Heads of educational institutions and expansion of autonomy with accountability. The mediating role of pedagogical leadership*

Dirección de centros educativos y ampliación de autonomía con rendición de cuentas. El rol mediador del liderazgo pedagógico

Samuel GENTO PALACIOS, PhD. Retired Full Professor. UNED *(sgento@edu.uned.es)*.
Raúl GONZÁLEZ-FERNÁNDEZ, PhD. Assistant Professor. UNED *(raulgonzalez@edu.uned.es)*.
Ernesto LÓPEZ-GÓMEZ, PhD. Tenure Professor. UNED *(elopez@edu.uned.es)*.

Abstract:

This article aims to develop a critical approach to three key aspects for the proper functioning of schools. First of all, school management, which includes collegial structures, the pedagogical leadership of the principal and the middle leadership of other educational leaders. Second, the autonomy of educational institutions, which lies between decentralisation and participation, and finally, accountability, as evidence of responsibility on the part of educational institutions. All three are considered substantive components, mediated through pedagogical leadership, for the promotion of continuous improvement of educational institutions. Thus, school management, autonomy and accountability create a logical structure of links that could improve the quality of such institutions. Various considerations that recognise the central position of pedagogical leadership in educational institutions derive from this analytical framework. These considerations lead to proposals capable of guiding policies aimed at improving the functioning of educational institutions in the context of the educational reform underway, towards which the LOMLOE (Organic Law 3/2020 of 29 December,

rep

which amends Organic Law 2/2006 of 3 May on Education) seems to be heading.

Keywords: heads of educational institutions, increasing autonomy, accountability, pedagogical leadership.

Resumen:

Este artículo pretende realizar una aproximación crítica a tres aspectos clave para el buen funcionamiento de los centros educativos. En primer lugar, a la dirección escolar, que comprende a los órganos colegiados, al liderazgo pedagógico de la dirección y al liderazgo intermedio de otros líderes educativos. En segundo lugar, a la autonomía de los centros educativos, que se sitúa entre la descentralización y la participación y, finalmente, a la rendición de cuentas, como evidencia de responsabilidad por parte de las instituciones educativas. Los tres resultan ser componentes sustantivos, mediatizados a través del liderazgo pedagógico, para promover la mejora continua de las instituciones educativas. Así, dirección escolar, autonomía y rendición de cuentas dan forma a una lógica de vínculos que *de facto* pueden mejorar la calidad de tales instituciones. De este marco analítico se derivan diversas consideraciones, que parten de la posición central del liderazgo pedagógico en las instituciones educativas y que dan forma a propuestas susceptibles de orientar políticas dirigidas a mejorar el funcionamiento de los centros educativos, en el contexto de la reforma educativa en desarrollo hacia la que parece apuntar la LOMLOE (Ley Orgánica 3/2020, de 29 de diciembre, por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación).

Descriptores: dirección de centros educativos, ampliación de autonomía, rendición de cuentas, liderazgo pedagógico.

1. Introduction

The implementation of Organic Law 3/2020 of 29 December, amending Organic Law 2/2006 of 3 May on Education (LOMLOE, Spanish acronym), will soon lead to changes in diverse areas of the educational system, affecting its levels, curriculum, educational approach to diversity and participation in and governance of educational institutions, to name a few. This article focuses precisely on these latter aspects, with the aim of analysing the functioning of educational institutions and exploring the implications of autonomy of schools and of accountability systems.

To this end, a critical analysis will be conducted of school management, which comprises collegial bodies, the pedagogical leadership of the principal and the middle leadership of other educational leaders. The autonomy of educational institutions, which lies between decentralisation and participation, and accountability, as evidence of responsibility, will also be addressed. All three are considered substantive components, mediated through pedagogical leadership, for the promotion of continuous improvement of educational institutions. Thus, school management, autonomy and accounta-

bility create a logical structure of links that could improve the quality of such institutions.

2. Heads of educational institutions

Within a broad participatory framework, school management is exercised specifically at the level of *individual action*, through the personal leadership of the principal and other middle leaders, and of *collegial structures*, consisting of two bodies -the School Council and each school's Executive Team-, which are responsible for the functioning of educational institutions. The aforementioned levels of action are described below.

2.1. The collegial structures for school management

In terms of collegial structures, the first relevant body is the School Council, which enables the educational community to participate in school governance and is composed of representatives of the teachers, the students and their parents, the city council and non-teaching staff, in addition to other executive positions within the school. Thus, it is an important body for decision-making and the educational community's professional, social and political participation; this is reflected in article 127 of the LOMLOE (2020), which assigns up to fourteen areas of competence to the School Council.

The second body, the Executive Team, is defined as a collegial management body of an executive nature in which professionals or specialists within the scope of the school itself participate. It consists of single-member bodies responsible for the functioning of the school (generally the school principal, head teacher and the secretary). The duties performed by the Executive Team are outlined and stipulated in general regulations (such as those set out in art. 131 LOMLOE), and further developed in frameworks of school organisation and management. Gento (1994) has summarised them in five categories, indicated below, to clarify their purpose. The first refers to *production of results*, which requires using the school's resources to accomplish the best educational product by means of appropriate didactic-educational processes. The second duty refers to *research and development* for the purpose of promoting the school's innovative interests and providing aid in the development thereof. Another relevant dimension has to do with the *organisation of human resources* through a robust framework that provides a functional structure and facilitates monitoring and motivation of the professionals who work at the school, particularly the teachers, to promote an ethos that fosters institutional excellence. Finally, two other dimensions should be noted: the *financial management* aspect, for forecasting, distributing and accounting for resources, and the dimension related to *administrative treatment*, which entails active intervention in the school's internal management and taking part in institutional relations with other external bodies (such as the national, regional or local education departments, in addition to other sectors).

Therefore, the importance of the collegial structures for *proper* management of the educational institution within a framework of stakeholder participation at numerous levels becomes clear. Of course, in order for their actions to create a ripple effect, the internal relations between these bodies must be flexible, constructive and, ultimately, geared towards the institutional development of the school and the promotion of the best ways of driving student development (Ibáñez-Martín, 2009).

2.2. The pedagogical leadership of the principal or head

Besides the involvement of the School Council in an educational institution's management and the provision of expertise that is generally entrusted to the Executive Team, the legislation regulating the functioning of these institutions allows for active, customised leadership through the exercise of school management at the individual level by the principal or head of the educational institution. This figure is tasked not only with calling and presiding over all academic acts and meetings of the school's collegial bodies but also with performing executive duties in a customised manner. However, school management is not exercised within a void but rather quite the contrary, as it takes place within the framework of a specific legal and administrative organisation and is subject to national and regional regulations.

From this perspective, the general duties entrusted by regulation to school principals are those inherent to a position of leadership over a group or team of people.

Although the principal relies on the necessary collaboration provided by the members of the executive team, these general duties can be summarised as follows (Gento, 1994): forecasting, planning, management, organisation, coordination, innovation and control. As Fullan states (2014): "implementing relevant knowledge, solving complex problems and building a relationship of trust" (p. 59).

In sum, a head or principal with pedagogical leadership capacity (Bolívar, 2019; Gento, 2013; Llorent et al., 2017), who has significant opportunities to decisively influence a series of factors (resource management, setting and assessing educational targets, support for teaching quality, collaboration with the surrounding community, etc.) through which educational plans and programmes are implemented (González-Fernández et al., 2020; Shaked and Schechter, 2016; Wang et al., 2016), as well as promoting, through their work, the career development of the teaching staff, all of which has an indirect impact on the students' learning.

While a direct relationship between management leadership and students' academic results has not yet been proven (Grift, 1990; Mortimore et al., 1988; Sugrue, 2015; Wellisch et al., 1987), there is evidence about the indirect impact it has, seen in improvements in the workplace climate at the school (Er, 2021; López-Rupérez et al., 2020a; Pan and Chen, 2020). Thus, an indirect relationship does exist, given that the head or principal can have a decisive influence over the teaching staff while also providing the con-

ditions, context and resources that are needed for quality education. Through this mediated effect, according to Philip and Rolf (2011), "good principals are a necessary requirement for a good school" (p. 30). Indeed, the principal is considered an important driver of the components of an educational institution (Day et al., 2010; Leithwood et al., 2020). In fact, diverse studies have shown that the activity of the executive team represents the second most important factor, after the teaching work done by the teachers, in terms of impact on students' learning (Hattie, 2009, 2011; Leithwood and Riehl, 2009; Pont et al., 2008).

2.3. Distributed middle leadership

It is also worth noting that leadership approaches focused exclusively on the principal display certain limitations due to the highly demanding nature and degree of responsibility required (Harris, 2013), while distributed leadership models have also been developed (Bush and Glover, 2014; Chi-Kin y Day, 2016; González-Fernández et al., 2021; Lipscombe et al., 2021; Tian et al., 2015). Under distributed leadership, relevant duties are assigned to middle leaders holding diverse formal positions which, in the Spanish system, include head teachers, department heads or similar roles (González-Fernández et al., 2020). These leadership roles, which mainly fall to the Executive Team, have a stronger direct influence over the teaching staff while also offering a link for cooperation with management. This entails not only a leadership position in the midst of the system, but also represents leadership

from the middle through a participatory approach that promotes collective responsibility and joint action by the teaching staff, thus making it possible to create professional communities that take the initiative instead of merely implementing what they are ordered to do (Hargreaves and Shirley, 2019; Harris et al., 2019; Netolicky, 2021).

It is important to note that, in addition to the roles of management and the middle leaders, distributed leadership models also include teaching staff leadership, the study of which has become consolidated in recent years as a relevant topic of research, as shown in the latest systematic literature reviews (Gumus et al., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2020; Schott et al., 2020). In this regard, the decisive control that teachers have over what happens in the classroom and with the students entrusted to them must be taken into account (Balduzzi, 2015; González-Fernández et al., 209; López-Gómez et al., 2020).

At least formally, these international trends are included in the spirit of the LOMLOE (2020), as evidenced in its preamble in reference to school management as a "key factor" and a "priority" for the quality of the educational system, through the explicit mention of the figure of the principal, who must "combine the institutional responsibility of the school's management as an organisation, administrative management, management of resources and leadership and pedagogical revitalisation, through a collaborative approach and seeking the log-

ical balance between administrative and pedagogical duties" (LOMLOE, 2020, article 131).

3. Autonomy of educational institutions and accountability systems

With regard to the functioning of educational institutions, paragraphs 3 and 4 of article 120 of this law also contain new elements about the autonomy of schools.

Thus, paragraph 3 is worded as follows: "the educational authorities shall promote the autonomy of schools so that their financial, material and human resources can respond to and ensure the feasibility of the educational projects and organisational proposals they draw up, after being evaluated and assessed accordingly. Schools supported by public funds must report the results obtained" (art. 120). The novelty in this point is the accountability, which is defined as a *duty* for schools supported by public funds.

In turn, paragraph 4 of said article has been updated to include the autonomy to promote "pedagogical innovation", "educational programmes" and "rules of coexistence", along with other aspects that have been carried over from the previous legislation, in a clear reference to fostering a broader sense of pedagogical autonomy. Therefore, the new law emphasises the autonomy of schools, particularly in terms of organisational and pedagogical autonomy, as well as accountability, as discussed below.

3.1. The autonomy of educational institutions: between decentralisation and participation

The idea of autonomy is linked to the decentralisation movement and to the admission of diverse proposals (including those of a private nature) within the field of education. While it is true that decentralisation is a relevant topic in the discussion on educational policies, centralised control over certain processes has been eased in diverse settings while at the same time the central authorities are exerting increasing influence on control over the system's results, seeking this intended accountability.

The autonomy of educational institutions must necessarily be fostered through a dynamic of participation. Indeed, autonomy arises from participation in the sense that participating means actively taking part, intervening in decision-making rather than merely discussing via multi-directional channels of communication and consultation. Autonomy is actually a requirement for participation, which could hardly take place without it, given that it implies that the stakeholders can accept a share or part of the actual decision-making. Based on Lowin's postulates (1968), full participation only occurs when decisions are made by the people who must execute them at each step affecting a scope of action: from establishing responsible units to restructuring them, decision-making and execution of decisions and assessment of processes and results, in addition to analysing the impact of said results.

The concept of autonomy, applied to a school or educational centre, can be understood as that entity's possibility to carry out, with a broad degree of freedom, an educational plan or project that is contextualised, defined, executed, monitored and assessed by those involved in the educational institution's mission (Gento, 1994). Thus, autonomy enables each school to construct its own project through shared decision-making, which affects the school as a whole, i.e., the teaching staff, students, non-teaching staff and other sectors involved. In this way, the school becomes more efficient at decision-making and has a greater capacity for developing its specific scholastic context.

Although evaluation and accountability to society are required for autonomous decision-making in an institutional setting, a lack of autonomy exempts its actors from responsibility for the results obtained, which limits their commitment (Casanova, 2021). This can happen, for example, when school management is judged (or held liable) for the results of actions over which autonomous decision-making was not possible. Therefore, autonomy means granting more institutional responsibility, which requires the professionals working at an educational institution to be committed to producing and executing initiatives that improve that school.

In this regard, school autonomy involves, firstly, granting teachers (within the school's concept and rules) a margin of freedom in their professional action to enable them to teach their own students in an original, personal manner (Gento,

1998), especially when it comes to methodology (Gento et al., 2018), and in the provision of the didactic materials and means to be used. Besides teaching staff, however, other professionals and sectors that also have a reasonable degree of autonomy and freedom in their decision-making have an impact on the functioning of a school. Here, non-teaching staff (specialists on diverse topics, social educators and others), students' parents (who are part of the governing bodies of all non-university institutions) and, in a certain sense, municipal representatives should be mentioned. A certain degree of autonomy should be given to those running private schools and to the range of social bodies that might have an impact on these institutions.

Furthermore, autonomy is developed at three main levels. On the one hand, there is *managerial autonomy*, which entails the capacity to act freely to forecast needs and internally manage and obtain resources. On the other, *organisational autonomy* stems from the specificity of the general orientation of the institution through its mission, as an expression of its aim or purpose, which gives rise to the way in which it plans for the diverse resources it has as an organisation (Gento, 1996). Finally, there is *pedagogical-didactic autonomy*, which refers to the way in which the institution acts to develop its basic educational approach and the way in which it strives to establish educational processes, the promotion of learning and the development of its students. The Educational Project can be mentioned as a basic reference on which to base pedagogical-di-

dactic autonomy, and it is also a driver for focusing on continual improvement and promoting quality within the institution (Gento, 1999).

Within the field of education, the dialectic between external control over educational institutions (and over the agents that work at such entities) and the levels of autonomy of such institutions and the professionals involved with them is becoming increasingly important. Although it may seem utopian or inappropriate to abandon one component or the other, the fact is that the relevance of progressing in the autonomy of educational institutions and professionals is becoming increasingly clear, thus granting them higher rates of self-control. This is even more necessary if one considers that teachers and education leaders are better prepared professionally.

Obviously, the room for freedom entailed in autonomy must be balanced with the need to keep educational institutions within the limits of the applicable legal framework. Effectively, there are guidelines and policies in place that affect and determine what can be done and to what extent autonomy can be exercised as part of a system. Therefore, the recognition and exercise of autonomy at schools leads one to consider that the educational authorities should play "a guiding role, which should be the blanket under which to comfortably exercise the approach and decision-making of a professional nature" (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 214).

3.2. Accountability as evidence of responsibility

The international discourse on new policies for regulating education is shifting from concepts of governing or management toward the idea of governance, which seems to imply that this development has not taken place unilaterally, but instead represents a complex, multi-level, multi-mediated process (Altrichter, 2010). In this way, the concept of governance aims to move beyond reductionist ideas of direct management to focus on procedures and mechanisms for coordinating actions within the educational system. The origins of regulatory governance date back to the 1980s when certain, mainly English-speaking, countries introduced structural reforms in the public administration in line with the convictions of neoliberalism. Subsequently, as economic globalisation expanded, other countries began to adopt similar policies as a means of evaluating and bolstering the competitiveness of their educational systems (Verger et al., 2019).

The focus on performance, equality and efficiency in educational systems has prompted social and political leaders to address the reform of governance in education (López Rupérez et al., 2020b). The contributions to this subject endeavour to analyse the relationship between several procedures of action at different levels in the educational system: in addition to expanding the aforementioned functional autonomy of educational institutions, they have the added responsibility of meeting certain requirements

included in what is known as *accountability*. This term, originally coined in the United States, refers to the reporting of accounts and was initially used in reference to «the use of funds earmarked for a certain purpose».

A review of the literature on the topic leads to the conclusion that there are a number of concepts of accountability due to its multifaceted nature (Fernández González et al., 2018), and that these depend, to a great extent, on the values and experience of those promoting them. Some authors identify the term with gathering information about schools' performance, while others see it as redesigning the governance structures in education; it can also be viewed as a performance contract or educational bonus, or a part of the educational systems (Levin, 1974); still others relate accountability with the auditing firm concept (Hopmann, 2008). Applied to the field of education, one essential purpose is usually mentioned, namely, to discern whether an educational system or its components account for their actions by achieving results in precise, objective, terms. To this end, a series of mechanisms and instruments is established, which the education authorities (central and regional governments) implement in order to estimate the extent to which other members of the educational system (such as teachers, managers, administrators or owners of educational institutions) fulfil the required responsibilities. In this way, accountability renders visible and intelligible the experiences, behaviour or results of individuals, groups or an edu-cational institution as a whole. In sum, this is a social, public process that acts as a kind of external legitimation that can promote the effective functioning of organisations.

The approach to accountability in relation to school performance entails interpreting results arising from state evaluation programmes and other information, such as the socio-economic breakdown of the students and the comparison of results from different regions. This concept is comparable to a financial and performance audit, which affords information about many of the school's results and about the distribution of expenditure, the teaching staff and other variables linked to programme descriptions.

However, the reporting on performance raises two serious questions. The first is related to the unanimity of the objectives of education and the concern that the information obtained should be useful to all educational leaders, which entails accepting a highly questionable concept: that all the political processes lead to appropriate objectives for all the stakeholders. The second question revolves around whether merely gathering information can highlight results and, further still, begs the question of whether the data obtained actually guarantees proof of shortcomings in educational results.

However, the accountability "system" is complete when the data and information gathered is conveyed to the teaching staff, the executive team or man-

agers and, ultimately, to society. Based on this communication process, objectives and strategies can be formulated to address each institution's situation. At any rate, it is worth recalling how important it is that evaluations involving accountability processes be conducted in a systematic, regular and longitudinal manner, so that they generate relevant, meaningful data that can be used to guide decision-making and well-informed action.

What may occur in practice is that the agents who are to do the reporting (teachers or executive team at diverse levels) endeavour above all to improve their scores in accountability evaluations rather than engaging in a reflection and analysis to shed light on processes of change and improvement. Be that as it may, the requirements imposed on educational institutions may, in practice, represent a limitation of their autonomy and constrict their flexibility in terms of functioning by creating obligations that, in most cases, are controlled by the competent educational authorities.

In Spain, the term 'accountability' appears for the first time in Organic Law 2/2006 of 3 May on Education (LOE), while Organic Law 8/2013, of 9 December on Improving Educational Quality (LOMCE) expands the external evaluations. At present, the LOMLOE (2020) establishes a diagnostic evaluation of the competencies acquired by students in the fourth year of primary school (and in the second year of compulsory secondary school) which, as indicated in the preamble of the law, "shall be indicative, formative and guiding for the schools, the students and their families and for the educational community as a whole". Therefore, "educational institutions shall take the results of these evaluations into account when designing their plans for improvement" (article 144.1) but "under no circumstances shall the results of these evaluations be used to establish classifications of schools" (article 144.3). These are clearly noble aims which, if implemented effectively, could lead to institutional improvement processes at the schools (Godfrey, 2020; Hutt and Polikoff, 2020).

4. Final comments: The central position of pedagogical leadership

This article aimed to develop a critical approach to diverse key aspects for the proper functioning of schools, such as school management, autonomy and accountability. Various considerations are presented below, deriving from this analytical framework, that recognise the central position of pedagogical leadership in educational institutions. These considerations lead to proposals capable of guiding policies aimed at improving the functioning of educational institutions in the context of the educational reform underway, towards which the LOMLOE (2020) seems to be heading.

The intended pedagogical leadership of the principal is clearly at risk of being eclipsed by management tasks,

which monopolise this figure's duties. When the most common tasks of a principal have to do with organising human resources, often unnecessary formal routines, drafting descriptive reports, extensive discussions on relatively unimportant decisions or responding to large volumes of e-mails, to name few, there is a radical problem of priorities that limits the capacity of school management and the ability to exercise pedagogical leadership (González-Fernández et al., 2020).

If this occurs, at least four direct effects could arise from this situation: a decline in energy and time to focus on what matters, a weakening of the principal's commitment to a role that in practice is not what was expected, a challenge in retaining school leaders and, finally, a lack of appeal in relation to exercising school management. In fact, considering that the principal's work is visible among the educational community, there are sometimes few teachers willing to accept the position and, while the reasons for this are diverse, they may be related to the restrictive conditions for exercising pedagogical leadership. In light of this situation, one significant challenge will definitely be accomplishing something that is noted in the preamble of the LOMLOE (2020): that the executive role be "stimulating and motivating, so as to encourage the best qualified teachers to accept this responsibility".

Therefore, three lines of action are proposed, which could prevent the principal from being overwhelmed by bureaucracy.

The first is to clarify the job description of a principal and decide whether the most relevant aspect of this person's job is the aspect to which the greatest efforts are devoted. The second has to do with raising awareness among principals about time management, which could give rise to ad hoc training plans to focus their priorities on pedagogical leadership. The third line of action, of an organisational nature, refers to redefining structures, which could, in practice, mean hiring new administrative staff to provide support for operational tasks, and to open up other middle leadership positions related to the head (a vice-principal or deputy head, for example) to strengthen distributed leadership.

These initiatives will be meaningful in the transition towards a greater professionalization of the executive role, through pedagogical leadership, which renders the position more attractive. This will be a significant challenge that should be addressed in the implementation of the LOMLOE and, to a great extent, it will entail providing structural and formal, as well as material, conditions to ensure that the exercise of the pedagogical leadership unequivocally referred to in art. 132 of said law arises from a greater professionalization of the executive tasks (Bolívar, 2021).

This professionalization requires, firstly, reflecting seriously on the procedure for hiring principals or heads. It also entails promoting initial training in pedagogical leadership and arranging appropriate resources for effective continuous training where there is the greatest need and de-

mand, as well as training about the most relevant issues for properly functioning schools in relation to bolstering strong, productive ties within the educational community, particularly with teaching staff. Finally, the implementation of professional and wage-related incentives should be considered.

In an era featuring high levels of responsibility and numerous tasks to be completed, it is easy for the principal to fall into a managerial leadership style in which the middle leadership structures are used for the delegation and distribution of duties, neglecting their potential as a framework for distributed leadership, which refers to sharing responsibilities and creating capacity within the school (Sugrue, 2015). Pedagogical leadership cannot be disguised as middle management, but rather, it must facilitate significant decision-making on the purpose and progress of the school in a *good* direction. Such decision-making occurs in a model that seems increasingly destined to shift from a centralised perspective to another view that fosters greater institutional autonomy, from which degrees of responsibility are expected through accountability. Obviously, when it does happen, greater school autonomy may also entail an increase in related responsibilities that do not always have to do with the genuine, original concept of pedagogical leadership. To reduce this indirect effect, some of the lines of action described above could be considered.

At any rate, autonomy enables the best decisions to be made for each school through structures of participation and management, setting shared targets, establishing strategies and roadmaps and organising reasonable resources to accomplish this. In the effort to decentralise and promote participation, greater school autonomy makes it possible to increase the response capacity of the local setting, meet the students' needs better and to foster a more effective use of resources to meet those needs. Such autonomy also helps reduce bureaucracy and affords schools greater potential for innovation, in a broad sense. In this regard, it is essential for schools to have a degree of freedom to responsibly make decisions that affect curricular and pedagogical matters (relating to the curriculum and educational projects) and financing and material resources (reflecting the way of allocating and managing resources), which have a relevant impact on the teaching and learning. Granting schools autonomy should help improve student performance, although diverse studies have shown that the context can be a decisive mediator (Hanushek et al., 2013; Kameshwara et al., 2020).

In sum, the proposal consists in promoting a functional model for schools that harmoniously combines autonomy with accountability through educational policies that respond to the demand for educational institutions to report fulfilment of their responsibilities while also fostering cooperation instead of competition among students, teachers and schools. To this end, in addition to stable policies, it is also urgently essential to enable distributed, intelligent and creative pedagogical leadership to *let go* of administrative work and to avoid bureaucratic types of leadership.

References

Altrichter, H. (2010). Konzepte der Lehrerfort-bildung im Kontext von Veränderungen im Schulwesen [Concepts of teacher training in the context of changes in the school system]. In F. H. Müller, A. Eichenberger, M. Lüders y J. Mayr (Eds.), *Lehrerinnen und Lehrer Lernen* (pp. 17-34). Waxmann.

Balduzzi, E. (2015). Liderazgo educativo del profesor en el aula y la personalización educativa [Educational leadership of the teacher in the classroom and educational personalisation]. **revista española de pedagogía**, *73* (260), 141-155.

Bolívar, A. (2019). *Una dirección escolar con capacidad de liderazgo pedagógico [A school management with pedagogical leadership capacity].* La Muralla.

Bolívar, A. (2021). La dirección pedagógica en la LOMLOE: no todos los pasos adelante requeridos [Pedagogical guidance in the LOMLOE: Not all steps forward required]. *Boletín Dirección y Liderazgo Educativo, 2,* 26-28.

Bush, T., & Glover, D. (2014). School leadership models: what do we know? *School Leadership & Management, 34* (5), 553-571. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2014.928680

Casanova, M. A. (2021). Gestionar la autonomía pedagógica: un factor de calidad reconocido [Managing pedagogical autonomy: a recognised quality factor]. *REICE. Revista Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación, 19* (2), 9-22. https://doi.org/10.15366/reice2021.19.2.001

Chi-Kin, J., & Day, C. (Eds.) (2016). *Quality and change in teacher education.* Springer.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1997). *The right to learn*. Jossey-Bass.

Day, C., Sammons, P., Hopkins, D., Harris, A., Leithwood, K., Gu, K., & Brown, E. (2010). *10 strong claims about successful*. College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services.

Er, E. (2021). The relationship between principal leadership and teacher practice: Exploring the mediating effect of teachers' beliefs and professional learning. *Educational Studies*, 1-20. https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2021.1936458

Fernández-González, N., & Monarca, H. (2018). Los sentidos de la rendición de cuentas en el discurso educativo [The meanings of accountability in educational discourse]. *Perfiles Latinoamericanos, 26* (51), 379-401. https://doi.org/10.18504/pl2651-015-2018

Fullan, M. (2014). *The principal. Three keys to maximizing impact [El director. Tres claves para maximizar el impacto].* Jossey-Bass.

Gento, S. (1994). *Participación en la gestión educativa [Participation in educational management].* Santillana.

Gento, S. (1996). *Instituciones educativas para la calidad total [ducational institutions for total quality].* La Muralla.

Gento, S. (1998). *Implantación de la calidad en instituciones educativas [Implantación de la calidad en instituciones educativas].* UNED.

Gento, S. (1999). Autonomía del centro educativo, impulsor de la calidad institucional [Autonomy of the educational centre, promoter of institutional quality]. *Acción Pedagógica, 8* (2), 30-45.

Gento, S. (2013). Relevancia del liderazgo de la dirección para la calidad de la institución educativa [Relevance of management leadership for the quality of the educational institution]. *Participación educativa, 2* (2), 1-13.

Gento, S., González Fernández, R., Palomares Ruiz, A., & Orden Gutiérrez, V. J. (2018). Integración de perspectivas sobre el perfil metodológico de una educación de calidad [Integration of perspectives on the methodological profile of quality education]. *Bordón. Revista de Pedagogía, 70* (1), 25-42. https://doi.org/10.13042/Bordon.2017.50833.

Godfrey, D. (Ed.). (2020). *School peer review for educational improvement and accountability: theory, practice and policy implications*. Springer.

González-Fernández, R., Khampirat, B., López-Gómez, E., & Silfa-Sención, H. O. (2020). La evidencia del liderazgo pedagógico de directores, jefes de estudios y profesorado desde la perspectiva de las partes interesadas [Evidence of pedagogical leadership of principals, heads of school and teachers from a stakeholder perspective]. *Estudios sobre Educación*, *39*, 207-228.

González-Fernández, R., López-Gómez, E., Khampirat, B., & Gento, S. (2021). Medición de la importancia del liderazgo pedagógico de acuerdo con la percepción de los evaluadores [Measuring the importance of pedagogical leadership as perceived by evaluators]. *Revista de Educación, 394*, 39-65.

González-Fernández, R., Palomares Ruiz, A., López-Gómez, E., & Gento Palacios, S. (2019). Explorando el liderazgo pedagógico del docente: su dimensión formativa. *Contextos Educativos, 24*, 9-25. http://doi.org/10.18172/con.3936

Grift, W. van de. (1990). Educational leadership and academic achievement in Elementary Education. *School Effectiveness Improvement, 1* (1). 26-40. https://doi.org/10.1080/0924345900010104

Gumus, S., Bellibas, M. S., Esen, M., & Gumus, E. (2018). A systematic review of studies on leadership models in educational research from 1980 to 2014 [Una revisión sistemática de estudios sobre modelos de liderazgo en la investigación educativa desde 1980 hasta 2014]. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *46* (1), 25-48. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143216659296

Hanushek, E. A., Link, S., & Woessmann, L. (2013). Does school autonomy make sense everywhere? Panel estimates from PISA. *Journal of Development Economics*, *104*, 212-232. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2012.08.002

Hargreaves, A., & Shirley, D. (2019). Leading from the middle: its nature, origins and importance. *Journal of Professional Capital and Community, 5* (1), 92-114. https://doi.org/10.1108/JPCC-06-2019-0013

Harris, A. (2013). Distributed leadership: friend or foe? *Educational Management Administration and Leadership, 41* (5), 545-554. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143213497635

Harris, A., Jones, M., Ismail, N., & Nguyen, D. (2019). Middle leaders and middle leadership in schools: Exploring the knowledge base (2003-2017). *School Leadership & Management, 39* (3-4), 255-277.

Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: a synthesis of over 800 meta-analysis relating to achievement [Aprendizaje visible: una síntesis de más de 800 metaanálisis relacionados con el rendimiento]*. Teachers College Press.

Hattie, J. (2011). *Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning [Aprendizaje visible para profesores: maximizar el impacto en el aprendizaje]*. Routledge.

Hopmann, S. T. (2008). No child, no school, no state left behind: schooling in the age of accountability [Ningún niño, ninguna escuela, ningún estado se queda atrás: la educación en la era de la responsabilidad]. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 40* (4), 417-456. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220270801989818

Hutt, E., & Polikoff, M. S. (2020). Toward a framework for public accountability in education reform. *Educational Researcher, 49* (7), 503-511.

Ibáñez-Martín, J. A. (2009). Elementos básicos de un ethos escolar orientado a la excelencia [Basic elements of an excellence-oriented school ethos]. In J. A. Ibáñez-Martín (Coord.), *Educación, Conocimiento y Justicia* (pp. 315-318). Dykinson.

Kameshwara, K. K., Sandoval-Hernandez, A., Shields, R., & Dhanda, K. R. (2020). A false promise? Decentralization in education systems across the globe. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *104*, 101669. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2020.101669

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, *40* (1), 5-22. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077

Leithwood, K., & Riehl, C. (2009). ¿Qué sabemos sobre liderazgo educativo? In K. Leithwood (Ed.), *Cómo liderar nuestras escuelas. Aportes desde la Investigación* (pp. 17-34). Fundación Chile.

Levin, H. (1974). A conceptual framework for accountability in education. *The School Review, 82* (3), 363-391.

Lipscombe, K., Tindall-Ford, S., & Lamanna, J. (2021). School middle leadership: A systematic review. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220983328

Llorent-Bedmar, V., Cobano-Delgado, V., & Navarro-Granados, M. (2017). Liderazgo Pedagógico y dirección escolar en contextos desfavorecidos [School leadership and school management in underprivileged areas]. **revista española de pedagogía**, *75* (268), 541-564. https://doi.org/10.22550/REP75-3-2017-04

López Rupérez, F., García, I., & Expósito-Casas, E. (2020a). School leadership in Spain. Evidence from PISA 2015 assessment and recommendations. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 1-20. https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2020.1770806

López Rupérez, F., García, I., & Expósito-Casas, E. (2020b). Un marco analítico para la evaluación de la calidad de la gobernanza de los sistemas educativos [An analytical framework for the evaluation of the quality of governance of education systems]. *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación*, *83* (1), 53-76. https://doi.org/10.35362/rie8313672

López-Gómez, E., González-Fernández, R., Medina, A., & Gento, S. (2020). Proposal to promote quality of education: A view from Spain. In H. Flavian (Ed.), *From Pedagogy to Quality Assurance in Education: An International Perspective* (pp. 29-44). Emerald Publishing Limited.

Lowin, A. (1968). Participative decision making: A model, literature critique, and prescriptions for research. *Organizational Behavior & Human Performance, 3* (1), 68–106. https://doi.org/10.1016/0030-5073(68)90028-7

Mortimore, P. (1993). School effectiveness and the management of effective learning and teaching. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 4* (4), 290-310. https://doi.org/10.1080/0924345930040404

Netolicky, D. (Ed.) (2021). *Future alternatives for educational*. Routledge.

Nguyen, D., Harris, A., & Ng, D. (2020). A review of the empirical research on teacher leadership (2003–2017): Evidence, patterns and implications. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *58* (1), 60-80. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-02-2018-0023

Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education (LOE). *Spanish Official State Gazette, 106*, 4 May 2006, pages 17158 to 17207. https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/2006/05/03/2

Organic Law 8/2013, of 9 December, for the Improvement of the Quality of Education (LOMCE). *Spanish Official State Gazette, 295*, of 10 December 2013, pages 97858 to 97921. https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/2013/12/09/8

Organic Law 3/2020, of 29 December, which amends Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education (LOMLOE). *Spanish Official State Gazette, 340*, of 30 December 2020, pages 122868 to 122953. https://www.boe.es/eli/es/lo/2020/12/29/3

Pan, H. L. W., & Chen, W. Y. (2021). How principal leadership facilitates teacher learning through teacher leadership: Determining the critical path. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *49* (3), 454-470. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220913553

Phillip, E., & Rolf, H. G. (2011). *Schulprogramme und Leitbilder Entwickeln [Develop school programmes and mission statements]*. Beltz.

Pont, B., Nusche, D., & Moorman, H. (2008). *Improving school leadership*. OECD.

Schott, C., van Roekel, H., & Tummers, L. (2020). Teacher leadership: A systematic review, methodological quality assessment and conceptual framework. *Educational Research Review, 31* (3). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2020.100352

Shaked, H., & Schechter, C. (2016). Systems thinking among school middle leaders [Pensamiento sistémico entre líderes intermedios de escuelas]. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 45* (4), 699-718. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143215617949

Sugrue, C. (2015). *Unmasking school*. Springer.

Tian, M., Risku, M., & Collin, K. (2015). A meta-analysis of distributed leadership from 2002 to 2013: theory development, empirical evidence and future research focus. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 44* (1), 146-164. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143214558576

Verger, A., Fontdevila, C., & Parcerisa, L. (2019). Reforming governance through policy instruments: how and to what extent standards, tests and accountability in education spread worldwide. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 40* (2), 248-270. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2019.1569882

Wang, L. H., Gurr, D., & Drysdale, L. (2016). Successful school leadership: Case studies of four Singapore primary schools. *Journal of Educational Administration, 54* (3), 270-287. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-03-2015-0022

Wellisch, J. B., McQueen, A. H., Carriere, R. A., & Duck, G. A. (1987). School management and organization in successful school. *Sociology of Education, 51* (3), 211-226.

Whitty, G., Power, S., & Halpin, D. (1999). *La escuela, el estado y el mercado [The school, the state and the market]*. Morata.

Authors' biographies

Samuel Gento Palacios. Retired Professor of Didactics and School Organisation. He has an honorary doctorate from the University of Latvia. He was a member of the National Education School Council and Inspector of Education of de Spanish Ministry of Education. He has acted as the 'link convenor' and is currently 'honorary link convenor' of Network 11 on "Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance" of the EERA (European Association of Research in Education). He belongs to the consolidated research group (ForInterMed, UNED / Ref. 125). His research interests focus on pedagogical leadership, education in diversity and educational quality.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5847-2911

Raúl González-Fernández. Assistant Professor at Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED). He is 'co-convenor' of Network 11 on "Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance" of the EERA (European Association of Research in Education). He belongs to the consolidated research group (ForInterMed, UNED / Ref.125). His research interests include educational leadership, development of educational institutions and early education teacher training.

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5683-685X

Ernesto López-Gómez. Tenure Professor of Didactics and School Organisation, UNED. He belongs to the con-

solidated research group (ForInterMed, UNED / Ref. 125) and is 'co-convenor' of Network 11 on "Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance" of the EERA. His research interests include teacher training, university tutoring and higher education and pedagogical leadership.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0679-5241