Leading for School Inclusion and Prevention? How School Leadership Teams Support Shy Students and Their Teachers

Stine Solberg , Anne Edwards & Geir Nyborg

Published online: 27 Jul 2020.

Submit your article to this journal ⬈

Article views: 93

View related articles ⬈

View Crossmark data ⬈

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Leading for School Inclusion and Prevention? How School Leadership Teams Support Shy Students and Their Teachers

Stine Solberg [a], Anne Edwards [b] and Geir Nyborg [a]

aDepartment of Special Needs Education, Faculty of Education, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway; bDepartment of Education, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

ABSTRACT

School shyness may have immediate and long-term detrimental effects. Drawing on cultural-historical understandings of motivated actions and conceptual and material tools, the study examined how ten school leaders in three Norwegian elementary schools interpreted and responded to the demands on the school in their work with shy children. Data comprised individual interviews and concluding school-based group conversations with leaders. The schools were recognized as enabling teachers' responsive work with shy children in classrooms and presented a useful tension between central direction by school leaders and the professional discretion that enabled teachers' responsive pedagogies. The leadership teams' focus was school inclusion through adaptive pedagogies. This strong focus on inclusion emphasized classroom-based Tier 1 universal interventions. There were Tier 2 targeted interventions with shy children undertaken by social teachers, but they could seem ad-hoc by depending on teachers' capacity to identify the need for them. The implications for school leadership are discussed.

Introduction

Shyness is not categorized as a special educational need, demanding interventions from school psychology services. Yet, for some students it can inhibit learning and require tailored responses from schools (Mjelve et al., 2019; Nyborg et al., 2020). In the study reported here we draw on cultural-historical framings of motivated actions and use of conceptual, human and material tools (Engeström, 2007; Hedegaard, 2012) when examining the resources school leadership teams in three Norwegian elementary schools employed to facilitate teachers' work with students perceived as shy (henceforth referred to as "shy students").

School leadership teams are important providers of support for teachers working with vulnerable children (Prather-Jones, 2011), as well as key to creating supporting school conditions for teachers and students (Leithwood et al., 2019). Recent Scandinavian research into classroom practices has indicated that teachers have specifically tailored strategies to support shy students within classroom settings, and during break (Mjelve et al., 2019; Nyborg et al., 2020). However, the broader school conditions from school leadership teams' perspectives for the kinds of responsive teaching advocated by these studies have yet to be understood.

We aimed to address this gap in research by identifying how members of school leadership teams interpreted the needs of shy children and ensured that shy children are included, not only in the flow

CONTACT Stine Solberg ✉ stine.solberg@isp.uio.no 🖂 Department of Special Needs Education, Faculty of Education, University of Oslo, Postbox 1161 Blindern, 0318 Oslo, Norway

of classroom life, but within the wider school environment in ways that enable them to engage with the demands of schooling. The intention of this study is therefore to increase understandings of how school systems not only promote the inclusion of shy children alongside other students, but also address the possibility of children needing intensified help through targeted interventions aimed at preventing the escalation of difficulties.

Although there is no agreed definition of shyness as a potential behavioral and emotional problem (Lund, 2016), it is commonly defined by psychologists as "wariness in the face of social novelty and/ or self-conscious behavior in situations of perceived social evaluation" (Coplan & Rubin, 2010, p. 9). The behaviors displayed can be quiet, withdrawn, anxious and inhibited (Mjelve et al., 2019). Although these behaviors are not necessarily problematic in themselves, Nilsen (2018) found that teachers experienced withdrawn and shy children to be struggling both socially and academically, an argument substantiated in international research (Hughes & Coplan, 2010; Hymel et al., 1990). The threshold for when shyness is problematic and when it is not, and for whom, have to be seen in interaction between the subjective experiences of the individual, and the demands of the context (Lund, 2016). Importantly, childhood shyness may also lead to later difficulties, especially lower self-esteem, anxiety, loneliness, and fewer positive coping strategies (Findlay et al., 2009). However, teachers can find it challenging to adequately meet the needs of these students, both because they are more easily ignored, and because they might make themselves invisible (Nilsen, 2018).

It is recognized that schools have important roles in relation to students' mental health and identification of internalizing problems, e.g., depression, anxiety and withdrawal (Weist et al., 2018). Accordingly several shyness studies suggest that research should consider environmental protective factors for shy students (Buhs et al., 2015; Gazelle, 2006) in order to ensure the adapted education for school inclusion required by Norwegian legislation. However, we argue that simply promoting an inclusive school environment is sometimes not enough and schools should consider targeted early intervention preventative strategies for those students whose shyness may impede their development as learners.

From Adaptive Education to Preventative Efforts for Shy Students?

The idea of adapted education is embedded in the Norwegian Educational Act (1998) § 1.3, where inclusion is promoted and all children have the right to education that is adapted to their abilities. Our concern with attention to the longer-term developmental implications of shyness for some children has meant that study was informed by the ideas of early intervention (taking action at early signs of difficulty), protective factors (offering ways of strengthening a child's capacity to engage) and prevention (taking early action with a view to preventing later difficulties) in order to augment existing attention to promoting inclusion. In doing so we recognize the importance of promoting the well-being and inclusion of all students, but intend to indicate the benefits of thinking in terms of prevention when difficulties in the here and now may develop into more serious problems over time.

Previous longitudinal studies suggest that shy children can be at risk of negative development (Asendorpf et al., 2008). They are likely to report low levels of interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies as young adults (Grose & Coplan, 2015). Childhood shyness has also been linked to adolescent social anxiety disorder, and problems in adulthood, including delayed marriage, parenthood and career stability (Asendorpf, 2010). In school, shy students are at risk of socio-emotional difficulties, negative peer-perceptions, peer relational difficulties and academic problems (Hymel et al., 1990; Rubin et al., 2009). Additionally, they can be underestimated in terms of intelligence and academic competencies (Hughes & Coplan, 2010), leaving them at risk of diminished expectations. However, because identification is key to early prevention, students with internalizing problems (e.g., anxiety and social withdrawal) can be hard to identify, thus are unlikely to receive targeted interventions (Gresham & Kern, 2004; Weist et al., 2018).

Recent research suggests that schools can provide a potential protective culture for shy students. The longitudinal study undertaken by Buhs et al. (2015) indicated that teacher sensitivity is positively

related to student engagement, and a moderating factor between shyness, peer rejection and engagement. Previous research has also indicated other protective factors, such as improved skills in academic engagement (Hughes & Coplan, 2010), and strategies to deal with stressors (Findlay et al., 2009). Together, this research suggests that there are protective factors that can be implemented in schools, which may decrease potential negative outcomes of shyness.

While schools may not regard themselves as preventative agencies, they have a strong preventative function; but the levels of support they can offer are under-differentiated. If we apply the Hardiker model of prevention commonly used in social work (Hardiker et al., 1991) to schools, we see that engagement in classroom life is a Tier 1 universal service which benefits all students. At Tier 2 we might expect to to find targeted additional support in schools to prevent further difficulties for vulnerable students. Tiers 3 and 4 are the domain of services that tackle problems that have not been prevented and are usually specialist statutory services. Positive Bevahioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) applies a similar three-tiered logic (universal, targeted and intensive) to education, reflecting the need for gradual increase in intensity, feedback and monitoring across tiers (OSEP Technical Assistance Center, 2017). For shy children, the inclusive strategies associated with adaptive education within classrooms may be sufficient to hinder negative consequences. However, it is important to identify children before they meet the threshold for Tier 3 interventions through, for example school refusal behavior, clinical anxiety or severe academic difficulties. For example, O'Connor et al. (2014) found that enhancing teachers' awareness of and responsiveness to children's temperaments is an important preventive intervention for shy children. We suggest therefore that teachers need to identify shy students who require Tier 2 interventions and schools should find ways of providing them. However, there is little research into the systems needed to achieve and maintain Tier 2 supports (Newcomer et al., 2013), as well as a clear lack of written procedures for these interventions (Debnam et al., 2012). Considering our intention to address how school systems both promote inclusive environments for shy students *and* prevent possible negative consequences of escalating in a longer-term perspective, this is important background information, as shy students might require more intensive efforts (Mjelve et al., 2019; Nyborg et al., 2020) than those provided within Tier 1.

Leading for Inclusion

Whole-school approaches to special needs, whether academic, social or emotional, have long been valued (Ramasut & Reynolds, 1993); while work on leadership for inclusion shows that school leaders are crucial for developing systems and practices that include all children, including increasing school staffs' capacity to "imagine what might be achieved, and increasing their sense of accountability for bringing this about" (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010, p. 412).

Our premise is that, while school leadership teams aim to create school-wide systems for promoting inclusion and prevention, it is class teachers who adapt pedagogies to include shy children (Mjelve et al., 2019), and are crucial in identifying the need for Tier 2 interventions. They therefore need the necessary professional discretion for such decisions. Here we draw on Orton and Weick (Orton & Weick, 1990), who argue that there should be a dialectic relationship between central direction from leadership and the professional discretion of practitioners in educational organizations such as schools. Schools need to allow a high degree of professional discretion and are best seen as "loosely coupled" to the extent that there is a tension between central direction from leaders and professional discretion when working with children. Such tension becomes fruitful through the role of leadership in clarifying and engaging with shared values that underpin actions in the system. Too much or too little central direction is not conducive to well-focused professional discretion (Edwards et al., 2017).

This interpretation of school leadership echoes Spillane (2006) on distributed leadership, with the notion of distribution of responsibility and multiple leaders in both formal and informal positions. Such leadership reflects the roles commonly found in Norwegian elementary schools; where

responsibilities for supporting students as learners are shared across leadership teams which include the principal, assistant principals, deans, and other personnel, such as social teachers, in quite complex patterns of distribution. In this system the classroom teacher crucially identifies student difficulties (Gresham & Kern, 2004), passing information about problems to members of leadership teams.

Our aim is to reveal what is involved in leadership for inclusion and the prevention of longer-term problems when the focus is shy children, a group of students who sit below the threshold for statutory interventions, yet may present problems in the here and now and in the future. To do so we have elicited accounts from school leadership teams of what actions they have taken, with what resources and why.

Cultural-Historical Concepts – School Leaders in Action

Following Montecinos et al. (2017) we examined school leaders' motivated actions, in activities, within institutional practices: an approach that is fundamental to cultural-historical research (Hedegaard, 2012).

The concept of motive in cultural-historical theory is indebted to Leont'ev who introduced the term object-motive (Leont'ev, 1978). By that he meant that we interpret the object of our activity, what we are working on, such as the learning trajectory of a shy child, by employing the motives and values that matter most to us and the practices we inhabit. Three different school principals may, therefore, interpret a child's learning trajectory in different ways: Principal A may regard shyness as unimportant and something the child will grow out of; while Principal B will recognize that shyness can impede the child's engagement in classroom activities in ways that are detrimental to the child's progress as a learner. Principal C might not see the shy child as the core concern, but rather the teacher's insecurities related to their work, as the main issue. Engeström has worked with Leont'ev's ideas to examine how organizations as activity systems respond to different interpretations of their potential objects of activity (Engeström, 2015). However, our concern here is not how organizations change, but what happens within organizations at the level of institutional practices and the role of leadership teams in shaping and working within those practices. To that end we turn to Hedegaard and her focus on institutional practices. Our definition of practices is in line with Hedegaard and strongly cultural-historical, seeing them as "knowledge-laden, imbued with cultural values and emotionally freighted by those who act in them" (Edwards, 2010, p. 5).

Hedegaard has developed Leont'ev's ideas in two ways (Hedegaard, 2012). First, she has emphasized the role of institutional practices in mediating societal purposes. This enables us to distinguish analytically between the purposes of the practices in different schools and identify the dialectical relationship between institutional practices and the actions that people take in the activities that comprise the practice. Second, she has worked with the idea of object motive and people's responses by encouraging a focus on what people interpret as the demands in an activity. Principal A would not recognize the demands presented by working to support a shy child; while Principal B would recognize them and would take actions to enable teachers to support the child. Principal C would recognize the stress presented by the teacher working with the shy student. These developments of Leont'ev's work have been employed in the present study. Understanding how school leadership teams see the needs of shy students and the potential demands on the school gives us access to their primary objects of activity: for example the shy child's trajectory as a learner or teacher retention. Once we understand what motivates leaders in the situation involving the shy child, we can examine what they do and why they do it.

Another relevant aspect of cultural-historical theory is attention to the tools for working on an object of activity, such as the learning trajectory of a shy child. How these tools are employed and for what purposes give insights into how the problem is being interpreted and what responses are available within an institutional practice. From a leadership team's perspective tools may include other teachers, strategies and ideas from research. Here we turn to Engeström, who in 2007 offered an elaborated notion of tool use, enabling us to distinguish between, for example, the

tools and the different purposes to which they were put to use. In terms of our attempts at understanding whether or not schools engage with the preventative features of their interventions with vulnerable shy children we were alert to what Engeström termed the "where to" features of tool use (Engeström, 2007, p. 35), which indicates a concern or goal in the use of a tool that extends beyond the here and now.

Research Questions

Although previous studies have identified school-based protective factors for shy children (Buhs et al., 2015; Findlay et al., 2009; Gazelle, 2006; Mjelve et al., 2019), there is a need to shift the focus onto what school leaders do to enable the building of these protective factors and why they do it. In order to address this gap, we pursued the following overarching research aim: to identify the resources school leadership teams draw upon to support teachers working with students who are perceived as shy.

This aim produced the following research questions:

(1) How do school leadership teams interpret the demands on the school arising from student shyness: what are their object motives when addressing student shyness?
(2) How do they respond to these interpretations: with what tools and why?

The Study

The present study is part of a national examination of how shy children are supported at school. The aim was to identify the pedagogic strategies teachers use with shy students. A mixed method sequential design was employed in which the strategies were identified through focus group and post observation recall interviews with experienced teachers. A questionnaire was designed to examine if these strategies were utilized across a representative sample of 329 Norwegian teachers. The study reported here is a cross-case analysis comprising three elementary schools where there was evidence of success with shy children.

In order to select the schools, teachers from the national study and known for their positive experience with shy children were asked about their school leadership's engagement with the demands presented by shy students. A criteria-based purposive sampling strategy (Patton, 2002) was then employed. The criteria were: (1) the principal had some experience with shy students; (2) the principal had been in post for at least a year; and (3) other leaders interviewed should be a member or affiliated with the school leadership team (principal, dean, social teacher). Although social teachers are not formal members of school leadership teams, a distributed perspective (Spillane, 2006) offers a broad notion of leadership that "acknowledges the work of all individuals who contribute to leadership practice, whether or not they are formally designated or defined as leaders" (Harris, 2008, p. 13). Social teachers were included in the sample for two reasons (1) They were described as an extension of the leadership team, thus an important connection between leaders and teachers, and (2) They have a key role in schools' targeted interventions and promotion of safe environments.

The Schools

We first present contextual information on the three schools. Unsurprisingly, given that the schools enabled teachers to work successfully and responsively with shy children, drawing on the literature the authors found that the schools all evidenced a sound tension between direction and discretion and paid attention to shared values.

Eastwood

Eastwood is a city elementary school in eastern Norway. The principal was in post for four years. Many students did not have Norwegian as their first language. The team responsible for follow-up of students at risk for academic or psychosocial difficulties, including shy students, was led by the social teacher. It included the principal, the dean, and the special needs teachers. Pedagogical Psychological Services (PPS) attended every second week. Teachers had considerable professional discretion in choosing pedagogical methods within the classroom; but were also in regular contact with their closest leaders. The aim of the principal was to create a shared understanding of being a professional teacher, including a shared view of students as having a difficult time, rather than being difficult. The school, therefore, evidenced a strong dialectic between professional discretion for teachers and central direction from leaders, guided by a shared view of school priorities.

Highfield

The school is a 1–10th grade rural school in east Norway. The principal was in post for one year. The student body was socially heterogeneous, and the intake varied in size year on year. The principal explained that teachers had previously had considerable autonomy and that it is expected that she will have tighter control. The team responsible for the follow-up of students with potential need for special educational provision or psychosocial issues was led by the social teacher. She also had the overview of all the children within the lower grades. The school was self-critical about their systematic work in identifying and helping shy students, perhaps reflecting the self-analyses required of a school in transition under a new principal who is making changes. In Orton and Weick's terms, this school was relatively loosely coupled, with the principal on track to a fruitful tension between teachers' discretion and central direction.

Westwood

This city elementary school is also in east Norway. The principal was in post for five years. The catchment was described as homogenous, with highly educated comfortably off families. Recently the catchment shifted slightly due to the intake of refugees. The team responsible for special needs provision and individual follow-up was led by the social teacher, who unfortunately was absent during the study. The school psychologist, the school nurse and environmental therapist also attended the psychosocial team meetings. The school leaders had an explicit focus on social skills during instruction; though how social skills instruction was conducted, was up to the teacher. The school's approach was a dialectic between teacher discretion and central direction.

Both Eastwood and Westwood presented a productive tension between central direction and teacher discretion, while Highfield was making the transition towards such a state. Hence, there were no major differences between the three schools in terms of the Orton and Weick modalities. Consequently, the responses to the research questions discussed without comparing the schools. Table 1 shows schools and the participants.

Methodology

After gaining ethical approval from Norwegian Centre for Research Data, the first author met school leaders, gathered documents on each school's psycho-social work, and identified how leadership was distributed in relation to shy children. Examples of documents were rules related to classrooms and recess, the annual strategic plan and action-plans for the school's psychosocial development work. While recruiting, the informants received a definition of shyness as "children who have problems in social situations due to anxiety and withdrawal, where the difficulties have consequences for the child's social and academic performance". This description was provided to give the informants

Table 1. Schools and participants.

	Eastwood	Highfield	Westwood
Approximate number of students	300–400	200–300	600–700
Grade levels	1–7	1–10	1–7
City or rural	City	Rural	City
Leadership team composition	Principal	Principal	Principal
	Assistant principal[a]	Dean 1	Dean 1
	Dean[b]	Dean 2	Dean 2
	Social teacher[c]	Social teacher	Social teacher[a]
		Assistant principal[a]	Assistant principal[a]

[a]Did not participate in the study.
[b]A dean often has responsibility for the school's instruction and daily administrative tasks. Examples of tasks are follow up of teachers and staff, scheduling, organization of student groups and pedagogical development.
[c]Social teachers' primary task is helping students with social and academic issues pertaining to learning and development. They often function as an extension to the leadership team, a middle leader, and a link between the senior leaders and teachers, having responsibilities for individual student follow-up and work with parents. They co-operate with leadership, teachers, nurses and external agencies. Similar to SENCO's in England.

an idea of the target group for the study. At the same time, we were at pains to understand the leaders' perception of internalized behavior/shyness and its implications because our theoretical stance recognizes that student shyness can produce different object motives.

In-depth, semi-structured individual interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), tailored to each school, were then undertaken with the school leadership teams. The interview questions were informed by our cultural-historical stance, probing their actions taken in activities within the practices of the school. We were interested in what mattered to the school leaders (their object motives); how they interpreted the concept of shyness in relation to what mattered to them as school leaders; how they worked on that interpretation; the resources they used, conceptual, material and human, and why they did what they did. The first author recorded and transcribed the interviews, which yielded 14 hr of conversation.

Data collection in each school concluded with a group conversation with all the informants, using extracts from the individual interviews as mirrors on which the group could jointly reflect. They were recorded and transcribed by the first author and yielded 3.25 hr of recordings. These meetings were important for informant validation, while producing additional data. The analyses presented here are based in transcribed audio-recordings with 10 school leaders from three schools undertaken between May 2017 and February 2018 and the group conversations.

The first author read the transcripts and school documents to build broad pictures of the schools and the work of the school leaders in relation to Orton and Weick's (1990) notion of direction and discretion. The two research questions then led to the selection of meaningful extracts from the transcripts. These extracts were selected through a back-and-forth process between the meanings of statements within extracts and their relationship with transcripts from the same school. This process involved undertaking a common sense descriptive analysis of the selected units to justify their selection (Hedegaard & Fleer, 2008). The next stage was to apply the theoretical resources to reveal what

Table 2. Analysis.

Meaningful statement	RQ-relation	Common sense	Theoretical
Principal: "We have done a turnaround in the culture here. We started writing on these post it notes. Writing down the good things and the bad. Then we made a document (…). Because I wandered the hallways and it was sadly too much negativity both about students and about parents".	With what tools	Creating a shared school document together with the teacher staff.	Creating and communicating a shared school vision as a tool for building an inclusive school.

school leaders do, why and how in terms of tools and resources (see Table 2). The first author translated the selected extracts into English. Her analyses were then checked by the third author.

The inclusion of multiple voices within the same school on the same phenomenon enhanced this study's validity. To that end the concluding group conversations in each school, which were based on the individual interviews, allowed member checking as well as providing additional data to clarify the points being made.

Limitations

We acknowledge that there are limitations to this study. Firstly there were a limited number of informants, and we recognize it would be of interest to develop research that would yield a more representative view on how school leadership teams work towards facilitating teachers' work with shy students and others whose difficulties don't reach the threshold for Tier 3 interventions. Additionally, observations of school leadership teams at work could have added validity as interviews could have explored actual events.

Findings

We now present the findings from the three schools by focusing on school leadership teams' interpretations of shyness and therefore their object motives, together with how and why they used available resources to address their interpretations.

The Over-Riding Importance of Creating Inclusive Classrooms

The school leaders acknowledged shyness as potentially challenging for students and teachers. Common student descriptions were: "quiet", "timid", "calm". These behaviors were not necessarily concerning, but because inclusive classroom environments encouraged students in being visibly active, these behaviors could be problematic (Mjelve et al., 2019). Shy students did not raise hands, disliked reading aloud, were generally less verbal, and were "closing the door on learning". The object of activity for school leaders was characterized by a focus on the here and now of schooling with the over-riding motive being achieving inclusive classrooms where all students are visibly engaged.

Leaders did nuance different degrees of shyness and the implications for engagement. The Eastwood social teacher described shy behavior as a continuum, where some students are situationally shy, struggling with responding during instruction; whereas the extremely shy struggled simply with being in the classroom. Shyness was described in relational turns by leadership teams. These descriptions included "the children who drown", the "children we do not see", "who are invisible" and "out of sight, out of mind", and called on teachers' relational competencies. The Westwood dean explained: "And if they [students] are very quiet then a safety that is necessary (…) is [for them] to get to know their teacher, which is really important".

Paramount for leadership teams were, therefore, the implications of shy students for teachers. Teachers were described as "first-responders", particularly when shyness was not "obvious"; and teachers' professional discretion was key.

> It is about teachers' autonomy but also teachers' professionalism with regards to dealing with it. They are on the frontline, and then they contact us if they experience challenges. It is then we get involved. (Highfield Principal)

Echoing the idea of adaptive education which underpins Norwegian expectations for inclusive schools, the Westwood principal spoke of the need for "a different teacher attention". This was echoed by the Westwood dean who suggested that "it is the teacher's task to satisfy that student's needs in another way". Their object of activity in this area was teachers' capacity to address the inclusion needs of vulnerable shy children. In brief, the teachers were key resources for Tier 1

inclusive classroom practices and they needed to be able to adapt their teaching to engage shy children along with the other students, and have the discretion to do so.

Seeing class teachers as the key resources focused attention on enhancing their capacity to include children in classroom life. They first needed to identify detrimental shyness and, then have strategies to give support. The Highfield principal explained:

> And then there are those [students] who I believe will be catered for and identified by their teachers; but not all will (…) I also believe it is about the ability to see. Then again, you also have to know what to look for.

As teachers were the primary resource for ensuring inclusion, we might have expected to find tools that would have helped develop the capacities of teachers in this regard. However there were no material resources in the form of written guidelines, which could be used to help teachers to recognize and respond to shy children. Not only were shy children potentially invisible in classrooms, they were not evident as a concern within the policies that were central to schools' systemic responses. School leaders also rarely mentioned potential longer-term disadvantages for childhood shyness: prevention was connected to being included in current school activities. The "where to" aspects of actions to assist shy students specifically were relatively short-term, ensuring their inclusion in school practices.

Direction and Discretion in School Practices

This presentation of findings is not to downplay the importance of responsive teaching aimed at supporting the participation of shy children in the flow of classroom life. The three leadership teams were all adept at ensuring that teachers had the discretion to adapt to the needs of shy children. Here a key leadership tool was to build and communicate trust and confidence in teachers to encourage professional discretion in adapting their pedagogies:

> (…) I emphasize that I have full confidence in the work that they do and that I know that they make the decisions they take with their students' best interests in mind. (Highfield Principal).

Teacher autonomy was not without boundaries. All three schools had documents and meetings to communicate the schools' visions or organizational narratives, making explicit to teachers what mattered to the leadership teams. At Westwood this shared focus involved a program for social skills; while the Eastwood principal discussed a school-wide effort to build shared view of being a professional by including everyone in creating a document in which captured these descriptions. These were crucial tools carrying school values and purposes and reflected the object motives of the leadership teams.

Communicating and monitoring the vision involved being accessible and visible to the staff, having an "open-door", working alongside teachers, and being outside during recess were regarded as flexible strategies for supporting teachers and reiterating aspects of the visions for inclusive schools.

Leadership teams, therefore, had a strong focus on the longer-term mission of schooling as a societal good. The leadership teams' emphasis on adaptive education to meet the needs of individual children was regularly highlighted when explaining what mattered to them, as the dean from Eastwood does here:

> I think that I am very humbled by the task given to me or the role I am allowed to have. To join in on adapting in the best way possible for every child so they get to develop their competencies (…) Because I am very concerned with the societal perspective. I think far ahead, not just the child in elementary school. They should be beneficial citizens of society (…).

The purposes of adaptive pedagogies for school inclusion were clear and could be related by participants to longer-term notions of social inclusion and society and these concerns were addressed through Tier 1 attention to responsive teaching for all. School documentation and interviews, however, revealed that the possible longer-term outcomes of school shyness for some were largely

unrecognized, with the consequence that preventive measures targeted at shy children did not have these potential outcomes as a focus.

The Distributed Responsibility of Social Teachers for Tier 2 Actions

Despite the over-riding and understandable focus on responsive and adaptive classroom pedagogies, there were systems in place for providing additional support for students. The Eastwood principal outlined the complex layers of distribution of responsibility that were reflected across the three schools.

> (…) in the first instance it is the contact teacher that has the responsibility of course, and who has to approach that child. And if there is a need for us coming in or the social teacher comes in or the nurse or PPS, then … [the teacher] notifies us (…) It depends on the need (…) We are very concerned about the individual receiving what they need.

Here we see how the leadership teams' object motives could change with the interpretations of the needs of shy students. For example, school refusal or severe anxiety as an aspect of shyness was regarded a particularly serious manifestation, requiring Tier 3 interventions involving PPS. Additionally, if adaptations within classrooms were insufficient for including a child in everyday activities social teachers could implement Tier 2 targeted interventions aimed at ensuring that the child could engage with here-and-now demands of the wider school. Their responses were tailored to specific problems, such as an unwillingness to enter school at the start of the day.

Social teachers were a crucial resource for supporting shy students and their teachers. They were described as "the one who holds the strings" and with "the overview". They took forward the leaderships' aims of implementing measures at the lowest level possible; while connecting the teams to the teachers and their concerns. They largely offered Tier 2 responses. Examples included a check-in-check-out system for an anxious student organized and enacted by the social teacher; a girls-group set up by the social teacher and school nurse to develop social skills for shy girls; and arranging walking a student between classes to reduce anxiety. All of these exemplify how the hands-on work of the social teachers with students could result in interventions outside the inclusive classrooms the teachers were charged to create and the interviews indicated that the aim of the interventions was school inclusion in the here and now. The preventative aspects of these strategies as tools relevant to long-term well-being did not feature in most discussions. Nonetheless, the work appeared to fill the gap between inclusive pedagogies (Tier 1) and the need for statutory interventions (Tier 3).

The identification of these specific needs could seem ad-hoc as school systems and the documentation supporting them did not identify shyness as a potential problem. The Highfield dean was explicit about the weak system for identification and the reliance on teacher expertise.

> When I start talking about it. About the fact that this might be a bit too teacher dependent rather than system dependent (…).

The potential for capturing the needs of some shy children was there. Schools had systematic student tracking procedures, which could be used as tools for identifying Tier 2 needs of some shy children. The meetings where tracking was discussed allowed leaders to draw on comprehensive data on academic achievement and potential socio-emotional issues.

> Westwood dean: "In the analysis meeting we go through everyone and see which students need more follow-up. (…) It is their [the teachers] responsibility to follow-up a lot of these things; but they are also letting me know, and then we do it systematically (…)".

These tracking procedures could bring shy children to the attention of the system and provoke responses. Intervention could be classroom-based as an enhanced Tier 1 response to support a teacher: at Westwood a teacher was allocated additional help from the social teacher with a student who "just sits there". Or it could lead to a Tier 2 response like the following which involved a student who

was noticed to be isolated at recess. A plan was made with parents, student, teacher and dean, detailing who did what, and when to enable social interaction.

In summary, the object motive of school inclusion was clear and carried through by the leadership teams, largely relying on Tier 1 adaptations in classrooms to meet the needs of all students. Interventions to target the additional challenges for inclusion presented by some shy children were mentioned in the interviews, but were not reflected in school documentation, instead relied on the capacity of teachers to identify the child's difficulties and their importance. Given the potential for longer-term detrimental effects of shyness for some children, this finding raises concerns.

Discussion

These analyses were shaped by the two research questions: (i) How do school leadership teams interpret the demands on the school arising from student shyness: what are their object motives when addressing student shyness? and (ii) How do they respond to these interpretations: with what tools and why? In addressing these questions the analyses were underpinned by cultural-historical concerns with object of activity, object motive, the demands arising from an object-motive and tool use, in particular the use of tools with a "where to" intention (Engeström, 2007). The aim of the analysis was to address a gap in the literature by focusing on the perspectives of leadership teams in relation to shy children.

In brief, the super-ordinate object of activity for the leadership teams was an inclusive school, with an object-motive aimed at school inclusion, in line with Norwegian policy. These priorities involved enabling teacher discretion so that they could recognize and respond to the immediate needs of shy children, together with access to the support of social teachers for Tier 2 interventions that were also aimed at inclusion in the here and now activities of school life. Importantly, sympathetic responses from senior leaders were seen as helpful in enabling teacher discretion, whether it was availability, being explicit about what mattered to them or communicating trust in teachers.

All three schools had earlier been identified as places where teachers had evidenced success with shy children (Mjelve et al., 2019; Nyborg et al., 2020). It was therefore unsurprising that the leadership teams saw teachers as primary tools, encouraging them to be "first responders" supported by social teachers as "the one who holds the strings". However, the strength of the Tier 1 work across the schools, based on the object motives of the school leaders, threw into relief the relatively ad-hoc nature of Tier 2 targeted interventions. The role of the social teachers as key resources in potentially preventing the escalation of problems for some shy children was not made explicit. Rather, given the leadership teams' object motive of school inclusion, their work aimed at students' integration in the current practices of the school.

This kind of work is, of course, valuable and we recognize that not all shy children will later present more challenging behaviors, but some will (Asendorpf, 2010; Asendorpf et al., 2008; Grose & Coplan, 2015). Seeing the challenges related to Tier 2 preventative efforts (Debnam et al., 2012; Newcomer et al., 2013), we would argue that proposing specific approaches towards shy children within school documents and in policy could potentially yield specific actions. Also, seeing social teachers' key role in Tier 2 preventative efforts provides important knowledge for schools on how to fill the gap between Tier 1 and Tier 3. The distribution of leadership responsibility (Spillane, 2006) points to how the role of social teacher could be enhanced in this respect. Our findings, therefore, encourage a focus on school inclusion that is augmented by recognizing that for some shy children, inclusion should encapsulate attention to prevention beyond Tier 1 (OSEP, 2017). We would, therefore, wish to encourage schools to recognize the preventative features of Tier 2 interventions, such as groups for developing social skills, by labeling them as preventative in written school policies so that early identification of needs might be enhanced and support offered. Such action would make good the lack of material resources aimed at shy students and be part of schools' systemic responses to any debilitating effects of shyness. These responses could, for example, include tracking procedures.

Implications for School Leadership Teams

Our starting point when discussing implications for leadership is that classroom teachers are essential to implementing adapted education (Buli-Holmberg et al., 2014) and much depends on their ability to recognize shyness as a potential impediment to learning (Hughes & Coplan, 2010; Rubin et al., 2009). As shyness is difficult to identify (Weist et al., 2018), there is a danger that there is over-reliance on teachers to identify shy students for both adaptive pedagogies and Tier 2 actions. When systems of responsibility are distributed in schools, there is, we suggest, an imperative on leadership to ensure that knowledge and understanding accompanies responsibility (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). This, we suggest, could entail sharing of interpretations of potential shyness, both in interactions with colleagues and in school documents. These interpretations could be placed on a continuum of potential need based on the framework offered by the Hardiker Tiers.

There are therefore some implications for school leadership teams. First is the need to consider how professional discretion intersects with distributed leadership and the importance of a robust tension between direction and discretion, which is enacted by all colleagues and sustained through strong organizational narratives. Second is the need to help teachers identify vulnerable students at an early stage, through for example, guidance on screening for specific behaviors. Although specifically focusing on a group of students, such as shy children, might seem opposed to what inclusion means (Messiou, 2017), helping teachers recognize and respond to shy students can prove an important approach (O'Connor et al., 2014); while sustaining the discourse about all students. Third, the role of the social teacher or equivalent may need to be clarified so that their Tier 2 initiatives are regarded as targeted preventive actions, not only focused in the here and now of coping with life in inclusive schools, but also as preparation for longer-term coping with institutional demands in future.

Conclusion

We selected schools where teachers had evidenced successful work with shy students and endeavored to identify how these teachers were supported by senior leaders and the systems they created. We were impressed by sustained efforts at school inclusion and the professional discretion enacted by teachers. However, we noted the importance of teachers as first responders and the lack of written guidance to assist in their interpretations of shy students' needs. We therefore hope that the Hardiker model that we have employed will be of use to schools when developing written guidance for colleagues and not only for identifying shy students, but also all those who, do not meet thresholds for special educational needs but, may be nonetheless struggling with school.

ORCID

Stine Solberg http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4684-0684
Anne Edwards http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4608-716X
Geir Nyborg http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6682-9207

References

Ainscow, M., & Sandill, A. (2010). Developing inclusive education systems: The role of organisational cultures and leadership. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *14*(4), 401–416. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110802504903

Asendorpf, J. B. (2010). Long-term development of shyness. Looking forward and looking backward. In K. H. Rubin & R. J. Coplan (Eds.), *The development of shyness and social withdrawal* (pp. 157–175). The Guilford Press.

Asendorpf, J. B., Denissen, J. J. A., & van Aken, M. A. G. (2008). Inhibited and aggressive preschool children at 23 years of age: Personality and social transitions into adulthood. *American Psychological Association*, *44*(4), 997–1011. https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.44.4.997

Buhs, E. S., Rudasill, K. M., Kalutskaya, I. N., & Griese, E. R. (2015). Shyness and engagement: Contributions of peer rejection and teacher sensitivity. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *30*(Part A), 12–19. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.07.010

Buli-Holmberg, J., Nilsen, S., & Skogen, K. (2014). Inclusive and individually adapted education in Norway. Results from a survey study in two municipalities focusing the roles of headteachers, teachers and curriculum planning. *International Journal of Special Education*, *29*(1), 47–60. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1034082

Coplan, R. J., & Rubin, K. H. (2010). Social withdrawal and shyness in childhood. History, theories, definitions, and assessments. In K. H. Rubin & R. Coplan (Eds.), *The development of shyness and social withdrawal* (pp. 3–20). The Guilford Press.

Debnam, K. J., Pas, E. T., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2012). Secondary and tertiary support systems in schools implementing school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports: A preliminary descriptive analysis. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, *14*(3), 142–152. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300712436844

Education Act [Opplæringslova]. (1998). https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1998-07-17-61

Edwards, A. (2010). *Being an expert professional practitioner. The relational turn in expertise*. Springer.

Edwards, A., Montecinos, C., Cádiz, J., Jorratt, P., Manriquez, L., & Rojas, C. (2017). Working relationally on complex problems: Building capacity for joint agency in new forms of work. In M. Goller & S. Paloniemi (Eds.), *Agency at work: An agentic perspective on professional learning and development* (pp. 229–247). Springer International Publishing.

Engeström, Y. (2007). Enriching the theory of expansive learning: Lessons from journeys towards co-configuration. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, *14*(1-2), 23–39. https://doi.org/10.1080/10749030701307689

Engeström, Y. (2015). *Learning by expanding: An activity theoretical approach to developmental research* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Findlay, L. C., Coplan, R. J., & Bowker, A. (2009). Keeping it all inside: Shyness, internalizing coping strategies and socio-emotional adjustment in middle childhood. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, *33*(1), 47–54. https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025408098017

Gazelle, H. (2006). Class climate moderates peer relations and emotional adjustment in children with an early history of anxious solitude: A child × environment model. *Developmental Psychology*, *42*(6), 1179–1192. https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.42.6.1179

Gresham, F. M., & Kern, L. (2004). Internalizing behavior problems in children and adolescents. In R. B. Rutherford, M. M. Quinn, & S. R. Mathur (Eds.), *Handbook of research in emotional and behavioral disorders* (pp. 262–281). The Guilford Press.

Grose, J., & Coplan, R. J. (2015). Longitudinal outcomes of shyness from childhood to emerging adulthood. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, *176*(6), 408–413. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221325.2015.1084988

Hardiker, P., Exton, K., & Barker, M. (1991). The social policy contexts of prevention in child care. *The British Journal of Social Work*, *21*(4), 341–359. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.bjsw.a055771%J

Harris, A. (2008). *Distributed school leadership. Developing tomorrow's leaders*. Routledge.

Hedegaard, M. (2012). The dynamic aspects in children's learning and development. In M. Hedegaard, A. Edwards, & M. Fleer (Eds.), *Motives, emotions and values in the development of children and young people* (pp. 9–27). Cambridge University Press.

Hedegaard, M., & Fleer, M. (2008). *Studying children*. Open University Press.

Hughes, K., & Coplan, R. J. (2010). Exploring processes linking shyness and academic achievement in childhood. *School Psychology Quarterly*, *25*(4), 213–222. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022070

Hymel, S., Rubin, K. H., Rowden, L., & LeMare, L. (1990). Children's peer relationships: Longitudinal prediction of internalizing and externaliziing problems from middle to late childhood. *Child Development*, *61*(6), 2004–2021. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.1990.tb03582.x

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Sage.

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2019). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, *40*(1), 5–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077

Leont'ev, A. N. (1978). *Activity, consciousness, and personality*. Prentice-Hall.

Lund, I. (2016). "When words don't come easily": Personal narratives from adolescents experiencing shyness as an emotional and behavioural problem in the school context. *British Journal of Special Education*, *43*(4), 430–447. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8578.12151

Messiou, K. (2017). Research in the field of inclusive education: Time for a rethink? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *21*(2), 146–159. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2016.1223184

Mjelve, L. H., Nyborg, G., Edwards, A., & Ray Crozier, W. (2019). Teachers' understandings of shyness: Psychosocial differentiation for student inclusion. *British Educational Research Journal*, *45*(6), 295–311. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3563

Montecinos, C., Leiva, M. V., Campos, F., Ahumada, L., & Galdames, S. (2017). An analysis of the use of relational expertise, relational agency, and common knowledge among newly appointed principals in Chile's public schools. In A. Edwards (Ed.), *Working relationally in and across practices: A cultural-historical approach to collaboration* (pp. 78–95). Cambridge University Press.

Newcomer, L. L., Freeman, R., & Barrett, S. (2013). Essential systems for sustainable implementation of tier 2 supports. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, *29*(2), 126–147. https://doi.org/10.1080/15377903.2013.778770

Nilsen, S. (2018). Inside but still on the outside? Teachers' experiences with the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs in general education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1503348

Nyborg, G., Heidi, M. L., Edwards, A., & Crozier, R. (2020). Teachers' strategies for enhancing shy children's engagement in oral activities: Necessary, but insufficient? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2020.1711538

O'Connor, E. E., Cappella, E., McCormick, M. P., & McClowry, S. G. (2014). Enhancing the academic development of shy children: A test of the efficacy of INSIGHTS. *School Psychology Review*, *43*(3), 239–259. https://doi.org/10.1080/02796015.2014.12087426

Orton, J. D., & Weick, K. E. (1990). Loosely coupled systems: A reconceptualization. *The Academy of Management Review*, *15*(2), 203–223. https://doi.org/10.2307/258154

OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. (2017). Positive behavioral interventions & supports. Available at www.pbis.org. https://www.pbis.org/school/tier-3-supports/what-is-tier-3-pbis

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation method* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Prather-Jones, B. (2011). How school administrators influence the retention of teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, *84*(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.2010.489387

Ramasut, A., & Reynolds, D. (1993). Developing effective whole school approaches to special educational needs: From school effectiveness. Theory to school development practice. In R. Slee (Ed.), *Is there a desk with my name on it? The politics of integration* (pp. 218–240). The Falmer Press.

Rubin, K. H., Coplan, R. J., & Bowker, J. C. (2009). Social withdrawal in childhood. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *60*, 141–171. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163642

Spillane, J. P. (2006). *Distributed leadership, The Jossey-Bass leadership library in education*. Jossey-Bass.

Weist, M. D., Eber, L., Horner, R., Splett, J., Putnam, R., Barrett, S., Perales, K., Fairchild, A. J., & Hoover, S. (2018). Improving multitiered systems of support for students with "internalizing" emotional/behavioral problems. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, *20*(3), 172–184. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300717753832