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ABSTRACT

Scholars have produced a substantial body of research to analyze how school leaders can change their schools in challenging circumstances to improve organizational conditions, professional relationships, teaching and learning practices, and student outcomes. The main purpose of this paper is to analyze the complex structure of leadership in the learning area that has been created, as a consequence of Chilean educational policy, between principals and Heads of Technical Pedagogical Units (HTPUs). Chile has defined a particular leadership role within school organizations denominated Head of Technical Pedagogical Units (HTPU). This study used a multi-method approach, employing both qualitative and quantitative methods, to understand the leadership relationship between principals and HTPUs. The data results show that HTPUs have had to share leadership with principals, a phenomenon referred to as a bicephalous structure. This situation has resulted in a division of tasks and roles, and thus has introduced more complexity into the school context and an unproductive relationship in terms of leadership for learning. Distributed leadership should be considered as a real alternative to deal effectively with the bicephalous structure of leadership found in the Chilean scenario.

The bicephalous leadership structure: the Chilean case

During the last few decades educational leadership has become a relevant subject for many researchers. The literature is concentrated on investigating the relationship between school leaders’ performance and student outcomes at organizational levels. In other words, educational leadership is aligned with understanding the crucial relationship between leadership and learning within schools. In schools there is a tendency to reflect on teaching practices and leadership practices at both macro- and micro-levels to improve student outcomes. Researchers have produced a substantial body of literature to analyze how school leaders can change their schools in challenging circumstances to improve student outcomes. This paper assumes an indispensable connection between school leaders and school effectiveness.
In this context, the main question is: how can educational leadership be effective in improving student achievement at school? Some researchers (Anderson & Bennett, 2003; Fullan, 2009; Harris, 2009; Heifetz, 1994; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008) argue that it is possible to improve student outcomes if school leaders are capable of using educational leadership effectively as a strategy at the organizational level with learning goals. Others (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Marzano & Waters, 2009) have collected empirical information about the influence of school principals’ styles, given that cultivating good relationships, emotional intelligence and safe working environments for teaching staff can help achieve better student outcomes (Anderson & Bennett, 2003; Fullan, 2009; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). It is clear that researchers from different perspectives have shown that leadership and learning have a strong association with generating positive impacts on leaders, teachers, students and their communities.

The main purpose of this paper is to analyze the complex structure of leadership in the learning area that has been created, as a consequence of Chilean educational policy, between principals and Heads of Technical Pedagogical Units (HTPUs). According to the Ministry of Education in Chile (2005) school leaders are capable of implementing relevant changes in schools. Chile has selected a leadership for learning approach to design new policies to understand the role of the school principal in changing times. However, Chile has defined a locally specific leadership role within school organizations, denominated Head of Technical Pedagogical Units (HTPU); the original Spanish term is jefe de unidad técnica pedagógica. According to MINEDUC (2015) the HTPU plays an essential role in school organizations to improve student outcomes, professional development and curriculum activities. The role involves supervision, organization and evaluation of teaching practices within the schools (MINEDUC, 2005). At the same time, HTPUs act as advisors for the principals, to help them formulate, implement and evaluate strategies for teachers. Therefore, HTPUs are key actors in constructing teaching and learning practices. In addition, the role of the principal in Chile has been undergoing changes recently, including the addition of new demands, responsibilities and a clear mandate to improve learning outcomes. Within this context, HTPUs have to share leadership with principals, a situation that has resulted in a division of roles and tasks and introduced more complexity into the school context.

This paper will be organized into four sections, with the Introduction and Discussion sections including subsections that provide background/contextual information and recommendations, respectively, concerning this particular case study.

**Leadership for learning**

Researchers have demonstrated that educational leadership influences positively on student outcomes, even if the influence is indirect (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2008; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009; Snipes, Doolittle, & Herlihy, 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2003; Witziers, 2004). School principals indirectly impact student performance by directly supporting teaching staff, organizational learning and successful practices (Mulford & Silins, 2003). There is also much evidence that school leaders can act as agents of change when they focus on improving student performances (Anderson & Bennett, 2003; Fullan, 2009), which
constitutes a new notion regarding their role. In organizational terms, it implies that school leaders should be able to perform tasks not only related to administration and coordination of the educational system, but also to profoundly transforming school culture and practices. Indeed, school leaders have an important opportunity to generate changes within a school organization (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Harris, 2009). In the same vein, successful students have school leaders who are developing a wide range of tools and skills in the supervision, coordination and management of both their staff members and the curriculum itself (Brock & Grady, 2012; Davies, Ellison, & Bowring-Carr, 2005; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Robinson et al., 2008; Sergiovanni, 1995). In other words, educational leadership can be successful in improving student achievements if school leaders have sufficient knowledge about effective practices of learning. This leadership promotes a commitment to a common vision at the organizational level (Harris, 2009; Robinson et al., 2008).

One of the main tasks of school principals is to help create a working environment in which teachers collaborate and identify with the school’s organizational mission and goals in relation to student outcomes (Harris, 2009; Sergiovanni, 1995; Whitehead, Boschee, & Decker, 2013). However, if school leaders want to improve student outcomes it is necessary to expand their role in terms of learning. This was the option selected by the Ministry of Education in Chile (MINEDUC). To achieve this goal the Chilean government has generated various programs of leadership across the country to encourage professional development, and school leaders have begun to be trained in curriculum development, communication skills and other aspects of professional development.

The Chilean leadership context

In the Chilean education system, it is possible to observe three different types of schools: public, private-subsidized and private. This is called the Chilean voucher system (Bellei, 2005). The division between public, private-subsidized and private schools has increased social inequalities (Drago & Paredes, 2011). In 2011 more than three million Chilean school students were enrolled in the system; 44% attended public municipal schools, 50% attended private subsidized schools and 6% attended private schools (MINEDUC, 2012).

The Good School Leadership Framework, enacted by MINEDUC in 2005 with a new version enacted 10 years later, created specific competencies, practices and domains for principals exercising roles of leadership in schools. This framework was considered to be a formal approach to understand what it means to be an effective school leader in Chile. The significance of this framework is its ability to systematize a clear understanding of effective leadership through professional standards. It contains five main domains: creating a shared vision, developing professional skills, leading and monitoring teaching and learning processes, organizational management and development, and management and community participation (MINEDUC, 2015). Each of these domains is disaggregated within specific indicators of effective performance for Chilean principals. Finally, MINEDUC explicitly defined that the role of Chilean principals includes leading the educational project as well as supervising their own schools and communities in an economic and administrative
capacity (MINEDUC, 2005). This is an important step in the preparation of principals because it helps bring about professionalization according to national standards. However, it is also more than that: it creates a nationally shared mental model of ‘good leadership practices’.

The bicephalous structure

Chileans principals and HTPUs have different formal roles but they share the same task: to improve learning outcomes. Both of them are focused on tasks such as success in relation to student outcomes, effective teaching practices and improving professional conversations among their staff (MINEDUC, 2015). Thus, on multiple levels they are both concerned with the same issues, which can result in interpersonal and organizational problems. From this angle, it is possible to note some relevant research questions:

- What is the nature of the relationship between principals and HTPUs?
- What tasks are the principals and HTPUs responsible for, respectively?
- Are HTPUs important in Chilean schools?

The important point here is that Chilean schools have a bicephalous structure in terms of leadership, and this situation is generating a division, rather than distribution, of tasks. The bicephalous structure refers to two people leading at the same time and in the same space. This is the principal reason to argue that in this context it is possible to observe a common leadership space. It has been produced as a predictable consequence because educational policies in Chile have redesigned the role of principal. This new design involves more responsibilities, demands and tasks for principals in the learning area. Chilean principals have more influence and power in learning decisions. Chile, based on an international perspective aligned with the literature, has stated that the main task of principal is to generate conditions to improve student outcomes and develop effective practices by teachers. However, while educational policies have redesigned the principal’s role, the role of the HTPU has been maintained. In that sense, the role of HTPUs and the principals overlap in many ways. In other words, Chilean educational policies have created a new role for principals that in effect invade the learning area historically dominated by HTPUs.

The bicephalous structure shows a division, not a distribution, of tasks and this situation is dangerous, especially in terms of projecting a shared vision. Shared vision is key for leadership (Harris, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2008; Sergiovanni, 1995) because goals and directions are essential in mobilizing organizations and their members. In the Chilean case, the HTPU can be responsible for creating a shared learning vision without considering the principal’s point of view, and vice-versa. If schools do not have a shared vision in terms of learning, it is nearly impossible to achieve dissolution of individual conceptions of leadership.

The bicephalous leadership structure is not inherently a good or bad thing. Its value depends on how leadership is distributed in terms of practices, responsibilities and roles. However, the existence of overlapping roles clearly brings more complexity, divisions and dilemmas into the scenario, sometimes generating fractures between
principals and HTPUs. Table 1 shows a comparison of the role of principals and HTPUs in the pedagogical domain.

In the context of this division of responsibilities, it is possible to observe that some of them involve the same activities in practical terms. For example, the role of principals can be translated into activities sustained to create mechanisms to support, develop and evaluate his/her teams. Similarly, the HTPU has to support, develop and evaluate specific practices of the teaching staff. For instance, in the pedagogical domain The principal and his/her leadership team recognize the Chilean curriculum at different educational levels and possess mechanisms to assess them. Similarly, The HTPU plans, analyses and supervises the accomplishments of Chilean curriculum programs at each level. This example shows that both tasks are related to Chilean curriculum and its cultural reading in a particular context. HTPU might be categorized as an operational role. In contrast, the role of principals is aligned with a strategic perspective based on planning and supervision. It seems apparent that the Ministry of Education has conceived of the roles of principals and HTPUs as residing in different respective areas. However, in practical terms they are often engaged in the same tasks, and these roles should be working together to achieve better outcomes in the same area. Hence, the question is: if school principals, in addition to HTPUs, are connected with learning, what is the main reason for maintaining the latters’ role? Are HTPUs even necessary in this new scenario?

To sum up, the bicephalous structure is complex and hybrid. It is complex because it represents a range of activities separated by an invisible line between principal and HTPU responsibilities. The limits of each role are not clear. At the same time, this structure is complex because it contains multiple dimensions. For instance, it is bicephalous but also hierarchical. Why is it necessary to have two heads with different levels of influence and power? It creates a division of tasks and this is the main risk for the whole organization. While principals are preoccupied with creating guidelines for the future of the organization, HTPUs could be considering new problem/solutions in learning terms. Therefore, the risk is that structurally the organization of roles allows for principals to delegate more responsibilities to HTPUs in learning terms, and according to the new model of educational leadership, these responsibilities are the most important. Thus, the role of principal does not actually change at all; principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal: pedagogical domain</th>
<th>HTPU: pedagogical domain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● The principal and his/her leadership team lead curricular change within the school.</td>
<td>● The HTPU designs and organizes curricular activities with the teaching staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● The principal and his/her leadership team understand the Chilean curriculum at different educational levels and possess mechanisms to assess them.</td>
<td>● The HTPU supervises, monitors and evaluates teaching practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● The principal and his/her leadership team organize effectively the time for curriculum activities.</td>
<td>● The HTPU provides feedback for teaching practices, planning lessons and evaluations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● The principal and his/her leadership team support mechanisms to achieve quality processes of learning in classrooms.</td>
<td>● The HTPU plans, analyses and supervises the accomplishments of Chilean curriculum programs at each level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● The principal and his/her leadership team ensure the existence of mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating curriculum and learning outcomes with the Institutional Educational Project of the school.</td>
<td>● The HTPU evaluates the level of student achievements, conducting statistical analyses based on national tests and internal tests to generate remedial strategies to improve student outcomes and teacher performance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
remain within the managerial domain and HTPUs in the pedagogical domain. This bicephalous structure of leadership tends to divide tasks and roles.

**Method**

This study adopted a multi-method approach that, according to Driessnack, Sousa, and Costa (2007), and Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), allows for an integration of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to achieve better comprehension about the study’s object. It takes into consideration an exploratory-concurrent study because the qualitative and quantitative instruments were applied in a concurrent way and its results were triangulated (Creswell, 2003; Creswell, Plano Clark, Guttman, & Hanson, 2003; Dellinger & Leech, 2007), incrementing the data validity and conclusions (Cea D’Ancona, 1996; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006).

Quantitative data collection was obtained through an online survey of 187 school principals and HTPUs from one entire school district in Valparaíso, Chile. We received 78 complete surveys. The average age of the participants was 48 years old with 21 years of job experience. The survey contains seven assertions and one open question. Each one of these assertions contains a specific practice of leadership extracted in the Good School Leadership Framework. The open question was: Is the role of the HTPU indispensable in school organizations? In addition, a focus group was organized with seven principals and seven HTPUs. The criteria for selecting these 14 participants included the following requirements: (a) working in the school district of Valparaíso; (b) working for at least 10 years; (c) working for at least four years with the same principal in the same school. These conditions represent leadership practices institutionalized in the school center. The comments were recorded, fully transcribed and member-checked. This qualitative instrument was used for data collection (Fairclough, 1995). The concept mapping was made by all participants in the focus group before the start of interviews. Thus, the focus group was divided in two sections: first, an explanation about the concept mapping and second, a conversation about the relationship between HTPUs and school principals from participants’ perspectives.

Concept mapping is an effective tool for drawing out what participants understand in terms of roles, and which people are engaging in which tasks. This research strategy focuses on the relationship between concepts in the mind of a learner, teacher or curriculum planner. It is structured around nodes that identify concepts, with these nodes being connected by lines labelled to indicate the relationship between adjacent concepts (McLay & Brown, 2003. p. 74). Concept mapping is a technique that can be useful for understanding through a wide range of concepts the relationships between principals, HTPUs and the organization as a whole (Stoddart, Abrams, Gasper, & Canaday, 2000). Thus, concept maps were selected as a qualitative research strategy because they can offer an illustrative image of relationships, which is certainly useful in this study. Maps were analyzed using computer software (Decision Explorer) that created clusters and repetitions of concepts and linkages.

**Results**

The online survey was completed by 78 people, 33.3% of whom were men ($n = 26$) and 66.6% of whom were women ($n = 52$). Table 2 shows the results associated with each
practice in terms of who was reported as being responsible for each task. Results are presented in percentages.

Practices 1, 2 and 3 fall into the pedagogic domain; in other words, they imply the articulation between curriculum and supporting the teaching staff. 75% of the participants express that these practices are being conducted by the HTPU, not the principal. Practice 4 refers to recognizing teaching skills and assessing them to achieve effective learning goals for students. This practice requires being able to manage pedagogic data and decision-making processes. 53.8% of the participants express that this activity is the responsibility of principals, while 39.7% report that it corresponds to HTPUs. Practice 5 refers to avoiding distracting activities for teachers. According to the results, 53% of the participants link this activity to school principals, 21.8% to HTPUs, and 21.8% to inspectors. This practice is the first that shows data dispersion, which can be explained in terms of its association with administrative tasks, management and the pedagogic domain. Practice 6 is aligned with the early identification of students with different learning styles. This practice shows more distributed leadership in terms of tasks: 16.7% assign it to principals, 28.4% to HTPUs, 23.9% to orientators, and 28.4% to other roles. Finally, practice 7 is connected with detection and diffusion of good teaching practices: 32% considers that this is a school principal task, while 50% believe it to be the task of the HTPU.

According to the data, there exists a high predominance of the HTPU, his/her role is associated with three specific pedagogic practices. The principal’s role solely achieves a maximum of over 50% in two practices, which are associated with managing teaching and learning results (practices 4 and 5). Finally, practices 6 and 7 are distributed across different roles, although the HTPU corresponds with the highest percentage. It is possible to highlight that practices connected with management are generally associated with school principals and practices connected with teaching and learning processes are

### Table 2. Online survey results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practices</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>HTPU</th>
<th>Orientator</th>
<th>Inspector</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Articulation and coherence of curriculum with teaching practices and</td>
<td>15.30%</td>
<td>79.60%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assessment between different levels of teaching and discipline areas.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Monitoring the integral curriculum implementation and learning</td>
<td>19.20%</td>
<td>75.60%</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outcomes at all student levels for improvement teaching practices and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>pedagogic managing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Systematic orientation, assessment and feedback for teaching</td>
<td>15.30%</td>
<td>79.60%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practices and teachers supervision.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Identify strengths and weaknesses of each teacher to put them in a</td>
<td>53.80%</td>
<td>39.78%</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grade, level and discipline to achieve their better teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>performance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Monitoring teachers to not distract of teaching and learning</td>
<td>53.80%</td>
<td>21.80%</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
<td>21.80%</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>processes, avoiding interruptions and overwhelming of school projects.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Implementation of strategies to identify and support early students</td>
<td>16.70%</td>
<td>28.40%</td>
<td>23.90%</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
<td>28.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who have learning difficulties or disruptive conduct, affective or social.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Identification and diffusion of good teaching and learning practices,</td>
<td>32.10%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>7.60%</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
<td>7.70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>at internal level and external level, which are in coherence with the</td>
<td></td>
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<td>necessities of the students.</td>
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generally associated with HTPUs. Therefore, leadership for learning is mainly a task developed for latter, not the former.

With respect to the data from the focus group, it is possible to suggest that the relationship between HTPUs and school principals is configured in two blocks, which corresponds to the quantitative data. On one hand, a group of principals are seen as ‘blind lovers’, those that think everything is fine. One respondent stated, ‘My principal always says that everything in terms of learning is fantastic, amazing and awesome. He always uses positive expressions, I think, because he is comfortable giving me these kind of tasks’. Another participant explains,

In my school, I make all the decisions connected with pedagogy. I know, because of the new role of principals, they have to do the same things I do but...I am pretty sure she probably will be more confused, so I prefer to do my best instead of release these tasks to my principal. That is the way that we are working.

Data suggests that these principals are not able to manage the school in terms of teaching and learning processes. Therefore, the HTPU is responsible for supervision, orientation and evaluation of teaching practices. These ‘blind lovers’ are out of touch in terms of the improvement of teaching and learning practices because they are more concerned with accountability and administrative tasks. One participant states, ‘I believe, in general, that principals are more worried about external stuff rather than internal, because they have the pressure to respond to administrators, governors, etc. I felt that at least in my context’. Another asserts,

In my school, my principal is doing more to monitor teaching practices but I understand that this is my role so he (principal) can sometimes...it depends on his time...to support me. He has a lot of things to do, so I understand that he doesn't have the same time for these complicated tasks.

According to these quotes, principals are constantly pressured by external factors that distract them from focusing on teaching and learning practices. In these cases, student outcomes and teaching performance are not being monitored by principals, who are not conducting data analysis or observing classrooms.

On the other extreme, some participants in the focus group categorized principals as ‘hostile witnesses’, those that blame teaching staff because of low student outcomes on standardized tests. These principals consider that teachers do not have sufficient skills to be effective. One of the participants claims,

He [the principal] does not know how to communicate with teachers; he puts more stress on them. For example, when a teacher wants to do something interesting for students, he publically invalidates his or her proposition, which produces anger. For me he does not know that we are his team and we want to make changes for students.

Another states,

In my case, my principal is always busy, so I always have to do the same thing, even though I know that these tasks are an important part of being a principal. But when we have the opportunity to have conversations about teaching practices he does not know very much, so what can I do?
According to these characterizations it is possible to conclude that there is not an observable pedagogic relationship between principals and HTPUs. Theirs is more of an administrative relationship because they do not have clear shared criteria regarding the quality of learning and teaching practices. Both qualitative and quantitative data express that principals and HTPUs do not have a common vision about learning and teaching; instead, one role is about management while the other is about supervision, monitoring and supporting pedagogic matters. This bicephalous model inhibits coherence and cohesion for the whole organization in terms of leadership for learning.

The open question in the survey was: Are HTPUs indispensable in this new scenario of leadership? The results were: 87.7% said yes and 12.82% said no. Similarly, in the focus group everyone, even principals, asserted that the HTPU role is crucial for school organizations. One principal stated, ‘I cannot deal with all the pressure and tasks, so... for me... the HTPU is essential in daily practices’. In fact, the HTPU has a positive perception regarding his/her performance and role (MINEDUC, 2012) and quantitative and qualitative data confirm this. In some cases the teaching staff feels closer to the HTPU than the principal does. One participant stated, ‘I feel that we (HTPU) are closer to teachers because we are monitoring them all the time... and sometimes the principal is absent because of his agenda’. The reason for this is undoubtedly linked to the fact that the HTPU is supervising teaching and learning practices of teachers daily. Nevertheless, this situation is the result of a vertical separation of roles between principals and HTPUs, even if the HTPU has an operational role based on more specific and visible practices.

According to our data, the HTPU is necessary in Chilean schools, primarily because they are capable of creating a necessary connection between different layers of the schools. It is a perfect meeting point. For instance, the HTPU can generate connections between students and principals, students and teachers, teachers and principals, and teachers and parents. Moreover, the area of action for the HTPU is clearly defined because this role, task and responsibilities have not changed over time. However, the same cannot be said for Chilean principals. This situation was drawn in 12 of 14 concept maps. It was possible to note a direct connection between the HTPU and teachers trough the concept maps. McLay and Brown (2003) explain that concept maps are useful when researchers are looking for hierarchical layouts of concepts (Stoddart et al., 2000). In this case, teachers are always linked with HTPUs, and HTPUs with principals. This draw model represents a hierarchical dimension of roles. Also, concept maps show a visual representation of how the organization works. In 12 of 14 cases the principal is recognized as the main head, and the HTPU the secondary leader. An example of a concept map can be seen in Figure 1.

The concept maps show a high level of connection with the focus group. This is because it is possible to distinguish a connection between teachers and the HTPU. Again, it is apparent that HTPUs have a strong and direct connection with learning and teaching practices in contrast with principals, whose roles are not linked directly to teachers.
Leadership or co-leadership?

The question of whether leadership or co-leadership is more effective is an important question in Chilean schools. Spillane (2006) points out that leadership involves reciprocal interdependencies regarding responsibilities and practices between leaders and followers. This can be categorized as ‘co-leadership’ because it encompasses formal and informal roles; more precisely, in Spillane’s words, it does not imply an ‘either/or’ situation. Therefore, it is important to recognize the difference between co-leadership and distributed leadership because they are commonly understood as synonymous. Co-leadership may be aligned with a bicephalous structure in Chilean school organizations. From an organizational theory it is based on sharing roles, but it does not necessarily mean collaborating with someone else or participating in something together (Harris, 2009). Data analysis suggests that this is the case for leadership roles in the Chilean context. On the other hand, Harris (2012) asserts that distributed leadership can be explained as an expansion of leadership roles in schools. Distributed leadership presents multiple forms of influence, including sharing, collaborating and participating. In this sense, distributed leadership seems to be more complex than co-leadership, while the latter is more hierarchical than the former. In part, distributed leadership reflects the dissolution of individual conceptions of leaders (Harris, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2008) because leadership is a complex process that involves social, emotional and knowledge dimensions from a team-work approach.

As Harris (2012) states, distributed leadership suggests a shift from a managerial perspective to a new understanding where school leaders have less formal authority and more responsibilities in order to delegate, distribute and support others’ work. This shift represents an important change in terms of repositioning the role of principals (Davies et al., 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Harris, 2012). In addition, distributed leadership has changed the perception of school organizations (Anderson & Bennett,
suggesting they should be considered learning organizations in which everyone can be a leader.

**Learning, roles and relationships**

According to Fielding (2006), the goal of improving student outcomes brings together personal relationships and functional relationships in school organizations. Functional relationships are relations typically defined by achieving particular goals. In contrast, personal relationships exist to provide people with emotional support, and it is crucial to be open and honest with others regarding the different sides of personality of ourselves. Fielding (2006) points out that even though functional and personal relationships are interrelated, they do not have the same relevance. Researchers of successful school and educational leadership (Harris, 2009, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2008) support this approach, functional relationships not only benefits personal relationships. School relationships should be intrinsically cooperative and the bicephalous structure obstructs leadership for learning roles between HTPUs and principals. Transformation is the key in pursuing goals learning, and in this case cooperation is not the reality. The data shows that an interesting point of conflict is found in functional relationships between principals and HTPUs, but not necessarily in their personal relationships.

The association between functional relationships and personal relationships requires trust between teaching staff and school leaders in order to build an organization where learning is the interaction center between teachers and students (Fielding, 2006). From this perspective, educational leadership needs school leaders to generate functional relationships that encourage trust relationships inside of teaching staff (Brock & Grady, 2012; Fullan, 2009; Harris, 2012). Functional relationships are the problem because it seems the principal does not understand his/her new role and its connection with the HTPU. In this sense, it is important to analyze how school leaders can build positive relationships with all members of the community, especially the HTPU. As such, it is necessary to understand functional and personal relationships to achieve successful learning goals.

**A prospective plan: distributed leadership as a real alternative**

School organizations are flexible, dynamic and changing. The key to this new perception of school organizations is to integrate the staff in the decision-making process. Chilean educational policies are trying to turn schools into more collaborative, participatory and supportive organizations. Distributed leadership is not a recipe or formula, but rather a way to understand the leadership roles within the organization. This understanding suggests the need for horizontal organizations capable of supporting the capabilities of others because distributed leadership is exercised within particular and variable contexts.

The Chilean case seems to be easy to analyze because it essentially constitutes an issue of communication between the principal and the HTPU. Nevertheless, it is a more complex matter. The key to this case is a conflict between the principal’s role and HTPU’s role in terms of learning leadership and this is reflected in educational policies at the national level. Considering this complex situation, a prospective plan should be
created, one that is multidimensional, not sequential. This is important because in functional relationships the effects are multiple, contextual and unpredictable. Therefore, if one of the dimensions is not well achieved, it can be repaired in other areas. Also, it provides flexibility and adaptation in terms of distributing responsibilities related to complex situations, as well as in daily routines.

The plan should consider four main dimensions:

- Remodeling roles
- Planning distributed leadership
- Understanding functional relationships
- Creating leadership teams

These four domains are aligned with the idea that both principals and HTPUs are necessary for Chilean schools to succeed. However, both roles should be understood as a combined result of collaborative practices and working together in the learning leadership area. Thus, the main responsibility is to distribute the space of leadership instead of dividing tasks, because these are two very different things. Division and distribution are not synonymous. Distributed leadership means sharing a space of leadership, working collaboratively according to a plan carefully discussed and analyzed.

According to Harris (2009) distributed leadership implies a form of job-redesign or work restructuring. In this vein, it is necessary to create conversational spaces in each school at the internal level. It implicates understanding functional relationships and delimiting fields of action for principals as well as for HTPUs in terms of job-redesign. Certainly, structural barriers are in place because the principal’s responsibilities tend to be more regulated and controlled by governmental organisms and accountability processes than those of the HTPU. For that reason, it is clear that job-redesign should be shaped following the settled guidelines proposed by the Ministry of Education, as well as taking into account contextual factors in each school.

Distributed leadership is a real alternative to sustain positive change in Chilean schools. As Hargreaves and Fink (2006) point out, distributed leadership has a greater impact on organizational development, especially in terms of remodeling roles. As a consequence, leaders need to be clear on distributing responsibilities and creating leadership teams. The implication here is that certain forms of distribution should be understood as an expansion of leadership roles rather than a division of tasks. This is the main recommendation: remodeling roles implicate distribution of responsibilities, not tasks, because some tasks are emergent and unexpected. In contrast, responsibilities tend to be more general and limited. In that sense, principals might control diverse variables in specific and changing conditions. Researchers highlight that in order to mitigate the bicephalous structure of leadership in the Chilean scenario, it is necessary to create a plan for distributed leadership based on responsibilities of working cooperatively. Principals and HTPUs are key actors in schools to encourage professional learning and student outcomes, and their effectiveness can be strongly increased when they are working together horizontally.
Implications and recommendations

As we have seen, distributed leadership might be considered as a real alternative to mitigate the bicephalous structure of leadership in the Chilean educational system. The bicephalous structure, as has been conceptualized, has created a division of tasks and roles. Such divisions are increasing because of the shift in the principal’s role and his/her mandate to supervise pedagogical practices. Co-leadership can be viable when organizations are less complex and more static. In contrast, distributed leadership would be more useful in the Chilean scenario, as it offers the opportunity for sharing, collaborating and participating in decision-making process at different levels. It will allow principals and HTPUs to work together to support others’ work and achieve better student outcomes in challenging circumstances and changing times.

Distributed leadership is a viable alternative for the Chilean context. However, if school organizations are unable to reflect on functional relationships between Chilean principals and HTPUs, the bicephalous structure will likely create confusion in leadership teams. If principals delegate tasks to HTPUs, related to learning and teaching practices, the managerial role will be emphasized. These risks may be avoided through reflective processes to understand the position of different roles in schools. The reflection process emerges when individuals are updating their own practices, roles and responsibilities. From here, the invitation is broad and multidimensional to foster revision processes for everyone in a retrospective way to contribute collaboratively to improve school organizations.

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References


