

**Identidad profesional de liderazgo en la dirección escolar:
Barreras, crisis y reconstrucción**



Carmen Lucena Rodríguez

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Tesis doctoral dirigida por
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**«*Identidad profesional de liderazgo en la dirección escolar:
Barreras, crisis y reconstrucción*»**

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*Educar es lo mismo
que poner un motor a una barca...
Hay que medir, pensar, equilibrar...
y poner todo en marcha.*

*Pero para eso,
uno tiene que llevar en el alma
un poco de marino...
un poco de pirata...
un poco de poeta...
y un kilo y medio de paciencia concentrada.*

*Pero es consolador soñar,
mientras uno trabaja,
que ese barco, ese niño,
irá muy lejos por el agua.*

*Soñar que ese navío
llevará nuestra carga de palabras
hacia puertos distantes, hacia islas lejanas.*

*Soñar que, cuando un día
esté durmiendo nuestra propia barca,
en barcos nuevos seguirá.
nuestra bandera enarbolada.*

Gabriel Celaya

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Resumen

Investigadores de todo el mundo afirman que el liderazgo es un factor clave de mejora escolar y calidad educativa. La mirada se dirige hacia la dirección escolar y específicamente hacia el director de escuela. Destaca esta figura por su gran implicación en el contexto escolar y su capacidad de influir en la visión conjunta de los demás profesionales. No obstante, refiriéndonos al contexto español, existen problemas estructurales sobre la dirección y el liderazgo pedagógico. Existe la necesidad de reflexionar sobre la función directiva, su profesionalización y formación. Reclamando en los centros escolares, profesionales con identidad de liderazgo consolidadas. Esta tesis trata de comprender cómo se (re) construye y se desarrolla la identidad de liderazgo en directores escolares, además de conocer, cómo lo hacen y cuáles son los factores que obstaculizan e instalan crisis o barreras en el proceso de su desarrollo profesional. Además, se tiene en cuenta un aspecto particular, interesa conocer y comprender la percepción que poseen los demás profesionales e individuos que le rodean en su quehacer diario (inspectores, profesorado, orientadores y familia), para tener una visión más completa y real de su identidad. De este modo, poder detectar desde un punto de vista tanto interno como externo lo que está ocurriendo en la construcción identitaria del director.

Para dar respuesta a este objetivo, se llevaron a cabo una serie de estudios que se tradujeron en diez artículos de investigación con matices metodológicos cualitativos particulares. Esta tesis doctoral, que presentó un desarrollo y diseño secuencial, comenzó con una exploración de la literatura a través de tres revisiones sistemáticas. Posteriormente, con la entrada de campo, se llevó a cabo un estudio exploratorio y estudio de caso a través de una metodología mixta (QUAL-QUAL) desde un enfoque (auto) biográfico y narrativo, con alto componente participativo y dialógico. Para la recogida de información se realizaron entrevistas semiestructuradas, en profundidad y biográficas-narrativas a través de cascadas de profundización reflexiva, observación participante y anotaciones de campo. El análisis de información, se llevó a cabo siguiendo la teoría fundamentada con saturación de información y se apoyó el proceso con un software de análisis cualitativo (Nvivo 12). Además de cumplir con las consideraciones éticas características de esta forma de investigación. Durante el proceso de tesis, a modo de

contextualización, se realizaron estudios particulares que complementaban el estudio de caso y añadían comprensión complementaria a los momentos de crisis identitaria de los directivos. Es el caso del análisis fílmico, de la panorámica general sobre la dirección escolar o qué ocurrió en fase de crisis COVID.

Esta investigación nos permitió descubrir posibles crisis, barreras e identificar claves potenciales para mejorar la dirección escolar y lograr un impacto en la mejora educativa. Nuestros hallazgos revelan como una identidad profesional fuerte y consolidada, se asocia a un compromiso personal y profesional con el centro y su ecosistema. Además descubrimos cómo influye el recorrido de la trayectoria vital y experiencias de una persona y el contexto que le rodea. Particularmente reparamos en todos los agentes que le rodean en su hacer diario, como punto clave de influencia en la construcción de la identidad profesional. En este sentido, las percepciones de otros agentes, junto a las del propio participante, nos ofrecieron pistas sobre las barreras o crisis que encuentran los directivos en su construcción identitaria profesional, la reconstrucción de esta identidad y finalmente, las prácticas de liderazgo exitosas para la mejora educativa que puede llevar a cabo un director con una ajustada y consolidada identidad profesional. Estos aspectos ofrecieron una perspectiva amplia para poder construir una propuesta de mejora.

En conclusión, de esta tesis doctoral se extraen una serie de puntos clave que pretenden servir de orientación en la implicación educativa y para futuras líneas de investigación. Podemos afirmar que el éxito educativo lo tiene cada director, por ello es necesario lograr que éste desarrolle una consolidada y reconocida identidad de líder escolar. La administración, ha de otorgar confianza interrelacional, mayor autonomía, mejorar la formación inicial y continua, simplificar la normativa, descargar al director de aspectos burocráticos y llevar a cabo una evaluación sistemática y continua. A su vez, los directivos deben comprometerse personal y profesionalmente con la sociedad, la educación, la escuela y su ecosistema. Al mismo tiempo, llevar a cabo un liderazgo pedagógico, para la justicia social, compartido y de cuidado. En definitiva, el líder escolar es el encargado de identificar las dificultades y las necesidades del centro poniendo remedio a las mismas, liderar de forma pedagógica y compartida con sus compañeros, debe escuchar y predicar con el ejemplo, ser consciente que el centro educativo se encuentra al servicio de la comunidad y ser consciente que el protagonista de la escuela siempre es el niño.

Summary

Researchers from around the world claim that leadership is a key factor in school improvement and educational quality. The focus is on school leadership and specifically on the school principal. This figure stands out for his or her great involvement in the school context and his or her ability to influence the joint vision of the other professionals. However, referring to the Spanish context, there are structural problems regarding school management and pedagogical leadership. There is a need to reflect on the management function, its professionalisation and training. In schools, there is a need for professionals with a consolidated leadership identity. This thesis tries to understand how the leadership identity is (re) constructed and developed in school principals, as well as to know how they do it and which are the factors that hinder and install crises or barriers in the process of their professional development. In addition, a particular aspect is taken into account: it is of interest to know and understand the perception of the other professionals and individuals who surround him/her in his/her daily work (inspectors, teachers, counsellors and family), in order to have a more complete and real vision of his/her identity. In this way, it is possible to detect from both an internal and external point of view what is happening in the construction of the head teacher's identity.

In order to respond to this objective, a series of studies were carried out which resulted in ten research articles with particular qualitative methodological nuances. This doctoral thesis, which presented a sequential development and design, began with an exploration of the literature through three systematic reviews. Subsequently, with the entry into the field, an exploratory study and case study was carried out through a mixed methodology (QUAL-QUAL) from a (self-) biographical and narrative approach, with a high participatory and dialogical component. For the collection of information, semi-structured, in-depth and biographical-narrative interviews were carried out through cascades of reflexive deepening, participant observation and field notes. The analysis of information was carried out following grounded theory with information saturation and the process was supported by qualitative analysis software (Nvivo 12). In addition to complying with the ethical considerations characteristic of this form of research. During the thesis process, by way of contextualisation, particular studies were carried out which complemented the

case study and added complementary understanding to the moments of identity crisis of the managers. This is the case of the film analysis, the general overview of school management or what happened during the COVID crisis phase.

This research allowed us to uncover possible crises, barriers and identify potential keys to improving school leadership and making an impact on educational improvement. Our findings reveal how a strong and consolidated professional identity is associated with a personal and professional commitment to the school and its ecosystem. In addition, we discovered how a person's life path and experiences and the context that surrounds him or her influence this. In particular, we look at all the agents that surround you in your daily work, as a key point of influence in the construction of professional identity. In this sense, the perceptions of other agents, together with those of the participant himself, offered us clues about the barriers or crises encountered by managers in their construction of professional identity, the reconstruction of this identity and, finally, the successful leadership practices for educational improvement that can be carried out by a manager with a well-adjusted and consolidated professional identity. These aspects offered a broad perspective to be able to construct a proposal for improvement.

In conclusion, a series of key points can be drawn from this doctoral thesis that are intended to serve as a guide for educational involvement and for future lines of research. We can affirm that educational success is the responsibility of each headteacher, which is why it is necessary to ensure that the headteacher develops a consolidated and recognised identity as a school leader. The administration must grant inter-relational trust, greater autonomy, improve initial and continuous training, simplify regulations, relieve the principal of bureaucratic aspects and carry out systematic and continuous evaluation. At the same time, principals must make a personal and professional commitment to society, education, the school and its ecosystem. At the same time, they must provide pedagogical, social justice, shared and caring leadership. In short, the school leader is in charge of identifying the difficulties and needs of the school and remedying them, leading in a pedagogical and shared way with his or her colleagues, listening and leading by example, being aware that the school is at the service of the community and being aware that the protagonist of the school is always the child.

INTRODUCCIÓN

CAPÍTULO 1.

PRESENTACIÓN Y JUSTIFICACIÓN DE LA TESIS DOCTORAL

1.1. Presentación y justificación

La presente investigación deriva de la búsqueda de una educación inclusiva, equitativa y de calidad, coincidiendo con el objetivo cuatro marcado por la ONU en la agenda para el desarrollo sostenible (ODS). Nos planteamos, de esta forma, la necesidad de tener escuelas eficaces (UNESCO 2008, 2011) y de promover oportunidades de aprendizaje durante toda la vida para todos. Esta tesis pretende contribuir a la búsqueda de una educación de calidad centrando sus esfuerzos en uno de los elementos clave para la mejora educativa, el liderazgo escolar (Day, 2018; Johnson, 2017). Específicamente, nos centramos en analizar la identidad profesional de liderazgo en la dirección escolar, en sus barreras y crisis, para finalmente construir unas bases de propuesta para su mejora.

Son numerosas las investigaciones que han venido trabajando en esta línea. Así autores como Bolívar (2012), Day, et al. (2011) o Hallinger y Heck (2010), resaltan la importancia de un liderazgo como factor clave de mejora escolar y calidad educativa. Estos afirman que un liderazgo eficaz repercute positivamente en los resultados escolares y en el desarrollo de comunidades profesionales comprometidas con el cambio y la mejora. En muchas de las investigaciones centradas en el liderazgo, la mirada se dirige hacia la dirección escolar y específicamente hacia el director de escuela (Crow, Day y Moller,

2017; Ritacco y Bolívar, 2018). Esta visión se recoge en informes internacionales tales como OCDE (2013,18) o UNESCO-IIPE- IWGE (2012), los cuales defienden la presencia de líderes escolares en los centros educativos para lograr cambios y mejoras.

Esta línea de trabajo se consolidó especialmente a partir del año 2001, al crearse la que hasta ahora es la red más grande y sostenida de investigación sobre la dirección escolar exitosa ISSPP (International Successful School Principalship Project). Este proyecto, dirigido por Christopher Day, destaca que la figura de la dirección escolar es fundamental por su gran implicación en el contexto escolar y su capacidad de influir en la visión conjunta de los demás profesionales. El liderazgo de los directores es por tanto, un foco clave en las reformas educativas y políticas actuales de todo el mundo (Hartley, 2009, OECD, 2014; Bolívar, 2012; UNESCO, 2018).

Los estudios que orientan estas políticas, como los informes TALIS (2013, 2018) (OECD, 2014, 2019), ponen de manifiesto el estado de la cuestión. Refiriéndose a España, denuncian que existen problemas estructurales sobre la dirección y el liderazgo pedagógico en nuestro contexto. Recomiendan la necesidad de reflexionar sobre la función directiva, su profesionalización y formación. Reclamando en los centros escolares, profesionales con identidad de liderazgo consolidadas (González, 2020).

Esta preocupación por una sólida identidad de liderazgo es compartida a nivel internacional, especialmente desde la creación del Strand 3 sobre “Principal identities” del proyecto ISSPP sobre liderazgo eficaz. Lo que ha dado lugar a la proliferación de estudios centrados en la identidad profesional de directivos escolares a nivel internacional (Crow, Day y Moller, 2017) y nacional (Ritacco y Bolívar, 2018).

A nivel nacional existe una red de investigación sobre liderazgo y mejora de la educación (RILME) que fue creada en 2012 y la componen ocho grupos de investigación de universidades españolas. En uno de estos grupos de investigación: *Formación centrada en la escuela* (FORCE-HUM386) de la Universidad de Granada, se integra la presente tesis doctoral. Específicamente, este proyecto de tesis se suma al proyecto I+D+i estatal: *Identidad de la dirección escolar: liderazgo, formación y profesionalización* (EDU2016-78191-P) dirigido por Antonio Bolívar. Este proyecto presenta entre sus objetivos estudiar

la identidad de los directivos que actúan como líderes escolares a través de estudios de caso particulares. A partir de este proyecto, la línea de investigación en la que se inscribe la investigación avanza hacia el liderazgo como promotor y dinamizador de comunidades de práctica profesional ampliada para la mejora de resultados educativos. Este tema es nuestro nuevo foco de investigación actual (PID2020-117620GB-I00/P20_00311).

A su vez, la tesis se enmarca en la línea del programa de doctorado de la Universidad de Granada, Currículum, organización y formación para la equidad en la sociedad del conocimiento. Además, esta tesis doctoral cuenta con la financiación del gobierno de España mediante las ayudas para la formación de profesorado universitario (FPU- 17/01873). El proyecto FPU y por tanto la tesis doctoral, defiende la idea de investigar sobre el liderazgo escolar y la importancia de indagar en la identidad profesional para lograr un cambio y mejora. Pero presenta la particularidad de examinar la identidad desde dos perspectivas, interna (desde el punto de vista del propio protagonista) y externa (desde el punto de vista de los que le rodean).

La construcción de la identidad y la competencia como líder en los profesionales de la dirección escolar es un foco clave de interés (Hallinger y Heck, 2010). En este punto, se le otorga un valor cardinal a esta figura profesional como cooperador y coordinador para lograr ideales comunes en el centro educativo. Además, representa la imagen que apoya, valora y motiva al desarrollo profesional docente, repercutiendo positivamente en los discentes. En este sentido, es necesario profundizar en la identidad profesional de los directivos para comprender su desarrollo profesional y la práctica de su liderazgo.

El concepto de identidad por su carácter subjetivo y dinámico es difícil de definir, pero algunos autores como Dubar (2000), lo entienden como: «El resultado a la vez estable y provisional, individual y colectivo, subjetivo y objetivo, biográfico y estructural, de los diversos procesos de socialización que, conjuntamente, construyen los individuos y definen las instituciones» (p.109). Conocer este proceso identitario en los líderes es importante para comprender el desarrollo profesional (Crow, 2011) y el de la comunidad educativa. Sobre todo en profesiones –como la de director escolar– en las que puedan darse situaciones de identidad transitoria (docente-director-docente), sin una formación inicial específica o que se desempeñan en contextos muy diferenciales.

Cuando hablamos del desarrollo de la identidad, vamos más allá de la cara superficial de la función institucional, profundiza en todo el envoltorio contextual, relacional y personal que envuelve a un profesional. En este sentido, no sólo nos interesa conocer lo que hace un director, sino que también lo que piensa, siente y la situación e influencias que le han llevado al estado actual, su “yo” personal y profesional.

Ahondando en el complejo concepto de identidad por su carácter subjetivo, Dubar (2000), nos da pistas esenciales para comprender su construcción: la identidad presenta múltiples caras, es cambiante en el tiempo y se halla en constante transformación. El individuo se encuentra en continua deliberación sobre los cambios que van produciéndose en sus actividades diarias, haciendo que adquiera una identidad propia según la forma de vivir sus autorrelatos y la creación de autoconceptos (Ricoeur, 1996). De esta manera, los directores transforman su identidad profesional conforme se van enfrentando a distintas vivencias, desafíos y barreras políticas, educativas o contextuales que van encontrándose en el camino de su desarrollo profesional. Siendo necesaria de esta forma, una consolidada identidad para poder hacer frente a su “yo” (Ritacco y Bolívar, 2018).

Para Dubar (2000) existen dos ejes complementarios que determinan la identidad profesional: Por un lado, un eje diacrónico, con un aspecto individual-temporal, y un segundo eje sincrónico, que muestra un pensamiento de la identidad desde un aspecto colectivo-contextual. De este modo, la construcción identitaria no depende exclusivamente de las vivencias experimentadas internamente por el sujeto, sino que además, depende de la sociedad que lo envuelve y de los grupos sociales a los que pertenece. Esto implica un proceso dual que engloba formas de identificación para sí y para los otros, no pudiendo distanciar la identidad individual de la sociedad a la que forma parte, así como tampoco, construir su identidad al margen de las identificaciones que los otros formulan sobre él (Dubar, 2000; Ritacco y Bolívar, 2018). Desde este punto de vista, el papel de “los otros” agentes y profesionales de la comunidad educativa que rodean al director, constituyen un factor determinante y esencial para la cimentación de su identidad profesional (Crow, Day y Moller, 2016).

En este sentido, el director está condicionado por la cultura y los agentes que le rodean, así como por la forma de vivir su identidad personal y profesional. Puede ocurrir que en

determinados momentos, la construcción de sus identidades se encuentra limitada por múltiples razones, impidiéndoles desempeñar puestos de liderazgo, por tal razón, la mirada de estos “otros agentes” nos pueden ofrecer claves consistentes para entender las barreras o crisis que pueden experimentar en el desarrollo de su profesión. Hay razones de peso, por tanto, para profundizar en la identidad profesional de líder en directivos escolares, pero desde ambos puntos de vista: internos al director y externos al mismo.

1.2. Ideas de partida y objetivos de investigación

Teniendo en cuenta este escenario en el que se asienta la investigación, nos planteamos las siguientes ideas de partida:

1. Una identidad fuerte y reconocida impacta en la mejora educativa de la escuela y de los resultados.
2. El director actúa como líder en función de la identidad profesional que tenga.
3. La identidad profesional de líder se construye a lo largo de una trayectoria de vida y en un contexto.
4. La identidad de buen líder educativo es la que dirige todos sus esfuerzos hacia la mejora escolar.

Al tratarse de un estudio de corte cualitativo, con el fin de comprender, se plantan preguntas o cuestiones que sirven de guía de trabajo y que se tratarán de responder a lo largo del trabajo.

- ¿Cómo perciben “los otros” a los directores escolares? ¿Qué problemas pueden encontrar? ¿Qué posibles soluciones existen o pueden existir? ¿Se está haciendo bien la elección de directores/as?
- ¿Cómo se sienten como directores/as? ¿Qué problemas encuentran en el camino hacia la dirección? ¿Cómo se siente un director como líder escolar?
- ¿Qué similitudes existen al cruzar las distintas miradas en relación a las barreras y crisis? ¿Qué soluciones se proponen?

- ¿Poseen los otros y los propios directores claves valiosas que ayuden a proponer las bases de una propuesta de mejora de la dirección escolar?
- ¿Qué indicadores de buen liderazgo del director son determinantes para valorar si impactan en la mejora escolar?

Partiendo de estas preguntas de investigación, esta tesis trata de comprender cómo se (re) construye y se desarrolla la identidad de liderazgo en directores escolares, además de conocer, cómo lo hacen y cuáles son los factores que obstaculizan e instalan crisis o barreras en el proceso de su desarrollo profesional. Además se tiene en cuenta un aspecto particular, interesa conocer y comprender la percepción que poseen los demás profesionales e individuos que le rodean en su hacer diario: inspectores, profesorado, orientadores y familia, para tener una visión más completa y real de su identidad. De este modo, poder detectar desde un punto de vista tanto interno como externo lo que está ocurriendo en la construcción identitaria del director. Lo que nos permitiría descubrir posibles crisis, barreras e identificar claves potenciales para mejorar la dirección escolar.

Para alcanzar este propósito se plantean los siguientes objetivos de investigación:

1. Indagar el grado de presencia de la función de liderazgo educativo en la identidad profesional de los directores y directoras escolares desde diferentes perspectivas (dirección, orientación, inspección educativa, asesoría y familias).

1.1. Obtener una panorámica inicial comprensiva de la realidad.

1.2. Detectar posibles barreras y crisis, así como recomendaciones y vías de solución desde una perspectiva externa.

2. Comprender cómo se construye la identidad de liderazgo pedagógico en directores y directoras, identificando competencias, momentos clave, hitos, circunstancias y leitmotiv, temáticas y ámbitos, crisis y barreras... Este objetivo se aborda desde dos perspectivas:

2.1. Construcción de la identidad desde la voz de los casos objeto de estudio (autoimagen e identidad personal y profesional).

2.2. Construcción de una identidad percibida o proyectada desde la perspectiva de

los otros significativos en el contexto y caso objeto de estudio (inspección educativa, orientación, asesoría, profesorado, familias y comunidad).

2.3. Comprender el impacto de una identidad de liderazgo.

3. Obtener una visión holística analizando y cruzando los diferentes casos para detectar que es un buen director.

3.1. Dimensiones clave de un liderazgo exitoso del director escolar (contextos, ámbitos y temáticas).

3.2. Formación y desarrollo profesional de la identidad de líder en los directores escolares.

4. Propuesta de mejora.

1.3. Estructura, desarrollo y diseño de la tesis

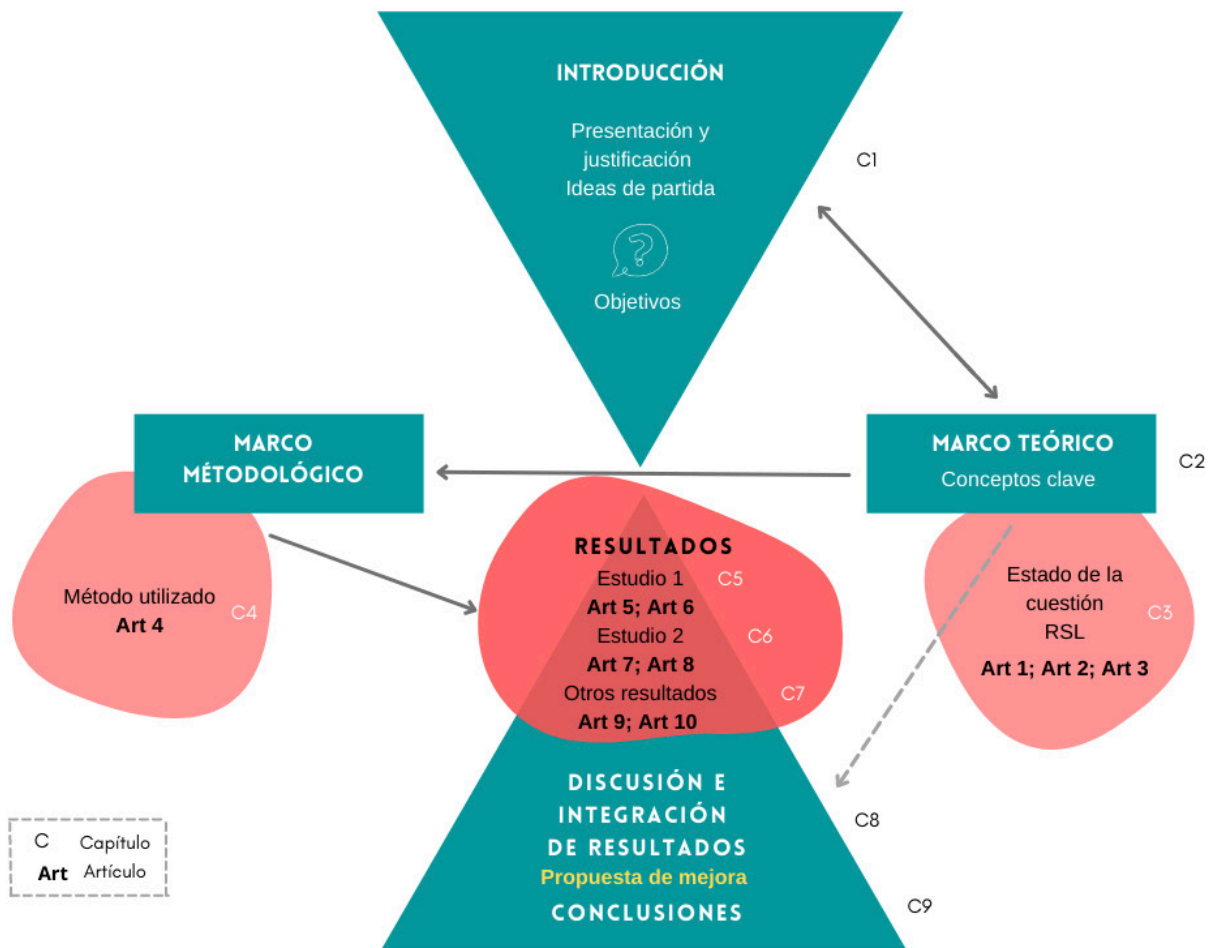
Partiendo de lo anteriormente expuesto en la presentación y justificación del problema de investigación y con el fin de cubrir los objetivos planteados, esta tesis doctoral se divide en cinco apartados, nueve capítulos y referencias bibliográficas y legislativas. Este proyecto está diseñado por compendio de artículos. Un total de diez artículos de investigación están integrados en los diferentes capítulos como se muestra en la Figura 1.

Esta tesis doctoral presenta un desarrollo y diseño secuencial. En primer lugar, partimos de unas ideas previas a partir de las cuales se desarrollaron unas preguntas de investigación y finalmente se formularon unos objetivos. Con la pretensión de dar respuesta a dichos objetivos, se diseñó un marco teórico para realizar una aproximación conceptual desde diferentes perspectivas y encontrar puntos clave. Este marco teórico, de carácter empírico, lo componen dos capítulos.

En el primer capítulo (**C.2**) se realiza una delimitación conceptual: dirección escolar en España; formación y desarrollo profesional de los líderes escolares; liderazgo para la mejora educativa; e identidad profesional. El **capítulo 3** muestra tres revisiones

Fig.1 - Diseño de la tesis doctoral.

Elaboración propia con la herramienta de diseño CANVA



sistemáticas de la literatura (en adelante RSL) que han constituido la base para la construcción conceptual del capítulo anterior y darle cuerpo al marco teórico. La primera (**Art 1. A systematic review of principals' leadership identity from 1993 to 2019**) examinó cómo los líderes educativos construyen su identidad profesional. La segunda (**Art 2. The Leadership Identity of Principals through the "View of Others" A Systematic Literature Review**), pone su foco en la construcción identitaria de líderes escolares pero desde perspectivas externas. La última revisión muestra el estudio de la literatura sobre la formación de directores para la construcción de la identidad de liderazgo con el fin de ofrecer una revisión del estado del arte. (**Art 3. Training for the Construction of a Leadership Identity in Principals: A Systematic Review of the International Literature**).

El marco metodológico, se compone por un capítulo (**C4**). En este se expone tanto la concepción global de la metodología de investigación empleada y su diseño de investigación, como un artículo que describe de manera más pormenorizada cómo se realizan los estudios de caso (clave central del estudio). El diseño de la investigación presenta un enfoque descriptivo, exploratorio e interpretativo, utilizando una metodología mixta con énfasis (auto) biográfico y narrativo. Interesa comprender y profundizar en el lado más oculto, humano y personal de la identidad profesional, utilizando enfoques cualitativos, biográficos y narrativos, con alto componente participativos y dialógico. Se utiliza como herramienta principal las entrevistas. Por un lado, entrevistas biográficas y narrativas y por otro, entrevistas tematizadas en profundidad a los informantes clave. En este capítulo además se exponen los participantes, los instrumentos de recogida y análisis de información y las consideraciones éticas. Toda la metodología utilizada se presenta a través de un artículo de investigación en el que se recoge todo el aspecto metodológico (**Art. 4. Researching the Professional Identity of School Principals through Case Study**).

En el siguiente apartado, se muestran los resultados de investigación. En un primer capítulo de contextualización y entrada empírica en el campo (**C.5**) se recogen los resultados obtenidos del estudio 1 (ver figura 2) de esta tesis doctoral. Este primer estudio consistió en obtener una primera panorámica del objeto de estudio. Nos interesaba conocer que piensan los otros líderes intermedios que rodean a los directivos escolares y que tienen especial contacto y conocimiento sobre su contexto profesional, su desempeño profesional, el ejercicio o no de la función de liderazgo y su desarrollo profesional.

Fig.2 - Diseño del estudio 1.

Elaboración propia con la herramienta de diseño CANVA

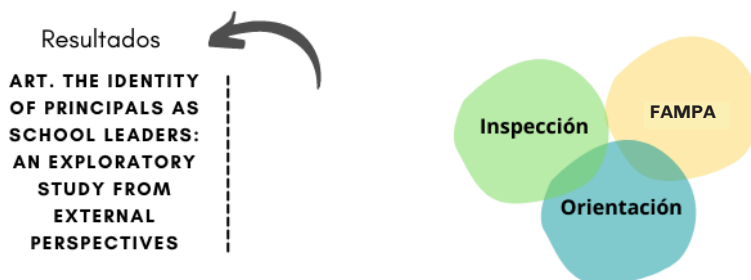
Estudio 1

Propósito: Conocer que piensan los otros colectivos que rodean al director escolar sobre la función de liderazgo y su desarrollo, para obtener una primera aproximación panorámica al objeto de estudio
Instrumentos de recogida de información : entrevistas en profundidad

Fase 1. Entrevistas en profundidad



Fase 2. Integración de resultados



Para ello se realizaron entrevistas tematizadas en profundidad a distintos colectivos que rodean a los directivos escolares: 1) Inspectores de educación (en adelante IE), orientadores de los Equipos De Orientación Educativa (en adelante EOE) y representantes de la Federación de Asociaciones de Madres y Padres del Alumnado (en adelante FAMPA). Este estudio preliminar de contextualización da lugar a dos artículos. El primero de ellos (**Art. 5. *The identity of principals as school leaders: An Exploratory Study from External Perspectives***) muestra la panorámica descriptiva de cómo son vistos y considerados los directivos escolares; el Segundo se detiene más específicamente en la opinión de los inspectores escolares (**Art. 6. *Exploring school leadership through the eyes of the education inspectors***).

En el **capítulo 6** se recogen los resultados del **segundo estudio** de investigación (Ver figura 3). Este estudio constituye el eje central de la investigación y tuvo como propósito profundizar en el conocimiento de la identidad profesional de liderazgo en directores. Para ello, se llevó a cabo un estudio de caso, se seleccionó un director de un centro educativo en un contexto con bajo índice de desarrollo socio-económico y cultural (En adelante ISEC o ESCS en PISA, Economic, Social and Cultural Status). Según los criterios de la Agencia Andaluza de Evaluación Educativa (en adelante AGAEVE) en el que se había observado que obtenían mejores resultados educativos que la media de las escuelas de su mismo índice ISEC, con mejora educativa evidente e indicios de la existencia de un liderazgo pedagógico. Se llevaron a cabo entrevistas biográficas y narrativas basadas en ciclos profundización reflexiva (al director/a del centro), complementados con entrevistas en profundidad a los otros significativos con los que interactúa (miembros de su equipo directivo, profesorado centro, inspección educativa, AMPA, EOE, comunidad, alumnado y administración y servicios). Se usó la técnica de bola de nieve hasta saturación de información. (**Art. 7. *Alberto's life story: transforming a disadvantaged school by appreciating the child's voice***; **Art.8. *Principal professional identity: Giving voice to children in a vulnerable Spanish context***).

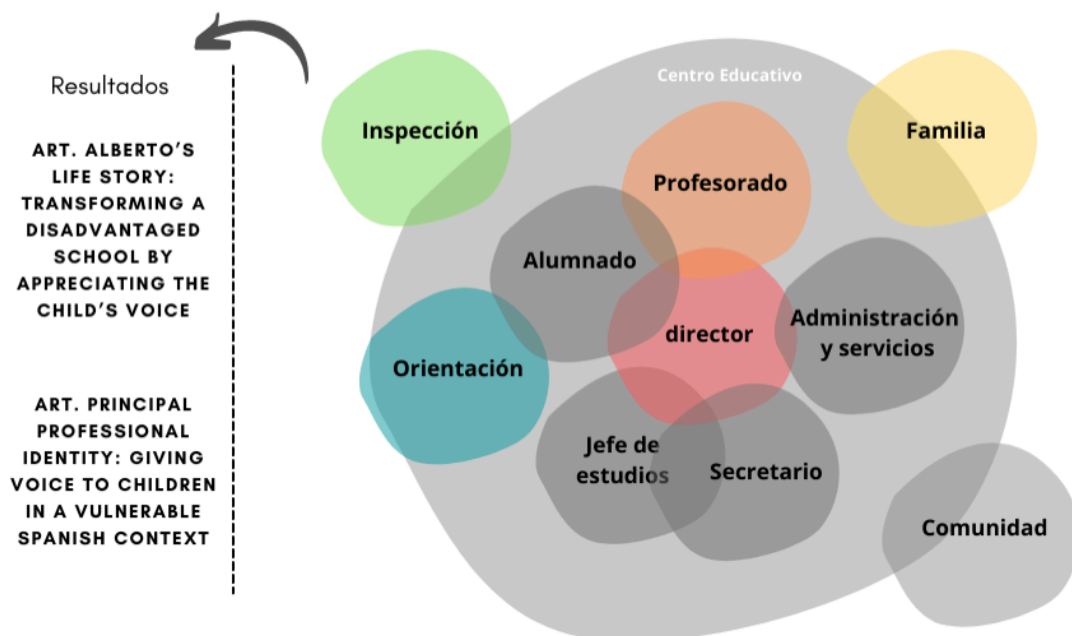
Fig.3 - Diseño del estudio 2.

Elaboración propia con la herramienta de diseño CANVA

Estudio 2

Propósito: Conocer que piensa el director y los otros con los que interactúa en un contexto determinado. Profundizar en el conocimiento de la identidad profesional, sobre la función de liderazgo y su desarrollo.

Instrumentos de recogida de información : entrevistas biográficas y narrativas. Entrevistas en profundidad.



Finalmente el **capítulo 7** muestra otros resultados de investigación derivados de los acontecimientos ocurridos durante el desarrollo de la tesis doctoral. Se lleva a cabo en un primer momento un análisis crítico de la película: *Hoy empieza todo*, para ejemplificar el desarrollo de la identidad de un director que lidera bajo el paraguas de justicia social (**Art. 9. «It All Starts Today»: Stage Portrait of a Leader for Social Justice**). Y finalmente, durante el confinamiento provocado por el Covid-19, se lleva a cabo una investigación para conocer el impacto y las reconstrucciones identitarias ante momentos de crisis (**Art. 10. Fighting windmills: a female principal's story during Covid-19**)

Finalmente se dedica un último apartado a exponer la discusión de resultados y conclusiones. El **capítulo 8** muestra la integración de resultados de todos los artículos de investigación y se discuten los resultados. No obstante, en cada uno de los artículos presentados, se exponen los resultados de investigación y sus discusiones particulares. Emergen tres temáticas principales de nuestra integración: crisis y barreras en la construcción de la identidad de líderes escolares; (re) Construcción identitaria profesional de la dirección escolar; prácticas de liderazgo exitosas para la mejora educativa y finalmente la información se vuelve en la elaboración de una **propuesta de mejora**. El último capítulo (**C9**), se encarga de las Conclusiones, limitaciones, fortalezas, implicaciones educativas y futuras líneas de investigación.

Por último, se presentan las referencias bibliográficas y legislativas utilizadas a lo largo del documento y todas las referencias de los artículos mostrados eliminando los duplicados.

MARCO TEÓRICO

CAPÍTULO 2.

CONCEPTOS CLAVE PARA ENTENDER LA DIRECCIÓN ESCOLAR EN ESPAÑA

Esta sección muestra una delimitación conceptual de los sectores objeto de análisis de la tesis, concretamente centrados en el contexto español, proporcionando definiciones para demarcar su alcance. Existen diversas definiciones para los conceptos clave tratados en la investigación y procuraremos llevar a cabo una aproximación global. Estos conceptos han sido redactados a partir de las revisiones sistemáticas de la literatura expuestas en el capítulo siguiente (Estado de la cuestión). Además, se ha llevado a cabo un rastreo de nuevos artículos de la literatura actual ampliando las revisiones y añadiendo literatura gris, invisible o informal que no han sido publicadas por canales ordinarios y que son de suma importancia para lograr obtener una visión completa. Finalmente, analizando la normativa nacional.

2.1. Dirección escolar

Informes internacionales como McKinsey (Barber y Mourshed, 2007), consideran al director como uno de los factores de mayor influencia interna e indirecta en la mejora de los resultados educativos del alumnado. Por ello, la figura directiva, se ha convertido en foco de estudios a nivel mundial. De forma concreta, el modelo directivo Español, presenta particularidades, que merecen atención. En este apartado, se trata de sintetizar las peculiaridades de este modelo de dirección con el objeto de facilitar y centrar al lector en unos de los puntos clave a tratar durante el desarrollo de esta tesis doctoral.

La Ley educativa española de mejora y calidad educativa (LOMCE, 2013) trajo un cambio de modelo en la dirección escolar. Esta promueve la potenciación de la función directiva y la considera como uno de los factores clave para la transformación del sistema educativo de cara a las nuevas demandas de aprendizaje del siglo XXI. La dirección escolar está implicada en todos los procesos que se producen en los centros educativos. Supone un puesto complejo, en el que hay que atender a numerosas responsabilidades y asumir diversidad de tareas, funciones, roles y perfiles para desarrollarlo de forma exitosa. (Sallán y Caecero, 2010). La misma ley educativa, señala un perfil del modelo de dirección escolar en España.

Así, el director ha de convertirse en representante de la administración educativa, asumir un mayor liderazgo pedagógico y de gestión (pues son responsables del proyecto educativo) y una mayor profesionalización en el sentido de obtener una certificación previa de competencias para poder acceder al puesto. Por tanto, a las tradicionales funciones de gestión económica y de administración, se les une otras como liderazgo pedagógico, liderazgo compartido, líder transformador y comunitario y facilitador en la transformación y desarrollo de las personas que componen la comunidad escolar (Bolívar, 2016)

En cuanto a la selección de la dirección y nombramiento de directores, el contexto Español presenta características específicas que repercuten de forma directa en su desarrollo profesional y por tanto en su identidad. El nombramiento del director se lleva a cabo por un periodo de 4 años y estos podrán renovarse por periodos de igual duración siempre y cuando su evaluación sea positiva. Para poder acceder al puesto, será necesario presentar una certificación de haber superado un curso de formación sobre la función directiva y desarrollado reglamentariamente por el Gobierno Español (LOMCE, 2013). En el proceso de selección mediante concurso de méritos, participa la comunidad educativa y la Administración educativa. Esta última tiene un peso porcentual levemente más elevado en cuanto a número de miembros en la comisión.

Este sistema de reclutamiento, crea incertidumbre y desanima a los candidatos a presentarse a la dirección. Para Ritacco y Bolívar (2018) esta inseguridad puede estar motivada por el modo de funcionamiento del sistema electivo que pone en duda su carácter democrático (elección de colegas, elección "corporativa"). Para Bolívar (2017), además, existe una clara falta de candidatos que en parte lo provoca la situación de ambivalencia a la que se enfrenta (dicotomía de docencia-dirección). Es decir, el director es un docente, que entre clase y clase, actúa de director. En definitiva, la dirección escolar se exhibe como una profesión poco atractiva (Martínez-García y Gil-Flores, 2018; Sallán y Caecero, 2010).

En esta línea, Pont y otros (2009) indican que son precisamente las responsabilidades y la gran carga de trabajo los culpables del desánimo de los posibles candidatos, junto a las escasas perspectivas de desarrollo profesional o las insustanciales condiciones salariales. Ritacco y Amores (2018) defienden esta misma idea, alegando que en la

actualidad y a pesar de los avances, se sigue debatiendo en España acerca del peso de las tareas administrativas y de gestión, el tiempo limitado de ejercicio profesional (periodos de 4 años), la falta de autonomía en decisiones importantes o las presiones del contexto actual. Ante este panorama, los propios directivos españoles mediante sus asociaciones han tomado cartas en el asunto construyendo un Marco español de buena dirección (MEBD), con el fin de dirigir el cambio hacia una profesionalización directiva y establecer una identidad a la dirección escolar.

2.2. Formación y desarrollo profesional de los líderes escolares

La necesidad de formación y desarrollo profesional de los directores escolares ha ido ganando terreno en las agendas y políticas actuales de todo el mundo (Orr, 2011; Parylo, 2013) Hallinger (2003) considera central la formación de los líderes escolares para el avance y el progreso de las escuelas. Esta noción surge de la amplia gama de evidencias empíricas aportadas al respecto, que sugieren la existencia de una fuerte conexión entre la eficacia de una escuela y la formación del liderazgo educativo (Boyle, Haller y Hunt, 2016; Horn, Nolen, Ward y Campbell, 2008; Jenlink, 2014).

En el contexto Español, la ley orgánica de mejora y calidad educativa (LOMCE, 2013) impuso por primera vez la obligatoriedad para acceder a puestos de dirección en centros docentes, la posesión de una certificación de superación de un curso sobre la función directiva (no obstante, este requisito no fue obligatorio en los primeros cinco años desde su entrada en vigor). Por tanto, hasta el año 2018, no existía ninguna obligación de poseer formación directiva entre los requisitos de participación en los concursos de méritos para la selección de directores en España. Estos cursos de formación, dirigido a la adquisición de las competencias para ejercer funciones propias del puesto directivo, son impartidos por el Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte y las Comunidades Autónomas. Presentan una duración de mínimo 120 horas y tienen una validez para 8 años, por tanto, será necesario la realización de cursos de actualización.

Este nuevo enfoque dirigido a la profesionalización directiva, no es suficiente para lograr el cambio y la mejora (Bolivar, 2012). Esta afirmación concuerda con los resultados

expuestos en el informe Talis 2018 (OCDE, 2019) en el que se señala que solo la mitad de los directivos en España han completado, al menos una vez, un curso de formación antes de asumir su cargo. Para Vázquez, Liesa y Bernal (2016), los cursos de formación en la actualidad, son meros trámites en el que no existe una mejora real en el desarrollo profesional de los directores escolares, porque entre otras cosas, de aleja de la realidad contextual. A pesar de todas las competencias a alcanzar en el curso formativo marcadas en el Real Decreto 894 (2014), como son habilidades de liderazgo y fomento de trabajo en equipo, de comunicación, motivación, control y supervisión, gestión, coordinación, toma de decisiones o motivación (entre otras). Gómez-Delgado (2018) señala, que estos cursos se centran principalmente en desarrollar habilidades de gestión en temas burocráticos y supervisión más allá de funciones pedagógicas y de liderazgo, pues como afirman, son las tareas administrativas a las que más tiempo dedican los directivos como consecuencia del nivel de exigencia de la administración educativa. Por tanto, no existe una formación equilibrada y basada en la mejora educativa en España, así como una figura directiva bien definida (Ritacco y Bolívar, 2018). El MEBD, trabaja en esta línea, pretende servir de guía para el buen hacer directivo y consolidar así la figura directiva.

Esta problemática se extiende fuera de nuestro territorio, y es por ello que actualmente se reclama un cambio en la gestión escolar, rechazando los aspectos meramente administrativos y burocráticos dentro de la responsabilidad escolar (Connolly, Milton, Davies y Barrantes, 2018). En este sentido, se apuesta por una figura que luche por las necesidades reales de la escuela y que la lidere con el objetivo de alcanzar el éxito y la equidad. Para ello, se requiere una formación específica para que los directores adquieran una identidad como líderes plenamente comprometidos con el éxito de la escuela. Además, diversos estudios, como los de Grissom, Mitani y Woo (2019), Hallinger (2018) y Tingle, Corrales y Peters (2019), señalan la necesidad de avanzar tanto en la formación inicial como en la continua de los líderes escolares.

2.3. Liderazgo para la mejora educativa

Se puede definir el liderazgo como el conjunto de estrategias y acciones emprendidas por un individuo para obtener éxito (Yukl, 2008). La persona (as) líder (es), demuestran la capacidad de influir, motivar, organizar y llevar a cabo acciones para lograr metas propuestas y a la vez involucrar a otras personas y guiarlas hacia la consecución de los mismos objetivos en un marco de valores (Goldman, 1998). Este aspecto, convierte al liderazgo escolar en un elemento clave para la mejora escolar y eje prioritario en las políticas educativas de todo el mundo (Bolívar, 2012; Day, 2018; Hallinger y Heck, 2010; Pont, Nusche y Moorman, 2008; UNESCO, 2018). Fullan (2016), en su obra: *Tres claves para maximizar el impacto de la dirección escolar*, argumenta a través de una metáfora que «La capacidad de navegar, de ayudar a otros a navegar a través de aguas turbulentas requerirá un nuevo tipo de liderazgo» (p. 19).

Concretamente el liderazgo pedagógico, se considera un punto clave para lograr una educación de calidad (Crow et al., 2017; Llorent-Bedmar, Cobano-Delgado, y Navarro-Granados 2017; Robinson; Lloyd y Rowe, 2014). El líder pedagógico se centra en labores educativas, en el proceso de enseñanza aprendizaje, además de apoyar todos los procesos para su mejora (Bolívar, 2015; Leithwood y Seashore-Louis, 2012). Este tipo de liderazgo, el director acompaña y guía al docente a construir visión y metas educativas comunes que logren la mejora escolar (Rodríguez-Gallego, Sierra y López-Martínez, 2020). Bøe, Marit; Hognestad, Karin (2015), añaden la perspectivas del liderazgo distribuido con los enfoques del liderazgo pedagógico. Es decir, el liderazgo pedagógico, se desarrolla a partir de prácticas horizontales, enfoque distribuido y de una cultura profesional colaborativa (Robinson, Lloyd y Rowe, 2008; Hargreaves y Fullan, 2014).

Del mismo modo para Fullan (2016), reposicionar el rol directivo como líder pedagógico consiste en que este, centre todos sus esfuerzos en maximizar el aprendizaje de todos los profesores para que a su vez se maximice el de sus estudiantes. En el sentido que el concepto este orientado hacia la construcción del capital profesional de la escuela (Hargreaves y Fullan, 2014) y la búsqueda de la implicación y labor conjunta de toda la escuela (Bolívar, 2019). En definitiva el liderazgo pedagógico, busca relaciones y redes de acción, basada compromiso personales y profesional y valores de empatía (Escudero, 2011).

Además, de defender un líder carismático, que luche por la inclusión educativa y la justicia social (Bolívar 1010; Furman, 2012; Murillo et al., 2010).

Pero más allá de las formas de liderazgo, algunos autores como Robinson (2014), han apostado más bien, por describir prácticas de liderazgo llevadas a cabo por líderes exitosos que verdaderamente tienen un impacto en la mejora de los resultados escolares. Leithwood, Harris y Hopkins (2008), desarrollaron cuatro prácticas de liderazgo exitosas que se han convertido en universales. Otros autores como Day et al. (2010), enmarcados dentro del proyecto ISSPP (*International Successful School Principaship Project*), a partir de las anteriores desarrollaron ocho dimensiones clave. Pero como bien afirma Bolívar (2019), se ha de tener en cuenta que el éxito de estas prácticas o dimensiones, depende de que respondan al contexto en que se desarrollan. A partir de aquí, se extraen dimensiones clave y prácticas exitosas de los estudios mencionados:

- 1.** Establecer unas metas de grupo, encaminadas hacia la misma visión, dirección y expectativas.
- 2.** Mejorar las condiciones y los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje (nuevos métodos, actividades innovadoras...).
- 3.** Construcción de relaciones positivas en el centro escolar y fuera del mismo (comunidad/localidad)
- 4.** Fortalecer el desarrollo profesional docente, mejorando y aportando calidad a su formación.
- 5.** Rediseñar las estructuras organizativas para apoyar las prácticas deseadas.

A pesar de los beneficios de tener bajo la dirección escolar líderes con capacidades pedagógicas, la situación particular de la dirección en España provoca grandes dificultades para desempeñar prácticas eficaces de liderazgo pedagógico (Bolívar, 2019). Así se manifiesta en Informes como el de Talis (OCDE, 2018), en cuyo análisis se afirma que los directores españoles se sitúan por debajo de la media en cuanto a recibir formación de liderazgo instructivo. En esta línea, Bolívar (2006) ya venía afirmando que en España se ha de cambiar de perspectiva individualista de «cada uno trabaja en su aula» y centrarse de forma conjunta en la mejora de los resultados escolares. Este aspecto es una de las metas prioritarias manifiestas en el marco Español para la buena dirección escolar.

2.4. Identidad profesional

En las últimas décadas, se ha asociado el buen desarrollo profesional y de liderazgo con el “ser profesional” de los directivos escolares (Kelchermans et al., 2011). Para Thomson (2009), el liderazgo escolar es más que una simple forma de hacer las cosas, es también una forma de ser y entender el mundo. Como afirman Crow y Møller (2017), interesa la dimensión más humana del líder escolar, centrando el foco en un sólido y fuerte sentido de identidad profesional (Bolívar 2006; Izadinia 2018). En este sentido, las investigaciones sobre el liderazgo requieren la recopilación de datos sobre los directores, entendiendo lo que piensan, sienten y creen más allá de sus acciones, lo que permitirá además, extraer claves significativas en la puesta en marcha de un liderazgo eficaz. (Sugrue, 2015).

La identidad es difícil de conceptualizar, ya que no es una realidad objetiva y se desarrolla a partir de la autopercepción, que a su vez se basa en valores, impulsos, creencias, rasgos y experiencias con los demás, siendo el resultado de la interacción humana (Ibarra, 1999; Slay y Smith, 2011). La literatura científica recoge diferentes tipos de identidad. Por ejemplo, Burke y Stets (2009) la clasifican en identidad social, identidad personal y rol. Otros enfoques critican esta concepción estática, centrándose en la interacción entre estas dimensiones (Thoits y Virshup, 1997). La identidad representa un concepto de naturaleza cambiante e inestable. Por lo tanto, está en constante negociación, ya que los contextos que envuelven al individuo son variados.

Crow, et al. (2017) asocian el concepto, con aspectos profesionales y personales. Según Dubar (2000), la identidad puede definirse como el resultado de las interacciones personales junto con el contexto social, cultural y organizativo. Esto significa que la identidad no puede separarse de las relaciones personales y del entorno, que siempre están sujetos a la influencia de factores históricos y culturales (Baumeister, 1986; Trede et al., 2012; Wenger, 1998). En este sentido, y como sugiere Dubar (2000), la identidad no se construye sólo para uno mismo, sino también para los demás. Se trata de un proceso subjetivo (Court 2005) que se moldea continuamente por la interacción social, de manera que los sentimientos de una persona dependen de los grupos sociales a los que pertenece (Bolívar 2006; Tajfel y Turner 1979). En este punto, la identidad de liderazgo del director se construye a partir de los acontecimientos pasados y presentes

y de la influencia de otros agentes educativos que le rodean. Por lo tanto, la identidad profesional no es estática, sino que cambia constantemente y es transitoria (Day et al., 2005; Reay y Ball, 2000).

Los individuos reflexionan constantemente sobre los cambios que se producen a su alrededor, y estas reflexiones les llevan a desarrollar una identidad basada en la forma de interpretar su historia autobiográfica (Ricoeur, 1996). En este sentido, la identidad profesional de los directores está en constante evolución a medida que se adaptan a las diferentes barreras, retos y experiencias a las que se enfrentan. Estas barreras pueden ser los cambios políticos, sociales y culturales, su raza, su género o sus experiencias personales. Pero la identidad profesional también puede modificarse conscientemente, como afirma Robertson (2017: 786), «Como resultado de los procesos de aprendizaje y las reflexiones sobre uno mismo». Así, todos los sujetos tienen la capacidad de mejorar su competencia personal y profesional. Guskey y Yoon (2009) observaron que el desarrollo profesional requiere la implementación exitosa de nuevas prácticas en el aula. El éxito de la práctica, que es posible gracias a la identidad transitoria, se produce cuando los aprendizajes se integran en la identidad profesional, y cuando los individuos aprenden a adoptar un pensamiento positivo y son capaces de controlar las emociones.

Otras barreras que influyen en la construcción del desarrollo de una identidad de liderazgo profesional incluyen la carga de papeleo que se impone a los directores, que los desvía de la búsqueda de objetivos pedagógicos (Bush, 2018; OCDE, 2013; Ritacco y Bolívar, 2018). Esta limitación está estrechamente relacionada con la creciente cultura de la rendición de cuentas, que está ganando terreno en las políticas educativas europeas (Connolly et al., 2018). Otros factores influyentes son el género (Coleman, 2000; Crow et al., 2017; Pont et al., 2008; Rusch y Marshall, 2006), la experiencia (Cardno y Youngs, 2013; Mpungose, 2010) y la falta de apoyo y compromiso de los miembros de la escuela (Galdames et al., 2018; Rhodes et al., 2009). De forma concreta, en el contexto español, existe una crisis identitaria en los directores escolares, provocada por la inestabilidad que supone asumir el puesto directivo (Ritacco y Bolívar, 2018).

CAPÍTULO 3.

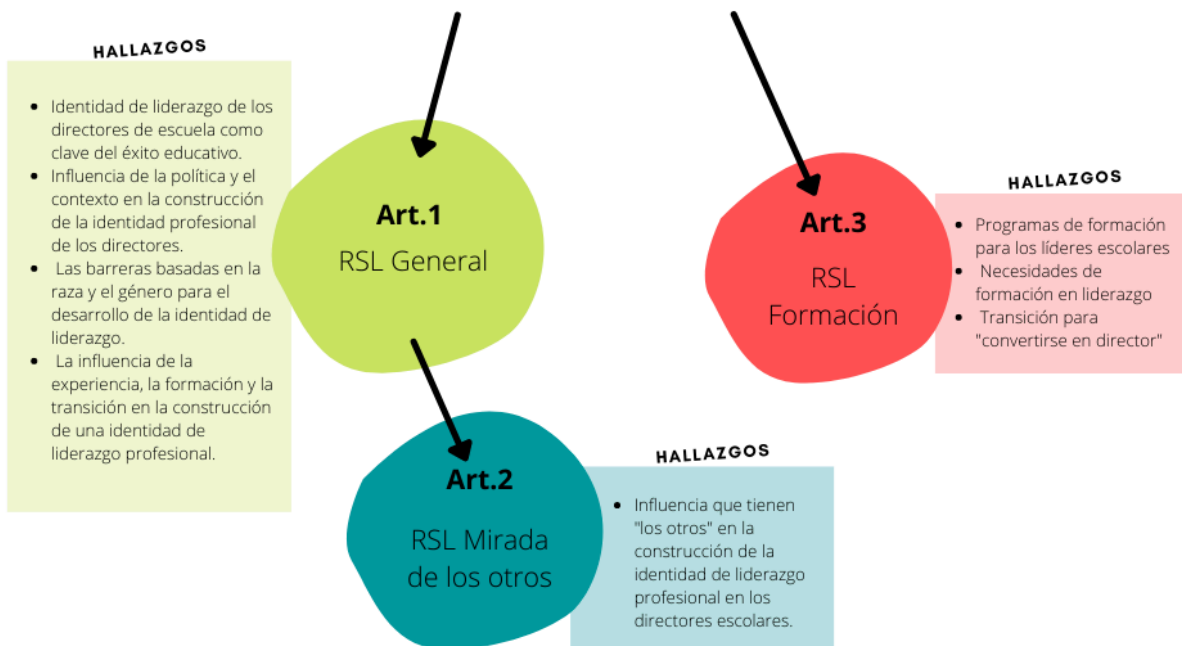
ESTADO DE LA CUESTIÓN

El presente capítulo recoge la delimitación del tema de investigación a partir de tres revisiones sistemáticas de la literatura.

- A systematic review of principals' leadership identity from 1993 to 2019.
- The Leadership Identity of Principals through the «View of Others» A Systematic Literature Review.
- Training for the Construction of a Leadership Identity in Principals: A Systematic Review of the International Literature.

Fig. 4 - Publicaciones derivadas de las revisiones sistemáticas de la literatura
Elaboración propia con la herramienta de diseño CANVA

Identidad de liderazgo de los directores



ARTÍCULO 1

A systematic review of principals' leadership identity from 1993 to 2019

Cristina Cruz-González, Carmen Lucena Rodríguez and Jesús Domingo Segovia (2021). A systematic review of principals' leadership identity from 1993 to 2019. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 49(1), 31–53.

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SJR Impact Factor **Q1** (5.100)

JCR Impacto Factor **Q1** (4.297)

Abstract

There is growing interest in the role that principals play as school leaders. Exploring how principals build their professional leadership identity is crucial to understanding their influence on school performance. A systematic review was conducted to examine how educational leaders develop their professional identity. Our objectives were: (a) to identify the factors that determine how educational leaders develop their professional identity; (b) to identify shared traits of educational leadership identity; and (c) to describe the implications that the results obtained may have for research and professional practice. A literature search on Web of Science (WOS), SCOPUS and Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) yielded a total of 38 articles published in international journals. Thematic analysis was conducted using the Nvivo software package. Emerging topics include: leadership identity of school principals as the key to educational success; influence of politics and context on the construction of principals' professional identity; race- and gender- based barriers to the development of leadership identity; and the influence of experience, training and transition on the construction of a professional leadership identity.

Keywords

Identity, Leadership, Principal, Systematic review

Introduction

Research in the field of education has demonstrated that school leadership is crucial to school and academic improvement (Day et al., 2011; Hallinger and Heck, 2010; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2008; Muijs and Harris, 2006). Based on this finding, leadership in schools has become a priority in education policies worldwide (CEPPE, 2013; Hartley, 2009; OECD, 2013; Pont et al., 2008; UNESCO-IIEP- IWGE, 2012).

International studies and reports identify differences in achievements based on the context and environment. This effect demonstrates that school leadership is not approached from a standard perspective, and that leadership is exercised differently by school leaders. Even in similar contexts, different achievements are obtained, based on the way in which leadership is approached. This phenomenon suggests that there are other personal, cultural and identity factors at stake in the exercise of school leadership

In this regard, a number of studies have been conducted to better understand the concept of 'professional identity', including its construction and development and the factors that either hinder or help the transition towards school leadership (Akkerman and Meijer, 2011; Dubar, 2000). The results of these studies may shed light on how school leaders develop a professional identity that drives them to exercise school leadership.

A third strand has emerged on the identification of personal qualities and professional competencies generic to effective school leaders of the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) coordinated by Christopher Day. This project has encouraged a series of research studies focused on the development of professional leadership identity in successful school leaders (Aas and Vavick, 2015; Crow et al., 2017; Ritacco and Bolívar, 2018; Robertson, 2017; Sinha and Hanuscin, 2017).

This emerging topic encouraged us to conduct a systematic literature review (SLR) on professional leadership identity in school leaders at the international level. Our objective was to identify relevant findings that answer the following research questions:

- What are the characteristics of studies on leadership identity in school leaders?
- What are the primary factors that determine the development of a leadership identity in school leaders?
- What implications may the findings have for professional practice?

This review adopted a systematic approach to include international literature on professional identity and leadership in principals (Hallinger, 2013). The process of searching and selecting thematically relevant studies resulted in the review of 38 articles indexed in 3 databases – Web of Science (WOS), SCOPUS and Education Resources Information

Center (ERIC) – between 1993 and 2019. By outlining the international perspective, this study provides relevant points of interest and future lines of research that have emerged on the basis of our included studies.

To facilitate the understanding of the findings, we have structured the results into two blocks with their corresponding subsections: general description of the studies and emerging topics. Subsequently, a discussion was advanced using the findings from relevant research on this subject. Finally, we end with some concluding observations.

Theoretical framework

Numerous studies have emphasized the association between school leadership and school improvement (Bush, 2009; Hallinger and Heck, 2010; Muijs and Harris, 2006; Thoonen et al., 2012). Several international reports (OECD, 2013; UNESCO-IIPE-IWGE, 2012) support the idea that educational quality stems from transformational processes where school leaders are assigned a major role. The evidence demonstrates that scant attention is paid to professional leadership in some countries –as documented by Rhodes and Brundrett (2006). Based on current evidence, on- going educational reforms are focused on the development of professional leadership identity, which is considered to be a determinant of successful teaching practices (Brezicha et al., 2015; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2008; Scribner and Bradley-Levine, 2010; Soini et al., 2016).

With regard to school leadership, school leaders have been observed to play a critical role due to their organizational (Schleicher, 2012) and political involvement (Crow et al., 2017). High expectations have emerged regarding the role of school principals, who are considered key to school improvement (Cowie and Crawford, 2008). Evidence has been provided of the ability of principals to gain the commitment of school members to a shared vision for their school (Urick and Bowers, 2014). This idea is supported by Botha (2006: 342), who identified some of the abilities required for the exercise of school leadership, namely: 'to convince, inspire, bind and direct followers to realize common ideals'. This is why being a principal and exercising school leadership is a complex task that involves the development of professional pedagogy skills. Consequently, these

competences are influenced by factors of both an external and internal origin that make management work even more difficult. It is also relevant to refer to 'cross-cultural leadership' (Dickson et al., 2012: 490) because the expectations of the management role vary according to the existing school culture in each territory. Each context and culture incorporates important nuances in the conceptualization of school management. Thus, these are named differently according to the country (i.e. head teacher, headmaster, principal), emphasizing roles of 'head', 'responsible', 'first authority', 'chief' or 'leader'.

In addition, it is key to mention the evolution, in the last decade, of the term 'educational administration' towards the concept of 'educational management, administration and leadership' in various countries, such as the UK and some parts of Europe. This evolution has provided a greater vision of leadership in the school organization, rebuilding the professional identity of the school principal (Bush, 2019).

Some barriers to the development of a professional leadership identity include the burden of paperwork that is imposed on principals, which diverts them from pursuing pedagogical goals (Bush, 2018; OECD, 2013; Ritacco and Bolivar, 2018). This limitation is closely related to the growing culture of accountability, which is gaining ground in European education policies (Connolly et al., 2018). Other influential factors include gender (Coleman, 2000; Crow et al., 2017; Pont et al., 2008; Rusch and Marshall, 2006), experience (Cardno and Youngs, 2013; Mpungose, 2010) and the lack of support and commitment of school members (Galdames et al., 2018; Rhodes et al., 2009).

School performance improves when leadership is successfully exercised by the principal (Cowie and Crawford, 2008). Yet, as Thomson (2009: 1) observed, 'school leadership is more than simply a way to do things, it is also a way to be and understand the world'. In this regard, investigations into leadership require the collection of data on principals, understanding what they think, feel and believe beyond their actions, which involves studying leadership identity (Sugrue, 2015). In brief, there are major reasons for deepening our understanding of the self in school leadership (Robertson, 2017). These studies resulted in the emergence of the term leadership identity (Aas and Vavick, 2015; Sinha and Hanuscin, 2017).

The 'self' is ambiguous and is composed of a constant flow of multiple identities (Møller, 2012; Scribner and Crow, 2012). According to Ricoeur (1992), 'selfhood' can be understood as a narration containing all the components of story telling. It is difficult to conceptualize 'identity', as it is not an objective reality and is developed based on self-perception, which is in turn based on values, impulses, beliefs, traits and experiences with others (Ibarra, 1999; Slay and Smith, 2011).

The scientific literature includes different types of identity. For instance, Burke and Stets (2009) categorize this into social identity, personal identity and role. Other approaches criticize this static conception, focusing on the interaction between these dimensions (Thoits and Virshup, 1997).

Identity represents a concept that is of a changing and unstable nature. Therefore, it is in constant negotiation, since the contexts that involve the individual are varied.

In the present article our focus will primarily be centred on the issue of professional identity. In relation to this concept, Crow et al. (2017) associate this with professional and personal aspects. According to Dubar (2000), identity can be defined as the result of personal interactions along with the social, cultural and organizational context. This means that identity cannot be separated from personal relations and the environment, which are always subject to the influence of historical and cultural factors (Baumeister, 1986; Trede et al., 2012; Wenger, 1998). In this sense, the development of identity involves a dual process: identity for oneself and identity for others (Dubar, 2000; Ricoeur, 1996), and it takes a long time to construct and develop an identity. Therefore, professional identity is not static, but is instead constantly changing and transient (Day et al., 2005; Reay and Ball, 2000).

Professional identity is in a continual state of development. Individuals are constantly reflecting on the changes that occur around them, and these reflections drive them to develop an identity based on the way they interpret their autobiographic story (Ricoeur, 1996). In this regard, the professional identity of principals is in constant evolution as they adapt to the different barriers, challenges and experiences they face. These barriers may include political, social and cultural changes, their race, gender or their

personal experiences. But professional identity can also be consciously changed, as stated by Robertson (2017: 786), 'as a result of learning processes and reflections about oneself'. Thus, all subjects have the ability to improve their personal and professional competence. Guskey and Yoon (2009) observed that professional development requires the successful implementation of new practices in the classroom. Successful practice – which is made possible thanks to transient identity – is where the lessons learned are integrated into professional identity, and where individuals learn to adopt positive thinking and are able to control emotions.

Methods

This study is a systematic literature review (Gough, 2007; Hallinger, 2013, 2014; Petticrew and Roberts, 2006). Our primary purpose is to construct a qualitative synthesis of research hotspots in the field of leadership identity in school principals. To this end, we conducted an exploratory review of the literature to identify the objectives, context and design of studies within this field (Hallinger and Bryant, 2013). We also explored emerging topics and avenues for future research and practice (De Vries et al., 2016; Voorberg et al., 2015).

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

The key criteria for identifying the selected studies were based on those used in other systematic reviews (e.g. Castillo and Hallinger, 2018), including thematic adequacy, time period and type of source. In Table 1, we expose a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria were used in our literature search on WOS, SCOPUS and ERIC.

SEARCH STRATEGY

A literature search was conducted using WOS, SCOPUS and ERIC to identify articles relevant to our SLR (Figure 1). In order to provide rigour to our search process, we proceeded to establish keywords extracted from the ERIC thesaurus (Hertzberg and Rudner, 1999).

Table 1 - Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusion criteria

Studies published in the Web of Science (WOS), SCOPUS and Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC) databases resulting from the pre-established search equations

Studies that were published in either a review or article format

Relevant topic that may answer our research questions and goals

School-centred studies

Studies addressing the role of school principals

Scientific studies in the following areas and research domains:

- In SCOPUS: studies labelled within the research domain 'Social Sciences'
 - In WOS: studies labelled in the field of research 'Education, Educational Research'
-

Exclusion criteria

Not meeting inclusion criteria

Fig.1 - Flow chart of stages of literature search.

The keywords used in our search equation were: professional identity AND leadership AND principal OR head teacher.1 Table 2 provides data on our search strategy Below are the stages of the literature search of our systematic review.

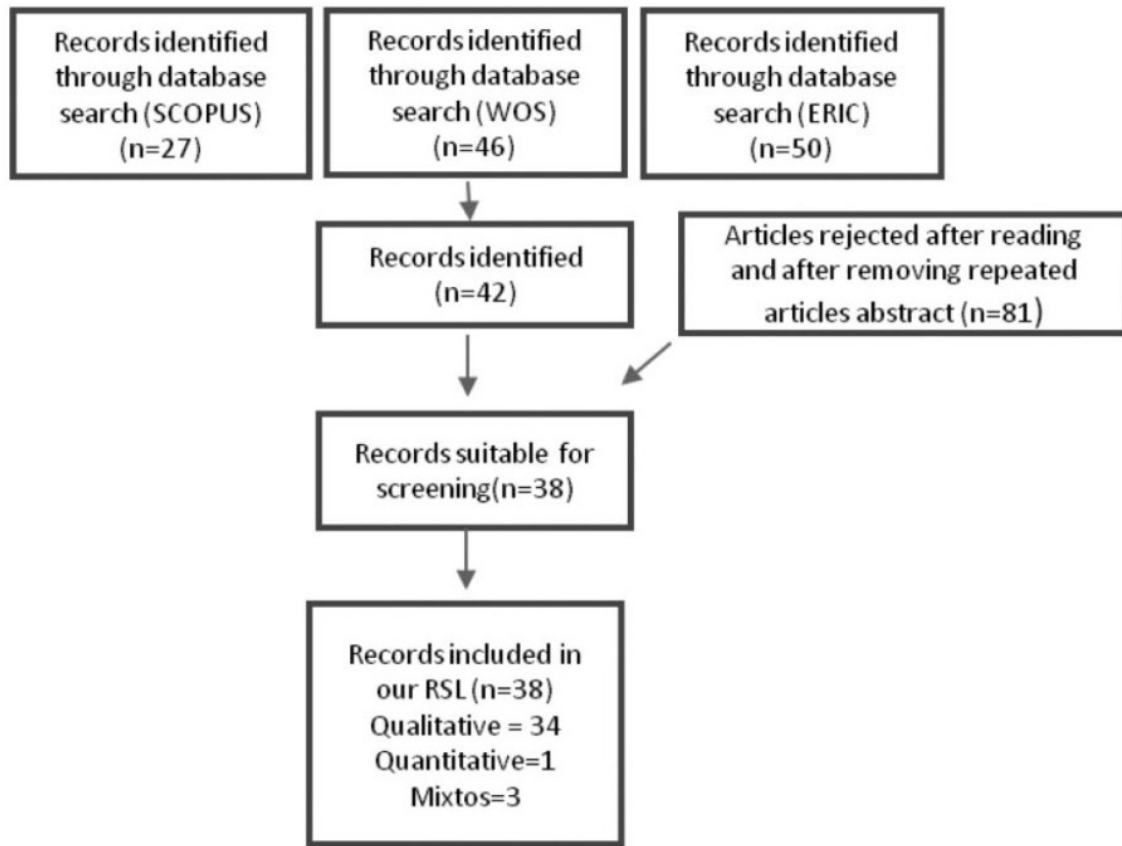


Table 2 - Strategy used in our literature search

Database searched	Keywords used	Articles identified after the application of selection criteria	Articles included
Web of Science (WOS)	TS = (('professional identity') AND (principal OR head teacher) AND (leadership))	46	16
Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC)	('Professional identity') AND (principal OR head teacher) AND (leadership)	50	13
SCOPUS	TITLE-ABS-KEY('professional identity') AND TITLE-ABSKEY(Principal OR head teacher) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY(leadership)	27	9
Total		123	38

DATA EXTRACTION AND QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The process of including the studies in our SLR was carried out through peer review (Sarhou, 2016). We proceeded to read the articles returned by our search to identify only those that were relevant to our research questions and goals. Of the 42 articles returned, we selected 38. In this phase, the reason for exclusion of these studies was thematic inadequacy in relation to our issue of study.

Thematic analysis of the selected studies was carried out by the qualitative analysis software Nvivo, to identify the 'topical focus' of the included literature. The emerging thematic categories were shared and agreed upon by three researchers, in order to ensure the coherence of this codification.

Results

This section begins with a synthesis of the research purposes and the contexts and studies included in our systematic review. An overview of the temporal evolution of scientific production in the selected databases is also provided. Subsequently, we present an analysis of the 'emerging topics' found in the review. A general overview of the 38 articles included revealed the emerging hotspots of research on principal professional identity and school leadership.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDIES

Objectives and research questions. The studies included had a variety of objectives, which can be synthesized into two core objectives.

Firstly, the general objective of many studies was to understand the process of developing, negotiating and constructing professional leadership identity (Boris-Schacter and Merrifield, 2000; Connolly et al., 2018; Crow et al., 2017; Johnson, 2017; Miller et al., 2015; Rayner, 2018; Ritacco and Bolivar, 2018; Robertson, 2017; Spies and Heystek, 2015). The prevailing theme of these articles was to address gender and race-based

barriers to the development of leadership identity in school leaders (Armstrong and Mitchell, 2017; Arar and Shapira, 2016; Hernández and Murakami, 2016; Jones, 2017; Lya et al., 2002; Mendez-Morse et al., 2015; Murakami and Tornsen, 2017; Nickens and Washington, 2016; Watts, 1998). Other authors such as Bredeson (1993), Mpungose (2010), Notman (2017), Stamopoulos (2012) and St-Pierre (2005) also examined the factors that determine the development of leadership identity and practice.

Secondly, a shared objective was to evaluate the ability of school leaders to influence the school community (Carpenter et al., 2015; Mifsud, 2015; Montecinos, 2018; Payne and Smith, 2018; Rigby, 2015; Toure and Dorsey, 2018). These studies were aimed at examining the influence that school principals may exert on pupils and teachers and how the way in which they exercise leadership may support or prevent discriminatory actions and perpetuate stereotypes in school. For them, all of these studies pointed to the need for a leadership identity.

Other studies focused on the issues of professional development and training to achieve a professional leadership identity (Greer et al., 2015; Maguire and Braun, 2019; Rhodes et al., 2009). Furthermore, studies such as Montecinos et al. (2018) examined how professional experiences influenced the development of professional identity. Literature included in this review (Browne- Ferrigno, 2003; Connolly et al., 2018; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006; Simon et al., 2019; Wallace, 1996) analysed key factors in the transition to principalship.

Notably, all studies highlighted the need to comprehend the professional identity of school leaders in order to understand their leadership practices.

Context and study designs. In relation to the geographical distribution of studies, 12 studies had been conducted in the USA and 9 in the UK. This means that studies in this field are largely conducted in Anglo-Saxon countries. Other countries included Canada, Spain, Sweden, Israel, Malta, South Africa, Australia, Jamaica, Chile and Lebanon.

Study participants were mainly school principals, whilst other stakeholders such as teachers, families, pupils and others participated in some studies.

Most studies were qualitative, of which only three employed a mixed design (Lya et al., 2002; Montecinos et al., 2018; Rhodes et al., 2009), and only one study was quantitative (Greer et al., 2014). Ten studies were case studies, of which 18 (Arar and Shapira, 2016; Bahous et al., 2016; Boris-Schacter and Merrifield, 2000; Bredeson, 1993; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Carpenter et al., 2015; Maguire and Braun, 2019; Mendez-Morse et al., 2015; Mifsud, 2015; Miller et al., 2015; Notman, 2017; Rayner, 2018; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006; Rigby, 2015; Ritacco and Bolivar, 2018; Riveros

et al., 2016; Simon et al., 2019; St-Pierre, 2005; Toure and Dorsey, 2018; Wallace, 1996; Watts, 1998) were based on semi-structured interviews with school principals and other school members. In some studies, data collection was also based on participant observation (Rigby, 2015; Toure and Dorsey, 2018), focus groups (Nickens and Washington, 2016) or documentary analysis (Mifsud, 2015; Riveros et al., 2016). Four studies used the method based on 'life stories' (Hernández and Murakami, 2016; Johnson, 2017; Mpungose, 2010; Spies and Heystek, 2015).

Growth trajectory of the literature on leadership identity in principals. We found that a total of 38 articles on professional leadership identity in leaders had accumulated in recent decades. Table 3 shows the growth trajectory of the included literature, which began with the publication of an article in 1993. From that date until 2015 there is no significant growth. After that year, the number of publications increases steadily, reaching its maximum in 2017. However, it must be noted that this data does not represent all the knowledge published on leadership identity in principals. Only articles published in journals indexed in the WOS, ERIC and Scopus databases were taken into consideration in this review.

EMERGING TOPICS

After identifying the purposes of the included studies, the research contexts and the trends over time, we turn to an analysis of the 'topical focus' found in this review. In Appendix 1, the central theoretical terms of the studies included in our review are shown in order to explain how the authors place their research focus on the professional identity of leaders. From this, we classify the articles into four central categories.

Table 3 - Growth trajectory of the literature search.

1993	Bredeson (1993)
1994	-
1995	-
1996	Wallace (1996)
1997	-
1998	Watts (1998)
1999	-
2000	Boris-Schacter and Merrifield (2000)
2001	-
2002	Lya et al. (2002)
2003	Browne-Ferrigno (2003)
2004	-
2005	St-Pierre (2005)
2006	Rhodes and Brundrett (2006)
2007	-
2008	-
2009	Rhodes et al. (2009)
2010	Mpungose (2010)
2011	-
2012	Stamopoulos (2012)
2013	-
2014	Greer et al. (2014)
2015	Carpenter et al. (2015); Méndez-Morse et al. (2015); Mifsud (2015); Miller et al. (2015); Rigby (2015); Spies and Heystek (2015)
2016	Arar and Shapira (2016); Bahous et al. (2016); Hernández and Murakami (2016); Nickens and Washington (2016); Riveros et al. (2016)
2017	Armstrong and Mitchell (2017); Crow et al. (2017); Johnson (2017); Jones (2017); Notman (2017); Murakami and Tornsen (2017); Robertson (2017)
2018	Connolly et al. (2018); Montecinos et al. (2018); Payne and Smith (2018); Rayner (2018); Ritacco and Bolívar (2018); Toure and Dorsey (2018)
2019	Maguire and Braun (2019); Simon et al. (2019)

The first category focused on the relationship between leadership identity in principals and school success. The second category evaluates the political-contextual influence on the construction of the principals' identity. Influence of race and gender in the development of leadership identity were grouped into the third category, whilst in the fourth category the central themes were experience, training and transition.

Leadership identity of school principals as the key to school success. In this review, several studies examine how leaders conceptualize their leadership identity. The development of a leadership identity in school principals was identified in several studies as being crucial to educational success. According to Ritacco and Bolivar, successful leadership largely depends on leadership identities (Ritacco and Bolivar, 2018). In a similar vein, Crow et al. (2017) found that the sense of identity of principals as educators with strong moral purposes is a critical antecedent and corequisite of their capacity for effective practices. Mpungose (2010) describes professional identity as 'the principals' source of influence'.

Identity, as the researchers claim (Johnson, 2017; Robertson, 2017) is constructed not only in an individual way, but also in such a way that society plays a decisive role in this construction. This identity is subjective and social, implying a dual process –identity of oneself and identity of others – so '[n]o one can build their identity independently of the identifications that others build about such identity' (Ritacco and Bolivar, 2018). A successful leadership identity consists of multiple components, is subjectively (re)built to adapt to the political and social context and results from interactions with others (Crow et al., 2016; Mpungose, 2010; Rigby, 2015; Ritacco and Bolivar, 2018). Leadership identity is also determined by personal beliefs, values, and feelings (Boris-Schacter and Merrifield, 2000; Crow et al., 2017). Other authors such as St-Pierre (2005), Lya et al. (2002) and Mpungose (2010) identified influential factors in the development of leadership identity such as the before social dimension, and the perceptions held by colleagues, the internal dimension (values and beliefs), individual expectations about principalship, and professional experiences.

There is a consistent body of evidence to support the idea that leadership has a social dimension. In this regard, relationships with the community have an influence on our

professional identity (Mpungose, 2010). How others perceive us plays a crucial role in identity. Yet this aspect has rarely been addressed directly in the literature. In some studies, the perception of others was tackled briefly (Bahous et al., 2016; Johnson, 2017; Mifsud, 2015; Miller et al., 2015; Rayner, 2018). The feedback that principals receive when they interact with others (or when they visit other professional contexts) is also an important contributory factor in their professional development (Miller et al., 2015).

Certain studies included a focus on the role expected of school leaders. A principal has to feel that he/she identifies with principalship duties and functions. When a principal has a weak leadership identity, others may not recognize their leadership, which could hinder school achievement. In contrast, when principals have a strong professional leadership identity and their leadership is widely recognized by the school staff, school performance improves (Ritacco and Bolivar, 2018). According to these authors, principals with a strong leadership identity create team spirit, gain staff commitment and build a shared vision for the school.

Another key aspect examined in our studies was to consider how principals' practices contribute to school improvement. Notman (2017) aimed to gain knowledge regarding the professional identity factors that are present in the role of the school leader and how to use them to make a change throughout the school. These factors are both individual and social, involving other educational agents such as the family, teachers or department heads. Thus, it is argued that 'the professional identity of each of the principals was proven by a different set of cultural circumstances, where both principals had to establish an identity of the "reliable leader" "in the eyes of their new staff (Notman, 2017: 768).

For this reason, the studies highlight the need for a leadership identity in principals, highlighting the importance of both the personal and the professional dimensions, as well as the influence of the educational community on the construction of such identity.

Influence of politics and context in construction of principals professional identity. The evidence has consistently shown that political and contextual factors influence leadership practices and are a source of concern among principals.

At the international level, a series of guidelines has been established on what is expected of principals. In this regard, providing school principals with the tools to exercise successful leadership is a common thread that runs through the different studies analysed (Carpenter et al., 2015; Connolly et al., 2018; Rayner, 2018; Rhodes et al., 2009; Riveros et al., 2016). Rayner (2018) identified some barriers to the successful exercise of educational leadership, including accountability and meeting standards, which create an unstable environment. According to Riveros et al. (2016), standards can be useful for the evaluation and promotion of principals, but they are of no value for daily practice, as they are a restriction to the exercise of their agency. In this vein, Spies and Heystek (2015: 443) observed a tendency to approach the education system from a mercantilist viewpoint, where principals are overloaded with paperwork. These authors argue that the authorities conceive principals as professionals who must meet a series of objectives and requirements, being accountable for everything that frames their work and thus leaving less space for their leadership role, and more for management tasks. The principal is bound in this process by the education authorities' objectives, and is held responsible for ensuring that these goals are achieved in the core activities of the school.

Connolly et al. (2018) concluded that the duties of principals should be reorientated towards aspects related to professional practice. This would help principals to exercise their agency and achieve professional development.

Mifsud (2015) and Maguire and Braun (2019) documented that educational leadership is challenged by a number of factors that make some school actors invisible, thereby giving principals 'hidden' power.

When the educational context is ambiguous, principals find it difficult to adapt to their environment. For these reasons, building a strong, assertive leadership identity is crucial for improving performance in both teachers and students (Bahous et al., 2016). Rayner (2018) documented that creating a supportive, collaborative climate within the school community is key to the adoption of transient identities that enable principals to exercise school leadership. This view is supported by Notman (2017), who emphasized that adopting an adaptive leadership style based on values, and building a strong professional identity are crucial to the development of a leadership identity.

Therefore, the school context is an important determinant (Bredeson, 1993; Johnson, 2017), a notion that is supported by the evidence found in our review. Spies and Heystek (2015) concluded that principals respond in unique ways to the peculiarities of their school and the climate of support they find. Mpungose (2010) identified two determinants in the development of leadership identity: an internal dimension and a social dimension. The latter embraces other factors such as the professional culture of the school and expectations about the role of the principal. These studies indicate that organizational culture is key to successful leadership (Bahous et al., 2016).

Thus, the social and cultural context that surrounds the educational centre, the characteristics of the educational team, and the ideals of the centre are decisive in the development of leadership that could result in improvement. In addition, the included studies point to mercantilism, accountability and educational standards as relevant factors – and in some cases duress – in building a strong professional identity in school principals.

Race- and gender-based barriers in the development of leadership identity. Principals often find race- and gender-based barriers to the exercise of leadership, with most authors being concerned about the difficulties encountered by female principals when exercising leadership. Indeed, interest in gender-based difficulties in leadership has grown in recent years (Armstrong and Mitchell, 2017; Jones, 2017; Murakami and Tornsen, 2017; Nickens and Washington, 2016).

In this section, studies consider race and gender as influential factors in leadership professional identity. To this end, authors relate these factors to the way in which diverse leaders conceptualize their own identities. The literature shows that many female principals have to renegotiate or rebuild their professional identity to adapt to a male-dominated social and cultural environment (Armstrong and Mitchell, 2017). When leadership positions are primarily held by men, female principals may feel forced to change their leadership practices, agency and professional identity. Female principals ‘may inhabit several contradictory identities revealing qualities, characteristics and leadership styles which diverge from socially prescribed gender-appropriate behaviours’ (Jones, 2017: 907). Thus, according to Jones (2017), the professional identity of female leaders may be socially pre-established beyond individual views.

On the other hand, some studies focused on how diverse leaders conceptualize their own professional identities. Murakami and Tornsen (2017: 820) found that female principals often feel they are evaluated negatively even when they improve school performance. According to these authors, this phenomenon is related to 'the way in which female principals are recruited, hired, and weighed when appraised'. Further, these authors state that a gender-based bias persists in the way female principals are perceived in the school community, despite governmental efforts to create an egalitarian culture. These difficulties are the result of the power of normalization of the patriarchy, which has hidden administration and leadership policies aimed at marginalizing and excluding different identities to control and hinder certain educational practices.

In addition to these evidently gender-based barriers, cultural and racial barriers are also encountered. Gender- and race-based discrimination has been addressed by numerous authors (Armstrong and Mitchell, 2017; Arar and Shapira, 2016; Hernández and Murakami, 2016; Mendez-Morse et al., 2015; Nickens and Washington, 2016), which often judge from a 'racial lens' (Armstrong and Mitchell, 2017: 831).

Nickens and Washington (2016) investigated whether African American principals can keep their leadership identity and maintain their position. The authors found evidence that African American principals change their personality, manners or beliefs to pave their way to principalship. These principals often feel socially and professionally isolated due to gender- and race-based barriers.

Finally, Payne and Smith (2018), Toure and Dorsey (2018) and Watts (1998) pointed out the necessity of raising awareness about racial, gender- and sexual orientation-based barriers in teacher and leadership training programmes. In fact, school principals themselves perpetuate stereotypes and discriminatory practices unconsciously, influencing educational opportunities for students of colour and for teachers (Toure and Dorsey, 2018).

The literature included addresses gender and race barriers, describing how female principals must face challenging situations by rebuilding their identity and changing their leadership and agency practices. This is due to socio-cultural factors that cause an imbalance of power when they try to assume a leadership role in school management.

Influence of experience, training and transition in the construction of a professional leadership identity. Some studies suggest that professional experience is a determinant in the development of a leadership identity. Thus, Johnson (2017) demonstrated that critical professional experiences drive principals to rebuild their social and professional identity, thereby resulting in the development of a leadership identity Montecinos et al. (2018) analysed potential differences between senior and novice principals. The authors observed that novice principals found managing up (school management aspects) more challenging, while senior principals found managing down (aspects related to interaction with school staff) more difficult.

Rigby (2015) documented that previous experience and context are an advantage when establishing a rapport and obtaining feedback from school members. In accordance with Robertson (2017: 774), 'even longer-serving principals continue to transform their professional identities as they manage emotions, make decisions, access professional learning and interact with others'.

In their transition to principalship, principals transform and renegotiate their professional identity. Connolly et al. (2018) warned about the difficulties found in recruiting and retaining school principals. As a result, providing training to school principals must be a priority. The study conducted by Murakami and Tornsen (2017) demonstrates that this situation is the result of the way principals 'are recruited, hired, and weighed when appraised' (808).

A number of studies have focused on educational leadership training and the professional profile of school leaders (Greer et al., 2014; Rhodes et al., 2009), whilst other studies were centred mainly on 'beginning principals' (Browne- Ferrigno, 2003; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006; Simon et al., 2019; Wallace, 1996). Greer et al. (2014) reported that training in the resolution of moral problems should be improved. Future leaders generally prefer standard structured models for the resolution of complex situations, thereby ignoring higher-level considerations (post-conventional moral thought). Rhodes et al. (2009) and Simon et al. (2019) described the positive influence of these training programmes on successful leadership. The authors also highlighted the necessity of creating professional networks for school improvement (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006).

In this connection, Rayner (2018) argues that principals with a strong professional identity create a trustful and supportive climate in the school community by the adoption of identities based on pedagogical leadership to achieve educational improvement. Improving school performance requires changes not only at local level, but also at a national level based on support from national entities and external organizations (Stamopoulos, 2012). Becoming a principal entails a professional and identity transition. The studies included in our review refer to the importance of a principal's education and training based on educational leadership, along with the 'professional experience' factor being decisive in the consolidation of a 'leader' identity.

Discussion

International research indicates that educational leadership is a key factor for educational improvement in schools. For this reason, in recent decades, the knowledge production on the professional identity of leadership has increased (Castillo and Hallinger, 2018; Crow et al., 2017; Cruz et al., 2019). The purpose of this review was to analyse the scientific literature regarding the leadership identity of school principals, in order to delve deeper into the characteristics presented in the selected scientific output and the main themes of the included studies. In addition, we present the implications of the findings of these studies for both professional practice and the development of future lines of research.

INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

Firstly, the results of our SLR revealed that there has been a notable increase in scientific production on this subject in the last decade. This is in agreement with other investigations such as those of Hursh (2005), Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) and Gumus et al. (2018), which indicate a prominent trend in these studies due to factors such as globalization or accountability for educational improvement and, therefore, the greater value of leadership for achieving successful educational outcomes. Secondly, our findings are also in accord with the current interest in the development of the professional identity of teachers (Schutz et al., 2018).

The results of our study have revealed a predominant scientific output from the USA and the UK. In spite of this, in our review we can see how, in recent years, geographical diversity has increased with respect to this literature. This data accords with the findings of studies such as that of Hallinger (2018: 374), which argues that in the last two decades, the literature on leadership and educational management has expanded its borders outside the 'traditional Anglo-American literature'.

Further, a description is provided of the relevant findings that were yielded by our SLR. It is worth mentioning some of the methodological and theoretical aspects addressed in the studies analysed.

One of our objectives was to identify determinants of leadership identity in school principals. This aim led us to analyse the interplay among the complex components of leadership identity. As previously mentioned, leadership identity is dynamic and multidimensional, and therefore it should be approached from a holistic, hermeneutic perspective.

This is the reason why most of the studies were qualitative and only a few were quantitative. The quantitative design is not suitable for understanding and interpreting the experiences and symbolic elements that compose leadership identity, which has a humanistic and social dimension that cannot be measured quantitatively. In contrast, qualitative analysis is more appropriate for investigating leadership identity.

Some mixed-design studies focused on influential factors such as training and experience (Montecinos et al., 2018; Rhodes et al., 2009). These studies examined personal, professional, contextual and demographic variables such as gender, ethnicity and years of experience. In their quantitative study, Greer et al. (2015) also used these variables to gather relevant information on decision-making and problem-solving skills in candidates for principalship. Authors chose these variables, since the literature has shown that these factors shape leadership identity in principals.

Training for future principals is fundamental to the development of leadership identity. (Payne and Smith, 2018; Simon et al., 2019). It is necessary to train future principals in their professional development and provide them with personal values compatible with

the professional standards and expectations projected in this role. In general, only a few studies were found to focus on the education and training received by future principals, which is a promising avenue for future research. Standard international training programmes do not meet the contextual and adaptive nature of educational leadership, which should be addressed in the future.

Further, the perceptions and opinions of other school members also shape the professional identity of principals. Yet this aspect is not appropriately examined in the literature. Further studies are needed in the future to address these aspects.

There is abundant evidence identifying educational leadership as key to student performance. The role of students should also be examined in future studies in this field of research. Numerous studies included teachers, deputy head teachers and student families in their samples.

A large proportion of studies were based on interviews with key school actors (principals). Interviews addressed aspects such as the impact of socio-political factors on the professional identity of principals, which fits with the methodology proposed. However, it is worth mentioning that some biases were identified resulting from the self-report study design. As interviews were based on self-reports, data cannot be extrapolated to other contexts, as they were provided in very specific contexts.

However, self-report interviews are very useful ways of gathering organizational and sociological data in the area of education. The hermeneutic nature of this type of interview facilitates the understanding and interpretation of professional and social experiences. Evidence supports the strong impact of educational policies on the exercise of principalship and in the development of a professional identity in principals. Accountability has become an increasingly important feature of education policies in both the USA and the UK, which is demonstrated by the evidence provided in studies conducted in these countries. This approach is gaining popularity among educational authorities, which limits the agency of school principals. Therefore, further studies are needed to investigate whether accountability is a threat to the exercise of successful leadership.

The results of our review are consistent with those of international reports (OECD, 2013, 2014) that identify educational leadership as key to student performance and organizational culture. An example of this could be the study of Bahous et al. (2016). Their findings suggest that the organizational culture of the school plays a decisive role in school improvement. In this way, assertive principals can create a strong sense of community that promotes the development of positive identities and improvement of student performance and motivation. Next, we analyse the recommendations and guidelines provided by different authors in order to identify the main lines of action proposed.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITIES AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Evidence consistently shows that the development of professional identity is critical if leadership is to be exercised successfully. A growing number of studies has been published in recent years on professional identity in principals (Notman, 2017). However, the issue of leadership and professional identity in principals is now gathering interest. This is supported by the McKinsey report on educational systems (Barber and Mourshed, 2007), which established an association between school leadership and school performance. Despite the growing number of studies published on school leadership in recent years, authors consistently claim that there is a need for studies that clearly identify successful leadership practices (Orr et al., 2008). Further research, changes in educational policy reforms and new laws forcing structural changes are all needed to improve school performance.

Another important theme drawn from our findings has been the barriers of gender and race in the development of a leadership identity in principals. The studies analysed identify barriers encountered by principals when building their leadership identity. Female principals find it more difficult to gain school leadership. Principals are predominantly male, which generates a male-dominated context. This is consistent with the conclusions drawn from the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2013 study (OECD, 2014), which revealed that although teachers are primarily female, the position of principal is generally held by men. Therefore, further studies should be conducted to examine female identities and to better understand gender-based barriers to principals-hip. Schein (2001) explained that management has historically been associated with men,

whilst certain stereotypes persist in relation to female managers. Jones (2017) concluded that educational policies should be aware of stereotypes and fight against them for a more egalitarian society (Murakami and Tornsen, 2017). Arar and Shapira (2016) recommended that we gain insight into the development of professional identity in female leaders. Thus, society would become aware of the on-going social changes, which would help to overcome gender-based barriers. Murakami and Tornsen (2017: 821) denounced the lack of support for the integration of female principals and recommend that further research is conducted to better understand 'the specific expectations of each country'. These studies would help raise awareness among future generations.

Race-based barriers were also identified in the literature. Thus, culture and race are influential factors in the development of identity. Some authors have coined the term democratic racism (Henry et al., 2010). This term makes reference to the perpetuation of race-based discriminatory patterns, despite governmental efforts to promote equality. Future research should seek to assist in the development of racial literacy in the educational context and the formulation of a theory on social justice (Toure and Dorsey, 2018). It is necessary to place the focus on gender- and race- based microaggressions (Hernández and Murakami, 2016), which occur in school and pose a threat to the successful exercise of leadership. To this end, principals should receive suitable training adapted to the social context. This training should have a moral component (Bebeau and Monson, 2008), where principals develop critical self-reflective abilities (Notman, 2017). Payne and Smith (2018) added that the concepts of heteronormativity and heterosexism should also be addressed in leadership training programmes.

In sum, efforts should be directed towards improving principal training programmes and adapting them to the demands of equality and social justice. Further studies are needed on different aspects related to educational leadership from 'multiple lenses' such as those proposed by Foucault. Training programme designers should be aware that educational policies and local forces influence the development of a leadership identity.

Final Conclusion

The relevance of educational school leadership is widely recognized. This study focused on principal leadership, and demonstrates that understanding and improving leadership in school principals requires gaining insight into their identities. To understand how principals exercise leadership, we need to be aware of how professional identity is developed.

The development of professional identity is a complex and multifaceted process (Lumby and English, 2009). Professional identity is influenced by numerous factors, which shape the way of 'being' and 'doing' of each professional. Improving leadership – and therefore school performance – requires the identification of the determinants of professional identity.

The professional identity of principals is even more complex, since it is a two-fold identity that involves high professional responsibility (Duchaufour, 2013; Pelletier, 2010; Sackney and Walker, 2006). As evidenced in the literature, the complexity of the role of principal makes this position somewhat unattractive to teachers. Educational policymakers should adopt measures that facilitate transition to principalship. In addition, the quality of their initial training should be improved and adapted to the context.

Some authors have identified certain barriers that hinder the exercise of principalship. These barriers – described above – should also be addressed in the training that principals receive. Awareness of the so-called 'glass ceiling' and 'racial literacy' should be gained.

It is therefore of vital importance to continue research on the construction of the leadership identity in school principals, focusing on the barriers and crises they encounter, in order to address this issue internationally and thus improve the quality of schools by nurturing leaders with strong professional identities without losing sight of the influence of politics and context. This is an emerging field of study that requires further knowledge and more in-depth analysis. We thus advocate an increase in case studies located in schools, as well as biographical-narrative investigations that deal with how leadership identity is constructed and to understand how identity is generated in contrast with how others perceive it and how they form such an identity.

Similarly, systematic reviews of the literature are encouraged to identify the past, present and the future lines of research that awaits us in order to improve the quality of education.

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Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

ARTÍCULO 2

The Leadership Identity of Principals through the «View of Others»: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

In recent decades, there has been an increasing interest in the process of identity construction of school principals in order to improve education. The construction of this identity is shaped by internal and external factors, and this is an issue that requires further investigation. The present systematic review explored the construction of professional leadership identity from an external viewpoint. For this purpose, a bibliographic search was conducted to find articles published in journals indexed in the Web of Science database during the last 10 years. Our findings reveal the influence that “the others” have on the construction of a professional leadership identity in school principals. The key factors that influence this identity construction are also presented. Therefore, it is necessary to consider “other points of view” in order to obtain a broader and more complete vision of the realities faced by school principals in the construction of their leadership identity.

Keywords

Professional Identity, Leadership, Principal, Systematic Review

Introduction

One of the great perspectives established in the scientific literature in terms of educational improvement is based on a solid and strong sense of identity of the professional members of the school. There is evidence that this improvement comes hand in hand with major organizational changes, emphasizing the need for educational leadership in order for schools to implement such changes (Akkerman and Meijer 2011; Beauchamp and Thomas 2011; Cruz-González, Lucena and Domingo 2020). For this reason, there is a demand in schools for professionals with consolidated leadership identities (Bolívar 2006; Izadinia 2018). Focusing on the figure of the principal, the exercise of good leadership undoubtedly contributes towards such improvement (Cowie and Crawford 2008). Thus, leadership identity is highlighted as a key determinant of a school's success (Aas and Vavick 2015; Sinha and Hanuscin 2017). This professional identity is not static (Dubar 2010).

On the contrary, it is formed by a process of continuous movement and reconstruction, changing over time. It can be defined as transitory identity (Day, Elliot, and Kington 2000) or changing identity (Townsend and Weiner 2011). This identity construction not only depends on the internal experiences of the individual, but also influences the surrounding social, political and cultural context, whilst the view of the other “agents” surrounding the principal is one of the pillars that supports the establishment of such an identity (Dubar 2000; Scribner and Crow 2012).

In this regard, and as Dubar (2000) suggests, identity is not built only for oneself, but also for others. It is a subjective process (Court 2005) that is continuously shaped by social interaction, such that a person's feelings depend on the social groups to which he or she belongs (Bolivar 2006; Tajfel and Turner 1979). At this point, the principal's leadership identity is constructed on the basis of past and present events and the influence of other educational agents that surround him/her. This external view of the principal's identity is the one that will form the focus of this literature review.

The general objective of this review is to analyse the scientific output regarding the professional leadership identity exercised by school principals, delving deeper into the influence of other educational agents in the construction of this identity.

Method

This current study is a systematic review of the literature (Gough 2007; Petticrew and Roberts 2006). This type of review allows for a qualitative synthesis of the current state of research through analysis of various emerging themes. Issues such as the analysis of the contexts and designs present in the selected studies (Hallinger and Bryant 2013) or emerging themes (Voorberg, Bekkers and Tummers 2015) are key points to be addressed in this type of review.

In order to proceed with our review, we selected the Web of Science (WOS) database, which includes indexed journals of high scientific impact in the educational area.

LITERATURE SEARCH STRATEGY

To select our articles, a literature search was conducted in the Web of Science database using keywords derived from the ERIC Thesaurus. This process was carried out with the aim of providing our search strategy with quality and academic rigour. During the search process in the indicated database, the selected descriptors (from the ERIC Thesaurus) were combined and Boolean operators were used in order to gather and analyse all the studies that had as central axes the terms “professional identity”, “leadership” and “principal”. The following table shows the search equation used for our analysis.

Table 1 - Search strategy used. Source: Authors' own, 2019

Data Base	Search equation
<i>Web of Science (WOS)</i>	<p>ST= ((<i>Professional identity</i>) AND (<i>leadership</i>) AND (<i>principal OR headteacher</i>))</p> <p>Search filters:</p> <p>Data Base: Main collection of Web of Science</p> <p>Research domains: (<i>SOCIAL SCIENCES</i>)</p> <p>Research areas: (<i>EDUCATION/ EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH</i>)</p> <p>Types of documents: (<i>ARTICLE</i>)</p> <p>Time period: 2010-2019.</p>

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to our systematic review of the literature. These criteria were pre-established in order to facilitate information management and to select those studies that were appropriate for meeting our research objective (Gough 2007; Hallinger, 2013)

Table 2 - Inclusion and Exclusion criteria for the search. Source: Authors' own, 2019

<i>Inclusion criteria</i>	<i>Exclusion criteria</i>
<i>Studies from the search equation: "professional identity", "main OR head teacher", "leadership"</i>	<i>Articles not published during the 2010-2019 time period.</i>
<i>Research published between 2010 and 2019</i>	<i>Contextualized studies in non-school contexts.</i>
<i>Studies in "Article" format</i>	<i>Other documents such as book chapters, conference proceedings, and reviews (among others).</i>
<i>Scientific studies belonging to the research areas of "Social Sciences" and "Education and Educational Research".</i>	<i>References not belonging to the main WOS collection.</i>
<i>Studies that are thematically compatible with our object of study</i>	<i>Original studies from areas and domains of research other than "Social Sciences" and "Education and Educational Research".</i>
	<i>Research that does not focus on the study of the principal's professional identity.</i>

Fig.1 - Flow chart of the phases proposed by the PRISMA protocol.
 Source: Authors' own, 2019

S T U D Y IDENTIFICATION	<i>Studies obtained through the equation search in: WOS= 47</i>	
I N I T I A L SCREENING	<i>Studies obtained after the application of filters from the selected database WOS= 32</i>	
T H E M A T I C ELIGIBILITY	<i>Proposed studies to assess their thematic suitability n=32</i>	<i>Number of excluded items n=6*</i>
S T U D I E S INCLUDED	<i>Selected studies for thematic analysis n=26</i>	

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

This section shows the process of including studies based on the phases proposed by the PRISMA protocol (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff and Altman 2009).

A series of measures were followed to increase the reliability of the procedures used for collecting and analysing information in our systematic review.

Thus, as part of the process of establishing the studies to be included, we used a peer review procedure (Sarhou 2016) in order to reach agreement and consensus, in order to increase the rigour of this phase. Once we had selected the articles for inclusion in the review, thematic analysis was conducted using qualitative analysis software (Nvivo 12). Two researchers were responsible for codification of the information. The analyses were pooled to provide consistency in the thematic coding.

Results

In order to address our research objective, the results were divided into two main sections. The first section shows the results of bibliographic mapping (Hallinger and Kulophas 2019), which presents a summary of the current panorama presented by the research on the subject of study: authors, temporal data, territorial data, central subject, method and sample used. The second section shows the results of the thematic analysis.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC MAPPING

The following is a thematic analysis based on the selected studies. Our purpose was to investigate how “the others” influenced the construction of a leadership identity in principals.

CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY IN SCHOOL LEADERS: EXTERNAL VIEWS

A considerable number of studies are aimed at examining and understanding how the professional identity of school leaders is constructed. In view of this objective, the studies included in our review point to the central importance of a strong and assertive identity in school management. In addition, the importance of the professional growth of the teaching and management team in the student body is highlighted (Armstrong and Mitchell 2017; Bahous, Busher and Nabhani 2016; Carpenter, Bukoski, Berry and Mitchell, 2017; Connolly, Milton, Davies and Barrance, 2018; Johnson, 2017; Jones, 2017; Mpungose, 2010; Murakami and Tornsen, 2017; Notman, 2017; Ritacco and Bolivar 2018; Robertson, 2017; Sinha and Hanuscin, 2017)

Table. 3 - Bibliographic and methodological data of the included studies

Author(s)	Year	Country	Central Theme	Methodology		Sample of the study
				Qualitative	Quantitative	
Armstrong and Mitchell	2017	Canada	Intersection of race and gender identity in educational contexts	x		Two principals in multi-ethnic high schools
Arar and Shapira	2016	Israel	Cultural and gender influences on the identity of female leaders	x		Seven female Muslim principals in educational institutions in Israel
Bahous, Buser and Nabhani	2016	England Lebanon	Professional identity of the principal and improvements in educational outcomes	x		Teachers, principals and students from each school in four primary schools in disadvantaged communities in Beirut
Carpenter, Bukoski, Berry and Mitchell	2017	United States	Accountability Policy, Social Justice Leadership and the Role of Deputy Principals	x		12 assistant principals within an urban school district
Connolly, Milton, Davies and Barrance	2018	Wales	School leadership identity in principals and recruitment in Wales	x		30 assistant school principals

Crow, Day and Moller	2016	England Norway United States	Professional identity of leadership in principals	x	Theoretical essay
Hernández and Murakami	2016	United States	Race and gender-based barriers to achieving educational leadership	x	A Latino female principal at an urban American school
Johnson	2017	England United States	Professional and social identities, generational approach and leadership metaphors	x	28 Asian and ethnic minority principals in UK schools
Jones	2017	England	Impact of gender on the construction of a pedagogical leadership identity	x	10 female principals of Anglo-Saxon schools
Mendez-Morse, Murakami, Byrne-Jiménez and Hernández	2015	United States	Influence of gender and race on Principal's Identity Construction	x	Female and Latino school principals in the U.S.
Mifsud	2015	Scotland	Power and visibility structures and invisibility in leadership practices	x	Principals and deputy principals and other agents of the centre within the Maltese education system
Miller et al.	2015	England Jamaica	Impact of experiences in other contexts on professional growth	x	16 education professionals (teachers and principals) in the Master of Education Management and Leadership programme at the University of Technology, Jamaica

Montecinos, Bush and Aravena	2018	Chile England	Experience as a key factor in the professional identity of principals	x	x	Novice (n = 94) and experienced (n = 120) principals
Mpungose	2010	-	Influential factors in the construction of a leadership identity in principals	x		Six principals from selected schools in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
Murakami and Tornsen	2017	United States	Influence of gender on the Construction of Principals' Professional Identity	x		Two female principals in successful high schools in Sweden and Texas
Nickens, and Washington	2017	United States	Influence of race and gender on the construction of the professional identity of principals	x		African American School Leaders
Notman	2017	New Zealand	Influence of personal and contextual factors on achieving effective leadership	x		Two principals from New Zealand
Payne and Smith	2018	United States	Leadership based on values of appreciation of diversity and social justice	x		Principals, teachers, and students in American schools
Rayner	2018	England	Influence of political-contextual factors on successful leadership development	x		Governors, leaders, teachers, and associated staff in the UK school context

Rhodes, Brundrett and Nevill	2009	England	Educational leadership training for the transition of future principals	x	x	Future principals who have participated in the NPQH training programme
Rigby	2015	United States	The principal's role as a teacher-supervisor	x		Six principals and teachers
Ritacco and Bolivar	2018	Spain	Professional identity of school principals in Spain	x		15 principals of Spanish educational schools
Robertson	2017	New Zealand	Transformation of the professional identity of school principals	x		Four New Zealand school principals
Spies and Heystek	2015	South Africa	Impact of the social and school context on the professional identity of principals	x		Four rural school principals
Toure and Dorsey	2018	United States	Influence of racial stereotypes on the acquisition of a leadership identity in principals	x		Three urban district principals in Pennsylvania

Identity, as several studies claim, is constructed not only in an individual way. The social context is also a decisive factor in this process (Johnson, 2017; Robertson, 2017). This identity is subjective and social, implying a dual process: identity for oneself and identity for others. Therefore, as Ritacco and Bolivar (2018) explain, «No one can construct his identity apart from the identifications that others formulate about him» (p.176). The expectations of the “other” professionals in the educational community determine the construction of the professional identity of the principal (Crow, Day and Moller, 2016; Mpungose, 2010). In this section, therefore, we were interested in analysing the influence of others in the construction of the identity of principals.

Accordingly, in his study, Johnson (2017) provides a more detailed analysis of how principals' leadership experiences in the United Kingdom have changed over time and how other educational agents could influence the construction of their identity (teachers, parents, students and governors). Similarly, Carpenter, Bukoski, Berry and Mitchell (2017) employ this same approach, and one of their key findings was the considerable workload pressures and challenges of finding a work/life balance while fulfilling the duties of school management. Furthermore, Notman (2017) explains in his study that, in addition to principals, teachers and other significant people were essential to the analysis of the professional identity of the school principal.

Further, Murakami and Tornsen (2017) studied the identity dimension of school leaders through the experiences of family members, mentors, and co-workers. As well as interviewing the principals themselves, Payne and Smith (2018) also considered asking teachers and other groups about their vision of the professional figure of the principal. Both groups pointed out the importance of leadership training for creating a positive school climate for the entire educational community. Other studies included in our review highlight the importance of a leadership identity in school management, as perceived by the agents that constitute the educational community (Rayner, 2018). Finally, our review reveals research that includes other members (such as management team representatives) in order to explore their perceptions of change in leadership practices and the transformation of the professional identity of principals (Robertson, 2017). Specifically, this study concludes that experienced leaders continue to transform their professional identities as they manage emotions, make decisions, and interact with others.

INFLUENTIAL FACTORS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A LEADERSHIP IDENTITY

Influence of gender on the development of a leadership identity

This systematic review highlights the existing barriers that women face in the construction of their professional identity and how this influences the way in which they are able to carry out their professional duties. Many of the studies reviewed, particularly those published in recent years (Armstrong and Mitchell, 2017; Arar and Shapira, 2016; Jones, 2017; Mendez-Morse, Murakami, Byrne-Jiménez and Hernández, 2015) describe the unique difficulties encountered by female principals in relation to exercising their leadership roles. With regard to the barriers and peculiarities detected in the results of our studies, it is important to point out that the professional identities of women must often undergo a process of reconstruction and transformation due to the masculinized social and cultural context that surrounds them (Jones, 2017). Thus, in the study by Armstrong and Michell (2017) which seeks to examine how two female Canadian principals of colour negotiated their professional identities in educational contexts, one of the interviewees stated that she sometimes moderated her voice judiciously when advocating for the rights of students.

Similarly, Murakami and Tornsen (2017) explained that leadership (exercised mostly and historically by men) when practiced by a woman, is forced to be rebuilt to achieve successful educational practices. This idea is shared by Jones (2017) who shows in her study that the participating principals described a period when they had to earn the respect of the other educational members. In addition, the author perceived that the principals' narratives were ambiguous, inhabiting several contradictory identities that revealed qualities, characteristics, and leadership styles that diverged from socially prescribed gender-appropriate behaviours. This could be due to the expectations of each country and context, and, specifically those that teachers, supervisors, and parents may have regarding the figure of the principal as a school leader (Murakami and Tonsen, 2017). In addition, Murakami and Tonsen (2017) argue that despite the fact that female principals were successful in their leadership, they received little recognition for their talent, little support from mentors, and were perceived as being less effective in the eyes of others. Thus, and in agreement with Hernández and Murakami (2016), it appears that in

spite of the attempts made by many countries to achieve equality, there are still inequalities when it comes to the perceptions of women as leaders. In this regard, the authors conclude that a patriarchal system still persists, and is one that interacts by discarding forms of identity in order to keep leadership practices under control (Armstrong and Mitchell, 2017).

Influence of ethnic background on the development of a leadership identity

A further obstacle that principals encounter when exercising their leadership in the school is related to issues of ethnicity and race, this being one of the key findings of our review. Hernandez and Murakami (2016) noted that race played a significant role in the Latino principal's professional identity. In the face of this adversity, the principal developed a unique leadership style, transforming and renegotiating her professional identity, and directing it towards professional values of commitment and active listening. She also highlights barriers that are based on gender, with the belief that these two issues are responsible for social and professional isolation.

In a similar vein, Nickens and Washington (2017) report that African-American women are at greater risk of modifying their professional identity in comparison with other groups. Their findings suggest that female principals feel the need to change their personality, expressions, and behaviours in order to adapt to the context that surrounds them. Similarly, Armstrong and Mitchell (2017), in their analysis of the negotiation of the identities of two Canadian principals of colour, confirm that these women leaders are judged predominantly from a racial standpoint. Hernandez and Murakami (2016) state that "racism has become an integral element of the society that breathes in the educational systems" (p.11). For this reason, it is important to note that on many occasions the leaders themselves perpetuate and accentuate this discriminatory situation (Toure and Dorsey, 2018). In this regard, Payne and Smith (2018) argue that there is a need to train principals as educational leaders based on a critical understanding of social justice, and on issues of race, gender and LGBTQ notions, in order to contribute to the progress of future generations (Johnson, 2017).

Influence of political-contextual factors on the achievement of educational leadership

The third pillar of influence on the professional identity of principals is related to political and contextual issues. Thus, educational policy is a determining factor in the exercise of educational leadership in the figure of the principal (Hallinger 2005; Ingvarson et al. 2006; Pont et al. 2008). Spies and Heystek (2015) pointed out the pronounced mercantilism that taints the South African education system, an approach that severely impedes the ability to exercise leadership as a principal. In addition, the findings showed that other practitioners also attached great importance to the political arena in developing a leadership identity in principals, noting that bureaucratic overload could restrict the work of the principal. Thus, Spies and Heystek (2015) argue that authorities conceive of principals as professionals who must comply with a series of objectives and prescriptions, accounting for everything that frames their work and thus leaving less space for their leadership, and more for bureaucratic tasks.

Similarly, Rayner (2018) argues that accountability and compliance with standards are two of the main requirements that hinder professionals when exercising educational leadership. In this case, it is the role of other professionals in the school that also determined this change. In this study it is described how, from the perspective of the centre's professional colleagues and for the rest of the members of the management team, the principal carried out his work through dialogue and openness, so that everyone had a positive view of him, which made this process of institutional transition easier. The purpose of studying how professionals respond to institutional and policy changes is also addressed by Notman (2017). In his study, conducted in New Zealand, he aimed to understand the professional identity factors that are present in the role of the school leader and how these effect change throughout the school. These factors are individual and also social, involving other educational agents such as the family, teachers or departmental heads. In this sphere of change, other members of the educational community sought, in the figure of the principal, a trusted leader who would allow them to establish a secure base of support for such a transition.

Along the same lines, Riveros, Verret and Wei (2016) establish the importance of the achievement of such practices not only for the role of the principal or deputy principal, but for

all the members that make up the educational institution. It is concluded, therefore, that the exercise of effective leadership resides not only in the figure of the principal, and that the faculty and other agents must consider the principal to be an indispensable figure of cooperation to reach this goal. In his study, Mifsud (2015) adds the idea of an ideological conflict and makes a claim about what distributed leadership really means, along with what various educational policies promote through their masked ideologies. From his contribution, it can be seen how figures such as the assistant principal are limited due to the power attributed to the figure of the principal and he adds that, in most cases, the assistant principals have great power to “express themselves” but not to make decisions, and are thus restricted. For this reason, we must move towards a contextualized education policy that seeks to improve schools through perspectives of social justice. The study by Carpenter, Bukoski, Berry and Mitchell (2017) analyses this issue in an American context, showing the need for management to seek new ways of carrying out their duties, arguing for the need to develop an identity based on social justice. The findings of this study suggest that, from an external perspective, the leader was perceived as a figure with great workload pressures and the associated challenges of balancing life and work.

Professional experience influences the development of a leadership identity

Numerous studies point to the idea of experience as a key factor in successful leadership (Johnson, 2017; Méndez-Morse, Murakami, Byrne-Jiménez and Hernández, 2015; Montecinos, Bush and Aravena, 2018; Rigby, 2015; Robertson, 2017; Simon, Dole and Farragher, 2019).

In his study, Robertson (2017) describes the importance of early family experiences in the later construction of the professional identity of the principals included in his research. In turn, Johnson (2017) explains the professional stories lived by these principals. In his findings, he also considers early family and school experiences to be determining factors in the subsequent professional identity of principals. In addition, Robertson (2017) highlights the figure of other agents such as counsellors, who appear to be sources of support during times of difficulty. Similarly, in the research on the impact of the experience of principals (novice and experienced) in a Chilean context, Montecinos, Bush and Aravena (2018) assign great importance to family and professional agents in the construction of professional identity. In this case, they refer to the families that participate in the school and

other protagonists such as teachers, students or the Chilean Ministry of Education itself.

On other occasions, it has been demonstrated that the role of teachers and other professional agents is to act as a facilitator of this desired pedagogical leadership. Miller et al. (2015) argue in their study that the experience of other professional colleagues in other professional contexts is vital for the professional growth of the principal. Training principals in leadership is a key and emerging point in the themes of our included studies. In this training, not only is there a need to train the principal in the “I”, but also in how he or she relates to other professionals. Thus, Rigby (2015) points out the importance of informal professional networks in the work of the principal. At the same time, this author emphasizes the considerable value of professional feedback between principal and teacher, and how an evaluation carried out by means of sound reasoning and assertiveness could have a positive influence on achieving effective leadership.

Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this research was to analyse the scientific output on the professional identity of leadership exercised by school principals, and in particular, to delve deeper into the influence of other educational agents in the construction of this identity. In this section, the results obtained are discussed in comparison with other studies of high impact at the international level. As we have seen, the previous section is structured into thematic dimensions. In the dimension that refers to external perspectives and their influence on the construction of the professional identity of the principal, we can appreciate the importance of a solid professional team and a school context that shows a commitment to the educational improvement of the school. In view of this, a number of the selected studies highlight the importance of the role of other agents in the construction of the professional identity of the principal. Key scholars within the field of identity research also assign an essential role to others in the construction of the principal's identity from a professional perspective. Dubar (2000) presents us with two axes that determine the professional identity: the diachronic axis and the synchronic axis. These axes present different but complementary characteristics. The first axis is tinged with an individual-temporal aspect, while the second presents a conception of identity from a more collective-contextual perspective.

Based on theories such as that of Charles Taylor, who proposes that identity is constructed through social narration (Taylor 2006), we can see that this identity not only has an influence on the person himself, but that a significant role is also played by the social group that surrounds him. «My identity, in order to be mine, must be accepted, which in principle opens the space for a negotiation with my environment, my history, my destiny» (Taylor 1996, 11). Thus, this theoretical proposal is, to a large extent, compatible with the results described in this review, since agents such as the family, professional colleagues, or the student body are key elements in the way in which the principal carries out his/her daily duties, and therefore rebuild his/her professionalism. In addition, many of the studies included emphasized the great importance of establishing professional relationships with other members of the educational community (Rigby, 2015). This idea is supported by Paris (1990), who emphasizes the idea of a stable and strong consolidation of identity through a network of social relations.

The gender factor was one of the key themes that emerged in the selected studies. Thus, our results indicate that gender influences the way in which principals construct their identity (Armstrong and Mitchell, 2017; Cruz- González, Pérez and Domingo 2020; Jones, 2017; Murakami and Tornsen, 2017 and Nickens and Washington, 2017). This would explain approaches such as that of Aguado and Portal (1991), which argues that this identity construction is the result of a set of personal experiences and consequent characteristics such as socioeconomic level, age, gender and their cultural and social values.

Moreover, there are several articles that discuss ethnic factors as determinants of the construction of a professional leadership identity (Arar and Shapira, 2016; Murakami and Tornsen, 2017; Payne and Smith, 2018; Toure and Dorsey, 2018), which was another key theme that emerged in our review. It is the other educational agents, who sometimes build limitations and obstacles to the achievement of such a leadership identity when it comes to principals of different ethnic origin. In view of this, Gimenez (1996) argues that one of the essential categories of identity is that of ethnicity. Thus, he explains how, at times, the different leaders studied in his research, included, felt (dis)identified and perceived, in various cases, how the factor of race provoked exclusion attitudes due to objective cultural traits.

In a similar vein, Kossoy (2009) adopting a social approach, agrees with Dubar (2010), stating that biographical and relational processes co-exist in the construction of the social identity. And, at the same time, social identity is redefined from the inherited, attributed and claimed identities of the individual. This aspect figures centrally in our review, particularly in studies that analyse the influence of the historical-temporal, political and social context on the construction of identity in principals (Johnson, 2017; Mpungose, 2010; Spies and Heyste, 2015). In this sense, Henry Tajfel (1981) agrees with this idea through his theoretical proposal on social identity, in which he argues that the construction of identity relies heavily on the group to which one belongs, in addition to his/her qualification in this group and the sense of belonging (Chihu, 2002).

Another of the major areas detected in our review was professional experience as a determining factor in the development of educational leadership in principals. There are several studies that aimed to analyse the influence of temporal factors on the construction of identity (Johnson, 2017; Montecinos, Bush and Aravena, 2018; Robertson, 2017). Many of these point to experiences in the professional sphere as a key factor in their professional development. This nuance is in accord with the collective-contextual aspect described by Dubar (2000, 2010) in his theoretical works on the synchronic axis.

With regard to methodological issues, it is important to note that most of the studies analysed in this systematic review used a qualitative case study methodology (Arar and Shapira, 2016; Bahous, Busher and Nabhani, 2016; Carpenter, Bukoski, Berry and Mitchell, 2017; Mendez-Morse, Murakami, Byrne-Jiménez and Hernández, 2015; Mifsud, 2015; Miller et al., 2015; Notman, 2017; Rayner, 2018; Rigby, 2015; Riveros, Verret and Wei, 2016 and Toure and Dorsey 2018), through biographical-narrative interviews (Ritacco and Bolivar, 2018) and life stories (Mpungose, 2010; Johnson, 2017; Spies and Heystek, 2015) with principals and “other” people close to them. These methods are among the best ways of obtaining information and identifying emerging patterns, since they allow us to deeply analyse the identities of the principals.

Limitations of our study

Because of the nature of our study, we believe it is appropriate to point out certain limitations inherent in this approach. One of the main limitations was the establishment of a fixed time period in the search criteria. Restricting our search to a fixed time interval means that we might have overlooked other studies of great interest and relevance to our topic. In spite of this, this decision was justified due to our aim of synthesizing studies from international research conducted in the last decade (2010-2019).

A further limitation concerns the selection of the sources of information used. One of the principles of the methodology of systematic reviews is based on the systematization of the search in order to extract articles of high quality and academic rigour. In order to comply with this principle, our review made use of the WOS database as a search source. This decision was taken with the specific purpose of including in this review only articles that contained work of a high scientific quality.

Future perspectives

It is worth noting that the findings described in this review could be useful for establishing new lines of investigation concerning the subject of professional identity in school principals. Faced with the realities analysed here, and the growing interest in our subject of study, there are still many interesting questions that need to be addressed. The main implications of the present findings are as follows:

- Interest in the study of pedagogical leadership associated with the professional performance of an effective school principal is an emerging theme. This should be a fundamental part of the professional identity of school leaders. As research in this review indicates, the viewpoint of others is a determining factor and should be considered when immersing oneself in the study of the professional identity dimension of school principals.

- There are two main models of leadership identity in school principals; on the one hand, there is an emphasis on management and results, and on the other hand, there is a tendency to be concerned with those dimensions more strongly linked to improving education outcomes and developing communities of professional practice oriented toward good learning for all. This second model should be emphasized in the training and professional development processes of school principals.
- Countries with a strong tradition of leadership in school principals consider this characteristic to be an essential part of their managerial identity. In this way, they deal with gender, ethnic, personal, and cultural nuances that can affect their normal performance and improvement. This diversity of identities should be valued whenever they achieve effective leadership.

These suggestions highlight the lack of studies that focus on the professional leadership identity of school principals. However, we must not ignore the excellent work that has been carried out over the last few years in this regard. That is why we believe it is necessary to move toward future lines of research that focus on the professional development and training of school leaders with a view to achieving a professional leadership identity that will foster educational improvement. Finally, we encourage further research through qualitative methodologies and biographical approaches, including narratives that help to build a complete picture (past-present) of the interviewee, with an awareness of the importance of society, context, and politics in the construction of identity. We consider it key to continue investigating the construction of identity from the viewpoints of other individuals that are close to the principal.

ARTÍCULO 3

Training of identity-based leadership in school principals: a systematic review of the literature

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Abstract

In the last decade, the issues of leadership and the professional identity of school leaders have attracted the attention of the scientific community. The importance of principal training and leadership identity is among the most highlighted approaches in educational improvement. In this work we have studied the literature on the training of principals for leadership identity in order to provide a state-of-the-art review. In addition, we offer a thematic analysis of the included studies, using qualitative analysis software (Nvivo). Our findings highlight various emerging themes, including training programs for school leaders; leadership training needs; and the transition to “becoming a principal”. We finally conclude by proposing the need to better understand leadership preparation in school principals. Whilst current training programs on leadership for principals are encouraging, there is still a long road ahead, given the specific needs identified in this review.

Keywords

Training, Principal, Leadership, Identity

Introduction

In recent decades, numerous research studies have established a solid and consistent body of literature on educational leadership and school improvement (Bell, Bolam and Cubillo, 2003; Bridges, 1982; Campbell and Faber, 1961; Murphy et al., 2007; Walker and Hallinger, 2015). The international literature points to educational leadership as the second most influential and significant factor in educational improvement (Leithwood et al 2006; Robinson 2007). Several studies argue that leadership that supports, motivates and promotes the professional development of teachers will bear fruit in the form of superior educational and professional quality (Hallinger, Liu and Piyaman, 2017; Qian and Walker, 2013; Zheng, Yin and Li, 2018)

Educational leadership requires a commitment and vision shared by the professional

team who comprise the educational community (Day et al, 2010). For this reason, the landscape of school leadership research has paid particular attention to the need for pedagogical leadership in schools (Robinson, 2006). From this approach, the figure of the principal is assigned special significance, since it is this figure that serves as an anchor for the rest of the educational community, supporting and guiding the latter towards a common vision and ideology (Crow, Day and Møller, 2017; Robinson, 2006).

The study of leadership exercised by the principal requires a deeper understanding of their identity. It is not only important to analyse the principal's tasks, but there is also a need to delve deeper into what they feel and think about themselves, that is, their personal and professional self-image (Robertson, 2017; Thomson, 2009). Identity is a multiple construct that changes continuously (Hong, Cross Francis and Schutz, 2018). Principals reconstruct their professional identity as they face different educational, political, contextual and cultural challenges. And to do so, principals need to have a strong and consolidated identity (Ritaco and Bolivar, 2018). In this regard, Robertson (2017) explains that this identity can be transformed and (re)constructed in a conscious way.

The training of principals for the achievement of a leadership identity is one of the most urgently needed approaches for achieving improvements in educational outcomes (Orr, 2011; Parylo, 2013). In various geographical locations, the training of school leaders is considered to be central to the advancement and progress of schools (Hallinger, 2003). This notion emerges from the wide range of empirical evidence provided in this regard, which suggests the existence of a strong connection between the effectiveness of a school and educational leadership training (Boyle, Haller and Hunt, 2016; Horn, Nolen, Ward and Campbell, 2008; Jenlink, 2014).

Several studies have emphasized the importance of leadership identity building as an essential pillar of leadership training and professional development programs (Crow and Moller, 2017; Lumby and English, 2009; Richardson and Loubier, 2008). For instance, Bush (2018) explains that a paradigm shift is currently taking place. This is due to the re-establishment of school autonomy, the high complexity of schools, and the growing recognition of the importance of training as a means of educational improvement. For this reason, school management is considered to be a distinguished position that requires specific training.

There is currently a call for change in school management, rejecting administrative and bureaucratic aspects within school accountability (Connolly, Milton, Davies and Barrance, 2018; Ritacco and Bolívar, 2018). In this sense, the focus is on a figure who fights for the real needs of the school and who leads the school with the aim of achieving success and equity. For this purpose, specific training is required for principals to acquire an identity as leaders who are fully committed to the success of the school.

A number of studies, such as those of Grissom, Mitani and Woo (2019), Hallinger (2018), and Tingle, Corrales, and Peters (2019), indicate the need for progress in both the initial and continuous training of school leaders. In view of this suggestion, we considered it necessary to conduct the current systematic review.

This review is part of two larger research projects. One of these projects is a national R+D+i project (2016-2019) entitled: ***Principal's identity: leadership, training and professionalization***, and the other is the International Successful School Principals Project (ISSPP, 2013). The purpose of this review is to establish an overview of the scientific literature on leadership identity training in school principals, with the aim of extracting comprehensive and essential clues on this issue. The research questions are presented below:

- What are the chief characteristics of studies published on training of identity-based leadership in school principals between 1998 and 2019?
- What are the main training needs for achieving a leadership identity in principals?
- What implications might the findings of this review have for professional practice?

Methods

A systematic review of the literature was conducted (Gough, 2007; Petticrew and Roberts, 2006). This review provides a qualitative synthesis of the issue of training for a leadership identity in school principals at the international level. By adopting an exploratory approach, our aim was to identify the emerging themes (De Vries, Bekkers and Tummers, 2015), along with the aims that underpin and guide the research, and the contexts and designs that characterize such work (Hallinger and Bryant, 2013).

SELECTION CRITERIA

A number of selection criteria were used to select the studies included in our review. These criteria are displayed in Table 1, shown below.

<i>Selection Criteria</i>
<i>Relevant themes that address the research objective</i>
<i>Studies focused on the school context</i>
<i>Time frame: 1998-2019</i>
<i>Research domain: "Social Sciences"</i>
<i>Document type: "Article"</i>
<i>Source of the document: "Journal"</i>
<i>Research area: "Education and Educational Research"</i>

Source: Prepared by the authors

SEARCH STRATEGY

We conducted a search of the scientific literature published in SCOPUS, ERIC and Web of Science (WOS) databases in order to gather the studies for inclusion in our systematic review. Keywords were extracted using the ERIC thesaurus. The search equations used are presented in Table 2.

DATA EXTRACTION AND QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The process of searching for and including studies was carried out through peer review (Lake, 2018; Martinez, 2012; Sarthou, 2016) to provide our review with scientific rigor and quality. Having selected the studies that would finally be included in the review, we proceeded to conduct the thematic analysis of these studies with the support of

Table 2 - Details of the Search strategy. Source: Prepared by the authors

Data Bases	Search equation	Identified studies	Selected studies	Included studies
Web of Science (WOS)	TS= ((training OR preparation) AND (principal OR "head teacher") AND (leadership) AND (identity))	36	18	39 (after screening the duplicate studies)
SCOPUS	TITLE-ABS-KEY (training OR preparation) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (principal OR "head teacher") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (leadership) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (identity) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2019))	30	13	
ERIC	(training OR preparation) AND (principal OR <u>headteacher</u>) AND (leadership) AND (identity)	58	25	
Total number of articles		124	57	

qualitative analysis software (Nvivo 12). The thematic categories were extracted through an emergent process based on the basic principles of grounded theory (Strauss and Cobin, 1998). These categories were shared and pooled in order to provide consistency and coherence to our thematic coding.

Results

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDIES

Objectives and research questions

A summary of the different research purposes in the studies included in this systematic review is presented below.

Several studies focus on exploring various leadership training programs and their effects on the development of professional identity in principals (Aas and Vavik, 2015; Aguilar, 2017; Battagiannis, 2011; Boyle, Haller and Hunt, 2016; Brody, Vissa and Weathers, 2010; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Coleman and Campbell- Stephens, 2010; Cowie and Crawford, 2008, 2009; Eacott, 2011; Earl, 2005; Gilroy, 1998; Young, O'Doherty, Gooden and Goodnow, 2011; Greer, Searby and Thoma, 2015; Henderson, Carjuzaa and Ruff, 2015; Isaac and Trodd, 2008; Lackritz, Cseh and Wise, 2019; O'Malley and Capper, 2015; Pont, 2014; Scott and Webber, 2012; Simkins, Close and Smith, 2009; Simon, Dole and Farragher, 2019; Kim and Kim, 2005).

In addition, a number of studies examine the training needs of school principals regarding educational leadership (Bush, 2018; Cruz-González, Domingo and Lucena, 2019; Lugg and Tooms, 2010; Moorosi and Grant, 2018; Scott, Scott, Dixon, Mola Okoko and Dixon, 2013). Among these training needs, many authors highlight the term “leadership for social justice” (Tuters and Portelli, 2017), focusing on specific issues related to LGBTQ (Albritton, Huffmany McClellan, 2017; Hernández and Fraynd, 2014; Marshall and Hernandez, 2013; O'Malley and Capper, 2015), ethnicity (Gooden and Dantley, 2012; Henderson, Carjuzaa and Ruff, 2015; Toure and Dorsey, 2018), or gender (Cruz-González, Domingo and Lucena, 2019, Coleman and Campbell-Stephens, 2010; Lugg and Tooms, 2010; Toure and Dorsey, 2018; Weiner, and Burton, 2016).

The resolution of moral problems (Greer, Searby and Thoma, 2015), the importance of socialization (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003), and communication skills (Barton and Dereshiwsky, 2009) are other issues found in terms of the training needs of school leaders.

The transition to headship and the importance of training in this role conversion (teacher-principal) also appears to be one of the most predominant study objectives (Russo-Netzer and Shoshani, 2019; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Bush, 2018; Cowie and Crawford, 2008; 2009; Slater, Garcia and Mentz, 2018; Read, 2011)

In spite of the thematic diversity and differences in focus among the included studies, it is important to emphasize that they all highlight the urgent need for a greater emphasis on research into professional leadership education and training for principals.

Context and study designs

Of the 39 articles analysed in this systematic review, there is a predominance of those produced by the United States, with a total of 15. Studies have also been found from countries such as Scotland, Canada, Norway, Spain, Australia, Israel, South Korea, China, Kenya and South Africa.

All of these studies focus on the training of the principal as a leader of the school. A substantial number of the selected studies adopt a qualitative approach, with only four articles using quantitative methodology (Greer, Searby and Thoma, 2015; O'Malley and Capper, 2015; Read, 2011; Kim and Kim, 2005) and three using a mixed approach (Simon, Dole and Farragher, 2019; Scott, Scott, Dixon, Mola Okoko and Dixon, 2013; Slater, Garcia, and Mentz, 2018).

Various methods are employed in the different studies, with case studies being particularly noteworthy (Albritton, Huffmany McClellan, 2017; Batagiannis, 2011; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Brody, Vissa and Weathers, 2010; Scott, Scott, Dixon, Mola Okoko and Dixon, 2013; Lackritz, Cseh and Wise, 2019; Young, O'Doherty, Gooden and Goodnow, 2011), along with the use of in-depth interviews (Coleman and Campbell-Stephens, 2010; Henderson, Carjuzaa and Ruff, 2015; Simkins, Close and Smith, 2009). Moorosi and Grant, 2018) and semi-structured interviews (Barton and Dereshiwsy, 2009; Cowie and Crawford, 2008; Tuters and Portelli, 2017; Weiner, and Burton, 2016; Russo-Netzer and Shoshani, 2019) as well as narrative discourse analysis (Cowie and Crawford, 2009; Isaac and Trodd, 2008) and theoretical studies (Aguilar, 2017; Boyle, Haller and Hunt, 2016;

Earl, 2005; Gilroy, 1998; Lugg and Tooms, 2010; Marshall and Hernandez, 2013; Pont, 2014). Both meta-analyses (Scott and Webber, 2012) and surveys (Moorosi and Grant, 2018) were also used in the studies.

Another methodology used is the literature review, including a review of international research (Bush, 2018; Cruz-González, Domingo and Lucena, 2019), whilst we found other reviews of a bibliographic-epistemological nature (Eacott, 2011; Hernández and Fraynd, 2014).

An action-research article (Aas and Vavik, 2015), an autobiographical analysis (Gooden and Dantley, 2012), and an ethnographic study (Toure and Dorsey, 2018) were also included in our review. Further information about methods and analyses will be provided in the development of our findings.

EMERGING TOPICS

A. Training programs for school leaders

The studies included in our review refer to different characteristics and particularities of the training programs designed for principals to achieve educational leadership.

In different territories around the world (Aas and Vavik, 2015; Cowie and Crawford, 2008, 2009; Eacott, 2011; Pont, 2014; Simkins, Close and Smith, 2009; Kim and Kim, 2005), efforts are being made to respond to the need for a more thorough preparation of school principals, and to assess whether such programs provide significant benefits in this regard.

Authors such as Eacott (2011) explain that this training must be based on a key principle, that is, it should not be based on the acquisition of skills, as proposed by an external agency, but rather on taking advantage of the opportunity to turn future leaders into protagonists, making them participants in a conversation with the world (an idea that is reflected in the thinking of Pierre Bourdieu).

In contrast, the study by Boyle, Haller and Hunt (2016) argues that the establishment of national standards could benefit the achievement of effective Catholic schools and a better framework for Catholic principal formation programs. Continuing in this area of education, Earl (2005) argues that Catholic educators and principals need to have spiritual formation to convey to the educational community. The author advocates for training in Catholic identity in the school by means of a program for the development of Catholic identity (VWC).

Furthermore, studies such as those conducted by Cowie and Crawford (2008, 2009) explore the connection between the principal's training program (NPQH) and the expectations reflected in the program. It was shown that the program significantly helped in the development of a professional identity at the time of transition to the directorship, encouraging candidates to have greater vision and confidence in themselves. In his study, Gilroy (1998) discusses and evaluates the program in its first year of development, and reports findings that highlight the importance and power of the principal as an educational leader. In spite of this, Cowie and Crawford (2009) suggest that these programs should make more effort to consider the specific support needs of the various participants, and should also place greater emphasis on the socialisation processes involved. Coleman and Campbell-Stephens (2010) also focus their studies on identifying the perceptions of a group of BME (black and ethnic minority) principals who had participated in a leadership course. The authors highlight the gender and ethnic barriers that are still faced by this group, and call for training that is oriented towards social justice.

In his study, Aguilar (2017) investigates the power of "Transformational Coaching". He argued that this approach was effective in supporting leaders in building their identity, improving communication, and self-regulating their emotions. Similarly, Aas and Vavik (2015) investigated the influence of coaching within their program designed to prepare principals for effective leadership in the Norwegian education system. The findings revealed that coaching had a positive impact on increasing the understanding of their own roles, helping them to identify their personal preferences and to translate these into the way in which they carry out their duties from a leadership perspective. In addition, another highly valued aspect was the use of coaching as a means of consolidating personal and professional relationships between the different participants, which allowed them to

create a constructive and supportive environment. Along the same lines, the NPQICL program in the United Kingdom, which supports managers in developing their own leadership capacity, promotes the learning process of tutors and mentors, positively influencing the identity of the trainees (Isaac and Trodd, 2008). The study by Lackritz, Cseh and Wise (2019) supports this idea by explaining the benefits of the “coaching” process in the construction of the participants' leadership identity.

As a contribution towards the construction of the leadership identity of aspiring principals, Batagiannis (2011) proposes a research-action team. In the same way, Brody, Vissa and Weathers (2010) present a program of specialized observations (a term coined by Lortie, 1975) through a process of guided research, for the applicant to feel and live the experience. Young, O'Doherty, Gooden and Goodnow (2011) highlight collaborative learning as a key factor in preparing the principal. Finally, in the view of Scott and Webber (2012), entrepreneurship can play a valuable role in the training of educational leaders.

A number of programmes that have been addressed in some of the studies included in our systematic review are outlined below:

Table 3 - Training programs addressed in the included studies. Source: Prepared by the authors

<i>AUTHOR/YEAR</i>	<i>TERRITORY</i>	<i>INSTITUTION</i>	<i>Name of the training program</i>	<i>Characteristics of the program</i>
<i>Aas and Vavik (2015)</i>	<i>Norway</i>	<i>University of Oslo</i>	<i>National Principal Program in Norway</i>	<i>Coaching as a strategy for developing a leadership identity</i>
<i>Browne-Ferrigno (2003)</i>	<i>United Kingdom</i>	<i>“Educational Leadership Constituent Consortium” “National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education”</i>	<i>Principal Licensure Program</i>	<i>This program consists of four main areas: Educational leadership and innovation; Experience in the school environment; Monitoring of curriculum/instruction; School improvement</i>
<i>Cowie and Crawford (2008, 2009)</i>	<i>Scotland England</i>	<i>National College for School Leadership</i>	<i>National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH)</i>	<i>Emphasis on knowledge, skills and confidence required to successfully lead in educational environments</i>
<i>Eacott (2011)</i>	<i>Australia</i>	<i>NSW Department of Education and Training (DET).</i>	<i>“Principal preparation programme” “Highly effective leaders” “Great leaders, great teams, great results”</i>	<i>Workshops, online learning modules, seminars for itinerant academics and self-taught CD-ROMs that have leadership training as their central focus.</i>

<i>Greer, Searby, and Thoma (2015)</i>	<i>United States</i>	<i>University of Bowling Green State</i>	<i>Educational Leadership (EDL)</i>	<i>Training focused on instructional skills and educational leadership and distributed throughout the school/district</i>
<i>Henderson, Carjuzaa, and Ruff (2015)</i>	<i>United States</i>	<i>University of Montana</i>	<i>Indian Leadership Education and Development (ILEAD)</i>	<i>Training program focused on improvement initiatives through problem-based learning. It employs a mentoring program with skilled professionals who work in schools with a high population of Native American students.</i>
<i>O'Malley and Capper (2015)</i>	<i>United States</i>	<i>University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA)</i>	<i>UCEA institution's principal preparation programs</i>	<i>Training of principals focused on curricular or evaluative aspects based on national standards</i>
<i>Simkins, Close and Smith (2009)</i>	<i>United Kingdom</i>	<i>National College for School Leadership</i>	<i>Tomorrow's Leaders Today (TLT)</i>	<i>This program aims to develop leadership skills in future leaders, to achieve positive actions in the community, and to solve future educational challenges</i>

<i>Isaac and Trodd (2008)</i>	<i>United Kingdom</i>	<i>University of Plymouth; University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield</i>	<i>The National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership (NPQICL)</i>	<i>A program that supports children's school leaders in developing their own leadership skills.</i>
<i>Brody, Vissa and Weathers (2010)</i>	<i>United States</i>	<i>University of Pennsylvania</i>	<i>Educational Leadership Program for Aspiring Principals (ELPAP)</i>	<i>This program employs a guided research experience (specialized observation) to facilitate the conceptualization of function and leadership identity development for pre-service students.</i>
<i>Coleman and Campbell-Stephens (2010)</i>	<i>United Kingdom</i>	<i>Institute of Education</i>	<i>Investing in Diversity</i>	<i>Course designed to consider the issue of culturally and ethnically oriented leadership</i>
<i>Simon, Dole and Farragher (2019)</i>	<i>Australia</i>	<i>The North Coast Region of the Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET)</i>	<i>Principal Learning Institute Coaching Program (PLICP)</i>	<i>This program supports new principals in strengthening their professional leadership identity with the use of coaching.</i>

B. Leadership training needs

Another issue that emerges from our analysis is the need to include specific and essential themes for the construction of a leadership identity in the training and capacity programs for principals.

Various authors highlight in their studies that issues of a cultural or ethnic nature should be addressed in leadership training programs (Coleman and Campbell-Stephens, 2010; Gooden and Dantley, 2012; Henderson, Carjuzaa and Ruff, 2015; Toure and Dorsey, 2018; Tutters and Portelli, 2017).

Gooden and Dantley (2012) consider this issue in their research in a US context. Social justice leadership training programs were shown to address this perspective by providing school leaders with greater racial awareness. It was also found that, for future principals, the inclusion of this perspective was effective in encouraging participants to adopt (and act upon) an anti-racist leadership mentality.

In their research, Henderson, Carjuzaa, and Ruff (2015) also address this issue by studying how American Indian school leaders reconcile their leadership training from a Western perspective with their indigenous knowledge. The findings show that the resolutions of difficult situations in reference to cultural and racial aspects were overcome by their authenticity. These Indian leaders used it to tackle the challenges of complex circumstances, creating a climate of social and anti-racial justice in the centre. It is for this reason that Toure and Dorsey (2018) propose the need to include a critical understanding of race and racism in the education and training of teachers and school leaders. By adopting this approach, progress can be made with regard to combating deep-rooted stereotypes and discriminatory actions.

In their study, Tutters and Portelli (2017) report that there are very few real resources to prepare Ontario's leaders to deal with diversity and to exercise a style of leadership that is based on principles of equity. They also add that most existing training programs are linked to external agencies. Another study calling for more leadership training for social justice is that of Tutters and Portelli (2017). In this study —conducted in the Ontario

educational context— it was revealed that school leaders are ill prepared to support and respond to the current needs of students.

This same purpose was shared by Hernández and Fraynd (2014), expanding the meaning of leadership for social justice, and focusing specifically on a particular LGBTQ group. They advocate for greater training and participation of school leaders in national programs designed to combat negative homophobic experiences, as well as the creation of inclusive school communities. In the same vein, Marshall and Hernandez (2013) support the need for greater training of leaders on issues of heterosexism and heteronormativity, highlighting the need to include this area in educational leadership training programs. Similarly, in a study conducted in the USA, Albritton, Huffman, and McClellan (2017) analysed principals who considered themselves to be social justice leaders and who struggled with recognizing the needs and well-being of LGBTQ students. The findings indicated the importance of LGBTQ preparation and training programs. The study also recognized the need to integrate reflection and self-awareness into training programs, which is critical for the development of the social justice leader. O'Malley and Capper (2015), on the other hand, report that in the US context LGBTIQ issues are only addressed in social justice leadership training programs and depend on the initiative or judgement of the trainer in charge of developing such programs. It is therefore important to provide training programs with more in-depth coverage of these issues.

In addition to the need to consider social justice and cultural diversity issues in training programs, Coleman and Campbell-Stephens (2010) and Lugg and Tooms (2010) found that gender discrimination continues to directly affect female principals. Therefore, Weiner and Burton (2016) analyse how preparation programs address the issue of gender identity, and how gender can affect the experiences of female principals and the construction of their identity. The results suggest the need to instil a debate on the inclusion of gender stereotype issues in the preparation of principals. This idea is in accord with the views of Cruz-González, Domingo and Lucena (2019), who, through their review of the literature, indicate the influence of gender on the achievement of a leadership identity in principals, along with the importance of training for overcoming these barriers.

In other cases, authors argue that greater attention should be paid to training principals and school leaders in aspects related to socialization (Bush, 2018; Moorosi and Grant, 2018), communication skills (Barton and Dereshiwsky, 2009), solving moral problems (Greer, Searby and Thoma, 2015), or in collaboration, facilitation and mediation skills (Scott, Scott, Dixon, Mola Okoko and Dixon, 2013).

C. Transition to headship

The identity transition involved in assuming the position of principal is also examined in many of the studies included in our review of the international literature.

Browne-Ferrigno (2003) studied this issue in his research with aspiring school principals who participated in a principal training program. In relation to the transition to their future professional identity, the candidates highlighted four fundamental themes: the conceptualization of the role of the principal, the initial socialization of their new work, the conversion of their role, and the greater professional commitment. In this regard, the study of Russo- Netzer and Shoshani, (2019) revealed that in a leadership training program, the key elements highlighted by participants were the internal and personal construction of identity towards leadership values, the influence of external agents, and the experience of being selected.

It is important to emphasise that, in order to lead the school successfully, teachers (aspiring principals) must go through an arduous process of “metamorphosis” towards the construction of a leadership identity beyond that of simple principal-manager. This is the central theme of the study by Batagiannis (2011), which proposes the use of action-research as a means of helping participants to make this transition. This study, based on collaborative learning, helps aspirants to be reflective and self-reflective. The study concluded that for aspiring principals, action research learning has a great impact on the “emerging leadership identity” (Batagiannis, 2011).

Read (2011) points out the currently existing need for the training of new leaders, since on many occasions they assume their position without being adequately prepared to carry out their leadership roles. In some cases, this is because they do not receive the

necessary training or simply because such training is poor or disorganized. Faced with this scenario, some regions have considered revising the contents of the training courses. The United States, for example, examined the perceptions held by principals and assistant principals with regard to their preparation for the leadership role. Similarly, Canada examined the training activities that assistant principals undertook when they were teachers to see what activities prepared them for their subsequent role as assistant principal (Read, 2011).

Principals are special figures among the professional members of the educational community, and for this reason they require specialized training (Bush, 2018). According to Bush (2018), it is necessary to include issues of professional, personal and institutional socialization in the training programs for school leaders. For this reason, in his study he proposes a training program for the transition to leadership, in which emphasis is placed on the development of leadership skills and on a continuous process focused on professional learning.

Slater, Garcia and Mentz (2018) explain that these training programs must also include common issues that novice principals must sometimes deal with, such as feelings of professional isolation and loneliness, poor time management, work overload, lack of school budget, ineffective professional culture, difficulties in balancing the demands of their role with new government initiatives, or insufficient resources and facilities. Furthermore, Simkins, Close and Smith (2009) also focus on aspiring school principals, through the analysis of a training program that used “work-shadowing”. This accompaniment strategy consisted of “working in the shadows”, i.e. spending time with an expert who is carrying out a task so that later, when they enter the post, they are better able to perform it effectively.

Finally, Brody, Vissa, and Weathers (2010) also emphasise the importance of using new methods to train aspiring principals, particularly those that take into account their needs. In this case, the authors decided to explore the University of Pennsylvania's Educational Leadership Program for Aspiring Directors (ELPAP), which uses guided research and focused observations to develop leadership identity. Focused observation offers applicants the opportunity to develop “lenses” through which they can view the ways of achieving school improvement.

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this work was to provide a systematic review of the international literature on the training of identity-based leadership in school principals. The study of the scientific production of this issue provides an overview of the current state-of-the-art in terms of the training of school leaders and their training needs.

As a result of the main findings of our review, we can highlight some key points in relation to theoretical and methodological issues that have been raised at international level. Our findings are compatible with those described in international reports such as TALIS (OECD, 2013, 2014) or the McKinsey Report (Barber and Mourshed, 2007), which, in addition to highlighting the urgent need for greater educational leadership in schools, also emphasise its importance as a key determinant of educational improvement.

The various studies included in our review aimed to answer questions about the validity and effectiveness of training programs, as well as to detect the training needs of current principals at different stages of their professional development. For this reason, many of the studies are of a qualitative nature, since this approach is particularly useful when it comes to gaining a better understanding and interpretation of the voices and contributions of the educational professionals participating in the research. Quantitative methods play only a minor role and are often combined with qualitative methods.

for social justice (Albritton, Huffmany, and McClellan (2017); Gooden and Dantley, 2012; Hernández and Fraynd, 2014; Henderson, Carjuzaa and Ruff, 2015; Lugg and Tooms, 2010; Marshall and Hernandez, 2013; Tuters and Portelli, 2017; Weiner and Burton, 2016; O'Malley and Capper, 2015), addressing the problems faced by a range of disadvantaged groups that are forced to deal with issues of race, gender and sexual orientation. In this regard, and as noted by leading authors in this field, schools continue to be mechanisms for combating social segregation (Furman, 2012; Gooden and Dantley, 2012; Hernandezy and McKenzie, 2010). This idea has aroused interest in greater training in leadership for social justice, which, in turn, has been consolidated within its own research field, producing a significant amount of research on this issue (Jean-Marie, Normore and Brooks, 2009; McKinney and Capper, 2010; McHatton et al., 2010).

“Becoming a principal” is another of the greatest focal points in terms of the scientific literature studied. This transition of the professional role has been central to many studies within the educational field (Capasso and Daresh, 2001; Crow, 2006; Kelly and Saunders, 2010). This is reflected in some of the empirical research studies found at the international level, which indicate the significant challenges inherent in this process (Hobson et al., 2003).

Certain limitations can be identified in the research conducted. Some of these limitations are related to the nature of the research method itself. Gough (2007) argues that the systematic review of scientific research is, in essence, a study of the literature that depends largely on the nature of the sources that are available and used. Moreover, the diversity of research methods and instruments present in the articles makes comparison and/or generalisation difficult.

The present review shows the worldwide need to work on the training of principals. A commitment to quality and equity in education should improve the training of principals as leaders of schools, since these are the essential elements that guide the entire education community toward a common objective. The research analyzed is concerned with the need to adapt training programs to the social, political, and cultural context. It is claimed that from the political sphere, solid bases should be established in the improvement and quality of initial training programs (in the present work, we have referred to this as “transition to school management”) so that teachers, future leaders, and school principals may be up to the task of meeting the demands of such a complex and essential role. In this regard, some of the studies in our review indicate the importance of mentors, that is, tutors who guide the learning process (Close and Smith, 2009). In addition, some authors encourage the training of both new and veteran principals on issues of gender equality, racial equality, and LGBTQ — in short, the development of social justice skills.

Finally, it is necessary to point out that not all countries focus on this issue. For this reason, it is important that research exists in all territories so that training can be adapted to specific needs, and in turn, to make comparisons towards excellence. In this way, specific and global training programs on leadership in school management can be established.

Taken together, our findings suggest the need to increase scientific production at both the international and national levels in the area of training effective and competent leaders in school management, since these figures have a critical role to play in the improvement of schools.

MARCO
METODO
-LÓGICO

CAPÍTULO 4.

MÉTODO

La tesis doctoral presenta un método mixto, integra diversos estudios y metodologías cualitativas, con el propósito de entender la identidad profesional de los directores escolares. En total, la investigación presentó cuatro fases metodológicas, las cuales nos llevan a la construcción de una propuesta de mejora (Figura 5). En un primer momento, se llevaron a cabo tres revisiones sistemáticas de la literatura (recogidas en el apartado estado de la cuestión), lo que nos permitió obtener una primera aproximación teórica y centrar progresivamente el objeto de estudio. En segundo lugar, se llevó a cabo un estudio exploratorio a través de entrevistas en profundidad a personas clave que rodean al director escolar (inspectores, orientadores y FAMPA). En tercer lugar, se realizó el estudio de caso central de la tesis, que se desarrolla de forma detallada en este capítulo. Y finalmente, se llevó a cabo un análisis fílmico para conocer el proceso de reconstrucción identitaria en un contexto de ciencia ficción y se analizó el impacto del Covid-19 en la identidad de una directora escolar a través de entrevistas en profundidad y semiestructuradas

El presente capítulo recoge tanto un esquema que organiza el proceso seguido y que se corresponde con lo mostrado en resultados (ver Figura 5) de fases metodológicas), y seguidamente se pasa a desarrollar más específicamente cómo es el marco central del estudio: Estudio de caso. Para lo que se muestra tanto la figura 6 (del marco metodológico) como un artículo que la describe y justifica específicamente (Researching the Professional Identity of School Principals through Case Study). No obstante, en cada una de las publicaciones recogidas en resultados, se expone la metodología específica utilizada en cada estudio específico.

Fig.5 - Fases metodológicas.

Elaboración propia con la herramienta de diseño CANVA

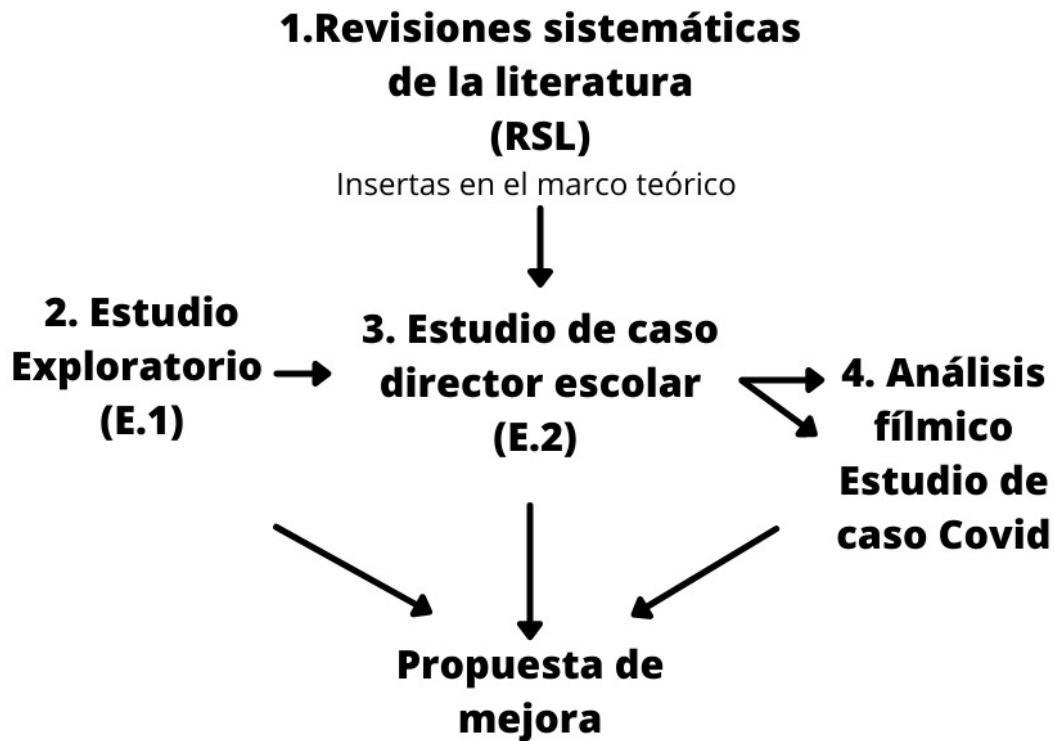
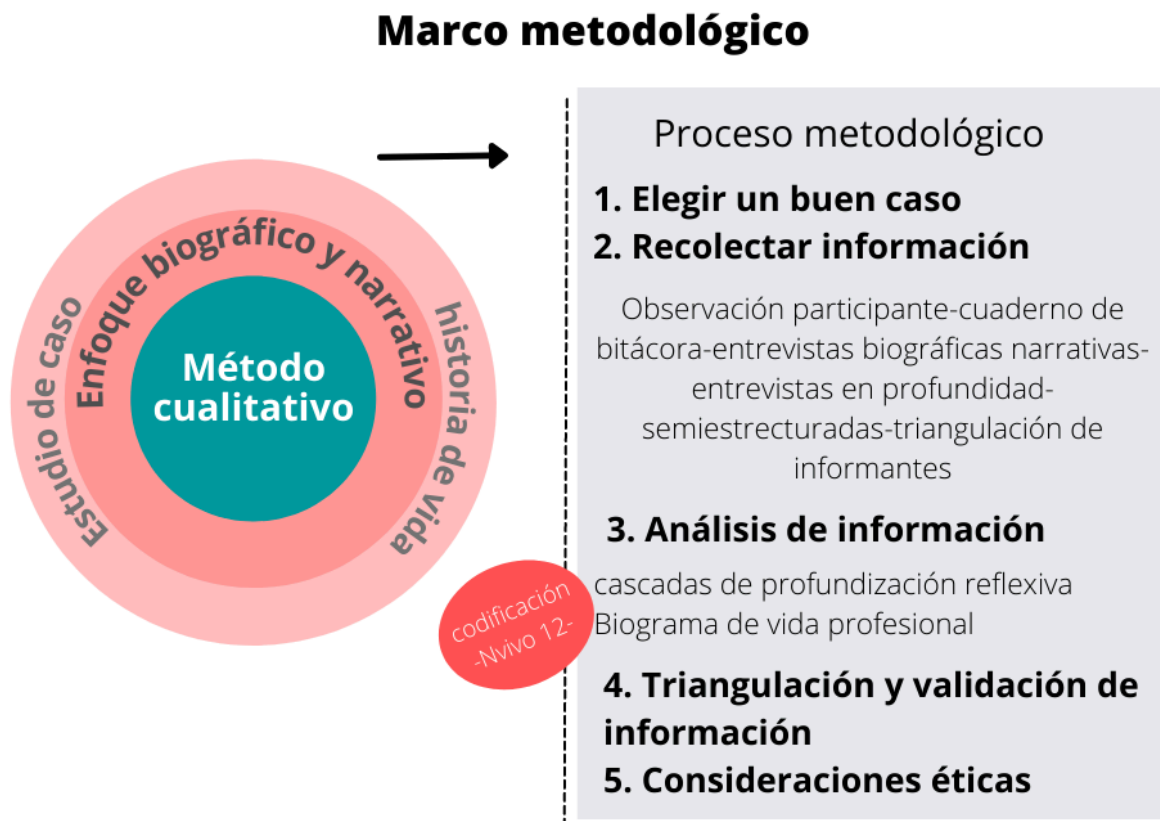


Fig.6 - Marco metodológico tesis doctoral.
Elaboración propia con la herramienta de diseño CANVA



ARTÍCULO 4

Researching the professional identity of school principals through case study

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Abstract

This study explains the methodological protocol conducted to research the professional identity of a school leader who develops his work in a challenge context. For this purpose, we propose the use of biographical and narrative research conducted through the case study methodology. From here, we present the methodological protocol carried out to analyse the identity of principal, a principal who successfully leads a disadvantaged school. The process of collecting data to understand the scenario under study (ethos, context, and meaning of the stories) is reported, along with the information analysis process and ethical considerations. Finally, the strengths, limitations and constraints of this study are presented, along with final conclusions and recommendations for future research.

Keywords

Professional Identity, Successful leadership, Biographical-narrative research, Professional biography, Sequential triangulation

Introduction

In this study, we present the methodological process of a single case study used to research the professional identity of a Spanish school principal and his school in a challenging context. The professional identity of Principals in leading challenging schools is an area of concern due to low student attainment and future job aspirations. This study is part of International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP, 2013), which aims to study the school identity of school leaders across different geographical locations.

School leadership is one of the key factors that determine good educational outcomes, inclusive schools based on equity and social justice, and ultimately successful schools. Several studies point out that a strong and consolidated professional leadership identity perceived by other members of a school is another aspect of fundamental importance for educational achievement. (Cruz-González, Lucena and Domingo 2020; Leithwood and Jantzi 2008).

The professional identity construct is complex to define and delimit. Following Bolívar, Fernández and Molina (2005), it could be conceived as the “definition of oneself” of the individual as a professional and as a member of a collective that works in the same way under a set of common practices and working conditions, in relation to a given context and in interaction with other social groups, i.e. their interlocutors.

Studying the identity of a person —and specifically that of an educational professional— requires access to his/her personal life, revealing the milestones, experiences, and important people who have had an impact on him/her during their career. In addition to becoming familiar with the social and professional environment in which they live, it is important to be aware of the fact that, as Dubar (2010) argues, this identity is not static, but is instead shaped by a continuous process of (re) construction. It is not just a matter of initial training or occupying a professional position. In this changing scenario (Townsend and Weiner 2011), identity does not depend exclusively on the events experienced by the subject themselves, it is also subject to the cultural, political, and social context that surrounds this individual.

Within this social context, the people who comprise it, the external agents, constitute, as Dubar (2010) or Scribner and Crow (2012) argue, first order factors in establishing identity. From this perspective, according to the same authors, identity is constructed not only for the person themselves, but also for others. In this regard, the individual cannot detach him/herself, and is instead dependent on the social groups to which he/she belongs (Bolívar 2006). This perspective makes us conscious of the fact that in order to study the process of identity construction and reconstruction of a school principal it is necessary not only to deepen our understanding of their own perceived identity, but also the way in which this identity is perceived by others.

It is essential to have knowledge of both the internal perspectives of the professional, as well as the external views of the people who surround him/her on a daily basis. This is the nuance that has been adopted in our research. In this work we follow the case study method, which allows us to delve deeper into the “being” by understanding the voices of both the subject of study and the people who surround him with the purpose of investigating the professional identity of a leader who exercises leadership with others and not over others.

As we have already mentioned, the identity dimension is a subjective and complex aspect to study. Thus, studies that aim to investigate this type of element must include a broad and complete methodological design, in which not only the vision of the subject(s) of study is investigated in depth, but also those other figures, contexts, circumstances and/or moments that influence their identity. Based on this perspective, could the identity felt be studied without contemplating the identity attributed by others? Would it be sensible to analyse the being of a subject without taking into account the past and critical elements that influenced the reconstruction of his/her identity? Are we able to understand the reality of an educational context from a single lens?

Following the hermeneutical approach to social sciences enquiry, it is increasingly important to know the person, that is, what they feel, think, believe, and experience. Thus, the use of qualitative research has become well-established. Bruner (2006) and Ricoeur (1996) consider narrative methodology as a valid response to understanding social constructs, within, time, context and personal circumstances. The introspective and subjective view of personal and professional experience has become a relevant focus of interest. For this, it is considered a scientific approach that promotes understanding of the meaning of one's life/experience (Bolívar, et al., 2001; Kelchtermans, 2016). More important than events and episodes are the meanings that participants attribute to their own world (Cruz-González 2020).

Based on this methodological framework, studying identity through narrative is an ideal and potential approach. However, the question arises of how to carry out such research and access hidden and traditionally forgotten aspects of identity. Sparkes (2015) argued that researching and reasoning about experiences is also an object of interest in science and that a biographical-narrative approach allows access to this knowledge. A case study on the construction of identity from a (self) biographical-narrative approach can undoubtedly offer a good framework for studying the construction of professional identity (Bolívar and Domingo 2019).

Case studies are a useful and adaptable means of integrating all the voices of interest in socio-educational research. Specifically, recent times have seen a growing interest in case studies within the field of educational research (Lapoule and Lynch 2018).

Thus, understanding and delving deeper into the most relevant meanings of the school context has become increasingly important, and for this purpose, several researchers have considered case studies as suitable avenues to pursue in their work (Hatch 2002).

The purpose of case studies is to gather valuable information from a real-life research context. One of the great strengths of this method is that it collects essential information from the people involved, delving deeper into the identity dimension of the case of interest (Yin 2009). Stake (2007) points out that this type of methodology is based on a constructivist paradigm, relativizing truth and prioritizing the meanings that the subjects of study use to describe their world. Through this lens, the subjects of the case study describe their reality, while the researcher's role is focused on interpreting and understanding the discourse of these participants (Yin, 2009).

Creswell (2009) and Yin (2009) explain that in the design of a case study the triangulation of informants and information must be present, and for this purpose participant observation, documentary analysis, interviews and questionnaires are potentially useful. Baxter (2008) shares this view, stressing that the use of various data sources is essential for conducting the research in an adequate way.

As Yin (2009) points out, this is key if we are to avoid limiting the exploration of a topic to a single lens. In fact, although educational studies focus on the figure of a single individual, research on that subject of study involves gathering information from the various associated voices with whom he/she is involved (Hancock and Algozzine, 2006).

By adopting this line of thought, the present article describes and argues in favour of the use of this research process that aims to achieve a polyhedral understanding (from both different voices and perspectives, and from within its own developmental context) of a complex issue such as that of professional identity. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the case study method used to analyse the identity and successful practices of the school principal.

Researching identity: guidance in the methodological process

Intity is a complex issue and its understanding is beyond the scope of linear and static designs (Dubar 2010). For this reason, it is necessary a research design in which the contributions, techniques and procedures of different qualitative research methodologies are integrated in order to gain a more holistic understanding of the case (Goodson 2017). This section will discuss the main methodological phases we followed during the two years of the study. Further, a final section will be devoted to the ethical issues that have been considered throughout our research process.

STAGE 1: HOW TO CHOOSE A GOOD CASE

One of the most important aspects of research using the case study method is the selection of the case itself. Recommendations proposed by authors of qualitative studies (Stake 2007; Bolívar 2002) explain that it is key to find “good cases”, and to do so, they must bring richness to the field of knowledge in which our research is framed. In this regard, Bolivar and Domingo (2019, 92) argues that:

«Cases should meet the basic requirements of good informants who deserve to be studied in depth because of their relevance to an investigative objective, their relevance (as an agent with objective reasons for being taken into consideration), uniqueness or degree of exemplarity. Although this type of research is by definition personal and non-transferable, it can provide good leads for reflection on a field, scope, dimension, role, etc»

Another of the characteristics in the selection of the case study should be the adequacy of the case study itself with regard to our research objectives. Goodson (2017) also points out the “deliberate” or “voluntary” nature of the process of selecting a case study. This will allow us to get closer to the surrounding context and to gather a more substantial body of dialogue. In this regard, Moriña (2017) adds that it is of fundamental importance that the researcher is familiar with and committed to the principles and characteristics that support the methodological design of the research.

Based on the need to choose a good case, this study purposively selected the case of a principal who had successful professional practices and a strong perceived and attributed identity, which was leading to school improvement according to evaluation reports. The school is located in a rural village and is considered a challenging context as the families are economically underperforming and most of them are unemployed. The school has few pupils from 3 to 13 years of age. Since the principal has been leading the school management, the school has improved its performance and school results, in fact, it has been awarded with numerous prizes for educational improvement related to the promotion of emotional intelligence work and innovative projects.

STAGE 2: DATA COLLECTION PROCESS FOR SCENIC COMPREHENSION (ETHOS, CONTEXT AND MEANING OF THE STORIES)

Following Bolívar and Domingo (2019), biographical and narrative research of a hermeneutic nature goes beyond the compendium of narrative data without sense or nexus. On the contrary, it attempts to go deeper and gather stories that allow for giving meaning to affective, cognitive, and action dimensions, and providing an insight into the feelings, projections, and desires of the person interviewed. It is necessary to follow this interpretative process of deepening since our aim is to investigate the deepest part of the individual, his/her identity. In order to delve deeper into the identity construction of a school leaders and explore his/her modes of leadership, it is essential to capture all of the key moments, circumstances, and critical incidents that have shaped his professional development (Natow 2019). Similarly, it is important to obtain information from people and the context that surrounds them, in order to obtain complete and real information, thereby sustaining the triangulation of informants (Flick 1992)

In this process of biographical-narrative research and following the same authors, the instruments for collecting information must be rigorously selected so that these tools are appropriate and adapted to the particular context of study.

Participant observation

Throughout the research, it is very important to become natives of the centre as opposed to strangers with “magnifying glass and briefcase”. Our senses must be focused on becoming familiar with the context in which our investigation took place. As Guber (2001) describes, we must “be within” the community being studied (p. 57) and be accepted in the group. In this process, observation becomes the research instrument par excellence. Once we have been accepted into the context and are deemed to form part of the population analysed, we are then able to observe. This type of observation is referred to as “participant observation” (Kawulich 2005), which focuses on the experiences lived by the researcher himself. For Jorgensen (2015), this observation is unique for investigating the experiences, feelings, and problems faced by individuals, since with this process, the researcher interacts with those observed while gathering information.

This participant observation method — and in accord with the ideas of Jorgensen (2015) — allowed us to gather a rich body of data that would otherwise be inaccessible to an external observer or non-participant.

Field Diary and Logbook

Journal or field notes are all written records of what was observed, noting the reality lived and the perceptions of the researcher. According to other authors in the area, these notes are akin to written photographs of the scenario surrounding the study (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen 1993). The field diary, in our work known as the “logbook”, alludes to the notebook in which the merchant seamen wrote down possible incidents, relevant data, and watches that occurred during navigation. This instrument allows us to synthesize our research practices on a daily basis, and also allows the researcher to continuously enrich, improve, analyse, and interpret the information collected.

During the research, also it is necessary to write down all the sensations, feelings, and thoughts (Schensul, et al., 1999) that arose during the interviews with the principal and other informants. Also, it is important to record any ideas that flowed from the consensual and formal interviews. Upon entering or leaving the centre, we might, for instance,

encounter a meeting in the corridors with a student or with a teacher, or a course party. The walls of the school, the decorations, the colours, the banners and the paintings could be key elements to be recorded our research. The decoration of the school is also a major source of information in terms of setting the visual scene, revealing what is projected by the school.

In-depth biographical interviews: Principal as a subject

In-depth biographical interviews became the main instrument for collecting information in our case study. For Hopf (2004), biographical interviews are those that allow us to gain information on a life history and the biographical configuration of an identity. Through these, we were able to identify the key moments, leitmotifs, key characters and important circumstances that had been turning points in the principal's life, all of which served to guide him in his subsequent professional actions.

In table 1, we show the interview process carried out in our research project with a case study specifically. A total of six in-depth interviews were conducted with a principal, which lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were distributed across the two school years of our study period. In addition, an introductory and acknowledgement interview was conducted, along with a further interview to consolidate all the information gathered in the interviews (see Table 1). After each of the meetings, we noted down any possible doubts or misunderstandings that had arisen in the previous interview. These notes and summaries of information were presented in the next interview in order to compare and validate the information with the informant himself, and to obtain his consent and support. In this manuscript, the emphasis was placed on the researcher-participant relationship, and a climate of dialogue was established with the purpose of jointly constructing a shared life history.

Table 1 - In-depth biographical interviews: School Principal
 Source: Own elaboration

<i>Year/course</i>	<i>Month</i>	<i>Interview</i>	<i>Duration</i>
<i>2018-2019</i>	March	Introductory interview/ Invitation to Participate	60 minutes
	April	Interview 1	90 minutes
	May	Interview 2	65 minutes
	June	Interview 3	90 minutes
<i>2019-2020</i>	September	Interview 4	70 minutes
	October	Interview 5	80 minutes
	November	Interview 6	90 minutes
	December	Collection/conclusion interview	90 minutes

The voice of other interlocutors: triangulation of informants

During the participant observation phase, it is recommended to design an interview script to gather the information that was not possible to access through participant observation and in-depth interviews. It is necessary to obtain information to compare data, resolve any doubts or questions and expand on the construction of a successful identity and leadership practices. In this regard, it is interesting in meeting people close to the subject of study both inside and outside of the school so that they could explain their personal experience with his/her, along with their impressions and assessments. The aim of the semi-structured interviews (Fischer-Rosenthal & Rosenthal 1997) is to capture the core information of the research from different perspectives and thus contribute to the triangulation of information and key informants.

In figure 1 we show an example of a study belonging to our research project. In this case, we show the key agents investigated.

Stage 3: Information analysis process

ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP IDENTITY

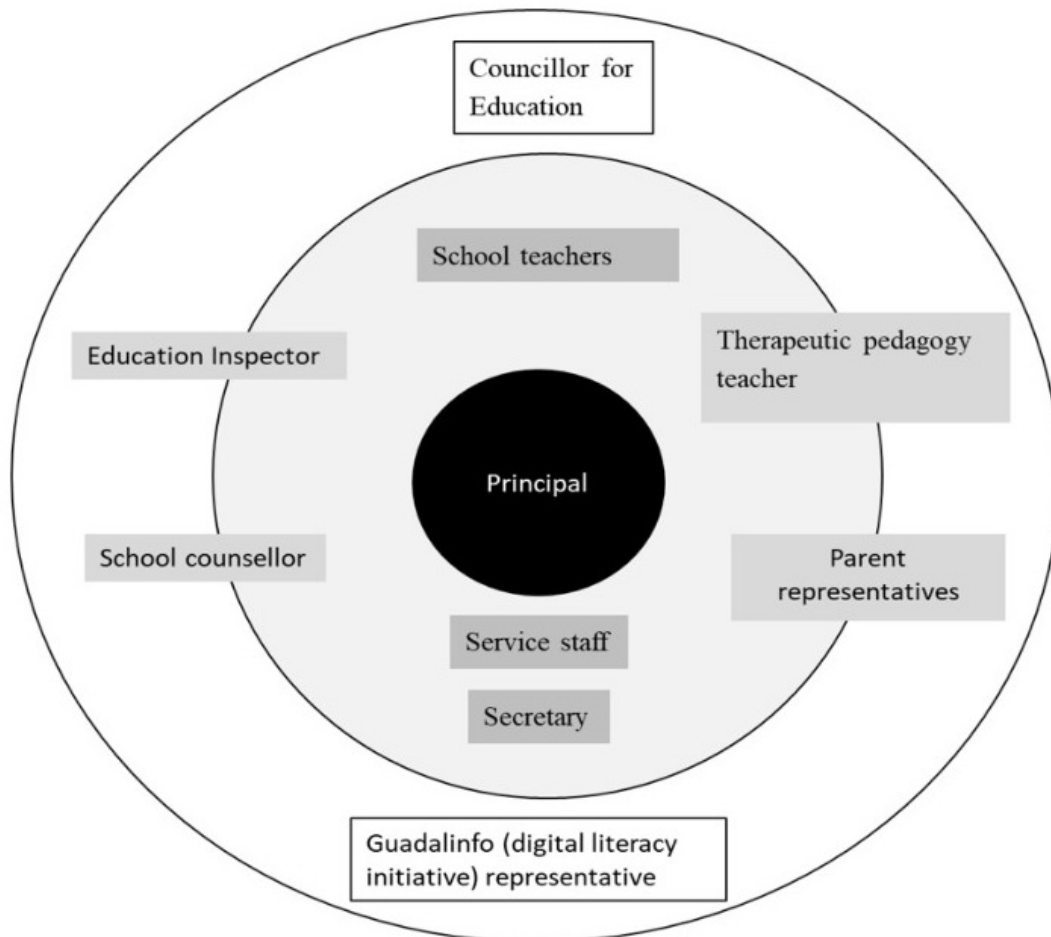
In the analysis of leadership identity, we proposed two main procedures: the cascades of reflective deepening (sequentially during the process of information gathering) and critical discourse analysis.

A) Cascades of reflective deepening

The information collected in the in-depth biographical interviews is key to this phase of analysis. Accessing the profound meaning that the informant assigns to the events in his life —both as an actor and an external observer— is a complex process that requires both the personal commitment of the informant to give an honest account of these events and the attendant consequences, and a cascade of reflective deepening which allows him to continue to progressively untangle the events and in successive attempts (Kelchtermans, 2016).

Stage 3 - Case study participants.

Source: Own elaboration



Each of these interviews should include an initial section devoted to using concept maps and a dialectical validation process. This dialectical validation consists of confirming what had been gathered through language and the self-presentation of the protagonist himself (Bamberg, De Fina and Schiffrin 2011). At this point it is worth noting that it is recommended to adopt the principle of sequentiality (Bolívar, Fernández and Molina 2005) during this process. Thus, in each interview, in addition to validating the analysed discourse, this process also serve as a starting point for exploring in greater depth those aspects of interest to the researcher.

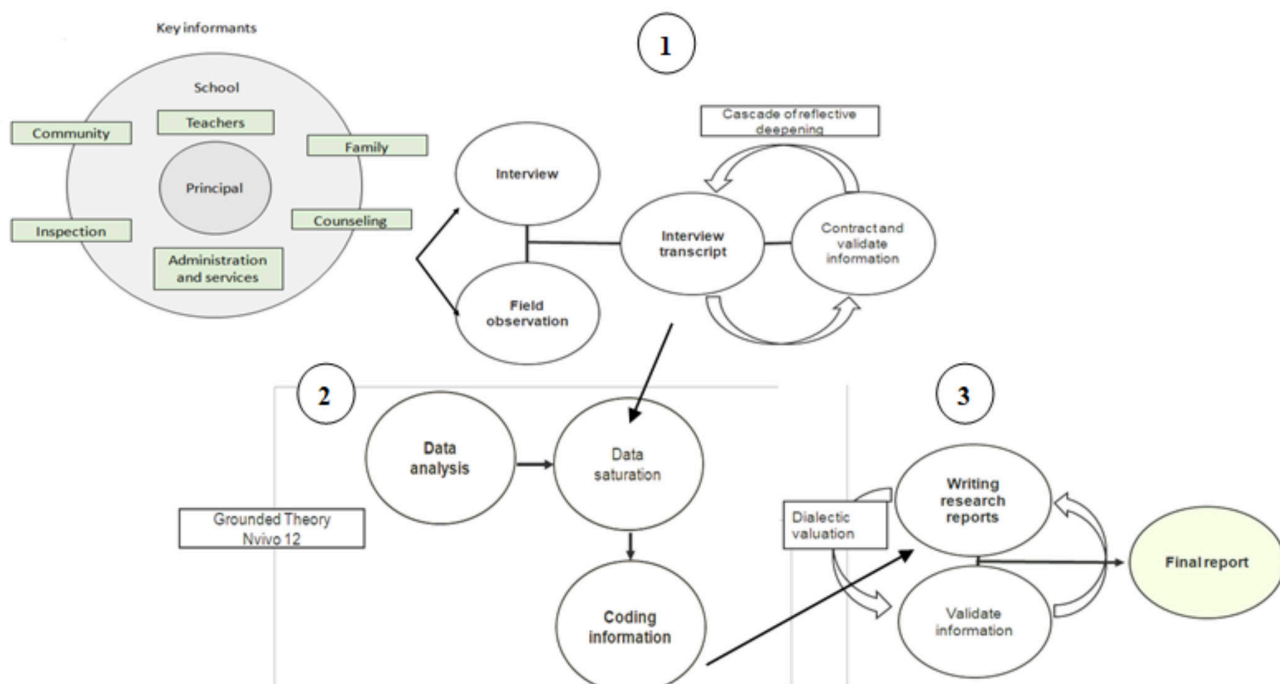
The cascades of reflective deepening allow for an in-depth analysis composed of different cycles of interviews (along with dialectical validation of the information collected) until saturation (Strauss and Corbin 1998) of the different categories that emerged from the discourse is achieved. This technique allows for collecting and analysing the participant's voice in a way that is shared between the researcher and the participant, which endows the research with greater quality and rigour (Geertz 1989). In figure 2, we show an example of the cascade process carried out in our research project.

Following the recommendations of Bolivar and Domingo (2019), three types of validation reports were produced both during and after this cascade process. The first two are constructed sequentially and throughout the process. These two reports are focused on checking the understanding of the story. The third and final report focus on the life history of the protagonist of the study, which included fundamental aspects such as his personal/professional trajectory and its impact on identity, along with (identity) crises and the subsequent reconstruction of identity.

B) Professional life biogram

A further analytical tool used to explore the professional identity of the main principal of our study is the professional biogram. The biogram can be defined as the graphic mapping that can establish the personal, professional or social life trajectory and in which chronology is combined with events. The purpose of this biogram is to analyse the biographical dimension of our researcheds by taking into account contextual, spatial, political, educational, and social factors.

Figure 2 - Cascade process carried out in our research project
 Source: Own elaboration



Goodson (2017) suggest that the best way to study a life narrative is by locating it within its spatial and temporal context, and investigating the narrative from a theoretical approach to this context. This allows us, as Bakhtin (2003) explains, to delve into elements of the past from the very present, and to establish processes of reflection on the impact that these critical events have had on our identity.

The following is a basic outline of the elements that constitute our professional life biography:

Table 2 - Support material for the elaboration of the professional biogram

Source: Own elaboration

<i>Chronology</i>	<i>Description of the personal/professional stage</i>	<i>Critical events, milestones, leitmotifs, and key characters</i>	<i>Impact on identity</i>
Year(s) when the event happened	Relevant details about the time stage	Explanation of event, experience, character or milestone that mark the participant's professional career	Explain the personal/professional impact of these elements

ANALYSIS OF THE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY ATTRIBUTED TO SCHOOL LEADERS

In this phase we will explain the analytical process used to study leadership identity of school leaders from the viewpoint of other educational agents that constitute the school community. For this purpose, we propose two main procedures. Semi-structured interviews and interviews that gathered different views on his/her identity and professional performance in the school. The information collected in the interviews should be transcribed and entered into the qualitative software program Nvivo 12 (The researchers chose the Nvivo programme to facilitate the process). We recommended that the interviews are structured in an emergent way by meta-categories (coded in Nvivo as the main thematic node) and categories. This stage could be followed by an inductive process based on Grounded Theory principles (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Further, this type of analysis is characterized by its focus on language as well as other observational records obtained from other sources, for example, a logbook. The thematic analysis should be complemented by critical discourse analysis. By adopting this approach, it is possible to analyse the discursive representations of our interviewees, delving deeper into those elements that allow us to reconstruct the most complex sense of their narrative.

TRIANGULATION AS A VALIDATION TOOL

Considering the duality of identity, as defined by Dubar (2002), was one of the key aspects of our analytical process. There has been a long-standing debate regarding validation in studies of a social and qualitative nature (Flick 1992). As a result of this extensive debate, various authors have chosen triangulation as an ideal method for validating information in studies of this nature.

Authors such as Denzin (2009) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argue that triangulation through different sources or informants are an extremely valuable technique for obtaining a complete view of the object of study and for providing coherence and consistency in our study. Denzin (2009) explain that this type of triangulation (interactive triangulation), different discourses related to the same subject come under scrutiny, capturing their different visions and nuances and paying special attention to those common and differentiating aspects as a key element and issue of further investigation. This can there-

fore be viewed as a complementary and transversal analysis that examines all the voices of our study sample, and explores in a “crossed” way the categories that constitute the professional identity being studied (Bolívar, Fernández and Molina 2005).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is important to note the ethical issues to be considered during the reporting process. Firstly, it is essential for us to obtain a mutual agreement between the researchers on the characteristics encompassing the study and the commitments made by both parties (Moriña 2017). Once this agreement has been reached, one of the most characteristic ethical aspects concerns the process of information collection. For us, this is one of the key moments in which the role of the researcher is essential, designing an action plan based on values of respect, empathy and active listening (Munhall 1998).

During the process of information analysis, a particular protocol must be followed. For example, the participants themselves could be asked to validate the analysis of their discourse. This would not only ensure the highest rigour and quality of our own analysis, but also make transparent our honest and respectful approach to the use of our own study participants' accounts (Smythe and Murray 2000).

Discussion

In this study we analyse the importance of investigating the voices of the characters (the others) surrounding the researcher, providing support for the need to work on the triangulation of informants in a hermeneutic and narrative research process. According to authors in this area (Bolívar and Ritacco 2016), professional identity is a socially constructed experience that is also personally recreated with meaning and intentionality. Thus, the identity of an individual is established on the basis of mutual interaction with the group to which the individual belongs (Dubar 2010; Scribner and Crow 2012). Therefore, it is logical that the data is collected not only from the interviewees themselves, but also from those around them, so that the information is always contextualized in their place of work.

The case study, which as Yin (2009) and Stake (2007) state, allows for detailed observation of the subject of study, and reveals the most relevant meanings of the school context whilst also allowing us to delve into the professional identity of a leader (Albritton, et al., 2017). Specifically, our study suggests as an analytical technique to delve into the life of a school leader, the creation of a life biogram, in accordance with Sugrue's work (2015), whose longitudinal study analyzes the life of a principal to evaluate the critical and turning points that have led him to impart certain professional practices. The construction of the biogram could be carried out through in-depth biographical interviews, in line with studies such as those by Bolívar and Ritacco (2018) in which identity is analysed as a story. In addition, a particular nuance of our study is the combined use of biographical interviews of the main protagonist and semi-structured interviews with other informants around the study subject. In studies such as the one reported by Johnson (2017), additional interviews were also conducted with parents, teachers, and students to help establish whether the leadership actions of participating principals were reflected in their identity statements. In the same vein, Notman (2017) reports that in his study, in addition to collecting data from the principals themselves, qualitative data was also obtained from teachers and other important people (e.g., the Board of Directors) through semi-structured interviews.

This way of collecting information from both the participant himself and the people who make up the educational community outside and inside the school, as well as from other sources such as the researcher's own (documentary analysis and participant observation) allow us to obtain a deep and complete view of the professional identity of school leaders. This, in turn, offered us the opportunity to identify and understand the key factors that guide the development of successful educational practices within the school.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND LIMITATIONS OF OUR CASE STUDY

The use of the case study in research gives us the opportunity to obtain a more complete understanding of the reality being researched. It also allows the researcher to obtain an integrated and interrelated network of knowledge and experiences regarding the study context and the participating subject. These processes and subtle facts that emerge when telling a life story would be overlooked when using other research methods,

as pointed out by Stake (2007). Therefore, this approach is useful for shedding light on complex educational realities such as the case studied here, that is, a principal who successfully leads a particularly challenging educational centre. This makes the “invisible” visible and allows us to gain an insight into internal processes, helping us to understand and reflect on educational practices (Heras Montoya, 1997).

Likewise, case studies that are based on life stories are beneficial to the participant, giving them the opportunity to embark on a journey through their lives and reflect on those events that have led to changes in their current identity. It also provides them with the opportunity to learn about the perceptions that other informants (colleagues, friends, and acquaintances) have of him/her, thus strengthening and completing their perceived identity.

In spite of all the advantages of adopting this methodological approach for achieving the proposed objectives, there are certain weaknesses and limitations that deserve attention. Since this is a unique and particular study, the results cannot be generalized or compared with other contexts and educational centres. As Stake (2007) states, the findings are only representative of an individual's own experience and situation. However, our results are of interest for scientific knowledge by revealing and understanding the reality of a specific case and life history, providing clear clues regarding limitations, possibilities, or trends. At the same time, case studies offer the opportunity to reflect on certain successful educational practices, stimulating questions such as those posed by Walker (1983): What is there in this research that I can apply to my own situation? Such questions offer the opportunity to transfer rather than generalise.

Further, we can find other weaknesses when looking at a case study given that these narrative texts are constructed through the continuous researcher-participant relationship, a real involvement and strong commitment on the part of both agents is essential. In this scenario, the subjectivity of the researcher comes into play, which although, as Stake (2007) states, a degree of “controlled subjectivity” has already been assumed in the field of qualitative research, the credibility of the data must be rigorously protected, which depends on the ethical skills, validation, sensitivity, and expertise of the researcher. Finally, we must be aware of — and minimize as far as possible — any alterations to the way of life of the subjects studied when they remain in the field for certain periods

of time. Therefore, entry into the field of study must be a process of negotiation, the aim of which is to be seen as one more member the group.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The work presented here suggests that the case study method may be useful if our objective is to gain an in-depth understanding of an activity within a given context, if we aim to investigate exemplary/singular cases, and/or if our objective is to reveal a life history, whether this be for a specific individual or a group. It is for this reason that, on the basis of this work, we express the need to study different viewpoints when embarking on research into identity construction, since the subject of study is as important as the social context that surrounds it. Finally, we advocate continuing to investigate leaders who practice successfully and are committed to innovation and school growth through biographical and narrative research. We hope that our case study will serve as an inspiration for other researchers and provide an example for reflection and the dissemination of successful educational practices.

Acknowledgement

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RESULTADOS

CAPÍTULO 5.

RESULTADOS ESTUDIO 1: MIRADAS EXTERNAS AL DIRECTOR

ARTÍCULO 5

The Identity of Principals as School Leaders: An Exploratory Study from External Perspectives

Carmen Lucena Rodríguez, Cristina Cruz-González and Jesús Domingo Segovia (2021). The Identity of Principals as School Leaders: An Exploratory Study from External Perspectives. *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies* 17 (1): 31-43.

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the professional identity of the school principal in the Spanish context, from the perspective of other agents, including supervisors, family, and counselors. Through their discourses, the following research questions were answered: How are the identities of school principals perceived as leaders from an external perspective? What main barriers, limitations, and influences are found by principals when exercising their leadership? How do the groups interviewed propose to improve school management? An exploratory study of a qualitative nature was carried out. Twelve participants from different areas of the Spanish educational system were interviewed (four supervisors, four counselors, and four representatives of the federation of parents and students). Analysis of the information was carried out using the qualitative Nvivo software, and the data was analyzed using the principles of grounded theory. The findings revealed a significant bureaucratic and technocratic burden that makes it difficult for principals to exercise pedagogical leadership. The results point to the need for better training and evaluation so as to allow principals to acquire a leadership identity. Gender was identified as a barrier when exercising leadership. This study highlights the need for professionalization of the leadership figure. The identity of the principal as a school leader has not been widely investigated from external perspectives. These results provide key proposals for improving school management.

Keywords

Identity, School Leadership, Principal, Supervision

Introduction

Educational research has highlighted the key role of educational leadership in the improvement of schools, forming the core of the international educational political agenda (Hallinger and Heck 2010; Hartley 2009; OECD 2013). Focusing on the figure of the principal, the exercise of good leadership becomes essential for such improvement (Webber,

Cowie, and Crawford 2008). The school principal, as explained by Albendea and Martín-Cuadrado (2017), assumes the roles of leader, representative of the administration in the center, conflict mediator, management of the center, as well as being the figure responsible for establishing channels of communication with families and the community, all of which makes the principal one of the fundamental pillars of the school. This calls for a managerial figure with a strong and consolidated professional identity (Crow, Day, and Møller 2017; Robertson 2017). This identity not only favors the principal's own recognition of his/her professional role, but also reinforces social recognition within his/her professional context.

In the Spanish context, as shown by the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) reports of 2013 and 2018 (OECD 2014, 2019) along with other recent studies such as that of Ritacco and Bolívar (2019), there are structural problems in the exercise of school management. The management teams are nowhere near the European average in terms of pedagogical and administrative leadership skills, and the need to rethink the management role has been highlighted so that it is closer to what occurs in the classroom and its real influence on school results. The school culture in the Spanish educational centers makes it difficult, in a way, for the principal figure to build a leadership identity (Llorent-Bedmar, Cobano-Delgado, and Navarro-Granados 2019). This is partly attributable to the individualistic nature of the role and the way in which principals perceive themselves and are perceived by others. Ritacco and Bolívar (2018) have warned that the current Spanish school management requires urgent professionalization.

In this regard, this study forms part of a larger project on leadership and professional identity, which is part of the Third Strand of the International Successful School Principal Project (ISSPP). Within this strand, the implications of a consolidated professional identity for the leadership role are examined. Based on this premise, this study examines the professional identity of school principals by looking at their leadership from an external perspective. Authors such as Ritacco and Bolívar (2018) refer to this approach as “the eyes of others” with this external perspective of the other “agents” that surround the principal being a key determinant in the construction of his/her identity (Dubar 2010; Scribner and Crow 2012).

For this, we aimed to identify the perception that others have (educational supervisors, counselors, and family) regarding the school principal's role as educational leader. We used the voices of twelve participants from different sectors linked to the principal as our unit of analysis. To help the reader, we provide the theoretical and contextual framework for our study and the interpretation of its results.

Professional Leadership Identity in School Principals

Identify, because of its subjective and personal nature, is a difficult concept to classify and define. Identity is an abstract concept, which goes beyond reality itself. This identity sets us apart from the rest. It marks the sense of a person, giving one a unique and inimitable character (Crow, Day, and Møller 2017). In this regard, we can understand identity by using and linking two philosophical movements: essentialism (being unique, which is not dependent on time) and nominalism (having movement and being dependent on time), what is unique is what is shared (Dubar 2000). This makes us understand that, on the one hand, we have an identity that does not vary, is our own, and is imposed at birth, whereas, on the other, we have an identity that changes over time according to certain experiences and situations that are experienced throughout life. In this way, this identity can be analyzed through two lenses: “from others” and “from oneself.” We cannot conceive of an individual identity that is dissociated from the society of which we are a part.

In the professional (and specifically school) context, Bolívar, Domingo, and Pérez-García (2014) understand this identity as the way in which professionals see themselves within the educational community in which they are immersed. This professional identity is not static; rather, it is formed by a continuous process that influences the surrounding social, political, and cultural context (Dubar 2010). Therefore, leadership is not only conditioned by the way the principal lives his/her professional and personal identity but is also conditioned by society and by those around him/her in their daily work (Fernández 2011). This concept is essential to the exercise of any professional role in a positive and appropriate way. Therefore, there is a need to establish how the identity of a principal is constructed and in what way his/her identity as a school leader affects the academic improvement of the center.

The view of the school environment constitutes the focus of this study, that is, we aimed to identify the extent to which “others” expect, project, or demand a certain kind of professional practice. Undoubtedly, these perspectives are also important for analyzing the construction of the professional identity of the principal. These informed views of others can provide real and essential clues to identifying the professional practice of school management and what is actually happening in schools. Therefore, this study shows, from different angles, ways of understanding what it is to be a principal in an educational center and what other members of the school environment expect from an educational leader.

School Leadership in Spain

In order to understand the study, it is necessary to explain particular key aspects of leadership in the “Spanish case” and to understand the impact they have on the process of constructing the leadership identity of school principals. Ritacco and Bolívar (2019) refer to a particular outlook in Spain that differentiates its people from those of other countries of the European Union. According to recent legislative changes, a teacher who wishes to be considered as a candidate for the role of principal must have at least five years of experience as an official teacher (unless it is an exceptional case), have passed a training course provided by the ministry of education, culture and sports or by educational administrations, and submit a management project. On meeting these requirements, a teacher can submit an application, after which he or she will be evaluated and finally appointed by a selection committee composed of representatives of the educational administration and the corresponding school. This entire process is chaired by the area supervisor. Finally, the candidate, following an assessment of their accredited merits, is appointed principal for four years, extendable for a further four years pending a positive evaluation (La propuesta de la Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa [LOMCE] 2013).

In spite of this being a seemingly elective recruitment process (Ritacco and Bolívar 2019), on many occasions this does not translate into a transparent democratic selection. In addition, it is quite often the case that those candidates best prepared to exercise their position are not chosen because the voters influence this selection to suit their own circumstances. In addition, in many other cases, the principal position is left vacant because

there are no candidates, forcing the educational administration to hurriedly appoint a teaching member. In these scenarios, complexity forms part of the teacher–principal–teacher transition. This transition leads to a change in the role of the principal, which implies changes in identity, directly affecting their own personal and professional image and the way in which they are portrayed by others. In other countries, such as France, this transition (teacher–principal) is permanent (Duchauffour 2013). In this regard, there is a debate in Spain over the need to reach a professional level of leadership.

Methodological Framework

This study forms part of a larger research project. This is an exploratory study (Keppens and Spruyt 2017; Wilson and Xue 2013) that adopts a qualitative approach with the aim of drawing an initial picture (through the voices of different educational agents within the same community) of the professional identity of principals in the Spanish context. In this case, we proceeded to analyze their identity through an external perspective of the object of study by delving into the eyes of others in order to address our research question.

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

The study was carried out in the province of Granada. The participants in this study were selected intentionally, in order to gather relevant and valuable information to address our research question. The following table (Table 1) shows the selection criteria used.

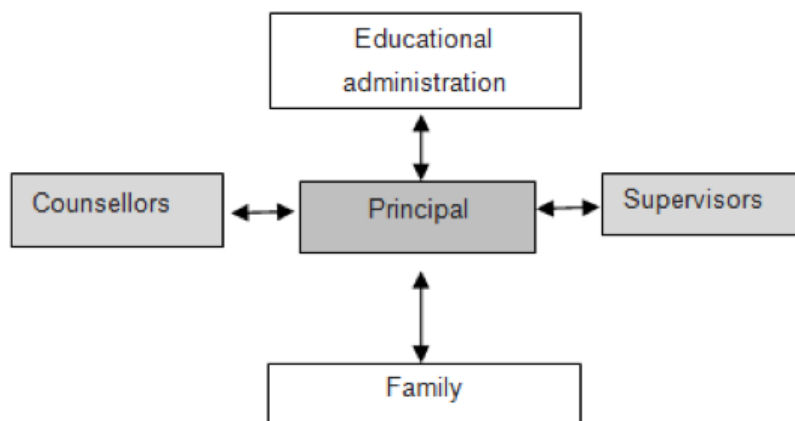
Table 1 - Criteria for the Selection of Participants in Our Study. Source: Rodríguez, Cruz-González, and Segovia

<i>Heterogeneity Criteria</i>	All participants are linked to the figure of the principal, but from different perspectives
<i>Homogeneity Criteria</i>	Participants belong to different sectors of the context in terms of training, gender (female/male), and age (youngsters/veterans)

The key informants in this work are significant members of the Educational Inspection (EI) (4 supervisors), the provincial Federation of Parents and Students Association (FAM-PA) (4 representatives), and the Educational Guidance Teams (EGT) (4 counselors). The inclusion of these different sectors is important because

- Inspection is the main element that helps to observe whether leadership is effective. This influences the entire educational community.
- The family are good at indicating what they want for their children. They observe their sons and daughters and see the “products” of an approach that works and of one that does not.
- Finally, counselors are essential figures for the adequate functioning of the center. These are figures of the team with great pedagogical value. They have a lot to say about leadership practices. This figure completes the external “tri-view” of leadership.
- All of these are required to have a direct and close link with the school principal figure (Figure 1). Thus, on the basis of their views and perceptions, we are able to analyze the professional identity of the school principal.

Figure 1 - Link between the Sectors and the Principal. Source: Rodríguez, Cruz-González, and Segovia



In the following table (Table 2), we describe the characteristics of the respondents. The names used are fictitious.

Table 2 - Characteristics of the Participants

Source: Federation of associations of mothers, fathers and students

Source: Lucena, Cruz-González, and Domingo

<i>No.</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Years of Experience</i>
s1	Salvador	Male	58	Supervisor	Teacher: 18 Inspector: 22
s2	Ángeles	Female	63	Supervisor	Teacher: 30 Inspector: 14
s3	Alberto	Female	45	Supervisor	Teacher: 16 Inspector: 28
s4	Carlos	Female	52	Supervisor	Teacher and principal: 18 Inspector: 15
c1	Pedro	Male	40	Counselor	Counselor: 15
c2	Lola	Female	60	Counselor	Teacher: 15 Counselor: 20
c3	Carlos	Male	52	Counselor	Teacher: 6 Counselor: 33
c4	María	Female	30	Counselor	Counselor: 5
f1	Ana	Female	29	FAMPA*	Mother
f2	Marta	Female	49	FAMPA	Mother
f3	Sara	Female	40	FAMPA	Mother
f4	Juan	Male	45	FAMPA	Father

COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The collection of information was carried out through participant observation and in-depth interviews with key informants. Each participant was interviewed periodically, and the duration of each interview lasted approximately two hours. The periodicity of the interviews and the observation allowed us to collect and analyze information in a gradual manner, detecting the emerging points of the discourse and delving deeper into these in the subsequent sessions.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Analysis was carried out constantly throughout the process to detect and more deeply analyze subsequent key themes that emerged during the discourses collected. In this way, the information collected was used in accordance with the cascade of reflective deepening (Kelchtermans 1993). Following this, the data were analyzed using the principles of grounded theory. Thus, it is the main actors who have structured the most predominant themes in our study and who have identified the essential points when talking about the school principal in the Spanish context. The data was categorized using Nvivo 12 software, following a sequential process, as mentioned previously. Finally, the main categories were considered as priority issues. This allowed us to detect main patterns, on the basis of which to build links and relationships through the information collected.

Findings

The following section presents the analysis of the voices of the interviewees. These findings are structured into three main emerging axes of the participants' discourse: the identity of the principal from the vision of others, the barriers found to the development of pedagogical leadership, and proposals for improvement from external perspectives.

IDENTITY OF THE LEADER FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF OTHERS

One of the purposes of our study was to analyze how the professional identity of the principal develops and becomes consolidated, making use of the vision of others.

In this way, our focus was to analyze whether, in addition to being principals, these professionals felt like school leaders. This consideration is key when studying professional identity, as suggested by authors such as Day (2011), distinguishing between the concepts of “being” and “feeling” and highlighting the need to feel like a school leader in order to carry out committed and involved work. In line with this, the participants of our study, such as Supervisor 1, explain that:

«Principals cannot feel like a principal in its fullest meaning. On the one hand, they have a different role to the rest of the teaching staff, but at the same time, they share a feeling of belonging to that same group. This sometimes causes them to have a crisis in their work role, such that they don't know how to manage it at all... Some time ago they were also teachers, and they will probably be again»

This identity duality (colleague–administration representative) sometimes leads the principal to disidentify with their managerial role. The scientific literature has also considered this peculiarity that the principal faces, which is associated more strongly with his/her intimate and personal dimension (Day 2011; Whiteman, Scribner, and Crow 2015). Bolívar and Ritacco (2016) indicate that all this has a negative effect on the construction of their professional identity, making it changeable and unstable. Interestingly, this occurs differently in the eyes of other educational agents. Counselor 2 clarifies that from an external perspective, the figure of the principal is fully defined and identified.

«No one in a school is any doubt as to who the principal is. Everyone knows that this position represents one of the most decisive roles for making decisions. But to me, this particularly seems like an aspect worth investigating. We must achieve a collaborative culture, but there are those who recognize the role of the principal as being of an authoritarian nature or, in other cases, bureaucratic. This prevents us from achieving that culture; this stereotyped conception of school management does not help to achieve the pedagogical leadership demanded by the regulations»

If we analyze the vision of others, we find considerable differences with regard to how principals feel and how they are perceived by their surroundings. It can be observed in the findings obtained that this eventual and unmarked feeling of identity that often affects

the principals is not perceived similarly by the rest of the group interviewed. In this regard, Dubar (2010) argues that one of the most important features in the construction of a professional identity is negotiation with their environment, that is, it takes both oneself and others to be recognized.

The collaborative culture of the center determines the development of leadership practices. It is for this reason that the principal plays a key role. A dual identity that is changing and blurred (if we analyze the Spanish case) can determine the practices and ways of working toward professional individualism in the center. However, a solid educational leadership identity can lead to relevant changes. Thus, Supervisor 2 explains that:

«Principals are being made aware of this. Also, from our work as supervisors, it is insisted that they are not managers, that the educational part cannot be forgotten. You have to switch the chip; you have to become pedagogical leaders»

From the collective of parents, this vision is also shared. In our findings, the families, who are key agents in the educational community, demand a greater connection between the principal and practices and tasks oriented toward pedagogical issues.

«For our group, the figure of the principal and his/her management team is considered a priority. We believe that their roles are key in determining whether or not the operation of a center will go well. We have contact with various centers and principals, and in some of them, we long for that pedagogical spirit, that more humane and educational vision that is usually forgotten by the school management, even though it has it»

Often, the work of the principal is affected by a heavy bureaucratic burden. This prevents their professional development from being oriented toward more pedagogical issues. In this regard, Counselor 1 argues that:

«This bureaucracy does not only undermine the enthusiasm for leadership when the position is accessed. This also means that teachers themselves refrain from thinking about being a principal. A job of an administrative nature is not attractive if your vocation is educational»

All the foregoing issues considered have a negative impact on the willingness of teachers to assume leadership positions. In the following results section, barriers to the exercise of educational leadership by principals, as perceived by the groups interviewed, are specifically addressed.

BARRIERS TO BUILDING A PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP IDENTITY IN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

The principals in the Spanish educational centers find themselves having to bear a considerable bureaucratic burden in their professional development, in spite of the changes implemented in the most recent educational reforms (LOMCE 2013). This bureaucratic overload, based on excessive administrative work, limits the extent to which the principal can develop leadership that is focused on pedagogical issues. Supervisor 2 points out that the managerial work of the principals is complicated, even to the extent of being an obstacle when it comes to applying for the position. Along the same lines, the counselor agrees in this regard, explaining that «The work of the principal is more managerial and organizational as opposed to pedagogical»

The participants in our study point out various factors that could lead to this situation. Counselor 3 indicates that this bureaucratic overload is caused by agents outside the management: «It is the educational administration that subjects the principals to excessive regulatory control, establishing dates and times that leave them with barely enough time to devote to pedagogical issues» This idea is also shared by the group of parents. For Mother 1, «The principals are saturated with tasks that can hardly be performed correctly» With regard to this point, lack of time was highlighted by all of the respondents. Owing to the heavy administrative and management workload, principals are forced to spend more time in their offices, resulting in a reduction in the number of meetings that are necessary in an educational center. This is consistent with the individualistic, managerial, and commercial aspects that invade professional work organizations and that have been implemented in educational models, encouraging the proliferation of bureaucracy (Goodson 2003) and de-professionalization (Freidson 2001).

In addition to the so-called work overload, our participants also point out the need for principal training oriented toward pedagogical issues. Counselor 3 argues that:

«The principals should have more training, particularly at the pedagogical level. There are many issues that are somewhat complicated, for example, on the issue of living together, mediating with families and students, managing human groups, knowing how to team up, guiding peers, or managing conflict. We need real leadership in schools, principals who are good leaders. All this is included in current regulations, but when analyzing the practice, it is not reflected in reality. In fact, not all principals receive the mandatory training course»

In this same sense, all the representatives of the groups interviewed agreed that there was a need to improve training and to provide all management candidates with access to such training. They advocated continuous training that is linked to pedagogical commitment.

Further, according to our research findings, the gender factor is shown to be a barrier to the construction of the identity of school principals. For the interviewees, despite the positive changes that are taking place for real parity between men and women, there are still notable differences. For Counselor 4, there exists a glass ceiling in leadership roles. He adds that very few women present themselves for the position of principal because this position is socially attributed to men. He also explains that, for those that do, it is often much later than childbearing age.

«Women—as explained—are those that are socially responsible for raising children and when occupying positions such as principal for some time they “can” miss out on family life»

Along the same lines, Counselor 2 emphasized the vertical discrimination that exists for women in schools.

«In infant and primary schools there are more female teachers than male teachers, and little by little this is being reversed. If you start analyzing by departments, all

departments of a humanistic nature are led by women and the others are run by men. And of course, when it comes to accessing leadership positions, it shows. There are more and more female principals in high school, but they are still a very small minority»

The group of parents point out the limitations that women suffer when accessing managerial positions compared with the opportunities available to men. Father 4 tells the story of the principal of his school.

«I perceive differences in the view that parents have about it, it is a shame. She is a young principal, has been a principal for 3 years and has always been fighting because there are parents who do not respect her on account of being a woman. In reality, being a woman and being young is an impediment to the managerial role, even if you have all the skills»

This section shows the main barriers perceived by the agents surrounding the principal. Thus, we have shown the great bureaucratic burden and the considerable demands that are placed on principals following the new educational models deployed in society. These cause them to suffer a work overload that hinders their capacity to execute pedagogical leadership. In addition, we have described the need to expand training programs as well as to improve them in terms of pedagogical and social skills. Finally, we have highlighted the gender barriers that still persist in society and that are amplified in the positions that school principals have.

PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LEADERSHIP IDENTITY IN PRINCIPALS

All groups indicate the urgent need for training so that principals acquire a strong identity as school leaders. The interviewees emphasize the inclusion of pedagogical and social aspects (social skills, group skills, positive aptitude, assertiveness, tolerance, and fairness) but argue that basic training is not enough and that a deeper approach is necessary. In this regard, Counselor 4 explained:

«The training of principals must be continuous. It seems to me that it would not be a bad idea to conduct training every year that will update and train them in key skills such as leadership and school management»

Counselor 1 specifies that it is necessary for the training to be accompanied by an evaluation by a supervisor, with continuous follow-up involving the entire community that has previously participated in the selection committee, including families.

«The inspection should not be limited to evaluating for a day or an hour but should instead be a continual process to check if what is marked on a “paper” is being fulfilled, in the leadership project and whether the center follows the same line as indicated»

In this regard, the family representatives point out that when submitting a project, it must be taken into account that this project is real and attainable and not “a political rally” (Mother 1). Therefore, they support a more real and committed change in the selection and evaluation of principals. From inspection, this improvement is oriented toward a change in valuation, that is to say, evaluation.

«There should be an assessment by the administration, by the technicians and an assessment of acceptance as a social leader. Let them separate and then have a come together, so that in this way the best prepared candidate for the position is chosen (Supervisor 2)»

In addition, a change in the selection committees is proposed, imitating other community models where this works well. In this regard, Juan (family representative) proposes that «It is good to look at communities, schools, and working institutions to create information transfer networks, meeting places, and good practices» The parents interviewed report that from the FAMPAs they fight for this change, that is, in favor of the creation of common spaces where teachers, family, managers, and students exist together.

Further, the previous section highlighted the considerable bureaucratic burden on managers, arguing that it distances them from pedagogical issues and, in some cases, even constitutes an obstacle to applying for the job. Faced with this barrier, the group

of parents proposed that there should be a figure outside the center that is responsible for these aspects, that is, an administrator who belongs to the team and who relieves the principal of economic, administrative, and bureaucratic duties. This would enable the principal to focus on pedagogical and scholarly improvement. Although counselors support the inclusion of this administrative figure, they also question it, arguing that with a figure outside the center, priorities can change.

Another point to discuss is the professionalization of the principal's position. The representatives of the families support professional management by a governing body that entails new methodologies, teamwork, and communication skills, which have basic pedagogical and psychological knowledge but also a strong leadership identity. They advocate a generalized model of school management. For the counselors interviewed in our study, this professionalization can make the principals "forget" their teaching role and move further away from the needs of the center and its educational team. The supervisors interviewed expressed support for managerial professionalization, in the sense of forming a sector in a certain profession with the same line of action, but maintained that there was a need for the training of future educational principals.

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the professional identity of the school principal and to identify the various challenges that he/she faces when exercising pedagogical leadership. We carried out our analysis from an external perspective of this figure. The findings of the study show us how school management is perceived in Spain, along with the barriers faced, and proposals for improvement to achieve true pedagogical leadership, highlighted by supervisors, family, and counselors. In our analytical approach, we have focused on how others perceive the identity of the principal.

Authors such as Dubar (1991) and Jenkins (2000) argue that a comprehensive and in-depth study of identity necessitates analysis of identity from the perspective of oneself and the identity assigned by others. In this way, and linking it with this perspective, the human being finds meaning in him/herself both through internal and external interaction

with his/her context. This makes the identity for others, or attributed identity, extremely important in this study.

The findings of our study have revealed some disagreement in the way in which the principal feels and in the way in which he/she is perceived by others. Whereas studies such as that of Ritacco and Bolívar (2019) tell us something about a possible professional disidentification of the principal with his/her position, our participants show the opposite external view. From this external perspective, the principal is considered as a figure that is positioned and defined by our interviewees.

A long tradition of exercising school leadership based on bureaucratic and management tasks characterizes the educational system in Spain. Despite attempts to change this situation through legislation (LOMCE 2013), there is still a long way to go. The voices of our participants also point to a real need for principals to have pedagogical leadership skills, a view that has also been echoed by authors such as Estruch (2002) and Bolívar (2006).

Our study reveals the main barriers perceived by the agents surrounding the principal (supervisors, counselors, and family) in regard to the construction of the principal's identity as a school leader. The results highlight a heavy bureaucratic and technocratic burden that makes it difficult for principals to exercise pedagogical leadership. As a possible means of reducing this problem, a figure is proposed to support the principal, that is, a person trained in bureaucratic and administrative aspects that could relieve the principal of those tasks. The burden assumed by the principal in aspects of management and administration is closely linked to the training they receive, which is far removed from pedagogical aspects. This is compatible with the results of the study by Gómez Delgado (2018), in which the content of training programs on leadership was analyzed.

Our findings indicate the need for more extensive and enhanced training that would enable principals to acquire a leadership identity and improve school management, which is in line with international research on principal training (Moorosi 2013). In the Spanish context, from the Organic Law on the Quality of Education (LOCE 2002) to date, with the Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (LOMCE 2013), it has been considered that an accreditation is mandatory to be a principal, which implies training.

This training, as indicated by our results, does not reach all the candidates for the role of principal. This is in line with the recently published TALIS 2018 Report (OECD 2019), which highlights that only half of the principals in Spain have completed a training course or program before assuming their leadership positions. At an international level, it is interesting to refer to the findings of Pont (2014), which analyzed 22 educational systems to explore how politics can contribute toward supporting the professionalization of school management. Their results offer clues about how, in many countries, the leadership position is reached without any specific type of training or demands for additional educational support. This only serves to increasingly hinder the achievement of a true pedagogical leadership role in schools and highlights the need for specific training for this purpose.

Moreover, a large body of international research has warned of the gender-related obstacles to the achievement of a leadership identity (Armstrong and Mitchell 2017; Arar and Shapira 2016; Davids 2018; Johnson 2017; Singh 2019). The participants in our study also highlight these limitations. For them, being a woman is considered a barrier when it comes to accessing and developing a leadership role.

The results have also revealed that an improvement in training must be accompanied by an improvement in the evaluation of school management (continuous evaluation). These findings support the line of argument advanced by Condon and Clifford (2010), who highlighted the lack of sufficient tools for systematically and continuously measuring the exercise of leadership. In short, this study suggests the need for professionalization of the managerial figure. It advocates that principals are prepared and trained for the work to be carried out. This professionalization, as argued by some of our interviewees, cannot be separated from the teaching role. This position has been argued at an international level in studies such as those of Relja, Popović, and Gutović (2019), in which they analyzed the processes of professionalization of school principals in Croatia. In accordance with our results, the work of school principals in Spain was identified as still being deficient in the area of leadership, suggesting the urgent need to professionalize this role.

On balance, twelve participants from sectors linked to school principals are not enough to make generalizations about the perception of identity construction of principals as

school leaders and the barriers they may encounter in the construction of their identity. However, by means of this exploratory research study we sought to provide examples of how the perceptions of others can offer comprehensive clues to improve school management, analyzing the principal's identity from an external perspective. Future research should investigate this issue with a larger sample that represents more educational sectors surrounding the principal. This study provides support for the proliferation of literature on this issue.

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ARTÍCULO 6

Exploring school leadership through the eyes of the education inspectors

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Abstract

Numerous studies in the last decade have focused on exploring the school leadership exercised by principals as an essential point in educational improvement. The focus has mainly been on the protagonist's own point of view (internal perspective). However, hardly any studies have been developed that analyse school leadership from an external perspective. For this reason, this article takes this perspective and focuses on analysing the perception of the educational inspectors with respect to school principals. In order to meet this objective, the article uses a qualitative methodology through a collective case study. The voices of seven education inspectors are analysed on different elements of the current school management model that determine their identity and professional role as educational leaders, as well as possible solutions to the most recurrent problems detected in this respect. The results show key points extracted from the interviews with the inspectors: a) towards an inverted leadership model: pedagogical leadership over managerial leadership; b) beyond initial training, continuous training is necessary; c) school autonomy versus accountability; d) rethinking the selection process: how to choose the best candidates; and e) disaffection and disidentification from school management: causes and possible solutions. Finally, the results are discussed with research in the field and some final conclusions are drawn.

Keywords

Leadership, School Supervision, Headteacher, Principal, Professional identity, Quality of education

Introduction

The study of the identity of successful school principals has been widely studied in recent years, as evidenced by the fact that the: *International Successful School Principalship Project* (ISSPP) has devoted its third strand to this area. Within the Research Network on Educational Leadership and Improvement (RILME), in which we participate as partners in

the aforementioned project, we have been dealing specifically with it in the R+D+i research project on: *Identity of school leadership: leadership, training and professionalisation*, led by Professor Bolívar. This work is part of this project, dealing specifically with how this identity is constructed and seen from the point of view of educational inspection.

A number of studies highlight that the study of identity is a key element for the analysis of successful leadership practices (Akkerman and Meijer 2011; Bolívar and Ritacco, 2016; Cruz-González, Domingo, and Lucena 2019; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2008; Scribner and Bradley-Levine, 2010). According to Crow and Scribner (2014), this is due to the fact that only focusing on a leader's competencies implies a biased view of the practice they develop, as other elements such as their personal values, training, or beliefs, among other aspects, also come into play.

However, identity is a complex term due to its objective, multifactorial, interactive and dynamic nature (Akkerman and Meijer, 2011; Dubar, 2010). It is formed from an interaction between the characteristics of the context (institutional, cultural and social) and the personal experiences of the subjects (Bolívar and Ritacco, 2016; Scribner and Crow, 2012). In this sense, Dubar (2000) distinguishes two different dimensions of identity: identity for oneself (accepted identity) and for others (attributed identity), the latter being considered an essential element in the identity construction (Honneth, 1997).

Therefore, we can establish that the identity of educational leaders is formed as a consequence of the dialectic that is generated between the recognition of others and the vision of oneself as a professional (Bolívar and Ritacco, 2016; Scribner and Crow, 2012). As defined by Dubar (2002, p. 132) «Building a professional identity forces one to be continuously engaged in complex negotiations with others and with oneself in order to be recognised»

However, although there are a large number of studies that analyse leadership identity from the "identity for self" dimension (Ritacco & Bolívar, 2019; Bolívar & Ritacco, 2016; Cruz-González, Pérez, Domingo, 2020; Lucena, López, Domingo & Cruz, 2021), there are hardly any studies from the perspective of others (Lucena, Cruz-González & Domingo, 2020). These studies are necessary as they can contribute to a better understanding of

the dual identities of Spanish educational leaders: leader/manager, partner/representative of the administration, principal/teacher and representative of teachers/responsible for the application of standards, among others (Ritacco & Bolívar, 2019). Given this situation, the need arises to analyse the identity of school leadership from this perspective (the gaze of others). On this occasion, the perspective from which we will focus our analysis will be the perspective of educational inspectors.

Historically, school inspection has been a control tool used by the state to ensure compliance by school principals (Hall, 2016). Currently, although this continues to be one of its primary functions (Aguerrondo, 2013), new objectives with a more pedagogical orientation are also being contemplated (Monarca and Fernández-González, 2016). In this sense, a part from being a control body for regulatory and bureaucratic aspects (Aguerrondo, 2013), inspection has an important role as critical supervisor that mediates and supports good school leadership, contributing to school improvement (Fullan, 2002; Derlering and Müller, 2010, Silva, 2013).

This duality in the functions of the school inspectors, together with their higher level in the hierarchical scale of the education system (Monarca and Fernández-González, 2016), can exert an important influence on the configuration of school principals' identity from the perspective of "identity for others". In this sense, the view and opinions of the educational inspectors on the functions and the figure of the principal can even guide the principals' leadership style, contributing (or not) with a successful leadership to improve teaching-learning processes, increasing educational performance and, ultimately, enhancing school effectiveness (Day et al., 2011; Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016; Hallinger, 2018; Hallinger and Heck, 2010).

For all these reasons, the main objective of this research is to «Identify the perceptions of the educational inspectorate with respect to school heads» The identity assigned by one of the most influential figures in day-to-day school management. In this study we will analyse the voices of seven education inspectors on different elements of the current school management model that determine their identity and professional role as educational leaders, as well as possible solutions to the most recurrent problems detected in this respect. Therefore, we analyse a wide range of themes that emerge from their

discourses on school leadership in Spain and which are constitutive of this other view of leadership identity: their opinions on the system of election and training of school leaders, on the real role of good leadership, and their views on the different styles of leadership present and necessary for educational improvement.

1.METHOD

We framed this research as a collective case study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017) on leadership identity in school principals in Andalusia. Stake (2010) defined this as the study of a series of individual cases together to investigate a particular population or phenomenon. A qualitative methodology was used to examine the perspective of seven inspectors in relation to school leadership, its role and professional identity. It aims to achieve a better understanding of school leadership from an external, but well-informed, perspective by taking an autobiographical narrative approach. This approach gives prominence to the discursive dimension as a particularly relevant way of giving meaning to life through language. From here, the present study was guided by the following research questions.

- What do educational inspectors think of current school leadership?
- What might be going wrong in school leadership (barriers, limitations)?
- How to improve school leadership and what strategies to use?

1.1. Research context and sample selection

This study focuses on the Spanish educational context, specifically in the Andalusia. The study was carried out in the Territorial Delegation of Education in Granada, where the inspection service is located. The data were obtained from the voices of 7 intentionally selected educational inspectors guided by different circumstances. A sample of inspectors willing to participate in the research was collected, with a low participation rate. Of the willing participants, those with more than 10 years of experience and aged between 50 and 63 years were selected. All 7 participants, as shown in table 1, had previously worked as teachers at some or all stages of education (pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher education). In addition, some of our participants had held other educational positions such as head teachers, advisors or education delegates.

Table.1 - Key informants.

Source:

Informants	Gender	Age	Inspection experience	Teaching experience	Educational stage	Additional information
Inspector A	F	+60	20 years	20 years	Pre-school, primary and secondary	CEP's Assessor (Spanish acronym for Teachers' centres) School secretary
Inspector B	F	+60	30 years	10 years	Secondary Education	Higher education Professor Principal
Inspector C	F	+60	10 years	34 years	All stages and even Higher Education	Principal of a centre Head of Service of the Department of Education. Education Delegate.
Inspector D	F	+60	28 years	16 years	All stages and vocational education	
Inspector E	F	+60	15 years	18 years	All stages	CEP's Assessor Education Delegate and President of the Andalusian School Council.
Inspector F	F	-60	19 years	10 years	All stages	Principal in a centre
Inspector G	M	+60	14 years	30 years	All stages and vocational education	

1.2. Data collection process

The data for this study was obtained from in-depth interviews conducted with participants over the course of a school year. The interviews were conducted sequentially and through cascades of reflective deepening (Bolívar and Domingo, 2019). Each participant was interviewed a minimum of three times, an initial contact interview and two interviews for information gathering and validation. Each interview, lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes, was recorded, transcribed and analysed in order to understand and deepen the most significant themes. In addition to the voice recordings, all the participants' sensations, feelings, expressions through non-verbal language, as well as other observations were recorded in a field notebook for later analysis. Table 2 shows the interview scripts that piloted the in-depth dialogues and some of the questions asked, all of which were based on willingness, trust and respect between researcher and participant.

1.3. Data analysis

The information collected was analysed in two main phases. In the first phase, the data were transcribed sequentially and simultaneously, to be returned in the following interviews so that the information could be validated and completed with the informants. In this first phase, the information collected corresponded mainly to primary data and a first contextualisation and interpretation of personal and professional data, as well as emerging themes and other key issues. In the second phase, the transcribed information and observational records noted in the notebook and the reworked (supplemented and validated) primary data were analysed through a thematic analysis with emergent coding following the principles of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 2016). To facilitate the process and given that the volume of information obtained was very extensive, the coding process was supported by the qualitative analysis software Nvivo 12. In addition, in this study, we tried to ensure credibility by working closely with several colleagues –in a collaborative research perspective– in the analysis of information, in order to obtain more consistency and perspectives in the data. In particular, a double triangulation of informants and researchers has been carried out in order to reach a consensus in the understanding and interpretation of the research results.

Table. 2 - Interview script used during data collection.

Source:

Interview Script	
BACKGROUND INFORMATION	Personal data: Name, age, contact
	Professional data: professional experiences
	- Educational area
	- Educational stage
	- Positions occupied
	- Years as teacher
	- Years as principal
	- Years as inspector
KEY ISSUES	- Training
	- Additional information
	- How do you see leadership today?
	- Does the principal feel identify with his/her managerial position?
	- What does it mean to be a good leader?
	- Is there shared/distributed/pedagogical leadership?
	- What is the reason for this?
	- Are there barriers?
	- What is the training of school leaders like? In your opinion, is this training adequate?
	- What proposals do you have for improving this complex process?
- How are they selected? Do the directors apply voluntarily? If not, why not?	
- To what extent does the inspectorate influence school leadership?	
- How would school leadership be improved?	

As well as ensuring consistency by questioning both the data obtained, addressing gaps in understanding and contextualising or nuancing the evidence, as well as dialectically validating with each informant their reports, before proceeding to the cross-sectional analyses in which the collective case study was articulated.

1.4. Ethical considerations

In all research, certain decisions have to be made to ensure the reliability of the study; this is most notable in qualitative research and specifically when a biographical and narrative approach is adopted (Bolívar and Domingo, 2019). Therefore, ethical commitment in the exchange of researcher-participant narratives becomes necessary. In this study, the anonymity and confidentiality of the interviewees has been maintained, for example, by substituting names with pseudonyms and not indicating in the report places or key people that could alter this anonymity. Another relevant ethical issue has been to approach the information systematically and technically, but respecting the perspective, voice and emerging orientation of the informants themselves.

2. RESULTS

The results of the present research are presented below. The main points of the current model of school leadership as perceived by the interviewed inspectors are shown together with possible points for improvement.

2.1. Current model of school leadership: a view from the educational inspectors

The interviewees agree in their assessment of the role of the school head as one of the most important and influential positions in a school, as well as one with the greatest responsibilities. In this sense, Inspector C affirms that there may be schools whose functioning is deficient, but that, with an effective change of management, this school improves its results. This is complemented by a role that is more conducive to the expansion of social and community capital in the school. In other accounts describing schools located in villages, the functioning of that school influences the development and improvement of the whole municipality. However, while recognising the importance of school leadership

and its influence on school improvement, the school inspectors interviewed state that the current model of school leadership is not consistent with these possibilities and has much room for improvement.

Towards an inverted leadership model: pedagogical leadership over managerial leadership.

From the informants' perspective, the main criticism of the management model is the lack of pedagogical leadership and the excessive management and bureaucracy of the post. Inspector A, states that the Organic Law on Education in 2006 was the first to require the figure of pedagogical leader and that, since then, initial training courses for head teachers or school counselling from the inspectorate insist on this task. But the reality of their professional practice after more than 14 years of the law is quite different.

«The idea has remained on the paper, principals in schools do not have time to deal with such a task, at most, they can deal with day-to-day management» (Inspector D).

In this sense, they denounce that at present the management model prevails over the model centred on the teaching-learning process. It is due to the fact that the first obligations of the directors do not leave them enough time to exercise it as they would like to and should, explains inspector B.

«The problem may lie in the training of management teams. The courses they are offered, or that are required in order to become a head teacher, possibly place more emphasis on management. Firstly, in the initial training and secondly, once they are in the post, the administration is mostly requiring them to meet requirements that do not have so much of a pedagogical component. Management is prioritised over pedagogical organisation » (Inspector B)

Therefore, for the inspectors interviewed, a profile linked to managerial rather than pedagogical leadership currently predominates in management positions. This, as Inspector G rightly states, is not positive and the equation must be reversed or at least left in balance. This same informant insists that student learning is what should take

precedence in an educational centre. As well as the processes of educational improvement should be the primary objective of education. Therefore, with good school leaders who focus their efforts on carrying out pedagogical innovation projects, better school results will be obtained. For this to happen, it is necessary to relieve our school leaders of bureaucracy and allow them time to exercise these functions. Inspector F defends this idea, by suggesting the creation of a figure in the management team who would be in charge of bureaucratic and administrative aspects. He points out that this would serve to unburden the director. He also defends the idea that the educational administration should simplify the administrative bureaucratic burden required by the regulations in order to allow time for more attention to be paid to what is really important: pedagogical matters.

Inspector F informs us that at present it is the will of teachers and school leaders themselves that safeguards improvements in schools, with a lot of effort and little support from the administration. In addition, he is self-critical of the inspection function, advocating for a more submerged function in the field of work.

*«We, as inspectors, influence them and we become their back-up. We are, in a way, the ones who give them solidity, support in many occasions in the exercise of management. The inspector is the eyes and the hatred of the administration in the schools. He is the one who moves and goes to the schools and reports to the delegate. Therefore, we should focus on making sure that there are real managers in the schools with pedagogical profiles focused on getting the best out of each student. But it is true that, in our group, as in the case of managers, we lack tools and we lack autonomy»
(Inspector F)*

Beyond initial training, there is a need for continuous training

The inspectors interviewed inform us that since 2002, with the Organic Law on the Quality of Education (LOCE 10/2002), the acquisition of an accreditation to become a head teacher has been contemplated, which implies specific training for this purpose. Since then, the training requirements for school heads have been modified. Currently, initial training and refresher training (not compulsory) are envisaged. All interviewees agree on the benefit of this initial training, but argue that it is not enough.

What they really want is real continuity in management training.

«There is a need for real continuity in training as principals. There has to be continuity, because new regulations arise, new aspects of the pedagogical function arise, and new problems arise that need to be solved. In this sense, the modification of the norm is good, since it requires that there be refresher courses for principals, which have never existed before. They were always trained initially and that was supposed to be enough. It is true that there has always been a willingness on the part of managers to take training at their own risk in order to update their skills. That's why many managers take courses, innovation courses, competency programming courses, emotional courses... but they do it voluntarily and not as an obligation» (Inspector B)

In the same vein, Inspector E argues that refresher courses are not sufficient because not everyone attends, arguing that they are “not compulsory”. He explains how the head teacher has to keep up to date with legislation and regulatory changes, with new horizons that are opening up from the perspective of the functioning of schools, with questions that have to do with didactic-methodological aspects of application, with new ideas and aspects that can benefit the school. The same inspector draws a comparison between the continuous training of school management and the continuous training of a doctor: both cannot become obsolete in the face of new medical and educational advances.

For Inspector F, in addition to the need for continuous training, he insists that the problem of current educational management lies in training that is not focused on pedagogical content. The informant argues that training in bureaucratic aspects is necessary and important but cannot become the main content.

«The training is aimed at knowing the rules and regulations well, it is administrative. Bureaucracy is sometimes unavoidable. You have to pass data records, order, sequences, processes... You have to do all these things, because we are in a complex society that starts from the premise that bureaucracy is inevitable, necessary and good. The problem I see is not so much that there is too much bureaucracy, but that it takes precedence over pedagogy. Therefore, the courses are currently aimed at providing knowledge of the norm, knowledge of school organisation and knowledge

of those elements that are going to be necessary. However, innovation in aspects of teaching and learning is not required. If it is not in the training, the administration is not looking for the profile of a pedagogical leader. Therefore, the training courses and the educational administration should focus on finding good pedagogical leaders who also have a deep knowledge of the standard» (Inspector F)

Informant E also adds the need for evaluation to all training issues. He insists on the importance of evaluating training programmes, as well as a proper evaluation of managers at the end of their training courses.

School autonomy vs. accountability

Our management model, and this is supported by the Andalusian Education Law (LEA/2007), speaks of a strong pedagogical and organisational autonomy of schools. For Inspector D, this autonomy differs from reality, claiming that there is no real autonomy. The inspector argues that schools cannot act with real and effective freedom, as they cannot decide on certain matters and school heads and management teams are “tied hand and foot”. In this respect, the inspector emphasises an Anglo-Saxon management model where managers have real power and autonomy even to choose the teaching staff. He defends a system, contrary to the Spanish one, which allows a head teacher to follow a certain pedagogical line and, to this end, to choose the most suitable teaching candidates to ensure that the school moves in the same direction and direction. This means that there is no obstacle to change. In this way, Inspector F is critical of our current model of civil service and school autonomy.

The same argument is expressed by inspector D. He again insists on the need to restore autonomy to the school head and to the school, as he insists on the justification of autonomy with the needs of each school. Along these lines, inspector E explains the lack of organisational and managerial autonomy that exists in school management.

«Greater organisational autonomy means that the centres and the management teams (more specifically the principals) have the option of contracting, by contracting, not only the contracting of works and services, but also of personnel. This is

done in other countries around us» (Inspector E).

Principals must have organisational autonomy and managerial autonomy. It is unacceptable for schools to have a financial budget and not really have the option of having their own income or be limited, despite the fact that the regulations allow it. This applies to management. In terms of organisation, management teams find it difficult, if not impossible, to surround themselves with or rely on the people who make up their staff. And this is not effective when it comes to organising a school, building teams or distributing competences (Inspector F).

Similarly, Inspector E calls for greater autonomy linked to accountability. He insists on allowing schools to work autonomously, but always evaluating the process and the results. School principals should have their management project evaluated and the results of the project evaluated.

The pedagogical and organisational autonomy of principals is necessary, but with accountability. Because if we find a bad principal, who is authoritarian for example, has a lot of autonomy and is not accountable, he or she has a lot of autonomy to go in precisely the opposite direction to what would be desirable. Therefore, I give autonomy but I have to see responsibility and accountability. First, in front of their educational community. Then, in front of the inspectorate.

For inspector G, there is a real autonomy embodied in the regulation, but she argues that the reality is that managers do not know how to combine the autonomy that the school has with the regulation. For her, inspectors, counselors and training courses are key for school heads to learn this.

This is where the key lies, in teaching them to combine autonomy with the norm and to know how to use this autonomy in their exercise of pedagogical leadership. Their educational project, their programmes, everything has to be contextualised, everything has to be adapted to their centre, so they need to have strong pedagogical training, as well as management training. This would provide autonomy and knowledge (Inspector G).

Rethinking the selection process: How to choose the best candidates?

Informants show that this is another important point of criticism of the current school management model in Spain. For informant B, the selection process for school leaders should be based on democratic criteria, as it is at present (by election among the educational community). But, from their point of view, the problem is that there are not enough applicants for the post, so that they cannot make an informed choice based on a real assessment of who is the best person for the post of principal.

«What does that mean? That when the management calls a selection committee, you find that only one person applies. So if he or she more or less meets the profile that is requested and usually ends up being elected as director, but in many cases he or she is not the right person for the job. Therefore, I think that we don't have the right profiles for school management and there is a lack of competences» (Inspector A).

In the same vein, Inspector D, complains that there is a vulnerability in our system of staff selection in schools. The system is very rigid and the transfer competition is tedious.

«We have a very rigid personnel system, where the transfer competition is sacrosanct, where you cannot move and there is no possibility of crossover. The principal has no flexibility in the choice of teachers. There is no such flexibility in terms of staff. You get a teacher who doesn't want to follow the same line and you can't do anything about it, the head teachers tell us. You can be lucky and you are always thinking about who is coming next year... So the tools they have are few and the tools we inspectors have are few too» (Inspector D).

On the other hand, the selection process for school principals and how to choose the best candidates is currently the subject of much debate. There are those in favour of professionalising the post of principal, others do not agree at all and finally there are those in favour of creating a sort of “hybrid” model. For Inspector B, professionalising the management position means, for example, creating a competitive examination for entry to the position, this would improve the selection of the best principals. For him, principals today are afraid to be leaders because after a few years they return to their teaching

post, which can have repercussions on the image they project on their colleagues, pupils and families. On the contrary, for inspector G, the principal should always be a teacher in order not to lose contact in the classroom, as this could turn him/her into a mere economic manager, therefore, she is not in favour of the professionalisation of principals. In the middle of these two thoughts, Inspector E is in favour of a hybrid model, in which the teaching perspective is not lost, but there is a professional body.

«I believe that we could look for a hybrid model, which would logically have the search for those profiles, those suitable and trained people. I am not saying that we have to go in search of that professional director, but that that professional director can have that training, but at the same time, be close to the centre in the exercise of teaching. I would not leave the director as a mere managing principal. Due to he/she will lose contact with the pupils, with different realities. There are people who would not want to lose that contact but others would, they would go into an office to manage... and that is not possible» (Inspector E).

Disaffection and disidentification from school management: causes and possible solutions

We currently have a school management model in Spain where a principal is a teacher, applies for management for a period of 4 years and then returns to his or her original post, which may be affecting his or her sense of identity.

They know that today they are principals and tomorrow they can go back to the colleagues they have managed... they feel a bit mediatised. They feel mediatised in their decision-making, in their professional practice for fear of future repercussions (Inspector A).

On the other hand, this fact is compounded by the existence of a disaffection with the school management post, which, for inspector C, is due to the lack of training as a pedagogical leader, which means that they do not feel secure in the post and focus on a less controversial field such as management. In addition, for informant D, this is compounded by the complexity of the regulations and the heavy bureaucratic burden which makes the post unattractive and makes teachers reluctant to apply for management. There is also a

difficulty that has increased in recent years. Inspector B argues that in some schools the attitude of the community has changed from genuine collaboration to constant opposition. This is generally leading to a social change of principles, so he advocates restoring the lost authority of the head teacher, not as authoritarianism but as respect for this figure.

«Being a principal at the head of an educational community is a complex task. Firstly, it depends on the support you have in your staff, to have more or less pressure and criticism (this wears you down). Secondly, the family, today the family in many cases, believe that they only have rights and not duties. They are demanding more and more, denouncing more and more... The educational community has been given a lot of power and this has been perverted. There is no respect, there should be more support for the school, the teachers and the school management. For example, at the door of a school I was visiting, I once heard a father say to his son: «It's OK son, another day we'll come and set fire to the school...» (Inspector A).

Another barrier to disaffection and disidentification with the school management position perceived by our informants is the individualistic culture in which we are imbued. For Inspector D, teaching - contrary to what pedagogical theory says - has become a very individualized job, where everyone does their own thing. We don't have a culture of teamwork, which is essential. Therefore, we lack the profile of pedagogical leadership, but also distributed leadership. According to this inspector, schools where the principal acts in collaboration and as a team, educational results improve.

Finally, Inspector C talks about a glass ceiling in school management for female teachers. In our profession there are many more women than men, but the ratio is reversed when it comes to management functions. As there are many women in our profession, there are also many female directors... but in a smaller proportion than would correspond to them by mere percentage. I have always had more male than female principals. Another fact: there are 37 inspectors and only 7 women. There are still more men than women. In terms of laws, we are making progress, but there is still a long way to go. It is still women who are in charge of the day-to-day.

3. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the school inspectorate's view of the professional identity of school heads in the Spanish context.

The main findings point to the consideration of the figure of the school principal as a key axis for educational improvement. This is consistent with current pedagogical knowledge (Bolívar, 2019; Cruz- González, Domingo, & Lucena 2019; Day et al., 2011; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2020; Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016; Hallinger 2018;). Similarly, the school inspectors participating in this study highlight the value of good leadership in developing and promoting professional practices with values of horizontality. Literature in this field of study supports that the school principal, if oriented towards pedagogical principles and distributed leadership, can make significant progress towards collaborative professional cultures (Akkerman & Meijer 2011; Crow, Day, & Møller 2017; Hargreaves, & O'Connor, 2018).

However, one of the main peculiarities of school management in the Spanish context refers to the heavy workload in bureaucratic and administrative matters that principals have to assume (Ritacco and Bolívar, 2018; OECD, 2019). This sometimes leads to a situation where principals are unable to take on pedagogical tasks and, therefore, the work of principals becomes deprofessionalised. The inspectors in this study place great emphasis on this aspect, also pointing out that this work overload is often accompanied by other negative aspects such as low extra-economic remuneration, possible tensions with other professional colleagues and/or low professional support or participatory culture in the school in question (Galdames et al., 2018; Gairín and Castro, 2010).

Against this complex backdrop, research has outlined alternative ways of developing and improving school leadership (Bolívar, 2019; Cowie and Crawford, 2008; Schleicher, 2012; Urlick and Bowers, 2014). Different models of school leadership are being presented by other countries. In some cases, school leadership is divided into two main figures or entities. One is more oriented towards bureaucracy and management, while the other section is dedicated to pedagogical issues (Valle and Martínez, 2010). In line with this, the participating inspectors argue that it is vital to relieve school management in Spain of bureaucracy, and one possible way forward could be the creation of a complementary

figure in charge of management and administration tasks.

Another of the main results of this study refers to the need for true autonomy in Spanish schools. This is largely based on training, identity and the possibility for school heads to develop their management project and to integrate it into a collective educational project. Nevertheless, this aspiration is still far from reality.

Sometimes, despite the fact that the regulations call for greater school autonomy, they still have certain shortcomings that need to be addressed (Weinstein, 2009). Thus, the inspectors interviewed consider that school management should move towards a model that promotes autonomous teacher selection and financial management. Other studies in the Spanish context agree with this idea, pointing out that without true autonomy, principals are unable to make decisive and meaningful decisions that lead to real changes in school dynamics (Bolívar, 2019). However, a sector of the participants in this study also remarked that there is an urgent need for greater accountability in these professional dynamics. Despite this commitment to school autonomy, different inspectors consider that this should be accompanied by thorough planning and constructive evaluation to guide professional processes towards improvement.

In addition, another key point in the narratives of our inspectors was linked to the selection processes and the constitution of school leadership. From their perspective, these selection processes lack a purely democratic approach. Spanish scientific literature shares this same idea, adding that in a professional culture characterised by low participation such as the Spanish one, the head teacher often has to be chosen by the educational administration due to a lack of candidates (Bolívar, 2017). Faced with this, inspectors in our research propose a competitive system that professionalises school leadership and makes it a distinguished figure with its own personality. There are education systems in Anglo-Saxon countries (United Kingdom or Ireland) or Nordic countries (Denmark and Sweden) that conceive this choice of candidates through other parameters. In the United Kingdom, this involves an interview with potential candidates, while in Sweden there is a gradual evaluation of potential candidates. The French-speaking system, on the other hand, focuses on the national institution responsible for the selection of candidates (Valle y Martínez, 2010).

Under this last finding, the issue of the training of school principals also arises. Inspectors claim that this training is insufficient in Spain. In this sense, coinciding with other national and international studies, they propose that specialised training with clear and solid evaluative processes on issues such as pedagogical leadership and the development of horizontal professional practices and towards social justice should be mandatory (Lucena, Cruz-González & Domingo, 2020). In addition, our inspectors point out that accompanying this training with formative assessment of principals' professional competences is key.

Being a principal in the Spanish context can be challenging for a number of reasons. However, one of the most important in our study is the duality of identity that principals experience throughout their professional career. The professional transition from teacher-manager-teacher weakens a consolidated sense of identity with their work (Zabalza y Zabalza Cerdeiriña, 2012). At the same time, the combination of plural figures and roles such as professional colleague - principal, bureaucratic manager - pedagogical leader, representative in the educational administration - colleague, responsible for compliance with regulations - professional member of the school, cause the principal to experience identity crises and lead to disaffection and even disidentification with the post itself (Bolívar & Ritacco, 2016).

The glass ceiling in school management was another major revelation that emerged from the school inspectors' discourse. Under the approach that professional roles and identities are largely constructed from a social prism, being a woman in a position traditionally conceived as masculine sometimes provokes cognitive dissonances that materialise in discrimination towards the female collective (Arar and Shapira, 2016; Cruz-González, Pérez and Domingo, 2020).

In conclusion, we consider that school leadership is a key element for developing improvement-oriented practices. However, there are many fronts to contend with in the Spanish context (Ritacco and Bolívar, 2018). Exploring the professional identity of these school principals through the lens of school inspection can be useful to take into consideration various points of reference that are closely linked to this professional performance. Based on identity approaches such as Dubar (2010) or Ricoeur (1996), identity

should be studied from different spheres (Lucena, Cruz-González and Domingo, 2021). This study, approached from the perspective of educational inspection, provides themes and elements of judgement that affect the construction of the professional identity of school management, as well as key issues that mark moments or dimensions that call it into question or generate professional identity crises. In this sense, educational inspection, from a critical-constructive analysis of the reality of school leadership in Spain, is committed to the conversion of the school leadership model towards new horizons and challenges that professionalise this figure, strengthening the identity of an educational leadership that seeks participatory professional cultures committed to the education of their schools.

CAPÍTULO 6.

RESULTADOS ESTUDIO 2: ESTUDIO DE CASO DE LIDERAZGO DE UN DIRECTOR ESCOLAR

ARTÍCULO 7

Alberto's life story: transforming a disadvantaged school by appreciating the child's voice

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Abstract

This article presents a case study of a principal who successfully leads a disadvantaged school in Spain. Through his life story, we investigate the personal and professional factors that have shaped his current professional identity, and we identify the main successful educational practices that the principal has implemented in order to achieve improvements in educational outcomes. Findings reveal a set of professional practices that have been invigorated from his leadership for the improvement of education. In short, he is committed to leading by appreciating the voice of the child and having respect for the children and it is this that forms part of the collective ideology of the school and is the most outstanding role of his professional identity.

Keywords

Principal, Leadership, Professional identity, Professional development, Life history

Background

Principals are considered to be essential figures in leadership development, as they are a key axis of influence in the school and in the development of strategies for educational improvement. It is well documented that when good and successful school leadership is exercised by the principal, this impacts on student outcomes and educational performance (Leithwood and Day 2008). But these practices are dependent on the specific requirements of each context (Bush 2017). Achieving successful leadership, particularly in highly challenging contexts, depends on responding to the problems identified within a given context (Gurr 2015). Therefore, it is important to understand how leadership is developed in particular complex cases, without claiming to provide universal answers, but to instead understand what is happening in that particular scenario.

Within this framework, a number of studies conducted at the international level have also pointed out that successful leadership is exercised when principals present a strong professional identity (Crow, Day, and Møller 2017). In this regard, there is existing literature that has analysed the concept of professional identity, providing a more in-depth understanding of the elements that influence its construction along with the factors that hinder the transition to school principal (Cruz-González, Lucena, and Domingo 2020). However, there is rather less work in the literature that analyses the identity construction of principals for achieving successful educational practices, particularly in socially and demographically disadvantaged contexts.

Identity, understood as a concept, is difficult to define because it is not an objective reality. As Ritacco and Bolívar (2018) indicate, it is a discursive and mental construction that individuals use to express a certain way of seeing and feeling within themselves in relation to their environment. Professional identity is forged in a constant flow of socialisation and interrelationship influenced by contextual, personal, and cultural factors grounded in events that have occurred over time, at the core of which is the essence of the self. School principals must have a strong and consolidated inner core in order to achieve effective professional performance. Thus, some studies have revealed that to achieve successful leadership practices, consolidated professional identities are required (Scribner and Crow 2010).

Context plays a determining role in the personal and professional development of a principal when negotiating his/her identity. The Spanish educational professional context is characterised by the need for greater professionalisation of the leadership figure (Bolívar 2019). In Spain, principals are appointed for specific periods of time. During this process, principals experience identity transitions (teacher-principal-teacher), which leads to changes in their professional identity that influence the way in which they see and consider themselves both personally and professionally. Due to these peculiarities, we begin with the need to investigate how the identity of school principals is constructed, and what elements have influenced their negotiation and development in under-performing schools.

This study is part of the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) founded and coordinated by Professor Christopher Day. This project, now comprising 14 countries, focuses its efforts on researching effective school principals. The project presents three key lines of research (1) Successful school principals; (2) Principals in lowperforming schools; and (3) Principals' identities. The present manuscript is developed within Strand 3, designed to investigate the identity of leaders, as part of the ISS-PP project in Spain, with a particular emphasis on challenging contexts that have made gains in educational attainment. For this reason, this line of work on professional leadership identity is assumed in the present manuscript.

Specifically, this article analyses the life story of a principal considered to be an educational leader by the educational community and his professional team. The principal, named Alberto, is a pedagogical leader who acts under the umbrella of social justice and his pedagogical line focuses on children's rights. These aspects, which make him unique and particular, are established by the experiences he has lived throughout his life in the construction of his professional identity. Alberto is a principal in a school located in a challenging context, but despite the circumstances, he has managed through his leadership practices to transform the school and achieve high educational achievements. Therefore our purpose was, on the one hand, to investigate the influence of personal and professional factors in the construction of the leader's identity as principal, and on the other hand, to identify the main educational practices that the principal has implemented to achieve educational improvement in a challenging environment. With these objectives in mind, the following research questions were addressed:

- What are the personal and professional factors that have influenced the construction of leadership identity for this principal?
- What are the principles from which he acts to improve and transform the school?

The authors hope that this research will be analysed as an inspiring profile of an effective principal who has faced the challenges of an education centre with great socio-economic difficulties and has transformed the school for the better by always appreciating the voice of the child.

PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP IDENTITY WITH A COMMITMENT TO CHILDREN

A large body of international research points to a direct relationship between the existence of successful school leadership and educational quality in schools (Hallinger and Heck 2010; Leithwood and Jantzi 2008; Muijs and Harris 2006). In this scenario, the school principal is a key figure in energising leadership practices (Cruz-González, Lucena, and Domingo 2020). Several studies indicate a significant influence on school leadership by the principal and school educational outcomes (Ritacco and Bolívar 2018; Bush 2018; Connolly et al. 2018; Connolly et al. 2018; Ritacco and Bolívar 2018). In this sense, it is of great interest to focus on how school leaders construct their identity to achieve these successful practices (Day et al. 2010). Studies in the field of leadership and professional identity establish a series of key dimensions around these successful leadership practices: establishing joint educational visions and goals, improving teaching- learning conditions, redesigning and enriching the curriculum, improving teacher training and building intra-school relationships (Day and Sammons 2013; Leithwood and Louis 2012).

As authors of reference in the field of professional identity state, this identity is changing and multifaceted, and is therefore always under continuous construction and transformation (Dubar 2000). For this reason, in order to analyse the professional identity of a school leader, it is necessary to take this approach into account and establish research designs that explore this purpose of study from the perspective of narrativity (Ricoeur 1992). On the other hand, due to its polyhedral character, we must consider contextual, historical and social factors that have shaped the history of school leaders, trying to achieve a complete capture of their being and professional trajectory (Cruz-González, Lucena, and Domingo 2020).

This study focuses on schools with special difficulties. This is why the school leadership developed should be further oriented towards principles of equity and social justice (DeMatthews 2018; Özdemir 2017). Achieving equity in schools and promoting a more just society is becoming a current priority for the education system (Pont, Nusche, and Moorman 2008). This perspective of leadership for social justice could then be added to instructional leadership with an impact on improving results and doing so in challenging contexts (Mulford et al. 2008; Murillo and Hernandez-Castilla 2014).

The effective development of school leadership in challenge contexts involves a number of dimensions that require special attention: (1) a good leader must be sensitive to the diversity present in society and to the associated cultural and socio-economic inequalities, responding adequately to the challenges that arise from such inequalities; (2) he/she should progress in the construction of a community of professional practice focused on good learning for all, by all, and among all; (3) he/she should adopt a professional practice of teaching and leadership guided by social commitment, involvement, and collaboration; (4) he/she must expand professional and social capital, strengthening networks of shared leadership and the instructional leadership of teachers; and (5) he/she should do so in a manner that is attentive to context, listening to students and seeking their authentic participation and involvement in learning (Portelli and McMahan 2004). Successful school leadership, and one that is capable of responding adequately to the demands that arise in specific situations, depends on the ability to take advantage of the resources provided and to build a joint vision for the school (Bush 2018). In order for this vision to be extended to the entire community, the leader must instil confidence and encourage good communication practices among its members (Robinson 2019). It is therefore important to organise schools in order to generate a collective professional capacity both within schools and between school networks (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012). The engine of change must be built on collaboration, mutual support, and trust in staff, or what Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) have called 'collaborative professionalism (when teaching together means learning from all)'. Otero (2019) adds that 'leadership in learning and improving education will depend on the capacity and ability of school leaders to connect everyone in the school community to learning' (344). Therefore, in line with the awareness-raising proposed by Freire (2001), there is a need for the principal to act under the premise of social commitment and to adopt a style of school leadership that is attuned to the voice of the community and the students themselves.

It is precisely this last dimension that deserves special attention in this case. On many occasions, the professionalism of teachers and, more evidently, that of educational leaders, is exercised in the face of student learning from a colonial and despotic perspective: for children, but without them. That is to say, as Tonucci (2015) or Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) report, the impact on learning and on the improvement of education is sought, but the voice of students is not taken into consideration.

In contrast, Alberto and the school he leads believe –as Dewey proposed (Bernstein 2011) – in the goodness of the child, their interest and capacity and the potential of their participation for the democratization of education and their involvement in their learning processes (Fredricks 2014). This is why in this manuscript we demonstrate an approach in which the essence of change is born from the voice of the learner (Mockler and Groundwater-Smith 2014). There is a vast body of research that addresses the issue of leadership and improvement, but we believe that this is not the case when it comes to highlighting the learner's own agency in this aspect. We believe that in challenge contexts this is even more necessary. This is why this study seeks to highlight the value of traditionally 'forgotten' or 'silenced' groups of students (Fielding 2004; Rudduck and Flutter 2007).

Moving into this field of study, authors such as Robinson and Taylor (2007) and Smyth (2006) argue the importance of empowering students to move towards true educational inclusion. This educational approach could be linked to pedagogical positions such as those of Paul Freire or Dewey, who reaffirm the unquestionable value of a democratic education based on the pedagogy of transformation. From this point of view, the development of educational practices based on transformative and empowering pedagogies would favour the fight against a neo-conservative, mercantilist and dehumanizing neo-conservative era. Assuming this new framework implies a professional identity of leadership that has the capacity to influence and transform in a given context, which means that such ideals must be central to the professional performance of leaders (Bolívar 2019). That is, they must be focal points for establishing a shared vision that guides a set of curricular, organisational, strategic, and training dimensions that come to have an impact on the school's education policies, its school and professional culture, and on classroom practices. These areas have been identified by Ainscow (2017) as determining factors in the development of an inclusive school and for success for all and among all. In addition, some authors have analyzed the components of leadership necessary for the critical-democratic engagement of students in their learning (Boberg and Bourgeois 2016).

A committed and resilient teaching identity is the basis of good professional practice (Day 2018). The construction of a professional identity for social justice also requires training that is particularly sensitive to this requirement. The works of Zeichner (2010) have made progress in this line of thought and are particularly relevant when speaking of the

training of professional school leaders capable of both facing and acting to transform these educational, social, and professional realities.

Along with this, other personal, social, contextual and school-related factors are also key in the initial formation of a professional identity (Rivas 2010; Robertson 2017), along with those that are the most socially/student committed. The incidence of personal and professional milestones, of critical incidents, or of key people who cross paths in people's lives or in their professional experience also feature strongly in the processes of professional and identity development. Dubar (2000) noted the influence of different internal or external elements that represented moments of inflection, growth, or professional crisis.

Finally, given the size of the challenge, a professional identity of commitment requires support and the expansion of professional networks that face this challenge. In this sense, this perspective of commitment is more sustainable from the construction of a community of professional practice that is capable of expanding networks and increasing its social and professional capital. Thus, an interdependent scenario is taking shape, capable of increasing synergies of commitment and learning as a result of active participation, dialectic argumentation, professional collaboration, and mutual support.

Method

This study tells the life story of a principal who exercises educational leadership in a challenge context. Through his narrative, we explore how a particular professional identity has developed, one that is focused on successful educational practices. To this end, this study analyses the factors that have influenced this identity construction and, finally, how all these events, milestones, and leitmotifs have been translated into the implementation of measures for the transformation of his school. To do this, a qualitative study was carried out through the life history approach (Goodson et al. 2017). From this methodological perspective, the aim was to give 'voice' to the participant by presenting the stories and experiences that have influenced who he is today and how he acts (Bolívar and Domingo 2019).

The life history method has been used in various research studies on leadership identity (Cruz, Pérez, and Domingo 2020; Kelchtermans and Piot 2013; Mpungose 2010; Sugrue 2004). But the present study also adopts a clear perspective of communicative and participatory research. The 'authentic participation' of informants in the sense of research and in the dialectical validation of results facilitates researcher-informant interaction processes and increases mutual trust and commitment to the authenticity, truthfulness and credibility of the study, The informant and researchers are (co-)authors of the work. This ensures their involvement and the real validity of their statements. With this, it is possible to show the process and sense of the professional identity of leadership, in this case from the description of the practices as they were actually experienced in the school.

SELECTION OF THE CASE STUDY

The selection of the case was made using some of the criteria of the project in which this study is included (ISSPP). The criteria were the following:

1. The school principal is a successful leader.
2. Academic performance is higher than expected according to the socio-economic and cultural index of the school
3. The school is located in a socially and demographically disadvantaged context

These data are based on the results of the Andalusian Agency for Educational Evaluation (AGAEVE), the recognition of educational institutions and organisations, and the internal evaluations and those of the centres that take in students once they have finished their schooling in that educational centre.

INFORMATION COLLECTION PROCESS

The collection of information was carried out using (self) biographical and narrative research instruments. In-depth biographical interviews were conducted with the principal over the course of two school years. The interviews were accompanied by field observations and logbook entries throughout the research process (see Table 1).

DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

The study was conducted through a recurrent process of reflective deepening (Kelchtermans and Piot 2013) and dialectical validation until reaching information saturation and collective consensus on the meanings, interpretations, and conclusions (Bolívar and Domingo 2019).

Table 1 - Information gathering process.

Investigation	Month	Interviews	Field observations
First school year of investigation: 2018–2019	March		✓
	April	Interview 1	✓
	May	Interview 2	✓
	June	Interview 3	✓
Second school year of investigation: 2019–2020	September	Interview 4	✓
	October	Interview 5	✓
	November	Interview 6	✓
	December		✓

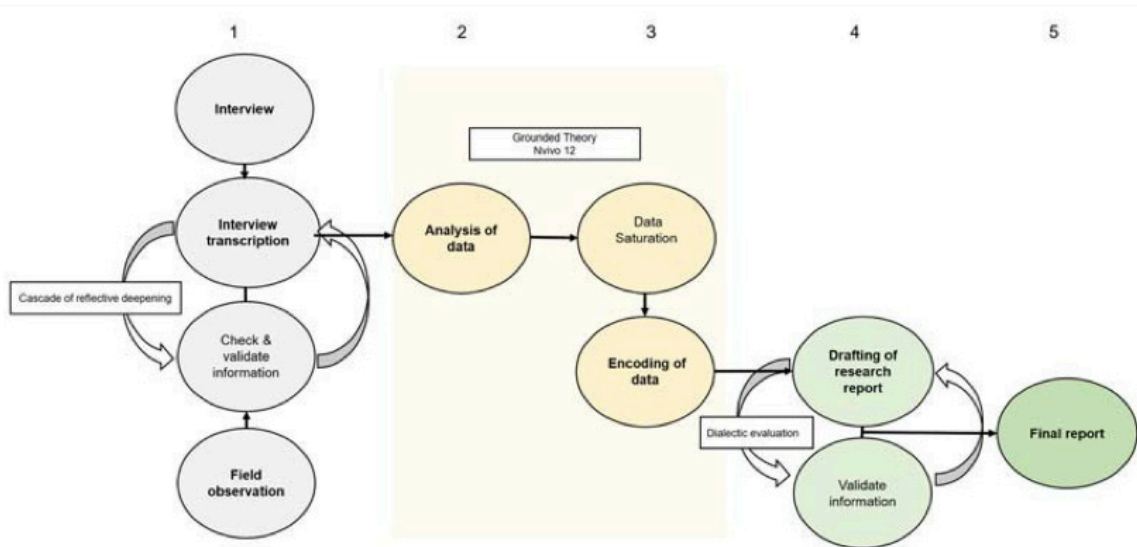
The thematic analysis of information was largely developed by following the key guidelines of grounded theory. The themes and categories emerged from the data and narrative text, from the researcher's observations, and from subsequent discussions of these materials that took place among interviewers and researchers. This analysis process was supported by the qualitative software Nvivo 12. The various stages of the analysis and

information collection process are graphically presented below (Figure 1).

RESEARCHER-PARTICIPANT RELATIONSHIP

In this study, there is an emphasis on the researcher-participant relationship. Alberto goes from being an object of research to becoming a participant and author of the study. This context of interaction implies that the researcher's work is placed in a new framework of active listening, as an interlocutor who mediates the original story and helps to open paths of deepening and improvement; and opens a scenario of reflexivity, dialogue and debate that shifts the role of the researcher as analyser and interpreter, towards one of enquiry until gradually and dialectically reaching a consensus that catalyses new spaces of significant and relevant improvement.

Figure1 - Flow chart of the information collection and analysis process



Participant and researcher established an interactive dialogue in each of the visits to the centre, in order to jointly construct a shared life story. The researcher collected all the key moments, leitmotifs, and important circumstances in order to 'establish the motives, contexts, and pillars that give meaning to the subsequent decision-making and starting point of professional actions, to understand a professional life and the biographical configuration of an identity' (Bolívar and Domingo 2019, 110). All of this follows the ethical processes that are appropriate for qualitative research.

SCHOOL AND NEIGHBOURHOOD CONTEXT

The educational centre analysed in this study is located in the town of Valderrubio, in the North West of Granada. Valderrubio is a small, purely agricultural town, the population has a low socio-economic level, with families in serious economic difficulty and a subsidiary standard of living.

In the educational centre, teaching is given in the stages of Infant, Primary, and the first cycle of Secondary Education. A significant number of students are covered by a compensation scheme created by the school itself. It also has a significant number of students covered by the solidarity and food guarantees or *Solidaridad y Garantías Alimentarias SYGA* plan. This is a plan created by the Andalusian Government that puts into place a set of measures to provide coverage of basic needs and to tackle social exclusion. This school offers a school canteen service, with breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack, as well as a wide range of free extracurricular activities in the afternoons.

Despite the rural context surrounding the school and the difficulties it faces in compensating low-income families, this is a school that is excelling educationally. It is evaluated annually by the Andalusian Agency for Educational Evaluation (AGAEVE) and its results stand above the average of the Andalusian Autonomous Community and particularly those schools with similar contextual characteristics.

In recent years, since the arrival of this principal, this school has become a reference at national and international level. Since then, in a very short time, the principal has been recognised with prizes such as: the *EducaCiudad* prize, for the commitment of his centre

to teaching and good educational practices; prizes for 'Solidaridad en las Letras' or winners of the provincial phase of the School Competition of 'La ONCE, People who think about people'. It is also an APFRATO friendly centre of the Francesco Tonucci pedagogical association. This is the only centre in Andalusia to receive a national award from the RED de Aprendizaje y Servicios (Learning and Services Network) as a centre promoting health and healthy habits (2015), recognised for its work in developing physical and mental health in the town. It has also been a centre promoting positive coexistence by the Andalusian Ministry of Education since 2014, promoting a model of coexistence based on emotional intelligence and interpersonal relationships.

In short, it can be said that this school is fighting for a better future and is committed to the growth of its people in spite of the difficulties associated with a challenge context. In this case, the transformational and pedagogical leadership of the principal is key. He is promoting this entrepreneurial initiative and spreading it to the entire educational community. This is the main reason why the particular case of the principal Alberto and the school of Valderrubio is being studied.

Results

The following section shows the results obtained during our research process. It is important to note that it was vital to become natives of the principal's own professional context. In the first section, we analyse the figure of the director Alberto as a transformer and activist in his school, revealing the most important events in his life and how he believes these have shaped the construction of his identity. In the second section, we set out the values of the school and the philosophy that the director wants to adopt for his school as a whole. Finally, in Section three, we present the successful educational practices that Alberto has led in order to achieve this transformation both within and from the school.

THE IDENTITY OF ALBERTO AS A PRINCIPAL: ACTIVIST AND TRANSFORMER

Alberto describes himself as a restless, passionate, and untraditional human being, as well as a tireless reader. His actions are aimed at transforming and improving education. He is a principal who staunchly believes in public education and his main mission is to build a school for children to be happy. In addition to his role as a teacher, he is an advisor to educational centres, focusing on issues such as multiple intelligences and project work methods.

He considers that in order to do a good job as a principal, it is necessary to prioritise pedagogical duties over those that are purely administrative. He describes his belief in leadership and the way he wants others to understand it: «I want the students in my school to jump in and understand that the network is me». He affirms this by drawing on his first identity, his memories of school. Alberto describes, with sadness, how throughout his own academic career, the principals he has met have focused their work on administrative issues that are not very educational or humane. For this reason, he tries to endow his work as a central figure with characteristics of a devoted and educational nature.

In spite of being a principal, Alberto makes an effort to not neglect his teaching profile. For this reason, he is a principal who has managed to ensure that when both students and teachers alike have a problem, they consider him a support figure and turn to him. Not because he is the principal, but because he tries to be a figure that projects a sense of refuge and safety to the rest of the educational community. 'They come because they feel like giving me a hug, because they feel like crying, because they feel like giving me a picture with a heart and telling me that they love me very much'. Alberto also sees the family as a key element in his work, which is why the doors of his office are always open to everyone. For him, the atmosphere of respect and trust is the jewel of his school. Alberto misses his teaching role, and he would like to spend more hours in the classroom with his students. Being in management means he spends more time in the office.

As he puts it, his own students ask him why he is now the school's principal, and he is clear about that:

«I want to fight for a better education and for Valderrubio, in 20 years from now, to have been transformed by the school. That's the dream I have, that's what I'm fighting for. It is easier for management to establish strategies aimed at achieving this change»

It is clear that the main reason why Alberto has decided to be a principal, to change and improve the school, having access to the whole community and, in this way, offer his educational focus that gives voice to the children.

In order to meet this leadership requirement and to achieve school improvements, Alberto has been living through different personal and professional events throughout his life, all of which have helped to shape the construction of his identity. These events have motivated him to finally become the transforming and pedagogical leader of today. For this reason, the following Table 2 includes the most relevant events from his birth until the present day.

THE SENSE OF LEADERSHIP: A JOINT VISION OF SCHOOL BY AND FOR THE CHILD

Alberto's school has a clear ideal: that the children are happy. The school, as the principal says, should be a place of refuge, where each student feels respected for being who he/she is – a place where they take care to ensure that each child has his/her own identity as a person. He wants students to go to school with joy, to enter a space where they can learn while being relaxed, and to have the opportunity to learn both emotionally and academically. At Valderrubio, it is clear that these conditions are present, with dynamic classes, classes with noise (of activity rather than disturbance), corridors with movement, and happy and dynamic students, and it is here where we can see how the principal has fought to bring the school to life. The starting point is a line of work based on respect for children, because the voice of the students is taken into account from the very first day that they enter the school.

«One thing I always do is learn the name of every single student in the school. Since they come in at three, I go to their class so that we can get to know each other. Calling a child by his/her name makes him/her feel valued and identified»

Alberto has lived through professional and personal experiences that have made him consider his line of work. He explains how in his student years he had a teacher who changed his life. He (Alberto) was a young man who had never been told what he was worth and that he could do whatever he wanted if he so wished. But it was in college that a teacher instilled this idea in him. From then on, he started reading different books to those of his classmates, going beyond the class notes. He read all kinds of books about different types of educational models, and about methodological approaches. As he himself says, on his bedside table there is always a book of essays on education. One day this teacher invited the teacher and illustrator Francesco Tonucci, (with the pseudonym Frato) to the faculty and introduced him to Alberto.

Table. 2 - Biogram of Alberto's life.

Date	Description	Milestones, key people, themes or leitmotifs	Personal and professional impact
1978	Birth and childhood before school age.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born only two years following the end of a dictatorial system in Spain (1939–1975). • Moved from Barcelona to Andalusia after his birth. • His grandmother takes care of his education during his early years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquires values of respect and solidarity attributed to his family. • Passion for reading and stories, inherited from his grandmother.
1982	Entering school: school experience during his childhood and adolescence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational path regulated by the General Education Law (1970) and the Organic Law of General Organisation of the Spanish Educational System (LOGSE) of 1990. • His experience was negative; the school did not adapt to the needs of each student. • Authoritarian education system adopted by both teachers and principals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquires values and a critical awareness of inequalities. • Suffers from low self-esteem due to negative school experience. • He did not fit into a traditional school. • These experiences would make him reflect years later and lead him to become a teacher and principal who believed in the potential of others.

1996	Becomes disenchanted with his law career.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His family was primarily dedicated to the practising law, and, following the family tradition, he embarked on the same career. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High family and social pressure. • His law studies did not fulfil him like the rest of his family.
1996	Voluntary work in non-formal education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First professional experience: association to help the Romany population and 5 women without resources to graduate from college. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to identify his vocation, that is, to help others but from an educational perspective. • Development of professional values based on social justice.
1998	Beginning of his career in education. Continues voluntary social work in non-formal education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets a teacher who believes in his potential. • Meets Francesco Tolucci. • He continues to work during the summers in associations (Spain, Central America, South America, and Morocco). • He becomes a member of the teacher training department. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers that social work volunteering is the engine of his life. This strengthens his foundations of a leadership style based on social justice. • Experiences in the teacher training department enrich him both personally and professionally. Today he continues to train teachers. • Frato becomes his educational godfather and is part of his life. • Consolidates an educational and professional pillar; 'educating with respect for children'.
2002	Passes the national teaching exams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First real contact with his profession • His first job is in a deprived context with 300 inhabitants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tough but important experience; discovers the value of working in challenging contexts and catering to diverse groups of learners. • In this role he discovers a new world full of opportunities in education.

(Continued)

Date	Description	Milestones, key people, themes or leitmotifs	Personal and professional impact
2003	Gains experience in various educational centres.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moves around several educational centres. • One educational centre stands out from all of these due to its innovative pedagogical approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthens his pedagogical approach based on respect for the child.
2008	Moves to the school in Valderrubio.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He begins his career as a tutor in 3rd grade. • He is faced with a traditional school. • He works on projects within his classroom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refuses to replicate the figure of a traditional teacher. • Acquires values of educational commitment and school innovation. • Acquires the drive and initiative to access a school leadership position to achieve educational improvement through the educational ideals built from his previous experiences.
2016	Becomes the principal of the Valderrubio school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational context in need of improvement. • He applies for the role of principal and his appointment is approved by all the members of the centre. • He begins the phase of his career as a principal. • Changes the working teams and establishes practices for educational improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His leadership is based on all of his past beliefs and professional values, that is, leadership based on the potential of others, respect for students, project methods, and social justice. • The role of principal affords him the opportunity to change the school beyond the students in the classroom.
2020	Principal leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He opens the school to the community • Cooperative and collaborative work: family-school-community • The 'children's council' is created • The school is awarded for its innovative experience • He enrolls in professional learning communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal and professional growth • Sense of accomplishment by implementing your line of work

«I met Frato, because he introduced me to him one day in college. I was amazed, because I totally identified with his line of work, with the vision he has of an educational institution. For him the school has to be totally horizontal, where the voice of the children cannot be ignored. That same day, at breakfast with him, he said something that will stay with me forever. I asked him: Francesco, what are you really, what do you do? To which he replied: 'I am a niñoólogo'.¹ He bowled me over. From that moment on, I fell in love with him pedagogically, and today he is part of my life. I consider him to be my educational godfather.»

For Alberto, meeting Francesco Tonucci had a real impact on strengthening his educational philosophy, a philosophy that can be summarised as the care and respect for children, respecting the times and the rebelliousness of childhood.

«What is the rush for children to learn to read? What rush is there for children to learn to divide and multiply? And then we forget to make them people. Children are going to learn content, but they learn it when they are mature enough to do so. The most important thing is to play, because to play is to educate, and from there, you have changed education.»

When you look around the schoolyard there are children playing chess, basketball, soccer, hopscotch, there are children reading, dressing up, playing with a skipping rope or painting on a blackboard. As the principal says, they are doing what they want to do. For him it is one of the most important hours of the day and it should last longer. During the break, conflicts occur, which for Alberto are like 'a treasure', in which the most important learning can take place. You can release and remove a barrier from a child in emotional ways. Alberto tries to share with his team the idea that all learning situations must be exploited, that every moment in the classroom, in the playground, is a time for children to learn.

Another of the great commitments of this school is to take the characteristics of each child as a starting point. The principal wants students to identify their potential from the moment they enter the school, in the classroom. He wants to ensure that each one of them is aware that whilst they can be good in certain aspects, in others they cannot

perform at their best. Each student in their classroom draws some paper wings to which they hang some labels that indicate a virtue. These wings are shown to all the students in the school.

Alberto goes on to explain that the same teachers have different skills, and that part of the leader's job is to know how to give the teachers duties in subjects in which they feel confident, so that they can perform to the maximum. Alberto's leadership is committed to making the most of the potential of his students and teachers, in order to guarantee that people are motivated and want to come to the school.

«Here come the children to do their homework. They're very clear about it. I have been called by mothers because their child with a fever wants to come and do his homework. The students are committed to their jobs. Similarly, most teachers are here because they want to be. There are teachers who walk 60 km to school when they could be two minutes away from home on foot, but they prefer to commit to a school that meets their needs.»

SUCCESSFUL EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES DEVELOPED BY ALBERTO TO ACHIEVE EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT

This section describes the educational leadership practices that have been implemented in order to transform a school in a challenge context. Alberto implemented five strategies aimed at promoting the success of children, their peers, and ultimately the improvement of their school:

1. Training the work team: learning communities and respect for vocations

For Alberto the most important thing is to form a team at the school that will be compatible with his way of working. However, the situation in Spain is complex because the principal does not choose his staff, the teacher passes the national examinations and is assigned a school. In recent years, there has also been a procedure known as 'concurso de traslados or transfer application' which means that every year teachers can change schools that will fit better with the demands of their family life. In the informant's opinion,

whilst this opportunity to change schools is positive on a personal level, this is not the case at the school level. It is, in fact, very harmful for both the teaching teams and the students. Alberto goes on to criticise this on the grounds that it translates into an unstable work force that makes it impossible to maintain a way of working, and is, ultimately, a hindrance to his leadership project.

In this unstable situation, teachers appear who are very dear to Alberto, who fit in with the working policy he wants to promote and with his educational philosophy. He decides to meet with them and think of a strategy so that he can at least maintain a stable faculty for four years. The only administrative possibility they have is that the school decides to become a learning community (Flecha 2008). They take advantage of this project and train for two months. From there, they present a project (required by the call to become a learning community that can be assessed by the Junta de Andalucía), which is finally approved.

«That was the only way in which we could arm ourselves so that the staff we had could stay with us and maintain a way of working overtime. Now the staff is amazing. They have a line of work that begins with respect for children.»

For the principal, forming his own team has allowed him to fit together the pieces of the puzzle based on the potential of his teachers. In this way, each teacher teaches in his or her own vocational area (a new and unique aspect of the Spanish education system). The teaching team therefore feels motivated, secure, and creative when working with the students.

«Now I have two teachers who impart knowledge of the media in all primary schools, another who teaches the artistic students at all stages, and one who teaches digital culture to the 6th grade. People, when they work in the area they love, perform much more. Because when working with the subjects you enjoy, you make your students enjoy them too.»

2. Self-education and training

Self-training is another strategy adopted by the principal to enhance teacher training. When Alberto began his management role, he decided that self-training activities should be carried out so that everyone could learn from everyone.

«For example, I am a specialist in project work, another teacher in service-learning, another teacher is a machine in manipulative mathematics. So, what can we do? Share and discuss, learn together, and that is our basis. We shape ourselves.»

In addition, the school's teachers have external training sessions, often at the request of the teachers themselves, which are attended by practically 100% of the staff: «We do selective training, we advocate the workgroup model, we need a subject and we work on that».

3. Creation of the children's council

At Valderrubio School all the important decisions that are taken are made collectively and all opinions are equally important. For Alberto, respect for children has to go to the extreme. That is why he has created a Council for Children at the school. This consists of providing children with economic resources so that they can decide independently what they want to spend the money on. In this assembly, the children of the school participate exclusively, and they run debates to reach democratic agreements. The last monetary item allocated to them was for the construction of a fountain in the school yard. They decided that they would like to have a fountain to relax and make their playground more beautiful.

For the principal, the children are now at a point where they have to reveal themselves, because their rights are being violated.

«Let me use a very simple example. Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that students have the right to express their views on the decisions that are made about them. Any educational institution that does not have a children's council is an illegal centre, and in Spain they abound, because in no case is that opinion taken into account. Wherever there is a child, there must be a council where the child is heard.»

4. Change of methodology: Project work

When Alberto arrived at Valderrubio school as a teacher, he wanted to work with a methodology that would be attractive to the students, he wanted to make the child a participant in his/her own learning. With considerable effort, he introduced into his classroom the method of project work, but he wanted to reach all the students of the school. Having reached the management position, Alberto trained his team in this methodology so that it could be implemented as a definitive method in the school. Today, he and his team have managed to ensure that, in a school of 300 students, everyone works on the same projects at the same time, and that educationally they 'speak the same language'. For the principal, education does not depend so much on objectives as on evaluation criteria, in other words, making it explicit how far one wants the child to go and how one wants him or her to get there. Working on projects is a very complex process in which the interests of the students have to be matched with what needs to be taught, and for this, the teachers need to be fully on board with this philosophy.

«For a traditional teacher, it is a challenging and complete change, and you can revolutionise a centre with this methodology. I see that there is a lack of strong commitment to this methodology in the majority of centres because this requires a lot of work on the part of each one, and they are simply not willing to take it on.»

All the projects carried out in the school operate in a globalised way in all educational areas and act under the same umbrella: to fulfil the 17 objectives set by the UN for the year 2030. In the two school years over which we conducted our study, various projects were carried out, chief among them being the Water Explorer project (international challenges related to sustainable water consumption) and the Neuroactivate project. This latter two-year project aims to make Valderrubio a city that activates your brain cells. It is a school project in which the Institute of Neurology of Granada and other neurologists of Seville are involved.

«The project involves the whole community. Our main focus is Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, and we want to do preventive work on the initiative of the school. We will modify parks, so that they have recreational activities, which at the same time train the mind.»

We will work on pedestrian crossings, public buildings — everything we can to keep the neurons active.»

5. Opening the school to society

For Alberto the school should be open to society. There must be a symbiosis between the school community and the civil community. It is society as a whole that educates children. For him it is very important that all members of the community collaborate and participate.

«The families, the town council, the Guadalinfo centre, and the geriatric centre all actively collaborate with us. What is important to us is that our school is open to the people and the people to our school. That we all promote the education of our children.»

In this sense, the principal has taken into consideration organisational aspects and cultural dynamics in order to effectively open up the school to society. In the same way, he does not simply allow them to enter the school, but instead promotes real interrelations and a joint working cooperation.

6. Addressing the challenges of school and administration

There are a number of barriers that prevent the principal from advancing in his project of an effective school, but he, as far as possible, lessens the impact of these by taking on the challenges. In Alberto's eyes, personal resources are also very limited. The administration sends counsellors to the school on only a few days of the week.

This vital figure in the school does not have enough time to attend to all the students, which makes it necessary for the principal and the management team to assume this function on many occasions. Moreover, the educational administration provides very limited material resources.

They provide the centres with economic resources, but as Alberto states: 'for very specific items. The centre is given very little autonomy and few resources'. He adds:

«I always talk about respect for children and the dignity of children ... but the spaces we have are not dignified. When I arrived, the school library was a storage room. We carried out a series of reforms and collaborative work between teachers, students and families. The result is now a wonderful library, which is now our emblem, made from everyone's efforts.»

Alberto says they have learned to 'survive', and to seek resources by other means: We sign up for all the competitions we see to win money that can go to the school, and, ultimately, to the students.

Fortunately, in innovation and inclusion, resources are not everything. Without attitude and collaboration they are not possible, nor is the leader's commitment enough if there is no team behind, no professional collaboration and no organisational structures to ensure this improvement. Professionalism, commitment and knowing how to manage the possible social capital (of the community) and professional capital (of the teachers) have been good allies in this improvement process.

Getting to this point has not been easy, it has been a controversial and complex process of development over time. There have been moments of crisis and professional and institutional barriers (fear of change, routines, more traditional professionalism, micropolitical games of resistance ...) have had to be faced and – as far as possible – overcome. Their tools have been dialogue, resilience and perseverance, together with the arrival of new colleagues with curricular leadership skills and the possibility of building organisational conditions more conducive to innovation and collaborative work. This driving force, united in a pedagogical project closely linked to the community, has been building a collaborative network around a community education network that has united synergies and all of this has had repercussions in terms of educational improvement and better educational results.

Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of this research was to analyse, on the one hand, the personal and professional factors that have shaped the construction of the identity of a successful leader in a challenging context, and on the other hand, to identify the main educational practices used to transform education in a highly challenging context. A case study was used to build on the narratives of a unique life story, constructed from a dialogical participant-researcher interaction. In order to address these research objectives, the results were structured around three sections, the first two of which speak of the leadership profile of Alberto, the principal under investigation, in addition to the vision and values that underpin the school where he works. And section three focuses on identifying successful educational practices that respond to the second research objective.

In this section, we discuss the results obtained in our study in relation to other relevant research. In addition, we identify implications of the results for professional practice and the development of future lines of inquiry. It should be borne in mind that since this is a single case study carried out in a specific context, these data are not generalisable or comparable. However, as pointed out by Mullen and Patrick (2000), in this particular case and context the results suggest that this school and the leadership exercised by its principal can be a promising element of reflection for other schools that struggle with achieving educational equality. In short, this work presents an inspiring profile of an effective principal who has addressed the problems of a school in a challenging context and has transformed it on the basis of respect for children.

In order to achieve this particular model of professional practice as an effective instructional and transformational leader, there is a complete underlying identity at play. This particular life trajectory influences the construction of an identity committed to children. In line with other studies, this case shows the influence of childhood and school memories that form the basis of an individual's first professional identity (Rivas 2010) and subsequent adult identity (Robertson 2017). Alberto relates how events from his childhood have substantially influenced him in the construction of his current professional identity, from his family's move to another city, to his bad experiences with teachers and principals during his childhood and adolescence.

The political and social context in which the individual finds themselves can also have an impact on the channelling of their personal and professional career (Mpungose 2010). Thus, for example, Alberto began his studies in law, mainly because of the influence of his family and the context that surrounded him. Finally, and a few years later, in search of personal and professional fulfilment, he embarked on his educational career.

Professional identity is not independent of personal identity. On the contrary, it is part of a more global identity of commitment. Alberto, since he began his educational career to become a teacher and finally a principal, has combined this with voluntary work (non-profit) in associations that work with children and adults at social risk: women at a socio-cultural disadvantage, Roma children, children and adults from underdeveloped countries, among others. Such experiences forge a high degree of commitment to social justice, which, in the future will translate into the exercise of leadership for social justice. Authors such as Carpenter Bradley et al. (2017) argue that there is a need for a social justice identity in school leadership. Therefore, to alleviate inequalities, Alberto believes in individualised education (focused on the specific needs of each student) that is globalised (based on action-oriented learning methods and practices within a global whole). He advocates the project method and explains the benefit of starting from the students' interests and issues that emanate from everyday life, turning them into managers of their own learning. With this, he points out that his transformational leadership has a clear instructional aspect and that it identifies him, moreover, as an effective leader. In general, the successful educational practices developed by Alberto to achieve educational improvement are in line with the dimensions of successful leadership outlined within the ISSPP project (Gurr 2015).

This leadership, with a high degree of personal integrity, sensitivity and adjustment to one's own context, is in line with the work of Gurr, Drysdale, and Mulford (2010), who states that successful leadership is put into place when the principal starts with the needs of the student body based on a given school context. This is Alberto's professional involvement engine. Giving children a voice is Alberto's purpose. This vision of education is also in line with the study published by Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) in which great emphasis is placed on giving students a voice as a means of empowering the student and fostering their maximum potential. The informant has shown how there is an ongoing struggle

for respect for children, in line with Tonucci (2015), arguing the need to be sensitive to children's needs and strictly comply with their rights (1989). This methodological and philosophical approach has permeated through Alberto's identity by the experiences of the past. For him, the negative experience he had with principals during his school years made him reflect on the principal he wanted to be. That is, a devoted principal, committed to the educational community, who carries out his work through dialogue, respect, and trust, all of which are characteristics that, according to Bolman and Deal (2008) are typical of an effective principal.

In addition, and in accordance with the findings of other research, this case reveals a commitment to consensus decision-making, which is attributed to shared leadership (Harris and Jones 2019). Moreover, compatible with the proposals of Dempster (2019) with regard to disadvantaged communities, or the more general proposals of Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), in this case we can see how in their professional development as school leaders, their action to build a community of professional practice is particularly relevant, increasing their social and professional capital, fostering actions of a communal nature and expanding networks of influences and opportunities through professional and social interactions both within the school and between the school and the community. In line with the work of Bottoms and Fry (2009), the principal may experience a number of obstacles to developing his leadership and achieving school transformation, such as lack of support from the administration. For Alberto, one of the most notable problems was the difficulty of forming a stable teaching team, along with the struggle to ensure that all members of the teaching staff follow the same educational philosophy. In addition, for Alberto, the administration does not provide enough material and personal resources to have adequate schools that cover all the needs of the students, so he himself has had to take on the challenge of overcoming these limitations. In line with this, Bolman and Deal (2008), consider that a successful leader looks for the right people to occupy the right positions, as well as being capable of solving conflicts within the political framework.

In conclusion, we believe that the Valderrubio school can become a model for schools that are struggling to achieve success. The principal and his team have achieved good academic outcomes, thanks to pedagogical and distributed leadership, in spite of the socio-economic and demographic difficulties that surround the school. For Alberto, the

greatest success lies in the fact that the children grow up happy and recognise their own potential, all of which has been achieved by adapting the methodology to the environment, addressing the real needs of the students, as well as creating a favourable school environment. A commitment has been made to strengthen relations in the centre and to include the people within them. The school is a source of pride, but for the principal, the most important thing is to think that all children deserve the best education, provided by the best teachers. That is why the administration is being asked to help meet the school's needs and to continue researching on the issue of successful leaders. Leading by appreciating the voice of the child, and respecting children whilst also harnessing their full potential, should become the most important purpose of educational institutions.

NOTE

1. Broadly speaking, *niñólogo* could be regarded as someone who is a student of child behaviour (a childologist).

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ARTÍCULO 8

Principal's leadership based on social and pedagogical commitment: Giving voice to children in a vulnerable Spanish context

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Abstract

This case study investigated the strategies used by a school principal who successfully leads an educational centre in a vulnerable context. This article aims to explore how a school in a vulnerable context can be strengthened by the actions implemented by the principal and his leadership based on social and pedagogical commitment. Initially, the key aspects identified by the school community in the principal's identity were analysed, and subsequently compared with their own perception to understand their professional development and leadership practices. The findings identify three main strategies that have been implemented to improve the school climate: (1) Building relationships and involving the community in educational change. (2) Enhancing cooperative work and the joint vision of the school: professional learning communities. (3) Give children a voice, respect children and fight for equal opportunities. Comprehensive keys to professional practice are drawn from these findings.

Keywords

Identity, Educational leadership, Principals, Student success, Social justice

Introduction

Various studies at the international level have indicated the critical importance of school leadership in educational improvement (Hallinger and Heck, 2010; Harris and Jones, 2019). In this paper, we describe the case of an educational centre of special vulnerability, which was been transformed into a reference centre of educational excellence thanks to the leadership developed by the principal and his professional team.

The essence of this transformation, as we will discuss in later sections, was born from giving a voice to the students of the educational centre. Delving further into significant works in this area, authors such as Fielding (2004) or Rudduck and Flutter (2007) offer

us a particular approach of educational inclusion through the empowerment of students. In particular, this approach is committed to a horizontal school organizational structure in which students play a key role. In this way, the transformation towards a better school is only possible through their critical, reflexive, and participative spirit. Accordingly, the values that support the basic pillars of the school must be felt and internalized by the various members of the educational community, and this can only be made possible through social involvement and collaboration in their establishment (Hoffman- Kipp, Artiles and López-Torres, 2003).

Husu and Tirri (2007) argue that schools could be considered as communities in which educational practices ferment from the common thoughts and ideals of teachers, contributing to their social and community implications. Thus, the school becomes a professional learning community, where professionals in the centre support each other and sustain the creation of innovative ideas. However, the achievement of a true professional learning community is determined by the professional context in which teachers work (Stoll et al., 2006). The identification or (dis)identification of educational professionals with their professional context is a key aspect. Thus, a supportive and safe school will foster greater social and pedagogical commitment on the part of the teaching team (Shulman and Shulman, 2004).

Within this framework, a figure of special relevance emerges when it comes to coordinating and energizing professional groups within the educational community. The principal is a key figure in ensuring that the professional team is guided towards ways of working based on shared leadership and joint commitment and support (Cruz-González, Lucena and Domingo, 2020). Research has indicated that this type of leadership contributes to a positive school climate (Bosker et al., 2000) and greater professional and job satisfaction for teachers (Griffith, 2004; Hallinger and Heck, 1998). Consequently, this research presents a real case of transformational leadership through the figure of the school principal and his professional team, who believed that the greatest driving force for change was the students themselves.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AS A DRIVER OF CHANGE IN VULNERABLE CONTEXTS

School and society are intimately connected. For this reason, in social contexts with special vulnerability, there is an even greater need for a school with a more just and equitable vision, transforming this into priority elements for action for achieving educational success. One of the keys to school leadership concerns its horizontal structural organization, distributed between all members of the educational community (Elmore, 2000). As advocated by Day et al. (2010), the development of this leadership requires a common vision that is shared by the professional team regarding the goals of the school. With this approach, school leadership aims to transform professional practices through a collaborative and pedagogical professional culture. Several authors attribute the term “transformational leadership” to this approach, emphasizing the process that seeks to achieve a professional culture based on values of dialogue, commitment, mutual support, and empathy (Day, 2000; Ninković and Knežević Florić, 2016). This type of leadership serves as an enabler for the development of practices that achieve a truly democratic sense of school (Marshall & Olivia, 2010). In this sense, research also points to the importance of sustainable leadership which strives for collective and activist engagement, building a diverse school climate that promotes innovative ideas and successful educational practices from a learning communities approach (Hargreaves & Fink, 2012).

Contexts of special vulnerability are understood as those that, due to various circumstances (including context, location, and socio-economic level), are in a disadvantaged situation that directly or indirectly influences the quality of education and learning of students. Specifically, in the Spanish context, these educational centres are classified as challenging contexts with performance difficulties. The characteristics of these types of centres often stem from the scarcity (or even absence) of certain favourable conditions at home, including appropriate nutrition, healthcare, and parental support. Several studies highlight the importance of educational leadership and professional support and commitment in this type of context (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008; Copland & Boatright, 2004). In fact, authors such as Fullan (2001) argue that leading in a committed way in a challenging context has effects on different dimensions of the centre such as the morality and professionalism of the teaching staff and the educational outcomes of the student. Hence, the figure of a good leader in a disadvantaged context is essential. Portelli and

McMahon (2004) emphasize that in this case, a good leader must have a great critical and social conscience in the face of inequalities, using diversity as an opportunity and not as a restriction. Furthermore, they must walk together with their professional team to achieve an education for all and among all, for which collaboration and professional involvement are key. Similarly, in Rudduck's research (2007), the school encourages the participation of everyone in the improvement process, particularly the students. It would be a matter of giving them a voice so that they participate in the daily management of the centre, and that they are able to choose what and when to learn, whilst playing an active role in their own learning.

Constructing a leadership identity in challenging contexts has been the focus of analysis in several studies (Cruz-González, Pérez and Domingo, 2020; Jo, 2014; Nickens and Washington, 2016). In fact, authors such as Spies and Heystek (2016) explain that in order to achieve a consolidated identity in difficult contexts, it is necessary to have an educational community that shares common visions of work and educational goals. Jo (2014) agrees on this and highlights the importance of a professional culture based on teamwork principles. Therefore, professional ways of working, professional expectations and professional support are crucial elements for the development of successful educational practices in a plural and diverse context. This is argued by Carpenter et al. (2015), indicating that leaders who work in challenging contexts must be updated on the new social realities and adapt their educational practices and strategies to the educational environment. It could be said, therefore, that this leadership provides the educational community, and particularly the students, with an adapted and safe environment, which would serve as a source of support for dealing with the academic and emotional challenges of the school (Elmore, 2000).

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

By focusing our analysis on the importance of the principal for educational success in a difficult context, our study aims to evaluate the visions and perceptions held by the rest of the educational community regarding a leading principal who has achieved educational success in a particularly difficult context. Analysing the professional identity of leadership of this principal and exploring the meanings that the rest of the community attributes to

him, could be useful to guide the professional practice in these types of contexts.

This study is part of two main research projects. The first of these is the ISSPP, an International Project of Successful School Principals, which includes the analysis of different cases at an international level about schools that have achieved educational success. The second of these is the National Research, Development and Innovation (R+D+i) Project, 'Identity of school management: Leadership, training and professionalization'. Based on these projects, our study aims to examine the construction of the professional identity of the principal working in this school. In particular, we will place special emphasis on the vision that the rest of the educational community has of him along with identifying the most significant professional and identity values that form the basis of his work (Ritacco and Bolívar, 2018). In this regard, the main objectives of this study are as follows:

- To analyse the characteristics of the professional identity of the principal as a school leader in his school community.
- To study the strategies and initiatives carried out in the centre for the achievement of successful leadership in a vulnerable context.
- To extract comprehensive keys for professional practice

THE STUDY CONTEXT: SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

The educational centre analysed in this study is located in a rural village in Granada. The context surrounding the municipality is vulnerable, with a population of low socioeconomic level and families with economic problems and a high incidence of unemployment. There is only one educational centre in this municipality with about 300 pupils, which teaches pre-school, primary and the first two years of secondary education, i.e., children from 3 to 13 years of age. Many of the students who attend the school are covered by aid plans offered by the autonomous community of Andalusia due to the scarce social and economic resources of their families.

Despite the difficult circumstances of the school, it is a centre that stands out educationally, achieving outcomes that are above the average of other schools in the same contextual circumstances, particularly after the appointment of the principal analysed in this

work. Before the transformational leadership and educational practices of the analysed principal were out in place, the school had not achieved these academic results. This improvement in educational results is recorded by the Andalusian Agency for Educational Evaluation (AGAEVE), which evaluates schools on an annual basis. In addition, the school has become a national reference centre, which is reflected in the numbers of awards it has received, along with the press releases that have appeared in newspapers and on television. We also note that the school is endorsed by the educational association Francesco Tonucci and promotes a model of school coexistence based on interpersonal relationships and emotional intelligence. Finally, the leadership style of the principal is one that promotes the involvement of the entire community and the municipality in the education of its children. In this way, collective and community activities are promoted from the school, the city hall, and local businesses.

Methods

This research was conducted through a case study (Stake, 2005), and using a qualitative methodology from an interpretative paradigm (Charmaz, 2004). Our aim was to study the professional identity of this principal, delving deeper into his educational strategies for success and inter-professional relations with the rest of the community. This case study explored the educational practices carried out by the school principal and his team and analysed the perceptions that the educational community held about the leadership identity of the school principal. This type of methodology allowed us to examine, in an integral way, the pillars that constitute the professional culture of the educational centre, along with the professional values of the team led by the principal.

SELECTION OF THE CASE STUDY

This research is part of two larger research projects: ISSPP and National R+D+i Project. For this reason, our choice of case study is justified by the selection criteria of these two projects. Thus, the school where Alberto works as principal is characterised by being a school of difficult performance, which presents educational results above the expected ones (based on its Socio-Economic and Cultural Index).

Within the Spanish educational context, and specifically in the autonomous community of Andalusia, this type of school is classified as a difficult performing school (Official Bulletin of the Andalusian Regional Government, Number 219, 13/11/2019). Another peculiarity to highlight is that these types of centres are always voluntary. This means that you can only work in them if you expressly request it. This, moreover, adds a special value to this research, since the professionals who constitute this educational centre, including the Principal himself, are people with a vocation and enthusiasm for building the foundations of a better education in an educational centre such as the one in which this study is framed.

Furthermore, and referring to another of the selection criteria of the projects that form part of this research, Alberto is considered by both his professional peers and the rest of the educational community as a successful pedagogical leader (Day, 2005).

DATA COLLECTION

Information was collected using in-depth biographical and semi-structured interviews between 60 and 90 minutes in duration, participant observation, and documentary analysis. This process took place between 2018-2020 and a mixed approach was used (Creswell and Clarck, 2011). Information collected through participant observation was captured in a logbook (Punch, 2012). In this notebook we collected all the impressions, feelings and relevant data that could trace a social cartography of the context surrounding the case study. The documentary analysis was based on different documentary registers and institutional writings of the centre.

Biographical interviews (Hopf, 2004; Fischer-Rosenthal and Rosenthal, 1997) were conducted with the school principal in order to access his life history and explore the personal, contextual, professional and/or circumstantial factors that shaped his identity as a pedagogical leader.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with various members of the educational community that constituted the school. Table 1 shows the various participants of the research.

Table 1 - Participants in our case study and type of interview developed with each one.

Source: Prepared by the authors

Interview type	Main topics of the interviews	Number of interviews	Participants
In - d e p t h biographical	History and biography of the principal Personal characteristics, professional values, and motivation Visions and goals Leadership role Initiatives carried out in the centre for educational improvement Challenges encountered in school management since being appointed Strategies used to respond to educational challenges	8	1 Principal
S e m i - structured interviews	Characteristics and identity traits that define the principal as a leader Initiatives developed by the principal and management team to achieve school improvement Leadership strategies developed in the school to respond to problem situations	2/3 to each participant	5 Family members 10 Students 10 Teachers 1 Therapeutic Pedagogy teacher (TP teacher) 1 Secretary 1 Councillor 1 Service staff 1 Councillor for Education and Culture 1 Guadalinfo* (digital literacy initiative) representative 1 Inspector

* Guadalinfo is the Andalusian public network of digital competence centres, open innovation, and Internet access, whose focus is to empower people (using ICT as a tool) to be the engine of transformation of their communities.

Table 1 illustrate that a number of key informants were purposively selected. Among those interviewed, we highlight families and students. In reference to the families, the voices of 5 representatives of the AMPA (association of parents and students of the school) were collected. As for the pupils, 10 pupils were finally interviewed. This number corresponds to ten representatives of the classes taught at the school (from 4 to 13 years of age).

The main objective of the semi-structured interviews with the different sectors of the school was to study the views and perspectives they showed towards the successful educational practices implemented with the arrival of the new principal, and how they defined their professional identity.

In addition, participant observation and documentary analysis were carried out throughout the two-year fieldwork period. During this time, notes were taken in the “logbook” on the various significant verbal and non-verbal elements that emerged (Punch, 2012). Furthermore, we also recorded the impressions, sensations and intuitions following the interviews and conversations with the members under study. This was extremely useful as a complementary way of gathering information that is difficult to collect through dialogue, but can be perceived through participant observation.

DATA ANALYSIS

The process of data collection and analysis was carried out using reflective deepening cascades (Kelchtermans, 1993, 2016). In this way, the interviews were carried out progressively in order to reach a better understanding and to validate the information collected by the informants themselves. To this end, at the end of each interview, we analysed the information collected and later, in the next meeting, we delivered a conceptual map with the main ideas expressed so that the informants themselves could validate our analysis of the discourse. This also served to introduce the topic to be discussed in the subsequent interview. Further, the observations recorded in the “logbook” provided a potential means of triangulating the information collected in the semi-structured interviews (Bolívar, Fernández and Molina, 2005). For this purpose, we considered the voice of all members of the educational community who could provide us with meaningful information.

When all the interviews were done and we had completed our logbook, we dumped the data into the qualitative analysis software Nvivo 12. The observational records were introduced into the program through “memos” that complemented the discourses collected during sequential interviews. This analytical process was based on basic principles of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), in which the priorities and significant issues of the participants emerged from their own discourse.

Findings

In this section we present the results of our study. From the participants' narratives we identify the main identity characteristics presented by the principal Alberto as the leader of the educational centre. We focus on the perceptions of the principal himself and those of the external agents, based on Dubar's (2000) definition of identity for oneself and identity for others. Finally, we identify the strategies that the principal employs to achieve successful leadership in the challenging context that surrounds him.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND OF THE PRINCIPAL

Alberto was born in 1978 into a family of lawyers and was raised by his grandmother during his early years. His school life was characterised by a traditional educational system which has resulted in bad school experiences mainly due to his worries and impatience. He began his university experience at the law school, following the tradition of his family, but very soon he became aware of his true vocation, to help others from an educational point of view. He then began his educational career, combining this with volunteer work with people at social risk and of high vulnerability. In the faculty of educational sciences, he encountered a new world, a teacher crosses his path, believing in his potential, and he falls in love with books and methodology, guided by his new friend, Francesco Tonucci. At the end of his university years, he passed the competitive examinations and secured a teaching contract. He then began his journey that took him from one educational centre to another. The first destination (a rural context with a very low ratio) allowed him to start using innovative and project-based methodologies. Other schools he passed through as a teacher and which use project-based methodologies encouraged him to continue on

this path. Finally, in 2008, he arrived at his current centre, a school with considerable socio-economic needs and rooted in traditional methodologies. His mission at that time was to change the school's vision towards an educational model of quality and equity. For him, respect for children must be at the core, taking into account their time and interests. In 2016, he decided to become the school's principal, because he realized that being a principal and a pedagogical leader allows him to more easily reach all his students, his classmates and the entire educational community. From here, with the implementation of globalised, active, and emotional methodologies, the school saw significant improvements in the educational and emotional outcomes of its students, whilst achieving recognition in the form of numerous national and international awards.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PRINCIPAL ALBERTO'S IDENTITY AS A SCHOOL LEADER

Through an extensive process of interviews and participant observation at the school, we were able to have contact with various agents and members of the educational community. For all the interviewees, the principal is a person who is well prepared on a human and professional level to exercise his leadership role in a vulnerable centre. They also stated that the principal has a clear purpose, and all his actions revolve around this purpose, that is, to transform and improve the school and the surrounding municipality by taking into account the voice of the whole community, and specifically that of the child. This fact was observed throughout the research process. It was possible to observe how the children based on their autonomous compartments and the ease with which they were able to decide on classroom and center issues. According to his colleagues that we interviewed, the principal also has a high capacity to empathize with people. This capacity allows him to be a person who knows how to listen and transmit his opinions to others. The school councillor defines him as a good leader with communication skills.

For the service staff interviewed in this study, Alberto gives them the confidence to be able to express their concerns and needs. In a similar vein, for Teacher 2, Alberto is a pedagogical and affective leader. She states that people define him as a "priest", because he is the person to whom everyone goes to for confession.

According to the families interviewed, Alberto has become an essential part of the centre.

This was expressed in their words, but also in their non-verbal language. Their expressions of joy and excitement about the center's new educational approach were palpable in the atmosphere throughout our research stays. They have noticed a significant change in the last few years since Alberto became the principal. «Now he leaves the doors of the school open, and for any doubt or problem, he is always available». For Mother 1 the most important thing is that Alberto transmits happiness to their children, since he makes them want to go to school every day because he offers them security and have total confidence in telling him anything that happens to them. The participating students, for their part, defined him as a trustworthy person to whom they can tell all their secrets. They respect and admire him at the same time.

«Alberto is good to us, he always asks us how we are and if we need something, he helps us» (Student 4)

«Alberto is more than a principal, because he is like a mother who shelters you and helps you. With him, school is also my home» (Student 6).

The narrative of our informants also reveals how there is a critical point of inflection in the principal's professional practice. For all the interviewees, the principal projects an image of identity that is more strongly connected to the teaching role than that of the administrator. For Alberto, this means an internal struggle of identity duality (teacher-principal).

«I think it is hard for Alberto not to dedicate himself fully to teaching, his role as a teacher is very present, but it is clear to him that from above (management) he can help classroom teachers transform themselves and fulfil their work duties» (Teacher 1)

The school community defines Alberto as a person with the capacities and aptitudes required to successfully lead a school. He has clear ideas of educational improvement and fights for them. He is a hard-working person who knows how to listen to others in order to identify their needs and to empathize with them, thus providing them with the necessary support. These perceptions held by the school community are shared by the principal himself, that is, he perceives himself as he is perceived by others.

«I consider myself a pedagogical leader committed to society who wants a change in the school and who starts from the fact that the most important thing is the children. I have decided to be a principal so that I can influence everyone in my educational team, but it is also true that I would like to spend more time in the classroom. Moreover, I always try to listen to everyone and respect their opinions, and then give my view before reaching a consensus. I always put myself in the other person's place, whether it is a parent, a student or a colleague» (Principal).

EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES CARRIED OUT AT THE CENTRE FOR SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP IN A VULNERABLE CONTEXT

A. Empowering relationships and involving the community in educational change

The principal aims to achieve an educational change in his school that is for everyone and between everyone. He is a socially committed leader who works for, from, and in social justice. He believes that social justice goes beyond the equitable distribution of goods and understands it as the representation of all individuals and their opportunity to be included in society. He explains that at present, discrimination exists for a multitude of reasons, including gender, ethnicity, culture, ability, and sexual orientation, and that the school has a fundamental role to play in reducing these social inequalities. For this reason, Alberto promotes collaboration and continuous interrelations between school, families and the municipality, since for him this symbiosis makes it easier to fight for inequalities and offers the opportunity to educate children together. Alberto aims to involve the whole community by raising awareness of the need for educational and social commitment. He is guiding people in a depressed context, so that they have the necessary skills to enable the municipality to prosper and to live in harmony.

To achieve this proposed goal, the principal encourages the establishment of relationships both within and outside the school community. In this sense, the interviewees have informed us about the process of fostering school-municipality relationships.

«The school has been completely open to the citizens, whereas before the school and the local council worked separately. But now it is joint and collaborative work.

The pupils come to the town hall naturally and propose activities, and we also go to the centre and so all year round, at the level of culture, education, health, and sport, we touch on all areas and work on them together. We implement a model in which we involve all the institutions. This means that we all come together and work along the same lines» (Councillor for Education).

«Since Alberto became principal, barriers have been broken down and we are looking for points of collaboration. The children go out two days a week during school hours to have their classes in the Guadalinfo center. This is a very powerful union, a very unusual case. He is very keen for me to join in with the school, to work in collaboration with them and for the children to come here... and he has a very clear idea of how he wants to transform the society of this municipality» (Representative of the Guadalinfo centre)

Therefore, the Guadalinfo centre, apart from allowing the children to continue learning and developing their technological capacities, offers its resources to the school. For example, it allows the centre to use the 3D printer in its facilities, that is, for the children to use along with their teachers. All this has been possible due to the good relations that the principal has established with the rest of the community and the municipality. This model, which involves the entire community in the teaching-learning process, encourages families to be motivated, open and participatory. This is particularly true in disadvantaged contexts where expectations are low. The families themselves and their colleagues inform us of the change they have noticed in the school in recent years; they perceive how the doors are always open for resolving any questions and problems, and how the principal is always available.

«Alberto's office is always open to students, parents, and the entire community. No parent can say that the principal's door has been closed at any time and for any problem he/she may have. I think that if a principal is not 100% available to the educational community, he is wasting his time in a centre» (TP teacher).

This fact indicates the principal's social commitment, but also shows how this has been transmitted to his team. Specifically, the principal intentionally seeks to ensure the

wellbeing of the general community over that of the individual. For the inspector, the team in general has a very positive attitude. They do overtime if they have to, and the teachers are very much involved in the school. This is reflected in both the results obtained by the school and the well-being of the community.

B) Promoting cooperative work and the common vision of the school

The principal has a clear vision of the school and wants the whole community to unite and walk in the same direction (Teacher 2). He starts from the premise that everyone — individually and collectively — has something to contribute. For him, each teacher has “a kind of superpower” that makes them work cooperatively to complement one another (Teacher 1). For this reason, the principal establishes roles and functions for the different teachers in order to ensure that all are motivated in their roles and can be receptive to following the line of work that has been mapped out.

«Since the arrival of the principal, every year, when distributing the courses, we analyse the profile of each teacher, that is to say, we try to place a person who adopts a more innovative methodological approach with another person who uses a more traditional methodology in the same course in order to achieve a balance and to ensure that they inspire each other. Or, for example, if we have a specialist in social sciences, he continues to teach that subject throughout the whole year. In this way, it is easier to establish the methodological approach that will be maintained throughout a particular course» (TP teacher).

Alberto has restructured the school, promoting collaborative and collective work among teachers, in order to improve educational practices, which has had an impact on the teaching-learning process.

«In this centre, the principal has strengthened the professional learning communities, allowing us to all learn from each other, whilst each teacher feels more committed to achieving the proposed goals» (School councillor).

Motivating teachers to work along the same lines and to fulfil certain common purposes requires the principal to have a profound knowledge of people and the activity to be carried out. In this sense, Teacher 2 speaks of the great capacity that Alberto has to know the people around him, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, while at the same time understanding the methods he uses.

In addition, for the principal, the most important aspect is to delegate functions to his management team, exercise shared leadership to dilute the workload, and make everyone feel involved and a necessary part of the changes. In the school, all decisions are made in a consensual manner and everyone has something to contribute. The interviewees speak of the good relationships, explaining that they routinely meet every week to talk about how the week has gone and if any kind of problem has arisen or how it can be solved. They give each other their insights and reach agreements.

Finally, the participants detect a barrier that the principal faces in his quest to implement changes in their school. There are people who do not want to change because it represents an extra effort that they are sometimes not willing to make (School councillor). Generating a change in a teacher's educational path means beginning to train and rethink their schedules and plans. But the principal, together with his or her team, makes the teachers aware of this, and this is spread by observing good practices and good school results.

C) Give children a voice, respect children, and promote equal opportunities

The school's focus is on the children. The child is always the priority, above parents, colleagues and everyone else, according to Teacher 1. Alberto is very clear about this and his enthusiasm infects us all with respect to this vision of respect for children and for “making” children happy (Teacher 2). For the principal, the rights of the child must be strictly respected, and he argues that the school is precisely the place to ensure that such rights are upheld.

Both the principal and the rest of the school management team always think of the student. They do not focus exclusively on what they learn, but they instead emphasize the

importance of acquiring human values and channelling their emotions. They are concerned about their future and their well-being. The most important thing for the principal is that all the children manage to reach the goals that are within their capabilities. This is even more important in a school in a vulnerable context with low expectations on the part of the families and the students themselves (Service staff)

The principal, as well as arguing that all teachers have something to contribute, applies this logic to the students. Each child is unique and has strengths that should be recognized and reinforced. This is why he advocates a project-based methodology in which children become the protagonists of their own learning. Through this methodology, children are active, work autonomously, and are able to organize and plan their own tasks. Together with his team, the principal has managed to improve the teaching-learning process and to contribute towards the children being valued and their voices being heard. «The idea is to get the children to be heard. We encourage them to think and be reflective, thus contributing to the growth of the school» (School councillor).

Incorporating this method of teaching has an impact on the learning process and this is reflected in the good results of the students. «We are above average compared to other schools working under similar conditions in Andalusia» (Teacher 3). This is also reflected in the happiness of the students (Teacher 1). They are aware that Alberto fights for them and respects them and this attitude is reciprocal. Teacher 3 explains that the relationship between the principal and the students is excellent and not only on a curricular level (in terms of content and learning), but also on an emotional level. This fact was observed by the researchers when the children went to the headmaster's office very happily to discuss their exploits, problems and achievements..

«When something bad happens to you, the principal helps you, and when something good happens to you, he helps you to celebrate it. My son has always described Alberto in this way» (Mother 1)

In the same vein, the participants report that the principal visits the classrooms whenever there is time, in order to ask how the children are doing.

«Or, for example, he goes to the class to say that the school has been given 500 euros in subsidies and the children are going to manage them. And also, when we do a project, he goes to say that we have done very well» (Teacher 1)

«We decide in a children's assembly what we spend the money on, we get together as class delegates and ask all our classmates what they want to spend the money on. For example, last year we decided to spend the money on a fountain for the playground» (Student 9).

«We love to have assemblies to decide on our interests» (Student 8).

As well, the principal himself tells us how the professional practices developed in the school have to be adapted to the needs of the students and particularly those difficulties that are associated with a disadvantaged context. For Alberto, agreeing with his colleagues, the hardest part is the attempt to alleviate inequalities and compensate in some way for the disadvantages conferred upon students by their socioeconomic situation. “The mission is that all children, despite their family circumstances, can have the same opportunities and be able to “become what they want to be” (Principal).

«We try to compensate for the difficulties faced by the students, particularly family problems. For example, children who are not used to going to the cinema, going to the museum or having a table to study at home. Thus, we have established support spaces in the afternoons so that they can come and have a place to feel safe» (Principal).

«There are days when you say I'm going home, but I don't even know what this kid is going to eat. So of course, in the end, it's the hardest part of the management and you can't see it. It's very hard for a family to tell you that they don't have enough to eat. And although it's true that the SYGA plan exists (a support plan that is available to low-income families) it doesn't reach all of those families. From school, we try to compensate and alleviate the inequalities by offering breakfast, lunch, and snacks”» (Principal).

Discussion

This study analyses the professional leadership identity of a principal, who, with his arrival at the school, has transformed a vulnerable school context into one full of opportunities and challenges. In this section we discuss the findings gathered, along with other relevant research in the field of studying the professional identity of leadership and school improvement in particularly difficult contexts. The success of a school that serves children from pre-school to secondary school in a vulnerable context with scarce resources is one of the most significant features of this case study. This, in fact, is a rare occurrence in schools working under such circumstances. Therefore, documenting this school case in which good results are obtained allows us to recognize that it is possible to achieve success in disadvantaged contexts, through certain strategies and initiatives developed by the management team, and specifically through the good professional practice of the principal who acts as the school leader. This educational success does not come from a single actor but is instead a challenge assumed by a group of professionals who, with their dedication and commitment, have helped to create a better school.

Our first purpose was to investigate the professional identity of Alberto, the principal of the school under study. The findings revealed that his professional identity presented values of professional commitment, horizontality and social justice to achieve school improvement in his school. Other studies with similar purposes had results of interest and in line with ours. For example, with the study by Mullen and Patrick (2000), in which a principal through his successful leadership practices manages to reform and improve an at-risk urban primary school. This school presented similar difficulties to those we found in our research. It was characterised by low expectations of students and families for their children's education, high unemployment and domestic violence. Studies also highlight the importance of a school principal who bases his or her professional practice on principles of social justice, collaboration and democracy (Cruz-González, Pérez and Domingo, 2020).

As for the approach to the study of identity in our manuscript, it is in line with the thoughts of Dubar (2000), who points out that the identity perceived by oneself cannot be dissociated from the society of which it is a part and therefore will be determined by the view of the agents who surround it, that is, "the others" in their daily work. Moreover, this

identity is in continuous change and is understood as he adds Robertson (2017: 786), 'as a result of learning processes and reflections about oneself'. From this author's point of view, it should be emphasised that in this process of identity construction, emotional management, decision-making and interpersonal relationships are of great value. In the present study, both perceptions have been taken into consideration (of the principal himself and that of the others) to obtain a complete view of the identity of the principal and to understand how he behaves during the course of his professional practice. This sequential process of identity construction marked by key events, critical incidents and interpersonal relationships has also been considered. The results reveal how the principal, in the eyes of the informants, is highly trained for his duties as a principal, based on the power of communication and the capacity of empathy. Following his appointment, he restructured the school organization by adopting a horizontal approach that is, involving everyone, leading with others and not over others. According to his professional colleagues, this marked a point of inflection and an increase of his self-concept and self-confidence (Leithwood, Day et al., 2006).

Our second purpose was to study the strategies and initiatives carried out in the school to achieve successful educational leadership in a vulnerable school. The findings explain that Principal Alberto was characterised by the development of educational practices oriented towards pedagogical and inclusive purposes. From his role he sought to project his own values of commitment to social justice and horizontality in his school. For Hallinger (2011), this approach is an indispensable requirement for the development of leadership for learning. In turn, the principal of this centre is perceived as a support figure who provides security and shelter to all members of the school community. This observation is in line with the proposal put forward by Robertson (2017), who argues that effective leadership requires an organizational structure that provides a safe school climate and fosters a positive environment.

The principal and his team have been adapting to the different circumstances and needs of the school by developing professional practices that consider the vulnerable context that surrounds the school. In reference to this, authors such as Carpenter et al. (2015) argue that educational leaders who carry out their work in difficult contexts should employ analytical strategies with respect to their school environment and involve students

through initiatives adapted to their social and educational needs. At the same time, as Hallinger (2011) argues, it is necessary to spend time analysing and contextualizing the educational environment before developing strategies and initiatives aimed at school improvement. For this reason, the leadership developed by our principal tries to minimize, through his actions and management strategies, the inequalities and inequities that his school may present, improving and adapting the conditions for teaching and learning to the needs of his own students (Robinson, 2011).

As our results show, the appointment of the principal as an educational manager of the centre marked a before and after in the progress of the school towards educational improvement. In this sense, we are speaking of transformative leadership (Ninković and Knežević Florić, 2016) based on professional principles of dialogue, mutual support, professional commitment, and empathy. With his arrival, the principal oversaw an improvement in the school in which the students played a major role, and for this, giving voice to the students was essential. Authors such as Rudduck (2007) and Fielding (2004) agree that this approach is necessary to achieve educational improvement, since they reported that involving the students in their teaching-learning process promoted a greater bond and commitment of the students towards the educational centre. In contexts of particular vulnerability, such as the one presented here, this becomes even more necessary. For this reason, this article highlights the value of giving a leading role to these “forgotten” groups by making them participants in their own teaching-learning process through granting autonomy and offering globalised methods, coinciding with the studies of Tonucci (2015) and Rudduck (2007).

Moreover, the results show us how the principal, during his adaptation to the environment, presents a high degree of social commitment in the fight to enable the school to work for social justice. In particular, he created an environment in which all people are involved and represented, particularly those groups that had been socially excluded. These results are in line with the reflections of Murillo and Hernández-Castilla (2014) and Young (2011) who argue the need to fight and lead for social justice. From this premise, the principal has adopted a strategy of promoting the creation of professional learning communities (Bolam et al., 2005), thus encouraging an ongoing collaboration between the school, the families, and the community/municipality.

In the struggle to promote cooperative work and a shared vision within the school, the principal has established lines of action to encourage the spread of this common vision based on social commitment and the importance of respect for children. These initiatives, which emerge from the interviews, and which are associated with defining a vision and direction, empowering teachers and building relationships both within and outside the community, are in accord with the key dimensions for successful leadership defined by Day et al. (2010). Furthermore, we have been able to identify strategies used by the principal to involve others in decision making, as shown, for example with meetings where decisions are made by consensus, or by voting or delegating functions to other team members. These characteristics are associated with shared leadership practices (Gronn, 2009; Harris & Jones, 2019). Finally, our findings have revealed the principal's fight for children to be respect, that is, to give them all the attention and to respect their learning times, in line with the thoughts of Tonucci (2015) & Rudduck and McIntyre (2007). To this end, a project-based methodology has been established in the school, which encourages autonomous student work, movement, participation and activity. This strategy is designed to empower the students and thus enhance the expectations of the families and the students themselves, expanding their social capital.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

This study presents a unique case of a school that, in the face of adverse circumstances, achieved educational success based on principles of equality and social justice. Whilst qualitative and more human and social research brings with it a number of potentials, there are also limitations to this approach. For example, whilst case studies are a useful methodology for conducting research on professional identity and school leadership, their findings cannot be generalized or compared with other contexts or realities (Denzin, 2009). The results reported refer to the unique reality faced by a particular school. The reason for choosing this case was that it allowed us to fulfil the specific requirements of interest for our research project. One of the common limitations in a case study includes the fact that it is not always easy to find a unique and singular case that is available for study and shows commitment to the research (Stake, 2005). In our research process, we were fortunate to find such a centre, since the educational community was also committed to participating in our study. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that this study

and its implications are contextualised in a Spanish scenario, which presents characteristics that are different to those of any other territory, and it is therefore important to take this aspect into account.

There is a large body of research on the factors that lead to the achievement of better schools in challenging contexts (Chapman & Harris, 2010; Hopkins, 2001; Potter, Reynolds & Chapman, 2002). Research indicates that methodological innovation and inclusion (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006) are both key in this case. We believe that whilst these studies can point us in the right direction, we also argue that all of these achievements are the consequence of a professional team that is committed and united by the same cause, and therefore, analysing these leading professional teams and their identity is of vital importance and interest to us (Day, Elliot, & Kington, 2005).

Further, the findings of our study demonstrate the importance of having a school principal with a consolidated professional identity oriented towards horizontal values and social justice, particularly when dealing with difficult contexts. In recent decades, many studies have focused on the functions of school leadership (Cowie and Crawford, 2008, Schleicher, 2012), and to a lesser extent on the more identitarian aspect (Crow, Day & Moller, 2017; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003).

Considering the voices that constitute the school context has provided us with a wealth of information in this study. In future studies related to professional identity and leadership, we recommend the inclusion of these perspectives and narratives, as they are not only important for triangulating information from different professional agents, but also complete the bi-dimensionality that is inherent to identity, based on Dubar's ideals (2002). Finally, another purpose of this study was to establish comprehensive keys to professional practice based on the results extracted. We consider that from the analysis of this singular case, we can extract key factors that help us to guide future practices of educational action. The school under study is located within the educational centres of interest for the ISSPP project. Thus, analysing its professional practices can guide us towards key strategies and actions that can be implemented in other contexts with similar characteristics to the one studied here. Empowering students was one of the successful ways that this school developed as a means of creating educational practices towards a democratic school.

- The results revealed that in order to achieve educational success in this context, it was essential to establish intra-inter school relations, involving and making everyone participate in the education of future generations. In particular, opening the doors of the centre to the community, spreading enthusiasm and involving everyone so that everyone will be the winner of a better school. This is why future educational professionals who seek to create a better and more equal school could take this issue as a starting point. In line with Robinson (2007), this could provide the basis for developing an inclusive and supportive environment at the school.
- In contexts of cultural plurality, diversity must be transformed into richness. For this reason, the different needs of the student body are converted into opportunities to address diverse themes in the most connected way, giving a voice to the child himself (Tonucci, 2015). Listening to the child, encouraging him/her to be the protagonist of his/her own learning, is a motivating element that reaffirms him/her as a part of his/her school and reinforces his/her sign of identity. The case analysed in this study, conceives and works from this perspective to delve deeper into the educational needs of students and go into a close and respectful in its most emotional and personal dimension.
- For the protagonist of this study, Alberto, being a principal was a way to convey the feeling of togetherness and unity in his professional team. Leading through the school's organizational hierarchy was never an option. Leading with his colleagues, however, was the basic premise that underpinned his professional activities. For this reason, we consider it key that in the search for educational improvement, the school's professionals should dream together. That is to say, they should create a joint vision of what they want in their school, aims that should be based on the voices and ideas of everyone. Only by doing so can they feel that they are participants in the goals to be achieved.

CAPÍTULO 7.

OTROS RESULTADOS: RECONSTRUCCIÓN IDENTITARIA

ARTÍCULO 9

It All Starts Today: Stage Portrait of a Leader for Social Justice

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Abstract

Leadership research focused on social justice recognizes the critical role played by educational leaders in mobilizing discourse and achieving social justice in schools, particularly those leaders with consolidated identities committed to social justice. Therefore, this study seeks to explore, from a metaphorical analysis of the contents of the film “It All Starts Today,” and the identity of a principal who exercises leadership for social justice. We will analyze what is an inspiring portrait and model of overcoming situations that are, unfortunately, real and current, and we will conduct a conceptual review that integrates the implications of our analysis. For this purpose, a thematic analysis was carried out from the film using units of meaning. The results reveal the reconstruction of the principal’s identity, from identity as a manager to an identity as a leader for social justice, showing us the limitations and barriers faced during the process, and, finally, the main characteristics of a principal who fights for the improvement of his school through social and community commitment. The film offers a good example of how to carry out a strategic case study for the training and development of school leaders.

Keywords

Identity, Leadership, Principal, Head Teacher, Social Justice

Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development includes among its goals the fulfilment of human rights, among which is the right to education for all without exclusion. In this scenario, encouraging education by, for, and in social justice plays a major role (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017). Therefore, societies should be committed to the prosperity of democratic schools that fight for equity and inclusion, since education in schools is a powerful tool for promoting social change and reducing inequalities. Along these lines, an increasing number of academics argue that in order to address inequalities, principals acting as educational leaders should be aware of social justice issues and strive to meet the

needs of all students (DeMatthews and Mawhinney 2014). In particular, these are key figures in the struggle and mobilization of the discourse and practice of teaching for justice and equal opportunities (Potter, Torres, and Briceno 2014).

At this point, the concept of “leadership for social justice” emerges (González 2014; Muriillo and Hernández 2014), the purpose of which is to encourage school leaders to achieve more equitable outcomes for all (Blackmore 2006). This type of leadership is developed by assuming the differences between people as an opportunity for enrichment and improvement, and not as a disadvantage or a source of discrimination. However, we should not ignore the dilemmas inherent in this type of leadership (DeMatthews 2018). Thus, the tensions, challenges and dilemmas associated with school practice require consideration, which leads to the emergence of a more critical and radical perspective of social justice leadership by determining the specific personal and local dimensions of social justice that need to be recognized and applied in a given educational context (Sarid 2020). This entails a greater capacity for dialogue and interaction (Shields 2004), as well as the need to expand spaces for distributed leadership to other community agents (Bertrand and Rodela 2018).

In this process of professional performance, Crow, Day and Moller (2017) highlight an identity based on social involvement and ethical commitment as a key factor. In this sense, the focus is on the construction of a professional identity adjusted to social commitment, along with the necessary radical transformation of the concept of professional performance of leadership for social justice. Recent years have seen an increase in the number of studies on these identity constructs of principals acting as leaders committed to society. Focusing on the complex concept of professional identity (Dubar 2000), we argue that a principal’s identity is influenced by numerous factors; social, personal and contextual, which coexist in a continuous process of reconstruction.

Therefore, we present the need to eliminate today’s social inequalities based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, religion, and ability, whilst we also show how these inequalities can be reduced or eliminated through schools. In this regard, we will place special emphasis on the importance of the leadership figure when they act under the umbrella of leadership for social justice from this critical and contextualized perspective (Sarid 2020) with an identity committed to the socioeconomic and cultural context of their school.

In real professional practice in challenging and vulnerable contexts, leaders face great challenges and processes of personal and professional transformation, which must be analyzed and placed in the political and social conditions in which they operate (Berkovich 2014). More than ever, it seems necessary to study how educational leaders, in their contexts, pursue their social justice activism and the challenges they face (Ryan 2016). It is common to use films as a social portrait, using the provided material as an important catalyst for rethinking and developing a critical debate, comparing these portrayals with the reality and identity of a social group (Scull and Peltier 2007; Yoel 2004). In particular, there are important studies on leadership for social justice through the lens of texts and films, considering their moral purpose, human and environmental conditions, leadership practices and technical limitations (Wang 2017).

In this context, we consider that the educational social film, *It All Starts Today*, directed by Bertrand Tavernier in 1999, could also be a good source of analysis for this purpose. This film depicts the harsh reality of Western societies and the formidable socioeconomic disadvantages that are an insurmountable wall for many. Focusing specifically on a slum in a mining town in northern France, where unemployment exceeds 30 percent, it documents the life of a kindergarten principal, Daniel Lefebvre. The film shows us, through dialogue, the challenges that Daniel faces as a principal, faced with desperate families, and an education system based on capitalism, while showing his status as a teacher and principal devoted to children and the struggle for equality and social justice. Thus, this film appears to be a good source of analysis of the process of constructing and developing a successful social justice leadership identity in challenging contexts.

This study analyses the film from a narrative perspective, going beyond the role of mere spectator. It aims to analyze the identity of a principal who exercises leadership for social justice, from this inspiring portrait and model of overcoming adverse situations that are unfortunately real and current, and from a comprehensive conceptual review of the implications of this portrait. Our specific objectives were as follows:

1. To examine the transformation of the principal's identity to suit the context.
2. To investigate the forms of their leadership and the professional practices developed.
3. To identify the barriers and obstacles the principal faces and how to deal with these.

Method

There is a well-established line of film production that portrays and criticizes social reality and can provide relevant knowledge in the world of education and, in particular, leadership (Aoki and dos Santos 2020; Wood 2007). These studies use metaphor analysis and content analysis to examine leadership in depth. There is no universal model for film analysis, as there are various forms, techniques, and procedures (Aumont and Marie 2002). Rather, the researcher is responsible for developing and adapting the method according to his or her study purposes. In this case, in which we focus on analyzing the construction of the identity of a principal who acts as a leader for social justice, we have established a methodological strategy based on existing trends in qualitative research. To inquire into an identity is to delve into the deepest part of a person, for which there are both narrative (Bruner 2006) and (auto)biographical methods (Bolívar and Domingo 2019), which are key tools for achieving these specific purposes (Bolívar, Domingo, and Fernandez 2001). Through the narrative, reflexive, and biographical exploration of the audiovisual and cinematographic discourse, we try to unravel the personal and emotional characteristics, the factors, and influences, along with the obstacles and barriers that characterize the film.

Similarly, in order to grasp the full meaning of the message of social criticism that *It All Starts Today* wishes to convey to us, a thematic analysis was conducted based on film analysis and the units of meaning (Brisset 2011; Delponti 2007). These are units of content around situations, milestones or circumstances that behave like descriptive metaphors (Aoki and dos Santos 2020) or “culturemas” (Luque 2009), which, for the collective under study, are highly illustrative and significant for rethinking this reality from the very actors or agents that represent and project this reality (Delponti 2007). Such metaphors go beyond the sequence or plot, the senses, relationships and links between the film sequences and the identity evolution of the character analyzed.

The design of the film itself, whose narrator is the protagonist, facilitates its analysis by resembling in-depth biographical interviews that are typical of case studies (Lapoule and Lynch 2018) and life stories (Moriña 2017). The audiovisual discourse of the film allows us to go beyond the stories and narratives of the principal, allowing us to obtain information

about other characters, actions and events, focusing on the discursive element (within the content). At the same time, the film allows us to gain a more complete view with the aesthetic element, that is, shapes, plans, images, or colors. In the same way, the film genre allows us to obtain information from the various signs of communication between characters and contexts, based on the semiotics of the story (Piñeiro 2000).

The data obtained from the audiovisual discourse were transcribed onto paper, thus facilitating the handling of the development of the narrative. For this, all the information was dumped into nvivo12 qualitative analysis software, which allowed us to encode the written film discourse. Thus, the analysis is oriented toward codification related to the capacity for resilience of the protagonist, who is a school principal in a vulnerable context where he leads under the umbrella of social justice. By focusing on the expression of his feelings, emotions and attitudes, we can take advantage of the power of cinema as a means of rethinking reality.

Results

The following are the results of the thematic analysis of the film *It All Starts Today*, gathering sections and images extracted from the stories of the film. The results are structured into three main parts. In the first part, we present the social and school environment in which the main character of the film works as a principal. In this first section, the principal's performance as a good principal-manager is described. Following this, we describe the key moments, personal milestones or leitmotifs that lead to a change and reconstruction of identity by becoming aware of the surrounding reality. Third, we present the principal's transformation to a leadership figure who bases his work on the pursuit of social justice, revealing the features of this new type of school leadership for social equality.

FIRST IDENTITY: LEADER-PRINCIPAL

We are located in the 1990s' in a small village on the outskirts of Northern France. Throughout the narrative, the principal shows the challenging situation faced by

the population of the village on a daily basis, mainly due to the high unemployment rate caused by the mining crisis. In addition, other problematic situations typical of marginal industrialized people are also shown, such as abuse, alcoholism, vandalism, mistreatment or family breakdown. Further, images, conversations and scenes that show the desperation and lack of hope for the future are highlighted. Young unemployed families are shown, who have no hope of finding a better life, and consequently raise their children in the same hopeless environment.

In spite of the social environment described above, the school becomes, for the students, a place of refuge from the harsh reality that surrounds them. This is Daniel's primary contribution as a school principal. Many of the images and scenes are focused on showing children playing, jumping, working, and running in the playground and in the classrooms. The film shows a mixture of classroom and school scenes, in which images and scenes of assemblies, globalized learning and acquisition of autonomy predominate. However, in the first part of the film, one can see a traditional school in which the principal seeks to improve from an administrative, judicial and economic perspective, that is, improvements in terms of material and personal resources. His concern is with obtaining grants and bureaucratic aid. He wants to improve the school, not only through social change; but rather from changes external to the school through administration and social assistance, without extending internal support networks.

For Daniel, in his first stage, he could be described as a good principal-manager and a good teacher who seeks to improve his school. But his vision is to promote himself professionally. This can be deduced from a conversation with his life partner, in which he informs her of his concern about leaving his school in the best possible way and making it work, but claiming that he sees his future beyond a marginalized village, and a life in a "major" school in the big city, in Paris. In the same way, you can also see how he is concerned about the low performance scores given by the inspector and how this will negatively influence his future career advancement. This leadership identity, which encompasses that of a managerial leader, who looks for a superficial improvement of his school and focuses on self-interest rather than social interests, will evolve throughout the film. As a consequence of events suffered, he questions his leadership role, which leads him to re-construct his identity.

IDENTITY RECONSTRUCTION: KEY MOMENTS, CHARACTERS, MILESTONES AND LEITMOTIVS

The film presents Daniel's life from a personal and professional point of view. From a personal perspective, it reveals key aspects of his life that have influenced the construction of his identity. Daniel comes from a struggling and humble family that has managed to survive in this harsh mining region. «Thirty years ago, my father was crawling along a mine shaft, the slag heaps rising up to the sky with their black peaks like inverted holes. Only the crazy climb up there and the innocent» (poem read by Daniel). Daniel, faced with this hostile environment, decides to continue the struggle but from the most powerful position of authority, education.

Becoming a teacher, and later a school principal, is not welcomed in his family. This is reflected through similes throughout the story. «This coffee tastes like mud...(Daniel); it's the coffee your father drinks, it's not teacher's coffee, it's miner's coffee» (Mother). In addition, there are licenses in the film that makes one reflect on the bad relationship that Daniel has had with his father and brother for years. In this sense, Daniel has been forging his identity in the absence of protection and respect from his father. This aspect can be translated into the protection that he provides to his students. In contrast, we see Valeria, his partner, who becomes very supportive during the difficult events he faces every day as a principal and as a person. This figure reminds us of the human need to belong to a social group and the need for support when facing problems and tragedies.

From a professional point of view, we can observe Daniel's development as a principal and his identity reconstruction through key moments, characters, milestones and leitmotifs, which make him aware of the harsh reality that surrounds him. In this sense, the principal realizes the serious situation in which his students live, children who do not eat, who do not have a house, who do not have a coat, and at this moment, his motives (until now concerned with promotion) change and he realizes that what is really important is the struggle for social justice. At this point, Daniel embarks on his most difficult journey. He begins to pursue social change in the school and seeks help from the administration, his peers, and families. His identity changes from one of principal-manager to a leader who fights for social justice.

It is during this process of searching for networks that an awareness emerges of the barriers and limitations that exist, one of which is related to the passivity and conformity of his own colleagues. The following is an excerpt from a conversation that Daniel has with another fellow principal on the way out of a meeting with inspectors. This dialogue reflects Daniel's position, which is to fight for equal opportunities, and that of a principal who throws in the towel in the face of the devastating contextual reality.

What do you want us to do? We are not the emergency services, but school principals, if you take care of the extreme cases, you neglect the others (Fellow principal). So, do we throw half of them away? And with the others, we'll see. The garbage will blow up in our faces because it won't stop growing. There are many children who are on the edge of the abyss, who are ignored...it is a matter of listening to them, of looking at them... (Daniel)

Similarly, families themselves pose a barrier by their indifference to the education of their own children. Social and childcare services are another key factor for improving education, but for the principal and the sector itself, there are not enough personal and material resources. The film also shows the inability of politicians to deal with the serious social problems that exist within the community. Added to this, there is the figure of the inspector, who, in the film is portrayed as a person outside the school who passes by once every so often and gives teaching lessons using technical terms, without first having any contact with the students. «Who is this gentleman? (Mother), that's the inspector, the big boss» (Teacher). The film criticizes this figure and argues the need for inspectors with pedagogical skills and a desire to improve the school.

All these limitations make Daniel realize that he cannot expect anything from anyone, that he has to be the one, together with his team, who fights for his school and for his students. His aim is not for a better school, but that the children eat, learn, and that the school becomes a community. This is the moment of change when the principal returns to his school as a transformational leader and the moment when for him *It all starts today*.

IT ALL STARTS TODAY: SCHOOL LEADERSHIP FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

The reconstruction of the principal's identity towards one that fights for social justice is reflected in the principal's commitment to his community. In the second part of the film, a socially committed man is revealed—one who fights against the material and moral misery of families and educational agents, facing the precariousness that surrounds him and sometimes assuming roles outside of education. The principal presents personal and professional characteristics that provide him with an adjusted and positive identity of himself, which translates into good professional performance. His love of education and commitment to social justice for the youth lead him to continue working outside of school hours; going to family homes, confronting the administration, or buying food vouchers to continue his social work outside of the school. In this way, there is a before and after when it comes to confronting families, the administration, students and their co-workers. From a cordial and then reproachful manner, he goes on to view the advisor as a collaborator in achieving improvement.

Daniel, with this similar sense of community, takes scrupulous care of the relationships between classmates. Advocates a good relationship between the members of the school and how such movement in the same direction leads to an improvement in the attention paid by the students. These relationships are based on trust and respect, and the film shows us continuous meetings between the principal and all classmates, in which they express their concerns and share ways of fighting all the challenges with which they are faced. This collaborative work becomes more necessary in a context of special difficulty where problems go beyond social limits.

For Daniel, and as can be seen in the film following his development, the school has social responsibilities that go beyond objectives and contents. The school must be a refuge for children, a transmitter of life models, of social values and the one in charge of creating an awareness in favor of a culture of peace. Learners must acquire strategies to transform society and solve problems peacefully.

Along these lines, the film projects images that reflect the principal's mission to accompany students, to help them “climb a mountain,” to offer them his or her hand and to guide them

in the right direction. In short, the school must be the place where happy children can be seen, without the presence of the problems that surround them.

Finally, the film puts emphasis on a party where the color, music and smiles of children and families are predominant. The school must be a place led by resilient people who are able to overcome tragedy and move forward with strength and hope. The principal, who in the face of adversity has moments of weakness, is capable of recovering with the support of his family and colleagues, but above all by the desire to continue fighting to transform society, through a form of education that is committed to equal opportunities.

Fig.1 - Daniel helps the Children to Reach the Top of the Mountain
Source: Rodríguez and Segovia



Fig. 2 - The School of Colors: Symbolizing Hope and the Meaning of School

Source: Rodríguez and Segovia



Discussion

This film, as can be derived from other works (Mullen and Patrick 2000), faithfully recreates the challenging situation faced by a school principal in a slum consumed by poverty and hopelessness. The film shows the social portrait of a leader who, despite the contextual and social situation around him, leads from a perspective of social justice, fighting for equal opportunities. It all starts today, is as an appropriate lens through which we can reflect on social needs, educational policies and the power of the school, and is particularly relevant as a source of analysis for rethinking the role of school principals. Therefore, the present work aimed to examine the construction of the identity of the principal protagonist of the story and his adaptation to the context, to investigate the forms of his leadership and professional practices for social justice and, finally, to identify the barriers and obstacles faced by the principal exploring the way in which he deals with such challenges. The findings obtained focus on three dimensions.

SCHOOL MATTERS

In conclusion, school matters, and it is the most important driver for change and improvement in society. If schools take up the challenge of achieving social justice and try to alleviate inequalities, they can help change lives. In contrast, a traditional school, in which there are no real implications on the part of the educational community and which lives on the margins of political, social and contextual circumstances, will not, according to Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017), produce changes in the students, and thus, in society. This fact is highlighted in the conversation described in our results, where the protagonist has a discussion with another fellow principal. Daniel reproaches him for failing to fight for all children equally, and his colleague replies that those “below the curve” are already lost and they cannot waste time neglecting others. Here is an example of the controversial and dualized nature of the school context, and is something that its principal discovers and rethinks, even prioritizing his professional decision-making towards leadership so that his school fights to promote equal opportunities. As discussed in the studies by Murillo and Hernandez-Castilla (2014), education can be a double-edged sword, depending on its use. On the one hand, it can enhance social inequalities and on the other hand, it can become an eradicator of such inequalities.

At the same time, the film shows how the school becomes a refuge for children, mainly those in vulnerable situations. Along the same lines, Garbarino et al. (1992) analyze children at risk and how to deal with the consequences of community violence and reveals the need for schools to become places of safety and opportunity for students. The proposal shown by *It All Starts Today* is congruent with the need to establish predictable, structured and safe environments for children, translating into the improvement of children’s natural resilience and helping to mitigate the long- term consequences associated with living in a marginalized and dangerous context. These reflections are in line with the thoughts of Paulo Freire (2001) and Tonucci (2015).

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP ESSENTIAL FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Our analysis of the film highlights the idea that leadership and school management are essential for social change and educational improvement. This is a central issue that is compatible with the recommendations from international research and reports (Day et al. 2011; Hallinger and Heck 2010; Harris 2013; OECD 2019). The role of a principal is essential for change toward social justice (DeMatthews and Mawhinney 2014). They are responsible for guiding and supporting colleagues and encouraging collaborative and cooperative work (Garbarino et al. 1992). They also become the liaison figure between the school and the community, as shown in the work of Goldfarb and Grinberg (2002). In both cases, a leader is studied who encourages authentic participation in promoting social justice in a community center and how this also has an impact on engaging the local community in such authentic participation.

Moreover, school principals can assume leadership from different perspectives, and there are differences between leadership for management and leadership for social justice, as the film analyzed here makes clear. In traditional schools, which are the model from which the film starts, managerial leadership predominates, centered on bureaucratic and administrative issues. An innovative school, however, which emerges throughout the course of the film, fights for equality, and leadership based on educational and social justice predominates (Bolívar 2010; Oplatka and Arar 2016), which is also shared with the rest of the teaching team. These leadership practices can sometimes be affected and guided by external or internal influences. In this sense, in the film analyzed, it can be seen how the inspector himself encourages the principal to keep all the administrative issues in order, even if this means neglecting his pedagogical duties. This fact is reported in the work of Bolívar and Ritacco (2016) in which the impact of the Spanish model of school management on the professional identity of school leaders is analyzed, citing the administrative barriers presented by school management and the way in which these have an impact on their professional development. This work also highlights the existing limitations in terms of the absence of communication and coordination between the school and administrative bodies.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MOVING TOWARD THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONSOLIDATED IDENTITIES

It all starts today, shows the life of a principal and how his or her professional development takes place in response to the identity crises brought about by complicated contexts, which imply that in order to face and overcome these challenges there must be a gradual reconstruction of the principal's identity towards a model for social justice. As shown in Dubar's (2000) work, identity is constantly (re)constructed over time. This construction is influenced by various social, political, and contextual factors that occur in a person's life. For the same author, identity is formed not only for himself but also for others. As shown in the film, there are events, key moments and people who have an impact on the journey of the protagonist, which determines his identity. Following Cruz, Lucena, and Domingo (2020), who analyze through a systematic review of the literature, the main factors that affect the construction of a school principal's leadership identity, context can be highlighted as a key influential factor. Thus, the vulnerable context that surrounds the school in the film becomes a determining factor in the construction of Daniel's identity and in his professional performance directed towards the struggle for social justice.

Finally, *It All Starts Today* offers a good example for conducting a professionalized and strategic case study for the training of school managers. The film emphasizes the power of the school and the importance of interrelationships, particularly the joint and collaborative work of the school with other administrations of the municipality, along with other fundamental aspects that highlight the need for leadership in decision-making and conflict resolution. *It all starts today* shows how principals can act by maintaining a high level of leadership in the pursuit of social justice without being swayed by archaic models entrenched in social and educational policy pressure. The film shows us that there are paths a principal can follow that lead to a system of education that is more equitable and of a higher quality. An education that, far from being easy to achieve, requires commitment, consistency, and perseverance.

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ARTÍCULO 10

Fighting windmills: a female principal's story during COVID-19

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Abstract

The arrival of Covid-19 had a major impact on all sectors of the population, especially education. The closure of schools and later the health measures adopted forced schools to a rapid conversion towards a digital scenario. Faced with this crisis situation, the existence of school leaders became even more essential. For this reason, in order to face this challenge, it is necessary to establish a school management that moves towards horizontality, social justice and professional commitment. Using a qualitative approach, we offer the story of a female principal who leads in a challenge context. The findings reveal how fighting windmills was one of the predominant sensations throughout this period. This manuscript also describes the different leadership strategies developed. It also points out the different supports and obstacles experienced by the professional team of the school. Finally, we discuss new horizons within the field of school leadership in times of crisis.

Introduction

This article explores the impact of the Covid-19 on the conditions of a local public school and the performance of a headmistress and her team in Granada, Spain. The principal 'Dulcinea', maintains a focus on the school's priorities in a culture of inclusion, where work and effort is being directed by policies of school improvement and greater family responsibilities. The study is based on research that focuses on the analysis of leadership strategies and the promulgation of inclusion actions by the direct, her team and the rest of the educational community, during a period of rapid change such as the current pandemic and which is of interest to research on leadership in contexts with similar socio-economic and political conditions. The conditions that accompany the centre are characterised by the problematic situations of the students, which are characterised by socio-cultural disadvantage and family nuclei with difficulties, especially caused by culture shock. There are problems of coexistence and a great absenteeism and premature abandonment, especially affecting girls.

Since the health crisis caused by the SARS CoV 2 virus, these problems have increased considerably. This is why it is considered of vital importance to carry out this type of study, in order to analyse the impact of the pandemic on schools. In addition to exploring the strategies used by schools in general and by the management in particular, in order to try to alleviate emergency situations. In this way, authors such as Hallinger and Heck (2010) or Llorent-Bedmar, Cobano-Delgado, and Navarro-Granados (2017), defend school leadership carried out by school principals as a priority for school improvement. Harris (2020), indicates in his studies how school leaders responded and how the distributed and collaborative leadership actions carried out by principals were key points in tackling the health crisis.

This article, which focuses on a specific case study, is part of a larger research project ISSPP (International Successful School Principalship Project). ISSPP is the largest and most sustained network of research on successful school leadership and has among its main objectives, to conduct case studies of principals who lead effectively throughout the world. These studies are particularly valuable in the current situation that accompanies us, in order to overcome situations of great difficulty, stress and great socio-economic and cultural disadvantages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership in schools in times of pandemic

In the face of new situations or paradigm shifts, Kuhn (2012) asserts that the key for leaders is to move forward but without rushing decisions. It is true that in the face of the crisis that has befallen us worldwide, leaders have had to act very quickly, foreseeing at the same time as carefully guarding against the consequences of the decisions taken (Netolicky 2020). Nonetheless, and based on the same author, leadership in times of crisis is uncertain but the drive to overcome obstacles and challenging moments must prevail.

School principals continue to lead their schools but have had to change their practices in a very short time. They have moved to lead through a whole screen, leading from their school but with a reduced number of staff and students and interacting with parents

and members of the online community. In this sense, Covid-19 has had an impact on all sectors, but in education, leaders have been forced into a very painful 'separation' from their student body (Harris 2020). A successful school leader encourages others to follow and move in the same direction and educational sense. Achieving this purpose by connecting to a computer or reducing hours of face-to-face meetings to virtual ones is more complex, but not impossible. The leader, therefore, must make more effort to keep the relationships and the community alive (Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins 2020). Despite the difficulty and the titanic efforts on the part of the principals and other school leaders, education has not stopped and there is a positive response to the challenges caused. In this panorama of crisis, there is still little scientific production, but some authors already point to certain patterns of leadership that are flourishing: distributed, collaborative, and networked and community leadership (Harris 2020). A leadership that needs the joint support of families and the community.

COVID-19 is not affecting everyone equally: leadership for social justice

School leaders focus their efforts on ensuring that students find well-being at all levels and leadership for social justice is advocated (Murillo et al. 2010; Ryan 2006). Multiple international studies have found that the economic gap significantly affects particularly vulnerable groups of students, such as students with low socioeconomic status, ethnic minorities, impoverished social classes or immigrant students, in low school achievement and lower rates of school success (Lalas and Morgan 2006). In the context of the health crisis, school leaders have become more aware of this sometimes camouflaged reality surrounding individual family situations. Covid-19 has clearly exposed the inequalities and inequities that already existed in education (Harris and Jones 2019), but which have been exacerbated.

This situation is compounded by the digital divide (Lai and Widmar 2020) with the result that many students have been left without access to education. The disparity in access to digital resources (such as computers, mobile phones or tablets) and the internet has become apparent. It is precisely these particularly vulnerable groups that the digital divide has most deeply penetrated (Gillis and Krull 2020; Stelitano et al. 2020), thus increasing educational inequalities across the board. Therefore, the health crisis is not affecting

everyone equally, in terms of social, economic and health contexts, but undoubtedly in the educational context. Efforts, as Harris (2020) states, are now focused on achieving the inclusion of all students in education systems around the world. In this scenario, school leaders must make efforts to direct their actions towards proposals for social justice.

PARTICULARITIES OF THE SPANISH CONTEXT

Although the health crisis has left its mark on every part of the world, it can have an impact on each territory with different characteristics. Similarly, the leadership actions taken by school leaders vary from place to place depending on the health and political measures imposed by governments. This article, based on a case study of a principal, focuses on the Spanish context. Therefore, it is necessary to offer some particularities of leadership, school management and the impact of Covid-19 in this particular context.

School management in Spain, as some authors argue (Bolívar and Ritacco 2016), is characterised by a particular focus. Managers are not permanent; they are teachers who apply for the job by fulfilling a series of requirements. After 4 years as principals (which can be extended), they return to their teaching posts. This teacher-teacher transition, as Carver (2016) states, means that they sometimes do not feel identified with and committed to the managerial position. In the face of disconcerting situations, of great changes and high levels of stress such as those caused by the health crisis, it is necessary to have leading principals with strong and adjusted identities to achieve school progress and success (Bolívar 2019). Therefore, this situation that characterises Spain, may be affecting the good performance of school leadership when it comes to managing schools in the face of the different problems caused by the pandemic.

The study on delayed inequality and the digital divide in Spain carried out by the UGT (2015), indicates that Spain is behind Europe in homes with Internet access, behind the European average and in fourth place within the so-called EU-515. This fact has been increased and consolidated by the virtualisation of schools. This fact has been increased and consolidated by the virtualisation of schools. Not all families have technical support or the same opportunities to access it, especially the most vulnerable families (Fernández, Moreno, and Guerra 2020).

Methodology

The aim of this research was to analyse the impact that the Covid-19 generated in an educational environment in a challenging context. More specifically, the experiences and strategies used by the school management in the face of this health crisis situation will be studied.

Due to the eminently qualitative nature of this study, a single qualitative case of study was selected (Stake 2007). As Yin (2009) points out, case studies are the most appropriate for studies that seek to take into account the context, thus allowing for global and broader explanations, interpretations and visions of the object of study (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2010). Through this methodology, the aim is to analyse both the impact generated by the Covid-19 and the different leadership strategies carried out in a Challenging centre.

The selection of the case was decided on the basis of some fundamental requirements that had to do with its relevance to the purpose of the study and the degree of exemplarity. Likewise, the criteria established by the international project within which this study is framed (ISSPP) were taken into account for the selection of informants and the study context. In this sense, the chosen centre presents educational results that are higher than expected according to its socio-cultural context (based on its ISEC1 and the results of the AGAEVE2).

Furthermore, this centre is characterised by the development of leadership for social justice as the principal herself and her professional team point out.

DATA COLLECTION

Information was collected through semi-structured and in-depth interviews with the principal of the centre. The interviews were carried out in a process consisting of 3 cycles of interviews, which were articulated one above the other (Kelchtermans 2016). Due to the health situation, the interviews were carried out through a virtual platform (Google Meet). In this sense, each interview consisted of two phases. A first phase focused on examining the previous interview with the aim of validating, clarifying and deepening

different aspects. And the second part focused on conducting the semi-structured interview. The following table shows the thematic categories and subcategories that were established in each of the interview cycles Table 1.

DATA ANALYSIS

The collection and analysis process were carried out by means of reflective deepening cascades (Kelchtermans 2016). In this way, as mentioned above, the interviews were carried out in different cycles with the main objective of understanding and validating the information collected. Once the interviews were conducted and validated by the principal, the qualitative analysis software Nvivo 12 was used. For the data analysis, the principles and procedures of the Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967) were followed. Through this approach thematic focuses emerged from the participant's own discourse. Finally, these interviews were also subjected to an analysis using the basic principles of the institutional development processes of a school (Van de Ven and Poole 1995; Domingo and Bolívar 1996). This analysis allowed us to obtain a general overview of the leadership actions and strategies developed in a school to deal with each and every one of the obstacles encountered during a pandemic crisis.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is important to mention the ethical issues taken into account throughout the process of developing this research. In this study, we have considered the respect and consent of the people participating in the study to be key. At the same time, we respect the anonymity of the participants and to this end we have created a pseudonym to refer to the name of the principal: Dulcinea. On the other hand, emotional skills of empathy, respect and active listening were always present in the process of collecting information (Moriña, 2017). In our process of analysing the information, the dialectical validation of the participants and the respect and honesty when dealing with professional experiences were fundamental.

Table.1 - Thematic categories for information collection.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed later to facilitate their analysis.

Block 1. Personal data and experience	History of the principal, professional career. Years of teaching experience. Years of management experience.
Block 2. Educational and social reality of the centre	Number of students, lines and courses that the centre offers. Socioeconomic level of the educational centre Educational level of the centre, in terms of school results. How they faced the months before the start of the course. The beginning of the course.
Block 3. School management in Covid's time	The development up to the present day. Personal and professional feelings regarding the expectations at the beginning of the course and its course to date. The most critical moments. Important people. Challenges. Strategies used to coordinate the whole centre.

Findings

This article focuses on the leadership and inclusion strategies carried out by an educational centre that is difficult to carry out in times of coronavirus. This manuscript is part of a larger research project called International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP), which aims to examine case studies of different schools across the globe that develops effective school leadership. Dulcinea has been teaching for more than 33 years. Specifically, she has been working as a school principal at the centre under study for 4 years. Before delving deeper into Dulcinea's professional work, we consider it very important to understand the context in which she carries out her profession.

For reasons of respect for anonymity, we will not give the name of the centre. However, we will describe the characteristics that surround this school in order to place the readers in the context of the research. It is a public nursery and primary school located in one of the most depressed and marginalised areas in the heart of the city of Granada. Due to its special situation of vulnerability, the centre maintains a close relationship with the city council, which supports different socio-educational projects promoted by the school.

In general, the school's students come from immigrant families, the most predominant nationalities being African and South American. This situation generates the coexistence of three different religions: Muslim, Catholic and Evangelical. Despite this, most of the students come from North African areas, so Spanish is not their mother tongue. This aspect hinders the achievement of educational objectives due to problems related to communication.

Students' families are characterised by their low socio-economic and cultural level. The main activity in which the school families are engaged is the service sector, an area that was severely affected during the pandemic. In addition, their conceptions of education and their language problems made it very difficult for them to establish adequate communication with the school during the period of confinement. Moreover, in the midst of the pandemic, the economic problems of these families made it difficult for their children to develop a suitable online education due to the lack of technological resources. In addition to this complex scenario, some families at the centre interpreted the closure of educational centres during the pandemic as the start of a holiday. All these factors created a challenging situation for the educational professionals at this centre.

Finally, it is worth highlighting some characteristics of the school's teaching staff. The school is composed of Spanish teachers between 26 and 60 years of age. Most of the teaching staff are temporary teachers, i.e. teachers without a permanent position in the school who change location every year. As for the more senior teachers, they have a permanent position, but hardly have any experience in technological resources.

Throughout this section, we gather the story of the experience of a centre in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. This story shows the lights and shadows experienced by the entire educational community during this difficult stage, and also how they developed leadership and inclusion strategies to overcome the adversities that occurred. To facilitate the analysis of the results, we have highlighted three key moments during the Covid-19 health crisis.

THE ARRIVAL OF CONFINEMENT: MARCH AND JUNE

The decision of total confinement of the Spanish population led to the closure of all educational centres. This was news for which nobody was prepared and schools had to be reconverted into totally virtual centres. This decision was prolonged during the months of April, March and June, and caused all schools to be forced to close their doors temporarily.

According to Dulcinea, the first few weeks were really complicated, as uncertainty led them to continually reinvent themselves. She admits that at the beginning they acted on the spur of the moment, as nobody was prepared for this situation. She stresses the importance of the help of the city council in these first moments. Thanks to their continuous and joint collaboration, they were able to provide school materials and digital resources to those students who lacked economic resources.

«At the beginning we only started distributing support, revision and reinforcement material, as we were confident that this situation would be temporary. As the days went by, faced with the seriousness of the situation, we realised the importance of reinventing all our teaching, going on to digitalise ourselves by using different media such as zoom, google meet, youtube, gmail, etc»

The use of new technologies also had a strong impact on students, as not all families had sufficient digital resources for the development of new teaching:

«Many of my students did not have laptops or the internet, and even at home conditions were not good enough for them to live, let alone learn»

The principal stresses that these were very difficult times, and that thanks to the help of the professional team at the centre and other institutions and associations, many actions were taken to ensure that no one was left behind. Some of these were totally decisive in guaranteeing the access of students to virtual education and consisted of the provision of digital, written and support material. At the same time, the provision of internet was also key in ensuring that everyone could be present in the online classroom. Thanks to the efforts of the school and the municipality, this was possible.

However, Dulcinea highlights the great efforts that most families make to achieve an educational improvement of their children. Nevertheless, she also indicates that in this situation a great handicap is the poor communication between the centre and the family. The headmistress points out that the lack of Spanish language skills that many families often have, sometimes makes it very difficult to establish a solid bond and easy understanding with them. Before the pandemic, this complex situation was tried to be solved with added effort from teachers and families. When Covid-19 appeared, this became a major concern as it was even more complicated to establish continuous and effective communication.

«I think the pandemic situation made everything worse. For example, many parents don't know our language and although they made an effort, it was really difficult to move forward without real contact»

Furthermore, the principal also points out that the confinement was considered by many students and families to be the end of the school year, which, together with all the aforementioned, led to significant educational problems. According to Dulcinea, before the pandemic, school results were higher than expected in the area. However, with the advent of Covid-19, educational outcomes fell, affecting, above all, those with already low scores. Dulcinea emphasises that the most affected courses were the initial ones, which did not adapt to the online modality, leading to worrying results.

«The confinement affected, above all, the first and second grades where students were being initiated in reading and writing. Imagine how complicated it is for parents who do not know any Spanish to help their children to write or read in this language. Now we have started the year, and this deficit is noticeable. The teachers of these

levels tell me how complicated it is to start the programme due to the great deficit that many students have».

Despite all this, Dulcinea highlights above all, the huge economic impact that the health crisis has generated in families. As Dulcinea relates:

«Economic difficulties have increased due to the Covid-19. Most families were involved in building, in the service sector, in caring for the elderly, or in housecleaning, ... and unfortunately this is where the pandemic is striking hard. In addition, a large number of families have no basic formal education, and this prevents them from being able to expand their possibilities of changing their usual employment. The pandemic has left many of our students' parents out of work, and this has been terrible for supporting housing and basic needs such as food and hygiene»

These economic difficulties led, in many cases, to real food problems. According to Dulcinea, this situation was the one that most affected teachers emotionally, psychologically and personally.

«We cannot forget that we work with people, children, parents, families in general. And we knew that with this situation some of our families were going through a really bad time. They had real economic problems; some even had a lack of food. We couldn't look the other way»

Faced with this situation, the teaching staff decided to organise themselves to help those families in greatest need. With this action, says the director, a double objective had to be achieved. Firstly, and most importantly, to alleviate the problems related to nourishment. And secondly, to achieve a greater commitment from those families who were less concerned about their children's education and the school's life. The latter was essential especially at a time when families became the continuation of the teacher at their home. For Dulcinea:

«This experience was not only one of the most rewarding, but also one of the most positive during this very difficult time we have had»

ANTI-COVID PLAN, BUREAUCRACY AND UNCERTAINTY: JULY AND AUGUST

With the arrival of the end of the school year, a new period began full of obstacles and challenges for the management. In the summer, the central governments asked each centre to produce an anti-covid protocol so as to describe how their centre were going to adapt to deal with this health crisis.

Faced with this situation, Dulcinea describes moments of great fatigue due to the enormous workload. In addition, she also points out that neither the inspection nor the education administration lived up to her expectations.

«We finished the school year working between 10 and 12 hours, but in the summer, everything remained the same. There was a lot to prepare before the new year school started. We were asked to prepare anti-covid protocols for the return to school, to provide and equip the centre so that everything would be fine. But how? Nobody gave us any guidelines or instructions. And on top of that I knew that whatever I was doing, no one would supervise it»

The uncertainties and fears about returning to the classroom and the responsibility that was falling upon her characterised this period. Dulcinea adds that:

«I was afraid and insecure about not knowing if I was doing it right. It was really stressful and exhausting. Besides, I felt a lot of pressure, it was people's health that was at stake, and I am neither a doctor nor a health expert»

Both she and her colleagues experienced that feeling of fighting against giants that were like windmills.

«We were facing an invisible and unknown enemy. And to make matters worse, no one knew how to guide us in our actions»

Fig.1 - Main moments and strategies developed during the Covid-19 health crisis.

Chronology	Description	Milestone, Theme, Leitmotiv Or feelings and emotions.	Educational strategies developed to address COVID-19
12 th March 2020 to 22 nd June 2020	A state of alarm is declared, and the confinement of the population is approved. Schools in Spain are forced to close their doors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New technologies became a fundamental element of access to education. - Many school families have a lack of digital resources, access to the Internet and basic food and hygiene. - Communication difficulties with families due to lack of knowledge of the Spanish language. - Economic difficulties in many school families as a result of confinement. - Aggravation of the curricular gap of those students who are more disadvantaged or in lower grades. - Predominance of emotions of fear and uncertainty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - City Hall as a great support for the supply of school and digital materials and food. - Collaboration and union of the professional teaching team and school management. - Continuous virtual contact with families for monitoring students.
July and August	After the end of the course, a great increase in bureaucratic/administrative work. A request is made for the preparation of an AntiCovid-19 action plan with scarcely any guidance from the administration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Central governments ask schools for an adaptation plan for the return to school in September. - Lack of orientation and guidance for the elaboration of adaptation plan. - High workload and increased responsibility on the part of the management team. - Predominant feeling of loneliness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased job responsibilities by school management - Support from colleagues to answer, plan and elaborate all required administrative procedures.

<p>From 10th September onwards</p>	<p>Back to the classrooms. Return to the classroom mode in schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New health measures (social distancing, masks, ventilation, gels). - Lack of teacher training in new technologies. ▪ Lack of commitment from a small sector of teachers. - Predominance of feelings of grief and tiredness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of student coexistence groups with assigned teachers to avoid and minimize contacts in the school. - Restructuring of playtime and time spent entering and leaving the school to minimise crowding ▪ Preparation of the building to make it more sanitary. - Provision of sanitary and hygienic materials and of reminding of rules of social distancing. - Methodological adaptations to meet educational objectives while respecting health protocols. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training in new technologies for digital literacy of teachers. ▪ Distributed leadership and for social justice
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BACK TO SCHOOL: SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER

September arrived with the desire of a better reality. The new situation and the recent health regulations led to the development of countless measures to safeguard the health of the students. Dulcinea explains:

«We create coexistence groups of students with assigned teachers to avoid as much as possible the contacts between students from different grades. It was assigned to each group a different area of the as well as a different door to enter and exit the centre. In addition, we staggered the entrances to prevent family members from crowding the doors. We prepared with gels and mats; we closed and disabled some toilets»

However, Dulcinea reports that these measures were sometimes very difficult to carry out:

«Classes were prepared, furniture was provided, tables and chairs were separated. We tried to keep as much distance as possible. However, it is sometimes very difficult in classes with 25 or 30 students»

In addition, the principal mentions the key role played by nurses and health workers in the development of these measures. These figures were assigned to each centre in order to provide guidance on the necessary adjustments to safeguard the health of both pupils and teachers. In this sense, Dulcinea stresses the essential role that the health workers played throughout the pandemic, not only in the fight to safeguard the health of sick people, but also in other tasks such as those that they provided at the school. Despite this, the principal complains about the slow reaction of the bureaucracy in assigning these health workers:

«We had to have the health workers assigned before the protocol was drawn up. However, and again due to bureaucracy, they arrived once we had done so. In spite of this, their help was exceptional and very relevant, as it helped us to rethink some aspects and to be continuously informed of the advances in issues such as the transmission of the virus»

Dulcinea argues that another major challenge faced by the school was the methodological change. Until less than a year ago, the school was moving towards cooperative methodologies, with strong links between colleagues and participation. However, now hugs, displays of affection that involved contact were forbidden and it was even difficult to capture the happiness or sadness on the faces of the students because a mask was covering half their faces. Given this scenario, preparing new dynamics that would adapt to the stipulated measures of distance was, at the very least, a challenge. Furthermore, this health crisis has highlighted the fundamental role of digitalisation for both schools and teachers. The headmistress said that the lack of teacher training in this area was a major problem. In view of this, Dulcinea adds:

«Given the low level of digital literacy we had and the situation we were facing, we considered essential to make progress in this area. So, two teachers were trained throughout the summer, and in September we created working groups so as to train the rest of the teaching staff»

On the other hand, Dulcinea points out how they had to delete all the ephemeris from the school and only follow what was strictly necessary.

«On a curricular level ... things are going more or less well. But we have had to sacrifice a lot, we have had to abandon all those aspects that truly enrich the school and the students. For example, the Peace Day. We have focused on what is necessary, on exceedingly at least those minimum criteria for promotion»

Despite all the measures and efforts made, Dulcinea explained that she was still very afraid.

«I was afraid of another possible confinement, afraid of not being prepared, afraid of contagion from students or colleagues, afraid of not doing things right. But I also felt sorry, sorry to see the students separated and having to fight all the time to keep their distance or to put on their masks»

In spite of all this, Dulcinea explains how the entire professional team at the centre turned out to keep the centre running so that no one was left behind. The Headmistress observed the enormous commitment of the teaching staff to the school and the exceptional situation they were experiencing. She perceived the increased workload and, in some cases, significant sacrifices:

«There were colleagues who, despite their situation as people of risk, were still at the 'bottom of the barrel', when perhaps the most logical thing would have been to take a step back. And there were others who were about to retire and with the significant reduction in working hours, decided to sacrifice this reduction in order to help as much as possible. My colleagues not only showed their commitment to me and to the school management, but to everyone: to the families, to the students, to education in general»

However, Dulcinea stands out from all her colleagues, her management team and administration staff. For the headmistress:

«The work that my fellows did was not only essential to overcome all the problems that the Covid-19 was causing to the school, but it also became the main and best emotional and personal support that I had during all this period»

These colleagues not only fulfilled the functions that their posts required, but also assumed other responsibilities with the sole aim of keeping the life of the school going. In this sense, Dulcinea relates how they assumed extra teaching hours to replace sick colleagues, who were not replaced by the system's bureaucratic slowness; or how they assumed additional coordination tasks in the face of the laziness of other colleagues.

«This situation has shown me that teachers matter relatively little. No one asks, how are the teachers? The only thing that matters is having the school open at all costs, but that's it. We have had up to six teachers leave, we have reported that we could not cover the classes. But on an administrative level, we haven't received any help»

Despite this, the director also highlights the laziness of some of her colleagues:

«What has impacted on me the most is the lack of commitment from some of my colleagues, and above all I am struck by the fact that they tend to be the youngest. Either because they don't feel the school as theirs, because they consider that they know enough, because they are not willing to share, or because they are more aware of their curriculum... I don't know why, but it is true that these colleagues were not helping. I miss more committed young teachers, what kind of teachers will we have in 15 years' time? This situation has shown me that the centre is working and that we are overcoming this crisis thanks to the older teachers»

Dulcinea underlines a fundamental learning from this unfinished experience:

«This situation has taught me that education in general and teachers in particular are indispensable. We are essential to society, just like doctors, health workers or security personnel»

Finally, the findings presented reveal how throughout this health crisis, the school developed a series of strategies and initiatives so that no one in the education community was left behind. Figure 1 shows in a more graphic and visual way the different key events throughout this period and the leadership and inclusion strategies carried out by the school under study.

Discussion and conclusions

The purpose of this manuscript was to explore the leadership and inclusion strategies developed by a difficult centre that managed to deal effectively with the health crisis that occurred.

As reported throughout the findings, the educational practices developed in the school studied were based on a methodological (re)conversion towards an irreversible scenario due to this global pandemic (Harris 2020). To this end, the teaching team based their professional work on school leadership values, establishing a clear vision of what they wanted to achieve, in what way and what the role of each one of them was in order to

make this possible. Studies such as Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2020) argue that this leadership is key, even more in complex times such as the present.

Furthermore, Day et al. (2010) already indicated that one of the main key dimensions of school leadership refers to building relationships both within and outside the school community. Our findings agree on the importance of building networks and links with institutions and agencies outside the education community, which can sometimes be complex and can be a determining factor in the implementation of inclusion strategies in schools.

The school principal works in a school with adverse circumstances, which was hit hard by the appearance of the Covid-19. The economic and social situation in which most of the families found themselves was truly alarming. This is why the centre considered adopting measures that could respond to those educational and social needs that the pandemic had increased. Llorent-Bedmar, Cobano-Delgado, and Navarro-Granados (2017) stress that these initiatives are vital in order to guarantee basic social and educational rights in disadvantaged contexts. One of the great complexities when it came to overcome the challenge of adapting to the virtual mode of teaching at this school was the lack of knowledge of the language that many families had and the lack of digital resources to have access to virtual teaching. This made it even more difficult to achieve a true engagement with the students (Netolicky 2020), although thanks to external bodies such as the town council, the school was able to distribute basic digital resources for access to an online educational scenario. This also highlights another extremely important aspect, the duality between pedagogy and technology: although technology has taken on a priority role in the Covid-19 crisis, the human dimension is vital if education is to be truly effective and reach everyone (Hargreaves 2020).

Following this premise, the school studied developed different strategies to overcome the difficulties caused by the pandemic. Our findings set the scene for a school with a difficult performance, which thanks to the leadership exercised by the director and the rest of the educational community managed to address the difficulties encountered throughout the process. Thus, the redistribution of primary material goods, the valuing of cultural, social and personal differences and the participation of the entire educational community were fundamental values and principles of this leadership (Hargreaves and Fullan 2012).

In this sense, it is relevant to point out that these educational practices in a challenging context coincide with those leadership values developed by female school leaders. In fact, several studies suggest that in contexts of difficult performance, female school principals promote leadership strategies and actions based on collective commitment, mutual support and social justice (Armstrong and Mitchell 2017; Cruz-González, Pérez, and Domingo 2020; Murakami and Tornsen 2017).

Landing in the Spanish context, and as we have already pointed out in other sections, school management finds itself with a 'blurred' professional identity that is weak on most occasions (Ritacco and Bolívar 2018). Among other reasons, work overload can be one of the main ones due to the fact that school directors are often flooded with bureaucratic and administrative procedures which take away hours from other issues of a pedagogical nature. The results of our study coincide with this previous research, pointing out that even when what prevailed was a pedagogical and cooperative action to deal with the Covid-19, school directors were succumbed to hundreds of bureaucratic procedures that took up a lot of time (or caused them to take time away from other aspects).

In addition, we must add that the managers and educational professionals found themselves with a scenario that was not expected and for which they were not trained. For this reason, the ability to manage crises and changes is now one of the priority skills that every school leader must present. Also, a united team that faces adversity together is needed. The participating headmistress tells of initial moments in which there was improvisation because no one was prepared. In spite of this, her encouragement and enthusiasm to continue assuming this challenge lay with a large part of the school's committed professional team, who acted as a collective glue to ensure that, in the face of any problems caused, everyone would be there to respond.

The coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the need for greater professional training in educational technologies (Fernández, Moreno, and Guerra 2020). In fact, our results already confirm the key role of having digital tools and skills for a situation of this magnitude. Furthermore, as Harris and Jones (2020) explain, a significant rethinking of leadership models is considered fundamental, adjusting them to current needs and demands and orienting their principles to those skills and practices necessary to respond

to the current situation. In short, the Covid-19 crisis has dismantled urgent needs in the field of school leadership, and everything points to the fact that, for the very near future, school leaders will need to be experts in educational technologies and virtual teaching methodologies.

Notes

1. Indices of the cultural and economic status in PISA.
2. Andalusian Agency for Educational Evaluation.

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DISCUSIÓN DE RESULTADOS Y CONCLUSIONES

CAPÍTULO 8.

INTEGRACIÓN Y DISCUSIÓN DE RESULTADOS: PROPUESTA DE MEJORA

Los resultados concuerdan con la idea de que una identidad fuerte y reconocida del director, que actúa como líder, impacta en la mejora de la escuela y de los resultados educativos. Afirmación que coincide con otras investigaciones y revisiones en el área (Bolívar, 2019; Cruz- González, Domingo y Lucena 2019; Day et al., 2011; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2020; Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016; Hallinger 2018). Nuestros hallazgos revelan como esta identidad profesional fuerte y consolidada, se asocia a un compromiso personal y profesional con el centro y su ecosistema. En la construcción de la identidad profesional, descubrimos cómo influye el recorrido de la trayectoria vital y experiencias de una persona (momentos clave, leimotiv, acontecimientos...) y el contexto que le rodea. En este contexto, encontramos a los “otros” (a todos los agentes que le rodean en su hacer diario), como punto clave de influencia en la construcción de la identidad profesional, en línea con la teoría de Dubar (2010) o Crow et al. (2016).

La mirada externa, resultó ser clave para analizar y comprender como se construye la identidad de un director que actúa como líder con el fin de lograr un impacto en la mejora educativa. Perspectiva manifiesta por Ritacco y Bolívar (2018), en cuyo estudio se afirma como la mirada de los demás pueden dar claves comprensivas de los factores que juegan en la construcción y verificación de la identidad de los directivos escolares. En este sentido, las percepciones de otros agentes, junto a las del propio participante, nos ofrecieron pistas sobre las barreras o crisis que encuentran los directivos en su construcción identitaria profesional, la reconstrucción de esta identidad y finalmente, las prácticas de liderazgo exitosas para la mejora educativa que puede llevar a cabo un director con una ajustada y consolidada identidad profesional. Estos aspectos ofrecen una perspectiva amplia para poder construir una propuesta de mejora de la gestión escolar. Del análisis de los resultados emergen las siguientes temáticas.

8.1. Crisis y barreras en la construcción de la identidad de líderes escolares

La identidad profesional, se ve muchas veces afectada por distintas barreras o crisis que manan a lo largo de su construcción. Lo que repercute de forma directa en el ejercicio profesional, es decir en la manera de liderar el centro educativo y llevar a cabo prácticas educativas. En este apartado, recogemos todas esas crisis y barreras encontradas tras el análisis de nuestros resultados.

Los hallazgos ponen de manifiesto que existe una dualidad identitaria que los directores experimentan a lo largo de su carrera profesional. La transición profesional de profesor-director-profesor debilita un sentido de identidad consolidado con su trabajo, coincidiendo con las ideas de Zabalza y Zabalza (2012). En este sentido, los docentes en su rol profesional, presentan unas características personales y profesionales particulares, incluyendo las interrelaciones en el centro. Si un docente, se presenta al puesto directivo, su rol profesional cambia, al mismo tiempo que varían las percepciones e interrelaciones con los demás miembros del centro. Cuando pasa el periodo directivo y su rol nuevamente se modifica, no vuelve a ser el mismo por las experiencias vividas o las posibles decisiones tomadas. Por tanto, nuestros resultados afirman que muchos de esos directivos no se sienten cómodos en esta transición identitaria, lo que puede dar lugar

a una desafección al puesto directivo. Esta misma idea, la trabaja Moreno (2004) en su investigación “el regreso del hijo pródigo”, en este caso con ex-asesores que vuelven a sus puestos y contrastan sus nuevos discursos educativos. También puede dar lugar a cambios de contexto, es decir, se pueden sentir presionados a pedir traslado de centro una vez finalizado su mandato. Afirmamos, en este sentido, la influencia que puede presentar la desprofesionalización directiva en la construcción de la identidad profesional. Los hallazgos revelan al mismo tiempo, como la figura directiva se ve influenciada por una larga tradición de ejercicio del liderazgo escolar basado en tareas burocráticas y de gestión que caracteriza el sistema educativo español. Este sistema provoca una fuerte carga burocrática y tecnocrática que dificulta el ejercicio del liderazgo pedagógico por parte de los directores (Madero, 2019; OCDE, 2019; Ritacco y Bolívar, 2018;). Los directivos se ven “obligados” a desplazar tareas pedagógicas, para ocuparse de todas las tareas burocráticas que deben tener al día por exigencias de administración. Nuestros resultados afirman que los directivos no tienen tiempo para ocuparse de las tareas que verdaderamente son importantes para lograr el cambio y la mejora escolar. Además no se les exige desde administración cumplir escrupulosamente con tareas pedagógicas, pero sí, presentar tareas administrativas en tiempo y forma. Es decir, rendición de cuentas ante tareas administrativas y de gestión, pero no ante la falta de liderazgo pedagógico (Elmore, 2010).

Esta afirmación va en línea con la formación que reciben los directivos. Los hallazgos manifiestan que aunque existe un intento de formación obligatoria para presentarse a la dirección escolar, todavía no se ha puesto en marcha de forma imperativa. Por tanto, existen directivos sin formación alguna en la dirección escolar en España. Además, se afirma que aunque existan cursos de formación inicial, la que reciben, se aleja de los aspectos pedagógicos. Esto es compatible con los resultados del estudio de Gómez-Delgado (2018), en el que se analizó el contenido de los programas de formación sobre liderazgo. Afirma que estos cursos se centran en aspectos relacionados con el liderazgo de gestión, tareas administrativas y burocráticas, pues al fin y al cabo, son a las que se le dedica más tiempo en el ejercicio profesional.

A esta sobrecarga de trabajo administrativo, le suele acompañar otros aspectos negativos que provocan desafección al puesto directivo, como la baja remuneración

extraeconómica, las posibles tensiones con otros colegas de profesión (por ejemplo, derivado de la dualidad identitaria) y/o la baja apoyo profesional o cultura participativa en la escuela en cuestión, coincidiendo con otros estudios (Galdames et al., 2018; Gairín y Castro, 2010). Además, aunque en los últimos años se le ha otorgado autonomía a los centros y a los directivos escolares, los inspectores participantes en nuestro estudio insisten que es una “verdad a medias” pues todas las decisiones deben ser aceptadas desde la administración y cumplir requisitos administrativos que requieren de un tiempo considerable y dificultan su puesta en marcha real en el centro (Bolívar, 2019).

En relación con la autonomía de los directivos en los centros escolares, los resultados de nuestro estudio ponen de manifiesto cómo afecta a los líderes no tener libertad en la elección de su plantilla. La situación en España es compleja y el director no elige a su equipo de trabajo (como si ocurre en otros países vecinos), los docentes aprueban las oposiciones y se le asigna una escuela. Existe un procedimiento llamado “concurso de traslados” que hace que cada año el docente pueda cambiarse de escuela para conciliar mejor su vida familiar. Los hallazgos revelan como este concurso de traslados a nivel personal es positivo, pero a nivel de escuela no. Para los equipos docentes y para el alumnado es muy perjudicial, pues se traduce en una inestabilidad de la plantilla que hace que no se pueda mantener una línea pedagógica de trabajo y que supone un hándicap para llevar a cabo el proyecto de dirección.

El techo de cristal en la dirección escolar fue otra de las revelaciones de nuestros resultados de investigación. Bajo el planteamiento de que los roles e identidades profesionales se construyen en gran medida desde un prisma social, ser mujer en un puesto tradicionalmente concebido como masculino provoca en ocasiones disonancias cognitivas que se materializan en discriminación hacia el colectivo femenino. En este sentido, ser mujer puede considerarse una barrera a la hora de acceder y ocupar puestos de liderazgo. Esta afirmación concuerda con otras investigaciones en el área, en las que se advierte de los obstáculos relacionados con el género para la consecución de una identidad de liderazgo (Armstrong y Mitchell, 2017; Arar y Shapira, 2016; Davids, 2018; Cruz-González, Pérez y Domingo, 2020; Singh, 2019).

8.2. (Re)Construcción identitaria profesional de la dirección escolar

Nuestros resultados revelan como el debate sobre la profesionalización de la figura directiva está sobre la mesa. Encontramos defensores de este modelo, afirmando que tener una dirección profesional se traduce en un director reencontrado con su profesión, con autonomía real a la hora de liderar, de tomar decisiones y gestionar el centro, así como, un profesional con capacidades o competencias específicas. Una dirección profesional superaría, de esta forma, la transición identitaria difusa docente-director-docente. En este punto, los detractores de este modelo, afirman que profesionalizar la figura directiva puede ocasionar que se aparte de su labor la función docente, olvidando las necesidades pedagógicas reales del centro y de su equipo educativo. De acuerdo a estas ideas, Barrios y Tierno (2013), afirman que los directores españoles actualmente se autodefinen más desde una identidad docente que directiva, desarrollando más un rol primus inter pares (Gairín y Castro, 2010) que de autoridad. Y aunque para ellos es importante la identidad docente asociada a un liderazgo pedagógico, no puede sustituir a la identidad directiva que es la que demuestra comportamientos más eficaces.

Por otra parte, encontramos defensores dispuestos a llegar a acuerdos, los cuales abogan por un modelo generalizado de gestión escolar. Es decir, apoyan la profesionalización directiva, en el sentido de formar y capacitar a un sector en una determinada profesión con una misma línea de actuación, pero mantienen la necesidad de continuar con el perfil docente de los directivos escolares. Esta es la misma línea que siguen las asociaciones de directores en España (FEDADi, FEDEIP, FEAE) y que se recoge en el Marco Español de Buena Dirección. Buscando desde la profesionalización directiva un sistema de acceso definido y consensuado. Unificar las valoraciones en el acceso a la dirección, para que no existan diferencias importantes entre las diferentes comunidades, en línea con los estudios de Montero (2010). En definitiva, los resultados avalan la idea de repensar la función directiva y progresiva profesionalización. Hallazgos que concuerdan con los pensamientos de Purón (2020), que afirman como la profesionalización directiva es un asunto que forma parte de la agenda de toda administración pública y a la que muchos de los países de la OCDE (2009) ya se han sumado. Los hallazgos también sostienen que la profesionalización ha de ir acompañada de una mayor autonomía directiva. Siendo

imprescindible la confianza entre las administraciones y los centros educativos. En el sentido de dejar funcionar a las escuelas, aunque deban estar sujetos a una rendición de cuentas. Esto concuerda con la investigación de Roca y López (2018), en la que se exponen la dificultad a nivel práctico en la búsqueda del equilibrio entre autonomía de los centros, potenciación de la función directiva y rendición de cuentas.

En otro punto, los resultados alegan la necesidad de liberar de burocracia a la dirección escolar en España. Entre sus posibles soluciones, encontramos la creación de una figura complementaria real y estable encargada de las tareas de gestión y administración. Se propone una figura de apoyo administrativo, que pueda descargar al director y equipo directivo, para que el tiempo pueda ser invertido en el desarrollo de tareas pedagógicas. Figuras que desde la normativa quedan reflejas (auxiliar administrativo), pero que físicamente no son visibles o insuficientes (especialmente desde educación primaria) para notar esa descarga de trabajo al equipo directivo. Otra vía propuesta, se basa en la simplicidad de la norma y de aspectos en gestión burocrática. Es decir, que desde administración se simplifiquen los procesos y se propongas nuevas vías para mejorar los sistemas de gestión, con nuevos programas informáticos más intuitivos y de fácil utilización. Además, se alega la necesidad de llegar a acuerdos generales sobre el sistema educativo español, sin necesidad de reformas tras nuevas legislaciones. Se ha de dejar de instrumentalizar la educación como lucha ideológica y política, para de este modo abordarla desde aspectos más técnicos y pedagógicos.

Otro asunto fundamental en la construcción de una identidad profesional directiva consolidada es la capacitación directiva en habilidades de liderazgo pedagógico. Formación más amplia y reforzada que permita a los directores adquirir una identidad de liderazgo y mejorar la gestión escolar, lo que coincide con las investigaciones internacionales sobre la formación de directores (Moorosi, 2013). Se propone la obligatoriedad de una formación especializada con procesos evaluativos claros y sólidos en temas como el liderazgo pedagógico y el desarrollo de prácticas profesionales horizontales y hacia la justicia social (Lucena, Cruz-González y Domingo, 2020). Además, se señala, que más allá de la formación inicial, es necesaria la formación continua y actualización en aspectos educativos. A este aspecto, le debe acompañar una evaluación formativa de las competencias profesionales de los directores, desde la educación superior.

Los resultados, en este aspecto revelan que una mejora en la formación debe ir acompañada también de una mejora en la evaluación de la dirección escolar (evaluación continua, participativa, corresponsable y formativa). Es decir, aplicar una mayor rendición de cuentas en estas dinámicas profesionales, acompañadas de una planificación exhaustiva y una evaluación constructiva que oriente los procesos profesionales hacia la mejora. Estos resultados apoyan la línea argumental expuesta por Condon y Clifford (2019), quienes destacaron la falta de herramientas para medir de forma sistemática y continua el ejercicio del liderazgo. Autores como Bolívar, 2006 o Sammons y Bakkum (2011) argumentan que para lograr el éxito escolar a esta presión en el rendimiento de cuentas, se le ha de acompañar con otras prácticas y medidas como la capacitación de profesorado, la supervisión escolar, la colaboración con la comunidad y entorno o la mayor participación del alumnado en el centro (medidas que se desarrollan en el siguiente apartado).

Un último aspecto que emerge de nuestros resultados, fue la reconstrucción de identidad de los directores escolares, a partir del caos que se produjo en el sistema educativo provocado por la pandemia. Los resultados revelan como los directivos tuvieron que responder autónomamente por no tener previas normas, avisos e instrucciones. Tuvieron que asumir nuevos roles con la familia, el alumnado y sus propios compañeros o verse forzados a adquirir un mayor compromiso social. Estos hallazgos concuerdan con las investigaciones de Leite (2021) o Harry y Jones (2021), en los que se afirma como los directivos tuvieron que pasar de la urgencia a la acción, lo que reforzó en algunos casos su autonomía y su identidad de liderazgo ante situaciones de crisis.. Para Moreno (2020) en esta misma línea, la situación de pandemia ha supuesto un experimento global no planificado, en la que se ha tenido que vivir la no escuela y ha supuesto para los directivos un reto, un cambio de rol y la adquisición de una mayor autonomía.

8.3. Prácticas de liderazgo exitosas para la mejora educativa

Los hallazgos concuerdan con la idea de que la identidad de un buen líder educativo es la que dirige todos sus esfuerzos hacia la mejora escolar. Por ello, un director comprometido y con una afianzada identidad profesional desarrolla prácticas de liderazgo exitosas para la mejora educativa. En este apartado, integramos todas esas prácticas exitosas

que han sido identificadas en los resultados de investigación. Nuestros hallazgos concuerdan con las dimensiones del liderazgo exitoso señaladas dentro del proyecto ISSPP (Gurr, 2015).

En primer lugar, afirmamos que contextualizar el entorno educativo es fundamental para el desarrollo de un liderazgo eficaz. De este modo, y en concordancia con Robinson (2011), se consigue minimizar las desigualdades que pueda presentar la escuela, mejorando y adaptando las condiciones de enseñanza y aprendizaje a las necesidades del alumnado. En la revisión de Hallinger (2011), se confirma la misma idea, argumentando que un buen líder debe dedicar tiempo a analizar y contextualizar el entorno en el que trabaja, antes de desarrollar estrategias e iniciativas dirigidas a la mejora de la escuela. El mismo autor añade, que conocer el entorno de trabajo ayuda a identificar las necesidades reales del alumnado y lograr que todos puedan tener éxito académico sin excepciones.

Nuestros resultados en esta línea, y siempre tomando la no generalización del estudio, pues el caso estudiado es ciertamente particular, defienden la relación de la mejora educativa con un alto grado de compromiso con la justicia social. Por tanto, ejercer un liderazgo para la justicia social, consigue transformar la escuela en espacios adaptados a todos los estudiantes donde puedan aprender de forma segura y eficaz independientemente de sus condiciones. Estos resultados están en consonancia con las reflexiones de Murillo y Hernández-Castilla (2014) y Young (2011) que defienden la necesidad de luchar y liderar por y para la justicia social. Autores como Carpenter Bradley et al. (2017) sostienen la misma idea, afirmando que es necesaria una identidad de justicia social en el liderazgo escolar.

Otra práctica exitosa recogida en nuestros resultados, supone la adopción de un enfoque horizontal en la organización escolar por parte del líder educativo. Acogerse a este enfoque, implica vincular la posición de cada individuo respecto al bienestar común. El líder dirige con los demás y no por encima de ellos, se toman decisiones y resuelven problemas de forma conjunta, lo que implica que el grupo adquiera confianza y reconocimiento, al mismo tiempo que se enfatizan las acciones colaborativas y de compañerismo logrando mejorar el ambiente laboral (Leithwood, Day et al., 2006). Esta observación está en consonancia con la propuesta planteada por Robertson (2017), quien sostiene que un

liderazgo eficaz requiere una estructura organizativa que proporcione un clima escolar seguro y fomente un ambiente positivo. Estos hallazgos pactan con la idea de liderazgo compartido, que de acuerdo con Castillo, Puigdellivol y Antúnez (2017), la mejora educativa, depende de la participación y corresponsabilidad en el aprendizaje de todos sus miembros. La literatura en este campo de estudio avala que el director escolar, si se orienta hacia los principios del liderazgo distribuido, puede avanzar significativamente hacia culturas profesionales colaborativas y ofrecer oportunidades de mejora del capital social del profesorado (Akkerman y Meijer 2011; Crow, Day, y Møller 2017; Fullan, 2010; Hargreaves y O'Connor, 2018).

En sintonía con el liderazgo compartido (Harris y Jones 2019), los hallazgos manifiestan los beneficios de promover comunidades profesionales de aprendizaje como nueva forma de reconfigurar las escuelas y lograr la mejora de la práctica educativa. A través de las comunidades profesionales de aprendizaje y de acuerdo con Bolam et al. (2005) o García-Martínez; Higuera-Rodríguez y Martínez-Valdivia (2018), se crean espacios en los que los docentes se reúnen de forma constante y se trabaja de forma colaborativa. Colectivamente se abordan problemáticas asociadas, entre otros aspectos, a sus prácticas de aula con el fin de mejorar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del alumnado. A través de estos espacios, se fomenta la autoformación docente e innovación educativa. Además los resultados afirman como el líder, a través de la formación de equipo de trabajo, va guiando a su equipo hacia una misión común, valores compartidos y misma dirección pedagógica. También encontramos relevante, la importancia de aprovechar las potencialidades y las vocaciones de los docentes. En consonancia con lo anterior, Bolman y Deal (2008), consideran que un líder exitoso busca a las personas adecuadas para ocupar los puestos adecuados.

Del mismo modo, afirmamos la necesidad de fomentar una colaboración permanente, no solo con el profesorado, sino con las familias y la comunidad. Es decir, promover acciones de carácter comunitario y ampliar las redes de influencia y oportunidades a través de las interacciones profesionales y sociales tanto dentro de la escuela como entre la escuela y la comunidad. Para ello, se requiere un cambio de cultura, un proceso lento y costoso de trabajo y esfuerzo. El líder ha de realizar una búsqueda permanente de relaciones estrechas con toda la comunidad educativa basadas en la complementariedad,

confianza y colaboración. Estos resultados concuerdan con las ideas desarrolladas en el libro: *Familia, escuela y comunidad: un encuentro necesario* (Comellas et al., 2013). Las autoras buscan nuevos referentes y prácticas educativas dirigidas a mejorar las prácticas educativas dando respuestas a la situación actual y recolocando el rol educativo adulto. Además exponen, coincidiendo con nuestros hallazgos, las posibilidades educativas que brinda la ciudad, barrio o pueblo donde se sitúa el centro educativo.

Finalmente, se manifiesta la importancia de favorecer la implicación de la infancia y adolescencia en estas interrelaciones, pues a pesar de ser los protagonistas de la escuela, son demasiadas veces los colectivos “olvidados”. Dar voz al alumnado resulta fundamental para lograr una mejora educativa real, pues implica empoderar al discente e involucrarlo en los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje promoviendo un mayor vínculo y compromiso hacia su educación y centro escolar. Todo ello se consigue, prestándoles la atención que merecen, escuchando sus discursos, atendiendo sus necesidades y respetando sus tiempos de aprendizaje. Esta visión de está en consonancia con el estudio publicado por Rudduck y McIntyre (2007) en el que se hace gran hincapié en dar voz al alumnado como medio para empoderar al estudiante y fomentar su máximo potencial. Autores como Tonucci (2015), coinciden en este enfoque argumentando la necesidad de ser sensibles a las necesidades de los niños y cumplir estrictamente con su bienestar social y sus derechos.

Los resultados defienden, coincidiendo con Bolívar (2015), que el director ha de ejercer su labor mediante un liderazgo pedagógico. Ha de procurar seguir una línea pedagógica basada en una educación individualizada (centrada en las necesidades específicas de cada alumno) y globalizada (basada en métodos y prácticas de aprendizaje orientados a la acción dentro de un conjunto global). El líder ha de guiar en la concesión de autonomía al discente para que pueda convertirse en gestor de su propio aprendizaje, potenciando de esta manera, las expectativas propias y familiares ampliando su capital social.

8.4. Propuesta de mejora de la dirección escolar en España

Tras la presentación de la integración de nuestros resultados de investigación y su discusión con investigaciones en el campo, recogemos los aspectos clave que sirven de base para la elaboración de una propuesta de mejora de la dirección escolar en España (ver tabla 1). Los propios directores españoles, agrupados en la Federación de Asociaciones de Directivos Escolares (FEDADi, FEDEIP, FEAE), han considerado necesario la elaboración y publicación de un Marco Español para la Buena Dirección. Este MEBD, se ha desarrollado de acuerdo con las tendencias internacionales y lo que la investigación muestra sobre prácticas de éxito en la dirección. Es decir, con lo que nos dice la literatura internacional y nacional y con las prácticas que nos han servido tras experiencias positivas y mejora escolar. El marco, está diseñado a través de mapas de dimensiones, competencias y prácticas profesionales, los cuales configuran un perfil de desempeño que comprenden el ejercicio de una buena dirección escolar. Este marco, tiene por un lado una función descriptiva de buenas prácticas y por otro, prescriptiva, en procesos de formación y evaluación. De forma general, a través de este marco, se pretende abrir un camino hacia la profesionalización de la función directiva en España.

Para la elaboración de nuestra propia propuesta de mejora, hemos tenido en cuenta muchos de los aspectos recogidos en el marco de buena dirección. Hemos partido de lo ya trabajado, pero incorporado y reforzando aspectos emergentes tras nuestra investigación. Nuestras pretensiones en la elaboración de esta propuesta, están orientadas a la mejora directiva para lograr la calidad del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje. La propuesta, como se muestra en la tabla 1, se organiza en torno a unos ámbitos a mejorar, unas metas y objetivos a alcanzar y unos responsables de su cumplimiento.

Emergen cinco ámbitos de mejora; 1) identidad profesional, 2) liderazgo, 3) formación directiva, 4) evaluación y 5) aspectos de gestión. El primer ámbito, se relaciona con la necesidad de ir hacia una profesionalización directiva, coincidiendo con el marco español para la buena dirección. Desde la profesionalización directiva, la propuesta marca como objetivo lograr que los directores desarrollen una consolidada y reconocida identidad de líder. Conseguir que se comprometan personal y profesionalmente con la educación, la escuela y la sociedad que la envuelve. Adquirir una mayor autonomía, en la que puedan,

entre otros aspectos, elegir libremente al personal con el que formar equipos de trabajo. Y finalmente, un cambio en la selección directiva guiado hacia un concurso/oposición. El responsable principal para lograr alcanzar dichas metas, es el director escolar, aunque con ayuda en determinados aspectos, de la administración (como en el caso del último punto de selección directiva).

El ámbito de mejora relacionado con el liderazgo, se agrupa en liderazgo pedagógico, para la justicia social, compartido y de cuidado. Descubrimos como es el ámbito de mejora más extenso y desarrollado y en el que el director es el responsable único en la consecución de metas y objetivos. Concretamente es el liderazgo pedagógico el más destacados para mejorar la dirección escolar y lograr escuelas exitosas. De este modo, se marcan como objetivos, unir a la comunidad, promover comunidades profesionales de aprendizaje, guiar a los compañeros docentes hacia una misma dirección pedagógica y proyecto común, valorar y respetar las potencialidades de los compañeros docentes, crear redes de influencia y fomentar una colaboración permanente con las familias, implicar al alumnado en las interrelaciones del centro y en su proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje y propiciar nuevos métodos de enseñanza-aprendizaje. En cuanto al liderazgo para la justicia social, marcamos como objetivos, promover y fomentar una educación de equidad y calidad para todo el alumnado, contextualizar el entorno educativo y paliar las desigualdades por cuestiones de género en la dirección escolar. Se marcan unas metas a alcanzar relacionados con el liderazgo compartido, como lograr un enfoque horizontal en la organización escolar en el que se impliquen a todos en la toma de decisiones, en la que se gestione de forma conjunta y se distribuyan responsabilidades. Finalmente, se ha de procurar alcanzar un liderazgo de cuidado, lograr generar confianza, apoyar las emociones, una comunicación respetuosa y resiliencia.

Otro ámbito sobre el que mejorar, se relaciona con la formación directiva. Incentivamos la necesidad de una formación obligatoria para ocupar puestos de líderes escolares. Formación inicial y continua o de actualización, son los aspectos tratados en el marco español para la buena dirección. Nosotros proponemos ir más allá, y formar en aspectos de liderazgo y gestión de centros a los futuros maestros, es decir, que exista formación desde educación superior. La evaluación va muy de la mano con lo anterior. Nuestra propuesta respalda una evaluación continua y sistemática en el que los directivos tengan

que rendir cuentas en el cumplimiento del proyecto educativo y la gestión del centro. Rendir cuentas no solo de cara a la administración, de la que se ocupa inspección, sino de cara al centro educativo. Es decir, propiciar una autoevaluación directiva, una evaluación por parte de la familia y de los propios compañeros, en la que al final, se cree una confianza interrelacional.

El último ámbito, se basa en la mejora de aspectos gestión escolar. Así, proponemos alcanzar unas metas comprometidas las cuales se relacionan con llegar a acuerdos generales sobre el sistema educativo español, al mismo tiempo que simplificar la normativa. Además, encontramos la necesidad de crear nuevos puestos de trabajo en los centros escolares que sirvan de apoyo para el equipo directivo en todos los aspectos relacionados con temas burocráticos. Y finalmente, desarrollar nuevos programas informáticos más sencillos e intuitivos para mejorar la gestión escolar.

Tabla 1 - Propuesta de mejora de la dirección escolar en España

Propuesta de mejora			
Ámbito de mejora		Metas y objetivos	Responsables
Identidad profesional	Profesionalización directiva	Desarrollar una consolidada y reconocida identidad de líder escolar.	Director/ administración
		Compromiso personal y profesional con la educación, la escuela y su ecosistema.	Director
		Compromiso con la sociedad.	Director

		Mayor autonomía directiva.	Director/ administración
		Libre elección del personal.	Director/ administración
		Selección por concurso/ oposición	Administración
Liderazgo	Liderazgo pedagógico	Promover comunidades profesionales de aprendizaje.	Director
		Unir a la comunidad.	Director
		Guiar a los compañeros docentes hacia una misma dirección pedagógica y proyecto común.	Director
		Valorar y respetar las potencialidades de los compañeros docentes.	Director
		Crear redes de influencia y fomentar una colaboración permanente con las familias y la comunidad.	Director / familias/ comunidad
		Implicar e involucrar al alumnado en las interrelaciones del centro y en su proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje.	Director/ alumnado
		Propiciar nuevos métodos de enseñanza-aprendizaje (método por proyectos, educación emocional...)	Director/ docentes

	Propiciar la innovación educativa.	Director/ docentes
Liderazgo para la justicia social	Promover y fomentar una educación de equidad y calidad para todo el alumnado.	Director
	Contextualizar el entorno educativo.	Director
	Paliar las desigualdades por cuestiones de género en la dirección escolar	Administración
Liderazgo compartido	Enfoque horizontal en la organización escolar.	Director
	Implicar a todos en la toma de decisiones y gestionar de forma conjunta.	Director/ docentes
Liderazgo de cuidado	Distribuir responsabilidades	Director/ docentes
	Generar confianza	Director
	Apoyar las emociones/ educación emocional	Director
	Comunicación respetuosa	Director
	Resiliencia	Director
Formación directiva	Formación obligatoria para ocupar puesto de líder escolar.	Administración

	Desarrollar asignaturas concretas en educación superior (grados en ciencias de la educación) sobre liderazgo escolar.	Administración/ facultad
	Formación directiva inicial	Administración
	Formación continua / de actualización.	Administración
Evaluación directiva	Rendición de cuentas de la gestión y cumplimiento del proyecto educativo.	Inspección/ dirección/ docentes /familia
	Evaluación directiva sistemática y continua	Inspección/ dirección/ docentes /familia
	Confianza interrelacional	Inspección/ dirección/ docentes /familia
Gestión	Simplicidad de la norma	Administración
	Personal de apoyo en aspectos burocráticos	Administración
	Desarrollar programas informáticos para mejorar la gestión escolar	Administración
	Crear acuerdos generales sobre el sistema educativo español	Administración

CAPÍTULO 9.

CONCLUSIONES, LIMITACIONES, FORTALEZAS, IMPLICACIONES EDUCATIVAS Y FUTURAS LÍNEAS DE INVESTIGACIÓN

9.1 Conclusiones

Una vez expuesta la integración y discusión de resultados, se derivan unas conclusiones finales, que se organizan entorno a los objetivos específicos de investigación. Recordemos, que la presente tesis doctoral muestra como temática central la construcción de la identidad profesional de liderazgo en la dirección escolar. Partíamos de la idea de que una identidad fuerte y reconocida impacta en la mejora educativa de la escuela, que un director actúa como líder en función de la identidad que tenga, que esta identidad profesional se construye a lo largo de una trayectoria de vida y en un contexto determinado y que la identidad de buen líder educativo es la que dirige todos sus esfuerzos hacia la mejora escolar. Estas afirmaciones de partida, han sido defendidas a lo largo de la integración y discusión de resultados.

A partir de estas ideas, nuestro propósito general fue comprender cómo se (re) construye y se desarrolla la identidad de liderazgo en directores escolares, además de conocer, cómo lo hacen y cuáles son los factores que obstaculizan e instalan crisis o barreras en el proceso de su desarrollo profesional. Todo ello, teniendo en cuenta no solo la perspectiva interna del propio directivo, sino una perspectiva externa, es decir, la percepción que poseen los demás profesionales e individuos que le rodean en su hacer diario

(inspectores, profesorado, orientadores, alumnado, familia y municipio). Esto nos permitió obtener una visión más completa y real de su identidad, permitiéndonos descubrir posibles crisis, barreras e identificar claves potenciales para la mejora escolar y la dirección. Toda esta información, se utilizó para la construcción de una propuesta de mejora.

En un primer momento y debido al carácter procesual de la investigación, comenzamos realizando una revisión sistemática general de la literatura (**Art. 1**). Nos sirvió para identificar los principales factores que influyen en la construcción de una identidad profesional de liderazgo en la dirección escolar. Esta revisión, además de “ayudarnos a poner los pies en la tierra”, en el qué investigar, constituyó la base teórica de nuestra tesis. Además, nos arrojó claves compresivas en el ejercicio profesional de liderazgo y posibles barreras que interfieren en su desarrollo, lo que dio lugar a una serie de factores sobre los que profundizar. La formación directiva resultó ser uno de los factores más influyentes en la construcción de la identidad profesional, por tanto consideramos necesario profundizar en la formación directiva a través de una revisión sistemática de la literatura internacional (**Art. 2**). Esta revisión, refleja la necesidad real de mejorar los programas de formación en todos los territorios. Como nuestro interés al mismo tiempo, fue profundizar y conocer las miradas externas al director, siendo otros de los hallazgos de la revisión general, se llevó a cabo una tercera búsqueda bibliográfica (**Art.3**). Pretendimos conocer las percepciones que tienen los demás en las construcciones identitarias de los líderes escolares a nivel internacional. Se destacó la necesidad de tener “otros puntos de vista”, para obtener una visión más amplia y completa de las realidades a las que se enfrentan los directores escolares en la construcción de su identidad de liderazgo.

Al mismo tiempo, los resultados obtenidos en las publicaciones de las revisiones sistemáticas de la literatura, nos ofrecieron pistas metodológicas de interés para orientar nuestra investigación. A lo largo de los estudios revisados, la metodología cualitativa y el enfoque autobiográfico-narrativo fue el más predominante. Algunos de los estudios justifican su potencial para ahondar en la dimensión más íntima y humana de los de los profesionales de la educación. Resultado que coincidió con nuestro enfoque metodológico, el cual, está recogido en una publicación que compone el marco metodológico (**Art 4**). A través de este artículo, mostramos el método desarrollado a lo largo del proceso

de investigación. La presente tesis doctoral, que se desarrolló a través de dos estudios principales, asumió un enfoque cualitativo con énfasis biográfico-narrativo y se llevó a cabo a través de estudio de caso.

El primer estudio, abordó el **objetivo 1: Indagar el grado de presencia de la función de liderazgo educativo en la identidad profesional de los directores y directoras escolares desde diferentes perspectivas (orientación, inspección educativa, asesoría y familias)**. A partir del cual se obtuvo una panorámica inicial para comprender la realidad que se plasmó en una publicación científica (**Art 5**). En este primer artículo de resultados, se recogió la percepción de supervisores, orientadores y representantes de la federación de padres y alumnos, sobre la identidad de los directivos escolares. Posteriormente, se llevó a cabo un estudio centrado en la mirada de la inspección educativa (**Art 6**). Ambos, contribuyeron a detectar posibles barreras y crisis, así como recomendaciones y vías de solución desde una perspectiva externa. De este primer estudio, podemos concluir la necesidad de repensar la función directiva. Dirigirla hacia una profesionalización, hacia una mayor formación sobre todo en aspectos de liderazgo pedagógicos, compartido y para la justicia social.

El segundo estudio, da respuesta al **objetivo 2: Comprender cómo se construye la identidad de liderazgo pedagógico en directores y directoras, identificando competencias, momentos clave, hitos, circunstancias y leitmotiv, temáticas y ámbitos, crisis y barreras...** Al igual que el propio objetivo, el estudio de caso se abordó desde dos perspectivas. En un primer caso, se llevó a cabo la investigación sobre la historia de vida de un director que lideraba de forma exitosa en un centro educativo situado en un contexto difícil. Analizamos la construcción de la identidad desde la voz del propio objeto de estudio (autoimagen e identidad personal y profesional), pudiendo conocer todos los hitos que le habían marcado y convertido en el líder pedagógico que lucha por la justicia social y los derechos de la infancia (**Art 7**).

En segundo lugar, se analizó al mismo directivo, pero añadiendo las percepciones de toda la comunidad educativa (inspección educativa, orientación, asesoría, profesorado, familias y comunidad). De este modo, pudimos conocer desde una perspectiva externa la identidad percibida o proyectada desde los otros significativos. Los mismos recalcaron

la gran labor directiva y su forma de liderazgo pedagógico, para la justicia social y orientada a la educación emocional (**Art 8**). Ambas publicaciones, nos permitieron comprender el impacto educativo de una identidad de liderazgo.

En conclusión, este segundo estudio de caso, puede convertirse en un modelo para las escuelas que luchan por alcanzar el éxito. El director y su equipo consiguieron buenos resultados académicos, gracias al liderazgo pedagógico y distribuido, a pesar de las dificultades socioeconómicas y demográficas que rodeaban a la escuela. El mayor éxito radicaba en que los niños crecieran felices y reconociendo su propio potencial. Todo ello, gracias a la adaptación de la metodología al entorno, atendiendo a las necesidades reales de los alumnos, así como a la creación de un entorno escolar favorable. Dirigir la escuela apreciando la voz del niño, y respetar a los niños al tiempo que se aprovecha todo su potencial, debería convertirse en el propósito más importante de las instituciones educativas.

Por otro lado, al tratarse de una tesis de carácter cualitativo e inductivo, en el proceso de investigación se integraron aquellos estudios que emergieron por casuísticas específicas. Por ejemplo, se llevó a cabo un análisis fílmico de la película “hoy empieza todo” a modo de ejemplificar la construcción de la identidad de un líder para la justicia social. Con esta publicación (**Art 9**), pudimos comparar, aunque de manera ficticia, las características de un buen líder escolar y las diferentes barreras y retos a los que se puede enfrentar por ejercer su profesión en contextos de gran dificultad. Por otro lado, debido a la situación de pandemia provocada por la Covid-19, en la parte final del desarrollo de la presente tesis, se consideró la opción de plantear un estudio sobre las reconstrucciones identitarias provocadas tras esta crisis sin precedentes (**Art 10**). Este artículo nos pone de manifiesto, como una directora tiene que asumir un nuevo rol, orientado hacia un componente más humano. Asume de forma inmediata y “obligatoria” una autonomía del centro, el uso de las nuevas tecnologías educativas y todo ello con la sensación de “luchar contra los molinos de viento”.

Finalmente, el apartado de integración y discusión de resultados, da respuesta al **objetivo 3** de investigación: **Obtener una visión holística analizando y cruzando los diferentes casos para detectar que es un buen director**. En este apartado, se trataron, por un lado, las dimensiones clave de un liderazgo exitoso del director escolar, entre las que se inclu-

yeron la inclusión, participación y metodologías activas y participativas, así como el protagonismo del alumno en el centro escolar. Y por otro, se destacaron las barreras y crisis encontradas en el proceso de construcción de la identidad de líder en los directivos para acabar ofreciendo claves en la formación y desarrollo profesional de la identidad de líder.

En último lugar, el **Objetivo 4: Propuesta de mejora**, ha sido tratado en el capítulo 9. De forma general, propusimos 5 ámbitos de mejora, relacionados con la identidad profesional (profesionalización directiva), liderazgo (liderazgo pedagógico, para la justicia social, compartido y de cuidado), formación y evaluación directiva y por último, gestión.

De todo lo anteriormente expuesto concluimos que:

- La **llave del éxito educativo** lo tiene cada **director** en su “bolsillo”.
- El buen director “no nace, se hace”. Su **identidad profesional se (re)construye de forma continua** a lo largo del tiempo.
- El director ha de tener una **fuerte y consolidada identidad de líder** y proyectarlo en la comunidad. Debe ser el **guía y acompañante** en todo el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje.
- El director ha de **identificar las dificultades del centro** y ponerle remedio tan pronto como sea posible.
- El director ha de procurar **predicar con el ejemplo**, escuchar y ser consciente de las necesidades reales de su centro educativo.
- Se ha de trabajar en la **formación directiva**, especialmente en tareas de **liderazgo pedagógico**.
- Se ha de otorgar **autonomía** al director pero con **rendición de cuentas**. Rendir cuentas a toda la comunidad y no solo a la administración. Autonomía de las escuelas adaptando la realidad del cambio a la realidad que vivimos.

- Se ha de **liderar de forma compartida**, valorando a todos los compañeros docentes.
- El centro educativo ha de estar **al servicio de la comunidad**.
- Es importante, **estimular el trabajo colegiado** de los docentes.
- El **protagonista** de la escuela siempre es **el niño**.
- Los otros “agentes” que rodean al director son claves para lograr el éxito educativo. Especialmente cobra interés la buena labor de la **inspección educativa**.

9.2. Limitaciones, fortalezas, implicaciones educativas y futuras líneas de investigación

Una vez expuestas las conclusiones finales de la investigación, indicaremos las limitaciones encontradas en el proceso, las fortalezas e indagaremos en las líneas de investigación que podrían ser relevantes.

En cuanto a las **limitaciones**, destacamos los siguientes aspectos:

- Debido a la naturaleza de las revisiones sistemáticas de la literatura, encontramos algunas limitaciones inherentes. Restringir la búsqueda hacia un intervalo de tiempo fijo, un tipo de publicación o una base de datos específica, significa que podríamos haber pasado por alto otros estudios de gran interés y relevancia para nuestro tema. No obstante, para paliar esta posible limitación, en el apartado de conceptos clave de la tesis doctoral, hemos tenido en cuenta otros estudios de literatura gris.
- Los resultados de los estudios cualitativos biográficos-narrativos (estudio de caso e historias de vida) muestran unas perspectivas particulares, de unos participantes seleccionados de forma intencional y en un contexto específico. Por tanto, aunque muestren realidades que pueden coincidir con la literatura, no representan la realidad de poblaciones generales, ni la muestra es significativa para dicho propósito.

- Otras limitaciones, son de carácter personal. Durante el proceso de investigación se han vivido momentos que dificultan conciliar la vida laboral con la personal (maternidad y situación de pandemia en la recta final de la tesis).

Pasamos a señalar los **puntos fuertes** de esta tesis doctoral:

- Contar con diferentes miradas para analizar a un mismo objeto de estudio, es uno de los principales puntos fuertes de esta investigación. Desde esta perspectiva, pudimos comprender barreras, crisis y (re) reconstrucción identitarias, no solo desde la perspectiva del protagonista, sino desde la mirada de los que le rodean, "los otros". Esto nos permitió obtener una panorámica más completa de la realidad.

- La metodología utilizada, constituye otro punto fuerte. El método biográfico y narrativo, nos permite indagar en la parte más humana. Resulta más fácil familiarizarte y envolverte en el contexto de investigación, convirtiéndose incluso en uno más del centro educativo.

- Otro punto potencial de la tesis, se relaciona con los resultados obtenidos del segundo estudio de investigación. Un director que lidera de forma exitosa un centro educativo a pesar del contexto difícil que envuelve a la escuela. Este estudio, y a pesar de las limitaciones indicadas, puede convertirse en un modelo para las escuelas que luchan por alcanzar el éxito educativo.

Finalmente, añadimos **implicaciones educativas y futuras líneas de investigación** que se pueden resumir en:

- La construcción de una propuesta de mejora, nos ofrece la posibilidad de aplicarla y utilizarla en los cursos de formación directiva. Además de servir de orientación y constituir puntos clave en el proceso de (re) pensar un nuevo perfil directivo.

- Resulta necesario la consecución de más estudios que profundicen en la construcción identitaria de líderes escolares.

- Recomendamos la inclusión de otras perspectivas y narrativas, ya que no solo son importantes para triangular la información de los diferentes agentes profesionales, sino que completan la bidimensionalidad propia de la identidad.
- Analizar otros casos de directivos que lideran de forma exitosa y en diferentes contextos educativos, puede ser una forma eficaz de seguir construyendo bases que orienten a liderar las escuelas de forma exitosa.

9.3. Conclusions

Once the results have been integrated and discussed, some final conclusions are drawn, which are organised around the specific research objectives. Let us remember that the central theme of this doctoral thesis is the construction of the professional identity of leadership in school management. We started from the idea that a strong and recognised identity has an impact on the educational improvement of the school, that a principal acts as a leader depending on the identity he/she has, that this professional identity is constructed throughout a life trajectory and in a specific context, and that the identity of a good educational leader is the one that directs all his/her efforts towards school improvement. These initial assertions have been defended throughout the integration and discussion of the results.

Based on these ideas, our general purpose was to understand how leadership identity is (re)constructed and developed in school principals, as well as to find out how they do it and what are the factors that hinder and install crises or barriers in the process of their professional development. All of this, taking into account not only the internal perspective of the school head, but also an external perspective, that is, the perception of other professionals and individuals who surround them in their daily work (inspectors,

teachers, guidance counsellors, students, family and municipality). This allowed us to obtain a more complete and real vision of their identity, enabling us to discover possible crises, barriers and identify potential keys for school improvement and management. All this information was used to build a proposal for improvement.

Initially, due to the procedural nature of the research, we began by conducting a general systematic review of the literature (**Art. 1**). This helped us to identify the main factors that influence the construction of a professional leadership identity in school leadership. This review, in addition to "helping us to get our feet on the ground" in terms of what to research, formed the theoretical basis of our thesis. In addition, it provided us with comprehensive clues on the professional exercise of leadership and possible barriers that interfere with its development, which gave rise to a series of factors on which to delve deeper. Management training turned out to be one of the most influential factors in the construction of professional identity, therefore we considered it necessary to delve deeper into management training through a systematic review of the international literature (**Art. 2**). This review reflects the real need to improve training programmes in all territories. As we were also interested in finding out more about the external views of principals, which were another of the findings of the general review, a third literature search was carried out (**Art. 3**). We aimed to learn about the perceptions that others have of the identity constructions of school leaders at the international level. The need for "other points of view" was highlighted, in order to gain a broader and more comprehensive view of the realities faced by school leaders in the construction of their leadership identity.

At the same time, the results obtained in the publications of the systematic literature reviews offered us methodological clues of interest to guide our research. Throughout the studies reviewed, the qualitative methodology and the autobiographical-narrative approach was the most predominant. Some of the studies justify its potential to delve into the most intimate and human dimension of those of education professionals. This result coincided with our methodological approach, which is included in a publication that makes up the methodological framework (**Art 4**). Through this article, we show the method developed throughout the research process. The present doctoral thesis, which was developed through two main studies, assumed a qualitative approach with a biographical-narrative emphasis and was carried out through a case study.

The first study addressed **objective 1: *To investigate the degree of presence of the educational leadership function in the professional identity of school principals from different perspectives (guidance, educational inspection, counselling and families)***. From this, an initial overview was obtained in order to understand the reality, which was then translated into a scientific publication (**Art. 5**). In this first results article, the perceptions of supervisors, counsellors and representatives of the parents' and pupils' federation on the identity of school leaders were collected. Subsequently, a study was carried out focusing on the view of the educational inspectorate (**Art. 6**). Both contributed to the identification of possible barriers and crises as well as recommendations and solutions from an external perspective. From this first study, we can conclude that there is a need to rethink the management function. To direct it towards professionalisation, towards more training, especially in aspects of pedagogical leadership, shared leadership and leadership for social justice.

The second study responds to **objective 2: *To understand how the pedagogical leadership identity is constructed in male and female principals, identifying competencies, key moments, milestones, circumstances and leitmotifs, themes and areas, crises and barriers...*** Like the objective itself, the case study was approached from two perspectives. In the first case, research was carried out on the life story of a head teacher who successfully led a school in a difficult context. We analysed the construction of identity from the voice of the object of study itself (self-image and personal and professional identity), being able to know all the milestones that had marked him and turned him into a pedagogical leader who fights for social justice and children's rights (**Art 7**).

Secondly, the same manager was analysed, but adding the perceptions of the entire educational community (educational inspection, guidance, counselling, teachers, families and community). In this way, we were able to learn from an external perspective about the identity perceived or projected by the significant others. They emphasised the great work of management and its form of pedagogical leadership, for social justice and oriented towards emotional education (**Art 8**). Both publications allowed us to understand the educational impact of a leadership identity.

In conclusion, this second case study can become a model for schools striving for success. The principal and his team achieved good academic results through pedagogical and distributed leadership, despite the socio-economic and demographic difficulties surrounding the school. The greatest success was that the children grew up happy and recognising their own potential. This was achieved by adapting the methodology to the environment, addressing the real needs of the pupils, as well as creating a favourable school environment. Leading the school by appreciating the voice of the child, and respecting children while tapping into their full potential, should become the most important purpose of educational institutions.

On the other hand, being a qualitative and inductive thesis, the research process integrated those studies that emerged from specific case studies. For example, a film analysis of the movie "Today it all begins" was carried out in order to exemplify the construction of the identity of a leader for social justice. With this publication (**Art 9**), we were able to compare, albeit in a fictional way, the characteristics of a good school leader and the different barriers and challenges he or she may face in exercising his or her profession in very difficult contexts. On the other hand, due to the pandemic situation caused by Covid-19, in the final part of the development of this thesis, we considered the option of proposing a study on the reconstructions of identity caused by this unprecedented crisis (**Art 10**). This article shows how a headmistress has to take on a new role, oriented towards a more human component. She assumes an immediate and "obligatory" autonomy of the centre, the use of new educational technologies and all this with the feeling of "fighting against windmills".

Finally, the section on integration and discussion of results responds to research **objective 3: To obtain a holistic vision by analysing and cross-referencing the different cases in order to detect what makes a good head teacher.** In this section, on the one hand, the key dimensions of successful leadership of the school principal were discussed, including inclusion, participation and active and participatory methodologies, as well as the leading role of the student in the school. On the other hand, the barriers and crises encountered in the process of constructing a leader identity in school leaders were highlighted, and finally, the keys to the training and professional development of the leader identity were offered.

Finally, **Objective 4: Proposal for improvement**, was dealt with in Chapter 9. In general terms, we proposed five areas for improvement, related to professional identity (professionalisation of management), leadership (pedagogical leadership, leadership for social justice, shared and caring leadership), management training and assessment, and finally, management.

From all of the above we conclude that:

- The **key to educational success** is in the "pocket" of each **head teacher**.
- A good head teacher "is not born, he/she is made". **Their professional identity is (re-constructed continuously** over time.
- The principal must have a **strong and consolidated identity** as a leader and project this identity into the community. He/she must be the **guide and companion** throughout the teaching-learning process.
- The school head must **identify the school's difficulties** and remedy them as soon as possible.
- The school head must try to **lead by example**, listen and be aware of the real needs of his or her school.
- Work must be done on **management training**, especially in pedagogical **leadership tasks**.
- The head teacher should be given **autonomy** but with accountability. **Render Accountable** to the whole community and not only to the administration. School autonomy adapting the reality of change to the reality we live in.
- **Shared leadership**, valuing all teaching colleagues.
- The educational centre must be **at the service of the community**.
- It is important to **stimulate the collegial work** of teachers.

- **The protagonist** of the school is always **the child**.

- The other "agents" around the head teacher are key to educational success. The good work of the **educational inspectorate** is of particular interest.

9.4. Limitations, strengths, educational implications and future lines of research

Once the final conclusions of the research have been drawn, we will indicate the limitations encountered in the process, the strengths and investigate the lines of research that could be relevant.

In terms of **limitations**, we highlight the following aspects:

- Due to the nature of systematic literature reviews, we found some inherent limitations. Restricting the search to a fixed time interval, a publication type or a specific database means that we may have missed other studies of great interest and relevance to our topic. However, to alleviate this possible limitation, in the key concepts section of the dissertation, we have taken into account other grey literature studies.

- The results of qualitative biographical-narrative studies (case studies and life histories) show particular perspectives of intentionally selected participants in a specific context. Therefore, although they show realities that may coincide with the literature, they do not represent the reality of general populations, nor is the sample meaningful for that purpose.

- Other limitations are of a personal nature. During the research process, there have been moments that have made it difficult to reconcile work and personal life (maternity and the pandemic situation in the final stretch of the thesis).

The following are the **strong points** of this doctoral thesis:

- Having different perspectives to analyse the same object of study is one of the main strengths of this research. From this perspective, we were able to understand barriers, crises and identity (re)reconstruction, not only from the perspective of the protagonist, but also from the perspective of those around him/her, "the others". This allowed us to obtain a more complete picture of reality.

- The methodology used is another strong point. The biographical and narrative method allows us to investigate the more human side. It is easier to become familiar with and involved in the context of the research, even becoming a member of the educational centre.

- Another potential point of the thesis relates to the results obtained from the second research study. A head teacher successfully leading a school in spite of the difficult context surrounding the school. This study, despite the limitations indicated, can become a model for schools struggling to achieve educational success.

Finally, we add **educational implications and future lines of research** that can be summarised as follows:

- The construction of a proposal for improvement offers us the possibility of applying it and using it in management training courses. In addition to providing guidance and constituting key points in the process of (re)thinking a new managerial profile.

- It is necessary to carry out more studies that delve deeper into the identity construction of school leaders.

- We recommend the inclusion of other perspectives and narratives, as they are not only important for triangulating information from different professional agents, but also complete the two-dimensionality of identity itself.

- Analysing other cases of successful school leaders in different educational contexts can be an effective way to continue building the foundations for successful school leadership.

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