Ἔχεις μοι εἰπεῖν, Ὁ Ἀρσιλεύς, ᾿Αρα διδακτόν ἢ ἀρετή; ἢ οὔ διδακτόν ἀλλ’ ἀσκητῶν; ἢ οὔτε ἀσκητῶν οὔτε μαθητῶν, ἀλλὰ φύσει παραγίγνεται τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ὃ ἄλλω τινὶ τρόπῳ
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THE KINDS OF PRINCIPALS TEACHERS PREFER: A CROSS-NATIONS STUDY

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ABSTRACT
Experience with the international copying of educational policies and practices suggests that “borrowed” changes are effective only if the underlying values are congruent with the culture of the receiving society. Consequently researchers are paying more attention to cultural issues. Although there is much agreement about the relative importance of those characteristics and behaviors in different cultures. This article reports findings from an investigation of Greek and Cypriot educators’ conceptions of positive and negative characteristics of school leaders and compares them against other researchers’ findings from other countries. The findings support the proposition that preferences for leadership style are different in different regions, and illustrate the need for caution in using “recommended practices” that were developed in other contexts.

Keywords: School principals, effectiveness, cultural differences, borrowing, globalization

1. INTRODUCTION
The history of studies of administration reflects a number of broad streams of inquiry, each defined by the then-dominant interests and methods. Even as early as 1958 Davies and Iannaccone, for example, posited three streams: a “technical” stream characterized by Taylorism, a “human relations” stream epitomized in the Western Electric studies, and the then-emergent “conceptual” stream. This typology was acceptable to another well-respected authority, Getzels (1960), who equated these streams with three general approaches to developing administrative theory: studying natural-born leaders, extracting general principles from “best practices”, and developing conceptual frameworks. The “conceptual” movement ushered in an enduring tradition of developing administrative principles based on “scientific” studies rather than ideological beliefs and personal experiences. But it was soon populated with alternative ways of thinking and conducting research, so that today studies of administration reflect a wide range of paradigms. In general the emergence of each paradigm was occasioned by a creeping awareness that the assumptions and foci of existing paradigms were deficient in some way.

For my purposes here, three weaknesses are particularly important. The first
weakness is that conceptualizations of leadership have been limited by the hegemony of a “heroic” paradigm (Harris 2003, Harris 2005, Lyman Ashby & Tripses 2005). This paradigm entails a tendency to see leadership as “positional” – that is, flowing from one influential individual, usually the occupant of a formally designated position or office. Instead, it has been argued, leadership should be seen as also flowing from individuals anywhere in a group as they influence an organization’s trajectory, through their decisions about the objectives they will support (or resist) and how they will interact with others. This leads to the notions of leadership as “distributed” and/or “dispersed” (MacBeath 2005). The second weakness is that organizational theory and research have tended to emphasize the technical and rational aspects of leadership, systematically neglecting the affective and moral dynamics of administration because they lie in “the neural dark” – beyond direct observation (e.g., Hodgkinson 1991, Begley, 1996, Evers & Lakomski 1996, Leithwood & Jantzi 2006). The third weakness is that easier travel and communication has resulted in widespread, often global awareness of “successful” administrative arrangements - and “borrowing” of policies and practices developed in other jurisdictions, nations, and cultures. But that is proving to be problematic, as there is mounting evidence that borrowed policies and practices will fail if they are not congruent with the values of the local culture (Brundrett Fitzgerald & Sommefeldt 2006, Steiner-Khamsi 2006).

This article relates to the last issue: It reports findings from research to investigate whether teachers in different countries (cultures) prefer different kinds of principals, with a primary focus on the leadership preferences of teachers in Greece and Cyprus.

This report of that research comprises four stages. First I review recent developments in understandings about the nature of leadership and the role that cultural factors may play in leadership preferences. Second I describe my investigation of teachers’ leadership preferences in Greece and Cyprus, present the findings, and compare those findings with the results of a parallel study by Zepp, Eckstein, Khalid, and Li (2011). In this part of the article I also take a look at the effects of making different assumptions about the nature of data from Likert scales. In the third section I relate my findings to the literature, commenting on how the findings reflect on extant understandings about leadership in schools, as well as the “borrowing” issue. In the final section I surface implications for further research and practice.

2. CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT THE NATURE OF LEADERSHIP

2.1. Conceptualizations

In most of the theoretical and research literature, the descriptions of leadership promote the heroic paradigm:

The “hero paradigm” of leadership ... emphasises the capabilities of one person to transform and improve an organisation. ... The school leader is the
This kind of leadership is typically “positional” and most obvious in bureaucratic organizations, where the right to control organizational affairs is formally allocated to a few individuals occupying designated “leadership” positions (offices), directives are transmitted via hierarchical “chains of command”, rules specify acceptable behaviour, and accountability is effected through close supervision. Heroic leadership is typical of organizations with centralized control – such as the systems of schooling in Greece and Cyprus. And the hegemony of the heroic assumption extends even to organizations where so-called “distributed” leadership (Woods & Gronn 2009) is advocated. For example, it has been found that in more effective schools where distributed leadership was ostensibly practised, in fact

*the Heads ... had deliberately chosen to distribute leadership responsibility to others and had put in place systems and incentives to ensure this happened. ... [But] in all cases, they remained important gatekeepers to change and development, guiding their schools in a clear and purposeful direction.*

(Harris 2005: 12).

As a result some theoreticians and researchers have become interested recently in a form of leadership that contrasts with heroic leadership in that it has no centers of concentrated control. It is referred to variously as dispersed leadership (MacBeath 2005), collective leadership (Leithwood & Mascall 2008), quantum leadership (Lazaridou & Fris 2008*), and organic leadership (Miller & Rowan 2006). The latter, for example, characterize this kind of leadership as

*a shift away from conventional, hierarchical patterns of bureaucratic control toward what has been referred to as a network pattern of control, that is, a pattern of control in which line employees are actively involved in organizational decision making [and] staff cooperation and collegiality supplant the hierarchy as a means of coordinating work flows and resolving technical difficulties (cited in Leithwood & Mascall 2008: 532).*

Several caveats regarding this dispersed conception of leadership need to be emphasized, however. First, there is yet little empirical evidence about its dynamics. Second, members of the group must be in symbiosis – a readiness, based in personal confidence and trust, to engage in reciprocal social and professional exchanges.

**2.2. Culture as mediating factor**

A fairly recent development in studies of administration and leadership is the proposition that cultural factors mediate effectiveness. This phase in thinking and inquiry about administration began in the early 80s and many issues have been examined. One, arising out of the globalization of successful educational policies and practice, is the possibility that “borrowed” changes may fail because they are incongruent with the values and norms of the receiving society (Brundrett Fitzgerald & Sommefeldt 2006, Steiner-Khamsi 2006). To address this problem researchers
have been paying more attention to cultural issues (e.g., Hofstede & Bond 1988, Dimmock & Walker 1998, Dimmock & Walker 2000, Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, Zepp Eckstein Khalid & Li 2011). The groundbreaking studies of cultural differences in leadership practices and preferences were conducted in the field of business by Hofstede (1991). He concluded that cultures could be differentiated in terms of four variables – power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and individualism – and that managers should align their leadership style with the particular value orientations of the cultural contexts they operate in. For example, in a culture characterized by high uncertainty avoidance, managers must pay particular attention to ensuring that their instructions for others are always very clear.

In similar fashion research in educational settings has shown that leadership styles vary significantly among subcultures and subgroups (e.g., Zepp & Hong 2007). In this regard two recent investigations are particularly noteworthy, one focused on inter-cultural differences, the other showing intra-cultural differences.

The first study, by Zepp, Eckstein, Khalid, and Li (2011), investigated whether teachers’ perceptions of the characteristics and behaviors of good and bad leaders varied across seven countries, seven cultures. To do this Zepp and colleagues developed a questionnaire to assess teachers’ views regarding the characteristics and behaviors of good and bad leaders. The questionnaire consisted of four groups of eight items each: traits of good leaders, behaviors of good leaders, traits of bad leaders, and behaviors of bad leaders. Respondents were required to identify and rank three items in each of the four groups of items that they considered most characteristic. Zepp and colleagues then administered the questionnaire to teachers in seven countries: Cambodia, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Qatar, Taiwan, Uganda, and the United States of America. They found that the seven national groups’ conceptions of good and bad leaders differed significantly and that no single set of characteristics or behaviors emerged as universally important. For example “intelligent” was seen as very characteristic of good leaders by the Cambodian teachers but much less so by their American counterparts. Conversely, “broad vision” was seen as very characteristic of good leaders by the American teachers but not so by the Cambodian teachers. Further, even on what would appear to be the most culturally similar pair – that of Hong Kong and Taiwan – significant [differences] were observed on ... 10 of the 32 variables.

In the second study Yalcin and Erginer (2012) asked students, teachers, administrators, and parents of eight primary schools in northern Turkey (total n = 1875) to characterize school principals (“Directors”) in metaphorical terms: “The school Director is like .......... because ..........” They found that, as a group, the participants characterized principals as protector/guardian, guide/leader, manager/administrator, negative force – hostile and mercenary, valuable – sympathetic/helpful, power-center, and hardworking (pp. 251-252). However, the data also revealed that the sub-groups (sub-cultures) in the sample attached different priorities to the most common characteristics: students mentioned hostile/mercenary most often, teachers and administrators mentioned guide/leader most often, and parents mentioned protector/guardian most often (p. 250).
In sum, the concerns and findings highlighted in this section suggest that a country’s legislators and governors should be cautious about adopting policies and practices for preparing and appointing school administrators – such as - that are advocated in other countries. Even though there is much agreement about the desirable characteristics and behaviors of good leaders (e.g., Leithwood & Riehl 2003) and widely influential sets of corresponding performance standards have been constructed (e.g., Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium 2008), the relative importance of these characteristics and behaviors in different cultures has not received much attention and remains to be established.

3. THE STUDY

As noted earlier, a large body of leadership research supports the contingency principle – leaders must adjust their styles to fit the exigencies of different situations. In educational organizations such exigencies include the level of schooling; constraints and opportunities imposed by contracts regarding employment and working conditions; the educational priorities of the State, local authorities, and professional associations; and local value orientations. If the constructivist perspective is taken, this last factor suggests the proposition that a school principal’s perceived effectiveness - and corresponding acceptance by those she/he works with - is a function of how that principal is seen to “fit” the work-place ecology. In other words, whether a school’s principal is seen as good or bad, desirable or undesirable, depends in part on whether she/he displays or lacks the characteristics and behaviours valued in the school’s cultural setting.

The research I report here was designed to provide further insights into this proposition. Partly in keeping with the constructivist paradigm, it involved a survey of Cypriot and Greek educators’ conceptions of the personal characteristics that they believe differentiate more effective school leaders from less effective leaders. In service to this objective, I used a translated version of the instrument developed by Zepp, Eckstein, Khalid, and Li (2011). This allowed me to extend the cross-nations comparison by comparing my data with data gathered by Zepp et al (2011) in Cambodia and the USA.

Accordingly, my research questions were:

1. What are Greek educators’ conceptions of the features that define (a) desirable and (b) undesirable school principals?
2. What are Cypriot educators’ conceptions of the features that define (a) desirable and (b) undesirable school principals?
3. How do those conceptions compare?
4. How do the Greek and Cypriot educators’ conceptions compare with those of educators in Cambodia and the USA?

Before I describe the questionnaire in more detail, it is important to note three things about the survey instrument. First, it requires respondents to differentiate between “good” and “bad” leaders and thus employs a designation - “bad” - that some people prefer to avoid. To permit comparison of my data with those gathered...
by Zepp and colleagues, I retained this term in my questionnaire; but in this report I do use “softer” synonymous terms. Second, the template questionnaire reflects the “positional” perspective on leadership, and I accepted this because it is congruent with the highly centralized and bureaucratic nature of the school systems in Greece and Cyprus. Third, the questionnaire presents respondents with an a priori set of personal characteristics and behaviors that were derived from the literature. Because of this it allows bounded responses and does not permit a pure constructivist approach to ascertaining educators’ conceptions of “good” and “bad” leaders.

The questionnaire consisted of 32 items in four clusters of eight items. The items in the four clusters presented characteristics of leaders that had been extracted from the literature, classified by Zepp and colleagues as follows:

- **Cluster 1** – Characteristics of a good leader
- **Cluster 2** – Behaviors of a good leader
- **Cluster 3** – Characteristics of a bad leader
- **Cluster 4** – Behaviors of a bad leader.

Respondents were required to select and rank order three characteristics in each cluster.

The Zepp et al (2011) questionnaire was translated into Greek by the author (a native Greek) and verified by independent judges who were fluent in both Greek and English and intimately acquainted with the administration of education in Greece and Cyprus. The questionnaire was made available to convenience samples of educators in Cyprus and Greece.

Out of about 477 questionnaires distributed, 310 usable questionnaires were received, a return rate of 65%. This sample consisted of 253 teachers (43% Greek, 57% Cypriot), 21 principals (24% Greek, 76% Cypriot), twenty respondents who occupied positions with various other responsibilities (55% Greek, 45% Cypriot), and 16 educators who did not indicate the positions they held. Table 1 shows the composition of the Cypriot and Greek samples in terms of country and position.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Elem. School teacher</th>
<th>Sec. School teacher</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>294 *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*16 missing cases -- did not indicate position

For analytic purposes the participants’ choices were coded 3 for the characteristic nominated first, 2 for the second nomination, and 1 for the third.

I processed my data in three stages. First I used descriptive frequencies to determine how the respondents profiled good and bad leaders using the
characteristics and behaviors presented in the questionnaire. Next, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied to search for differences in the Cypriot and Greek respondents’ notions of desirable and undesirable leaders. Finally I examined the data for differences between my data and data collected in two other countries. In this phase I also addressed a statistical issue associated with data from rating scales.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Distribution of responses

In the first phase of analysis, the data were treated as categorical (Kohlman & Mook nd; UCLA Academic Technology Services nd) and examined in terms of simple frequencies. Table 2 shows how often the characteristics and behaviors listed in the questionnaire were identified by all the participating educators as the primary desirable and undesirable characteristics of leaders. The frequencies are given as percentages of the total sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Selected as 1st characteristic</th>
<th>Selected as 2nd characteristic</th>
<th>Selected as 3rd characteristic</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desirable characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Very intelligent</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Good public speaker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Dependable and consistent</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Has broad vision, shares it with us</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Very friendly personality</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Honest and we can trust him/her.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Very self-confident</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Persistent &amp; determined to achieve goals</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors of a good leader</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Attends to our well-being and human needs</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Appeals to our higher moral selves</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Works with us as a team</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Gives very clear</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristic</td>
<td>Selected as 1st characteristic %</td>
<td>Selected as 2nd characteristic %</td>
<td>Selected as 3rd characteristic %</td>
<td>Total %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instructions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Treats us with respect</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Invites us to share in decision making</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Seeks to improve social relationships</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Challenges us to perform at highest levels</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undesirable characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Stupid</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cannot express self well</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Not consistent in what is said and done</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Narrow minded</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Unfriendly personality</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Dishonest and deceitful</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Not confident about achieving our tasks</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Lacks strong will to succeed</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors of a bad leader</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Works only to improve ego &amp; promote self</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Appeals to our selfishness</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. No sense of teamwork</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Fails to be clear about what we are to do</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Treats us like naughty children</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Acts as a dictator</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Fears, discourages criticism &amp; opposition</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Engages in corruption</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When they thought about desirable characteristics, the two that most often came to mind first and second were having a broad vision that they shared with their teachers and persistence and drive in achieving goals. At the third level of frequency was dependability and consistency. Incidentally, among the “good leaders” characteristics listed in the questionnaire, three were selected very seldom as characteristics that set effective principals apart: good public speaker (selected by only 4%), friendly personality (8%), and high intelligence (14%). This is not to say that these characteristics are of no consequence; rather, they are not, at least in the eyes of these educators, among the characteristics that set good leaders apart.

Of the eight desirable behaviors presented in the questionnaire, the two that were identified most often as distinguishing characteristics (either 1st, 2nd, or 3rd) were “treats us with respect” and “attends to our well-being and human needs”. As the cell-percentages show, there was little consensus about the ranking of these behaviors. Four behaviors were mentioned much less frequently as characteristics that distinguish a good leader: building social relationships, giving clear instructions, team worker, and sharing decision making.

In regard to undesirable characteristics, two were selected most often: “not consistent in what is said and done” (doesn’t walk the talk) and “dishonest and deceitful”. Two of the characteristics presented in this section of the questionnaire were apparently irrelevant to the respondents in profiling bad leaders: inability to express oneself and stupidity.

In the domain of undesirable behaviors, only one stood out: working only to improve personal status. However, this was by no means a clear first for all the respondents; 1st selection – 26%, second – 21%, and 3rd – 27%. The obverse of this coin is that this behavior was not chosen as a characteristic of a bad leader by 26% of the participants.

### 4.2. Differences in Cypriot and Greek participants’ conceptions

Table 3 presents the statistically significant differences in the two groups’ responses that were uncovered with a Mann-Whitney U test, suitable for categorical data.

#### Table 3. Differences in Cypriot and Greek Educators’ Conceptualizations of Good and Bad Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of a good leader</th>
<th>Mann-Whitney U</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Grouping</th>
<th>Mea Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&amp; nepotism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 310
3. He/she is dependable and consistent. 3052.0 .003 Greece 79.2
4. He/she has a broad vision which he/she shares with us. 5104.0 .014 Greece 124.1

### Behaviors of a good leader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He/she treats us with respect.</td>
<td>3640.0</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>86.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/she challenges us to perform at our highest possible level.</td>
<td>1531.5</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>59.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Behaviors of a bad leader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He/she appeals to our selfishness.</td>
<td>236.5</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/she doesn't make it clear what he/she wants us to do.</td>
<td>651.5</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/she fears and discourages criticism and opposition.</td>
<td>1757.0</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>76.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first thing to note is that there were no significant differences (p ≤ 0.05) in the Cypriot and Greek educators’ responses to the third set of questionnaire items – undesirable characteristics of a leader.

In regard to desirable characteristics, the mean rankings show that the Greek participants, compared with the Cypriot respondents, were more inclined to see good leaders as being dependable and consistent. Having and sharing a broad vision was more readily attribute to good leaders by the Cypriot participants. But it should be kept in mind that here we are looking at inter-group differences in responding to specific questionnaire items, not the relative weight or salience of a specific characteristic in the overall profile of an effective or less effective leader. As to desirable leader behaviors, there were two significant differences in the two groups’ mean rankings of items. The Greek participants were more inclined to attribute “treating others with respect” to good leaders, while “challenging us to perform at our highest possible level” was associated with good leaders more readily by the Cypriots.

With regard to undesirable behaviors, the Greek participants were more inclined to associate “appealing to our selfishness” with bad leaders. On the other hand the Cypriot participants were more inclined to associate bad leadership with not giving clear instructions and fearing and discouraging criticism and opposition.

Now, if we ignore for the moment differences in the participants’ rankings of their putative good and bad leaders’ primary characteristics (as supported by the above analysis for differences), the data show that the participant teachers had similar preferences. Both Cypriots and Greeks were of the opinion that good leaders have and promote a broad shared vision of education, are persistent and determined in their pursuit of goals, are dependable and consistent, treat others with respect, and foster the well-being and human needs of their staffs. At the more general level of interpretation, furthermore, one could venture that both the Greek
and Cypriot teachers characterized good principals as those who promote
organizational goal achievement, primarily by striving to develop a robust shared
vision and by demonstrating faith in others’ abilities. In contrast, poor principals
were seen to be those who are unauthentic (not “walking the talk” and dishonest)
and who compromise the common good by working to build their egos and
promote themselves.

4.3. Comparison with findings for other countries

In the third phase of analysis the findings were compared with those reported by
Zepp and colleagues (2011) - first in terms of the primary characteristics and
behaviours of liked and disliked leaders, then in terms of differences between
national groups.

4.4. Cross-national differences

Zepp et al (2011) presented the top three characteristics and behaviors (based on
average ratings) identified in each of the seven countries they surveyed. Table 4
emulates this pattern to present and compare the findings for my sample of Cypriot
and Greek teachers with the data for two of the seven countries in Zepp et al’s
investigation: Cambodia and the USA. (I chose to feature only these two countries to
avoid data overload and to have countries that I thought might prove to have similar
and dissimilar value orientations.)

Table 4. Cross-cultural comparison of characteristics nominated most often in four
countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive characteristics of school leaders</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Third</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Friendly *</td>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>Public speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self-confident</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>Public speaker</td>
<td>Dependable</td>
<td>Self-confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Persistent</td>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>Honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Dependable</td>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>Persistent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive behaviors of school leaders</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Third</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Social relationships</td>
<td>Shared decisions</td>
<td>Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>Social relationships</td>
<td>Clear instructions</td>
<td>Shared decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Morals</td>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>Shared decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Shared decisions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative characteristics of school leaders</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Third</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Unfriendly</td>
<td>Not confident</td>
<td>Narrow-minded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>Unfriendly</td>
<td>No willpower</td>
<td>Stupid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The general picture painted by Table 4 tends to support the conclusion that there are differences across cultures in perceptions of what constitutes good and bad leadership.

In regard to the top three characteristics of good leaders, seven characteristics were referenced by respondents in the four countries; that is, there was a fair amount of variation in conceptions from country to country. Five characteristics were identified in only two countries – friendly, good public speaker, dependable, persistent, and honest. Self-confident and intelligent were each mentioned in only one country.

In regard to the top three behaviors of good leaders, there was both congruence and variance in conceptions across the four countries. Of the seven characteristics referenced, shared decision making was identified in all four countries. Exacting high performance and building social relationships were mentioned twice each. Cambodia was least “in step” with two of its top three characteristics not taken up in the other countries.

As to the characteristics of bad leaders, there was a fair amount of variation across countries. Mentioned twice each were unfriendly, narrow-minded, no willpower, and dishonest. As to the other three characteristics, each was referenced in only one country: not confident, stupid, and intelligent.

With regard to the behaviors of bad leaders, there was again a significant amount of variation – eight characteristics were referenced. Four were nominated in two countries each – unfriendly, narrow minded, no will-power, and dishonest. The other three characteristics were nominated in only one country each – stupid, intelligent, and inconsistent.

4.5. Effects of using alternative statistical procedures

The data I used raised two issues associated with the analysis of data from rating scales. First, there is controversy among statisticians about the kind of data produced by ranking scales – and the statistical procedures that are appropriate. Some argue that a 3-point (and even a 5-point) rating scale provides categorical or
ordinal data, not interval or ratio; thus the data they produce are not amenable to
descriptive statistics like the mean and t-test (e.g., Kohlman and Mook, nd; UCLA
Academic Technology Services, nd). In this perspective differences in the responses
of different groups of respondents should be assessed with the Mann-Whitney U
test. The manual for SPSS verifies this (SPSS Inc., nd, pp. 420, 428). The second issue
was the need to compare the findings of this research with those of Zepp et al
(2011), who used Chi-square.

In light of these considerations, I analyzed my data with Chi-square tests and
compared the differences between Cypriots and Greeks that emerged with this
procedure compared with the differences between countries that Zepp and
colleagues (2011) observed.

Using Chi-square, then, five significant differences in my data were revealed, as
shown in Table 5

| Table 5. Revisiting differences in Greek and Cypriot educators’ conceptualizations of
good and bad leaders: Chi-Square tests |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire item</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std dev</td>
<td>Chi-square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of a good leader</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependable and consistent</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>.778</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>.764</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has broad vision, shares it with us</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>.868</td>
<td>.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>.725</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviors of a good leader</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treats us with respect</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>.783</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>.905</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invites us to share in decision making</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>.861</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>.821</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges us to perform at highest levels</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>.713</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>.828</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(p ≤ 0.05)

In some respects the two analyses produced parallel outcomes. But there were
differences. The first difference to note is that the Chi-square test indicated that
there were no differences in the Cypriot and Greek participants’ responses to items
in two sub-sections of the questionnaire: the characteristics and the behaviors that
define a bad leader. The Mann-Whitney test, though, indicated that there were
differences in responses to items in the “behaviors of a bad leader” section of the
questionnaire (see Table 3). The second difference is the Chi-square indication that
the Greek and Cypriots samples responded differently to the item “Invites us to
share in decision making” in the “behaviors of god leaders” section of the
questionnaire - while the Mann-Whitney test did not. These analyses, then, suggest
that the choice of analytical techniques can affect findings derived from rating-scale
data.
5. DISCUSSION

Experience with “borrowing” of educational policies and practices has indicated that it is important to fit administrative structures and practices to local contexts, in particular the values and norms of the receiving society or group (Brundrett Fitzgerald & Sommefeldt 2006, Steiner-Khamsi 2006, Lazaridou & Iordanidis 2011). As a result researchers have been paying more attention to cultural issues. In the arena of educational administration this involves paying attention to people’s preferences regarding leadership styles. By extension one particular issue is whether conceptions of good and bad leaders differ from culture to culture, and within cultures. In this regard the two investigations reviewed earlier provided evidence that they do (Zepp Eckstein Khalid & Li 2011, Yalçın & Erginer 2012).

My findings also support the proposition that preferences for leadership style are different in different countries and cultures. The similarity of Greek and Cypriot teachers’ conceptions of desirable and undesirable leaders that I found should not surprise - they are after all in close proximity, use the same language, have very similar social institutions and structures, and have a common heritage. That is, Cypriot and Greek educators are embedded in highly comparable cultures. Thus, in looking at cross-national differences in preferences and values, Greece and Cyprus should be treated as one analytical unit. When this perspective is adopted, my comparison of data from four countries shows clearly that educators’ conceptions of good and bad leaders were different in three cultures: Greece-Cyprus, Cambodia, and the USA.

Another conclusion suggested by my data is that there is good reason to be alert to the statistical procedures used to detect inter-group differences in data produced with ranking scales. When I subjected my data to Mann-Whitney U tests (suitable for categorical/ordinal data) and then Chi-square analyses (suitable for interval/ratio data) to surface significant differences in the responses of the Cypriot and Greek respondents, the former isolated differences on three questionnaire items that the latter did not. Conversely, Chi-square identified a difference on one item that the Mann-Whitney did not. Ergo, treating responses to ranking scales as categorical/ordinal data, as oppose to interval/ratio data, can lead different representations of reality.

In connection with the issue of seeing leadership as “positional”, it should be remembered that the instrument used for this research consisted almost exclusively of items that reflected this perspective. Indeed, only the data for two items could be taken as proxy indicators of a distributed (but not dispersed) approach to leadership: “Works with us as a team” and “Invites us to share in decision making”. These behaviors were not strong elements in the profiles of the participants’ “good” leaders. One possible interpretation of this finding is that my participants saw good leadership as more positional than distributed – let alone dispersed. This, it seems, is consistent with immersion in the long-entrenched systems of centralized-control of Greece and Cyprus. And it suggests that attempts to emulate the more decentralized systems that have been adopted in other countries may meet resistance by Greek and Cypriot teachers.
Finally, the conceptions of good and bad leaders that the Cypriot and Greek educators held have implications for the development of school principals in those countries—and perhaps in other countries. But when policies and practices related to leadership development are being planned, the principle of “glocalization” (Brundrett & Dering 2006) rather than globalization must be used—when looking to other countries’ policies and practices for guidance, care must be taken to co-opt only those aspects that fit the local values. My data suggested that policies and structures for the appointment and in-service evaluation of school principals in Greece and Cyprus should emphasize characteristics and behaviors that ensure leadership by individuals who (1) have faith in and are prepared to capitalize on the abilities of staff, (2) support and are adept in cultivating a shared school vision, and (3) inspire dedication to achievement of the organizational goals generated by that vision. Sadly this has not much been the case, even in the immediate past, for appointment and evaluation of principals in Cyprus and Greece have been influenced heavily by ability to cultivate relationships with political power-brokers and skill in currying favour (Athanasoula-Reppa 2005, Athanasoula-Reppa & Lazaridou 2008). To help change this situation it may be useful to investigate conceptions of desirable and undesirable principals qualitatively; that is, without the constraints of an a priori list of characteristics.

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Lazaridou, A., & Fris, J. (2008*). Slipping the yoke of the heroic paradigm: Looking for quantum leadership. International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Education, 12(21). *Critical figures in this article were distorted and omitted in the process of being uploaded to the Web. Contact first author for uncorrupted article.

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