

REFORM IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM. THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGE IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT: In the recent decades, the academic literature engages more and more with reforms in the education system. These reforms that are worldwide seek to create change in education. If it's regarding the position of the school principal as designer leader has significant role in the reforms management, but, moreover the role of this article is to emphasize the change of the role of the school principal over the years. The functions of the school principal integrate managerial aspects and leadership aspects and its importance is immense in the school organization, both in the terms of the organization customers, the pupils, and in the terms of the organization's staff - teachers. Not less important is the operation and implementation of educational reforms. We have to see the role of the school principal as the most significant to the implementing the reform in the education system.

KEYWORDS: reforms, change management, school principal.

1. INTRODUCTION

The declared purpose of educational reform is to improve the achievements of more and more pupils and to enable them to be better integrated in society. In addition to being of reforms sometimes as a survival necessity the organizations and also the way of systems to maintain the issue in the focus of public interest, they are also a level for constant renewal and express a yearning to change the face of the education [1]. Due to the occurrence of the reform as processes of change in a democratic society is summoned exit from the routine, undermining the existing, activities of identifying of needs, an opportunity for public discussion on values, examining alternatives, construction of consensus on priorities, harnessing the stakeholders, coping with objections, developing of activity strategies and etc.. On the other hand, there braking forces such as: explicit and implicit objections of different stakeholders, political struggles for power and influence, weaknesses of the reform in terms of the requested change itself and its nature, conflicting interests of interest groups, socio-political mechanisms and structures, failures in performance and so on [26]

Elmore [12] define educational reform as planned change process that is aimed for achieving Objectives, which are praiseworthy from the perspective of its initiators. It is impossible to talk about educational reform without discussing the changes that were applied in the role of principal of the school in the recent years. This article will present the change in the role of the principal and how the principal can assist in implementing of the reform and the changes that are dictated from the top. It can be said that the school principal is a role with a crucial importance to the success of the school [24]. The success of the schools involved in the formulation and implementation of educational purposes [20]. From the middle of the twentieth century, and especially the last three decades, the purpose of the school was focused in the success of all of the pupils who come within it - their education, their learning and their achievements [12], hence, the principal of the school has primary responsibility for the success of the all pupils and it is important to cultivate his/her commitment for this. The study shows that the principal has an important role in improving the teaching and increasing of achievements of the pupils [e.g.: 22; 30; 21; 19] The role of the school principal is a busy and

complex role, and it includes tasks of diverse nature. One of the main reasons for this is that the schools and their principals work in changing, uncertain and unstable reality [9; 21].

2. THE BEGINNING OF THE ERA OF THE REFORMS IN EDUCATION AND IN THE ROLES OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

The post modern era and the last decades are characterized by a high frequency of changes. A lot of information, the global communications, the improved accessibility, the knowledge and the technological progress, have a significant impact on institutions and organizations in general, and public organizations and schools in particular. In the recent decades, most of democratic countries in the West acted in order to promote reforms in the public sector. The common denominator among all of them is dissatisfaction on the part of the citizens in relation to the providing of governmental services that are provided by the state.

The professional literature that engages with schools management sees the school as an organization, which has to conduct in accordance with the theories of management. Accordingly, the school and the school management engage with the requirements, the needs and the roles of the school principal as an organization manager, in accordance of the theories of modern organizational management. This literature engages with the importance of the systemic view, with reference to the learning organization, which copes with the changing environment, with contradictions and with complexity [25]. In addition, the emphasis on the position of the school principal as a leader, including decisions that he/she makes, his/her daring and his/her resourcefulness in coping with the changing environments and the with challenge of change leading [20]. The classic literature of management refers to the skills and the talents that are required form the manager, including technical skills alongside social skills such as staff leading and interpersonal communication and also conceptual abilities that are associated with seeing of the vision as a complex of the components of the organization. However, there is presented an argument that the school principal, compared to owners of management positions in other organizations, has a central and unique role in leadership and educational work of the teaching staff. The school principal is perceived as the leader of the education system, a major leader of pedagogic guidance of the school, who has overall responsibility for the success of the pupils at the institution that he/she manages, when by all these he/she has a crucial influence on the improving teaching and increasing achievements of the pupils [21].

According to these perceptions, we can see the development and the changes that were applied in the last decades regarding the role of the school principal and the expectations from him/her: (1) From the perception of the principal as who has professional authority, the pedagogical leader who uses transformational leadership and who places the vision and the purposes and recruiting the staff for their fulfillment to the perception of the manager as participating leader, who develops processes of participation of teachers and the officials in the professional discourse, in the decision-making and the in dividing of tasks and responsibilities. (2) From the perception of leadership of the manager as functioning that is focused on the inputs and on the processes of teaching, through personal guidance for teachers, attendance in the classroom, follow up of achievements of the pupils and fundraising to a leader who is focused on the management of culture and the culture of learning of teachers and pupils, emphasizing the results, the empowering of the group as a community with unique identity that includes values, symbols , beliefs, and intentions that are common to all its members, (teachers, parents, pupils) and managing of professional discussion the main issue of which is the quality of teaching, promotion of learning and mutual commitment among the all members [2]. Hence the responsibilities of the school principal are anchored in the leading of processes of teaching, education and learning in the design of the future image of the school- vision and change management, in the leading of the staff and its professional training, in focusing in the individual and in managing of the relationships between the school and the community. In all of these the role of the principal is to create the moral infrastructure that connects between the organization members and their environment, to activate

mechanisms and processes, including enforcement of discipline, which will develop the capabilities of the school to manage itself, to determine its objectives, and the ways how to achieve them and to act for their implementation and to promote the individuals as leaders and skilled professionals [2]. This approach for the role of school principal integrates aspects of management and leadership. However, conceptually there are two different dimensions: the management has one significant aspect of preservation and daily operation of the school, while the focus of leadership indicates fields such as values, ethics, inspiration, purposes design, renewal and motivating of people towards a common and agreed purpose, on these aspects there are added balancing leadership management components that are relied on the theory of "the full range of transformational leadership" that specifies terms such as: the realization of ideals, inspiration, consideration of the individual and the intellectual stimulation.

3. THE PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL ACCORDING THE APPROACH OF THE NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

From the late 1980s, there was begun to appear liberalization of the public administration that is now known as the phenomenon of "new public administration" that relies on the assumption that collaboration between the two sectors will benefit many individuals of society. As the essence of this phenomenon the public sector adopted behavior rule, management methods, codes of culture, norms and values that characterize the business sector and the private sector [28]. As part of the reforms of new public management we can see characteristics and different expressions of business organizations infiltrate to the public field. For example we can see an emphasis on quality of service and the product, as well as striving for performance management including setting of measureable objectives, developing of metrics and standards, and repeated measurement for the purposes of comparison and improvement. At the same time, the organizational structure is flatter, i.e., headquarter has increased, and there are also complex and multi-channel collaborations and teamwork compared to the past [12]. Similarly to the private sector, the model of new public management poses for the managers, challenges and expectations that are larger than in the past, and in accordance, enables providing of consideration and extensive authorities to the managers in order to enable them to managerial flexibility and ability to adapt to changing situations. This approach assumes that perceptual change regarding the values that in the basis of the activity of public sector: efficiency is perceived as more important than the action, effectiveness is more important than the process, flexibility and adaptability more important than the principles of certainty and obedience. These work patterns provide to the managers greater maneuvering space and enables them to direct the activities of the institution in accordance with cost-benefit considerations and to examining of inputs versus outputs. The most important components of the leadership of public management are managerial responsibility, accountability, transparency. All those motivate organizational processes and working processes, speed up tasks performing, streamline priorities, reduce costs and encourage focusing in goals and objectives that are essential and most urgent. In addition, they encourage teamwork and responsibility of unified staff that shows responsibility and leads the organization to the desired results [28]. Vigoda [29] creates a distinction between the administration that is focused in policy implementation and management that is generally attributed to empowering of individuals and groups and aimed to achieve organizational effectiveness and efficiency. In order to promote the new public administration reform we have to develop and encourage appropriate leadership, which is flexible and modern processes and which will encompass both the processes of administration and the processes of management. It is proper that this leadership on the one hand will cause the necessary changes that are derived from the perception of NPM and on the other hand, will continue to act within the framework of the existing system and relying on it as it extract the best as possible from it. For the leveraging and promoting of such leadership, it is necessary basic conditions, with structural and cultural characteristics that are suitable for the new public management.

4. THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL AS TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADER – IN THE POSTMODERN ERA

Today, there are two prominent educational ideologies in the education systems in the country and worldwide: the traditional stream and progressive stream. The traditional stream is based on the culture of traditional teaching with instrumental approach, learning of skills and the expectation of usefulness. This teaching exists because the cultural and the social contexts that affect the daily life at school do not stimulate critique or questions. This arrangement is the result of traditional - conservative approach, according which teachers perceive the tradition and the culture of the school obvious [27]. The progressive stream, reflects new educational arrangements that focus on professional developing and humanistic teaching and learning methods of the teachers, on developing of intellectual, emotional and moral resources of the teachers and the pupils, on the design of their identity and on the guidance for the design of their perspectives about the life, about themselves and about others. The difference between the two streams, is in the basic issues in education such as: determining of the educational purposes, the role and the position of the teachers and the pupils in the process of teaching [11]. While the progressive pedagogy was primarily focused on position the pupil in the center of the educational process, there was simultaneously developed in the UK and in the US the radical educational approach – the critical pedagogy that has challenged the existing cultural, social and educational arrangements and has emphasized the educational contexts outside the classroom and outside the school and the complexity of the relations between education and society.

The educators in the postmodern era should persist in position of the pupil at the center of education being, to examine their of educational activities constantly, to develop critical attitudes of them and of their pupils towards the system, to examine the effects of the education system on the figure adult and to implement accordingly the changes in their teaching methods [2]. In Israel the National Task Force to Improve the Education (Dovrat Committee) pointed out the school principal as responsible for providing high quality of education for the all pupils, the empowering of the educational staff, the constant improvement of its professional functioning and its success in fulfilling the tasks and achieving the purposes of the school. (National Program of Education, 2005).

Hence there is growing and strengthening the understanding that it is impossible to improve efficiently and for the over time the learning of pupils and their achievements without improving of teachers' teaching and recognition that the responsibility for this is imposed on the school principals. The demand for transparency and accountability from the Ministry of Education, the local authority and the school community reinforces the need for assessing teachers' performances [2].

5. CHANGING TRENDS IN THE ROLES OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Evans [13] argues that the deep significance of the school principal task is inherent in the pedagogical aspect of his/her role. The key to the success of the principals is changing the emphasis of their duties: from management of education until the 1980s the research of leadership was based on the social sciences, and the principal's role was based on scientific, business, and managerial images [9]. The basis of management was considered as universal and not dependent in the educational context [23]. The features approach, the situational approach and the behavioral approach are examples of this general paradigm [16]. In the last twenty years, in the light of the recognition of the relation between the action of the leader and the culture of the organization in which he/she acts, have a great interest in the model of transformational leadership or Transmuting leadership and the model the full range of leadership. Avolio & Bass [4] emphasize the role of the manager as a designer of the culture. These models focused on the influence of the leader on people – their tendencies, attitudes and beliefs, as well as the design of optimal relationships among members of the organization [23]. The model of transformational leadership specifies terms such as realization of ideals, staff developing based on inspiration, taking the individual into account and intellectual

stimulation [5]. The special importance of transformational leadership is emphasizing the need to create a healthy school culture. According to Barth [6] the school culture is based on the system of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, values, ceremonies, traditions and myths that are ingrained in the core of the institution. A healthy culture is a continuous source of inspiration for learning of the young and adult alike, hence its great importance. The school principal has to constantly examine the culture in his/her school and to ensure that it invites and encourages learning. This conclusion has led many researchers to determine that pedagogical leadership is one of the characteristics of the principal's role: leadership that emphasizes the behavior of the teachers and is aimed directly to influence the growth of the pupils [22]. Leadership that defines the pedagogical purpose of the school, manages of the teaching and the learning, and creates a school climate that supports learning [17] leadership that directs and guides the improvement of the teaching and the learning [12], leadership that designs educational-scholastic vision and implements it by collaboration with the school staff and the community [21] and leadership that is based on procedures that create sustainable relationships with the class action [8], in other words, is based on the interrelationship of teacher-pupil-learning materials [18;19].

6. THE ROLES OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL IN THE MODERN ERA – NOW

The roles of the school principal integrate managerial and leadership aspects. Conceptually, these are two different dimensions [20]. The managerial aspect includes prominent aspect of preservation, arrangement and daily operation of the school, in contrast, the aspect of leadership emphasizes the internal things like values, ethics, inspiration, purposes design, regeneration and especially motivating of people towards a common and agreed purpose [24]. In practical terms, too sharp distinguishing between management and leadership is not productive [14;15].

The principal's role integrates management and leadership: according to Bennis & Nanus [7] it is involved is the design of vision and leading of changes alongside with regular and effective maintenance, and according to Friedman [14] it is based on 'leadership of transformation' and 'routine leadership' respectively and they both are necessary for the organization. Thus, the effective management of the school is a function of leadership characteristics that rely on a managerial basis [20]. Transformational leadership is something necessary, but it alone is not enough to lead to sustained school improvement [19]. The transformational approach as other general leadership approaches, reflects far too long from the 'core technology' of schools means teaching and learning. If the central role of the school is to grow young people - empowering of their learning and their achievements – it is proper that the principal will focus on this purpose, will serve as a pedagogical leader and will direct towards changes in the teaching and learning actions.

Recent studies indicate that the pedagogical leadership is the core task of the school principal [30], and principal who is a pedagogical leader who influences the improvement of teaching and the achievements of learners [23;24]. It turns out that pedagogical leadership is not a common and structured phenomenon in the educational systems. No one time there are schools in which there is a division of work according which the teachers are responsible for what goes on behind the closed classroom door closed, while the school principal engages with action such as budget management, determination and maintenance of the organizational structure of the school, managing relationships with the school community, handling with conflicts and crises, enriching of the human capital, design of the school climate as well as marketing and management of daily routine of school [12]. The principal finds it difficult to connect these activities and the teaching and learning action, and therefore does not design for a central role for himself/herself as pedagogical leader. While there is inclusion in this description, but the argument which must be considered is that there is no systemic construction that supports systematically the pedagogical leadership. From the 1980s we see an effort to change the central characterization of the role of the school principal and to bind it in the educational context of and the in the learning objectives of the organization. If we

accept the assumptions that the central role of the school involves in improving of the education and the learning and that the school principal has a very important role in realizing of this purpose, the obvious conclusion is that the principal has to dedicate the best efforts to the fields of teaching and learning.

The central role of school principals is to lead educationally and pedagogically the school in order to improve the education and the learning of the all pupils. Four other management fields enable this role and support it: design the future image of the school - Vision and change management; staff leadership, its management and its professional development; focusing on the individual; managing of the relationships between the school and the community. As his/her being a school leader, the principal has to see the school system on a variety of its dimensions and fields and to create close connections between them for the sake of the success of the all pupils.

7. THE FIELD OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TODAY

It is possible to summarize and say that we can divide the role of the school principal to four fields of management. **Figure 1** summary the different in the role of the school principal

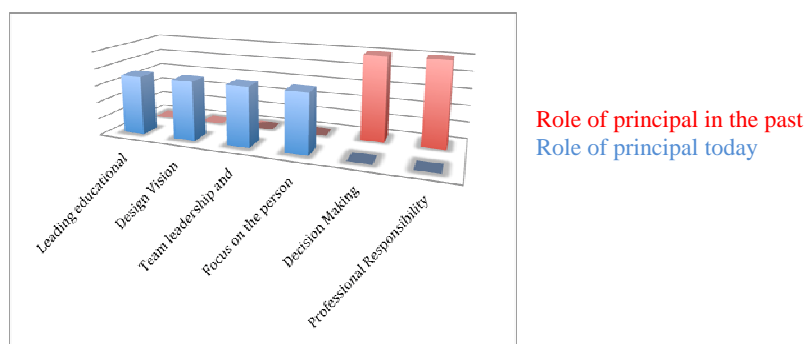


Figure 1. Working Dogs organizational consultant

(1) *Education, Teaching and Learning Processes Leading* Due to the responsibility of the School to the Education of the pupil, his/her being a person with a passion to know, autonomous learner, with self-direction for learning (self-regulated learning) and provides meaning for it - the constant improvement of the education, the teaching, the learning and the achievements of the all pupils are a priority for the school. As a pedagogical leader, principal plans, leads and is involved in major educational tasks of the school, in collaboration with the school community.

(2) *Design of the Future Image of the School* - Vision and Change Management in the schools work in the complex reality and the environmental context of that are affected by the complex of permanent changes and transformation in their close and distant environment. The nature, perceptions, goals and ways of life of the schools affected by these changes and transformation in the present, but will be also subjects of unexpected conditions in the future. As the school principal will be wise to lead strategic efforts of thinking, based on information collection, intelligent prediction, systematic learning and planning of the objectives and long-term and data-guided ways of action, in participation of the school staff and the officials of the Authority and the Community, will increase the chances that his/her school will succeed to fulfill the needs of the partners, to adapt itself own flexibly to the future changes flexibly and to gain recognition and appreciation for his/her efforts and his/her achievements on the part of entities that act with him/her.

(3) *The Staff Leading, its Management and its Professional Development* -Teachers are the leaders of the action of education. Teachers are human capital and the professional asset that the school relies on it. Nurturing and investing in this major and important and will largely ensure the fulfillment of the goals and the achievements of the school in the pedagogical,

organizational and social aspects. The school principal manages the teaching staff. His/her role is to plan and to lead the processes of professional learning and professional envelopment of his/her staff in accordance with the policy of the school, the teacher's professional needs and their aspirations and in congruence with the teachers' career steps.

(4) *Focusing of the Individual* - The school is an organization that engages with education and cultivation of young and different from each other persons. The focusing on the individual pupils is an expression of caring and of concern, it strives to respond to the loneliness of many of the youths in this age, and is anchored in the commitment to the success of each pupil in the educational, social and emotional fields. Child under mental distress cannot learn or to be expressed in company of children. The principal designs school that is designed to serve as a safe and pleasant personal and human environment and to encourage the growth of the all pupils.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The role of the school principal, as part of the education system has undergone transformations and changes over the years. In the beginning - from the mid-nineteenth century we identify processes of secularization, urbanization and industrialization, which led to the development of new human society, there was a turning point in the teaching and education methods and in the role of the school principal "The public education" [27;25;26]. The education received additional meaning when the countries have begun to understand that education is a means to increase the competitive power of the country against other countries. From the mid-twentieth century, and especially during the last three decades, the purpose of the school has been focused on the success of the all pupils who are part of it - their education, their learning and their achievements [12]. The role of the school principal is a busy and complex role, and it includes tasks of diverse nature [9; 21]. Among the duties of the school principal we can be specify, for example, organizational developing of school, management of decision-making processes, systematic and systematic planning, design of safe climate and environment, managing of the curricula system, design of the schedules, professional developing of teaching staff, budgeting and financing of the school activities, formulating of educational vision and its implementation, recruitment of employees and human resource management, management of relationships between the school and the community, developing of learning communities, assessment of teachers' performances, and finally - improving of the achievements of the all pupils. The role of the school principal integrate managerial aspects and leadership aspects and its importance is immense to the operation of the school organization, both in the terms of organization customers who are the pupils and in the terms of the organization's staff – the teachers. Any reform of education cannot exist without the involvement of the school principal. Expanded discussion of the issue should be dedicated to the providing of tools to assist to the school principal to carry out his/her duties.

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