FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN ONTARIO:

A Fresh Perspective on Leadership Practices

A project sponsored by the Ontario Institute for Education Leadership and the Ontario Ministry of Education

Executive summary report

September 2017

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INTRODUCTION

The study examined the leadership practices of school and system leaders in the 12 French-language school districts. These practices are identified in the *Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)*. The OLF serves as a reference for identifying successful individual and organizational practices at the school and district level. The quantitative and qualitative analyses conducted throughout the study made it possible to document leadership practices in the context of institutional capacity and academic achievement development within the French-language districts as defined in the *Aménagement Linguistic Policy (PAL)* (2004).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The *Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)* defines leadership practices as a bundle of activities exercised by a person or group of persons, which reflect the particular circumstances in which they find themselves.

In light of this definition, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How do French-language school and school district leadership practices promote academic achievement in a minority context?

2. How do French-language school and school district leadership practices develop the ability of school staff, families and students to maintain their Francophone linguistic and cultural identity?

3. How do French-language school and school district leadership practices support a French speaking environment that is conducive to the vitality and pluralism of the minority French-speaking community?

4. How do the effective leadership practices of school and system leaders of French language schools and school districts influence the leadership practices and personal leadership resources development of Ontario school and system leaders?

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN A MINORITY SETTING

In Francophone minority settings, schools often serve as the most significant link between families and the French-speaking circles formed within English-speaking majority communities. Expectations for these schools are therefore very high. First, the schools are expected to give each student the opportunity to acquire advanced language skills, and second, their mission of education is relied upon to convey the values that may shape young people's identities. (Dalley and Roy, 2008) French-language school districts, together with parents and community organizations as a whole, must keep the *Aménagement Linguistic Policy (PAL)* at the forefront and develop a language improvement policy promoting the fulfillment of the mandate of French-language schools. The strategic aims of this mandate are to ensure the academic achievement of every student, implement high-quality programs and services that are specific to the French speaking community, create a dynamic and pluralistic Francophone environment that properly reflects Ontario's French-language community, promote identity building, and form significant partnerships between schools, families and the community.

THE ONTARIO LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK (OLF)

In the context of the educational and cultural mandate of French-language schools, the *Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)* defines leadership as the exercise of influence over the members of the organization and other stakeholders to achieve the organization's vision and goals. This influence, which is driven by a process of collaboration and reciprocity, can be exercised by different people (school leaders, system leaders, parents and teaching staff) and make a positive contribution to the organization's vision and goals.

To answer the research questions, the leadership practices of school and system leaders in French language schools and school districts will be examined in light of the nine characteristics of the *District Effectiveness Framework (DEF)* from the *Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)* as well as the strategic aims for personal development and academic achievement under the *Aménagement Linguistic Policy (PAL)* mandate to enhance the French language and culture.

METHODOLOGY

The research questions highlight the study's interest in the leadership practices of system leaders in a French-language minority setting. They focus on an approach and a review of processes. That is why a mixed method combining the strengths of quantitative and qualitative data was used, which will allow to more easily pinpoint the leadership practices of school and system leaders. (Creswell and Polano, 2007)

QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Two questionnaires were designed, one for system leaders and one for school leaders. The questions focused on the nine (9) characteristics of highly effective school districts from the *District Effectiveness Framework (DEF)* as well as the domains from *School-level Leadership* and the *Catholic School-level Leadership* and the personal leadership resources of the *Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)*.

The cultural and diversity areas of the *Aménagement Linguistic Policy* (PAL) focus on culture and diversity and are reflected in the questions. Forty-five (45) system leaders and two hundred and twenty-four (224) school leaders completed the questionnaires.

QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

The school and system leaders who participated in the qualitative data collection process were from a voluntary sample from each school district. A total of sixty-five (65) system leaders and forty-six (46) school leaders participated in the discussion group meetings.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY QUESTIONS

RESULTS OF THE FIRST QUESTION OF THE STUDY

In response to the first question: How do French-language school and school district leadership practices promote academic achievement in a minority context, the results of the study show that Catholic and public school districts as well as schools have developed different strategies to operationalize the nine *District Effectiveness Framework (DEF)* characteristics of the *Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)*. Processes related to the development of a vision, policies, budgets, accountability, instructional improvement, resource allocation, use of data, professional learning and leadership development are put in place in order to maximize the success of all students.

A broadly shared mission, vision and goals founded on aspirational images of the educated person

- ✓ The mission, vision and goals are guidelines for defining the district's directions and are understood by all school district members as frames of reference to inform their decision-making.
- ✓ The school districts' Catholic vision is put into practice, and the Christian message is embodied in the directions, relationships and operating procedures. Catholic schools use symbols that reflect their faith.
- ✓ Strategic plans and improvement plans for Catholic and public schools and school districts are generally developed in a transparent way in collaboration with their stakeholders.
- ✓ The fundamental priorities of the strategic plans also integrate the priorities of the Ontario Ministry of Education, which are achieving excellence, ensuring equity, promoting student and staff well-being and enhancing public confidence.
- ✓ District improvement plans inspire the development of schools improvement plans. Measures are taken to ensure that improvement plans and strategic plans that are part of the district's vision are communicated equally well by system leaders and by school leaders.
- ✓ School leaders are committed to making the school an enriching environment with high expectations for students and staff, and they encourage instructional innovation in teaching.

A coherent instructional guidance system

✓ School and system leaders believe strongly in the ability of school and district staff to achieve high standards for all students as well as standards of excellence in teaching and leadership. There is also a desire to identify weak performances and obstacles to achievement, to accept responsibility for failures and to find solutions.
✓ System leaders work in collaboration with school leaders to target specific goals and effective strategies.
✓ Ambitious and realistic achievement standards for students take their development and well-being into consideration. Learning assessments make it possible to identify and prioritize students who need additional support.
✓ Improvement efforts in the form of learning networks between a school district's schools are focused on student needs and interests.
✓ School leaders observe classrooms and provide constructive comments to teaching staff.
✓ School leaders support teaching staff in implementing promising and evidence based instructional approaches
✓ Teaching staff are allocated time to collaborate and to share innovative practices with their colleagues. They have access to the district's resources to support them in their instructional process.
✓ Catholic school district programs take Catholicism into consideration. Pastoral life is part of the daily experience of catholic schools.

Deliberate and consistent use of multiple sources of evidence to inform decisions

✓ Priority is placed on understanding how data is used and on maintaining a database with multiple sources at the district level. Teaching staff and school leaders work together to analyze multiple data sets before making decisions on ways to improve student achievement and establish common goals.
✓ A data-based culture is beginning to be integrated into research-validated instructional approaches. Districts believe there is added value in participating in research whose results could help them in their decision-making.
✓ Professional learning support or technology tools help school leaders and teaching staff to analyze and interpret data.
✓ Computerized data management systems give access at all times to an overall picture of a student's progress in order to provide appropriate, timely and specific interventions.
✓ Schools are responsible for interpreting the results of provincial tests from the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) and asking questions such as: what do the results mean, what can we do to improve, how can we find new strategies for aligning practices, and how can we be open to creativity?

Learning-oriented organizational improvement processes

✓ School district and school structures and standards encourage regular conversations about teaching and learning.
✓ School leaders create a safe and positive environment and a school culture that is conducive to learning. They organize the schedule, participate in school and community events and are present within the school, interacting with students, staff and parents. They ensure that teaching staff participates in developing and implementing important school district decisions and policies.
✓ School-team meetings examine academic success, which is defined as much by the value placed on the student's self-esteem as their well-being and learning of skills. These components of academic achievement are supported by teaching and appropriate activities with clear and applicable improvement goals. A positive disciplinary climate leads to a trusting and respectful environment.
✓ The collegial culture gives school staff the confidence to openly discuss the difficulties they encounter in their instructional practices. This open communication supports a professional learning community within the school that allows staff to take on leadership roles in promoting a positive school climate and supporting the values of French-language schools in minority settings.
✓ The staff and the school leader work directly with families from different backgrounds to help them support their children at home to ensure their academic success.

Job-embedded professional learning for all members of the organization

✓ Professional learning is also an essential function of improvement efforts to implement the priorities of the district's mission, vision and goals.
✓ Professional learning makes it easier to monitor the way knowledge is put into practice to achieve improvement goals. It is part of an annual plan that constitutes a starting point for supporting teaching staff in their development both in terms of personal growth and their learning with respect to the school's priorities.
✓ Professional learning activities are guided by improvement plans. Monthly meetings provide opportunities for professional learning, as they create an appropriate context in which staff members' ideas can be heard, valued and taken into consideration. They also lead to constructive discussions on successful practices.
✓ The professional growth plan is used to identify learning conducive to the development of teaching staff and school leaders while helping them set professional learning goals.
✓ Network models allow professional learning to be decentralized according to the collective and individual needs of teaching staff. They offer teaching staff an opportunity to reflect on what they are trying to achieve with students and how they will do it.

- ✓ Professional learning resources are allocated to professional learning community activities that involve collaboration and discussion among peers on different themes with the goal of updating instructional strategies and approaches or deepening knowledge of the subjects taught.

Budgets, structures, time and personnel policies/procedures aligned with the district's mission, vision and goals

- ✓ The budgeting process supports the needs of schools and services aiming to improve student achievement. School and system leaders emphasize the fact that they work together so that schools receive the resources they need. In fact, it is a shared responsibility of all the senior administrative team to work together to ensure that budgets are aligned with the goals of improvement plans based on the mission and vision.
- ✓ The particular needs of certain students are analyzed on an ongoing basis. This analysis also aims to ensure that the organizational structures of budgets support teaching staff in upgrading their instructional practices.
- ✓ Resource allotment is tied to the essential priorities of reinforcing instructional abilities in mathematics and literacy.

A comprehensive approach to leadership development

- ✓ An ongoing process for identifying potential leaders accompanies succession planning. This planning is based on evidence that reflects the particular needs of districts. There are procedures in place for recruiting, selecting and assessing school and system leaders.
- ✓ French-language school districts have implemented processes to assess and track the skills of their school leaders. Leaders have access to mentoring and are assessed based on their professional growth plan. They receive both formal and informal coaching and participate in discussions on the smooth functioning of the school, the school climate, academic achievement and their professional growth plan, among other topics.
- ✓ Shared leadership, cultural leadership and academic leadership are valued within districts and refer to the *Aménagement Linguistique Policy (PAL)*.
- ✓ Competent leadership of school and system leaders manifests itself through in-depth knowledge and understanding of education in French language minority settings, the French-speaking community and the challenges they face.
- ✓ Leaders base their decisions on a set of values that they can defend easily. When it comes to solving problems, leaders remain calm and confident. They consult others and take the time required to come to a full understanding of the situation and the consequences of any decision. They create a positive emotional climate in which staff can share their perspective and feel heard.

- ✓ In particular, leaders' psychological resources allow them to bounce back after a failure and to persevere in the face of adversity or difficulties. Leaders have confidence in their ability to find ways to reach their goals and are optimistic that their initiatives will produce positive results.

A policy-oriented board of trustees

- ✓ School trustees help develop the strategic plan. They ensure that policy development is focused on improving student learning and well-being.
- ✓ School trustees collaborate with system leaders and respect their role in the district's day-to-day operations.
- ✓ Trustees are consulted on and engaged in district and community activities. They help establish and maintain productive working relationships.
- ✓ Productive working relationships with staff and stakeholders
- ✓ Communication within catholic and public school districts is supported by the notion of community services and community schools. This means that the school is a place of convergence for the family and the community.
- ✓ Interactions between teaching staff, students and parents take place in an environment of mutual respect and are conducive to maintaining the Francophone environment. Surveys conducted among the staff, students and parents help maintain a friendly environment built on trust.
- ✓ Catholic schools develop direct relationships with dioceses.
- ✓ School and system leaders collaborate on and participate in Ministry of Education initiatives.

RESULTS OF THE SECOND QUESTION

In response to the second question: *How do French-language school and school district leadership practices develop the ability of school staff, families and students to maintain their Francophone linguistic and cultural identity*, the results show that Catholic and public school districts implemented interventions aligned with the strategic aims of the *Aménagement Linguistique Policy (PAL)* for a French-language minority setting. These interventions are associated with the development of culture and identity, attitudes conducive to cultural affirmation, animation culturelle and the Francophone environment.

Implementation of French linguistic and cultural ownership in a minority setting

- ✓ The *Aménagement Linguistique Policy (PAL)* is believed to be the cornerstone of French-language school districts. School and system leaders work to ensure the school is a vibrant French-speaking community and that the French-language and culture are valued every day as part of instructional practices.
- ✓ Schools build a bridge between families and the community to create a space for meetings, diversify students' learning experiences and expose them to cultural

content in French. Community partners are key actors in students' cultural lives, as they provide opportunities both in and outside of school for students to express themselves and to be active and engaged in the primary French-speaking areas of Ontario. The combined actions of the school, the parents and the communities create an essential dynamic for the development of a Francophone space conducive to student identity building.

✓ The French-language and culture are promoted in a way that reflects Francophone pride and identity through several initiatives both at the school and district level. Leaders use formal and informal opportunities to explain to stakeholders the educational and cultural mandate of the French-language school, its vision and its goals.

✓ Professional learning integrates the intervention areas of the *Aménagement Linguistique Policy (PAL)*. School staff members assess their progress toward the achievement of goals linked to the school's educational and cultural mandate. They are encouraged to reflect on their own identity building in order to act as cultural models, guides and mediators for students.

✓ School districts have recruitment plans for attracting French-language students and right-holder students and keeping them in French-language schools during the transition from elementary to secondary school, a period during which more students tend to transfer to other systems.

Instructional guidance system based on cultural ownership in a minority setting

✓ The goals of the school are aligned with those of the district, the *Aménagement Linguistique Policy (PAL)* and the province. In this context, teaching staff establishes relationships between the school's cultural goals and those of the Ontario Ministry of Education to reinforce engagement towards efforts to improve school and student achievement.

✓ The school staff and other education partners play a role in bringing together the vision of the school, the cultural pedagogical approach and the strategic priorities of the district and the province. Parents are welcomed, respected and considered as partners in the cultural development of their children. School district networks support parents who know little French.

✓ Resources are put in place to update priorities with respect to teaching and the integration of Francophone culture into learning. Teaching staff observes effective cultural teaching practices in their own and other schools. Time is allocated for the development of strategies that will promote identity building and improving cultural practices.

✓ Animation culturelle with cultural facilitators plays an essential role in helping schools integrate cultural pedagogy and identity building and motivate students to continue their studies in French.

✓ The principles of the cultural approach that target student success in accordance with the *Aménagement Linguistique*

Policy (PAL) are integrated into professional learning and the planning of curriculum-prescribed learning activities.

✓ In the context of catholic education, identity building is linked to catholic values.

RESULTS OF THE THIRD QUESTION

In response to the third question: *How do French-language school and school district leadership practices support a French speaking environment that is conducive to the vitality and pluralism of the minority French-speaking community,* the results reveal that Catholic and public school districts have implemented interventions that are aligned with the aims of the *Aménagement Linguistique Policy (PAL)* regarding the vitality and pluralism of the minority French-speaking community. These districts have also created structures to facilitate the inclusion of diversity in the Francophone environment of their schools, as the *Aménagement Linguistique Policy (PAL)* clearly defines the school as an environment in which students take ownership of their culture and also show openness to the culture of others.

Establishment of a Francophone environment conducive to the vitality and pluralism of the minority French-speaking community

✓ School and system leaders support the pluralism of French-language community schools. This support is manifested through inclusive policies and procedures to promote and support equity and respect for the diversity of staff and students. Leaders also participate in professional learning opportunities, which focus on equity and diversity.

✓ The Actualisation linguistique en français (ALF) program and the Programme d'appui aux nouveaux arrivants (PANA) are considered in teaching. There are welcome programs and services for newly arrived students and their parents, and strategies are developed for managing multiethnic classrooms. The cultural skills taught at school take into account curiosity about cultural differences.

✓ The welcoming of newly arrived students takes into consideration their previous experiences. In some schools, a person is designated to support the integration process for newly arrived students.

✓ Parents of newcomer students are welcomed and directed to the appropriate community resources. Communication structures such as the Settlement Workers in schools (SWIS) ensure a relationship between the school, the students, the parents and the community.

✓ Activities focused on inclusion and openness to diversity are pillars of the vitality of a pluralistic Francophone environment within the school. The celebration of different cultures is part of the school experience and of the process of welcoming all French speaking communities, including recent immigrants.

RESULTS OF THE FOURTH QUESTION

In response to the fourth question: *How do the effective leadership practices of school and system leaders of French language schools and school districts influence the leadership practices and personal leadership resources development of Ontario school and system leaders?* The results show that the successful practices of school districts are shared with the province in different ways. In addition, Ministry of Education partners receive reports as part of the province's accountability process.

Influence of leadership practices and personal leadership resources development

✓ The Directors of Education of the Conseil ontarien des directrices et directeurs d'éducation de langue française (CODELF) share their leadership practices and resources through provincial and regional sharing sessions, teleconferences, webinars and the Centre de leadership de l'Ontario.
✓ An accurate and transparent account of the performance and cultural profile of French-language schools is presented to all school partners (the Ministry, parents and community).
✓ French-speaking leaders informally share their successes with their own colleagues and with their English-speaking colleagues.
✓ Relationships between French-language and English-language school districts are created through different organizations such as the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) and the Ontario's Institute for Education Leadership (IEL).
✓ Throughout the province, there are sharing systems in different regional or municipal committees that bring together French-language and English-language school districts.

PROPOSED LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND PERSONAL LEADERSHIP RESOURCES TO SUPPORT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The leadership practices defined in the *Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)* apply to all education systems, and it is in line with these pratices that this study proposes leadership practices and personal leadership resources that support institutional capacity development goals for academic achievement. These practices and resources may be implemented and used in all four education sectors - English-language, French-language, Catholic or public, according to the circumstances and contexts of the institutional environments. In the case of French-language school districts, leadership practices and personal leadership resources must take into account the *Aménagement Linguistic Policy* (PAL), which defines the mandate of French-language schools in a minority setting. The uniqueness of French-language school districts lies in their mission, which is not only to educate their students but also to protect, enhance, and transmit the language and culture of the community they serve. Protecting, enhancing and transmitting the language and culture are an explicit part of their mandate (*Politique d'aménagement linguistique*, p. 7).

A shared mission, vision and goals founded on aspirational images of the educated person

Identified leadership practices and personal leadership resources consist of:
✓ Using the strategic plan as a road map to achieve the district's vision in the medium and long term. The implementation of the strategic plan involves sharing with school and system stakeholders to ensure consistent strategic choices in a comprehensive approach to improving student outcomes and closing achievement gaps.
✓ Building mutual trust between school leaders and teaching staff through interactions and dialogue to create an environment conducive to creativity and innovation for the implementation of the school improvement plan. In addition, school and system leaders motivate staff with their openness.

A coherent instructional guidance system

Identified leadership practices and personal leadership resources consist of:
✓ Supporting students in their learning by offering individual services, material and human resources. Student success also involves engagement on the part of both students and teachers. School leaders meet with teaching staff to specifically discuss students in order to find appropriate strategies to meet their needs.
✓ Ensuring instructional coherence between the schools and the district to improve achievement. System leaders support school leaders in monitoring student achievement.

Deliberate and consistent use of multiple sources of evidence to inform decisions

Identified leadership practices and personal leadership resources consist of:
✓ Promoting a collaborative culture in which school staff uses the results of student assessments to reflect on the best instructional practices to serve student interests and needs.
✓ Integrating data analysis with school management in order to make time to question the data and make appropriate instructional changes at the teaching level to implement successful strategies.

The creation of learning-oriented organizational improvement processes

Identified leadership practices and personal leadership resources consist of:
- ✓ Setting up structures that can be adjusted to fit provincial goals and priorities in schools and in the district. These structures also take into account schools' efforts to improve student achievement.
- ✓ Promoting collegiality and collaboration among staff members by allowing them to work together.

Job-embedded professional development for all members of the organization

Identified leadership practices and personal leadership resources consist of:
- ✓ Supporting professional learning through coaching, mentoring and collaborative inquiry to build the capacity for instructional interventions with students.
- ✓ Participating as a leader in professional learning communities where teaching staff examines their practices, hear about those of their colleagues and document the best practices to implement in their classrooms.

Budgets, structures and time and personnel policies/procedures aligned with the district's mission, vision and goals

Identified leadership practices and personal leadership resources consist of:
- ✓ Aligning resources with the needs of schools and instructional strategies that can respond to the needs of students.
- ✓ Supporting improvement efforts with consideration for the changes that occur throughout the academic year.

A comprehensive approach to leadership development

Identified leadership practices and personal leadership resources consist of:
- ✓ Setting up assessment and monitoring processes through mentoring and coaching. During regular visits, school and system leaders discuss achievement and everything happening in the school.
- ✓ Treat everyone in the school with respect as this ensures commitment.

A policy-oriented board of trustee

Identified leadership practices and personal leadership resources consist of:
- ✓ Defining the role of elected members through orientation sessions focusing on results-based governance models.
- ✓ Establishing trust by creating ongoing collaborative relationships with trustees.

Productive working relationships with staff and stakeholders

Identified leadership practices and personal leadership resources consist of:
- ✓ Communicating on an ongoing basis with parents and the community to place the school at the heart of the community. This also involves adopting an open door policy.
- ✓ Consulting parents, students and staff to involve them in a partnership to ensure the success of each student.

PROPOSALS FOR THE REVISIONS OF THE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND PERSONAL LEADERSHIP RESOURCES OF THE ONTARIO LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK (OLF)

Transformational leadership, the foundation of the *Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)*, was implemented in education thanks to the work of Kenneth Leithwood and his collaborators (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1999; Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson and Walshtrom, 2004; Leithwood and Riehl, 2005). Leithwood puts an emphasis on leaders developing a vision and on their ability to support and stimulate staff and to involve them in the achievement of common goals.

In relation to transformational leadership, it is important to see how the *Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)* might consider:

- ✓ Competent leadership, namely that the leader must have in-depth knowledge of their school and the school environment.
- ✓ Self-efficient leadership, which means that the leader has knowledge of teaching and learning that allows them to inspire, bring together and work with a team to go deeper into the process of improving student achievement and success; this might also be defined as participative, instructional and distributed leadership.
- ✓ Personal leadership resources, which will have to be further defined so that school and system leaders might take inspiration from them to implement the leadership practices.
- ✓ The areas of the *Aménagement linguistique Policy (PAL)* which must be integrated into the leadership practices of the *Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)* for French-language Catholic and public school districts.

LOOKING AHEAD

Following the analyses conducted as part of the study, we propose some forward-looking recommendations to ensure that the leadership practices of school and system leaders maintain a commitment on the part of catholic and public school districts to improve learning for all students by closing gaps in achievement between those who have always succeeded and the others. In the context of French-language education, this commitment must take into consideration the goals of the *Aménagement Linguistique Policy (PAL)* in order to maintain the institutional vitality of the French-language and culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Leadership and French-language education in a minority setting

A recent trend in leadership research is the movement toward a hybrid model of effective educational leadership that reflects both instructional and transformational practices. In the case of French-language education, the *Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)* must consider the particularities of the linguistic and cultural context of French-language education in a minority setting. In this respect, beyond the additions regarding culture and language that are interspersed throughout the domains of School-level and System-level Leadership placemats, and the nine characteristics of the *District Effectiveness Framework* (DEF), these should better reflect the skills of effective leadership in a minority setting, which has educational, participatory and shared attributes according to the *Aménagement Linguistique Policy (PAL)*. This would include more specific characteristics related to the mandate of French-language schools, for example, a mission, shared vision and goals founded on aspirational images of an educated person aware of their Francophone identity, or a coherent instructional guidance system that includes the cultural approach to teaching.

Leaders emphasize how important it is that the Ontario Ministry of Education fully supports the specificity of French-language education and its leadership. This support would make it possible to pursue an effective collaboration to meet the challenges of a minority setting and of valuing French-language leaders, whose leadership practices should be used to update the Ministry's policies and initiatives.

Leadership practices

✓ Ongoing relationships should be maintained between all the departments and schools in a district in order to keep resources up to date.

✓ French-language school districts must have access to additional resources from the province to face the challenges of school and system leadership succession in a context of geographic dispersion.

✓ The implementation of personal leadership resources to support the leadership practices of effective leaders should be more formal as part of the mentoring and coaching programs for leaders.

Cultural ownership, vitality and pluralism in line with the *Aménagement Linguistique Policy (PAL)*

✓ Cultural development should be factored into the systematic analysis of data to inform decisions concerning the integration of culture and identity building.

✓ Student services should continue to consider the many needs of pluralistic French language schools.

Influence of the leadership practices of French-language school and system leaders

✓ To learn more about the influence of the leadership practices of French-language school and system leaders it would be necessary to survey a representative sample of school and system leaders from English-language districts and conduct a comparative study.

✓ Several leadership initiatives already exist across the province. However, for these provincial leadership practices to have an influence formal forums with specific themes should be established at the local, regional and provincial levels to allow leaders of English-language and French-language school districts to share innovative leadership practices to advance the Ontario Leadership Strategy (OLS). Leaders would therefore learn how Ontario's goals for student academic success and well being are achieved in their shared contexts and challenges. These forums could also be beneficial for succession, in particular for some French-language school districts that must resort to different procedures to build a pool of potential future leaders due to the demographic challenges.

FOLLOW-UP TO THE STUDY

A qualitative study of the teaching staff of French-language schools would make it possible to examine how they integrate the leadership practices and personal leadership resources of school and system leaders into their day-to-day work in the classroom to promote student academic achievement and well being.

CONCLUSION

In order to accomplish school improvement goals, school and system leaders must consider the essential dimensions of the French-language and culture in a minority setting in their decision-making. The integration of these dimensions supports the development of educational leadership in Ontario's French-language minority settings. It also has an impact on the recruitment process. As one leader emphasized, the recruitment process for leadership positions must begin early: *. . . as soon as new teachers arrive, we encourage them from the very first day to continue their studies . . . to advance their knowledge . . . it's important to seek them out and encourage them.*

With regard to the concept of performance-related academic achievement measured through provincial tests from the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) and the Ontario Secondary School graduation rate, results show that in 2016, the secondary school five-year graduation rate for students from French-language school districts was 90.5%, and the four-year graduation rate was 88.1%. Moreover, the performance of Grade 3 and Grade 6 students equalled or surpassed the provincial standard in reading, writing and mathematics. Research has not yet established a correlation between academic achievement and the organizational climate. This study therefore has not looked at such a correlation but has focused primarily on the way in which the leadership practices of school and system leaders contribute to academic achievement.

Through quantitative and qualitative data, the study revealed that the practices of school and system leaders in Ontario's French-language schools and school districts are based on effective leadership skills that have educational, participatory and shared attributes, as well as an in depth knowledge of education in French language minority settings. These practices are associated with schools that have a close relationship with the community and define themselves as community schools serving their students and parents. The actions of schools and system leaders converge toward academic achievement and student well being. Every effort is made to close gaps and to support students in their development; teaching staff is also supported in their professional learning, and leaders are mentored in their professional growth. This close-knit school community is there for students throughout their years at school and ensures that they not only achieve academic success but also come to define themselves as Francophone through their engagement in French-language acquisition and cultural ownership activities. It is a complex challenge, but the school and system leaders who participated in the study clearly demonstrated their commitment and their desire and ability to fulfill the mandate of French-language schools as defined by the *Aménagement Linguistique Policy (PAL)* while implementing the *Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)*, which includes evidence related to the characteristics of highly effective districts.

It is to be hoped that this first study of Francophone school and system leaders in Ontario will contribute to enriching the *Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)* and enhancing our understanding of the practice of leadership in minority settings, which must serve the community school and assure the transmission of French-language and culture. Moreover, in light of this study, it would be worthwhile to study the responses of teaching staff to understand the ways in which they live and integrate the practices of school and system leaders in their day-to-day work in the classroom in support of student academic achievement and well being.

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September 2017