Implementing Distributed Leadership in Pre-school Education Institutions[*]

Dalia Dambrauskienė, Laima Liukinevičienė, Sigitas Balčiūnas^{**}

Abstract

The article aims to reveal the implementation of distributed leadership in Lithuanian pre-school education institutions from the perspective of a principal in the organization. The article presents the results of qualitative research (the interviews n=11) conducted in 2019 in Lithuania. The research is based on the concept of distributed leadership as a result of interaction between leaders and followers, as a forward-looking transformation, which is discussed in science. The position of a principal has been chosen: the perspective of the person elected as a pre-school principal for the first time, or an experienced pre-school principal who is assigned to manage two institutions at the same time. The research has revealed that the majority of principals seek to implement distributed leadership due to their moral values and from the pragmatic point of view. The factors that hinder principals' desire to implement distributed leadership in pre-school education institutions have been revealed as well.

Keywords: Distributed leadership, pre-school education institution, a novice principal, management.
JEL Codes: O350, H400, I200.

I. Introduction

Scientists note that in the organisations of the 21stcentury, the leadership of leaders acting alone is no longer sufficient. The changing environment is changing the aims of the public sector, and the attitude to leaders of public sector organizations, their role in the organization and the local community is changing as well. The need for a different culture of management in organizations and the necessity for leaders to focus on developing the leadership skills and capabilities not only of their own but also of other members of the institution's community are becoming relevant. Spillane (2005), who is one of the leading theorists of distributed leadership, defines distributed leadership as the synergetic interactions among leaders, followers, and their situation and the distribution of power and influence. Scientists note that distributed leadership is currently one of the ways to achieve the organisation's long-term and short-term goals,

** *Dalia Dambrauskienė*, PhD, Lecturer, Vilnius University Šiauliai Academy, Email: dr.dalia dambrauskiene@gmail.com. Main research interest: Leadership, Management of organizations, Change management.

Laima Liukinevičienė, PhD, Professor, Vilnius University Šiauliai Academy, Email: liukinevicienelaima@gmail.com. Main research interest: Management of organizations, Change management, Leadership, Quality management systems.

Sigitas Balčiūnas, researcher, Lecturer, Vilnius University Šiauliai Academy, Email: sigitas .balciunas@sa.vu.lt. Main research interest: Educational management, Quantitative research methodology.

with a positive impact on the organisation's performance. According to Hartley (2009), the idea of distributed leadership is supported by governments who see distributed leadership as a pragmatic solution to facilitate leaders' workload, as well as a way to attract teachers to take a leader's position that they are increasingly avoiding. Therefore, the causes of political, economic, cultural, and intellectual support make distributed leadership more attractive in practice (Hartley 2009). Harris (2012) noted that it is no longer necessary to prove that distributed leadership makes a difference to organisational outcomes, but rather in scientific research to focus on analysing how it works, how this leadership is implemented in practice.

In the scientific literature the researchers focus on the implementation and development of distributed leadership in an organization (Copland 2003; Mayrowetz/Murphy/Seashore/Smylie 2007; Ritchie/Woods 2007; Smylie/Mayrowetz/Murphy/Seashore 2007; Sentočnik 2012; 2013).The most common objects of such research are organizations where distributed leadership is successfully implemented. Also, in the organizations surveyed, distributed leadership is often implemented as a funded distributed leadership project supported by national or regional education policy. However, there is the lack of research analyzing how leaders manage to implement distributed leadership without receiving any additional funding, without implementing distributed leadership in the organization as a project activity or reform supported by local or national politicians.

In Lithuania there has also been a shift in education policy for more than ten years towards the development of leadership as well as distributed leadership in educational organizations, which is reflected in the Lithuanian Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030" (2013), the Lithuanian National Education Strategy 2013–2022 (2013), the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania (1991), and the Conception of the Good School (2015). Also, the leadership projects initiated by the Ministry of Education and Science have significantly contributed to the dissemination of leadership ideas in Lithuania.

At present, in Lithuania, when principals of educational institutions are appointed for a fixed period (the one tenure for the principal is 5 years), there is the lack of principals in many educational institutions. Due to this reason, as well as the need to save money for the management of organizations, local self-governments are implementing various reorganizations of the network of educational institutions. As a result, a one-principal model for two or three educational institutions is often applied. Therefore, the issue of the implementation and development of distributed leadership in educational organizations is becoming more important than ever, not only in the implementation of Lithuanian education policy, but also in order to ease the workload of principals.

A lot of scientific studies on leadership have been conducted in Lithuania. The research in this sphere was conducted by Cibulskas/Žydžiūnaitė/Kruopas/ Šišla/Prakapas/Tamošaitytė (2010), Cibulskas/Žydžiūnaitė (2011), Beresnevičiūtė/Dagytė/Dapkus/Katiliūtė/Savičiūtė (2011); Katiliūtė/Malčiauskienė/Simonaitienė/Stanikūnienė/Jezerskytė/Cibulskas (2013), Valuckienė/ Balčiūnas/ Katiliūtė/Simonaitienė/Stanikūnienė (2015); Urbanovič/Navickaitė (2016); Damkuvienė/Valuckienė/Balčiūnas (2019), etc. However, in Lithuania and other countries, there is the lack of the research on the implementation of distributed leadership from the perspective of a principal who has started to lead a new organization or manage even several organizations at once.

This research aims to reveal the implementation of distributed leadership in Lithuanian pre-school education institutions from the perspective of a principal in the organization. This research aims to answer the following questions: what are the factors that motivate principals and the factors that restrict principals' desire to implement distributed leadership in Lithuanian pre-school education institutions?

This empirical study contributes to the development of research on the implementation of distributed leadership in educational institutions by revealing how distributed leadership is implemented by novice principals and experienced principals who manage even several organizations at once and implement distributed leadership within their organizations.

Generic qualitative exploratory approaches (Kahlke 2014, Merriam/Tisdel 2016) were selected to implement the research aim, by using a qualitative in-depth interview of 11 principals. The material was systematized by coding and distinguishing the categories of topics envisaged at the beginning of the research and later it was interpreted. The discussion is based on the research on distributed leadership in general education schools, as pre-school institutions, as a different context for implementing distributed leadership, are still awaiting deeper research.

II. Theoretical Background

The Concept of Distributed Leadership

As Hill (2008) argues, the concept of distributed leadership fragmentary appeared in literature in the second half of the 20th century, however, there were no definitions of it until the 21st century. The diversity of concepts and definitions of distributed leadership may have resulted from different contexts, i.e. different sectors and countries (Bolden 2011). Although some scientists believe that the absence of a common definition of distributed leadership remains a constraint, it does not preclude further empirical research on distributed leadership and not diminish interest in its practical application (Harris/Spillane 2008;

Harris/DeFlaminis 2016). As Harris and DeFlaminis (2016) note, there are the essential things that discern the concept of distributed leadership from many other types of leadership. One of the key elements is the emphasis on leadership as a practice rather than on a leader as a role or responsibility. Another key element is interaction, not action; influence and power are significant in distributed leadership as well. Spillane argues that distributed leadership is a synergistic interaction among a leader, followers, and situations (Spillane/Halverson/Diamond 2001; Spillane 2005; Spillane/Harris/Jones/Mertz 2015). The outcome of this interaction is the leadership practice. According to Spillane (2005), interdependence is a key feature of leader interaction. Therefore, the leadership practice can also be distributed between two or more leaders who work together or separately but are interdependent.

The analysis of the scientific literature (Gronn 2002; MacBeath/Oduro/Waterhouse 2004; Leithwood/ Day/Sammons/Harris/Hopkins 2006; Ritchie/Woods 2007; Duif/Harrison/van Dartel 2013; Lahtero 2017; 2019) revealed that DL implementation is a multi-stage process during which the social capital of an organization is increased, i.e. collective skills are expanded at the individual, team, organizational, and community levels to effectively engage in leadership roles and processes. Scientists (Bennett/ Christine/Woods 2003; Bolden 2011) note that the subjects of the initiative in the DL implementation in the organization may vary:

- top-down strategy, initiative is taken by managers,
- Implementating bottom-up strategy, the initiative is taken by informal leaders (individuals, groups of workers, trade unions or other representative bodies),
- Initiative arising from an external context may involve political pressure, etc.

In this research, the principal is considered to be the initiator of DL implementation, however the DL implementation as an employee initiative or as a political pressure is not analyzed in more detail.

Seven dominant dimensions of distributed leadership can be distinguished: school structure, strategic vision, values and beliefs, communication and collaboration, decision making, responsibility and accountability, and the initiative (Duif et al. 2013).

Participants of Interaction: Leaders and Followers

According to Leithwood et al. (2006), the concept of distributed leadership does not deny the importance and significance of formal leaders but emphasizes horizontal relationships, leadership as interaction, and creates space for others to lead. Harris (2012) notes that with the development of distributed leadership at school, various changes begin in the principal's office. According to her, the principal firstly has to:

■ Refocus and be able to relinquish the power and authority,
■ Move from leadership to interaction with other members of the organization,
■ Maintain a high level of trust in each other.

A similar idea is expressed by Murphy et al. (2009) that often formal leaders determine whether or not the initiative of others will be allowed to be developed. The importance of formal leaders and school principals in implementing the ideas of distributed leadership is also emphasized by Hopkins/Jackson (2002), who argue that formal leaders have to organise and foster space for distributed leadership. They underline that this would be difficult to achieve without the active support of school principals. However, this reorientation, the relinquishing of power and authority, the transition to interaction, the maintenance or creation of trust in each another – disseminating the ideas of distributed leadership within the organization – often cause difficulties for formal leaders. Therefore, these difficulties, as Gronn (2010) observes, are related to the fact that distributed leadership inevitably diminishes the role of a formal leader. According to MacBeath et al. (2004), the success of distributed leadership is determined by a leader's decision to relinquish authority. Without the leader's determination, neither opportunistic nor cultural development of leadership is possible. As Hartley (2010) observes, a leader's decision to implement distributed leadership can also be pragmatic, as distributing leadership facilitates the burden of overworked leaders.

Therefore, today formal leaders are inevitably forced to change themselves, to shift their personality, their attitudes to changes in the organization, and to enable other members of the organization to reveal their leadership abilities. Formal leaders, according to Harris (2012), have to be proactive and benevolent, do not assess other people's leadership as a relinquish of their power and authority, they have to avoid excessive control over others, and they have to actively promote and value innovative ideas of employees. This implies that leaders have to feel time and place, understand the opportunities of others, and know when to retreat, allowing employees to contribute and participate in decision-making, and to coordinate the actions (Leidhwood et al. 2006; Obadara 2013).

MacBeath et al. (2004) believe that the distribution of leadership is a reflection of the leader's leadership style and philosophy. According to these scientists, this is more often an indirect goal of the leader and an intuitive process. The importance of the formal leadership position and approach to ongoing processes is emphasized by Spillane et al. (2015). An analysis of the data of the research conducted by these scientists shows that the work of a novice school principal is associated with a certain tension, which is not only a function of the individual choices of those who assume the principal's position but also is inherent in the principal's position itself. Spillane et al. (2015) note that the reluctance of a novice principal to distribute leadership can cause tension in the organization.

Besides formal leaders, significant participants in distributed leadership, as a synergistic interaction, are teachers. According to Setchel (2008), the success of school development depends on teachers as they determine what happens in the educational process. Therefore, it is essential to involve teachers-leaders in the school development process, as they would be less likely to effectively implement the initiatives of improvement if they were not involved. Murphy et al. (2009) also discern teachers as significant participants of interaction, however, for most teachers, the current organizational system is the only one known to them. Therefore, they often find it difficult to switch to another, unknown system, especially when it is not clear and comprehensible enough. Hierarchical and bureaucratic structures are often associated with comfort, for example, when efforts to implement changes fail or the desired results do not manifest. Hierarchical and bureaucratic structures then allow those involved in the change process not to blame themselves, but to attribute it to others or even to the system itself (Murphy et al. 2009).

According to Murphy et al. (2009), leaders' actions related to the implementation of distributed leadership in the organization can be grouped into the following clusters:

- Building strong relationships with teachers,
- Rethinking the concept of power,
- Rebuilding the organisation's structure.

Therefore, according to Murphy et al. (2009), if there is distributed leadership within the organization, school principals have to be resolute in rebuilding the organization's structure into more favourable for the development of distributed leadership. According to these scientists, school structures define teachers' abilities to work together meaningfully and consciously.

The Situation Dimension

As it was already mentioned, according to Spillane (2005), leaders and followers interact with one another, and this interaction involves the aspects of the situation, including various tools, routines, and structures. According to Spillane (2006), tools range from pupil assessment data to teacher assessment protocols. Structures include routines, such as grade-level meetings and the scheduling of teachers' prep periods. From the perspective of distribution, the situation allows or restricts the practice of leadership. Situations lead to distributed leadership and, at the same time, distributed leadership practices influence the situations through interaction between leaders and followers. Structures, routines, and tools are the ways on which human interaction depends. As Spillane (2006) notes, organizational culture, language, etc. also determine the situation of distributed leadership interaction. According to this scientist, formal novice leaders, who start managing a new organization, often face routines, tools, structures that

have not changed for a long time. Starting to change them, various tensions or resistance to change can occur. Therefore, distributed leadership can be seen as a change in organizations.

Spillane et al. (2015) identify another reason that poses a challenge to a novice principal. It is an institutional school environment. As these researchers note, although all the schools under investigation were of the same local school district (i.e. the same local education authority), the situation of the principals was very different. For example, in schools where principals had a probationary period, this tension was greater than in schools where principals did not have a probationary period.

Therefore, not only the interaction between leaders and followers but also the situation in which they interact is important for implementing distributed leadership in the organization. Changing the practice within the organization to a more favourable for distributed leadership, a situation of the formal leader (e.g. probationary period, fixed-term employment contract, etc.) can cause some tension and restrictions in implementing distributed leadership in the organization.

III. Methodology

The research was conducted within the framework of generic qualitative descriptive exploratory research (Kahlke 2014, Merriam/Tisdel 2016). The research strategy is not based on the approach of a specific qualitative methodology but simply seeks to discover and understand the phenomenon of distributed leadership from the perspective of the people participating in this research. To ensure the validity of the research, i.e. to make sure that the research results would reflect the real situation, would be accurate and trusted, the research reports were provided to the interviewees. The interviewees assessed their accuracy and provided observations that were taken into consideration in preparing the final research report.

Prior to the research, the course of the research was discussed with the interviewees, and the confidentiality of the interviewees was guaranteed. The interviewees participated in the research voluntarily, their written consents were obtained to participate in the research and the interview was to be recorded on a dictaphone. Information that could identify the interviewee is considered confidential. Therefore, the interviewees' data, which allows them to be identified as well as the answers are coded.

The Scope of the Research

To achieve the aim of the research, the perspective of the principal involved in the implementation of distributed leadership was chosen. The targeted selection of principals was used. The researcher interviewed 11 interviewees who took

over the leadership of the new institution in the last two years. They can be divided into two groups: 1) the six experienced principals who have managed two organizations at the same time (hereinafter – the Experienced Principals; codes ID2, ID4, ID5, ID6, ID9, ID10), i.e. in one of the organizations they were principals for five-year term, in another organization they were appointed as interim principals till the time a new principal will be appointed for five-year term; 2) the five novice principals (hereinafter – the Novice Principals; codes IV1, IV3, IV7, IV8, IV11), who during the last two years were elected for the first time to manage the organization for five-year term in a pre-school education institution. Choosing two groups of principals with different experience enables to reveal the differences and variations in the approach to distributed leadership and the situations of distributed leadership. All principals interviewed are females with managerial experience of 6 to 16 years. The institutions managed by interviewees have between 30 and 52 employees, and all institutions are located in the city. The interviews were conducted by one researcher.

Interview guidelines

The interview was organized using the method of a semi-structured interview based on a pre-discussed interview procedure, the guidelines for the questions were prepared. The interviewees were provided with short, easy-to-understand questions, avoiding complex academic concepts. The term of distributed leadership in presenting the research topic and asking questions directly was not used. Such access allowed avoiding the narratives conditioned by different understanding of distributed leadership and based on theoretical positions, as well as to identify the issues of distributed leadership that an interviewee may not ascribe to this concept. This questioning strategy was chosen for the purpose of open and theory-unrestricted statements provided by a research participant. An average duration of one interview was 45 min.

The research focused on seven dimensions of distributed leadership. The guidelines for the questionnaire on the distributed leadership proposed by Duif et al. (2013) were used in compiling the questionnaire for the research (the main topics of the interview are presented in Appendix A). Depending on the expression of the dimensions of distributed leadership in the organization, the factors that motivate as well as factors that hinder the principals' desire to implement distributed leadership in the institution have been revealed. Encouraging the interviewees to provide more comprehensive answers, the researcher responded in a non-verbal language to the research participants' words, their thoughts were paraphrased, and they were asked to provide examples from their experience.

Data Analysis

The generic qualitative approach is an inductive research that uses the qualitative content analysis, open coding, and categorization (see Table 1). The coding was performed by the team of researchers. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Analyzing the data, a basic qualitative content analysis method (Merriam/Tisdell 2015) was applied, lexical-semantic units corresponding to the research theme were identified, later they were coded, categories and subcategories were formed and their content was revealed by describing and providing examples given by interviewees. The research findings are summarized and theorized in the discussion section.The investigation on distributed leadership in pre-school education institutions was conducted in 2019 February-May.

Table 1. The examples of coding process

Theme	Category	Subcategories
The factors that motivate principals to implement distributed leadership	Distributed leadership as the implementation of principal's moral values	Employee empowerment
		Support of the idea of distributed leadership
	Distributed leadership as a pragmatic managerial solution	Reducing the administrative burden on principals
		Influence of Lithuanian education policy
The factors that restrict principals' desire to implement distributed leadership	Principal-dependent factors slowing down the process	Lack of principal's experience in leadership
		A novice principal's expectation to quickly implement the changes
	Obstacles caused by employees	Previous, except distributed leadership, organizational culture
		Lack of communication and collaboration competencies
		Reluctance to take responsibility
		Lack of initiative
		Resistance to changes
	External factors	Relics of hierarchical management culture
		Insufficient support from education departments for the principals implementing managerial innovations
		Lack of distributed leadership mentors

IV. Research Findings

The implementation of distributed leadership.

The analysis of the results of the conducted interviews revealed that there are no common scenarios, models, and strategies of implementing distributed leadership in the organization. Most principals emphasize the principal-leader's

personal involvement into processes, the strengthening of horizontal interaction between the principal and employees, and the development of the managerial structure involving a community. Therefore, principals consider that harmonizing the overall strategic vision, values and beliefs of the organization, their own personal example of leadership is important:

IV3:   *<...> a very strong moral background of the principal himself/herself, the harmony between words and activities, as if you declare one thing, you have to behave the same as you declare.*

Also, in pre-school education institutions, when the novice principal started working, the interaction between principals and employees was changed, e.g. in one of the organizations another meeting methodology was used, principals were more active in providing feedback to employees:

IV3:   *It's possible to name the method of a meeting, how it's conducted. <...>Providing feedback. It's quite different.*

Also, in the same organization, the interviewee IV3 mentioned the involving employees in problem-solving:

IV3:   *Let's say how we solve an occurred problem. Whether we talk with each person individually, or tackle openly a problem, severely or not severely. The nature of solving conflicts and problems is quite different, providing feedback, organization of work, efficiency, or information dissemination, even activation. <...>I try not to say how to behave in more difficult situations. I say – tell me three options for how you imagine to solve the problem.*

In other pre-school institutions, principals mentioned such changes in the interaction between principals and employees as strengthening of teamwork and building a community:

IV4:   *<...> while working here for the first months, I try to organise team building, to invite lectors, coaches, psychologists who would help to strengthen the team<...>we have so-called reflection groups. Once a week, when a psychologist is working <...> when people meet to discuss a specific situation.*

IV11: *Joint outings of the employees were emotionally warm, melted mistrust. <...>We reduced the number of festivals which were unsuccessful or too traditional and started to change the mode of festivals. We started to organise different joint meetings for parents – at least twice a year. We involve parents in activities.*

Changing the management system by including employees has taken place in several pre-school education institutions, e.g. involvement of employees and parents in management structures:

IV3: *The working group has been formed, there's a parents' representative, the interested specialists are invited. They feel that they are important and they see that I pay attention to this what they've said.*

Also, novice principals talk about changing the management system as the establishment of working groups:

ID9: *The working group has been formed to create a code of ethics for the organization.*

Interviewees mentioned that by improving and changing the management system, the internal communication system is being improved:

IV3: *We try to find effective ways for information sharing <...>.*

IV4: *We have five-minute meetings on Mondays, also we have other meetings.*

Another interviewee mentioned that changing the management system by including employees is the periodic activity planning and analysis:

IV7: *Now we organize staff meetings every two weeks.*

IV11: *At the beginning of the week, every Monday we have staff meetings, teachers' meetings.*

Strengthening the staff with newly recruited employees who have leadership competencies is also an important measure for implementing leadership in the organization:

IV3: *One of the good things is the renewal of staff, recruiting people with fresh and new thinking, people who have other experiences, people who share their ideas. They're quite different and they show with their example and best practices that it's possible to have another relationship with the principal, to communicate differently, to perform differently, talk differently, and so on.*

IV8: *Recently, a new deputy head for education has started work. This person has a huge managerial experience, however, she is new in this community. I'm happy that our attitudes to institution activities coincide, thus we together seek implement changes, which would improve the institution's activities. During the last years, several changes have taken place inside the community as well, several new employees have been recruited, thus,*

> *simply naturally, the former hierarchy has partially collapsed that resisted changes.*

As it is seen from the answers above, the novice principals are more active in supporting distributed leadership, they are more knowledgeable about it and employ more innovative tools to empower employees. The principals themselves are primarily inclined to relinquish power, to distribute leadership, i.e. to shift to interaction and demonstrate it with their behaviour. The principals also evaluate and, if necessary, implement such additional organizational structures that require leadership initiative (internal communication structure is being improved, working groups are being established, etc.).

The factors that motivate principals to implement distributed leadership.

The analysis of the results of the conducted interviews helped to find out what are the factors that motivate principals to implement distributed leadership within the organization. Interviewees' responses revealed that the first motive of the implementation of distributed leadership in the pre-school education institution is distributed leadership as the implementation of principal's moral values. While the second motive of the implementation of distributed leadership in the pre-school education institution is distributed leadership as a pragmatic managerial solution reducing the administrative burden on principals and influence of Lithuanian education policy, e.g. Conception of the Good School (2015). Factors that motivate principals to implement distributed leadership within the organization provided by the interviewees are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Factors that motivate principals to implement distributed leadership

Categories	Subcategories	Illustrative statements
Distributed leadership as the implementation of principal's moral values	Employee empowerment	*I wish democratic management, distributed leadership, when all people are empowered, when there isn't the culture of fear, but rather the culture of promotion, the culture of empowering <...> (IV3). I try to empower as many people as possible to work as a team, share ideas and together seek for the improvement in the organization's activities (IV11).*
	Support of the idea of distributed leadership	*It is very important to show every employee that each of them is important for the community, that their ideas, even the smallest initiatives will be accepted, discussed, and the best solutions will be found. It's necessary to show people that unfavourable decisions won't be taken without them. At the same time, it's important to prove that each person has to be responsible for their own decisions (IV8). For me, it's very important to involve other people in decision making. That's my way of working (ID10).*

Categories	Subcategories	Illustrative statements
Distributed leadership as a pragmatic managerial solution	Reducing the administrative burden on principals	*I've learned not to take up and do everything by myself. I've learned to distribute functions. After managing kindergarten for nine years, <...>I understood that it would be too difficult for me (ID6). As now I'm working in two organizations, I can't devote much time to solve the problems, so part of the problems and solutions I distribute to other people (ID10).*
	Influence of Lithuanian education policy	*ID5: Good things are in the Conception of the Good School. And those concepts I wanted.*

Therefore, the research shows that for most principals, the idea of distributed leadership reflects their moral values to empower employees, i.e. to create a collaborative community (team) that collegially makes decisions. Distributed leadership enables employees, therefore, it is attractive for improving the performance of the institution. There is also a pragmatic aspect in managing pre-school education institutions: distributed leadership shifts the part of the administrative, routine burden to other employees, responsibilities are collegially shared, and for this purpose, they strive to implement distributed leadership within their institution.

Factors restricting the principals' desire to implement distributed leadership in the pre-school education institution.

The analysis of the material collected during the interview has revealed that the principals have rather critically distinguished obstacles caused by a formal leader and employees (see Table 3).

Table 3. Factors restricting the principals' desire to implement distributed leadership

Categories	Subcategories	Illustrative statements
Principal-dependent factors slowing down the process	Lack of principal's experience in leadership	*Maybe there's a lack of experience, as I'm a novice principal, and I haven't had a concrete experience, that I'm on the top of the institution. <...> It's not clear what is the right thing to do, how to behave (IV3).*
	A novice principal's expectation to quickly implement the changes	*There was a strong expectation. The imagination that I would come, people are longing for changes and everything will be all right was misleading. I understood that it was utopia <...> I didn't imagine, that sometimes I'll feel helpless (IV3). I had an opinion, but it was better than the one I had when I started working. <...> I see that there aren't any positive things. Everything is very bad (IV7).*

Categories	Subcategories	Illustrative statements
Obstacles caused by employees	Previous, except distributed leadership, organizational culture	*The biggest problem is distrust and being considered an outsider. As I came to the pre-school education institution from the general education institution, sometimes I heard, this was at school, but here…<…> We didn't believe that it would be so as you've said, that you keep your promise, that you try to be objective and fair for everyone (IV11).*
	Lack of communication and collaboration competencies	*The first problems were related to communication (IV7). If you point at a big problem, something that has failed, they accept this as accusation (IV3). Learning from each other is a painful problem. The majority of teachers, who have huge work experience, think that they know everything very well, and there is nothing new to learn (IV8).*
	Reluctance to take responsibility	*Well, it is difficult with responsibility here. <…> If they are not asked, they do not show initiative. And if it is necessary, in more complex situations, they want that a principal would say how to perform (IV3). What is the worst thing, a person who temporarily was in a position of a deputy head for education, avoided responsibility, often wanted to transfer responsibility to the principal (i.e. to me) (ID9). You gave freedom and there was a moment when people didn't know how to deal with this freedom (IV7).*
	Lack of initiative	*So far, employees themselves don't join these groups. We can't do anything. Till now they don't dare to act, there's no self-sufficiency (IV7).*
	Resistance to changes	*The main problem is a new person in an already close-knit community, that has formed their values, traditions, and that accepts new people with difficulty (IV8). <…> We need to work much to persuade how it will be better: "We've worked in this way for ages and it was good, why to change?" (IV7).*

As it is seen from the answers above, part of the interviewees noted that obstacles to implement distributed leadership in the organization are related to the principal himself/herself, i.e. with the lack of principal's experience in leadership. Also, the obstacles to implement distributed leadership are caused by a novice principal's expectation to quickly implement the changes. Another significant part of an obstacle that makes it difficult to implement distributed leadership in an organization are the obstacles caused by employees, e.g. previous, except distributed leadership, organizational culture. Also, principals identified staff-related barriers, such as the lack of communication and collaboration competencies and reluctance to take responsibility or lack of initiative.

As can be seen from the interviewees' responses, when implementing distributed leadership, principals face some challenges within the organization. The novice principals expressed uncertainty about their decisions, doubts about the leadership style, and what behaviour is the most appropriate in a given situation. Interviewees revealed that they sometimes feel very helpless. The interviewees

with bigger experience in leadership see these problems like other problems and see their solutions:

ID4: *Well, problems are the matter of everyday life. I don't emphasize them. These are some certain situations, which have to be resolved. They're different of both parents and teachers. This is your everyday life. There aren't any unsolvable problems.*

ID2: *I've gained experience, faced the staff's solutions, and not so easy ones. And to solve these problems. Thus, here I gained experience.*

Obstacles caused by employees are usually related to the following reasons:

1. The leadership style in the organization before the changes.

IV3: *Well, I understood that it [managing style] was authoritarian.*

IV8: *Under the previous principal employees were used to solving their problems individually, not considering the interests of other employees.*

IV11: *I came to the institution after a person who had managed it for 40 years, and whose leaving was related to financial matters and resulted in a criminal case.*

2. Former organizational culture.

IV3: *And usually people can do and they perfectly understand and know how. And, of course, people protect themselves, because if I being a teacher communicate one or another solution, and if it fails, he/she will be "scolded".*

External factors that hinder to implement distributed leadership and expectations. The interviewees also identified the underlying reasons of education system why such managerial innovations as distributed leadership are difficult to implement in the pre-school education institutions (see Table 4).

Table 4. External factors restricting the principals' desire to implement distributed leadership

Categories	Subcategories	Illustrative statements
External factors	Relics of hierarchical management culture	*ID4: What I don't like, I will tell frankly, is that in budgetary institutions, till now it is thought, that the principle of "scolding and praising" is the best. And that practically starting with our administration, municipality, department… I don't want to specify a city, simply, there's still this outdated management and there's no culture of communication.*
	Insufficient support from education departments for the principals implementing managerial innovations	*IV7: I was very angry with our heads. I felt completely abandoned. I wasn't interesting for anybody. You were recruited to work and you have to work here.* *ID6: <…> they call and want to teach you.*
	Lack of distributed leadership mentors	*IV3: And it is very important, that we would have mentors, with whom we could talk.*

As it is seen from the answers above, the main external factors restricting the principals' desire to implement distributed leadership are*:*

1. Relics of hierarchical management culture.
2. Insufficient support from education departments for the principals implementing managerial innovations.
3. Lack of distributed leadership mentors.

Among the novice principals, some received moral support from the education department.

ID6:   *I'm very happy that I was supported. This approach, this trust in me that I agreed to be there, as not everyone agreed, this really very motivated not to let other people down and to do everything what is possible. So, I was very happy that I was supported.*

According to interviewees, it will take them several years to implement the intended changes:

IV3:   *Well, probably, two years, when the stability will come. Maybe some routine would change, something, some experiences would show them, that it's not so as I imagined.*

ID4:   *As it is some kind of view, values, agreements, which have to be well established. And they're not changing so quickly. <…>Well, probably from five to ten years. I think that there won't be any changes neither in a year nor in two years time.*

The analysis of the interview material shows that it is easier for experienced principals-leaders of distributed leadership. A greater moral, methodological

support from the superior education institutions would increase the speed of distributed leadership.

The interviewees stated that they had much higher expectations, were planning for bigger, faster changes, hoped that the team would be willing to change, however, in practice they faced reluctance to change and resistance to changes. Therefore, one interviewee expressed doubts about the appropriateness of the democratic leadership style in the current situation.

V. Concluding Discussion

The research highlighted the expression of some dimensions of distributed leadership in organizations: *strategic vision, values and beliefs, participation in decision-making, and changes in organizational structure*.The expression of other dimensions, such as *responsibilities and accountability*, *communication and cooperation*, *initiative* were not revealed or the interviewees expressed the opinion that it is difficult to achieve due to the previous organizational culture and the prevailing leadership style.The research questions (What are the factors that motivate principals and the factors that restrict principals' desire to implement distributed leadership in Lithuanian pre-school education institutions?) have been answered. Principals' aim to implement distributed leadership has emerged as an intuitive solution rather than a conscious and pre-planned action.This confirmed MacBeath et al.'s (2004) observations on the implementation of distributed leadership as an intuitive leadership solution.

The research revealed that the principals' aim to implement distributed leadership is promoted by:

1. The principals' values (they manifested in the case of the novice principals).
2. The pragmatic approach of principals: the desire to reduce the administrative burden and the influence of Lithuanian education policy (it manifested in the cases of the principals managing two organizations at the same time).

The principals' aim to implement distributed leadership is hindered/limited by:

1. The individual factors that depend on the principal (lack of experience, excessive expectations).
2. The factors that depend on employees (previous, without distributed leadership, organizational culture);
3. The unfavorable external context of distributed leadership: a culture of distributed leadership that is not supported at national and local governance level (relics of hierarchical management culture and insufficient support

from education departments for the principals implementing managerial innovations); lack of distributed leadership mentors.

The research has shown that the role of formal leaders remains important in distributed leadership and that the leader determines to what extent leadership develops within the organization (Leithwood et al. 2006; Murphy et al. 2009; Harris 2012). Scientists have also emphasized the importance of the leader's approach to distributed leadership, to the change of his/her role in the organization. This research has also revealed that the principals who sought to share leadership with others manifested in their favourable approach to distributed leadership and a reduction in their power and influence. Not only did they allow the novice principals to emerge, but they promoted the leadership skills of teachers and created space for their leadership to manifest. Therefore, the idea proposed by MacBeath et al. (2004) was confirmed that without the leader's willingness to relinquish power, the development of distributed leadership in the organization cannot take place. However, the research proved that the novice principals have the approach of exceptionally favourable moral value to distributed leadership. Even though Spillane et al. (2015) noted that the novice principal's reluctance to distribute leadership could result in tension, the research revealed a different situation – although the principal sought to implement distributed leadership within the organization, employees often found it difficult to accept this initiative of leadership. Employees were not willing to take the initiative, they had difficulty in taking responsibility for their activities, or were reluctant to participate in decision-making. Therefore, tension within the organization arose not due to the principal's unwillingness to distribute leadership, but rather due to the principal's willingness to change a well-established way of managing and to share leadership with employees. The idea proposed by Murphy et al. (2009) has been confirmed that it is often difficult for teachers to shift to another leadership style, to refuse the hierarchical and bureaucratic structure to which they are accustomed and which provides them with some comfort (e.g. allows them not to take responsibility).

The idea, expressed by Hartley (2010), that leaders' attitudes towards distributed leadership can be pragmatic to facilitate their workload, has also been confirmed. However, such a pragmatic approach and willingness to distribute leadership was inherent with those principals who had greater managerial experience and managed two pre-school education institutions at the same time.

The majority of difficulties in implementing distributed leadership in the organization occurred due to the resistance of employees to the changes caused by organizational structures and, in particular, the changes in organizational culture. The idea proposed by Spillane (2006) has been confirmed that changing long-standing, well-established organizational routines, tools and structures can pose various tensions or resistance to change. To take responsibility, show initia-

tive, maintain a respectful and less hierarchical relationship with the principal, communicate openly and collaborate with colleagues, and learn from each other were the most difficult things for employees. To quicker and easier distribute leadership, the principals focused on attracting new individuals with leadership abilities to the organization or disclosing leadership abilities of those already in the organization to make leadership distribution faster and easier. MacBeath et al. (2004), referring to the opportunistic leadership distribution, also mention that leaders often support and promote the energetic, ambitious employees who want to take a leadership role, or even conscientiously employ such individuals to reveal their leadership within the organization.

A lot of disappointment for the novice principals was caused by too high expectations and insufficient managerial experience. Adverse factors determined by the external context also include the root causes of the education system itself, which make it difficult to implement managerial innovations such as distributed leadership.According to the interviewees, there are still a number of relics of hierarchical management culture in the country's education system. Experienced principals lack the respectful communication and trust in principals of the municipal administrators supervising their activities. The novice principals lacked the interest of institutions supervising their activities, and they lacked the support of persons supervising their activities. Therefore, the interviewees expressed the wish that the features of distributed leadership would transcend their organization and be developed throughout the whole education system. This could take the form of paying more attention of superior institution individuals to principals, by appointing mentors or changing the culture of communication/collaboration throughout the whole education system. There is a lack of scientific literature on these issues, therefore it would be purposeful to conduct more comprehensive research, as namely these factors, according to interviewees' opinion, would enable them to implement the ideas of distributed leadership more successfully within their organizations.

Limitations and Implications for Further Research

The research covered only pre-school education institutions subordinated to the city municipality, which are similar in size, activities and age of pupils.The implementation of distributed leadership in private institutions and institutions located in rural areas was not analyzed.The research did not cover the cases of an experienced principal working for a long time in the same pre-school institution and implementing distributed leadership and principals who manage more than two organizations at the same time.

When developing the topic of distributed leadership implementation in the context of a principal, it is appropriate to triangulate the approach of principals and

employees to the issue of implementing distributed leadership within the same organizations.

Inter-rater reliabilities were not calculated, this is an important limitation of this study.

It is relevant to further investigate what are the factors that motivate principals and the factors that restrict principals' desire to implement distributed leadership in pre-school education institutions.An analogous and representative research of the implementation of distributed leadership in educational organizations (involving a wider sample of the study and other stakeholders, such as pupils' parents) would make it possible to compare and supplement the results of this study. In order to determine the influence of the organizational context on the implementation of distributed leadership, it is recommended to conduct a similar investigation in private educational institutions, institutions located in rural areas, general education schools of the next level of education.

This research highlighted some of the less scientifically observed features of distributed leadership implementation that are worth to be analysed in future research:

1) Distributed leadership as a change in organizational culture.In situations where distributed leadership is implemented at the initiative of a principal, where the values and attitudes of the principal and employees of the organization differ significantly, the implementation of distributed leadership should be seen not only as a structural reorganization but also as a change in organizational culture. It is important to pay attention to the specificity, duration, stage of implementation of such changes in the organization and to reveal the factors that influence the implementation of distributed leadership.

2) In the case of Lithuania, it can be seen that strategic and other documents regulating educational activities and leadership projects at the national level support and promote the aspiration of principals to implement distributed leadership. At the same time, the tradition of hierarchical management at the national and local levels limits its implementation.Therefore, it is appropriate to conduct similar research in other post-Soviet countries with a similar level of economic and social development, attitudes towards hierarchy in the organization and the whole education system.

References

Bennett, N./Christine,W./Woods, Ph. (2003): Distributed Leadership: A Review of Literature. Full Report. National College for School Leadership.

Beresnevičiūtė, V./Dagytė, V./Dapkus, G./Katiliūtė, E./Savičiūtė, D. (2011): Longitudinis lyderystės raiškos švietime tyrimas. Vilnius: Mokyklų tobulinimo centras.

Bolden, R. (2011): Distributed Leadership in Organizations: A Review of Theory and Research, in: International Journal of Management Reviews, 13, 251–269.

Cibulskas, G./Žydžiūnaitė, V./Kruopas, M./Šišla, R./Prakapas, R./Tamošaitytė,A. V. (2010): Lietuvos mokyklų valdymo efektyvumo tyrimas. Vilnius: Mokyklų tobulinimo centras.

Cibulskas, G./Žydžiūnaitė, V. (2011): Lyderystės vystymosi mokykloje modelis. Vilnius: Mokyklų tobulinimo centras.

Copland, M. A. (2003): Leadership of inquiry: Building and sustaining capacity for school improvement, in: Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 25, 4, 375–395.

Damkuvienė, M./Valuckienė, J./Balčiūnas, S. (2019): Teacher Leadership for Organizational Change, in: Journal of Contemporary Management Issues Management, 24, 37–53.

Duif, T./Harrison, Ch./van Dartel, N. (2013): Distributed Leadership in Practice, in: A Descriptive Analysis of Distributed Leadership in European Schools.

Geros mokyklos koncepcija (Conception of the Good School). (2015). Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania.

Gronn, P. (2002): Distributed leadership as a unit of analysis, in: The Leadership Quarterly, 13, 423–451.

Gronn, P. (2010): Where to next for educational leadership?, in: Bush, T./ Bell, L./ Middlewood, D. (ed.): The Principles of Educational Leadership and Management, London: England, Sage, 70–85.

Hopkins, D./Jackson, D. (2002): Building the Capacity for Leading and Learning, in Harris, A./ Day, C./ Hadfield, M./ Hopkins, D./ Hargreaves A./ Chapman, C. (ed.): Effective Leadership for School Improvement. London: Routledge, 84–105.

Harris, A./DeFlaminis, J. (2016): Distributed leadership in practice: Evidence, misconceptions and possibilities, in: Management in Education, 30, 4, 141–146.

Harris, A./Spillane J.P. (2008): Distributed leadership through the looking glass, in: Management in Education, 22, 1, 31–34.

Harris, A. (2012): Distributed Leadership: Implications for the Role of the Principal, in: Journal of Management Development, 31, 1, 7–17.

Hartley, D. (2009): Education policy, distributed leadership and socio-cultural theory, in: Educational Review, 61, 2, 139–150.

Hartley, D. (2010): Paradigms: How far does research in distributed leadership "stretch.", in: Educational Management, Administration, and Leadership, 38, 3, 271–285.

Hill, A.L. (2008): Distributed Leadershipin Schools. PhD Thesis, The University of Melbourne.

Kahlke, R.M. (2014): Generic qualitative approaches: Pitfalls and benefits of methodological mixology, in: International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 13, 1, 37–52.

Katiliūtė, D./Malčiauskienė, A./Simonaitienė, B./Stanikūnienė, B./Jezerskytė, E./Cibulskas, G. (2013): Longitudinio lyderystės raiškos švietime tyrimas. Kaunas: ŠMM.

Leithwood, K./Day, Ch./Sammons, P./Harris, A./Hopkins, D. (2006): Successful School Leadership. What It Is and How It Influences Pupil Learning. Research report, University of Nottingham.

Law on Education. (1991). Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania.

MacBeath, John/ Oduro, G. KT/Waterhouse, J. (2004): Distributed Leadership in Action: A study of current practice in schools. University of Cambridge in collaboration with the Eastern Leadership Centre.

Mayrowetz, D./Murphy, J./Seashore L.K./Smylie M.K. (2007): Distributed Leadership as Work Redesign: Retrofitting the Job Characteristics Model, in: Leadership and Policy in Schools, 6, 1, 69–101.

Merriam, S.B./Tisdell, E.J. (2015): Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation. John Wiley and Sons.

Murphy, J./Mayrowetz, D./Smylie, M./Seashore, K.L. (2009): The Role of the Principal in Fostering the Development of Distributed Leadership, in: School Leadership and Management, 29, 2, 181–214.

National Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030". (2013).

Obadara, O.E. (2013): Relationship between Distributed Leadership and Sustainable School Improvement, in: Int J Edu Sci, 5, 1, 69–74.

Ritchie, R./Woods, P.A. (2007): Degrees of distribution: Towards an understanding of variations in the nature of distributed leadership in schools, in: School Leadership and Management, 27, 4, 363–381.

Sentočnik, S. (2012): Distributed Leadership as a Form of Work Redesign: Exploring its Development and Implementation in High Schools in Slovenia. Theses and Dissertations. Paper 1172.

Sentočnik, S. (2013): Re-thinking School Leadership: Exploring the Development of Distributed Leadership in a Post-Socialist Europen Context.Saarbrücken: Scholars' Press.

Setchel, B.A. (2008): How Distributed School Leadership Practices are Implemented in a Rural Northeast Georgia Elementary School, in: Georgia Southern University. Electronic Theses and Dissertations.

Smylie, M. A./Mayrowetz, D./Murphy, J./Louis Seashore, K. (2007): Trust and the development of distributed leadership, in: Journal of School Leadership, 17, 4, 469–503.

Spillane, J.P./Halverson, R./Diamond J.B. (2001): Investigating School Leadership Practice: A Distributed Perspective, in: Educational Researcher, 30, 3, 23–28.

Spillane, J.P./Halverson, R./Diamond, J.B. (2004): Towards a Theory of Leadership Practise: a Distributed Perspective, in: Journal of Curriculum Studies, 36, 1, 3–34.

Spillane, J.P. (2005): Distributed Leadership, in: The Educational Forum, 69, 2, 143–150.

Spillane, J.P. (2006): Distributed leadership. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Spillane, J.P./Harris, A./Jones, M./Mertz, K. (2015): Opportunities and Challenges for taking a Distributed Perspective: Novice School Principals' Emerging Sense of their New Position, in: British Educational Research Journal, 41, 6, 1068–1085.

Urbanovič, J./Navickaitė, J. (2016): Lyderystė autonomiškoje mokykloje. Monografija. Vilnius: MRU.

The National Lithuanian Education Strategy 2013–2022. (2014). Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania.

Valuckienė, J./Balčiūnas, S./Katiliūtė, E./Simonaitienė, B./Stanikūnienė, B. (2015): Lyderystė mokymuisi: teorija ir praktika mokyklos kaitai. Šiauliai: Titnagas.

Appendix A. The sample of interview questions

The sample of interview questions	
Socio-demographic questions	How long have you worked / managed at this organization? *Or* How long have you worked / managed two organizations?
Organizational structure	How do you assess the current organizational structure? What would you like to change in it? Why? How would you make the changes?
Vision	What is your opinion on the overall agreement with the community on the vision of the organization? How did the agreement work? Why did you organize it that way?
Values and beliefs	What is your view on the agreement with the community on values? How did the agreement work? Why did you organize it that way?
Collaboration and cooperation	How do you communicate and collaborate in the organization? How do you learn from each other? Why do you communicate in that way?
Decision making	How do you make decisions? What is your opinion on the involvement of community members in decision-making? Why is it important to you to involve other members of the community in decision-making? Which community members do you think should be involved in decision-making? What issues do you form for working groups and teams to solve, what activities do you implement? How do you make them?
Responsibility and accountability	What is your opinion about taking responsibility for employees? Why is this (not) important to you?
Initiatives	What is your opinion on the employees' initiative? Why is this (not) important to you?
Search for the aim of implementing distributed leadership.	What other changes do you plan to implement and why? How and when do you plan to implement them? What kind of organizations do you want in a year or a few?
Completing the interviews	What else would you like to say? What is important when a principal starts managing an organization?