



What do we know about effective and successful school leadership?

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A new study “What do we know about effective and successful school leadership?” maps four decades of evolution of the concept of what constitutes effective school leadership. It analyses the theoretical background to these developments and advocates the utility of thinking of a ‘lean’ form of school leadership that is comparable to the concept of ‘meta-control’. A wide-ranging survey of the empirical research literature on leadership effects includes the presentation of results from earlier meta-analyses as well as a new meta-analysis on some 25 studies carried out between 2005 and 2010. This survey demonstrates that older reviews and meta-analyses were predominantly based on so-called ‘direct effect’ studies, while more recent studies have tried to quantify the indirect effects of leadership, mediated by other school variables. While acknowledging the relatively small total effect of leadership on student outcomes, the study does identify promising intermediary factors which, stimulated by specific leadership behaviours, impact on student performance. The presentation ends by drawing out wider implications for educational practice and policy, presented under headings such as ‘schools need leadership’, ‘the toolkit of the school leader as a meta-controller’, ‘the special case of turning around failing schools’ and ‘efficiency of school leadership’. In passing, the authors make several suggestions about potentially fruitful next steps in researching the effects of school leadership.

Jaap Scheerens has led the Department of Educational Organization and Management since 1987. He was also the scientific director of the Faculty of Education’s research Institute OCTO, from 1989 until 1998, and the scientific director of the ICO national research school from 1992 until 2003. He has been a project leader of numerous international research projects funded by the European Union, and a consultant for international organizations like OECD, UNESCO and the World Bank. He is currently a member of the Social Science Council of the Royal Academy of Sciences, and member of scientific advisory boards of programs and research institutes in Germany, Italy and Brazil. Within the context of OECD’s INES project, he has played a leading role in the development of school and teacher surveys for primary and lower and upper secondary education. He has also played an important role in the development of the School and Teacher Survey for the World Education Indicator Project, which is a joint initiative of UNESCO, OECD and the World Bank. In 2004/2005 he was responsible for the thematic report “School Factors related to Quality and Equity”, based on PISA 2000 data, which was published by OECD in 2005. He was the chairman of INES Network C, from 1999 until 2006 and was the Chairman of the PISA 2009 Questionnaire Expert Group.

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