Education Reform: The Case of School Leadership in Comparative Perspective

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Presentation objectives:

• Why is school leadership an “afterthought” of education reform, given the evidence of its positive influence on school achievement?

• Analysis of factors that influence the adoption of school leadership reforms across OECD countries.
What is school leadership? School directors/principals/administrators that lead/administer schools (primary/secondary). From administrative to leadership.

Public policy & process? Many defs.: government actions & intentions that govern actions (Cochran et al., 2009); stages of public policy (Easton, 1953); ACF (Sabatier, 1988)....

Edu Policies: Programmes developed by public authorities (values/ideas) directed to education public enacted by administrators & ed professionals (Rayou & Van Zanten, 2015)

Education policy = education reform: Reform refers to change in an existing policy, in one concept refers to policy and the process of change (Psacaropoulos, 1989)
School leaders and how to professionalise their practice
Factors that influence school leadership reform:

**Research methodology**

**SL reforms literature review:** school/ed leadership, ed policy, ed change, ed reform search: + 960 articles > -70.

**Develop theoretical framework:** building on public policy process theory, for analysis of adoption of school leadership reforms.

**Quantitative analysis:** probability of having a school leadership reform across OECD countries (OLS).

**Qualitative comparative case study:** indepth analysis into individual country reforms (Mexico, Norway, Spain).

**Conclusions**
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School leadership reform?

Analysis: quantitative and qualitative

Conclusions
Why focus on school leadership?

After teaching, SL is the most important school level factor in improving school outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2008)

- Implementing school reform by linking policy and practice
- Improving equity by reaching out to other schools and communities
- Creating the conditions for students and teachers to perform well
- Shaping teaching and learning environments
Among the +450 education reforms across OECD countries...

Distribution of policies adopted by policy lever, 2008-2014

- Preparing Students for the Future: 30%
- School Improvement: 25%
- Equity and Quality: 15%
- Evaluation and Assessment to Improve Student Outcomes: 10%
- Funding: 9%
- Governance: 5%

School leaders are key to most support teachers and to other school reforms.

Investment in their role appears limited across OECD countries.

School leadership: A gap between expectations and investment? An “afterthought” in policy?
Education context has changed, 1980-2015

- Education: Results oriented (Natl’/Intl PISA/PIRLS/TIMSS)
- Governance: National prescription, Decentralisation & NPM
- Learning: Knowledge/class ctrd, Skills and competencies/student centered
- Schools: Admin units, Networks of learning/IT

Administration, Management, Leadership
Context of decentralisation

Percentage of decisions taken at each level of government in public lower secondary education (2011), EAG, 2014
School level autonomy in staff hiring, PISA 2006-2012

Source: OECD PISA Database
School level autonomy in curriculum issues, PISA 2006-2012

Source: OECD PISA Database
Accountability, PISA 2006-2012

Data posted publicly and used for tracking schools for admin purposes average, PISA, 2006, 2009, 2012

Source: OECD PISA Database
Professional development activities of teachers in accordance with the teaching goals of the school

I ensure that teachers work according to the school’s educational goals
I observe instruction in classrooms
I use student performance results to develop the school’s educational goals
I give teachers suggestions as to how they can improve their teaching
I monitor students’ work

When a teacher has problems in his/her classroom, I take the initiative to discuss matters
Practices: teachers self-efficacy and professional collaboration, TALIS 2013

- Teach jointly as a team in the same class
- Observe other teachers’ classes and provide feedback
- Engage in joint activities across different classes
- Take part in collaborative professional learning
Practices: school leaders and professional collaboration, TALIS 2013

- Discuss individual students
- Share resources
- Team conferences
- Collaborate for common standards
- Team teaching
- Collaborative PD
- Joint activities
- Classroom observations

Percentage of teachers

Average
France

Exchange and co-ordination
Professional collaboration
School leadership instructional practices, 2012

Index of instructional leadership, PISA 2012

Source: OECD PISA 2012.
## School leadership reform? How do different experts see it?

### Education policy
- Diem & Young (2015): Need to review content complexity & associated factors in SL Reform

### School improvement
- SL key in reforms for improvement (Fullan; 2009) Hargreaves & Shirley, 2013
- Key in implementation process (Datnow, 2002)
- Elmore (1995)
- Hanushek & Woessman (2013): decentralisation –autonomy need mgmt capacity

### School leadership and outcomes
- SL play a key indirect role in school improvement (Robinson et al., 2009; .
- Especially key for disadvantaged schools (Branch & Hanushek, 2012).
- Different roles: pedagogical, transformational, distributed.

### SL policy
- Comparative research on concrete training policies (Huber, 2010; Normore, 2010; Magro 2013)
- ICP/EI
- US/UK research on policies (research or officially driven policies)
Agree

SL reform follows general education policy context of **decentralisation and autonomy**, coupled with accountability and focus on outcomes.

There has been a **shift from management to leadership** in the practices, reflecting contextual change or part of broader reforms.

**Recent calls for need invest in school leadership** (different reasons): as key for SI; as actor of reform, as reforms cannot reach classrooms if SL don’t implement them. SL as object and actor of reform.

**Recommended policies**: leadership training (whether initial or continuing), standards and definition of key roles to play; incentives to make it an attractive position.
School leadership reform? How do different experts see it?

Limits

Tensions in conceptualisation of role of school leadership. Some as reflection of marketisation trend, others as key actor to school improvement. Eclectic and segmented research area.

School leadership role to be better understood.

SL reform is a missing link in research. Within different strands, SL reform not included as part of research (policies or process), leaving a gap in knowledge base which could improve policy actions in this area.

School leadership reform needs to be part of research.

No clear framework for analysis, many different research topics and approaches (case studies, narratives, ethnography, meta analysis). Quantitative analysis limited.

Need policy framework for analysis.
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School leadership reform?

Analysis: a picture of school leadership reforms

Conclusions
School leadership reforms, 2008-2014

Index of instructional leadership, PISA 2012

- **Mexico:** Teacher Professional Service (2013)
- **Spain:** New Leadership Training Requisite and Programme (2013)
- **Finland:** Advisory Board for Prof. Personnel (2008)
- **Ireland:** Professional Development for School Leaders & teachers (2011)
- **Portugal:** School Leadership Reform 2008; mandatory training (2013)
- **Norway:** Leadership training and development (2009)
- **Australia:** Professional Standards and Professional Charter 2011
- **Chile:** Reform and Professional training plans (2013)
- **Italy:** Initial Training (2013)

Source: OECD PISA 2012.
How to look at school leadership reform: Which are the factors that influence school leadership reform?

Many different frameworks of the policy making process, aim to provide a rational explanation of policy change.

- Punctuated equilibrium theory (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993)
  - tendency of policy making to be incremental and punctuated with short periods when major policy change happens.

- Policy (multiple) Streams, Kingdon (1995)
  - problem, policy, political streams come together when policy window opens.

- Advocacy Coalition Frameworks (AFC), Sabatier (1999, 2014)
  - efforts of numerous competing groups to influence policy development over time across subsystems. Agree on the role of policy actors to promote reform.

- Bell & Stevenson (2006)
  - Sociopolitical environment; governance & strategic direction; organisational practices & procedures.
A framework for analysis of SL reform adoption process
A framework for analysis of SL reform adoption process

- Each model has value for interpretation and to guide education policy action.
- The analysis of theories on policy making process shows common features relevant to the adoption of education and school improvement reforms:

- Political and social context that surrounds education discourse
- Education environment
- Policy complementarities
- Human agency: role of actors/institutions

Time
Education policy process

Political and social context
- Political cycle
- Economy
- Equity
- culture

Education environment
- Edu achievement
- Governance
- Reform history
- Teacher/SL quality

Policy complementarities
- Autonomy
- Accountability
- New curriculum
- Other reforms

Human agency
- Ministry/Agencies
- Unions
- Stakeholders/Researchers
- IOs
**Statistical model: relevant contextual factors of SL related reforms**

\[ y_{it} = \alpha + \beta_{1} \delta_{1} + \gamma + \varepsilon \]

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## A look at SL related reform context: policy complementarities

Teacher/SL in context of autonomy/ accountability, associated to system and school evaluation & curricular reforms.

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### Model results on factors associated with SL reforms

#### Correlation between school leadership reforms and:
- Governance: political cycle
- Economic & equity variables (GDP and HDI)
- Autonomy in curriculum, selection of text books and selecting teachers for hire
- Accountability (school & system eval and curricular reforms)

#### Number of areas not correlated to the adoption of reforms:
- Education attainment or achievement (measured by PISA)
- Autonomy in courses and autonomy in salaries
- Initial levels of school leadership (interaction with accountability)

Model caveats: 91 cases; selection bias, missing information; policy coverage
School leadership reform: case study analysis

**Political and economic context**
- Pact for Mexico and Constitutional Reform (2/2013)
- New Professional Teaching Service Law (2013)
- New test to select new school leaders: 2015: 37,700 took test: 60%

**Education environment**
- New School Leadership Training Programme (2009)
- Principal standards (2009)
- 6 Providers across Norway: 500 per year – strong results

**Policy complementarities**
- LOCME (2013): more autonomy for principals
- Requisite for SL training programme in selection process

**Human agency**

Mexico

Norway

Spain
School leadership reform context

Mexico
- 222,350 schools
- 1,156,500 teachers
- 25,603,600 students

37,700 took test
60% passed

Norway
- 3,000 schools
- 66,520 teachers
- 615,900 students

500 school leaders annually

Spain
- 27,790 schools
- 664,325 teachers
- 8,087,347 students

142 school leaders year

Dimension of education systems differ, but similarities in SL reforms AND SMALL DIMENSION?
Case studies: school leadership reforms Mexico, Norway, Spain

Reform associated

Not associated to reform

Pol cycle
Achievement
Governance
Ref History
Autonomy
Accountability
New Curriculum
Other
Ministry/Agency
Unions
Researchers
Ios

Mexico
Norway
Spain
Part of broader education reform effort

**Political context:** Politics matter, in terms of newly elected or having a majority government. Social context of leadership is also important.

**Education context:** From govt to governance (NPM): SL with decentralisation, school autonomy and accountability. Investing in developing SL to have the capacity to deliver.

**Policy Reforms:** Reform included in a broader law aiming towards school improvement (LOCME, SP; White Paper, NOR; Constit. Reform, MX). Afterwards becomes a programme on its own, with own dynamic.

**Role of key actors:** Ministry led reforms, often promoted by a group or individuals who have been influenced by research or OECD or other international organisation. Used a policy window to promote this reform.

Case studies: school leadership reforms Mexico, Norway, Spain
Some preliminary conclusions: school leadership reforms have common patterns

Rather than being defined alone, school leadership reforms are part of broader governance trend of decentralisation, autonomy and accountability. Not seen by broad policy and public for its own value for school improvement.

- **Political context**
  - Elections and new government, economic environment.

- **Edu context**
  - Edu progress – indirect
  - Part of a broader reform history and development
  - Governance: more centralised with school responsibility

- **Policy complementarities**
  - Always with other broad scale reform
  - Autonomy, assessment and accountability
  - Curricular reforms

- **Human agency**
  - Key actors: Ministry, policy entrepreneurs
  - International agencies, researchers.
Limited reform in relation to possibilities:

**Political context:** depending on politics. Issue needs to be depolitised or agreed by different parties.

**Education context:** Part of a broader trend, no focus in role in improvement. Seen as objects of reform, delivering government agenda, not adopting leadership role. **Fear of too much leadership?**

150/500/23,586 per year (?) In relation to scale of issue/number of schools. Either not mandatory or small n. of candidates. **Limited scale of reforms.**

**Policy complementarities:** Reform included in a broader law aiming towards school improvement. Afterwards becomes own separate **small programme not linked to broader policy.**

**Role of key actors:** Ministry led reforms, with opposition from some players, support from **SL representatives but low engagement or representation.**

Some preliminary conclusions: school leadership reforms have common patterns
School leadership: not a policy priority but a policy “afterthought”?
Thank you!
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Sources upon request:

Analysis from database combining information from:
www.oecd.org/edu/reformfinder.htm
Education Policy Outlook 2015: Making Reforms Happen
OECD PISA data (autonomy, accountability,
HDI: UNESCO Human development index
Elections database.