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To cite this article: Anthony Thorpe & Maria Karamanidou (2024) The governance, leadership and management of complementary schools: the case of Greek Cypriot schools in England, Cambridge Journal of Education, 54:3, 317-335, DOI: [10.1080/0305764X.2024.2353049](https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2024.2353049)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2024.2353049>



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Published online: 22 May 2024.



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The governance, leadership and management of complementary schools: the case of Greek Cypriot schools in England

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ABSTRACT

The article explores the governance, leadership and management of complementary schools through the case of Greek Cypriot complementary schools in England with a view to developing a research agenda for this under-researched yet significant sector of education for children and young people. Drawing on stakeholder and bottom-up theories of governance that aim to uncover the intricate networks of groups that surround organisations and the systems in which they exist, we highlight the multiple and sometimes conflicting stakes held. This exploratory research involves interviews with five practitioners in positions of responsibility. The governance, leadership and management of these schools matters because there are concerns about their sustainability requiring a greater appreciation of their contribution, the issues they face and how they make decisions with limited resources. We call for further research to increase the understanding of the sector and to improve the support for practitioners, organisations and communities.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 27 September 2023
Accepted 4 May 2024

KEYWORDS

Complementary schools;
governance; Greek schools;
heritage language;
leadership and
management;
supplementary schools

Introduction

The article explores the governance, leadership and management of complementary schools through the specific case of Greek Cypriot complementary schools in England with a view to developing a research agenda for the study of governance, leadership and management in this under-researched yet significant sector of education for children and young people. This exploratory research involves interviews with practitioners in positions of responsibility in Greek Cypriot complementary schools. Drawing on stakeholder and bottom-up theories of governance that aim to uncover the intricate networks of groups that surround organisations and the systems in which they exist, we highlight the multiple and sometimes conflicting stakes held.

We explore the governance, leadership and management of these schools because little is known about them despite their contribution to the education of children in

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England and many other countries (Thorpe et al., 2020). There are concerns about their sustainability especially in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions which necessitated moves to online and hybrid learning, and due to reduced workforce capacity (Hancock et al., 2021). It is difficult to provide professional development opportunities, support and guidance to practitioners of governance, leadership and management in schools and policymakers when so little is known about these matters.

Complementary schools are primarily operated on a voluntary and part-time basis to support the linguistic, cultural and religious education of migrant groups (Kagan et al., 2017; Trifonas & Aravossitas, 2018; Wei, 2006). Researchers and policymakers refer to these organisations using several terms; for example, heritage, community language or supplementary schools. The various terms often reflect the different interests of researchers and policymakers in the nature and purpose of such schools, though the schools themselves may not use any of these terms in their organisation's titles (Thorpe et al., 2018).

The UK national and devolved governments and local authorities often use the term 'supplementary' for these schools (Maylor et al., 2010). Historically, schools established by parents and community groups for young Black people have tended to use the term 'supplementary' since they aimed to supplement the deficiencies in mainstream state schooling (Gerrard, 2013). In contrast, the term 'complementary' is used in research that sees schools as concentrating on the maintenance of a specific ethnic minority community's cultural and linguistic traditions to be complementing the learning and identity formation of mainstream school pupils (Francis et al., 2008; Lytra & Martin, 2010). However, from the context of the USA, García et al. (2012) argue that bilingual community education goes beyond the term 'heritage language education' to focus on the cultural aspects and objectives of the construction of the diasporic community, which also applies to the schools in our sample. In this article, we favour 'complementary', whilst referring to other terms when discussing the work of authors who themselves use a different term.¹

Despite the importance of complementary schools to many children in mainstream education, little research has been conducted into the governance, leadership and management of these schools despite these practices, and their practitioners, influencing the success and continuation of these organisations (Thorpe, 2020; Thorpe et al., 2020). In England, for example, the number of complementary schools before the COVID-19 pandemic was estimated to be at least 3000 and possibly as many as 5000 (Evans & Gillan-Thomas, 2015), but it remains unclear how many have closed or been placed in abeyance as a result of COVID-19 restrictions and its aftermath. These schools often use the facilities of mainstream schools outside normal school hours (Maylor et al., 2010).

The schools are usually financial fragile organisations with insufficient resources and difficulties in recruiting and retaining members of staff (Thorpe et al., 2018). They operate within a broader context of stakeholders and forces including the influences of countries of origin and consulates, parents and ethnic communities, mainstream schools, religious and cultural organisations, and the wider host society (Thorpe & Wahlin, 2023). In the context of Flanders, Belgium, Steenwegen and Clycq (2023) write about how supplementary schools make community resources accessible in a way that benefits all members. They identify the community cultural wealth and funds of knowledge and

conclude: ‘These schools operate as intermediaries, translating the wealth embedded within the community into practical, functional resources’ (Steenwegen & Clycq, 2023, p. 15).

Much of the research about complementary schools has focused on language acquisition, pedagogy and identity in relation to students, families and communities as well as the influence of these schools on achievement and well-being, often conducted by researchers working in the fields of applied linguistics, multi-culturalism and diaspora studies (Aalberse et al., 2019). In interviews with school administrators, discussions tend to focus more intently on the immediate concerns of teaching and learning rather than wider matters of governance, leadership and management (Arthur & Souza, 2023).

Our article contributes to the study of complementary schools by developing the understanding of the governance, leadership and management in this sector through the application of governance theory with the purpose of developing a research agenda to promote deeper understanding of this topic. The next section provides some background to Greek Cypriot complementary schools including the terms used for these schools. Then several bodies that play a role in governance are introduced, followed by an outline of the expectations for school governing bodies and headteachers. The two theories of stakeholder and bottom-up governance are introduced and then used to analyse and discuss the data collected from interviews with five practitioners involved in the governance, leadership and management of these complementary schools. The concluding section summarises the article’s contributions and an agenda for researching the governance, leadership and management of complementary schools drawing on Gunter’s (2005) multi-level framework for conceptualising research in educational leadership.

Greek Cypriot complementary schools and their governance, leadership and management

This section provides background on Greek Cypriot complementary schools before outlining several bodies that play a part in their governance and some of the expectations set for their governing bodies, leaders and managers. We define a Greek Cypriot complementary school in England as one whose origins lie in the Greek Cypriot community in England and whose governance is linked, in some way, to the Cyprus Educational Mission in the UK and Ireland (Kypriaki Ekpaideutiki Apostoli [KEA]). The KEA was established in 1977 by the Cyprus Ministry of Education, which appoints the head of the Mission to act as an educational advisor and inspector (KEA, 2007). The government of Greece has established its own educational office in London covering the UK and several other European countries (Hellenic Education Office, n.d.).

Greek Cypriot complementary schools provide a rich context in which to explore complementary school governance, leadership and management because several organisations have been involved in establishing and maintaining the schools, including the government of the Republic of Cyprus, school governing bodies, parents, and other stakeholders in the local and wider community such as the Greek Orthodox Church, as well as other specific factors such as the historical and political links between Cyprus and the UK. For various political, social and economic reasons, the number of people of Greek Cypriot descent who have formed a long-established diasporic community in the

UK is at least 150,000 and possibly up to double that number (Ioannidou et al., 2020; Karatsareas & Charalambidou, 2020).

Many of these complementary schools in England use the term 'Greek school' in their title, such as the Leicester Greek School (<https://leicester.schools.ac.cy>). However, the KEA refers to the schools as 'Greek Community Schools' (Ελληνικά Παροικιακά Σχολεία). A catalogue featured on the respective websites of the KEA (2023) and the Hellenic Education Office (n.d.) lists 59 schools based in England. Similar to the arrangements for other complementary schools,

Greek communities run their own part time supplementary schools in churches and community centres or in classrooms rented out from mainstream schools during the weekend or in the afternoon. Classes usually take place on Saturday or Sunday mornings and/or weekday evenings. (Papastergiou & Sanoudaki, 2022, p. 2837)

The Ministry in Cyprus, with the KEA, develops and publishes the curricula to be used in complementary schools in England (Ioannidou et al., 2020; Paraskevopoulos, 2012).

Reflecting research in the wider field of complementary schools, research in Greek and Greek Cypriot complementary schools in England has focused on pedagogy (Pantazi, 2010; Voskou, 2021), and quantifying the effect of attending these schools on the vocabulary and grammar scores of Greek-English bilingual children (Papastergiou & Sanoudaki, 2022). Other research has been concerned with the construction of identity, religion and culture of students in these schools in England and the USA (Hantzopoulos, 2012; Voskou, 2023). Paraskevopoulos (2012) explains that his case study of two schools, augmented by his professional experience, is prompted by the government of Greece's proposal that complementary schools should find other sources of funding rather than relying on the Greek government. He addressed the schools' purpose, role and current operations focused on teaching and learning as well as the curriculum, with a couple of paragraphs on management (Paraskevopoulos, 2012). There are linguistic debates, for example, about integrating Cypriot Greek into Greek Cypriot diaspora education in the UK where Standard Modern Greek has dominated the medium of instruction (see Ioannidou et al., 2020; Karatsareas & Charalambidou, 2020; Paraskevopoulos, 2012), whilst Cushing et al. (2021) critically explore language policing in mainstream and Greek Cypriot complementary schools in England from 'macro-level policy mechanisms through to micro-level classroom interactions' (Cushing et al., 2021, p. 1). However, this article is focused on governance, leadership and management of the schools, in relation to formal mechanisms, roles and bodies, rather than the fields of linguistics or pedagogy.

The governments of both Cyprus and Greece state that they have a concern for the provision of Greek education to children of Greek origin living outside Cyprus and Greece respectively, in conjunction with the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain (Papastergiou & Sanoudaki, 2022; Thyateira, 2020). The Archdiocese was founded in 1922 to minister solely to the UK and Republic of Ireland (Thyateira, 2020). Thyateira is one of the seven Apostolic Churches mentioned in the New Testament (Revelation 2:18–29), in what is now the municipality of Akhisar in the west of modern-day Türkiye. The inclusion in each bishop's title of a place within the traditional lands of the Eastern Orthodox Church reflects that the orthodox churches are

geographical entities whilst maintaining the spiritual link to the homelands for congregations living outside them (Ware, 1993).

The Co-ordinating Committee of Greek Educational Bodies in the UK (Eniaíos Foréas Ellinikís Paroikiakís Ekpaídefsis [EFEPE]) was established in 1992 and is presided over by the Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain. It presents itself as the unified agency for promoting the programmes of the Greece and Cyprus Ministries of Education with the purpose of preserving 'the national, religious and cultural identity of Greek people in the UK and coordinate the efforts of community schools within the UK' (Thyateria, 2020), including establishing new schools as well as maintaining an overview of accommodation, teacher recruitment and teaching.

The Head of the KEA is one of the two vice-presidents of EFEPE (the other is the head of the Hellenic Education Office) and a member of the Central Educational Council of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain (Kentrikó Ekpaideftikó Symvoúlio [KES]) (Thyateira, 2020). However, there are other organisations that also promote Greek Cypriot complementary schooling, which predate the establishment of the KEA, EFEPE and KES, so adding to the richness and complexities of the governance system and history of the schools.

The Federation of Greek Cypriot Educational Associations (Omospondía Ekpaideftikón Syllógon Ellínon Kypríon Anglías [OESEKA]) was established in 1971 to preserve Cypriot culture, education and language in complementary schools. OESEKA is a founding member of EFEPE in addition to the KES and the Independent Greek Schools of England (Anexartita Ellinika Scholeia Anglias [AESA]).² Its president serves as the KES general secretary. OESEKA credits itself as having successfully lobbied the government of Cyprus to place complementary Greek Cypriot schools under the purview of the Ministry and to begin to recruit teachers from Cyprus while also appointing an inspector for the schools as a KEA employee (Cypriot Federation, 2022).

The Greek Parents Association (Syllogos Ellinon Goneon [GPA]) was established in 1952 by a small group of Cypriot immigrants to the UK seeking to promote the welfare and education of what was then the first substantial generation of Cypriot immigrants to the country. The GPA established the first complementary school in London to provide tuition in the English language and customs to the newly arrived Cypriots, but the association's main focus is now on helping the UK-born community members to learn and maintain the Greek language, culture, history, customs and religion by running schools and youth clubs in the London area and Hertfordshire (GPA, 2023). Whilst many of the Greek Cypriot complementary schools in England were founded under the auspices of the EFEPE and KES, a sizeable number, especially within Greater London, were established by OESEKA and the GPA (KEA, 2023).

Each school is independent in terms of governance through its own school board or association. Schools are expected to have their own policies and be responsible for funding as well as the contracts and the terms of employment for teachers but, as previously mentioned, the curriculum is set by the Cyprus government through the KEA (Ioannidou et al., 2020; KEA, 2007; Paraskevopoulos, 2012). The expectation is that parents should be running the school governing bodies or management boards, whilst working closely with the KEA to ensure the smooth running of the school and liaising with other parents to help them understand how the school is run and how they can support their children's education (KEA, 2007). Teachers seconded from Cyprus are not

expected to take on managerial duties unless they have already held a managerial position. Each school's headteacher, whether seconded or not, is appointed by the KEA in agreement with the school's governing body, as is the person undertaking the management of each school (KEA, 2007). English health and safety and child protection laws and regulatory bodies related to education, including awarding bodies, have to be followed by practitioners in the schools.

Having outlined several of the bodies involved in the governance of Greek Cypriot complementary schools and highlighting the complexity of authority and influence linked in part to when and how they were established and the continuing relationships, the next section considers stakeholder and 'bottom-up' governance theories. These theories are then used to analyse the data and promote discussion, leading to the development of a research agenda for the governance, leadership and management of complementary schools.

Stakeholder and 'bottom-up' governance theories

The term 'governance' has several meanings including that of overseeing and having responsibility for something as well as holding or exercising authority but, in the field of organisational studies, governance refers to 'the ways in which government and non-government entities intervene, both formally and informally, to shape the way organisations and individuals conduct themselves' (A. Wilkins & Gobby, 2023, p. 311). Leadership and management are functions, or actions, of governance and so the exercise of governance in an organisation is not limited to those holding formal positions such as a designated governor or trustee.

Wilkins and Mifsud write of the 'entangled histories shaping meanings of governance in education research/policy' (2024, p. 1) and call for more engagement with these complex histories in the pursuit of understanding and interpretations of governance. They outline different meanings given to governance in education including a move in the late 20th century to devolving power from traditional governance as 'governing without government', which represents 'a shift away from vertical structures of top-down government and a shift towards (and its displacement by) horizontal, flexible networks of bottom-up government' (A. W. Wilkins & Mifsud, 2024, p. 4). This understanding of governance may be influencing a reduction of financial support for complementary schools (Paraskevopoulos, 2012), leading us to the related theories of stakeholder and 'bottom-up' governance to analyse the data collected through interviews with five practitioners involved in the governance, leadership and management of Greek Cypriot complementary schools.

Stakeholder theory was developed as an approach to strategic management. Freeman (1984) argued that attending to the needs of multiple stakeholders, rather than shareholders alone, would make commercial organisations more competitive in the long term. When applied to organisational governance, stakeholder theory can help to uncover the intricate networks of groups that surround organisations and the systems in which they exist, as well as conflicting stakes that may emerge within and across the stakeholder groups through shifting coalitions, behaviours and preferences. Stakeholder theory has been used to identify the changing influence and importance of internal and external stakeholders for governance and management in the increasingly competitive market of

UK higher education (McCann et al., 2022) and how some stakeholders are ignored in higher education institutions because of the ways in which the wider networks operate (Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010). Donaldson and Preston (1995) identify three distinct, though interconnected, aspects of the theory with normative, instrumental and descriptive approaches. We adopt the descriptive approach to describe specific characteristics and behaviours in the analysis of our interviews with practitioners in Greek Cypriot complementary schools.

In general, 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' refer to two different approaches to decision-making or policymaking (Sabatier, 1986). Top-down policymaking is a centralised decision-making process where top-level officials or a central authority make decisions without consulting or involving subordinates or lower-ranking officials. This approach is mostly used in authoritative or hierarchical organisational structures, where power and authority are concentrated at the top. In contrast, bottom-up policymaking is a decentralised decision-making process where lower-ranking officials or subordinates make decisions and provide input and feedback that can influence the creation of policies. This approach is mostly used in democratic or participatory organisational structures, where power and authority are distributed among all employees.

Ramiel and Lefstein (2022, p. 218) deploy the phrase 'bottom-up governance' 'to denote a form of policy-making and enactment involving a duality of bottom-up discourse and rationale with top-down governing structures and mechanisms'. They define bottom-up governance as

a hybrid mixture of discourse that valorises grass-roots leadership, of governance through actors' autonomy and reflexivity, of enactment by a complex array of external and internal educational actors, and of initiation and control by central government, which provides insufficient, temporary and unstable resources. (Ramiel & Lefstein, 2022, p. 217)

Their analysis of teacher leadership in state schools in Israel highlights the conflicted and complex role of mid-level policymakers in this mode of governance, which seems an insightful way to understand the policy actor role (Ball et al., 2011) played by head-teachers and governors of complementary schools. Two key means of governance identified by Ramiel and Lefstein (2022) are autonomy and reflexivity aligned to seeing policy actors as having agency, albeit constrained by the structures in which they act, especially when there are limited and unstable resources available. We refer to agency and structures in this article in seeking to recognise the agency of individuals whilst recognising the constraints when operating in a 'bottom-up governance' scenario and within a network of stakeholders.

Methodology

The project's exploratory research design adopted a qualitative approach to offer a tentative analysis and suggest avenues of research into governance, leadership and management in complementary schools, through the example of Greek Cypriot complementary schools in England, rather than seeking to present a set of conclusive results which can be verified, as might be the case with other research designs. The purposive selection criteria were that the interviewee held a position which involved the practice of governing and/or leading and managing related to Greek Cypriot complementary

schools; that is to say, complementary schools whose origins lie in the Greek Cypriot community based in England and which are listed in the KEA school catalogue (KEA, 2023). For example, postholders in schools offering full-time provision were discounted. Five participants meeting the criteria were identified from publicly available databases, namely three headteachers and a school governor, all from different schools, and a KEA officer.

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed around key questions addressed to each interviewee through a series of prompts and probes (Drever, 2003) about their experience in the practice of governance, leadership and management, and the arrangements for the governance, leadership and management in their organisations. Recruitment materials were written in English and Greek and ethical approval was received.³ The participants gave their consent in writing after having been informed about the research verbally and in writing. In a relatively small sector, due consideration has been given to the level of anonymity required for individuals and their schools. However, the degree of anonymity that can be afforded to the KEA official is different as it is a single organisation employing a small group of people, albeit with a considerable turnover of employees. The participant consented to participate with this understanding of the degree of anonymity and we took additional steps to inform them of the data from the interview that would be included in the publication.

The interviews took place online in Greek with one of us being a native speaker of the language, though participants were offered the option for interviews to take place in either Greek or English. The interviews were translated into English and then qualitative thematic analysis was used to identify several emergent themes (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). Stakeholder and bottom-up governance theories were used to deepen the analysis and identify key points for discussion, leading to the development of a research agenda for governance, leadership and management in complementary schools.

As there can be a temptation to see everything as a matter of governance, leadership and management, to maintain the focus of the agenda we draw on Gunter's (2005) multi-level framework for conceptualising research in educational leadership. The five levels Gunter identifies are the 'technical (what is), illuminative (what does it mean), critical (why is it like that), practical (how might it be better) and positional (who says so and why?)' (2005, p. 165). A further attraction of Gunter's work is her rejection of a narrow, leader-centric view of the field, which makes her multi-level framework able to encompass matters of governance, leadership and management.

Data analysis and discussion

This section analyses data from interviews with five practitioners, all from different organisations, involved in the governance, leadership and management of Greek Cypriot complementary schools, comprising a headteacher employed by the Ministry (P1), two headteachers not employed by the Ministry (P3, P4), an experienced governor (P5) and an official from the KEA (P2). Five themes emerged from the analysis: prior experience, differences in the arrangements for the appointment of headteachers, the

complexity of the tasks, financial fragility and the idea of the school as a ‘home from home’.

Prior experience in governance, leadership and management

Most of the headteachers’ experience of holding a senior leadership role came from their current school; for example, ‘I am the acting headteacher at the Greek school I currently work in. This is my only experience in a school leadership position’ (P3). In UK English, the word ‘acting’ in front of a title indicates that the person holding that role is doing so only until a permanent replacement is found, or the regular incumbent of the post returns from leave. However, the meaning of the term as it relates to Greek Cypriot complementary schools is that acting headteachers ‘are only responsible for the educational part of how the school functions’ (P2) rather than other matters of the governance and leadership which should be the responsibility of the wider school community. The exception to these arrangements is where it is agreed and approved by the KEA that a headteacher should take on a wider leadership and management role (KEA, 2007).

Headteachers may not have held a leadership role prior to their appointment, such as with this headteacher who volunteered to take on the role:

The school community was in need of a headteacher as the previous one decided to move back to Cyprus. I do not have any particular previous experience in leading a school, but the community and experienced teachers have been very helpful. I was a Greek school teacher myself and decided to step up when they needed my help. (P4)

The importance of others in the school and wider community comes through clearly as well as the idea of leaders coming forward in an hour of need (Thorpe et al., 2018).

Differences in the arrangements for the appointment of headteachers

The differences in the arrangements for the appointment of headteachers emerged from a comparison of several of the interviews. The arrangements for recruiting a headteacher by appointment from the Ministry was outlined by one of the headteachers along with the arrangements for other school employees:

I am the full time headteacher employed from the Cyprus Ministry of Education. We have another teacher employed by the Greek Ministry of Education but she is holding a part time post. This teacher does not have any leadership responsibilities. Everyone else is employed by the school community. (P1)

However, the governor gives a more nuanced explanation of the system for appointing headteachers, suggesting a move towards the centralisation of headteacher appointments:

We have one headteacher who relocated from Greece, and she has been a headteacher for more than five years now. The way we recruit our headteachers is slightly different to what we used to do in the past, as we are now being told who our headteacher will be. We can still recruit our teaching staff, but not our headteachers. Our headteacher and teaching staff are vibrant members of our community and play a significant role in the design of the teaching and learning curriculum. We have links with the church and the Ministry of Education in Cyprus, as they provide us with books and some teaching resources such as pencils, rubbers and rulers for the children. (P5)

The move to a centralised appointment process for the headteacher may well reflect the different histories of individual schools and their founding organisations, which predate the establishment of the KEA and the KES. It comes with an enhanced role for the Ministry, which brings the benefit of resources for the school, but, as outlined previously, the responsibility for operationalising the teaching of the curriculum set by the Ministry remains the responsibility of the school (Ioannidou et al., 2020; KEA, 2007; Paraskevopoulos, 2012).

In contrast, some headteachers are employed directly by the community rather than by the Ministry:

I am the full time headteacher employed from the community here. We have apart time teacher employed by the Greek Ministry of Education but and this teacher does not have any leadership responsibilities. All the rest are also employed by the community [governing body]. (P3)

That the school also has a teacher appointed by the Hellenic Education Office illustrates further connections between stakeholders and the complexity that they may bring (McCann et al., 2022). Another headteacher directly employed by the community identifies the change of appointment process as a result of the special circumstances of the pandemic:

I have been the acting school headteacher in this Greek school for the last few years. I am currently employed by the school community and not the Ministry of Education in Cyprus. The reason for this is because when the pandemic started there were budget cuts and Cyprus was not able to send or employ any Greek school headteachers. (P4)

This change to the usual appointment process came in a period of disruption that limited the resources available from the centralised power of the Ministry and the KEA. The school was forced into the exercising of bottom-up governance in making the new appointment, which in some ways enhanced the organisation's agency (Ramiel & Lefstein, 2022; A. W. Wilkins & Mifsud, 2024).

The complexity of the tasks of governance, leadership and management

Another theme was the complexity of the tasks involved in governance, leadership and management. One headteacher outlines the myriad tasks involved in the role as follows:

My current responsibilities are a lot. I am also responsible for an administrative role. I respond to school emails, check CVs, job applications and arrange interviews. I am also the EDEXCEL [awarding body] head of centre, which is a huge part of my job. As a daily job, I will have to go in to open the school, switch the heating on, ensure that the school is ready to run and welcome its students. I also have to check teachers' lesson plans and ensure their teacher resources are up to date. (P1)

The KEA official considers state schools in Cyprus to be completely different from community schools in England and goes on to explain how this affects the headteacher's tasks:

Headteachers [in] these schools are responsible for the 'teaching' aspect in the school. Leading the school is not the headteacher's responsibility. This part is monitored by the

school's community and governance. Child protection is a responsibility of the Headteacher too. The functioning of the school is also the school community's responsibility. (P2)

The governor also speaks of the complexity of the task of governance, leadership and management in the school, which challenges the idea that a school can successfully operate with a simplistic and homogeneous idea of the community:

As a governor, my role is to make sure the school, community and the church are one single community. One is helping the other and all have one single goal – to educate children and teach them about their mother language and heritage. (P5)

Stakeholder theory helps to explain the challenge the governor sees in creating and maintaining a single community, as the various stakeholders such as the student body, staff of the school, the parents and other organisations like the local church might well have conflicting behaviours and preferences (Freeman, 1984).

The governor highlights the complexities of the role through the example of the problems caused by the pandemic and how networking helped in deciding what to do in the school:

Good governance and leadership do not come with a manual. It comes [sic] with experience and good networking. During Covid 19, we had to deal with lots of financial issues, as well as being able to keep the education we provide [for] children up to a great standard. It is always good to keep in touch with other leaders from other complementary schools in see[ing] what their visions are and how they achieve their goals. (P5)

The bottom-up governance approach helps to explain how organisations can make a difference by exercising agency from albeit limited resources and despite severe constraints (Ramiel & Lefstein, 2022).

A comparison between school governance, leadership and management in the complementary and mainstream sectors arose with several of the headteacher interviewees, who felt there were considerable differences between sectors. For example, one interviewee explained the difference as being that 'We have less children and I am very close with the students and parents in school' (P1) and another felt very different leadership practices were needed: 'I have been leading complementary schools for over 15 years and I would still not implement the same leadership model if I were to work in a mainstream school' (P3). However, the issues confronting complementary schools that the interviewees speak of appear similar to those faced by mainstream school leaders in struggling with financial constraints, poor accommodation and with recruiting and retaining suitably qualified teachers (Thorpe et al., 2018).

Financial fragility

The financial fragility of the schools is well appreciated by the interviewees, as illustrated by a headteacher:

The school community gathers donations and the school is registered as a charitable organisation. During every Sunday liturgy the church gathers some money. We do cake sales and breakfast for the parents so everyone can contribute. We are also registered as a gift aid organisation so the government can return some money to the school. (P1)

The headteacher points out that the school must cover its own running costs except for the salaries of employees directly appointed by the Ministry, which is in line with the KEA's expectations, and the ways the community seeks to raise these funds. The official explains how the KEA is not responsible for funding the schools but does fund the salaries of 25 full-time and 125 part-time members of staff:

It is very expensive, £500,000, to maintain this. We are not usually involved in the school community's expenses. By law we are not responsible for how these schools are being funded and this is definitely not the headteacher's responsibility. School communities sometimes ask more experienced headteachers to take over the financial aspects of these schools. (P2)

These expectations for schools linked to the KEA may be an outcome of what A. W. Wilkins and Mifsud (2024) refer to as devolving power from traditional governance structures, a form of 'governing without government'.

As one headteacher said: 'If we didn't have the funding from the Ministry of Education in Cyprus, we wouldn't have survived the pandemic' (P3). Another headteacher explains how the pandemic led to change in governance structures with additional pressures placed on the KEA:

[The KEA] is now leading schools across the UK. Especially during lockdown, all the guidelines we have received were very vague. However, the Church decided to keep the schools closed and move to online teaching and learning. Our school policies are something that we have developed ourselves as we have not received any guidance from others. (P1)

The theory of bottom-up governance helps to explain how the interviewee's perception of centralising through an enhanced role for the KEA did not remove the need for decentralised governance of the schools themselves. Bottom-up governance also helps to understand why the headteacher might feel a lack of guidance from centralised authorities whilst recognising the resources already in place within the school itself (Ramiel & Lefstein, 2022). Stakeholder theory identifies how a stakeholder's decision, in this case the Greek Orthodox Church, can impact a school's operations. The Archbishopric was responding to national government pandemic restrictions of public worship in England, which continued for longer than those for schools. The repositioning of the KEA's role and the actions of the Church are examples of the dynamic characteristics of how wider stakeholder networks operate that need to be taken into account by the schools (Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010).

However, one headteacher links the financial pressures on the school with parental expectations and illustrates the challenges this can present:

Budget is one of the most, if not the most, difficult factors in leading complementary schools. But as I mentioned earlier, as a school we are really good in organising events to raise money, and most of the families in this area are wealthy and not afraid to contribute to the school's budget. For this reason, we consider ourselves extremely lucky. However, parents' expectations are very demanding. They want the best for their children's education and this is what you would expect from all parents really. As a headteacher, I ensure that this is embedded in the school's values. Parents do appreciate this. (P4)

Again, different stakeholders may have different concerns and preferences which practitioners need to take into account in the governance, leadership and management of these schools and the wider sector (Freeman, 1984).

The school as a ‘home from home’

A theme of ‘home from home’ emerged from the interviewees in their concern for maintaining the culture of the community with its links to a homeland. The idea of the school as a ‘home from home’ (a ‘home away from home’ in US English) has the meaning that a place is as comfortable as one’s actual home, like a comfortable hotel or other holiday location (or even a place of exile) where people can relax and be themselves with connotations of happiness and contentment (*Oxford English Dictionary* [OED], 2023). In the case of the Greek Cypriot community in England, this theme takes the idea of ‘home’ applying to the person’s home in England (which for many children attending the schools will be their place of birth), but also ‘home’ as being Cyprus. It is noteworthy that the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain’s title embodies this link to the traditional Greek Orthodox homelands (Ware, 1993).

Moving to the role of parents as a stakeholder group, participants recognised their crucial role in maintaining the school as part of the wider community:

Parents are very valuable. They keep our community alive; they help us maintain the transition of the cultural aspect into a new generation of people and help us keep our ethos and customs alive. (P5)

This view relates to the ideas of community cultural wealth and funds of knowledge that schools make accessible to a wider range of the community’s members, whilst noting that promoting and maintaining this access is not without problems and challenges (Steenwegen & Clycq, 2023).

As membership of these stakeholder groups can shift and individuals can simultaneously hold roles in multiple groups, an understanding of the specific characteristics and behaviours of the stakeholders becomes vital for practitioners of governance, leadership and management. As the KEA official states:

It is very important to maintain a greater appreciation of the contribution of the school community and the community in general . . . [as] . . . schools in the Greek community are trying extremely hard to keep the Greek flame alive and it is very important for the different agencies to realise this. (P2)

The governor explains that maintaining the ‘home from home’ is not an easy task:

The Greek school, church and its community are like our family. Being a school governor in a complementary school is sometimes more challenging than you can imagine. The reason I say this is because people in this community are ‘more demanding’ as this is their home away from home. Our biggest challenge is to keep the people of this community happy. (P5)

There appear to be considerable implications for well-being and cultural maintenance and development in the loss of a ‘home from home’ if complementary schools close for students, staff members, parents and others involved in these schools, which would benefit from further research. As one headteacher said:

The school is open on Saturdays and my aspiration is for the children to arrive and leave school feeling happy and positive and love their Greek school. These children are the future of the Greek community in the UK and it is very important to teach them Greek history, values and ethos. (P1)

The example demonstrates again that these schools are a functional resource of the cultural wealth and knowledge of the community including history, values and ethos (Steenwegen & Clycq, 2023).

The KEA official identified a need to change: 'We need to upgrade our schools to adjust to the real environment. We have lots of people relocating' (P2). One of the headteachers perceived this change of approach, explaining that the KEA 'considers that school communities are the ones making the final decisions' (P1). A move to a bottom-up governance approach might be indicated by these interviewees, dictated by the circumstances of limited resources and other structural restrictions, but such a change often brings more conflict and greater complexity for those dealing with day-to-day matters such as headteachers and governors (Ramiel & Lefstein, 2022; A. W. Wilkins & Mifsud, 2024).

This analysis and discussion illustrates the complex array of internal and external stakeholders of national government departments, non-government organisations, religious authorities, governing bodies, parents and other stakeholders in the local and wider community (McCann et al., 2022). Drawing on stakeholder theories of governance helps to show how stakes are held by different groups operating within highly dynamic networks, which can include conflicting ideas. It helps to avoid the misapprehension of a community as being a homogenous group and encourages the appreciation of the different needs and preferences of groups as well as the intersections where individuals and groups hold multiple and overlapping roles.

The use of bottom-up governance theory (Ramiel & Lefstein, 2022) highlights issues of agency and structure and helps to explain why there might be tensions between expectations in centralised and decentralised forms of governance (A. W. Wilkins & Mifsud, 2024). The move away from a centralised system may not automatically be welcomed by those in organisations faced with decentralisation as these changes add to the number of challenges and their complexity faced by practitioners. Policymakers and other actors need to carefully support and guide employees and other stakeholders through changes.

Conclusion: a research agenda

The aim of our exploratory research in the significant yet under-researched sector of complementary schools through the specific case of the governance, leadership and management of Greek Cypriot complementary schools in England has been to offer a tentative analysis and research agenda, rather than presenting a set of conclusive results. This concluding section identifies three original contributions to the field of complementary school studies followed by a research agenda to explore governance, leadership and management in the sector, which could, for example, lead to the development of guidance and support for practitioners in complementary schools and related organisations.

The first contribution has been in giving an example of how the task of research in this specific area might be approached through an exploratory design. Second, we

have illustrated how complementary schools are rich sites for research about school governance, leadership and management by identifying some of the complexities in the case of Greek Cypriot complementary schools, including organisations involved in their governance. Third, we have provided examples of how governance theories, such as stakeholder and bottom-up governance, can be drawn on when researching these schools and in doing so have engaged with A. W. Wilkins and Mifsud's (2024) call for researchers to explore the complexities of governance and its history in education.

We do not claim to have comprehensively mapped the governance, leadership and management of Greek Cypriot complementary schools from the comparatively small amount of data we collected, so we call for further theorisation and empirical research about their governance, leadership and management in multiple geographical, political and social-economic contexts, as it should not be assumed that all segments of the complementary schools sector are the same. To maintain the focus of our research agenda, we draw on Gunter's (2005) multi-level framework (i.e. the technical, illuminative, critical, practical and positional levels) for conceptualising research in educational leadership. By providing examples of research at the five levels, we can offer an example of a coherent agenda without seeking to exhaustively list every possible line of research.

Building on our interview data, a fruitful line to pursue would be a multi-level understanding of the roles, practices and lives of complementary school headteachers, governors and teachers with leadership responsibilities. At the technical level that asks 'what is?', what practitioners of governance, leadership and management do can be explored including their other work, family responsibilities and place within the community. This consideration needs to encompass the narratives they express about their work lives and careers, including the dilemmas and tensions they face as well as their insights into what effective practice in their roles entails.

At the illuminative level that asks 'what does it mean?', the meaning given to holding a role of responsibility for governance, leadership and management in the sector can be explored along with the accounts given to understanding practices and relationships. Related to this is the meaning given to the idea of creating a 'home from home' in espousing and applying distinctive views of and beliefs about the practice of governance, leadership and management. A comparison between school governance, leadership and management in the complementary and mainstream sectors would be fruitful, as several of the interviewees felt there were considerable differences between not only their role and practice compared with mainstream schools in the host country, but also the position of headteacher in the heritage country; in the case of this research, comparing England and Cyprus.

At the critical level that asks 'why is it like that?', the situating of individual practitioners and individual schools within complex networks of groups should be explored. Further research is needed into the power relationships between different groups – for example, the governing body and the headteacher – or how different governing organisations relate to each other. Such research could provide insights into how the agency of practitioners is shaped, constrained and enabled by social and cultural structures. Important questions remain as to how the situation of a school influences the arrangements for governance, leadership and management; for example, school size, funding models, accommodation arrangements and community links.

At the practical level that asks ‘how might it be better?’, more projects are needed to discern what it means to improve practice and how structural barriers to improvement might be overcome. Understanding the professional and organisational development needs at the practical level can contribute to the development of the guidance and resources to promote good governance, leadership and management of a complementary school, and also within the wider system. The question of who decides what is ‘good’ and ‘better’ needs critical consideration, which moves us to the positional level.

At the positional level that asks ‘who says so and why?’, the engagement with theories of stakeholder and bottom-up governance can be further developed through stakeholder analyses of the wider network of complex relationships, connections and intersections within the complementary school system(s), rather than just focusing on bilateral relationships (Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010). This consideration could include interviewing a wider range of those involved in governance such as, in the case of Greek Cypriot complementary schools, officials of the Archdiocese and the various organisations that contribute to the schooling system. Such research should combine the descriptive approach of stakeholder theory we have used with the instrumental approach to identify the connections, or lack of them, between stakeholder management and the achievement of school objectives (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

These projects would be helpful in exploring matters of agency and structure as well as autonomy and reflexivity in governance (Ramiel & Lefstein, 2022) that can contribute to creating professional development opportunities, support and guidance for practitioners and policymakers. It is our conjecture that there may be much that governors and leaders in each education sector could learn from each other but this is unlikely to happen unless more research is conducted into complementary schools.

Notes

1. The Greek word ‘sympliromatikós’ covers both complementary and supplementary in English.
2. AESA was established in 1980 with the aim of maintaining Hellenism through schools that are fully independent including the choices they make about the curriculum they follow (<http://www.hshb.org.uk/aesa#:~:text=The%20schools%20that%20comprise%20AESA,realisation%20that%20they%20are%20Greek!>).
3. Ethical approval from University of Middlesex, London.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Ethical approval

Ethics approval by the Education Research Ethics Committee, Middlesex University, London. Application/approval number 17,429.

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