POSSIBILITIES TO DEVELOP SCHOOLS’ MANAGEMENT IN THE BALTIC COUNTRIES

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Abstract
The article reveals an analysis of school management situation and development possibilities in the Baltic countries. Evaluation and expectations of the managers of education establishments are provided in the field of management. Problems raised by the managers of education establishments are analyzed while organizing and executing an education process in the school.

KEYWORDS: management of education establishments, ways of addressing problems of organization and activity, possibilities of improving management in the process of education.

Introduction
Each of us imagine administrating, managing the establishment and organizing its activity in his/her own way, however each of us also understands that managing and administrating of the establishment is not possible without co-operation between the manager and employees, without mutual support, assistance and without formulated rules, values and outlined goals. Namely a clear, purposeful formulation of rules and values becomes a direction of our productive activity and it is important in seeking to achieve the set goals. In order to organize in a professional manner teachers' and other employees' activity, it is necessary to create the conditions for the success of that activity, to learn continuously and to create conditions for others to learn, to concentrate the teams and pursue a group work, efficiently communicate and create favourable culture of the organization.

At the present time many countries treat education as a particularly important area of life, the main priority of the nation, since when a person progresses as a personality, as an inseparable part of the society, the society is improving itself also. The key purpose of education establishments is educating a human being. Results of education depend to a large extent upon the sound management of the establishment. Education management in The Baltic countries is oriented towards humane relationships between the manager and the subordinates. We would briefly describe managers' work with the staff as follows: the goal is set out, it is discussed with the staff, employees are praised for the efforts and results and all are happy, subordinate's efforts and capacities to accomplish the work well are highlighted and different methods are used to encourage effectiveness of work, newness and quality.

This and other questions were of interest while trying to investigate the work of the managers of education establishments in the Baltic region and to present similarities and differences.

The aim of this article: to analyze the situation of school management in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to identify strengths and weaknesses and to prepare a cycle of workshops conforming to the needs of the managers.

Object of research: situation of school management in The Baltic countries.

Objectives of the work:
1. To analyze scientific literature in the area of education and personnel management.
2. To prepare an electronic survey and to question managers of education establishments.
3. To analyze received data and compare their results with the situation of education management in other countries.

Methods of research. Analysis of scientific and managerial literature. Survey by questionnaire. Mathematical data analysis.

Results of the research and their discussion. An electronic questionnaire has been designed consisting of 44 questions. Of them 6 were open questions, all others (38) were closed-ended questions. The questionnaire has been forwarded by Internet to nearly all (about 2000) education establishments. Lithuanian school managers of only 147 establishments have returned completed questionnaires. This number shows that managers of education establishments in Lithuania are not very interested in establishments' managerial problems or they are insufficiently using Internet environment. Active respondents have distributed by the schools as follows: 40 per cent city schools (over 50 000 residents), 32 per cent schools from city type settlements with the population from 2 to 50 thousand, and 26 per cent from rural schools. Managers’ time of career: 21 per cent – 0–5 years, 15 per cent – 6–10 years, 17 per cent – 11–15 years, 19 per cent – 16–20 years, and 25 per cent working in schools over 20 years. By age...
managers distributed as follows: up to 30 years of age – 4 per cent, 31–40 years – 13 per cent, 41–50 years – 34 per cent, 51–60 years – 38 per cent, over 60 years – 10 per cent. By gender: 75 per cent – women and 25 per cent – men. There are on average in Estonian schools almost 90% female teachers. At the same time among school principals it can be seen (see figure 3) that the male proportion is much higher than the average in education – more than 1/3 of the principals are males among the respondents. Estonia had some years ago a system to re-elect school principals every five years. At the same time the country had the rule that persons older than 65 could not have a full-time job in public institutions. This took away many school principals over 60 from the educational system. This could be the reason why today the average respondent to the questionnaire is 40–60 years old. (Kukemelk, 2010). To make a research on Latvian schools principals understanding of strategic planning importance 240 questionnaires were sent to different schools principals, but only 90 respondents filled in the forms. (Dukshinska, 2010).

1. Strategic management of schools

Good understanding and implementation of the organization’s vision, mission and set goals is the guarantee of the team's activity. Organization’s vision – is the future desired to be achieved by the organization. The vision must foresee what the organization will become 5 or 10 years later if there are favourable conditions. Vision – is an ideal commonly undertaken by the organization's members. Most often the organization's vision is set out by the highest level managers, but in order the vision is effective, it has to be considered and approved by all members of the organization.

Plans are usually divided into strategic and operational plans. Strategic plans are developed by the organization's managers. These plans reflect the main goals of the organization. Operational plans are intended to implement strategic plans in everyday activity. Namely these and other questions have been put to the managers of education establishments.

Having generalized the data of the respondents, we can assume that 90 per cent of the schools possess approved visions and missions, but only one third of the respondents indicated they had a clear five-year plan for problem addressing. Hence it is difficult for the managers to identify problems and foresee ways of resolving them. About 80 per cent of the school managers have clearly defined school development objectives. This shows that managers know how to develop schools. However asked to evaluate the outcomes of the implementation of the development plan, only 30 per cent were fully satisfied with the development outcomes, 53 per cent assess the situation well and satisfactory. That means there still are unforeseen obstacles for the achievement of the set objectives.

Having asked the managers to evaluate the staff and to tell how they understand their role in the process of implementing their school's development plan, only 21 per cent of the managers are fully satisfied with their staff and think that they excellently perceive their role in the school's development. 59 per cent think that they understand the role sufficiently well, whereas 21 per cent refrain from such an evaluation. This shows that managers have not managed to properly explain for each employee his role in the improvement of the establishment.

Nearly all the respondents (93 per cent) noted that while planning the activity they thoroughly consider the possibilities of the community development, number of children in the region, expectations, economic environment, labour market, needs for after-class activity and etc.

It should be noted that managers, while creating activity plans, not always consider the results of the feedback from the staff. Only 27 per cent of the respondents fully agree that the changes of their work are caused by reflections over their current activity. A similar percentage (24 per cent) of the mangers discuss the feedback results with students and their parents.

The survey disclosed that school administration takes into account the opinion of the target groups, proposals in the area of school management and development: nearly all of them (98 per cent) favourably assess teachers' opinion, (77 per cent) – opinions of the students and parents, 88 per cent fully agree with the suggestions and remarks of the promoters. Nearly all respondents also noted that information on activities pursued in schools is accessible for all above-mentioned target groups.

All the managers who have answered to the questions of the questionnaire state that communication with school management is simple and natural. They are also highly interested in the public opinion on schools, in particular in the municipalities.

However, only 15 per cent of the respondents note that their activity is sufficiently actively publicized in local press or radio. Only one third (34 per cent) of the managers fully support the opinion that their teachers are actively involved in the local activity and public life of the community. It has to be said that a small percentage of the respondents (13 per cent) can tell nothing good about international, national or
regional achievements of their teachers. The study indicates that school principals have a very high opinion of strategic management. The average value of the responses was 4.32 (SD = 0.88) – that is very high. At the same time the two weakest fields in strategic management were identified by principals as the reflection of school activities in the media (3.74, SD = 0.88) and schoolteachers’ participation in local public life (3.76, SD = 0.82). The highest scores were assigned to the availability of information for different target groups in school, especially for teachers (4.86, SD = 0.68) and to the clear definition of the school’s mission and vision (4.76, SD = 0.76) by the school. Almost every principal fully agreed (86 %) that their school has a clear statement of mission and vision. A large majority of respondents (2/3) stated that a school has defined key results in its development plan. At the same time 61 % of the respondents fully agreed that the school has summed up the results of implementation of the development plan. It demonstrates that most of the schools define strategic directions and priorities (more than 80 %) but only 2/3 of those make efforts to achieve these strategic goals. In the planning process of the school activities principals consider very much students’ and parents’ school satisfaction opinions (86 %). Designing the school action plan principals consider even more important the results of the teachers’ school climate studies (92 %). Even more – planning school management and development 98% of principals take into account teachers’ opinions, quite important for them are also parents’ and students’ opinions – 90 % of principals take this aspect into account.

Estonian principals on consideration are not so happy with public relations in the school system. Only 18 % of them fully agreed that school activities are well reflected in the media. This gives rise to the question of PR problems – schools get space in the media only in case if there is a scandal in the school, but teachers’ excellent everyday work is not a message that can get into news. (Kukemelk, 2008). In Latvia almost all respondents (96 %) consider that schools they lead have got a definite mission and worked out vision. It helps to evaluate educational establishment growth, development: to conclude if the establishment’s aims are topical; to evaluate the necessity of strategy change; to sum up the adaptation level of the establishment. 49% of school managers respond that they agree and 40% of them disagree with the statement that there is a clear understanding of the roles and problems solving in the nearest five years. It confirms that there is no confidence in the nearest future at schools what was influenced by economic crisis and by the schools optimization process in the state. The biggest part of schools principals answer that they identify and sum up school’s development plan main results. 75% of respondents agree, but 24% of them have got neutral attitude to the fact that staff is aware of their roles in the carrying out of the school’s development plan. It shows that school staff is not aware of and does not evaluate completely their roles in school’s development planning. Almost all school managers (93 %) declare that planning the activities they take into consideration society’s development changes in the regular work justifying by current activities references. Almost100 % of school managers point out that planning the work for the next academic year they take into consideration students, parents and staff’s opinions on the activities which took place at school. In the sphere of school development and management development school administration (98%) take into consideration teachers’ opinion, 89 % consider that students suggestions are also taken into consideration, but 11 % of respondents have got neutral opinion to students’ ideas. 92 % of principals listen to parents’ opinion, but 7 % are neutral to them. 83% of respondents affirm that they take into consideration school holders ideas planning school’s work, but 10 % don’t give any information to this question. In separate cases we see that school boards or orphanage’s staff’s opinions or administration’s ideas and real economic situation are taken into consideration. All school managers (100 %) point out that necessary information about school activities is available to students, teachers, and parents. 76 % answer that this information is available to school-holders. Principals also declare that mass media, television, city’s inhabitants; national societies are informed about school activities. All principals confirm that communication with administration is easy and natural, because community’s opinion is important to school. Evaluating the results of the questionnaire we can sum up that schools have got comparatively little cooperation with mass media which can reflect school’s activities. Only 67 % of respondents point out that they have enough cooperation with mass media but 23 % have got neutral attitude to this question. We should come to a conclusion that it is necessary to inform the community through the means of mass media about the activities in the education sphere. The biggest part of schools (82 %) assesses teachers’ achievements in different fields, 14 % of school managers have got neutral opinion, but 3 % consider that teachers’ achievements are not assessed. (Dukšinska, 2010)
2. Human and financial resources, their importance for the establishment's management and development

Correct formation and management of the Lithuanian school budget is the main factor in the development of the establishment. However, the fact that the school budget should be made on the basis of the school’s development plan is fully accepted by only 19 per cent of the respondents, 36 per cent of them agree, and as many as 27 per cent abstain from such an opinion. Respondents were asked to assess whether the school developing its infrastructure and technical facilities is building upon the development plan. It turned out that only 16 per cent are fully supportive of this, 48 per cent – agree that it should be like that, whereas 23 per cent abstain from such an opinion. Nearly one quarter of the managers carry out the development of infrastructure and technical facilities in a random, non-planned way. The respondents similarly assessed the use of financial and other resources on the basis of the school's development plan.

But in the area of managing human resources majority of the respondents (86 per cent) state that they regularly analyze and plan internal needs of their teams. They think over the needs for improvement of each member of the staff while creating a staff development plan. In Estonian school the high level of deviations in the responses indicates that school principals have quite different managerial traditions – only 28 % of the respondents fully agreed with the statement. On the other hand the low mean (3.68) for school budgeting according to the developmental plan indicates clearly certain contradictions in the school finance and material resources planning stage compared to everyday decision-making processes. The statements related to personnel development were fully agreed or agreed in more than 90 % of cases. (Kukemelk, 2010)

3. Process of education management in the school

The main area of Lithuanian school activity is education. Results of education are also greatly dependent upon manager's managerial activity. An inquiry was made how managers assess their establishments' teaching and learning results. 22 per cent provide very favourable evaluations, 63 per cent are satisfied with the current results, and 13 per cent abstain from the favorable evaluation. Those who are very positive about the school's education results state that students willingly attend the school and there are no attendance problems at all. One fourth of the respondents replied that students unwillingly attend the school, miss many of their lessons without any grounds. 19 per cent of the managers are absolutely convinced, 70 per cent believe that students understand what teachers require from them. 9 per cent of the respondents abstain from such an evaluation. Very evenly have distributed the answers of the managers (about 47-48 per cent) who very positively and positively evaluate teachers' work, when students are constantly encouraged to seek for the best possible result, teachers do care about their students, they are easily accessible. Students are learning what will be needed for their further studies and successful life.

Teachers' and students’ relationships are very important in achieving good education results. 15 per cent of the respondents are convinced that students in their schools respect each other and that there are excellent relationships between students and teachers. 53 per cent positively evaluate such relationships, and nearly one third (27 per cent) abstain from such an evaluation. They think that relationships could be better.

An inquiry has been made into whether students' personal capabilities constitute the foundation of teaching and learning in their schools, whether schools are taking appropriate care of their students’ skills. 25 per cent of the respondents fully agree that students’ skills must be acknowledged and developed, about 60 per cent agree and 13 per cent are in doubt.

A similar distribution was among respondents who were asked to evaluate how students' teaching/learning accomplishments, development of their main competences depend upon the systemic analysis of the school activity. About 20 per cent fully agree that systemic analysis is of an impact on the results of students’ self-education, 50 per cent agree but about 30 per cent think that it is not possible to analyze the development of each student's main competences. Managers' opinions and evaluations on the analysis of the students' requests and suggestions for organizing and carrying out a school life (classes, breaks, after-class activity etc) have distributed similarly.

It should be observed that in Lithuanian schools students are actively encouraged to take part in different contests, competitions and exhibitions etc. As many as 64 per cent of the respondents are fully supportive of this opinion, 33 per cent agree that this is the case in their schools.

Diversity of the teaching/learning process and teaching aids have also a certain impact on the good teaching/learning results. We inquired managers whether they think that their teachers are deploying
contemporary aids of education (computers, activation, individual and other measures). 27 per cent are fully convinced that teachers in the establishments managed by them work like this. 61 per cent just agree and 10 per cent abstain from such an evaluation stating that their teachers have no such opportunities.

Schools while analyzing the results of education/self-education, most often use subject-based appraisals, this is certified by 90 per cent of the managers. But two thirds of the questioned managers state that they are analyzing also the causes of the students' who stay to repeat the course, bad performance and failure to attend the school. 34 per cent of the managers state that the results of the state matura examinations and enrollment to other higher education institutions are of great importance for them. Another object for analyzing school activity is the number of students taking part in after-class activity. 39 per cent of the respondents deem it to be as exceptionally important and 35 per cent – as important.

Analysis of all the answers allow assuming that managers of education establishments are investigating all areas of activity relating to education, they seek for the most optimal roads to address the problems. Education management in Estonian school is a key issue in school management. Students’ development, learning and acquiring of new skills are the most important targets of a school. Therefore stakeholders’ satisfaction with the learning and teaching environment is very important. Respondents were satisfied with the quality of instruction (Mean 4.1, SD = 0.63) in average, but only 18 % fully agreed with the statement. It is interesting that school principals declare that they have an excellent teaching team and not so good students at the school. Similarly only 24 % of school principals fully agreed with the statement that students’ individual abilities form the basis of the teaching in school. Almost the same (25 % fully agreed) was the respondents’ answer to students’ general competencies analyse. Those answers indicate that respondents are more concerned about school environment, teachers’ opinions etc than students development. (Kukemelk,2008). In Latvia it is considered that there are 3 structural levels in the educational environment – business environment, human resources and spiritual conditions. Business environment influences the active environment creation very much. It includes finances, facilities, their equipment, materials, and visual aids. In their turn human resources are education process participants – students and pedagogues. The more a school is open, the more it uses human resources from outside, e.g. parents, different kinds of specialists who can be former school’s alumni. Spiritual conditions are favourable mutual relations in the class, management style, pedagogues’ working style, educational situations created during the education process, atmosphere in the class and at school, that creates school’s microclimate. Answering the question, if the school budget grounds on the school development plan, 65 % of school principals answer positively, the other ones don’t understand the question or neutral. 74 % of respondents think that schools develop their own opportunities and buy technical means according to the school development plan, the other ones do not agree with the statement or neutral. 80 % of principals agree that financial and other resources are used in accordance to school development plan. Almost all (98 %) analyze and foresee school needs, but 85 % of managers planning resources take into consideration each staff member personal development needs. In the school managers work with pedagogical staff it is important to see and give a stimulus to teachers to personal development. (Ducksinska, 2010). 87 % of Latvian school managers are satisfied by teaching quality at school. 93 % consider that students like to attend school and they understand what teachers expect from them. Completely all respondents think that students are encouraged for self-development, that teachers are always available to students are always care of them. 81 % of respondents think that students respect each other t school, but others have got neutral opinion to this question. More than 90 % of respondents regard that students’ individual abilities are the basis to studies at school and attention to students’ possible development is paid on the sufficient level. 80 % of respondents agree that ever student’s general competence development and studying progress is analyzed, but other ones are neutral to this question. 95 % of respondents answer that each student’s wishes and suggestions to school life arrangement are taken into consideration in the educational establishment. Almost each school (99 %) supports students’ participation in contests, competitions, exhibitions. The most part of respondents (85 %) considers that teachers use modern instructions and educational resources sufficiently, but 6 % of respondents think that teachers do not do it on the sufficient level. Only 2 % of principals regard that students’ results in different subjects are not analyzed, but other ones (98 %) confirm that this kind of analyses takes place. More than 80 % of respondents declare that the analyses of the students who repeat the school year a well as the students who do not attend school unreasonably take place. Only 35 % of school principals analyze the coefficient of students who were not admitting regular studies out of the whole students’ number; 14 % have got neutral attitude to this question, but 46% of respondents do not have such an information or
do not understand the question. Supporting programmes and services influence to the achievements in the studying process are seriously analyzed in the educational establishments. It is confirmed by 82 % of positive answers, but 8 % of respondents are neutral to the question. 94 % of school principals declare that the results of state exams are analyzed at schools, 62 % of school managers agree that academic tests results are evaluated and analyzed; 16 % have got neutral attitude, 5 % do not agree with this statement, but 18 % of respondents do not have the information or do not understand the question. A little bit more than a half (55 %) of respondents confirms that the number of graduates is rated to the class of the beginners. 10 % have got neutral attitude to the question, 2 % do not agree with the statement, but 32 % do not have the information or do not understand the question. 90 % of school principals point out that they analyze the percentage of graduates continuing their studies on the next level of educational system; 7 % have got neutral opinion, but 3 % do not have the information or do not understand the question. Percentage of students attending the extra curricular activities provided by the school of the overall number of students is analyzed seriously enough. It is affirmed by 77 % of respondents. 16 % of them are neutral; 2 % think that it is not done at their schools, but 6 % of school managers do not have enough information. 69 % of school managers point out that students’ satisfaction surveys are analyzed. 7 % are neutral. 1 % do not agree with the statement, but 23 % do not have the information or do not understand the question. (Dukinska. 2010). Latvian school principals consider school environment, students’ support and teaching and learning processes as the strongest sides at school. They also mention project work, informal education, extracurricular work as well as students and teachers’ mutual relations. Latvian school principals mention resources, school physical environment, students’ students’ studying motivation, financing as well as work with parents as the weakest sides at school. School material base is mentioned as relatively weak side.

Conclusions

1. In The Baltic countries school managers understand the essence and meaning of the vision. Their creation and planning are directly interrelated and the improvement is built upon community values and expectations.
2. Respondents are convinced that their employees understand the importance of being involved in the planning of the establishment's activity, and everyone is responsible for good teaching/learning results. The questionnaire revealed that the managers of the establishments understand that planning can not be escaped and is mandatory in order to achieve sound results, however, strategic plans are still not entirely clear for most of them.
3. The sample of the current study was not representative and therefore there could not be done any conclusions about Estonian school system. The current study demonstrates that there are a number of schools in the country that need serious improvement in school management issues and especially in the fields directly targeted to students.
4. In Latvia during regular training organization, the help must be provided for the staff in order to be integrated into innovations, to motivate the staff to learn. And the changes period, school staff’s loyalty to a school principal could decrease fast, that is why activities for staff microclimate stabilization are essential.
5. A very important issue in The Baltic countries school is administration work quality, school’s supply with resources, IT use, study programmes offered by school.
6. Having generalized the received results it can be stated that managers of education establishments in The Baltic countries are capable of critically assessing the work of the establishment managed by them, they know weaknesses and strengths of their schools, look for possibilities and ways to remove the accumulated problems.

List of References

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Santrauka


Šiame straipsnyje pristatome Estijos, Latvijos, Lietuvos mokykloų vadovų įvertinimą vadovo atsakingą už kvalifikaciją patirtį. Vadovai nevengia aptarti probleminių temų. Projektą dalyviai apmąsto ir autentiškai reiškia asmeninę profesine patirtį.


Paprastai vadovų įvertinti personalą, kaip jie suvokia savo vaidmenį mokyklos plėtotojimo plano įgyvendinimo procese, tik 21 proc. vadovų visiškai patenkinti savo personalu ir mano, kad jie puikiai suvokia savo vaidmenį plėtotojančio mokyklos veiklą. 59 proc. mano, kad pakankamai gerai supranta, o štai 21 proc. susilaiko nuo tokio vertinimo. Tai rodo, kad vadovai nepakankamai gerai išaiškina kiekvienam darbuotojui apie jo vaidmenį tobulinant įstaigos darbą.

Beveik visi respondentai (93 proc.) pažymėjo, kad jie, planuodami veiklą, gerai apgalvoja bendruomenės raidos galimybes, vaidų skaičių rajone, lūkesčius, ekonominę aplinką, darbo jėgos rinką, popamokinės veiklos poreikius ir t. t.

Reikia pažymėti, kad ne visi vadovai, kuri dėdina veiklos planus, apskarstino personalu grįžtamuoju ryšio rezultatas. Tik 27 proc. respondentų visiškai pritaria, kad jų darbo pokyčiai remiasi esamais veiklos refleksija. Panašiai procentas (24 proc.) vadovų grįžtamuoju ryšio rezultatą apskarstino personalu ir jų tėvai.

Apklausos pareiškė, kad mokyklos administracija atsižvelgia į tikslinių grupių nuomones, siūlymus mokyklos valdymo ir plėtojo srityje: beveik visi (98 proc.) palankiai vertina mokytojų nuomones, (77 proc.) mokinio ir tėvų nuomones, 88 proc. visiškai sutinka ir su steigėjų pasiūlymamis ir pastabomis. Taip pat beveik visi respondentai pažymėjo, kad informacija apie veiklos, vykdomas mokykloje, prieinama visoms minėtoms tikslinėms grupėms.

2. Respondentai yra ištikinę, kad jų darbuotojai supranta, kad dalyvaučių planuojant įstaigos veiklą yra labai svarbu, ir visi yra atsakingi už gerus ugdymo(sių) rezultatus.
3. Iš apkausos išryškėjo, kad įstaigų vadovai suvokia, kad planavimas yra ir neišvengiamas, ir būtinas norint pasiekti gerų rezultatų, tačiau strateginis planas dar daug kiek yra ne visiškai aiškūs.
4. Analizuodami ugdymo proceso rezultatų įstaigų vadovai atsižvelgia į visus galimus rodiklius, kurie parodydina mokinio ir mokytojo veiklos progresą, išskiria naujų būdų ir metodų, kaip pagerinti rezultatus.
5. Apibendrinus gautus atsakymus galima teigti, kad Lietuvos švietimo įstaigų vadovai geba kritiškai įvertinti savo vadovaujamos įstaigos darbą, žino mokyklos pranašumus ir trūkumus, išskiria galimybių ir būdų, kaip spręsti susidariusias problemas.