



WELSmain 2021 - Abstracts

September 30, 2021, 16.30 – 17.30 CEST

E8a Leadership Learning and specific Challenges

Mihaela Zavašnik und Tatjana Ažman, National School for Leadership in Education Ljubljana, Slovenia

Title: Coaching newly appointed Headteachers during Covid-19 Epidemic

In their career paths, headteachers experience a variety of challenges, expectations and demands of various stakeholders. Headship requires not only high levels of competence, but also a number of (inter)personal qualities and skills. There is a growing consensus among scholars and practitioners that newly appointed headteachers can be considered a »vulnerable« group of headteachers due to their lack of experience and feeling of isolation. Also, many of them have not yet become members of the (in)formal networks which could help them reduce stress and build leadership capacity. Recently, coaching has been suggested by many scholars to be a viable form of support for novice headteachers as it (amongst other things) strengthens mental resilience and improve their well-being. Thus, the Slovenian National School for Leadership in Education (NSLE) decided for additional support in a form of an individual coaching programme for newly appointed headteachers during covid-19 epidemic. All newly appointed headteachers were invited to the programme; 20 newly-appointed headteachers (27%) decided to attend, i.e. 6 in the first epidemic wave (April 2020), 9 in the second epidemic wave (October 2020) and 5 in the third wave (January 2021). The coaching »packages« in a form of 5 or 7 one-hour coaching sessions in a row once or every second week were undertaken by three trained and licenced coaches employed at the Slovenian NSLE. The coaching experience was evaluated using a questionnaire for the coachees and an evaluative discussion with the coaches. The article focuses on the presentation of the execution of the coaching process, the emerging themes/challenges of the coachees, perceived benefits, valuable aspects and impact of the coaching experience, beliefs regarding the most beneficial attributes of a coach and potential solutions related to future regular headteachers' coaching support at the Slovenian NSLE.



Mireia Tintoré, Universitat Internacional de Catalunya Barcelona, Spain

Title: Leadership Programme for a Whole Child Development in Disadvantaged Contexts. A summary

In 2018, the European Foundation Society and Education (EFSE) in Spain and the Centre for Studies on Portuguese-Speaking Peoples and Cultures under the Catholic University of Portugal (CEPCEP) took on the design, development, and supervision of an experimental programme in whole child development leadership, in a set of 15 Spanish and Portuguese public schools that attend to children in situations of special difficulty. LWCD is a model of leadership that aims to assist in improving the leadership skills of principals for achieving the whole child development of students creating, through its management function, a culture of change that involves all stakeholders in the school community, namely, teachers, parents, and pupils. Two research teams from Spain and Portugal summarised the WCDL program in a Basic Document, and later, they developed and implemented a training program for the 15 leadership teams. Throughout the 2019-2020 academic year, the principals participating in the programme received a blended learning course which, through lectures, videos, activities, and case study methods, encouraged them to reflect and decide on situations that were designed to be as similar as possible to real-life cases. The WCD programme was completed in 2020-2021 when each school team put into practice a plan to achieve the substantive elements of the training received, with the support and guidance of a mentor for each school. A team of evaluation experts assessed each phase of the program. We present here a summary of the project and some preliminary quantitative and qualitative results.



Niclas Rönström, Stockholm University, Sweden

Title: School leadership in a moment of transformative change: Recognizing dynamic capability and the meta-practices of change

Education has always been an agent for change in societies, especially so when society is confronted with changing conditions and a need for a different, less harmful and better future. However, this is not always recognized in research stressing the reproductive character of education. In this paper, we argue that we are experiencing a moment of transformative change in society, and that this transformative moment calls for educational change since our dominant views of education but also school leadership are running dry. School leadership has been recognized as a vital agent for teaching and learning, professional development, school improvement and education reform (Leithwood et al, 2004; Hopkins, 2005; Robinson et al, 2009). However, we argue that there is a growing need to pay attention to the complex capabilities of school leaders, the dynamic capabilities of schools and the meta-practices of change in school leadership. Firstly, we describe three views (nationalist, democratic and economic) defining modern education and why there are needs to re-imagine schools and education (Rönström, 2015). Next, we argue that the ongoing pandemic can be seen as a moment of transformative change in society that we can no longer neglect and that we can learn about change by studying school leaders and school leadership during the pandemic. Finally, we explicate the complex capabilities of school leaders (Robertson, 2015), the dynamic capabilities of schools and school leadership (Rönström and Håkansson, 2021) and meta-practices of change (Rönström, 2021) and discuss why they need to be stressed and educated in times of transformative change.



Cathryn Magno and Anna Becker-Cavallin, Université de Fribourg, Switzerland

Title: Global, intercultural learning (and teaching) in the virtual Comparative Educational Leadership Lab

This presentation will showcase a newly-launched, innovative learning hub for school leaders worldwide. Available at www.compedleadershiplab.com as an open source, the Comparative Educational Leadership Lab (CELL) contains teaching case studies from seven country contexts across five continents; it is similar to a MOOC but more flexible and personalized. We will first present the CELL and walk participants through one case study (Diversity-Engaged Leadership in Switzerland). Case studies were developed in collaboration with practicing school leaders by identifying problems facing them, collecting data about those problems (interviews, videos, interactive games, documents, etc.), and generating critical thinking questions about each case for users to consider. We will then present several scholarly articles and chapters that have emerged from the Lab partners, demonstrating important links between research, training and practice. Most school leaders around the world have not been professionally prepared for this role, rendering them ill-equipped to address both the daily and the strategic dilemmas they face (Bush, 2018; Magno, 2013) which range from reducing drop-out rates to protecting schools from military occupation. The CELL can assist school leaders in high-income as well as poor and under-resourced regions by providing unique virtual training material addressing today's most pressing educational leadership challenges. This training platform has the potential to reach and connect hundreds of school leaders around the world and - ultimately - to improve outcomes for thousands of the world's children. We look forward to sharing it, receiving feedback, and making continuous improvement so that the CELL is as effective as possible.