COMPETENCIES AND ROLES OF MANAGERS IN REGIONAL EDUCATION

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Abstract:
The paper deals with the determination of types and contents of competencies and roles of managers in regional education. Specifically, it compares the most important roles and competencies of managers in regional education as presented in specialised literature with the results of a survey conducted by the author of this study among the students of Master’s degree study programme in Educational Management in the period 2017-2018. Based on the conducted survey, it is possible to determine more precisely which partial competencies a headmaster needs for a competent performance of his/her work position. That is connected with the possibility to target more precisely the professional development of this group of employees in regional education. The information obtained can also be used as a contribution to the development of a professional standard or of a generally acceptable competence model of a headmaster. That could be used to specify more precise selection criteria for educational managers and also to enable their further career development also outside of the sector of regional education.

Introduction

The objective of the research was to determine which competencies are considered as key/most important competencies by actual and prospective educational managers (especially headmasters in regional education).

The intention is to contribute to the ongoing discourse aiming to define a professional standard/competence model of headmasters in sector of regional education. It has not yet been developed for this group of professionals in the Czech Republic. This creates certain anomaly between the legislative requirement for professional education of educators and the absence of that standard as well as of a career model for the position of school managers (headmaster).

The survey took place in two phases. It focused on the specification of the most important prerequisites (contents or components) for a competent performance of the role of a manager in regional education (chosen post: headmaster). For the two phases of the survey, the research questions (RQ) were as follows:

RQ1: What are the requirements/prerequisites for a competent conduct of a headmaster work position in partial roles of an educational manager?
RQ2: Which components constitute the content of key/significant competencies of a headmaster?
A qualitative research methodology was used for both phases of the survey. The basic techniques used in the survey included different types of discussions. More specifically, it was a modification of a moderation method and the use of focus groups - 1st phase \((n_1 = 42)\), and panel discussion - 2nd phase \((n_2 = 22)\). Plenary discussions were used in both phases of the survey. In both phases, the respondents were students of the 2nd year of a Master’s degree study programme in Educational Management at the Faculty of Education, Charles University (Prague). At the beginning of both phases of the survey, terminology was harmonised. Given that the respondents have worked with the terms manager’s role as well as competence/y (especially as regards a connection between key competencies as learning outcomes and key competencies of managers as well as managerial competencies) during their study as well as at their work, it was only a fine-tuning in accordance with further described models of roles or competencies so that the survey's objective could be attained.

The following premises also became general starting points of the survey:

a) social roles are defined as expected expressions of conduct in certain social position (Jandourek, 2007),
b) it is a characteristic feature of a competence that it is manifested in the conduct of its holder (Veteška & Tureckiová, 2008),
c) partial key competencies constitute a prerequisite for a comprehensive competence for performance (Belz & Siegrist, 2018).

It was the intention of the first phase of the survey not only to describe the components of partial roles of a school manager from the perspective of performed activities, but also from the perspective of competencies which the manager possesses. This created a basis for interlinking the concept of roles and the most important (and in this sense key) competencies of a headmaster, or other managers in regional education.

The first phase of the survey took place in the course of the academic year 2017/2018. It focused on the determination of the most important competencies of a school manager in connection with prevailing roles which s/he must handle in the performance of his/her function. Domestically widely accepted model of manager’s roles consisting of the roles of a manager, a leader and a process executor (Plamínek & Fišer, 2004) was used as a starting point. The model is described in more detail later in the text. Particular expressions of behaviour which are characteristic for the mastering of partial roles of an educational manager are in the original model presented in the context of enterprises and their managers. The survey involved specification of headmaster's competencies which s/he uses in the mastering of his/her roles.

The second phase of the survey took place in the winter semester of academic year 2018/2019 and focused on the types and components of key competencies of educational managers. The objective of this phase of the survey was to confirm and, if necessary, complement the earlier identified expressions of competency to act/to perform. The phase further examined to what extent the competencies of a school manager are key and/or transversal. To this end, existing competence models could be used. Generic models were used in the survey (Belz & Siegrist, 2015, and an overview of transversal competencies according to Straková, 2008). In the text, there are also references to models created earlier for employees in regional education (Procházka & Binderová, 2011) and headmasters (Lhotková, Trojan & Kitzberger, 2012).
1. Roles of managers and their modification for regional education managers

There are relatively many models of manager's roles and the same applies to models of competencies. The first model of managerial roles developed by H. Mintzberg generally ranks among the most well-known. He defined three basic categories of activities (roles) of a manager. Specifically, these include informational, interpersonal and decision making (for more details see for instance Hroník, 2007 or Pilařová, 2016). The model is still frequently used, also in the context of school management. Nevertheless, the model of J. Plamínek (Plamínek & Fišer, 2004) is most widely used in Czech conditions and the given context. In view of the fact that the model was used in this survey, characteristics of individual roles are presented in greater detail (including the competencies mentioned by the model's author as appropriate for partial roles):

In the role of a leader, the manager "is in charge of a strategic framework, its definition and sale of ideas to the inside of the company in the sense of convincing other staff about the correctness of implementing that framework. This role is connected with the competency to formulate ideas, to analyze and evaluate information, to distinguish personalities, to listen, motivate others" (ibid).

The partial role of a manager (i.e. the one "who does things right") according to Plamínek & Fišer (2004) consists of "achieving strategic objectives and rules set by the leader.... It is the most complicated role in the whole company. The competencies needed again include those to assess ideas, argumentation towards the leader, decision making, ability of principal negotiation, acceptance of ideas, decomposition of strategic objectives, human resource management, definition of tasks, orientations, integration of people, feedback evaluation" (ibid).

The role of a process executor consists of "a transformation of inputs into outputs, the executor achieves objectives and fulfils tasks immediately. The competence in question concerns providing required performance and care for own resources" (idib). By the care for own resources the author means competencies focused on own person (personal competencies) as well as other competencies which allow an individual to handle with competence other types of resources from the organisation's internal and external environment.

Through specific use of the above model for managers in regional education, the above-mentioned roles are interlinked in the performance of activities at the post of a headmaster. S/he is the fundamental representative of the managed organisation, and creator of the school's concept, strategic framework or vision. This means that s/he is at the same time a top manager as well as the one who contributes to the attainment of objectives and fulfilment of tasks. The specificity of the executor's role is further underlined by the fact that the headmaster does not cease to be a teacher and may appear even in a situation when s/he is a "subordinate" within an educational team (Lhotková, Šnýdrová & Turecková, 2013).

Also in other types of organisations, a line manager may, within a matrix structure, become a "common" team member for a limited period of time, but usually this does not concern persons in higher and top management. In the case of a headmaster, this may be a long-term and recurring situation. Moreover, as a teacher the headmaster is the executor of a key educational process. The quality of his/her specialist educational as well as of his/her managerial and leader's role are significant for the school. In those roles, s/he cannot be
replaced in the school or at least with great difficulties (in big schools, some partial roles can be transferred to other members of higher management). The care for own people and their development is part of all partial roles of a headmaster. People management competencies are becoming a priority (for more details see Tureckiová 2018).

1.1 Requirements for headmaster's competencies in coping with the manager's roles

Respondents in the first phase of the survey were at first divided into five groups depending on the type of school they represented (kindergarten, elementary school, elementary art school, secondary technical school and secondary comprehensive school). Individual groups always included representatives of the given type of school (headmasters and/or other pedagogical staff of public and where possible also private schools). They were complemented by other members of the student group so that the focus groups were balanced in terms of number of members as well as the representation of other stakeholders. Besides adherence to methodological principles, the purpose of the distribution to groups was also to provide for the possibility to distinguish potential specifics in the partial roles of headmasters depending on the type of school and provided education. The only distinction was found in the group from elementary art schools where the respondents for all partial manager's roles and hence also for his/her competencies stated the requirement for a higher development of competencies in artistic disciplines which are taught in the elementary art schools (music, fine arts, dance and drama). They were, nevertheless, mentioning the same types of prerequisites for competencies as the other groups. Subsequently, the groups were merged into preschool, elementary and secondary schools and the decisive partial competencies of school managers were specified according to the chosen model of managerial roles. The respondents further worked in those three groups. The results presented below summarise the outputs from those three groups of respondents.

Based on the model of managerial roles outlined above (in a modification for regional education), the respondents of the survey determined the following competencies corresponding to individual roles:

A) Leader - according to the respondents in the survey, effective mastering of this role involves in particular the ability to set a vision for the school's development and to win the school staff for that vision. It also involves the skill to motivate others to achieve the school's vision and strategic objectives (for more detailed results see Figure 1)
B) Manager - according to the respondents, a competent performance of this role requires especially a competent performance of managerial functions. A control function was mentioned most frequently together with the ability to delegate tasks and responsibilities to other staff. The ability to motivate appears again, this time not only to achieve a vision and strategic objectives, but also as a basic component of the function of leadership/leading people (see Figure 2 for complete results).

C) Process executor - in the respondents' view, the mastering of this role by headmasters involves educational as well as diagnostic competencies which the headmaster employs as a
teacher and it includes also management and evaluation of the educational process in the school and presentation of the school and of the results of the educational process, including the results of individual pupils in public (see Figure 3 for a frequency of partial competencies and their complete list).

Figure 3: Competencies of a process executor

2. Significant competencies of managers in regional education

Generic models of competencies which are keys for employability of the current labour market were used as a starting point for the second phase of the survey. More specifically, Belz & Siegrist (2015) model of key competencies was used which comprises the following types and components of competencies:

a) social competencies (elsewhere referred to also as soft or interpersonal competencies) – capability of team work and cooperation, capability to face conflicts, communication skills,

b) competencies in relation to oneself (elsewhere referred to also as personal competencies) – ability to handle oneself, self-management, self-reflection, development of one's own values, self-critical thinking, self-development,

c) competencies in the area of methods (in other models referred to also as methodological and conceptual competencies, comprise also general professional competencies) - planned and targeted application of professional knowledge, creativity and innovativeness, structuring and classification of information, conceptual thinking, critical thinking and work with risk (ibid).

Key (generic and/or interdisciplinary) competencies are generally considered as “a transferrable and universally applicable set of knowledge, skills and attitudes which every individual needs for its personal fulfilment and development, for involvement in the society and for a successful employability” (Průcha & Veteška, 2014). Similar definition can be used also for transversal competencies "which enable an individual to act successfully in various social areas and roles" and which include competencies such as “communication, problem solving, drawing of conclusions and argumentation, management, creativity, motivation to learn, team work and ability to learn” (Straková, 2008).
Key and transversal competencies constitute also an important part of competence models (professional standards) of pedagogical staff. Domestic specialist literature, for instance, sometimes distinguishes between personal and professional competencies (Procházka & Binderová, 2011). Personal competencies and some of the professional competencies form a part of key competencies. According to the above authors, individual types of professional competencies of pedagogical staff include: subject related specialist competencies, psycho-didactic competencies, communication, organisational and managerial competencies, diagnostic and intervention competencies, advisory, consultative and (self)reflection competencies. The personal competencies and “at least a part of the so-called professional competencies are relevant also for the requested performance in the function of a headmaster” (Tureckiová, 2012).

Respondents in the first phase of the survey also mentioned subject related specialist competencies. They are one of the prerequisites for the mastering of the role of an executor of educational process by a headmaster. Also competencies constituting the content of the role of a manager and a leader are mentioned among the groups of competencies in another of the partial competence models of headmasters (Lhotková, Trojan & Kitzberger, 2012). So far, no competence model has been adopted as binding for the development of a professional standard of a manager in regional education (not only headmaster).

### 2.1 Competencies of educational managers according to the results of the survey

Respondents in the second phase of the survey at first received a list of types of manager's competencies which are mentioned in the basic models described above. Subsequently, they were divided into three groups where they had a task to specify the content of significant competencies of educational managers. The groups were assembled so as to be as homogeneous as possible thus creating an opportunity for comparing different viewpoints. Specifically, there was a group of educational managers and educational staff, a group comprising staff of other educational organisations and a group comprising representatives of other stakeholders.

The basic model with which the groups worked was Belz & Siegrist (2015) model of key competencies. Results of the group work are summarised in Table 1. Individual components of key competencies are not ranked by frequency. Those that were mentioned by all groups are highlighted in bold.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social competencies</th>
<th>Competencies in relation to oneself</th>
<th>Competencies in the area of methods and conceptual competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Systematic nature</td>
<td>Development of strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicativeness</td>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>Support for the education of employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to fulfil assignment</td>
<td>Self-management</td>
<td>Education/qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to listen</td>
<td>Ability to cope with stress</td>
<td>Self-development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading of discussion</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Crisis management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of positive environment</td>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Anchoring of the organisation in its environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal approach</td>
<td>Decisiveness</td>
<td>Management of the education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Key competencies of educational managers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Checking and evaluation of teachers</td>
<td>Sound judgement</td>
<td>Securing of the working environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation with schools</td>
<td>Set example to others</td>
<td>Creation and development of internal regulations and guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading of a group</td>
<td>Thoroughness</td>
<td>Delegation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to represent and present in public</td>
<td>Control</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creativity/proactiveness</td>
<td>Development of the organisation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
<td>Knowledge of new trends</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ability to motivate</td>
<td>Selection of employees</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-reflexion</td>
<td>Planning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Purposefulness</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: author

Conclusion

The model of partial roles of managers (Plamínek & Fišer, 2004) was used in order to find an answer to the first research question (RQ1: What are the requirements/prerequisites for a competent conduct of a headmaster work position in partial roles of an educational manager?). Respondents in the survey agreed that they know the model well and consider it as suitable also for school managers. Based on the results of the first phase of the survey, it can be stated that in view of the complexity of a headmaster’s work in school, and the scope of his/her competencies and responsibilities, a more detailed separation and differentiation of the content of his/her roles is more difficult than in the case of managers of other types of work organisations.

The following characteristics of individual roles can be specified for a headmaster: In the role of a leader, s/he is primarily a creator and executor of the organisation’s vision and at the same time the person who motivates himself/herself and his/her colleagues to development. S/he delegates to his/her colleagues a number of tasks and responsibilities which are connected with the attainment of the objectives of the education process. In the role of a manager, headmaster ensures primarily the functioning of the organisation by mastering managerial functions of which the control function is considered the most important. For the role of process executor the respondents mentioned the requirement of professional development (pedagogical as well as managerial). However, care for one's own well-being (care for oneself and one's own resources) was not mentioned in the survey. Subsequent plenary discussion showed that the respondents see the role of the leader as a decisive one. This probably results from a link between the role of a manager and a leader where leader is the one "who shows the direction in which we wish to go" (vision). It is interesting that also for the role of process executor the respondents mentioned that it is "the means to achieve the objectives of the leader".

Basic overview of the types of significant competencies of a headmaster can be obtained already from the above partial roles of managers in regional education. In general such competencies can be divided to key (interdisciplinary and/or transversal) and professional (general and specific vocational, for headmasters there are competencies of a teacher).
The answer to the second research question (RQ2: Which components constitute the content of key/significant competencies of a headmaster?) was specified in the second phase of the survey. Here, the respondents used the model of key competencies (Belz & Siegrist, 2015). In the overview of individual constituent components of competencies key for employability, the respondents stated that:

Social competency of a manager in regional education lies especially in developed communication competencies, and in competencies connected with the management of people and organisations. As the most important social competence the respondents mentioned "equal approach" which involves equal treatment of school employees as well as "application of an equal approach to the education possibilities of all pupils, while taking into account their specific needs".

In the respondents' view, competencies in relation to one's own person are connected in particular with partial components of self-concept and self-management and with the use of emotional intelligence of school managers.

Conceptual competencies and competencies in the area of methods are dominated by competencies connected with the development of a strategy and with strategic management of educational organisation, with the development of the school and its staff and with the mastering of managerial functions. Also respondents in the second phase of the survey see the competencies connected with the manager's control function as the most important ones.

In accordance with the objective of the survey, the findings gained in the examination of the headmasters' roles and competencies may be used to develop and evaluate a professional standard/competence model of a manager in regional education. They will also be used to develop the content of the education of students in the study programme of Andragogy and Educational Management at the Faculty of Education, Charles University (Prague) and in further education of managers in regional education.

References


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