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International Trends in Principal Autonomy

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ABSTRACT

This study explores international trends in principal autonomy. As national education systems are responding to the pressures of globalization by introducing reforms to enhance the efficiency of schooling, the role of the principals is becoming widely recognized as a key component in the efforts to reshape education for the 21st century. Giving school leaders greater autonomy to manage resources, personnel, and instructional programs has been linked to improvements in student outcomes in different countries. The availability of internationally comparative data has reinforced the trend to implement reforms which promote enhanced principal autonomy as a means to improve student outcomes. This study fills a gap in the research related to the global spread of notions of best practice in educational leadership and the impact of recent reform efforts on the changing role of the school principal. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the role of school principal is becoming increasingly similar across countries, regardless of culture, in response to a growing global understanding of best practice by national education systems worldwide. The study used a sequential mixed methods design consisting of a quantitative analysis of data from the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) as well as a series of semi-structured interviews to shed light on how the lived experiences of secondary principals in a German 'Gymnasium' reflect changing expectations linked to international trends regarding the role of the principal. The findings broadly confirmed the underlying hypothesis that educational leadership reforms are often based on global notions of best practice and that these changes have resulted in 1) an increase in principal responsibilities related to instructional ("pedagogic") leadership; and 2) an increase in homogeneity of the role of principal across countries.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Study

National education systems are responding to the pressures of globalization by introducing reforms to enhance the efficiency of producing skilled human capital (Daun & Mundy, 2011; Productivity Commission, 2012; Symonds, 2011). The role of the principal is widely recognized to play a vital role in the efforts to reshape education for the 21st century, and enhancing school leadership has emerged as an education policy priority around the world (Brundrett et al., 2006; Caldwell, 2013; Fancera & Bliss, 2011; Stoll & Temperley, 2009). Several key aspects of schooling, such as school climate and teacher quality are recognized as important contributors to student success, and both have been linked to school leadership (Davis, 2009; McCord, 2013). More specifically, giving school leaders greater autonomy to manage resources, personnel, and instructional programs has been linked to improvements in student outcomes in many different countries (Eyal & Berkovich, 2011; Goodwin et al., 2007; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD, 2009a; OECD, 2013).

The effectiveness of education systems is measured internationally by comparing student academic outcomes on standardized tests (Ioannidou, 2007; Jakobi & Teltemann, 2009; Martens & Niemann, 2010). Large scale international student achievement tests such as *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS) conducted by the *International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement* (IEA) or the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA) by the *Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development* (OECD) provide internationally comparable data, which politicians and educators alike use to promote educational reforms. TIMSS and PISA compare students' educational achievements, and the results of both tests are used to promote systemic educational change and

improvements through learning from the experiences of other educational systems (Martens & Niemann, 2010). Data from these studies has shown that principal autonomy directly correlates with enhanced student performance in mathematics, science, and reading proficiency (OECD, 2013).

This study seeks to explore the relationship between school leadership reform efforts in 39 individual countries and changing degrees of principal autonomy at the school level resulting from growing convergence of understanding of best practice in educational leadership as promoted by international tests such as TIMSS and PISA. The availability of internationally comparative data has reinforced the trend to 1) promote international economic competitiveness through education reform; and 2) implement reforms which promote enhanced principal autonomy as a means to improve student outcomes (Wallace Foundation, 2011). This suggests that international trends in principal autonomy reflect international educational policy convergence. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the role of school principal is becoming increasingly similar across nations, regardless of culture, in response to a growing global understanding of best practice by national education systems worldwide.

<div align="center">**The Changing Role of the Principal**</div>

Across countries, school leaders' titles and their responsibilities may vary significantly. Organizations like the OECD commonly refer to the different types of public school leader as 'school principal' (OECD, 2009a). The school principal is generally understood to have managerial as well as instructional leadership responsibilities. One thing all school leaders are tasked with, however, is leading their organizations safely and effectively through fast-paced changes (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, OISE, 2014). In an age of globalization, the continuous need for education reform has been transforming the role of educational leaders

worldwide. There is a growing concern that the role of the school principal, originally designed for the industrial age, has not sufficiently evolved to deal with the complexities of preparing students to be successful in the economy of the 21st century (McCord, 2013). The dynamics of educational change represent the processes of moving away from an industrial world to one of information and services (Stoll & Temperley, 2009). Researchers like Martens and Niemann (2010), Popp (2009), Rinne, Kallo, and Hokka (2004), and Schriewer (2003) also argue that the dynamics of globalization and the diffusion of notions of best practice in educational leadership promote international educational policy convergence.

The principalship has been strongly influenced by reform efforts over the last 20 years (Caldwell, 2013; Goodwin et al., 2007). Proposed changes in school leadership are not only political issues but also market-driven, and when considering the future of educational leadership, one must take into account the impact of economic, social, and political forces which shape these reform efforts (Webb et al., 2006). International comparative tests such as TIMSS and PISA facilitate policy learning across countries. Through the spread of notions of best practice, these programs offer international platforms for achieving cross-cultural understanding for specific policy reforms, the result of which are changes in educational governance and, as is the focus of this study, changes to the role of the principal (Grek, 2012). The evolution of the principalship has resulted in increased expectations, complexity, and complications as layers of responsibility and accountability keep being added (Adamowski et al., 2007). School leaders today are more likely to be held accountable for learning outcomes of teachers and students, whereas previously their accountability was primarily for input into learning processes. As the job of leading a school has expanded and become more complex, it has become obvious that the

many demands and expectations placed on principals far exceed what one person alone can achieve (McCord, 2013).

Researchers broadly agree that the role of the principal is non-rational and complex (Goodwin et al., 2007). Enhancing principal autonomy is increasingly seen as a prerequisite to effective school management and instructional leadership (Brooking, 2008; Brundrett et al., 2006; Cranston, 2002; Daun & Mundy, 2011; Eyal & Berkovich, 2011; Honig & Rainey, 2012). Adamowski et al. (2007, p. 8) posited that "school leaders need to wield true authority over their personnel, their budgets, and key parts of their instructional programs if they are to be held accountable for results". In their analysis of data from the fourth PISA test series, the OECD (2009b) noted that

> school leaders can only have an impact on student outcomes if they have sufficient autonomy to make important decisions about the curriculum and teacher recruitment and development and if their major areas of responsibility are focused on improving student learning (p. 13).

As the role of the nation state expanded in the post World War Two era, in many countries, traditionally high levels of principal autonomy were gradually eroded (Sergiovanni et al., 1992). Today's call for greater autonomy in key decision making areas such as personnel, budgeting, and instructional programs, reflects common practice of an earlier age. The following section briefly outlines historical developments on principal autonomy in several developed and developing countries.

Historical Perspectives on Principal Autonomy

The history of the principalship is comparatively short and is linked to the creation of state school systems in the 19th century (Brown, 2005; Kafka, 2009). Early schools were self-

sufficient units dominated by the teacher, and only with the development of institutionalized systems of education did leadership roles within the school emerge. Such 'head teachers' or 'principal teachers' were first tasked with the supervision of teachers, and subsequently with the management of the school as an organization, including tasks such as finance, personnel and facilities (Goodwin et al., 2007). The creation of the principalship was nothing short of a revolution in education (Rousmaniere, 2009). The organization of the school passed from a group of students supervised by a teacher to a group of teachers managed by an administrator. School culture immediately changed as social relations and power structures shifted and the delivery and supervision of instructional content and methods was no longer the sole domain of the teacher (Brown, 2005).

The history of the principalship is also one of complexity and contradictions (Bates, 2006; Kafka, 2009). Individual identity, personality and leadership styles as well as political, social, and economic contexts have always impacted the principalship. Even as principals are firmly embedded within systems, they have developed a work culture of negotiation, autonomy, and resistance (Rousmaniere, 2009). The emergence of the principal position poses several questions (Brown, 2005). If the principal is the product of the modern school system, how has the role developed within the system? If the making of the principalship is linked to the creation of modern bureaucratic systems, which, in turn, were designed to control the principal's work, how have principals interpreted their roles, balanced divergent interests, and/or resisted the system? To what extent do principals adapt, accommodate, and resist the constraints of their position? Research suggests that principals have responded to changes in the social and educational systems in which they operate by using elasticity within the system at the school

level to shape and adapt their roles. Thus, even in the face of resistance, principals have been able to shape the local response to larger political and policy directives (Thomson, 2008).

Varying forms of educational governance are crucial to the development of systems, hierarchies, and levels of accountability and typically reflect differing societal and cultural norms across countries (Daun & Mundy, 2011). A principal's range of powers and decisions is wide and varied. It depends on myriad factors such as institutional norms and rules, organizational history and culture, and last but not least, the managerial skills and political abilities of the individual (Bozeman et al., 2013). School systems are subject to internal and external influences, and within this context, school principals are active participants as well as passive spectators in the evolutionary process of their role. The principal's work is embedded in national, regional, and local policies, and leadership is linked and dependent on all these contexts. To assert institutional and personal power, principals have traditionally drawn on shifting sources of authority (Kafka, 2009).

Bottery (2008) described historical changes in the principalship in four countries, the United States, the United Kingdom, China, and New Zealand. A common theme Bottery (2008) identified is that traditionally principals enjoyed a great deal of autonomy when making decisions in their schools, and that this autonomy has gradually been eroded by national, regional, or local bureaucracies. Similar trends appear to exist in developing countries as well (Oplatka, 2004). For example, in the immediate post-colonial era of the 1950s and 1960s, many school systems initially retained the governance forms and structures imposed by the colonial powers, and principals enjoyed high levels of autonomy. As newly independent countries shed their imposed colonial systems of education for new local systems, the result was often an

erosion of authority on the part of the principal in favor of expanding bureaucracies (Crossley &

Tikly, 2004; Masuku, 2010).

In historical perspective, the changing orientation from the autonomous stand-alone

school to the organizational bureaucracy which we know today has been the key to the

professional transition of the principalship within educational systems (Bates, 2006). The gradual

loss of principal autonomy is now being countermanded by international trends promoting

principal autonomy at the building level (Bottery, 2008). In this evolutionary process, principals

move on the continuum between identifying as a teacher with administrative duties or as an

administrator in an educational setting (Bates, 2006). Recognizing the interrelationship of past,

present, and future, as well as considering international reform trends now underway in

education, should, therefore, enable researchers to identify whether principal autonomy-related

responsibilities are not only 'accumulating' but also becoming increasingly homogeneous across

countries.

Trends in Educational Globalization

The global spread of information and the integration of economies has had far-reaching

impacts on every nation state, society, culture, and economy (Bieber, 2011; Samier, 2008). The

effects of globalization have led to drastic changes in the traditional role of the nation state, and

as a result the relationship between the nation state's governance model and the globalized

political economy is being redefined (Bieber, 2011; Dobbins, 2009; Wendt et al., 2008). National

governments vie for influence in the educational policy domain with inter- and supranational

agencies such as the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

(UNESCO), the World Bank, or the OECD (Schriewer, 2003). Grek (2012) stated that education

policy proposals from various international organizations are perceived at the national level as

relatively homogenous. Studies like *The International Adult Literacy Survey* (IALS) were led by the OECD in collaboration with the European Union and UNESCO and administered by North American agencies like the *National Center for Education Statistics* (NCES), *the Educational Testing Service* (ETS), and *Statistics Canada* (Grek 2012). As the interests of the private sector have expanded into public and cultural domains, a variety of new educational leadership paradigms and managerial practices have emerged. Litz (2011) argued that regardless of how one interprets globalization, the fact that it has reached almost every facet of our lives makes it imperative for school leaders to correctly identify global forces and pressures. School leaders need to adapt to and cope with these large scale and 'inevitable' changes, and they must recognize that globalization is a highly complex and multifaceted process.

The expansion of neo-liberal models of education has driven global reform efforts. The effects are felt in such areas as curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, organizational structure, and models of funding. Other conceptual frameworks such as educational research and professional development are also affected (Rousmaniere, 2009). There can be no doubt that such changes have had some positive impact on educational systems. Recent reform efforts, however, not only have liberating potential in that the essence of uniformity inherent in globalization constrains the possibilities of the local. Educational practitioners often fail to see how different parts of the policy agenda fit together (Codd, 2005). Commenting on the large volume of legislation coming down on educators, Bottery (2007) noted that practitioners are often actively discouraged from looking at the bigger picture. That is, the job of school leader is seen as one of accepting and implementing what comes down from above rather than questioning its intent.

The arrival of new inter- and supranational actors in the education arena is just one more step in the evolution of educational systems, and at the very least, principals need to be cognizant

of the dynamics which are shaping expectations and demands on their schools. Globalization movements tend to be balanced by movements toward localization. For educational leaders these dynamics only increase the complexity of their position (Caldwell, 2013; Eyal & Berkovich, 2011; Webb et al., 2006). By shifting educational responsibilities to regional or local levels, the nation state is in a weaker position to balance interests of various identities represented. School leaders find themselves in the role of mediator between forces at various political, social, and cultural levels. As a result, school leaders may experience greater autonomy and control of their work at the same time as they are caught in an increasingly complex and fragmented environment (Adamowski et al., 2007). Principal burn-out is a major concern among school leaders who operate in such a stressful workplace, and finding qualified personnel who are willing to assume school leadership roles is increasingly difficult (Wallace Foundation, 2011).

Some of the primary goals of recent reform initiatives are economic, where education systems are expected to produce the skilled workforce needed to be economically competitive in a global economy (Productivity Commission, 2012; Daun & Mundy, 2011; Litz, 2011; Symonds, 2011; OECD, 2013). Schools need to become more productive, which requires changes in system governance and management, personnel selection, finance, and curriculum control. Neo-liberal thought holds that the quality of educational and student outcomes are improved when authority is decentralized and localized. Research results on the effects of decentralization range from inconclusive (Engel, 2008; Shoraku, 2008) to indicating partial success (Cranston, 2002; Honig & Rainey, 2012). Most recently, analysis of data from large-scale international studies such as PISA has shown a direct correlation between principal autonomy and enhanced student outcomes (OECD, 2009b, 2012).

Processes of Globalization

As stated above, the growing influence of international organizations such as the OECD is a comparatively new phenomenon in educational policy making. The widespread dissemination of results and rankings of national education systems is shaping public and political discourse (Bieber, 2010; Botcheva & Martin, 2001; Martens & Niemann, 2010; Schriewer, 2003). Reform proposals are increasingly framed by data analysis of large-scale international tests such as PISA and TIMSS. Policy recommendations are broadly justified as a central component of efforts to enhance the efficiency of educational systems in producing skilled human capital (Cusso & d'Amico, 2005; Daun & Mundy, 2011; Symonds, 2011). Educational reforms typically draw upon 'best practice' governance agendas that promote school site-based management and leadership ideals. The result is a new kind of governance system, a hybridization of globalized features and policies which are filtered through the respective national systems as well as their local interpretations, adaptations, and actions (Dobbins, 2009).

Global trends in educational reform are multi-faceted. At the school level, the principal is often caught between the demands of the global and the local and is rarely given the authority to question the intent of reform efforts. In this kind of increasingly complex environment, the role of the principal has been changing rapidly across countries. In the globalized world of the 21st century, societies will be looking towards educational leaders for answers and solutions to increasingly complex and complicated challenges. Scott & Webber (2008) identified the need for principles to lead social transformations, demonstrate visionary capacity, engage in boundary-breaking entrepreneurialism, manage crises of various types, and develop new professional skills in instructional design and literacy. This plethora of tasks and skills will inevitably necessitate

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the emergence of new trends and paradigms in educational leadership and management practices, and that greater principal autonomy must be one of them.

The global dissemination of leadership ideals and the broad acceptance of new educational governance paradigms promote international convergence of educational governance systems (Ioannidou, 2007; Jakobi & Teltemann, 2009; Phillips & Ochs, 2003). At the practitioner level the question, therefore, is whether international convergence of education paradigms and governance systems also leads to international convergence of educational leadership practices. The changing understanding of the role and responsibilities of the principal may serve as an indicator with which to measure international convergence trends of educational governance and leadership practices at the school level. The key issue in terms of educational leadership, then, is whether processes of globalization that are promoting international educational policy convergence are leading to sigma convergence, or increased homogeneity, of the role of the principal across countries.

Purpose and Research Questions

Considering the continued interest of the effects of globalization on educational practice, there is a need for research on the influence of international actors, such as the OECD, on the policy making process and the translation of policy into practice. When examining the so-called 'policy-practice interface', research needs to focus on the roles and responsibilities of educational leaders and the social and political contexts which shape them (Webb et al., 2006). The comparative analysis of international trends in principal autonomy is the focus of this study. My specific research questions are:

1. Do the reported responsibilities of principals in PISA test schools show changes between 2000 and 2012?

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2. Has there been increased homogeneity of principal responsibilities across countries between 2000 and 2012 as measured by PISA principal autonomy-related indicators?

3. How do the lived experiences of principals in a German public "Gymnasium" reflect changing expectations linked to international trends regarding the role of the principal?

Summary of Methodology

I propose to use a sequential explanatory mixed methods design consisting of two distinct phases (Creswell, 2013). Phase one, the quantitative element of the study, consists of a series of paired-sample *t* tests of seven principal autonomy-related indicators for 39 PISA participant countries to identify international trends in school leadership practice. Phase two, the qualitative element of the study, consists of a series of semi-structured interviews that will provide contextual information to help explain the impact of recent reform efforts on the changing role of the principal in one of the countries shown to have increased autonomy-related responsibilities as evidenced in phase one of the study. Together, the two methods will provide answers to the research questions and the following hypotheses developed from them: If research on best practice in school leadership, specifically on principal autonomy, is disseminated and put into practice globally through changes in national educational policy, then it will result in 1) an increase in principal responsibilities related to instructional leadership; and 2) an increase in homogeneity of the role of principal across countries. To test these hypotheses, I will:

- extract PISA data and calculate linear trends regarding changes in responsibilities in instructional leadership and management for principals for all 39 participant countries for the years 2000 and 2012; if linear trends are positive between 2000 and 2012, it would indicate a mean increase in instructional leadership and management responsibilities;

- calculate paired t-test values as well as geometric distances to determine the presence or absence of sigma convergence (growing together); and

- conduct a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews with active and/or retired principals from Germany based on the *Principal's Role Questionnaire* (Goodwin, 2002) to add context and perspective in relation to educational reforms and political pressures.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

The study is descriptive in nature and seeks to add to the greater debate on the changing role of the principal in an age of globalization. Specifically, it sheds a new light on the actors and processes that shape the job descriptions of educational leaders around the world and addresses the question whether the role of the principal is converging internationally. Data and analyses from this study may be used by the public, educational practitioners, politicians, and social scientists to evaluate the results of recent educational reform efforts in a global as well as local context.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions provide an explanation of the key terms used throughout the study.

Globalization – The diffusion of commodities and ideas; the interconnectedness of economies and societies which reflects a standardization of cultural expressions around the world.

Governance – Governance is a process of policy making that goes beyond traditional steering mechanisms; it is a form of societal coordination that manifests itself in interdependent

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interactions between the state and societal organizations with binding regulations and enduring patterns.

Government – Government represents the nation state's command-and-control regulatory instruments. The use of command-and-control regulatory instruments is the quintessence of government.

OECD modes of governance – OECD modes of governance are means through which the OECD is seeking to influence national education policy making. In the pursuit of its education agenda, the OECD enters into interdependent relationships with sovereign governments and creates binding regulations and enduring patterns. The three modes of governance are: *agenda-setting*, *policy proposals* and *policy coordination*.

Policy convergence – Policy convergence is an increase in similarity over time in a certain policy area towards a common point. Researchers distinguish between *sigma convergence*, *beta convergence*, *gamma convergence*, and *delta convergence*.

Policy-practice interface – The translation of policy into practice and the effects on the role of the principal (Webb et al., 2006)

Principal – The school or building leader. Professional personnel who are responsible for school management and administration; personnel whose primary responsibility is the quality control and management of the school (OECD, 2012).

Principal Autonomy – The ability by the school leader to make decisions autonomously in "key areas" of school management, such as staffing, budgeting, curriculum, and assessment (see Adamowski et al., 2007).

Snowball-Sampling – A qualitative purposeful sampling technique where getting new contacts from each person interviewed is applied (Patton, 2002).

Transnational communications – A process of influencing national education policy making based solely on communication. Communication is the main factor accounting for convergence effects.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The dissemination of best practice and the broad acceptance of new educational paradigms promote international convergence of educational governance systems, policies, and practices (Bieber, 2010; Dobbins, 2009; Popp, 2009). While the debate about what constitutes effective school leadership has reached a point of broad consensus on instructional leadership, new management challenges are arising (Caldwell, 2013; Honig & Rainey, 2012; Wallace Foundation, 2011). At the practitioner level the question, therefore, is whether international convergence of education paradigms, governance systems, and educational policy also leads to structural convergence of the roles and responsibilities of the building principal across countries. Bottery (2008) proposed that the changing understanding of the principalship may serve as an indicator with which to measure international convergence trends. Whereas international educational policy convergence is frequently observed, structural policy convergence, that is, the translation of policy into practice, is less frequently observed (Martens & Niemann, 2010). A central issue in terms of educational leadership, then, is whether processes of globalization promote international educational policy convergence in the form of increased homogeneity of the role of the principal across countries.

The following literature review is organized in two main sections with several sub-sections that discuss and define 1) the changing role of the principal in the 21st century with a focus on autonomy-based practices, and 2) international educational policy convergence through processes of globalization and the dissemination of best practice in the transnational space with a focus on the OECD and its PISA assessment program. The chapter begins with a historic overview of the principalship in the United States and moves on to include historical

perspectives from several developed as well as developing countries. It then presents an overview of principal autonomy-related issues in the context of the changing role of the principal. The second part of the literature review examines processes of globalization and international educational policy convergence. It outlines the role of the OECD and its PISA test series in the global dissemination of information and notions of best practice in educational leadership. The chapter proceeds with a discussion of neo-institutionalism's diffusion theory which provides the theoretical framework for the study. The final section summarizes the findings of the research and connects it to the research questions of this study.

Part One: The Changing Role of the Principal in the 21st Century

Historic Developments of the Principalship in the United States

Kafka (2009), in her historical account of the changing role of the principal in the United States, noted that in the early stages of the principalship independence of decision making was an essential aspect of the role. Principals enjoyed a high degree of autonomy from the public and gained authority through leadership, in part, because they were granted independent decision making by their superintendents (Goodwin et al., 2007). Superintendents were actively discouraged from infringing on the duties and rights of principals, and principals actively resisted the implementation of policies which they perceived to be either unjust to their teachers and students or to be interfering with the day-to-day operations of their schools (Pierce, 1935, in Kafka, 2009, p. 322).

Principals also gained authority by creating systems of networks and local associations, which culminated in the creation of the *National Association of Secondary School Principals* (NASSP) in 1916 and the *National Association of Elementary Principals* (NAESP) in 1921 as separate elements within the *National Education Association* (NEA). These organizations

established clear guidelines for specific knowledge and skills by sponsoring scientific inquiry, further professionalizing the principalship through more rigorous certification processes (Brown, 2005).

As the nation state's role in society expanded after World War Two, principals increasingly became a tool of society (Goodwin et al., 2007). Societal problems such as poverty, gender and race issues, student rights, integration of disabled children, drug abuse, or teenage pregnancy required principals to become literate in law (Rousmaniere, 2009). At the same time, principals were expected to provide leadership in solving these non-academic community problems. The 1960s and 1970s were a time of tumult in many Western countries which saw significant changes to the roles and responsibilities of the principal. The principalship became more of a program management position, where program implementation of externally devised solutions required compliance rather than focus on student outcomes (Kafka, 2009).

In the 1980s, increasing fiscal pressures promoted market-based school reforms with a focus on principal accountability for student achievement (Rego, 2007; Shipps & White, 2009). Instructional leadership meant that principals were expected to set high standards for students and teachers, supervise curriculum and instruction, and monitor student progress. School governance and site-based management ideals constituted the next wave of reforms (Goodwin et al., 2007). The increase in local participation meant that principals were expected to act as facilitators between the school and the community. Summarizing post World War Two developments, Sergiovanni et al. (1992), found that the state delegated responsibilities to local authorities after the war, however, much of this authority was recaptured during the late seventies and early eighties.

The contemporary principal lives between conflicting demands of instructional, organizational, community, and strategic leadership, as well as expectations of school improvement, enhanced student outcomes, and various social pressures (Rousmaniere, 2009). New expectations present challenging multi-dimensional responsibilities (Brundrett et al., 2006). Added accountability, in the form of social, legal, managerial, and political expectations, has added to the traditional role of instructional leader. Goodwin et al. (2007) argued that the increasingly complex role of the principal today is not so much an evolution of the role as an accumulation of expectations and a layering of responsibilities. These new responsibilities, expectations, and duties have increased the principal's work load and diminished the authority and autonomy of the principalship (Eyal & Berkovich, 2011).

School leaders today face a complex and nonlinear world. Changing expectations and new job descriptions of principals reflect broader changes in society's expectations of schooling (Caldwell, 2013; Cranston, 2002; Wallace Foundation, 2011). That is, when expectations of what schools are asked to do shift, the understanding of the principal's role and authority shifts as well (Bates, 2006). Principals are frequently asked to accomplish great things with little support, and as sources of authority have shifted over time, degrees of principal autonomy have shifted with them. Kafka (2009) contended that principals have always been expected to be instructional leaders and their roles have always been a mix of diverse expectations and competing demands. What is truly new to the role of principal is the degree to which schools are expected to address and resolve societal problems in the predominantly market-based environment of the 21st century (Shipps & White, 2009).

Many school systems, like the United States, have authoritarian governance systems with top-down reform policies and practices (McCray & Beachum, 2014). The educational system in

the United States left control over public and private schools in the hands of state governments, where authority is mostly delegated to local entities such as school districts. Because education is not constitutionally anchored, a special relationship exists between school autonomy and accountability. This 'ebb and flow' has led to accountability measures being "used as a weapon of efficiency over educators" (Bogotch, 2014, p. 320). At times when policies of local control have proven inadequate in tackling major political and social developments, the federal government often intervened on behalf of race, gender, and special needs. Policies such as *No Child Left Behind* and *Race To The Top*, have begun to erode local autonomy. This deviation from traditional accountability processes has led to much frustration and anger, and the autonomy-accountability dynamics are being redefined (Townsend et al., 2013). Principals respond in creative ways to the pressures of reform, and in today's era of accountability, many principals have come up with innovative approaches to reclaim their rights to curriculum and instruction (Bogotch, 2014). According to Reyes-Guerra et al. (2014), educators find

> new spaces that are contextually appropriate and effective in exercising their autonomy and accountability within a conceptual model for partnerships between schools, districts, universities and the governing bodies that regulate them (p. 415)

A near universal concern in the literature is that the expanded workload and complexity of the principalship is diminishing role effectiveness, reducing creativity, and promoting burnout (Crawford, 2007; Wallace Foundation, 2011). The conflict of authority and autonomy is a major problem for practitioners. The OECD (2010) reported that

> as in any organization, decisions made at one level determine what actions can be taken at other levels. The degree to which principals can assume leadership roles in various

domains may be constrained by external administrative agencies, regulatory frameworks, or the level of autonomy that is granted to individual schools (p. 99).

To resolve these conflicts, principals "must have the authority and autonomy to exercise their best professional judgment on decisions that properly should be made at the school level" (Goodwin et al., 2007, p. 8). Daun and Mundy (2011) argued that enhanced autonomy will provide the principal with the flexibility needed to meet local school needs as well as policy mandates from higher administrative levels. In other words, given the dichotomy between expectation and needs, the autonomy of the principal must be commensurate with the responsibilities.

The 'Autonomy Gap'

Increased accountability is a new reality for American school leaders, the root causes of which are high stakes testing and standards-driven curricula (Reyes-Guerra et al., 2014). A direct consequence of increased accountability is that school leaders face ever-decreasing autonomy over instruction, curriculum, finance and other school management areas. In order to be effective in their jobs, school leaders are finding new ways to balance accountability and autonomy. Accountability pressures are particularly high among low-performing public schools where principals need to have the knowledge and skills to effectively oversee reforms which comply with mandated standards (McCray & Beachum, 2014 Reyes-Guerra et al., 2014).

Traditionally, autonomy in an educational setting has been defined as terms of power of the principal to make his/her own professional decisions. The perception of autonomy has an effect on motivation, job satisfaction, and role perception (Strike, 2012). The freedom to make decisions at the school level is informed by the local level and specific needs of the students within that particular community. District, sate, and federal mandates mitigate the local decision

making ability. Today, standardization and high stakes testing are used to measure organizational

performance, and each level of school is ceding authority to the level above (Reyes-Guerra et al.,

2014). Principals and superintendents are constrained by the pressures of the district, while

districts adhere to state mandates, and the states bow to political trends and the need for federal

funding. In a system with few carrots, the stick is typically funding.

Most school principals believe that they are effective leaders, their true authority over key

elements of their schools' instructional programs is strikingly limited (Adamowski et al., 2007,

p. 32). Their view of leadership, therefore, may also be very limited or constrained. Adamowski

et al. (2007) have called the distance between the authority principals need to raise student

achievement and the authority they actually have, the "autonomy gap" (p. 9).

School leaders are confident that they can make a difference (Wallace Foundation, 2011).

Accountability is not a forbidding concept per se, but school leaders demand the tools and

autonomy they need to increase student achievement. In a survey by Farkas et al. (2001) of 909

randomly-selected public school principals on the state of school leadership in the United States,

ninety percent of principals agreed that "giving school leaders far more autonomy to run the

schools while holding them accountable for getting results would be an effective way to do so"

(p. 13). Principals voiced frustration with the politics and bureaucracy that hamper their

effectiveness. Approximately 44% believed that unreasonable standards of accountability would

drive talented and committed principals from the profession. Being allowed to make key

decisions on staffing was identified by 86% of principals as an 'absolutely essential' area of

autonomy. The autonomy gap is biggest when it comes to firing low performing teachers. Only

32% of principals in the survey reported having sufficient autonomy to remove ineffective

teachers. The autonomy gap was lowest in respect to student discipline where 84% of principals reported sufficient autonomy (Farkas et al., 2001).

The trend to increased accountability tends to be a one way street. Instead of being a reciprocal process where each increase in accountability is offset by increased resources, principals are faced with more demands but fewer resources. Autonomy and accountability form a cycle where an increase in one demands more in terms of the other, and from a historical perspective, Kafka (2009) argued, the perceived necessity for change and the proposed solutions of today are remarkably similar to what has come before. Principals in general should be given autonomy equal to their responsibilities as strategic, instructional, organizational, political, and community leaders, but in particular principals need increased control over budgeting and staffing (OECD, 2010).

Summary of Historic Developments in the United States

While levels of autonomy have fluctuated over time, systemically, the principal's position within the educational bureaucracy has remained largely the same. As middle level managers, principals still answer to various interest groups such as teachers, parents, community members, district officials, and policy makers, but they remain constrained by local, state, or federal mandates beyond their control (Cranston, 2002). Another reason why the principalship today is largely the same it was one hundred years ago is that the fundamentals of schooling have not changed (Goodwin et al., 2007; Kafka, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2009). What has changed is the political environment surrounding the principalship. Neo-liberal trends and market-driven reforms have placed greater emphasis on school accountability in general, and principal accountability in particular. The result is an accumulation of expectations and demands coupled

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with layers of responsibility which have made the modern principalship an exceedingly complex role (Kafka, 2009).

Similar Developments in Other Countries

Since the early stages of the development of public educational systems in the United Kingdom, the head teacher had acted under the supervision of Local Education Authorities. The supervisory system was fairly loose, and the head teacher enjoyed a high level of autonomy (Brundrett & Crawford, 2008). The Education Reform Act of 1988 introduced a more centralized structure, and in 1993 an associated system of inspections was created under the supervision of the *Office for Standards in Education* (Ofsted). The framework of evaluation under Ofsted included criteria for school leadership and management, placed emphasis on school self-evaluations, and among other things, evaluated performance and effectiveness in terms of "value for the money" (Brundrett & Crawford, 2008, p. 11). At a time when the central government asserted more control over educational systems, school accountability was increasingly shifted onto the school level, which translated into new roles and responsibilities for the school head. The shift to school-based management and instructional leadership along with increased regulatory and accountability requirements continued throughout the 1990s. Recent reforms have brought more centralized structure to school leadership supervision as well as leadership training. Critics of these school-based management reforms have warned of bureaucratization of leadership (Gronn, 2003). The emphasis on standards-based approaches to leadership is seen to be excessively detailed, prescriptive, and bureaucratic, thus limiting the autonomy of the school head to make contextually localized decisions.

The lack of localized decision making is a theme that occurs frequently in developing countries where many educational systems across the globe are inefficient and ineffective. In her

meta-analysis of 27 studies on school systems in developing countries, Oplatka (2004, p. 427) identified some common features of inefficient educational systems such as limited autonomy, autocratic leadership style, summative evaluation, low degree of change initiation, and lack of instructional leadership functions. To address these issues, Oplatka (2004) identified a number of specific issues concerning educational leadership development plans, among which are adequate training on instructional leadership, improving the responsiveness of school leaders to students, parents, and other community members, as well as providing principals with greater autonomy to implement changes to curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Recognizing the urgent need for change, international organizations such as UNESCO, the World Bank, or the OECD are actively involved in reforming educational systems in many countries. Decentralization of power in education has become part of a global process and is found in educational reform efforts across the globe. The initial aim of recent decentralization reforms is to serve a variety of purposes from "democratization to efficiency, empowerment of stakeholders to improved quality of education" (Masuku, 2010, p. 2). Decentralization is also seen as a step to overcome rigid educational governance structures and bureaucracies and to give the building principal the authority to address local issues within the national or regional mandate (Hanson, 1998; Engel, 2008). Khan and Mirza (2012) investigated the outcomes of decentralization reforms and described the effects on the role of the principal in Punjab Province, Pakistan. Their study surveyed 387 secondary school principals using a Job Descriptive Index consisting of 90 items designed to measure respondents' job satisfaction. The authors found that in the decentralized systems head teacher accountability rose manifold as more responsibilities were devolved to the school level. Even though head teachers became accountable to several additional levels of bureaucracy and stakeholders at the district level, as they gained more

autonomy, job satisfaction rose. Parent involvement increased, and compared to pre-decentralization times, principals reported more satisfaction with supervision and opportunities for promotion.

Many countries in Southeast Asia are introducing school-based management reforms with the aim to reduce inequality. Shoraku (2008) described major school reforms in Cambodia, Indonesia, and Thailand. The author examined government documents and UNESCO data to follow developments at the school leadership level. Shoraku (2008) also analyzed several studies on the effectiveness of previous reform efforts before conducting onsite interviews of principals, teachers, and parents. Shoraku (2008) came to the conclusion that school-based management reforms in all three countries were at best marginally successful, and that particularly poor rural areas did not benefit from the reforms. The analysis of studies and subsequent literature

> revealed a dichotomy between the policy intention and its implementation and practice at
> the school level. School-based management reforms that were introduced with intentions
> to reduce inequalities in education are actually widening, or have a risk to widen, the gap
> between the schools in different areas, and/or between children in different situations
> (Shoraku, 2008, p. 24).

To help make reforms successful, principals need training in basic leadership techniques and community organization skills. Principals are not sufficiently skilled in school management nor are they representative spokespersons for the various educational stakeholders. Educational community partners are confused about the rapid change, and participation of local communities in school management is not successfully stimulated. Another key obstacle to success was the lack of genuine principal autonomy to implement these reforms. The author concluded that

school management continued to be largely conducted at the government level, thus neutralizing many of the intended effects of the reforms.

Similarly, Masuku (2010) examined the difference between intended consequences of decentralization reforms and the real effects of these measures on the lived experiences of principals in Zimbabwe. To this purpose, Masuku (2010) first analyzed government documents with the aim to determine goals and intended outcomes of proposed reforms. She then interviewed and observed 14 principals and district leaders as well as parents from those schools. Her interpretive findings confirmed that the redistribution of power manifests itself differently in differing contexts, even within the same country. When coupled with resource limitations, decentralization did not prove conducive to overall enhanced student learning. The experience of principals in Zimbabwe indicated that their workloads increased due to devolving administrative and supervisory functions to the school level. At the same time, educational quality suffered, because principals had less time to spend on instructional supervision and community liaison activities. Masuku (2010) confirmed, however, that whenever power ambiguity arose within the new system, principals adapted quickly to the new situation consolidating power in creative ways. A skeptic of blanket decentralization reform efforts, the author concluded that decentralization "as a policy for whatever reason is seldom more than political rhetoric to decentralise conflict" (Masuku, 2010, p. 2).

Moradi et al. (2012) investigated the effects of school-based management reforms on educational systems and the changing role of the principal in Iran. While their descriptive study is not as pessimistic as Masuku (2010), the authors did agree that the intended functions and outcomes of school-based management reforms in Iran and the reality at the policy-practice interface diverged significantly. The stated goals of reforms included increased independence,

accountability, and efficiency as well as increased involvement of all beneficiary groups of the school community: students, parents, teachers, principals, and government officials. Moradi et al. (2012) described several major problems with the implementation of school-based management reforms, most notably with budget control, teacher supervision, and curriculum. The authors proposed a fundamental rethink of several aspects of the current educational model and practices, and that among successful change initiatives, the principal needed to be endowed with more control over budget, teacher supervision, and curriculum (Moradi et al., 2012, p. 2150).

Litz (2011) questioned the validity of school governance and leadership transfer of predominantly Western models to developing countries. In the historical context of colonialism, foreign directed educational policy reforms can cause more suspicion than enthusiasm, and there needs to be closer attention to local customs and cultural norms. Principal training, for example, must reflect local contexts and idiosyncrasies (Brundrett et al., 2006). New educational leadership paradigms also require a longer incubation period in environments where they have not traditionally been present (Karstanje & Webber, 2008; see also Shoraku, 2008). While there is no doubt that recent reform efforts have had some positive effects on educational systems in many developing countries, these countries will need the time and support to adapt the needs of education to the demands of the local situation. Litz (2011) further argued that the principalship will need to remain at the very core of any school reform efforts, and that principals need not be given more responsibilities but more authority and autonomy to carry out existing responsibilities effectively.

Summary

While local contexts may be vastly different from country to country, historic developments in the principalship across various countries show certain similarities. Particularly

within the context of globalization, many recent reform efforts are based on the same ideological and economic neo-liberal philosophy of decentralization and school-based management (Engel, 2008). The literature also suggests that the role of the building principal is becoming increasingly complex across countries. Changes in school governance systems have placed the principal in a position of needing to balance an ever-growing list of demands, expectations, and tasks. Principals adapt to changes by interpreting their roles within the system, balancing divergent interests, and/or resisting the system when possible. To varying degrees, principals adapt, accommodate, and resist the constraints of their position, and in order to address complexities, principals are asking for genuine autonomy in key areas of school administration and leadership. Research indicates that there are widespread discrepancies between intended and real principal autonomy, and that the 'autonomy gap' exists in many countries.

Barriers to Principal Autonomy

In their qualitative study on barriers to effective school leadership in the United States, Adamowski et al. (2007) interviewed 33 principals from five major urban districts in three states whether today's principal possesses the authority to exercise strong leadership. Most analysts agree that principals should have authority over key functions of their school, such as budget, personnel, and curriculum, but to what extent do principals themselves feel that they actually have authority over these functions? And if they do not feel that they have it, why not? Are barriers to strong leadership real or imagined? Adamowski et al. (2007) defined the 'autonomy gap' as "the difference between the amount of authority that district school principals think they need in order to be effective leaders and the amount they actually have" (p. 5). As outlined above, the autonomy gap is greatest with regard to personnel decisions such as hiring and firing of teachers and determining the number and type of positions needed at the school, as well as

resource decisions, such as budget formulation and allocation. Principals also identified

curricular and instructional areas as lacking in autonomy. These barriers to effective leadership

are real and stem primarily from policies and procedures.

A key insight of Adamowski et al's. (2007) study is the principals' perception of their

role. Most of the 33 interviewed principals felt that they were effective school leaders. They have

a clear understanding of what it takes to function as an effective leader, and they often find ways

to work within and around the political environment of their schools (Wallace Foundation,

2011). At the same time, most principals view themselves as middle managers rather than CEOs,

and instead of trying to change the system, they are content to work the system. Principals who

perceived themselves to be effective were most often those who have honed their political and

relationship-building skills over time. The amount of experience influenced the amount of

perceived autonomy. Summarizing their findings, Adamowski et al. (2007) concluded that it is

> striking how little true authority these principals enjoy in key areas. Their budgets are
>
> essentially handed to them, or at least strictly regulated from above. In most cases, the
>
> curriculum is determined for their schools, and they have little control over who works
>
> there. These limitations force principals to be creative within a relatively narrow range of
>
> freedom—in other words, to become skilled at the art of middle management
>
> (Adamowski et al., 2007, p. 31).

In this respect, principals in public and private schools in the United States are no

different from the principals elsewhere who deal with the unintended consequences of

decentralization. Effective leadership is frequently a question of ingenuity, resilience, and clever

manipulation of the system rather than genuine authority and autonomy over key areas in school

administration.

Leadership Styles and Principal Autonomy

There can be no doubt that the multi-faceted dimensions of globalization will have a great impact on educational leadership policy and practice. Societies expect that principals cope with the increasingly difficult and complex challenges of the 21st century. In addition to tackling new and sometimes unknown challenges, principals are expected to uphold core principles of social transformation from the past and present. On top of everything else, principals will need to demonstrate visionary capacity, boundary-breaking entrepreneurialism, new professional skills, instructional design and assessment literacy, and crisis management skills (Scott & Webber, 2008). Various leadership styles have been at the center of educational leadership debate, some of the most recent being transformational leadership and distributed leadership. Leithwood (2007) in his extensive formulation of transformational leadership identified four major dimensions of practices: setting directions, building collaborative cultures, developing people, and staffing the program. An organizational capacity is enhanced when collective forms of leadership exist within the organization (Grubb & Flessa, 2006). Mulford (2008) argued that successful school leaders not only promote enhanced student learning by increasing capacities in others within the organization, but also by adopting a focused and explicit approach to their responsibilities. This focus on responsibilities, in turn, requires educational leaders to have the autonomy to make appropriate decisions at the building level, particularly, if certain responsibilities are to be distributed (Leithwood, 2007).

Distributed leadership is one of the most recent approaches to school leadership and includes such dimensions as enhancing interpersonal relationships to build leadership capacities throughout the school community (Gronn, 2002, Fullan, 2006). Creating a genuine team culture requires openness and trust and an interpretation of leadership as an outcome of interpersonal

relationships rather than a focus on individual actions or accomplishments (Spillane & Orlina, 2005). Leadership is fluid rather than located in specific and formal roles. Distributed leadership cannot be mandated but must be grown. Successful school leaders do not just delegate power or give more influence to others in the organization, they adopt a focused and explicit approach to developing leadership capacities in all their staff (Gronn, 2002). To do so effectively, principals have to learn to relinquish responsibilities rather than merely delegate tasks. More importantly, principals must also have the authority to let go. Research has shown that distributed leadership only works when it is supported and facilitated by the principal, where full principal support for any devolution of power or distribution of responsibilities is based on the principals' perception of accountability and autonomy (Mulford, 2008). That is, when confronted with myriad clerical as well as instructional duties, it may be tempting to simply delegate tasks, but principals who are held accountable for implementing policy directives and student learning outcomes are often reluctant to relinquish key responsibilities (Adamowski et al., 2007). Litz (2011) posited that the underlying assumption behind new and relevant leadership paradigms such as transformational leadership, distributed leadership, site-based management, or total quality management, is that the principal must have a high degree of autonomy in decision making.

Principal Autonomy and Contextual Levels of Influence

The implementation of school reforms is heavily influenced by local contexts, and these contexts are determined by different levels of influence: personal, institutional, national, and global. These levels are not mutually exclusive but are deeply interwoven with each other (Bottery, 2007).

Personal level. The personal level is crucial at the policy-practice interface (Webb et al., 2006). The personal level is about the commonly held belief in the utility of extracting what are

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believed to be key features and best practice of good schooling and attempting to replicate them not only at the school level but at the individual leadership level (Bottery, 2007). What in theory is neat and simple at the policy making level, is a genuine challenge at the school implementation level. That is, the implementation of best practice gleaned from another system is often highly problematic at the school level due to the lack of local context (Cranston, 2002).

Principals are held accountable for student achievement at the school and classroom level, and principals experience accountability pressures at a very personal level. With high burnout and turnover rates, principals, especially new ones, often do not have the connections and sources of authority that principals have had in the past (Crawford, 2007; Shipps & White, 2009). Neo-liberalist views on education, such as lower government spending, a contracting role of the state, and an increase in market mechanisms tend to ignore the complexities of educational organizations (Johnson, 2004; Robinson, 2006). As competition for resources has increased, the principal's individual importance to the success or failure of the school has also increased (Kafka, 2009). In education, advancing the best interest of the students, rather than advancing individual interests, defines relational trust as a coherence of behaviors by various members of the organization. Such coherence correlates strongly with academic attainment. Bottery (2007, p. 6) claimed that the reason why 'hyper-rational' and market models of educational systems and reform efforts fail is because they fail to appreciate the personal nature of education. Imposing a flurry of responsibilities on principals has proven to be a likely causative factor in principal burnout (Brooking, 2008; Caldwell, 2013; Fullan, 2003; Gronn, 2002).

Organizational level. Organizations are more than the sum of their individuals. They are constituted by shared values, rules, procedures, and many other unique aspects which contribute to school culture (Sergiovanni, 2005). Within organizations, people act as individuals as well as

group members. Individuals take on roles and responsibilities and operate in an atmosphere of relational trust (Spillane, 2005). Roles and notions of trust change over time as people adapt to new challenges and routines. The organization is shaped by people just as people are shaped by the organization. Gronn (2003) posited that in a world where legislation and reforms are turning education into a commodity, practitioners are reduced to 'designer leadership' or implementers of externally specified operations within a bureaucratized pattern of management. A net effect is often to reduce creativity within the organization (Samier, 2008). In other words, a government's desire to facilitate the education of a more creative workforce can result in precisely the opposite. Central imposition of policy does not necessarily result in homogenous work or learning environments, nor does it reduce ambiguities and dilemmas (Brundrett et al., 2006). To the contrary, Bottery's (2007) study on headteacher roles in the UK and Hong Kong and Brooking's (2008) study on primary principals in New Zealand, both, reported more complexity and role ambiguity. Principals generally do not have the freedom to interpret and mediate locally those external directives imposed from above. This dilemma is not new. Lipsky (1989) asked whether 'good policy' was one that was implemented without being infected by local influences, or whether it was one interpreted and modified with respect to local circumstances. The school leader needs to manage the organization by interpreting the external in terms of the local, and without localization, sustainable leadership is likely to fail (Shoraku, 2008; Wallace Foundation, 2011). Professional autonomy is necessary to balance demands on the organization. If an appreciation of the personal level is commonly accepted as a mediative approach to student learning and school leadership, it is at the organizational level that the greatest barriers to principal autonomy exist, thus, creating a need for critical analysis and skepticism in the light of educational reform.

National level. At the national level the influences are more diverse and complex, because the traditional role of the state as the paragon of education is slowly changing (Bleiklie, 2001; Enders, 2006; Martens & Wolf, 2006). Historically, the role of principal has changed in tandem with changes to society and the nation state (Goodwin et al., 2007; Kafka, 2009). Such changes tend to be more like unplanned reactions to changes in ideas and legislation than smoothly engineered transitions. Rousmaniere (2009) argued that the accretion of responsibilities and the enhanced complications and complexities that come with change contribute to higher stress levels and early retirement among principals.

Global level. The term globalization can be interpreted many different ways but almost always it includes an economic, political, and social component (Webb et al., 2006). Globalization is far-reaching and has many interconnected, complex dimensions. It has an enormous impact on educational systems and leadership paradigms (Litz, 2011). Supra- and international organizations like UNESCO, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, or the OECD facilitate the spread of neo-liberal ideas (Botcheva & Martin, 2001; Martens & Niemann, 2010). The nation state's ability to control its economy is increasingly curtailed by international interconnectedness. The nation state's independence in social policy is also reduced by fiscal constraints, making education increasingly vulnerable to international influences (Enders, 2006). Ball (2007) traces global movements down through UK policies to organizations and individuals and shows how the private management of public education is taking hold. Bottery, (2007, p.6) saw various ironies in the demands and effects of this type of 'hyper-rationalist management':

- The more you try to engineer the creation of a successful workforce, the more likely you are to suppress, the creativity upon which it depends;

- The more you try to encourage quality by measuring it, the more you will encourage people to concentrate only on the measurable and thus ignore richer aspects of quality;

- The more people are not trusted, the more they will become untrustworthy;

- The more you try to engineer success, the more you suppress the local knowledge upon which success depends; and

- The more you define the bottom line, the more that this becomes the only line that people become interested in achieving (Bottery, 2008, p. 4).

In sum, the research indicates that barriers to principal autonomy are real, and the discrepancy between the intentions of recent reform efforts and their effects on the daily lives of principals can be significant. Principals are stuck in the middle manager mind set and continue to act in creative ways to ensure that their authority within the school to exercise leadership in key areas is ensured. Obstacles to the exercise of autonomy are greatest at the organizational level. Globalization and neo-liberal thinking have been shaping educational reform efforts across the globe, and principals struggle with balancing expectations and accountability with the autonomy they are given. There is a genuine gap between the autonomy principals need to be effective leaders and the authority they are given to do so.

Summary of Part One

The demands on educational leaders are manifold and complex. In order to operate effectively within their respective systems, educational leaders must have greater insight into the forces which are shaping their role. They have to see that globalization is a new framework within which educational changes need to be examined and leadership practices be reframed. They need to be aware of the positive and negative effects of globalization, and they must remain flexible in order to adapt to an ever-changing world where new qualities, ideas, and purposes are

emerging in educational practices. The literature revealed that in order to deal with competing demands, principals require a greater degree of accountable autonomy in key decision making areas such as budget, staffing, and curriculum. New leadership paradigms such as transformational and distributed leadership rely on principal autonomy to be effective. The development of accountable autonomy processes can be interpreted as a systemic reaction to mediate between the global, national, and the local (Bottery, 2007). Recognizing the interrelationship between past, present, and future is essential in identifying reform goals to enhance the effectiveness of the principalship. Educational change is formulated and implemented in an environment influenced by social, political, and economic forces, and in an era of transition from an industrial age to a world of information and services, the role of the principal will be shaped by the dynamics of globalization and educational change. Carnoy and Rothen (2002, p. 2), concluded that, "In assessing globalization's true relationship to educational change, we need to know how globalization and its ideological packaging affect the overall delivery of schooling, from transnational paradigms, to national policies, to local practices."

<center>**Part Two: Processes of Globalization**</center>

International Policy Convergence

Empirical studies on policy convergence do not represent a homogenous field of research (Heichel et al., 2005). Instead, researchers build on different schools of thought, apply different theoretical concepts, and use diverse explanatory variables when investigating international policy convergence. Holzinger and Knill (2005) posited that the basic premise of international policy convergence research centers on whether and why countries develop similar policies over time. In an era of globalization, international policy convergence research is booming, yet, as Drezner (2001, 2005) pointed out, the concept of international policy convergence itself is not

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new. Bennett (1991, p. 218) defined international policy convergence as "the tendency of societies to grow more alike, to develop similarities in structures, processes, and performances". This study bases the following examination of international educational policy convergence of autonomy related principal activities on a series of steps. The first is a description of a neo-institutionalist approaches to international policy convergence, which will serve as the theoretical framework of the study. The next step examines processes of international educational policy convergence using the example of the OECD's PISA test series. The third step investigates empirical studies on international policy convergence using quantitative and qualitative research.

International Policy Convergence seen through a Neo-Institutionalist Framework

According to Rogers (2003) diffusion is a process of communicating innovations through certain instruments over time. Neo-institutionalism elaborates on the role of international organizations in the diffusion process of ideas and norms and attributes much importance to exogenous factors. It assumes that international organizations limit the range of actions of national and local actors, while at the same time urging them towards a more rational, just, and democratic world community. Special importance is assigned to the public discourse. Haunss and Schneide (2013) identified the influence of international organizations on the public discourse as a crucial factor in the diffusion of ideas. Not only does public discourse on specific issues and ideas provide governments with the basis for policy reforms which, in turn, are grounded in the diffusion of notions of best practice, public discourse also provides legitimacy for political action and policy reforms.

Societal changes can also be of an endogenous nature where national actors resort to using external knowledge in pursuit of their national agendas which then serves as a form of external legitimacy or validation (Phillips, 2006b). Thomson (1995) argued that using

international organizations "lends domestic autonomy to the state through institutions such as international law and diplomacy that empower the state to overcome societal resistance to its policy practices" (p. 226). National governments are using international organizations in order to promote domestic agendas. In other words, by introducing outside actors onto the national stage, governments aim at influencing public debate in their favor, and thus to increase leverage over the national balance of power. This novel approach to domestic policy making, however, has had unintended consequences that have resulted in the opposite of what had originally been intended (Martens & Wolf, 2006). Instead of exerting greater control over the public education debate, the new initiatives result in a loss of sovereignty and the weakening of the nation state's ability to control educational policy making. Co-opting international organizations into national policy making has opened the door for the latter to play a more important role in national educational policy making (Bieber, 2011; Enders, 2006; Ioannidou, 2007; Popp, 2010).

Processes of International Policy Convergence: The Example of the OECD

Transnational transfer processes are based on the assumption that contextual similarities should lead to similar results (Steiner-Khamsi, 2006). Strang and Meyer (1993) reasoned that the idea that all countries are members of a global society enhances perceived similarity among nations, which, in turn, enhances diffusion processes. It is in this context that Phillips (2006a) explained why external education reforms resonate locally. Weymann et al. (2007) argued that the empowerment of international organizations on behalf of nation states is a classical *principal-agent* problem. Nation states (*principals*) who initially supported the creation of international organizations (*agents*) and helped set their agenda, now see themselves confronted with *agents* who pursue their own agendas that are not necessarily in the interest of the *principals*.

Today, the OECD is an important international player in education policy making, and the organization makes policy recommendations for modernization and improvement of public education services. For example, one of the primary goals of OECD education policy recommendations is to change and rationalize public management of education so that increased quality of services is reflected in the social fabric of a society that strives to be competitive in the global knowledge-based economy. Within many OECD member states, the focus of quality control and accountability is shifting towards more internal assessment of schools and giving local administrations more autonomy and powers of procedure.

OECD benchmarking identifies countries and systems the OECD considers to be effective, or role models. These best practices in school management and leadership identified by the OECD enable the organization to make specific recommendations to individual countries. Klausenitzer (2002) claimed that the political interest of the OECD is summarized in the context of OECD objectives that form the framework of its education policy activities, particularly the outcome measures that are needed by "countries which want to monitor the adequacy of their education systems in a global context" (OECD, 1999, p. 16). To summarize using Rogers' (2003) definition of diffusion outlined above, the OECD succeeds to promote diffusion by publishing PISA results and communicating innovations directly to the public. It does this through various means, so-called modes of governance, which include agenda-setting, policy proposals, and policy coordination.

OECD Modes of Governance. OECD modes of governance represent means through which the organization is seeking to influence national educational policy making. In the pursuit of its education agenda, the OECD enters into interdependent relationships with sovereign governments, thus creating binding regulations and enduring patterns of influence. As early as in

the late 1980s, researchers like Fiala and Lanford (1987) found empirical support for the increasing uniformity in national educational policies that reflected the development of global ideologies and standards. Drawing on institutionalist world polity perspectives, the authors viewed international organizations as "world-level agencies influencing the incorporation and diffusion of educational ideologies and practices within and among nation-states" (p. ii).

The modes of governance that international organizations have at their disposal vary according to their objectives. McNeely and Cha (1994) distinguished between exchange of information, charters and constitutions, standard setting instruments, and technical and financial resources. In the case of the OECD, however, these instruments either do not apply (financial resources) or are not fine-tuned enough to analyze policy shifts. Other researchers such as Leuze et al. (2007) drew on Cox and Jacobson's (1973) work on IO's and their political activities in the development of economic, security, and welfare policy. They identify five modes of governance including discursive dissemination, standard setting, financial means, coordinative activities, and technical assistance. While only three of the five (discursive dissemination, standard setting, and coordinative activities) apply to the OECD, these instruments represent a more fine-tuned understanding of the current realities of the OECD and education policy making. Knill (2005, p. 7) referred to the use of modes of governance that rely on mechanisms of communication as 'transnational communications' and identifies transnational communications as a means to promote cross-national policy convergence.

In her endeavor to "identify concrete means, mechanisms and tools that are used in order to achieve certain policy objectives", Ioannidou (2007, p. 341) identified three knowledge-based instruments that she described as regular monitoring of education systems, evaluation by peers, and large-scale empirical assessment studies. While Ioannidou does identify important means

with which the OECD is acting in the transnational educational space, her emphasis on knowledge-based instruments not only limits the understanding of convergence processes, it actually understates the real influence of the OECD in terms of being an agent of change. In contrast, Jakobi et al. (2007) elaborated in more detail and, significantly, in greater scope on the soft power instruments of the OECD. They identify *agenda-setting*, *policy proposals*, and *policy coordination* as the three principal modes of OECD governance in education policy making. While the differences to Ioannidou (2007) appear subtle, they are, nevertheless, significant to the purposes of this study. Not only do these three instruments offer a better fit with the definition of governance as outlined above – in that they better preserve the breadth of the term governance – they also incorporate important concepts of policy convergence.

Agenda-setting. International organizations such as the OECD gain influence over national policy making through skillful agenda-setting. The OECD's *Centre for Educational Research and Innovation* (CERI) is specifically assigned with educational agenda-setting. CERI staff are considered experts in their field who often have superior knowledge in comparison to their national colleagues (Marcussen, 2004). These experts identify relevant issues, set up working groups, and propose projects that are then promoted through the OECD to national levels. Through close links with other important players in international education, such as the World Bank and the European Union, the OECD ensures even wider dissemination of its agenda.

> We partner with other international organisations (such as UNESCO, World Bank, UNICEF, European Training Foundation) and leading NGOs (such as The British Council, Open Society Institute) as well as the private sector. We collaborate with the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture on projects of mutual interest to maximize synergies. (OECD, 2012, p. 3)

Jakobi and Teltemann (2009) referred to the OECD as a central source of information and legitimation for other international organizations. The dominant function of agenda-setting is to establish new ideas in the international discourse on education policy. The widespread notion of *lifelong learning* is a prime example of OECD agenda-setting. More recent examples include publication of PISA results concerning efficiency of national education systems. The OECD describes its own education mission thus:

We provide comparative data and analysis on education policy-making to help build efficient and effective educational systems and improve learning outcomes. We provide a forum where governments, business, civil society and academia can share best practices and learn from one another. Our statistics and indicators provide a strong evidence base for international comparisons of all aspects of education systems. Our policy analyses facilitate peer learning across countries as new policy options are explored and experiences compared. Our future-oriented educational research helps shape policy agendas by identifying upcoming issues while drawing upon the overall breadth of the OECD's policy work. (OECD, 2012, p. 2)

PISA has managed to skillfully connect student achievement in literacy, mathematics, and science to the perceived needs of successful human capital of the 21st century. Through the masterly build-up of this policy specific discourse, PISA managed to transcend boundaries of educational research and policy making on a global scale (Grek, 2012). Not only did it link research, assessment, and public policy, it also provided a common language which came to dominate public discourse. Because the OECD is in charge of every step in the process from

identifying and defining an issue to data gathering, analysis, discussion, creation, and implementation of plans, the organization effectively controls not only *what* is discussed but also *how* it is discussed (Jakobi & Martens, 2007). Researchers such as Leuze et al. (2008) have referred to the capacity of the OECD to initiate and influence international education policy debates as 'discursive dissemination'.

Policy proposals. While agenda-setting allows the OECD to influence international political debate, it is through carefully crafted policy proposals that the organization is able to influence policy making. The OECD regularly elaborates and disseminates concrete recommendations for its member nations in order to address issues they have identified as problematic. The OECD publishes brochures and statistical data that outline the problem as well as steps and courses of action towards implementation of its own recommendations. These publications go as far as elaborating specific suggestions, called 'policy directions', on how to approach an issue within the body politic of a nation, such as, for example, how to finance education.

> We develop analysis and best practices together with the 34 OECD member countries
> and with over 40 non-member economies. We help them to answer the most important
> questions in education policy: how to best allocate resources in education to support
> social and economic development, and how to offer everyone the chance to make the
> most of their innate abilities at every stage of life. (OECD, 2012, p.3)

Planned initiatives in education that were initially created within the OECD re-emerge on the national stage of its member nations and beyond as common goals based on evidence which could justify said initiatives. Interestingly, as an international institution, the OECD enjoys

sufficient standing to propose alternative courses of action that in a national political system might not have been realizable (Jakobi & Martens, 2007). As discussed above, one of the main tasks of the OECD is to collect, analyze, and disseminate information. The OECD is, thus, in a position to actively influence public debate by providing data for discussion. In other words, internationally generated policy analysis and recommendations flow back into the national discourse, and into the national policy making processes. OECD publications, such as *Education at a Glance* and the standards published therein, become a basis as well as a resource for public discussion and legislative debate. Through its policy proposals the OECD contributes to the diffusion of knowledge and best practice (OECD, 2013). These best practice benchmarks, in turn, are used to set standards aimed at providing rules for state policy. Standard setting in a soft law context allows the OECD to generate standards for evaluation as well as new constitutive norms which are reinforced through normative pressures.

Policy coordination. It is inherent within the organization's purpose to initiate programs that are universally applicable to member states. The OECD engages systematically in coordination of policies among nations through publications such as the *OECD Peer Review* and uses coordinative activities to "organise and logistically influence procedures in order to promote policy initiatives and decisions" (Leuze et al., 2008, p. 9).

> We are committed to supporting an integrated approach to education which helps OECD countries improve the quality, equity, efficiency and effectiveness of their education systems. By improving learning outcomes for all, we help mitigate inequalities and help countries foster: economic and social development; innovation and sustainable growth; social mobility. (OECD, 2012, p.3)

In its most direct form, the OECD may offer incentives for policy making by offering to manage programs or projects and their implementation. Another active path is to act as a facilitator and disseminator of information among the nations through international conferences in which respective national groups exchange and discuss policies. Lechner and Boli (2005) posited that these international conferences, at which OECD policy proposals are discussed, form an important platform for dissemination of ideas and initiation of political discourse within member states. OECD meetings bring together scientific expertise and key policy makers as a type of governance that promotes organizational thinking and processes beyond the OECD to influence policy making at the national level. Through the publication of its data and the use of rankings and ratings (R&R), the OECD is also in a position to identify successful as well as unsuccessful examples of educational policy making among its member states. In turn, such data publication may promote competition of educational models and/or diffusion of successful policies. The long-term effect could be convergence of educational policy making among OECD member states (Jakobi & Martens, 2007).

Summary. IOs have several modes of governance at their disposal, and in a classical *principal-agent* constellation, nation states are increasingly subject to the influence of IOs. Theorists differ on the nature and definition of modes of governance depending on the organization's socio-political purpose and area of expertise. The above typology of OECD governance modes – *agenda-setting*, *policy proposals*, and *policy coordination* – represents a synthesis of the relevant research literature on modes of governance for international organizations. With respect to this investigation, the typology is consistent with the neo-institutionalist premise of maintaining the breadth of the governance construct while at the same time outlining clear working parameters of the theoretical construct.

The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment. PISA is a comprehensive and statistically sophisticated indicator program, and its outcomes-oriented data collection and analysis has generated a wealth of internationally comparable education data (Cusso & d'Amico, 2005; Enders, 2006). This data has had an enormous impact on education policy making among PISA participant countries, because it is now easier to compare student performance and outcomes internationally (Rinne et al., 2004). PISA has allowed the OECD to identify education-related themes and to set education policy agendas. In a series of international thematic reports, the OECD makes policy recommendations which range from rather implicit to very explicit statements (Bieber, 2011). These proposals concentrate on indicators that are positively correlated with student performance without, however, claiming a causal relationship.

As the initiator and coordinator of PISA, the OECD has assumed a role in which it can develop policy proposals and coordinate them among its member states. This is done on a voluntary basis and requires the consent of concerned countries (Ioannidou, 2007). Unlike other indicator programs, PISA defines the problem as well as delivers the solution, thus contributing to the diffusion of best practice policy reforms among OECD member states and beyond (Enders, 2006; Jakobi, 2007). While this study seeks no causality between OECD policy proposals, government intervention in education policy, and its effects on the role of the principal, PISA publications and programs may offer explanatory linkages between 1) OECD actions and the social phenomenon of educational leadership reform; and 2) international educational convergence of the role of the principal across PISA participant countries.

Rinne et al. (2004) indicated that by implementing various OECD recommendations, many countries actively strive for policy convergence. Rationality of knowledge has become an important means in forming public discourse and policy development. Through its governance

capacities, the OECD provides the information, or knowledge, fuelling these processes. Not only does the OECD expose national public education systems to the demands of adopting regulatory proposals using benchmarks and standards that have been designed by itself, but the OECD's international qualitative comparisons, such as PISA, subsequently provide schools, the public, and politicians with a justification for their adoption.

Summary

Neo-institutionalism's diffusion theory supports the notion that the OECD successfully promotes its ideas and norms onto the national stage through its modes of governance. At a time where rationality of knowledge has become an important means in forming public discourse, exogenously or endogenously, the assumption that the exercise of governance is not confined to the processes of legitimization but extends to policy development and implementation, is no longer a mere theoretical construct but an empirical reality. It is through effective convergence of perceptions of notions of best practice that the OECD promotes international convergence of education policy in school management and leadership.

Empirical Studies and International Policy Convergence

While the vast majority of empirical research uses quantitative methods, convergence research also uses qualitative methods (Heichel et al., 2005). A review of the policy convergence literature reveals that both, quantitative and qualitative, methods have distinct advantages and disadvantages. The more formal way of defining similarity allows quantitative research to more clearly identify patterns of convergence than qualitative studies, as does the greater amount of data examined (Jakobi & Teltemann, 2009; Martens & Niemann, 2010). Consequently, researchers can more easily compare quantitative findings to other studies. Qualitative studies may have more bias in their selection of cases that may exaggerate the significance of the actual

findings. The great advantage of qualitative studies, however, is that their open design may compensate for typical quantitative shortcomings such as the vulnerability to outliers, or the lack of sensitivity towards convergence on a subgroup level (Heichel et al., 2005; Nagel et al. 2009; Popp, 2009).

The general subject in convergence research is to investigate increasing policy similarity over time (Knill, 2005). In order to bring focus and clarity to empirical convergence research, Heichel et al. (2005) proposed that a study should "address at least one clearly identifiable public policy or policy field in relation to at least two countries providing information on the development over time" (p. 818). Additionally, the authors proposed that researching international policy convergence should be the central theme of the analysis. In addition to defining the policy dimension, empirical research must contain clearly defined temporal, geographic, and analytical aspects.

Conceptualizing international educational policy convergence. The aim of this study is to analyze the relative effects of policy developments at the practitioner level, the policy-practice interface, over time in a select group of countries. In order to avoid ambiguity over the occurrence of convergence, the focus of this study is on defining measurable indicators and time periods in which international policy changes occurred (Seeliger, 1996). Plümper and Schneider (2009) stated that, "convergence [] is an observable outcome and exists if and only if some observable dissimilarity between independent units of observation declines" (p. 997). Bennett (1991) posited that because "public policy is a complex multidimensional phenomenon, it is crucial to be absolutely precise as to the aspects of policy being compared to ensure cross-national equivalence" (p. 218). Empirical studies of international policy convergence must, therefore, clearly define several dimensions among which the most important are the policy

dimension, the temporal aspect, the spatial aspect, and the analytical dimension of the study. Only a narrow focus on an individual policy dimension and a well-defined time frame allow for empirical measurement, comparison, and analysis of policy developments across countries. Seeliger (1996) concluded that international policy convergence studies may only be conceptualized as a temporal and reversible policy process.

In response to the need for clear definitions as outlined above, this study will focus on education system governance at the building level in general and principal autonomy-related indicators in particular. With regards to the OECD PISA studies, Klieme (2010) contended that twelve years of PISA is a long enough time period to warrant an examination of systemic changes. The 39 PISA participant countries selected for this study are primarily developed countries, but the list does include several developing countries. The research literature outlines four major analytical approaches that outline similarities and differences in research designs as well as the resulting consequences on their analysis (Starke, Obinger & Castles, 2008): a) sigma convergence as a process of growing together; b) beta convergence as a process of catching up; c) gamma convergence as mobility through dynamics; and d) delta convergence as minimizing the distance to an exemplary model. The analytical approach used in this study will be sigma convergence.

Sigma convergence: growing together. Named after the algebraic notation for variance, sigma convergence analyzes the decrease of variation of domestic policies between countries. The most common approach to determining convergence is to compare the variation of specific policies between two points in time. Researchers interpret a decreasing coefficient of variance, for example a decline in dispersion of the range or the standard deviation, as positive convergence (Starke et al., 2008). Diffusion literature, with its focus on the spread of ideas,

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instruments, and organizational forms embraces sigma convergence in order to illustrate the processes of convergence as portrayed in rates of adoption and degrees of homogeneity (Bernauer & Achini, 2000; Bouget, 2003; Ganghof, 2004; Tews et al., 2003).

Plümper and Schneider (2009) outlined various specifications of convergence by introducing the concept of conditional convergence for three similar but not identical types of convergence processes.

> First, conditional convergence takes place if researchers can observe convergence once they control for influential factors which push countries apart. Second, conditional convergence has been used interchangeably with the concept of convergence clubs such as the European Union. Accordingly, convergence can be observed in a subset of countries, but not in the entire population. And, third, the strengths of convergence may depend on another variable, i.e. on trade relations or capital flows. (p. 993)

The definition of the dependent variable as an increase in similarity over time of a certain policy leaves a broad range of options concerning its empirical assessment. Researchers commonly distinguish between convergence, divergence, convergence processes, conditional convergence, complete convergence, and incomplete convergence (Holzinger & Knill, 2005; Plümper & Schneider, 2009; Sanz & Velazquez, 2003; Wolf, 2002). Bennett (1991) posited that because "public policy is a complex multidimensional phenomenon, it is crucial to be absolutely precise as to the aspects of policy being compared to ensure cross-national equivalence" (p. 218). Heichel et al. (2005) have cautioned that if researchers are imprecise with defining the policy dimension, the comparability of the data is thrown into doubt, especially since policy convergence is not by necessity the result of policy diffusion. Deriving from the research

literature, empirical studies must clearly define several dimensions among which the most important are: a) the policy dimension; b) the temporal aspect; c) the spatial aspect; and d) the analytical dimension of the study.

Results of convergence studies are not always conclusive. Heichel et al. (2005) examined 33 convergence studies and found that a little more than half of them determined convergence while 15 studies rejected the existence of convergence or even reported divergence. Plümper and Schneider (2009) analyzed 31 studies and found 18 with convergence and 13 which rejected the hypothesis. The results of their study led the authors to the conclusion that the analysis of policy convergence is like "chasing a black cat in a dark room" (p. 990). Lenschow, Liefferink and Veenman (2005) used another animal analogy to describe their findings.

> Birds sometimes sing and sometimes they don't. In a similar vein, national policies sometimes converge and sometimes they don't. Speaking very generally, and somewhat cynically, this is the key insight to be derived from several decades of studies on the convergence of national policies" (p. 780).

Seeliger (1996) concluded that policy convergence studies may only be conceptualized as a temporal and reversible policy process. Only a narrow focus on an individual policy dimension and a well-defined time frame allow for empirical measurement, comparison, and analysis of policy developments across countries. Researchers have to be aware that "knowledge diffusion and processes specific to policy convergence may intermingle, or may not be distinguishable in the age of instant intercontinental communications" (p. 304). In sum, an approximation of similarity is not enough. Instead, an appropriate conceptualization of convergence requires a precise time frame that sets rigid parameters for the interpretations of the findings. Accordingly,

Seeliger (1996) elaborated on the need to establish the initial degree of policy similarity between observed units at a given point (t1) and a second measurement at a later point (t2). Most convergence studies in social policy indicate a time frame of between 10 and 20 years. Few studies exceed a 30 year time span, and some researchers such as Armingeon (2000), Ferrara , Hemerijk, and Rhodes (2001), or Pierson (2003), worked with data from four and six year studies respectively. The selection of an appropriate time frame in large part depends on the availability of data. Both, longer and shorter time frames, have distinct advantages and disadvantages. Where, for example, phenomena at a macro level are hardly likely to have a measurable impact over a few short years, processes of diffusion may have a leveling effect when studying relatively longer time periods. With regards to the OECD PISA studies, Klieme (2010) contended that one legislative period (four or five years) would not be long enough to markedly change an education system, but twelve years of PISA is a long enough time period to warrant an examination of systemic changes.

Summary of Part Two

Empirical studies on convergence vary greatly in terms of policy area, temporal, spatial, and geographic aspects, theoretical concepts, methodology, and analysis. Current research primarily explores correlational factors that are supposed to lead to growing similarities among states. An increasing interest in convergence research over the past years has led to diversification in research designs and the emergence of new concepts. As a result, the literature does not reveal a general judgment on the degree of policy convergence as a global phenomenon. The concept of conditional incomplete convergence allows for the existence of limited convergence among a subset of countries under investigation. A common theme does exist in that, both, quantitative and qualitative studies, attempt to assess increasing policy similarity over

time, and that conceptual clarity of the various dimensions established by Heichel et al. (2005) should facilitate the comparison of principal autonomy related indicators across countries.

Conclusions

The growing interest in the effects of globalization on school leadership at the practitioner level is not yet matched by the quality of research at the policy-practice interface. Studies with a narrow analytical focus that is embedded within global dimensions of diffusion are scarce. The literature revealed a broad consensus on the increasing complexities of the principalship. Principals do their best to adapt to changes, but the self-perception of role is frequently one of middle manager rather than CEO, which would indicate that a genuine gap in autonomy exists between the authority needed to successfully lead schools which prepare students for the economy of the 21st century, and the authority actually delegated to do so. The literature review also showed that principal autonomy is a crucial component across various leadership styles, and that the biggest obstacles to principal autonomy lie within the organizational structures of education systems.

School and instructional leadership have been clearly linked to enhanced student performance. Similarly, enhanced principal autonomy over key areas of school management, such as staffing, budgeting, curriculum and assessment, has been positively correlated to improved student performance. The dissemination of data from large-scale international student performance tests, such as PISA, has contributed to the diffusion of notions of best practice in school leadership, and international organizations like the OECD have become important players in educational policy making and school leadership reform efforts across countries. The literature review on international policy convergence indicated that results are often inconclusive. While many countries have initiated educational leadership reforms which reflect neo-liberal ideals on

site-based management and principal autonomy, there is little empirical research on whether these reforms constitute a global phenomenon, and whether these reforms are, in fact, promoting international convergence of the roles and responsibilities of the principal.

The previous sections presented the complexities facing today's principals as well as processes of globalization and the diffusion of notions of best practice in educational leadership. The literature review, combined with insights gained from a preliminary analysis of principal autonomy related indicators from PISA, were used to state the rationale for the study and form the basis for the research questions. This study broadly aims to advance understanding of the globalization phenomenon by narrowly examining principal autonomy-related indicators. It builds on neo-institutionalist thought and advances knowledge of assimilation processes across countries. The study is at the very center of the policy-practice interface debate in that it brings together the macro-political processes of diffusion with the lived experiences of principals.

Why Germany?

In the 2000 PISA test series, Germany ranked 21st out of 31 PISA participant countries in Reading Literacy and 20th in Mathematical and Scientific Literacy (see Chapter Four). In all three areas of literacy, Germany scored well below the OECD average. The poor performance of German students on the first PISA test series stunned the German public. PISA began to dominate the public discourse on education, and the term *PISA-Schock* was coined to describe the collective disbelief of the German public. The *PISA-Schock* was so intense, and public discourse on PISA results so widespread that the term *PISA-Schock* is now an official entry in *Duden*, Germany's most prominent thesaurus.

Germany has a highly decentralized education system where the federal education ministry is mostly limited to an oversight role. The nation's 16 federal states have primary

responsibility for education policy making and schooling. The states coordinate their policies in the framework of a standing conference of education ministers. PISA 2000 revealed wide variations in standards and curricula across the individual states, and the federal government responded by working with state ministries to develop common curriculum frameworks, performance standards and tests, as well as to enhance the use of benchmarking (Pearson Foundation, 2013). A combination of reforms and a nationwide effort to raise performance has resulted in Germany's improvement in education outcomes. Subsequent PISA test results have shown improvements from 21st place in 2000 to 16th place in 2012.

The section of Baden-Württemberg's Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport website dealing with school and quality development has the following opening statement: "The introduction of international comparisons of educational standards which followed TIMSS in 1995 has resulted in a constructive and fruitful didactic dialogue on the ways and means of instruction and learning processes in German schools. Through the participation in PISA [ ] new concepts of understanding and praxis-oriented learning were developed, which have been increasingly integrated into teacher professional development and instructional materials…This new dimension of an "empirical change" in educational research and in educational policy making provides the necessary data for specific impulses in quality enhancement" (Ministerium für Kultus, Jugend und Sport Baden-Württemberg, 2015; translated from German by author).

The above statement is but a reflection of the greater impact that PISA has had on the collective educational debate in Germany. From a neo-institutionalist standpoint, the *PISA-Schock*, that is, the public discourse centered on PISA, is perhaps the single most important explanatory factor in the diffusion and subsequent adoption of educational reforms. PISA's

influence on the public discourse not only provided the basis for policy reforms but also legitimacy for political action (Haunss & Schneide, 2013). It is in response to the combination of the factors mentioned above, as well as an analysis of PISA data as outlined in the methods section below, that Germany was chosen as a country from which to select subjects for the qualitative part of this study.

<center>**CHAPTER THREE**</center>

<center>**Methodology**</center>

Introduction

Internationally comparative data is used in order to validate enhanced effectiveness of school systems with higher levels of principal autonomy. It might, therefore, be expected that an increasing number of reform efforts across countries will follow this particular model of best practice in education leadership and school management. If this is the case, then 1) principals are taking on a wider range of leadership activities and responsibilities for student outcomes than was previously the case; and 2) job descriptions of principals will be increasingly similar across countries over time. This study investigated whether the 'globalization' of the principalship is reflected in the convergence of roles and responsibilities and the lived experiences of principals at the school level. Thus, the overarching question framing this research proposal was, "Is the role of school principal becoming increasingly similar across nations in response to a growing global understanding of best practice by national education systems worldwide?" My specific research questions were:

1. Do the reported responsibilities of principals in PISA test schools show changes between 2000 and 2012?

2. Has there been increased homogeneity of principal responsibilities across countries between 2000 and 2012 as measured by PISA principal autonomy-related indicators?

3. How do the lived experiences of principals in a German public "Gymnasium" reflect changing expectations linked to international trends regarding the role of the principal?

Research Design

This study used a sequential mixed method design that made use of quantitative and qualitative methods as a procedure for collecting and analyzing data. The rationale for the mixed method approach was that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods alone could adequately capture trends and details of the changing role of the principal across countries. Each type of data collection has limitations and strengths, and combining the two types of data can better capture the details of international convergence trends in educational leadership than either method could by individually (Creswell, 2013). Blending of data provided answers to the research questions and the following hypotheses developed from them: If research on best practice in school leadership, specifically on principal autonomy, is disseminated and put into practice globally, then it will result in 1) an increase in principal responsibilities related to instructional leadership; and 2) an increase in homogeneity of the role of principal across countries.

In quantitative research, assumptions are tested deductively. The researcher chooses the variables and instruments in order to determine the magnitude and frequency of relationships. Qualitative research is an inquiry approach and analyzes data inductively to arrive at interpretations and meanings. Mixed method designs integrate the two forms of data and use distinct designs involving philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks (Creswell, 2013). Quantitative and qualitative data complement each other to gain a deeper understanding of the research problem. A mixed methods approach was particularly suitable to this study because it not only sought to explore whether the dissemination of best practice promotes similar educational policy reforms across countries resulting in increased homogeneity of the principalship, but also how the implementation of policies impacts the role of the principal at the building level.

There are a number of mixed method designs that use qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis to answer a given set of research questions. For this study, I used what Creswell (2013) called a 'sequential explanatory mixed methods design'. The study was sequential, because its design consisted of two distinct phases to determine policy and structural convergence: Phase one consisted of a quantitative post hoc one-group pretest-posttest analysis of PISA data from 2000 and 2012 to identify international trends in school autonomy-related instructional leadership practices. The quantitative part of the study was post hoc because data was collected after each PISA test series. Isaac and Michael (1995) described the one-group pretest-posttest as a minimal control design that provides a comparison between performances by the same group of countries at two distinct points in time.

Phase two was informed by the results of phase one and provided contextual information to help explain the impact of recent reform efforts on the changing role of the principal from the point of view of the practitioner in the selected country. Germany was identified in phase one as showing a positive linear trend of changes in autonomy-related principal activities. The researcher grew up in Germany, and for the snowball sampling method, the initial principal I approached was personally known to me. Recently retired after 39 years of service with 19 years as an administrator, this person provided me with the names of principals from his personal and professional network. Two more principals from German "Gymnasien", one public and one private, volunteered to participate in this study. Phase two consisted of a series of open-ended questions based on Goodwin's (2002) Principal Role Questionnaire.

The final step was to integrate, connect, and interpret the two forms of data (Creswell, 2013). Priority was given to the quantitative element of the study. The goal was to identify international trends and to determine the extent of dissemination of best practice ideals of

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principal autonomy. The quantitative and qualitative elements were integrated at the beginning of the qualitative phase. As mentioned above, phase one informed the selection of country, principal, and interview questions in phase two. The purpose was to examine established hypotheses and conclusions derived from phase one as well as to elicit answers to explain the impact of reform efforts on the lived experiences of school leaders. The results of both phases were integrated in the discussion of the outcomes of the entire study.

Phase One: Quantitative Element

Borman, Hewes, Overman, and Brown (2003), in their meta-analysis of comprehensive education reform efforts, concluded that examining school autonomy indicators is a promising approach to determine changes in educational policy and their effects on educational systems. Availability of data informed the design of the study, such as the participants and the time frame. It also had a major impact on the selection of education indicators to be analyzed for sigma convergence. I explored the changing role of the principal in the context of public secondary schools that have participated in the OECD's PISA program between 2000 and 20012. After carefully examining the research literature and weighing several research designs, a post hoc one-group pretest-posttest design emerged as the most viable method to investigate conditional incomplete convergence processes of PISA participant countries and their principal autonomy-based reform efforts. The study is descriptive in nature and used a series of statistical measures including sample means, coefficients of variation, squared Euclidean distances and dissimilarity coefficients, as well as paired-sample t tests in each measure at alpha 0.01 as the statistical method to determine the presence or absence of sigma convergence.

Data

I examined the following principal autonomy-related PISA indicators for 39 countries that participated in the PISA test series between 2000 and 2012:

- Assessment Policies indicator. Original question on PISA questionnaire: *At your school, who has the main responsibility for: establishing student assessment policies? Principal*;

- Budget Formulation indicator. Original question on PISA questionnaire: *At your school, who has the main responsibility for: deciding on budget formulation within the school? Principal*;

- Budget Allocation indicator. Original question on PISA questionnaire: *At your school, who has the main responsibility for: deciding on budget allocation within the school? Principal*;

- Courses Offered indicator. Original question on PISA questionnaire: *At your school, who has the main responsibility for: deciding which courses are offered? Principal*;

- Disciplinary Policies indicator. Original question on PISA questionnaire: *At your school, who has the main responsibility for: establishing student disciplinary policies? Principal*;

- Firing Teachers indicator. Original question on PISA questionnaire: *At your school, who has the main responsibility for: firing teachers? Principal*.

- Hiring Teachers indicator. Original question on PISA questionnaire: *At your school, who has the main responsibility for: hiring teachers? Principal*;

Participant Countries

This study analyzed developments of principal activities as measured by a selection of principal autonomy-related proxy variables for 39 PISA participants in 2000 and 2012. The countries in this group consisted of Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil,

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Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, United Kingdom, and United States. For the quantitative analysis, this study took into consideration OECD membership, and the 39 PISA participant countries were divided into 25 OECD members and 14 non-OECD members. The 25 OECD members were: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and United States. The 14 non-OECD members were: Albania, Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Israel (which only joined the OECD in 2010, and is therefore considered a non-OECD country for the purposes of this study), Latvia, Liechtenstein, Peru, Romania, Russia, and Thailand.

Analysis Methods

I used various statistical methods, descriptive and inferential, to determine the presence or absence of sigma convergence. The descriptive measures included changes to the mean and coefficients of variation of the data. To further investigate degrees of similarity and control for errors, this study also used a country pair approach as proposed by Sommerer, Holzinger, and Knill (2008). Typical measures of sigma convergence, such as the sample variance approach or the coefficient of variation, are aggregate descriptive measures and are not sufficiently sensitive to detect changes at the country level, especially if the focus is on the degree of convergence rather than the direction. The most direct approach to measuring sigma convergence is to use a dyadic approach. Using a pairwise country comparison was the basic starting point for this study, and represented the lowest possible level of aggregation for any assessment of similarity. An

additional advantage of using country pairs was that they represent an appropriate measure of the development over time, unlike aggregate figures which measure similarity at a given point in time. Sommerer et al. (2008) also argue that

> hypotheses can be tested more directly with country pairs than at the level of individual countries: it is the common membership of a pair of countries in an international institution which is assumed to increase policy convergence among these countries via international harmonisation or via transnational communication. (Sommerer et al., 2008, p.146)

I used a series of geometric distance calculations based on country responses to the selected variables. In order to objectively measure the degree of similarity, researchers use similarity coefficients and dissimilarity coefficients. Field (2009) proposed using the Euclidean Distance, *d*, to measure the geometric distance between countries of a given set of variables. Generally speaking, if the geometric distance between country profiles grows smaller over time, it is indicative of sigma convergence, or 'growing together'. In respect to this study, a smaller dissimilarity coefficient between PISA 2000 and PISA 2012 indicated that the job descriptions and responsibilities of principals are becoming increasingly similar across countries, thus, confirming the hypotheses outlined above.

For the inferential statistics, this study used paired-sample *t* test, also known as within-subjects or dependent *t* tests, in each measure to statistically test whether the change on each of the seven indicators was significant. To control for Type I error for a series of seven paired-sample *t* tests, I used alpha levels at .01.

Validity and Limitations of Phase One

Quantitative research is by nature output oriented. However, a vital component of understanding, namely identifying the importance of a stimulus in terms of its effects on international policy convergence, may remain elusive to purely quantitative means (Plümper & Schneider, 2009). Additionally, Seeliger (1996) contended that relative policy developments need not necessarily be divergent or convergent. Policy developments in countries may be identical in substance and proceed synchronously. In case of such a parallel policy development, the values measured at the first point in time and a subsequent point in time remain identical. The changes are similar in direction as well as magnitude and may not register as convergence.

One limitation of the data was that, even though the OECD uses adjusted data, its statistics are not harmonized (Windzio et al., 2005, p.6). That is, even though this organization applies strict criteria to the collection of data, differences in the historical developments of diverse education systems reflect variance in indicator values. Moreover, the degrees of equivalence of indicator values in the statistical representation of education systems differ among the participating countries. Such difficulties influence the quality of empirical analyses and have to be taken into account when interpreting the results.

Another limitation, as Field (2009) explained, was that the Euclidean distance is "heavily affected by variables with large size or dispersion differences" (p. 3). Several of the selected indicators show significant dispersion differences that resulted in the Euclidean distance being inaccurate. Since the focus of this study was on dispersion changes over time, it was, nevertheless, possible to compare changes even where high dispersion differences existed. Alternatively, it was possible to identify such outliers and to compensate for them by clustering them separately.

Several threats to the validity of the study were addressed. The first one related to the design of the study: p*ost hoc ergo propter hoc*, or the false cause error. The complexity of the relationship between PISA participation and educational reforms is exceedingly difficult to quantify, and myriad domestic factors are involved in the policy making process which may complicate the task of interpreting and validating results. Rival hypotheses, such as path dependency, needed to be addressed as partial convergence may have resulted from weak convergence pressure as well as from institutional, policy specific, economic, or political constraints (Phillips, 2006a). The careful selection of participants and education indicators was, therefore, of crucial importance to address the issue of false cause error (Isaac & Michael, 1995).

The sample size of 39 countries was statistically not big enough to provide stable results across varying sample sizes. On the other hand, the 39 PISA participant countries represent roughly one fifth of the worlds' countries, and, therefore, are broadly representative of general trends in educational leadership. The participant countries are predominantly developed countries but include a number of developing countries as well. Varying population sizes was an issue which needs to be addressed. Should calculations have taken into account the greatly varying populations of the different countries? Should this study have treated all countries as equal units, from the USA with 320 million people, to Luxembourg, with 400,000? Interest in the full extent of the variation in an indicator across the entire population of PISA participant countries suggested the use of a weighted measure. Since it was desirable to have a measure that showed the dispersion of individual countries, however, country size was irrelevant, and this study treated each country as an equal unit.

The interaction of country selection and maturation posed another challenge (Isaac & Michael, 1995). Changes in education policy between 2000 and 2012 that were due to education

reforms unrelated to international trends could have skewed the results. To address this concern, the period of investigation was set between 2000 (PISA 1) and 2012 (PISA 5). With 2000 as the starting point, it was possible to account for the distance of proximity as measured by the proxy variables before the first effects of PISA. Hence, false conclusions about convergent effects could be avoided for countries which had already been pursuing education policy reforms prior to PISA which were similar to those disseminated globally in subsequent years.

Further threats to the validity of the study concerned sigma convergence and related to the availability and quality of data as well as the comparatively short time span of the proposed investigation. While at first glance it would appear that there exists a wealth of education-related data, obtaining indicators that 1) corresponded to principal autonomy, and 2) were accurately reported for 39 PISA participant countries over a twelve year time span was challenging. Even in the context of PISA participant countries, missing data for one or more countries was a regular problem. The availability of data was also directly linked to the time span of investigation, and PISA provides a comparatively short period of measurement points. The assessment has taken place five times since 2000. Because the assessment of change is directly linked to an adequate observation of time, researchers like Heritier (2002) argued that longer periods of investigation provide clearer results for policy convergence. Jakobi & Teltemann (2009), on the other hand, argued that internationalization processes in education are a fairly recent phenomenon, and that longer time series would not necessarily be more useful. So while it is true that this investigation could, at best, provide a snapshot of ongoing convergence processes, detecting sigma convergence in such a comparatively short period of time would indicate that significant changes in education policy were happening on the national level.

Phase Two: Qualitative Element

Phase two consisted of a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews to add context and perspective in relation to educational reforms and political pressures on the lived experiences of secondary principals in Germany. I used 'snowball sampling' to determine the interviewees (Patton, 2002). The selected principals were given an adapted version of Goodwin's (2002) Principal's Role Questionnaire as a basis for a series of open-ended questions on the experiences of a secondary principal and the changes which took place during his/her tenure. The qualitative aspect of the study allowed for a more complete understanding of the issue and the research questions by comparing and explaining quantitative results with personal perspectives. That is, while the quantitative data provided a snapshot of principal role developments across 39 countries, the qualitative data and its analysis refined and explained the statistical results by exploring the principals' views in greater depth.

The participants were purposefully sampled using 'snowball sampling' to represent secondary principals of public secondary schools of one of the 39 PISA participant countries. Patton (2002, p. 236) described "typical case sampling" as a technique to illustrate what is 'typical' or 'normal' in a certain context. The primary technique was to conduct in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the selected principals. The participants received the questions prior to the interview and had time to respond in writing if desired. The participants had the opportunity to review and correct responses after transcription.

Data Analysis

In the qualitative phase of the analysis, data from the interviews was winnowed, categorized, and coded according to themes (Creswell, 2013). The basic steps were to do a preliminary analysis of the data by reading through the transcript and taking notes; to code the

data by segmenting and labeling the text; to develop themes by aggregating similar codes; to connect and interrelate themes; and to construct a narrative. Data analysis followed the processes of analytic induction as outlined by Patton (2002). Initial analysis was deductive, because the quantitative portion of the study provided a framework for analysis. Subsequent analysis was inductive to check for previously undiscovered themes in the data. The analysis of the qualitative data aimed to interpret the follow-up results of the quantitative part of the study by providing context of the setting in which the case presents itself. It culminated in a detailed narration using an elaborate perspective based on perceptions on the impact of reforms concerning the role and responsibility of the participants.

To validate the findings and confirm whether the information matched reality, several steps were used. Firstly, the researcher and the participants clearly stated their respective central assumptions and biases on principal autonomy-related reform efforts. Secondly, the study provided descriptions to convey the findings (Creswell, 2013). Thirdly, an outside expert to this study provided a thorough review of the study and provided feedback and recommendations. Lastly, to gain fuller insight into the research question, I compared and contrasted the findings of the quantitative analysis with the themes of the deductively and inductively derived findings from the open-ended qualitative responses.

Strengths and Limitations

The explanatory sequential mixed methods approach has several strengths as well as limitations (Creswell, 2013). As shown in chapter two, quantitative and qualitative international policy convergence studies each have their own distinct strengths and limitations. Where quantitative methods can more readily identify patterns of similarity in data, the more open design of qualitative methods can compensate for quantitative shortcomings such as lack of

sensitivity. A combination of the two, therefore, can highlight the strengths of both methods, while minimizing their respective limitations. Because the design was sequential, it was highly useful for exploring the results of the quantitative analysis in greater detail. The combination of quantitative and qualitative aspects provided a more holistic understanding of a phenomenon which affects educational leaders across the globe. The qualitative aspect of the study was particularly useful, because it brought to light important variables, processes, and interactions which might have gone unnoticed in the quantitative analysis (Isaac & Michael, 1995; Maxwell, 2005). Emergent themes from this study may also serve as a basis for future research.

Limitations to the design include questions about the accuracy of the overall findings. Results may have been compromised when the qualitative follow up did not consider or weigh all of the options derived from the quantitative results (Creswell, 2013). This part of the study was particularly vulnerable to subjective biases, and its representativeness, therefore, is limited. The uniqueness of the participants' experiences and school context precluded the study from being replicated in a different context. Because the sample size was limited to a small number of participants, these persons' experiences may not allow for a valid generalization to the larger body of principals under investigation in the quantitative part of the study. Values and biases on the part of the participants could have distorted the analysis and may have skewed the alignment between the quantitative and qualitative elements of the study. To put the questions in context, a rigorous analysis of the quantitative data was followed by a shared discussion of the results with the participants, providing opportunities for the participants to ask questions and identify values and biases.

Visual Model for Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Design

Phase One	Procedure	Product
Quantitative Data Collection	• OECD website data gathering; • Adjust data for missing values	• Numeric Data from PISA for years 2000 and 2012
Quantitative Data Analysis	• Descriptive Statistics • Paired-sample t tests at alpha 0.01 & geometric distance tests	• Mean change • Standard deviation change • Alpha at 0.01 • Euclidean distances
Case Selection	Purposeful selection of the participants based on analysis of values of significant changes over time in at least one PISA participant country	
Qualitative Data Collection	• Principal Role Survey; • Individual in-depth semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions	• Text data (survey answers, interview answers)
Qualitative Data Analysis	• Coding and thematic analysis; • Within-case theme development	• Codes and themes
Interpretation of Entire Analysis	Explanation of the meaning of quantitative results; Interpretation of the meaning of case study	• Discussion • Recommendations for future research

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

This chapter presents the findings from the quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analysis undertaken to answer the following research questions:

1. Do the reported responsibilities of principals in PISA test schools show changes between 2000 and 2012?

2. Has there been increased homogeneity of principal responsibilities across countries between 2000 and 2012 as measured by PISA principal autonomy-related indicators?

3. How do the lived experiences of principals in a German public "Gymnasium" reflect changing expectations linked to international trends regarding the role of the principal?

The data revealed differing trends among groups of countries, most notably OECD members and non-OECD members. For purposes of analysis, this chapter first describes trends for all 39 PISA participant countries, and then examines them by group (OECD members and non-OECD members). Of the 39 PISA participant countries, 25 are OECD members and 14 are non-OECD members. Israel joined the OECD in 2010, and is therefore counted as a non-OECD member.

Research Question 1: Changes in Principal Responsibilities

The first question asked, "Do the reported responsibilities of principals in PISA test schools show changes between 2000 and 2012?" The percentage of 'yes' responses by principals on the PISA questionnaires to the seven indicator questions ("Regarding your school, who has a considerable responsibility for the following tasks?" Assessment, Budget Allocation, Budget Formulation, Courses Offered, Discipline Policies, Firing Teachers, Hiring Teachers – Principal)

for in 2000 and 2012 indicated a high level of change among the 39 PISA participant countries. Each of the seven indicators showed an increase to the mean of 'yes' answers ranging between 1.59% (Budget Formulation) to 10.25% (Hiring Teachers). The mean for all seven indicators increased from 54.36% in 2000 to 60.51% in 2012, an increase of 6.15% (see table 1). Eleven out of 39 countries showed changes to the mean for all seven indicators in excess of 20%, seven countries showed changes between 10% and 20%, and in another seven countries the percentage of 'yes' responses changed by more than 5%. The countries with the highest overall rate of change are: Thailand (+41.1%), Portugal (+33.52%), Romania (-30.32%), Germany (+28.74%), Hong Kong (+28.57%), Russia (+26.42), Chile (+25.78%), Hungary (-25.51%), Latvia (+25.12%), Liechtenstein (+23.27), Mexico (-22.87%). Seven of these countries are non-OECD members.

Table 1

Mean Percent Change of 'Yes' Answers for all Seven Indicators PISA 2000 and PISA 2012

	PISA 2000	**PISA 2012**	**Change**
Assessment Policies	47.05	56.39	9.34
Budget Allocation	66.83	70.41	3.58
Budget Formulation	49.64	51.22	1.58
Courses Offered	52.32	54.54	2.22
Discipline Policies	61.17	68.74	7.57
Firing Teachers	46.81	53.05	6.24
Hiring Teachers	56.70	66.95	10.25
Mean of Means	54.36	60.51	6.15

It is important to note that even though the overall linear trend is in the positive direction, not all countries showed an increase to the mean in 'yes' responses. That is, in 2012, 28 PISA participant countries had a higher percent of principals saying that they had responsibility for one or more of the seven indicators than in 2000. In the remaining eleven countries, fewer principals reported having responsibility for one or more of the seven indicators. For those countries with a percent increase, the average for all seven indicators was +13.23%, and in the 11 countries that reported a decrease the average was -12.39%. Of the 11 countries with mean decreases, five were OECD members, and six were non-OECD members. Both types of change, however, are indicative of the changing role of the principal.

The ten countries with the lowest initial mean, as calculated by averaging the means of all seven survey questions in 2000, tended to show high levels of change (average +22.04%), which is indicative of beta convergence, or 'catching up'. The ten countries with the highest initial mean in 2000, on the other hand, showed lesser changes (average +7.29%). More non-OECD members are found in the lower range than in the higher range, both, in 2000 and in 2012. With the exception of Israel, the countries with the highest initial values were all OECD members.

Table 2

Mean percent changes of 10 lowest scoring countries PISA 2000-2012

	PISA 2000	PISA 2012	Change
Italy	4.69	24.52	19.83
Portugal	6.40	39.92	33.52
Thailand	20.82	61.92	41.10
Greece	21.83	12.28	-9.55
Albania	28.69	27.43	-1.26
Russia	30.35	56.77	26.43

Germany	30.61	59.35	28.74
Chile	35.45	61.23	25.78
Liechtenstein	36.42	59.69	23.28
France	38.10	49.02	10.92

Table 3

Mean percent changes of 10 highest scoring countries PISA 2000-2012

	PISA 2000	**PISA 2012**	**Change**
New Zealand	86.12	87.47	1.35
Iceland	84.35	83.65	-0.69
Hungary	81.02	55.51	-25.50
Belgium	79.83	76.45	-3.37
Netherlands	77.69	92.58	14.89
United Kingdom	75.97	90.99	15.02
Sweden	75.79	78.16	2.37
Australia	74.47	78.54	4.08
Israel	74.38	74.76	0.38
Canada	72.86	78.07	5.20

The following section analyses the seven principal responsibilities examined by the survey individually.

Assessment Policies

This indicator shows one of the lowest starting averages for the 39 PISA participant countries (47.05% in 2000), and even though this indicator had the second highest increase in 'yes' answers between 2000 and 2012 (+9.34%), the overall score remains low with 56.39% of all surveyed principals reporting having responsibility for assessment policies. In terms of dispersion of increases and decreases, this indicator showed an increase in the percentage of 'yes' answers for 24 countries while 15 countries showed a decrease. Most of the decreases occurred in OECD member countries (11 out of 15). For those countries with positive linear increases, the percentage change of 'yes' answers tended to be high (Hong Kong +55.27%, Latvia, + 44.29%, Liechtenstein + 42.67%, Thailand +41.17%, Italy +36.08%, Russia +34.51%, Sweden +34.36%, Indonesia +26.81%, Switzerland, +26.81%, Chiles + 25.15%). The decreases in 'yes' answers were not as pronounced (Iceland -20.56%, Mexico -20.08%, Argentina, -18.97%, Brazil -15.32%, Peru -8.76%, Belgium -7.15%, Canada -5.91%, and Ireland -5.24%). The highest scores in both PISA assessment years, 2000 and 2012, are in OECD member countries. The highest changes to the mean, on the other hand, occurred in non-OECD members: increases in 'yes' answers (OECD +5.31% versus non-OECD +16.53%); decreases in 'yes' answers (OECD -8.58% versus non-OECD -13.75%).

Budget Allocation & Budget Formulation

For these two indictors, the picture is decidedly mixed. The overall number of countries that showed a percent increases in 'yes' answers is lower in these two categories than in any other. Budget Allocation showed an increase in the percentage of 'yes' answers for 22 countries and a decrease in 17 countries. Budget Formulation is the only indicator where fewer countries

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showed an increase (16) than a decrease (23). For this indicator, two thirds of OECD members showed decreases as compared to one half of non-OECD members.

Increases in the Budget Formulation indicator tended to be higher than in the Budget Allocation indicator. However, Budget Allocation had a significantly higher starting point in 2000 with almost two thirds of all responding principals saying 'yes, this is part of my responsibilities' compared to less than half of all respondents for Budget Formulation (see table 3). Even though in 2012 70.41% of principals said they had control over how to allocate their budgets, only 51.22% of principals that the authority to formulate their budgets. The large discrepancy of mean scores between the two indicators actually increased between 2000 and 2012, from 17.19% in 2000 to 19.19% in 2012. Additionally, some of the highest increases for any indicator stand opposite some of the highest decreases. For example, Budget Allocation: Portugal +43%, Romania -71.85%. Budget Formulation: Latvia +74.53%, Mexico -59.48%.

While most countries showed consistency between the two indicators, meaning either higher or lower scores for both indicators in 2012 compared to 2000, many countries had mixed results. For example, countries like the Netherlands had a decrease in the percent of 'yes' answers in the Budget Allocation indicator coupled with a high increase of 'yes' answers in the Budget Formulation indicator (Budget Allocation -8.69%, Budget Formulation +40.87%). Other countries in this category include Indonesia (BA -1.12%, BF +4.40%), Ireland (BA -6.88%, BF +4.09%), and Sweden (BA -0.76%, BF +3.11%). In Liechtenstein the picture was reversed with an increase in Budget Allocation but a decrease in Budget Formulation (BA +21.46%, BF -15.38%). Other countries in this category include Australia (BA +1.22%, BF -5.47%), Finland (BA+2.34%, BF -0.62%), France (BA +7.79%, BF -8.55%), Germany (BA +12.27%, BF -4.97%, which also emerged from the principal interviews), Peru (BA +6.51%, BF -9.61%),

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Spain (BA +2.38%, BF -2.41%), and Switzerland (BA +18.62%, BF -0.92%). Trends in the

budget category suggest that principals still do not have formal control over their budgets.

Courses Offered

This indicator had the second lowest mean increase of 'yes' answers of all surveyed

principals reporting having responsibility for courses offered between 2000 and 2012, from

52.32% to 54.54%, a change of +2.22%. Of the 39 PISA participant countries, 24 countries

reported increases and 15 countries reported decreases, meaning that fewer principals reported

having responsibility for the courses offered at their school. Strong increases in many countries

were met by strong decreases in others. For example, Thailand (+44.28%), Germany (+43.69%),

Russia (+43.60%), Portugal (+32.67%), Latvia (+29.78%), Italy (+29.46%), Hong Kong

(+27.18%), Chile (+25.99%), France (+17.24%), and United Kingdom (+16.99%), versus

Romania (-63.21%), Argentina (-53.38%), Hungary (-49.69%), Bulgaria (-28.99%),

Liechtenstein (-26.46%), Brazil (-13.41%), Sweden (-12.80%), Finland (-10.92%), Indonesia (-

10.10%), and Denmark (-5.15%).

The results for non-OECD members were evenly split with half of the countries showing

increases and the other half decreases. The average decrease was only slightly larger at -28.53%

as compared to average increase +26.69%. Only one third of OECD members had decreases,

which were also less pronounced (-14.78%). The 17 OECD members averaged increases of

12.81% and decreases of 14.78%. The numbers for non-OECD members indicate more and

broader changes than for OECD members.

Discipline Policies

Discipline Policies had the second highest mean of all seven indicators for both PISA test

years in 2000 and 2012, with 61.17% and 68.74% of principals respectively responding 'yes, this

is part of my responsibilities'. It was also the indicator with the second highest number of countries recording increases in 'yes' answers (25). The data indicates strong increases for many countries. The changes between 2000 and 2012 follow a similar pattern as in other indicators, where mean increases are comparatively higher than mean decreases. The top ten countries with increases averaged a plus of 34.11%, whereas the top ten countries with decreases averaged a minus of 20.15%. Among the countries with decreases were eight OECD members and six non-OECD members with average decreases of 12.74% and 19.34% respectively. The increases in OECD members versus non-OECD members were 15.3% and 31.65%. Six out of the top ten countries with increases were non-OECD members as were seven out of the top ten countries with decreases. Again, the trend among non-OECD members appears to be more pronounced changes in either direction.

Firing & Hiring Teachers

Similar to the Budget Allocation and Budget Formulation categories, the Firing Teachers and Hiring Teachers indicators showed comparatively large discrepancies between the two indicators. Both indicators showed positive changes (+6.24% and +10.25%), and both had comparatively high numbers of countries with increases in the percent of 'yes' answers, 24 and 26, with Hiring Teachers having the highest overall number of increases. However, the gap between Firing Teachers and Hiring Teachers mean scores increased between 2000 and 2012, from 44.19% and 57.58% to 51.47% and 67.46%, a change of 9.89% to 13.90%. This pattern is repeated for OECD countries where the gap between 2000 and 2012 increased from 13.39% to 15.99%, and to a lesser extent for non-OECD members, where the gap between the Firing and Hiring Teachers indicators increased from 3.64% to 5.44%.

Overall, the Firing Teachers indicator showed comparatively low changes, but again, the average increase was higher than the average decrease. For example, Liechtenstein (+50.99%), Thailand (+41.29%), Netherlands (+35.07%), Denmark (+28.01%), Finland (+26.13%), Switzerland (+24.74%), Chile (+23.27%), Russia (+23.10%), United Kingdom (+18.08%), and Korea (+17.95%), compared to Romania (-47.77%), Mexico (-15.10%), Indonesia (-12.50%), Albania (-11.10%), Hungary (-8.59%), Brazil (-6.71%), Argentina (-5.10%), Canada (-4.70%), Sweden (-3.61%), and Spain (-3.26%). The Firing Teachers indicator had the lowest initial score in 2000 and the second lowest score in 2012. Only 53.05% of all principals surveyed indicated that they had the responsibility to fire teachers. Among OECD countries, the Firing Teachers indicator scored very low with 44.19% of principals responding with 'yes' in 2000 and 51.47% in 2012. In non-OECD member countries the picture is slightly different. In 2000, Firing Teachers was the third highest indicator with 51.49% of 'yes' answers behind Budget Allocation and Discipline Policies. In 2012, Firing Teachers ranked 4th with 55.88%.

By contrast, the Hiring Teacher indicator showed the highest increase of all seven indicators with 10.25%. It is the third highest indicator for both PISA test years after Budget Allocation and Discipline Policies, which were first and second in both years. Still, only two thirds of the responding principals in 2012 indicated that they had responsibility for this key area of school management. The ten countries with the highest initial scores on the Hiring Teachers indicator in 2000 remained within the top ten in 2012 (Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Israel, Latvia, Sweden, Hong Kong, and the US). The top ten increases were on average higher than the top ten decreases. The countries with the highest increases were Liechtenstein (+64.94%), Thailand (+48.37%), Germany (+43.71%, confirmed in the principal interviews), Portugal (+42.54%), Ireland (+29.98%), Finland (+39.97%), Chile

(+29.23%), Switzerland (+23.86%), Australia (+23.52%), and Romania (+19.55%). The highest decreases were in Argentina (-32.45%), Indonesia (-26.67%), Peru (-23.53%), Brazil (-11.94%), Mexico (-11.51%), Albania (-11.46%), Hungary (-10.07%), Belgium (-3.23%), Spain (-2.96%), and Czech Republic (-0.72%).

Several countries showed mixed results as with the Budget Allocation and Formulation indicators. Belgium, Czech Republic, Iceland, and Peru all had increases in Teacher Firing but decreases in Teacher Hiring. Bulgaria, Canada, Israel, New Zealand, and Romania all showed decreases in Teacher Firing but increases in Teacher Hiring.

Results by Country

When analyzing the percent changes by country for each of the seven indicators, no clear pattern emerges. In spite of the overall positive linear trend, only seven countries (Chile, Hong Kong, Italy, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Russia, and Thailand) showed a percent increase of 'yes' answers for each of the seven indicators. Four countries (Argentina, Brazil, Greece, and Hungary) showed a percent decrease for each of the seven indicators. All other countries showed a mix of increases and decreases ranging from one to six indicators. For example, PISA 'poster child' Finland had a mean increase of principal responsibilities of 3.97% for all seven indicators, but this increase was limited to Budget Allocation (+2.34%), Firing Teachers (+26.13) and Hiring Teachers (+29.97). In the remaining four indicators, the percent of principals with responsibility decreased between 2000 and 2012. While there is no clear pattern of increases and decreases, the overall changes in the number of principals responding with 'yes' suggest that the role of the principal has undergone significant reforms between 2000 and 2012.

Research Questions 2: Increasing Homogeneity

The second research question addressed developments across countries: "Has there been increased homogeneity of principal responsibilities across countries between 2000 and 2012 as measured by PISA principal autonomy-related indicators?" The above descriptive analysis of PISA results indicated a positive linear trend, which means that the responsibilities of principals in the countries surveyed are becoming increasingly similar over time. This trend of increased homogeneity of the principalship across countries may be interpreted as sigma convergence. Additional descriptive statistics such as decreasing coefficients of variation and decreasing dissimilarity quotients based on Euclidean distance models may be used to support the notion of sigma convergence. Inferential statistics like paired sample *t*-tests with alpha set at 0.01 may be used to determine statistical significance of sigma convergence. The following section examines the results in this order.

Coefficients of Variation

The coefficient of variation (cv) is defined as the ratio of the standard deviation σ to the mean μ, and a decrease in the coefficient of variation can be interpreted as sigma convergence, or growing together. The mean coefficient of variation for all seven indicators declined from cv = 0.51 to cv = 0.44 (-13.7%) between 2000 and 2012 (see tables 4 & 5). Six out of seven indicators had declining coefficients of variation, with Budget Formulation being the only indicator to have increased between 2000 and 2012. The greatest cv decrease was in the Assessment indicator from cv = 0.55 to cv = 0.40, a decrease of approximately 27%. High decreases in the coefficient of variation were also evident in Discipline Policies (-22.5%), Hiring Teachers (-15.5%), and Budget Allocation (-15.4%). The lowest change was in Firing Teachers

(-7.7%), and as indicated above, the coefficient of variation for Budget Formulation actually

increased by 8%.

Table 4

Coefficient of Variation for All 39 PISA Participant Countries & All Seven Indicators for 2000 and 2012

	PISA 2000	**PISA 2012**
Mean Standard Deviation	27.56	26.32
Mean of Means	54.36	60.51
Mean Coefficient of Variation	0.51	0.44

Table 5

Coefficients of Variation 39 PISA Participant Countries for Individual Indicators 2000 and 2012

	PISA 2000	**PISA 2012**
cv Assessment Policies	0.55	0.40
cv Budget Allocation	0.39	0.33
cv Budget Formulation	0.50	0.54
cv Courses Offered	0.54	0.49
cv Discipline Policies	0.40	0.31
cv Firing Teachers	0.65	0.60
cv Hiring Teachers	0.58	0.49

When examining the change of coefficient of variation by group, OECD member

countries versus non-OECD member countries, the results were less conclusive. The mean cv for

all seven indicators decreased in both groups from cv = 0.48 to cv = 0.42 (-12.5%) for OECD

members and cv = 0.52 to cv = 0.48 (-7.7%) for non-OECD members (see tables 6 & 7).

Individual indicators, however, show mixed results. The 25 OECD members showed the same

results as the overall group of 39 PISA participant countries. For non-OECD members, the coefficient of variation actually increased between 2000 and 2012 in three out of seven indicators (Budget Allocation, Budget Formulation, and Hiring Teachers). The cv decreased for Assessment Policies, Courses Offered, and Discipline Policies, and remained unchanged for Firing Teachers. The decreases were more pronounced than the increases and, thus, contributed to the overall decline of the cv for all seven indicators, thus supporting the notion of sigma convergence among non-OECD members.

Table 6

Coefficient of Variation for OECD vs. NON-OECD PISA Participant Countries All Seven Indicators for 2000 and 2012

	OECD		NON-OECD	
	PISA 2000	PISA 2012	PISA 2000	PISA 2012
Mean Standard Deviation	28.03	26.19	24.78	26.40
Mean of Means	58.29	62.86	47.34	54.73
Mean Coefficient of Variation	0.48	0.42	0.52	0.48

Table 7

Coefficients of Variation OECD vs. NON-OECD PISA Participant Countries Individual Indicators 2000 and 2012

	OECD		NON-OECD	
	PISA 2000	PISA 2012	PISA 2000	PISA 2012
cv Assess. Policies	0.50	0.42	0.58	0.37
cv Budget Alloc.	0.35	0.26	0.41	0.43
cv Budget Form.	0.44	0.50	0.53	0.62
cv Courses Offered	0.51	0.45	0.59	0.54
cv Discipline Pol.	0.36	0.30	0.43	0.28
cv Firing Teachers	0.70	0.61	0.59	0.59

cv Hiring Teachers	0.59	0.47	0.57	0.59

Euclidean distance model

The Euclidean distance model is based on a proximity matrix from which dissimilarity coefficients are calculated for 2000 and 2012. The values in the dissimilarity matrices are calculated using a dyadic approach where the geometric distance for two countries is determined by the rescaled squared Euclidean distance. The range of values is between 0 and 1, where 0 denotes no difference (equality) and 1 denotes 100% difference. The maximum dissimilarity is the total number of individual dyadic calculations divided by two. For this study, the total number of calculations is 1,521 (the square of 39), and the maximum dissimilarity, therefore, is 760.5. The dissimilarity quotient is calculated by taking the sum of the dissimilarity values and dividing it by the maximum dissimilarity (see table 8).

The dissimilarity coefficient for the 39 PISA participant countries decreased between 2000 and 2012, from 0.208 to 0.184 (-11.5%), indicating sigma convergence, or an increase in homogeneity of the role of the principal across countries. The decrease in dissimilarity coefficients occurred in both groups of countries, OECD members and non-OECD members. The decrease among non-OECD members was less pronounced than among OECD members (-3.7% versus -9.4%). Because non-OECD members tended to have low starting values in 2000 (see previous section), the geometric distances in the 2000 matrix were comparatively small between non-OECD members but relatively larger when measured against OECD members. This discrepancy, in turn, explains why the dissimilarity coefficient showed a larger decrease for all 39 PISA participant countries than for any single group. Put differently, the dissimilarity between OECD members and non-OECD members was higher than the dissimilarity within each

group, and therefore the overall decline of the dissimilarity quotient was higher for all 39

countries than for each group alone. Between 2000 and 2012, the gap of dissimilarity coefficients

between OECD members and non-OECD members narrowed, which is indicative of beta

convergence, or catching up. In other words, principal responsibilities in non-OECD members

converged with those of OECD members.

Table 8

Dissimilarity Quotient Rescaled Squared Euclidean Distance all 39 PISA Participants 2000 and 2012

	PISA 2000	**PISA 2012**
Sum of Dissimilarity	158.4	140.2
Maximum Dissimilarity	760.5	760.5
Dissimilarity Coefficient	0.208	0.184

Table 9

Dissimilarity Quotient Rescaled Squared Euclidean Distance OECD vs. Non-OECD PISA Participant Countries 2000 and 2012

	OECD		**NON-OECD**	
	PISA 2000	PISA 2012	PISA 2000	PISA 2012
Dissimilarity	66.55	60.16	16	15.41
Max Dissimilarity	312.5	312.5	98	98
Dissimilarity Coefficient	0.213	0.193	0.163	0.157

Paired-Sample *t*-tests

The results of the paired-sample *t*-tests largely reflect the analysis from the coefficient of

variation in that high decreases in the coefficient of variation for individual indicators correlate

to low *p*-values. In order to control for Type 1 error, alpha was set at 0.01, making the criteria for

sigma convergence more stringent. Because this study used the same countries for each

indicator, the countries served as their own control, eliminating random interference between country variation. The sample-paired *t*-tests clearly indicated that the null hypothesis of no mean difference between the two years for each respective outcome could not be rejected. Of the seven indicators, only Assessment Policies met the criteria to reject the null hypothesis at $p = \underline{.005}$ (see table 10). While the Hiring Teacher indicator came close at $p = \underline{.012}$ (a difference of .002), all other indicators have *p*-values that are significantly above alpha 0.01.

Table 10

Paired-sample t-tests 39 PISA Participants All Seven Indicators 2000 and 2012

		t-value	Df	p-value
Pair 1	Assessment Policies 2000 - Assessment Policies 2012	-2.946	38	.005
Pair 2	Budget Allocation 2000 - Budget Allocation 2012	-1.046	38	.302
Pair 3	Budget Formulation 2000 - Budget Formulation 2012	-.417	38	.679
Pair 4	Courses Offered 2000 - Courses Offered 2012	-.556	38	.581
Pair 5	Discipline Policies 2000 - Discipline Policies 2012	-2.168	38	.036
Pair 6	Firing Teachers 2000 - Firing Teachers 2012	-2.226	38	.032
Pair 7	Hiring teachers 2000 - Hiring teachers 2012	-2.625	38	.012

Summary. The null hypothesis could not be rejected for either group, OECD members or non-OECD members. For the 25 OECD members, only the Firing Teachers ($p = .007$) and Hiring Teachers ($p = .003$) had values which met the criteria. For non-OECD members, the lowest value was in Assessment Policies with $p = .028$. All other indicators showed high *p*-values. In terms of the changing role of the principal, no statistically significant evidence exists to suggest that the principalship is becoming increasingly similar across countries as a result of the global spread of notions of best practice in educational leadership.

Table 11

Paired-sample t-tests OECD vs. Non-OECD PISA Participant Countries All Seven Indicators 2000 and 2012

		OECD			Non-OECD		
		t-value	df	p-value	t-value	df	p-value
Pair 1	Assessment Policies 2000 - Assessment Policies 2012	-1.74	24	.095	-2.467	13	.028
Pair 2	Budget Allocation 2000 - Budget Allocation 2012	-.626	24	.537	-.821	13	.427
Pair 3	Budget Formulation 2000 - Budget Formulation 2012	-.684	24	.5	-1.228	13	.241
Pair 4	Courses Offered 2000 - Courses Offered 2012	-1.067	24	.297	.102	13	.921
Pair 5	Discipline Policies 2000 - Discipline Policies 2012	-1.8	24	.084	-1.286	13	.221
Pair 6	Firing Teachers 2000 - Firing Teachers 2012	-2.916	24	.007	-.669	13	.515
Pair 7	Hiring teachers 2000 - Hiring teachers 2012	-3.278	24	.003	-.829	13	.422

Research Question 3: Lived Experience of German Principals

The final research question addressed the lived experiences of principals in the context of globalization and its effects on the principalship. The research question asked, "How do the lived experiences of principals in a German public 'Gymnasium' reflect changing expectations linked to international trends regarding the role of the principal?" Three principals participated in this study. Two principals worked in public Gymnasien, and one principal worked in a church-affiliated private Gymnasium ('freie Schule') that is part of a larger group of schools. Their combined administrative experience of these three principals exceeded 42 years. One participant was recently retired after 19 years as a principal ('Schulleiter') in a public Gymnasium. The second public school principal had recently extended his contract by two years after reaching age 65. The third participant had been at his current school since 1986, first as a teacher, and for the

last nine years as principal. All three schools are located in small urban settings (population less than 50,000), and one principal described his environment as 'rural'. Two principals opted to participate in telephone interviews, while the third preferred completing a questionnaire. Both approaches, interviews and questionnaire, consisted of a series of open-ended questions based on Goodwin's (2002) 'Principal Role Questionnaire'. Each answer was analyzed for content and categorized for themes. Exploration of the responses revealed identical themes among all four participants as well as stand-alone themes. The following section presents the results of the interviews structured by emergent themes. The table below lists emergent themes which have been classified into specific categories.

Table 12

Emergent Themes from Principal Interviews

Role and Responsibilities	*Change from pure management to pedagogic leadership (2);* *Added responsibilities and higher role complexity (3);* *Budget cuts have exacerbated the situation (3);* *More diverse student body and more diverse student/community needs (3);* *Liaise with myriad community members and answer to everyone (3);* *Technology has made life more hectic and stressful (3);* *Burnout common within professional networks (2).*
Relationship with Governing Authority	*Good relationship with superior, regular contact (1 principal in private school);* *Tension with central education bureaucracy administrators, asking too much with too few resources, largely left alone with no or little accountability (2 principals in public schools);* *Frustration with lack of input (2).*
Reforms	*Top-down with principals being implementers not initiators-reforms are law and, therefore, but be implemented, even by private schools (3);* *Perception that politicians give in to special interests and engage in "crowd" pleasing (3);* *Direct link between PISA and recent school reforms (3);* *Some leeway to initiate and implement school improvement initiatives (2).*
Perceptions of Autonomy	*The system works, major decisions on issues such as staffing, budget, and curriculum should be taken at the national or regional*

	(state) level (2); *Appreciate central placement of staffing because it guarantees that qualified teachers are sent to every school (3);* *Strong sense of equity and democracy, equality of chances and equality of pay (3);* *No need for more autonomy(3);* *Highly skeptical about giving 'blanket autonomy' to solve problems (2 in public schools).*
Attitudes towards PISA and International Comparisons	*International comparisons are of very limited value, results can be misleading (3);* *Systems learning is only possible in a very limited way (3);* *PISA did highlight issues that needed addressing such as integration of immigrant children, but perception that reforms to address these issues were botched (1);* *Predominantly negative perception of PISA's influence on educational policy making, particularly the practice of ratings and rankings (3);* *From PISA-Schock to PISA fatigue (2).*

The Case of Germany

As outlined in Chapters 1 and 2, the selection of principals who participated in the qualitative aspect of this study were informed by the results of the quantitative analysis. Germany emerged as a country with a high change in the percent of 'yes' responses to the indicators of principal responsibilities. The mean increase between 2000 and 2012 for all seven indicators was 28.74%, the third highest among all 39 PISA participant countries, which would imply that major changes to the role and responsibilities of the principal have been introduced. Germany scored low among all the indicators in 2000 and ranked the seventh lowest of all 39 PISA participant countries. Changes in the Courses Offered, Discipline Policies, and Hiring Teachers indicators were of a magnitude to propel Germany to having some of the highest scores in 2012. Germany had the fourth lowest score in 2000 for Firing Teachers, and the 2012 results remain low with a mere 21.63% of participating principals indicating that they have the responsibility to fire underperforming teachers. Only 10.41% of principals were in charge of

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Firing Teachers, a decrease of 4.97% from 2000. The discrepancy between Firing Teachers and

Hiring Teachers is particularly pronounced in Germany, and the gap increased significantly

between 2000 and 2012 (from 10.89% in 2000 to 41.98%).

Table 13

Results for Germany

	PISA 2000	PISA 2012	Change
Assessment Policies	24.28	41.46	17.18
Courses Offered	36.63	80.32	43.69
Discipline Policies	48.60	81.83	33.23
Budget Allocation	60.50	72.77	12.27
Budget Formulation	15.38	10.41	-4.97
Firing Teachers	9.01	21.63	12.62
Hiring Teachers	19.90	63.61	43.71
Mean	30.61	59.35	28.74

Principal Role and Responsibilities

The principals in this study identified themselves as highly dedicated pedagogues who

will do whatever it takes to get the job done. They feel responsible for everything that is

happening at their school, and they are resilient and creative in the face of constant demands and

stress. In a hectic and complex environment, they try to stay true to their ideals, by putting

student needs first, keeping an open door, and treating all problems as equally important. They

strongly emphasize the personal nature of their role, and building healthy relationships with their

faculty in a supportive and cooperative environment is seen as the most important 'pillar' of their

work. Their pedagogic convictions and the demands placed on them by recent educational

reforms are often at odds. The high demands of the role are met with an equally high work ethic to the point where two principals reported their physical health was suffering.

There was unanimous agreement that the role of the principal in Germany is changing. The principalship is moving away from a traditional pure management role towards that of "pedagogical leader". This marks a shift from earlier practices of holistic school improvement projects to more leadership and student learning centered approaches. According to one principal, the trend to more site-based management practices started about 20 years ago. Observations regularly expressed were that increased site-based decision making has added complexity to the role of the principal, and that over time more and more responsibilities have been added. One principal stated that his "responsibilities have increased exponentially". At the same time, budget cuts meant that more tasks had to be done with fewer resources, or "do more with less" as one principal put it. All three principals identified time as the most precious resource, and their main concern was never having enough of it to adequately address all the demands placed on them.

The two public school principals shared that they became administrators 'by accident' and that they had not planned this career path. One principal had been a physical education teacher, and when he developed health issues and was unable to teach his subject, he was moved to administration. He remained vice-principal for ten years before assuming the principalship of the same school at the age of 60. The second public school principal described how he became 'Schulleiter' thus:

> By accident (having been freshly appointed to be an expert advisor for my main teaching
>
> subject), I took part in an in-service training program which turned out to be a selection
>
> and qualification program for "principals-to-be". It was the only in-service training for

my needs as an expert advisor, so I continued, although I did not have the intention to become a head of school. This program consisted of four singular weeks (only!), spread over two years. It ended with tests and a personal assessment. Shortly after its conclusion, the State school administration asked me to take over a school as a principal, which I did most hesitantly. There was no further formal training or advising, just the offer of random three-day courses on various topics, if you chose them.

Principals felt generally well-prepared for their roles on the theoretical pedagogic level, but not very well prepared on the practical level. All agreed that principals should be experts on teaching and learning, but that these qualifications did not seem to be core qualifications for the principalship. They felt that principal training programs had gotten better over time, but that there was still much room for improvement. One principal who acted as a mentor trainer between 1999 and 2006 stated that initially he was able to identify with the new program, but that he grew disillusioned over time as principal training became increasingly subject to "whims and fashionable trends" which were dictated from inexperienced central administrative functionaries. He finally quit after budget cuts forced a reduction of the program.

As society is changing, so are the demands on the principal. Student backgrounds and needs have become more diverse, and principals are increasingly addressed and confronted by many special interests. Principals are at the center of the greater school community and act as organizers and mediators. Over the last 20 years, schools have become more inclusive community learning partners, and principals liaise with many different constituents such as churches, sports clubs, regional job agencies, and health associations. More diverse communities, higher demands by the public, and less acceptance and respect for school administration have added to the complexity of the role. One principal stated that there was constant pressure on

schools, because principals are expected to answer to everyone in the community. Another principal reported having to deal with groups of immigrant children that had previously not been present in the community, and that it was up to him to find ways and means for integrating these new families into a traditional rural school setting.

Technology has added great opportunities as well as great burdens to the principalship. All three principals spoke of new technologies needing to be implemented often without having received proper training. There was also broad agreement that technology has added responsibilities as well as accountability. Life has become more fast-paced and hectic, as principals are deluged with emails which are expected to be answered immediately. The time span for decision making has shrunk from weeks to days.

Relationship with Governing Authority and Reform Processes

The principals in the public schools reported no structure or system of direct accountability and control. Everyone in the system is overworked, and principals for the most part are left alone. One principal described the relationship with the state authorities as "do your job well, and don't bother us". On the practical level, principals' pedagogic philosophy and convictions often clashed with the educational bureaucracy. About the new emphasis on pedagogical leadership, one principal stated:

> I do think I have a certain notion of "pedagogical leadership" myself, which I would dare
> to articulate. What I experienced instead, was a constant use of this expression by the
> school administration without ever receiving an official and compelling definition, not to
> talk about the legal and practical implications it would require.

 Even though private schools have to follow the same laws and regulations as public schools, their governance structure is vastly different. As part of an organization with over 30

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schools in the region, the principal in the private school was accountable to a direct supervisor. He reported good relations with his superior.

All principals described the reform process as essentially top-down. Reforms are politically motivated, and decisions are taken at the state government level without input from the school level. Decisions are then passed down through the State Administration of Education ('Schulbehörde') to the school leader who is expected to implement them without questions. Because private schools adhere to the same laws, they have to implement the same reforms. Principals described reforms as varied, far reaching, and constant. New reforms had to be implemented every two to five years. One principal reported having implemented 20 major reforms and innumerable minor ones in his 19 year career. At the school level, principals may initiate minor changes or reforms to the system, such as adding new courses ("Profile"). All three principals mentioned that they had introduced new courses such as special band and sports classes. These types of reforms may be initiated at any level within the school community.

The most far-reaching and transformative reforms were the introduction of the eight year baccalaureate track (down from nine years), the introduction of all-day schools ("Ganztagsschulen"), and the integration of the differentiated school system into comprehensive schools ("Gesamtschulen"). The principals in this study felt that these reforms were directly connected to PISA. They also felt that these reforms were pushed through and implemented without proper planning and investments in staffing, facilities, such as cafeterias, and after-school and/or extra-curricular activities. In one school, the cafeteria was finally completed after 13 years of planning.

The participants were frustrated about the lack of input from practitioners in the policy making process, and from the interviews emerged a sense that education has become more about

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regulation rather than effective school management and improvement. Principals felt strongly that they should be included in the reform process, because they are the ones who know the daily processes and practices of the school. They are also the ones who have to implement the reforms. One principal described an invitation as an expert advisor ("Fachberater") to discuss a specific regulation proposal as a charade. Instead of actively discussing the proposal, the invited principals were presented with a regulation that "had been written up within the education bureaucracy, presumably by someone far removed from practice". When asked how he felt about implementing this regulation, the response was, "Guess!!!!".

The perception among principals was that politicians react to public pressure and engage in "crowd pleasing" without having clear long-term goals. In the eyes of the participants, reforms were "amateur-like" and lacked professionalism. Reforms tended to be one-size-fits all measures to get students to graduate and be prepared for tertiary education regardless of skill, aptitude, or motivation. Reforms catered to special interests like industry but almost never to educators. There was little continuity and poor communications about the purpose of reforms, and the participants did not discern a compelling or coherent bigger picture. Discussion or critique was not welcome. Principals were purely implementers of reforms whether they agreed with them or not. One principal stated that he was expected to execute directly whatever came down from above and that he felt helplessly exposed to protests from all sides.

Stress and Burnout

This type of exposure leaves principals feeling vulnerable. Some principals were more frustrated and disillusioned with the system than others, but all could testify to the high demands of the role and that burnout was common within their professional networks. Not only are there high exterior demands on school leaders, principals hold themselves to high standards, and one

principal spoke of "exterior exploitation as well as self-exploitation". Participants in this study cited permanent overload and a constant shortage of resources and time as main factors contributing to stress. The constant pressure to get things done, and the never ending flood of tasks and demands take a significant toll on principals. One retired principal stated that he suffered from "acute burnout syndrome" during the last five years of his tenure. Another principal shared that his health had deteriorated as a consequence of permanent pressure and stress.

Perceptions of Autonomy

There was broad consensus that principals had sufficient autonomy within the respective systems to effectively run their schools. None of the interviewees felt the need for more autonomy over key areas of school management such as staffing, budget, curriculum or discipline. Deliberate steps by education policy making authorities to enhance principal autonomy was viewed as a typical top-down "one size fits all" solution, and principals were highly skeptical of such blanket reforms. They also felt strongly that each area of school management would have to be closely examined to establish whether more principal autonomy would really help to solve problems. One principal expressed concern that giving principals more autonomy would increase the risk of abuse of powers. "Many principals [are] neither fit, nor competent, nor circumspect enough to deal with complex decisions – and each increase of autonomy demands an adequate increase of time, energy, and money, not to be expected from anywhere".

A strong sense of equity emerged from the interviews. That is, the interviewees felt that giving principals more autonomy over staffing and budget could possibly undermine equity within the system. School districts actually benefit from the central placement of staff, because it

ensures that qualified personnel are sent to those districts which might be perceived to be less attractive and, thus, difficult to staff. This is particularly the case in rural areas. The same mentality was shared by the principal of the private school where 50% of his positions are filled centrally. Regional decision making for staffing is also perceived as necessary to ensure equal pay. Curriculum decisions should be taken at the national or regional level to ensure equality of chances for students as well as comparability of results. Only budget questions concerning instructional resources and materials should be taken at the local or school level.

Attitudes towards PISA

One principal's school had participated in PISA, and another's in TIMSS. All principals reported being "very aware" of PISA. Most of the feelings expressed about international comparative studies like TIMSS or PISA were negative. One principal expressed that PISA did have some positive effects in that it started long overdue public debate about Germany's three tiered school system, the integration of children with migrant backgrounds, and the educational opportunities of socially disadvantaged families. Unfortunately, however, the reforms that emerged from these discussions, such as the introduction of all-day schools, were, in his opinion, not sufficiently thought through and consequential, and their implementation was a disaster.

Although there was agreement that system learning, in theory, was possible and that there is always something to be learned from comparisons and exchanges, it was only possible within strict limits and differentiation of results. Across the board comparisons and simplifications, however, are neither useful nor valid. These principals were highly sceptical of PISA methods and highly critical of PISA results and their interpretations. All principals strongly condemned the practice of ratings and rankings. For no other aspect concerning PISA was the frustration and cynicism more tangible than for the practice of ratings and rankings.

In order to have valid comparisons, many factors such as resources, situations, goals, and interests of different systems must be taken into consideration. If all of these considerations were taken into consideration and evaluated in a localized context, then the futility of international comparisons would soon become apparent. One principal pointed out that PISA champion Finland, whose students have some of the highest PISA scores, is so different in many respects from Germany that a comparison is hardly relevant and certainly not valid. The attitudes expressed in the interviews echoed Meyer and Benavot's (2013) proposition that the value of simplistic cross-national comparisons is limited, and in the case of Finland, which has historically enjoyed high social status of the teaching profession, the inevitable conclusion is that non-schooling factors must play a decisive role in producing the Finnish success rates. The same is true for other high achieving countries like the Netherlands, South Korea, or Singapore where non-schooling factors are also considered to be the major determinants of high performance (Cowen, 2013). After allowing the theoretical possibility of system learning, all principals came to the conclusion that the current practice of PISA was not only of limited value but actually misleading and counterproductive. One principal was questioning whether PISA with its focus on individual achievement was, in effect, harmful to local educational systems and social cohesion.

Summary

The principals who participated in this study perceive themselves to be highly dedicated, resilient professionals, fully committed to their jobs and will do whatever it takes to run their schools effectively. They feel responsible for everything that is happening at the school, and that even in the face of increased responsibilities and role complexity, they try to stay true to their beliefs that student needs and support come first. They rely on professional and personal

networks for support. The constant need for change and reforms is an enormous burden and greatly contributes to stress. PISA student scores and the country rankings based on these are directly linked to many of the reforms that principals have had to implement. The principals in this study felt that many of the reforms are misguided, and the overall attitude towards international comparative studies like PISA is negative. They believe that the pressures of the job can, at times, feel overwhelming, and burnout is seriously threatening the long-term effectiveness of school leaders.

CHAPTER FIVE

Analysis and Discussion

The data and interviews provided a wealth of information, both descriptive and

inferential, which addressed the changing role of the principal in an age of globalization. This

study is a descriptive examination of longitudinal results of country participation in PISA and, as

such, it may offer explanatory linkages between OECD actions and 1) the social phenomenon of

educational leadership reform; and 2) international educational convergence of the role of the

principal across PISA participant countries with a focus on autonomy-related indicators. This

study does not seek causality between OECD policy proposals, government reforms in education

policy, and their effects on the role of the principal.

Descriptive Statistics Related to Question 1: Changes in Principal Responsibilities

The data showed wide-ranging changes to the percent of 'yes' answers on indicators of

principal responsibilities, indicating changes to the role of principal between 2000 and 2012.

Individual countries showed increases as well as decreases to the responsibilities expected of

principals as reported by principals, and changes occurred across indicators as well as countries,

regardless of OECD membership. Both increases as well as decreases are indicative of the

changing role of the principal, suggesting that educational leadership reform and changes to the

principalship are a global phenomenon. Increases to the percent of 'yes' answers on indicators of

principal responsibilities, on the whole, outweighed decreases in terms of the number of

countries recording increases as well as the magnitude of the increases (higher percent changes)

which accounts for the overall positive linear trend of principals reporting having increased

responsibilities for the examined indicators. As more principals are reporting increases in

responsibilities, the positive linear trend may also be indicative of the notion, as expressed by

Goodwin et al. (2007), that the effects of recent reform efforts to the role of the principal have resulted in an accumulation of expectations and a layering of responsibilities.

Individual Indicators and Key Areas of School Management

Looking at individual principal responsibility indicators, the study showed no clear pattern of increases or decreases. Only seven out of 39 PISA participant countries showed increases for all seven indicators between 2000 and 2012, and only four countries had consistent decreases, which would imply a strengthening of centralized control. In reference to Adamowski et al.'s (2007) 'key areas of school management' such as budgeting, staffing, curriculum and assessment, it is telling that the indicators related to these 'key areas' not only ranked among the lowest in 2000, but that they also showed some of the lowest increases with a little more than half of all principals in PISA 2012 responding having responsibility for Budget Formulation (51.22%), Firing Teachers (53.05%), and Courses Offered (54.54%). While changes are occurring towards increased principal responsibilities, the 'autonomy gap' in these key areas of school management is only slowly closing.

The issue of budget formulation goes to the very heart of the education policy debate as it addresses the question of who determines how much gets spent. School funding is dependent on the educational governance system and varies from country to country. Reforms to educational governance and funding systems tend to be politically contentious (Curtis, Sinclair & Malen, 2014), and it is, therefore, not surprising to see that the Budget Formulation indicator shows the smallest overall change (+1.58%) and that the majority of principals still do not have formal control over their budgets. The principals interviewed for this study indicated that their budgets are essentially handed to them, and that they only have minimal control over resources such as instructional supplies.

Neither do they have full control over staffing issues. In 2012, the second lowest indicator was Firing Teachers (53.05%). In this respect, the PISA data mirrors the results of Adamowsky et al.'s (2007) as well as Farkas et al.'s (2001) studies on the changing responsibilities of principals in the US (see Chapter Two). Making key decisions in staffing is largely limited to hiring teachers, but the freedom and autonomy to fire ineffective or low performing teachers remains limited. These results are not surprising. The notion of giving principals more autonomy over firing teachers typically faces stiff opposition from teachers and unions who are concerned about who makes decisions, what constitutes failing performance, what criteria are used, and whether politics and favoritism are driving such decisions rather than merit (Farkas et al., 2001). Looking at the big picture, though, the change to the mean in the PISA data could possibly hint at a tendency across countries and educational systems to address the issue of personnel by giving principals more autonomy to hire and fire teachers. The three German principals confirmed that having the responsibility to hire teachers was new, but the extent of their actually hiring staff was very limited.

Similar trends also occurred in the indicators Assessment Policies and Courses Offered, as both indicators were in the 50% range in 2012. In a time where the global is adapted to the local ('glocalization'), the literature revealed that sensible and sensitive leadership is needed at the school level. Those who control assessment and evaluation exercise enormous power over both individuals and programs (Pearl & Knight, 1999), yet the data showed that principals are stuck in the role of middle manager and are limited in their autonomy to influence what is learned and how it is assessed at their schools. Assessment has been identified by the OECD as a key policy agenda item for school reform (Phelps, 2014), and it will be interesting to follow future international developments for this indicator.

Non-OCED members are making great strides in catching up to OECD members in giving principals more responsibilities in key areas of school management. Eight out of fourteen non-OECD members showed increases in the percent of 'yes' answers, and these increases tended to be significantly above average. This subset of countries experienced conditional incomplete convergence in the form of beta convergence, or catching up. In spite of these developments, non-OECD countries still have fewer principals reporting responsibility for each of the seven indicators than OECD members. This trend was particularly pronounced among developing countries in this group.

Summary

The data indicated a mean increase in instructional leadership and management responsibilities as measured by the seven indicators. Whether the overall positive linear trend actually translates into more principal autonomy at the school level, cannot be inferred from this data. The relationship between principal autonomy and accountability is complex and varies from country to country as well as from school district to school district (Bogotch, 2014). Because this study only examined seven autonomy-related indicators, the validity of the results is limited and, whatever reform efforts are occurring, the data did not reveal a clear and consistent trend across countries or indicators to enhancing principal autonomy. The data did, however, confirm the existence of a global trend of educational leadership reforms as well as the changing nature of the principalship. It also emerged that principals continue to experience an 'autonomy gap' in key areas of school management , such as budget formulation, course offering, and firing underperforming teachers, and that this gap is more pronounced among non-OECD members.

Inferential Statistics Related to Question 2: Increasing Homogeneity of the Principalship

A close examination of results confirmed the notion of conditional incomplete convergence as outlined by Plümper and Schneider (2009). Each of the tests for convergence was conducted once for all 39 PISA participant countries and once for each group of countries, OECD members and non-OECD members. While the paired-sample *t*-tests did not allow for a rejection of the null hypothesis, the data did show a decrease in the coefficient of variation as well as a decrease of the dissimilarity coefficient between 2000 and 2012, both, for all 39 PISA participant countries as well as for the two groups, OECD members and non-OECD members. Different types of convergence were in evidence among several subsets of countries, sigma convergence, or growing together, as well as beta convergence, catching up.

The differences in convergence trends among the two groups, OECD and non-OECD, are less pronounced than among the individual indicator changes discussed above. While the declining coefficients of variation and dissimilarity quotients in both groups suggest sigma convergence, the null hypothesis could not be rejected for either group of countries when applying paired-sample *t*-tests. Perhaps the most interesting finding is the presence of beta convergence for two distinct groups of countries: 1) countries with low initial scores in 2000, and 2) non-OECD members. Those countries with the lowest initial scores in 2000 tended to have higher changes than those countries with high scores, and the relatively higher mean increases in 'yes' answers in 2012 are indicative of the presence of a 'convergence club' (Plümper & Schneider, 2009). For non-OECD members, not only was beta convergence more pronounced, the overall trend for changes in principal responses was stronger. This raises several interesting questions worthy of future research. Are non-OECD members more 'eager' to reform than OECD members? Or are non-OECD members more susceptible to PISA's influence? Or both? It

would seem somewhat ironic that non-OECD members are more susceptible to OECD modes of governance than OECD members, and the real question must go deeper. Could it be that political systems of developing countries are more susceptible to outside influences than those of developed countries?

A Neo-Institutionalist Interpretation of Results

Even if this study did not reveal conclusive evidence of increased homogeneity (sigma convergence) of the role of the principal across 39 PISA participant countries, the data did show that many countries are engaged in reforms to educational leadership policy and practice, and that there is an overall increase in homogeneity of principal responsibilities. Since the study is descriptive in nature, it was not statistically possible to establish the reasons for these changes in different countries. It is possible, though, to suggest an explanatory linkage between PISA participation and educational reform efforts on the one hand, and increases in homogeneity of the principalship across countries, on the other. The principal interviews clearly affirm this hypothesis as well. From a neo-institutionalist perspective, there is reason to believe that reforms to educational leadership policy and practice among PISA participant countries promote international convergence of the role of the principal. Educational systems are facing similar problems and pressures, such as the shift from an industrial world to one of information and services, and processes of globalization, in the form of transnational communications of best practice, offer solutions to common problems.

The methods presented here to analyze the changing role of the principal and increased homogenization of role in the context of globalization represent an approximation of reality. A common finding in convergence studies is that the evidence is too weak to unequivocally determine the existence of convergence, and citing Plümper and Schneider's (2009) 'black cat in

a dark room', this study is no exception. That is, while a majority of PISA participant countries experienced an increase in 'yes' answers to the seven indicators on principal responsibilities, several countries, both OECD members as well as non-OECD members, had decreases to the number of 'yes' answers, which limits the finding of convergence trend across PISA participant countries. Additionally, while the overall positive linear trend suggests convergence in all seven indicators, the degree and extent of convergence varies significantly between indicators and countries. Because partial convergence may result from weak convergence pressure as well as from institutional, policy-specific, economic, or political constraints, this section also addresses rival hypotheses to convergence trends.

Partial Incomplete Convergence and Rival Hypotheses

The neo-intuitionalist view of policy convergence emphasizes the structural forces involved in the processes of policy reform. Given the fact that education systems and philosophies are inextricably linked to national traditions and path dependencies, a plausible alternative to international convergence is international divergence of educational leadership policy and practice (Phillips, 2006a). PISA results, indeed, reveal apparent paradoxes. What, for example, motivates national governments to implement OECD reform proposals that strengthen local authority and limit central government powers? Limited resources are certainly a contributing factor, and the fact that developing countries are more prone to implement OECD policy proposals would seem to help explain these developments. On the other hand, limited resources alone cannot account for this development. Another paradox is that similar PISA impulses may lead to different policy responses and results in different countries. How can we explain that in some countries principals are given significantly more responsibilities while in others they are significantly curtailed? Schriewer (2003) elaborated on the importance of path

dependencies that represent the particular conditions prevailing in each jurisdiction under which international policy convergence may occur. Individual countries' governance systems and structures react differently to external influences, and the question of who influences and shapes the public discourse plays a crucial role in addressing the above questions.

The scope of this study was too limited to take into consideration individual country's political situations or country-specific domestic factors that mediate the effectiveness of international convergence mechanisms. Based on cultural, institutional, and socioeconomic factors, an alternative hypothesis to OECD influence is that countries which are culturally, institutionally or economically close may be expected to adopt similar ideas or instruments in public policy, and thus are likely to converge on these points (Lenschow, Liefferink & Veenman, 2005). The presence of beta convergence among a large number of non-OECD members would seem to fit this pattern. It would also explain the decreases of coefficients of variation and dissimilarity quotients in both groups of countries, OECD members and non-OECD members. As path dependency is an important variable in convergence research analysis, it follows that sigma convergence is, indeed, in evidence among PISA participant countries.

Findings and Interpretations Related to Question #3: Lived Experiences of German Principals

The open-ended qualitative responses to questions about the changing role of the principal and PISA's influence on the reform process that arose deductively through the lens of the neo-institutionalist theoretical framework and inductively through content analysis were compared and contrasted with the quantitative findings to gain fuller insight into the research questions. In keeping with the tenets of concurrent triangulation design, the qualitative data were summarized and matched with themes which emerged from the literature review and the

quantitative analysis of the study. New themes emerging from the inductive analysis are noted and discussed through the lens of all three research questions.

Analysis of Findings

The interviews broadly confirmed global trends as identified in the literature review and quantitative section of this study. The role of the principal in German Gymnasien is changing. There is a fundamental shift away from a traditional pure management role towards more 'pedagogical leadership' and site-based management practices. The principals in this study directly associated PISA with many recent reform efforts. They also associated immediate consequences to their role with the results of the PISA initiated reforms. Principals have to deal with pedagogical, social, and economic issues, and while they are resilient and creative in the face of a veritable flood of reforms, two out of three principals in this study confided that they pay a high emotional and physical price for their dedication and service.

Goodwin et al.'s (2007) notion that the increasingly complex role of the principal today is not so much an evolution of the role as an accumulation of expectations and a layering of responsibilities is broadly confirmed by the lived experiences of the three principals in German Gymnasien, public and private, who participated in this study. Recent reform processes have exacerbated role complexity, and as a result, these principals are increasingly disillusioned with political leadership, policy making, and reforms. Even though principals are expected to be pedagogical leaders, the myriad demands and lack of resources confine their daily routines to managerial tasks. Principals are organizers, implementers, and mediators within their school and liaise with many different constituents. They are at the center of all school-related aspects and, therefore, are exposed to criticism from all sides. Time is the most limited of all resources, and the many demands of the job produce worryingly high levels of stress and burnout.

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PISA data indicated that Germany had some of the highest rates of change for the seven indicators on principal responsibilities examined in this study. The interviews confirmed these trends, specifically for the indicators Budget Allocation, Courses Offered, and Hiring Teachers. Participants confirmed that over the years they had been given more responsibilities in these specific areas of school management. For example, the percentage of principals who reported having responsibility over Courses Offered and Hiring Teachers increased by over 43% between PISA 2000 and PISA 2012. The interviews confirmed that the ability to offer select courses ("Profile") and to hire teachers was, indeed, new and that in years past these had not been part of their responsibilities. However, extreme caution is necessary when interpreting these results. That is, one must not confuse being granted the ability to offer a course or hire a teacher with having the (sole) responsibility to do so. Core courses are still centrally mandated, and only enrichment courses may be added. Similarly, the vast majority of teachers is still centrally placed, and principals have no influence over this process whatsoever. Those positions that the principal can fill are very limited. The principal in the 'rural' school district stated that, at the most, he can hire one person per year. Even in the private school, only about 50% of teachers are hired directly by the principal. In other words, PISA data is easily taken out of context and can lead to misinterpretation of results. As the example of the three principals involved in this study clearly showed, 'having responsibility' is by no means the same as 'being in charge'. In spite of what PISA data might suggest, German principals still have very little genuine autonomy over key areas of school management. More importantly, the participants in this study were content with the status quo and did not feel the need for more autonomy.

Autonomy

As seen in Chapter Four, on the question of autonomy, the participants' views and opinions diverged strongly from the (Anglo-Saxon dominated) literature review. There was no mention of a perceived need for more autonomy. To the contrary, the principals in this study not only felt that the system gave them enough leeway in their respective roles, they expressed doubts about the usefulness of handing principals more autonomy. An intriguing question, therefore, arises: In a top-down school system where they have very little decision making powers over key areas of school management, how can principals feel that they have sufficient autonomy?

The answer, at least in the context of principals in German Gymnasien, lies in understanding principal *perceptions of autonomy*. Even though the system is top-down, it is also a system with little oversight and direct accountability. Principals are essentially free to run their schools as they deem appropriate. The principals in this study did not perceive a lack of autonomy over key areas of school management precisely because there was no accountability for these responsibilities. That is, in their minds, being left alone by the education bureaucracy translated into freedom of action, and the lack of accountability provided them with sufficient autonomy of role.

Secondly, perceptions of autonomy differ strongly among individuals, and the individual's interpretation of role and responsibilities is more important than providing blanket autonomy. While some principals, for example, appreciated having the opportunity, albeit limited, to hire their own staff, others thought of it as just one more time consuming task that they would rather not have to deal with. This raises the question whether enhancing principal

autonomy is seen as an opportunity or an additional burden? Are principals actually willing to

seize on opportunities to enhance their autonomy?

PISA

PISA has had a particularly strong impact on the German school system, and principals

are keenly aware of the impact PISA and its system of ratings and rankings has had on their role.

The poor performance of German students on PISA ushered in a new era of education reform.

Major school reforms, such as the eight year baccalaureate or the introduction of all-day schools,

are directly linked to PISA results. Each one of the participants felt very strongly that

international comparisons of student performance were invalid or misleading, yet PISA

continues to dominate the public debate. Or put differently, OECD modes of governance have

proven singularly effective in Germany. The example of Germany is a good illustration of how

the global spread of notions of best practice in educational leadership works its way through the

political process. PISA managed to move the debate on education to the foreground (*agenda-

setting*). The public discourse in the wake of the PISA 2000 *shocked* the establishment into

action, resulting in specific reform efforts based on PISA recommendations (*policy proposals*)

that have had concrete and tangible effects on the German educational system and the role of the

principal. With principals reporting constant headlines on education, there is no indication that

this trend is going to subside any time soon.

The principals in this study were highly critical of PISA and viewed it with open

contempt. From the point of view of these principals, the *PISA-Schock* has resulted in a kind of

reform mania ("Reformwahn"), and the novelty of PISA has long since given way to a genuine

PISA-fatigue. Principals have virtually no influence over the reform process and are made to

implement reforms which they do not believe in. The results of some of the PISA initiated

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reforms are perceived to be disastrous. In this particular environment, PISA is promoting a philosophical and pedagogical disconnect between policy makers and practitioners.

Conclusions and Areas for Further Research

This study investigated the changing role of the principal in a global context. It also examined the relationship between educational leadership changes in PISA participant countries and the extent to which the role of the principal is converging internationally. The central hypothesis was that the global spread of notions of best practice in educational leadership promotes an increase in principal responsibilities related to instructional leadership as well as an increase in homogeneity (sigma convergence) of the role of principal across countries. To this effect, the study analyzed quantitative as well as qualitative data.

Globalization is a web of interrelated connections and influences, and recent reforms in educational leadership policy and practice are rooted in the idea that all countries are members of a global society. This world view enhances perceived similarity among nations, which, in turn, enhances diffusion processes. Knowledge and information used to be shaped and transmitted by local and national institutions. These institutions have been fundamental to the development of the global economy, but, in turn, are now influenced by the global economy. The OECD has become a major player in international education, and researchers credit its governance forms as having increasing influence on national governments in the field of educational policy making. PISA put education policy making in foreground and offered the OECD an international platform to promote its education policy agenda through measurement and comparisons.

The empowerment of international organizations on behalf of nation states is a fairly recent phenomenon, and the impact the OECD's PISA program is having on educational leadership policy and practice is only just beginning to manifest itself. School systems are highly

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complex and unique to each country, and to what extent the OECD's PISA program influences educational leadership policy and practice remains subject to each country's polity and society. Neo-institutionalist theory suggests that at a time when many countries pursue educational leadership reform, the solutions that the OECD is proposing may be widely accepted. Do the OECD's specific reform proposal, such as enhancing principal autonomy, bring about international convergence of the role of the principal among PISA participants? The answer to date would seem to be a cautious 'yes'.

System learning, policy attraction, and policy borrowing are not new concepts, and policy makers as well as practitioners have always looked beyond their borders for opportunities of systemic change (Phillips, 2006a; Phillips & Ochs, 2003). However, contexts, cultures, and local situations matter. Sound decision making needs to take into account human differences, and strictly following dogma or being inflexible may prove to be counterproductive. Reform efforts which are grounded in commitments to entities and groups other than the nation-state or the local community may result in situations in which educational leaders are forced to implement policies which lack local traditions and coherence. The changing role of the principal, as expressed in the day-to-day operations of the school, largely takes place in a contextual vacuum, and principals may find that their personal and organizational loyalties and allegiances are increasingly located beyond the traditional local or national framework. The question, therefore, is whether neo-liberal management reforms in many countries are replacing the inadequacies of tightly controlled centralized systems with those of equally flawed school and site-based management systems. In order to run effective schools, principals need a balance of autonomy and accountability, but the proper measure and degree of both cannot be determined through a one-size-fits-all approach. While context and culture factor large in this equation, numerable local

variables come into play, right down to the experience, skill, and competence of the individual school leader.

While this study was limited in scope, the findings broadly confirmed the hypothesis that the role of the principal is changing and that international comparative studies like PISA are promoting increased homogeneity of role across countries. Some critical questions emerged from the data analysis and interviews which may serve as a basis for further research: Do principals perceive having increased responsibility for key areas of school management as an opportunity to exercise autonomy or as yet one more task in their already overflowing basket of tasks? Is the 'autonomy gap' real or perceived? One must not confuse principals having responsibility for a certain set of tasks with having genuine decision making autonomy. Examining principal perceptions of autonomy, therefore, has more relevance to the practitioner than examining blanket levels of principal autonomy. The key to unlocking the greater principal autonomy debate lies in understanding the systemic relationship between accountability and autonomy in a local context. How do principals perceive the balance of autonomy and accountability within their school system? An intriguing prospect would be to undertake a systemic study based on Windzio, Sackmann, and Martens' (2005) classification of six different educational governance systems to examine if there is a correlation between principal perceptions of autonomy and their respective educational governance systems? A further systemic questions worth examining would be whether developing countries are more susceptible than developed countries to the influence of international organizations' modes of governance?

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I.   **Demographic Information**

    a.   My total experience in my most recent (retired) position is/was:

    b.   My total experience in all my educational positions is/was:

II.   **Identifying Personal Positions** (Please comment on each question.)

    a.   What do you see as the key responsibilities of a school leader?

    b.   How would you describe your leadership approach or style?

    c.   How would teachers in your school describe your leadership style?

    d.   Do you have a vision for your school?

    e.   What is your overarching approach to achieving that vision?

    f.   Can you explain the expectations of your school governing authority/bureaucracy?

    g.   Are these expectations compatible with your vision?

    h.   In your opinion, what is the aim of education in the 21st century?

    i.   What role should the school play? (in society, economy)

    j.   How do you interpret the role of the principal in the school?

    k.   How do you perceive your role in your particular context?

    l.   At what level do you think the locus of decision making should be (national, regional, local, school) for the following issues:

        • Staffing (hiring and firing teachers)

        • Curriculum and materials

        • Budgeting

        • Disciplinary policies

III.   Daily Life

    a. What qualities, do you think, make you an effective administrator?

    b. Are you an effective administrator in terms of

        i. Delivering educational content to students?

        ii. Providing instructional leadership to staff?

        iii. Communicating with and meeting the needs of parents and other community members?

        iv. Navigating the school and educational system bureaucracy?

    c. How would you prefer to spend your day? (in terms of tasks, duties, activities, etc.)

    d. By contrast, how do you spend your average day?

    e. What are the biggest discrepancies between the two?

    f. What keeps/hinders you from being as effective as you could be?

IV.   Educational Reforms

What contemporary changes have occurred in the role of the secondary school principal?

    a. How does the reform process work in your educational system?

    b. During your time of service, what type of educational reforms were introduced?

    c. How many reforms/directives would you say you have implemented over the last 20 years?

    d. Have these reforms been coherent? sporadic? contradictory?

    e. Did you discern a "bigger picture"?

f. In your opinion, what prompted politicians (or others responsible) to initiate these reforms?

g. How do your perceive your role in the reform process? (initiation, formulation, implementation)

h. In your opinion, should principals/school leaders be involved in policy formulation? If so, how?

i. What recent reform efforts would you say had the most direct effect on your work?

j. How did you perceive these reform efforts?

k. How were they explained to you in terms of purpose?

l. Do the reforms you implemented reflect your personal experience, motivations, and philosophy?

m. How do you feel about implementing these reforms?

Please indicate your level of agreement for each statement that follows:

A – strongly agree

B - agree

C – disagree

D – strongly disagree

1. Being an instructional leader has become the principal's primary role.

   A B C D Comments:

2. The principal today is held to higher standards of accountability in many areas including finances, curriculum, and staffing.

   A B C D Comments:

3. Higher standard of achievement exist for students, and principals are accountable for such student outcomes as test scores, etc.

   A B C D Comments:

4. The principal is required to serve as a liaison between different constituencies such as: school and community, school and (state) government.

   A B C D Comments:

   Please list other constituencies with which you liaise:

5. Technology has increased both responsibility and accountability for the principal.

   A B C D Comments:

6. The principal must be an expert on teaching and learning.

   A B C D Comments:

7. The possibility of litigation has increased substantially.

   A B C D Comments:

8. Principals must cope with social and economic issues that impact student behavior and performance.

   A B C D Comments:

9. Implementation of site-based decision-making strategies have transferred more responsibility to the principal.

   A B C D Comments:

10. The principal must meet the enhanced needs of a more diverse student population as a result of legislation and social changes.

    A B C D Comments:

   V.   Role Complexity

a. In your opinion, has the role of the principal become more complex?

b. If so, which tasks have made the principal role more complex?

c. How well did you feel prepared to assume your role as a principal?

d. Principal preparation programs are frequently criticized as being inadequate. In your experience, please describe how well new and aspiring principals are prepared to assume their role.

e. Successful principals often identify professional networks and relationships as being important to their role. How well connected do you feel? In the beginning, middle, end of your term?

f. 'Burnout' is a common problem, especially among new school leaders. Please share your thoughts and experiences.

g. In your opinion, do principals need more autonomy to run their schools? (particularly in respect to personnel, finances, curriculum & assessment)

h. Are you aware of PISA? (what the acronym stands for, who is behind it)

i. Does your school participate in PISA tests?

j. Would you say that PISA affects your life as a building administrator? If so, how?

k. Do you see a connection between recent reform efforts and PISA?

l. What is your opinion on international ratings and rankings of educational systems based on student achievement tests such as PISA?

m. What do you think about best practices gleaned from other educational systems?

n. Do you think school systems can "learn" from international comparisons, e.g. from PISA champions like Finland or Singapore?

VI. School Management

Please take a moment and comment on Bottery's (2008) "ironies of hyper-rationalist management"

- The more you try to engineer the creation of a successful workforce, the more likely you are to suppress the creativity upon which it depends;

- The more you try to encourage quality by measuring it, the more you will encourage people to concentrate only on the measurable and thus ignore richer aspects of quality;

- The more people are not trusted, the more they will become untrustworthy;

- The more you try to engineer success, the more you suppress the local knowledge upon which success depends; and

- The more you define the bottom line, the more that this becomes the only line that people become interested in achieving.

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer these questions.

CONSENT FORM
"International Trends in Principal Autonomy"

You are invited to be in a research study investigating international trends in principal autonomy across 39 PISA participant countries. You were selected as a possible participant because of your extensive experience as a teacher and school administrator ('principal') in a German public secondary school. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: James William Pilton, candidate for a doctorate in educational leadership at the College of Education under the direction of Dr. Jill Sperandio, Associate Professor, College of Education, Lehigh University.

Purpose of the study
The purpose of this study is:
The purpose of this study is to investigate the changing role of the school principal and whether the role is becoming increasingly similar across nations, regardless of culture, in response to a growing global understanding of 'best practice' of educational leadership by national education systems worldwide.

Procedures
If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
Answer a series of questions in writing with follow-up questions to clarify individual points of view and experiences related to changes in principal responsibilities. Possibly engage in a recorded oral interview with a series of open ended questions.

Risks and *Benefits* of being in the study
Possible risks:
I do not foresee any risks to the interviewee. All records and transcripts will be kept confidential. No names, addresses or locations, or anything else from which the interviewee may be identified, will be mentioned in the study.

The benefits to participation are:
 I sincerely hope that the process will prove an educational learning experience for both sides.

Compensation
You will receive payment:
Compensation will be offered in the form of a gift certificate from Amazon. The value of the certificate will be 50 Euros per participant.

Confidentiality

The records of this study will be kept private. Any report that might be published will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. The participant's names and specific identifying details will not be included in the report. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Any recordings will only be made available to myself and the dissertation committee members for review. Recordings will be erased after completion of the dissertation process. We are taking these steps to protect the privacy of our participants.

Voluntary Nature of the Study
Participation in this study is voluntary: Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the Lehigh University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions
The researchers conducting this study are:
James William Pilton. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact either James William Pilton (Chengdu, PRChina; +86 1398 179 1433; jwp204@lehigh.edu; skype: james.pilton) or Dr. Jill Sperandio, Behtlehem, PA, USA, + 01 610-758-3392; jis204@lehigh.edu
Questions or Concerns:
If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact Susan Naomi Coll, Lehigh University's Manager of Research Integrity, at nac314@lehigh.edu or 610-758-3021 of Lehigh University's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. All reports or correspondence will be kept confidential.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have my questions answered. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____   Date: _____
Signature of
Parent/Guardian: _____   Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____   Date: _____

APPENDIX C – VITA

James William Pilton
13 Kibbe Drive
Somers, CT 06071 – USA

Education

Doctor of Education Educational Leadership Lehigh University	May, 2015
Master of Arts International Relations Boston University	May, 2004
Bachelor of Arts Government and History Bowdoin College	May, 2002

Professional Experience

Director Quality School International Chengdu, PR China	2014 – Present
Director of Instruction Quality School International Chengdu, PR China	2013-2014
Educator Quality School International Skopje, FYR of Macedonia	2009-2013
Educator Lanna International School, Chiang Mai, Thailand	2006-2009
Educator American School of Libreville, Gabon	2000-2006
Educator Nute Middle and High School	1999-2000
Educator Anglo-American School of San Jose, Costa Rica	1998-1999
Educator Chiang Mai International School, Thailand	1996-1998