

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP, TEACHERS' MOTIVATION AND PATHWAYS TO THE PROFESSION IN DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS

*Arianna Lodovica Morini, Barbara Ambu, Maria Grazia Giovanna Chillemi
Roma Tre University (ITALY)*

Abstract

This contribution analyses the relationship between educational leadership, teachers' motivation and pathways to the profession, with a particular focus on the dynamics that characterise the interaction between principals and newly hired teachers in the context of democratic schools. In an increasingly complex educational ecosystem, the relationship between principals and newly hired teachers is a determining factor in the functioning of the school organisation and the quality of learning (Moretti & Alessandrini, 2015; Rosa, 2017).

International literature has highlighted how distributed and situated leadership is a key element in building collaborative professional environments that can support entry into the profession and promote multi-level improvement processes (Spillane, 2006; Harris, 2014). Research conducted at national level shows that entry into the profession requires a training ecosystem capable of integrating organisational and relational dimensions. It also emphasises that the essential conditions for organisational well-being and teachers' motivation require participatory decision-making processes and the development of professional communities (Barzanò, 2008; Guerra, 2018; Moretti, 2022; Moretti & Fiorucci, 2022). Within this framework, the principal plays a strategic role in supporting newly hired teachers through guidance, mentoring and providing formative feedback (Hobson et al., 2009). From this perspective, effectiveness is measured through a multi-actor and multi-level approach, emphasising the strategic role of the university in qualifying the professional practices of tutors for newly hired teachers and in strengthening the link between academic institutions, regional education offices and local schools (Crozier & Friedberg, 1978; Scheerens, 2018).

The contribution focuses on the complexity of the school system, exploring the relational dynamics among the actors involved and the implications they have on the quality of the education system. The study of professional identity and teachers' reflections on educational practices provides an in-depth understanding of how educational and organisational structures influence daily teaching, contributing to a clearer understanding of teachers' professional development processes.

The unit of analysis considered includes tutor teachers and newly hired teachers assigned to them in the provinces of Frosinone-Latina-Rome-Rieti-Viterbo who enrolled in the tutor teacher training course organised by the Department of Education Sciences of Roma Tre University in the year 2025/2026 in collaboration with the Lazio Regional Education Office of the Ministry of Education and Merit.

Two semi-structured questionnaires were used to collect data, with the aim of gathering and analysing the different perspectives of the teachers belonging to the two groups considered. The questions concerned educational leadership, motivation and access to the profession, including elements relating to the educational environment and the relationship with the principal within the scope of the training programme for tutors of newly hired teachers.

The analysis highlights the importance of considering the transition of newly hired teachers as a complex and multidimensional process, in which educational leadership, motivation and pathways to the profession play a positive role in building an inclusive,

innovative and sustainable learning environment. The main findings of the research make it possible to reflect on the strategic role of principals and tutor teachers in enhancing the quality of the training experience from a systemic and multi-level perspective.

Keywords: educational leadership, newly hired teachers, principal, teacher motivation, tutor teachers.

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