students' learning outcomes.  
It is important to ensure that cultural and contextual conditions are adequately taken into account when (re)defining principals' roles and responsibilities.
- Involve school principals at the different stages (policy formulation, adoption and implementation) of all reform initiatives intended to reshape their roles and responsibilities. As reforms in school leadership consist mostly of changing

principals' roles and leadership models – from a managerial/administrative and sometimes authoritarian style to a more collaborative, participative and instructional one – it is crucial that principals are involved at the outset and thereafter (from policy formulation to implementation). While the principals' role is particularly crucial at the implementation stage, their involvement in the policy formulation and adoption stages is necessary to ensure the ownership which facilitates good implementation of reforms.

- Adopt a multiple-stakeholder and participatory approach to school leadership reform to ensure that all relevant stakeholders, including teachers and other education staff, communities, parents and civil society, contribute to the improvement of policy and practice on school leadership at local and school levels.

### **Professionalize school leadership career and make it more attractive**

The regional reviews reveal that, in most countries, school principals are former teachers appointed shortly before retirement, often without adequate preparation or support to perform the responsibilities expected of them. It was also found that, in many cases, salary differences between teachers and principals do not reflect the increased workload of principals, and therefore do not motivate teachers to apply for school leadership positions. To maximize the benefits of effective leadership, school leaders should be provided with adequate training to ensure they have the skills they need, namely the competence to serve as a facilitator, guide and supporter of quality instructional practices. In the same vein, prospective school leaders should be motivated by the prestigious status, attractive remuneration and career development associated with the role. More specific recommendations are to:

- Enhance school leaders' skills and competencies through (re)designing their training programmes (pre-service, induction and in-service) in coherence with the national competency framework for school leaders.
- Make school leadership a more attractive profession by establishing incentives and reward systems in order to raise the status of school leaders and attract the best candidates in the profession.
- Improve the procedures for selection, appointment/recruitment and deployment of school leaders, and encourage the integration of young and female school leaders.
- Mobilize adequate resources and partnerships to support school leadership reforms and sustainable improvements to policy and practice in this area.

### **Set up viable systems of information, networking and research on school leadership**

The regional reviews highlight the dearth of data, information and research on various aspects of school leadership, which limits investigation of the dynamics and development of sound policies in this area. While countries which use an education management information system (EMIS) have established systematic data collection on teachers, with detailed data collection instruments, most of them have no specific instrument for school principals, who are often considered as teachers. This partly explains the weakness of research on school principals, especially in developing countries. It may also help explain why there are very few programmes supporting school principals' policies, training and development, while the teaching profession has received increasing attention and support.

Effective policy reform of school leadership cannot be developed and implemented without reliable data and information on school principals. The data should be integrated into the national EMIS. In order to achieve this, countries, research institutions and development partners should support the creation of viable systems for the regular collection of data and information in order to serve the purposes of research and policy formulation. Networking should also be an important part of these efforts, with the aim of sharing best practice across countries and regions. More specific recommendations are:

- Collect and share relevant data and information through annual education surveys (EMIS), baseline studies, follow-up studies, surveys and research of a national, regional and international nature to inform decision-making and policy development/implementation on school leadership.
- Create or reinforce networking systems to ensure close cooperation between universities, governments, research institutes and other relevant stakeholders, with the aim of promoting the exchange of information and experience.
- Encourage and support research studies to better understand the dynamics of school leadership, for example, its impact on students' learning outcomes, its relevance in relation to different governance structures (school autonomy, centralized/decentralized systems, etc.), its effectiveness in different social and cultural backgrounds, and the effects of different training (pre-service, induction and in-service) modalities and duration on the performance of school leaders.

## **UNESCO's proposed Agenda for Effective School Leadership in the framework of the Education 2030 vision**

As a UN specialized agency for education development, UNESCO is in a unique position to support its member states in addressing most of the recommendations resulting from the regional reviews. During an expert meeting, organized as part of the review process, participants called for UNESCO's intervention to support the development of effective school leadership policies in its member states, especially the least developed ones which face enormous challenges of inefficiency and poor learning outcomes. It was also suggested that UNESCO use its forums and networks to promote and advocate for wider recognition of the importance of effective and instructional leadership as a way to enhance school performance and students' outcomes.

In terms of substance, the experts observed that UNESCO can play an important role by supporting research, and knowledge production and sharing, as well as the promotion of regional and international cooperation with the aim of supporting capacity development for effective school leadership, especially in developing countries.

UNESCO has been instrumental in supporting the development of education systems in its member states, working across a range of areas, including sector-wide policy and planning, teacher policies and development, TVET, adult literacy and non-formal education and gender equality in education. UNESCO's intervention modalities vary according to needs, but reflect its five key functions as clearing house, laboratory of ideas, standard-setter, capacity-builder in member states and catalyst for international cooperation. Through these functions and its international mandate, UNESCO is well placed to support countries at different stages of the development of school leadership.

The expert meeting made three recommendations for UNESCO to consider, as part of the global effort to reinforce school leadership, within the framework of the Education 2030 agenda:

### **a) Promoting research, knowledge production and sharing**

This first recommendation is for the development of research and knowledge production and dissemination, including the related advocacy and awareness-raising, on the importance of effective school leadership and its positive effects on school performance and students' learning outcomes. This work should inform the global debate on this issue and share lessons, innovations and best practice, aimed particularly at education policymakers and practitioners. The present report is part of this effort,

and will be supplemented or, better, deepened with country case studies and other specific research. Some of this research will be based on first-hand data and information that UNESCO is planning to collect through an international survey on school leadership. The authors of the regional reviews have particularly recommended that UNESCO promotes research work on the links between effective school leadership, teacher performance and students' learning outcomes.

**b) Developing normative instruments for effective school leadership**

UNESCO should consider setting up an expert group that can develop recommendations concerning school leadership and devise normative instruments to support them. Recommendations might address issues such as the status, training and working conditions of school leaders. UNESCO could, for example, support the elaboration of generic qualification/competency frameworks for school leaders, and assist member states in adapting the generic tool to their specific contexts.

**c) Providing policy/technical advice and capacity development to member states**

This last recommendation is for the organization and provision of policy support to member states eager to develop effective school leadership. With the wealth of information, expertise and capacity accumulated, including through the above mentioned research work, UNESCO should consider supporting countries to develop and implement effective policies on school leadership.

Concrete UNESCO contributions in this area should include:

- Providing member states with policy support and capacity development in the area of effective school leadership.
- Promoting technical cooperation and partnership among countries and relevant institutions (donors, universities, professional networks, etc.) for the development of effective school leadership.
- Producing and disseminating guidelines and tools for needs assessment and policy formulation to develop effective school leadership.
- Promoting, through its Institute for Statistics (UIS), in particular, the regular collection and analysis of relevant data and information on effective school leadership.

## **Conclusion**

The six regional reviews highlight a number of urgent issues with regard to policies and practices for effective school leadership in different parts of the world. Despite important contextual differences among the education systems of the countries studied, there is an emerging consensus concerning the role effective school leadership can play in positively influencing school performance and students' learning outcomes, particularly when principals are skilled and supported to act as instructional leaders.

Having analysed the profiles of school leaders (age, gender, qualification, leadership styles, etc.), the related institutional and policy frameworks, and education governance structures in the six regions, the reviews suggest that the prevailing situation in most countries remains inconducive to yielding the type of benefits expected from effective school leadership, in terms of enhanced school efficiency, effectiveness, and students' learning achievements.

While a global trend towards reshaping the roles and responsibilities of school principals is evident, the focus is not always on instructional leadership or leadership for learning. In many countries, principals' assignments are still framed in merely administrative and managerial terms; principals are not expected to provide instructional leadership. Moreover, with the exception of a small number of countries, school principals do not receive adequate training and support to function effectively as instructional leaders. Where this concept of leadership features in national policy documents, it is often not accurately reflected in the practice of school principals.

In light of these findings, the authors of the regional reviews made a number of policy recommendations to support the concerned countries in developing and implementing policies and practices that promote effective school leadership.

The literature makes clear that school leadership emerges from a range of different actors, not just school principals. However, because the principal's role in the leadership process is central, reform efforts in this area should target improvement in their recruitment, training, working conditions and remuneration. The reviews reveal that many countries lack appropriate policy frameworks to serve the above purpose. Hence, school principals are mostly recruited among experienced teachers close to retirement. Most of these teachers lack the preparation and skills to act as effective school leaders. It was also found that, in many countries, teachers are not motivated to become school principals, as the small increase in salary does not fairly reflect the additional workload.

The reviews also highlight a number of initiatives on school leadership undertaken in countries across the six regions. It was found that most of these initiatives were



unsuccessful, though for different reasons. Depending on the country, the main challenges relate to weak integration with broader education policy development, conflicts between reform components and the national context and culture, or weak national capacity to formulate and implement effective school leadership policies. In other cases, lack of political commitment and weak accountability resulted in situations where legal and policy provisions for school leadership were not translated into the expected results, in terms of enhanced school performance and students' learning achievement.

The reviews also draw attention to the paucity of relevant data, as an important challenge to the development and implementation of effective school leadership reform. This, the authors argue, should be addressed urgently at national, regional and global levels, with strong systems of data and information set up to close the knowledge gap. In the same vein, research and the production and sharing of knowledge are recommended as ways of supporting policy reform for effective school leadership. Similarly, networking, regional and international cooperation for capacity development, and the sharing of good practice should be promoted to serve the same purpose. To this end, UNESCO, as a UN specialized agency for education, is called upon to sustain countries' efforts in this important area.

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