

RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Research on the administrator professional training and its role in the implementation of educational institutions reforms in Kosovo

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### Abstract

The education organization success depends to a considerable extent from the professional performance of its director as its principal manager. Directors success depends largely on his skills for decision-making and efforts to promote and develop the spirit of cooperation inside the organization. In order to achieve the expected effects of the undergraduate education system reform in Kosovo, school administrators should work to maximize the synergistic effect of their interaction with teachers, pupils, parents community and local government. Support for directors capacity development, in order to professionally manage schools in Kosovo, is conditioned by lack of experiences, political environment, economic and social development, management culture and director’s psycho-social constitution. In order to have successful management of undergraduate learning organizations in Kosovo it is recommended to develop the managerial capacity of their directors in accordance with the requirements of the Bi-centered model "Director & pupils in the center"

**Key words:** *administrator, professional skills, pre-univeristar education, reform*

### Introduction

The current trend related to school management developments is characterized by the increased role of the administrator. The current literature, by considering school as a "learning organization" and its administrator as the main managerial leader, stresses out his plagued impact on its success [5]. Some of the most important performances of a school administrator are defined in:

- (i) identification of issues related to the demand for continuous development of the organization's capacity to provide quality services,
- (ii) research and finding effective solutions for cooperation between members of the organization,
- (iii) promotion and support of relations with other actors outside the organization in order to create opportunities to provide quality services in education and
- (iv) capacity building on using new technologies in teaching process etc..[2].

The successful realization of these tasks depends, in a great measure, on the level of administrator professional preparation. Meanwhile, it should be noted that the organization success depends on exogenous factors associated with country’s economic and social development. In particular, this dependence is more pronounced in countries with developing economies, where political and social environment are prevailed by the transition phenomenon.

School administrators demand for acquisition of new knowledge is strongly connected with organizations needs to implement changes in order to meet standarts of current educational system. Having a key position in the reform process, these administrators must possess the necessary professional performance for:

- (i) analysing, planning and implementing the reforms, the effective management of organization’s human resources;
- (ii) the creation of a favorable environment for cooperation as a prerequisite for the development of synergies that enable the added value in its management.

This reformative process in order to create an educational system capable of fulfilling:

- (i) the population current needs for knowledge,
- (ii) economic and social development trends in the labor market, requires the investment of the society to form capable administrators prepared to run and realize real and measurable changes in the three priority areas of management science:
  - (a) organizational culture of the educational institutions,
  - (b) use of science and information technology and
  - (c) human resource management.

As a school manager the administrator must possess the ability to mobilize, organize and manage people and resources and coordinate actions of others in order to achieve defined outcomes. An administrator is required to have decision making skills and an integrative and visionary school management. He/she should be interactive and possess leader qualities in representing the school, in cooperation with teachers, parents, RED (Regional Education Directorate) and local government, in organizing and controlling the teaching process, in the introduction of pedagogical innovation, in establishing the order and law enforcement.

The dynamics of changes in undergraduate education system in Kosovo which is conditioned by its alignment with those

of developed countries, often presents difficulties for the managerial staff.

Their successful handling of these difficulties requires not only a good preparation as professional administrators but also creating a climate of cooperation, teamwork, motivation of every member of the organization, support and encouragement of each initiative and investment aimed at developing the organization's capacities in order to provide the best possible services for the student community.

In order to achieve their objectives, these reforms should not treat the educational system as a closed one. Taking into account this fact is vital importance in the success of the process of preparing and implementing reformative interventions that have as their objective the development of managerial capacity of school administrator.

This study addresses issues related to the evaluation of the role that the managerial qualifying of a school administrator have, in Kosovo. The study was conducted assuming a prior hypothesis that the administrator is one of the institutions from the behavior of which depends, to a certain extent, the performance of the learning organization and the quality of service that it offers. Target of this study are the pre-universitaries schools of Kosovo.

#### **Culture of changing and the behavior towards management process of undergraduate educational institutions in Kosovo.**

Success in the public service provided by the educational system, in a large extent, is conditioned by the quality of the provider organizations. Meanwhile, it should be noted that this quality is closely connected with defining a clear vision and the strategic objectives the organization. In addition to this, it is necessary that all organization members should be informed at any time and their activity should be characterized by a creative spirit, encouragement and motivation.

In the '70s the education system, at the global level, was involved in a dynamic process of change caused by the crisis of confidence [4]. It was followed by reforms aiming to reorganize the system in accordance with a new philosophy under which was to be conceived the offers of this system, with an objective approach to the economic and social changes of the time.

Countries in economic transition and with developing democracies, as is the case of Kosovo, are currently facing, in their efforts to reform the education system, the same situations like those faced by developed countries in the 70s. The need for change in these countries is a priority. The issue is on how to have a non gravely cost of this reform process for the country and the society. Experiences of other countries show that success is guaranteed, if reform focuses attention on facilitating and supporting culture for change. Changes in the system will be most effective and long-termed if focused on:

- (i) professional preparation of administrators as carriers of new ideas and visions for the development of school quality,
- (ii) development of active methods and research managerial of leading forms and ways that enable greater motivation of workers, students and other members of the learning organization,
- (iii) autonomy and greater financial opportunities.

Culture change should be developed as a fellow of the entire reform process aiming at creating a new image for the school administrator. In its foundation lies in the paradigm "teaching and capacity for change is guided by moral purposes ..." [1]. Persons who manage the education system should seek and encourage the use of all necessary instruments. They must create the right conditions, to activate the energies of the managerial staff to conceive the increasing of schools quality as a continuous process. The object of this goal should be all services offered to all schools and communities who need these services.

In particular, this is very important in the case of Kosovo, which is characterized by the existence of different communities of ethnic groups, who have cultural differences, different social behavior conditioned by traditions and different attitudes toward the education system supply often biased from reasons not directly connected with the system. In addition, it is important to bear in mind that the education system in Kosovo can not be conducted as a closed system, with objectives and products that are for Kosovo and will belong only to Kosovo. The globalization phenomenon and its effects are active in Kosovo too. To understand the change and therefore also to administer it, it is necessary to understand the country's history and consider its cultural features and its human communities characteristics. The interconnection between education system and culture is reciprocal and none can be explained or developed without considering the other [Hofstede 1996, see [8]].

#### **Analysis of perceptions for the administrator in undergraduate education organizations in Kosovo**

Explaining the role of managers in the success of an educational organization is often based on

an analysis of perceptions about the quality of management.

While it is important to note that

this analysis should always consider the differences in culture, that constrain manager's behavior. Culture is the background on which is built the entire behavior of a manager towards the needs for change. Its consequences is the level of accountability and measures of commitment, initiative, leadership and leaders participation in the changes process of an education organization.

In order to acquaint and analyse the qualities of the administrator in undergraduate education institutions in Kosovo, interviews were conducted with 200 school directors and 20 former one's in Pristina region. Interviews were focused on obtaining data in order to analyze and evaluate administrators behavior toward their duties. Also they were focused on various aspects of the management process, promotion and support of the reform and the evaluation of school teachers for their leaders.

Some of the results of these interviews can be listed as follows:

In the undergraduate education system in Kosovo prevails the culture oriented on setting as primary the relations between the leader with school teachers and auxiliary staff.

Direct relationship with the individual, based on their performance and effectiveness on the school quality are not considered as a primary opportunity to increase the positive effect of the leading role of a school director. Meanwhile, almost all express the consideration that manager skills are crucial in changes that may occur in the institution for its

benefit and those of the people working in it. This situation is almost the same as that explained by Zeneli, I. (2013) [5] and similar to those in several Asian countries. This perception is different in western countries Anglophone, Germanic and Nordic, in which considerations and respect for leaders are the result of professional skills assessments and his/her mastery in the direction [8]. Kosovo school directors often tries to avoid open confrontation and categorical persistent communication with subordinates. The cause of this it is not the cultural behavior of staff members but the fragility of the institutions. Respondents assert that generally they don't react defiantly and they try to avoid disapproval of opinion with leaders even when their interests are affected. Directors, on the other hand, try to anticipate conflictual situations using authoritarian attitude in decision making. These behaviors differ substantially from those that characterize the relationship between leaders and staff in western countries. In Kosovo the culture of dealing with conflict for the sake of the management of an educational institution, is very different compared with that of Anglo-American and Germanic one.

Reformativ processes are an internal need of the education system itself. Despite this, generally the managers of undergraduate education institutions in Kosovo are prone to preserve the statusquos. The missing culture on receiving and confronting challenges brought by new changes makes the reformativ process quite difficult. In response to questions regarding their staff evaluation, most of the directors consider much more important teachers behavior, adaptation, communication and relations between them, than their professional skills. So, the relationship between staff members is evaluated more than the level of fulfillment of their duty. The role of managing directors, as administrators of the institution, is often limited in providing guidelines for coexistence within the institution of school teachers and auxiliary staff and, in attracting the attention to control personal emotions and to avoid competition and conflict. This is a situation also encountered in other countries of Eastern Europe and in some Asian countries [9]. According to these authors in these countries harmony is a primary moral norm, part of their culture. It lies at the base of the process of "collectivization".

Analysis of our data shows that school teachers in Kosovo have had and continue to have a high threshold of tolerance to subjective judgment and estimation, as long as they believe in the director. Most of them expect and choose to be evaluated by their director. The superior opinion is accepted even if it is not based on the evaluation of their efforts and achievements, as members of organization. This situation does not promise success in the implementation of reforms and changes that should be made in the management processes of undergraduate education institutions in Kosovo, which aim to increase the autonomy in governance. The commitment to change it, is necessary [6].

#### Management models of learning organization

Analysis of data on respondents' opinions regarding school management models – model centered on leader or on student - shows that about 90 percent of the respondents had uncertainties in understanding the models and their purpose. This situation encourages the need for reflection on these models. Referring to contemporary developments [1,3] in

management of education institutions, the answer to the question "leader or students at the center" turns out to be one of the main arguments of the discussion.

#### Model "Student-centered"

This model is schematically presented in Figure No.1.

The main objective of the institution is providing and delivering the education service for students. Everything that is done to develop school capacities through investments in infrastructure and laboratories, efforts for continued development of professional performance in academic and auxiliary staff, management interventions for school reform, are evaluated whether or not successful by referring to the quality of students that the school prepares

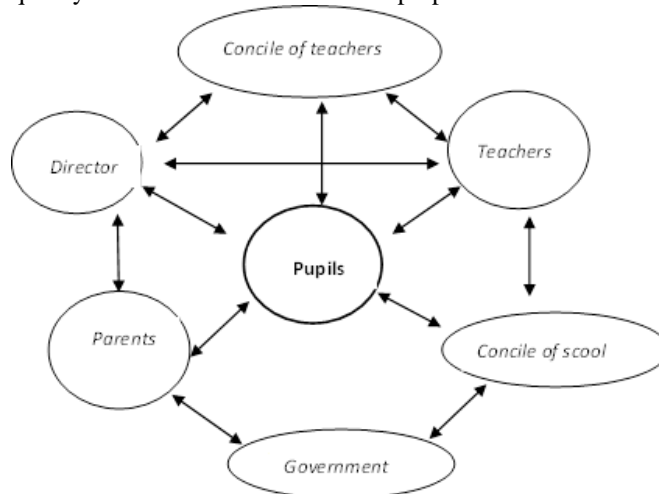


Figure No.1 Management model based on the principle of "Student-centered"

. All activity of the learning organization is on students service. Therefore, a priori can be concluded that the model of school management under the principle of "student-centered" is very reasonable and easily acceptable as the most effective one.

In fact, such an assessment is simplistic and its implementation in practice is exposed to serious problems in managing the institution. The model is hard to understand and implement. Among the difficulties that may arise in the process of implementation of this model, can be listed:

- (i) difficulty in understanding the philosophy of this system,
- (ii) autocratic and non-inclusive culture that characterizes the management of the institution from its leader,
- (iii) students low level of motivation to the acquisition of knowledge,

(iv) psycho-social restrictions tied to students age, which are reflected in the insufficient level of awareness about the education value their role as subjects and objects of the learning organization, etc ...

Application of this model was attempted in 1995-96 year in Hong Kong but without success. [8]. Successful attempt was made in Taiwan. The analysis of this case showed that on the basis of its success stands a voluntary choice of some managers to apply this model, avoiding their authoritarian and uncooperative attitude and that of school teachers with the students.

School management model under the principle of "student-centered" was implemented in Albania, after 1967, in the framework of the reforms that took place under the slogan "The school revolution". The main feature of the Albanian model was putting in a dominant position student decision. Practically, students through their elected representatives and organizations were the evaluator authority and, in many cases with greater influence in decision making for all school problems. The system has recognized this right to every student. As an individual he/she can publicly demand to get in consideration his/her assessments for teachers and the school board work. Such a system was possible to apply only in conditions of dictatorship. The effects of this system were devastating for the quality of the school.

Model "student-centered" is an approach for the management of the educational institution which brings the slidding of formal relations between different structures, part of the educational organization. This model brings structural and organizational changes. The model, through increasing students and students council role, aims to create favorable conditions for a greater and effective student participation in the process of decision-making and management of the organization. Meanwhile, the hegemonic nature of the actual system and the dominant position of director, eventhough positioned in the periphery, make his relations with others have greater effect on the administration process, rather than the effects of a student being at the center of the system. If we add to this situation the rooted culture of human society according to which, every organization needs a single leader at its helm, the model "student-centered" rather than a model that can be implemented, should regarded as a model that can be use to make analysis and reach conclusions on the theory of learning organizations management models.

**Model "Director – centered"**

Referring to managerial experience applied in different countries of the EU, the position and role of the school principal tends to move towards the center and others, teaching, students and parents are treated as satellite, whose orbit is the director. The principal work is regarded as the most important factor for the progress and quality of the teaching process. This approach to the management philosophy of the learning organization is the cornerstone of the "Director - centered" model (Figure No.2). This practical model creates favorable conditions for a school autocratic management. The model gives to the principal the opportunity not only to control the conduct of all other links through direct connection to them but also to be the only school authority that has the right and ability to monitor and intervene in relations between students, teachers, parents and their representative councils. Consequently, the institution managed according to this model, in fact is a mirror and a product of the its leadership behavior. By using this model the product will identify itself with the figure of the institution's principal. The success and / or failures of the system are evaluated and accepted as the succes and / or failures of its leadership. This essential feature of the model makes the success and quality of the school to be closely dependent on the management professional performance of its principal. Consequently, the need for continuous professional training of these managers is permanently present. Establishment of institutions that should offer such a training service for these managers and the support for their

capacity development should be considered as a prior action of the undergraduate education system in Kosovo. Meanwhile, it is important to note that the success of a learning organization based on the model of "leader-centered" depends also on the cultural background and psychosocial behavior of its leader.

These are personal trait that can not be changed through training processes. Therefore to prevent their negative, the model should generate prohibitive barriers for them. This requirement is also provided in legal provisions, curriculum and strategic development of the educational system, at all levels, in the Republic of Kosovo. According to these documents, in principle, the success of a learning organization does not depend only on the performances of its director. All members of the school community have responsibilities and the school outcome is a joint product of teachers, students, parents and local government performances.

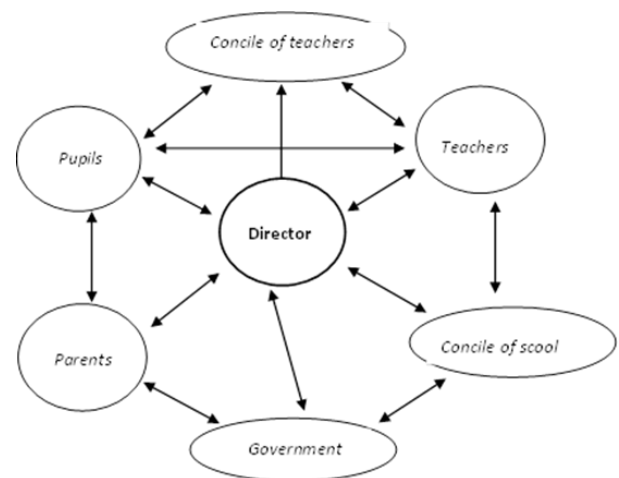


Figure No.2 Management model based on the "Director–centered" principal

**Bi-centered model “ Director and students in the center”**

The management of a learning organization in each of the two models discussed above is exposed to different problems whose prevention requires the construction of barriers, as appropriate instruments out of the respective system.

In principle, such thing is possible. Meanwhile, it is important to note that these barriers can not be built as instruments that can be used equally and with the same efficiency for any learning organization. They can not be used as long-term instruments regardless of changes that may occur in the organization's objectives. They are exposed to the need for changes even if the school changes its director.

In these circumstances it is appropriate to find a long-term management model of a learning organization with as less as possible needs for intervention from the outside. One of the options that can be discussed is the *Bi-centered management model "Director & pupils in the center"* (Figure No.3).

Management of learning organizations in different countries of the EU tends to converge towards mixed model, in which the idea of placing the student at the center is acceptable and it is even supported from the directors of the organization. In the philosophy of the organization's management, treating pupils with priority and putting them in the center of director's attention, not only as beneficiaries but also as

acting subjects in decision-making, is accepted as an inspiring principle. The application of this principle have positive expectations, due to the culture of institutions administration in these countries.

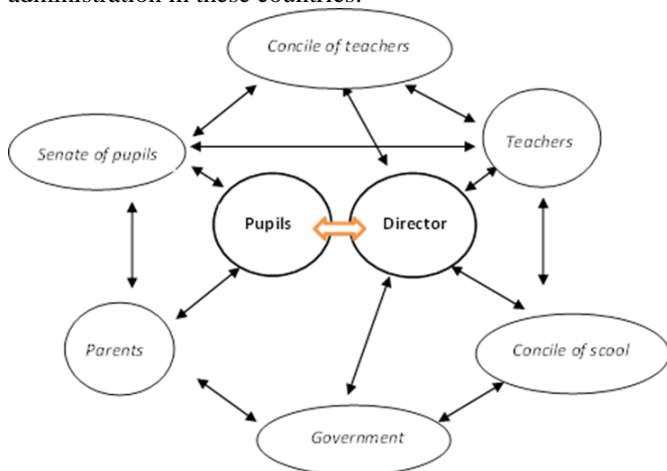


Figure No.3 Bi-centered management model “Director & pupils in the center”

Meanwhile, in developing countries characterized by the absence of this culture, the implementation of the above principle requires binding instrument. The Bi-centered management model tries to build such instruments. In this model the relationship between directors and pupils is considered as an equal partnership relation. The connection of pupils with other links of the system is not direct. It is done through Pupils and Parents Senate, while a director has direct relationships with parents, teachers and government. In this way becomes possible a more democratic decision-making for the management of the learning organization. Success of the director as a leading manager of the organization grows because of pupils contribution, who are the only beneficiaries of the service that the learning organization provides.

### Conclusions

The education organization success depends to a considerable extent from the professional performance of its director as its principal manager. Directors success depends largely on his skills for decision-making and efforts to promote and develop the spirit of cooperation inside the organization.

In order to achieve the expected effects of the undergraduate education system reform in Kosovo, school administrators should work to maximize the synergistic effect of their

interaction with teachers, pupils, parents community and local government.

Support for directors capacity development, in order to professionally manage schools in Kosovo, is conditioned by lack of experiences, political environment, economic and social development, management culture and director’s psycho-social constitution.

In order to have successful management of undergraduate learning organizations in Kosovo it is recommended to develop the managerial capacity of their directors in accordance with the requirements of the Bi-centered model “Director & pupils in the center”

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