

# SALIENT IDENTITIES OF LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS IN GREEK PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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**Abstract**— The vast majority of leadership research and literature has been focused on the leader, his/her traits, behaviors, styles etc. This paper adopts a different stance as it examines salient identities of leaders (headteachers) and followers (teachers) in Greek primary schools. More specifically it attempts to discuss leaders-followers identities formulated not as an active process but rather as a consequence, a spinoff of the observed hierarchies in Greek (primary) schools. A Qualitative Methodology was used, as a total of 43 telephone semi-structured interviews were carried out to respondents, who work in 13 regional directorates of education (the whole country), in order for the sample to be representative, while the thematic/topic coding was applied. Research findings show that differentiated identities emerge in schools, through both verbal and non-verbal communication, as a result of institutionalized hierarchy. Although, distinctive identities are interdependent, they can also become confrontational, to the extent that headteachers manifest “hegemonic” behaviors, forcing teachers to adopt a Passive Follower Identity. The interactive nature of this relationship is reflected in the influence exercised by leaders, which in turn has positive results in teachers’ professional development and creativity but also in the influence exercised by followers, leading to the reformation of Leader Identity.

**Keywords**— Salient Identities, Leader, Follower, Interaction, Influence, Prototypicality, Institutionalized Hierarchy

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is well documented that the vast majority of leadership research has focused on leaders. The role of followers although important, it is somehow neglected from the literature. "From 1990 to 2008 in The Leadership Quarterly only 14% of the articles had some version of the word follower in the abstract or title" (Bligh, 2011, cited in Uhl-bien *et al.*, *ibid*, p. 89), reflecting the dominant western representations of leadership, according to which followers’ role is underestimated and thus omitted (Schyns, Tymon, Kiefer, & Kerschreiter, 2012, p. 12).

Much research has been conducted highlighting leaders’ and followers’ relationship (Adair, 2008; Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010; 2012; Sallee, 2014). However, it seems that the field of followership is still not discussed thoroughly, as according to Adair (*ibid*, p. 137) barely have researchers begun to study followers in recent years.

There is a research gap regarding the interactive relationship of leaders and followers as well their differentiated Identities; thus, this paper examines how separate Identities are

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Received: April 27, 2020

Reviewed: June 10, 2020

Accepted: July 2, 2020

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manifest at school from the viewpoints of leaders and followers and the Social Identity Theory perspective (Hogg, 2008).

## 2. LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS

The leader is indicated by the followers, either because he/she identifies with the group's prototype (social approach), the substance and content of their Social Identity (Van Knippenberg, Van Knippenberg, & Giessner, 2007) or/and because his/her characteristics are consistent with the established leadership prototype (cognitive approach, implicit leadership theories) (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005; Van Quaquebeke, Graf & Eckloff, 2014).

DeRue & Ashford (2010, p. 629) claim that identities of leaders and followers are structured in the context of their social interaction, as leadership is a dynamic bidirectional relationship (Luhmann & Eberl, 2007). The leader's place in the hierarchy and institutional legitimization emerge as a reward by the followers because of his/her prototypicality (Uhl-bien *et al.*, *ibid*, p. 87). The social framework delimits social roles by identifying the processes through which individuals will embody, support and take on separate roles (Weick, 1995).

According to Van Knippenberg (2011, p. 1087), follower's trust to the leader is a key issue in the social identity analysis. It is not based though only on institutional hierarchy, but also on the formation of an emotional bond between leaders and followers, who show respect to the leaders by accepting their influence (Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007). Prototypicality is a key factor that separates the leader from his social group, giving him/her de facto a differentiated social position, prestige and power (Hogg, 2001) compared to followers who, being considered inadequate and passive, comply with the influence exercised by leaders due to their self-categorization.

Teachers are part of the social context of the school, defining themselves and others, behaving and acting by taking on social roles within the group, thus structuring the collective self (Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 2002; Hogg & Ridgeway, 2003; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). According to Znaniecki (1939, p. 808) all members do not have the same role within a social category. In this respect, although teachers belong to the same social category, they do not have an equal position in the administrative hierarchy, resulting in the existence of two quasi-social entities (Brewer & Miller, 1996) -headteachers and teachers- in the context of the intergroup level of abstraction (Hantzi, 2013).

Teachers are not identified only by their general social category, but also by the subcategory they belong to (leaders/followers), because social identification has psychological content, including the internalization of corresponding behaviors (Ellemers *et al.*, *ibid.*). From this point of view, teachers' self-perception is influenced not only by their individual characteristics and Personal Identity but also by their Social Identity (Oldmeadow, Platow, Foddy, & Anderson, 2003). Thus, teachers are -consciously or unconsciously- integrated into specific subcategories, which affect their social behavior and interpersonal relationships in the context of their work, as their identities emerge through verbal and behavioral responses. Given the fact that the Greek educational system is highly centralized, formalized and hierarchically structured (Koutouzis, 2012) it is interesting to explore issues of identities of leaders and followers in the specific context. In particular the research questions that emerge from the previous theoretical discussion are:

1. Do headteachers and teachers believe that hierarchy affects their behavior towards each other and their social position in Greek (primary) schools?
2. What kind of influence do headteachers and teachers exercise to each other within the context of Greek (primary) schools?

### 3. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research was conducted in order to answer the above questions. According to Conger (1998, cited in Odom, Boyd & Williams, 2012, p. 54) qualitative research “can be the richest of studies, often illuminating in radically new ways phenomena as complex as leadership”. In this research 43 respondents participated (during the period October-November 2016) and specifically 31 teachers who claimed a managerial position (22 headteachers and 9 candidate headteachers) and teachers who have never claimed a managerial position (12 teachers) from the 13 regional directorates of education in order for the sample to be representative regarding the subcategories (Silverman, 1998).

The research tool was telephone semi-structured interviews which were carried out with non-proportional quota sampling. Telephone interviews are used for social and educational research (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004), as this process allows examining sensitive social and personal issues, because the interviewees feel more secure about their anonymity, expressing their views honestly.

It should be mentioned that ethical rules have been respected by researchers while the thematic coding was applied. The validity and reliability of research was ensured through the triangulation of data sources, because the participants have different roles, specialties and age (Koutouzis & Spyriadou, 2017, p. 193).

### 4. RESULTS

#### 4.1. PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

<b>13 Regional Directorates</b>	Attika	East Macedonia Thrace	Central Macedonia	Central Greece	South Aegean	Crete	North Aegean	West Macedonia	Epirus	Ionian Islands	West Greece	Thessaly
Numbers (of Interviews)	10	6	5	5	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	1
<b>Position</b>	<b>Experienced Headteachers (Leaders)</b>			<b>New Headteachers (Leaders)</b>		<b>Candidate Headteachers (Followers)</b>			<b>Teachers (Followers)</b>			
Numbers	14			8		9			12			
<b>Sex</b>	<b>Men</b>						<b>Women</b>					
Numbers	21						22					
<b>Specialty</b>	<b>Teachers of General Courses</b>					<b>Specialty Teachers</b>						
	<b>Primary School Teachers</b>		<b>Physical Education Teachers</b>		<b>Music Teachers</b>	<b>English Language Teachers</b>		<b>French Language Teachers</b>		<b>Information Technology (IT) Teachers</b>		
Numbers	20		11		8	2		1		1		
<b>Age</b>	<b>25-35</b>			<b>36-45</b>			<b>46-55</b>			<b>56-62</b>		
Numbers	3			10			28			2		
<b>Years of service</b>	<b>8-15 years</b>			<b>16-21 years</b>			<b>22-31 years</b>			<b>32-35 years</b>		
Numbers	10			11			20			2		
<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Ph.D.</b>	<b>Master's Degree</b>		<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Degree</b>		<b>University Degree in Teaching</b>	<b>Postgraduate degree in Educational Management</b>		<b>Degree in Music</b>		<b>Two year Teachers Training Colleges</b>	
Numbers	9	16		7		7	4		8		9	
<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Married</b>				<b>Single</b>				<b>Divorced</b>			
Numbers	37				4				2			

#### 4.2. SALIENT IDENTITIES OF LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS: THE VIEW OF LEADERS- HEADTEACHERS

Several headteachers mentioned that interpersonal relationships are not negatively influenced by the hierarchy. However, hierarchy is institutional and thus inevitable, since

*"educators keep their role in the teachers' association", "there should be a proper distance, as it is good to know that leadership is democratic, but the head is one".* For these headteachers, hierarchy is not linked to hegemony, but it is necessary to ensure the school's coordinated operation as *"we are a team in school and we need to cooperate"*.

Moreover, new teachers address headteachers formally, due to the age gap, confirming that differentiated Identities are salient in school.

*I want them to address me informally. If we have an age gap, they address me formally, but I want them to address me by my first name. I want them to feel equal. (I5 New Headteacher, Primary Teacher)*

According to experienced headteachers, a managerial position is not a means of exercising power. It is reported that the dynamism of salient identities depends on the personality and emotional stability of the headteacher and the teachers because *"a mentally balanced person is not affected by hierarchy, he will offer and contribute to the school improvement"*. The leader's role is significant in establishing *"harmonious, friendly and democratic relations between colleagues"*, shaping a collaborative climate in which separate Identities will be manifested in a consensual spirit.

Some headteachers believe that the hierarchy inevitably affects the behavior of headteachers and teachers. Phrases such as *"a slight difference in behavior exists, justified by the hierarchy, "when I go to school, I am the headteacher", "they should have more respect for me, they mustn't control me", "there are limits"*, confirm that leaders' and followers' Identities are salient at school. However, headteachers attempt to maintain the balance, avoiding conflicting situations.

*I make compromises and concessions, which in other cases I wouldn't. My behavior is clearly influenced by my managerial role because I am trying to have a pedagogical climate at school, as in many schools there are conflicting situations. (I2 New Headteacher, Primary Teacher)*

Other headteachers supported that hierarchy distorts teachers' behavior towards headteachers, as relationships are unequal due to institutional authority and hierarchy. These identities may conflict not in obvious but in latent ways, as followers, due to their low hierarchical position, are not always able to openly confront headteachers.

*The relationship is altered and I have a good example with a teacher. We were colleagues in another school and suddenly he came to the school where I am headteacher and started to address me formally. (I4 Established Headteacher, Primary Teacher)*

Socially, Leader Identity enhances the social status of headteacher, but the responsibilities of the managerial role may change his/her behavior, by making verbal or non-verbal suggestions for coordinating the group. Hierarchy may distort headteachers' attitude, as when they transformed their Follower Identity into that of a Leader, some of them dramatically changed their behavior, which became *"hegemonic, authoritarian, and autocratic"*. An established headteacher stated that in his first terms his behavior had been adversely affected by hierarchy, but then by developing Leader Identity, he distanced himself from hegemonic behaviors.

### **4.3. SALIENT IDENTITIES OF LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS: THE VIEW OF FOLLOWERS-TEACHERS**

Most followers (teachers, candidate headteachers) claimed that the differentiated identities are salient at school, because *"the positions of headteacher and teacher are visible"*. Headteachers are *"imposing"* due to their powerful Social Identity, because *"they socialize with other school headteachers and others high in the hierarchy"*. Teachers

follow the vision and goals set by headteachers, tend to treat and address him/her formally, regardless of their relationship.

The use of the title serves another purpose, as stated by a specialty teacher that "I want to make clear that you are the headteacher and I am a teacher. I don't want to have his favor, as I may be pressed to do things"(I<sub>3</sub> Specialty Teacher). It is also reported that in trying to maintain a balance, headteachers may not support a teacher in a problem with parents.

*The headteacher tries not to come into conflict with parents, something that a teacher respects to some extent, but it is not his/her priority. If I am angry with a parent, I will dispute him within the formal context, to defend myself. The headteachers, albeit not all of them, may not defend you in such a case. (I<sub>3</sub> Specialty Teacher)*

The dominant position of headteachers is revealed by the fact that "he has his separate office and this changes the climate", confirming that the identity of Leader and Follower is also perceived non-verbally. Some headteachers are self-centered, as "they publicly humiliate colleagues in front of the children", verifying that differentiated Identities are even in conflict.

Some followers noted that headteachers make intergroup discriminations, by asking only the opinion of the experienced teachers and "then you feel like a stranger". Exercise of power in some cases reconstructs Leader Identity negatively, because the hierarchical authority tends to distort headteachers' social behavior towards teachers.

*There are headteachers who were presidents of the teachers' community and until then they advocated the interests of colleagues. When they became school headteachers or primary education headteachers they changed". (I<sub>8</sub> Candidate Headteacher, Primary Teacher)*

Some followers reported that the headteacher's personality will determine the manifestation of differentiated identities, as there are headteachers who do not take advantage of their hierarchical position to promote themselves socially, but instead allow expression and self-activity of teachers, while others may be "authoritarian either if teachers do not comply or because of abuse of power".

*There are headteachers who promote themselves and others who stay behind and teachers come at the front in various events. A teacher can represent the teachers' association at a parent council. When we are all together, the headteacher has the leading role. (I<sub>7</sub> Candidate Headteacher, Specialty Teacher)*

Hierarchy is not necessarily a negative factor, since headteachers and teachers have different roles. The Leader Identity is evident at school -for example in a school celebration-, as the headteacher is a respectable person mainly due to his/her leadership characteristics. Teachers are consulted by their headteachers, if their help is needed, but "in tone, in the appropriate language to the relationship of a headteacher and a subordinate".

*I have never been told "I'm the headteacher, you will do this". There is a hierarchy, but the hierarchy is not bad. It is not unwholesome to respect your supervisor, when he shows you respect, support and love . (I<sub>7</sub> Specialty Teacher)*

#### **4.4. EXERCISING INFLUENCE: THE VIEW OF LEADERS-SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS**

Most headteachers claimed that influence is bidirectional, because through interaction and exchange of views, collectivity is strengthened. The use of word "*colleagues*" instead of "*subordinates*" reveals that headteachers believe their relations with the teachers are characterized by equity. The potential of this bidirectional influence depends on the personality of the parties involved. In some cases, the influence exercised by teachers is so strong, leading to the reformation of Leader Identity.

*Some elements of my character have changed. My colleagues have told me to do something different and I saw that they were right. The way we worked helped me change things. (I<sub>2</sub>ExperiencedHeadteacher, Specialty Teacher)*

This interactive relationship is expressed through collective decision-making, as "*It is not a relationship of I give the orders and you follow them*". Headteachers believe in the strength of the Teachers' Association, where major issues are thoroughly discussed, as "*No one knows everything. There are alternatives and suggestions. There is give and take with all teachers*" (I<sub>6</sub>Experienced Headteacher, Primary Teacher). This process produces a democratic qualitative synthesis of heterogeneous views, leading to the achievement of the school's objectives "*through cooperation and mutual respect*".

*As difficult and complicated as a matter may be, I will first listen to the teachers' views. We decide through dialogue. I never decide alone. (I<sub>4</sub>ExperiencedHeadteacher, Primary Teacher)*

Headteachers do not always display their Leader Identity hegemonically, by referring to their qualifications. They promote the school's improvement, collegiality and solidarity through responsibility and efficiency, by helping teachers when they face a problem. It was noted that headteachers should be a prototype for teachers with their attitude, as they cannot demand prudence and devotion by teachers if they do not act as example.

*You cannot ask for things, if you leave school at 11.00 (a.m.). If you disappear and they can't find you. You can't ask them to join educational programs, if you never participate. (I<sub>3</sub> New Headteacher, Specialty Teacher)*

In case of specialty teacher headteachers, exercising influence is more difficult, as they are not prototypical.

*Acceptance and respect are no longer enforced but achieved. As specialty teacher in primary education, I have struggled. (I<sub>3</sub>Experienced Headteacher, Specialty Teacher)*

Headteachers also have an active role in the professional development of teachers. It is argued that headteachers should be supporting and promoting teacher excellence, which strengthens the school's social image in the local community.

*If one teacher succeeds, what does it mean? This is pride and honor. Should I underestimate him or hide his contribution? He helps me to promote my school. (I<sub>4</sub>ExperiencedHeadteacher, Primary Teacher)*

#### **4.5. EXERCISING INFLUENCE: THE VIEW OF FOLLOWERS-TEACHERS**

Some followers consider that the influence is bidirectional, but can be positive or/and negative. Headteachers may be influenced by teachers, who, by expressing their opinions can advise them, but on the other hand headteachers can influence them by motivating them to develop professionally.

*A headteacher can encourage new colleagues to attend a seminar or participate in educational programs. If colleagues have the courage to voice their opinion, they can give advice to the headteacher, whose behavior will be influenced. (I<sub>8</sub> Candidate Headteacher, Primary Teacher)*

Teachers' success positively affects the headteacher's social status. However, some followers believe that it is mainly the headteacher that influences teachers rather than being influenced by them, which is consistent with the view of two female headteachers.

The headteacher's institutional authority inevitably strengthens his/her Leader Identity at school, so that decisions are not made essentially collectively, because his/her opinion prevails, as *"there are headteachers who don't converse with teachers, a fact for which both sides are responsible"*. As an old primary teacher (candidate headteacher) supported, *"the headteacher cannot affect me, but he affects new teachers"*, a view consistent with responses by new teachers, who, having a low Social Identity status, are more susceptible. Particularly, new teachers feel like subordinates rather than collaborators of the headteacher, who can negatively influence their working life, creating feelings of anxiety in them.

*It is the first and last image that a subordinate has in order to improve his life. If the headteacher is good you don't have any problems, but if he is cranky you have a reason to feel stressed at school. (I<sub>4</sub> Primary Teacher)*

*If a headteacher is cranky and asks for something abruptly, he will influence the teacher very strongly. For example: 'I have a job we must finish, we must do it now'.* (I<sub>2</sub> Primary Teacher)

Some followers supported that the influence exercised by headteachers depends *"on their personality"* and prototypicality.

*There are schools where relationships are very formal. Therefore, the headteacher is not the exemplar, or someone who can influence others. If he is appreciated, if there is a relationship, he can influence teachers. (I<sub>7</sub> Candidate Headteacher, Specialty Teacher)*

It is also reported that there are headteachers *"who are taken advantage of by teachers"* and others *"who are manipulated by them"*, asking for favors to the detriment of others, threatening the school climate.

*I believe that some teachers keep the headteacher under close watch to have preferential treatment in the school program and to promote their interests over others', who address the headteacher formally. (I<sub>3</sub> Specialty Teacher)*

Seniority is an important factor, as *"in primary education older primary teachers influence headteachers, while in secondary education headteachers influence teachers"* (I<sub>10</sub> Specialty Teacher). Finally, a specialty teacher mentioned that she has never perceived being influenced positively or negatively by a headteacher and vice versa, manifesting a withdrawn Follower Identity.

## **5. DISCUSSION-CONCLUSION**

This research brings to the front the relationship between leaders-school headmasters and followers-educators. Although they belong to the same social category, they have differentiated but interdependent Identities, not only affected by the institutional framework through which hierarchical relations are dictated, but also by the social context, which affects the self-perception of individuals. The hierarchical, formalized and bureaucratic characteristics and tradition of the Greek educational system should be stressed again before attempting to reach any conclusions.

Some headteachers believe that hierarchy has not changed their social behavior towards teachers, considering them equal and aiming at forming a democratic and harmonic climate, thus confirming that interpersonal effectiveness is a basic element of Leader Identity. The leading role is deeply collective, because headteachers, are oriented to the aims and objectives of the group. A headteacher's both Personal and Leader Identity affect the manifestation of separate Identities, because there are headteachers who, considering teachers as "*colleagues*" and not "*subordinates*", reinforce their creativity, innovation, self-esteem and self-image, strengthening collective efficacy (Bandura, 2000). These views are consistent with the attitudes of some followers, who support that although Identities are salient, hierarchy is not "*toxic*", when there is mutual respect, revealing implicit outgroup favoritism.

However, some headteachers claim that institutionalized hierarchy is inevitable, affecting their behavior. It seems that the hierarchical tradition affects headteachers identity formation. It is noted that hierarchy is necessary for the cooperation of headteachers and teachers, leading to school organizational effectiveness DeRue & Ashford (2010, p. 632) stated that the Identities of leaders and followers are expressed through their verbal and non-verbal communication, justified by the formal behavior of teachers to headteachers, by the headteachers' separate room and their non-verbal communication methods, with which they coordinate teachers. The Identities of headteachers and teachers are more salient at school due to institutional hierarchy (Hantzi, 2013). Leaders' and followers' Identities are salient, delineated and hierarchical at school, because their social position is "*visible*" in the context of *normative fit* according to which headteachers and teachers have different roles and thus distinctive Identities manifested at school, confirming the socially defined beliefs about them.

Hierarchy may distort headteachers' behavior, as some of them make intergroup discriminations. Others do not defend teachers in cases of problems with parents. They may even change their attitude, being imposing, hegemonic and authoritarian. This deterioration is reflected in the headteachers' discourse, as some of them may humiliate teachers publicly or even force teachers to address them as "*boss*", focusing on the empowerment of their social status and compliance of hierarchical rules rather than on achieving objectives and overall organizational change. Some teachers feel disadvantaged, while often they cannot openly confront them and thus talk to each other behind his back of the headteacher, incorporating a Passive Follower Identity. The above statements reveal that differentiated Identities are often in conflict due to the partial and elitist attitude of some headteachers, who abuse power -a fact that applies in coherent communities like primary education-, by exercising invisible symbolic violence, "*which is established with the mediation of consensus that the dominated is forced to offer to the dominant... because the integrated form of domination relationship is presented as natural*" (Bourdieu, 1998/2007, p. 81) and accepted by followers, who comply. Obedience to power has psychological dimensions as individuals not only accept orders by a body of authority but also abide with them. (Milgram 1963, 1974; cited in Kokkinaki, 2006, p. 161). Members of high-ranking groups (in this case headteachers) may disregard members of low-ranking groups or may exhibit paternalistic behavior, when conditions are non-threatening for them, while members of low social status groups may be afraid of them (in our case teachers).

Most headteachers believe that their relationship with teachers is interactive, especially in case of non-prototypical specialty-teacher headteachers, who gained the members' confidence by adapting their action and behavior to the values and norms of the dominant subcategory (primary teachers) (see also Koutouzis & Spyriadou, 2017). Headteachers' influence originates not only from institutionalized authority, but mainly from their prototypicality, because followers as regulators of this ideological influence, consider that it is a prerequisite for effective leadership (Yukl, 2002). Moreover, it is noted that headteachers motivate teachers to develop professionally, because their success increases



the headteacher's social status, having positive results for the school and formulating an effective social image in the local community, in the context of exercising latent and unconscious quasi-educational marketing practices (Oplatka, 2007) The influence exercised by teachers can lead to reforming Leader Identity due to the interaction of individual and collective incentives. Headteachers realize their leading role and its social content, through direct leadership experience as they change their self-perception because of the influence of others while developing self-knowledge (Priest & Middleton, 2016), authenticity (Odom *et al.*, 2012) and interpersonal effectiveness (DeRue & Myers, 2014). This view is consistent with some teachers' attitudes, who believe that their role is essentially helpful in exercising leadership (Tee, Ashkanasy, & Paulsen, 2013), through participation in decision-making processes.

While the responses of leaders converge, the responses of followers are differentiated. Some of them argued that the influence exercised by leaders is sometimes negative, a view consistent with two headteachers' responses. Carsten *et al.*, (2010) and DeRue & Ashford (2010) state that leadership style affects the behavior and feelings of followers, because if their cognitive patterns do not identify with the exercised leadership, they experience anxiety and frustration. New teachers are negatively affected by headteachers, as, having a low Social Identity status, feel like subordinates rather than collaborators of headteachers, whose influence does not derive from their prototypicality (internal regulator of the group) but from their institutional power (external factor) (Hogg, 2001). Nevertheless, there are headteachers who are manipulated by experienced primary teachers, closer to the leaders (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), so as to control them, being active in the implementation of leadership and thus confirming that "*leaders form high-quality relationships with some subordinates*" (Carasco-Saul, Kim, & Kim, 2015, p. 41) and in this case who have a powerful Professional and Social Identity in the context of coherent primary education, which is socially stratified due to the field's structure, as producing dominant and dominated groups (Bourdieu, 1994/2000, 1998/2007) on the basis of specialty, seniority, hierarchical role, working relationship, salary and gender (Koutouzis & Spyriadou, 2017).

Salient Identities are the "*lens*" through which the actions of the subjects, the interaction of their Identities and more generally the social reality will be perceived. Institutional hierarchy is a parameter, explaining the obedience/subordination of followers, who are considered passive, albeit being participative, compulsive, controlling and even withdrawn followers, according to research findings. Headteachers' leadership and/or group prototypicality are the main factors not only for granting Leader Identity, but also for ensuring followers' confidence and commitment due to their interactive relationship. The followers accept the influence of leaders, but wish to be respected by them, as fair treatment (Van Knippenberg, 2011) will build a relationship of mutual trust.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS

This paper examined the interaction of leaders and followers, as well as their salient Identities at school, by using qualitative interview data from the 13<sup>th</sup> educational regions (the whole country) with 22 leaders/active headteachers and 21 followers/educators, although 9 of them had claimed a managerial position, which they did not undertake.

The research findings have some implications about the relationship between leaders and followers at school. Even though the differentiated Identities are salient due to the headteachers' power (Kellerman, 2012), as apparent in the context of Greece's centralized education system (Koutouzis, 2012; Koutouzis, *et al.*, 2008), in which the contribution of individuals to the organization's effectiveness is devaluated, hegemonic attitudes seem to appear. However, headteachers' role should be regarded as social, collective and unifying. Therefore a Leader Identity should be developed which will integrate "*a lens of humanity*" and foster headteachers human and social capital, by "*cultivating their self-*

*perception as a prototypical group member through socialization processes and leadership development programs"* (Van Knippenberg, 2011, p. 1086).

On the other hand, as leadership is not a one-sided process, followers (teachers) can potentially play a major role, "*a more active role*" (Tee, Paulsen, & Ashkanasy, 2013, p. 914), by incorporating an active Follower Identity, ensuring organizational effectiveness and school improvement, as these aspirations can be fulfilled only by promoting collectivity (Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005). This raises issues of Moral Leadership (Bush & Glover, 2003; Greenfield, 2004; Sergiovanni, 1992) and organizational culture (Luthans, 2011), as it seems that the school's organizational culture should be oriented not to the hierarchy, but to human resources, as clan culture contributes to increasing employee job satisfaction.

Followership remains center-staged in some contexts, therefore, further qualitative and quantitative research should be conducted, to investigate this parameter in differentiated cultural and social contexts. This paper follows the above direction by contributing to the wider understanding of this concept, examining the differentiated Identities of leaders and followers and their interactive relationship in the primary school. Although this research was carried out in Greece, it would be useful to conduct a comparative analysis between its findings and respective findings in other countries, because according to Tee, Paulsen, & Ashkanasy (2013, p. 903) "*follower-centric approaches are crucial to the advancement of leadership theory*".

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