

Approaching the Headmaster in the Context of Current Education Theory

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Abstract: The institution of the headmaster goes through multiple transformations, both from the institutional perspective, as well as from the formative perspective. Thus, the appointment occurs following the passing of an exam which involves extensive administrative and leadership skills and the managerial act itself has different valences, from the psychological, motivational side to the technical side, maximizing the results and using less and less resources. Within the article we are going to show that the headmaster must either develop coaching skills or receive advice from a coach to implement a friendly climate in school with both students and teachers and parents alike, but also to be in a good relationship with the stakeholders in order to achieve the school goals: increasing external visibility, providing an interface with the business environment in order to support the students' technical training for a good integration into the labor market, attracting funds to support school activities in terms of developing the students' professional career path.

Key words: education, leadership, coaching

Introduction

The position of the headmaster has become lately more and more important for the students and teachers of a school in the context of increasing the visibility and the role of school in the process of human capital development, which is needed in order to achieve performance.

To be a headmaster is a challenge, no matter the size or the position of the school. There are difficulties in every work field, especially in the management one. Unlike other fields, in education the headmaster collaborates with several categories of people, different in terms of age and professional training: teachers, administrative staff, students, parents and tutors, community representatives etc. Moreover, a headmaster is aware of the fact that he cannot accomplish anything by himself, needing, in this regard, the guidance and supervision of a coach.

The "coach/trainer" concept refers to the observer on the edge that offers explicit instructions, continuous and detailed feedback on performance and "over time" support to guide the development of a team, of a manager, as well (Cohen Hill, 2001). Adapted to school, the coaching activity targets all the advice that the management team and teachers receive in order to transform the process of professional development in the class into a model adapted to the labor market from the perspective of the incorporation of students' transversal competences. The coach also directs the headmaster to emphasize in the management process those elements

which give value and substance to school, from the working environment to ensuring the conditions for incorporating the curriculum and the necessary skills for the placement on the labor market.

Thus, the coaching built for teachers and leaders has the role of improving the quality of learning for all the students. The goal of coaching is to provide focused support to help educators achieve the goals which they have set for students by adopting good practice in teaching, but also in leadership. Coaching can also help the teachers and the school manager/headmaster to contextualize local goals or practices that they apply to the professional development of the school, eventually applying them in their own classrooms.

A coach uses as a working method the questionnaire or survey, observation, the heuristic conversation with both teachers and students. So, a coach aims to discover the strengths, goals and questions with reference to the students' learning that educators bring to the work permit; they bring their own content expertise to formulate the questions and give the answers, and then decide what kind of guidance, information or support will help them reach their goals. The coaches can address specific aspects of curriculum and content guidelines or focus on communication practices, assuming work tasks and on how they interact with the headmaster.

The content and the instructive coaching involve conversations about the students' learning data, setting goals and practices according to the capabilities and wishes of each student. The school manager is also guided to adapt the operational plan focused on the development of school, depending on the internal resources, the development perspectives of students and teachers alike.

The Modern Perception on the Headmaster

A manager is not necessarily perceived as a leader at the same time, and when the influence on others consists mainly in the turning to good account of the personality, this is when we can speak of leadership. Within an organization, the influence of the leader-manager will be dependent on the type of power that the leader can exert on other people. The effective leadership must use to its advantage the motivational and the rewarding aspects of the activities and, at the same time, overcome or compensate those aspects that demotivate and bring dissatisfactions. Each teacher must trust his colleagues as trust itself is the element which maintains the cohesion of a team. The leader must be a model in this respect, he must support his subordinates so that they can express their thoughts and feelings openly. People must feel free to ask questions and trust that they will receive honest answers. There should be no hidden plans. Information is an important chance for each member of the team; therefore the manager needs to make sure he offers all the necessary information in order to complete a task.

At the same time, a school manager has to cope with external pressures both at institutional and socio-political level. The pressures, if not being coped with, get to overwhelm him, to transform the school into a field of unpredictable and contextual changes. Therefore, the coach can help him observe the leading thread towards the ultimate goal, the education of the youngsters in consensus with the knowledge society, constantly changing, and also face the danger of a lack of education adapted to the labor market: unemployment, engaging in activities that do not converge to motivation and long-term personal success.

One of the goals of the team is to implement the “friendly school” concept by ensuring a pleasant environment and a climate of security, physical and mental comfort in school. To feel in school as a family, it is necessary to pursue the integration of students with special educational needs, counseling those with behavioral problems, mediating conflicts of any kind through a series of internal measures (staff homogeneity, the application of the regulation, parents’ involvement) and through projects in partnerships with the community (supporting the students with parents left abroad or the ones who have material problems).

A “friendly school” also involves other aspects that can be solved through various projects and collaborations: - the civic spirit – the ecological climate, - healthy eating, - civilized and responsible behavior, “Education=Recreation”, training for career. Some problems need a good word, calm and patience, empathy, a smile – qualities that a leader makes use of in the managerial activity as well.

Rewards are a first-rate motivational factor: when students get As for national evaluation, awards for national competitions and Olympiads, attracting and implementing projects, changing the mentality of peers with reference to community issues such as cleanliness, environmental protection, security, decency, mutual respect.

There is a clear distinction between the educational management and the school management, in the sense that the first concerns the management of the educational act in the whole of its manifestations and the second one relates to the management of the institutional activity from an institutional point of view.

By analyzing both the functions and attributions of the school manager, the types of managers and their leadership style are outlined on the educational system itself.

The manager procures, allocates and uses physical and human resources to achieve the proposed institutional goals in various ways.

The quality of education offered by school also depends on the quality of the management in the school. Therefore the manager has to prove his vocation and managerial skills:

- intellectual: logical thinking, conceptualization capacity, ability to diagnose;
- entrepreneurial: capacity to make decisions, skillfulness;
- socio-emotional: self control, spontaneity, objectivity, adaptability;
- interpersonal: trust, focus on the development of others.

The school manager also needs certain competences which involve specific abilities:

- to be well informed
- to know how to apply the legislation in force correctly
- to be a good organizer
- to be a determined follower of introducing the new into the education system.

A good school manager cannot manage effectively and responsibly as long as he does not know the principles and functions of the didactic process, the specifics of the educational management. With reference to the aspects of schools leadership, the headmaster is not just an administrative manager, but also the leader of the whole activity within a school, both in administrative sense and in instructive-educational sense. He has to prove himself competent enough in the management of material and financial funds, in financial evidence, as well as in the supervision of the way the buildings, furniture and teaching material are maintained.

The high-performance management components imply:

- searching for information
- the formation of concepts
- conceptual flexibility
- interpersonal research
- interaction manager
- impact
- self confidence
- orientation in practice
- orientation in success

It is estimated that 70% of the managers' time is used to communicate and therefore the managerial success depends on the quality and efficiency of applying skills. Thus, the national standards for leadership, guidance and control positions have been designed starting from the communication and relationship skills.

The educational communication is a deliberate process of transfer of information and meanings between individuals, groups, organizational levels and organizations as a whole. For the efficiency of communication, certain specific conditions must be met:

- developing the message and looking for favorable conditions for its transmission
- expressing the message clearly, logically , operationally
- outlining the goal of communicating the message accurately
- defining the best conditions in order to get a good communication
- transmitting the message to a receiver through certain channels
- receiving, understanding, processing the message
- formulating the answer, integrating it into the managerial action

Within the communication process the manager can fully use the support of the coach. In order to cope with the challenges and obligations assumed in the coaching process, the coach should benefit from a professional development meant to support their challenging and important role in improving teaching and learning and to support as much as possible the teachers, so as to change the classroom practice in consensus with the learning standards. The coach should also have knowledge in the field of educational management in order to support the educational management process at school level by providing advice that will make the managerial act more effective in consensus with the school objectives.

Thus, the coach supports:

- ✓ The implementation of exchanges of training practices, especially those required by educational policy standards
- ✓ Deepening knowledge regarding the content of the subject matter and developing effective classroom practices
- ✓ Aligning content standards, classroom expectations and training practices with national and European ones
- ✓ Improving the facilitation and coaching skills of teachers, curriculum specialists, and of those who work directly with teachers to improve their training practices within school
- ✓ The use of new teacher evaluation systems as a means of observing and analyzing training, providing feedback and supporting the professional development of teachers
- ✓ Observing the classroom training in order to identify effective methods for coaching
- ✓ Taking into account a series of coaching practices for an identified goal
- ✓ Establishing craft coaching plans for maximum effect
- ✓ Designing professional development experiences focused on student learning
- ✓ Supporting the development of a vision around a good learning instruction
- ✓ Developing the coach-manager or coach-teacher relationship through the acquisition of the skills needed for an effective collaboration.

The professional development by applying coaching uses video or live observations of the training lessons and coaching in action. Thus, the participants are offered opportunities to involve themselves in the coaching process in order to increase their skills repertoire. Besides supporting coaching knowledge and skills, it is also envisaged the development of the interrelation capacity with teachers as research groups based on investigation.

Conclusions

The headmasters with a deep understanding of high-quality training can engage an entire educational system in improving achievements – from parents and school councils to teachers. This communication process is stimulated by total employability in the leadership coaching.

Leadership coaching also involves conversations about students' learning data, setting goals and practices. Direct assistance is also provided during management events, classroom visits, class observations and data analysis at class level, education cycle, learning cycle. In coaching with the school leader/headmaster the development of the skills needed to support teachers on the spot is considered, in order to interfere with the community and to cope with rigors and institutional challenges in the field of education.

Coaching offers suggestions, feedback or a language that a leader can implement immediately during leadership.

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