School Leadership as Gap Management: Curriculum Traditions, Changing Evaluation Parameters, and School Leadership Pathways

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Abstract: School leadership nowadays is confronted with ever-changing and fast-growing expectations of what schools should be able to achieve. However, school leadership is an embedded activity, i.e., much depends on the underlying structure and culture of schooling. For instance, different traditions of defining schooling play a significant role in defining the role of school leaders. Therefore, it could be worthwhile to compare different traditions and current practices of defining school leadership with the traditions of conceptualizing the schooling within which they have evolved. Taking the well-known differences between the *Didaktik* and the curriculum traditions as a starting point: Should one assume that these deeply rooted traditions have an impact on the leadership "pathways" that are determined by new expectations of the outcome of schooling? This becomes a fascinating empirical question the moment both traditions meet, e.g., by implementing in a *Didaktik* setting control patterns that historically have been developed within the curriculum tradition. For example, how do school leaders respond to the challenge of being measured by parameters that traditionally were none of their business? This chapter addresses conceptual issues of this question and empirical findings based on a research project in Lower Austria.

Introduction

Different concepts of teaching, instruction, and preparing lessons in different countries can be distinguishable when taking an Anglo-American curriculum tradition together with a German *Didaktik* one (Hopmann & Riquarts, 1995). An understanding of German, Scandinavian, and Central European schooling presupposes knowledge about the significance and role of Didaktik; such knowledge, however, has not been given the same importance in Anglo-American countries, where the issues concerning Didaktik

[1] In: Knapp, M., & Hopmann, S. (2017). School Leadership as Gap Management: Curriculum Traditions, Changing Evaluation Parameters, and School Leadership Pathways. In M. Uljens & R. Ylimaki (Eds), *Bridging Educational Leadership, Curriculum Theory and Didaktik* (pp. 229–256). Springer. The original work has been published by CC 4.0, which this re-plushishing is based on.

are expounded within the framework of "curriculum and methods" and "curriculum and instruction" (Hopmann & Riquarts, 1995; Hopmann, 2015). Linguistic and cultural differences also make it difficult to translate concepts and theories from one to the other. The difference between these two traditions cannot be regarded merely as a boundary, since it also offers an opportunity for each to learn from the other within their own possibilities and restrictions. "Didaktik meets Curriculum" is a topic on which researchers since the 1990s have been focusing, and its implications have become more important as extensive and large-scale changes in school systems, such as the introduction of educational standards and national testing in Austria, continue to evolve.

Since curriculum development occurs on different levels of decision-making, educational leadership in the Anglo-Saxon tradition is also an important part of the discussion, selection, and organization of the educational purposes of a school. The concept of school leadership became familiar in the 1990s and is connected to reforms toward a decentralization of the education system. While in the 1960s the activities of school principals were described as administrative tasks, emphasis has shifted to the discussion of effective school management (cf. Gunter, 2014). In conjunction with the implementation of school-based management, the tasks of principals were increasingly seen as planning strategies, implementing proposals, and motivating people. In the 1990s, mostly with the results and student outcomes of national testing in mind that seemed to demonstrate a necessity for change in the education systems, this label changed again (cf. Wissinger & Huber, 2002). Research on school effectiveness indicated that leadership was an important factor for innovation and school turnaround since it would be able to create ideal conditions for school improvement (Gunter, 2014). This marked a shift from the management label to an emphasis on leadership.

It is a different thing in the German-speaking context. A systematic confrontation with leadership matters has never occurred from the perspective of the Didaktik tradition. Nevertheless, the label of school leadership as a description of the tasks of principals here is also becoming increasingly common with the ongoing trend toward standardization and national testing. From this perspective, "Didaktik meets Curriculum" can offer a starting point for investigating how the construction of school leadership has changed in the new accountability and testing environment. The basic idea of this chapter

is to define the dual tasks of school leaders as gap management: on the one hand, to ensure the requirements of school administration, but on the other, also to ensure local freedoms. In the following sections, the main elements of both traditions, Didaktik und Curriculum, will be described, and their ramifications for leadership will be discussed. If and how school leaders deal with this kind of gap management in testing times will be investigated with recourse to an interview study from Austria.

"Didaktik meets Curriculum" is a project that started about 20 years ago (Hopmann & Riquarts, 1995) to think about schooling using the differences and similarities of two different approaches. Both Didaktik and curriculum can be seen as different concepts associated with distinct traditions of dealing with the concept of schooling. Both are historically evolved forms of reflection within distinct social systems (Hopmann, 2015) and so are based on different understandings and images of schooling. These traditions have coexisted and from time to time have influenced each other in various ways, but until the late 20th century, never in a way that changed the fundamentals of the other tradition. Due to developments stemming from social ones outside schooling, their current conjunction may be different in scope and consequences from any known hitherto. Besides the translation of important historical works of didactic and curriculum theory and making these accessible for both the English- and German-speaking worlds, another aim of the project is to discuss current developments and reforms in the field of education concerning the consequences of the ongoing mixing and transforming of both these traditions. The idea of the "Didaktik meets Curriculum" project can be seen as a background for the examination of actual trends in reforming education systems by implementing national testing and modes of local accountability. Moreover, this new way of thinking about schooling also affects school leadership since reforms and changes in the context of implementing an accountability system often discuss school leadership as a key to the success of school effectiveness and related functions, but also new challenges, which were actually not part of the respective traditional activity set. Therefore, the different traditions of Didaktik theory and curriculum research, but also current developments, are briefly characterized and serve as a background for the following description of the concept of school leadership as gap management.

The German Tradition of Didaktik

Whereas the German tradition of Didaktik and its central concept "Lehrplanung" (instruction planning) is typical for German, Scandinavian, and Central Europe schooling, curriculum theory was established in the Anglo-American area. Since the implementation of public mass schooling in the late 18th century, both have been established as distinguishable traditions. Historically, three different aspects are important for a characteristic of the traditional European Didaktik theory: the term "Bildung," the pietistic understanding of schooling, and the implementation of a national curriculum regime.

A main feature of a pietistic understanding of schooling was, not least, the idea that teaching is more than acquiring knowledge, but that it renders teaching and learning as an unfolding of all the senses and powers (August Herman Francke). In this context, the realization of teaching cannot be assumed but must be learned as a profession. Consequently, teacher seminaries as institutions for teacher education were established and used with the basic idea of teaching as an independent activity. Becoming a teacher was not about doing a job but following a vocation. This understanding of professionalism confers on the teacher considerable "pedagogical freedom" in decision-making during lessons based on his or her "professional knowledge." In curriculum theory, this understanding is different and sees teaching more as an implementation and execution of curricular decisions (Westbury, 2000).

Closely linked to the German understanding of teaching is also the implementation of a national curriculum regime, or the so-called "Lehrplan," which is a product of the Prussian corporative state with its administrative structure and was developed as a regulatory tool of education policy and school administration for controlling local schooling and classroom practice. It defines and specifies the social function of schooling, the objectives to be achieved, and the content of teaching (Künzli et al., 1999). As a document, the "Lehrplan" describes the framework of teaching but also grants teachers enough pedagogical freedom and professionalism (see Horlacher & De Vincenti, 2014). Since the school administration is not in a position to compulsorily standardize the activity of teachers and student learning, it defines the achievement of students at best as expectations (Künzli, 2006). In this sense, it reaches the classroom only indirectly (Künzli et al., 1999).

The concrete realization of the intended goals needs transformation into a concrete, methodical, and didactical arrangement, but also one in which teachers can appreciate the situation of their students. This traditional construct of state-based regulation has important consequences for teachers, as it helps them legitimize pedagogical and administrative decisions for parents and students (Hericks & Kunze, 2008). Teachers were not per se responsible for the performance of students or that something "works," but rather that something had been offered and done. Didaktik, in this context, was to close the gap between the regulations of the state and local teaching. For teachers, this implies a scope of action that is manifested in a kind of "freedom of method" and a "pedagogical freedom." In a type of license principle, the teacher is seen as a legal person who can choose the methods of instruction and is responsible for conducting lessons (Hopmann & Künzli, 1998). In this sense, Didaktik can be seen as important for the transformation from the national curriculum to lesson planning since teachers answer questions as to which specific content should be taught in a particular lesson and why. So, during instruction, the teacher has the license and the permission to act in class autonomously within the framework of the official guidelines, but still retains full responsibility. Erich Weniger (1932) described the transformation of cultural heritage into the educational content of the "Lehrplan" as a struggle of powers between political agencies ("Kampf der geistigen Mächte").

The German tradition of Didaktik also established a close reference to the ideas of the Enlightenment of the 18th century and the German tradition of humanistic pedagogy ("geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik"). Most theories of Didaktik developed in the 19th century comprise as a constitutive element the category of "Bildung." In this context, the aim of teaching and schooling has nothing to do with transporting knowledge from society, science, or other domains to a learner but uses knowledge for the transformation of the unfolding of a person's individuality and sociability. Bildung cannot be reached through Didaktik, but Didaktik makes it possible to "restrain teaching" in such a way as to allow for the individual development of the student to prosper (Hopmann, 2007). Examples of this are the models of Wolfgang Klafki (1958, 1995), which are the most popular and best-known references to school practice in German-speaking countries when it comes to planning lessons or evaluating the quality of schooling and instruction.

In a survey of German teachers, in answer to the question as to which text best characterized the German Didaktik tradition, nearly all replied: Klafki's Didactic analysis as the core of preparation of instruction (Hopmann, 1999). Here, one aspect of the "common core of Didaktik" becomes obvious, namely the difference between matter and meaning, which means the distinction between the content as such and its "educational substance." One and the same matter (Inhalt) can represent many different meanings (Gehalt), and one and the same meaning can be represented by different matters (Künzli, 2002). Meaning is what emerges when content is enacted in a classroom based on the methodological decisions of a teacher (Hopmann, 2007). In this sense, Didaktik becomes a tool for teachers to identify and transform curricular matters into local teaching (meanings).

From the perspective of Wolfgang Klafki, this transformation from "matter" to "meaning" is only possible by analyzing and answering the basic questions of didactic analysis (this concerns the question of what relevance the content has for students present and past, what the content exemplifies, how it can be integrated into the overall structure of the lessons, and how students can get access to this topic). Klafki's outstanding performance lies in the extraction and development of an argumentation structure for the planning of teacher lessons based on educational theory. As a student of Erich Weniger, he managed to reform and integrate the relationship between didactical and methodical problems (*Primat pädagogischer und didaktischer Zielentscheidungen im Verhältnis zur Unterrichtsmethodik*, Klafki 1976, p. 81) and describes how methods, contents, and aims are interrelated.

Connected with different traditions in philosophy and ideas about schooling, the concept of Didaktik as a systematic differentiation between curricular "matter" and local teaching "meaning" is also uncommon in the Anglo-Saxon world (Westbury, 2000). While "Curriculum Studies" deal with the organization of curriculum and the processes of teaching and learning, classical questions of Didaktik, for example, how to structure schooling and school subjects, are discussed under the category of "classroom research" (Gundem & Hopmann, 1998).

For curriculum as a scientific discipline in German-speaking countries, research on educational questions of the curriculum and syllabus discourse only existed marginally before the 1960s. So far, a research tradition or a research institution bearing the catchword "curriculum" has never existed

(Tröhler, 2014). Famous and well-known Anglo-American curriculum literature, such as the Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction (Tyler, first published 1949), was first translated and only published in German 24 years after its first printing in the United States. In current German-speaking discourse on schooling, such literature is either not mentioned or has been forgotten. Furthermore, other famous curriculum research works like Kliebard's "The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893–1958" (first published in 1987) or Jackson's "Life in classroom" (1968) are only rarely addressed in German research on schools and education. German translations of these texts do not exist. There is also no German-speaking Educational Research Association with a division that focusing on curriculum studies (Tröhler 2014). As Tröhler (2014) mentions, this also seems interesting in the light of the 1961 OECD recommendation to found national institutions for the dissemination of the educational goals of the member states, which led to the initiation of the Max-Plank Institute in Germany with Saul Benjamin Robinsohn as Director. Robinsohn's publication "Bildungsreform als Revision des Curriculum [*Educational reform as revision of the curriculum*, 1971]" became popular in the German-speaking world and formed a basis for further curricular models (e.g., Frey, 1971). The main idea was to build a scientific approach to curriculum planning by identifying socially relevant qualifications and associated content through empirical investigation, as well as situations for achieving such qualifications. Like Tyler's "Basic Principles," Robinsohn's version of curriculum planning also focused on the importance of research, evaluation, and expertise. Although it led to new models in Didaktik (e.g., Heimann et al., 1979) and to a new generation of "Lehrpläne" (Criblez, 2009), this approach did not fit the German tradition of administrative curriculum work (Künzli et al., 2013). Bearing in mind that learning goals were intended to be measurable and objective, it nevertheless can be seen as a precursor of the discussion on national standards testing, a discussion that is similar to the current discourse on standardized testing (Criblez, 2009).

During the sixties and seventies, another American influence became very popular, namely, the concept of programmed learning and instruction. In hindsight, the traditional Didaktik was challenged by behaviorist ideas of learning but also by more empirically based curriculum research (e.g., Heinrich Roth) and psychological testing (Terhart, 2015). The interest in curriculum research in Germany finally waned during the 1980s, which

is outlined in a "Renaissance of Didaktik" (Hopmann & Künzli, 1992). Although the semantics were replaced, the rules and routines of state "teaching work as an administrative action" were reinforced (Hopmann, 1988).

Changing Times

Amplified by international comparison studies like PISA or TIMSS, a growing political interest in the direct regulation and effectiveness of schooling has shifted the traditional focus from central input control toward output control. Regulation through the formulation of expectations in the "Lehrplan" and the idea of work conforming to such expectations were queried by implementing a continuous evaluation and assessment testing of students and schools to control the realization of these formulated expectations. Over the last 30 years, the trend of borrowing elements from the Anglo-Saxon curriculum tradition, where such product control and dealing with evaluation in the form of student test results is more common, could be observed. Whereas before, education planning was a promise without product viability, the implementation of standards as a new modus of regulation in education (which is also currently realized in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and many other European countries) is oriented toward the idea of guiding learning processes through output control. This understanding emphasizes a strong rationalistic and deterministic view of teaching and learning and misjudges the fact that students do not automatically learn what they are taught. This is also called the "didactic difference" (Künzli, 2006).

Although the Anglo-American "Curriculum tradition" is more oriented toward psychology models (Hericks & Kunze, 2008), it, however, focused very early on the learning process of students and how and what should be taught in school (Künzli et al., 2013). In contrast to the Didaktik approach, the term "Curriculum" is characterized by a culture of textbooks and learning materials (Künzli, 2009). While ideally, and typically for curriculum theory, the preparation for everyday life is paramount, a central aspect of the Didaktik theory is the introduction into society through providing content or matter whose meaning should be learned (Westbury, 2000).

Furthermore, an output-oriented evaluation of learning results and of the public school system is more common in the Anglo-American discourse. Exemplary are Joseph Mayer Rice's 1912 claims for "Scientific management

in Education," collecting data and developing common performance requirements in the form of educational standards (Kliebard, 2004), but also, as other American educators like Leonard Porter Ayres (1912) or Franklin Bobbitt (1918) argued, reasons for regulating processes of teaching and learning through the results of tests. In this context, achievement testing and external evaluation for determining the quality of schooling increased and characterized the American school system in an important way. The college admission test (Scholastic Assessment Tests) was established already in 1901, but national testing (National Assessment of Educational Progress—NAEP) also was implemented before the seventies.

As mentioned earlier, standardization was also a recurring topic in Western European countries but never had a sustainable influence in the US context until recent years. Education standards, implemented as an answer to "A Nation at Risk," have existed in the United States since the nineties. Paradoxically, today's discussion on standardization is led in the context of the first implementation of a national curriculum, the "Common Core State Standards," which defines in detail what K–12 students ought to know at the end of each grade. For England, the situation appears more moderate, but also their standards and attainment targets play an important role in describing the expected achievements of students and being inspected and regulated by a government agency (OFSTED). Furthermore, national tests, teacher assessments, and final examinations like GCSE are standard procedures. However, in contrast to the United States, a national curriculum as part of the "Education Reform Act" was implemented in 1988. So, what can be observed is an ongoing mixing of traditions in both directions, without at the same time neglecting the existing traditional form. Around the world, standards and tests are being implemented, which only intensifies the accountability problems of local teaching.

Moreover, the political drive toward raising the bar produces serious and significant consequences, which Nichols and Berliner (2007) described as "collateral damage." There is considerable empirical evidence indicating that the more school systems focus on academic achievement as a key variable, the more they put pressure on disadvantaged students of all kinds (e.g., race, needs, and migration) and promote social segregation (cf. e.g., Rustique-Forrester, 2005; Braun et al., 2010; Ravitch, 2011; Nichols et al., 2012). Another critical point is that standards also tend to draw attention and resources to certain subjects and therefore to knowledge and problems related thereto,

which withdraws legitimacy from other subjects (Apple 1992). The more energy schools or students invest in achievement competition in key areas, the less they can really devote to other subject-matter areas such as civic education or the arts since fewer resources are left for other educational issues such as social activities or civic engagement (see e.g., Cuban, 2007; Koretz, 2008; Polikoff et al., 2011; Labaree, 2010).

Furthermore, curricular shrinking, also known as "Teaching to the test," is often described as a consequence of teachers and schools focusing so as not to be low down on the league table. Such rigid testing programs are associated with fostering educational inequality (Marzano, 2000; Linn, 2003). So, all in all, research on national testing indicates the opposite effect to that which was expected and supposed to be established (for a summary, see Hopmann, 2013). Concerning the topic "Didaktik meets Curriculum" (Gundem & Hopmann, 1998), it is interesting to see what happens when two different traditions of schooling come together. How do those involved handle the situation? How do they realize reforms, and how do they change their actions? Especially the introduction of national education standards is already a change from an input-control orientation in schooling to one of output control, which can be seen as a change from viewing the "location of schooling" to viewing the "measurement and assessment of schooling" (Hopmann, 2006).

School leadership is also affected by this mixing of cultures and the striving for enhanced accountability. During the 80s and 90s, through national and international discussions about reform, restructuring, and improvement of the school system, the activity of school leaders evolved to itself become a subject of research. In German-speaking countries since the 90s, the amount of literature on how to lead a school successfully and how school leaders should improve their schools and manage their staff in an effective way has been permanently increasing. The standard economic concept of leadership has become a common term for describing the duties and tasks of principals in the local improvement of schooling and teaching. Here, leadership concepts are often borrowed from the Anglo-American area, ignoring that the activities of school leaders differ according to the respective tradition. The approach of "Didaktik meets Curriculum" can therefore enable an understanding of these traditions of school leadership and facilitate the discussion of trends for further development and the related implications.

School Leadership as Gap Management

Closely related to the discourse on "Didaktik and Curriculum" is the idea of "school leadership as gap management." Greatly simplified, the curriculum tradition was built around extremely high expectations of what local curriculum leadership meant. This was actually the basic notion of much of the curriculum work in the 20th and mid-20th century. The institutional pattern of local curriculum leadership becomes obvious from Dewey (1902) to Tyler (1949) up to Schwab (1969, 1970). In Dewey's "Child and the Curriculum" (1902), learning is only possible by adapting the curricular subject matter to the local experiences and actual lives of students. The curriculum tradition directly addressed school leaders as curriculum makers. This already can be seen in Tyler's "Principles" (1949), which were developed in a University of Chicago course for school leaders. How should a school leader go about creating, defining, developing, and controlling a curriculum at his or her school? By emphasizing the "rational" in curriculum planning, Tylers' "Principles" matched the existing predominant paradigms of behaviorism, positivism, and technical rationality and was thus often misinterpreted as a mechanistic understanding of curriculum (Pereira, 1992). "The Practical" (Schwab, 1970) criticized these principles and the idea of transforming scientific theories into pragmatic problems at school. But also for Schwab, curriculum was local, targeting a single school or small school districts and including a group of community members (and also the school leader) in the process of curriculum planning.

Up to the 70s and 80s, the idea that curriculum was publicly funded and locally decided was dominant in most of the Anglo-Saxon world. The basic idea of curriculum making was not only to locally define and determine its content but also to regulate how and in what sequence, when and for whom, the content was to be considered. Since the late seventies, however, this tradition has been challenged, not least as a consequence of reforms like "A Nation at Risk," the implementation of new core curricula (common core standards), or the introduction of state-based standard testing. These changes can be interpreted as the consequence of the development of a phenomenon called "risk-sharing." The model of risk-sharing, which had been the basis for the development of the modern nation-state, came under growing economic pressure (cf. Hopmann, 2008). As with schooling, most societies met growing demands for health care, security provision, social services, etc. by simply expanding the institutions, professions, and programs.

There is an unavoidable limit to how much a society can spend on such risk-sharing without squeezing the tax-producing parts of society too much. Thus, since the 80s, almost all welfare states have had intensifying public struggles as to how much to spend on what, and most have had to adjust their risk programs to meet budget limitations. The people, as the other partners in the risk-sharing deal, do not simply accept that the state cannot deliver what was promised in exchange for loyalty and taxes; this has created an intensive search for ways of obtaining the same or even better services for less money. If more growth and expansion seemed not to be sustainable, the question instead was whether an "intensification" of public service delivery would do the trick. This gave rise to concepts like the one of "new public management" and accountability measures, with which those involved in public institutions should be forced toward a more effective and equitable use of public resources. This change can also be described as a switch from "management by placement" toward "management by expectations" (Hopmann, 2008).

For schools, the introduction of national testing and evaluation was intended to make teachers and schools accountable for the outcomes of schooling. This means a mixed transformation where local leadership diverges from curriculum leadership in the traditionally comprehensive sense and turns leaders into being accountable for executing curricula they did not themselves develop or did not inspire or develop with their teachers. All in all, this means a reduction in locally based curriculum making, which today one can say has been destroyed in many places. The implementation of national testing also has consequences for the relationship between inner- and extra-curricular activities. Only schools with very good conditions, such as a composition of students from a high SES background or with an environmental climate matching the requirements of the local school climate, allow leaders to be able to offer a program besides "teaching to the test." Under these conditions, reaching the standards of common core is just incidental. They can more or less act in the traditional way by planning and implementing their local curriculum in accordance with their students and situation. For schools with different conditions, the situation is different, and national testing is more relevant. These schools have to deal with the gap between local management and external accountability. So, what can actually be observed is that school leadership in times of accountability has

to deal with new requirements. Gap management, in the sense of meeting local and state-based requirements, becomes an extended and transformed function.

In the midst of a transformation process toward school leadership as accountability management, issues like "fidelity," teacher control, and evaluation outcomes also evolve. The interesting thing that is happening at the same time in the US context is that much of the curriculum studies field seems to be disappearing from the discourse and is being turned into a sort of cultural studies field not actually connected to what goes on in schools or what goes on in leadership. This becomes clear, for instance, in discourse on curriculum and gender, race, class, or multiculturalism. Nevertheless, some scholars in curriculum research are discussing ways of managing public schooling in testing times and the plus of public schooling other than reaching good results in national testing situations (for example, Darling- Hammond et al., 2014). There are many echoes of school not just being about testing (cf. Nussbaum, 2011; Hansen, 2011). In other words, with the continuance of high-stakes testing, a new (didactical) pragmatism is also being discussed.

The Anglo-American perspective has now been described. The German, or Austrian, state-based system, however, is a different matter. What many people do not know is that when state curriculum production was invented, the recipient of this state curriculum was the school as a unit, not the individual teacher. The original desire was that the state also control school plans to ensure that they were in line with state expectations. Although school leadership was meant to have a plan of its own, the national curriculum was simply a tool to see whether the local curriculum was covering enough of the material it indicated. Many of the very first curriculum documents in Europe in the first half of the 19th century actually dealt with which mathematics to teach. There were also all kinds of subjects available. In most European countries, the list of key subjects that we have nowadays was more or less finalized around 1850 and has not changed substantially since (Hopmann & Riquarts, 1999). So, the locally used curriculum became a matter for the individual teacher, not the school. The bridging gap here became Didaktik—Didaktik as a tool for teachers to define their work within the national frame.

However, leadership in this context was not to practice didactics on behalf of teachers, and so it became administrative. Each teacher was able to do as he or she saw fit, which reduced the leadership role in the course of the

19th century to a more administrative one. Indeed, leadership issues did not play a significant role either in prominent Didaktik theories (for example from Schleiermacher, 1810, to Weniger, 1932; Klafki, 1958) or in German theories on schooling. So, Didaktik generally addressed teachers and not school leadership, almost because leaders were not supposed to fill the gap. That was the teachers' view. Likewise, Didaktik had no key role in the history of leadership theories, which often focused on the administrative role of school leadership.

In this tradition, school leadership was primarily considered an administrative task. A school leader represented the teachers and constituted the interface between school authorities and the matters of the local school. His or her central function in this model was the bureaucratic control and regulation of centrally based requirements of the school authorities. Legislation regulated the range of functions and duties of school leaders. This is still the situation today, and school leaders fall under the responsibility of the local school and the proper implementation of rules, regulations, and administrative provisions of the centralized school authorities. In this context, school leaders have to deal with school authorities, teachers, students, and their parents. Schratz (1998) has summarized the traditional understanding of school leadership in German-speaking countries. In this sense, a "good" school leader is a person who is a good recipient and transmitter of orders in the interest of the smooth administration of schooling. In the traditional bureaucratic model, the framework of the centrally regulated school is structured hierarchically and top-down.

In this sense, school leadership in state-based traditions also can be seen as gap management. This type of gap management has two distinctive sides. One is mainly located on the outside and focuses on school leadership as an administrative and public task. School leaders have to show that their schools are firmly rooted in the institutional framework and perform the duties required of them by society and the state. However, there is another side to the gap, which is located inside the school, focusing on teachers and students. School leadership is also about defending the educative surplus of schooling (Bildung) as an outcome of the didactical use of teachers' pedagogical freedom. This state-based construction of school leadership remained basically unchanged until the late 20th century (cf. also Holtappels, 1989) and was not discussed as a pedagogical issue (Wissinger & Huber, 2002). Stimulated by Anglo-American school effectiveness research ("school leadership matters")

and international discussions on ensuring quality at schools, leadership started to become a topic in terms of school improvement. Connected with the idea of school leadership as a profession of its own, new intermediate programs and agencies (such as Landesinstitute) were created to offer training for school leaders. School leadership, however, did not become part of any didactical discussion, and the programs did not really have an impact on everyday work in the schools. At best, they had an impact on the semantics of gap management.

School Leaders as a Target for Educational Policies

New inputs came from international developments like the results of large-scale assessments of PISA, TIMSS, and PIRLS. The related recommendations of supranational policy organizations like the OECD led to pressure and stress concerning assessment. In Austria, for example, they were used as arguments for reforms such as the implementation of national testing, a standardized school-leaving examination, competence-based instruction, or an inclusive and comprehensive school setting. By addressing the whole school as accountable for results, school leadership becomes a new issue. According to accountability, school leaders have to show that the students of their school fulfill the external state-based standards.

So, over the last years, school leadership and leadership theory have become important issues for the output-oriented management of schools. This trend is driven by the school-improvement discourse. Guided by the argument that school systems need reforming, the importance of "successful school leadership" has also increased. Current discussion is led by school-effectiveness research, debate on strengthening the local responsibility of schools, and a series of empirical research studies on identifying factors and characteristics of effective and "good" school leadership styles. The success of school leadership is measured by student outcome variables. However, research on the effectiveness of school leadership has come to a different conclusion: for example, that targeted cooperation and innovation-oriented leadership have a positive effect on the actions and cooperation of teachers (e.g., Bonsen et al., 2002; Hallinger et al., 1996; Mackenzie, 1983). This contribution also found a place in the concept of "transformational leadership" (e.g., Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Dubs, 1994) and "contributed leadership" (Mujis & Harris, 2006), which

are used internationally to describe and explain effective school leadership actions. Yet, findings concerning the relationship between school leadership and student achievement outcomes are inconsistent and very often without any theoretical substance. There is no evidence that a specific leadership style automatically leads to better achievement results. On the contrary, concrete leadership actions seem to be a response to the relationship between the contextual conditions of the individual school and the environment. It serves as a moderating variable (Brauckmann, 2012). Not personal factors, but the context as an interlock of institutional, system, and personal factors, which cannot be investigated as separate, is important (ibid.). In this sense, school leadership cannot be seen as the task of a single person but as co-actions of a system. In terms of Spillane et al. (2004), this is called "distributed leadership." Charismatic and heroic school leaders who can perform all-important functions might be successful in reaching their goals, but there are only very few persons with this attitude. Over the last 10 years, there also have been empirical references that focus on the interactions and active distribution of leadership functions, which are helpful for identifying manners of organizational change (Harris, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2007; Spillane et al., 2004).

Furthermore, school leadership is seen to influence student test results not directly and causally, but in indirect ways (Day et al., 2011). Effects seem small and often cognitive, and social or organizational psychological models are borrowed to explain good leadership. Often these models take on an importance different from the context settings of schools. School context is discussed as a phenomenon of school culture, shared goals, trust and performance orientation, cooperation among teachers, professional learning communities, capacity building, community partnerships, and instructional settings. Often leadership theory is characterized by ideas of behavioral and personality theories, focusing on the person and the best leadership style, which imply normative ideas. Studies in this research context define and interpret very differently what a "good" school means and what successful leadership should look like.

In the national and international discussion on school achievement, school improvement, and school quality, often school leaders are seen as an important resource and dependent variable for influencing the development of their schools. New governance approaches and reforms, however, tend to extend the autonomy of the single school ("shift of powers") and lead to changes

in the tasks and functions of school leaders ("shift of tasks"), and so school leadership is also discussed with stronger significance. The increased scope of actions and decisions in the pedagogical process should make it possible to better deal with the specific contexts and situations of the school and thereby use resources more effectively, which aims to improve the quality of both schooling and instruction. Coincident with the active use of these new scopes, school leaders are also increasingly responsible for processes concerning the management of quality. For individual school leaders, this means new challenges and requirements and a new understanding of their own positions. On the one hand, they are more responsible for changes that happen under their leadership; on the other, they must have a deep insight into and local knowledge of what exactly is happening in their school. A decentralization of decision-making often coincides with greater responsibility for external standard setting and increased centralized output control.

There is now new research on how school leaders deal with these new scopes, how they interpret them, and how the perception of more responsibility in more complex areas of activity can be successful in the social reality of individual schools (Brauckmann, 2012). Furthermore, questions on how schools use the new open spaces and how and why some schools seem to act more intensively and innovatively than others are being addressed (Rolff, 2009). In this sense, school leadership is about matching local and contextual demands with external requirements (Moos 2005). Surveys in the German and Austrian context show that school leaders still see their functions and duties as those of a steward and not as those of a developer and agent of school improvement (Bonsen, 2010; Breit, 2012). So, the empirical questions now are: What happens to gap management in these contexts? How will an introduction of elements from the so-called "curriculum tradition" change the school leadership role? With the aid of examples of Austrian school leaders, we investigate how school leaders deal with these new challenges.

The Implementation of Educational Standards and National Testing in Austria

In the context of Austria, national education testing is a new form of accountability that was borrowed and adapted from Anglo-American school systems. As a reaction to the bad PISA results in 2001 and 2006, reforms like the

implementation of national education testing in Austria and a new school type, the "New Middle School" (NMS), were intended to help improve performance in large-scale international assessments and achieve equity by reviewing and reconsidering traditional ways of teaching and learning. Evidence-based policy should thus help provide information about weaknesses and potential for improvement and increase quality not only in individual schools but also in the whole school system (Haider et al., 2005). Unlike Germany and Switzerland, the Austrian education system is centralized, but similarly to the other two countries, reforms are also intended to strengthen the responsibility and autonomy of individual schools. A discussion of national testing is also included. While attention in the 90s focused on the improvement of the individual school, the results of international large-scale studies like TIMSS and PISA indicated a high variance between schools, which is considered problematic when it comes to the equity and efficiency of the education system (Freudenthaler & Specht, 2006; Haider et al., 2005).

Conceptually, national testing in Austria is based on the construct of competence measurement and was tackled in 2003 after the publication in German of the so-called "Klieme Expertise," which contains detailed proposals for designing education standards (*Zur Entwicklung nationaler Bildungsstandards*, Klieme et al., 2003). Connected with the idea of being "objectively measureable," these standards, as in Germany, describe the normative expectations that schools should ensure (Lucyshyn, 2006). Based on this definition, many more or less grounded competence models were introduced in the German-speaking world. Often these competences are criticized for being too focused on their measurability and not on their content (cf. e.g., Heid, 2007; Scholl, 2012), which may have far-reaching consequences for instruction and practical work in schools. In the Austrian school system, Schratz (2012), for example, observed that in discussions with their students, teachers focus more on the structure of learning processes than on examining more deeply the teaching content.

In Austria, national testing takes place in the fourth and eighth grades. These are, respectively, the transitions from primary school to secondary I and from secondary I to secondary II. National testing was first carried out in 2012 to measure competencies in English (as a foreign language) and in 2013 for Mathematics. Besides an analysis at the state level, school leaders

also receive feedback from their own schools, teachers receive feedback from their classes, and students receive feedback on their own achievements. School leaders are also bound by law to discuss the results and further implications with teachers and parents. In the framework of this context, the question arises as to how school leaders use this information for the improvement of their school and instruction. In contrast to other countries like the United States or England, the results of national testing are not connected to any consequences or incentives for schools, such as benefits, job positions, school closings, participation in improvement programs, or financial disadvantages. The testing is "low stake." Comparisons between schools are not explicitly intended, and results of schools and classes are not made public.

Nevertheless, discussion seems important with respect to how school leaders and parents react to these changing contexts, bearing in mind that educational standards and the competence-oriented curriculum cannot be introduced as a one-size-fits-all template in a school. Schools and individual teachers do not have an executive function; their task at school is also to translate and contextualize the guidelines into the practices and conditions of their everyday lives. First, they have to make sense of the guidelines so as to embed them in a further step of their own instructional work. Here, the self-concept of teachers as professionals could be very important for how guidelines are followed. It is interesting to note that school leaders and parents react differently when bridging the gap between external demands and local situations of their school. The Ministry of Education also considers school leaders to be important for the successful implementation of reforms at school. Since 2004, the ministry has been offering an official program under the name of "Leadership Academy" (LEA) to qualify school leaders in professional guidance for school improvement and the professional development of their teachers (Schratz et al., 2010). Furthermore, national testing is on the agenda of this program and is intended to support school leaders in its strategic implementation.

But national testing is not the only reform with which school leaders in Austria are confronted. In the school year 2008/2009 a new school type was established in secondary I and will replace the hitherto lower secondary school by 2015/2016. Due to the fact that the school reform intends to be a school for all children, to intermix the social composition, and to reduce disparities by site-specific programs, school leaders have to engage with

more possibilities and autonomy in order to cope with the requirements of the students in class. Both reforms tend to foster school improvement based on local awareness of the conditions of their school. Also, here, it would be interesting to gain a more differentiated insight and more information on how school leaders deal with the gap between school autonomy and standardization and the bases of information they use in school improvement processes.

In international comparisons, school leaders in Austria more often cite that their assignments deal with administration and teaching than school leaders from other countries (Suchari et al., 2010). School reforms, like the implementation of national education standards and the New Middle School, focus instead on school improvement and school management based on local circumstances, considering these the most important tasks for school leaders and emphasizing their responsibility for them. The question of whether and how school leaders approach this new aspect of school reforms seems to be very relevant. Do school leaders face more pressure, or do they see no change at all? The answer to these questions would be of interest to the future development of schooling, school improvement, and the schooling system.

Mixed Messages: School Leaders Re-framing the Feedback from National Testing: Results from the Interview Study

Interviews with ten school leaders of New Middle Schools in the State of Lower Austria were conducted to study in an adequate way the individual perspectives, perceptions, and attitudes relating to school leadership and the tasks of school leaders concerning national education standards. This small-scale study is embedded in the government-funded evaluation project of the New Middle School in the state of Lower Austria, "NOESIS" (for results, see e.g., Feichter & Krainz, 2015; Geppert et al., 2015; Geppert & Knapp, 2015; Hörmann, 2012; Kilian & Katschnig, 2015; Knapp, 2015; Retzl & Ernst, 2012). In general, the interviews showed that school leaders reported different reactions depending on which perspective they focused on. If, in their function as a representative of the school, they were asked to describe the changes after feedback from national testing, they reframed

such testing as a useful evaluation tool for thinking and talking about school improvement. However, when asked to mention concrete activities, not much seemed to have changed in their everyday practice at school. From this within-school and didactical perspective, they seemed to reframe national testing as a tool too narrow and reductionist to capture schooling and the work at their school. This also seems to reflect their ambivalent attitude concerning national testing.

In the interviews and from the official perspective of administering and representing schooling, all school leaders reported that they discussed school-specific results from national education testing with the teachers. Changes after these discussions concerned, in particular, improvement in instruction and vocational development. Following feedback from national education testing, school leaders also reported a focus on topics that needed improvement, apparent through the introduction of observation by colleagues in the lessons, longer discussions during conference calls, or a specific search for courses on vocational teacher training. The school principals also said that on the basis of the results, they would place a new emphasis on learning and encouragement and that they would pay more attention to listening, writing, and/or the corresponding verbal communication. Furthermore, exercises in tests, schoolwork, and homework seem to be progressively adapted to the ideas of competence models and multiple-choice tests. The following interview passage provides an example for these narratives.

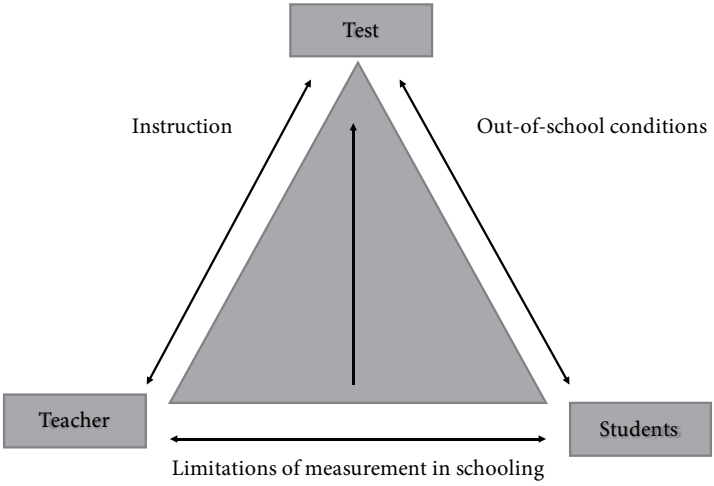
> In this school, before national testing, I suppose, we didn't really deal with questions as we do now because we developed the exercises for the tests in the old-fashioned way. Since national testing came in, we have been developing tests in a new format from first grade up. And I think we'll notice how the kids have become accustomed to these exercises in the next National Education Test. As I said before, the idea about what makes my colleagues special, well, we've also tried to bring this up at conferences and get it out there. (Interview 6)

What we actually see is that school leaders try to use the official language of the ministry. From this perspective, they feel predominantly confident that national testing offers a possibility for capturing and checking competencies but also for positioning their own school in an objective and fair comparison with other schools. They see it also as a way to evaluate and document the changes in their own instruction and to capture the effectiveness of that

instruction. But we get another perspective if we look at the concrete changes at school. From this view, school leaders do not seem to be so sure anymore that national testing can give them an orientation for further development at school. The ambivalent attitude toward national testing would appear to be due to the perception that results of national testing can be seen as snapshots of the current achievements of students that capture only a limited segment of schooling and what actually happens in the school system. This becomes obvious in the following statement of the interviews:

> But they were certainly thought-provoking, but not so much that I wouldn't say we found a whole lot of information in it about what we can do differently. Some can, some areas always lag behind, okay? If I enhance reading, then some other area is lacking and that's the problem, okay? (Interview 10)

Whose fault is it? Attributing the results from national testing, we also see this ambivalence of different perspectives in reframing national testing when we look at how school leaders explain the results their school achieved. In the interviews, school leaders mentioned three different ways of attributing the results from the national education standards. These possibilities can be arranged as in a triangle (as seen in the figure below).



Triangle to categorize the explanations for the scores achieved in National Testing of school leaders.

One way is that school leaders think that out-of-school conditions are relevant and important for outcomes. In this perspective, they argue that the family's socio-economic background and the missing commitment, but also the missing involvement of parents, are responsible for bad outcomes. Because students do not bring the requirements necessary for schooling or because they have to deal with family problems, it is also hard for the school and teachers to prepare them adequately for the tests. Interestingly, results from national education testing mostly were attributed in the interviews to out-of-school conditions, such as the social background of the students. This perspective is illustrated in the following interview excerpt:

> Last year we had some girls in the class where the families and the mothers had problems that were not really connected with the school, but we couldn't really get on with these people. Yes, definitely we had problems and I've seen the results of our school, because there were exactly three students who were hardly able to do anything properly in this class and there were these girls, who more or less failed themselves on purpose. So, umm, compared with the average, we didn't do so well in the English test and were just below average for the overall test results. (Interview 3)

Another way to look at the results is to attribute the outcomes to the test itself, i.e., that the test can only measure what it measures and has some limitations. An example of this argumentation mentioned in the interviews is that, based on the construction of the test, it can only capture a snapshot of what schooling is about. In this argument, the inference that schooling is based only on national education testing is not a fair and good choice (for example, see the following interview passage):

> Publicly, because in this form it's not possible to assess and evaluate schooling, and umm, this I wanted to add, if schooling is constructed only as an assessment of the national education test, then schooling and education is interpreted very, very narrowly. […] We're doing a good job, but also a job that can't be assessed in the form of a test. (Interview 1)

A possibility that was hardly noted was to explain the results as being due to the teacher's instruction, his or her personality, and what happened within a specific school. Although officially, national testing was intended to give feedback on learning processes and what had been learned at school, this argument rarely was used in the interviews. Here we can see the ambivalence

in school leaders' views. While on the one hand school leaders reported that they had reflected on the results and used the testing for changes in instruction and school improvement, they, on the other hand, could not see the reasons for the results coming from themselves.

Gap Management in Testing Times

The present text defines school leadership as gap management, which can have different connotations depending on the tradition in which it is embedded, i.e., curriculum or Didaktik. In short, by gap management we mean that school leaders deal simultaneously with centralized and state-based regulations and demands but also with matters, needs, and requirements of the local school. In the curriculum tradition, school leadership was a major part of local curriculum planning and making. By implementing state-based standards testing and a kind of national curriculum, the local curriculum leadership became lost, and school leaders were encouraged to execute an external curriculum.

In this context, gap management deals with executing a centralized curriculum and being accountable for it, but also adapting this curriculum to local conditions. From a Didaktik tradition, embedded in a centralized school system, school leadership has to deal with the gap between controlling and regulating the demands of centralized school authorities and defending the pedagogical freedom of teachers. This gap management becomes obvious as a "rhetorical shift" in the narratives of school leaders and seems to remain stable also after the implementation of (low-stake) national testing. The interviews showed that school leaders also used this rhetorical shift when arguing for or against national testing results. Whereas as part of their administrative duty, they defended the results by explaining the changes they had initiated in their schools, they simultaneously defended the necessity of teachers' pedagogical freedom by emphasizing the educational surplus of schooling beyond achieving good test results and the situatedness of teaching and learning.

This text also offers a background story on the current situation from the perspective of school leaders on the implementation of national testing in New Middle Schools in Lower Austria. It emphasizes the importance of the contextual factors of the surrounding school area for school reforms, especially for reforms that deal with standardization in the context of achievement

assessment and competence measurement. Often these reforms are constructed like a one-size-fits-all solution, which might not capture the real challenges and problems of the individual schools. For schools that face especially challenging circumstances, the results of national education testing might not be the first priority of their work. The same applies for schools that enjoy good conditions and have reached outcomes above the average. They often see the testing results as a way to acknowledge their good standing in comparison with other schools. The results of national education standards might be of greater interest for schools that, due to their location, find themselves in competition with academic secondary schools. Another important point is that changes because of the national education standards often do not go beyond the level of tests, tasks, and exercise materials. Further interventions and reflection on instruction, the concept, preparation, and course of the lessons were not mentioned in the interviews in the context of the debate on national education testing.

Furthermore, the idea of teaching and learning as a linear process and the deductive reasoning that excessive training in competencies that had failed might lead to better results the next time around seem to be important points for future research. This information is not only of interest for policymakers, for implementers of reforms, and for education researchers, but also for teachers and school leaders. Until now, it remains unclear which specific information is used by school leaders and how it is used for the determination and planning of interventions in their school. Thus, the question also arises as to which information resources seem to have the most relevance for school leaders.

As we know from the Anglo-American context, schools in the future will have to deal with expectations constrained by resources. The quality of schooling is measured in terms of accountability for satisfying expectations within given resources. The interviews show clearly that school leaders are successful if they manage the gap and find ways and the capacity to react to the local problems of their school. Successful school leaders find it useful to take national testing as a possibility and occasion to reflect on local circumstances. But that is not the only point. They also face the limits of national testing and see the "added value" of schooling. In this sense, their aim is not only to achieve better test results but also to find ways to deal with the problems facing them. This also necessitates allowing for local leeway in decision-making. The same applies to parents. Although national testing

also is intended to inform parents about the actual performance of their child and school, the results seem to hold only a part of parents' attention. In many schools, parents do not seem to be surprised or affected by test results.

The results of the interview study indicate that school leaders try to deal with the challenges they face by managing the gap between the external expectations of national testing and the local practices and demands of their school. In this sense, an interesting phenomenon can be observed and is described with the terms of "talk" and "action" of neo-institutionalism (Brunson & Olsen, 1993). First introduced by Brunson and Olsen (1993) in research on reforms in public administration, they used this differentiation to explain dealing with contradictory or inconsistent institutionalized provisions of organizations. On the "talk" level, organizations master the proper and particular vocabulary of the reform, they present themselves as open-minded toward the reform, and they signal that the organization complies with the expectations and notions desired. However, the "action" level, which includes everyday behavioral patterns and interpretative patterns, is not affected. The loose coupling of "talk" and "action" is seen as a possibility for creating a space of freedom for dealing with expectations at a distance (Schaefers, 2002). Expectations, benchmarks, and provisions that are not in line with the interests or conditions of the organizational actors are only symbolically realized at the "talk" level. Neo-institutionalism theory describes that this symbolic compliance helps to ensure the legitimacy of the organization (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Based on these ideas, school leaders seem to be bridging the gap between the prescriptions of new reforms like national testing or the implementation of a new school type (the New Middle School) and the local demands of their school by "talking the talk" they especially need. From the inside of schooling (or the organization), it is all about using teachers' "talk." In this context, school leaders are using the language of instruction, Didaktik, curriculum, and professionalism when they discuss the results with teachers at their school. So, discussing the results of national testing is all about a stronger representation of learning, exercises in tests, the adaptation of school and homework to the ideas of competence models, better receptiveness to the needs of students, observation by colleagues during lessons, teacher training, and so on. It is not very specific, and it is not clear if much changes in practice, but it is about how these matters are discussed within the school.

In this sense, school leadership and gap management are defined as turning official (reform) norms into building some kind of professional learning community and asserting the legal regulations symbolically. School leaders "talk the talk" within the respective contexts they need.

In general, most of the school leaders seem to be positively disposed towards national testing reform. However, it is questionable if this optimism is just an expression and reflection of the "talk" level to foster the legitimacy of their school. If you ask them what the results of national testing tell them about their school, they answer: "not much." So, what school leaders do is actually put the new challenge into the old gap management strategy. Outside school they talk the talk of accountability, but at the same time they see themselves as key figures taking care of the pedagogical freedom and the local autonomy of each and every teacher and not interfering too much with their teaching. Here school leaders act as classical representatives of their school, so failure is of course attributed to the outside wherever possible, e.g., to characteristics of students, out-of-school conditions, school environment, parents, or limitations of the test, but not to factors inside the school.

In summary, the interviews illustrated how school leaders try to translate reform demands into familiar activity and interpretative patterns for their school. They deal with these demands inside and outside the school differently and in a symbolic and ceremonial way. From the inside, school leadership is about sending a signal about the legal regulations to teaching staff and transforming the demands into instructional and curriculum language. Outside the school, leadership is about ensuring legitimacy by using the vocabulary of the reform and showing that their school meets the norms that are demanded of a modern organization. Beside the "talk" level, it remains unclear whether changes in activities and implementation of new activities are realized or if the routines and usual problem-solving processes remain stable. This is an important aspect for future research, but unfortunately, it would go beyond the scope of this text.

It should be noted that the presented results take place in a low-stakes environment. Up to now, national testing has had no real impact, and it is not of much consequence in Austria to be low down on the national table. Nobody knows if this will change, but the impression is that there are three conditions typical for many Western countries. The first perspective is that schools in Austria are not as different from each other as they are in the

United States. They are also very homogeneous, and only a few schools really experience difficulties with national testing. Another perspective is that schools in our system have little leadership to change the system. In the Austrian system, school leaders have to administer and not decide. Reforms like school-based management and movements of decentralization are only at their beginnings. Finally, school leaders are highly routinized in this gap management symbolism and are brilliant in changing their approach depending on to whom they are talking. The treatment of keeping both approaches going is a key element of leadership development.

Nevertheless, in different contexts where national testing is connected to important consequences, schools in a high-stakes environment might react in different ways. Also, organizational theory describes a higher adoption of norms in an organization with a stronger dependency on the legitimacy of the norms. In the context of national testing, a narrower adoption could mean a greater focus of curriculum on standards and "teaching to the test." In fact, school leaders in the interviews mentioned cases of cheating in other schools, like correcting the tests with students or studying the examples before the real test. Internationally, this is not a new phenomenon, and standardized test cheating has already been observed in other countries (like the United States or England). Nevertheless, "talking about cheating" also emphasizes a strong feeling of competition and the fear of being compared with hardly controllable criteria and perhaps inconsistent goals; otherwise, school leaders would not have mentioned this during the interviews. But on the other hand, they only described the situation of "other schools," not their own schools, and demonstrated they were ensuring legitimacy by their "talk" of the other schools (standard testing seems unfair if other schools cheat) (cf., see Berliner, 2011; Petrilli, 2012).

As already discussed, models and theories of school leadership have until now not paid much attention to organizational perspectives of neo-institutionalism that might afford a possibility for deepening the understanding of the actions and functions of school leadership. The results might also be connected to previous research on change and reform in the state-based "Lehrplan." Such research, too, indicates that the curriculum realized at a single school is only adapted to the new framework syllabus as far as necessary. This helps to ensure the established "curricular scripts" of teachers, which already secure their professional work at school (cf. Vollstädt et al., 1999).

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