LEADER IN THE SCHOOL NOWADAYS: THEORY AND EXPERIENCE
Līderis mūsdienu skolā: teorija un pieredze

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Abstract. *It is the 21century when everything is subjected to continuous and rapid changes. The human being should be able to adapt to changes in labor market, in the technological world and in globalized life. To operate successfully in free market conditions, the whole economy in Latvia, including all schools, has had to implement constant change. Economic transition demanded from Latvia school heads and teachers radical change in thinking and behavior. The main issue of article is leadership talent identification, development, succession and retention in contextually different primary and secondary schools in Latvia. Quality schools require quality leaders. It is vital that their morale, professional commitment, and sense of professional value and personal worth is maintained, and their creativity and enthusiasms is promoted. Paper will explore leadership talent identification, development, succession and retention in schools. The crucial question is how to achieve heads and teachers commitment to leadership in schools.*
Keywords: *leader, leadership, development, culture, school management, competence*
Aim of the study. *To explore leadership talent identification, development, succession and retention in schools in Latvia*
Methods. *Theoretical method: studies and analysis of literature sources, survey in writing; content analysis.*

Introduction

This article deals specifically with issues pertaining to the leadership development of existing staff given increasing reports of leadership shortages. Succession management incorporates the idea of creating and maintaining a pool of leadership talent by identifying individuals with talent, helping them to develop and fostering their retention either within individual schools or within the profession as a whole. The linkage between leader - ship succession planning and the leadership development of current staff is well established in commercial contexts (Hirsch, 2000; Conger and Fulmer, 2003; Rothwell, 2005, Maslo and Tiļļa 2005). In view of a leadership supply crisis, fostering leadership development as part of succession management has now become equally important within individual schools and good leadership development may be seen as an aid to necessary leadership succession planning. In educational contexts, leadership skill development has been associated with mechanisms such as coaching (Rhodes et al., 2004), networking (Hadfield et al., 2002; Jackson, 2003, Koķe, 2003) and the distribution of leadership responsibilities (Harris, 2003, 2004). It has been suggested that leadership learners benefit from a variety of learning approaches (Paterson and Coleman, 2003) and that they are

best served by being enabled to become self-directed in their leadership learning.

As pressure is increasing for schools themselves to become more proactive in helping to grow the leaders of tomorrow, how do they perceive themselves as training grounds for leadership development and what lessons can be learned from present successes and possible shortcomings?

Positive perceptions of leadership roles in the face of staff worries about workload, accountability and stress are perhaps best addressed by incumbent heads and their approaches to leadership development within their own schools. How might incumbent heads encourage, motivate and reward leadership learning and establish their schools as good training grounds for leadership development? The present study seeks to establish the perceptions of heads concerning effective and ineffective mechanisms of leadership development and the drivers and barriers to the development of leadership talent prevalent within their own schools. It aims to offer insights from a variety of contextually different schools that will be of interest to incumbent as well as aspirant leaders and all those concerned with the development of the next generation of school leaders. In the result of the analysis we have extracted categories that compose the theoretical framework of the competence that modern school leaders should posses. These are: personal, social, instructional, educational, self-management and managerial competences as the parts of integral competence of school heads.

Research methods

Theoretical method: studies and analysis of literature sources was employed this study. Contextually different schools were sought so as to enable a wide variety of leadership development circumstances to be taken into account. Contextual difference was based primary on the main contextual drivers according a wide range of possible respondent experiences and perceptions of successful and unsuccessful leadership development (Žogla, 2001). Schools in the sample also displayed differences in religious denomination, geographical location, immediate environment, local reputation, community links and the characteristics of the school site and buildings. The perceptions of school leaders as agents in creating a culture in which leadership learning can take place (Walker and Dimmock, 2005), were both sought in the present study.

The organization of the research

During the research the school principals and deputy heads were questioned. The research involved 40 secondary school heads and deputy heads from 20 schools located of 10 municipalities of the Latvia. The questionnaires for both groups of respondents were similar. The questionnaire included 20 questions of

open type. It was intended to state: which competences, to their mind, are important for today's school heads; how do they evaluate headship preparing programs, etc. After the answers were received the content analysis has been carried out. After the answers, similar opinions were joined under generalized label. So the analysis consists of several steps:

1) extracting of manifesting categories;
2) category expansion into subcategories;
3) interpretation of categories and substantiation of categories with authentic arguments.

After qualitative research procedure there appeared possibility to calculate the frequencies of categories that show the distribution of separate opinions in the objective population. Such a calculation empowered to find our dominating and uncommon opinions. The attention is drawn to the fact that open questions do not impute the possible answers. Respondents have an opportunity to put an accent on various sides of question, even those, not predicted by a research. So the content analysis is distinguished by heuristic potential, and the categories received allow disclosing true attitudes and beliefs of research participants.

Results and discussion

Today's school heads are responsible for their organization effectiveness and have to face the challenges of changing education policy. This is why they should be competent managers as well as pedagogues and administrators. So it is necessary to learn which competences are really important for modern schools leaders and receive feedback from the practitioners. We asked the respondents to describe a modern school head and indicate the competences one should posses. After having done the content analysis of the answers received it was possible to extract 6 qualitative categories that reflect the main characteristics of school heads (table1). The determination of the qualitative categories is based on the introduced competence classification.

The majority of respondents 80% stressed the managerial competence as the most important for today school heads. This include creating of a clear school vision and mission statement as well as of effective strategies and clear goals; managing intellectual resources, creative positive school image. 72 percent of respondents mentioned instructional competence which is vital for creating of learning environment. 70 percent of respondents mentioned social competence which is inevitable increasing and maintaining of a positive school culture. Education competence is a factor, stimulating life-long learning, was emphasized by 62 percent of respondents. Personal competence is understood as a number of particular traits common to effective school leaders such as leadership, humanity. So the most important competences for modern school leaders are managerial, instructional and social competences.

Table 1

Competences of school leader
Skolu līderu competence

Category	percents	Sub-category	percents
Managerial	80%	Facilitating the development ,implementation of the school vision that is supported by the school community	28%
		Creating clear strategies, exercising leadership to achieve common goals	22%
		Ensuring resources for safe, efficient organization activity	20%
		Creating learning environment	18%
		Creating collaborative environment	10%
		Monitoring school effectiveness	10%
		Creating positive school image	5%
		Developing effective staff communications	5%
Instructional	72%	Monitoring educational process, assessing outcomes	55%
		Coaching on educational topics	40%
		Acting in accordance with statutory requirements	15%
Social	70%	Sustaining a school culture conductive to student needs and staff professional growth	60%
		Creating positive climate in school	54%
		Using decentralized school management processes	40%
Educational	62%	Development in professional sphere	62%
		Providing opportunities for continuous competence development	50%
Personal competence	42%	Strong leadership	43%
		Humanity	41%
		Tolerance	25%
		Versatile personality	18%
		Criticism	15%
Self-management	40%	Using informational-communicational technologies	62%
		Understanding changes in education	50%

We wondered which competences should be acquired by today's school heads. We extracted 3 categories that are introduced in the table 2.

The interpretation of the answers allows to state that today's school heads feel the lack of social competence (90%). Such areas as planning, leadership skills, monitoring skills, information management, and management of change as the parts of managerial competence (80%) are also necessary to acquire. Last but not least is self-management competence (55%). In order to improve the school leaders understanding of new technologies and to empower them to bring these

technologies into their schools their competence needed to be developed. So the competences that should be acquired by today's school heads are social, managerial, and self-management competences. We wondered how school heads asses their theoretical preparation.

Competences necessary to be acquired by today's school heads
Nepieciešamās kompetences mūsdienu skolu vadītājiem

category	percents	Sub-category	percents
Social	90%	Sustaining positive climate in organization	40%
		Sustaining a collaborative culture in school community	28%
		Collaborating with families and community members	26%
		Acting in an ethical manner	18%
Managerial	80%	Skills of leadership	40%
		Managing information in school	38%
		Managing change	36%
		Creating school image	29%
Self-management	55%	PC skills	65%
		Managing time	40%

The answers received were rather laconic so we grouped them into 3 categories (insufficient theoretical preparation; depends on the situation; sufficient theoretical preparation). The majority of respondents (62%) emphasized that they feel the lack of theoretical preparation. 35 percent of respondents lack theoretical knowledge in some certain work situations. None of the respondents called their theoretical preparation as sufficient. It is apparent that today's school heads asses their theoretical preparation as insufficient. To the question,, In what ways today's school heads develop competences" 86 percent of respondents emphasized self-education as the most effective way of getting information." Self-education is just vital today otherwise you can lose yourself in information avalanche"." I spent quite a lot of time on self-education. It is very important today to march with the time so you have to be aware of novelties in education and the best resource for me , no doubt is internet" .The opportunities provided by various seminars and courses as the way for competence development was mentioned by 8- percent of respondents. So this way of competence development is rated as quite popular and effective. 52 percents of research participants put priority on higher education and stressed the usefulness of it. "Master's studies in education management are very useful to my mind. I am going to enter the university myself". According to 34 percents of respondents ,,practice and experience develop competencies". Knowledge is gained through everyday work, through problems and obstacles you have to overcome seeking for your organization effectiveness"/Exchange of

the experience as the way of competence development was mentioned by 21 percent of respondents. "I highly appreciate the activity of the association of school heads in Latvia because this is the best opportunity to exchange the knowledge and experience, to discuss participating problems, to stand on and fight for our rights". The best way of competence development is collaboration with colleagues. Hence we should admit that today's school heads gain and develop competencies through self-education and thanks to seminars and courses. However we should draw attention to the fact that higher education as a way of competence development is not considered as a very effective. We sought to learn whether there are enough of opportunities for competence development today in Latvia. The answers were distributed into 3groups. 60 percent of respondents claimed that there are enough of opportunities to develop competence and they are active participants. „There are a great number of various seminars for school heads but you have to choose what is really necessary for you and sometimes it is quite difficult to do". "There are enough of ways for competence development. The must important is to have a positive attitude towards novelties and continual change in education". "Various seminars and courses are offered by different institutions but the problems is time. Routine jobs take huge amount of time so it is problematic to find time for attending courses". To conclude with, we have to state that in spite of quite wide range of various competences development opportunities in Latvia school heads have some problems. Process of competence development should be more systemic and controlled, that will make competence development process more purposeful. School heads need both for theory and practice based development program.

Leadership actions are strongly influenced by school performance (Southworth, 2004). Respondent statements often framed opportunity in terms of new initiatives or in terms of available niches released by staff turnover. Staff turnover was sometimes depicted as directly resulting from challenging circumstances. . Small school size was either seen as fostering leadership skills by dint of the need for greater teamwork and responsibility sharing or limiting if such sharing was absent. Although incumbent heads can do little to change the size of their school, extending its boundaries through external networking and promoting inclusion through internal networking would seem to make good sense in the creation of a school as a good training ground for future leaders. Respondents appeared to reflect their approval of a contemporary view of leadership development where a variety of mechanisms can be accessed (Paterson and Coleman, 2003) and they are enabled to learn with and from others, perhaps arriving at a point of self-direction in their learning (Weindling, 2003).

All questionnaire respondent groups saw value in access to good leadership courses and these were endorsed as having a place in a good training ground for leadership development. Nevertheless, there was suggestion in the focus group

phase that leadership courses alone were insufficient to develop leadership skills. Respondent statements concerning the matching of leadership development to career stage were frequently associated with notions of possible exclusion, particularly for staff at an early stage in their career. It would seem sensible to foster leadership talent wherever it might exist within the school staff if appropriate numbers and quality of aspirant leaders are to be available within the talent pool. In considering future leadership needs, the inclusion of young staff with talent may be particularly important if they are to be retained within the school and further develop their commitment to the profession.

Conclusion

The main responsibility of a school head is to provide competent leadership for school. School leader should seek for school effectiveness, and efficiency; create a positive school image; represent a school in a community. Instructional competence is of a major importance in a prior school leader's responsibility-organizing the educational competence. Educational competence presupposes the development into learning organization.

The establishment of schools as effective training grounds for leadership development represents a challenge for incumbent school leadership. Based upon the perceptions of heads from 20 contextually different schools in Latvia, the present study has established pertaining to 'Context', and 'Development' deemed influential in creating schools as good training grounds for leadership talent development. In seeking to translate the details of these themes into the everyday experience of aspirant and potentially aspirant leaders, incumbent leadership need to consider and begin to address schools' future leadership needs. They need to encourage leadership learners within their schools and ensure development that works against a backdrop of context and culture. Although more work is needed in order to establish the best way to identify and enhance individual leadership skills, the present study does indicate potentially helpful mechanisms for incumbent leaders to begin to foster leadership talent in response to the growing leadership recruitment crisis. Located as part of succession management, leadership talent development in schools is now attracting increasing attention.

Kopsavilkums

Mūsdienu skolas sniegtā izglītības kvalitāte lielā mērā atkarīga no efektīva un radoša līdera, kuram piemīt nepieciešamās kompetences skolas vadības darbā. Skolas vadītāja līderība ir saistīta ar skolas mērķu ,virzības un prioritāšu noteikšanu, kā arī kultūras un etnosa veidošanu un saglabāšanu, lai būtu iespējams šos uzdevumus īstenot. Skolas direktors kā līderis veido mācīties spējīgu organizāciju, kurā pats direktors atrodas nepārtrauktā dialogā ar savas skolas skolotājiem un direktora vietniekiem radošu un inovatīvu ideju veicināšanā.

Mūsdienu skolā nozīmīgākā ir skolas pārvaldības kompetence, kura ļauj stratēģiski apzināt skolas attīstības iekšējos un ārējos faktorus un virzīt kolektīvu izvirzītās misijas īstenošanai.

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