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Teachers' Leadership in the Didactic Room: A Systematic Literature Review of International Research

Abstract

This study deepens our knowledge about research on leadership in the didactic room, i.e., the framing of the current teaching situation, regardless of its location. The objective was to (a) identify and classify patterns and trends concerning teachers' leadership in the didactic room from 1980 to 2013, (b) compare and discuss the findings, and (c) point to a future research agenda. The method is a systematic literature review (SLR) with a quantitative and qualitative content analysis. The results revealed that half of the research on this topic was performed from 2006 to 2013. The results also show that teachers' leadership appears to be a Western phenomenon that is becoming increasingly relevant in our time. Two issues could be linked to this leadership: the unclear boundaries between different types of leadership and confusion about teachers' personalities and leadership styles. This underlines the importance of contextual and situated didactic strategies and flexible leadership styles in the didactic room. Even if this study shows that an awareness of different didactic aspects exists concerning teachers' leadership, a comprehensive approach to designing studies that incorporate the didactic complexities is lacking.

Keywords: didactic, didactic leadership, literature review, teachers' leadership

Sammanfattning

Denna studie fördjupar kunskapen i tidigare forskning om ledarskap i det didaktiska rummet, dvs. inramningen av aktuell undervisningssituation oavsett plats. Syftet var att (a) identifiera och klassificera mönster och trender om lärares ledarskap i det didaktiska rummet 1980-2013, (b) jämföra och diskutera resultaten, och (c) peka ut en framtida forskningsinriktning. Metoden är en systematisk litteraturoversikt (SLR) med en kvantitativ och kvalitativ innehållsanalys. Resultaten visar att hälften av forskningen utfördes under 2006-2013. Resultaten visar också att lärarnas ledarskap är ett västerländskt fenomen som blivit alltmer relevant under senare tid. Dessutom finns det två frågor som kan kopplas till detta ledarskap: oklara gränser mellan olika typer

av ledarskap och en sammanblandning av lärares personlighet och ledarstil. Detta understryker förekomsten av kontextuella och situerade didaktiska strategier samt flexibla ledarstilar i det didaktiska rummet. Studien visar förvisso på medvetenheten om olika didaktiska aspekter, men det saknas forskningsdesigner som införlivar den didaktiska komplexiteten.

Nyckelord: didaktik; didaktiskt ledarskap; litteraturgranskning; lärares ledarskap

Didactics—the core of practical education—plays a vital role in schools throughout the world. However, the concept of didactics has different definitions (Oxford, 2015). The definition of the German spelling of didaktik is about teachers' choices of content and methods in teaching (Jank & Mayer, 1997). The understanding of the concept of didactics is sometimes also connected with too much teaching or systematic instruction. In this paper, we use the former meaning of didactics—teachers' choices of content and methods in teaching.

Didactic competence is about the knowledge of how to teach and communicate knowledge (Kansanen, 1993). This leads to the question of how teachers lead students' learning—how teachers' didactic competence is reflected in their leadership or vice versa. Teachers are expected to be flexible when educational systems are moving from standardization to diversity; to synchronously consider their own role in teacher–student, teacher–subject, and subject–student relationships; and to simultaneously manage both individuals and classes/groups of students to enable both the teaching and the learning process to work consistently (Granström, 2012; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). This approach requires leadership in the classroom, which includes leadership in a variety of teaching and learning situations. However, teachers' leadership is often regarded as a distinct phenomenon from the community, and it is neglected in leadership and organizational research in general (Berg, Sundh, & Wede, 2012). Here, we understand teachers' leadership as teachers who are “experimenting with new ways of organizing” their teaching (Curtis, 2013, p. 4). Our use of the concept of teachers' leadership should not be confused with the concept of teacher leadership—with teacher without an “s,” which usually means teachers' leadership of colleagues and operations, and some kind of decision making in schools (cf. Curtis, 2013; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Muijs & Harris, 2003).

Based on aspects of didactics, including the teacher, the subject, student(s), communication, interaction, and methods, the purpose of this study is to provide an integrative and systematic literature review (SLR) of international research about teachers' leadership in the didactic room. The didactic room is best understood as a non-spatial context of an interaction between teaching and learning. Scoping teachers' leadership of the didactic room fills an existing

research knowledge gap that can be covered by the concept of didactic leadership (Augustsson & Boström, 2012). Didactic leadership refers to teachers in their indirect or direct relations with individual students or student groups based on a conscious didactic approach. This paper's objectives are to (a) identify and classify patterns and trends in the research concerning a holistic perspective of leadership in the didactic room from 1980 to 2013, (b) compare and discuss the findings, and (c) point to a future research agenda. The analysis unit is limited to the individual teaching situation.

Previous Research

Didactic leadership relates to and complements the international research on *educational leadership*, or “a connection between school leadership and student achievement” (Grogan, 2013a, p. 83) and leadership in the classroom (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Pounder, 2006, 2008). The concept of didactic leadership is based on several important international sources of inspiration. Some include Spillane's (2006) focus on leadership-situated individual practice, routines, and social interactions among leaders, followers, and the current situation; Harris's (2008) emphasis on the relationship between distributed leadership and learning in both the school and classroom; Hargreave and Fink's (2006) emphasis on leadership that extends “across individuals, communities, and networks, as well as up and down the organizational layer” (p. 136); and Hersey, Blanchard, and Natemeyer's (1979) integration of situational leadership and power that enables direct connections among teachers' subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, and leadership in the didactic room.

As to the other prominent international research, tangential teacher leadership studies include the following: Crowther and Olsen (1997), Ertesvåg (2009), Granström (2012), Grogan (2013b), Muijs and Harris (2003), and Pounder (2006; 2008). Further valuable international research includes Hattie's (2009) meta-analysis of the influential factors of learning and study achievements; the reviews by Håkansson and Sundberg (2012) and the Swedish School Inspectorate (Skolinspektionen, 2010) of research on the success factors in Swedish and international contexts; Nordenbo, Larsen, Tiftikçi, Wendt, and Østergaard's (2008) review on teacher competence; and Granström's (2007) overview of the work of teachers in the classroom.

The *didactic triangle* can be seen as interactive, communicative, and consisting of interactions between three axes and three aspects (Künzli, 2000). We consider the didactic triangle to be a foundation for a holistic perspective on the teacher's leadership in the didactic room. The didactic triangle illustrates didactics' three pillars: the subject, teacher, and student (see Figure 1). The relationship between the teacher and the student is a communicative interaction. The relationship between the teacher and the subject involves the teacher's way

of presenting the subject. The relationship between the subject and the student includes how and in what ways the student assimilates the content, or in other words, which teaching methods are offered or suit the situation (Hoppman, 1997). The three aspects of the didactic triangle and the three axes (see Figure 1 below) interact naturally with each other in different ways, in various degrees, and in different contexts.

Figure 1. The didactic triangle with its three axes and aspects

As Figure 1 illustrates, the axes are teacher–student, teacher–subject, and subject–student, and the aspects are teaching, rhetoric, and methodology. The strength of using the didactic triangle as the basis for the term *didactic leadership* lies in the fact that the triangle defines different types of relationships between the teacher, student, and subject matter, and the possibility of linking these relationships to a structural context (Künzli, 2000; Westbury, 2000).

The teaching aspect and *teacher–student* axis concern knowledge of classroom interactions and group processes as well as the ability to handle them. The axis concerns the teacher’s insight into what goes on in the didactic room and about the teacher, including the teacher’s leadership and teaching style (Boström, 2011a, 2011b; Stensmo, 2000). Therefore, this axis represents the micro aspects of teaching along with the link between the teacher’s values and

intentions, and the teacher's ability to achieve a constructive learning environment (Grinder, 2008; Steinberg, 2012).

The rhetoric aspect and *teacher–subject* axis refer to how the teacher recognizes his or her own actions in relation to the subject, or what should be communicated, how, and why. Communication in this sense is about rhetoric, including the teacher's experience, oratory, understanding of the receiver, and ability to achieve a given communicative goal. This axis is about having an area of knowledge (the subject) and an ability to illustrate it (Steinberg, 2012). The axis also assumes, in a didactic sense, that a teacher is self-aware about his or her use of tone of voice, body language, eye contact, and the whiteboard.

The methodology aspect and third axis are the *subject–student* axis, which deals with an understanding and an exposition of the subject matter so that the student can learn in the best way. Here, we discover how subject content can be made accessible to the student so that it is both individualized and has a progression (Boström, 2004). An important factor in this axis is the pre-understanding that the teacher assumes the student has, thus allowing the student to understand the subject and enabling the teacher to believe that s/he can lead the individual and group.

In summary, didactic leadership needs to be studied from different angles: teaching (the structure behind the didactic leadership) and learning (the social interaction processes and ways in which people learn; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012).

Aim and Methods

Our study about teachers' leadership in the didactic room is based on an integrative and systematic literature review inspired by Polit and Beck's (2008) model of the flow chart of the literature review. SLR offers a means for researchers to search for and assess what is known about a particular topic, with the aim of finding a solution to a particular problem or suggesting directions for future research (Franzosi, 2008).

We chose a thematic and integrative study design to obtain a holistic understanding of the subject. This approach allowed us to combine data from the theoretical literature as well as from the empirical literature (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005), which also made the analysis more complex and difficult. In short, we chose both quantitative and qualitative approaches. We employed descriptive statistics to consider frequencies in relation to the following aspects: the relevance of the study's aim; the themes among the sources; the distribution of articles per year; the countries of origin of the articles; the methodological approach; the analysis level; and didactical aspects. The qualitative approach focused on qualitative aspects in the sources concerning their purpose, results,

didactical aspects, leadership, and problems and opportunities in teachers' leadership.

Below, we first describe the selection of the literature and the inclusion criteria; thereafter, we discuss their validity and reliability.

Selection of Literature and Inclusion Criteria

Employing a progressive selection of literature and detailed inclusion criteria, the SLR involved multiple phases: an initial identification of potential studies via an advanced search of Primo, the discovery tool for Mid Sweden University; and the retrieval and screening of full articles.

Primo is an access point where one can find books, e-books, print and electronic articles, digital media, and other types of resources (Primo, 2015). We conducted an automated advanced search of this database, which was limited to 1980–2013 and to publications written in English. The keywords used were *didactic**, *teachers' leadership**, *didactic room**, *didactic leadership**, and *classroom management**, with different combinations (see Figure 2 below). The keywords about didactics and leadership were the most extensive—10,399, with 144,605 sources.

We screened and included a total of 762 articles, abstracts, and titles in the initial review; 596 of those were excluded for being too broad and generalized, and not related to teachers' leadership in individual teaching situations. Using the remaining 166 articles, each of the two researchers independently carried out a content analysis (cf. Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify key themes. The content analysis used can be divided into three steps: selection of focus texts, encoding of the texts, and interpretation of the results (Ahuvia, 2008). The situational context was taken into account, so the “maximum variation sampling” was achieved (Franzosi, 2008, p. 89). We compared the outcome data and, through subsequent discussion and review, reached a consensus, leading to the identification of the key themes and specific categories.

Of these 166 sources, we excluded 103 because they could not be related to the topic (see Figure 2). Then, we excluded a further eight sources because their content was too broad to be generalized. Then, we assessed the relevancy of the content and finally categorized the sources into categories such as articles and book chapters. Figure 2 shows that the sources about the holistic inclusion criteria, “teachers' leadership in the didactic room,” included 29 articles, one dissertation, one book, four book chapters, eight debate articles/conference papers, and 13 reports. The sources were dominated by articles and reports.

Figure 2. Summary of review method with numbers and percentages (%)

The next phase involved retrieving and screening the full articles. The quality assurance procedure at this point once again involved the two researchers independently reviewing the data. Using the more detailed information from each of the articles, we reapplied the inclusion criteria. In addition to the original inclusion criteria, we also judged and selected the articles/texts that formed the initial in-depth review on the basis of the extent to which they provided comprehensive accounts of different aspects of the methodology and findings of the study.

Validity and Reliability

To maintain scientific integrity, we paid great attention to validity during the integrative review phase. We identified articles that fit the inclusion criteria, “teachers’ leadership in the didactic room,” and verified their inclusion into the search results to ensure the sensitivity of the search strategy (see Table 1). The estimated contextual relevance in relation to the purpose of the study was, as Table 1 shows: high 67.3%, medium 18.2%, and low 14.5%.

Table 1*Distribution of Relevance to the Study's Aim*

Relevance	Sources	Percent (%)
<i>N = 55</i>		
High	37	67.3
Medium	10	18.2
Low	8	14.5

The validity was handled in the following way: The items underwent data processing, checks for quality, sorting, categorization, and examination using assessment documentation (see Table 2-7 in the Results section below). Firstly, we continuously compared our respective analyses and interpretations of the same sources with each other. Secondly, we cooperated by critically comparing our respective analyses and interpretations with the sources.

We reached a consensus on identifying the key themes. In terms of the data extraction, we employed and checked the following categories according to our purposes: author, year of publication, country, methodological approach, data collection, analysis level, and themes. Using the sources, we then carried out a thematic analysis of the data independently to identify key themes occurring within the sources (cf. Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Results

This section outlines the outcomes of the review and is structured around two levels of analysis: The first is a contextual level of distribution of themes, years, methodological approaches, assessed relevance, and secondary sources of the articles reviewed; this was followed by a content level of thematic analysis and discussion of the data in relation to teachers' leadership aspects and didactical aspects.

Contextual Level of Analysis

Figure 2 above summarizes the 55 sources that were included in the review, and Table 2 specifies the most common themes. Table 2 shows there were six themes: teaching/teachers, methods, educational content, students/learning, leadership, and others. Four themes seem to have been more prominent than the others: teaching/teachers, methods, educational content, and others. The latter covers many different focuses, such as gender, pedagogical thinking, organizational changes, and learning environments.

Table 2*Distribution of Themes Among the Sources*

Themes	Sources N = 55	Percent (%)
Teaching/Teachers	14	26
Methods	10	18.4
Educational content	9	16.3
Students/Learning	3	6.1
Leadership	7	12.2
Others	11	20.4

Table 3 shows that the reviewed sources were published from 1980 to 2013. A majority of the sources had been published since 2006, accounting for approximately half of the articles. The next most common period was the early 1990s, during which 20% of the texts were published. In other words, interest has been growing rapidly in the last 10 years.

Table 3*Distribution of 55 Sources Reviewed by Year*

Years	Sources N = 55	Percent (%)
1980–1985	1	1.8
1986–1990	2	3.6
1991–1995	10	18.2
1996–2000	8	14.5
2001–2005	6	10.9
2006–2010	14	25.5
2011–2013	14	25.5

The geographic distribution shows that more than half of all of the sources were published in European countries, and approximately one-third came from the North America (see Table 4). Thus, this area of research seems to be a typically Western phenomenon.

Table 4*Continents Among the Sources*

Continent	Sources N = 55	Percent (%)
Europe	31	56.4
North America	13	23.6
Asia	6	10.9
International ¹	4	7.2
Africa	1	1.8

Note. ¹International stands for studies involving applied research in different countries and continents.

Concerning the methodological approach, there was an almost total domination of qualitative approaches, comprising 72.7% of the studies (Table 5). The qualitative approaches varied from individual interviews to focus group interviews and observations. Quantitative approaches or mixed methods were

used in 16% of the studies. The data-collecting strategies are numerous and various, from videotaping over self-assessment reports to content analyses, but most of the sources used just one.

Table 5*Distribution of Methodological Approach*

Methodological approach	Sources N = 55	Percent (%)
Qualitative approaches	40	72.7
Mixed Method Design	5	9.1
Quantitative approaches	4	7.3
Not reported/unclear	6	10.9

Concerning the analysis levels, we found six different categories: teaching, learning/students, leadership in the classroom, educational contexts, others, and none (Table 6). The most widely used level of analysis was teaching, comprising about a quarter of the sources, followed by learning/students and leadership in the classroom.

Table 6*Analysis Levels*

Analysis levels	Percent (%)
Education context (generally)	14.8
Leadership in the classroom	18.5
Teaching	25.9
None ²	9.4
Learning/students	18.5
Others ³	12.9

Note. ²None stands for “no level of analysis could be discerned.” These were, for example, descriptive studies and more narrative texts. ³Others stands for “levels of analysis that were not directly matched in the didactic triangle,” such as gender and organizational level.

Regarding didactic aspects, Table 7 shows that the content in the articles mostly focused on methodological issues (34.2%), followed by the teacher (23.7%) and subject (17.1%). The categories with the lowest proportions were student/group (15.1%), rhetoric (6.6%), and interaction (3.3%). Some of the articles focused on several aspects, up to four, while others did not have a specific didactic focus but described the leadership from a general didactical perspective.

Table 7*Didactical Aspects*

Didactical aspects	Percent (%)
Methods	34.2
Subject	17.1
Teacher	23.7
Student/group	15.1
Rhetoric	6.6
Interaction	3.3

To sum up, in this SLR, it is possible to observe a lack of empirical research involving teachers' leadership in the didactic room from a holistic perspective. Although a lot of research has been published, it only focuses on one or a few aspects, rather than the combination of teachers' leadership in the didactic room.

Content Level of Analysis

This section discusses the content of articles that has to do with the purpose and results, didactical aspects, leadership, problems, and opportunities. The goal is to frame the seemingly separate aspects to offer an overview of what is addressed in the literature.

Purpose and results of the sources. Of all of the reviewed articles, one-third was based on SLRs or conceptual papers. The articles deal with effective leadership in the classroom, discourses, historical compilations, and didactic theories, as well as its impact on perspective, effective methods in health sciences, didactic themes in the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and teachers' didactic thinking. Several of these, however, are targeted to specific disciplines, such as health and social care and physical education targeted to teacher education programs. The articles that are more mainstream call for broad research, a theoretical framework, and an understanding of the contextual emergence and development of activities in the didactic room.

Neumerski (2012) outlines how instructional leadership has failed to adequately attend to how the daily work of leadership unfolds, and he prescribes the importance of instructions that will lead to students' learning goals, teachers' need for learning to implement instruction, and "how leaders facilitate teacher learning around that targeted instruction" (p. 336). Other literature reviews focus on teachers' thinking, education planning and expertise, relationships between didactics and pedagogy, and learning.

An additional category incorporates teachers and their leadership. Several aspects can be discerned, from principles in the good teacher, the desired teacher, and the ideal teacher as perceived by students (Arnon & Reichel, 2007, p. 461) to ethical dilemmas, role models in practice, potential problems, teacher effectiveness, and the importance of analysis and reflection. The results presented, the authors depreciated the importance of teachers' conscious leadership in our rapidly changing world.

Finally, other categories that occurred were pupils' learning, gender, organizational general didactics, and didactics content in relation to education.

The didactical aspects. As mentioned earlier, the most dominant didactic aspect was the method. A thematic analysis of the articles shows a fuzzy picture from meta-analytic educational tools to specific pedagogical approaches like problem-based learning (PBL), and the theory of didactical situations (TDS), blended learning, tacit knowledge, intellectual dialogues, classroom

arrangement, activity pedagogy, non-traditional methods, and matching instructional methods.

The teacher's role was also a prominent focus in the articles. The picture is more uniform compared to the methods; a teacher in the didactic room should understand that s/he is part of a collective process in which taking responsibility, proactivity, creativity, efficiency, and moral/ethical dimensions are crucial in creating a good atmosphere for teaching and learning.

The focus of the reviewed articles concerning the subject shows that more than half are about science subjects (mathematics, physics, chemistry, etc.). The others are fairly scattered in subject focus, including entrepreneurship, health sciences, and staff development.

Concerning the aspect of student/group, the importance is that all students are responsible for their own and others' learning; they must actively participate in the learning processes and understand that diversity is emphasized. Interaction between teachers and students is described in general terms as socialization and disciplinary interventions. The aspect of communication (rhetoric) focuses on the importance of the teachers understanding and adapting to the generation they teach, the subject being taught, didactic knowledge, and an appropriate personality (Arnon & Reichel, 2007, p. 445).

The leadership perspective. The review also shows that different views exist on how teachers should lead their teaching and student learning. We identified 55 references that touch on teachers' leadership in a holistic sense. Among these, we differentiated among those that had a structural approach (47%) and those with a procedural (53%) approach. A structural approach means that the teacher is attributed a comprehensive and proactive responsibility and greater influence over both planned activities and activities going on in the didactic room. In a procedural approach, the teacher has an active responsibility for the chronology and atmosphere that prevail in the didactic room, in relation to social interactions and various types of activities. Taken together, these approaches mean that the teachers, on the one hand, on the basis of teaching and the curriculum, use an overview and a superior influence in the didactic room; on the other hand, in their actions, they strive to use strategies for the students to understand the content of the education.

Problems. Our literature review highlights two problematic circumstances that can be linked to teachers' leadership in the didactic room.

The first circumstance is the existence of unclear boundaries between different types of leadership in educational contexts (Neumerski, 2012). Neumerski meant that descriptions about how teachers can lead a variety of teaching situations are not as well defined as equivalent descriptions for principals. For example, Zuljan, Peklaj, Pečjak, Puklek, and Kalin (2012) argued that it is more difficult to find instructions for teachers who wish to comply with the curriculum's objective to motivate pupils to "discuss, share opinions and

evaluations and present arguments” (p. 60) than for teachers who use traditional instruction.

The second circumstance concerns the tendency for confusion in teachers’ personalities and leadership styles. Brophy (1988) underlined that teachers’ leadership is not only characterized by confusion with other types of leadership in the school context but also by confusion between teacher’s personalities and leadership styles. The point is that teachers are affected so much by their personalities that it was difficult for them to switch between different styles of leadership, such as authoritative, authoritarian, or laissez-faire, in relation to a current situation.

These two problematic circumstances suggest that research on teachers’ leadership during different didactic circumstances tended to be undeveloped.

Opportunity. The reviewed literature shows not only the problems with teachers’ leadership but also an opportunity. Künzli (2000) emphasized the importance of focusing on learning in terms of education or cultivation. This, he believed, could be accomplished by starting from the question, “Why is the student to learn the material in the first place?” (p. 46). Klafki (2000) believed that the answer to a question about education has multiple starting points. Firstly, it is “to develop the capacity for self-determination, participation, and solidarity.” Secondly, it is about “an outline and the critical discussion of the general as that which concerns us all in our epoch.” Finally, it is about “*Bildung* [education] of all the dimensions of humane capacities that we can recognize today” (p. 104). In addition, Klafki underlined that “Allgemeinbildung [all-round education] must even now also be understood as *political Bildung*, as a capability for active participation in a process of ongoing democratization” (p. 104).

Successfully accomplishing such a Bildung requires a thoughtful approach that is characterized by two stages: from curriculum to teaching and from teaching to learning (Westbury, 2000). The first step, from curriculum to teaching, emphasizes the teacher’s central (leading) role in implementing the curriculum. The second step, from teaching to learning, may be done through adopting a flexible approach between teacher-centered teaching and student-centered learning. Both approaches are needed, albeit in different teaching contexts and learning situations.

This opportunity demonstrates the importance of increasing awareness of the teachers’ flexible approach to the student based on the curriculum and the overall goal of education. This awareness affects not only teachers but also teachers’ structural conditions and who a student is as a person.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to deepen the knowledge of previous research about teachers' leadership in the didactic room, and the objectives were to (a) identify and classify patterns and trends in the research, specifically from 1980 to 2013, (b) compare and discuss the findings, and (c) point to a future research agenda.

We used an integrative SLR with quantitative analysis in terms of descriptive statistics, and qualitative analysis in terms of content analysis of patterns and trends. What is unique about this study is the overview of the research about teachers' leadership through didactics' own spectra (see Figure 1 above). This shows the complexities and focus areas for research and provides indications of problems and challenges. We noted that the didactic concept is frequently used in international research, but there is little research on our specific object of study—teachers' leadership in the didactic room. Thus, the answer to our research aim seems to be that the research on teachers' leadership in the didactic room from a holistic perspective is in its infancy.

We have identified and classified several patterns and trends in the results. First, it is possible to draw an important overall conclusion from the results: It seems to be problematic to write about teachers as leaders in the didactic room. This problem is likely representative of the difference between the meanings of the terms didactic and didaktik, as presented in the introduction. Didactic is associated with too much teaching and too many systematic instructions, while didaktik refers to the selection of the teaching content and methods. Didactic can be perceived as focusing on the teachers' control of the students' learning process, while didaktik draws attention to the teachers' strategic approaches to teaching contents and methods. When we use didactic as a concept, we refer to the didactic triangle, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Second, the quantitative results from our English-language sources revealed that teachers' leadership in the didactic room appears to be partly a Western (European, North American) educational phenomenon, which is at least somewhat increasingly relevant in our time. One can wonder whether it is related to international studies, such as PISA or TIMSS. The qualitative methodology is dominant, with many different data-collection strategies. Regarding the level of analysis, a quarter of the studies focused on teaching, followed by students' learning and leadership. None of the studies revealed a complex picture. An analysis of the didactic aspects (Table 7) showed that one-third of the sources focused on methods, followed by the teacher (23.7%) and the subject matter (17.1%). The other three aspects (student/group, rhetoric, and interaction) were less researched. From this, we observed a trend toward a lack of empirically based studies.

Third, the results of the content analysis show that many studies were conducted that were tangential to teachers' didactic leadership, but they were limited to only one or two aspects of the area. These studies dealt with the

subject and leadership, the student and leadership, or the teacher and his or her leadership. The main patterns concerning didactical aspects that we saw were (a) subjects in didactics (in particular, science is well represented), (b) problems with the concept of didactics because of its overlapping between education (as upbringing) and didactics (as schooling), c) teachers as good role models, and d) student responsibility in the learning process.

Conclusions

Finally, we compare and discuss the results. The thematic distribution is sprawling. What is lacking is research that takes different didactic aspects into account over time. This can also be a partial explanation for the low incidence of quantitative research, as many such studies require measurements over time. Since didactics are the essence of education and are focused on in most Western countries, we did not expect that no complete overview would be available in any of the studies' designs.

The analysis of the studies' aims and results revealed the absence of a holistic perspective. One-third of the studies were conceptual papers that asked for more research. Other aims were to examine various methods, such as PBL and the teacher's role. These are certainly important for didactic leadership and reflect the traditional image of teachers' leadership. We believe that teachers' professional occupation is much more complex and complicated than was apparent in the reviewed literature.

The literature review also highlights two important issues that directly and indirectly could be linked to teachers' leadership: unclear boundaries between different types of leadership and confusion over teachers' personalities and leadership styles. The first problem has to do with the existence of unclear boundaries between different types of leadership in educational contexts (Neumerski, 2012). Therefore, we specifically argue for a systematic use of the terms "didactic room" and "didactic leadership" (Augustsson & Boström, 2012). The purpose is to present an integrated theoretical approach that, can coalesce teachership and leadership in time and space (see Figure 1). The term "didactic room" has to do with the framing of the current teaching situation regardless of its location. Didactic leadership refers to teachers in their didactic rooms based on a conscious didactic approach. A teacher who combines a conscious didactic approach with a flexible approach to students in a teaching situation should be better able to embrace didactic leadership than a teacher who has difficulties with embracing alternative cognitive, physical, and verbal approaches to students.

The second issue concerns the tendency for teachers' personalities and leadership styles to be confused (see Brophy, 1988). This confusion is unfortunate. It would be more fruitful to assume that teachers can differentiate

and, thus, also instantaneously alternate among being authoritative, authoritarian, or laissez-faire, depending on the actual teaching context and learning situation. The more mentally and behaviorally flexible a teacher is in his or her approach, the more professionally s/he will be perceived.

Based on the identification and classification of patterns and trends in the research above and the comparison and discussion of the findings, we would like to point to a future research agenda. For the moment, we see an incomplete and fragmented picture of the combination of didactic aspects and teachers' leadership. This study shows that there is both an awareness of different didactic aspects and a lack of a comprehensive approach to designing studies that incorporate didactic complexity for teachers' leadership. Therefore, there seems to be a need for broad-based, empirical cross/interdisciplinary studies covering all aspects of didactics, or a holistic approach. This points to the importance of, for example, implementing longitudinal studies that account for didactics variables. In this way, educational design research (EDR) could be a possible design (cf. Akker, Gravemeijer, McKenney, & Nieveen, 2006). This approach takes place in natural environments, with the complexity of the real classrooms and schools, which in itself gives researchers methodological challenges.

The limitation of our approach is that holistic didactic leadership may have meant a basic definition that was too narrow. However, we felt that we needed a narrow definition from the beginning because the amount of literature that can be found in Primo with keywords about didactic and about leadership is quite extensive, as noted above.

Our approach had multiple strengths. Our starting point in leadership in relation to the axis and aspects of the didactic triangle made it possible to begin the search process with a relatively narrow definition. Another strength of using the didactic triangle was that it offered good support for interpretations of the literary content. It was relatively straightforward to determine what belonged to the axis of the respective aspect. However, this does not mean that there were no doubts, but at such times, we chose a broad perspective by including the text in the first step and making a more critical assessment in the forthcoming steps (see Ahuvia, 2008).

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