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# School leadership approaches and practices under the paradigm of New Public Management - an entrepreneurial perspective

## Approcci e pratiche di leadership scolastica secondo il paradigma del Nuovo Management Pubblico - una prospettiva imprenditoriale

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### Abstract

The New Public Management Philosophy assumes that changes in responsibilities, available resources and knowledge can have a positive impact on the successful management of an organization, and this, in turn, can have a positive impact on schools and on teaching and learning processes. In this article, we explore the significance of school leaders' entrepreneurial leadership approaches as potential leadership responses to new public management-driven changes, affecting the inner and outer world of the school. This research work presents not only the framework and the notion of entrepreneurial school leadership in conjunction with the new challenges to public management, but it also provides an empirical insight into entrepreneurial school leadership approaches across various educational contexts.

**Keywords:** School leadership, New public management, Entrepreneurial leadership, Parental involvement.

### Sintesi

La nuova Filosofia di Gestione Pubblica presuppone che i cambiamenti delle responsabilità, le risorse disponibili e le conoscenze possano avere un impatto positivo sull'efficace gestione di un'organizzazione. Ciò, a sua volta, può avere un impatto favorevole sulle scuole e sui processi didattici e di apprendimento. In questo articolo esploriamo il significato degli approcci di leadership imprenditoriale dei dirigenti scolastici, indicandoli come potenziali risposte ai recenti cambiamenti nella gestione pubblica, con ripercussioni su tutto il settore dell'istruzione, sia al suo interno che al suo esterno. Questa ricerca presenta non solo il quadro e la concettualizzazione della leadership imprenditoriale a livello scolastico, in relazione anche con le nuove sfide della gestione pubblica, ma fornisce anche un approfondimento empirico degli approcci di leadership scolastica nei vari contesti educativi.

**Parole chiave:** Dirigenza scolastica, New Public Management, Imprenditorialità, Coinvolgimento dei genitori.

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# 1. New Public Management in education and its implications for school leaders and their practices

Various authors have agreed and concluded that change is considered to be not only an important constant aspect in our lives, as well as a key challenge, but also an important factor that affects an education system which includes both the educational processes and the outcomes (Altrichter, 2017; Fullan, 2015; Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2011). In addition to general context conditions (OECD, 2019), such as demographic developments and structural changes towards a service and knowledge-based society, also economic circumstances have been identified, such as public budgets and boundaries of national employment markets. In the past decade or so, as a policy response to those changes, more attention was paid to the new system (management) philosophy of New Public Management. This is mainly characterized by greater degrees of Autonomy, Accountability, as well as School Voice and Choice. These New Public Management approaches aim at making individual schools more effective, efficient, evidence-oriented and successful. Consequently, a great deal of attention has been given to school principals' leadership practices, such as distributed leadership styles, as well as instructional/pedagogical and transformational practices, which have proven to have an important impact on student academic outcomes, under the new (results-oriented) steering paradigm of more efficiency and more effectiveness (Pietsch &

Tulowitzki, 2017; Scheerens, 2012). Many of the aforementioned effective leadership styles resonate well with the issues of Accountability and Autonomy, which have been not only discussed but have also been the focus of research initiatives. This is less true in the case of school Competition and Marketization (Choice) which have become two hot and heavily discussed issues in recent years worldwide (Schleicher, 2018; Altrichter *et al.*, 2012; Lubienski, 2009). On the contrary, these issues have remained largely under-researched, especially with regards to their implications on school leaders' practices (Cheng, Ko & Lee, 2016; Altrichter, Heinrich & Soukup-Altrichter, 2014).

In addition, the same holds true for the importance of entrepreneurial leadership in public and private sector organizations when it comes to dealing with changes inside and outside the organization in order to make it more efficient and more effective. According to Yemini, Addi – Raccah & Katarivas (2015, p. 3), “entrepreneurship is considered to be the main driving force of innovation and change”, through the introduction of opportunities and changes, so that efficient and effective performance can be achieved both in the private and public sector.

Furthermore, Cheng, Ko and Lee (2016) investigated various organizations and came up with the notion that breakthrough inventions, products and services are based on a new dimension of knowledge search – the search of originality. These researchers further demonstrated that incorporating original knowledge, and, in general, originality, into development could generate high-impact

breakthroughs, as well as promote breakthrough inventions thanks to the entrepreneurial approach.

Furthermore, Paleno and Kleiner (2000) stated that leadership in entrepreneurship enables economies around the world to benefit from the various positive effects of economic growth. By acting as entrepreneurs, this kind of leaders demonstrates innovation, creativity and self-determination. With regard to entrepreneurship in the USA Paleno and Kleiner (2000) argued that the long-term success of small businesses in the whole world depends mainly on: (a) the leader's skill to act in an entrepreneurial way to solve conflicts, (b) the willingness and capability to combine personal values with market potential and financial resources, as well as (c) the entrepreneur's own ambition.

Entrepreneurship is based on people or otherwise on the entrepreneur who acts as an agent of change and organizes either land, labor or capital (Rahman & Fatima, 2011). More specifically, Rahman and Fatima (2011) identified the three following characteristics which are consistently associated with the aspect of entrepreneurship: (1) need for achievement; (2) internal control; and (3) risk taking propensity. Moreover, Hisrich and Drnovsek (2002) state that the interest in entrepreneurship is engraved in business, education, government and in the overall community life.

In this respect, and turning now to school organizations, school principals, leaders or managers act as entrepreneurs in a variety of different ways, according to the level of autonomy and accountability they enjoy. Fur-

thermore, the role of parental involvement, as an entrepreneurial-oriented activity by school leaders, in improving school outcomes, has been recognized by governments and countries across Europe, USA, New Zealand etc. (Hornby & Witte, 2010). In fact, in various countries government initiatives have targeted parental involvement as a key variable in promoting educational improvement. In addition, Yemini, Ramot and Sagie (2016) in one of their articles claimed that parents' interactions within the school context have become more intense. In particular, they argued that parental interest in school choice, in conjunction with parental responsibility with regards to their children's learning outcomes, has increased. This is due to the various reforms introduced in the most developed nations, which entailed reduced funding, privatization and, in some contexts, school decentralization processes, enabling schools to have more power and autonomy. For instance, in many countries (e.g. UK, USA, Israel) schools are exposed to increasing pressures in order to perform effectively in line with governmental policies and demands (Yemini *et al.*, 2015). Thus, school principals are being held accountable for school outcomes in line with specific school regulations, circulars and guidelines. Moreover, school principals have the opportunity to extend their range of autonomy because of the possible decentralization in the educational system. In this context, parents want to have a 'voice' regarding their children's education through their active participation in school decision-making. Specifically, they have a say in areas and topics that might affect the quality of their children's education (Beck & Murphy, 1999).

## 2. Defining and measuring entrepreneurial leadership in its relation with New Public Management challenges: introducing the Pashiardis-Brauckmann Model (assumptions stemming from that model)

Patterns of centralization or decentralization as well as evaluation and accountability and finally patterns of Voice, Choice, Competition and Marketization set the backdrop of leadership (re)actions for each school leader. Ignoring contextual and governance issues at play might be similar to examining school leadership without acknowledging the particular conditions in which it is in fact taking place (OECD, 2008). Based on this assumption, Brauckmann and Pashiardis (2016) examined under which organizational/ environmental circumstances there is the “best fit” between what is externally (and rationally) required and what is internally (and organically) being offered as a response from a leadership perspective. Even more so, little attention has been given to school leaders’ perceptions of this New Management Philosophy in the education sector relating to their leadership practices (Hallinger, 2016), especially, as this area relates to parental Voice, Choice, Competition and Marketization of the schools.

Therefore, the Pashiardis-Brauckmann Leadership Model was conceptualized under the assumption that the above-mentioned New Public Management features, as interpreted by school leaders, influence the leadership styles adopted by them (Brauckmann

& Pashiardis, 2011). Thus, the Pashiardis and Brauckmann approach can be understood as an early attempt to re-contextualize trends of organizational entrepreneurship in the educational sector stemming from the private sector, by including a school principal’s entrepreneurial leadership style (Pashiardis & Brauckmann, 2008), as can be seen in Fig. 1.

A school principal’s entrepreneurship feature, which encompassed the various external stakeholders, was considered by Pashiardis and Brauckmann to be an essential part of school leadership. School principals are important because they are a crucial element for the success or failure of a school organization. However, engaging other important stakeholders, such as parents, could contribute to the school overall success. In fact, school leaders should explore different ways of including various external stakeholders, with the aim to accomplish the school mission. Thus, both the context around the school as well as the outer context at large seem to influence the actions of school leaders and, at the same time, seem to be influenced by school leaders themselves. Therefore, through their model, Pashiardis and Brauckmann attempted to re-establish the importance of context as it relates with the actions of school leaders themselves. Consequently, they envisioned the Entrepreneurial leadership style in their model, as the school leaders’ attempt to interact with the context they work in, the internal as well as the external context.

In essence, the Pashiardis-Brauckmann definition of Entrepreneurial style is the ability to involve, in a creative way, the commu-

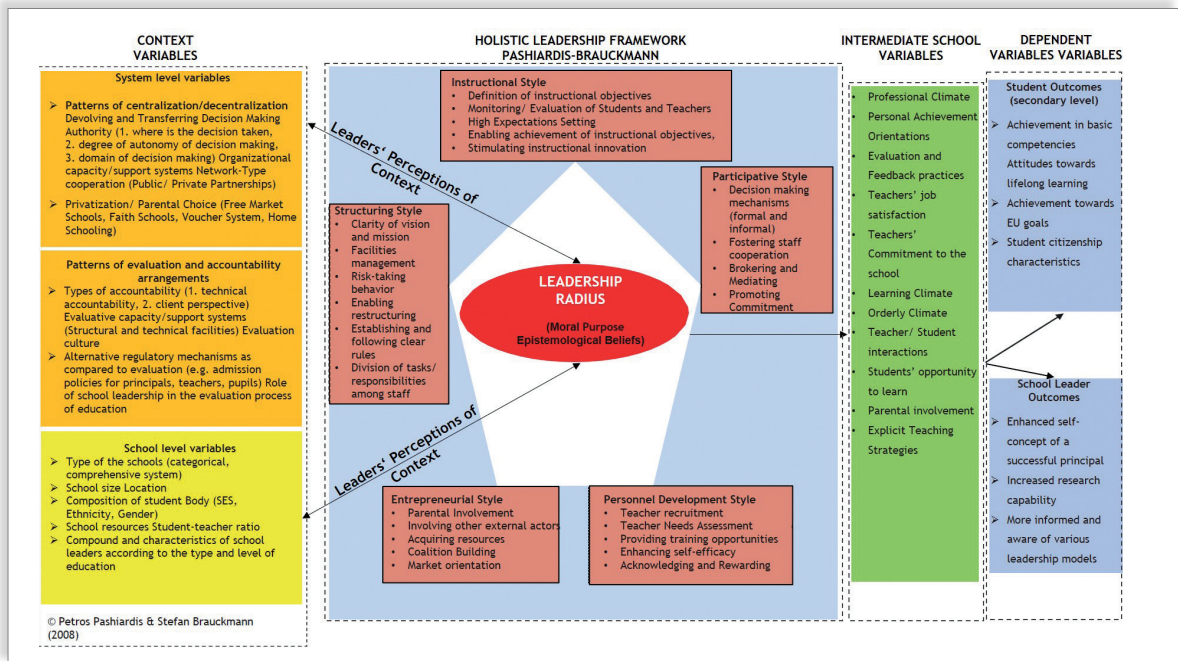


Fig. 1 - The Pashiardis-Brauckmann Holistic Leadership Framework.

nity (and especially parents) in school affairs. Taking into account the complex nature of a school's mission, it is imperative that schools create partnerships with parents and other organized elements of the community in order to get their support. These partnerships may create a safe school environment, encourage the provision of welfare services, improve academic achievement, as well as contribute to the accomplishment of other school goals. Thus, an outward-looking school principal who builds bridges and creates strategic alliances within the context he/she operates in is a truly entrepreneurial school leader. In short, by Entrepreneurial leadership style we mean the actions, practices, and behaviors of school leaders aimed to: (1) increase parental involvement; (2) involve other external actors; (3) creatively acquire more resources; (4) to strategically build coalitions and; (5) create a market orientation for their schools.

Therefore, Pashiardis and Brauckmann argue that in general external stakeholders, in this particular case the students' parents, are considered as a vital ingredient contributing to school success and improvement. In fact, the involvement of several external stakeholders could lead to improved school outcomes. Apparently, school principals have incorporated an entrepreneurial dimension because currently governments, communities and parents are demanding more from them. In relation to the above, it is also important to acknowledge that in the educational leadership field, entrepreneurship takes a more social meaning (Austin, Stevenson & Wei-Skillern, 2006), since it involves building relationships and alliances between the various external school stakeholders. Successful school leaders are people-centered, focused on fostering collaboration and, at same time, they get satisfaction



from seeing students develop. However, they are also focused on developing an entrepreneurship leadership approach by building the capacity of external school stakeholders. In this way, school principals can be seen as institutional entrepreneurs focused on complying with school demands, such as improving students' academic achievement. As institutional entrepreneurs, school leaders take up a central role in implementing various initiatives and changes that respond to the school needs and reflect their own interest (Yemini *et al.*, 2015).

Additionally, as mentioned before, the overall context plays an important role when it comes to exercising effective leadership styles separately or all styles combined together. As a consequence, Pashiardis and Brauckmann (2014) argue that the Entrepreneurial Leadership Style, based on their leadership framework, is also rather contextual and its application should be more closely connected with the nearby environment schools operate in. Following are some questions that might arise by looking into the school policy empirical fundamentals as well as into theoretical claims:

- Why do school principals opt for a given entrepreneurial leadership style (the aims and strategies behind EL)?
- What activities and tools do they use while exercising their entrepreneurial leadership style (Practicing EL)?
- Under what contextual/situational circumstances can an entrepreneurial leadership style be carried out (enabling & hindering factors of EL)?

### 3. Entrepreneurial leadership approaches and practices implemented by school principals – empirical insights

Yemini *et al.* (2015), as well as Pashiardis and Brauckmann (2019), argue that up until now, an operational and measurable concept of school principals as entrepreneurs within the school context has not yet been defined. Moreover, the researchers state that empirical studies on this topic depend mostly on teachers' reports of school principals' entrepreneurship, rather than on reports documenting the school principals' own perspectives. Similarly, Tillman (2002) argued that, although the literature contains a lot of data and information about the importance of parents' and other external school stakeholders' involvement, little emphasis has been given to the school principal's role in facilitating structures and incentives that lead to the effective involvement of potentially strategic partners, within the context of the New Public Management Reform as a comprehensive policy trend. Therefore, the question arises about the main aims and strategies that school principals adopt, in order to secure an entrepreneurial aspect within their leadership practices.

#### ***3.1. Aims and strategies behind entrepreneurial leadership***

A general trend towards the Entrepreneurial Leadership Style was the result of a three-year research study entitled 'Leadership Improvement for Student Achievement' (LISA project), funded by the European

Union (and initially including seven countries) from which the aforementioned Pashiardis-Brauckmann Leadership Framework derives (Fig. 1). In fact, based on the interpretation given by the researchers, this general trend towards school principals' entrepreneurship was a response to potentially limited school resources in terms of money, time allocation, and school personnel (Pashiardis, 2014). Furthermore, Pashiardis (2014) claimed that this trend towards entrepreneurship might be interpreted as a school principal's effort to rather privately create other support systems. Moreover, Brauckmann and Pashiardis (2016) recently emphasized the close connection of parental involvement as a practical manifestation of the Entrepreneurial Leadership Style (based on the Holistic Leadership Framework - see Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2011; Pashiardis, 2014). Based on their study, it is clear that this outward-looking style, referring to the Entrepreneurial Leadership Style entails a greater involvement of the various external forces and agents who will monitor and support the school work, and thus, they welcome it. In short, how one sees and reads the environment (both at a system and at a local level) is a very important variable in the way one will actually work on the ground (Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2016).

In a similar vein, a study conducted by Yemini *et al.* (2015) in Israel examined 10 school principals representing the full socio-economic spectrum of the society, identified by their peers and supervision authorities as institutional entrepreneurs in a school setting. Specifically, the research team conducted in-depth interviews with the 10 principals in or-

der to learn and highlight their personal perspectives. These interviews covered school principals' views on engagement in entrepreneurial activities and lasted between 90 to 120 minutes. The data were analyzed both independently and jointly by the research team. Based on the results, the contribution highlighted common features and characteristics of the notion of entrepreneurship in school settings. Specifically, the following common features of entrepreneurship activities in schools were identified: (1) entrepreneurship in line with school values, in which school principals shape their decisions based on their school vision; (2) team-playing, that is to say that school principals, as entrepreneurs, do not work alone to promote change and innovation; (3) school principals act as entrepreneurs not only to gain access to resources, but also to create external networks and strong alliances in order to have access to funding, staff and management; and finally (4) risk taking, where risk is taken in order to expand organizational capacity despite the limited resources.

In general, the aforementioned study shows that entrepreneurial school principals seek opportunities to fulfil their school vision. They work as part of a team. They do not hesitate to begin a new project (even if funding is not guaranteed), and finally they are ready to take risks. In other words, they introduced innovation leading to profound and lasting changes (Yemini *et al.*, 2015).

Additionally, a study by Li and Hung (2009) in the Asian context and particularly in Taiwan investigated 60 elementary schools, with the aim to understand how marketing

tactics could enhance parents' loyalty and involvement in the educational context. To collect data, a questionnaire was developed. Data were collected from 1,200 parents of the students attending these 60 elementary schools. In order to analyse the data, the research team conducted a multiple regression analysis. The results indicated that marketing tactics, such as promotion activities, were the most effective strategies to build parents' loyalty in schools. Through this promotion tactics, school principals had successfully enhanced the school's image and, in turn, influenced parents' school choice and retention. Promoting the school's image turned out to be a useful tool for increasing parents' loyalty. Based on the results, a school's favorable image could be promoted through the following strategies: (1) physical facilities and equipment; (2) teachers' skills, ability, and knowledge; (3) financial aid; (4) convenient location; (5) brochures and internet postings. In general, Li and Hung (2009) argued that identifying marketing tactics that foster parents' loyalty according to each context is of great importance. Therefore, in the Asian context, school principals should attract students and parents in the school not relying only on word-of-mouth strategies, but also by carefully analyzing, planning and implementing effective marketing programs and tactics.

Similar views were echoed by Petrolino and Giannelli (2014), in relation to Italian school principals in their efforts to raise funds and acquire resources. As stressed by the two authors in a case study, the Entrepreneurial leadership style was based upon a leader's

creativity, since he/she has to find out good "opportunities", enabling the school to look beyond its walls. As the authors underline, especially a "low resources" situation is a typical situation where such a style is likely to emerge and develop, as in Italy financial resources are attributed directly to schools by the Ministry of Education, although these resources are increasingly being cut. It is thereby quite reasonable that leaders are encouraged to use an "Entrepreneurial" style in order to acquire more resources from other external agencies and organizations.

### ***3.2. Practicing entrepreneurial leadership: parental involvement activities***

An important element in relation to the Entrepreneurial Leadership Style is parents' involvement in school affairs. More precisely, according to Pashiardis (2014), parental involvement mostly includes the following aspects: (1) parents' involvement in school decision-making; (2) encouragement of constructive and frequent communication regarding children's progress; and (3) voluntary work in various activities and school celebrations. Moreover, in a recent large study conducted by Povey and co-workers (2016) in Australia, the relationship between school principals' leadership and parental involvement was investigated. Specifically, 1,233 questionnaires were distributed to principals and presidents of parents' associations in Queensland State. The importance of the study was reflected in the Australian Government's recognition to increase quality and equity in Australian



schools through the improvement of parents–school partnerships. Povey *et al.* (2016) indicated that school principals have very positive attitudes towards parental engagement and most of them appreciated the benefits derived from parental involvement, such as enhanced student outcomes, attending school events, fundraising, etc. Moreover, the vast majority of the participants acknowledged that the most effective way to engage parents in the school process is based on: (1) the creation of a respectful and welcoming environment; (2) being flexible regarding the needs of parents and families, as well as (3) on parents' opportunities to voice issues and concerns. Moreover, the majority of the participating school principals appeared to have a collaborative leadership style and valued parental involvement in their school, whilst half of them appreciated having a list of volunteering parents willing to help at any time. The only concern highlighted by the results, was whether or not school principals expect parents' engagement in areas such as school governance, whilst it is worth mentioning that a smaller minority of the participants held a negative attitude towards parents' associations (Povey *et al.*, 2016).

Furthermore, Sui–chu Ho (2009) examined the role of school leadership in conjunction with parental involvement in the Asian context. Specifically, the researcher used a mixed methods approach with case studies followed by a series of questionnaires submitted to various school stakeholders. In fact, she argued that little has been done in Asian societies in order to understand parental involvement from the school principals' and

teachers' point of view. Sui–chu Ho (2009) explored three different school leadership approaches in relation to parental involvement. Based on her results, she identified three types of schools' principal leadership in relation to parental involvement: (1) the bureaucratic; (2) the utilitarian; and the (3) communitarian one. More specifically, the bureaucratic type referred to school leaders who considered schools as a formal organization with a rigid division of labor for teachers in school and parents at home. The utilitarian type referred to school principals who typically viewed parents as tools for promoting the school's reputation, as well as willing to fulfil the home-school policy mandates of the central government. Finally, the communitarian school principalship referred to those school principals who perceived schools as small communities by emphasizing informal, enduring and trusting relationships between home and school. In general, the researcher found that parental involvement in all participating schools was characterized as a multifaceted, multi-layered, and complex situation. More specifically, she argued that parental involvement in all schools was shaped by both group beliefs, as well as by the individual and collective actions of school staff and parents. Furthermore, even if the participating school principals recognized the importance of parental involvement, they expressed their concerns as to the availability of school resources in order to mobilize and strengthen it.

Similarly, in primary schools in the UK, Mleczo and Kington (2013) studied the role of school principals in enhancing parental involvement. The students involved in the re-

search work came from different ethnic minority groups of a low social and economic status in the Midlands region of the UK. The study took four years to be completed, so that researchers could further examine the sustainability of the activities introduced by the school principal and the staff in relation to parental involvement. The researchers investigated various case studies with a semi-structured interview format involving different stakeholders, such as school principals, students and parents. Moreover, daily life stories were conducted in order to engage the research participants in a dialogue concerning their perceptions of parental engagement. The findings highlighted the crucial role of school principals in the introduction, implementation and sustainability of initiatives involving parents in school. At the same time, this piece of research acknowledged the importance of school principals who are considered leaders with a strong commitment to their school. In fact, data revealed that school principals, even if facing serious problems, demonstrated positive attitudes and openness towards parents, which resulted in a higher parental involvement. Specifically, (1) clear communication with parents; (2) a series of workshops focused on parental skills; (3) clearly communicated expectations; (4) focus on students' academic achievement; (5) conversations with parents; (6) diplomacy and interaction; and finally (7) sharing creative ideas seemed to be successful initiatives aimed at developing relationships with parents and promote their subsequent increased involvement (Mleczo & Kington, 2013). In general, this piece of research is an example of a culture

aimed at encouraging parental involvement through a strong focus on school leadership, having as its main characteristics the leader's vision and strong and clear communication.

In another study conducted in South Carolina, USA, Boatwright (2014) investigated the developing role of school leaders in parental involvement strategies in four middle schools. The researcher visited each school three times and collected data from interviews with the school principals, teachers and parents. Moreover, he shadowed the school principals and teachers for a day and finally obtained study-related documents. The researcher aimed to identify successfully implemented practices aimed at increasing social capital and academic achievement, in conjunction with parental contributions. In general, the parental involvement strategies promoted by the school principals were the following: (1) parenting activities; (2) methods of communication; (3) volunteering; (4) learning at home; (5) equal decision-making for parents/guardians. More precisely, parenting activities included district workshops, parents' orientation, parent-teacher conferences, non-academic activities, family nights, student showcase nights and technology. Communication included phone calls, mailings and newsletters, websites, emails and meetings with the school principal. As far as voluntary work is concerned, parents were offered the opportunity to carry out voluntary activities in parent organizations, extra-curricular activities, and extra help in the community. Moreover, the school principals explained that recruiting parent volunteers can be difficult, and that they need to try new strategies to involve

as many parents as possible. Furthermore, 'learning at home' strategies promoted by the school principals were of great importance. In fact, school principals highlighted the strong impact of learning-at-home strategies on students' results at school. Finally, decision-making strategies were an important policy aspect. In this study, the school principals involved parents in decision-making processes through surveys and parent assemblies.

Another study by Kondakci and Sivri (2014) examined the relationship between schools and parents in the framework of a multiple case study involving nine elementary schools in the province of Izmir, Turkey. Specifically, semi-structured interviews with school principals and schoolteachers were conducted. Data were analysed based on the content analysis method. The results indicated that school leadership maintained functioning contact and communication with parents. In fact, the content of communication between schools and parents included not only students' results, but also the general state of the school. Specifically, school principals worked to keep open channels of communication through emails, phone calls, mailing newsletters, as well as by means of frequent report cards.

### ***3.3. Contexts of entrepreneurial leadership in schools***

Yemini *et al.* (2015) point out that the conditions that allow school leaders to act entrepreneurially, as well as the impact of their entrepreneurial leadership, depend on various pedagogical and organizational issues that

still need to be studied (Yemini *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, in recent studies (Kafa, 2016; Kafa & Pashiardis, 2016) on school principals' values system and leadership styles in Cyprus, one principal who took part in a case study and was promoting the Entrepreneurial Leadership Style mainly exhibited values of Conformity and Tradition. Specifically, the principal in his effort to build relationships and contacts with various external stakeholders such as parents etc., promoted the values of Conformity and Tradition. The value system of Conformity is connected with the limitation of leadership actions that could disrupt or undermine the smooth interaction with the various internal and external school stakeholders, as well as the restriction of freedom and choice in some school decisions as a result of the centralized educational system of Cyprus (e.g. kindness, politeness, obedience, self-control). On the other hand, the value system of Tradition is mostly connected with the values of respect and acceptance of the customs of the various communities where the school is located (humbleness, respect for tradition etc.). In that case, we could argue that the school principal promoted a number of values such as kindness, politeness etc. This was done in order to create strong alliances and a helping approach toward the various external stakeholders more easily, so that they can help support the school's mission. In other words, in relation to the promoted value systems of Conformity and Tradition, it is possible to identify the principal's ability to analyse the school's surrounding contexts and then approach the various external stakeholders accordingly, in order to

create better relationships (Kafa, 2016; Kafa & Pashiardis, 2016).

Furthermore, Barr and Saltmarsh (2014) investigated parents' behaviours in metropolitan, regional and rural areas of New South Wales (NSW) in Australia and their relationship with school principals. Specifically, this study investigated parents' experiences with regards to direct and indirect relationships with schools, their level and type of involvement, and specific factors that might impact upon their engagement in school activities. The researchers conducted a qualitative study in which they carried out a total of 22 focus group interviews (from 3 to 26 participants) in urban, suburban and outer metropolitan and regional centers in NSW, with a total number of 174 participants. Based on the results of the study, Barr and Saltmarsh (2014, p. 1) inferred that parents highlighted the crucial role that principals played in shaping parents' relationship with schools, by creating the right contextual framework. In other words, school principals' attitudes, communication and general leadership practices seemed to play an important role in fostering and maintaining relationships and contact between parents and schools. The findings of this study show that "parents are *more likely to be engaged with schools where the principal is perceived as welcoming and supportive of their involvement and on the contrary, are less likely to be engaged where the principal is perceived as inaccessible in supporting parents' involvement*". Additionally, for the parents participating in this study, the school principal's attitude towards them was a significant factor in determining whether they felt entitled to be

involved and contribute to the school's activities or the opposite. Furthermore, according to Barr and Saltmarsh (2014, p. 11), "*school choice' and associated parental expectations contributed additional layers of pressure and responsibility to the already intensified work of school principals, resulting from the need of school principals to be mindful of their role not just as entrepreneurs and 'impression managers', but rather as relationship builders in their communities*".

Furthermore, Epstein, Galindo and Sheldon (2011) tried to better understand the nature and impact of school leadership and actions on the quality of family involvement programs. In order to do that, the researchers collected data through a questionnaire from a "nested" sample of 24 districts and 407 schools in the USA. In their data analysis, they used a hierarchical linear modelling technique. In general, the findings suggest that school principals' support and assistance in favour of family involvement significantly contributed to schools' basic program implementation. Based on the study results the research team suggested a variety of policy-related actions that all schools could take into consideration, in order to increase the quality of school leadership in involving parents, based on the development of effective training programs and practices. Following are some of the actions suggested by the authors: (1) to appoint a district leader in order to assist schools in fulfilling the district policy for partnerships and to continuously improve their programs of family involvement; (2) to strengthen principals' support for partnerships, since school principals support for

partnerships has been shown to consistently, significantly and positively influence schools' basic program implementation; and (3) to extend the concepts of distributed leadership in order to incorporate families and parents into decision-making.

Moreover, Adams, Forsyth and Mitchell (2009) focused their research on understanding antecedents of parents' trust towards schools. Using questionnaires, the researchers examined school-level determinants of individual parent-school trust from a sample of 79 schools and 578 parents. An important aspect emerging from the findings of this particular study was that trust, as opposed to other variables and characteristics, is not associated with the context in which school leaders act as entrepreneurs with regards to parental involvement. In essence, the researchers came to the conclusion that parents' trust is not inherently deficient in schools plagued by social and contextual challenges. Adams, Forsyth and Mitchell (2009) argued that, regardless of the contextual elements such as poverty status, school size, diverse ethnic composition, and school level, school principals could in fact build and even sustain parents' trust by aligning particular policies and practices to address the affective needs of parents.

In another case study conducted at two elementary schools in the Los Angeles school district, Bolivar and Chrispeels (2011) collected data from multiple resources, such as observations of parent classes and implementation of focus groups interviews from various school stakeholders. The results suggested that increased parents' explicit knowledge

of the educational system, coupled with opportunities provided by the school principals, seemed to influence how well parents support their children's education. However, one important element in the above interaction was the aspect of trust showed by school principals towards students' parents. In this study, the participating parents showed two types of trust: (1) relational trust with school principals; and (2) relational trust with the other school staff. In order to create this kind of trust, channels of communication should be incorporated in all relationships between school leadership and parents. Therefore, once again the concept of trust acts as an important catalyst for parental involvement.

Finally, Watson and Bogotch (2015) highlighted four themes related to school leaders' challenges that can act as impediments to parental involvement. In this piece of research, the participating school principals identified certain themes in relation to the parents' low SES background: (a) culture and language, (b) poverty, (c) overemployment, and (d) access and literacy with respect to technology. In order to perform this research, the researchers employed the notion of dialogue with empirical evidence. Based on this, the research team argued that parents who did not speak English and worked unusual hours and often had more than one job, did not participate in school activities and were thus perceived by school principals as indicators of lost parental communication and contact. Once again, the context in relation to parental involvement levels acts as a crucial variable in school principals' efforts to promote an entrepreneurial leadership style.



In other words, despite the efforts of a principal towards increased parental involvement, through the entrepreneurial leadership style, parental involvement level is still dependent on parents' social class, socio-economic status and other variables related to the context where they live and work.

## 4. Concluding remarks

School principals exhibit an entrepreneurial leadership style by promoting themselves as reliable and trustworthy partners for various external stakeholders, in order to gain support and assistance for school matters. In fact, through constant interest and focus on the various external stakeholders, a school principal can gain their trust and, by extension, their support. Therefore, a school principal can create strong alliances with the various external stakeholders who support the school through invitations, conversations and in general through a constant communication process.

From a comparative perspective, it seems that the concept of entrepreneurial leadership represents a blend of different discursive ideas and interests (Mintrop & Klein, 2017; Research Centre for Learning and Teaching, Newcastle University, 2015) and therefore the outlines of this new governance paradigm seem to be quite vague. For instance, according to educational laws in a jurisdiction, we can have a variety of instruments in order to increase choice and voice; however, the concrete interpretation and utilization of these instruments into daily actions can be difficult (Altrichter, 2015).

Right now we cannot say if more choice and voice at school level is perceived as a stimulus for school innovation (strengthening the notion of entrepreneurial leadership), or as an additional burden made of new and extended leadership tasks, in addition to those they already exercise (OECD, 2008). Against this background, there needs to be a higher level of awareness in our research field with regards to this new, prescribed rather than described role of school principals within the new public management mix of more power and more responsibility (Cheng, Cheung & Ng, 2016).

With regards to the school level, research shows that entrepreneurial leadership comes in different forms and degrees, according to the extent to which power is transferred, as well as the level at which entrepreneurship is taking place. It is important to keep in mind that different models and varying degrees of school choice and voice in combination with autonomy and accountability mean different implications for the roles and functions of school leaders. In addition, it is important to acknowledge a number of contextual and personal variables, as part of the process in which school principals promote their entrepreneurial skills and abilities. A leader's personality and skills might be a crucial factor for the successful practice of entrepreneurship. In that regard, it is very important to acknowledge that a strong relationship between school leaders and parents or, in other words, between an entrepreneurial leader and external stakeholders, is based on trust and mutual understanding, despite any other contextual variable which might interact and

affect the overall parental involvement.

Having said that, it is important to point out, that different measures and instruments dealing with external stakeholders such as parents cannot be attributed only to one approach/political idea of New Public Management. Consequently, one will face (in reality) a diverse mix of ideas on the one hand and instruments/tools on the other hand which cannot be clearly distinguished from a conceptual point of view. This can increase the risk of not being fully understood or, even worse, to be interpreted by school leaders in a way that is contrary to the original intention. This kind of broad-spectrum connectivity of single tools and instruments of entrepreneurial leadership with regard to different discussion contexts might be one explanation for the current attractiveness of entrepreneurship in schools, as well as for the confusion that still exists about this fuzzy and elusive term. Another explanation for the attractiveness of entrepreneurship in schools could be related to the fact that researchers from all over the world have not yet come to a common understanding about the very essence and the limits of school leadership. For instance, leadership in the Pashardis-Brauckmann Leadership framework was treated as a multilevel and multi-dimensional construct which may affect school and student variables, but which is also likely to be influenced by contextual variables.

Lastly, recent research trends (e.g., Yemini *et al.*, 2015) acknowledged that entrepreneurship is associated with innovation and more particularly with the innovative ideas proposed by leaders and managers within

organizations, businesses or firms. Despite the fact that university master programs offer a variety of courses relating to innovation, these kinds of courses (e.g. Introduction to innovation) are just an introduction to the general knowledge in innovation and entrepreneurship. Therefore, more attention should be given to this topic, either through master courses or seminars focused on the importance of innovation and entrepreneurship in school organizations, as well as on the school principals' role in the overall school innovation process (Mousavi, Nilil, & Nasr, 2018; Ruskovaara, Hämäläinen & Pihkala, 2016). Through these courses, school leaders can become aware of the fact that society demands more with less, and that this objective can mainly be achieved through an entrepreneurial leadership attitude.

However, some questions could arise about the kind of innovative ideas that could be implemented in a centralized system as part of the school principal's Entrepreneurial Leadership Style. Another important question relates to the type of innovative initiatives taking place in other contexts where the educational system is decentralized, and on what ground does a school principal fulfil this kind of innovative initiatives, without really finding new obstacles during his/her leadership practice. With this in mind, there are still many under-researched aspects related to what we came to call entrepreneurial leadership. We believe that we are still scratching the surface of this very influential aspect of school leadership, which is still in an exploratory and evolutionary state.

Against the background of new public

management-driven policies, stressing competition and marketization in education, international comparative research approaches on the unintended negative as well as positive side effects of these policies on school principals' actions and their attitudes seem to be particularly relevant (Brauckmann, Pashiardis & Goldring, in print). Such an international comparative research approach needs to identify school systems which differ highly with respect to the aforementioned degrees of competition and marketization.

Possible future research works could investigate whether an entrepreneurial leadership approach in schools (as an unintended negative effect) could be portrayed as a de-professionalization of school principals. This could, for example,

be explained by the fact that they are under the pressure of a competitive governance system, and thus forced to develop a resource-oriented short-sightedness in which the focus is laid on rapid improvements, rather than on the long-term development of pedagogy-oriented knowledge and attitudes of their students. At the same time, a positive unintended leadership style variant could consist of an increased risk propensity and willingness of school principals to innovate; this places the entrepreneurial attitude at the service of the development of pedagogical concepts and tools. Therefore, by becoming Edupreneurial leaders (Pashiardis & Brauckmann, 2019), they oppose the tendency to ignore processes of change and blindly adhere to traditional methods and behaviors.

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