



## SCHOOL LEADERSHIP MODELS IN GREECE: PRACTICES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERS<sup>i</sup>

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### Abstract:

One of the most critical factors associated with school effectiveness is school leadership. The purpose of our research was to study the practices of primary school principals regarding school leadership from the perspective of managerial, transformational, and instructional leadership models. The sample of the study consisted of 12 primary school principals who worked in Thessaloniki (Greece). A semi-structured interview was used as a data collection tool. Data were studied and categorized based on the method of hybrid thematic analysis. The results of the study showed that managerial model is dominant. Principals, though, developed the tendency to adopt modern models of leadership as well, the “narrow” version of instructional leadership model and the two of the four dimensions of transformational leadership model, Idealized influence and Individual consideration. The conclusion is that although principals had adopted some aspects of modern leadership models, it is necessary for them to acquire knowledge and skills for the other dimensions also and to act accordingly. The Ministry of Education should design and implement training programs for principals, after conducting an investigation of training needs, in order to acquire more knowledge and skills concerning leadership and management so they can be more effective.

**Keywords:** primary education; school principals, school leadership practices; school leadership models

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### **Περίληψη:**

Ένας από τους πιο σημαντικούς παράγοντες που συνδέονται με τη σχολική αποτελεσματικότητα είναι η σχολική ηγεσία. Σκοπός της παρούσας έρευνας ήταν να μελετήσει τις πρακτικές διευθυντών/ντριων δημοτικής εκπαίδευσης σχετικά με τη σχολική ηγεσία υπό το πρίσμα των μοντέλων της διοικητικής, μετασχηματιστικής και καθοδηγητικής ηγεσίας. Το δείγμα της έρευνας αποτέλεσαν 12 διευθυντές/ντριες δημοτικών σχολείων της Θεσσαλονίκης. Ως ερευνητικό εργαλείο αξιοποιήθηκε η ημι-δομημένη συνέντευξη και ως ερευνητική τεχνική η υβριδική θεματική ανάλυση. Από τα αποτελέσματα της έρευνας προέκυψε πως το διοικητικό μοντέλο είναι κυρίαρχο στις πρακτικές των διευθυντών/ντριών, οι οποίες συνδέονται επίσης με τη «στενή» εκδοχή του καθοδηγητικού μοντέλου και τις δύο από τις τέσσερις διαστάσεις της μετασχηματιστικής ηγεσίας, την εξιδανικευμένη επιρροή και το εξατομικευμένο ενδιαφέρον. Ως συμπέρασμα προέκυψε η ανάγκη υλοποίησης επιμορφωτικών προγραμμάτων για διευθυντές/ντριες, μετά από διερεύνηση αναγκών, υπό την αιγίδα κρατικών φορέων της εκπαίδευσης, ώστε να αποκτήσουν γνώσεις και δεξιότητες και για τις υπόλοιπες διαστάσεις των σύγχρονων μοντέλων ηγεσίας και να ανταποκριθούν στις απαιτήσεις της θέσης ευθύνης που υπηρετούν.

**Λέξεις-κλειδιά:** δημοτική εκπαίδευση, σχολικοί διευθυντές, πρακτικές σχολικής ηγεσίας, μοντέλα σχολικής ηγεσίας

### **1. Introduction**

During the last decades, the necessity of school autonomy and accountability has emerged. School principals and teachers aim to improve their schools and make them more efficient concerning issues regarding the relationships between the members, their communication, their mental, emotional, and physical safety, and issues regarding teaching and learning (Thapa et al., 2013).

School improvement has also been related to school achievements and the development of all those involved in the teaching and learning process. All these aspects of school improvement and effectiveness have led the educational policy to redefine and highlight the importance of the role of the school leader (Pont et al., 2008) because his/her actions affect the aspects mentioned above in a direct or indirect way.

The school leader is considered to be one of the most important factors that positively or negatively affect school improvement (Hallinger & Heck, 2011). Based on international literature, school leadership is a determining factor for whether a school is effective or not (Leithwood et al., 2008). Recent research has shown that successful leadership practices are directly linked to the wider school context and school environment, the administration that aims to improve and develop students' performance (Hallinger & Heck, 2011), and the professional development of teachers (Taylor et al., 2011).

School leadership is a complicated concept and has many difficulties in implementation. It is not one-dimensional. It can be analyzed through a number of

theories and can be carried out through several leadership models (Bush & Glover, 2014; Bush et al., 2019). Concerns have been raised in literature about which are the most effective leader's skills, behaviours, and practices regarding each leadership model in order to achieve the organization's goals (Anderson, 2017).

The focus of this article is to study the practices of primary school principals regarding three school leadership models, managerial, instructional, and transformational model. These three models will be presented in the section of the theoretical framework. The other sections are the methodology, the results of the research, the discussion, and finally the conclusions.

## 2. Theoretical framework

Trying to define narrowly the concept of school leadership does not often bring the best results, as it is either approached superficially or the focus is limited to only certain aspects. Spillane (2005, p. 384) tried to highlight the difficulty of defining leadership in the school context, which is why he characterized it as a labyrinth. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) consider the attempt to define school leadership within the brief and limited framework of a definition as an unwise choice and ultimately unnecessary.

Bush (2008a, p. 273) mentions a definition that was presented by Cuban in 1988 and points out that leadership is associated with the ability to influence subordinates and the projects they perform, resulting in a successful approach to the goals that have been set. Leithwood (2005) also recognizes influence as a main characteristic but adds setting direction. He argues that the leader determines the directions that need to be followed at every level regarding school life and school effectiveness. Bush (2008a) argues that a leader should have administrative knowledge and skills. Two other characteristics of leadership are values and vision (Bush, 2008a; Bush & Glover, 2003). The values that the leader embraces and advocates must be passed on to his/her subordinates in a way that is anything but imposing. When the leader succeeds in transmitting his/her values to the members of the school, a favorable background is created which can then contribute to the future achievement of the vision that has been formed.

Except from the variety of definitions, there are various leadership models that have been proposed from time to time by scholars (Bush, 2008b; Bush & Glover 2003, 2014; Bush et al., 2019) while it is argued that no leadership model alone is enough to provide a comprehensive theoretical approach to school leadership. Leadership models offer a focus on specific aspects of leadership (Bush & Glover, 2014).

Leithwood in 2005 argued that instructional and transformational leadership are the dominant leadership models. Marks and Printy (2003, p. 370) claim that when transformational and instructional leadership coexist in an integrated form of leadership, then the school performance is improved. Nowadays, these two leadership models are still at the center of research interest and are considered to be the models that promote school improvement when combined (Day et al., 2016; Shava & Heystek, 2021). Even though a variety of leadership models are presented in the literature, transformational

leadership has been singled out for those elements necessary for schools to move toward improvement (Leithwood et al., 1999; Wiyono, 2018).

Although transformational and instructional leadership is gaining ground in countries inside and outside Europe, Bush (2008b, p. 12) mentions that in many countries, such as the Czech Republic, China, and Greece, the managerial leadership model, which is based on bureaucracy, is preferred. He proposes the restructuring of the administration of Greek schools and, refers to Kavouri and Ellis (1998, p. 106, as cited in Bush, 2008b), who point out the need to minimize technical issues and decentralize schools, focusing on professionalism and autonomy of the principal. These points of interest are also mentioned in a recent OECD report along with the necessity of training principals in leadership issues (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2017).

Three leadership models will be presented below, the managerial, the educational, and the transformational model. The managerial model was chosen because it is linked to the Greek education system and has a long history in Greece. The instructional and the transformational leadership models were selected as two of the most prevalent leadership models in the literature.

## **2.1 Managerial leadership model**

The managerial leadership model is one of the first to appear in the educational field. From the 1920s to the 1970s principals performed administrative duties and their role was limited to managing technical matters (Valentine & Prater, 2011). School leadership was characterized by centralization and strictness. There was a 'top-down' imposition of direction and control, either from the principals to their subordinates or from district inspectors to principals.

In the US, during the decade 1976-1985, the dominant characteristic studied by researchers in the field of school leadership was technical management (Gordon et al., 2017). The skills that were included were related to the: staff management, evaluation and selection of teachers, enforcement of discipline, and promotion of students' positive behaviors. During that time, it was also important for a leader to have great skills regarding resource management and student's evaluation, especially for students who needed special educational attention.

Leithwood and Duke (1999, as cited in Valentine & Prater, 2011, p. 6) argued that in managerial leadership the focus of attention is on the actions, tasks, and behaviors of the leader. What is required is for the leader to act effectively in these three axes, so that help is provided to the other members and the school can function satisfactorily. This view was expressed and supported several years later by Bush and Glover (2014, p. 556), maintaining continuity and stability in the focus of attention of this specific leadership model.

Bush and Bell (2002, pp. 17-18) stated that in managerial leadership there are clear boundaries of authority for school members, strict hierarchy, and regulations that must be followed by teachers and students, due to the principal's control.

## 2.2 Instructional leadership

During the 1980s, instructional leadership made a dynamic appearance. It was then that the main model of school leadership was proposed by politicians and researchers from the scientific field of education. Linking instructional leadership to the effective schools' movement in the US was the reason for this model to be considered the most effective one for school leadership. But there were also voices that strongly criticized it, treating instructional leadership with reservations (Hallinger, 2010). Over the years, US education policy has increasingly focused on the academic success of students, a fact that seems to have had an impact on the rest of the Western world as well.

In the 1980s, principals as instructional leaders appeared to have a centralizing and interventionist role with the primary goal of student achievement. They exercised control over teaching and learning-related issues in order to enhance student performance, which was based on set standards that led to academic success (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). It is therefore clear that in this decade the exercise of instructional leadership is centered on the principal, who, in this solitary role, is responsible for students' high performance (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, p. 221).

The socio-political and economic changes, however, bring to the fore the need to revise certain aspects of the theoretical framework of the instructional leadership model. It now acquires a more democratic and cooperative character and moves away from the centralized and strictly controlling role of the principal. For instructional leadership, it has been said that two versions can be distinguished in its application, the "narrow" and the "broad", with the adoption of the latter being argued to be more effective (Yasser, & Amal, 2015, p. 1505). In the "narrow" view, instructional leadership is defined as those actions that are directly related to teaching and to classroom supervision regarding observable behaviors, while the definition of the "broad" view contains "those actions that a principal takes, or delegates to others to promote growth in student learning" (DeBevoise, 1984, p. 15, as cited in Sheppard, 1996, p. 327). As Hallinger and Murphy (1985) argue the "broad" view includes "framing school goals, communicating school goals, inspecting and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum, monitoring student progress, protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, enforcing academic standards, and providing incentives for students" (as cited in Sheppard, 1996, p. 327).

In the early 2000s, and while some years had passed since instructional leadership had been removed from the focus of interest, the theory of instructional leadership returned at a time when globalization created an urgent need to meet needs related to student achievement and to teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2010). The influence of the labor market on education was also strong, as the education of students sought to follow the dictates of the market (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). At this point, it should be noted that instructional leadership had been criticized for being primarily concerned with teaching rather than learning (Bush & Glover, 2014, p. 556), while Leithwood and colleagues noted that instructional leadership focuses on the behavior of teachers in carrying out activities, which influence the development of students (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 8).

## 2.2 Transformational leadership, a full range approach

In the mid-1970s, a paradigm shift was observed in leadership theories (House & Aditya, 1997, p. 439). There was an effort to move away from the instructional leadership model and to pursue a leadership that was interested in all areas of the school organization and mostly in the relationships that were developed between all members (Hallinger, 2003; Onorato, 2013). Transformational leadership made a dynamic appearance in the 80s.

Burns was the first in 1978 to introduce the theoretical framework of transforming leadership in his book *Leadership*, where he referred to the value of the role of power (Bush & Bell, 2002). In the same book, he analyzed the theoretical framework of transactional and transformational leadership and separated them as opposites (Silins, 1994). According to him, the separation was justified, as in these models there is a different management of two important factors during the exercise of leadership. These factors are: a) the relationships between the leader and the members of the organization and b) power, which is linked to the motivations or goals of individuals but also to the exploitable resources (Bush & Bell, 2002, p. 28).

Bass in 1985 expanded Burns' proposals and approached the model of transactional and transformational leadership differently in his book *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations* (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). He did not treat the two models as two diametrically opposed leadership theories, but as one two-dimensional theory (Bush & Bell, 2002). For Bass, a leader can act at the same time as a transactional and as a transformational leader.

Transactional leadership focuses on the relationships between members and the leader and the completion of tasks by subordinates. It relies on the relationships that are created to make a profitable transaction (Bass, 1999). Instead, transformational leadership focuses its attention on changing the school unit through shared vision and mission achievement. It focuses on the "*meanings, values and feelings*" (Hunt, 1999) of the members as well as the relationships between them.

Bass wanted to create a tool that would describe the actions of the leader and his/her role in the organization, so he constructed a questionnaire with his colleagues (Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, MLQ), which was modified over the years several times (Antonakis et al., 2003). "*The full range of leadership, as measured by the MLQ, implies that every leader displays a frequency of both the transactional and transformational factors, but each leader's profile involves more of one and less of the other*" (Bass, 1999, p. 11). The questions of this questionnaire are related to the framework of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and passive-avoidant leadership (Antonakis et al., 2003; Bass et al., 1996; Silins, 1994).

We used the theoretical framework on which the questions of the questionnaire are based on to write the questions of our semi-structured interview, which is presented in the Methodology.

## 2.3 Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership is a four-dimensional model, also known as the four I's model. These dimensions are presented below.

**Idealized influence:** It refers to the characteristics and behaviors of the leaders based on which they act as role models for their subordinates. Their determination, dynamism, sense of responsibility, and consistency in the school's vision and mission inspire confidence and admiration among the members. Leader's personality traits and actions are based on their moral values and high ideals. They cultivate trust and respect.

**Inspirational motivation:** It refers to the leaders' actions that motivate members to participate voluntarily in the processes taking place in the organization. They motivate them to set high goals, while at the same time cultivating an optimistic attitude about the future of the organization. They provide motives for reflection, which they embrace and implement themselves, inspiring members to willingly follow their example. This practice gives meaning to members' efforts.

**Intellectual stimulation:** It refers to the leader's actions aimed at activating the intellectual skills of the members: solving complex problems based on logic, pursuing creativity, and dealing with innovative ideas. The leader creates challenges so that members develop skills to challenge old assumptions and explore new solutions to thought-provoking issues.

**Individual consideration:** Leaders treat each member as a unique person with special skills and needs. They treat their subordinates as beings with different characteristics, abilities, perspectives, concerns, and weaknesses. Leaders take the time to get to know their staff members, giving each and every one of them the necessary attention, help, and support, creating a sense of confidence, security, and satisfaction. Leaders can suggest tasks to which subordinates can respond and oversee their professional development.

## **2.4 Transactional leadership**

**Contingent reward:** For there to be a reward, it is necessary to achieve a defined goal. The leader has positive and constructive behavior, sets clear criteria, goals, and requirements of the tasks, and informs about the corresponding rewards. These are rewards given to staff when they successfully complete their assigned tasks or even when they put in a lot of effort to achieve performance standards.

**Management by exception (active):** Leaders act to secure the right outcome. They are alert to prevent mistakes and give negative feedback, as a result of which they exhibit a corrective type behavior, in which they either choose to check and correct the performance of the staff or intervene only in cases where someone's actions are deviating from the goal and then apply measures for discipline.

## **2.5 Passive-avoidant leadership**

**Management by exception (passive):** It refers to the intervention of the leader in case there is no compliance with the instructions and the standards that have been set. *"Describes a lack of involvement from the leader unless a follower's failures become chronic or serious"* (Bass & Riggio, 2006, as cited in Potter et al., 2018, p.8).

Laissez-faire leadership: The leader does not take responsibility, exercise authority, make decisions, or solve problems. He/she avoids getting involved in discussions or conflicts with other members of the organization.

Those were the three leadership models that will be used in our research. Next will be presented a brief reference regarding the way these models have been linked from time to time to the Greek education system.

## 2.6 Leadership models in Greece

Greece has a long history of education systems based on the exercise of central control and the hierarchical concentration of power (Katsikas & Therianos, 2007). According to Saitis (2000) the dominant school leadership model in Greece is the managerial. Kaparou and Bush (2015, p. 322) argue that the main characteristic of the Greek education system is its hierarchical structure, which is based on a "top-down" exercise of control and decision-making, resulting in the limitation of the autonomy of the principal. The centralization of administration, the focus on technical issues and the provision of instructions and directions from the Ministry of Education are axes that outline the managerial leadership model of Greece (Saitis, 2000).

Kaparou and Bush (2015) argue that there are limited researches that study the application of the instructional leadership model in Greek schools. They report that in the centralized education system of Greece, principals take on a managerial role, which is distinguished by bureaucratic characteristics, and do not function as instructional leaders. Nevertheless, principals seem to adopt informal instructional behaviors in order to strengthen the teachers' work (Kaparou & Bush, 2015). Dimopoulos and his colleagues (2015) highlight characteristics of the integrated model of transformational-instructive leadership, which are building relationships with members, democratic decision-making, and providing motivation to create school identity, and they point out that principals in primary schools in Greece deal with educational and pedagogical issues to a minimal extent.

"Greece has one of the most centrally managed and centralized educational systems in Europe" (OECD, 2011, p. 26). This fact has been shown to favor the emergence of transactional leadership behaviors by principals of primary education units in Greece, as principals follow two tactics, "*promoting their plans and guidelines that must be followed to achieve short-term goals*" and "*rewarding teachers for achieving school goals*" (Gaitanidou, 2019, p. 226).

Recently, interest in transformational leadership has grown in Greece. Research data from the field of primary education shows that principals' attitudes and behaviors are consistent with the transformational model mainly in matters of: a) strengthening positive school culture, b) building relationships between members, c) enhancing teachers' satisfaction, and d) cultivating a climate of trust and cooperation, highlighting a collaborative leader rather than a visionary, as more short-term goals are set (Gaitanidou, 2019, pp. 227-228).

We realize at this point that school leadership is a demanding and complex process. Pont and his colleagues (2008) point out the importance of leaders' training. They



mention that most of the time, teachers who are chosen to fill managerial positions, do not have the required skills and knowledge to respond to the demanding role of the leader related to resource management, setting goals, evaluating the quality of educational work, monitoring teaching and learning issues and collaborating within and outside the school unit. The importance of leaders' training in leadership issues is highlighted in the literature (Lashway, 2002b). This training, which does not exist in Greece, would be important to take place before the implementation of the teachers' individual evaluation which will apply for the first time in our country during the school year 2022-2023 (Law 4823/2021).

## 2.7 Relevant research

Below, we will present relevant research concerning the practices of school leaders linked to the three leadership models we are studying, the managerial, the instructional, and the transformational leadership model.

Recent research was conducted in Indonesia (Wicoksono et al., 2022) and its purpose was to study principal's practices, related to managerial leadership, in improving teachers' performance. The researchers argued that "*managerial competence in improving teacher performance is going well*" although "*it has not been fully implemented*" (Wicoksono et al., 2022, p. 14). Principals' main duties were to arrange school program and supervise and evaluate the teachers. Although more than half of the principals conducted workshops and meetings aiming to improve teachers' performance, there was a lack of teachers' participation, because many teachers were not willing to participate in these gatherings.

Trivellas and Akrivoula (2008) conducted research and reviewed 124 secondary school principals. They found that Greek principals were "*inclined to perform more intensely the innovator, director, monitor, and facilitator roles, neglecting the broker, producer, coordinator, and mentor roles*" (2008, p. 600). They argue that these findings reveal some weaknesses in principals' behavior towards effectiveness.

Dimopoulos, Dalkavouki, and Koulaidis (2015) conducted research based on 4 case studies of primary school principals in Greece, using semi-structured interviews and four-month diaries to investigate whether their practices are affected by the centralized education system. The results showed that their practices are influenced by the transactional and bureaucratic model of leadership combined with strict adherence to legislation and the traditional way of management. Nevertheless, there were features that indicate a transition towards more transformative and instructional characteristics, such as democratic-participatory decision-making, intimate relationships between members, and incentives provided by some leaders to create a distinct identity for their schools.

Onorato (2013) argues that the most important factor that can influence the effectiveness and improvement of a school is the principal and notes that the most appropriate leadership model for this purpose is the transformational one. In his quantitative research, he used the MLQ questionnaire on a sample of 45 New York elementary and secondary school principals in combination with their demographic profile to reveal which leadership model is mostly adopted. A percentage of 68.9%, had

adopted the transformational leadership model, 22.2%, had adopted the transactional model, and 8.9%, had the passive avoidant leadership.

Many researches argue that the key to success for a school is transformational leadership (Browning, 2014; Dhungana, 2020; Khumalo, 2019; Yang, 2014). Their findings from their researches showed that specific characteristics and behaviors of the school leader can lead to improvement. Transformational leaders cultivate trust, respect, and a shared vision and motivate their subordinates (Browning, 2014; Dhungana, 2020; Khumalo, 2019; Yang, 2014). Khumalo (2019) highlighted with his research the positive influence of transformational leadership on teacher productivity through participative decision-making and teacher professional satisfaction. Browning (2014) highlighted practices of transformational leaders that lead to change and improvement of the school organization, such as admitting mistakes, caring for the subordinates, active listening, data-based decision-making, principals' effort to be visible in the school, and maintaining optimism.

Marks and Printy's (2003) research showed that transformational leadership is necessary but insufficient. The combination of transformational and instructional leadership brings significant results in the improvement of school units. Day and his colleagues (2016) based on the findings of their research in 600 schools, among the most effective and improved schools in England, showed that principals adopted characteristics of both models, transformational and instructional leadership, resulting in maintaining or improving their educational work and student performance.

Shava and Heystek (2021) conducted a study regarding the practices of school leaders, who acted according to the transformational and instructional leadership model, in order to maintain the quality of the school. The transformative practices of principals showed that: a) principals show individualized interest, treat teachers as individuals with different needs and thus create a supportive environment, b) provide motivation to teachers to achieve their goals and their potential, c) push teachers to be creative and seek innovative ideas to solve problems, d) cultivate a shared vision, set high expectations and reward teachers to be committed to the common mission, and e) develop a collaborative culture and focus on positive feedback. In their instructional practices leaders: a) support teaching and learning by providing resources and supporting teachers, b) encourage teachers to choose student-centered teaching practices, c) involve teachers and, if possible, parents in decision-making, d) establish team formation among teachers and promote positive cooperation, and f) provide professional development opportunities to teachers.

Hallinger and Hosseingholizadeh (2019) studied principals' practices in Iran, where schools are highly centralized. It appeared that many of the principals focused on monitoring student progress, developing the quality of teaching and learning, ensuring a collaborative environment for teachers, and encouraged them to improve the quality of learning by using smart educational technologies.

As can be seen from the aforementioned researches, school leadership is a complex and demanding process. It is noteworthy that literature also highlights the crucial importance of training programs for leaders, which focus on issues of leadership and

management, principles and values, strategies, teaching and learning, and development of the members of the organization (Day et al., 2009).

## **2.8 The significance of the study**

In the theoretical framework above, it emerged that transformational leadership is the most appropriate to lead an organization to improvement (Anderson, 2017). However, its combination with instructional leadership that focuses on teaching and learning is one that can bring even more positive results to the school (Hallinger, 2003). However, in Greece, there is a long tradition of school principals adopting managerial leadership.

In recent years, however, there has been an attempt by the education policy of Greece to upgrade the Greek schools and to make them more effective. Laws were passed to implement the external and internal evaluation of the school unit and teachers (Government gazette 4189/B/10-9-2021) in an effort to improve the educational work. Their implementation requires leaders familiar with modern leadership models, who will be able to meet the requirements of the evaluation procedures. The importance of the present research, therefore, is great, as it was carried out after the passing of the above laws and before the implementation of the teachers' individual evaluation, which was planned to start in the school year 2022-2023, while the evaluation of the school unit has already been implemented in Greece since the school year 2020-2021. Therefore, adjunctively with other relevant research, it can focus on the practices of principals and highlight their training needs so that they could receive reinforcement. Such training could help principals become aware and ready to carry out effectively the procedures that will improve the school units in which they work.

## **2.9 Purpose and research questions**

The purpose of this paper was to study the practices of primary school principals of school units of Thessaloniki regarding school leadership, in order to highlight whether they adopt aspects of managerial, transformational, and instructional leadership.

The research questions arising from the research objectives are the following:

- 1) Are there practices of the principals that are linked to the managerial leadership model?
- 2) Are there practices of the principals that are linked to the instructional leadership model, the "narrow" or the "browed" version?
- 3) Are there practices of the principals that are linked to the transformational leadership model in its full-range approach?
- 4) Are there practices of the principals that indicate the implementation of the integrated leadership model of instructional and transformational leadership?

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Participants and sampling**

The research sample consisted of 12 principals, 8 men, and 4 women, of primary schools of Thessaloniki (see Appendices). All were between the age of 51 till 60 and had 26-35

years of work experience. A condition for the participation of a principal in our research was to work in a school unit that had six or more classes and did not belong to pilot, experimental, and special needs schools. Purposeful random sampling was chosen as a technique for selecting a sample, because it is the most suitable technique for selecting individuals who will be used in a very small sample (Isari & Pourkos, 2015, p. 83). Patton (2002) points out that the purpose of this particular technique is to increase the reliability of the sample, without the aim of generalizing the research conclusions.

### **3.2 Research tools**

The semi-structured interview was used as a research tool for data collection, as it offers to the interviewer the flexibility to modify the order and content of the questions during the interview in ways that could not have been foreseen during his/her planning (Isari & Pourkos, 2015). The purpose of conducting the interviews was to collect data in order to study the principals' practices based on the managerial, instructional, and transformational leadership model. Therefore, the questions chosen were based on the theoretical framework of the present research which was presented above. Specifically, the managerial leadership codes were related to bureaucracy, administrative duties, students' discipline, hierarchy, and teachers' evaluation. For the instructional leadership, the codes that were chosen were related to the "narrow" version and the "broad" version of the model. Finally, for the full range approach of the transformational leadership model, the codes that were chosen were related to the theoretical framework of MLQ questionnaire the four dimensions of transformational leadership, and the aspects of transactional and passive avoidant leadership.

### **3.3 Research process**

The conduct of the interviews lasted from February 13, 2021, to March 19, 2021. A pilot interview was conducted to ascertain the appropriateness of the questions and to calculate the required time. The rest of the interviews, whose data were used for analysis, were carried out either in person, observing the necessary protection measures against Covid-19, or online, through a video conferencing application (Webex), or by telephone. The executives were asked for permission to record the interview and the necessary information was given with an emphasis on compliance with the rules of ethics and deontology. The duration of the interview was approximately half an hour.

### **3.4 Data analysis technique**

The research technique of the present study was the one that was used by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006). It is the so-called hybrid thematic analysis in which the data are coded and, at a higher level of abstraction, they are grouped into themes. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) carry out the coding, combining an inductive way of processing data arising from the data of the survey itself, as suggested by Boyatzis (1998), with a deductive way of using a priori codes arising from literature, as suggested by Crabtree and Miller (1999). With the hybrid thematic analysis, a "top-down" processing and analysis of the data can be carried out, based on literature, and at the same time a "bottom-

up" processing that can highlight, through the research data, themes that may have not previously been studied or covered extensively in the literature (Kolosidou & Kakana, 2022).

#### 4. Results

Results will be presented at first in tables and afterward in text. Indicative excerpts from the interviews will be presented for each code. The results' presentation will follow the order of the leadership models as presented in the theoretical framework. First, we will present the results for the managerial leadership model, then for the instructional leadership model, and finally for the full-range transformational leadership model.

According to the data, principals' practices were linked to the managerial model, as we can see below.

**Table 1:** Practices based on the managerial model

Theme	Codes	Principals	Total
<b>Managerial leadership</b>	Compliance with laws/ bureaucracy	All	12/12
	Administrative/technical duties	All	12/12
	Discipline issues of students	All except P2, P9, P10, P12	8/12
	Hierarchy/Boundaries of authority	All	12/12
	Teachers' evaluation		0/12

All the principals pointed out that they had to comply with the laws and that they spent much of their time on bureaucratic tasks, as they had to handle many administrative and technical issues. They believed that the boundaries of authority were clear, that's why they were obliged to bear the responsibility of the final decisions and they were the ones who would be held accountable. Thus, they couldn't distribute responsibilities to teachers regarding administrative matters.

*"Principals must have administrative and legislative knowledge. They always make the final decision on school matters. So do I..." (P3)*

*"There are so many laws... Everything is guided by the ministry... Documents are daily and it comes one after the other and they all say: execute!" (P4)*

*"The bureaucracy is huge but it should exist. They [the bureaucratic and technical task] must be done." (P5)*

*"You must make sure that you are following legislation... If a case cannot be resolved [by me] I refer then to the director of primary education." (P7)*

*"It isn't necessary to ask the teachers... It's a matter of hierarchy. There are issues for which the principal is accountable to the law." (P9).*

Eight of them act to maintain order and discipline among the students. No one participated in the teachers' evaluation.

*"In primary schools, we don't have punishments, such as expulsion... At older ages, you can have a discussion..." (P1)*

*"I was involved in a matter... regarding children who had some issues at school. It was more about behavioral issues and less about learning issues." (P5)*

Several principals' practices related to the "narrow" version of instructional leadership were recorded.

All the principals said that they provided resources to teachers to enhance their teaching.

*"I organized the educational materials, organized the library books, I built the central school library..." (P8)*

*"We are going to buy some computers because ours are old. We have had computers since 2005..." (P10)*

**Table 2:** Practices based on the instructional modal

Theme	Codes	Principals	Total	
Instructional leadership	"Narrow" version	Encouraging teachers to use student-centered teaching practices	P1, P2, P5, P7, P9, P10	6/12
		Providing resources for teaching	All	12/12
		Monitoring students' progress	P1, P3, P5,	3/12
		Supervising observable behaviors in class		
	"Broad" version	Providing opportunities for updating teaching practices	P4, P9	2/12
		Building teams of teachers		0/12
		Encouraging the use of smart educational technologies		0/12
		Inspecting/evaluating teaching		0/12

Half of them encouraged teachers to use student-centered teaching methods, but only three mentioned that they monitor students' progress, not by being in class, but by getting informed by teachers. No one mentioned the supervision of observable behaviors in class.

*I encourage the teachers and I organize activities with the children inside and outside the school... We collaborate with various institutions of the municipality that concern children." (P7)*

*"I ask teachers about the children's progress, especially for children who have learning difficulties." (P3)*

As for the “broad” version of the instructional model only two mentioned acting to provide professional development opportunities at the school level for updating teachers' knowledge about their teaching practices.

*“I try to have educational activities on topics that interest [the teachers] and are directly related to teaching and the school unit.” (P9)*

No one tried to build teams of teachers to promote team teaching or to encourage teachers to use smart educational technologies. No one reported inspecting and evaluating teaching by entering the classrooms.

Many practices of principals are related to the first dimension of the transformational leadership model, the idealized influence.

**Table 3:** Practices based on the idealized influence

Theme	Codes	Principals	Total
<b>Idealized influence</b>	Determination/Dynamism	P4, P9, P10, P12	4/12
	Confidence/Trust/Respect	P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, P12	6/12
	Persuasion	P1, P7	2/12
	Values/Principles/Beliefs	P2, P4, P9, P10, P11	5/12
	Long-term goals/Personal vision	All except P8	11/12
	Role model	P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P10, P11	7/12
	Cultivating a shared vision/mission	P1, P2, P4, P9, P10, P11	6/12
	Positive school climate/Collaboration	All except P6, P8	10/12
	Feeling of satisfaction/pride for teachers	P1, P2, P5, P9, P10, P11, P12	7/12

Almost all principals, except one, set long-term goals and act to achieve their vision, but only half involve teachers in choosing what that vision will be.

*“I haven’t found a vision so far... We don’t have a vision. The visions are gone. Maybe we are gathering... energy now. From a cocoon it will become a butterfly.” (P8)*

*“A European program... Not everyone [share my vision]. It requires a lot of work from me and from two or three people who embrace my own vision.” (P12)*

*“The vision has to do with the chance that children have to get the best possible education from the school and for the teachers to cooperate with each other as a team... We discuss the goals every year.” (P10)*

The majority tries to create a positive school climate through collaboration.

*“Yes, we collaborate. I have told them ‘whatever you want to do, I am by your side’. I pay particular attention to the climate... In other words, each colleague comes to school in a good mood, with joy, with a smile, and leaves the same way.” (P5)*

*“Our cooperation is amazing... everything is solved, I think, with a good conversation in a positive climate.” (P9)*

Almost half are proud of the teachers of their school and their cooperation with them and try to be role models by inspiring trust, respect, confidence, and preserving values, principals, and beliefs.

*“Something that I have worked hard for it in all my years, is to act as a role model and to inspire... Our relationship is great.” (P2)*

*“First of all, the principal is a role model. And from there on, teachers, in my school at least, follow your example and admire you and your values.” (P3)*

*“Trust and respect. It’s number one. That is, I trust the teachers and they trust me... I’m lucky in that direction. We didn’t have any particular friction with colleagues.” (P12)*

*“It’s important to inspire confidence... And for the teachers to believe that the principal is the one who at all times will help and protect them if anything happens... I am very pleased with my staff.” (P4)*

There were few who operated with determination and dynamism and even fewer who used persuasion to achieve their goals.

*“It took much work and persuasion from me to make my colleagues understand.” (P1)*

*“... convince others that what the principal says is useful for the school.” (P7)*

In the second dimension of transformational leadership, inspirational motivation, there was a lack of practices.

**Table 4:** Practices based on the inspirational motivation

Theme	Codes	Principals	Total
Inspirational motivation	Motivating teachers to take initiatives	P4, P7, P9, P12	4/12
	Encouraging volunteer work		0/12
	Motivation to set high goals		0/12
	Motivating reflection		0/12

No one encourages teachers to do voluntary work and teachers are not motivated to set high goals and reflect on their work and on school processes in general. Only four principals motivate teachers to take initiative.

*“I encourage them [the teachers] to take initiatives.” (P7)*

*“It is important for teachers to take initiatives. I try to give them motives to do so.” (P12)*



The same lack of practices emerged in the third dimension of the transformational model, intellectual stimulation [Table 5].

**Table 5:** Practices based on the intellectual stimulation

Theme	Codes	Principals	Total
<b>Intellectual stimulation</b>	Seeking solutions/innovations	P1, P9, P12	3/12
	Creating challenges to question old assumptions		0/12
	Promoting creative suggestions	P4	1/12
	Seeking different perspectives		0/12

No one tried to find new perspectives on issues that concern the school or create challenges for the staff to question old assumptions. Only three principals sought solutions and innovations on problems and one principal promoted creative suggestions by supporting teachers' choices as best he could.

*“Children should be encouraged to participate in innovative actions, to create a cooperative culture in schools... I try to focus on the professional and personal issues of the staff and I try to give solutions.” (P9)*

*“...We must let our imagination free to create. I embrace suggestions and new solutions that teachers suggest. I say “I’m with you, go for it”.” (P4)*

Many practices of principals are related to the fourth dimension of the transformational leadership model, the individual consideration.

**Table 6:** Practices based on individual consideration

Theme	Codes	Principals	Total
<b>Individual consideration</b>	Different needs/skills of teachers regarding professional/personal level	P1, P2, P5, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11	8/12
	Different needs of students/parents	P1, P3, P5, P6, P9, P10	6/12
	Flexibility/Adaptability	P1, P5, P6, P10	4/12
	Communication/Empathy/Active listening	All except P3, P6	10/12
	Conflict management	P2, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12	6/12
	Protection/Help/Support	P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9, P10	8/12
	Promoting professional development	P1, P2, P7, P9	4/12

Almost all principals used communication, empathy, or active listening to approach teachers and create a strong personal as well as professional relationship with them. Eight principals recognized that teachers have different needs and skills on a professional and personal level. So, they tried to protect, help and support them.

*“I give a lot of importance to everyone as a person. Everyone has their own needs and problems... I try to offer my help.” (P2)*

*“I let the teachers know that the principal is the one who will help and protect them at all times in whatever comes up.” (P4)*

*“Everyone has different problems in their family and everyone needs a different treatment. Not everyone has the same professional or family issues...” (P5)*

Half recognized that both students and parents need to be treated according to their own different needs and half acted to manage conflicts in a way they thought more appropriate.

*“Parents have their own personal issues and we have to show understanding. The same applies to students.” (P6)*

*“The secret is to try and calm down whoever is upset. This is something that I didn’t do at first. While trying to assert myself, I raised the tone of my voice even more.” (P7)*

Four principals promoted the professional development of teachers by facilitating them to participate in trainings. Finally, four principals faced the situations that arose with flexibility and tried to adapt to the circumstances.

*“I have sent one of the two vice principals of the school for training regarding school administration.” (P1)*

*“Actions for the professional development of teachers take place at our school. We organize seminars and workshops.” (P9)*

*“Being flexible... Be able to listen... good at communication, able to adjust plans according to goals, but still having some fixed principles, being a role model...” (P10)*

Based on the principals' answers, there were not many of their practices regarding transactional leadership or passive avoidant leadership.

**Table 7:** Practices based on transactional leadership and passive avoidant leadership

Themes	Codes	Principals	Total
<b>Transactional leadership</b>	Give rewards	P2	1/12
	Prevent mistakes/Give negative feedback		0/12
<b>Passive avoidant Leadership</b>	Avoid interaction/conflict	P6, P8	2/12
	Avoid to exercise authority/responsibility/solve problems		0/12

Only one principal gave rewards to teachers to entice them to complete their tasks and two principals avoided interacting with teachers and engaging in conflicts.

*"I refer to clear criteria, goals, and tasks with corresponding positive rewards for teachers."*  
(P2)

*"I used to try [interacting with teachers], but I saw that it's not worth it... It was like talking to a wall, my stomach hurt... I generally avoid getting into arguments... I avoid conflicts."* (P6)

*"I did not succeed; I did not find a strategy to interact with teachers... The mood is bad and we are sad all day."* (P8)

At this point, the presentation of the research results has been completed. The following are the discussion and conclusions of the research.

## 5. Discussion

In this chapter, the most important findings of the research will be discussed in comparison with the findings of the relevant literature.

Based on the first research question and the results presented above it emerged that the managerial model is dominant in principals' practices, as it was stated by other researchers and scholars (Katsikas & Therianos, 2007; OECD, 2011; Saitis, 2000). It is the only model that has 12/12 responses almost in every code. From the principals' practices, it emerged that they cannot bypass the hierarchy, as there are strict boundaries of authority, according also to Bush and Bell (2002). Principals remain attached to the regulations, and they follow strict adherence to legislation (Bush & Bell, 2002; Dimopoulos et al., 2015). Their practices are influenced by bureaucracy and more generally by the traditional way of administration (Dimopoulos et al., 2015). The principals were inclined to perform more intensely as directors and facilitators, neglecting the coordinator and mentor roles, because they were too busy taking care of administrative and technical issues, as it emerged also in the research of Trivellas and Akrivoula (2008). As Wicoksono (2022) argued one of the main duties of principals was supervision, as well as the principles of our research which took upon discipline issues of students. However, in contrast to Wicoksono's research (2022), which showed that the principals undertake the evaluation in the school unit, in the present research no principal dealt with the teachers' evaluation, because the relevant law had not yet been passed when conducting the survey.

Regarding the second research question, it emerged that the instructional leadership model was not fully implemented. The "narrow" version emerged to be more prevalent in principals' practices compared to the "broad" version. That was the reason why instructional leadership has been criticized for being primarily concerned with teaching rather than learning (Bush & Glover, 2014). The principals of our research

provided educational resources to enhance teaching and encouraged teachers to use student-centered teaching practices, as shown also in the research of Shava and Heystek (2021). There have been a few principals whose practices were related to monitoring student progress, as emerged also, to a higher extent, from the research of Hallinger and Hosseingholizadeh (2019). There were very few principals who provided opportunities at the school level for updating teaching practices, in contrast with the research of Shava and Heystek (2021). While in literature the practices of principals who try to build teams of teachers were increased (Shava & Heystek, 2021), this practice is not implemented by the principals of our research. The inspection and evaluation of teaching are practices that an instructional leader carries them out (Hallinger and Murphy, 1985, as cited in Sheppard, 1996, p. 327). However, our results indicate that those practices were not chosen from the principles of our research. Finally, there were no practices emerged regarding the use of smart educational technologies in teaching in the present study, in contrast to the literature (Hallinger & Hosseingholizadeh, 2019).

Regarding the third research question, it was shown that the model of transformational leadership is not implemented in its full version. There were increased practices involving idealized influence, such as cultivating trust, respect, and values to teachers, creating a positive school climate, as also presented in the literature (Browning, 2014; Dhungana, 2020; Yang, 2014), and creating cooperative relationships (Hallinger & Hosseingholizadeh, 2019). There is, though, a difference between the principles' practices about school vision in our research and the literature. Our results show that principals set goals and had a vision, but only half cultivated a shared vision and a mission involving teachers in the decision-making process, while in the literature principals cultivated a common vision (Browning, 2014; Dhungana, 2020; Khumalo, 2019; Shava & Heystek, 2021; Yang, 2014).

The principals in the present research did not act to provide inspirational motivation to school members, as did principals in the research of Shava and Heystek (2021). Whereas, contrary to the research of Trivellas and Akrivoula (2008), in the present research the principals did not act as innovators, because they did not seek intellectual stimulation for themselves and for the members of their schools. According to the results of our research, there were high scores regarding individual consideration, especially in communication and active listening, practices that were emerged also in the research of Browning (2014).

As in the literature (Shava & Heystek, 2021), the principals expressed individualized interest and treated teachers as individuals with different needs, creating a supportive and protective environment, and, unlike other research, parents and children were also approached by principals and treated as school members with different needs. According to our results, less than half of the principals promoted teachers' professional development, while in the research of Khumalo (2019) and Wicoksono (2022), there were practices to support teachers' professional development and satisfaction.

In the present research, the vast majority of principals did not act according to the transactional or the passive avoidant leadership model, while in the research of Onorato

(2013) the percentages of these two models were high and in the research of Dimopoulos and colleagues (2015) the principals' practices were affected by transactional leadership model.

Finally, as far as the last research question, it emerged that, although the models of instructional and transformational leadership were not applied in all their dimensions, nevertheless, there was a significant movement towards them and an integrated model emerged, as in other researches in the literature (Day et al., 2016; Dimopoulos et al., 2015; Marks & Printy, 2003). Indeed, as it was seen from the results of our research, the principals mentioned some practices related to the "narrow" version of instructional leadership in combination with practices of transformational leadership for idealized influence and individual consideration. This combination is the aim of modern leadership theories, as presented in the literature, and the principals of our research tend to partially implement it.

## 6. Conclusion

The purpose of our research was to study the practices of primary school principals of Thessaloniki from the point of view of managerial, instructional, and full-range transformational models. The sample of our research was 12 primary school principals from Thessaloniki. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Summarizing our results, it can be stated that based on the principals' answers it appeared that managerial leadership and two of the four dimensions of transformational leadership, idealized influence and individualized interest, were dominant. Regarding instructional leadership, there were chosen quite a few practices from the "narrow" version, while from the "broad" version there were almost none. Practices concerning the other two dimensions of transformational leadership, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation, transactional and passive-avoidant leadership were very few to zero.

According to the results, principals continue to adopt the managerial model of leadership, as was done in the past in Greece. There is a lack of principal practices related to half dimensions of modern leadership models, which are the idealized influence and the individual consideration. However, due to the other half which displayed many practices, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation, we can conclude that there is a shift to principals' practices towards instructional and transformational models, as an integrated leadership model, which we believe is progress, but it's not enough. If the aim is to have principals capable of meeting the modern demands of leading a school, then the Ministry of Education is important to design and implement training programs, after conducting an investigation of training needs, for current principals, but also for those who are going to fill a corresponding position, in order to acquire more knowledge and skills concerning leadership and management, so they can be more proficient.

According to the discussion, there are two important issues that arose. The first is related to the managerial and transformational model and has to do with the non-implementation of teachers' evaluation in Greece. This does not allow principals and teachers to seek revision of their practices and does not allow schools to focus on

improvement, as is done in schools abroad. The second is related to the instructional model and has to do with the legal framework in Greece that does not allow children to bring smart devices to school. Thus, there is no way to enrich teaching, improve its quality, and achieve easy learning through certain technology.

### **6.1 The contribution of the research**

The contribution of the present research lies in the fact that it contributes to the field of theory, due to the use of the hybrid thematic analysis, and to the field of practical implementations, because it highlights the topics that should be covered by future principal trainings. The present research utilized the hybrid thematic analysis as a technique for organizing and analyzing the data, a technique not so widespread in the Greek literature. The choice of this specific technique can be an example for future qualitative research. The results and the conclusions of the present research led us to point out that there is a need to implement training based on modern leadership theories for the preparation of principals regarding leadership issues. The present study can contribute practically to the planning of such training, which should be conducted by the Greek Ministry of Education. This kind of training should focus on the dimensions of instructional and transformational leadership that were not linked with the principals' practices but also on those who had minimal extent.

### **6.2 Limitations of the research**

The generalization of results is not the aim of our research, as it is subject to specific limitations. One of them is the sample size, which is small and therefore cannot be considered representative of the population. One characteristic of the sample, which served as a criterion for principals' participation in the study, was the type of school unit in which the principals worked. Principals of pilot schools, experimental schools, and schools for special needs were not included, which leads to another limitation. Furthermore, there was no triangulation of data. Data was collected only from principals and not from other members of the school units where the principals worked.

### **6.3 Future research**

The above limitations are at the same time the trigger for further research. In the future, qualitative research could be conducted with a larger sample of participants, principals of primary education in Thessaloniki, which would be representative, as it would also include principals from the categories of schools that were not included in this study. Also, a survey could be conducted that would combine mixed research methods and draw data from different sources. Triangulation leads to more reliable results.

### **Note**

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### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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## Appendices

**Table 8: Demographics**

Sample	Gender	Age	Work experience	Work experience as principal	Studies	Postgraduate studies (PS)
P1	Male	51-55	26-30	5-9	DGR, D, 2 <sup>nd</sup> DGR, PS	New technologies & history
P2	Female	51-55	26-30	10-14	DGR, D, PS	Didactic of History
P3	Male	>60	36-40	20-24	DGR	
P4	Male	56-60	31-35	0-4	DGR, PS	School administration
P5	Male	56-60	26-30	5-9	DGR	
P6	Male	56-60	31-35	10-14	DGR, D, PS	Special education
P7	Female	51-55	26-30	10-14	DGR, D, 2 <sup>nd</sup> DGR, PS	School administration
P8	Female	56-60	31-35	20-24	DGR, D, PS	Life-long learning & Adult education
P9	Male	51-55	26-30	10-14	DGR, PS	School administration
P10	Male	51-55	26-30	0-4	DGR, D, PS	School pedagogy
P11	Male	56-60	31-35	0-4	DGR	
P12	Female	56-60	26-30	5-9	DGR, D, 2 <sup>nd</sup> DGR, PS	Life-long learning & Adult education

**Note:** (2<sup>nd</sup>) DGR: (2<sup>nd</sup>) Degree, D: Didaskaleio, Teachers Training Institution in Greece with two years duration. It existed until the end of '80.

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