

From Administrative Control to Collaborative and Inclusive Leadership: Redefining the Administration of Special Education Schools

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Abstract: The administration of Special Education schools is a complex field of educational leadership in which institutional accountability coexists with the need for interdisciplinary collaboration, participatory decision-making, and responsiveness to the heterogeneity of students' needs. The purpose of this study is to critically examine the shift from hierarchical and control-oriented models of administration toward collaborative, distributed, and inclusive forms of leadership, while also considering the Greek institutional framework. A focused integrative literature review was adopted, using thematic analysis of international peer-reviewed publications and relevant Greek legislative and regulatory texts. The synthesis identified six interrelated dimensions: institutional responsibility and accountability, professional participation, distributed responsibility, interdisciplinary collaboration, inclusive leadership, and inclusive school capacity. These dimensions do not constitute linear stages but interacting components of organizational transformation. The Greek institutional framework establishes structures and roles for collaboration; however, their formal provision alone does not guarantee the substantive distribution of leadership. It is concluded that effective leadership in Special Education does not require a weakening of administrative responsibility, but rather a redesign of the way in which it is exercised, so that institutional authority functions as an infrastructure for collective professional capacity and a sustainable inclusive culture.

Keywords: Special Education, educational leadership, collaborative leadership, distributed leadership, inclusive leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration, inclusive school capacity.

1. Introduction

The administration of Special Education schools is a particularly complex field of educational leadership, as the principal is called upon to respond simultaneously to administrative, pedagogical, organizational, and human demands. The complexity of students' needs, the presence of teachers and other professionals from different specialties, the need for individualized educational planning, and close collaboration with families create an environment in which traditional, strictly hierarchical models of administration present significant limitations. The effective operation of a Special Education school cannot, therefore, be based exclusively on administrative control and centralized decision-making; rather, it presupposes collaboration, professional interaction, and utilization of the specialized knowledge of members of the school community.

The international literature highlights school leadership as a decisive factor in the development of inclusive and effective educational environments. DeMatthews et al. (2020a) point out that creating and supporting schools that respond to the needs of students with disabilities is a fundamental responsibility of principals and is associated with specific leadership practices and organizational conditions. Similarly, the systematic review by DeMatthews et al. (2026) identifies a shared commitment to inclusion, the creation of appropriate organizational conditions, and the development of instructional and leadership capacity within the school as key areas of inclusive leadership. In this context, the role of the principal shifts from the traditional role of supervisor and sole decision-maker to that of coordinator, mediator, and creator of conditions for collaboration. Contemporary leadership in Special Education schools requires a shared vision, professional dialogue, collaborative problem-solving, the development of effective teams, and meaningful staff participation

in decision-making (DeMatthews et al., 2026). Distributed leadership is one of the most important theoretical approaches supporting this shift. Leadership is not regarded as the exclusive function of the principal, but is distributed among different members of the school community according to their knowledge, experience, and the demands of each situation. In Special Education, this approach assumes particular importance because effective student support presupposes the combined contribution of different professional specialties. DeMatthews et al. (2020a) emphasize that dialogue and opportunities for shared and distributed leadership help principals identify teachers' needs and support their professional development. The link between distributed leadership and inclusion is also supported by the broader international literature. Through a systematic review of studies involving 35 schools, Tejeiro (2024) concluded that distributed leadership, when supported by the principal, contributes to the development of a more inclusive school environment. Teamwork and collaborative decision-making are associated with the creation of a shared vision and structures of trust and support. At the same time, distributed leadership does not emerge automatically, but requires the principal's active contribution to the creation of appropriate organizational conditions. Similarly, Valdés et al. (2026) identify five important dimensions of inclusive leadership: managing pedagogical processes with diversity in mind, developing an inclusive school culture, promoting school community participation, professional development, and utilizing interpersonal resources. This approach connects inclusive leadership with social justice, critical reflection, and the adaptation of administrative practice to the needs of the specific school context. Staff empowerment, recognition of informal leaders, and the creation of trusting environments that allow professionals to take initiative and collaborate are particularly important (Valdés et al., 2026). Appropriate principal preparation is also critical. DeMatthews et al. (2020b) found that successful principals of inclusive schools regard their values and beliefs about inclusion, relevant knowledge and expertise, and instructional leadership skills as particularly important. Consequently, effective administration in Special Education cannot rely solely on general administrative skills, but requires a more specific understanding of the context, students' needs, and the school's professional and organizational relationships.

At the same time, family participation is a fundamental dimension of inclusive leadership. DeMatthews et al. (2026) identify the development of strong relationships with families and communities as an important leadership practice, through systematic communication, meetings, and support networks. In Special Education, this dimension assumes particular importance, as the family possesses critical knowledge of the student's needs, capabilities, and daily functioning. The transition from administrative control to collaborative and inclusive leadership does not, however, mean abolishing the principal's institutional responsibility. The principal remains responsible for the operation of the school unit, resource management, implementation of educational policy, and difficult decision-making. The difference concerns primarily the manner in which authority is exercised: administrative responsibility is combined with professional autonomy, collective decision-making, and utilization of staff's specialized knowledge. As DeMatthews et al. (2026) point out, inclusive leadership requires the redefinition of basic functions, such as shaping a vision, allocating resources, and developing organizational capacity through the lens of inclusion.

On the basis of the above, the transition from 'control' to 'collaborative leadership' should be viewed as a continuum of administrative practices rather than as the absolute replacement of one model by another. At one end lie centralized decision-making, strict hierarchy, and limited professional autonomy, while at the other lie participation, distribution of leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration, professional empowerment, and shared responsibility. The particular nature of Special Education makes investigation of this transition especially important, as schools are called upon to combine administrative accountability with flexibility, collaboration, and individualized support.

2. Special Education and Education in Greece: Institutional Evolution and the Contemporary Framework

The evolution of Special Education and Education in Greece is characterized by a gradual shift from more segregating and medically centered conceptions toward an educational framework in which integration, interdisciplinary support, and inclusive education acquire greater importance. This change concerns not only the way special educational needs are defined, but also the organization of support structures, the relationship between general and special education, and collaboration among teachers, specialist professionals, administrative staff, and families.

Law 2817/2000 constituted an important milestone, contributing to the redefinition of Special Education in terms of educational needs and placing greater emphasis on the principle of integration. The law established the Centers for Diagnosis, Assessment and Support (KDAY), while special classes were renamed Integration Departments, strengthening the connection between student support and the general education system. At the same time, staffing the KDAY with teachers and professionals from different specialties gradually highlighted the interdisciplinary dimension of assessment and educational support.

A decisive point of reference for the contemporary organization of the field is Law 3699/2008 (A' 199), which organizes Special Education and Education as an integral part of public and free education and defines basic forms of attendance, support, and staffing. The importance of this institutional framework for educational administration is considerable, as student support is not treated as the exclusive responsibility of a specialist, but presupposes collaboration among the school, specialized staff, support services, and the family.

The rights-based dimension was strengthened by Law 4074/2012 (A' 88), which ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In this way, the understanding of equal access to and participation in education as a right, as well as the direction toward a more inclusive education system, was institutionally reinforced.

The subsequent reorganization of assessment and support mechanisms, and especially Law 4823/2021 (A' 136), further strengthened the interdisciplinary dimension of the system. A pivotal role is now played by the Centers for Interdisciplinary Assessment, Counseling and Support (KEDASY) and the Interdisciplinary Support Committees (EDY), through which assessment and educational support are more closely connected with school reality and collaboration among different professionals.

From the perspective of educational leadership, however, the existence of institutionalized structures and multiple professional roles does not automatically entail substantive collaboration. The mere coexistence of teachers, psychologists, social workers, members of the Special Educational Staff and Special Support Staff, and other professionals is not sufficient to create a genuinely interdisciplinary school community. Shared planning, clear but complementary roles, systematic communication, exchange of scientific knowledge, and relationships of trust are required. As also noted in the institutional section of this study, Greek legislation may provide the necessary institutional infrastructure for inclusive leadership, but it does not in itself constitute a sufficient condition for its substantive implementation.

In this sense, the evolution of Special Education in Greece is directly linked to the central issue of this study. The transition from administrative control to collaborative and inclusive leadership does not imply a weakening of the principal's institutional responsibility, but a redefinition of the way it is exercised. The principal remains responsible for the school unit, while simultaneously being called upon to coordinate different professional groups, utilize their specialized knowledge, create conditions for participation in decision-making, and strengthen collaboration with families. Thus, administrative authority can function not only as a mechanism of control and accountability, but as an infrastructure for coordination, professional empowerment, and development of the school's collective inclusive capacity.

I would retain this version in the paper. It is more 'concise,' avoids turning the section into a historical enumeration of legislation, and concludes exactly where it should: by connecting the Greek institutional framework with the research focus on leadership.

2.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the transition in the administration of Special Education schools from more hierarchical and control-oriented models toward collaborative, distributed, and inclusive forms of leadership. Particular emphasis is placed on participatory decision-making, interdisciplinary collaboration, staff empowerment, and family participation.

2.2 Research Questions

Based on the above purpose, the study is organized around the following research questions:

RQ1: How does the international literature portray the transition from hierarchical and control-oriented forms of administration toward collaborative, distributed, and inclusive forms of leadership in Special Education?

RQ2: Which leadership and administrative practices emerge as decisive for developing a collaborative and inclusive culture in Special Education schools?

RQ3: What is the role of interdisciplinary collaboration, distributed decision-making, and the empowerment of teachers and other professionals in the operation of Special Education schools?

RQ4: In what ways is collaboration with families and the broader school community incorporated into contemporary inclusive leadership practices?

RQ5: Which organizational, professional, and institutional factors act as facilitators of or barriers to the transition from administrative control to collaborative and inclusive leadership?

3. Theoretical Framework

The administration of Special Education schools constitutes a complex field of educational leadership in which the principal's institutional responsibility is combined with the need for collaboration, coordination of different specialties, and utilization of professional knowledge. Hierarchical models of administration remain important for ensuring organizational functioning and accountability; however, by themselves they are insufficient to address the complexity that characterizes the education of students with disabilities and special educational needs.

Within this context, the principal's role is redefined: from the sole agent of administrative control and decision-making, the principal moves toward a more complex role as coordinator, supporter, and creator of organizational conditions for collaboration. Scheer (2021) emphasizes the importance of strong, supportive, and distributed forms of leadership for implementing inclusive education, while also noting that leadership practices are influenced by the institutional, political, and social context. Therefore, the transition from administrative control to collaborative leadership does not imply the abolition of administrative authority, but its different utilization for the development of people, relationships, and structures for collective action.

Distributed leadership constitutes the fundamental theoretical basis of this shift. Leadership is not viewed exclusively as the function of one person, but as a process developed through interactions among different members of the school community. Tejeiro (2024) connects distributed leadership with related approaches, such as shared, collaborative, democratic, and participatory leadership, highlighting the importance of teamwork, collaborative decision-making, shared vision, and trust for the development of more inclusive schools.

Distributed leadership differs from the mere assignment of administrative duties, as it presupposes substantive participation in decision-making, professional autonomy, the ability to exert influence, and the assumption of leadership roles. In a study of 780 teachers in inclusive schools, Wang and Tian (2023) found that distributed leadership is associated with differentiated instruction, while teacher leadership and teachers' professional competence function as mediating mechanisms. This finding suggests that the principal's influence depends not only on personal actions but also on the ability to strengthen the professional and leadership capacity of others.

In Special Education, distributed leadership is closely linked to interdisciplinary collaboration. Addressing complex educational needs requires the combined utilization of different forms of knowledge and professional approaches. Hsieh et al. (2024) connect school leadership with teachers' professional collaboration, while Sider et al. (2021) identify relationships, communication, and trust as critical elements of leadership for students with special educational needs. Collaboration, therefore, is not simply a positive interpersonal relationship, but an organizational process of knowledge exchange, shared planning, and collective problem-solving.

Inclusive leadership further broadens this approach, since collaboration and distribution of responsibility are insufficient without a clear value orientation toward equality, diversity, participation, and social justice. Valdés et al. (2026) organize inclusive school leadership around five fundamental dimensions: pedagogical processes responsive to diversity, development of an inclusive culture, school community participation, professional development, and utilization of interpersonal resources for inclusion. In the same direction, Tsirantonaki and Vlachou (2024) point out that transformational and distributed leadership can support inclusion through a shared vision, teacher empowerment, and distribution of responsibility, while also acknowledging the constraints that may be imposed by the institutional framework.

Professional development is also a critical dimension. Professional learning is treated not only as an individual process but as part of the school's organizational strategy. Valdés et al. (2026) connect professional development with collective learning and adaptation to the needs of the school environment, while Wang and Tian (2023) identify teachers' professional competence as an important mechanism linking distributed leadership with inclusive teaching practices.

Collaboration with the family and community completes the theoretical framework. Sider et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of positive communication and trusting relationships with parents, while Tejeiro (2024) incorporates the participation of teachers, students, families, and other members of the school community into the logic of distributed leadership. In Special Education, family participation is particularly important, as it can provide substantive knowledge regarding students' needs and capabilities.

Finally, the literature allows the analysis to shift from the individual action of the principal toward the school's collective capacity. Heck and Hallinger (2009) linked distributed leadership with the development of the school's organizational capacity, indicating that the impact of leadership becomes more sustainable when embedded in the structures and functions of the school organization. Similarly, recent literature highlights the importance of professional development, trust, collaboration, and the distribution of leadership for the school's capacity to respond to diversity (Valdés et al., 2026).

4. Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a focused integrative literature review with thematic analysis. The design is interpretive and conceptual: it aims to synthesize theoretical and empirical findings on the transition from administrative control toward collaborative, distributed, and inclusive forms of leadership, rather than to estimate a pooled effect size. At the same time, selected Greek legislative and regulatory texts are examined as the institutional context of the analysis. Because a full systematic review protocol involving protocol registration, a flow diagram, and double independent assessment was not applied, the conclusions are formulated as a theoretical synthesis rather than as an exhaustive mapping of the field. The choice of literature synthesis was considered appropriate because the issue under investigation encompasses different but interrelated theoretical approaches, such as distributed, collaborative, and inclusive leadership, teacher leadership, and leadership in Special Education. Thematic synthesis enables the identification of common patterns, differences, and recurring administrative practices, facilitating the construction of a unified interpretive framework.

Literature Search Strategy: The search focused on international scholarly publications concerning administration and leadership in Special and inclusive education. The main conceptual axes included the terms special education leadership, inclusive school leadership, distributed leadership, collaborative leadership, teacher leadership, shared decision-making, professional collaboration, principal leadership, inclusive schools, and family-school collaboration, in appropriate combinations. In addition, primary Greek legislative and regulatory texts governing Special Education and Education, support structures, parallel support, and the responsibilities of Special Educational Staff and Special Support Staff were examined. This strategy allows the international theoretical discourse to be related to the institutional conditions of its implementation in Greece.

The selection of terms reflects the interconnection of different forms of leadership recorded in the relevant literature. Tejeiro (2024), for example, points to the theoretical proximity among distributed, shared, collaborative, democratic, and participatory leadership, which justifies the joint examination of these concepts within the present review.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria: The literature synthesis included publications that:

- (a) Were published in peer-reviewed scientific journals
- (b) Examine issues of school leadership, administration, or collaboration in Special or inclusive education settings
- (c) provide empirical or theoretical findings regarding the role of principals, distributed leadership, collaboration, participatory decision-making, or the development of inclusive organizational conditions; and
- (d) Present adequate methodological and theoretical substantiation. Publications that addressed inclusion in general without a substantive connection to leadership or administration, texts lacking clear scientific substantiation, and studies whose context did not permit a direct connection with the research topic were excluded.

Analysis and Thematic Synthesis: The literature was analyzed through thematic coding. The studies were examined in terms of how they approach the role of the principal, the distribution of leadership, forms of professional and interdisciplinary collaboration, participation in decision-making, professional development, collaboration with families, and the factors that facilitate or hinder the implementation of collaborative and inclusive practices.

The rationale for thematic organization is supported by the systematic review of DeMatthews et al. (2026), in which inclusive leadership practices are organized around three broader areas: creating and sustaining a shared commitment to inclusion, establishing appropriate organizational conditions, and developing instructional and leadership capacity.

5. Analytical Framework of the Study

The synthesis of the international literature indicates that the transition from administrative control toward more collaborative and inclusive forms of leadership in Special Education schools is not a simple replacement of one administrative model by another. Rather, it may be interpreted as a process of organizational transformation in which the manner of exercising administrative authority, the participation of teachers and other professionals, decision-making processes, and the development of the school's collective capacity to respond to diversity are transformed.

The principal's institutional and administrative responsibility remains a fundamental element of school operation. However, contemporary research shows that effective leadership for inclusion extends beyond managing daily operations and requires the creation of a shared orientation toward inclusion, the development of appropriate organizational conditions, and the strengthening of the school's instructional and leadership capacity. The systematic review by DeMatthews et al. (2026) organizes inclusive leadership practices around three main axes: creating and sustaining a shared commitment to inclusion, shaping and improving inclusive organizational conditions, and developing instructional and leadership capacity for inclusion.

From this perspective, the principal shifts from the exclusive role of supervisor and decision-maker toward a more complex role as coordinator, supporter, and creator of conditions for collective action. This change does not entail a loss of administrative responsibility, but a different way of utilizing it. Administrative authority can create time, structures, and opportunities so that the professional knowledge of teachers and other members of the school community is substantively utilized in the school's operation and development.

Distributed leadership occupies a central place in this process. Tejeiro's (2024) systematic review showed that distributed leadership, when supported by school administration, is associated with the development of more inclusive school environments. Particular importance is attributed to teamwork, collaborative decision-making, and the participation not only of teachers but also of students, families, and, where required, individuals and organizations outside the school (Tejeiro, 2024).

Professional participation, however, should not be equated with the actual distribution of leadership responsibility. Teachers' ability to express views is an important prerequisite, but distributed leadership additionally presupposes the ability to exert substantive influence, take initiatives, and develop leadership roles. The empirical study by Wang and Tian (2023), involving 780 teachers in inclusive schools, showed that principals' distributed leadership is associated with the implementation of differentiated instruction, while teacher leadership and their professional competence for inclusive education function as important mediating mechanisms. This finding reinforces the view that the principal's impact is not limited to personal actions, but extends to the ability to develop the professional and leadership capacity of others.

In Special Education schools, this dimension is directly connected with interdisciplinary collaboration. The complexity of students' needs requires the combined utilization of different forms of professional knowledge. Special Education teachers and other specialized professionals need opportunities to exchange knowledge, plan jointly, and participate in collective problem-solving. Collaboration, therefore, is not simply a positive interpersonal relationship, but an organizational mechanism through which individual professional knowledge can be transformed into the school's collective capacity.

The importance of collaboration is also confirmed by recent empirical data. In a study of 604 teachers, Adams et al. (2025) found a positive relationship between inclusive school leadership and teacher collaboration. At the same time, teachers' academic optimism functioned as an important mediating mechanism in the relationship between inclusive leadership and collaboration. The findings indicate that leadership influences collaboration not only through formal organizational structures, but also through the development of trust, shared expectations, and positive professional beliefs.

At the same time, inclusive leadership cannot simply be equated with collaboration or the distribution of tasks. It presupposes a clear value orientation toward equality, diversity, participation, and social justice. Valdés et al. (2026) propose five theoretically important dimensions of inclusive school leadership: administering pedagogical processes with diversity in mind, developing an inclusive school culture, promoting participation by the entire school community, professional development, and utilizing interpersonal resources for inclusion. This approach places social justice, critical reflection, and adaptation to the specific school context at the core of inclusive leadership.

Relationships and communication are also particularly important. Examining data from 285 principals in six Canadian provinces, Sider et al. (2021) identified key themes concerning leadership for students with special educational needs, including relationships, communication, behavior modeling, and issues of isolation and inadequate principal preparation. These findings show that the development of inclusive schools does not depend exclusively on the principal's intentions, but requires appropriate preparation, professional support, and organizational conditions that enable collaboration.

The family and community also constitute an essential part of the process. Distributed leadership can broaden participation beyond the boundaries of the school's professional staff. Tejeiro (2024) notes that distributed leadership practices can strengthen the participation of students and families, while DeMatthews et al. (2026) place the creation of inclusive organizational conditions at the core of leadership for inclusion. In Special Education, family participation assumes additional importance, as parents often possess critical knowledge regarding the student's needs, capabilities, and daily functioning.

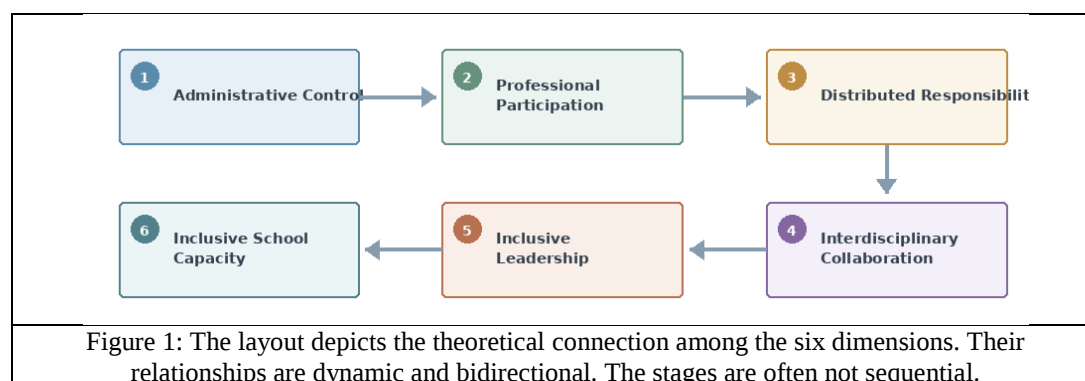
Based on the thematic synthesis, the main dimensions organizing the study's analytical framework are summarized in Table 1.

Thematic axis	Indicative content
1. Role of the principal	From control and supervision to coordination and empowerment
2. Distributed decision-making	Staff participation, teacher leadership, shared responsibility
3. Interdisciplinary collaboration	Teachers, specialist professionals, support teams
4. Inclusive culture	Shared vision, equality, diversity, trust
5. Family-community	Parental participation, communication, collaboration
6. Barriers and facilitators	Institutional framework, resources, professional development, organizational conditions

Table 1. Main thematic axes of collaborative and inclusive leadership

The six axes should not be regarded as independent categories. Rather, they interact and constitute a dynamic organizational system. Professional participation can create the conditions for distributed responsibility, which in turn facilitates interdisciplinary collaboration. When these processes are embedded in a clear value framework of equality, diversity, and participation, they can support the development of more mature forms of inclusive leadership.

Based on the synthesis of the above theoretical and research findings, the following dynamic conceptual framework for leadership transformation in Special Education schools is proposed: The framework's fundamental theoretical proposition is that effective inclusive leadership depends not exclusively on the principal's individual practices, but also on the capacity of leadership action to develop human resources, relationships of trust, collaborative teams, professional competencies, and organizational processes that enable the school unit to operate inclusively with continuity and resilience. In this sense, Inclusive School Capacity expresses the shift from individual leadership action toward a more collective and sustainable organizational capacity.



The dimensions of the proposed framework should not be interpreted as empirically confirmed or strictly sequential stages. The existing literature provides theoretical and empirical support for the individual relationships among distributed leadership, professional participation and capacity, collaboration, and inclusive leadership, but not for the above sequence as a unified and already confirmed model. This particular linkage of the dimensions constitutes a theoretical synthesis of the present study.

For this reason, the framework is proposed as a dynamic and developmentally oriented conceptual framework rather than as a linear stage model. The individual dimensions may interact, mutually reinforce one another, or develop with differing intensity depending on the institutional and organizational context of each school unit. Empirical investigation of the relationships among them and of their potential developmental dynamics is a subject for future research.

6. Theoretical Contribution

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in the synthesis of different but complementary strands of literature. Scheer (2021) provides the importance of the administrative and institutional context and the collective shaping of vision. Tejeiro (2024) provides the connection among distributed leadership, collaborative decision-making, and inclusion. Wang and Tian (2023) highlight the role of teacher leadership and professional competence. Hsieh et al. (2024) document the relationship among distributed leadership, professional collaboration, and collective innovativeness. Sider et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of relationships,

communication, trust, and appropriate principal preparation, while Valdés et al. (2026) reinforce the dimensions of professional development, participation, and interpersonal resources.

This synthesis indicates that inclusive leadership may be considered fully developed when inclusion is not merely a personal commitment of the principal but is transformed into collective organizational capacity.

Inclusive leadership becomes sustainable when inclusion is transformed from a characteristic of the leader into a capacity of the school.

7. Discussion

The synthesis indicates that administrative control and collaborative leadership are not mutually exclusive logics. In Special Education schools, regulatory compliance, safety, resource management, and accountability require clear institutional responsibility. This responsibility becomes more effective, however, when exercised in ways that activate the specialized knowledge of teachers, Special Educational Staff, and Special Support Staff, create structures for joint planning, and permit evidence-based professional disagreement. Distributed leadership, therefore, is not equivalent to the simple delegation of duties; it concerns expanding substantive influence while maintaining clear boundaries of responsibility.

Comparison of the international theoretical discourse with the Greek institutional framework reveals a productive but demanding condition. The prescribed interdisciplinary structures and distinct professional roles create institutional possibilities for collaboration. However, the existence of rules does not automatically ensure a shared vision, mutual trust, or collective learning. The principal's contribution lies precisely in translating formal provisions into organizational routines: regular interdisciplinary meetings, shared goal-setting for students, participatory use of data, clear protocols for communication with families, and systematic professional development.

8. Conclusions and Practical Implications

Effective leadership in Special Education does not consist in the linear abandonment of control, but in its transformation into an institutional guarantee of collaboration, justice, and pedagogical consistency. The proposed framework links institutional responsibility with professional participation, distributed responsibility, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the school's inclusive capacity. At a practical level, principals need to protect time for collaboration, make decision-making criteria transparent, develop leadership roles among staff, and include families as sources of knowledge rather than as mere recipients of information. For educational administration, there is a need to train leaders both in Special Education and Education legislation and in interdisciplinary facilitation, conflict management, and the use of data to improve school inclusion.

9. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The study is conceptual and integrative in nature and does not constitute an exhaustive systematic review or empirical evaluation of the proposed framework. The selection of literature may be influenced by availability and publication language, while the heterogeneity of national contexts limits the direct transfer of findings to the Greek setting. Furthermore, the legislative analysis reflects institutional provisions and not necessarily their implementation in school units. Future studies may empirically test the relationships among the six dimensions, compare Special Education School Units and general schools, and investigate, using mixed methods, how institutional provisions are translated into everyday practices of collaboration, leadership distribution, and family participation.

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