SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: LITHUANIAN CASE IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE*

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Abstract. *This paper examines the links between student learning and school leadership focusing on Lithuania in comparative perspective. Different aspects of school leadership areas are being outlined, but after a more thorough analysis of the educational effectiveness perspective, it seems that the direct link between principal and student achievement is not that clear. In order to explain this, we further analysed the role which school autonomy plays in effective leadership and found that different countries chose different levels of power distribution. After revealing diversity in meta-analyses and reviews about the existing effect sizes of school decentralization we looked into different tasks on which school heads spend their time, and noticed that instructional leadership is most effective in adding value to student achievement. What exactly counts as instructional leadership is debated and may change depending on context. The presumption that leadership and school effectiveness are related, could be valid only if school accountability and autonomy particularities are taken into account, therefore the reforms in selection, recruitment and training of school heads could be expected to drive effectiveness of education systems only as far as the right balance of the three (accountability, autonomy, leadership) are found.*

Keywords: *school leadership, educational effectiveness, principals, management, school heads, autonomy, professionalism.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Development of Lithuania and other post-socialist countries, after the collapse of the communist regimes, revealed the need to modernize the systems of education. In order to fully realize the human potential during the period of transition, a necessity of effective and efficient educational system became evident. One of the key aims of the reforms became the optimal use of resources in order to achieve highest equity and quality of schooling. What is the relationship between student achievement and effective school head work? While the value added studies of school effectiveness identifies the principal as a key actor, fostering effectiveness, this article highlights that school principals' role in improving student achievements is context dependent and factors, such as school accountability, autonomy and leadership style must be considered. Article also analyses the professionalism of school principals, namely, qualification requirements and competencies.

The methods of this paper are based on the review of scientific literature and analysis of different research, national and international surveys and meta-analysis. Analysis is enriched with comparisons of Lithuanian data in the context of other countries.

2. RESEARCH ON RELATIONSHIP OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND EFFECTIVENESS

Figuring out the nuts and bolts of effective schools is the main concern of educational effectiveness research (EER) theorists. Trying to understand what makes a "good" school and how to make more schools "good" (Reynolds et al, 2014) theorists identify the variables and their significance for educational outcomes. Not focusing solely on pedagogical work at the classroom level, but seeing classes as nested in schools, managed by principals, researchers direct their attention, among other factors, to the role school principals play in the effectiveness of schools. Operating within production model of education and focusing on student achievements as a fixed output measure, the value added studies of school leaders could benefit from further theorization.

Different elements of school leadership and effectiveness have been the focus of scientists for quite some time. As noted by Chapman, et al. (2016) the relationship between leadership and educational effectiveness has been firmly set by numerous studies (Hallinger & Heck, 1998, 2010; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999; Leithwood, Steinbach, & Jantzi, 2002; Sammons et al., 1996). Leadership has been studied in schools at different phases of development, different national and socio-economic contexts (Chapman, 2004; Chapman & Harris, 2004; Mongon & Chapman, 2012). Other authors (Higham, Hopkins, & Matthews, 2009) focused on leadership at different educational levels, distinguishing "system leadership", "departmental leadership" (Harris, Jamieson, & Russ, 1996; Sammons, Thomas, & Mortimore, 1997) and "teacher leadership" (Harris & Muijs, 2004; Leiberman & Miller, 2004). "Distributed leadership" was studied by Day & Sammons (2013) and Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999). Hallinger (2003) studied the significance of context in which the leadership is exercised. Chapman & Hadfield (2010), Hadfield & Jopling (2012), Muijs, West, & Ainscow (2010) have analyzed networking, as practiced by school principals (Chapman, et al., 2016). Moreover, strong claims, such as

"successful heads improve pupil outcomes" (Day, et al. 2010, p. 1) have grabbed the attention of theorists pushing them to analyse the links between leadership and student outcomes.

Recognition that leadership is significant to the performance of school and outcomes achieved by pupils (Bush, 2012) increased attention to effective principalship. Findings of Reynolds & Teddlie (2000) imply that leadership is clearly identified in school effectiveness studies as a key characteristic of effectiveness. A synthesis of meta-analyses by Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe (2008) highlights how important school leaders' participation and promotion of teacher development is to increasing students' academic achievement. Day et al. (2010) emphasize this finding by stating that: "head teachers are perceived to be the main source of leadership by key school staff. Their educational values, reflective strategies and leadership practices shape the internal processes and pedagogies that result in improved pupil outcomes" (p. 3).

The strong emphasis on school leaders viewed as crucial in creating the conditions for effective student learning as discussed by Leithwood et al. (2004), who suggest that: "of all the factors that contribute to what students learn at school, present evidence led us to the conclusion that leadership is second in strength only to classroom instruction" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p.70). Further, Leithwood et al. (2004), emphasize that schools in challenging circumstances benefit the most from effective leadership.

However, the relationship between school leadership and pupil learning is not that explicit. For example, results of a well-established value-added study by Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin (2012) reveal that school leadership indeed can be a facilitator of student achievements, especially in low socio-economic and cultural (SEC) status neighbourhood schools, but the effect size is rather small: "A principal in the top 16 percent of the quality distribution (i.e., one standard deviation above average) will lead annually to student gains that are 0.05 s. d. or more higher than average for all students in the school" (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2012, p. 27).

Similarities can be found in recent meta-analysis of 332 articles on school effectiveness and teaching effectiveness by Scheerens (2016). The synthesized findings of empirical educational effectiveness research have highlighted the particular variable effect size on student achievement outcomes, including school principals' effect. The author described educational leadership as a "weak" school-level variable, as it was found only in 8 % of all cases with significant relationships. Discussing the results, Scheerens (2016, p. 184) recognized that two variables – monitoring and educational leadership, emerged as having very small average effect sizes. This is confirmed by a similar effect size, which has been reported in an earlier study (Scheerens and Bosker, 1997). The author tries to explain it with a possibility of "variables that mediate the effect of leadership" (Scheerens, 2016, p. 184).

Comparing an earlier review (Scheerens, 2007), with the meta-analyses by Seidel and Shavelson (2007) and Hattie (2009), Scheerens (2016) points out that school leadership and staff cooperation are usually considered as important variables, but highlights that the quantitative evidence doesn't support the claim. To illustrate this, author ranks the average effect sizes of school effectiveness variables and demonstrates that *opportunity to learn* and *instruction time* ranks at the top while *school leadership* and *cooperation* at the bottom of

the table of all three reviews/meta-analyses (Scheerens, 2016, p. 245).

Most recent digest of meta-analyses dedicated to school principals as correlation between school leadership and student achievement conducted by Scheerens (2016) examines ten studies and highlights the correlation size found, i.e. Scheerens and Bosker (1997) *r*=0.04, Witziers et al. (2003) *r*=0.02, Marzano et al. (2005) *r*=0.25, Chin (2007) r= 0.49, Robinson et al. (2008) (1) *r*=0.25, Robinson et al. (2008) (2) *r*=0.06 Creemers and Kyriakides (2008) *r*=0.07, Hattie (2009) r=0.18, Scheerens et al. (2007) *r*=0.06 and Scheerens (2012) *r*=0.06 and concludes that majority of effect sizes (correlation) are low to very low. Scheerens recapitulates that the mean effect size rendered in this meta-analysis varies from *r*= 0.02 to 0.47 remaining below educational significance (*r* = 0.10 could be considered as educationally relevant) (Scheerens, 2016, p. 248).

To what extent educational systems provide opportunities of practicing effective leadership and decision-making on a school level? In other words, how autonomous are the schools? Sahlberg (2015) notes that one of the gateways to success of the Finnish schools is building of trust in schools and strengthening professional responsibility among teachers and leaders. In Finland, people trust their teachers and principals more than is the case in many other countries. Sahlberg (2015) assumes that this might be one of the reasons why Finland remains one of the world top performers in education. In order to make schools effective and facilitate student achievements, principals should have sufficient decision-making powers in order to exercise effective leadership.

3. LITHUANIA IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: SCHOOL AUTONOMY AND PRINCIPAL EMPOWERMENT

The question of autonomy and trust is especially important for former socialist countries, where, during the dominance of totalitarian regimes, decision-making powers at school level were strictly limited. After the collapse of the socialist system, all the former socialist countries have undertaken reforms in order to liberate the previously highly centralized education systems from strong state regulation and tight external control. School management bodies, including both school principals and self-governing school boards, gained more powers in leading their educational institutions. However, the pace of reforms and the level of managerial empowerment in former socialist countries were different. Countries with identical, or at least, very similar structures started moving to different directions, some of them gradually decentralizing their systems (Central and South Eastern Europe) and some retaining a more or less centralized state control (Central Asia). Choice of different trajectories of educational development was unexpected, as all the countries started their reforms at more or less the same time (beginning of the 90s) and received practically the same recipes from Western educational experts. One of the assumptions is that each country tried to implement reforms in its own specific way, which depended on the previous historical, cultural and religious heritage, mentality of the people, interpretation of current global tendencies in education, and many other factors.

A comparative school governance study, which included ten post-socialist countries– Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia,

Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Russia – found that the ongoing process of decentralization in many participating countries leads to a slow distribution of responsibilities. Schools in the post-socialist region remain largely dependent on provincial or regional education offices and, thus, still have little autonomy (Gabršček, 2016). The study showed that school management in participating countries experiences different levels of distribution of power. Lithuania seems to be one of the countries which granted the school principals and the school boards more decision-making powers than most of the other countries, which participated in the study. For example, Lithuania is the only country, where schools are not controlled by school inspectorate. Lithuania is also the only country, where members of the school boards are solely the representatives of school community – teachers, parents and students – and have no external members delegated by local government or central educational authority. Lithuania is, in addition, the only country, where a school principal can't be dismissed solely on the grounds of poor performance, while in Russia, for example, any head of an educational institution can be dismissed without explanation. The standard argument is that senior authorities have lost confidence in school principals. Recently, the five-year work contract for school principals is being introduced in Lithuania, in order to install a mechanism of replacing school principals in case of poor performance.

Since quantitative data about the importance of school leadership for student academic performance contradict theoretical expectations, leaving policy makers with more questions than answers, educational effectiveness researchers dig deeper by including system level variables, such as school autonomy into the equation. After all, there is only so much school principals can do in a highly centralized schooling system. However, the evidence presented by EER on autonomy and decentralization also show mixed results. Referring to more than twenty studies, Scheerens (2016) states that, counterintuitive to the popular belief, evidence does not support the claim, related to principal autonomy, as leading to higher student achievement.

The mixed results, stated by Scheerens (2016), might be attributed to the "experiences of new bureaucracy at lower administrative levels" (p. 150), or, as in the case of Netherlands, to refusal of external evaluations and opposition to governmental monitoring. Meanwhile, Wößmann (2003) points out that the exclusive school authority to hire the teachers and determine their salaries shows significant impact on student outcomes. Similarly, empirical research by Branch, Hanushek and Rivkin (2012) points out that controlling the quality of teachers is the key to improving student achievement. At this point, it is clear that both concepts (school leadership, as well as school autonomy) are, indeed, multidimensional and complex, with different elements being interdependent and interrelated. Attempts to explain this relationship indicate that a high level of school autonomy, including the curriculum autonomy, combined with the central control of outcomes, might be related to better student outcomes (OECD, 2014). Adding to that, Schleicher (2018) warns: *"The data from PISA suggest that, once the state has set clear expectations for students, school autonomy in defining the details of the curriculum and assessments is positively related to the system's overall performance"* (p. 109). The inconsistency in meta-analyses and studies about the factual effect sizes of principal leadership in different school autonomy settings leaves policy makers searching for the right balance of

school accountability, autonomy and the role of principals. The optimal combination of system level policies regarding school autonomy and accountability empower school leaders to facilitate school effectiveness remains an object of further research.

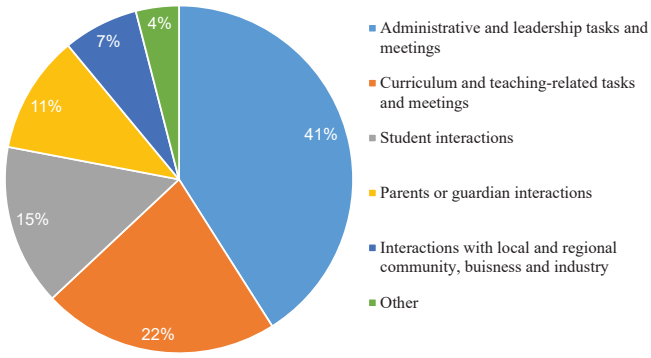
Chapman et al. (2016) indicate that different authors, referring to the type of leadership, influencing student outcomes, use a variety of terms, including "instructional leadership", "pedagogical leadership", "educational leadership" or "leadership for learning" (p. 332). EER theorists adopt the terms of instructional and educational leadership and use them interchangeably, as they both seem to put forward the idea of facilitating the process of teaching and learning in schools as the primary role of principals (Scheerens, 2016).

The main significant aspects of instructional/educational leadership have been outlined as follows: "time devoted to educational versus administrative tasks; the head teacher as a meta-controller of classroom processes; a quality controller of classroom teachers; facilitator of work-oriented teams; and as an initiator and facilitator of staff professionalization" (Scheerens, 2016, p. 82). Similar remarks can be observed in an OECD report, stating that, in systems with a high level of teacher and principal collaboration, where "school principals shape teachers' professional development, define the school's educational goals, ensure that instructional practice is directed towards achieving these goals, suggest modifications to improve teaching practices, and help solve problems that may arise within the classroom or among teachers" (OECD, 2013, p. 139), the relationship of autonomy to student performance is visible. This relationship cannot be identified in educational systems, where principals play an administrative role, managing staff, financial and material resources, planning the maintenance of school buildings (OECD 2013, 2015).

Different proportions of principals' time spent on tasks not related to curriculum, instructional issues as illustrated in Figure 1 in TALIS[1] countries could frame principals more as administrators rather than educational leaders.

Similar situation, described by Alfirević, Burušić, Pavičić and Relja (2016), can be observed in Croatia, although it is almost

Figure 1. Principals' working time: proportion of time spent on tasks



Source: Prepared by authors, based on OECD TALIS (2013)

[1] *"OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) asks teachers and school leaders about working conditions and learning environments at their schools".* Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/education/talis/.

identical to Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Slovenia. In those countries, school principals are overburdened by administrative tasks: "only 20% of their time left for expert pedagogical activities, while the remaining time is spent on performance of administrative tasks that frequently exert hardly any influence on the efficiency of their schools" (p. 93).

However, the administrative and managerial focus of principals are not necessarily ineffective. In an effort to redefine the instructional leadership definition, Horng and Loeb (2010) surveyed 800 principals, 1,100 assistant principals, and 32,000 teachers in the US and revealed that schools with principals, who have strong organizational managerial skills are more likely to demonstrate student achievement improvement. These principals rather develop the organizational structures for improved instruction, instead of directly coaching teachers, or spending time in the classrooms. They are commited to "hiring and supporting staff, allocating budgets and resources, and maintaining positive working and learning environments"(Horng & Loeb, 2010, p. 66). It could be hypothesized, that not only the level of autonomy, but also the time principals spend on particular tasks have a different value added in different contexts.

In our secondary analysis of PISA[2] 2012 data on school management, we compared the educational systems of the Baltic States with those of Finland, Germany and United Kingdom (UK), representing the Scandinavian, Continental and Anglo-Saxon education systems (Želvys, Jakaitienė & Stumbrienė, 2017). Results show that schools in the Baltic countries have a relatively high level of autonomy. In the domain of school autonomy, the Baltic States show results, which are closest to those of the UK. In particular, Lithuania is the closest to the UK, judging by the level of self-governance. In the approach towards assessment, there are evident similarities among Lithuania, Latvia and the UK. Although Lithuania, Latvia and the UK demonstrate the highest indicators of using assessment to evaluate schools and teachers, when compared with countries representing the Scandinavian and continental educational models, it does not result in better student learning outcomes, as shown by national and international surveys.

Judging by the results of the survey, the level of autonomy of schools in Lithuania is even higher than in Finland. However, differently from Finland, Lithuania places a strong emphasis on assessment of student achievements and results-oriented quality assurance systems. Schools in the UK have more responsibility for resource allocation than other countries in comparison. It is interesting to note that the level of responsibility of Lithuanian schools has increased significantly since 2006 and approached the UK average. The PISA 2015 data reflect a similar tendency (Table 1). For example, the highest responsibility for allocating recourses undertaken by principals can be observed in Lithuania, while in Croatia national authorities have the highest leverage in allocating school resources.

It should be concluded that the effect of school principals' on student achievement, as measured in value added effectiveness

[2] "*PISA is the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment. Every three years it tests 15-year-old students from all over the world in reading, mathematics and science. The tests are designed to gauge how well the students' master key subjects in order to be prepared for real-life situations in the adult world. PISA publishes the results of the test a year after the students are tested to help governments shape their education policies. PISA cycles are referred to by the year in which the students were tested. Therefore, PISA 2000 means the students were tested in the year 2000, PISA 2003, in the year 2003 and so forth*". Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/pisa/.

Table 1. Distribution of responsibility for school resources (in %)

	Principal	Teachers	School board	Local/ regional authority	National authority	Principal + teachers
Croatia	25.1	2.0	26.6	8.8	37.5	27.1
Latvia	60.0	5.1	9.9	9.3	15.7	65.1
Estonia	59.8	4.2	8.4	11.2	16.5	64.0
Germany	16,3	3,7	7,1	72.9	0	20.0
Lithuania	**60.7**	**3.3**	**15.7**	**8.6**	**11.7**	**63.9**
Poland	50.2	1.3	0.9	24.8	22.8	51.5
Finland	45.9	2.0	2.4	32.8	17.0	47.8
United Kingdom	56.0	3.9	30.0	5.2	4.8	59.9
OECD average	39.0	2.5	12.3	23.1	23.1	41.5

Source: Prepared by authors, based on OECD PISA, 2015)

research, is not a direct one. While certain contexts, such as the low socio-economic (SEC) status of neighbourhood, or a combination of school autonomy and accountability, might empower principals to facilitate higher student outcomes (e.g. as measured by international student assessments), in the Lithuanian case, this seems to be an exception, rather than the rule. This raises the question of principal professionalism.

4. PROFESSIONALISM OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS: QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES

Despite the fact that Lithuanian schools have a relatively high level of autonomy, the professionalism of school principals remains one of the unsolved problems in national education policy. In particular, there is no obligation for school principals to acquire any kind of formal education in school management. There are numerous long and short term courses for heads of schools, including the national project "Time for Leaders"[3], which undoubtedly contributes to principals as well as future principals 'professionalism'.

Principles of the project "Time for Leaders":

- Everyone can be a leader, not only a head or a manager.
- Interrelation of all activities.
- Representatives from all levels (national, municipal, school) are involved in all activities.
- The critical mass of leaders in education is being increased at all levels.
- The idea of leadership for learning is gaining strength at all levels of the system: education community members at all levels combine their forces and efforts for improvement of every student.

[3] http://www.lyderiulaikas.smm.lt/en/about-the-project

- Traditions of cooperation and consultation are being formed by means of regular educational leadership forums and public consultations.
- Motivated municipalities and schools create unique leadership development models (decentralization).
- Training of consultants is combined with immediate practical application of acquired skills: consultants go to practice in selected municipalities and schools without delay.
- Over 300 education specialists, representing the national, municipal and local levels have been involved in formal and non-formal studies, through the process of developing leadership competences.
- Legislation is being studied and analysed, with the aim of identifying the regulation, impeding the improvement.
- Experience gained by people and institutions involved is recorded in a range of forms and is disseminated in the virtual environment of the Project.

The project "Time for Leaders" foresees participation of representatives from all levels (national, municipal, school):

- Approximately 20 people from each municipality (altogether 60 municipalities) study together for 22 months and prepare/implement a change project, which is unique for each municipality.
- 360 existing and potential principals have studied in the formal Educational Leadership Programme for 1.5 years to obtain the Master's Degree in management.
- 900 representatives from all education levels have studied in the informal Programme in Educational Leadership (consisting of 5 modules), with 48 contact hours and 200 non-contact hours.
- Different programs for other target groups were implemented, with duration of two, six, 12 or even more days.

However, this cannot substitute the systematic training, which can be obtained by the Masters in Education Management and Leadership program. A study of the effectiveness of management of Lithuanian schools, implemented as a part of the "Time for Leaders" project, indicates that one of the means of quality assurance and school improvement is the policy of liberalization and increasing autonomy of schools (Lyderių laikas, 2010; Valuckienė, Balčiūnas, Katiliūtė, Simonaitienė, Stanikūnienė, 2015). The study also concludes that autonomy just creates conditions for effective leadership, but doesn't ensure high quality of schooling. In Lithuania, a series of steps were undertaken by educational authorities in this direction; however, the researchers did not observe the signs of purposeful implementation of leadership models. The EU education policy, on the contrary, urges the member states to focus more attention on selection and training of school principals.

The Council of the European Union has released recommendations to the EU Member States, inviting them to review responsibilities of principals and principal support. The Council of the European Union recommends principals to focus on creation of integral environment for teaching and learning, higher *quality of school performance,* and development of leadership competences (in particular

competences of leadership for learning). A scheme to support school management should be implemented, as to: ensure availability of and access to qualification improvement programmes for potential candidates; a mandatory minimal level of skills and capacities; mentoring of newly appointed principals; qualification improvement programmes developed according to proficiency developed by principals and practical principals' activities aimed at manifestation of competences, and evaluation (European Council, 2009).

Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom (2009the available evidence about the size and nature of the effects of successful leadership on student learning justifies two important claims: 1. Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school. While evidence about leadership effects on student learning can be confusing to interpret, much of the existing research actually underestimates its effects. The total (direct and indirect) reaffirm the conclusion that, as a cost-effective approach to successful school improvement, policy-makers should consider improvement of school principal recruitment, training, evaluation and ongoing development. Professional improvement of school leaders in Lithuania is of rather sporadic nature. Thus, the need for the quality culture, based on self-evaluation and analysis, that ensures the presence of coherence among self-governance, social partnership and leadership of principals, has been emphasized by National Education Strategy 2013–2022 (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas, 2013).

An overview of principal professionalization status by Alfirević, Burušić, Pavičić and Relja (2016) reiterates that importance of principal licensing is increasing worldwide. Institutions responsible for principal licensing and training have been established in the United Kingdom, Norway, US, etc, including an increasing number of EU member states, which prescribe principal vocational training before and after the appointment. While being mandatory in Italy and Slovenia, Albania, Serbia, Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria are on their way to adopt similar regulations (Alfirević, Burušić, Pavičić, & Relja, 2016, p. 89). Confirming significance of vocational training for principal effectiveness in Croatian primary schools, authors show that principals who use various qualification improvement activities (workshops, seminars etc.), related to management and other administrative topics, sufficiently meet the requirements of their schools' stakeholders (the community, governing bodies, etc.) and recommend implementation of national policy for compulsory principal training and certification (Alfirević et al., 2011)and thus enhance the performance of schools, conceptualized as nonprofit organizations. An indicative sample of primary school principals, selected by the Croatian primary school principal association, were surveyed in order to establish the effects of available institutional support. The low principals' orientation toward multiple relevant stakeholders has been established, although two different patterns have been identified - one oriented toward the individual actors (students, staff, parents.

The EU Member States (European Commission, 2013) apply different general requirements for selection of school principals: work experience in the system of education, experience gained in the field of administration (management), and completed training courses in education management. For instance, if a candidate for principalship in an Estonian school has graduated from an establishment of higher

education in the field of educational sciences and has a service record of at least three years, the applicant is required to attend and complete a 160–240 hour course in management. If he/she is a graduate from an establishment of higher education in a field different than educational sciences and has a service record of at least five years, the applicant is required to attend and complete a 240 hour course in pedagogy and a 160–240 hour course in management. In some countries (Slovenia, Germany, Italy and France), candidates are required to take special examinations. In England, one is required to have respective service record in the field of education, as well as knowledge and skills in management. However, the main criterion for selection of a potential candidate is the obtained national professional principal qualification. The time needed to obtain such a qualification varies from four to twelve months, depending on the administrative service record of a candidate. In Cyprus, candidates aspiring to take the position of a principal are required to complete a one-year course in school administration. As described by Orr et al. (2018) initial principal licensing in the US is also based on candidate's experience (specific number of years of teaching, advanced graduate preparation etc.), while some states also require candidates to complete a leadership exam (national or a state-designed), or have even introduced a pre-service multi-task performance tests to determine potential school heads' competences (Orr et al., 2018).

In some countries, a defined term of principalship is fixed by the principal's employment contract, while in other countries, such a term is not fixed (for instance, in Austria, Belgium, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany, New Zealand, school heads sign employment contracts for an indefinite period, while in Denmark, Finland, England, Hungary, Norway, Portugal, Scotland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, they sign fixed-term employment contracts). Sometimes a probationary period is set for a candidate. In many countries, employment contracts are renewed on a regular basis (European Commission, 2013).

In most countries-members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), performance of school heads is evaluated by taking into account quality of their performance, student progress and learning outcomes, successful implementation of curricula and attainment of financial goals at school, as well as feedback from students, their parents and teachers and their attitude towards their school heads. The school board, external evaluators, municipal and government bodies are usually involved into the process of evaluation of the school head. In some countries (for instance, in England, New Zealand and Slovenia), the evaluation procedure of school heads takes place on an annual basis, while in other countries (for instance, in Belgium, Spain, Sweden and Germany), it is arranged every three or four years, or every six-seven years (like in Latvia). In certain countries (for instance, in Hungary, Ireland, Poland and Denmark) the evaluation procedure is organized when required. School principals, whose performance is evaluated positively, usually get salary raises; they are provided with possibilities for professional improvement, besides, those activity areas that might be improved are identified based on personal performance evaluation. Sanctions for non-fulfilment of activity plans are also applied, such as remuneration cuts, unavailability of cost-free professional development or dismissal (Pont, Nusche, Moorman, 2008, OECD, 2008). As an example of harsh non-fulfilment sanctions revealed by Alfirević,

Table 2. Management competencies and evaluation in Lithuania

Management competences	**Average evaluation scores** (5-point scale: 4 – excellent, 3 – higher than average, 2 – satisfactory, 1 – poor, and N – unacceptable)
Personal efficacy	3.02
Strategic thinking and change management	2.41
Learning to learn	3.04
Management of human resources	2.49
Educational and learning process management	2.46

Source: Prepared by authors, based on NASE data (2018).

Burušić, Pavičić, & Relja (2016) point out to the US 2002 *No Child Left Behind Act* "which prescribes legal responsibility for principals whose students fail to achieve expected results (including limitations to authorisation for school leadership or termination of employment), with the possibility of school closure" (p. 89).

Upon selection of school principals, their performance is being evaluated on a regular basis, regardless of the actual approach used. For instance, in Germany, a principal is evaluated after the expired probationary period; in Denmark, a two-year probationary period is fixed; in Lithuania, evaluations take place in the fifth year of principalship (European Commission, 2013).

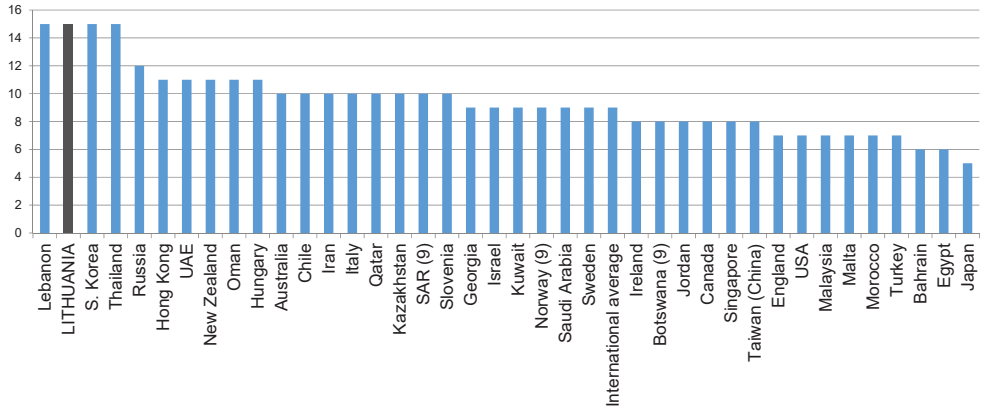
Usually, the following three school principals' qualification improvement types are discerned: training for future principals, an induction course for the already appointed principals and a qualification improvement course for principals with school management experience. For instance, in Belgium and South Korea, the training course for future principals is of special significance. In Chile and the Netherlands, significant attention is paid to qualification improvement of experienced principals, while in France, Finland, England and other countries, all the three types of qualification improvement programmes are implemented (Pont, Nusche, Moorman, 2008).

Between 30 July 2015 and 6 February 2018, competencies of 1,001 candidates, aspiring to take the position of a school principal were evaluated by the Lithuanian National Agency for School Evaluation (NASE). Management competencies were assessed on a scale, consisting of five points. Only 298 applicants (30 percent) met the requirement of the "higher than average" level. All of the 1,001 candidates achieved the highest evaluation in personal efficacy competence, while the poorest level of competence was strategic thinking and change management (Table 2).

The shortage of competent school heads becomes an increasingly challenging problem in countries all over the world. Many studies (Pounder & Merrill, 2001, Black, Martin, & Danzig, 2014, Doyle & Locke, 2014, Mallory et al., 2017) indicate that gifted candidates are not being attracted to school principalship. University programmes for training future principals are excessively theoretical, professional development of school heads and updating of their competences is often irregular and lacks coordination. As a result, the current pool of efficient school principals is growing old. Oldest principals are in lower secondary level (ISCED 2), especially in

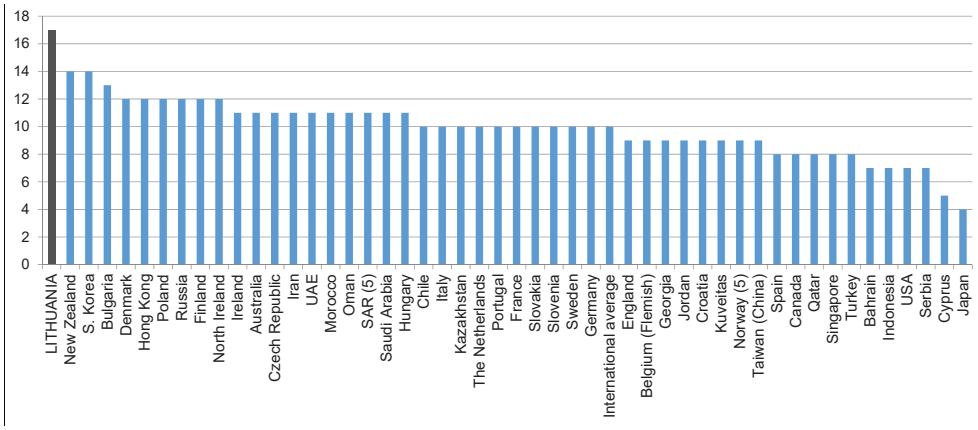
Lebanon, Lithuania, S. Korea, Thailand (Figure 2), while oldest school heads in primary school level (ISCED 1) are in Lithuania, New Zealand, S. Korea, and Bulgaria (Figure 3). While there is no sufficient appropriate succession, the demand for gifted school heads is especially strong in rural areas (Petzko et al., 2002). With research showing that low performing schools are being greatly underprivileged in recruiting principals (Winter & Morgenthal, 2002), complementing this "value added" studies concludes that "more effective leaders have a higher probability of exiting high poverty schools" (Branch et al., 2012).

Figure 2. Average experience of school heads by years of service (Grade 8)



Source: Prepared by Dukynaitė & Stundža, based on IEA TIMSS4 2015 data.

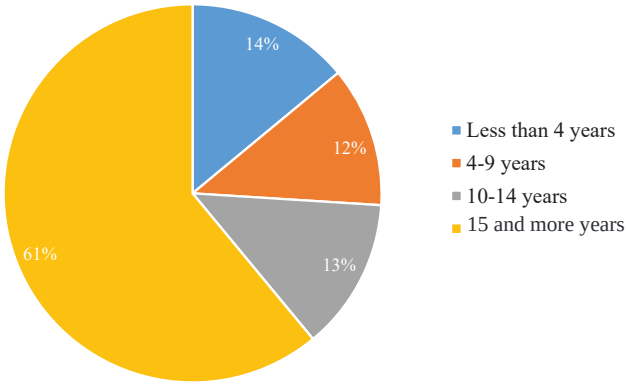
Figure 3. Average experience of school heads by years of service (Grade 4)



Source: Prepared by Dukynaitė & Stundža, based on IEA TIMSS 2015 data.

[4] *"TIMSS – Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study is a series of international assessments of the mathematics and science knowledge of students around the world. (...) TIMSS is one of the studies established by IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) aimed at allowing educational systems worldwide to compare students' educational achievement".* Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trends_in_International_Mathematics_and_Science_Study.

Figure 4. School heads in Lithuanian education institutions (higher education establishments excluded) by managerial service record, 2017 (%)



Source: Prepared by authors, based on EMIS data.

What measures would help to attract gifted persons to school principalship? In spite of the fact that responsibilities of school heads is to be increased, research findings show that the position of a school principal becomes more attractive, provided that the increased accountability and the number of managerial activities are being related to the higher school autonomy, additional work opportunities, better remuneration - based appropriately on quality results and various other incentives (Gronn, Rawlings-Sanaei, 2003; Copland, 2001, Pont, Nusche, Moorman, 2008; Pont, Nusche, Hopkins, 2008).

State-of-the-art methods for principal recruitment and selection, usually referred to as the *'headhunting'*, are not being used in Lithuania, because of the rather poor remuneration, when compared to salaries in the business sector. Additional reasons can be found in the high public expectations and a low social status, when considering education. As a result, current school principals are considerably aged, in comparison with the other countries, and they also have the longest-lasting record of service (Figure 4).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The relationship between school leadership and student learning is not explicit. On one hand, a number of research studies show that leadership is significant for the performance of schools and outcomes achieved by students. On the other hand, school leadership can be a facilitator of student achievement, especially in low SEC status neighbourhood schools, although the effect size is rather small. In their search for the factors influencing the performance of schools, researchers take into account system-level variables, such as the school autonomy and its impact on student achievement. Analysis by OECD (2014) hypothesizes that the high school autonomy, combined with the central control of outcomes, might be related to better student outcomes. Several comparative studies on school autonomy showed that Lithuanian schools have a relatively high level of autonomy, especially when compared with other former socialist countries. If assumed that one of the means of quality assurance and school improvement is the policy of liberalization and increasing the autonomy of schools, professional school leaders should

be in high demand. However, the professionalism of school heads in the country remains one of the unsolved problems. The Council of the European Union has released recommendations to the EU member states, inviting them to review responsibilities of principals and support provided to them. Lithuania has not improved much in implementing the recommendations. Performance of school heads is not evaluated by taking into account the student progress and learning outcomes, while professional improvement of principals is still rather irregular. National Agency for School Evaluation found that only 30 percent of candidates for the headship met the requirement of the level "higher than average". Principals are preoccupied with administrative work and lack the competencies needed for successful management of education and learning processes, as well as strategic thinking and change management.

Review of research and statistical data leads to the assumption that, despite a relatively high level of autonomy, Lithuanian school leaders do not undertake regular management and leadership training, and there is no system of periodical appraisal related to student performance. Their average experience is higher, when compared with other countries and the rotation in leadership positions is slow. Therefore, the country has one of the oldest corps of principals in Europe. This suggests that, in order to strengthen the effect principals have on student achievement, their professionalization should be of higher priority than accountability or autonomy issues in Lithuanian policies.

In conclusion, the presumption that leadership and school effectiveness are related could be valid only if school accountability and autonomy particularities are taken into account. Therefore, the reforms in selection, recruitment and training of school heads could be expected to drive effectiveness of education systems only as far as the right balance of the three (accountability, autonomy, leadership) are found.

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ŠKOLSKO VOĐENJE I OBRAZOVNA EFEKTIVNOST: SLUČAJ LITVE U KOMPARATIVNOJ PERSPEKTIVI

Sažetak

U ovom se radu analiziraju veze između učenja i školskog vođenja, s fokusom na Litvu, u komparativnoj perspektivi. Izlažu se različiti aspekti područja školskog vođenja, pri čemu se, nakon opsežnije analize perspektiva obrazovne efektivnosti, čini da direktna veza između ravnatelja i studentskih postignuća nije potpuno jasna. Kako bi smo objasnili navedeno, dodatno smo analizirali utjecaj autonomije škole u učinkovitom vođenju te zaključili da se razina distribucije moći razlikuje u različitim državama. Nakon utvrđivanja razlika u meta-analizama i preglednim radovima o postojećoj snazi efekata školske decentralizacije, analizirali smo trošenje vremena ravnatelja na različite aktivnosti i uočili da je instrukcijsko vođenje najučinkovitije u poticanju učeničkih postignuća. Pritom treba napomenuti da se raspravlja o definiciji instrukcijskog vođenja, a ona se može i mijenjati, ovisno o kontekstu. Pretpostavka da su školsko vođenje i efektivnost međuovisni može se smatrati točnom, samo ako se u obzir uzmu detalji, vezani uz odgovornost i autonomiju škole. Stoga se može i smatrati da reforme, povezane uz izbor, regrutiranje i obrazovanje ravnatelja mogu djelovati na efektivnost obrazovnih sustava, samo ukoliko se postigne odgovarajuća ravnoteža odgovornosti, autonomije i vođenja.

Ključne riječi: *školsko vođenje, školska efektivnost, ravnatelji, menadžment, autonomija, profesionalizam*