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Successful Leadership Practices for Schools in Challenging Urban Context

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Content of the presentation

Part I: Education and School Principal in Poland - Setting the Context

Part II: Successful Leadership Practices for School in Challenging Urban Context in Poland

Conclusions



1989-1991

Poland engaged in a democratic transition which led to the foundation of a democratic system (the Third Polish Republic)

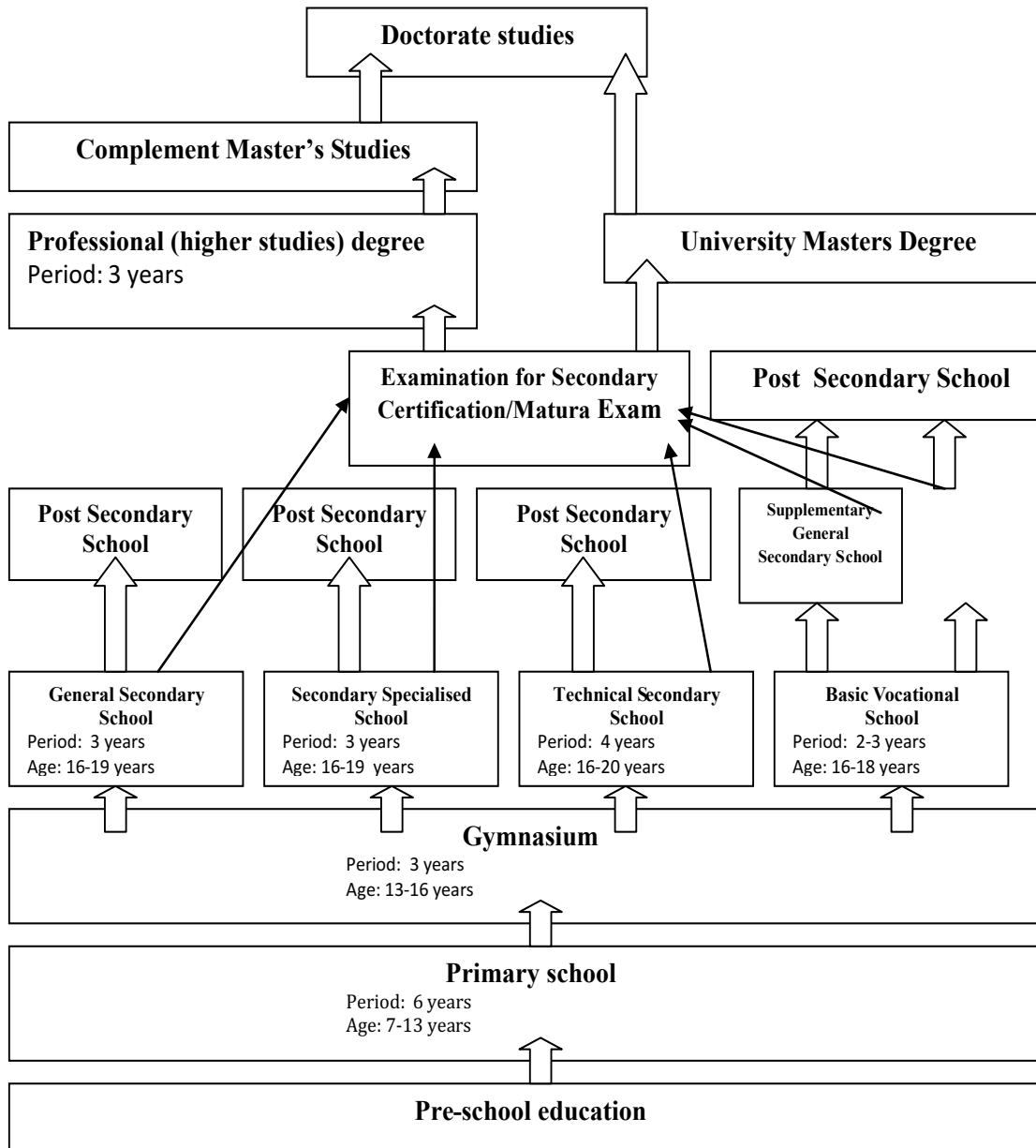


First non-communist
Polish Prime Minister since 1946

The Polish community as well as other former socialistic states, which broke with the old regime and followed the path of democratization and decommunisation, has witnessed massive social, economic, and political changes.

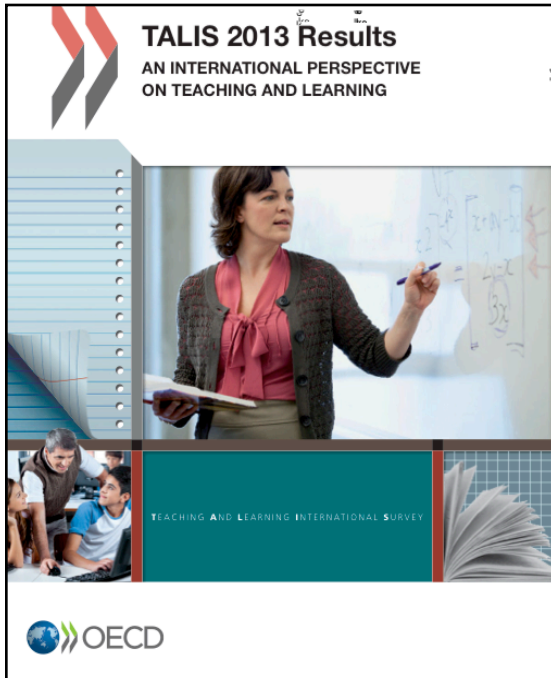
Education in Poland

- Central government broad policy and local government administration of schools
- Move from an emphasis on transmission and vocational training
- More rounded education based on knowledge construction
- Rapid growth in student numbers in higher education x5 since 1990
- Poland is one of the EU's top performers in
 - reducing early school leaving, and
 - raising the level of basic skills tested by the PISA survey, including the average level as well as the levels of low-performing and top-performing students.
 - increasing the number of young adults holding higher education qualifications in the 30–34 age group.

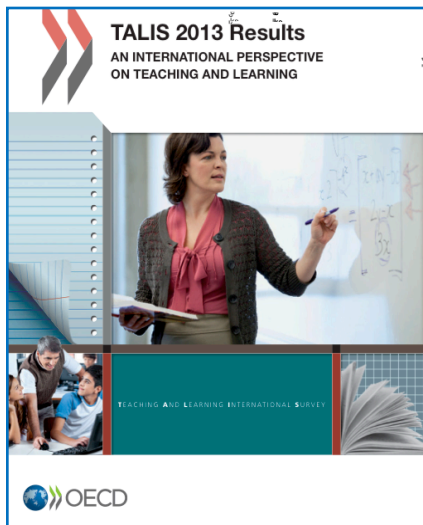


School year 2014/15

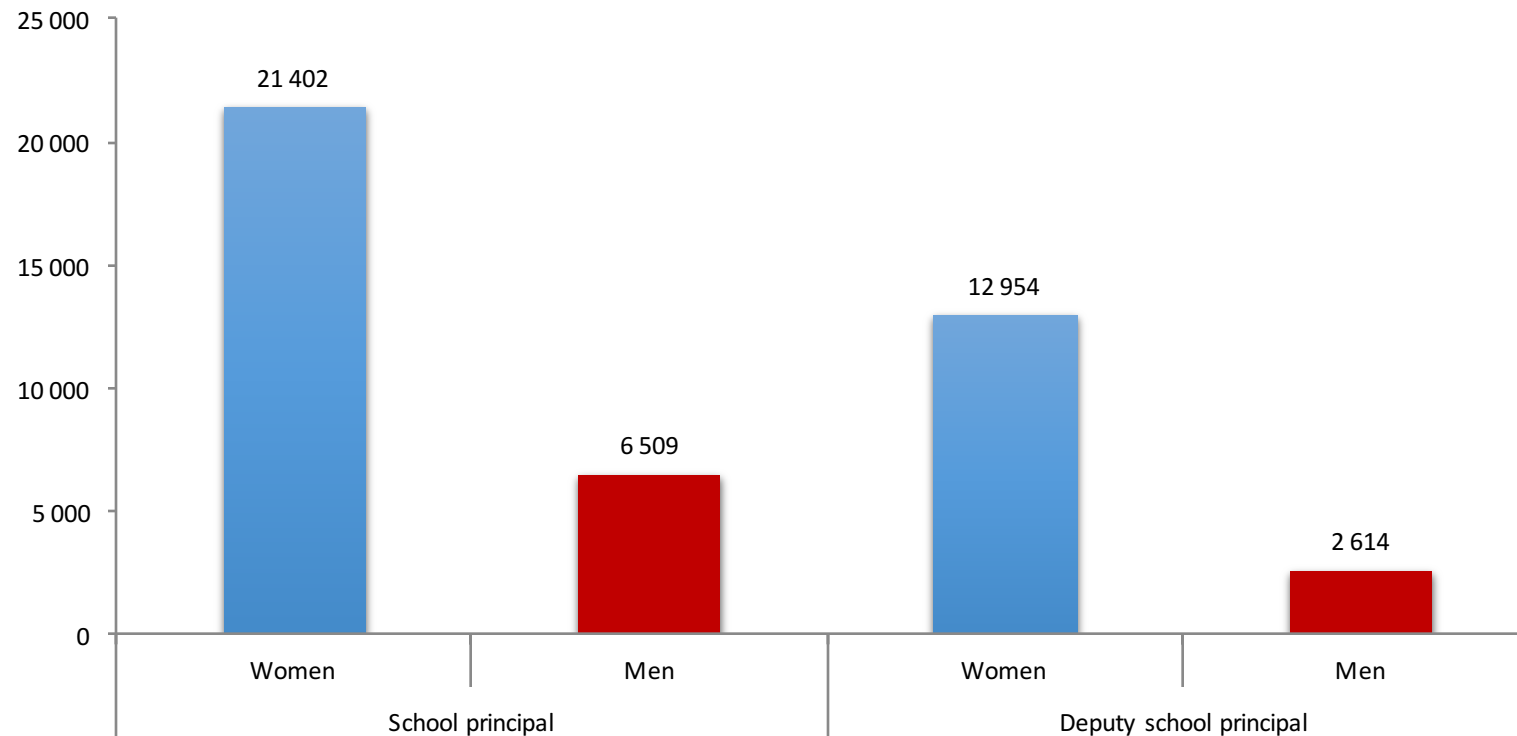
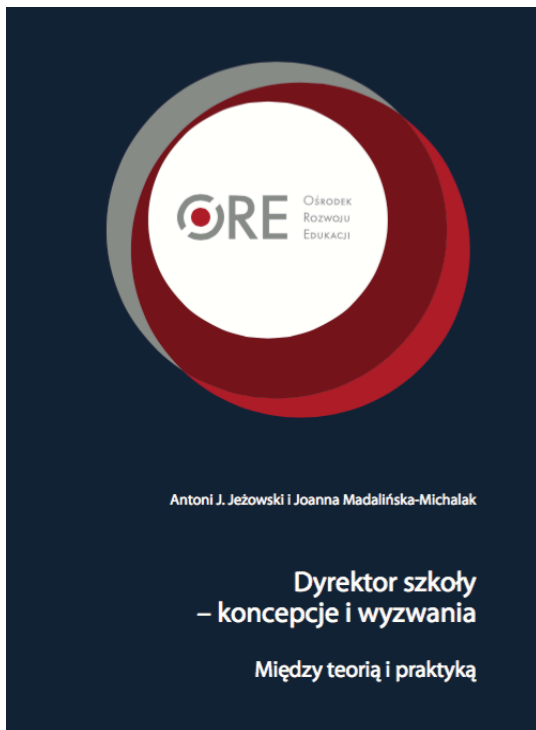
- The number of schools: 33 288
- The number of students: 5 185 418
- The number of school principals: 27 901



- Teachers in Poland are well educated and have a good theoretical background for their work
- 93% of teachers in Poland are satisfied with their job and have a strong sense of self-efficacy
- The biggest problems faced by teachers in Poland are: overwork (68% rated as “moderate” or “to high degree”), employment instability (67%), unsatisfactory earnings (78%) and the low general regard for the profession (69%).
- 94% of teachers in Poland participate in different forms of professional development activities



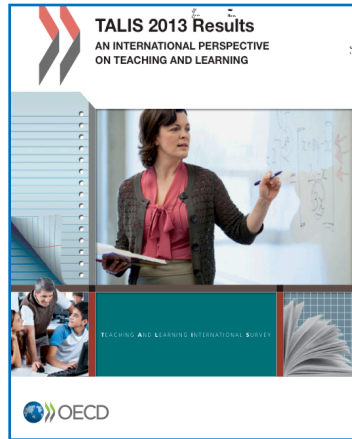
Typical principal in TALIS countries		Typical principal in Poland	
51% are men	Is 52 years old on average	33% are men	Is 50 years old on average
96% completed university or other equivalent higher education		100% completed university or other equivalent higher education	
90% completed a teacher education or training programme, 85% a school administration/principal training programme and 78% instructional leadership training		84% completed a teacher education or training programme, 100% a school administration/principal training programme and 43% instructional leadership training	
Has an average of 9 years of experience as a principal and 21 years of teaching experience		Has an average of 11 years of experience as a principal and 25 years of teaching experience	
62% are employed full time without teaching obligations and 35% are employed full time with teaching obligations		20% are employed full time without teaching obligations and 71% are employed full time with teaching obligations	
Works in a school with 546 students and 45 teachers on average		Works in a school with 221 students and 27 teachers on average	



School principals usually operate between teachers, students, parents and local governments. They link the school to the education system and the wider community in which a school exists.

The profession of school principals has become increasingly challenging over time.

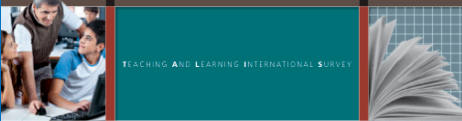
School year 2014/2015
 Totally: women: 34356 – 79%; men: 9 123 – 21%



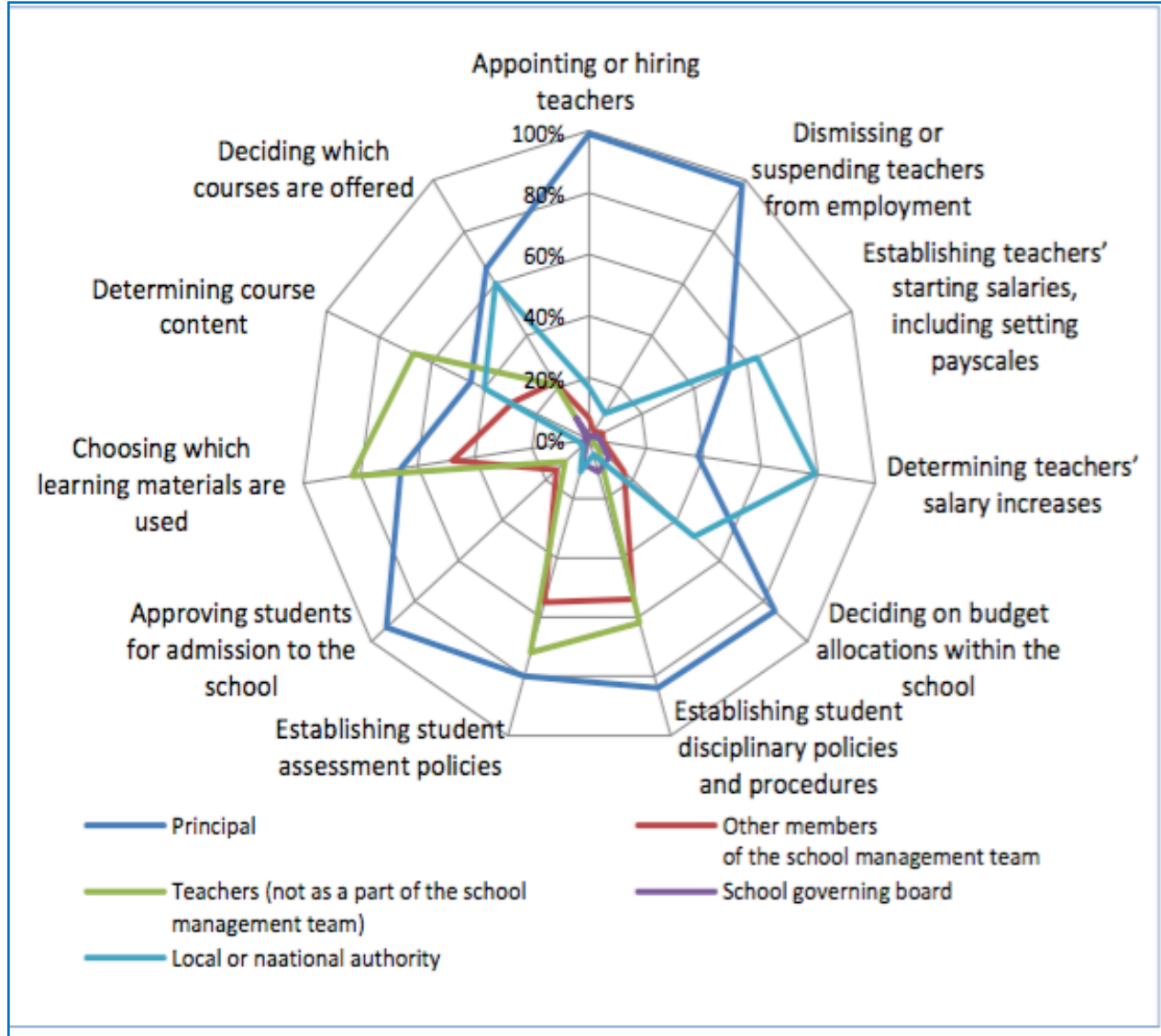
- The job of the principal in Poland demands not only management skills and knowledge of education law, but also employment legislation, competitive tendering and building codes.
- Four out of five principals in Poland declared the need for knowledge and skills about raising additional funds for their schools. As many as a third pointed to significant serious needs for knowledge in this area.
- Many principals in Poland feel responsible for issues in which they do not play a significant role in decision making, such as establishing teachers' starting salaries or determining salary increases. Nearly half of Poland's principals (43%) indicated that they make important decisions by themselves.



TALIS 2013 Results
AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE
ON TEACHING AND LEARNING



TEACHING AND LEARNING INTERNATIONAL SURVEY



- The OECD's TALIS study (2013) - the data showed that Poland is one of the countries where the highest percentage of principals reported no relevant educational offers within the field of their professional development (37%, TALIS average: 22%).
- One of the most highly needed areas of Polish school principals' professional development relates to leadership competences (62% indications of a high and a moderate level of needs).
- In Poland, there are no formal requirements for training and professional development for school principals already holding this position. Nevertheless, due to the fact that the overwhelming majority of Polish principals are teachers, they are obliged to continuously enhance their qualifications and pursue ongoing development.

Part II:

Successful Leadership Practices for School in Challenging Urban Context in Poland

- The school improvements
- Research methods
- Findings



The school improvement literature

- Schools in challenging circumstances - there are no 'quick fixes' to the problems that they face (Myers and Stoll, 1998).
- The research evidence:
 - the quality of leadership determines the motivation of teachers and the quality of teaching in the classroom (Hallinger & Heck, 1998);
 - effective leaders exercise an indirect but powerful influence on the effectiveness of the school and on the achievement of students (Leithwood & Steinbach, 2002);
 - leadership is one of the major contributory factor to raising achievement (Reynolds, 2001; Hopkins 2001; Muijs et al 2004; Harris 2006; OECD 2012).

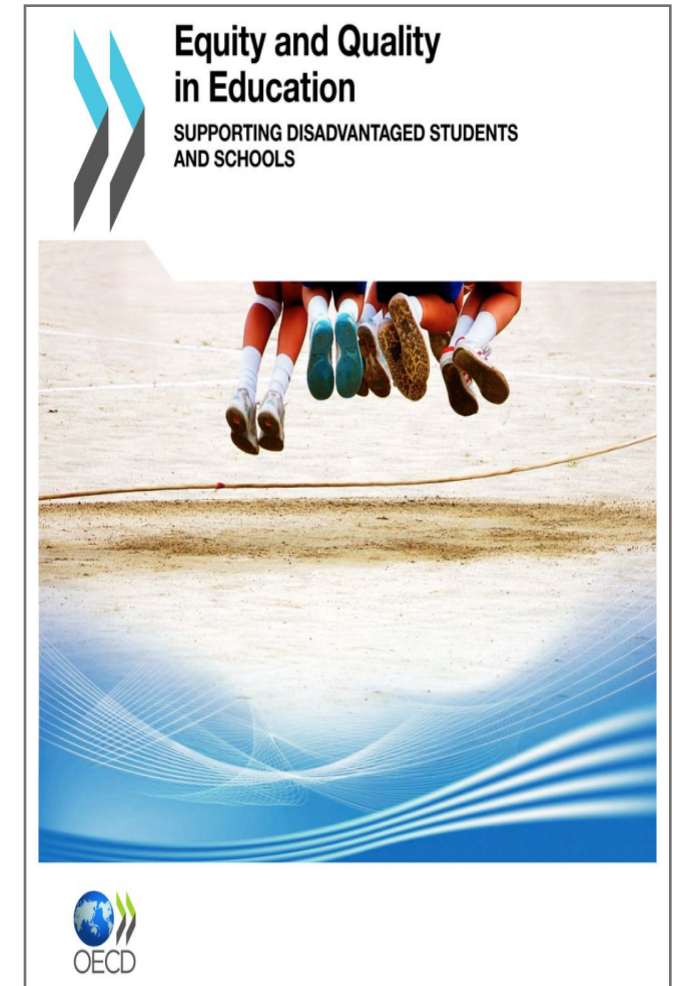
School leadership is key for the improvement of low performing disadvantaged schools, but disadvantaged schools may lack the necessary leadership to meet their specific challenges

Effective school leadership is crucial to student outcomes, second only to the quality of the teacher.

Principals have to set high expectations for all students and teachers to succeed.

School leaders influence student achievement through two important pathways:

- the support and development of effective teachers, and
- the implementation of effective organisational processes.



The school improvement literature

The question: “what works?”

- What leadership strategies are used by Principals of urban schools in challenging circumstances and why they are used? (Carter, 2002; Chapman, 2002; Franey, 2002; Harris, 2002; Harris & Chapman, 2002; Potter, Reynolds, & Chapman, 2002).

Stories of individual heads “I did it my way”

- What we can learn from successful leaders’ professional development by reconstructing their career stories? (Hampton & Jones, 2000; Meier, 1995; Monroe, 1997; Stubbs, 2003; Tompkins, 1998; Winkley, 2002).

The school improvement literature

The question: 'What is going on here?'

- Exploration of various dimensions of schools in disadvantaged neighbourhoods:
 - studies focus specifically on leadership (Lingard, Christie, Hayes, & Mills, 2003; Thomson, 2003),
 - studies focus on the life of particular disadvantaged schools (Gewirtz, Ball, & Bowe, 1995; Lipman, 1998; O'Connor, Hales, Davies, & Tomlinson, 1999; Tittle, 1995).

Challenging Urban Context

- Poor housing, health, local facilities, crime
- Low parental educational expectations
- Poor student attendance
- Poor educational underperformance
- Low parental and community engagement/participation in school daily life
- “A context of hopelessness and anger” (Michalak and Jones, 2009)



Research questions

Using a qualitative case study approach, the research questions were as follows:

- How do principals shape their roles as successful educational leaders who support the achievement of all children in schools in a highly disadvantaged urban context?
- What are their approaches to leadership in these schools?
- What strategies of change are used by the successful principals in these schools to create a culture of success “against the odds”?

The study – research methods

- a multi-case-study methodology to gather contextually sensitive data concerning individuals' perceptions about the work of their principals, because case studies provide an opportunity to uncover causation through “insight, discovery and interpretation’ (Merriam, 1988, p. 10).
- case studies in primary and secondary schools, which are sustaining success in communities of social and economic disadvantage.
- conduct case studies in order to identify and examine the characteristics and strategies of successful leadership in those schools

Selection of Schools

- Schools were chosen based on student performance on national standardized tests that exceeded expectations, principals' exemplary reputations in the community and school system, and other indicators of success that were both site-specific and initiated during the principal's tenure.
- Schools selected for the project are schools with the majority of their students drawn from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds where attendance and behaviour problems have existed.

Findings

The communities in which the schools function are very varied:

- there are areas which are occupied by families in difficult financial situation and there are also areas where the middle-class families live.
- Many of the pupils are brought up in single-parent families, in common-law families or in the unemployed families.
- Many pupils come from families with three or more children and these families also have serious financial problems, as well as difficulty in obtaining a decent flat. They are often characterized by serious alcohol problems and families are under the supervision of a probation officer.

“Success” in Challenging Urban Contexts - Inclusive School Leadership

Four major “areas of focus”

- leadership across the school;
- provision of an inclusive curriculum;
- including parents and the local community;
- including partner agencies.

Inclusive School Leadership: having inclusive values

- Driven by core values that are people-centred (Flintham, 2006)
- “Strong belief in the capacity of all to succeed in an inclusive environment” (Flintham, 2006:3)
- Placing human needs before organisational needs (Harris and Chapman, 2002)
- Regard diversity as a strength (Levin, MacBeath and Wong, 2006)
- Negotiate dilemmas (eg inclusion vs. standards)
- Encourage aspiration

- Sceptical about external standards and judgements
- Seeks to energise and to act in a “bottom-up” way to bring about positive changes
- Leaders need to be “incredibly inclusive ... They are not going to give up on any child”
- “Extraordinary”; “Inspiration”; and “expectation”
- “Very high expectations that are not compromised”
- “Rigour” and “target-setting”; “Champions and terriers”

Inclusive School Leadership - Teacher Leadership

- Teaching and learning as the focus for school development
- Inspiration of students is a key and urgent aim
- High expectations among staff is essential
- Curriculum innovation and high levels of teaching expertise
- Hard-pressed school leaders need to gain knowledge and new perspectives from outside
- Distributed leadership to address urgent teaching and learning issues
- Student-centred approaches and listening to students

An inclusive curriculum

- Curriculum innovation across the age range (eg personalised learning)
- Muijs et al (2007):The dilemmas surrounding inclusion for certain groups of children (with special needs and behavioural needs)
- Drawing on the assets of children and families – “assets rather than problems” (Menter et al, 2007:227)
- Avoiding a “deficit model” of highly disadvantaged communities and their families

Building "social capital" - internally and externally

- Building social capital is part of the school improvement agenda (Michalak and Jones, 2008; NCSL, 2008)
- “The very purpose of a school is to build bridges of understanding between adults and children, school and community” (Levin, MacBeath and Wong (2006:2)
- Parents and the surrounding community are important allies in helping students educationally. Involving parents is a difficult thing to do but schools should have a developmental role locally wider than education

Conclusions

- The presented findings direct our attention to the considerations on theory, policy and practice in teacher education, especially to the issue on the place and role of school principals' professional development in teacher education in the context of the development of the principals' leadership competences.
- All school principals should receive adequate education and training throughout all phases of their preparation and professional development and the need for school principals to seek and make use of learning opportunities within their schools and communities.

Deeper Issues of Inclusive Successful School Leadership

- How can *Inclusive School Leadership* be made sustainable in highly disadvantaged communities?
- What are the likely prospects and underpinning conditions for successful *Inclusive Leadership* practice?
- What positive examples can be established of successful parental and community inclusion by schools?
- What is the impact of *Inclusive Leadership* on children's learning?
- What are the major dilemmas of adopting an *Inclusive Leadership* approach within the current policy contexts of Polish education systems?



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