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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE IMPACT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP SETTING ON INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

The present paper investigates teachers' guidance from the transformational leader of the school unit in the implementation of cross-thematic teaching. More Specifically, the research focuses on (a) the existence of transformational practices and behaviors of school principals and (b) the thematic of the formal discussions of the Teachers' Association on cross-curricular teaching and the achievement of the School's objectives through a cross-curricular approach. It is concluded that there is a positive relationship between the practices, behaviors of the transformational leader of the school unit, and the explanation of the intersectional teachings and the expected results ($R = 0.550$, $R \text{ square} = 0.303$, $F = 30.401$, $p < 0.00$). The results can be taken into account in future training activities for teachers and principals.

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INTRODUCTION

Conceptual models of leadership in international literature since 1960 have linked school leadership to improved teaching quality and, consequently, learning (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Bush & Glover, 2014). The term leadership in school organizations succeeded the terms of management and administration. The term management is widely used in Britain, Europe and Africa, while the term "administration" is preferred in the United States, Canada and Australia (Bush & Glover, 2003; Bush, 2008). The educational leadership of the school unit is expressed by the activity of principals (Saitis & Shaiti, 2012) who practice leadership through a system of interdependent roles (Lainas, 2004). The first role is the leader who strives to ensure the professional development of teachers within the school unit, the second role is the administrator who maintains the usual balance of functions, and the third is the bureaucrat who manages the administration (Bush, 2008). The first role of the leader, who strives for the professional development of teachers with a direct impact on the learning process, is the organization of the curriculum of the school unit. In a cross-curricular syllabus, different cognitive areas lose their clarity within a single set (Matsangouras, 2012).

Transformational Leadership: Over the past twenty years, numerous studies have explored the structures of

transformational leadership (Hallinger & Wang, 2015). Pasiardis (2004: 209) states that "leadership is the grid of those behaviors that you use with others when you try to influence their own behavior". Bush and Glover (2003) define transformational leadership the process of teacher influence through the vision of school improvement. Leithwood (1994) emphasized that school vision is the key dimension of transformational leadership, but also mentions the existence of structures and goals. Leithwood and Sun (2015) argued in their research findings that transformational leadership has a significant impact on teachers, in particular their emotions, beliefs, and commitment to changes having a direct impact on positive school performance (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Scheerens & Steen, 2012). Research has argued that leadership along with teacher motivation and the work environment account for up to 35% of the change in teacher classroom practices (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). The analysis of research published from the early 1970s to the 2000s examined the impact of educational leadership on student achievement. Educational leadership was positively correlated with student achievement (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2005). Hallinger and Lu (2014) focused their research on identifying the paths through which leadership influences learning. The survey was conducted in 32 Hong Kong primary schools through an electronic system, 2011-12 school year. Teachers responded to the questionnaires on the shared vision and goals adopted by the principal and teachers of the school, as well as the teachers' commitment to implementing the vision and achieving the goals.

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The study identified the principal as a key mediator of the shared vision, in the form of a shared orientation of teachers' practices towards the implementation of the vision and the coherence of all school factors (Gaitanidou, Laios, Derri, Bebetos, 2018).

School Unit Principal: In all countries there is a common pattern in the structure of the school, known as the male or female principal. School Principal as a Quality Teaching Entity came from the research on effective schooling in the 1980s. The principal's influence on teaching that has a direct impact on learning is still being explored with Hallinger (2003) as the main spokesman. Yukl (2010) emphasized the two roles of the principal, the bureaucratic manager that focuses on stability-oriented short-term efficiency, and the leader that focuses on change and long-term effectiveness. In Greece, the law defines the duties of the principal in a general and abstract way: "The principal is in particular responsible for the smooth management of the school, the coordination of school life, the observance of laws, circulars and staff orders and the implementation of the decisions of the teachers' association, issued in accordance with the ministerial decision on the responsibilities of the teachers' association. He is also involved in evaluating the work of his school teachers and working with school counselors. In relation to the teaching staff of the school, he remains almost equal, as the governing body is the Teachers' Association as well, "The management bodies of each primary and secondary school are the principal, the assistant principal and the teachers' association"

Intersectionality: The term cross-thematic integration refers to the theoretical principle of organizing the syllabus that breaks down disciplines as a framework of school knowledge and attempts to bring knowledge unified (Matsangouras, 2012). 'Cross-thematic approach' means that form of teaching in which the content of teaching is unified, while the form of teaching is laboratory, group and inventive. The clarification of the definition shows that the intersectional approach is an innovation, not only in the content of teaching but also in the method of working. Specifically, the cross-thematic approach relates to students' self-efficacy in teaching, so that learning through the reflection and physical supervision of teachers becomes experiential (Theofilidis, 2010). The Cross-thematic Single Curriculum Framework attempted to cross-link the courses through fundamental cross-curricular concepts, with the aim of changing objectives and teaching methodology. The school of traditional cognitive-centric, passive and fragmented knowledge has attempted to become learner-centered, sociocentric, and experiential, with all contributors involved in an attractive environment where each student's creativity is cultivated (Alachiotis, 2002). The cross-thematic approach has the characteristic that it is based on the genuine interests and concerns of the group (Chrysafidis, 2011). In the methodology of intersectionality, the Project, child-centeredness dominates. The learner occupies the central position at all stages of application of the method (Koptsis, 2009). Placek (1992) states that with the implementation of cross-thematic programs, all types of intelligence are developed, since there is no separation of knowledge into distinct categories that make it difficult for children to relate individual disciplines to real, authentic life situations (Placek, 1992). In practice the cross-thematic approach means actively engaging students at all stages of the program, in selecting a topic, planning, searching for information, processing, presenting and evaluating (Matsangouras, 2012).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample: The study involved 83 male principals and 60 female principals of primary schools in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. The total population of the Region was 218 principals, 49 of whom were female and 171 male. 66.4% of the sample was 51-60 years old, 32.9% 41-50 years old, 7% 31-40 years old.

Data collection process: Random sampling methodology was selected and data collection was carried out via electronic questionnaire. Transformational leadership practices were explored with twenty (20) interpersonal questions (Gaitanidou, 2018; Theofilidis, 2012; Leithwood, Jantzi & Hopkins, 2006), while cross-curricular guidance was explored with fifteen interpersonal questions (Gaitanidou, 2018). Individuals' responses to the above two questionnaires were recorded on a 5-point Likert-type scale. The answers were given on a 5-point Likert-type scale where (1) means minimal response to the proposal, strongly disagree, (2) moderately disagree, (3) Not sure, (4) to a large extent, I agree, and (5) to a large extent, I completely agree (eg I provide teachers with feedback on cross-thematic practices).

Statistical analysis: The statistical software S.P.S.S 21.0 was used for statistical data processing. Correlation analysis was performed between the factors measuring transformational leadership practices (leadership orientation, staff development, organization restructuring and teaching improvement) and its two dependent variables of the "Cross-thematic Teaching" factor. Subsequently, regression analysis was performed. More specifically, "transformational leadership" was used as an independent factor, as it emerged from the average of the four factors that constitute it (to calculate the average preceding the "Second Order Factor Analysis"). The two questions of the "Leading of Cross-thematic Teaching" factor functioned as dependent variables.

- Clear Explanation in the formal discussions issues of cross-thematic teaching.
- Clear Explanation in the formal discussions of the Teachers Association of the School's expectations of learning outcomes from the intersectional approach of knowledge.

RESULTS

Initially, the averages and standard deviations for transformational leadership practices-behaviors of school principals and their dependent variables of the factor "Cross thematic teaching guidance" are presented. The results from the use of descriptive statistics revealed the transformational leadership behaviors (direction setting, staff development, organization restructuring, teaching improvement) of the principals / three of the school units, as well as the dependent variables of the "Cross thematic teaching guidance" factor. Subsequently, the correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between transformational leadership behaviors and the dependent variables of "Cross thematic teaching guidance". The results showed that there was a statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.01$) in all transformational leadership behaviors and the questions of the "Cross thematic teaching guidance" factor.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Transformational Leadership	143	4.33	0.415
A. Clear Explanation in the formal discussions issues of cross-thematic teaching.	143	3.57	1.010
B. Clear Explanation in the formal discussions of the Teachers Association of the School's expectations of learning outcomes from the intersectional approach of knowledge.	143	4.02	0.876

Table 2. Correlations

	Transformational Leadership	A	B
Transformational Leadership	1	0.529**	0.468**
A. Clear Explanation in the formal discussions issues of cross-thematic teaching.	0.529**	1	0.671**
B. Explanation in the formal discussions of the Teachers' Association of School Expectations on Learning Outcomes from the Cross-thematic Approach to Knowledge.	0.468**	0.671**	1

Table 3. Predictive Factor of Transformational Leadership in Cross-thematic Teaching

	β	t	p
A. Clear explanation in the formal discussion issues of cross-thematic teaching.	0.160	4.100	0.000
B. Clear explanation in the formal discussions of the Teachers' Association of School Expectations on Learning comes from the Cross-thematic Approach to Knowledge.	0.098	2.170	0.032

Note. $N=143$, $R=0.550$, $R\ square=0.303$, $F=30.401$, $p<0.00$

Continuing, regression analysis was performed. Specifically, the Transformational Leadership was used as an independent Factor and dependent Factors were the two questions of the "Cross thematic teaching guidance" factor: A) Clear explanation in the formal discussions issues of cross-thematic teaching. B) Clear Explanation in the formal discussions of the Teachers' Association of School Expectations on Learning Outcomes from the Cross-thematic Approach to Knowledge. The regression analysis showed that 30.3% of the transformational leadership fluctuation was interpreted by the fluctuations in the two dimensions of Transformational Teaching:

- Clear explanation in the formal discussions issues of cross-thematic teaching.
- Clear explanation in the formal discussions of the Teachers' Association of the School's expectations of learning outcomes from the intersectional approach of knowledge.

The effect of transformational leadership on the two dependent variables of the "Cross-thematic Teaching Factor" has approximately same weight ($r_{(A)} = 0.529$, $p < 0.01$; $r_{(B)} = 0.468$, $p < 0.01$). The test, "if the b (Unstandardized Coefficient) denoting the slope of the regression line is statistically significantly different from 0", so there is really a relation between transformational leadership practices and cross-thematic instructional variables achieved through t - variable. The regression coefficient β was statistically significantly different from zero ($t_{(A)} = 4.100$, $\text{sig} = 0.001 < 0.05$, $t_{(B)} = 2.170$, $\text{sig} = 0.032 < 0.05$), so transformational leadership practices had a statistically significant effect on both dimensions Leading of cross-thematic teachings (Clear explanation in formal discussions inter-disciplinary teaching issues and Clear explanation in formal discussions of the School Teachers' Expectations of School Learning Outcomes).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study reinforced the theory that principals use transformational leadership which, according to international literature, is associated with improved teaching quality and, consequently, learning (Bush & Glover, 2014; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Hallinger, 2003). To be more specific, transformational leadership emerged as a statistically significant predictor of 30.3% of cross-curricular guidance. In particular, the transformational leadership factors (direction setting, staff development, organization restructuring, and teaching improvement) of the elementary school principals can clearly predict the explanation in the cross-thematic issues discussed in the formal discussions and the school unit expectations for the learning outcomes from the cross-thematic approach of the knowledge. It is suggested that principals' training be aimed at educational leadership practices that reinforce teacher collaborations and emphasize the principles of cross thematic (child-centeredness, self-learning, co-inquiry, holistic approach, information literacy), types of intelligence and the related activities, the reasons (pedagogical, epistemological, social, psychological) that promote and support cross-thematic teaching. It is suggested that principals be trained in transformational leadership practices that have a positive impact on their pedagogical role reflected in the intersectional approaches to knowledge.

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