

The influence of values on educational administration: The School Principals' perspective

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Abstract

This qualitative study aims to unravel the elementary school principals' perceptions about the influence of their values on educational administration. Ten school leaders from the town of Alexandroupolis, in Greece, were interviewed in order for data to be obtained. For the data analysis, the qualitative content analysis was used. The findings indicated that the school administrators acknowledged that their values have effects of paramount importance on how they exercise their administrative duties, and consequently, on the whole school function. The influenced domains that were specifically mentioned were almost all the administrative functions, apart from the function of controlling. From the data analysis, the reciprocal effect between school leaders' values and school culture was also emerged. These findings provide further support for the importance of values in educational administration and for the need for their inclusion in the Greek school principals' training and selection.

Key words: principals' values, educational administration, educational leadership, qualitative research, school culture, qualitative content analysis

1. Introduction

A great deal of pedagogical research about values has focused on those shared among the people of a school, which are a component of school culture. In this scientific discourse, it has been acknowledged and emphasized that school administrators as leaders, based on their belief system and value orientations shaped through their experience, start off the formation of the culture in school units, while they are considered to be in charge of its preservation and management (Bush & Middlewood, 2005, p. 54-56; Schein, 2004, p. 1-2). More specifically, Peterson and Deal (1998, n.p.) have demonstrated that school leaders' influences on the creation of school culture are

occurred, among others, by the principals' rewarding both "the heroes and heroines" of school and the people fulfilling the goals that school tries to accomplish and the needs of pupils, by their conveying of basic value orientations through their behavior and words, by their expressive talk about the school purpose, and generally, by the exercise of their daily educational administrative duties.

At the same time, principals being influenced by their values are in charge as leaders of initiating the alteration of the culture of their school units (Deal & Peterson, 1990, p. 23-27; Hargreaves, 2004, p. 109; Schein, 2004, p. 1-418), contributing by that way to the school effectiveness and improvement, due to the fact that school culture is considered to be a critical factor for the latter (Deal & Peterson, 1990, p. 18-23; Nikolaidou & Ainscow, 2002; Stoll, 2000, p. 12-14).

In view of all that has been mentioned so far, one may suppose that school administrators' values are of paramount importance and should be the focus of scientific research. In fact, the significant place of values in educational administration was emphasized by some scholars about three decades ago. For instance, Greenfield, in (1986), stated that "values bespeak the human condition and serve as springs to action both in everyday life and in administration" (p. 57), while Willower (1985) one year before argued that "values are central to educational administration in the sense that administrators make choices among competing values and consider the desirability of alternative courses of action on a daily basis" (p. 17). Since then, some research has been conducted in order for whether and how the exercise of the leadership and administrative duties are determined by administrators' values to be found (Begley, 2000a, p. 239-245). However, that previous research has been mostly restricted to the "Western English-speaking" educational administrative context (Law, Walker, & Dimmock, 2003, p. 498). But, given the fact that the constituted elements of values and the social circumstances among different cultures are diverged from each other, despite their resemblance on their meaning and their shape (Begley, 2000b, p. 23), the conducting of research in other cultures and countries is required for these differences and subtleties to be unraveled. In addition, the impact of Greek school principals' value orientations remains unclear due to the lack of such studies in Greek literature.

Therefore, this study sets out to explore the influences of Greek school principals' values on educational administration, but from the school leaders' points of view. More specifically, this paper begins with a brief review of the relevant literature about values in educational administration. Then, it proceeds with an outline of the administrative work of school principals in Greece, while the remaining part concerns the research carried out and the emerged findings.

2. Literature review

2.1. Values in educational administration

In the literature, there seems to be a no generally acknowledged definition of values (Richmon, 2004, p. 33-34). However, a proposed one, particularly for the investigation of values in educational administration by the pioneers in this field, is that of Kluchhohn, which we use in this paper. According to this definition, "*values are a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action*" (Begley, 2000a, p. 235).

The literature also suggests that a value perspective in educational administration is essential for people holding administrative positions in education to understand themselves as leaders and to effectively handle the conflicts of values arisen in schools (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 11). Given the

Kluchhohn's definition as described above, both the impact of values on educational administrators' work and their subsequent significance are evident, because the decision of which option to choose among the existing alternatives is a central part of the educational leaders' administrative and leadership duties (Begley, 2001, p. 5). Actually, the influence of educational administrators' values has been identified by an amount of research that has been conducted (e.g. Begley, 1988; Campbell-Evans, 1991; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1991). In these studies different research approaches have been used. Specifically, either researchers explored the administrators' values in education indirectly (Kasten & Ashbaugh, 1991, p. 57) or directly. In the indirect approach, researchers first interviewed administrators while asking them to solve problematical situations or decide upon the scenarios,¹ or even assign an order to the stories, or researchers used "stimulated recall activities" (Begley, 2000a, p. 242), and then, they identified the values of leaders on the basis of particular frameworks, methods, or value typologies. In the direct approach, direct questions about values were posed to administrators (e.g. Campbell, Gold, & Lunt, 2003). In general, the conclusion to be drawn from these studies is that indeed the educational administrators' values impinge upon their administrative duties, such as decision-making or problem solving. For instance, Law et al. (2003), applying the grounded theory method, demonstrated among others that the way Protestant principals of secondary education understood and handled the problematical situations in the Hong Kong context was affected by their value orientations. In this study, it was also stressed that the above-mentioned effects of the principals' values were mitigated or amplified not only by the characteristics of the organizational context, containing the school history or how autonomous the school administrator was and others, but also by the head teachers' personal features, such as gender, years of experience etc., or the features of the values themselves, including breadth, commitment, focus, and other characteristics. Particularly concerning the influence of values in problem-solving, Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins (1994, p. 104) have stressed that values orientations can have a twofold influence. Therefore, values can impact indirectly on how administrators perform their duties, when values "act as filters... and influence school leaders' perceptions of events causing them to attend closely to some and ignore others altogether", or in a straightforward way, by pointing school leaders towards the action they will take. Moorhead and Nediger (1991, p. 17) have also found that the headteachers' values at a personal level indicated the way that school leaders exercised the administration in their school units.

Except for scholars, according to Ribbins (1999, p. xv), the practising administrators in education have explicitly mentioned their conscious attempts to employ their value orientations in their leadership activities, and it seems that they recognize the significance of values. But, in 1998, Strauss (1998, p. 14) advocated that, although the influences of value orientations on how leaders in education solve problematical situations or decide have been captured by the scholars' perspectives, a neglected area in the field was the administrators' points of view on their values. To date, after the review of the relevant literature, one can find few studies that have unraveled the impacts of values on educational administration, according to school administrators' personal opinions.

One example of such study is that of Campbell et al. (2003), where six English principals of secondary education were interviewed about their values. The above researchers reported that, according to principals, the administrators' value orientations had an impact on how they understood the exercise of leadership, on what they anticipated and desired for their school units as well as on the relationships that the principals built with educators, pupils, and the community of local context.

Outside the English-speaking literature, and specifically to explore if and by what ways school leaders with their personal values could have an impact on the students' values, embraced

¹ For the construction of scenarios named "vignettes" to explore values in educational administration, see Stravakou & Lozicka, 2018a.

during their education, Branson, Baig, and Begum (2015) gathered data, both from school principals and educators using semi-structured interviews, and from students with a focus group. These researchers illustrated that indeed school administrators had impinge of paramount importance on the students' embraced values and their subsequent "pro-social behavior", and also that this influence was happened by the students' observing the school administrators' values manifested in their behavior and words.

In another qualitative research of Aslanargun (2012), where Turkish headteachers interviewed with the focus group method about the value orientations they judged desirable for the educational administration, it was also emerged that some participants thought of values as an impediment to change, while some others acknowledged that values are significant in administration.

2.2. The Greek school principals' work

It is well established that the educational system in Greece is bureaucratic and is still characterized by a centralization of a great extent (Kaparou & Bush, 2007, p. 221; Kassotakis & Lambrakis-Paganos, 1994, p. 81-82), even though some law regulations have been legislated for the system to be decentralized (Bakas, 2007, p. 49). This means that the State, by the Ministry of Education, Research, and Religious Affairs, has the power and the main responsibility for the regulation of the educational issues and policy, leaving little autonomy latitude on the lower levels of the system (Bush, 2016, p. 1; Lymperis, 2012, p. 135-136). Especially for the Greek educational administrative system, this is like a "pyramid" comprised of four administrative levels where School Principals are situated in the lowest level (Poulis, 2001, p. 60-61).

According to the Law (Nomos 1566/85) and the more recent Ministerial Decision of 2002 (Ypourgiki Apofasi F.353.1/324/105657/D1/2002), Principal, Deputy-Principal, as well as the Teachers' Association, are in charge of the administration of the Greek school units. With a specific focus on what the above legal documents prescribe about School Principals, it has to be noted that they assume a dual role in schools, because they are considered to be both scientific pedagogical and administrative appointees at schools. The duties of principals more specifically include the proper school function, the implementation of both the educational laws and what the Teachers' Association decides, and the cooperation both with their superiors and with all the people being associated with the school. Greek principals also ordinate school units, try with their guidance for the openness of schools to society and for schools to be democratic. Concerning the staff, principals have responsibilities for the educators' training, for the staff motivation and guidance, and for educators to be informed about the issues relating to the function of the school unit. Moreover, they have to serve as a role model to school, to contribute not only to the formation of a positive school climate, but also to a positive pedagogical climate between educators and students. Being the president, a principal convenes with the Teachers' Association, and at the meetings proposes the distribution of duties to staff, while in conjunction with the latter design the teaching schedule. Still, principals in Greek school units oversee the educators' work, and together with the staff, ensure both that in schools there is the necessary equipment and that the school unit is a safe, esthetic, and a clean place for children e.t.c.. Furthermore, principals take on teaching duties, the hours of which are based on the size of the school they lead, while they process the official school correspondence and handle the official school documents, too.

Given the above, it is apparent that the duties that Greek principals have to perform are pedagogical, teaching, or administrative in nature and of high complexity (Stravakou, 2003a, p. 26-33). In the case of their administrative responsibilities, principals with the Teachers' Associations conduct the planning of the goals that school has to achieve at the beginning of each school year.

Furthermore, based on the educational policy defined by the State, they set the initiatives for the school-community connection, for the educators' training, for the organization of school events, or for the implementation of other educational projects (Katsaros, 2008, p. 59-60). Principals perform the administrative function of organizing, when they allocate the educational work and also the additional tasks and duties to the staff, when they allocate the resources, the time being available in the school, and the space for the conduct of the educational and other work (Katsaros, 2008, p. 70-71). Greek school administrators carry out the controlling administrative function (Bourantas, 2002, p. 40), having the overall supervision of the school, and especially, when for example they oversee the conduct of the educational duties and the other responsibilities having been given to the staff. They also direct and lead by motivating the school staff and giving responsibilities to the latter, by accommodating the educators' training, by handling the problematical situations and any differences emerged in schools, and by communicating effectively with the people in and out of school (Katsaros, 2008, p. 76-78). At the same time, people being in charge of the running of Greek schools constantly decide, while conducting the above administrative duties (Bourantas, 2002, p. 60-61). In addition, as it was described from the legislation above, Greek principals are directly in charge of constructing a positive climate in the schools they lead, contributing in that way both to the "internal dimension" of the school culture and to "external dimension" of culture, which is the schools' openness to society (Taratori-Tsalkatidou, 2009, p. 29). Thus, principals in our country on the one hand are socialized in the administrative culture being developed in the educational, administrative subsystem -and also co-form this culture with the other Educational Executives, as principals belong to the administrative hierarchy of education-(Stravakou & Lozgka, 2018b, p. 53-73). On the other hand, school administrators have a decisive influence on the shaping of the culture formed in the school, which they lead.

Overall, it is concluded that Greek principals, as elsewhere, have significant responsibilities for the school improvement, and generally for the children's education, but it seems that their administrative duties are restricted by the centralized educational system. Furthermore, they have difficulty in the exercise of educational administration due to the fact that they are not trained for their duties by the State and the legislation for them constantly changes, while the educational laws have not clearly defined what school administrators have to do (Stravakou, 2003a, p. 26-281).

From the review of the relevant pedagogical literature in Greece, one can conclude that for about two decades, there has been an increasing research focus on the principals' work (Stravakou, 2013, p. 330-331). However, despite the intense concern for principals and their work, very little attention has been paid to the principals' embraced value orientations and their effect on educational administration. Therefore, after having explored, both indirectly and directly, the Greek principals' values in another of our study (Stravakou & Lozgka, in press), we seek to answer in this study the following research question: How Greek school principals perceive the effect of their values on their administrative duties?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

The survey was carried out between May and June of 2017. To answer the research question, a qualitative research design was adopted, because it could enable us to provide a detailed account of how the actors in the field of the school administration perceived, from their experience, the effect that their own value orientations had on the complex work that they perform. The second reason of our using the qualitative research approach was the lack of relevant research findings in Greece (Creswell, 2011, p. 71).

3.2. Sample and participant selection

The research sample was consisted of 10 School Principals of primary education. The participants were recruited on the basis of the “homogeneous sample”, as they should have the principal’s position at schools, comprised of many teachers in the town of Alexandroupolis, in Greece (Creswell, 2011, p. 246). More specifically, six of the participated principals were male and the other four were female, while the participants had overall an average of 8 years of experience as principals and 30 years of experience as educators.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

The data for this study were collected with the usage of semi-structured interviews. Particularly, questions were posed to the respondents, after the announcement of the Kluchhohn’s definition of values to them. These questions were open-ended, so that the principals could freely express their opinions without the researcher’s, and third author of this article, impact on their answers (Chenail, 2011, p. 255-256). Overall, the interview duration was in each case about forty-five minutes. Prior to the primary research, the questions were tested to a principal, having the same characteristics with the participated principals but not having taken part in the main study (Chenail, 2011, p. 257-258). After the testing of questions, minor adjustments were made to the structure of some of them. The interviews were audio-recorded, and then, they were transcribed verbatim.

After the transcription of the research material, the first two authors took a lot of time to read it, to have a full understanding of it, as a whole. For the data analysis, the qualitative content analysis, as proposed by Schreier (2012), was performed. The first two authors were conducted the analysis separately at each stage, and then, they compared their findings for each part while working together to come to a consensus for the occurred differences. This process was followed for the reliability of the analysis to be ensured (Schreier, 2012, p. 166-174).

3.4. Ethical considerations

Before carrying out the research and selecting the participants, we obtained the approval of principals’ immediate administrative superior to contact them. Then, the principals meeting the eligibility criterion were contacted by phone to be informed about the general purpose of the research and to give their consent for the audio-taping of the interviews. They were also informed about the researchers’ confidentiality, the assurance of their anonymous participation, and for their right to leave the research whenever they wanted, although nobody left (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 79-116).

4. Findings

From the qualitative content analysis, two main categories emerged. These were: 1) The effects of principals’ values on educational administration, and 2) the reciprocal effect between the principals’ value orientations and school culture.

4.1. The effects of principals’ values on educational administration

Each and every one of the principals acknowledged the effects of paramount importance their values have on educational administration, and consequently, on the school function. Generally, the participants in our study stated that their values are pivotal in the conduct of all the administrative tasks they have to perform. Interestingly, one male respondent used an adage to express that the school leaders’ values are a determinant in the school function and the school life. He characteristically said:

“How the principals’ values influence the school?. For that, I want to tell you that the fish always stinks from the head downwards.” (Participant 1)

The most cited domain, having been influenced by the school administrators' value orientations, was the administrative function of directing-leading. Especially, the principals talked about their management of humans. The latter included not only the people being directly related to the school unit, namely the educators and students, but also those were indirectly connected with schools, such as parents. The majority of the interviewed principals clearly stressed that the frequency and the quality of their relationships with staff, students, and parents; the treatment of the above people, and the communication with them, depend on what the respondents judge desirable. In fact, the consequences from all the above, according to many respondents, are both the collaboration among educators and the school-family collaborative relationships. While almost all the participants strongly maintained that their preferred ways of conduct affect their communication with parents, educators, and students; only two principals advocated their collaboration with their superiors as an affected sub-domain. Especially for the educators, many of our interviewees explicitly pointed out the influences of the educational administrators' values on the motivation of staff and on the initiatives educators will take. According to a female respondent:

"I see that a principal's values, and specifically mine, have a tremendous effect on my staff, on the motivation of my educators, on their goals, and their abilities to start new things to their class." (Participant 8)

Some principals also said that the way they choose to solve the disputes, occurring among the members of the school unit, is catalytically determined by the values they hold. The latter is evident in the excerpt below, indicating a male participant's opinion about the impact of the administrative values, especially on principal's handling of tussles among children:

"[Principal's values are important] even to a confrontation among children. To give justice is the greatest lesson". (Participant 7)

From the last quote, it is demonstrated that headteachers' values also have an impact on students' value orientations, an opinion clearly stated by other respondents. According to them, the school is a socializing agent and children learn from it what is right and wrong and, therefore, the principals as the heads of the school contribute to a great extent to the children's socialization.

Another administrative function that was mentioned to be affected by principals' values, as cited by the most of the respondents, is the school planning being made at the beginning of the school year. Then, the principals based on their value orientations have specific priorities for their school units to be achieved, and therefore, they select specific educational projects in which their schools will participate. Moreover, it was said that the initiatives that they take for school function are emerging from the participants' values, and this, is especially connected with whether their schools will be open to the local community.

Furthermore, three informants talked about the effect of the educational administrators' values on the administrative function of organizing, where they particularly mentioned the influence on the task assignments to educators. For these principals, it is very significant that duties are distributed to the staff, according to the school needs and also to the needs of particular classes, and equally, without any influence of the personal affiliations that school leaders may have with educators. The last mentioned opinion, as it was expressed by a male principal, is illustrated in the quote below:

"Principals' values are usually evident in the allocation of tasks and responsibilities we do at the beginning and during of the year. It is very essential there for principals to have principles and values. I have heard about discrimination being made by other principals. I would never discriminate because I know someone and I am a friend of him/her and we go out... In school we are all equal". (Participant 2)

Interestingly, an unanticipated finding was when many respondents advocated that their values impinge on the implementation of laws. Specifically, these interviewees explained that their values serve as guiding principles to how they will implement the educational legislation in their schools. Despite the centralized and bureaucratic Greek educational system, the informants emphasized that every time they have to implement a law, they "filter" it through their values, and

implement it on the basis of the consequences it will have on school members. But, in case that laws and decrees are not in congruence with the respondents' values, the participants choose not to apply them.

Another point of convergence among the majority of the respondents was the influences of their values on their decision-making process. They said that when they have to reach at a decision their values play a significant role, and two of the principals related the values in the decision-making process with the type of leadership exercised by the principal. In this case, it was noted that if a school leader values collegiality and supports the collaboration of the decision making, the democratic leadership style will emerge. On the other hand, one interviewee advocated specifically the "authoritarian leadership" having been depicted in decision-making by some of his fellow-principals, as a manifestation of their particular embraced values.

Finally, only few respondents referred to the distribution of the school budget, "their priorities to improve the school surroundings and facilities", and the criteria for students' school assessment, as influenced domains by their values.

4.2. The reciprocal effect between principals' value orientations and school culture

Although the effect of the principals' values on the culture being formed in school units can be inferred from the analysis of the previous main category, the principals in our research explicitly stated the above-mentioned impact. Thus, all but two principals emphatically stressed that school leaders' value orientations are essential to the values shared among the school members. They specifically said that principals through their values leave their mark on the school, and consequently, on school identity, and pose the school to "a specific direction". However, some interviewees remarked that the influence of principals' values on the school culture is not always positive. It can happen, therefore, different subgroups to emerge in a school sharing dissimilar value orientations, due to the principal's priorities being affected by his/her values, resulting to the degradation of the school operation. According to a female principal:

"If I, as a principal, do not care about all my teachers because of my values, I will create clicks and the cliques will bring tension in school, and the tension will bring backwards after all." (Participant 9)

There were also two respondents who did not refer to the school principal's contribution to the formation of school culture. Instead, these respondents emphasized that the creation of the latter is attributed to the interaction among all the educators, where a principal is included.

On the other side of the coin, there were many times that school culture was so strong preventing the principals' efforts to change it and restricting the effects of their values. Some informants particularly described that the older educators opposed to any new initiative and value having been introduced by new principals. It was then, when the principal was separated from the staff, which was formed as a sub-group. Therefore, when some interviewees started to work in a new school with a well-established culture, they had to comply and follow the rules, even though the latter contradicted their values.

Even, a female respondent put a gender dimension while explaining the reason why she encountered obstacles, when she tried to set new priorities in her school. She explained that for many years a male principal had been in charge of her school and both its school personnel and parents were used to the previous male principal's behaviors, which they thought right and correct. So, when the respondent became a principal, she was confronted with many criticisms of parents and the teachers about how she, as a woman, thought right to run the school. She characteristically mentioned:

"When I came to school as a principal, it seemed very strange to parents and teachers the different way I followed to run the school, because they used to have male principals in school. And, they used to compare me with the previous

male principal in every occasion... I told them: 'I am the way I am, these are my values, that is my personality. These are the things I want to pass to the children'...they finally accepted me.' (Participant 6)

From the data analysis, the ways, through which the participated participants while exercising the educational administration try to conscientiously transmit their values to school culture by using diverse approaches, also emerged. Most respondents advocated that they try to serve as a role model for educators and children, and they try to pass their values to the culture through their behavior, in order to make the people in school accomplish same goals. For example, because some principals value punctuality, they are punctual themselves in their duties to inspire the staff, while others "give the right paradigm" by the participatory decision-making, which shows their respect to their colleagues. For many interviewees, the transmission of their values is achieved by the stipulation of school mission, and such missions mentioned explicitly by the principals were the school's openness to the local community, the preparation of students to be better citizens and people, or the acceptance of diversity by children. Moreover, many respondents stated that they infuse educators and students with their values by their "guidelines" and their "advice", too.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This qualitative study sought to explore how the Greek school administrators perceived from their experience the influence of their values on educational administration. A first comment here is that the participants, as they advocated, had not had any training before about values, neither had they read anything relevant in the literature. Nevertheless, they not only did not have any difficulty in acknowledging the impact of their values on their work, but also it seemed that they could reflect on their value orientations, discussing with a great passion about their conscious attempts to instill them into school culture. Actually, the same has been stated for practicing school administrators elsewhere (Ribbins, 1999, p. xv). This school leaders' understanding has been attributed to the complicated administrative reality that emerged due to the diversity of different values existing in school units, where principals often experience value conflicts (Begley, 1999, p. 54).

More specifically, the most cited administrative function, where the principals understood the effect of their values, was the directing-leading. In this context, almost all the individual aspects included in that function were mentioned. Thus, the participants referred to the relationships with all the people being associated with a school, the treatment of those people, their communication, the solving of disputes in schools, and to the motivation of staff; as particular domains that are influenced by their values. From the above, the opinion that "educational leadership...is values driven" (Anderson, 2004, p. 18) may be supported. In fact, some respondents in our research clearly stated that their values, and the values of a school administrator generally, are directly associated with the leadership style. Campbell et al. (2003, p. 217) also concluded that the relationships that school administrators formed with educators, pupils, and local community, as well as their understanding of their role as leaders were based on their value orientations. Similarly, Baig (2011, p. 11) demonstrated that in Pakistan context the behaviors of headteachers, their understandings of situations, and their relationships with other people, were influenced by principals' value orientations held at a personal level. The significance of a principal's personality to the formation of the relationships among the members of schools has also been emphasized by educators, in the Greek pedagogical literature. For instance, Koula (2015, p. 490-492), in a quantitative study, found that a high majority of the participated educators advocated that for the development of interpersonal relationships, both between staff and administration and among the members of the school staff, the character of headteachers and of educators were crucial. Furthermore, the above researcher stated that other significant, influential elements for the interpersonal relationships in

school units, from the teachers' perspective, were the principals' way of conduct and whether administrators had the value of equity in their interactions with the staff.

According to our findings, other influenced administrative functions by the principals' values were the school planning being made at the beginning of each school year, where the principals set their priorities for their schools, and the function of organizing, where the extra tasks are allocated to educators. In line with other empirical studies investigating indirectly the impact of principals' values (Begley, 1988; Campbell-Evans, 1991) and also with scholars' perspectives about the influence of values on educational administration (e.g. Begley, 2000a, p. 235-246), our participants advocated the decision-making process to be affected, too.

An interesting finding was the reported influence of the participants' value orientations on those of children. School principals apart from being administrators are also educators, and they run the schools aiming to both children's learning and socialization (Chatzidimou, 2008, p. 202-205), in order to prepare pupils by their paradigm for the society. Branson et al. (2015, p. 123-124) have indicated that school administrators could impact on the values embraced by children, as students themselves advocated in their research. However, these scholars have also concluded that a prerequisite for such an affection to be achieved is the school leaders' behaviors and words to be manifested in their interactions with pupils and staff, to be in close resemblance to the values they want for children to adopt, while with that way principals also can contribute to the pupils' achievement.

However, and contrary to our expectations because of the Greek highly centralized and bureaucratic educational system, in some cases it was said that the principals' values are more influential than the educational legislation on how the principals finally will behave. The respondents stated that when the legislation contradicts with their values, they choose not to apply it. This finding is in contrast to that found by Aslanargun (2012, p. 1341) in his study about the values that Turkish school leaders, who also work in a highly centralized educational system, found preferable to school administration. Unlike our principals, the Turkish school leaders in Aslanargun's (2012, p. 1341) study mostly cited the "without hesitation" implementation of educational legislation, as their actual practice and the most preferable one in the educational administration (Aslanargun, 2012, p. 1341). Therefore, although it is important to bear in mind the possible bias in our principals' responses, we think that our above finding has implications for further study. Observing directly the Greek principals' work can shed new light on how their values influence their administrative duties, and whether the afore-mentioned finding emerged here can be supported. Moreover, taking the above into consideration, another area of further study is the investigation of value conflicts that Greek school administrators experience.

Scholars have emphasized the contribution of school leaders' values to the formation of the values shared among school members (e.g. Bush & Middlewood, 2005, p. 54-56; Deal & Peterson, 1990, p. 23-41). On the other hand, it has also been stressed that it is in the case of a well-established culture when specific types of leadership are able to be exercised in an organization (Schein, 2004, p. 2). Interestingly, this reciprocal effect stressed in literature was also advocated by the principals in our study. Particularly, almost all of them emphasized that they have a pivotal role in the culture formed in their school units, leaving their mark on the school identity, and consequently, they can either positively or negatively affect the school culture and school in general (Stravakou, 2003a, p. 30-32 & 2003b, p. 9). The participated principals saw themselves as "value carriers in the educational organization" (Greenfield, 1986, p. 69), and they consciously try to shape school culture by the missions they pose for their schools, by their serving as a role model acting as "symbols" (Deal & Petterson, 1990, p. 31-34), or by their guidelines and advice, acting as "poets" (Deal & Peterson, 1990, p. 31-38). But this was not always the case. In case of a strong school

culture some principals saw the effects of their values to be restricted as they had to comply with how educators, being for many years in the school, were used to doing the things in those schools. In addition, there were also some principals who did not refer particularly to school administrators' influence on school culture, but they spontaneously mentioned that they understood the culture as the result of the interaction among all educators, where the principal is included. This opinion reflects the assumption in the literature, supporting that culture is a co-constructed concept among the most important members of a school unit (Deal & Peterson, 1990, p. 26).

It should be noted here that with a small sample size having been restricted in one Greek district only, the findings of our research should be interpreted with caution. Despite this, we think that the present study can enhance the international relevant literature by providing data from a centralized bureaucratic system, where Greek principals work, while the findings can further strengthen the idea that values matter on educational administration. Our study also brought to the surface primary findings for the Greek pedagogical literature, where the issue of principals' values has not been addressed. The implications of this research are that values should be included not only in the education and training programs for educational administrators, but also in the courses of the Greek Universities where the Pedagogical Science is taught. In addition, we recommend that the principals' selection should include an assessment of the values of the applicants for principalship.

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Authors' Contribution

P.A. S. and E.Ch. L. wrote the manuscript and conducted the analysis of the data; S. M. recruited the participants, conducted and transcribed the interviews.

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