Are Teachers of Primary, Secondary and High Schools of Athens Engaged in the Four Dimensions of Distributed Leadership?

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Abstract   Distributed leadership is defined as a distributed leadership practice "stretched over the social and situational contexts of the school" (Spillane et al., 2004). Distributed leadership is about leadership practice and not leaders or their roles, functions or routines (Spillane et al, 2004; Spillane, 2006). It is based on cooperation between the members of an educational organisation. The purpose of this study is to investigate where the teachers of all school grades are engaged in the four dimensions of Distributed Leadership. The research questions of this study were answered using the Distributed Leadership Readiness Scale (DLRS), which is a self-evaluation scale developed by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to measure school's readiness to distribute leadership and, therefore teachers' engagement in leadership practices can be measured accordingly (Smith, 2007; Christy, 2008). The findings of the study revealed that distributed leadership practices are applied to Greek schools mostly in elementary and secondary schools, whereas high school teachers are not highly engaged with some of the distributed leadership dimensions.

Keywords   Teachers • Primary • Secondary • High Schools • Athens • Leadership

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the increased demand for meeting standards and achieving high outcomes, forces the school principals to work collaboratively in an attempt to develop leadership in others and to distribute responsibilities. The philosophy of the principal as the heroic leader has become obsolete. As a result, school improvement can take place through collaborative learning communities (Lashway, 2003).

Collaboration between the members of an educational community is vital as it can enable them to transform the school as an organisation. "If schools are to be learning communities this cannot be achieved by operating with models of change and improvement depended upon individual leadership. Consequently, a new paradigm is emerging, one that is premised upon the leadership capability of the many, rather than the few" (Harris, 2003).

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The concept of learning community is closely linked to collaboration as "in schools learning communities work in groups and use effective communication and team processes to achieve their common goals" (Wilmore, 2007). Wilmore continues advocating that "everyone in the learning community encourages and solicits others in the cause of a solid education for every student, both of today and tomorrow".

Thus, this growth of collaboration and partnership in an educational community changes and redefines leadership. New concepts and types of leadership enter the educational arena in order to meet the contemporary needs of principals and students. Styles of leadership that encourage the principal to share responsibilities and distribute authority have been examined by scholars.

Distributed leadership is an emerging theory and as every new theory, distributed leadership has its opponents and supporters but since it is rather new, there is a need for more studies on this type of leadership. Critics argue that distributed leadership "is nothing more than a 'new orthodoxy' which reinforces managerialist principles" (Fitzerald and Gunter, 2007, cited in Harris, 2009). On the other hand, "supporters claim that it can transform leadership practice and it can provide a new way of thinking about leadership in schools" (Spillane et al., 2001, cited in Harris, 2009).

Although this term is widely used in the foreign bibliography, it was rather intriguing the fact that its presence in the Greek context is rather limited. The majority of studies on school leadership in the Greek context focuses on the role of principalship in schools (Pasiardis, 1993; Papanaoum, 1995), the educational management and the quality of management in education (Petridou, 2002; Zavlanos, 2003; Saitis, 2007) and the role of gender in educational leadership and management (Athanassoula – Reppa & Koutouzis, 2002; Pasiardis, 2003). In most studies the notion of distributed leadership is only referred to as part of the existing literature but major empirical studies that focus on this type have not been conducted up to this point.

The only study concerning distributed leadership in Greek schools is the one by Natsiopoulou and Giouroukakis (2010) who conducted a research in a large high school in Greece. According to their study, the principal of the school implemented the democratic and distributed model of leadership, allowing the teachers to have full participation in all the school's decision-making processes and to assume all administrative roles. The results were rewarding for both the principal and the teachers as "teacher satisfaction and retention improved. Many teachers reported substantial improvements in student achievement as well. Students also noted an improved focus on teaching and learning at the school" (Natsiopoulou and Giouroukakis, 2010).

1.1. Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership is defined as a distributed leadership practice "stretched over the social and situational contexts of the school" (Spillane et al., 2004). Distributed leadership is about leadership practice and not leaders or their roles, functions or routines (Spillane et al, 2004; Spillane, 2006). It is less concerned about the individual roles, talents or characteristics of the leader and more involved with creating joint responsibility and leadership capabilities. Distributed leadership does not take the responsibility of leading the school from the principal. Most importantly, distributed leadership does not mean that there is not anyone responsible for the overall organisation. Instead, it requires the principal to understand the relationship between leadership and organisational structures, school vision, and school culture (Elmore, 2000).

A great number of studies in the distributed leadership field have been conducted and the terms 'participative leadership', 'shared leadership', 'group decision making', 'teacher leadership' and 'shared decision making' are often used interchangeably by scholars and practitioners in international bibliography (Spillane, 2005). Within the educational environment, distributed leadership is seen as a prerequisite for an alive and evolving organisation, as schools are. The distributed style of leadership implies a different power relationship within a school setting, because it encourages the school to make leadership more fluid instead of stationary (Harris, 2003).

Distributed leadership is based on cooperation between the members of an educational organisation. Thus, the interdependencies among staff members' actions have created three forms of distributed leadership: spontaneous collaboration, intuitive working relations and institutionalised practices (Gronn, 2002). Firstly, spontaneous collaboration is the cooperation of individuals whose different expertise and skills are used in order to solve a problem. This can be "regular and anticipated (e.g., budget meetings, staff appraisals) or unanticipated (e.g., crises, major problems), and they vary in scale, complexity and scope" (Gronn, 2002). Secondly, intuitive working relations characterise the relationships that the members of an organisation develop so that they can solve a problem or complete a task (Gronn, 2002). And lastly, institutionalised practices are based on "the tendency to institutionalise formal structures". Institutionalised practices of distributed leadership are dictated by formal structures in a school that include role assignments, grade level organisation, or schedules. But "regardless of how and why practices are institutionalised, concretively acting units can be the focus of colleagues' attributions of leadership" (Gronn, 2002).

1.2. The four dimensions of distributed leadership

Elmore was the first to develop a conceptual framework for studying distributed leadership. According to this framework, there are certain dimensions related to the distribution of leadership. For Elmore (2004), distributed leadership does not mean that nobody is responsible for the overall performance of the organisation and the leaders must create a common culture of expectations regarding skills and knowledge, whilst individuals are held accountable for their contributions to the collective result. Elmore and the Connecticut Department of Education developed a tool in order to measure these dimensions. The DLRS (Distributed Leadership Readiness Scale) incorporated the dimensions that Elmore had identified which were; mission, vision and goals; school culture; decision-making; evaluation and professional development; and leadership practices.

However, through a factor analysis in order to justify its validity and reliability, Gordon reduced them to four as he merged the decision-making and evaluation/ professional development into one – the shared responsibility dimension.
The four dimensions of distributed leadership as used in the DLRS are:
1. Mission, vision and goals
2. School culture
3. Shared responsibility
4. Leadership practices.

Mission, vision and goals

Distributed leadership requires shared *mission, vision and goals*. "Mission, vision and goals are considered the building block of the professional learning community (DuFour and Eaker)" (Smith, 2007). Vision has been characterised as an education platform that incorporates the school's beliefs about preferred aims, methods, and climate. This creates a community of mind that establishes behavioural norms for the organization (Gordon, 2005). Despite their importance, "the mission, vision, and goals of a school can only be effective if all school members are aware of them and they are clear, meaningful, useful, and current and reflect important educational values that support the educational direction of the district" (Gordon, 2005). Thus, conflicting visions or goals that may hinder organisational change are a disadvantage for the application of distributed leadership. This lack of shared mission, vision and goals in Storey's (2004) study led the school to de-motivated students and teachers with conflicting priorities.

School culture

Second, distributed leadership requires a common *school culture*. Elmore (2000) explains how important a common culture is in distributing leadership
"In a knowledge-intensive enterprise like teaching and learning, there is no way to perform these complex tasks without widely distributing the responsibility for leadership among roles in the organisation, and without working hard at creating a common culture, or set of values, symbols, and rituals".
This set of values, symbols and rituals that Elmore refers to can be seen as the cornerstone of distributing leadership in an organisation and each school should pay particular attention to the features of its culture. As Harris puts it, "distributed leadership means multiple sources of guidance and direction, following the contours of expertise in an organisation, made coherent through a common culture" (Harris, 2005, cited in Robinson, 2009).

Shared responsibility

Third, distributed leadership also encourages *shared responsibility* among staff members. Sharing responsibility reinforces the idea that there is not one leader and the responsibility should be shared between the staff members (Storey, 2004). As Elmore (2000) proposes, this should be formed according to the interests, skills, experience and areas of expertise of each member. It is therefore important to organise individuals in the suitable positions so that they can complement each other.

Leadership practices

Fourth, distributed *leadership practices* organise staff to be more productive. The way the leaders interact with the others and the practices involved are closely linked to the artifacts – the ideas and intentions of the leader. "A distributed perspective on leadership seeks to both articulate the range of these artifacts as they constitute leadership practice and to characterize the ways in which such artifacts define and are defined by leadership activity" (Spillane et al., 2004). Leadership practices provide insights into how school

leaders act and the leadership routines within the structure of the school (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004). However, when skills and ideas within the organisation cannot solve the problem, then effective distributed leadership practices require seeking knowledge and skill outside the organisation (Christy, 2008).

1.3 Distributed leadership in greek schools

As far as the Greek education administration system is concerned, Saiti (2009) states that it needs to be altered so as to become more effective. She agrees that "Greek governments have sought efficiency through a plethora of legislative acts, which have precipitated an administrative deadlock in schools rather than an increase in productivity".

In order to understand the role of educational leadership and more specifically, distributed leadership in Greek schools, it is of vital importance to briefly analyse the process that is followed in Greek state schools for a headteacher to be appointed. Any Greek state teacher can be appointed as a headteacher provided that he/she has completed a certain number of years as a permanent teacher. There is not any prerequisite for previous experience or training and the final selection is made by a committee. When someone is appointed as a headteacher his/her teaching hours per week are reduced to a minimum 4 hours for secondary teachers and to 6 for primary teachers (Argiropoulou, 2006). So, in Greek schools, headteachers can hold two positions in a school, that of a teacher and an administrator.

According to the Greek legislation, the principal's competences and responsibilities are stated in the Official Gazette by the law 105657/2002 (27-39, law 105657/16-10-2002, Official Gazette 1340 vol.B). The role of the school principal is multi-faceted and according to the gazette the duties are divided into categories; general duties and responsibilities of the principals, their duties and responsibilities to the teachers, to the students, to the school counsellors and to the other people involved in education, such as the parents' council etc. Among other duties, the school principal is responsible for the smooth function of the school, the maintaining of laws, the co-ordination of school life as well as for the implementation of the laws by the teachers as published by the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs (YPEPTH). The school principal also takes part in the evaluation of the teachers and he cooperates with the school counsellors. The administrative role of the principal is closely related to the function of the school process.

However, as Saitis (2007) states, the "Greek educational system is highly centralized and as a result the principal has a very strictly determined place for action". Thus, we cannot claim that this can lead to a "dynamic leadership that can ensure the correct orientation of the school" (Theofilidis, 1994: 92-98, cited in Saitis).

Studies have shown that the vast majority of headmasters of primary and secondary education in Greece have never been taught educational management and leadership skills (Zavlanos, 1981; Saitis, 1990, 1997; Saiti and Mihopoulos, 2005). Argiropoulou (2006) states that in her research headteachers expressed the need for training in all aspects of school management.

In the 'Leadership for learning' project, 22 schools participated in a three year study of leadership spanning seven countries, including Greece. MacBeath (2006), presenting the findings of this research, draws some very interesting conclusions for the leadership practice in our educational settings. "In Greece 'leadership' carries connotations of

'power over' " (MacBeath, p.39). Indeed, the centralisation of power in the Ministry of Education (YPEPTH) and the bureaucratic attitudes are some of the disadvantages of the Greek education administration system. Thus, "a strongly centralised administrative system can be a significant obstacle to the efficiency of a school system" (Saiti, 2009).

Regardless of the law 1566/85 which aims at the decentralisation of education, Katsaros (2006) points out that the decision-making concerning the curriculum and the teaching methods used, is still defined by the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs (YPEPTH) and the Pedagogical Institute, which are the two main constitutions in charge of all the educational aspects. Thus, the principals are always accountable to them for the decisions made for the school. The distribution of leadership is questionable as "in regimes with a deeply entrenched addiction to hierarchy, this presented a leadership dilemma. In Greek schools, principals spoke of constantly bumping up against a tradition that attached specific and inflexible roles to the headteacher, teachers, parents and the school custodian" (MacBeath, 2006, p. 43). The Ministry of Education (YPEPTH) has imposed specific regulations and designations for the headteachers' role. These "strict designations of the Heads' administrative profile limit any initiative they would take in terms of decision-making in the long run" (Argiropoulou, 2006).

The results of a study concerning the effective financial management in Greek education concluded that distributed leadership is not applied in the Greek educational settings. Argiropoulou (2006) found that the majority of Greek headteachers has never participated in a training course on school management and that a great number of them delegate some of their school financial management tasks to the teaching staff. "This may not show a general managerial intention to delegation but a means to alleviate the burden of everyday routine. It is characteristic that almost half of the subjects admit they do not have enough time to carry out all their routine managerial duties and all of them wish to stop teaching while they are Heads" (Argiropoulou, 2006). Therefore, this delegation of tasks and the teachers' engagement in school financial management should not be perceived as a practice of distributed leadership in Greek schools as it mainly concerns performing bureaucratic or secretarial tasks. The delegation of tasks is mostly related to the administrative burden that principals carry rather than a distribution of leadership responsibilities and duties to the teaching staff.

The practice of educational leadership is greatly influenced and determined by two basic structural characteristics of the administration system; bureaucracy and centralism. Bureaucratic practices are related to the hierarchical positions, control and monitoring, and therefore there is dependence of work and positions that are found below by the work and the positions that are found above. This hierarchical structure has imposed specific roles and duties to the different parts of the pyramid, at the top of which find themselves the minister and the central service of Ministry of Education and hierarchically graded to under the positions of the Regional Directors of Education, the Directors of Education, the headteachers and deputy headteachers and, finally, the teachers. This bureaucratic and hierarchical model is linked to centralism which is an extension of the centralised administration system of the Greek state. Centralism is apparent in the Greek educational system as "the essential decisions on most subjects that are reported in the basic sectors of administration, organisation and operation, are in taken, mainly, at national level, at a binding way for the school units"(Iordanidis, 2006).

On the other hand, it is not only the centralisation of the system that hinders the development of distributed leadership in Greek schools. Iordanidis, Lazaridou and

Babaliki (2011) investigated Greek high school teachers' views on what principals can/should do to increase the effectiveness of their schools. The results of their research included parts of the leadership practices of these schools and the teachers' opinions about the decision making in their schools which are noteworthy. "Although they assigned the highest level of importance to good management of decision making, they rated the use of a participative approach to decision making lower in importance. One has to wonder whether this is an indication of support for a directive style of leadership and/or a reflection of the centralized system of school governance in Greece" (Iordanidis et al, 2011). This can further be explained by the teachers' perceptions concerning the practice of leadership by the principals. The teachers may not want to be part of the decision-making process and to participate in it due to the low capability of principals to lead. In a study concerning the satisfaction of teachers with primary school organisation, teachers rated the principals' leadership ability and their ability to evaluate, as the lowest ones (Eliophotou-Menon and Saitis, 2006).

Teachers want the principal to promote a more distributed model of leadership within their schools. "They attached high importance to the principal having a strong vision for the school, showing confidence in teachers, emphasizing the importance of regular professional development, working to build good interpersonal relations with and among staff; and maintaining open communications with teachers" (Iordanidis et al, 2011). All these elements are part of the distributed leadership and they are aspects that can lead the teachers to a more effective and dynamic participation in the school's administrative practices.

Nevertheless, it seems that educational leadership and management, is not central to the teachers' and principals' priorities, as its value is sometimes underestimated. In his research on the headteachers' views about the innovations, Iordanidis (2006), found impressive the fact that none of the headteachers connect the significance of innovations with the exercise of his managerial duties and the realisation of the head role. "All the opinions were in relation to the innovations in level of educational – pedagogic – didactic process and were not combined with the administrative dimension of their role as executives of education".

Consequently, from the inquiry of the bibliography, the researcher realised that despite the studies conducted in Greek schools examining some parts of the educational leadership, the concept of distributed is rather new and its role needs to be identified in the Greek context. Therefore, the need to investigate some parts of the distributed leadership is apparent and "the stronger the argument made for the benefits of distributed leadership, the stronger the case for collective democratic self-management by teachers and other stakeholders as the best means of realizing them" (Hatcher, 2005).

Leadership is essential and regardless of its role in the Greek educational system, it should be viewed as an integral part of the learning process. "Learning and leadership are subversive activities. They are bound together by the responsibility they take for organising, producing and creating knowledge and for the challenge they offer to inert ideas and conventional wisdom...leadership is, to quote John F. Kennedy, 'learningful', a continuing journey of renewed insight and rediscovery" (MacBeath, 2006, p.45).

2. Research methodology

The methodological design of this study is influenced by the theoretical perspectives adopted by the researcher. Throughout the design of the study the researcher acknowledged that the teachers and principals being the subject of this research should not be influenced in any way by the researcher as 'in examining social events, researchers adhere to subject-object dualism in that they stand apart from their research subjects and treat them as having an independent existence" (Wardlow, 1989 cited in Kim, 2003). This is one of the intrinsic characteristics of the positivistic mode of inquiry.

Another one which also applies to the present piece of research is that "theory is universal and sets of principles and inferences can describe human behaviour and phenomena across individuals and settings" (Wardlow, 1989 cited in Kim, 2003). Thus, this study took a positivist paradigmatic approach. Positivism argues that reality consists of what is available to the senses, inquiry should be based upon scientific observation and therefore on empirical inquiry and the natural and human sciences share common logical and methodological principles, dealing with facts and not with values (Gray, 2004).

Accordingly in designing this research, the researcher following the positivistic paradigm, assumed that the data and its analysis are independent of the researcher and they do not change because they are being examined. "Positivists separate themselves from the world they study, while researchers within other paradigms acknowledge that they have to participate in real-world life to some extent so as to better understand and express its emergent properties and features (Healy&Perry, 2000 cited in Krauss, 2005).

Moreover, the researcher acknowledging that the concept of school leadership is ambiguous, decided to incorporate a micropolitical perspective in the research design. Iannaccone (1975) became the first to study micropolitics in an educational context. Iannaccone believed that schools should be recognised and understood as political entities wherein school members (that is individuals and groups) develop micropolitical strategies in an attempt to achieve their own personal and school goals.

The researcher when designing the research assumed that the context of the study plays an important role to the survey as it is conducted in a centralised system. As Flessa (2009) states, "schools will not occupy this policy moment of centralized coordination forever and it will be important for our understanding both of leadership and of this historical moment to look back in a few years to see if distributed leadership is an expression of a particular kind of school administration with its roots in the accountability movement, or whether it has theoretical legs that will help understand leadership in more variable policy situations". It is clear that different policies of the countries directly influence the leadership practices, thus micropolitics cannot be split from the research.

Overcoming the limitations of the positivist approach and taking a micropolitical perspective into consideration, the researcher assumes that following an anti-positivist paradigm – interpretivism- can prevent meeting the requirements of the present study. "Interpretivism asserts that natural reality and social reality are different and therefore require different kinds of method" (Gray, 2004) which cannot be applied in this research and it is therefore rejected by the researcher.

The positivist approach is followed by a quantitative methodology and the research design of this study is a quantitative analysis in ordinal data. Quantitative research, as

defined by Gall et al. (2003), describes and explains the social environment by collecting numerical data and statistically analysing the data. In fact, quantitative research relies primarily on numbers as the main unit of analysis. The quantitative research approach is used when the researcher desires to obtain entire trends or statistical truth in the research. According to Smith (1983) quantitative research in education has, thus, attempted to discover existing facts under the research belief that the research act must be a neutral activity from the researchers' subjective viewpoint. Thus, Smith (1983) places quantitative research as a "journey of the facts".

2.1. Methodological approach

The research questions of this study will be answered using the Distributed Leadership Readiness Scale (DLRS), which is a self-evaluation scale developed by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to measure school's readiness to distribute leadership and, therefore teachers' engagement in leadership practices can be measured accordingly (Smith, 2007; Christy, 2008). The DLRS focuses on four dimensions of distributed leadership, *Mission, vision and goals*; *School culture*; *Shared responsibility;* and *Leadership Practices*. These dimensions are based on Elmore's conceptual framework of distributed leadership which initially were five, *mission, vision and goals*; *school culture*; *decision-making*; *evaluation and professional development*; and *leadership practices.* However, Gordon (2005) modified the dimensions through factor analysis and concluded in the four dimensions that are now identified as Elmore's conceptual framework and they are included in the DLRS (Smith, 2007).

2.2. Analysis of the data

Research Question 2: To what extent do primary, secondary and high school teachers differ in their engagement with the four dimensions of distributed leadership practices? The second research question of this study tried to examine the relationship of the primary, secondary and high school teachers with the dimensions of distributed leadership. Therefore similarities and differences between the three levels of education will also be examined. There are some tests conducted with the SPSS programme in order to find the relations between the variances.

Firstly, the Levene test, which is a precondition for parametric tests such as the t-test and ANOVA, is used to assess variance homogeneity (Cohen et al, 2007). The Levene test tests the null hypothesis that the variances in different groups are equal. If the Levene test is significant at $p \leq 0.05$ then we can conclude that the null hypothesis is incorrect and that the variances are significantly different – therefore, the assumption of the homogeneity of variances has been violated.

Another test used to answer the second question is one-way ANOVA which is used in situations when the researcher wants to find out if there are significant differences to be examined. One precondition to conduct one-way ANOVA is for the Levene test to be greater than 0.05. In this case, a post hoc test is conducted with equal variances not assumed or a non-parametric test. After the ANOVA test, further analysis is needed to find out which group differs. Post hoc tests enable the researcher to test every group against every other group in order to examine why they are significantly different.

Dimension 1: Mission, vision and goals

Through the Levene test for the first dimension, the researcher found that the sig. value was 0.330>0.05, so one-way ANOVA could be conducted (Appendix E – Table E 3.1). The score from one-way ANOVA was 0.000 which means that there are significant differences between the variables (Appendix E – Table E 3.2). In order to examine the differences between the groups, the researcher moved on to a Scheffe post hoc test. Significant differences were found between primary and high schools as the sig. value was 0.000 as well as between secondary and high schools. However, no differences were found between primary and secondary schools, as the sig. value was 0.638 which is greater than 0.05 (Appendix E – Table E 3.3).

As it is graphically presented (Graphs 5,6,7), a great percentage of primary school teachers agreed with the first dimension (76.2%) as well as secondary school teachers (72.4%). However, only a quarter of the teachers in high schools (25%) agreed, so they seem to be less engaged in the first dimension.
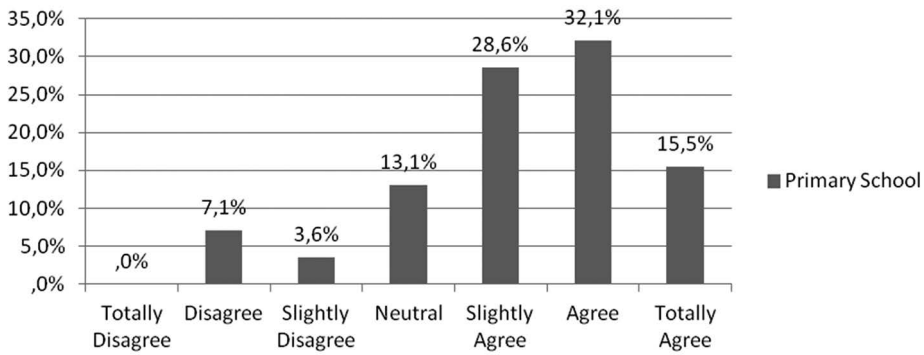
Fig. 5 | *Primary school teachers' answers for dimension 1*
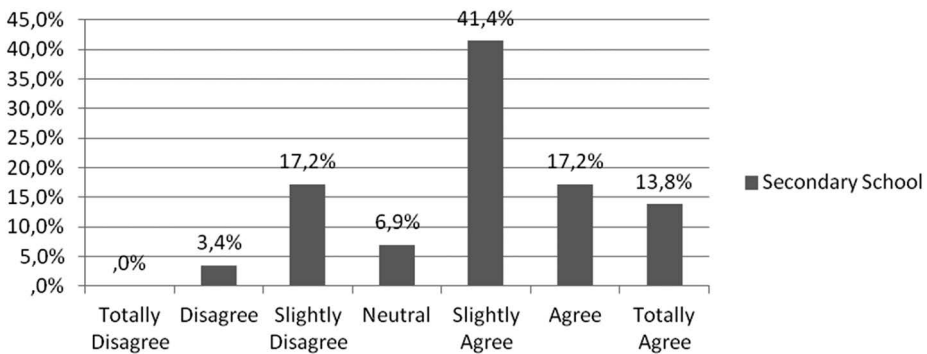
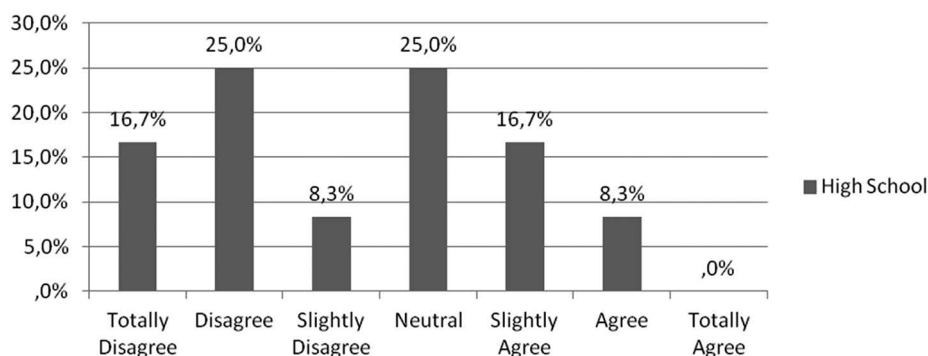**Fig. 6 |** *Secondary school teachers' answers for dimension 1*

Fig. 7 | *High school teachers' answers for dimension 1*

Dimension 2: School Culture

For the second dimension, the Levene test score was 0.010 (Appendix E– Table E 3.1) which did not fulfil the precondition to conduct one-way ANOVA, so a Dunnett T3 test (post-hoc test) was conducted, revealing that there were not any significant differences between primary and secondary schools (Appendix E – Table E 3.4). Yet the test found differences between primary and high schools as the sig. value was 0.017. Moreover, there was a slight difference between secondary and high schools, the sig. value was 0.062. Therefore, a second post-hoc test was used, the Games-Howell test, in order to justify whether there was a significant difference or not. If there is any doubt that group variances are equal then the Games-Howell procedure is used. The Games-Howell test score was 0.054 between secondary and high schools but as it was almost equal to 0.05 the researcher assumed that the null hypothesis of the equality of means was rejected. There would be greater confidence in the result if the significance level was 10%.

The differences between the school level and the engagement within the school culture are presented in the graphs below (Graphs 8, 9, 10). 86.5% of the primary school teachers agreed with the second dimension items as well as the secondary school teachers (74.1%). On the other hand, the majority of high school teachers did not agree as the 58.3% tended to disagree or to be neutral and 41.7% of them agreed.
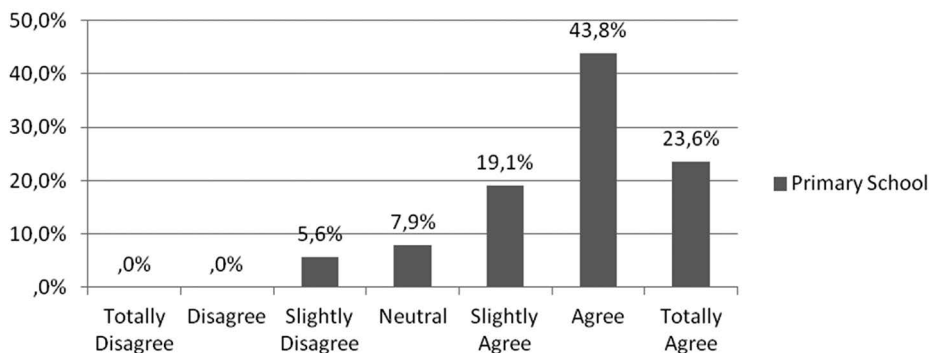

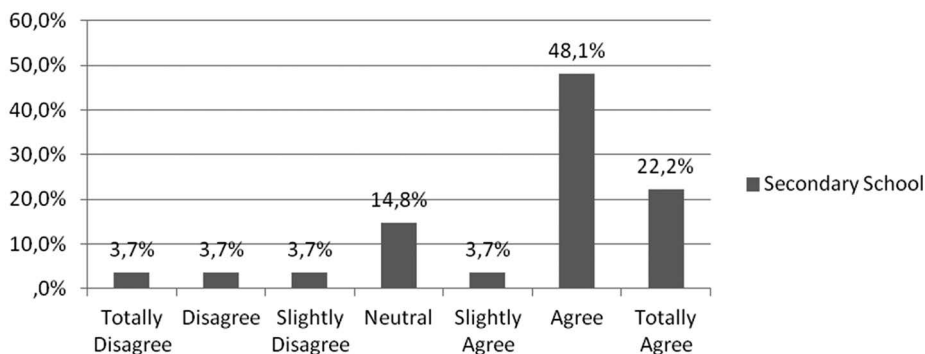**Fig. 8** | *Primary school teachers' answers for dimension 2*

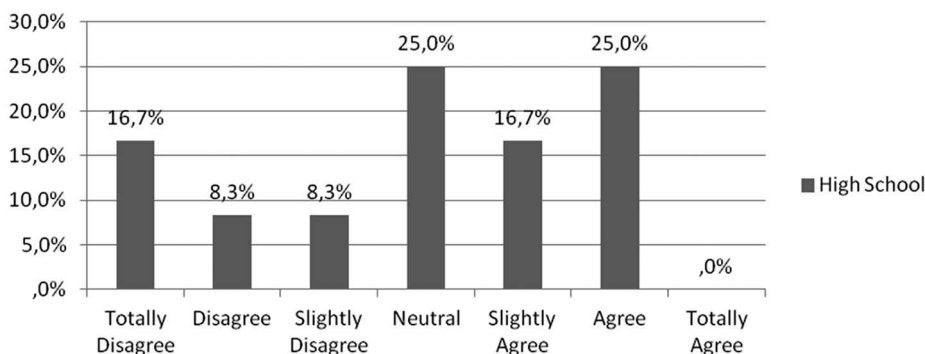**Fig. 9** | *Secondary school teachers' answers for dimension 2*

Fig. 10 | *High school teachers' answers for dimension 2*

Dimension 3: Shared Responsibility

In order to examine the third dimension, the Levene test was again done which led the researcher to do one-way ANOVA as the sig. value was 0.211 (Appendix E- Table E 3.1). Accordingly, ANOVA's score (0.000) showed that there were significant differences and a Scheffe post-hoc test was used to find the differences between the groups (Appendix E – Tables E 3.2, 3.3). Differences were not found between primary and secondary teachers (sig. value was 0.458), whereas between primary and high schools there were differences as the sig. value was 0.001<0.05. Moreover, differences were found between secondary and high schools (sig. value 0.000). Therefore, as in the first two dimensions, primary and secondary teachers were engaged in the dimensions of distributed leadership, whereas high school teachers were not engaged within the third dimension.

Teachers from primary schools who agreed formed the 67%, from secondary schools the 92.6% and from high schools the 25%. This depicts the significant differences between high schools and secondary schools as well as between high schools and primary schools (Graphs 11, 12, 13).
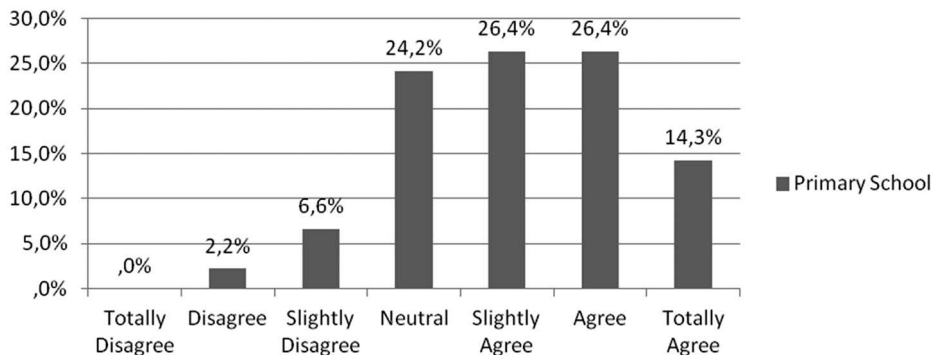
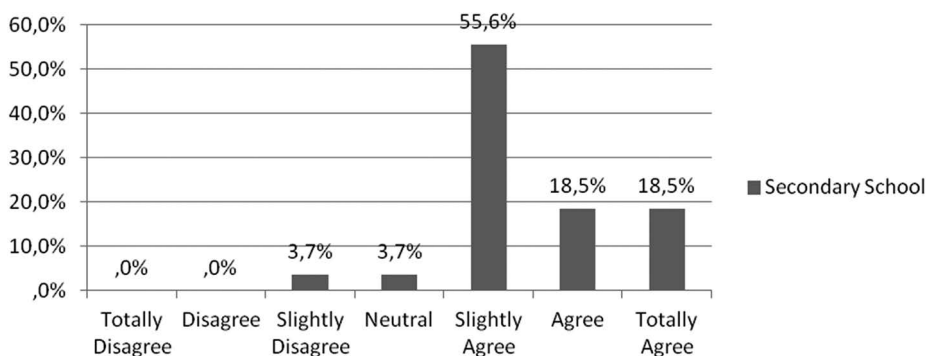**Fig. 11** | *Primary school teachers' answers for dimension 3*

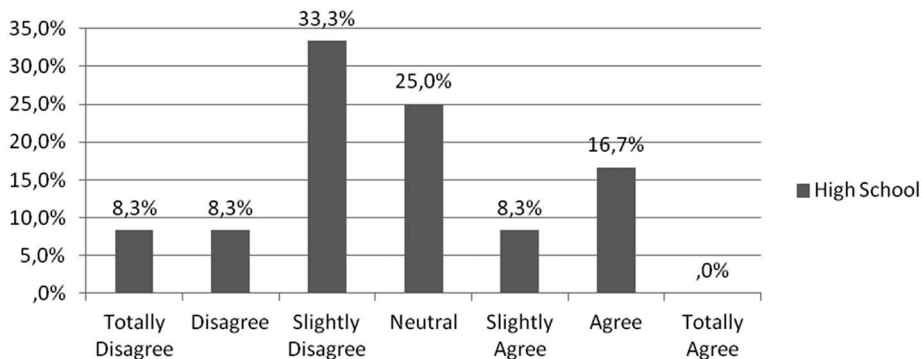**Fig. 12** | *Secondary school teachers' answers for dimension 3*

Fig. 13 | *High school teachers' answers for dimension 3*

Dimension 4: Leadership Practices

For the fourth dimension, the same procedure with the Levene test and one-way ANOVA was followed leading to a Scheffe post-hoc test (Appendix E – Tables E 3.1, 3.2, 3.3). It resulted in significant differences between primary and high schools. On the other hand, primary and secondary schools did not have differences in the leadership practices as the sig.

value was 0.935. Differences in the leadership practices were also found between secondary and high schools. As it is shown, the vast majority of high school teachers (78.6%) were not engaged in leadership practices, whereas 7.1% of them were engaged and 14.3% had a neutral position in this dimension. This is depicted in the graph below (Graphs 16).

Consequently, high school teachers differed in their engagement within all the dimensions, whereas primary and secondary teachers were the same (Graphs 14, 15).
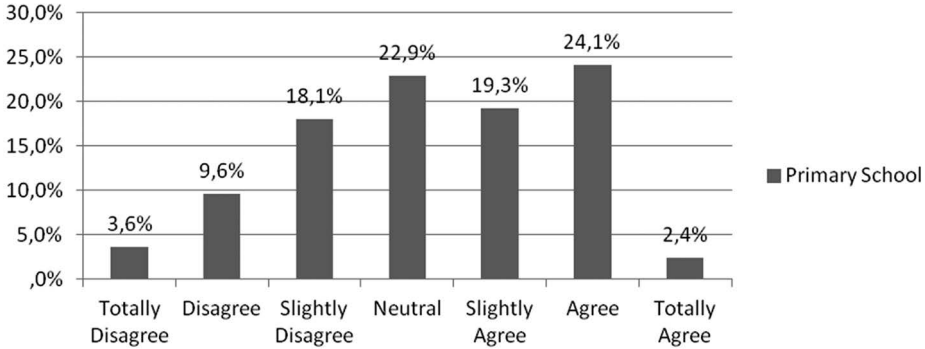
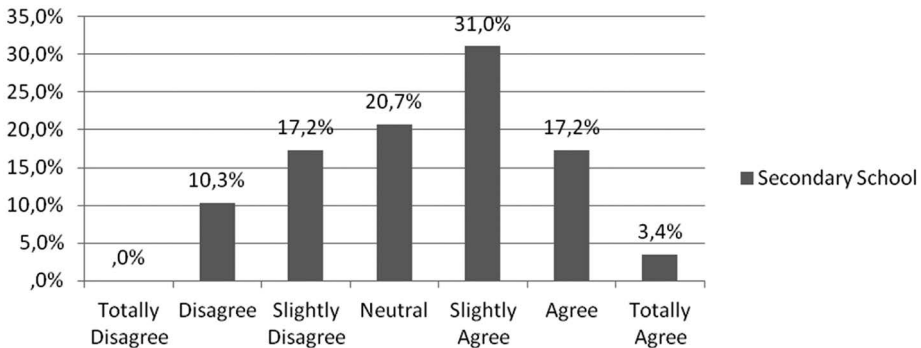**Fig. 14 |** *Primary school teachers' answers for dimension 4*

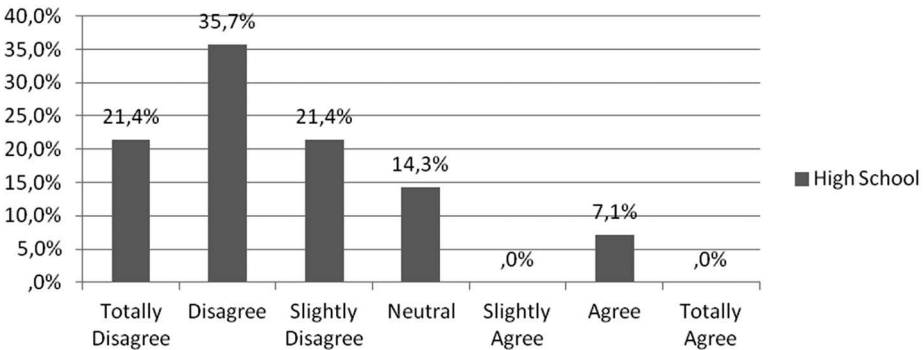**Fig. 15 |** *Secondary school teachers' answers for dimension* 4

Fig. 16 | *High school teachers' answers for dimension 4*

3. Evaluation

Research Question 2: To what extent do primary, secondary and high school teachers differ in their engagement with the four dimensions of distributed leadership practices? The engagement of teachers within the dimensions of distributed leadership and the school level was examined for the second research question. Overall, significant differences were found in the primary and high school teachers' engagement and in secondary and high school teachers' engagement. Within the 'mission, vision and goals' dimension, primary and secondary school teachers are engaged more than high school teachers. Accordingly, in the dimension of 'school culture' primary and secondary school teachers are more engaged than high school teachers. As Elmore (2000) suggests, it is the common values and culture that enables the school to attain their mission through distributed leadership. However, high schools seem to lack this common culture.

Within the dimension of school culture, the participants of this study were almost equally divided in their answers for the students' participation in the decision-making of the school. Half of them believed that students were engaged and could make suggestions for their school and half of them did not support this. This finding is controversial but of great importance as well. Given the complexity of contemporary schooling, participation in school governance by all stakeholders - including students - has become essential. Furthermore, students' active involvement in the organisation of school life helps develop their sense of responsibility and appreciation of democracy, important elements in their preparation for citizenship (Saitis, 2002).

Secondary school teachers are greatly engaged in the 'shared responsibility' dimension, primary school teachers are engaged as well but high school teachers do not feel very much engaged within it. However, sharing responsibilities in an organisation supports distributed leadership practices and this is constituted through the interaction of leaders, teachers and the situation as they influence the instructional practice (Spillane, 2006).

Finally, secondary teachers participate in leadership activities and practices as well as primary school teachers. However, as in the previous dimensions high school teachers are not part of the leadership processes at school.

The results of this research are contradictory to the one conducted by Natsiopoulou and Giouroukakis (2010). Their research found that in a large high school in Greece, the principal implemented the distributed leadership model with rewarding results. However, the present research found that the role of distributed leadership is very limited and high school teachers do not participate in distributed leadership practices as primary and secondary teachers do.

4. Conclusion

The findings showed that distributed leadership practices are applied to Greek schools mostly in elementary and secondary schools, whereas high school teachers are not highly engaged with some of the distributed leadership dimensions.

The research revealed that some aspects of distributed leadership are applied in Greek schools and teachers are positively engaged with many of its dimensions. Even though teachers and principals may not be familiar with the distributed leadership practices (Saiti, 2009; Argiropoulou 2006) due to the centralised system, it seems that within

their school environment they unconsciously apply distributed leadership practices in order to meet the demands of the Greek school. The distribution of leadership derives from practical issues such as the increased responsibilities and in order for distributed leadership to be successful, a shared mission, culture, shared responsibilities and leadership practices are necessary (Spillane et al, 2001).

Although the Greek educational system is extremely centralised and the decision-making for the curriculum and the instructional processes are defined by the Ministry of Education (Katsaros, 2006), this research indicates that schools try to implement a distributed course of action engaging teachers in the leadership process. The lack of officially implemented leadership practices in Greek schools derives from the absence of a holistic and long term plan for the training of educational leaders. Therefore, "it seems reasonable to establish a National School of Educational Administration which could coordinate the training provisions all over the country and guarantee the quality of the qualifications" (Thody et al, 2007).

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