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ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IN ALBANIA

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Abstract: The research study aims to describe the current situation in the management of the secondary education in Albania, by identifying the weaknesses and strengths of the system. The participants were about 600 teachers and the representatives of school managerial teams, randomly selected from six regions: Tirana, Durres, Korça, Vlora, Shkodra and Kukes. The study is trying to identify and examine the current policy-making capacity, management and decision making in the secondary schools, as well as to explore the possibilities for improvements.

The authors emphasise the crucial role that school managers play in the process of making schools attractive places for the private sector funding, and also finding some additional financial sources. The responsibilities of the school leaders in planning, management and quality improvement were analysed, and also managerial practices were assessed. The paper identifies the methods that leaders use to motivate their staff and measures the effects of leadership qualities in teachers' and managers' behaviour, which help to promote individual accountability and mutual obligations at work.

Other issues dealt with are the concept of a leader and leadership, the functions of leadership and leadership styles (authoritarian or autocratic, participant or democratic, delegating or without power) in the secondary schools. The results of the study are presented in a quantitative and qualitative form for a wide range of issues together with the conclusions, which are another important aspect of this study.

Keywords: leader, leadership, management, secondary education.

Introduction

In recent years education in Albania has undergone important transformations and profound reforms in order to support the economic, social, cultural and technological needs of Albanian society. Secondary education today includes students from K10 to K12 and grammar schools (secondary

schools for general education) and vocational schools. It is part of pre-university education and includes schools situated in urban and rural zones.

This research study aims to describe the current situation in the field of management and leadership in the secondary education by identifying weak points and strong decision-making capacity. The need for this research arises as a consequence of some of the problems identified by school administrators and teachers, but also by the National Education Strategy 2009-2013¹. There are shortcomings in the school development planning, efficient use of resources, finding and managing additional funds etc., as well as in the process of self-evaluation. Schools are required to take greater responsibility in planning, managing and improving quality of services they provide, but it is currently unknown if the schools have taken responsibility and properly implemented it. By getting donations for schools, principals have been required to act as managers, which has been a new and demanding challenge for these executives. These challenges include financial management of the schools in terms of finding alternative funding sources, development of policies to attract private sector funds, complete control of the income, independence in the use of revenues generated by school equipment and facilities as well as budget transparency. The model-based performance management seems to be a good start, but it is challenging to define and clarify the institutional responsibilities and mutual obligations. All these points are directly linked to policy-making capacity, management and decision-making, or in other words with the leadership in the education system, which would be the focus of this research study.

According to Haslam et al. (2011) leadership is not simply about getting people to do things. It is about getting them to want to do things. Leadership, then, is about shaping beliefs, desires, and priorities. It is about achieving influence, not securing compliance. Leadership therefore needs to be distinguished from such things as management, decision-making, and authority. These are all important and they are all implicated in the leadership process. It should be noted that leadership is much more than simply holding a managerial position.

Leadership has to do with coping with change and the ability of individuals to influence, motivate and enable others to contribute in enhancing the effectiveness, success and performance of the institution. Leadership should create the institution's vision and translate this vision into reality. This research study will seek to reflect, evaluate, analyse and improve (through recommendations) the existing style of leadership in pre-university public institutions, focusing specifically on general secondary education, since it is considered to be one of the key points that could increase productivity. The

¹ National Education Strategy for Albania. 2009-2013 (Strategjia Kombetare e Arsimit per Shqiperine 2009-2013)

purpose of the increase in productivity is to provide a better service through a better management and through efficient institutions. The study aims to reflect and analyse the executives' perception of their own leadership style. More precisely, the study mainly focuses on the issues of to what extent and in what ways the school leaders exercise their authority in decision-making; include teachers and other colleagues in the process of decision making; delegate certain tasks and share power with others; control their subordinates; define the institution's mission and goals; allow their subordinates to develop professionally; protect the integrity of the institution; mediate in internal conflicts, etc. Also the study aims to compare these statements with the opinion of the teaching staff about leadership styles. The paper ends with certain conclusions and recommendation on how to improve the leadership style in order to increase the quality and productivity of school service. The recommendations have already been tried out in a number of workshops named "The style of leadership and management in secondary education system" during 2011, in which the authors of the paper took part.

Aims and specific objectives of the study

The overall goal of this study is to identify and examine current and potential capacity of policy-making, management and decision-making in the secondary education system.

Objectives of the study are:

- to examine the role of team school leaders in developing policies to attract private sector funds as well as in finding and using alternative sources of funding
- to examine the responsibilities of school leaders in planning and managing the improvement of services that they provide
- to assess management practices based on performance
- to identify practices of school self-evaluation process
- to identify the methods that they use to motivate and influence their staff
- to measure the effects of leadership on behaviour and attitudes of teachers
- to measure the contribution of leaders in defining clear institutional responsibilities and mutual obligations.

Leadership is about creating a vision of a desired future state, which includes all members of an organization in its network. Leadership is an ability to motivate the management team towards a common goal. The leader is a person who exercises influence over other people to achieve the goals of a group by providing their enthusiastic support. Methods by which leaders or managers ensure that members of an organization do something collectively to

achieve their goals and objectives are used to develop the typology of leadership based on a leadership style.

In the management of an organization, some of the functions of leadership are:

- to determine the organization's missions and goals
- to be viewed as personification or embodiment of its institutional purposes
- to protect its integrity
- to establish rules for dealing with internal conflicts.

A good leader develops through a process of self-study, education, training and experience which never end. In order to inspire employees and to increase the level of group work, there are some things that they need to be, to know and become. These do not come naturally, but are acquired through continuous work and study. A good leader learns and works constantly to improve his leadership skills. Leadership is a process by which a person influences others to achieve an objective and directs the organization in order for it to be more cohesive and coherent. The leader performs this process by applying one's leadership attributes such as beliefs, values, ethics, character, knowledge and skills. Although one's managerial position gives them authority to accomplish certain tasks and objectives of the organization, this power does not make them leaders. Leadership rests on what makes followers want to meet major goals, rather than simply guiding people.

The leadership style is the manner in which the leader interacts with followers. A good leader knows more than simple manners of interacting with others. Good leaders recognize their natural tendencies and then adjust their behaviour to do what is right in certain situations or circumstances. Also, three major leadership styles are identified: authoritarian or autocratic; participant or democratic; delegating or without power.

Authoritarian style of leadership is used when the leader tells his employees what to do and how to do it, without taking advice from his followers. Authoritarian style provides clear expectations that need to be met. Also there is a clear separation between the leader and followers. An authoritarian leader makes decisions independently with little or no input from the rest of the group. Authoritarian style of leadership is characterized by a leader, who makes all the decisions and passes instructions to subordinates, who are expected to complete them under close monitoring. There is little or no opportunity for subordinates to develop initiative or creativity. An employee's behaviour is closely controlled by means of punishment, reward, arbitrary rules and task orientation.

Participant or democratic style of leadership refers to the situation when employees are more included in the decision-making process but the leader makes the final decision. Democratic style also called participants because he

encourages employees to be part of decision-making. Democratic leader keeps his or her employees informed about everything that affects their work and they share the responsibility for decision-making and problem solving. Democratic leadership can produce quality work and great quantities for long periods of time.

Delegating style is characterized by leader's allowing the employees to make decisions even though the leader is responsible for the decisions made. This is not a style to be used to blame others when things go wrong; this is the style that should be used when the leader has confidence in people around him/her. The leader should not be afraid to use this style, but he/she must use it wisely. This style is also known as "*lessez faire*" (non-interference in the affairs of others) and "*hands-off*" when the manager provides little or no direction and gives employees as much freedom as possible. All authority or power is given to employees and they should set goals, make decisions and solve problems themselves.

Methodology

The questions that will be addressed in the study are:

- What is the role of leadership in improving the productivity in institutions of secondary education in ...?
- In what way do leaders motivate teachers to reach and affect productivity in institutions of secondary education in ..?
- How effective are the leadership practices on the productivity of institutions of secondary education in ..?
- How to strengthen leadership, governance and management in secondary education system?

The study has covered a range of variables, such as:

- Leadership skills to solve problems, to make decisions and to improve performance
- The extent to which executives are sensitive to the interests, needs and aspirations of the institution and subordinates
- Reward and punishment methods that are used by managers of institutions to influence and motivate their followers
- Teachers perception about the clarity of their work, clarity of mission of the institution and open communication
- Teachers' attitudes about the leadership style of their managers
- Managers' perception of their own leadership style
- Demographic characteristics of participants in the study such as gender, age, work experience, location, etc.

Results of the study

According to Fiedler (1967) a leadership style depends on someone's personality, and is thus relatively permanent. Drucker (1992:14) explains that "the leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say "I". And that's not because they have trained themselves not to say "I". They don't think "I". They think "team". They understand their job to be to make the team function. . . . There is the identification (very often quite unconscious) with the task and with the group. Leadership is all about performance. You, as a leader, have to build an integrated team and empower them to deliver great results. Leadership is a means to an end. We don't lead because we want to, or because of our charisma or because of (a romantic idea of) power that comes with leadership. We lead because we seek results."

The obtained data were analysed (SPSS 16) and comparisons were made between teachers' and managers' perception of leadership style. The results suggest that 6% of school leaders exercise an authoritarian leadership style, of which 3.4% exercise a strong authoritarian style and 2.6%, a soft authoritarian style. 9.5% of managers use a transitional style between his authoritarian leadership and the democratic. 26.8% of managers exercise a democratic leadership style of which 19% exerted a strong democratic style and 7.8% a soft style democracy. 40.6% of leaders use a delegating style, of whom 7.8% use a strong style of delegating and 32.8% a soft delegating style. 9.5% of managers use a transitional style between the authoritarian leadership and the democratic. 17.2% of leaders use a transition leadership style between the main styles of leadership, authoritarian, democratic, and delegating (Figure 1)

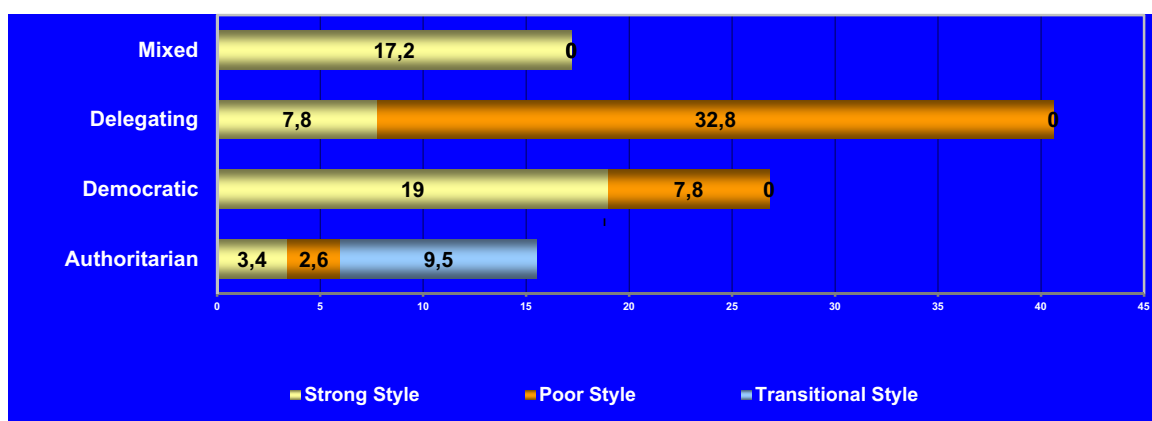


Figure 1. Teachers' perception of their leaders' leadership style

Figure 2. illustrates the level of teachers' satisfaction with the leadership style of their leaders. The majority of teachers (about 87.6%) are generally satisfied with it.

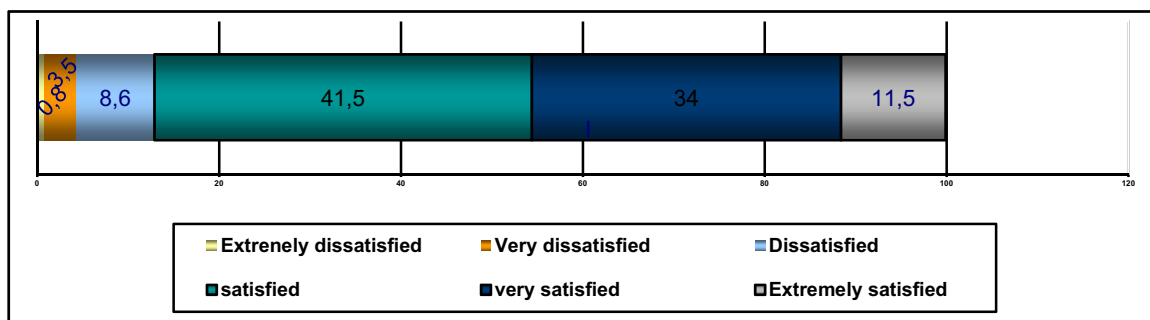


Figure 2. Teachers' satisfaction with patience, friendliness, courtesy and respect they receive from their leaders

Figure 3. illustrates the level of teachers' satisfaction with patience, friendliness, courtesy and respect which they receive from the managers. The majority (about 88.3%) is satisfied with this element of leadership.

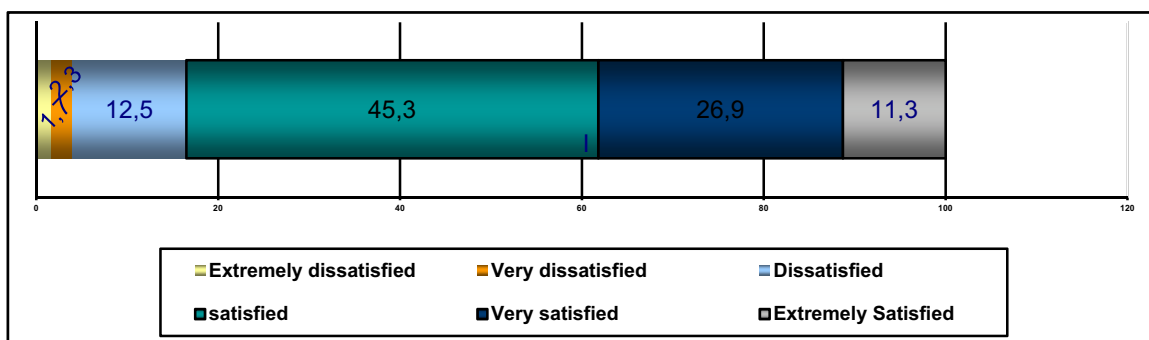


Figure 3. Satisfaction with the manner in which the leader gives feedback to teachers on their performance at work

Figure 3. illustrates the level of teachers' satisfaction with the way in which the leader gives feedback on their performance at work. The majority (about 86.4%) is satisfied with this element.

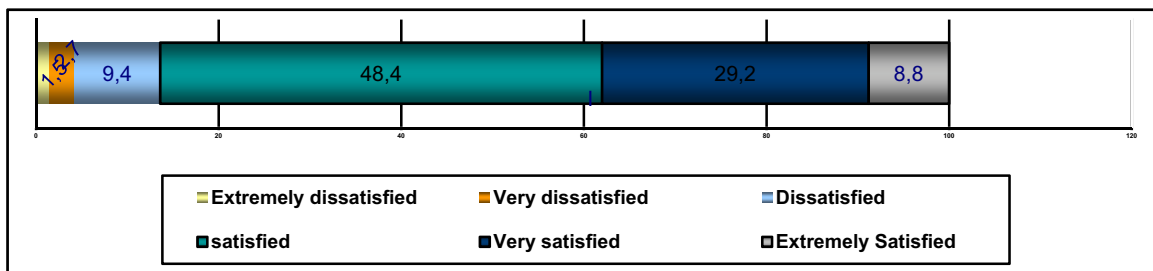


Figure 4. Satisfaction with the trust that the leader has in teachers

Figure 4. illustrates the level of teachers' satisfaction with the trust that the leader has in teachers. The majority (87%) seems generally satisfied with this element.

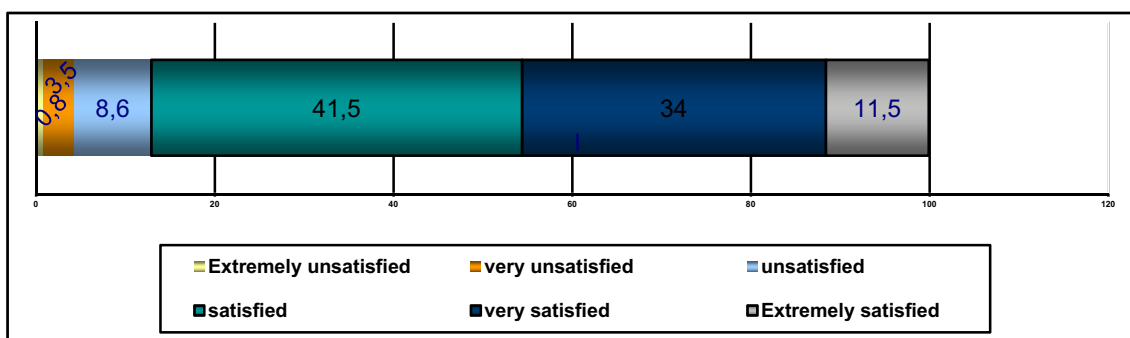


Figure 5. Satisfaction with the leader's recognition of the importance of professional development for teachers

Figure 5. illustrates the level of teachers' satisfaction with the leader's recognition of the importance of professional development for teachers. The majority (85.4%) feel generally satisfied with this element.

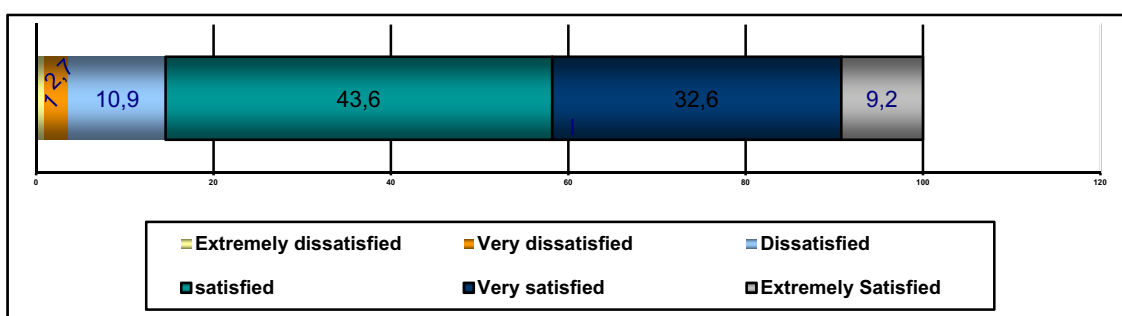


Figure 6. Satisfaction with the leaders' encouragement to express their opinions when they disagree with the decision

Figure 6. illustrates the level of teachers' satisfaction with the extent to which their manager encourages them to express their opinions when they

disagree with the decision. It is clearly identified that the majority of teachers (about 83.5%) are generally satisfied with this element.

Discussion

These are some of the results of a study on leadership and management style in the secondary education system in Albania. From interviews, questionnaires and observations made in public schools of secondary education it is evident that there is not one dominant leadership style. In general, managers do not use an authoritarian style of leadership, but those who do, belong mostly to the age group of 26-35 years. It is very likely that this style is used to cover uncertainties and lack of experience. Through the authoritarian style, young leaders are trying to establish authority over other teachers, they want to appear self-confident and respected. This phenomenon is known in the literature, as well as that the leadership style transforms several times during one's career, and typically, a new leader in this position, firstly experiments with an authoritarian style.

The results of the study also suggest that some leaders use elements of both authoritarian and democratic style of leadership. It mostly refers to leaders between 36 and 45 years of age. The reason for this may be the fact that managers, because of greater experience in the leading position and life experience, start to experiment and use more democratic style, but without giving up autocratic style completely. However, correlation studies suggest no significant correlation between age and leadership style. The dominant style among leaders is delegating style (40.6% of principals) followed by democratic style (26.8% of principals).

The delegating style is mostly used when employees are able to analyse the situation and determine what needs to be done and how to do it. The data obtained suggest that the secondary school teachers in Albania have the expertise, ability, experience, training and necessary education to work independently, to determine their priorities at work and to be productive. However the use of the delegating leadership style also raises another hypothesis according to which, perhaps, in the absence of a teacher-oriented direction and control, teachers may feel confused and lose confidence in their leader as well as in their own abilities. Also, it is not clear who gets the credit or is responsible for certain tasks. In addition, 30% of teachers feel that the meetings organized at work are a waste of time, since no important issues are discussed.

On the other hand, teachers are generally satisfied with the leadership style of their leaders. 96.7% of teachers think that the leaders communicate messages directly and 88% of teachers think that communication between

management and teachers is effective. 90% of teachers are generally satisfied with the clarity of tasks and responsibilities that they have at work.

It is very important to note that this leadership style is successful and likely when employees feel motivated and proud of their work. The delegating style presents some advantages in the context of work. The most important tasks the leader deals with relate to creating such environment that would stimulate talented employees and visionaries to identify and use their skills, abilities, creativity and their human capacity to work. Given the structure of work in secondary education institutions and the importance of the spirit for cooperation and team work among teachers themselves and between teachers and management team, this liberal style of leadership creates good opportunities for the empowerment.

The study also shows that about 26.8% of secondary school leaders use democratic style of leadership. This style is usually used when the leader has a part of information and their employees have other parts. Using this style has many mutual benefits allowing employees to join the team and allowing the leader to make more accurate and fair decisions. But what teachers think about the decision-making process? Do they feel that they contribute to decision-making and that their opinion is taken into account? From the study it appears that about 82% of teachers feel satisfied with the extent, to which they are participating in decision-making at school. 6.7% of the teachers state that their leader makes decisions independently, 72.4% state that the leader makes decisions in consultation with teachers, 18.2% state that the head teacher leaves the decisions to teachers, and 1.3% state that their leader does not make any decisions.

A democrat leader typically makes plans on how to help employees and assess their performance. He/she allows employees to set goals, encourages employees to grow and be promoted at work, recognizes and encourages achievement. From the study it turned out that 88.5% of teachers feel comfortable with the freedom and independence they have in deciding how to do their job. About 84.6% of teachers feel satisfied with the extent to which the leader cares about their problems. About 85.4% of teachers feel satisfied with the interest of executives in their professional development. About 86.4% of teachers feel satisfied with the way that leaders give feedback about their performance at work.

The democratic style of leadership is used best when followers are well informed about what is going on in the institution and what changes are needed. The study shows that 85.5% of teachers think that the school shares information well. In the democratic style, supervision is minimal while the individuals take responsibility for their behaviour. The study suggests that about 62% of teachers feel that the school is a strictly hierarchal institution, but 84.8% point out that they are allowed to complain about their superiors.

In the democratic style, subordinates are encouraged to express their ideas and give suggestions. The study shows that 90% of teachers are generally satisfied with the open communication between them and leaders. 30.1% of teachers declare that they communicate with their leaders several times a day, 49.2% claim to communicate several times a week, and 14.4% claim to communicate several times per month. Typically, the democratic leader tends to be warm, reliable and friendly. The study shows that 88.3% of teachers are generally satisfied with patience, friendliness, courtesy and respect.

The democratic style of leadership has the following characteristics. It encourages employees to participate in the decision-making and to grow professionally. It is suitable in environments in which people have a very high level of expertise such as software engineers, lawyers, judges, medicals, teachers, experienced lecturers, etc. This style promotes greater satisfaction from work and increased morale.

A democratic leader makes decisions by consulting the team, while maintaining control over the group. This allows him/her to decide how tasks will be performed and who will perform the task. A good democratic leader encourages participation, but never forgets the fact that he/she is the one who is responsible in the end. He/she motivates the team by empowering them. The group and the leader analyse the problem together and decide on the course of action. Just as the other styles of leadership, democratic style is not always convenient, but it is very efficient when used by employees who have more experience and highly developed skills for operational changes.

The aim of this study was not only to reflect the views and opinions of leaders and secondary school teachers in Albania about the style of leadership and management, but also to confront and compare these attitudes. The conclusion of this study shows that in general, most leaders perceive themselves as having mostly delegating style of leadership, while the teachers feel that the dominant style is the democratic one. This discrepancy cannot be regarded as problematic, because psychologically it is natural that individuals in positions to perceive themselves in terms of being less authoritarian, more cooperative and more liberal than they actually are. The most important is how teachers are satisfied with the leadership style of their leaders, regardless of the style. The study revealed that about 82.2% of teachers felt generally satisfied with their leaders' work. To practice the leadership style that fits the personal characteristics of the leader (principal) and his followers (in this case, teachers) is a very difficult process which depends not only on domestic needs and personality factors but also on external factors (physical environment, social and economic).

The teachers expect from their leaders to act democratically because this style makes them feel comfortable, freer, more creative, more productive and

more motivated, which results in higher quality of life at work. The study concluded that the majority of principals already use this style.

Aknowledgement

Special thanks to Open Society for Albania and to programme coordinator Mr. Dritan Nelaj, for supporting this study research project.

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DOSTIGNUĆA I IZAZOVI UPRAVLJANJA SREDNJIM ŠKOLAMA U ALBANIJI

Sažetak U radu se nastoji opisati postojeće stanje u području upravljanja srednjim školama, identificirajući jake i slabe strane toga sustava. Sudionici istraživanja su bili učitelji i predstavnici školskih upravljačkih timova (oko 600 sudionika) iz šest nasumično izabranih regija: Tirana, Durres, Korça, Vlora, Shkodra i Kukës. Rad pokušava utvrditi i istražiti postojeće i moguće kapacitete za vođenje, upravljanje i odlučivanje u srednjim školama.

Autori naglašavaju presudnu ulogu školskih menadžera u procesu privlačenja ulaganja iz privatnog sektora, kao i pronalaženja alternativnih izvora financiranja. Analizira se odgovornost menadžera u planiranju, upravljanju i unaprjeđivanju. Vrednuju se upravljački potezi. Rad također opisuje postupke kojima menadžeri motiviraju svoje zaposlenike i mjeri učinke upravljačkih karakteristika učitelja i voditelja, koji zagovaraju osobnu odgovornost i zajedničke radne dužnosti.

Ostale teme uključuju koncept vođe i vođenja, funkcije vođenja i upravljačke stilove u srednjim školama. Rezultati su predstavljeni u kvalitativnome i kvantitativnome obliku, uz određene zaključke koji predstavljaju dodatan važan aspekt ovoga rada.

Ključne riječi: voditelj, vođenje, upravljanje, srednja škola.

ERRUNGENSCHAFTEN UND HERAUSFORDERUNGEN BEI DER LEITUNG VON WEITERFÜHRENDEN SCHULEN IN ALBANIEN

Zusammenfassung: In diesem Beitrag wird der Versuch unternommen, die aktuelle Situation im Bereich der weiterführenden Schulen zu beschreiben, indem die Stärken und Schwächen des Systems identifiziert werden. Die Teilnehmer an der Studie waren Lehrer und Vertreter der Schulleitungsteams (ca. 600 Teilnehmer) aus sechs zufällig ausgewählten Regionen: Tirana, Durrës, Korça, Vlora, Shkodra und Kukës. Der Beitrag will die bestehenden und potentiellen Kapazitäten für die Führung, Leitung und Entscheidungsfindung in weiterführenden Schulen identifizieren und untersuchen.

Die Autoren betonen die entscheidende Rolle der Schulleitung im Prozess der Investitionsförderung aus dem privaten Sektor, sowie der Suche nach alternativen Finanzierungsquellen. Es wird die Verantwortung der Leitung bei der Planung, Verwaltung und Modernisierung analysiert. Weiter werden die Handlungszüge der Leitung bewertet. Der Beitrag beschreibt auch die Verfahren, nach denen die Führungskräfte ihre Mitarbeiter motivieren und es werden die Auswirkungen von Leitungsqualitäten der Lehrer und Leiter gemessen, die die Eigenverantwortung und gemeinsame Arbeitspflichten befürworten.

Weitere Themen sind das Konzept von Führung und Management, die Funktionen der Führung und Führungsstile in den weiterführenden Schulen. Die Ergebnisse wurden in qualitativer und quantitativer Form präsentiert, mit einigen Schlussfolgerungen, die einen zusätzlichen wichtigen Aspekt dieser Arbeit ausmachen.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Leiter, Führung, Leitung, weiterführende Schule.