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## Title:

### THE FIRST YEARS OF HEADSHIP IN ANDALUCIA (SPAIN)

**Abstract**-This article presents findings from a study of principals' first years in schools. Andalucía is presently involved in the development of comprehensive curriculum, school organization and in-service teacher training reform initiatives that addressed three raising compulsory age schooling upto sixteen, equity and excellence for teachers and students. In Andalucía, like in other Spanish autonomous communities, it is the administration's belief that by establishing a strong link between professional development and accountability, the educational quality will be enriched and true educational reform will be achieved. By offering a variety of teacher development programs (curriculum development, adult education, vocational education, headteacher training, etc.), Andalucía has put in place a model for all beginning principals. We have began to investigate principalship quality and competence in two studies: first of all, to capture those skills principals need to become effective leaders (De Vicente *et al.*, 1995) and secondly, to develop performance indicators to better assess in-service training courses (Villar, 1994). A total of 87 subjects were involved in the investigation: 44 primary school principals and 43 secondary school principals. The male principals represented 75,9% and female principals 24 %. Almost 50% of these principals were in the vital cycle of 35-44 years of age. These principals had an average of 13.8 years teaching experience. Data were gathered in this study using a Spanish version of the international questionnaire *The First Years of Headship*, composed of eight sections: (1) school, (2) principalship, (3) school internal issues, (4) school external problems, (5) school personnel problems, (6) changes since appointment, (7) professional isolation, and (8) support to new principals. Data analyses combined qualitative procedures (it involved creating 306 coding categories of various types. This coding scheme involved several passes through each open written answer seeking to identify the recurring regularities of phenomena) and quantitative procedures (descriptive statistics using SPSS) for each section. The discussion of qualitative findings were organized around the above sections: (1) *school*. Schools are considered 'passing' centers where teachers stay in a provisional administrative basis until they get the tenure [item 1.8, 175-177]; (2) *principalship*. Many headteachers want to become teachers when they abandon the post: "To come back to the teaching job" [item 2.16, 67-68]; (3) *school internal issues*. Principals are really borried about administrative, bureaucratic and organization issues: "Management of teacher substitutes and personnel permissions" [item 3.23, 308-310]; (4) *school external problems*. Most important are institutional and family relations: "Some times, it is difficult the relationship with parents. Parents assess school quality according with the number of failing students per academic year course" [item 4.15, 103-109]. It is also problematic the amount of educational resources, because it takes a lot of time and bureaucratic struggles to achieve anything: "At present, we do not have any information from the regional administration concerning the school reform in this district"; (5) *school personnel problems*. "Teachers' disillusionment and lack of motivation are provoked by bureaucratic rigidities. Such unflexible assigments are against in-service training and job planning" [item 5.22, 12-19]; (6) *changes since appointment*. "Teachers are generally speaking apathetic" [item 6.5, 124-125]; (7) *professional isolation*. Comments are of the following type: "Scarce support from administration" [item 7.2, 19-20] or "Inspection is more with parents than teachers" [item 7.2, 39-41] and "Teachers are against educational change (time schedule, curriculum development, teaching methods, etc.)" [item 7.2, 60-63], and (8) *support to new principals*. Principals referred to in-service courses taken in the past as follows: "The course was totally theoretical; it had nothing to do with the practical reality" [item 8.1, 62-64]. For purposes of this analysis, Univariate *F* tests were used to describe the significance of the main effects of the eight Andalucía school province principals for some dependent variables. The ANOVA applied to the province principals revealed a significant effect for style of headship (attention to contacts and external relations of the school) [*F* (7,79)= 2.2409, *p*<.05], headship orientation (attention to students) [*F* (7,78)= 2.1790, *p* <.05] and changes in curriculum areas (teaching evaluation of curriculum content and applied methodology) [*F* (7,70)= 2.6053, *p*<.05]. Several *t* tests comparing perceptions of the two gender groups in helpful information provided by senior members and management team [*t*(85)= 4.435, *p* <.05], attention given to students [*t*(85)= 10.723, *p* <.01], school aims [*t*(85)= 15.982, *p* <.01], curriculum and instruction [*t*(85)= 35.175, *p* <.01], general school issues [*t*(85)= 14.677, *p* <.01], support from experienced colleagues since appointment [*t*(85)= 5.68, *p* <.05], and support from University and College of Education since appointment [*t*(85)= 7.433, *p* <.01] were significant. Those preparing future school principals in Andalucía should be cognizant of several implications of this study for their future work: (a) there is a need for explicit attention to internal and external issues in each Andalucía province and (b) prospective principals need practice problematizing or how to deal with problematic school aspects.