

Preface

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In an era marked by global disruption, growing inequality, and rapid transformation in education systems, the role of school leaders – and educational leadership more broadly – has become increasingly complex, multifaceted, and urgent. This edited volume, *Educational Leadership in a Changing World: Challenges, Practices, and Innovations*, brings together international perspectives and original research that illuminate various dimensions of educational leadership, with a particular focus on school leadership.

Although school leadership has been extensively theorized and empirically studied in recent years, foundational concepts remain the subject of ongoing debate, as leadership is inherently shaped by its context. From a policy standpoint, globalization and internationalization have fostered a certain degree of ‘sameness,’ reflected in both terminology and theoretical approaches.

The international authorship represented in this volume underscores a shared commitment to improving schools and advancing school leadership. The chapters offer a timely and critical exploration of educational leadership in a rapidly changing world. They address pressing issues related to policy, practice, and equity, while providing grounded examples of innovation, resilience, and reflective practice across diverse contexts.

This book fills the void by providing knowledge on the complex, context-sensitive, and ethically grounded nature of educational leadership in diverse global settings. At a time when educational leaders are expected to address challenges, there is a pressing need for schol-

arship that bridges theory, practice, and context through a variety of perspectives and evidence-based policies.

More specifically, this book provides:

- Empirical insights into a variety of topics, including challenges, contextual elements, quality issues, professional well-being, and the leadership aspects of management and principalship.
- Theoretical and conceptual frameworks that highlight diverse topics, including challenges, contextual elements, quality issues, professional well-being, and the leadership aspects of management and principalship.
- Actionable implications for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners on promoting the support of challenges, contextual elements, quality issues, professional well-being, and the leadership aspects of management and principalship.

Chapter 1 is authored by Juan Luis Fuentes and Laura Camas Garido. They set the stage by exploring the emotional, inclusive, and ethical foundations of educational leadership. Drawing on care ethics and moral exemplarity, the authors argue for a human-centred approach to school leadership – one that embraces empathy, cultural responsiveness, and ethical guidance as essential components of effective practice. Their chapter provides both a conceptual grounding and a critical lens through which the subsequent contributions can be understood.

In Chapter 2, Rasa Nedzinskaitė-Mačiūnienė and Antonios Kafa investigate the influence of socioeconomic status on the relationship between leadership practices and student science achievement in the context of the OECD PISA study. Through a robust quantitative analysis, the authors reveal how economic, social, and cultural status (ESCS) mediates and moderates the effects of instructional leadership and school autonomy. Their findings underscore the importance of context-sensitive leadership and the risks of one-size-fits-all approaches to school improvement.

In Chapter 3, Carolina Marlen Luna Perez and Jennifer Ana Domínguez Rodríguez offer a comparative analysis of global leadership models, examining how different nations conceptualise and implement educational leadership in pursuit of quality and equity. Their work highlights both convergences and divergences across systems and encourages readers to reflect critically on the applicability and transferability of leadership frameworks across borders.

Chapter 4, authored by Monika Šimkutė-Bukantė and Vilma Žydžiūnaitė, presents a systematic literature review on the link between leadership styles and teacher professional well-being. Synthesising a wide range of studies, they demonstrate how leadership practices significantly affect teacher motivation, stress, job satisfaction, and emotional resilience. Their chapter makes a compelling case for leadership that prioritises the well-being of educators as a strategic investment in school effectiveness.

Chapter 5, authored by Martina Kovačič and Anita Trnavčević, explores the nuanced interplay between principalship, leadership, and management. Drawing from empirical evidence and theoretical reflection, the authors challenge the tendency to treat these roles interchangeably. Instead, they advocate for a more differentiated understanding of leadership that acknowledges the multiple identities and expectations school leaders must navigate daily.

This book is concluded with Chapter 6, where the editors, Anita Trnavčević and Antonios Kafa, provide a look forward and a reflective synthesis of the insights and pathways that emerge across the chapters. They argue for a leadership paradigm that is not focused only on strategic questions and accountability but is also deeply ethical, relational, and inclusive. Their concluding discussion invites readers to reimagine educational leadership as a collaborative and transformative practice anchored in care, justice, and context-sensitive responsiveness.

Authors come from different contexts and provide insights into leadership challenges, contextual elements, quality issues, professional well-being, and the leadership aspects of management and principalship.

This book can be of great interest to: (1) scholars worldwide who are interested in the topic of educational leadership; (2) educational policymakers, Ministries of Education, and professional development contributors; and (3) to students and graduates who immerse themselves to rethinking leadership for a more just and sustainable educational future. We acknowledge the work of scholars and practitioners working in the field of educational leadership. We hope this book will also trigger their attention and open the space for further discussions.

Finally, we extend our heartfelt thanks to all the contributors for their outstanding collaboration and the richness of their chapters, which have greatly enhanced the depth and diversity of this volume. Their insights and dedication have been instrumental in shaping a

meaningful and timely exploration of educational leadership. We are also deeply grateful to the University of Primorska Press for their unwavering support and commitment throughout the publication process. Their support has been invaluable in bringing this book to light.