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TO BE A PRINCIPAL IN TWO DIFFERENT EUROPEAN SCHOOL SYSTEMS. SOME INTERVIEW RESULTS

SER DIRECTOR ESCOLAR EN DOS SISTEMAS EDUCATIVOS EUROPEO. ALGUNOS RESULTADOS DE UNA ENTREVISTA.

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ABSTRACT

The particular aspects that seem to characterize the activities of head teachers are taking-on responsibility, interpersonal relationships as well as the fragmentation of daily actions.

The purpose of this article is to highlight how, despite common characteristics, activities develop differently in two European educational contexts: Spain and Italy.

Six school leaders were interviewed during a case study in order to investigate some aspects related to their role and the educational context in which they operate.

Results show that although both systems are centralized and give little autonomy, there are marked differences in the methods of selecting a school manager and in their respective careers. The conclusion reflects on the different organization of teaching activities, which, in part, is conditioned by the considerable differences in the size of the institute.

KEYWORDS: school leader, interview, Spain, Italy

INTRODUCTION

As Spain and Italy are two Mediterranean countries, they share a fairly similar culture, lifestyle and traditions that are also manifested in the school environment.

In both realities legislative changes in the school and education sector seem to be a consequence of the different governmental forces. Despite this, the contents of the reforms concerning the selection, training and evaluation of teaching

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staff and, in particular, of educational leaders demonstrate considerable differences.

This article intends to trace an analysis of the similarities and of the most significant differences found in the managerial role and in the school organization within these two contexts through an interview carried out during case studies with six managers, three in Spain and three in Italy.

We begin with an overview of the literature on what is known about what makes a leader. This is followed by the contextualisation of the study by presenting some aspects of the Spanish and the Italian educational systems. The legislative procedure and the difference of how teachers can become principal in the two countries, is briefly described. After describing the research methodology adopted, the paper presents the findings of how the six principals answered the interview. The study follows with a discussion of the findings where, through a table, the most significant questions and answers of the Spanish and Italian principals are summarised. Finally, in the conclusion some key answers are highlighted in order to understand the role of managers in the two countries.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Leadership has become a concept of increasing importance in educational literature. Numerous books and articles have been written about leadership - about how to define the concept, what it should comprise of and what effects it has. Kruger and Scheerens, (2012) and Bingham (1927) defined a leader as a person having the greatest number of desirable personality or character traits (cited in Bass and Stogdill 1990). Leaders were seen as individuals who possessed qualities that distinguished them from their followers. Authority, diligence and charisma were among the first traits to be considered.

According to Bass and Stogdill (ibid), leaders are characterised as having strong feelings of responsibility, the drive to complete tasks, energy and persistence in pursuing goals, willingness to take risks, originality in solving problems, initiative, self-confidence and a sense of personal identity, willingness to bear the consequences of their decisions and actions, the ability to overcome interpersonal stress, tolerance for frustration and delays, ability to influence the behaviour of others and the capacity to structure social interaction toward the goals that are to be pursued.

Despite many researchers and the many definitions of leadership that appear in this literature, there remains very little consensus concerning what leadership is and what it comprises (Krüger and Scheerens, 2012). Richmon and Allison (2003) argue that the search for an un ambiguous definition of leadership is in vain, as it simply does not exist. Although these differ in certain aspects, there are also several characteristics and functions inherent to leadership - in all its forms - that allow drawing a general definition of it.

In the educational sector, leadership as a concept and practice covers a large number of tasks, activities, attitudes and behaviours that are not reducible to the traditional role of the centre director as administrator and manager. Indeed, terms such as distributed, participatory and democratic leadership are increasingly common (Ciclo de Conefrencia. Liderazgo de los equipo directivo).

In a more recent contribution to this field of study, Leithwood et al. (2006) mention general intelligence, problem solving skills, self-confidence, emotional stability, extraversion, and internal locus of control, openness to experience, conscientiousness and self-efficacy as relevant personality traits for school leaders.

What is clear is that good leadership is key to the performance of schools. The management

teams have the task and responsibility of establishing and directing the direction of the institutions, establishing a mission - vision to follow global goals and objectives. Another essential part of leadership in schools is the ability to generate and facilitate the necessary conditions for achieving these objectives (Ciclo de Conferencia). In the context of goal setting, this means that what leaders and leadership researchers need to focus on is not just leaders motivational and direction-setting activities but on the educational content of those activities and their alignment with intended student outcomes.

For this reason, in the research, different strategies were used to identify types of leadership and their impact. One of these strategies involved a comparison between the impact of instructional and transformational leadership.

Instructional leadership theory has its empirical origins in studies undertaken during the late 1970's and early 80's of schools in poor urban communities where students succeeded despite the odds (Edmonds, 1979). As reported by Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, and Lee (1982), these schools typically had strong instructional leadership, including a learning climate free of disruption, a system of clear teaching objectives, and high teacher expectations for students.

Early formulations of instructional leadership assumed it to be the principal's responsibility. The exclusive focus on the principal reinforced a heroic view of the role that few were able to attain (Hallinger, 2005). Recent research has a more inclusive focus with many instructional leadership measures now embracing principals and their designees (Heck, 1992; Heck, Larsen, & Marcoulides, 1990; Heck, Marcoulides, & Lang, 1991), those in positions of responsibility (Heck, 2000; Heck & Marcoulides, 1996), and shared instructional leadership (Marks & Printy, 2003).

On the other hand, transformational leadership has its origins in James McGregor Burns's 1978 publication in which he analysed the ability of some leaders, across many types of organizations, to engage with staff in ways that inspired them to new levels of energy, commitment, and moral purpose (Burns, 1978). It was argued that this energy and commitment to a common vision transformed the organization by developing its capacity to work collaboratively to overcome challenges and reach ambitious goals (Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008).

Bass (1995) stated that transformative leaders are leaders of change; they increase awareness and conscience about what is really important, they push people to go beyond their personal interest for the common good of the organizations to which they belong. Transformational leadership may tell us more about leader–staff relations than about leaders' impact on student outcomes. It is more focused on the relationship between leaders and followers than on the educational work of school leadership, and the quality of these relationships is not predictive of the quality of student outcomes.

Transformational leadership involves not only building collegial teams, a loyal and cohesive staff, and sharing an inspirational vision. It also involves focusing such relationships on some very specific pedagogical work, and the leadership practices involved are better captured by measures of instructional leadership than of transformational leadership (Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008).

Marks & Printy (2003), concluded that an "integrated" form of leadership, incorporating a strong capacity for developing shared instructional leadership combined with qualities associated with transformational leadership, was the best predictor of the intellectual quality of students work in both maths and social studies.

Following the concept of transformational leadership, in the last years, we are witnessing the emergence of a series of proposals that take it as a starting point and seek to improve it by providing new elements. Among those that stand out are: facilitative leadership, persuasive leadership and sustainable leadership (Murillo, 2006).

More recently, within the educational environment the concept of leadership that is most strongly becoming consolidated is "Distributed Leadership" e.g. Gronn, 2002; Timperley, 2005; Spillane, 2006 (in Murillo, 2006). It refers to a plurality of individuals who exercise influence within the school community due to an organizational position assigned to them both formally and informally. This is a significant cultural change as the school as a system no longer refers to the unique role of the school manager, but entrusts the development, operation and management of the school to all its members. This redefines the role of school leaders, no longer merely bureaucrats, but promoters of change.

THE SPANISH AND ITALIAN SCHOOL CONTEXT:

Spain

The schools chosen for the manager's case study and interviews in Spain are concentrated in the metropolitan area of Madrid and the surrounding urban area. They are an average size ranging from 250 to 500 pupils. In no case does the law provide for principals to have more than one school under their supervision. Despite this, the complexity and fragmentation typical of managerial work are evident and noted here too. The first school observed was an 'Instituto de Enseñanza Superior', which is located in the Madrid's city centre. 250 students attend the school and they are between 16 and 18 years old. This is the last two years of high school before entering university (*bachillerato*). The idea that pervades the centre is simple and very clear and is carried out with determination by the manager: A school of excellence with remarkable results and high performance in studies. Here the students prepare to participate in both local and national academic competitions and in other European contexts. Its compact size allows the manager to personally manage even the most particular aspects with safety and accuracy. There are however, few extra-curricular project activities undertaken by the institute.

Remaining within Madrid's city centre, the research proceeds towards a 'Colegio de Educación Infantil y Primaria', this also has a school population of around 250 pupils aged between 3-12 years. It is, like many schools in Spain, a bilingual centre where most of the lessons, with the exception of Castilian and maths, are taught in English. The manager's primary purpose is the achievement of language certificates as well as the results in standardised tests at the end of the third and sixth year of primary school. Few projects take place in the school, in this case there was only one. The idea of working with the school network is not contemplated.

The last school is located in a suburb not far from the capital. It is a technical college, 'Instituto de Enseñanza Superior' with some classes of 'Educación Secundaria Obligatoria' and two extra rooms for fifteen-year-olds who have had problems with the justice system or who have left school early and who are trying to recuperate. It has a school population ranging between 460 and 500 pupils who are between 12 and 18 years of age. The economic level of citizens, as well as the education of families, is considered medium-low. The foreign population is constantly growing here. For this reason, the manager often finds himself managing and trying to resolve delicate situations with students and to speak with families. The manager's educational mission is clear: to believe and invest in the potential of each pupil. Here too there are few projects and much of the work involves improving

students results and consequently of the school as a whole.

Italy

In relation to what has already been said, the Italian school system is characterised by a managerial and organizational complexity which sees the work of managers to be highly demanding and varied. They often find themselves working in schools that have an average of 800 pupils with the probability of having other educational institutions under their supervision.

The leaders who took part in this case study and interview were deliberately chosen from three different realities both in terms of geographic position – southern, central and northern Italy – and in the type of school - Comprehensive Institute and Institute of Higher Education. In the case of one executive, it was verified that she also had two other schools under her supervision. This situation seems to be purely an Italian characteristic, unseen in other countries, including Spain.

The first school observed was in the south of Italy. It is a Technical Higher Education Institute located in a residential neighbourhood on the outskirts of a large urban centre. The boys who attend it, about 900 (of which a dozen foreign students), also come from neighbouring areas. The school's size has seen a remarkable growth in recent years thanks to the assiduous work of the manager who has focused on innovation and entrepreneurship, making it an avant-garde school even though it is in an area that is not particularly rich or economically developed. There are many extra-curricular project activities, including some of great prestige, which are carried out here and which are financed, mostly, at national and European level.

In the north, the schools visited and the directors' interviewed are characterized by the enormous complexity basically due to the number of schools under their supervision (one annual and one temporary from January to August) in two other Comprehensive Institutes, respectively of 937 and 805 pupils, and also in the different location of the schools that make the work of the school head even busier and fragmented. The headquarters are equally complex and demanding with the number of students equal to 797. There is an Institute of Higher Education, in two distinct municipalities, with different study addresses ranging from a technical institution to a high school up to the management of a boarding school with an adjoining farm. The area is quite rich in industries and the economy is highly developed. This climate of well-being is reflected in the schools, which are almost all well-maintained and equipped. Numerous projects are financed by local authorities.

The last observed school is located in a town in central Italy. It is a Comprehensive Institute with a total of 9 complexes located mostly within the historic area and with some offices in the immediate surroundings of the municipality. It consists of 1080 pupils. The manager is in the second year of activity in this school and has already made numerous innovations, but above all there is a great spirit of collaboration and of development and innovation of didactic activities. She has undertaken numerous projects that she develops in collaboration both with local authorities in the area and nearby schools, both at national and European level.

HOW TO BECOME PRINCIPAL IN SPAIN AND IN ITALY

Spain

The legislative and training process that sees the achievement of a school manager's career in Spain is different to that in Italy.

Up to about fifteen years ago, to become a school manager in Spain, it was necessary to be elected. The voters, in the school where this

figure was missing, were primarily the teachers followed by the *consejo escolar*.

Today the procedure has changed. When an opening for a school manager's position in a school is identified, the school administration organizes a sort of competition in which the available places and locations are listed. A teacher with a prerequisite of at least 5 years of teaching, who would like to hold the managerial role, can present his curriculum vitae and a four year project to an institution of his choice and for the grade of school that corresponds to his experience. Within the project, the future manager chooses, giving his motivations, the work team he will need in that school. The team, or directing team, is made up not only of the manager but also of the head of studies and a secretary.

The curriculum presented together with the project are evaluated by a commission made up of: a supervisor, a manager from another institute or college, a technical assessor sent by the Ministry and two professors from the institute (but which in theory could also be two parents or two pupils or a professor and a parent) one appointed by other professors and one by the school council (*consejo escolar*).

The evaluation is given by the sum of the score of the curriculum plus that of the project. The score obtained by candidates gives an actual ranking; based on this, they are appointed and have access to the executive position that lasts four years with the possibility of being extended for another four years. After this period of work they return to being a full time professor. Unless a different project for the same school or a different one is accepted again. Therefore, there is no real career or a permanent assignment as a school manager and not even specific entry requirements.

Some of the executives observed were appointed by a service commission before the project presentation. In that case, it was enough to send the curriculum followed, over time, by the specific project to make the assignment official.

Each year the school manager in Spain is evaluated by a supervisor in relation to the work carried out according to a formal protocol that the school produces (*Documento de Organización del Centro*). The document is divided as follows: Characteristics of the Centre (with the indication of the directive team); Pupils (with the relative courses followed in the various disciplines); Academic results (with the evaluation of the previous school year, the absenteeism rate and the disciplinary notes); Staff, Pedagogical Organization (teaching departments, individual teachers timetable, program, meetings, books, autonomy of the Centre); Building, installations and material; Other data; Notes.

Italy

The bureaucratic process that sees school managers taking on this role in Italy differs from the one just described and is quite complex. Furthermore, over the years it has undergone changes regarding the methods of accessing and carrying out the related contest procedures. The last three contests that of 2004 (D.D.G. 11/22/2004), 2011 (D.D.G. 13/07/2011) and recently of 2017 (D.D.G. 11/23/2017) have been substantially updated, confirming how much the figure of a valid school leader can really make a difference in terms of management and didactic organization of a complex system, as is that of the school in general and in particular of the Italian one, and consequently of improving the results of the students' learning.

The competition held with D.D.G. 22/11/2004 anticipated at least seven years of effective service in schools and took place at regional level. The examination consisted of an evaluation of the valid qualifications by a selection board;

an admission competition with two written tests (an essay and a project) and an oral one; after this phase, a nine-month training course was undertaken, at the end of which a final exam consisting of a written and oral test was held. The final ranking was divided by the level of training of primary and lower secondary school (middle school), and for the upper secondary school level (high school) and educational institutions.

By 2011 however, the subsequent competition, (D.D.G. 13/07/2011), had been modified. It was again called at regional level, but it was necessary to have at least five years of effective service in public schools. It was divided into a pre-selection test in which it was necessary to answer, on paper, one hundred multiple choice questions related to the managerial function, knowledge of IT equipment and applications, as well as the use of a foreign language at B1 level of the European framework between French, English, German and Spanish. After this phase, you were admitted to the actual exam which consisted of two written tests (an essay and a case study) on separate days. Upon passing both tests, the oral exam could be taken, the passing of which led to the conclusion of the exams. The evaluation of the qualifications and the entry into service followed. During the first year, a period of training and internship was required.

The last executive competition held with D.D.G. 23/11/2017 provided for a national selective course-competition, organized on a regional basis. The admission requirements remained the five years of service actually carried out in schools and educational institutions in the national education system. The candidates carried out, in various locations identified by the Regional School Office, a computerized pre-selection test in which they had to answer one hundred multiple choice questions on various topics. Once passed, they entered the written test which was also carried out on the computer and divided into five open-ended questions and two questions in a foreign language. Those who passed this were admitted to the oral test which regarded: ability to solve a case concerning the function of the school manager, knowledge of IT tools and communication technologies and knowledge of the language chosen at B2 level of the European framework between French, English, German and Spanish. Following the evaluation of the participant's qualifications they were included in a general merit ranking and in a training and internship course.

METHODOLOGY

Observation of the activities carried out, integrated by the analysis of the official documents of the schools and, in some cases, by statements from the staff, was the prevailing investigation technique used. This was combined with interviews with executives which usually took place at the end of each working day. In addition to having a clarifying value with regards to certain interesting aspects for further exploration or alternatively the differences in the two school systems, the questions posed concerned the following specific areas:

- role and career of the manager;

- teaching staff and middle management;

- school and its organization;

- school system, training and evaluation;

- personnel management and collegial bodies;

- relations with families and stakeholders;

- students and curricular and extracurricular activities.

The total number of questions was 108 for each leader. The time dedicated daily to the interview was about an hour and almost always took place inside the manager's office. With the consent of the participants, the interview was recorded to allow the researcher to reconstruct the

conversation, analyze and process the collected data and draft the final document.

On one hand, the interview from a methodological point of view, unlike a questionnaire with closed answers, has the advantage of entering into more detail and depth of the topic, with life experiences and richness of analysis; on the other hand, being unstructured by nature, it certainly has limits including what could be conditioned by the type of interaction that is established between the interviewee and the interviewer.

Often the time dedicated to the interview was experienced as a real moment of “release” by the managers, who could finally tell someone who listened carefully, all the problematic situations both of their work and of the school system. For the observer, this moment has proved useful in understanding aspects that are not very visible during ordinary observation, but that are nevertheless rich in meaning and essential for understanding the complexity of managerial work. In the end, all this has made it possible to have a fairly representative picture, without any claim to certainty, of the work of the managers in the two schools observed.

FINDINGS

The following table highlights some particular questions and answers. The main purpose is to understand, through the direct narration of its participants, the elements of equality and distinction between the two systems and to trace a synthesis.

Table. 1- Interviews’ results.

Area of investigation	Sample questions	Sample answers
Role and career of the manager	1. Do you have a flexible schedule, can it be organized according to commitments or is it rigid, fixed with a schedule to respect?	1. Spain: "I have a fixed schedule of thirty hours a week and another seven and a half hours to work at home"; 1. Italy: "The timetable is flexible due to the complexity and management of the school".
	2. Do your school commitments take place only within this school or do you have other locations or schools to manage? How many for example? And where?	2. Spain: "I work only in this centre"; 2. Italy: "No, I have two other schools to manage this year all in different municipalities"; 2. Italy: "This year no, up to last year yes".
	3. Do you continue to teach? How many hours per week?	3. Spain: "Yes, for eight hours a week"; 3. Spain: "I have lessons every day for five hours a week"; 3. Spain: "I have seven hours of lessons this year"; 3. Italy: "No".
	4. Are you also responsible for security?	4. Spain "I am primarily responsible for all professors, children and safety"; 4. "The safety of the building also brings me a lot of concern"; 4. Italy: "The responsibility for safety is mine together with the RSPP";

		4. Italy: “The manager must be given the didactic and administrative responsibilities, also the other responsibilities regarding litigation, but security is not. I'm not a technician, I don't have the money and I can't intervene”.
Teaching staff and middle management	1. How do you become deputy principal?	1. Spain: "The principal chooses them"; 1. Spain "I choose it because it is part of the project"; 1. Italy: "I choose them in relation to their organizational and relational skills; I observe them and see who is the most suitable person"; 1. Italy: “They are chosen by the principal”.
	2. Which other middle management staff members are there?	2. Spain "Just me, the secretary and the head of studies"; 2. Spain: "There is the function of coordinator which can be staff, the canteen ..., the library"; 2. Spain: "Apart from the head of studies there is the counselor ... and the secretary ..."; 2. Italy: “… the class coordinators…, the contact for cyber bullying, department coordinators, the laboratory managers”; 2. Italy "Other figures who follow various paths called instrumental functions ... in every institution there is always a person responsible for bes, dsa (special needs) students ... there can be figures for orientation ..., digital school ..., for inclusion ..., there is certainly inclusion and orientation ".
	3. Do they have a career or financial remuneration for the work they do?	3. Spain: “… and in some cases only those in the library earn an extra”; 3. Italy: "They have an economic reward established by the FIS (institute fund), but they don't have a career".

School and its organization	1. Do you have a defined weekly / annual work plan?	1. Spain "There is a weekly activity plan"; 1. Spain "… an annual plan is established…"; 1. Italy "Annual plan of activities that identifies the teaching staff ... starting from the first days of September".
	2. Is there an official school evaluation report?	2. Spain: "There is no official school evaluation document"; 2. Spain: "there is an evaluation plan at the end of the course"; 2. Italy: "The Rav, school self-assessment reports"; 2. Italy: "Official self-assessment report ... to set up an improvement plan".
	3. How autonomous are you in your school management activities in general?	3. Spain: "There is a false autonomy, the system is very verticalized"; 3. Spain: "The school has autonomy, but you can't go outside of the law"; 3. Spain: "Theoretically we have a law on school autonomy, in practice autonomy is very limited, very limited"; 3. Italy: "Autonomy does not exist, it is very scarce, there is only administrative decentralization"; 3. Italy: "Organizational, educational and financial autonomy is half, you do not have it totally"; 3. Italy: "There is no organisational, teaching or hourly autonomy at school, Autonomy is easily passed on faced with all other activities".
	4. Does your school receive annual funds? From who?	4. Spain: "The consejeria every calendar year gives a certain amount of money ... for everything that is needed in the institute. If there are extraordinary and particular expenses, I ask for them separately "; 4. Spain: "There is an annual budget of money for the expenses of the center with different items"; 4. Italy: "Annual funds of the Miur and student funds where possible".
	5. And on didactic choices, how can a manager act?	5. Spain: "I make a series of proposals to the departments"; 5. Italy: "I participate in the departments, I give indications for the curriculum ...";

		5. Italy: "You have no power in teaching, you only have to promote new teaching methods, buy innovative material ...".
School system, training and evaluation	1. Is there an evaluation of your work?	1. Spain: "Yes, there is for the head of the school and the inspection board does it"; 1. Spain: "I have no official form of evaluation"; 1. Italy: "The general manager evaluates me every year"; 1. Italy: "I am evaluated by the national evaluation system and by the regional school office"; 1. Italy: "There is a platform with the regional school office".
	2. Do you follow any compulsory training courses?	2. Spain: "I've only done it once ... in theory there is no compulsory training system ... every six years you can do a hundred hours to earn a little more"; 2. Spain: "... to get a complement of training ... you have to collect a credit every year and then every six years this credit is equivalent to many hours of training, if you do not put them together they do not pay you the supplement, that's why people do it "; 2. Italy: "There are no compulsory training courses for managers"; 2. Italy: “Compulsory training courses - not really”.
	3. Is there a form of evaluation of the teaching staff? Who does it?	3. Spain: “The teachers have an evaluation through the annual memory. The director is the one who makes the evaluation and presents it to the inspection board who evaluates it "; 3. Spain: "Now in each department a self-assessment is established which must appear in the final report of the course ... and afterwards we send it to the inspection board to see if it goes well. Officially I cannot evaluate my professors”; 3. Italy: “Teacher evaluation does not exist”; 3. Italy: “There is no teacher evaluation; the only evaluation in Italy is that of children".

	4. Are the other teachers required to train and how?	4. Spain: “Teachers must train by taking courses. Every six years they must attend one hundred hours to continue to have the qualification to teach that specific subject "; 4. Spain: "You have to do training just to get the credits, but what they say ... you can't choose"; 4. Italy: “They should train is a duty and right”; 4. Italy: "Without training, it’s a right and duty, they have removed the duty and it is only a right"; 4. Italy: "There are individual refresher activities ...".
	5. What have been the latest school reforms?	5. Spain: "The current law is called L.O.N.C.E."; 5. Spain: "... we have already had seven in a short time ..."; 5. Italy: "Law 107 on good education".
	6. Have they made any particular innovations? Which?	6. Spain: "As a novelty they have introduced standardized tests"; 6. Spain: "... nothing changes, I think there is still a very wrong and outdated idea ..."; 6. Italy: “There have been no reforms that have brought about particular changes; there are certainly things to change such as the lower secondary school and the high school exam "; 6. Italy: "Very bad, disorganized, not continuous, which have not tackled the various problems".
Personnel management and collegial bodies	1. Who chooses the teachers?	1. Spain: "I can because being a school of excellence I have this possibility, in the rest of the schools this is not possible because it is decided centrally"; 1. Spain: "teachers are chosen by the administration"; 1. Spain: "The administration chooses the teachers"; 1. Italy: "I don't choose them, they come from the regional school office, I have no contractual power over teachers"; 1. Italy: "The administrator chooses the teachers, I have no power"; 1. Italy: “Teachers come through a competitive exam which is followed strictly, you can't jump the queue and go wrong. Teachers are not chosen, direct calls have been removed ".
	2. How many secretarial staff are there in this school?	2. Spain: "There is a secretary who is teaching staff; there is an administrative member who is not teaching staff and there are two janitors "; 2. Spain: "We have two people in the school office, we have three in the consejeria and four people for cleaning, and two people in the cafeteria that we coordinate";

		2. Italy: "A valid and competent director and seven administrators, ten scholastic collaborators are legally allowed, when I manage to obtain it, I have another one and a half members of staff, (de facto one)"; 2. Italy: “Secretarial staff fifteen in personnel, teaching, pupils; janitors thirty-five; three dsga ".
	3. Are there any collegiate bodies in your school?	3. Spain: “The collegiate bodies are the school council and the board. The board is made up of the teachers of the school; it has didactic power. The school board is made up of parents, teachers and a representative of the municipality; it has an interpretative function and a bridging relationship between the school, the parents and the municipality "; 3. Italy: “The collegial bodies present are the school council, the teaching board, the class councils; the council includes parents, teachers, technical and administrative staff (ATA) and students; the teaching staff is a technical body that concerns teaching…”.
Relations with families and stakeholders	1. Tell me about your relationship with families, what are they like?	1. Spain: "The relationship with families has changed a lot in recent times ... there were years when no parents came to school ... now they come continuously every week for everything ..."; 1. Italy: “It is not easy for families to be present due to the vastness of the very complex territory and few connections. Families come only to discuss a problem…”; 1. Italy: The relationship with families is good… I have always had a good relationship with families because I have been very honest, parents have been advised on the things that could be done and the things that had to be done. I have always had very civil relations ...”.
	2. Do you have contact with local authorities?	2. Spain: "Being an academic school there are not many relationships with the territory in the sense of events"; 2. Italy: "Local authorities could do more, they believe they are collaborating, but in fact they create opportunities, in promoting them they rarely do what the school wants ... only offering prizes and they solicit participation"; 2. Italy: "Positive and very good relations with local authorities".

	3. Does your school network with other schools in the area?	3. Spain: "There are no school networks"; 3. Spain: "No ... we invite pupils from nearby schools to come here to do a series of activities ... every year"; 3. Italy: "Learning networks with which you work with other schools and train other teachers ..."; 3. Italy: "Also online ..., other sector networks".
Students and curricular and extracurricular activities	1. How many students are there exactly in your school?	1. Spain: "250"; 1. Spain: "Now there are 460 students, between 460 and 500 in all"; 1. Italy: "About 900"; 1. Italy: "In all 1080".
	2. Are there recurring examinations or tests?	2. Spain: "There are three quarters and therefore three evaluation tests, plus an initial one to begin the course ... There is a standardized external test in each area that is done for everyone on the same day and takes two days ..."; 2. Spain: "For example, the external test for access to the EVAU university"; 2. Italy: "Entrance tests, parallel entrance tests prepared by the department and they do it to the first classes ..."; 2. Italy: "Yes, the valid tests and the final exams at the end of the course of study".
	3. Are extra-curricular projects taking place?	3. Spain: "There are extracurricular activities that the municipality organizes that are free and the AMPA. This school has carried out a single international project with Taipei"; 3. Spain: “Little more than nothing, before we had organized exchanges with a couple of schools in Germany… but we had to abandon them. We have some extracurricular municipal collaboration projects for example in biology…”; 3. Italy: "The most important projects are robotics as we are the leader and are transversal for all the fields: English enhancement, legality ... European citizenship ..."; 3. Italy: “Yes, very many, especially with the local area, but also at national and European level”; 3. Italy: “… many projects, have a very cultural aspect: marine lands, it is a minimal part, they make innovative projects, 3D, music, cinema, as it were, various languages”.

DISCUSSION

With regards to working time in Spain, the manager has a rather fixed time during the week which is 30 hours, with another 7.5 hours used for additional activities such as class councils, departments, assessment, correction of homework and preparation of exams. The 30 hours include teaching of their subject which may vary from one manager to another. The rest is devoted to administrative and office activities.

Therefore, in Spain, although the executive's time in his organization is flexible enough, it is not so in terms of the number of hours worked which, except in particular cases or situations to be managed unexpectedly, does not go beyond the established time. Even the very rare meetings outside of school occur during these hours of service.

On the contrary, the school manager in Italy has an employment contract which states "In relation to the overall responsibility in terms of results, the manager independently organizes his own activity in his own time and method, correlating it flexibly to the needs of the institution for which he is responsible and to fulfil the assignment entrusted to him". He does not have a fixed schedule and can organize his activities according to criteria of efficiency and effectiveness during different days of the week. This unfortunately results in an excessive number of hours spent and often a job that continues at home during the late evening and at the weekend. In fact, in the three cases observed, even if the work done within the home was not detected for research purposes, the amount of evening work and meetings really was substantial. Overworked as they are, from all the organizational and management aspects of the school, they never manage to conclude activities during the morning. Meetings, colleges, talks, class councils, school councils, projects take place during the afternoon hours and often last until late in the evening. In both cases, the leaders went beyond a "pre-established" working time.

Another element of distinction between the two school systems analysed and the consequent work commitment of their managers is related to the school and extra-school project activities that take place in them. In Spain the project activities are very few or almost non-existent and simple in nature, and according to their managers they distract teachers and students from the main learning objectives, and require considerable expenditure of human and material resources and energy. Unlike the Spanish schools observed, Italian schools are very concentrated on planning activities of all kinds. From internal projects created by the school and teachers themselves to those organized by the local administrations, up to those carried out between school networks to end up with the NOPs and Erasmus that also involve external experts. The topics are varied and the articulation adapted to different age groups. They can range from robotics and new technologies, to music, wellness and sport, citizenship, language courses (also of L2 and LS for foreigners), to those more strictly corresponding to the high school curriculum. These activities require a great deal of energy and a deep commitment on the part of those who work within schools and especially the school manager.

To conclude, we focus on another significant aspect which is that of the school size. These two realities see a deep gap between the average numbers of students (327 in Spain and 926 in Italy), and consequently the teaching staff (26.8 in Spain and 125.7 in Italy) as well as and administrative staff, (6 in Spain, 36 in Italy). If we consider the management peculiarities of Italian schools, whereby an executive can manage another school due to lack of staff, the numbers double. In Spain, however, the smaller scale allows to have a school "where relationships

are of a familiar type, where space and time resemble that of a neighbourhood and where there is a shared code of values and ideas" (Sergiovanni, 2000).

From the observation of these two school systems, it is interesting to understand whether different organizational and management conditions can change the school and improve it; whether different structural conditions may affect students' school results and performance differently. If it is really the leader who makes the difference in a school, then it is from them that we must begin.

CONCLUSION

After having highlighted in previous paragraphs the differences and similarities between the two school systems and the role of the manager, we must now highlight some questions that are considered significant and useful in order to draw up a comparison between the six managers, for each area researched,

Discontent seems to be quite widespread due to the complexity of the activities carried out, and the amount of daily work, which often continues at home or during breaks "You have to work more than here and besides ... they call you at any time ..."; "I always keep working at home on weekends." Not to mention the considerable responsibilities in every sector from education, to administration, to school safety and even penal matters in the event that something happens to students and employees "We have too many responsibilities that I believe do not belong to us. We have a global responsibility for the functioning of the school and this is logical ... but we also have a great responsibility for the pupils ... the teachers ... and all the staff ... sometimes you are forced to intervene on justice issues... legal ... threats against you ... and your family ... I am not a lawyer, nor a judge ..."; "Our educational system… is too inflexible, gives few powers and discretion, too many responsibilities, without being able to exercise real power. Excessive responsibilities with respect to what is necessary, that should not depend on the manager but on a central system, in the same way that pensions and career reconstruction do. Bureaucracy is necessary, it is an organization, but it doesn't necessarily have to take place at school level…".

Even from the point of view of the 'social prestige' of managerial work, managers do not feel considered enough and do not see their role recognized as they would like: "From the social point of view the manager is not perceived as central within the social fabric. It depends a lot on the personality of each of us… your role becomes important but not due to the role, but because of the person"; "I don't think we have much social prestige, however I don't feel too badly treated either ..."; "I don't feel social prestige ...".

The perception that managers have of the work they do, and consequently of their role, has highlighted differences between Spain and Italy. I believe this is partly due to the different management complexity they face. The former operate in smaller schools, therefore with fewer pupils, fewer teaching and administrative staff to manage, fewer relationships with families and stakeholders and with fewer extra-curricular project activities. The latter, on the other hand, have schools with more than double the size to manage, and if they have other schools to supervise the dimensions are considerably larger. This when translated in terms of perception of their role, certainly makes a significant difference. In fact, in Spain executives describe their work as follows: "Well I would describe it as an experience to be had as well as benefiting from it. It seems to me something new, something that changes me and that brings me a lot, a lot "; "To me in general it is a rewarding job, I like it". On the other hand, his Italian colleagues see it this way: "The manager has to make the system work, he holds the system together"; "He is the person who is the fulcrum of the school, he

is the one who manages it with set guidelines. However in this last period there are no clear and precise guidelines on how to operate, I also don't believe that a manager can be alone in making choices… "; "It's 'a noose' in one word, they have found a scapegoat to be sacrificed….since it is a senior level role that counts for nothing but assumes all the responsibilities ... We are a scapegoat and have all the responsibilities that are given at a senior level".

None of the managers, even during daily interviews, feel satisfied with the work they do, neither from the point of view of social prestige, nor from the point of view of economic remuneration. All agree in calling it a job full of many responsibilities, but without any real power.

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