



**How the School Principal's Leadership Is Studied in Latin America?
A Review of Local Research in 6 Countries in the Region.**

Paulo VOLANTE

Purpose

This paper reports a systematic review of local research in Latin America about the school leadership focused on learning. The central question is how the leadership of principals is studied, and its effect on improving teaching and learning in various school contexts.

Design/methodology/approach

To obtain the required information we sought in the on-line database of libraries from universities with free access to theses and graduate studies. Furthermore high-use websites in Latin America (Google, Google Scholar and Research Gate) were reviewed. According to the inclusion criteria, 343 studies focusing on educational leadership, instructional leadership, educational management and leadership for learning, made between 2000 and 2015 were selected. This data were analyzed through open encodings and relations were established. A synthesis regarding overarching themes, research characteristics and recommendations for further research on local knowledge is proposed.

Findings

Of all studies reviewed 30 correspond to three Central American countries, 88 to Peru, 104 to Mexico and 121 to Chile. 65% are Master thesis, 20% are thesis of undergraduate programs and 15% are from doctoral studies. According to the approach of instructional leadership, school leaders influence through the teachers in achieving educational goals (Hallinger & Murphy, 1983; Robinson & Timperley, 2007, and Volante 2008), however this approach is not explicit nor predominant in the local studies. Rather we observed a tendency to analyze the conditions and processes of school management and organization in general, with an administrative emphasis, and with a transformational approach or focused on organizational change. The most frequent method used were qualitative studies, specifically case analysis based on interviews, surveys and focus groups with representatives of the school community. The references are mostly spanish editions of educational administration handbooks, and it is very common to use national policy documents for school leadership. Here differences between countries are observed.

Few studies describe or evaluate the effect of the leadership of principals in variables that impact the implementation of the curriculum, or the change in teaching practices or the learning outcomes of students. References to the instructional or learning-centered leadership, has rather an idealized or normative approach more than an empirical one.

Research limitations/implications: The main limitation is that the data source with which we count are only the on-line research reports available in universities.

Practical implications: This review helps to understand the needs of training and emphasis on public policies for the professional development of principals in different contexts in Latin America.

Originality/value: Is the first effort to explore local research in Latin America through the systematization of more than 300 theses studies conducted since 2000. This allows us to understand local perspectives in the analysis of school leadership and provides the basis for a comparative discussion.

Keywords: leadership in Latin America, principalship, instructional leadership, principal leadership