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School leadership, trends in policies and practices, and improvement in the quality of education

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Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2015
**School leadership, trends in policies and practices,
and improvement in the quality of education**

FINAL REPORT

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Summary

This is an overview of school leadership from the standpoint of improving the quality of teaching and learning, outlining, in particular, the main trends in the 2000s and subsequent developments. School leaders' responsibilities and tasks have increased in the last decade, and greater independence has been granted to schools in some cases. School leadership policies have performed better adapted to new environments and emerging challenges. Many countries are therefore trying to create conditions to suit future educational environments. Expectations in regard to school leaders have changed, and the distribution of their tasks must be reconsidered, as must the levels of training, support and incentives provided. Four case studies, illustrating various school-leadership models and practices, are reviewed as examples of the current situation. The cases show that school leaders can triumph over the odds only in an appropriate context, when they are highly regarded socially and are given opportunities for professional development and support and can so become better educational and administrative managers. The report ends with a discussion on the conditions required for effective school leadership and the way in which it is linked to the quality of teaching and learning. It is hoped that the more decisive role that school leadership must play in post-2015 world development will thus be prioritized.

Introduction

School leadership has been identified in the last few years in several international reports (OECD, 2013, UNESCO-IIEP-IWGE, 2012) as a key function to assuring quality in education. Research on the subject of leadership has increased and has focused on analysis of the leader as a person and on leadership functions and tasks. Furthermore, it has been stressed in studies that school leadership can be the solution to many problems arising in schools (Bolívar *et al.*, 2013).

It is a complex concept, which cannot be understood or applied in a single way and which is defined in terms of a demanding set of functions that include financial administration, human resources management and leadership for learning (Pont *et al.* 2008). School leadership is basically underpinned by two conceptual features (Spillane *et al.*, 2010). The first concerns the individual's personality, style and ability; the second links leadership to forms of organization and, to a smaller extent, to individual practices.

School leadership has historically been connected with the role and functions of school-management teams (Schleicher, 2012). During the last decade, however, it has been stressed both in reports by international organizations and in academic works that leadership involves a common culture of expectations, in which everyone is accountable for individual contributions to the collective outcome (Leithwood and Louis, 2011).

1. Main governmental and policy challenges in the 2000s

To be a principal exercising school leadership in the twenty-first century, one must build complex educational professional skills (Vaillant and Marcelo, 2009); the problem is that administrative tasks often predominate to the detriment of educational functions. Principals spend a high proportion of their time on administrative tasks and on activities such as monitoring and supervising physical and human resources (OECD, 2009). The monitoring and assessment of learning achievement and teachers' professional development are requested less frequently (UNESCO, 2008).

Principals are usually overburdened administratively, have no time for more educational tasks and take little part in decision-making. The main difficulty encountered in consolidating effective school leadership is related to the increase in and concomitant higher complexity of, principals' tasks and activities in the 2000s. Owing to external demands, moreover, the function has become fragmented in many cases (Mulford, 2003).

In regard to that growth in complexity, Elmore (2008) has pointed out that principals' main function should be to drive organizational learning in schools. Day *et al* (2009) drew the same conclusion when they wrote that organizational learning is the means of ensuring effective leadership and quality learning in schools.

Effective leadership has been a major area of concern in many educational reforms in the 2000s as can be seen from reports by Mourshed *et al.* (2010), Barber and Mourshed (2007) and others. In those studies, countries' education systems were considered in terms of their academic performance in PISA¹ and TIMSS tests.² One major finding in those reports was that educational institutions had improved their pupil's educational achievement owing to strong school leadership by their principals.

¹ Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), based on tests, taken by 15-year-old pupils every three years in several countries and conducted by the OECD.

² [Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study](#) (TIMSS), established by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) in order to measure trends in the educational achievement of fourth and eighth grade pupils in mathematics and science.

Some educational reforms promoted in the 2000s show that principals' effective leadership matters most where it is needed most, that is to say, in schools that are in difficult circumstances or in disadvantaged situations (Bolívar, 2009). Similarly, the opposite effect can also occur: poor leadership by principals leads to lower learning achievement by pupils, with schools thus ranking lower in quality terms (Weinstein, 2009).

To cope with the ever growing number of tasks, support mechanisms such as mentoring and coaching by management teams were promoted in some educational reforms in the 2000s (Davidson and Jensen, 2009). Such policies have been implemented in South Africa, France, United Kingdom and Singapore, where retired principals take part in providing such support to their colleagues (Bush, 2008).

Other challenges arising from the diversity of education systems in the 2000s are the levels of independence and decentralization and their relation to school leadership. Many countries promoted greater school independence in the last few years, and that has affected school leaders' functions and responsibilities. Greater independence and accountability requirements have transformed leadership within schools. Accordingly, many OECD countries have placed emphasis on decentralization, school independence, parental and community control, shared decision-making, results-based assessment and school selection. Apparently, independence and accountability are means of meeting local needs more effectively, but such changes affect school leaders' functions and responsibilities (Pont *et al.*, 2008), as will be seen in the next section in regard to the post-2015 agenda.

2. Change in approach with a view to 2015

Approaches to educational leadership have undergone major changes from the 2000s to the present day. Attention has shifted from the role of leadership in school management to the role of leadership in teaching and learning. Leadership is understood today in its broadest sense of being shared or distributed, and is central to the education system (Bolívar *et al.*, 2013).

In the 2000s the leadership debate focused on “what” (persons, structures, functions and roles), while interest currently focuses on “how” (practices and functions). The change in approach is evident in research, too, as it has shifted from analysis of models and approaches to the study of processes geared to the development of good leadership practices. Robinson (2010) notes that knowledge of leadership and quality education must be improved in the next few years so that research on leadership can be integrated into research on teaching and effective learning.

New lines of research cover learning-centred leadership, and their purpose is to close the wide gap between leadership and learning (Robinson, 2011). Many articles and books, published as from the 2010s, connect leadership with pupil learning. Various conceptual strands in the new approach to leadership can be identified in *Handbook of Leadership for Learning* (Townsend and MacBeath, 2011), with expressions such as *leadership for learning*, *pupil-centred leadership* and *learning-centred leadership*.

International organizations, such as OECD and UNESCO, have noted the change of focus in educational leadership. Noteworthy in that regard is the OECD's report *Leadership for Learning*, in which it is argued that life-long learning schemes must be substantively redefined in education systems and be based on a pupil-and-learning-centred approach and on learning achievement both within and outside schools, in which principals and teachers are actively involved (OECD, 2013). Moreover, it has been pointed out in a UNESCO report that a major feature in the improvement of learning is emphasis on school leaders' support for and positive pressure on pupils (UNESCO-IIEP-IWGE, 2012).

The current trend is to stress that the success of school leadership lies in its influence on pupils' learning achievements through action taken by principals and teachers. It is therefore increasingly stated in the literature that principals must act to improve the professional development of primary-

and secondary-school teachers in order to boost pupils' scores. Good management by the principal is of itself insufficient; the principal must also foster opportunities for good learning achievements by pupils. Consideration must therefore be given, when assessing the effectiveness of educational leadership, to its effect on pupils' learning and achievements (Robinson, 2011).

Learning-centred leadership requires a major change in research and policies since it implies switching from the approach centred on management capacity devised in the 2000s to an approach centred on ability to influence learning, selected for the post-2015 agenda. According to Letihwood and Louis (2011), the connection between leadership and the improvements in learning achievement and quality education is critical. The principal's leadership can have a direct effect by improving teaching or an indirect effect by creating conditions conducive to good learning achievement.

There is broad consensus in recent literature that leadership in education is what a principal, team and community can do, here and now, to dynamize schools and achieve good learning outcomes for all pupils. Effective school leadership is therefore one of the factors with a significant impact on education quality (OECD, 2012).

School leadership has now become an international priority on the education policy agenda, so the question arises as to which policies would achieve successful school leadership. In that respect, in the report by Pont *et al.* (2008) it is stated that "The position of principal remains an essential feature of schools (...), but it is facing a number of challenges. As the expectations of what schools should achieve have changed dramatically over recent years, countries need to develop new forms of school leadership better suited to respond to current and future educational environments. In order to do so, they need to address two sets of challenges simultaneously. (...) First, they need to support and retrain the school principals who are currently on the job. (...) Second, countries need to prepare and train the next generation of school leaders." (p. 31).

Retraining and training of school principals and leaders is very important since they are the people who apply education policies in schools, so if they are poorly trained and supported, no policy, be it national or regional or local, can be effective. Nevertheless, despite the trends noted, there is great heterogeneity among regions and countries. Effective school management practices depend on the features and characteristics of education systems as well as on teachers' status and work. In the next section, we shall address a few of these specificities by analysing four cases in different environments.

3. Four case studies of school leadership

It was not easy to select case studies in school leadership at the international level. In the first place, there are vast differences in scale in the education systems in different parts of the world, as well as in the political organization of States. In some countries, the ministry of education has sole authority over government action in the education sector, while federal countries have decentralized executive authority in which regional governments have a significant influence on education policies. On the basis of the kind of representation in each country, interaction between government and schools may take very simple forms or it could take the form of a more complex relation.

The four cases presented were not selected on the basis of criteria of representativeness but were deliberately chosen for their relevance to the theme under consideration. Three of the examples were taken from the project *Improving School Leadership* implemented by OECD from 2006 to 2008, which generated a considerable amount of knowledge about leadership.³ These are Australia, South Korea and Chile, which were among the 22 countries participating in the project. We have added South Africa to these three cases because of its relevance in terms of the school leadership training model.

³ Available on the website: www.oecd.org/edu/schoolleadership.

(a) Institute for School Leadership in Australia

For more than a decade now, Australia has been implementing a set of reforms in order to reduce inequity in its education system. Australian society is multicultural and multi-ethnic: there are at present more than 100 ethnic communities in Australia, speaking some 80 languages. This cultural wealth comes with the challenge of social minorities that are economically, socially and educationally disadvantaged (Welch, 2011).

The reforms promoted in Australia and announced by the Ministerial Council on Education as the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century, seek to counter the socioeconomic disadvantages of some pupils, increase literacy and schooling rates, and improve the quality of teaching and leadership. Furthermore, the Australian education system has encouraged accountability and transparency at all levels (Zanderigo *et al.*, 2012).

International mobility, globalization and technological change, together with socio-economic transformations, have placed great strain on the Australian education system but at the same time they offer it more opportunities (Dumont *et al.*, 2010). Improving the quality of teaching and school leadership is a priority in Australia and forms part of the country's efforts to achieve better learning outcomes for children and adolescents (Dinham *et al.*, 2008). It was in this context of change that the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)⁴ was established in the mid-2000s, with one of its main objectives being the development and maintenance of rigorous professional standards for teachers and principals.

AITSL is a public institution, connected to the Australian Government through the Ministry of Education, and has a governing body made up of representatives of the various education system stakeholders: central government, the authorities of each of Australia's provinces, the teachers' union and principals' associations, deans of education colleges and organizations of independent and Catholic schools (Timperley, 2011).

Among its activities, the AITSL promotes the specialization and accreditation of school leaders and principals on the basis of national professional standards developed and validated in 2011. The Australian Professional Standard for Principals sets out what principals are expected to know, understand and do to achieve excellence in their work (AITSL, 2012). In addition, a leadership standard has been established on the basis of three requirements: vision and values, knowledge and understanding, and personal qualities, social and interpersonal skills. These three requirements are revealed within five areas of professional practice: leading teaching and learning; developing self and others; leading improvement, innovation and change; leading the management of the school, and engaging in and working with the community (Timperley, 2011).

The principal training model promoted by AITSL includes steering activities, coordinated by independent, specialized institutions at the national level, to assess the relevance, use and added value of the Standard for Principals. Furthermore, AITSL has developed tools so that principals and school leaders may reflect critically on their performance and receive feedback from peers, pupils, school teams, members of the community and school governing bodies. Moreover, AITSL organizes expert team meetings with schools and their leaders with the aim of discussing the standards and defining a plan of action and implementation in each school.

From March 2013 and for three years, there will be an evaluation of AITSL by the University of Melbourne and the Australian College of Educators. Data from the first annual assessment, conducted in 2013 (AITSL, 2014), attest to a high level of knowledge of the school leadership standards. Some 65% of principals and teachers reported that they applied the school leadership standards in classroom practice. Other findings from the report indicated that a high percentage of the interviewees considered that AITSL facilitated the connection between education policy and

⁴ See <http://www.aitsl.edu.au/>.

school leaders. The evidence gathered showed how the standards act as a mechanism facilitating accountability and quality management in schools.

The evaluation report (AITSL, 2014) contains a number of examples of the application of the school leadership standards both in initial teacher education programmes and in accreditation and evaluation bodies for working teachers. A further example is that of the professional development activities that various Australian universities have initiated to facilitate implementation of the standards by school leaders.

In **sum**, it is worthwhile for other regions and countries to consider school leadership through the Australian case owing to the existence of, among others, the AITSL. The Institute is run for and by teachers and principals with a great many projects in the field of school leadership. It is widely recognized nationally and internationally and has promoted the review and synthesis of research into the quality of teaching and school leadership. It has also organized important national school leadership programmes and professional training and development in school leadership and improvement. AITSL shows how some bodies can promote and drive school leadership policies with a significant impact on education quality and learning.

(b) Good School Leadership Framework and leadership in Chile

The Chilean school system is very different from that of other countries in Latin America, since school registration is distributed practically equally between public education and subsidized private education. The operating criteria are very different. For the public sector, there are norms that govern the process, while in the private sector, the designation of management tasks and professional stability depend on the school owner. The country does not have “a single system” for selecting leadership teams, but combines aspects of market functioning for the private sector with some basic norms in the case of the public sector. This is the backdrop to the introduction of the *Good School Leadership Framework* proposed by the Ministry of Education after the success of the Good Teaching Framework, which established national criteria to assess the performance of classroom teachers (MINEDUC, 2011).

The establishment of the *Good School Leadership Framework* is an example of how, through consensus, Chileans managed to establish a set of norms and principles on skills which all principals were expected to possess. The process involved various national consultations and benefited from the backing of the teachers’ professional association (Teachers Association) and regional and local authorities. As well as working together so to design the standards, objectives and benchmarks, it was necessary to move forward in building the institutions required to ensure that the consensus could advance (Nuñez *et al.* 2010).

An aspect particular to Chile that is vitally important to consider is the position of technical unit head, who supports the teachers’ work, thereby playing a key role in school leadership. This position requires a more broadly shared vision of leadership and greater definition regarding the role of the principal in particular, and the relation that should be established in that respect with other members of the leadership team (Horn and Marfán, 2010).

The *Good School Leadership Framework* was a notable step in Chile in defining the new leadership function, as it reiterated the traditional legal concepts of the managerial function and associated educational, administrative and financial duties, but went further by identifying and specifying in detail four key dimensions: leadership, curriculum management, resource management and management of the organizational and social climate (Nuñez *et al.* 2010).

What interests us especially in this report is the *leadership* dimension of the *Good School Leadership Framework* as it is a clear example of the importance accorded since the 2000s to aspects linked to principals’ ability to guide school actors in achieving the school goals. The leadership exercised by principals in Chile has been prioritized and a set of criteria and descriptors has been defined enabling it to be assessed and boosted. Among the criteria for evaluating school

leadership are the capacity to manage change and conflict in the school, to provide information that is useful for decision-making and to engage the school community in developing the school's educational project (Weinstein and Muñoz, 2012).

The *leadership* component is complemented by the *curriculum management* component, under which the management team ensures effective pupil learning by paying special attention to actual curriculum implementation in the classroom, controlling the quality of teaching-learning strategies and monitoring and assessing curriculum implementation (Weistein and Muñoz, 2012).

Resources management goes hand in hand with leadership and curriculum management and focuses on the management team's ability to obtain, distribute and organize such resources in the light of the school's goals, duly taking into account the institution's educational blueprint and pupils' learning achievements. The definition of "resources" covers materials and finance as well as human beings – for example, the task of leadership in the recruitment, assessment and development of teachers under its responsibility (Muñoz *et al.*, 2010).

Lastly, the component relating to *ethos management and conviviality* are crucial to the development of effective leadership and are linked to tasks that principals must perform in order to create conditions in which the various school stakeholders can interact appropriately, feel at ease and identify with the schools.

The *Good School Leadership Framework* provides Chile with common benchmarks for use in initiating performance assessment of principals, other school leaders and technical-educational counsellors. It is designed to increase professionalization and thus enhance the quality of institutional administration and all pupils' learning achievements. It provides guidance for all members of the education system on what is expected of school leaders (Weistein and Muñoz, 2012).

According to Donoso *et al.* (2011), the next step in Chile is to link the quality of education to the quality of management by principals. The *Good School Leadership Framework* lays the foundations on which transparent assessment systems can be devised, as it provides for significant, contextualized and easily recorded indicators, and accountability for their development, all associated with management control systems that have proven their effectiveness in several educational organizations.

In **sum**, the Chilean case study is a source of inspiration, for it shows that the major change in the functions of principals in the 2000s was linked to a change in the role that principals and the management team are expected to fulfil. Whereas they were previously considered to be operatives implementing instructions issued by the central agency of the education system, they are now required to become educational leaders in their schools. The *Good School Leadership Framework* enshrines a key idea widely accepted in the 2000s, namely that educational change must first take root in school communities themselves and that such rooting requires resolute educational leadership.

(c) Principals in the Republic of Korea held in high social esteem

The Republic of Korea has not always had an exemplary and acknowledged school system. This Asian country has made remarkable progress in the last few decades, owing to its resolute commitment to its citizens' education. It had an extremely high illiteracy rate after the Second World War, but has now surprised the world because its school dropout rate is very low at 2% and 60% of the population are university graduates (Cho, 2012).

Education has great cultural and social value in the Republic of Korea. The society's consensus on the importance of education is unqualified, and so everyone is indisputably ready to give due attention and priority and allocate resources. The endeavour for betterment is reflected in pupils' intensive school days. In addition to seven classroom hours in schools, children usually spend

another five hours studying in private classes in order to strengthen their knowledge. Primary education is compulsory and free, and the first three years of secondary education, too, are compulsory (Jones, 2013).

Education is a central long-term field in the formulation of public policies. National development and education strategies are intimately interlinked and, as education curricula are developed every five years, initiatives can be aligned and updated, and the utmost systemic integration has always been the rationale on which they have each been based. Besides, teaching is a highly respected professionalized profession and it is therefore well paid. Only the top 5% of pupils graduating from secondary education may take up a teaching career, and the salaries are consistent with that high quality and professionalization. Over a closely supervised and assessed career of fifteen years on average, teachers' income will rise by 80% (Jones, 2013).

According to Jensen *et al.* (2012), the Republic of Korea is characterized by a strong trend towards centralization and open central-government intervention in all educational aspects. Teacher policy is led by the government; it is the Ministry of Education that is in charge of managing teacher training, certification and hiring.

It takes at least 25 years of service in the teaching profession for a regular teacher to be promoted to the post of deputy principal or principal. Therefore, as teachers enter the labour market at the age of 25, they are promoted to a deputy principal or principal post at the age of 50 years or more. Access is highly competitive because only 1% of all teachers can rise to the position of principal (Jensen *et al.*, 2012; Jones, 2013). Owing to keen competition at the hiring and promotion stages, only the potentially best teachers are employed as principals in the system (Jones, 2013).

Principals are not trained separately, but are recruited from among teachers who are promoted. To be promoted, candidates must have proven capacity and ability discernible from their professional record and research achievements, and they must win in the teeth of stiff competition. Research achievements include points scored in training courses and points validated on the award of Doctor's or Master's degrees; a maximum of two Master's qualifications may be filed in order to be granted points (KEDI, 2011).

The occupation of teacher or principal in the Republic of Korea is highly prized and acknowledged by the society. Principals are respected by the public and are considered by many to be the "cream of the teaching profession" (Kane *et al.*, 2007). It is a post that is much sought by teachers, and the requirements include moral integrity, social trust and educational and administrative expertise (KEDI, 2013). Teachers and principals in the Republic of Korea are highly respected and are among the country's best paid professionals, as they are hired from among the best in their year of graduation (Cho, 2012).

In **sum**, unlike other East Asian countries, such as China (Hong Kong) and Singapore, that have promoted leadership schemes for principals, the Republic of Korea has not given priority to the subject (Cho, 2012). It is, however, a very interesting case for rethinking school leadership in view of the high esteem in which the society holds teachers and principals. Society's high esteem and great respect for teachers and principals in the Republic of Korea are crucial factors that result in an ethos of order and hard work in classrooms of schools in the Republic of Korea and generate high academic achievement among pupils.

(d) South Africa – Leadership and the training programme

South Africa acceded to democracy in 1994, and innumerable changes have since occurred. Education is now enshrined as a right in the Constitution and is compulsory for all children between the ages of seven and fifteen. There is still much to be done, however, on account of the economic, social and political rifts inherited from *apartheid*. The shortage of qualified teachers and principals is one of the major problems.

Successive democratic governments' primary concerns since 1994 have included the training of teachers and principals. The *Advanced Certificate in Education School Management and Leadership* (ACE) was developed against that backdrop. It is supported by the Ministry of Education of South Africa; it began as a pilot experiment in 2007-2009 in six provinces and has now become institutionalized (Msila, 2012).

ACE has been designed to train members of the school management team who hope to become principals. The goal, under the ACE programme, is to provide structured learning opportunities that promote quality education in South African schools by training a corps of education leaders to apply critical understanding, values, knowledge and skills to school leadership and management consistent with the vision of democratic change.

The ACE programme was designed by the Department of Education of South Africa in consultation with the National Management and Leadership Committee (NMLC), on which representatives of universities that offer the ACE sit. The model was based on five components: teaching materials; training workshops on university campuses; support for university-selected tutors; networking by participants in the training course; online assessment of leadership in practice.

The course has a total duration of 24 months part time and is implemented by universities under a common framework of standards for principals. It is a 120-credit course divided into three modules: fundamental module (10 credits); core modules (90 credits) and elective modules (12 credits). Assessment is formative and is based on the preparation of applied projects in the school, in which the teacher who hopes to become a principal continues to work part time. In addition to attending lessons, candidates are supported by a team of tutors during the 24-month course.

An assessment of the ACE programme has shown that it lays strong emphasis on practice-based learning, supported by materials, coaching and networking. Some implementation problems were identified and ascribed to the complexity of the multi-strategy model. The workshops and theoretical lectures operate satisfactorily, but some difficulties have arisen in "grounding" theoretical knowledge on principals' actual school leadership (Msila, 2013).

It would seem, nonetheless, that the success of the ACE programme is due in part to the widely accepted strategy of coaching and peer networking – two mechanisms through which leadership learning results in effective practice. This is not an easy process, however, as it requires that a variety of human and financial resources be available to sustain principals' new practices in schools. Furthermore, under the coaching model, properly trained mentors are required (Bush *et al.* 2009).

In **sum** the South African case study shows that school leaders can be trained, under a specific training programme, to lead and manage educational institutions effectively. Learning opportunities are provided under the ACE programme, as many strategies are used to develop school leadership and management knowledge and skills within a setting geared to democratic change. The goal is to empower principals to lead and manage schools effectively and to contribute to the improvement of the quality of education.

4. Requirements for school leadership that influence the quality of education

This report has sought to demonstrate that the leadership exercised by principals is fundamental and has a positive impact on the learning outcomes of children and adolescents. When leadership is poor or non-existent, however, the opposite effect can occur, hindering pupils' learning and affecting the quality of schools.

In many countries, it would seem that educational policy is a hindrance to effective school leadership. There are well-known shortcomings in the selection, promotion and professional development of managerial teams. Furthermore, there is an excess of bureaucratic and administrative duties to the detriment of other more important educational activities. In the future,

stronger empirical evidence should be gathered to prove the effect that school leadership has on pupils' learning and on the professional development of teachers. This has been a primary concern in educational research in the English-speaking world, and it must be put on the education agenda in many other countries.

It is necessary to better understand how school principals can positively influence pupil outcomes and to clearly identify which leadership practices foster adequate teacher performance in schools. Studies in this field will not only bridge large gaps in educational research, but more importantly, they will also help political decision-makers develop programmes to support principals in their educational leadership.

School leadership is built on and refers to the ability to guide, inspire and motivate pupils and teachers. This ability is not innate, but can be promoted and developed through training, collaboration and exchange between peers.

The international situation and, in particular, the four cases presented in this report, show that there is no single solution. There are various strategies for developing school leadership. Australia's *AITSL* shows the role that certain organizations can play in the promotion and advancement of policy on educational leadership. The Chilean case study underlines the importance of the *Good School Leadership Framework* in defining the ideal role and functions for principals to assume in order to become school leaders. In the Republic of Korea leadership is not a priority, but has been included in the report due to the *value* that Korean society attributes to principals and its influence on high academic achievement. The South African example constitutes an investment in a sound, systematic *training programme* to improve the performance and leadership abilities of principals.

The bibliography and four analysed examples show that the school leadership exercised by principals is key to improving education. Although the situation in each country is heterogeneous and each context has its own particular differences, there is a series of policies that seems to yield good results. Firstly, it is necessary to *put the responsibilities of school leadership into context*. Leadership is not an innate quality and does not automatically improve the education system on its own. It is important that the primary responsibilities of school leaders be clearly defined according to the context in which they operate. These responsibilities must be defined by understanding the practices that are most likely to improve teaching and learning.

Furthermore, future scenarios will probably lead to an *increase in school leadership responsibilities*, which must then be delegated inside and outside of the school. When we consider leadership, we should consider not only principals, but other educational actors in the school environment such as teachers and school counsellors. The concept of school leadership must be enhanced and policy must be adjusted to accommodate it.

Lastly, the post-2015 agenda highlights the need to *develop sustainable leadership in the future*. The challenge is two-fold: on one hand, the quality of current leadership must be improved and on the other, sustainable leadership must be developed for the future. Principals must be acknowledged and compensated for their heavy workloads and must receive adequate remuneration and support. The selection processes must be transparent to avoid uncertainty and provide proper guarantees.

As the Education for All Global Monitoring Report (2014) indicated, equality in access and learning must stand at the heart of future education goals. We must ensure that all children and young people learn the basics and have the opportunity to acquire the necessary transferrable skills to become global citizens. Finally, regarding the learning crisis, all countries, both rich and poor, must see to it that all children have access to well-qualified, motivated teachers, and principals play a key role in this task. The changes and transformations that have taken place since the year 2000 have had significant consequences for education systems, which poses immense challenges for

the post-2015 agenda. One of the main challenges is the development of school leadership practices that facilitate the achievement of quality education and learning for all.

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