

SCIENTIFICALLY GROUNDED CONCEPTIONS, THEORIES AND SCHOOL PRINCIPALS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT VARIATIVE MODULES

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Abstract. *At present, there is an objectively determined process of the formation of a new type of education paradigm that envisages both in content and in organization passage from an informational-reproductive model to that of creative search. Solution of these problems requires operative organization in Latvia of the growth of professional competence of education institution principals as managers in the sphere of education.*

Investigation of the professional development of education institution principals sets as imperative the philosophical approach of constructivism and the communicative approach. Both conceptual approaches make it possible to elaborate a scientific conception that includes several variative modules that secure a multi-dimensional view of the professional development of education institution principals.

Professional competence of education institution principals is a complex notion with manifold content. It comprises a dynamic combination of knowledge and personality traits for the implementation of education institution principals' professional development.

The content of the variative module system and its sub-modules is tended to competence improvement in a particular sphere of education. Its aim is providing an opportunity of improving education institution principals' professional aptitude by acquiring new developments in the content and methods of education for their creative application in the process of education management in line with aims, learners' needs and interests, management philosophy, and basic principles of management.

Keywords: *competences, management, module system, principal, professional development.*

Introduction

Education is an essential determinant of the direction and perspective of society development. Education conceptions around the world as well as in Latvia are affected by the impact of democratization, globalization, optimization, and information technologies. The topicality of changes in education in Latvia also relates to its integration into the common European education space where the main mission of education is helping everyone, because the acquisition of

knowledge and skills happens simultaneously with an individual's character formation, world view development, and assuming responsibility. The future education focus has shifted from the national, where each state sets its own goals of education and means of acquiring education, to the international and global that concern all students. Global education must provide an opportunity of acquiring and developing skills and competences necessary for adjusting to the requirements and life conditions of the changing society. When we talk about a changing environment for the principal, the danger is that this may sound too abstract. Briefly, as we see the main shift towards new principalships in Europe, it basically means that the principals will move from solely being a manager towards becoming more of an educational leader. The emphasis lies on administrative and routine tasks, such as distributing resources, enforcing rules, etc. External and internal political and socio-economic changes in the 21st century have conditioned a need for further professional education of education institution principals and their deputies as well as education board and institution leaders and employees. Each country has its own experience and practice in the regulation of recruiting education leaders as well as their special education and professionalism development (e.g. Anderson, 1991, *First-time Principals Programme*, etc.).

Professional competence is to be developed during the whole of the professional action and process as life-long learning essence. Management of such a complex dynamic system as school in the period of the contradictory stage of development in Latvia requires from a principal not only adequate and quick reacting to all changes of the external and internal environment but also predicting the development of these processes (Morris, 2005).

The task of specifying the theoretical and methodological prerequisites for the complex development of personality of an education institution leader appears as an escape from aggravating the existing situation and locating the necessity, content, and conditions of the organization in the process of qualification upgrading of a school principal (Praude & Beļčikovs, 2001).

Professional development is an organized and self-driven process that includes a variety of learning content, forms, and methods as well as needs of school principals as participants of the process of education, therefore it requires support, investigation of management opportunities and their improvement (Krastiņš, 2000). In the process of the research study, it was stated that the process of education and professional development of institution principals is still fragmented and is not properly coordinated. It is not clear who is responsible for the implementation and execution of the process of professional development of education institution principals. In Latvia, there is a lack of information on the opportunities for the professional development of school principals. Major characteristics of the process of education and professional development of

institution principals are the continuity of the process that forms a single whole with the demands for education institution principals' professionalism level in the respective period of time, the harmonization of the process elements, excluding individual, though seemingly important, events, the *systemic character*, the active involvement of education institution principals and their wish for development, changes in the level of professionalism that is manifested in raising their professional competence and education quality.

In the research, for the professional development of education institution principals in Latvia it is important to suggest scientifically grounded conceptions, theories, and new professional development variative modules. It is necessary to suggest new perspectives for education institution principals in their professional development. Investigation of the professional development of education institution principals sets as imperative *the philosophical approach of constructivism and communicative approach. In the science of education they complement each other and provide the holistic view.* Both conceptual approaches make it possible to elaborate a scientific conception that includes several variative modules that secure a multi-dimensional view of the professional development of education institution principals.

Theoretical framework

Over the years, three different philosophical orientations have guided the education and professional development of school administrators: traditional/scientific management, craft, and reflective inquiry. The traditional model is characteristic of preparation of programmes at universities. Principals select this model based on their desire to pursue additional coursework in the area of their professional interest; to obtain an advanced degree; to renew or upgrade their administrative licensure; or a combination of these objectives (Daresh, 2002).

Murphy J. and Hallinger P. (Murphy & Hallinger, 1992) contend that leadership in the post-modern or "post-information" age is characterized by lifelong learning, learning to learn and just-in-time learning. Their report shows the impact of culture, philosophical approaches, hierarchical structures and, particularly, technology, on leadership development.

Jones C. (Jones, 2002) argues that "the global changes now occurring demand approaches to leadership education that is profoundly different from those that have served well in the past". They contend that these changes require reversing the six traditional priorities:

- from theory to practice;
- from parts to systems;

- from states and roles to processes;
- from knowledge to learning;
- from individual action to partnerships;
- from detached analysis to reflexive understanding.

The content of school leadership development programmes has considerable similarities in different countries, “leading to a hypothesis that there is an international curriculum for school leadership preparation” (Bush & Jackson, 2002). They identify the following common elements (Figure 1):

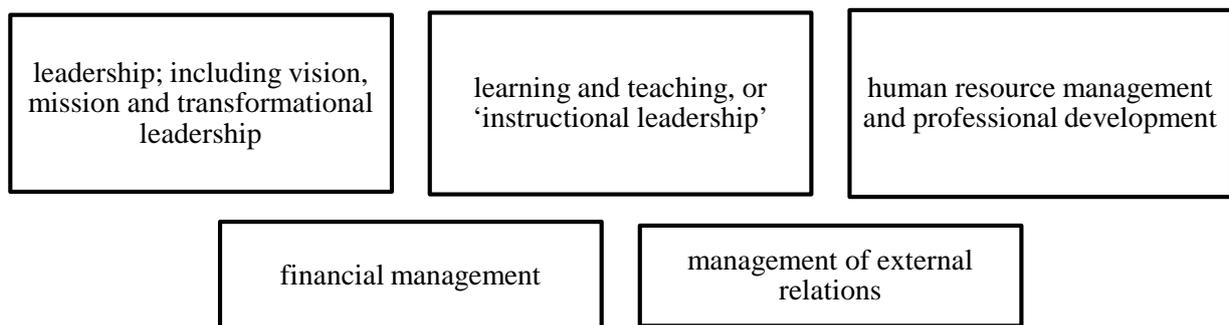


Figure 1. **Management principles** (Bush & Jackson, 2002)

Murphy K. (Murphy, 2000) provides a wide-ranging review of the American principalship within a context of “a scarcity of capable educational leaders” and claim that school systems must “reinvent the principalship” to define the role in terms of leadership for student learning:

- instructional leadership: strengthening teaching and learning,
- community leadership: big-picture awareness of the school’s role in society,
- visionary leadership: energy, commitment, entrepreneurial spirit, values and conviction that children will learn at high levels.

Mestry and Grobler (Mestry & Grobler, 2002) say that there is an urgent need to train and develop principals in four main components (Figure 2).

Based on their earlier review of the leadership literature, Bush and Glover (Bush & Glover, 2003) argue that training should include elements of both management and leadership. The reviewed literature offers no consistency in the attention to these themes. Some references incorporate both management and leadership themes, whilst others focus on only one. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) produced a wide ranging review of leadership development in the public sector (2001), including chapters for the UK, the USA, Germany, Sweden, Norway and Mexico. It points to seven general trends across its member countries (Table 1.).

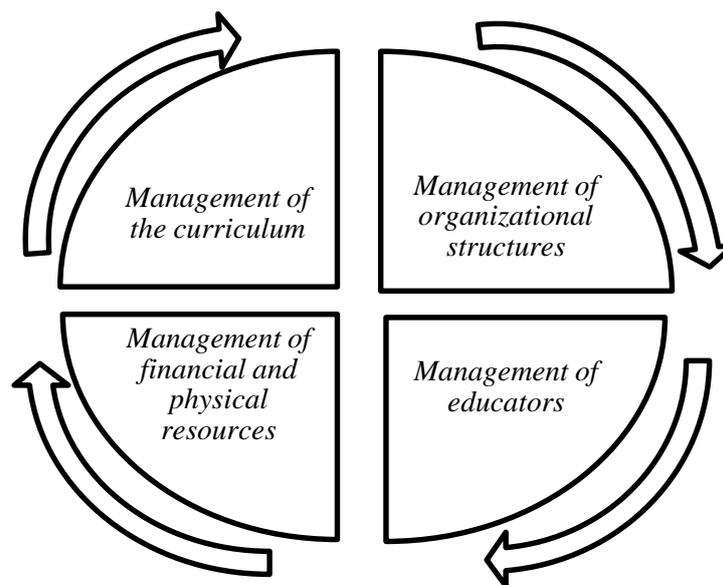


Figure 2. **Four main development components** (Mestry & Grobler, 2002)

Table 1 **Seven general trends** (Bush & Glover, 2003)

1.	Developing systematic strategies for leadership development,
2.	setting up new institutions for leadership development — this point is illustrated by reference to Sweden’s National Council for Quality and Development. England’s National College for School Leadership (NCSL) also fits this trend,
3.	linking existing management training to leadership development,
4.	defining a competence profile for future leaders — this is consistent with the approach taken by the English National Standards for school leadership and the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH),
5.	identifying and selecting potential leaders,
6.	encouraging mentoring and training
7.	ensuring sustainable leadership development — this places emphasis on managers’ time being utilized to develop other leaders, an approach consistent with NCSL’s distributed leadership models.

These seven trends resonate strongly with patterns of leadership development within education, notably in England.

Crow (Crow, 2001) states that the nature of work is changing significantly in post-industrial society and that this change affects the role of the headteacher: work in the 21st century emphasises complexity rather than routinization. The dynamic nature of organizations, such as schools, where numerous individuals without close supervision make multiple decisions working directly with children, requires a different kind of leader. The acknowledgment of the changing demographics of schools, the explosion of technology, and the rapid growth and

change in knowledge require individuals who can live with ambiguity, work flexibly, encourage creativity, and handle complexity.

Drawing on empirical research into middle leadership development in North Carolina, Pettitt P. (Pettitt, 1999) adds that training should be situated in the context and experiences of the leader and be problem-solving in nature. He advocates mentoring, action-learning projects and reality-based case methods as appropriate training formats for middle level leaders.

Methodological framework

The goals, content, modes, and methods of the professional improvement of education establishment leaders are determined by the education goals of the respective time period and the very process of changes. Professional improvement is to be systemic; it must not comprise a set of separate fragmented events and courses. The professional improvement of education establishment leaders is a system element that entails financing, payment, needs, schedule and certain kinds of events and their target groups (Adams, 2006). For the professional improvement process of education establishment leaders to be of high quality, it needs methodology based on characteristic and compliant ideas of adult learning. Of major significance in this process are appropriate planning, time, and arrangement of new information acquisition, practice, and self-assessment of the improvement process. Of no less importance is the precondition that education establishment leaders must try out learning activities they are going to apply in their work.

To secure the accessibility of the professional improvement of education establishment leaders, a two-fold approach is applicable: the existing offer must be made more visible, flexible, integrated, and efficient, at the same time designing new learning processes and environments. The following directions are foregrounded in the present research:

- eradicating social, geographical, psychological and other barriers, e.g. by facilitating information and communication technology development, formation of local level learning centres to implement the learning process in a suitable time and place;
- supplementing the basic events of education by goal-oriented events envisaged for the development of basic skills matching individual needs;
- recognizing that information, orientation, and counselling services constitute an important bond between needs for professional improvement and education offerings.

The research reveals that the professional improvement of education establishment leaders requires (Figure 3):

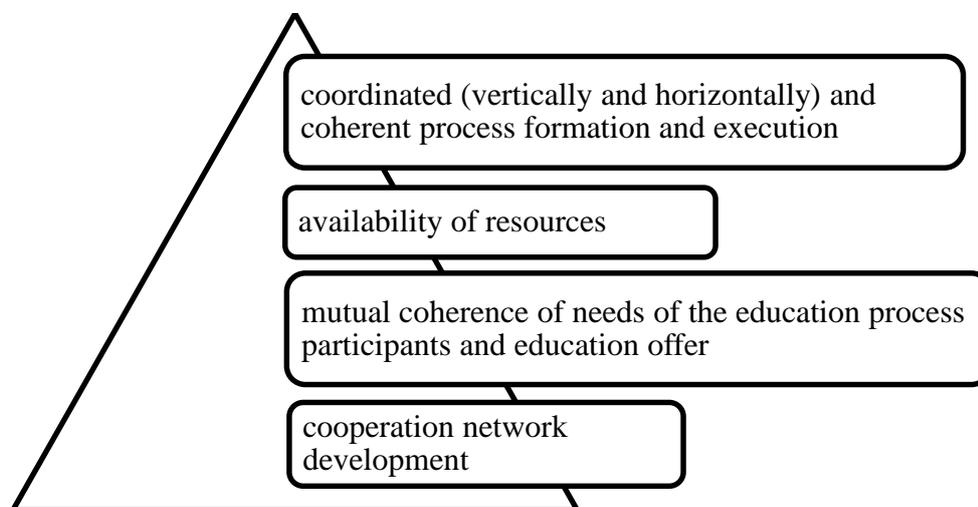


Figure 3. **Professional improvement of education establishment leaders (requirements)**
(Bush, Bell, & Middlewood, 2010)

Table 2 **Education institution principals' competences** (Adey, 2000)

Education institution principals' competences	
Jurisprudence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge and understanding of external laws and regulation, the development and implementation of internal rules and regulations, preparation of projects and agreements
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development of interrelations with the subordinates, the learners and their parents, representatives of the community, service providers and suppliers of goods, partners, clients, as well as knowledge of and skills in technologies and foreign languages
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work with the personnel, organization and management of projects, management of various competitions, management of quality and changes
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • education of values, interactive methods, novelties in theory and practice, knowledge of and skills in social and special pedagogy, skills in research in education
Economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • composition of the budget and its realization, attraction of sponsors, marketing of education products, ensuring assistance in the development of learners' economic competences

A school principal more and more quickly will be pressed to take a full range of roles simultaneously in the future. He/she must be a very erudite person, in order to solve different questions that may apply to him/her, pupils, parents, society. If we are speaking about solution of a conflict situation, the following

skills are important: a speaker, a diplomat, a psychologist. A principal, as a team member, is a leader and with his/her personality and skills fascinates establishment employees for common aim fulfilment (Adey, 2000). A principal, as a person, wants to feel confidence about his/her competences and his/her knowledge. He/she wants to perfect himself/herself constantly, in order to understand his/her personal potential.

Table 3 **Professional education of leaders** (Dallo, 2017)

Principals must be committed to	Principals must be able to
effective working relationships	foster an open, fair, equitable culture and manage conflicts
shared leadership	develop, empower and sustain individuals and teams
effective team working	collaborate and network with others within and beyond the school
CPD for self and all others within the school	challenge, influence and motivate others to attain high goals
distributed leadership and management	give and receive effective feedback and act to improve personal performance
equitable management of staff and resources	accept support from others including colleagues within the local education authority (LEA).
sustaining personal motivation and that of all staff	establish and sustain appropriate structures and systems
developing a safe, secure and healthy school environment	manage the school effectively on a day-to-day basis
collaborating with others in order to strengthen the school's capacity and contribute to the development of capacity in other schools.	delegate management tasks and monitor their implementation
	prioritise, plan and organise himself/herself and others
	make professional, managerial and organisational decisions based on informed judgements
	think creatively to anticipate and solve problems.

A principal, who is oriented on results, is sure about his/her own possibilities, is sure, that only he/she can solve questions with unknown answers, also he/she is sure, that he/she will learn to find answers during a working process. They are ready to turn for the help to competent persons, because they are free of competition fear. Personal behavior and action of such people are well – thought – out. If it is necessary, it will be improved. Increasingly rarely - in case of troubles

and failures, circumjacent colleagues are blamed. Solutions are searched, in order to use more useful circumjacent colleagues' skills and wishes. It helps purposefully to direct the staff, as well as to coordinate with the outside world. A common language with colleagues is found as a result – the wished is achieved. Thinking of these principals is nowadays trivial - reasonableness and logic are used within most complicated and the tangliest situations. The main thought is to use possibilities without a break, in order to approach necessary aims, also to create not such direct ways (Hopkins, 2000) (Table 3).

Results

Variative module system

The main features of the process of professional improvement of education establishment leaders are its endlessness, relatedness with the requirements for the professionalism of education establishment leaders in a respective time period, the cohesion of the elements of the process that makes a chain of separate, though seemingly important, events inadmissible, the *systemic character*, the active involvement of education establishment leaders and their wish to improve, change the level of professionalism that is manifested in raising their professional competence and quality of education (Dimmock & Walker, 2005). The aforementioned fact affects the goals, objectives, process duration and organization of the professional improvement of education establishment leaders, its methodology and techniques, as well as the requirements for the implementers of the professional improvement of education establishment leaders. The system of variative modules envisages the opportunities for education establishment leaders to improve their mastery and acquire knowledge in professional upgrading programmes (Bassett, 2001).

The variative module system is a part of the professional improvement of education establishment leaders. It is a process wherein education establishment leaders can acquire and build up knowledge by independently constructing the content of modules. The professional improvement of education establishment leaders may be regarded as a systemic and cyclical process. This process is included in the variative module system (VMS) that may assist and support education establishment leaders in their professional improvement process in relation to school development. VMS is a system with its own nucleus, a clearly marked beginning and end, aims, objectives, expected outcomes, goal-reaching mechanisms and monitoring of achievement formulated at the beginning of each stage. The system is variative and flexible, therefore it provides an opportunity for professional improvement to education leaders of any position and age.

Each module is a relatively independent, problem-oriented, interdisciplinary part of the professional improvement of education establishment leaders, an

especially structured complex of interdisciplinary thematic classes designed to facilitate professional upgrading. Within each module, the content of sub-modules may be varied in compliance with the needs and interests of education establishment leaders. It determines the strategic goals and expected outcomes of the respective competence improvement. The content of modules and sub-modules is aimed at competence improvement in a concrete sphere of education (Aiken, 2002). Each module may contain several subparts. Modules must be designed and organized so that the subparts and modules could be combined. As the professional improvement of education establishment leaders is a part of lifelong learning process, the modules ought to be harmonized with other kinds of formal and informal education, in order to provide wider opportunities and diversity for designing the process of professional improvement. The research outcomes are shown in a scheme of the variative module system (Figure 4.):

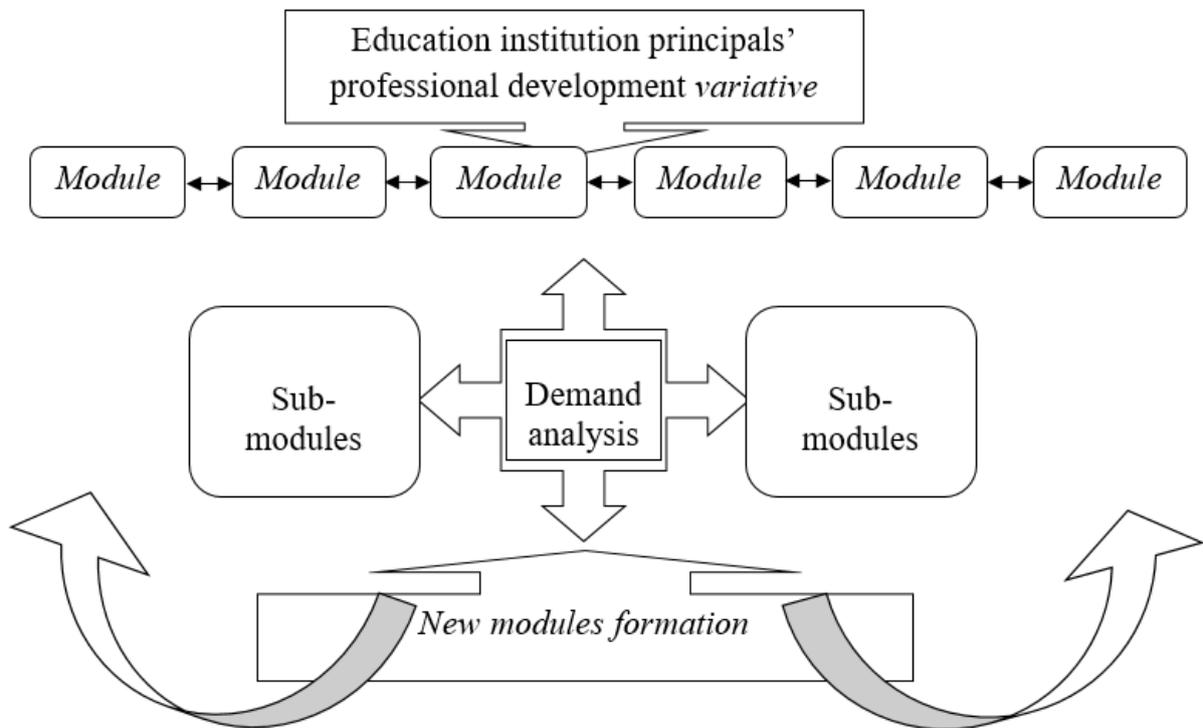


Figure 4. **Variative module system** (Arhipova & Kokina, 2017)

The variative module system is formed with the aim to create a system of professional growth for education institution principals that facilitates constant and goal oriented management competence development throughout all the career. The opportunities of education institution principals are growing internationally– through projects, experience exchange, and practice in other countries. Greater attention must be paid to the readiness of education institution principals to make use of these opportunities and stay equally competent.

Conclusions

The professional development of principals must be based on a holistic view of the school in which the organization of the programme, its relationship with the local community, and knowledge of school conditions together constitute important elements. The literature shows the many and wide-ranging methods used to promote leadership development. There is only limited evidence of their relative effectiveness and of how they work in combination. Research on the effectiveness of main methods is essential if informed decisions are to be made, which should be used in planning and delivering leadership development programmes. The purpose of professional development is to deepen principals' knowledge and increase their understanding of the national school system, the national goals of the school and the role of the school in the society and the local community. Important starting points for the development of competence are the principals' own experience of various types of work in school. Their professional development emphasise a capacity for reflection, for critically processing information and solving problems. Ideas, concepts and theoretical models from relevant areas of research and development will provide increasing knowledge and understanding of both one's own experience as well as other's contribution to school.

Professional development will allow principals to deepen their knowledge of the role of leadership in a school system managed by objectives and results, as well as develop their ability to plan, implement, evaluate and develop school activities. The training also aims at development of the capacity of the principals to analyse and draw conclusions from the outcomes of such activities and be able to share their views.

The content of the variative module system and its sub-modules is tended to competence improvement in a particular sphere of education. Its aim is providing an opportunity of improving education institution principals' professional aptitude by acquiring new developments in the content and methods of education for their creative application in the process of education management in line with aims, learners' needs and interests, management philosophy, and basic principles of management.

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