Positive Impacts of Trust-Based Leadership and Governance on School Outcomes.
A Literature-Based Impact Study

Lykke Mose[1]

Abstract

The "de-bureaucratization" of the public sector is a recurring theme in politics. Scandinavian politicians are working to scale back control-based performance management through trust-based governance, enabling professionals to develop flexible, local solutions to enhance welfare services. While the positive impact of trust on organizational processes is well established, it remains unclear whether efforts to strengthen trust in the public sector will improve welfare. Based on a systematic review and using the education field as a case, this article explores whether research evidence supports the idea that trust can enhance welfare, defined as school outcomes. It addresses the following questions: How do trust-based leadership and governance affect school outcomes in primary and lower-secondary schools? And how can findings from extant research inform the future implementation of trust-based leadership and governance to help ensure positive outcomes? The main finding is that trust-based leadership and governance can yield positive outcomes, both indirectly through improved teaching practices and directly through enhanced student achievement. Moreover, the findings bring us closer to understanding how trust works and what decisionmakers should consider to successfully strengthen it. The article recommends further research to advance trust measurement methodologies, which could simultaneously provide decisionmakers with actionable insights into the practical dynamics of trust implementation.

Practical Relevance

➢ The study demonstrates that empirical research highlights how policymakers and administrative leaders who effectively cultivate trust-based leadership and governance can anticipate improvements in school outcomes.

➢ The findings indicate that policymakers cannot simply introduce trust-based governance as a political agreement and expect it to increase school outcomes. Local leaders must actively practice trust-based leadership, as the level of trust between leaders and employees predicts the ability to convert trust-based governance into improved outcomes.

➢ The study underscores the value of trust research in providing a precise definition of trust-based leadership and governance. This clarity equips practitioners with the knowledge to strike the optimal trust–control balance and to understand the core attributes of trust in real-world settings.

➢ The article argues that the trust-measurement of subordinates' perceptions of trust can be further developed into "intelligent accountability" and used to evaluate and research the implementation of trust. This provides policymakers and administrative leaders with a tool to assess and anticipate whether trust implementation will lead to improved school outcomes.

---

[1]**Lykke Mose** ⓘD, Ph.D. fellow at Roskilde University, Roskilde School of Governance, with a master's degree in organizational psychology. Her research centers on trust, power dynamics, motivation theory, public administration, policy implementation, co-creation, 'de-bureaucratization,' self-management and organizational development. She specializes in school development, educational policy, student involvement and motivation. Her current research project is a three-year trust experiment in Denmark's educational sector. She has been working with organizational development and executive leadership consulting since 2007.

Introduction

Trust within public organizations is becoming an increasingly popular issue in the Scandinavian public sector. Trust reduces social complexity (Luhmann 2017) and has become an appealing new alternative in public administration, serving as a relevant counter-reaction to the problems arising from classical governance approaches. Societal developments, shifting ideologies, and new public sector issues have prompted competing approaches to public governance, resulting in contrasting suggestions for how to create a well-functioning welfare society. These different governance approaches have led to "layer-by-layer governance" (Bentzen et al. 2020, 23) in the public sector (Andersen et al. 2020; Hjelmar & Leth Jakobsen 2021; Torfing & Bentzen 2022), generating a series of unintended adverse effects in the form of conflicts and dilemmas (Andersen et al. 2020; Bozeman & Feeney 2011; DeHart-Davis 2008; Røiseland et al. 2024).

The bureaucratic focus on predictability, consistency, and rule compliance has led to constrained professional discretion. This focus has been supplemented by a New Public Management (NPM) -inspired emphasis on performance management based on the measurement and documentation of results, which has fostered a "cover-your-butt" mentality that often overshadows the focus on quality and collaboration (Daliri-Ngametua et al. 2022; Huey et al. 2024). NPM rests on a simplistic understanding of employees as self-interested individuals motivated more by external rewards and less by professional standards, service-quality improvements, and public sector outcomes (Schillemans 2013). NPM has thus contributed to a cynical workforce (Moynihan 2010), as attempts at enhancing economics, effectiveness, and efficiency have reduced trust, undermined professional autonomy, and demotivated public employees (Jacobsen et al. 2014; Six 2013; Vallentin & Thygesen 2017).

Although the Scandinavian countries never adopted the full NPM package (Pollitt & Bouckaert 2004) and have always been characterized by high levels of generalized trust (Delhey & Newton 2004), the problems caused by layer-by-layer governance explain the growing focus on introducing trust-based leadership (the aspiration for a cultural shift toward more trust-based interactions) and trust-based governance (the formalized agreements to be implemented) in Scandinavia (Bentzen et al. 2020; Bentzen & Bringselius 2023; Hjelmar & Leth Jakobsen 2021). Trust is expected to reduce control, strengthen collaboration, allow professionally trained employees to use their competencies to create local and flexible solutions, and enhance service-user involvement (Siverbo et al. 2024; Vallentin & Thygesen 2017). Within-organization trust has been shown to affect attitudes and behaviors positively, including enhanced employee satisfaction, job commitment, and leadership effectiveness (Dirks & Ferrin 2001; Härenstam et al. 2024), as well as improving collaboration and communication (Fulmer & Gelfand 2012; Sargent & Waters 2004); nevertheless, trust-based leadership and governance is not guaranteed to improve welfare outcomes, defined as the desirable outcome of welfare services.

As such, recent developments in Scandinavian countries and municipalities raise questions as to whether extant research supports the underlying assumption that trust-based leadership and governance lead to improved welfare outcomes. The article addresses this question by examining the scientific significance of trust-based leadership and governance in the school sector, with school outcome, defined as student achievement and teaching quality, as the dependent variables. This sector is chosen partly because trust is considered essential for achieving school outcomes (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran 2003), which also explains the expected prevalence of research on the significance of trust in this sector. Moreover, trust is a complex conceptual construct, where significance and measurement methods vary across professional domains (McEvily & Tortoriello 2011), which argues for selecting one specific domain. The school sector is particularly suitable for such analysis, as it provides relatively comparable and objective data for the dependent variable (student achievement). The school area thus provides a good case for examining how policy areas characterized by layer-by-layer governance react to trust-based leadership and governance.

A literature review on trust in the education area describes trust in general as a phenomenon and explains how trust can affect performance, leaving questions regarding the impact of trust unanswered (Harris et al. 2013). A systematic review sheds light on the role of trust in education governance, indicating the need to develop more "*intelligent modes of accountability*" Niedlich

et al. 2021, 127). This particular review offers little in terms of the impact of trust on welfare provision, ultimately calling for "a more in-depth investigation of the role of trust in education".

This article picks up this thread by, first, examining research focusing on the impact of trust-based leadership and governance and, subsequently, demonstrating how these findings can contribute to existing research on trust and be translated into implications for research and practice. To make the study manageable, this research project narrowly focuses on primary and lower-secondary schools.

The guiding research questions are: *How do trust-based leadership and governance affect school outcomes in primary and lower-secondary schools? And how can findings from extant research inform the future implementation of trust-based leadership and governance to help ensure positive outcomes?*

These research questions are answered by conducting a systematic review examining the existing empirical research. The article proceeds as follows. First, the theoretical framework defines trust, trust-based leadership, and governance. Second, the methodology of the review is explained. The findings are then presented, first regarding the impact of trust-based leadership and governance together and then the impact of trust-based leadership alone. The findings are then analyzed to determine their relevance for guiding the implementation of trust-based leadership and governance. The article concludes with a discussion of the findings, how they can be applied in practice, and suggestions for further research.

Theoretical Framework

After defining trust and distinguishing between trust-based leadership and governance, this brief theoretical overview defines the dependent variable, school outcomes, which is measured through student achievement and teaching quality.

Definition of trust

Trust is associated with behavior in interdependent relations, where there is a "*willingness to be vulnerable under conditions of risk and interdependence*" (Rousseau et al. 1998, 394; Schoorman et al. 2007). The experience of trust is operationalized as "*one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is (a) benevolent, (b) reliable, (c) competent, (d) honest, and (e) open*" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy 2000, 556). Hence, when public leaders trust their employees, they have positive expectations that the employees will not exploit a given situation for personal benefit at the expense of public goal attainment. Similarly, employees who experience trust-based leadership are confident that the management will treat them fairly and support them when problems arise rather than shirking responsibility (Bentzen 2019).

Trust can be studied as "*trust in a referent*" (Fulmer & Gelfand 2012, 1170) when directed toward a specific target, called the trustee; a person, team, or organization (Bentzen 2022). Trust can be *general trust* in a particular unit. Studies in psychological safety (Edmondson 1999; Edmondson & Lei 2014) monitor general trust, and research in social capital (Leana & Pil 2006) is related to general trust but distinguished by focusing more on communication and collaboration in relations. The two types of trust are connected, so the more individuals experience trust in a referent toward one another within an organization, the more general trust increases. Trust is, thus, a reciprocal phenomenon (Hoy & DiPaola 2008) and depends on both parties in the relation trusting one another: Leaders are trustors when they perceive their willingness to trust the administration (trustees) or their subordinates (trustees); when they offer their subordinates trust, they become the trustee (Fulmer & Gelfand 2012).

Trust-based leadership

Leadership is inherently relational, involving the use of authority to clarify organizational objectives, motivate employees, and facilitate the development of their competencies (Jensen et al. 2019). Within this context, *trust-based leadership* can be understood as a pattern of behaviors and communicative practices that unfold through interactions and dialogue between leaders and their subordinates. To demonstrate trust, leaders must accept vulnerability and involve

employees: They engage employees in addressing organizational challenges and in carrying out delegated tasks while maintaining confidence that employees will act with commitment rather than merely pursuing self-interest. Trust-based leadership thus entails providing support through dialogue and relying on employees' competences. For employees to perceive their leaders as trustworthy, however, leaders must appear both competent and resourceful, thereby enabling subordinates to believe that their leaders can act consistently with their stated values (Bentzen et al. 2025).

Trust-based leadership:

- Engaging and involving employees in decision-making and daily work
- Delegating tasks while maintaining confidence in employees' commitment and competences
- Providing support through dialogue and open communication
- Demonstrating competence and resourcefulness as a leader
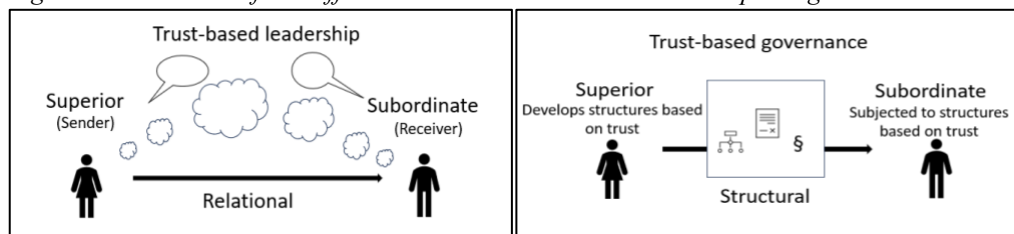
Trust-based governance

Governance refers to the exercise of political and administrative authority through regulations and rules (e.g. procedures, controls, budgets) designed to steer the behavior of organizational actors, including leaders and their staff, in ways that restrict their autonomy to secure established organizational objectives (Bøgh Andersen & Holm Pedersen 2012). *Trust-based governance* refers to regulatory frameworks, rules, and institutional structures (see Figure 1) based on the assumptions that practitioners are trustworthy and will utilize their professional expertise to create public value. Therefore, trust-based governance grants greater autonomy to local units to design flexible, context-sensitive solutions. In this model, detailed rules and prescriptive procedures are kept to a minimum to facilitate more "*agile decision-making processes that make it relatively easy to get approval for new solutions and work practices*" (Bentzen & Torfing 2022, 1295). The prioritization of personal autonomy and professional choice stands in contrast to the combination of bureaucratic rule compliance and NPM-inspired performance management, which tends to straitjacket employees.

Trust-based governance:

- Practitioners are trusted to use their professional expertise to create public value
- Local units are granted greater autonomy to design flexible, context-sensitive solutions
- Detailed rules and prescriptive procedures are minimized to enable agile decision-making and fast approval of new solutions and work practices
- Personal autonomy and professional judgment are prioritized over rigid compliance

Trust-based leadership and governance can exist independently of each other or possibly coexist. For example, a school can be subject to national trust-based governance in the form of a trust reform removing multiple, centrally defined requirements, while local leadership can be characterized by mistrust or the opposite.

Figure 1. Illustration of the difference between trust-based leadership and governance

The distinction between trust-based leadership and governance is important in relation to decisionmakers. For them, the differences lie in whether the changes required to strengthen trust concern regulatory mechanisms, such as control systems, goal-setting, or organizational design (trust-based governance), or whether regulatory adjustments are less decisive if trust primarily develops through relationships and leadership practices (trust-based leadership). It is also interesting to consider whether the research suggests that neither dimension alone (nor,

conversely, that both in combination) will enhance school outcomes. This study, therefore, applies both independent variables.

Definition of the dependent variable: school outcomes

The aim is to unveil whether trust can enhance school outcomes, measured in terms of student achievement (grades) and teaching quality, including conditions with an indirect positive impact on student achievement and teaching quality.

The expected impact of trust-based leadership and governance

In public administration theory, trust-based leadership and governance are expected to positively impact welfare outcomes, as trust facilitates effective communication and agile collaboration (Covey & Merrill 2006). Scholars describe trust as "*a remarkably efficient lubricant that reduces the complexities of organizational life and facilitates transactions far more quickly and economically than other means of managing*" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy 1998, 344). Therefore, the positive impact of trust is expected to be particularly evident in the education field, where it is referred to as "*the key building block between students and teachers*"[1] (Meier 2003, 13) and is attributed a crucial role in school performance (Robinson et al. 2008; Sahlberg 2011).

Method

Drawing on trust-research insights, the aim is to generate research-based suggestions regarding the impacts of trust-based leadership and governance in the school sector. As such, this article conducts a systematic review of empirical research focusing on the impact of trust-based leadership and governance on student achievement and teaching quality. It also aims to reveal potential knowledge gaps or incongruent findings (Denyer & Tranfield 2009) toward further discussion of whether the evidence supports the political assumption that trust-based leadership and governance will improve welfare outcomes in the education field (Alvesson & Sandberg 2020). The systematic review of empirical research has two steps:

> Step 1: A search strategy following the PRISMA guidelines for systematic literature reviews.

> Step 2: A review of the references found in the articles uncovered in Step 1 to recruit more records.

Step 1: the search string. The search strategy is applied in line with PRISMA guidelines, as the stringent method ensures quality. The aim is to improve the transparency and scientific merit of the review (Denyer & Tranfield 2009). The selection of articles was compiled systematically from Scopus and EBSCO (Date: 2023.08.01), which are among the most significant search engines for education, school research, leadership, and public administration. In Scopus, the following search keywords were used: All articles had to have "trust" in the title. The title keyword "Trust*" was combined with one or more of the following keywords: "lead*" OR "manag*" OR "govern*". These keywords could be in the title, abstract, or keywords. Finally, the keyword "School*" had to appear in the title, abstract, or keywords. Articles with the following keywords: "Control" "Covid" OR "Academic trust" OR "China" OR "high school") in the title, in the abstract, or as article keywords were excluded, as this eliminated a substantial number of irrelevant research articles from the search.[2] The document type was limited to articles written in English. Articles from the following subject areas were included: social science; business, management, and accounting; arts and humanities; economics, econometrics, and finance; psychology. The search produced 288 hits. The following search criteria for EBSCO were used: All databases were selected. The keywords used were: "Trust*" in the title combined with "Lead*" OR "manag*" OR "Govern*" in the abstract and combined with "School*" in the abstract. This includes peer-reviewed empirical research articles in English. The search produced 66 hits. Combining the Scopus and EBSCO searches provided a total of (288 + 66) 354 articles. The removal of 35 duplicates reduced the number to (354 − 35) 319 articles.

The articles identified in the Scopus and EBSCO searches were all screened using five inclusion criteria, ensuring that the studies answered the research questions and kept the number of studies manageable:

1. The articles had to be based on empirical research and peer-reviewed. More than half of the 319 papers were qualitative descriptive analyses without a focus on impact and conceptual explorations of trust in various forms.

2. The articles had to use data from Western countries. This ensures data comparability, as cultural orientations significantly affect how trust is developed and maintained in organizational settings (Knor 2016).[3]

3. The articles had to be related to primary, secondary, or middle schools.[4]

4. As different terms may represent similar phenomena (Elsbach & van Knippenberg 2020), all relevant articles are included, regardless of the terminology used to describe the leadership or governance style, provided they meet the definition of trust-based leadership and governance. For example, the terms "*relational trust*" (Bryk & Schneider 2002), "*trustworthy professional relationships*" (Smetana et al. 2016), and "*democratic leadership*" (Kars & Inandi 2018) are defined and measured consistently with this article's definition of trust-based leadership.

5. Since trust is a reciprocal phenomenon, it can be assessed both from the leadership's perspective of trusting the subordinate and offering trust-based governance and from the subordinate's perspective of whether they are subjected to trust-based leadership and governance. The variables, therefore, include variables considering both the leader's perspective and the employee's perspective.

Of the remaining 319 hits, 296 were removed for not meeting all five inclusion criteria. Some did not meet one or more of the inclusion criteria (e.g., a Chinese study of a middle school), while others fell outside the scope for other reasons (e.g., by focusing on the role of trust in relation to terrorism, mindfulness, religion, home schooling, etc.). This exclusion reduced the number of relevant articles to 23. *Step 2:* The references featured in the 23 articles identified in Step 1 were all reviewed to include additional studies meeting the four inclusion criteria. This procedure added two further studies. Figure 2 illustrates the systematic identification-and-selection process.

Figure 2. The selection process following PRISMA guidelines
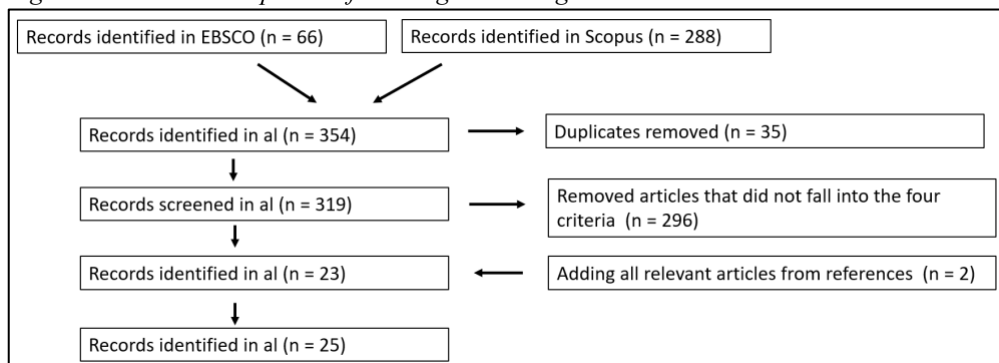
Findings

After presenting the general findings, Research Question 1 is addressed by analyzing the findings related to the impact of trust-based leadership and governance. Thereafter, findings solely relating to the impact of trust-based leadership are presented. The 25 articles also provide more concrete insights for practitioners into how to enable the positive effects of trust. This is elaborated upon in the final part, which addresses Research Question 2, about how data can be used to inform the future implementation of trust-based leadership and governance, thereby helping to secure positive outcomes.

The general features of the identified texts

The text corpus comprises 25 studies published between 2001 and the present (see Table 1 for an overview). Eight studies from 2020 to 2022 reflect a growing interest in examining the impact of trust-based leadership and governance in educational research. Twenty quantitative studies (11 USA, 7 Turkey, 1 Germany, 1 Portugal) use different structural equation modeling (SEM)

analyses based on Likert-scale measurements and data, such as student grades, SES (socioeconomic status), and free lunch. Seven of the studies employ qualitative methods (1 Sweden, 1 Canada, 1 Sweden/Australia, 34 USA). Four of the studies use mixed methods (4 USA). The studies all include comprehensive methodology sections, detailing data collection, questionnaire design, interview method, and analytical methods; for example, including the use of factor analysis and exploratory studies conducted prior to structural regression modeling. The studies are all characterized by a strong methodological design.

The studies' variables are defined and applied somewhat differently: While some measure the impact of both independent variables, others focus solely on trust-based leadership; while some measure student achievement and teaching quality directly, others examine factors indirectly affecting student achievement and teaching quality (e.g., teacher collaboration, commitment, motivation). The variation across studies means that some studies contribute more directly to answering the research questions than others, which is reflected in the extent to which they are referenced. Few qualitative studies are present, likely because the focus is on demonstrating impact, whereas qualitative studies tend to be more descriptive and exploratory in nature.

Table 1. Empirical findings on trust-based leadership (TBL) and trust-based governance (TBG)

Study	Sample	Method	Variables & findings
1. Bryk & Schneider (2002)	400 schools, 12 yrs, US	Longitudinal, multivariate & hierarchical regressions	TBG, TBL, trust in colleagues/parents → ↑ math & literacy; TBG no effect without TBL
2. Adams (2013)	1,039 teachers, 83 US schools	Structural regression	TBG → TBL & trust in colleagues/students ($r=.74$); trust → student performance ($r=.83$)
3. Adams (2020)	963 teachers, 74 US schools	SEM	TBG → teacher need satisfaction ($r=.25$); TBL → teacher need satisfaction ($r=.15$)
4. Adams & Miskell (2016)	785 teachers, 73 US schools	SEM	TBG ($r=.33$) & TBL ($r=.32$) → teacher commitment; both explain 29% variance
5. Tschannen-Moran (2009)	2,355 teachers, 80 US schools	Multiple regression	TBG → teacher professionalism ($r=.56$); TBL → teacher professionalism ($r=.44$)
6. Hoy & Sweetland (2001)	97 US schools	Regression analysis	TBG → TBL ($r=.76$), ↓ trust-spinning ($r=-.74$), ↓ role-conflict ($r=-.71$)
7. Freire & Fernandes (2016)	112 teachers, Portugal	Factor & regression analysis	TBG ↔ TBL ($r=.73$) TBG → teacher empowerment
8. Tschannen-Moran & Gareis (2015)	3,215 teachers, 64 US schools	Multiple regression	Student achievement ↔ TBL ($r=.39$) & school climate ($r=.82$); TBL ↔ climate ($r=.66$); TBL+climate explain 75% of variance in achievement
9. Smetana et al. (2016)	693 teachers, US	Multiple regression	TBL (principal dependability + trust in colleagues) → science achievement ($p=.02$)

Study	Sample	Method	Variables & findings
10. Mayger & Hochbein (2021)	3 schools, 5 yrs, US	Mixed methods (case study)	Lack of trust ↓ alignment; TBL is essential to sustaining a student-centered vision and preventing value-based compromises
11. Louis & Murphy (2017)	3,900 teachers + principals, 116 US schools	Regression & path analysis	TBL ↔ principals' trust in teachers (r=.48); TBL → student support (r=.67); TBL → organizational learning (r=.67), organizational learning → student support(r=.75)
12. Blömeke & Klein (2013)	221 beginning math teachers, Germany	SEM	TBL is associated with teaching quality and teacher job satisfaction
13. Hoy & Tschannen-Moran (2003)	50 US schools	Correlation & factor analysis	TBL ↔ trust in colleagues (r=.54), students/parents (r=.40); TBL ↔ teacher efficacy ↑ & conflict ↓
14. Demir (2015)	378 teachers, 21 schools Turkey	SEM	TBL ↔ organizational trust (r=.59), trust in colleagues (r=.52), parents & students (r=.34); Organizational trust ↔ teacher leadership & capacity building (r=.87)
15. Atik & Celik (2020)	401 teachers, Turkey	SEM	TBL → job satisfaction (r=.19), TBL, empowering leadership & psychological empowerment account for 17% of variance in job satisfaction (sig. results)
16. Parlar, Türkoglu & Cansoy (2022)	409 teachers, Turkey	Regression analysis	TBL → Defensive silence (r=- 0.16), affective commitment (r= 0.47)
17. Cranston (2011)	12 school leaders, Australia	Qualitative interviews	TBL → better information exchange, cohesion, calm climate
18. Daly (2009)	453 teachers, 14 schools, US	Mixed methods, regression	Under sanction-driven governance: TBL mediates collaboration, reduces fear, promotes innovation
19. Edwards-Groves et al. (2016)	5 schools, Australia	Qualitative casestudies	TBL → collaboration, enables implementation of strategic initiatives
20. Banwo, Khalifa & Louis (2021)	4-yr case study, US district	Mixed-method longitudinal	TBL→ positive change, equity, moral obligations, conflict resolution

Study	Sample	Method	Variables & findings
21.Kars & Inandi (2018)	722 teachers, 242 schools, Turkey	Survey	TBL ↔ colleagues (r=.29), students & parents (r=.25), laissez-faire leadership (r= -.65), autocratic leadership (r= -0.55)
22. Kılınç et al. (2021)	397 teachers, Turkey	SEM	TBL ↔ teacher commitment (r=.36); teacher commitment ↔ innovative practices (r=.56)
23. Bektaş et al. (2022)	327 teachers, Turkey	SEM	TBL → Collaboration (r=.16); reflection (r=.16), Experimentation (r=.24)
24. Kavgacı & Öztürk (2023)	397 teachers, Turkey	SEM	TBL ↔ Psy. capital (r=.43); Psy. Capital ↔ work engagement (r=.56); work engagement ↔ turnover intention (r= -0.18)
25. Gericke & Torbjörnsson (2022)	15 teachers, 5 schools, Sweden	Qualitative interviews	TBL → determines ability to implement reforms via collaboration & problem-solving

The impact of trust-based leadership and trust-based governance

Findings related to trust-based governance can be divided into two categories. The first type is exemplified by a case-study by Bryk and Schneider (2002) investigating a case where governance has been decentralized, thereby meeting the criteria for trust-based governance:*"Local units are granted greater autonomy to design flexible, context-sensitive solutions"* and "*Detailed rules and prescriptive procedures are minimized to enable agile decision-making and fast approval of new solutions and work practices."* The remaining six studies are the second type: survey studies. All measure the impact of trust-based governance through teacher-completed surveys. In these studies, the survey questions measure whether structures and systems appear detail-oriented or supportive of personal autonomy, enhance agile work processes, or the opposite; for example, "*Administrative rules at this school are substitutes for professional judgment*," *The administrative hierarchy at this school enables teachers to do their job"* (Hoy & Sweetland 2001, 310), and "*The evaluation system takes more time than it is worth*" (Adams & Miskell 2016, 685). All studies of trust-based governance also measure trust-based leadership. Considered together, they provide interesting insights.

The impact of both variables - trust-based leadership and trust-based governance

Bryk and Schneider (2002) conducted a longitudinal study (10 years) of the "*Chicago school decentralization reform*," a political decision to promote local autonomy by delegating power to the 400 city schools. The reform aligns with trust-based governance, as the local councils were entrusted with authority over budgets, employment procedures, curriculum, etc. They were thus offered autonomy to design flexible, context-sensitive solutions. Bryk and Schneider studied the connections between trust-based governance and leadership, along with trust among colleagues, trust in parents, and student achievement. They found that schools subjected to trust-based governance and with teachers experiencing trust-based leadership and trust in colleagues and parents were all positively linked to student academic performance. Students at schools with positive trust levels were 33% more likely to achieve academic progress than those from schools with low trust in leaders, colleagues, and parents. The research design is a major strength. They used mixed methods (interviews, observations, Likert-scale questionnaires, and student progression measured by grades) and checked for robustness using dummy variables (e.g., measuring socioeconomic factors). Furthermore, the longitudinal analysis monitored the impact of changes to institutions over time and the consistent conditions. As such, the study

demonstrates the positive correlation between trust-based leadership, governance, trust among colleagues, and student achievement.

These findings are confirmed by the six other studies (Adams 2013, 2020; Adams & Miskell 2016; Hoy & Sweetland 2001; Freire & Fernandes 2016; Tschannen-Moran 2009), as they measure the impact of both trust-based leadership and governance, their interaction, and demonstrate a positive association with student achievement, teaching quality, and the conditions indirectly affecting student achievement. Adams (2013, 373) demonstrates positive effects on student achievement, finding that trust-based governance, called "*enabling structures*," had a considerable effect on a culture of collective trust (r = 0.74), which in turn had a considerable effect on student achievement (r = 0.83). The study is based on responses from 1,039 teachers from 83 schools. The use of structural regression modelling is informative, as it can isolate the impact of trust-based governance, revealing it to have a stronger impact than other variables (e.g., the free lunch effect). The findings recommend that district leaders pay attention to the governance and leadership style, as trust levels have a "*strong direct effect on school performance*" (Adams 2013, 362). In line with Adams (2013), Hoy and Sweetland (2001, 313) unveil how trust-based leadership and governance correlate positively with less employee gossip (r = −.74, p < .01) and less role conflict (r = −0.71, p < .01). This supports how trust-based governance is associated with a collaboration culture that influences student achievement positively.

Tschannen-Moran (2009, 232) confirms the importance of trust-based leadership and governance, showing how, combined with trust in colleagues, students, and parents, it makes employees "*take their work seriously, demonstrate a high level of commitment, and go beyond minimum expectations to meet the needs of students.*" The study is remarkable due to the population size (2,355 employees from 80 middle schools in the US) and samples with high alpha coefficients and high reliability. Tschannen-Moran (2009, 218) concludes that:

> For schools to foster greater teacher professionalism, school leaders would do well to resist adopting a bureaucratic orientation, with its implicit distrust. They would be better served by exercising their administrative authority with a professional orientation (…) and adopting practices that lead to strong trust among school leaders, teachers, students, and parents.

Tschannen-Moran describes how the experience of more flexible and less rigid rules correlates with high trust, which leads to more professionalism. Adams and Miskell (2016, 375) support this finding, showing how a combination of trust-based leadership and governance affects the instructional capacity, defined as employee ability "*to convert information into knowledge and knowledge into changes that respond to learning needs of students.*" These findings reveal the relationship between trust-based leadership and governance and an organization's ability to respond to information and knowledge, translating them into actions that create value for students. Adams and Miskell (2016, 696) also show how trust-based leadership and governance affect employee commitment. The two variables *"explain 29% of the variance in employees' commitment"* and enhance their sense of competence and effectiveness (Adams 2020, 153).

Trust-based governance not only enhances commitment but also empowers teachers, as illustrated by Freire and Fernandes (2016) in a teacher survey study. Using regression analyses, they demonstrate that when teachers experience trust-based governance (e.g., access to information that promotes visibility and transparency) together with opportunities for collaboration, it has a positive influence on their sense of empowerment, which in turn positively impacts teacher performance (Altun 2017; Ryan & Deci 2000; Ryan et al. 2023).

Collectively, the studies confirm the significance of structural conditions, as the presence of trust-based governance increases the likelihood of improved outcomes, both directly through higher student performance (Bryk & Schneider 2002; Adams 2013), and indirectly by shaping teaching style, commitment, empowerment, collaboration, and trust in school leadership (Adams 2020; Adams & Miskell 2016; Hoy & Sweetland 2001; Tschannen-Moran 2009; Fernandes & Freire 2016).

Although the findings from these seven studies are consistent, one important nuance should not be overlooked: If the variable is isolated, Bryk and Schneider's (2002) study shows that trust-based governance does not relate to enhanced student achievement. Among the 400 schools included in the study that were subjected to trust-based governance, those without trust-

based leadership (referred to as "relational trust" in the study) did not show improved student achievement. Measured over three years, students in schools *without* trust-based leadership were statistically unlikely to achieve academic progression. Bryk and Schneider (2002, 111) conclude: "*These data provide our first evidence directly linking the development of relational trust in the school community and long-term improvements in academic productivity.*"

Relying on these findings, politicians cannot expect trust-based governance that merely alters structural conditions and enhances autonomy to promote welfare. The ability of local leaders to enact trust-based leadership seems crucial, as trust is the "glue" that enables leaders and employees to communicate about how to use the autonomy to improve student achievement (Bryk & Schneider 2002).

Despite their distance from the classroom, the findings show that policymakers and administrative leaders can indirectly impact student learning, as student learning is related to trust-based governance. However, the findings suggest that the positive impact appears contingent upon teachers experiencing trust-based leadership and governance at the local level. This finding aligns with trust theory describing trust as a reciprocal phenomenon (Bentzen 2019; Hoy & DiPaola 2008), implying that the impact of trust-based governance only materializes when experienced in practice by subordinates.

The impact of trust-based leadership on student achievement and teaching quality

This section examines the direct impact of trust-based leadership on student achievement and teaching quality. Three American studies show how trust-based leadership relates to student achievement, providing empirical support for the claim that trust-based leadership is associated with equitable student achievement (Mayger & Hochbein 2021; Smetana et al. 2016; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis 2015). Based on responses from 3,215 teachers across 64 schools and using multiple regression analysis, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) found that trust-based leadership has a moderate, direct relationship ($r = 0.43$, $p < 0.01$) with student achievement. They found that trust-based leadership and the "school climate" composite explain 75% of the student-achievement variance (Tschannen-Moran and Gareis 2015, 81), concluding that "*without trust, principals cannot be effective leaders*" (p. 84). The study is interesting because it also measures "instructional leadership" that shows a lower impact. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015, 82) conclude: "*it is more important for a principal to be friendly, approachable, and open to input from teachers*" than to "*be aware of and deeply engaged in the instructional program of the school.*" In line with these findings, Blömeke and Klein (2013) conduct a survey of 221 beginning teachers, demonstrating how trust-based leadership, characterized by perceived autonomy, appreciation, and support, enhanced their ability to provide mathematics instruction and classroom management. Both components are crucial for student learning (Nordenbo et al. 2008). Likewise, using regression analyses based on surveys from 3,900 teachers, Louis and Murphy (2017) show how teachers' perceptions of trust-based leadership have a positive association ($r = .67$) with their ability to support students.

Trust-based leadership indirectly impacts student achievement and teaching quality

Several studies based on quantitative teacher surveys reveal trust-based leadership to be associated with various forms of behavior, all of which contribute to collaboration that indirectly benefits student academic achievement and teaching quality. Trust-based leadership encourages employees to give feedback, share knowledge, engage in professional reflection, mutual learning, and encourage innovation, and it enables an open, inclusive dialogue together with conflict resolution (Bektaş et al. 2022; Demir 2015; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran 2003; Kilic & Yavuz 2021; Louis & Murphy 2017; Parlar et al. 2022). Consistent with these findings, based on a qualitative case study involving five schools, Edwards-Groves et al. (2016) also find that trust-based leadership strengthens collaboration and enables strategic agendas to be effectively implemented. Cranston (2011) complements this picture with qualitative interviews from 12 school leaders. His study demonstrates that trust-based leadership promotes stability, cohesion, and an inclusive, supportive school climate. The mixed-methods study by Daly (2009) adopts a slightly different perspective, examining the role of trust-based leadership under conditions of external pressure arising from externally imposed sanctions. It finds that trust-based leadership

reduces fear and enhances teachers' agency and their sense of security in experimenting with new instructional practices, which ultimately enables transformational collaboration.

Some of the studies also measure the impact of trust-based leadership in the form of improved employee motivation, self-efficacy, and psychological empowerment (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran 2003; Tschannen-Moran 2009), and show how trust-based leadership correlates positively with job satisfaction (Atik & Celik 2020; Kavgaci & Öztürk 2023). These studies are informative, as motivation, self-efficacy, and empowerment affect teacher performance (Altun 2017; Ryan & Deci 2000; Ryan et al. 2023). Thus, trust-based leadership indirectly benefits student achievement and teaching quality.

Trust-based leadership is associated with foregrounding moral obligations

Several studies demonstrate that trust-based leadership also enhances professional judgment and promotes ethical conduct. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) find that trust paves the way for difficult but important conversations, as employees feel more comfortable approaching their leaders with questions. Mayger and Hochbein (2021) investigate the relationship between trust-based leadership and student achievement through a mixed-methods 5-year case study involving three schools. The methodological approach adds depth to the findings, elucidating how trust-based leadership contributes to the foregrounding of moral commitment. They conclude that trust-based leadership is essential, as it translates into value-based dialogues in which leaders do not allow the "student-centered vision" to be compromised, which impacts student achievement. Similarly, other studies find that trust-based leadership fosters problem-solving (Gericke & Torbjörnsson 2022) and a supportive atmosphere in which challenges are openly discussed (Banwo et al. 2021). As such, trust-based leadership entails addressing (rather than neglecting) critical issues that may hinder student achievement. Therefore, foregrounding moral obligations is expected to have a positive indirect impact on students' achievement.

Up to this point, the focus has been on the direct and indirect impact of trust-based leadership and governance. In the next section, the 25 articles are examined for the knowledge they can contribute regarding how best to promote trust in the public sector.

Building trust-based leadership and governance: lessons from research

In the following section, the findings are analyzed with the aim of answering Research Question 2. The focus here is on the dynamics of how trust is built in practice in the public sector and on what may be important in relation to implementing trust-based governance.

Trust enhances behavior and collaboration, which cannot be imposed

Taken together, the 25 studies reveal a pattern that shows how trust-based leadership and governance can positively impact student achievement. This can be understood from the fact that trust is a reciprocal phenomenon: When employees experience trust from leadership and trust-based governance, their own trust increases - not only toward leaders (Atik & Celik 2020; Freire & Fernandes 2016; Louis & Murphy 2017), but also toward colleagues, students, and parents (Demir 2015; Hoy & Sweetland 2001). This reciprocity can promote broader organizational trust, defined as general trust across all relationships. This explains why trust-based leadership and governance can indirectly benefit students by enhancing collaboration among all stakeholders, which in turn supports achievement (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Trust enhances collaboration, which improves school outcomes
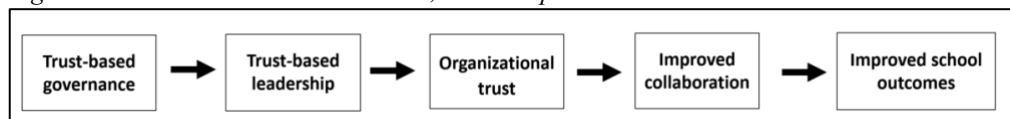
It is worth noting that the positive behaviors increased by trust, such as enhanced knowledge sharing (Cranston 2011), exceeding minimum expectations (Tcshannen-Moran 2009), and foregrounding moral obligations (Banwo et al. 2021), are behaviors that cannot be enforced through power; that is, politicians and administrative leaders cannot guarantee them. However,

findings reveal how trust-based leadership and governance can increase the likelihood of these positive behaviors. Therefore, if policymakers and leaders aim to promote collaborative behavior, research suggests they should practice and uphold trust-based leadership and governance. This knowledge is relevant for informing future implementation of trust, because one of the reasons governance has become so restrictive in practice is that policymakers, guided by bureaucratic logics, have attempted to ensure quality for citizens through procedures and a focus on rule compliance (Andersen et al. 2020). Scholars have shown how such problems can lead policymakers to abandon trust-based approaches, based on a bureaucratic argument that more rules ensure quality (Nyhan, 2000, Bentzen 2021). These findings thus provide decision-makers with an alternative argument, grounded in trust-based research, recommending that they be deliberate about what can and cannot be ensured through rules. The findings can be interpreted as a recommendation for policymakers to consider whether there is empirical evidence that regulations can achieve a desired behavioral change, or whether the regulations risk producing the opposite effect of what was intended.

Subordinates' experience of trust signals welfare outcomes.

Notably, 19 of the studies measure whether subordinates (as trustors) experience trust, finding that their experience of trust is associated with student achievement, teaching quality, and factors that positively impact student achievement.

This is interesting because the subordinates' experience of trust thus becomes an indicator of student achievement, meaning that the level of subordinates' experience of trust in surveys can inform policymakers about the likelihood of improved student achievement. For example, when subordinates in a school district experience rigid procedures that hinder their work (low trust-based governance), student achievement could be expected to decline (Adams 2013).

This suggests that politicians and administrative leaders cannot simply introduce a new policy of trust-based leadership and governance and expect it to be effective; they must also ensure that subordinates perceive the trust being extended. In practice, this may mean that administrators might do well to evaluate during the implementation by collecting feedback from leaders and employees on how they perceive the development of trust.

Leaders play a key role in developing trust in organizations

Despite finding a positive impact of trust-based leadership and governance, several precautions must be taken. Bryk and Schneider (2002) show how trust-based governance can disadvantage students, depending on the presence of trust-based leadership in the local units, and several scholars describe how trust-based leadership is crucial to fostering trust among school personnel (Kars & Inandi 2018; Tschannen-Moran & Gerais 2015; Wahlstrom & Louis 2008). Cranston (2011, 60) claims that "*the principal plays a key role in nurturing these relationships* [among employees]." Forsyth et al. (2011, 64) elaborate on this claim, explaining how:

> It is not the role of school leaders to reduce vulnerabilities but instead to make it possible for school agents to take risks. Principals do this by being supportive, open, collegial, authentic, and considerate as well as by cultivating boundary-spanning cooperation that encourages collective, not unilateral, problem-solving.

This paragraph highlights an intriguing shift. Whereas accountability-focused leadership seeks to eliminate any risk that might damage accountability measures, trust-based leadership focuses on supporting employees in coming to terms with risk, acknowledging that trust is desirable despite the risk it entails.

As such, trust-based leadership is important, as it can contribute to subordinates' willingness to accept offers of trust-based governance, such as more autonomy and responsibility (Bentzen 2019). Other studies confirm this, revealing how trust-based leadership is crucial for reforms and other development agendas to be implemented and to function as intended (Adams 2013; Edwards-Groves et al. 2016; Postholm 2019; Vallentin & Thygesen 2017). Louis (2007) concludes that the level of trust in the local school determines whether innovations introduced by the central office administration will succeed. Politicians and administrative leaders should therefore value trust-based leadership as a central factor if enhancing trust is to lead to improved school outcomes.

Trust is not laissez-faire - it's about addressing problems head-on and requires a clear mission

A major concern regarding the implementation of trust-based leadership and governance is whether self-serving subordinates abuse trust (Schillemans 2013) or become "paternalistic" and disregard citizen interests (Le Grand 2010, 65). This concern may be due to a tendency to perceive trust as a naïve or unconditional phenomenon, leading to skepticism regarding the positive role of trust and believing that some degree of distrust is positive (Six 2013; Vallentin & Thygesen 2017, 8). The findings from this review refute these worries, demonstrating that trust should not be understood as a naïve phenomenon and that it is incompatible with *laissez-faire* leadership (Kars & Inandi 2018). The studies included in this review all define trust as benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open behavior or attitude (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy 2000), indicating that a naïve conceptualization of trust has not taken hold in the research field. In this light, it is understandable that researchers find high levels of trust enable problems to be addressed and competence gaps to be resolved through collaboration and dialogue (Banwo et al. 2021; Mayger & Hochbein 2021).

Furthermore, several studies show how trust-based leadership and governance contribute to greater alignment with the organizational mission (Banwo et al. 2021; Hoy & Sweetland 2001; Mayger & Hochbein 2021; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis 2015). Harris et al. (2013) describe this impact as an "alignment of strategy." Taken together, these studies demonstrate a relationship between trust and a clear organizational mission (see Table 2).

These findings emphasize that the trust-based leadership included in this research is not enacted as passive or *laissez-faire* leadership, where employees are left to themselves with an unknown or unclear mission. Further research may uncover more detailed information about the mission clarity–trust relationship.

Table 2: Illustration of how mission focus is related to trust-based leadership and governance

	Leadership	Governance
High Trust	Supporting a coordinated mission focus	Structures promoting mission fulfillment
Low Trust *Laissez-faire* or micro-management	Allowing a defocused mission	Lack of structures to support mission fulfillment, or structures that hinder mission fulfillment

Discussion

Several studies demonstrate that trust-based leadership and governance contribute to improved student achievement and enhanced teaching quality. Some findings indicate that this occurs through stronger collaboration, as well as greater teacher commitment and motivation. Together, these factors directly and indirectly strengthen school outcomes.

Importantly, the findings provide a more nuanced understanding of the types of behaviors that trust-based leadership and governance promote among employees. Trust encourages staff to act on their moral obligations, to engage in problem-solving and conflict resolution, and to demonstrate constructive behaviors, for example, by exceeding formal requirements and reducing their involvement in counterproductive practices such as gossip.

These findings support theories suggesting that leaders and employees share common interests and should not view each other as opponents (Schillemans 2013), as the subordinates actually become motivated to exceed requirements when experiencing trust. This stands in contrast to an NPM-based approach, where leaders generally control self-interested individuals with external motivation. At the same time, the results also show that when teachers experience trust-based leadership and governance, their trust in parents and students increases (Bryk & Schneider 2002; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran 2007; Kars & Inandi 2018). This refutes concerns

about strong professionals exploiting trust to behave "paternalistically" and disregard citizen interests (Le Grand 2010, 65).

It is also notable that the findings help us further understand trust not merely as a *"magic concept"* (Bentzen & Bringselius 2023, 1) where different actors can assign different meanings to trust. The "*magic concept*"- understanding tends to make it unclear how trust-based leadership and governance are actually defined, and entails ambiguity regarding what it requires when political or administrative leaders aim to increase trust. Several of the findings indicate that leadership plays a central role (Bryk & Schneider 2002; Tschannen-Moran & Gerais 2015; Wahlstrom & Louis 2008, Cranston 2011). In other words, even though decisionmakers implement a trust-based structure, trust-based leadership is still needed to ensure the development of a trust-based culture. In addition, the findings show that trust-based leadership should not be confused with laissez-faire leadership (Kars & Inandi 2018) or with a lack of clear direction (Banwo et al. 2021; Hoy & Sweetland 2001; Mayger & Hochbein 2021). The findings align with other scholars who point to the risk of assuming that trust-based governance is only about removing rules, as they emphasize instead the importance of achieving an appropriate balance between control and trust (Vallentin & Thygesen 2017), adjusting exiting rules and enabling subordinates to internalize the values behind them, as rules can subsequently be perceived as meaningful rather than rigid or meaningless (Six 2013; Weibel 2007), and also provide an important basis for the constitution of trust (Bachmann 2003).

A key challenge when implementing trust is that decision-makers cannot be certain whether trust actually permeates the organization. Measurement methods developed in research might be applied in practice to address this challenge. The "enabling structure" (Hoy & Sweetland 2001) measurement method, for example, measures trust-based leadership and governance, operationalizing it using specific formulations, such as "*administrative rules in this school are guides to solutions rather than rigid procedures*" (Hoy & Sweetland 2001, 310). Such operationalizations are associated with a positive impact on student achievement and teaching quality (Hoy & Sweetland 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis 2015). As such, these are relevant as they offer a way for decision-makers to monitor and ensure that employees actually experience trust-based governance. This is also described by Adams (2013, 363): "*Regular and consistent measures of collective trust have the potential to improve how administrators at site and district levels manage the implementation of improvement strategies designed to build capacity.*" As such, trust measurement methods developed in research can be adjusted and used in practice to indicate whether trust is implemented successfully.

What also makes this measurement method distinctive is that subordinates' experience of trust, when measured, not only indicates whether trust has successfully been enhanced, but also whether a positive impact on school outcomes can be expected. As such, this approach to monitoring is interesting because politicians aiming to implement a trust reform may face a dilemma: they wish to phase out classic accountability, which standardizes and monitors task execution in a manner that hinders flexible solutions (Daliri-Ngametua et al. 2022). At the same time, politicians remain accountable for the quality of welfare services and must ensure that they are on the right track. Scholars have therefore called for the development of more "intelligent accountability" (Niedlich et al. 2021, 133). A measurement of the subordinates' experience with trust-based leadership and governance could serve as an "intelligent" trust-based accountability method, providing politicians with valuable insights without introducing resource-intensive accountability systems that hinder flexible solutions. This article contributes to trust research by advocating for the potential of developing measurement methods in the form of "intelligent accountability" that can be used to measure whether a trust reform increases the experience of trust-based leadership and governance.

There might be one more advantage to monitoring in this way. Scholars argue that the successful development of trust-based leadership and governance depends on a *"strong strategic and local anchoring*," "*experimental reform activities*," and "*long-term commitment*" (Bentzen & Bringselius 2023, 764). This warns against expecting big effects in a short time, as some level of inertia (Mahoney & Thelen 2010) is to be expected. By planning sample measurements of the experience of trust over a period of several years, policymakers can also

make it clearer that this is an ongoing development effort, which is evaluated and adjusted, thereby creating stronger anchoring.

Strengths and limitations of the study

When interpreting the results, it is essential to note that the research string requires "trust" in the title and the use of empirical studies. This has likely excluded some studies. For example, studies of the Finnish school system are not included despite high levels of trust-based leadership and governance, together with high student achievement (Sahlberg 2011). Widening the research scope and including more terms related to trust (e.g., "distributed leadership") in the search string might reveal additional relevant studies.

As regards generalizability to other sectors, school outcomes may be more influenced by trust-based leadership and governance than those in other domains. As trust is described as a strong, multi-dimensional factor in education - operating horizontally among colleagues, students, and parents (Hoy & DiPaola 2008) - it can seem more vital in schools, as professional collaboration among teachers and with students depends on openness and shared responsibility; for example, with respect to how to communicate with students and parents about the importance of homework or the social norms to which students must adhere. In contrast, a homecare worker can more easily assist an elderly citizen with bathing, regardless of whether they have high trust in their colleagues. It is therefore likely that, although trustful collaboration is generally important in welfare services, differences exist in the school sector. Moreover, teachers can be considered strong professionals (Noordegraaf 2007), which possibly affects their willingness to accept the trust offered compared to other professions. The findings must therefore be interpreted cautiously when applied to other settings. Future research could shed light on the generalizability.

A critic might wonder why there are no cases in which the removal of rules and display of trust produce negative effects. However, it should be noted that one of the defining factors of trust-based leadership is "competence." This means that surveys on trust-based leadership often include questions about leadership competency. This makes theoretical sense, as trust is defined by the ability (or competence) (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy 2000) to live up to the values espoused, and Bentzen et al. (forthcoming, 6) stress "competence" as an important component of trust-based leadership, as the leaders "*must have the necessary skills and resources to fulfil the trust placed in one.*" Still, from another perspective, it is notable that "competence" is included as an item, because one can assume a relationship between the perception of "competent leadership" and positive outcomes, regardless of leadership style.

Future research directions: Assessing the efficacy when implementing trust

A research gap emerges when examining the findings in this literature review on the impact of trust-based governance and leadership, primarily quantitative survey research conducted in American schools, and then considering research on enhancing trust in Scandinavian countries, primarily qualitative and descriptive research conducted in Scandinavian institutions (Bentzen et al. 2020; Bentzen & Bringselius 2023; Hjelmar & Leth Jakobsen 2021). Several survey methods developed to assess trust-based leadership and governance reveal a positive impact in the form of improved school outcomes (Adams 2013; Bryk and Schneider 2002; Smetana et al. 2016; Tschannen-Moan & Gerais 2015). Aside from the Bryk and Schneider (2002) study, these outcomes are measured as cross-sectional snapshots. In contrast, Scandinavian research on the implementation of trust in public administration relies more on qualitative case studies to assess impact. It would therefore be relevant to adapt these survey methods on welfare outcomes to the Scandinavian context and combine them with qualitative research to examine the effects of political initiatives aimed at increasing trust-based leadership and governance.

Conclusion

Building on the Scandinavian interest in strengthening trust as an alternative to control-based governance, this study set out to examine whether there is empirical support for the assumption that increased trust leads to improved welfare outcomes. Drawing on research from the

educational sector, the study highlights several positive associations between trust-based leadership and governance and school outcomes. At the same time, it identifies factors that condition whether such positive effects can be realized. The findings thus demonstrate that decisionmakers seeking to promote trust cannot simply reduce regulations and expand autonomy; trust-based governance still relies on rules and frameworks. Moreover, it requires trust-oriented leadership, as school leaders play a key role in fostering a collaborative culture and maintaining a clear focus on the school's mission.

The findings highlight a research gap in the implementation of trust and call for further research into how trust is implemented, as well as the continued development of measurement methods to assess and inform trust enhancement.

The article contributes to practice by arguing that research-based methods used to measure trust can also be applied in practice to inform the implementation phase. Measuring trust-based leadership and governance in the implementation process can provide guiding principles and function as an instrument for assessing whether the ambitions to foster trust are being successfully achieved. As such, the measurements can serve as trust-based accountability in public governance, evaluating the ability to promote trust.

Acknowledgments/Funding

Notes

[1] When used in quotes, "teacher" refers to an "employee."

[2] "*Control*" was tested as a keyword, but it returned 30,000+ irrelevant results. After reviewing 100 unrelated articles, I decided to exclude it to streamline the search.

"*Academic trust*" is the name of a school's structure in England and is not related to "trust" in the context of this research. Aiming to exclude research around "academic trust," this term was excluded. The search string returned several studies related to Covid and trust. To eliminate these, articles with the term "*Covid*" were excluded. Several Chinese studies on trust within the school system appeared in the search results. As the focus is limited to Western studies, "China" was excluded from the search string.

[3] Turkey and Israel are included because their school systems are comparable to those of Western countries.

[4] Three studies (Adams 2013; Cansoy et al. 2020; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis 2015) with a small percentage of the respondents from high schools were also included, as the majority of respondents was from "lower" schools.

References

Adams, C. M. (2013). Collective Trust: A Social Indicator of Instructional Capacity. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *51*(3), 363–382. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231311311519

Adams, C. M. (2020). Teacher Trust in District Administration: An Overlooked Relational Support for Teachers. *Journal of School Leadership*, *30*(2), 127–145. https://doi.org/10.1177/1052684619852714

Adams, C. M., & Miskell, R. C. (2016). Teacher Trust in District Administration: A Promising Line of Inquiry. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *52*(4), 675–706. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X16652202

Altun, M. (2017). The Effects of Teacher Commitment on Student Achievement: A Case Study in Iraq. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *7*(11), Pages 417–426. https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v7-i11/3475

Alvesson, M., & Sandberg, J. (2020). The Problematizing Review: A Counterpoint to Elsbach and Van Knippenberg's Argument for Integrative Reviews. *Journal of Management Studies*, *57*(6), 1290–1304. https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12582

Andersen, L. B., Greve, C., Klausen, K. K., & Torfing, J. (2020). *Offentlige styringsparadigmer: Konkurrence og sameksistens*. Djøf Publishing.

Atik, S., & Celik, O. T. (2020). An Investigation of the Relationship between School Principals' Empowering Leadership Style and Teachers' Job Satisfaction: The Role of Trust and Psychological Empowerment. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, *12*(3). https://doi.org/10.15345/iojes.2020.03.014

Bachmann, R. (2003). Trust and Power as Means of Coordinating the Internal Relations of the Organization: A Conceptual Framework. In B. Nooteboom & F. Six (Eds.), *The Trust Process in Organizations*. Edward Elgar Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781843767350.00010

Banwo, B. O., Khalifa, M., & Seashore Louis, K. (2021). Exploring Trust: Culturally Responsive and Positive School Leadership. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *60*(3), 323–339. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-03-2021-0065

Bektaş, F., Kılınç, A. Ç., & Gümüş, S. (2022). The Effects of Distributed Leadership on Teacher Professional Learning: Mediating Roles of Teacher Trust in Principal and Teacher Motivation. *Educational Studies*, *48*(5), 602–624. https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2020.1793301

Bentzen, T. Ø. (2019). The Birdcage Is Open, but Will the Bird Fly? How Interactional and Institutional Trust Interplay in Public Organisations. *Journal of Trust Research*, *9*(2), 185–202. https://doi.org/10.1080/21515581.2019.1633337

Bentzen, T. Ø. (2021). Breaking the vicious circle of escalating control: Connecting politicians and public employees through stewardship. *Administrative Sciences*, 11(3), 63. https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci11030063

Bentzen, T. Ø. (2022). The Tripod of Trust: A Multilevel Approach to Trust-Based Leadership in Public Organizations. *Public Management Review*, 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2022.2132279

Bentzen, T. Ø., & Bringselius, L. (2023). Translating Trust as a Magic Concept in Public Sector Reforms: A Comparative Study of the Danish and Swedish Trust Reform. *International Public Management Journal*, *26*(5), 764–784. https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2023.2223198

Bentzen, T. Ø., Sørensen, E., & Torfing, J. (2020). Strengthening Public Service Production, Administrative Problem Solving, and Political Leadership through Co-creation of Innovative Public Value Outcomes? *Innovation Journal*, *25*(1), 1–28.

Bentzen, T. Ø., Six, F., & Op de Beeck, S. (2025). Trust, Control and Motivation in Public Organisations. In F. Six, J. A. Hamm, D. Latusek, E. van Zimmeren, & K. Verhoest (Eds.), *Handbook on Trust in Public Governance* (pp. 408–424). Edward Elgar Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781802201406.00033

Bentzen, T. Ø., Winsvold, M. S. Six, F. (forthcoming). Beyond the Birdcage: Why Regulatory Context Matters Less than a Trust Supportive Culture. *(Journal name unknown)*

Bentzen, T. Ø., & Torfing, J. (2022). COVID-19-Induced Governance Transformation: How External Shocks May Spur Cross-Organizational Collaboration and Trust-Based Management. *Public Administration*, 1–18. 10.1111/padm.12881

Blömeke, S., & Klein, P. (2013). When Is a School Environment Perceived as Supportive by Beginning Mathematics Teachers? Effects of Leadership, Trust, Autonomy and Appraisal on Teaching Quality. *International Journal of Science and Mathematics Education*, *11*(4), 1029–1048. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10763-013-9424-x

Bøgh Andersen, L., & Holm Pedersen, L. (2012). Public Service Motivation and Professionalism. *International Journal of Public Administration*, *35*(1), 46–57. https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2011.635278

Bozeman, B., & Feeney, M. K. (2011). *Rules and Red Tape: A Prism for Public Administration Theory and Research* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315701059

Bryk, A. S., & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement*. Russell Sage Foundation. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7758/9781610440967

Covey, S. M. R. & Merrill, R. R. (2006). *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing that Changes Everything.* Simon and Schuster.

Cranston, J. (2011). Relational Trust: The Glue that Binds a Professional Learning Community. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, *57*(1), 59–72. https://doi.org/10.55016/ojs/ajer.v57i1.55455

Daliri-Ngametua, R., Hardy, I., & Creagh, S. (2022). Data, Performativity and the Erosion of Trust in Teachers. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *52*(3), 391–407. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2021.2002811

Daly, A. J. (2009). Rigid Response in an Age of Accountability: The Potential of Leadership and Trust. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *45*(2), 168–216. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X08330499

DeHart-Davis, L. (2008). Green Tape: A Theory of Effective Organizational Rules. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *19*(2), 361–384. https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mun004

Delhey, J., & Newton, K. (2004). *Social Trust: Global Pattern or Nordic Exceptionalism?* WZB Discussion Paper, No. SP I 2004-202, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung. Retrieved from http://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/44134

Demir, K. (2015). The Effect of Organizational Trust on the Culture of Teacher Leadership in Primary Schools. *Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Bilimleri/Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, *15*(3), 621–634. psyh. https://doi.org/10.12738/estp.2015.3.2337

Denyer, D., & Tranfield, D. (2009). Producing a Systematic Review. In *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Research Methods* (pp. 671–689). Sage.

Dirks, K. T., & Ferrin, D. L. (2001). The Role of Trust in Organizational Settings. *Organization Science*, *12*(4), 450–467. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.12.4.450.10640

Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological Safety and Learning Behavior in Work Teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *44*(2), 350–383. https://doi.org/10.2307/2666999

Edmondson, A. C., & Lei, Z. (2014). Psychological Safety: The History, Renaissance, and Future of an Interpersonal Construct. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, *1*(1), 23–43. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-031413-091305

Edwards-Groves, C., Grootenboer, P., & Ronnerman, K. (2016). Facilitating a Culture of Relational Trust in School-Based Action Research: Recognising the Role of Middle Leaders. *Educational Action Research*, *24*(3), 369–386. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2015.1131175

Elsbach, K. D., & van Knippenberg, D. (2020). Creating High-Impact Literature Reviews: An Argument for 'Integrative Reviews'. *Journal of Management Studies*, *57*(6), 1277–1289. https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12581

Forsyth, P. B., Adams, C. M., & Hoy, W. K. (2011). *Collective Trust: Why Schools Can't Improve without It*. Teachers College Press.

Freire, C., & Fernandes, A. (2016). Search for Trustful Leadership in Secondary Schools: Is Empowerment the Solution? *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *44*(6), 892–916. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143215578447

Fulmer, C. A., & Gelfand, M. J. (2012). At What Level (and in Whom) We Trust: Trust Across Multiple Organizational Levels. *Journal of Management*, *38*(4), 1167–1230. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206312439327

Gericke, N., & Torbjörnsson, T. (2022). Supporting Local School Reform toward Education for Sustainable Development: The Need for Creating and Continuously Negotiating a Shared Vision and Building Trust. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, *53*(4), 231–249. https://doi.org/10.1080/00958964.2022.2102565

Härenstam, A., Björk, L., & Corin, L. (2024). Trust Chains in Public Sector Organizations and Their Significance for Work Unit Performance and Employee Turnover Intention.

International Public Management Journal, 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2024.2322142

Harris, J., Caldwell, B., & Longmuir, F. (2013). *Literature Review: A Culture of Trust Enhances Performance*. Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Melbourne. https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/literature-review---a-culture-of-trust-enhances-performance.pdf

Hjelmar, U., & Leth Jakobsen, M. (2021). Frikommuneforsøg bør (også) forstås ud fra en innovationsdoktrin. *Politica*, *53*(3), 218–239. https://doi.org/10.7146/politica.v53i3.130452

Hoy, W. K., & DiPaola, M. (2008). *Improving Schools: Studies in Leadership and Culture*. Emerald.

Hoy, W. K., & Sweetland, S. R. (2001). Designing Better Schools: The Meaning and Measure of Enabling School Structures. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *37*(3), 296–321. https://doi.org/10.1177/00131610121969334

Hoy, W. K., & Tschannen-Moran, M. (2003). The Conceptualization and Measurement of Faculty Trust in Schools. In W. K. Hoy & C. G. Miskel (Eds) *Studies in Leading and Organizing Schools*. Emerald, 181–207.

Huey, L., Ferguson, L., & Ricciardelli, R. (2024). "It's All About Covering Your…": The Unintended Consequences of Police Accountability Measures. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, *24*(3), 585–607. https://doi.org/10.1177/17488958221140551

Jacobsen, C. B., Hvitved, J., & Andersen, L. B. (2014). Command and Motivation: How the Perception of External Interventions Relates to Intrinsic Motivation and Public Service Motivation. *Public Administration*, *92*(4), 790–806. https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12024

Jensen, U. T., Andersen, L. B., & Jacobsen, C. B. (2019). *Only When We Agree!* How Value Congruence Moderates the Impact of Goal-Oriented Leadership on Public Service Motivation. *Public Administration Review*, *79*(1), 12–24. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13008

Kars, M., & Inandi, Y. (2018). Relationship between School Principals' Leadership Behaviors and Teachers' Organizational Trust. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, *18*, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2018.74.8

Kavgaci, H., & Öztürk, A. (2023). How Distributed Leadership and Teachers' Psychological Capital Influence Turnover Intention? Understanding The Mediating Role of Trust in Principal and Work Engagement. *Participatory Educational Research*, *10*(1), 190–212. https://doi.org/10.17275/per.23.11.10.1

Kiliç, M. Y., & Yavuz, M. (2021). The Evaluation of Authentic Leadership in Terms of Trust in Manager and Schools' Levels of Openness to Change. *Otantik Liderliğin, Yöneticiye Güven ve Okulların Değişime Açıklık Düzeyleri Bakımından Değerlendirilmesi.*, *50*(2), 1033–1068. Academic Search Complete. 10.14812/cuefd.863251

Leana, C. R., & Pil, F. K. (2006). Social Capital and Organizational Performance: Evidence from Urban Public Schools. *Organization Science*, *17*(3), 353–366. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1060.0191

Le Grand, Julian (2010). Knights and Knaves Return: Public Service Motivation and the Delivery of Public Services. *International Public Management Journal* 13 (1): 56-71. 10.1080/10967490903547290

Louis, K. S. (2007). Trust and Improvement in Schools. *Journal of Educational Change*, *8*(1), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-006-9015-5

Louis, K. S., & Murphy, J. (2017). Trust, Caring and Organizational Learning: The Leader's Role. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *55*(1), 103–126. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-07-2016-0077

Luhmann. (2017). *Trust and Power*. (C. Morgan & M. King, Eds.). Cambridge: Polity Press.

McEvily, B., & Tortoriello, M. (2011). Measuring Trust in Organisational Research: Review and Recommendations. *Journal of Trust Research*, *1*(1), 23–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/21515581.2011.552424

Mahoney, J., & Thelen, K. (2010). A Theory of Gradual Institutional Change. In J. Mahoney & K. Thelen (Eds.), *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power* (pp. 1–37). Cambridge University Press https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511806414.003

Mayger, L. K., & Hochbein, C. D. (2021). Growing Connected: Relational Trust and Social Capital in Community Schools. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, *26*(3), 210–235. https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2020.1824676

Meier, D. (2003). *In Schools We Trust: Creating Communities of Learning in an Era of Testing and Standardization*. Beacon Press.

Moynihan, D. P. (2010). A Workforce of Cynics? The Effects of Contemporary Reforms on Public 10.1080/10967490903547167

Service Motivation. *International Public Management Journal*, *13*(1), 24–34

Niedlich, S., Kallfaß, A., Pohle, S., & Bormann, I. (2021). A Comprehensive View of Trust in Education: Conclusions from a Systematic Literature Review. *Review of Education*, *9*(1), 124–158. https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3239

Noordegraaf, M. 2007. "From 'Pure' to 'Hybrid' Professionalism: Present-Day Professionalism in Ambiguous Public Domains." *Administration & Society*, *39*(6), 761–785. 10.1177/0095399707304434

Nordenbo, S. E., Larsen, M. S., Tiftikçi, N., Wendt, R. E., & Østergaard, S. (2008). *Lærerkompetanser og elevers læring i barnehage og skole*: Et systematisk review utført for Kunnskapsdepartementet. The Danish Clearinghouse for Educational Research. ISBN: 978-87-7684-248-2

Nyhan, R. C. (2000). Changing the Paradigm: Trust and Its Role in Public Sector Organizations. *The American Review of Public Administration*, *30*(1), 87–109. https://doi.org/10.1177/02750740022064560

Parlar, H., Türkoğlu, M. E., & Cansoy, R. (2022). Exploring How Authoritarian Leadership Affects Commitment: The Mediating Roles of Trust in the School Principal and Silence. *International Journal of Educational Management*, *36*(1), 110–129. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-04-2021-0160

Pollitt, C. and Bouckaert, G. (2004) *Public Management Reform: A Comparative Analysis*. Oxford University Press.

Postholm, M. B. (2019). The School Leader's Role in School-Based Development. *Educational Research*, *61*(4), 437–450. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2019.1677171

Robinson, V. M. J., Lloyd, C. A., & Rowe, K. J. (2008). The Impact of Leadership on Student Outcomes: An Analysis of the Differential Effects of Leadership Types. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *44*(5), 635–674. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X08321509

Røiseland, A., Sørensen, E., & Torfing, J. (Eds.). (2024). *Advancing Co-creation in Local Governance: The Role of Coping Strategies and Constructive Hybridization Policy, Administrative and Institutional Change series*. Edward Elgar. https://directory.doabooks.org/handle/20.500.12854/142564

Rousseau, D. M., Sitkin, S. B., Burt, R. S., & Camerer, C. (1998). Introduction to Special Topic Forum: Not So Different after All: A Cross-Discipline View of Trust. *The Academy of Management Review*, *23*(3), 393–404. 10.5465/AMR.1998.926617

Ryan, R. M. (Eds.). (2023). *The Oxford Handbook of Self-Determination Theory*. Oxford University Press.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being. *American Psychologist*, 67.10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68

Sahlberg, P. (2011). The Fourth Way of Finland. *Journal of Educational Change*, *12*(2), 173–185. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-011-9157-y

Sargent, L. D., & Waters, L. E. (2004). Careers and Academic Research Collaborations: An Inductive Process Framework for Understanding Successful Collaborations. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *64*(2), 308–319. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2002.11.001

Schillemans, T. (2013). Moving Beyond the Clash of Interests: On Stewardship Theory and the Relationships between Central Government Departments and Public Agencies. *Public Management Review*, *15*(4), 541–562. https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2012.691008

Schoorman, F. D., Mayer, R. C., & Davis, J. H. (2007). An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust: Past, Present, and Future. *Academy of Management Review*, *32*(2), 344–354. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2007.24348410

Siverbo, S., Johansson-Berg, T., Øllgaard Bentzen, T., & Winsvold, M. (2024). On the Diffusion and Implementation of Trust-Based Management in Scandinavia: Cross-Country Survey Evidence. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, *37*(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPSM-01-2023-0020

Six, F. (2013). Trust in Regulatory Relations: How New Insights from Trust Research Improve Regulation Theory. *Public Management Review*, *15*(2), 163–185. https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2012.727461

Smetana, L. K., Wenner, J., Settlage, J., & Mccoach, D. B. (2016). Clarifying and Capturing "Trust" in Relation to Science Education: Dimensions of Trustworthiness within Schools and Associations with Equitable Student Achievement: Clarifying and Capturing Trust. *Science Education*, *100*(1), 78–95. https://doi.org/10.1002/sce.21195

Torfing, J., & Bentzen, T. Ø. (2022). The Danish Control–Trust Balance in Public Governance. In A. H. Krogh, A. Agger, & P. Triantafillou (Eds.), *Public Governance in Denmark* (pp. 111–129). Emerald. https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80043-712-820221007

Tschannen-Moran, M. (2009). Fostering Teacher Professionalism in Schools: The Role of Leadership Orientation and Trust. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *45*(2), 217–247. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X08330501

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Gareis, C. R. (2015). Faculty Trust in the Principal: An Essential Ingredient in High-Performing Schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *53*(1), 66–92. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-02-2014-0024

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, W. (1998). Trust in Schools: A Conceptual and Empirical Analysis. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *36*(4), 334–352. 10.1108/09578239810211518

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, W. K. (2000). A Multidisciplinary Analysis of the Nature, Meaning, and Measurement of Trust. *Review of Educational Research*, *70*(4), 547–593.

10.3102/00346543070004547

Vallentin, S., & Thygesen, N. (2017). Trust and Control in Public Sector Reform: Complementarity and Beyond. *Journal of Trust Research*, *7*(2), 150–169. https://doi.org/10.1080/21515581.2017.1354766

Wahlstrom, K. L., & Louis, K. S. (2008). How Teachers Experience Principal Leadership: The Roles of Professional Community, Trust, Efficacy, and Shared Responsibility. *Educational Administration Quarterly 44*(4), 458–495. 10.1177/0013161X08321502

Weibel, A. (2007). Formal Control and Trustworthiness: Shall the Twain Never Meet? *Group & Organization Management*, *32*(4), 500–517. https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601106293961