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## EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT – ART OR SCIENCE?

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**Abstract:** *Educational management involves both art and science in identifying efficient leadership manners to be used for the accomplishment of the targeted objectives. Within the educational environment, the manager needs to harmonize individual interests with the collective interests of the educational institution, mitigate conflicts, and to stimulate initiative spirit and ambition of placing the institution he or she manages at the highest possible levels. The more various the managerial abilities are, the more efficient his or her activity becomes. A permanent self-analysis on the manager's behalf will contribute to the development of the educational management.*

*Key words: educational management, individual interests, collective interests, managerial abilities*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Educational management consists of a complex activity involving various areas of expertise such as: the educational practice, the didactical activities, the teaching staff's training, the economic and financial activity, school-family relationships. Nowadays, issues specific to the educational management have become a priority among the concerns of experienced researchers in the field of pedagogy. Leadership, as a specific process within the educational management, has existed ever since immemorial times. Nevertheless, starting with Comenius, "it gained those attributes and features that allowed for a theoretical crystallization imposed by its integration within a well-contoured pedagogical system, thus opening the road towards the modern school's organization". (Rusu, Voicu, 1993: 37, apud Jinga, 2009: 24) Gradually, the leading of the educational activity has become a distinct subject matter within the education sciences and a series of researches and a consistent number of related papers have had it as their focus. The reform of the educational management generated new approaches to the

decentralization and autonomy of education institutions, the training of school managers or the reasonable distribution of both financial and material resources. The managerial activity cannot be excluded from the European and world context, nor can it be successful without an adequate training of the managers. The selection of managers based on rigorous criteria and their implication in activities regarding the continuous learning may guarantee an efficient educational management and an improvement of quality and efficiency of the entire educational environment.

### 2. CHARACTERISTICS OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

The concept of management has a plethora of meanings. It derives from the Latin "manus", which means maneuvering. The one who does the maneuvering is the manager. In our case, the manager was the one in charge with a sportsman, an artist or and actor. Thus, the manager "set the ground for success, particularly the financial one, of the activities performed by his/her client" (Jinga, 2009: 13). According to Peterson and Plowman, management comprises the

“methods by means of which a collective’s goals and tasks are determined, explained and achieved” (apud Jinga, 2009: 14). Karl Hegel argues that management is a subject matter leading to the achievement of set objectives by efficiently using human and material resources. Corneliu Russu (1991) notes that management is “the science of scientifically leading social-economic organizations” and carries three meanings:

- Science – organized set of concepts, principles and methods that explain the processes specific to organization management;
- Art – the manager’s skill to efficiently deal with various situations;
- State of mind – a certain way to regard, wish for and achieve success.

From the viewpoint of the above three meanings, educational management is regarded as “a complex process of managing the educational act within the educational system” (Niculescu, 1994, apud Jinga, 2009: 18). The core of management is to ensure maximum results with minimum material and intellectual expenses (Petrescu, 1991). Sorin Cristea (1998) thinks that educational management encompasses various strategies used to accomplish teaching activities.

Therefore, educational management seen as a combination of science and art shapes competent and developed personalities, able to adapt to the numerous and rapid changes occurring in every walk of life. The problem here is to decide how much of educational management is science and how much is art. If we view educational management as a science, then we establish that it has an object of study, methods and strategies to achieve its goals, theories, norms and principles, as well as management assessment procedures. The first stage requires intuition and management practice. The following stage embeds the general management concepts and legislation (Ivancevich et al., 1989, apud Jinga, 2009: 15). The stage of scientific management

involves calculus, statistics and mathematical methods. Regardless of the number of its development stages, educational management comprises:

- an educational ideal;
- general objectives;
- teaching strategies;
- assessment methods;
- human resources;
- financial resources;
- pedagogical research (Niculescu, 1994).

In terms of teaching objectives and strategies, educational management may be placed at various hierarchical levels, as follows:

- central level – strategic management: it orients, guides and evaluates the entire educational system;
- unit level – operational management: it puts in practice the strategy developed at higher echelons.

Educational management at unit levels approaches the teaching process in all its aspects, logistics, interpersonal relationships, and cooperation with other institutions. The institutional framework is ensured by general regulations such as: the Education Law, the Teaching Staff’s Statute, government decisions, norms issued by the Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation, as well as special stipulations – school regulations, University Chart etc. A UNESCO document (Russu, 1991) assessing the state of education in the year 2000 mentions that the manager must display a set of skills, knowledge and attitudes in order to address the specific requirements of his/her duties. We now talk about management optimization efforts, the manager’s professional techniques and his/her involvement in lifelong learning to ensure the effectiveness of educational management, which in turn leads to the improvement of the entire educational system. Also, success greatly depends on the manager’s personal traits.

In the following paragraphs, we will approach educational management as an art. Thus, it focuses on the manager’s personality,



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which must be role model to the subordinates. By his/her persuasion role, the manager must harmonize the individual and the collective interests. Besides professionalism, the manager must display empathy, communication skills, the desire to support and develop the employees in terms of their professional and social potential. The recognition of a job well done and support provided when a teacher encounters difficulties in their work enhance confidence and trust. Apart from professional, artistic and organizational skills, the manager must also act as a leader and psycho-pedagogical professional. An effective leader will not expect change to be imposed, but will stir change as a tool for progress. At the level of educational management, art and science go hand in hand, so that the manager adapts to social requirements for the purpose of achieving educational objectives.

### 3. EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT COMPETENCES

In carrying out his/her duties, the school manager (*aka* principal) performs roles such as:

- state representative – applies rules and regulations pertaining to his/her own school's policies;
- representative of educational community;
- president of the Teaching Board and Administration Board;
- person in charge of developing educational objectives and goals;
- credit responsible person;
- decision-maker;

- organizer of educational facilities;
- mediator within educational community;
- evaluator of teaching activity and staff;
- member of local community;
- citizen.

In order to perform these roles, the school manager must have competences such as decision-making skills and professional skills. Whereas decision-making skills are regulated by means of legal documents, professional skills are examined in handbooks and specialized literature. Also, the school manager must display the following competences: psycho-pedagogical, legal, economic-financial, managerial, cultural, social-moral.

Management skills imply the ability to set goals and objectives, organize and plan activities, take responsibilities, communicate, negotiate, interact, empathize, make firm decisions, solve conflicts, solve problems, keep an open mind and adapt to changes. In order to select school managers' eager to achieve performance, one must know the profile of an effective school manager, as well as to facilitate professional growth by training, education and gaining experience. The initial development of school managers is achieved by postgraduate courses in the field of educational management. In the year 2000, by the government ordinance no. 92/29 June, a national system was set up to develop school managers, but its functioning was affected by the elections held in late December. Consequently, the school managers' initial development can be done in the Departments of teaching staff's training by studying subject matters such as "Elements of educational management" and "The management of educational system and

process". School managers' professional development requires the establishment of an accredited center with a flexible structure, with experts in the fields of management, psycho-pedagogy, communication sciences, economics and culture. The range of educational programs must be diversified in the sense of a module-based approach with a variable duration (from 2 to 6 months). The school manager's job description is regulated by legal documents (Jinga, 2009) in accordance with every educational level:

- primary and secondary education – specific rules and norms and job description;
- graduate and postgraduate education – University Chart and job description;
- for school inspectorates rules issued by the ministry and job description;
- management team of the Ministry of Education Research and Innovation-government decisions and job description.

In order to accurately establish the relevant duties, the following stages must be considered:

- analysis of legal documents;
- group duties according to compartments within each institution;
- distribute duties according to area of responsibility, decision level, interpersonal relations, activity complexity and frequency. On a regular basis and for purposes of management optimization, the accordance between positions and job descriptions will be examined by means of legal documents and questionnaires. Jean Gerbier suggests a duty diagram to determine job

specifications and related duties within an institution.

Duties	Principal	Deputy principal	Chief accountant	Head of faculty	Admi to
Schooling plan design					
Schooling plan implementation					
Organization of schooling facilities					
Development of income-expense budget					
Execution of income-expenses budget					
Drawing up timetable					
Methodological-scientific activity					

Table 1. Diagram of duties to establish job specifications (Jean Gerbier, apud Jinga, 2009)

For exemplification purposes, below we present the main duties of a high school principal:

- organization: clarification of each department's and employee's duties, establishment of commissions in charge with timetable, attendance, dress code, teaching activity, quality assessment and assurance, goal-setting according to established objectives, coordination of activities. At the commencement of the academic year, he/she carries out the pupils' census, distributes the teaching staff, organizes the medical checkup, initiates activities of school guidance, and distributes pupils on classes. Throughout the academic year, he/she puts in practice the provisions of the School Regulations, and at the end of



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- the year organizes the final revision sessions, assessments, high school leaving examination, holiday schedule of events, cleaning activities.
- control: monitoring teaching staff's adherence to schedules, activities, dress code and conduct rules. He/she monitors students' training, behavior outside the school perimeter, fills in and keeps school records and labor documents, observes syllabi, curricula, handbooks, teaching process calendar and other relevant documents. This reflects the complexity of educational management and the fact that it requires attention, effort and responsibility.
- knows how to delegate responsibilities;
- keeps an open mind to modern methods and techniques to smoothly run the organization;
- overcomes communication blockages, organizational conflict and "scapegoating";
- is committed to the organization and its objectives, which must match the subordinates' objectives at the same time.

**4. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS INTERPRETATION**

What distinguishes educational management from other types of management is the fact that "it affects the children's and youngsters' personality and character development. In industries, for instance, losses or mistakes may be compensated for and then reused, in education failures can have negative effects at individual and social levels: incompetence, illiteracy, inadequacy and delinquency" (Iucu, 1999: 12). Therefore, we consider that approaching educational management from a modern perspective meets the needs for optimization and efficiency. In this respect, the school manager may delegate some of his/her responsibilities to deputies or counselors able to do that. Effectives does not depend exclusively on the manager, but also on his/her coworkers. Thus, a manager is effective if he/she:

- is able to manage time, human resources, material resources and financial resources;
- motivates staff by valuing their individual skills and interests;
- performs relevant and constructive staff appraisals on a regular basis;

In order to assess a school manager's efficiency and they extent to which art and science converge at the level of management skills, we have applied the survey related to the managers' perception of their own position. It was undertaken by high school principals and was evaluated by combining the survey data with the self assessment questionnaire concerning individual management skills (Jinga, 2009). Thus, the managers were able to assess the extent to which the feel that their position provides them with promotion and personal accomplishment opportunities. The analysis parameters of responses were the following:

- R – accomplishment
- Rp – responsibility
- Rn – recognition
- Av – promotion
- Im – interest in task
- Ap – personal fulfillment

The listed parameters describe work motivation. The final score reflects the impact of each factor upon the overall job satisfaction.

R	Rp	Rn	Av	Im	Ap	Total
3.1	3.0	2.9	3.2	3.6	3.5	51.8

Table 2. Analysis parameters of managers' opinion survey

The final score is between 45 and 55 points, which describes a certain level of dissatisfaction. A total of 55 points or above would have described a level of full job satisfaction.

As far as the second tool is concerned, the final score is between 41 and 60, which means a lack of attention paid to the subordinates' psycho-social needs. This may lead to confusion and may be put down to the managers' lack of time. Too many problems to solve in too little time make managers ignore their subordinates' concerns. The managers' actions must be carefully considered and well organized in order to favor their coworkers, which will increase the quality of their professional performance.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Educational management is a system of actions taken in a conscious, organized and systematic manner meant to develop the students' personalities and characters according to their own purposes and values. Thus, educational management aims at ensuring education quality in terms of the obtained results compared to the envisaged results. Also, a professional diagram for school principals can be drawn up based on algorithms, competences, knowledge and skills in accordance with a good manager's profile:

- physically and mentally fit;
- able to cope with stress and intellectual effort;
- energetic and consistent;
- determined;
- confident;
- accountable;
- altruistic;
- loyal;
- competent;
- intelligent and knowledgeable;
- open-minded;
- empathic;

- able to communicate efficiently;
- able to network for the benefit of his/her organization.

Nowadays, a manager is much more than a manager. His/her responsibilities pertain to the art and science to organize, guide, catalyze, optimize and influence his/her organization. The methods one may use in this respect are:

- information and decision-making by means of personal observation, self-study, monitoring, attending report and debate sessions, meetings etc.;
- involving the teaching staff in managerial activities: explanation, discussion, persuasion, critical analysis, personal example, suggestion, urging, praising, support, disagreement etc.;
- stimulation and encouragement of initiative and creativity: brainstorming, debate, analogy etc.;
- operative tools: clear objectives.

By applying these methods and techniques in order to guide activities, interact, communicate and persuade others, art and science converge. Also, one should mention the importance of how a manager manages his/her time, how he/she addresses the environmental challenges, solves conflicts and problems. In terms of interpersonal relations, one should handle communication tools, find the right words and body language, display confidence and openness. In our opinion, this art is mastered by the practice and experience which every manager should gain. One cannot draw a clear-cut line between art and science, but their combination results in efficient and effective outcomes and contribute to the overall improvement of the quality of Romanian education.



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