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LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION

Initiatives and trends in selected European countries



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LEADERSHIP IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF MONTENEGRO

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Abstract. Based on the recognition of the importance, complexity and the influence of the principal's function in the whole education process, the main goal of this paper is to present a picture of the status of the leadership function in the education system of Montenegro. The first out of three parts of the paper deals with the Legislative framework, e.g. competencies and dominant areas of work of principals in educational institutions. The second part describes the current state of educational leadership in the country and gives the history and scope of the program for the training and professional development of principals. Ever since the establishment of the system of licensing and relicensing of education staff (2010), including the leaders of educational institutions, they are obliged to continuously develop in professional terms. The last part – a view towards the future – gives recommendations for the strengthening of the school leadership role in order to respond to changes in society, particularly in the education system, in a professional and competent way, thus encouraging the development of the institution, that is, of every employee individually.

Keywords: principal, leader, education process.

INTRODUCTION

The entire system of professional development of teachers in Montenegro was established in the period from 2005 to 2009 in the context of the project "Development of the Professional Development System of Teachers in Montenegro", managed by the Bureau for Educational Services¹. Teachers, pedagogues, principals and assistant principals, advisors and supervisors of the Bureau for Educational Services, as well as foreign experts, participated in the said process.

The project consisted of five key components and one of them, pertaining to the professional development at the school/kindergarten level

¹ The Bureau for Educational Services is a government institution for monitoring, improvement and evaluation of educational processes in the general pre-university level of education. The Bureau has research, advisory and development oriented functions in the education system.

and titled Training of principals, i.e. developing quality management at the school kindergarten level, has been recognized as an important link in the overall development of the education system. As the leaders of educational institutions have a great influence and responsibility for the realization and results of the entire educational process, they can be a decisive incentive, but at the same time they can become or remain a barrier to the work of the entire institution. Namely, their capabilities and management skills affect the results of the work of the entire institution, because the quality of management inevitably reflects on the quality of both teaching and learning processes, the motivation of the teaching staff, the educational institution's ethos, as well as on the continuous professional development of teachers (Meador, 2019; Bredeson, 2000).

In the context of a modern educational institution, the principal's functions appear to be complex and interrelated on various levels. Principals of educational institutions have the following tasks: planning and organizing the work of the institution; management of the institution; monitoring and analyzing the results of the work of the institution; managing interpersonal relations, and the like. In all these areas, principals aim at integrating the goals of the institution and the personal goals of employees (Drucker, 1992; 2007). In order to successfully manage their educational institution they must possess certain competencies. Since each educational institution has its own specificities and operates under different conditions, it is necessary to provide principals with a variety of professional competencies, i.e. knowledge, skills, and values that will be applicable in different working conditions. Therefore, the potential of the individual, in this case the principal, for independent action in the various parts of society (Heilinger, 2005), the capacity of a person to develop (Arnold, 2001), together with developed professional competencies, which include cognitive and value-related, emotional and motivational aspects of action, remain crucial for the success of one's work. This is about developing and improving four key competences that are cyclically and synergistically related: personal, professional, social, and action competences (Staničić, 2011: 194). It is particularly important, having in mind the *Manual for Principals on Continuing Professional Development of Teachers at School* (2017: 10), Standard 5: "Principals of Educational Institutions support the professional development of teachers and develop themselves professionally", which states that the principals are expected to develop leadership skills that include recognizing professional development as one of the priority activities and building structures that support it by providing the necessary resources (human, material, technical, time...). In the indicators related to the Standard 5, it is stated that principals participate

in professional development activities; the institution plans and implements appropriate professional development activities; principals draw attention to the benefits and expected outcomes of professional development and support the continuous improvement of the quality of teaching and learning; principals support the building of a culture of professional development in educational institution; principals allow for the efficient use of available resources, including the time needed to achieve goals. It is worth pointing out that with this particular solution – the active involvement of the principal in the professional development of teachers – an additional step was made in the direction of professional interaction and cooperation between principals and teachers, where professional development refers to both.

The goal of educational reform is to create quality management at the school level, as an important basis for the overall development of education. “Contemporary school management is based on cooperation, consultation, suggestions coming from members of the organization or individual teams, active participation in decision-making and their implementation and evaluation, professionalism, mutual respect and partnership relations within the school and relation between the schools and its environment” (Jelovac, 2007: 196). Principal should be aiming at high-quality results in all of their most important functions, such as organizing, managing, providing pedagogical and instructive assistance, evaluating of the staff results and researching (Vujisić, 2004: 256).

Modern economy requires an education system to become a key factor contributing to the overall development, based on respect for cultural and other forms of diversity. The leader must possess all the necessary knowledge in the field of education management and broad education, abilities and communication skills in the team, with the aim to efficiently implement organization, management, staff choice and control. Proper work of the educational institution demands a high level of organization and coordination of teamwork, which certainly has a positive effect on interpersonal relations (Mršulja, 2007: 215).

The job of the principal as a school leader is key for education reform, in addition to the fact that principals must continuously work on their personal development. The reformed schools need principals who will be visionaries of change who will, with all their knowledge and skills, lead the school organization. “Professional development involves a continuous process that starts with the choice of profession, through basic education (faculty), assuming the role principal, as well as permanent development and improvement of oneself while in that role” (Jašić, 2010: 201).

A good and successful principal should possess some of the following characteristics: valuable, intelligent, honest, ambitious, energetic, flexible, optimistic, brave, strong and stable personality (Beycioglu & Pashiardis, 2015). Some of the skills that every principal should possess are organizational and leadership skills, as well as visionary ability, capacity for taking the initiative, rhetorical ability, the ability to distinguish the important from the unimportant, the ability to adapt to new situations etc. At the same time, another important ability of a successful principal in a reformed school is to be a visionary, which is the most important characteristic of the leader. The principal has a strategy and the ability to convey the vision to his or her members of staff and to win them over to its realization (Knežević, 2007).

One of the roles of the real leader is to move the process of introducing innovations into school organizations. This process is also the process of introducing much needed changes. The development of school organizations implies the awakening, realization, activation and innovation of all technical and human resources, with the aim to adapt all aspects of the school organization to such changes (Gajić, 2007: 265).

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK – COMPETENCIES AND DOMINANT AREAS OF WORK OF PRINCIPALS IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The need for professional training of principals in educational institutions in Montenegro was defined by the *Strategic Plan of Education Reform* in 2007 and the *General Law on Education of Montenegro* (Article 79), as quoted in the *Study on the Needs for In-service Training for the Principals of Educational Institutions* (Lalović, 2017: 1) which stipulates that a principal shall:

1. plan, organize and administer the institution's work;
2. organize rationalized and effective educational curriculum delivery;
3. provide the equality of students in the accomplishment of the rights to education, in line with their capabilities;
4. prepare the proposal of annual work plan and shall be responsible for its implementation;
5. manage the Panel of Teachers, or the Professional Panel's work;
6. select teachers, professional associates and other staff in the institution;
7. propose the document on the organization and the systematization of working posts;
8. perform professional and pedagogical supervision;

9. decide on the rights and the obligations of employees, in line with the law;
10. stimulate professional improvement and in-service training for teachers;
11. adopt the quality improvement plan of the educational work of the institution;
12. advocate and represent the institution, and be liable for the legality of institution work;
13. cooperate with parents and with the surroundings;
14. establish various commissions for assessing the knowledge of students during the school years, at the request of students, parents or legal guardians;
15. execute other jobs in line with the law and the Statute of the institution.

The professional activities of the principal of the educational institution can be divided into ten key areas: administrative affairs – relating to the monitoring and implementation of laws and regulations, the drafting of internal acts, staff issues, administrative affairs, etc.; financial affairs – relating to the preparation of a financial plan, the acquisition of funds, the preparation of reports and annual financial reports, keeping records of assets and equipment; work on maintenance and improvement of working conditions in the school – relating to the maintenance of space, equipment and resources belonging to the school, repairs and adaptation of certain parts of the facility; planning and organization of the work of the institution – relating to the planning and programming of work, organization of regular, elective, supplementary classes, professional practice, etc.; monitoring and analysis of the results of the work of the institution – relating to monitoring and analysis of the achieved results of the school and its teachers, introduction of innovations and improvement of teaching process; administration and management of the institution – relating to conducting meetings and teaching panels' sessions at school, work of Professional panels, instructive work with teachers, students and staff; extra-curricular, cultural and public activities of the institution – relating to the realization of various programs that are not included in teaching, public and cultural activities of the school, production and humanitarian work, etc.; cooperation with various bodies and organizations outside the school – relating to the establishment of contacts and cooperation with local government bodies, ministries, agencies, institutions, media, etc.; interpersonal relationships and school atmosphere – relating to cooperation with employees, parents and students or mediation work in resolving interpersonal problems, etc.; personal and professional development of employees – relating to the organization of professional

development of teachers, using and recommending professional literature, mentor classes, information about best practices, etc.

The specter of jobs performed by principals in educational institutions in Montenegro is wide and diverse and requires a wide scope of knowledge and skills that cannot be acquired during pre-service education or mere classroom work. Since the head of the institution is not born such, but is created and developed, the need for professional development of principals of educational institutions through training programs is more than obvious, necessary, and justified.

CURRENT STATE OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN THE COUNTRY

In order to build the professional capacities of the principals of educational institutions taking up that role for the first time, a program for their training and professional development has been developed. The goals and content of the program focus on the development of a range of abilities necessary for the successful, quality work of the leaders of educational institutions. It is rather functional in its character, because it is conceived in such a way that, in addition to providing basic theoretical knowledge, trainees can focus on the practical application of knowledge in their everyday work.

The program is based on Article 79 of the *General Law on Education of Montenegro (2013)*, which prescribes this training as mandatory. It is unique for all leaders of educational institutions and is intended for principals, assistant principals, and teachers who meet the requirements for principals.

Authors of professional development programs targeting principals are consultants from the Bureau for Educational Services, Centre for Vocational Education and Training, Examination Centre, professors from the University of Montenegro, pedagogues, psychologists and school principals themselves. The departing points and guidelines for the development of existing modules, as indicated in the document titled *Training Program for Managers of Educational Institutions* (Bureau for Educational Services, 2013) were created, *inter alia*, not only on the basis of the previous work on training managers of educational institutions, but also on the basis of the needs for the professional development of managers of educational institutions.

The need for professional training of the managers of educational institutions in our country was established by the *Book of Changes* in 2001, the *Strategic Plan of Education Reform* in 2007 and the *General Law on Education of Montenegro* (Article 79). With the aim of providing training and

continuous professional support to principals and improving the training process, the Competency framework for principals was developed as a starting point for the development of education programs. This document defines competencies that managers of educational institutions must possess in order to efficiently and effectively perform this very complex task. Based on the competencies defined in the Framework, a Training Program for Managers of Educational Institutions was developed, which already had its four editions. We hereby list the structure of all four education programs because they reflect the chronology of changes, as well as the needs of Montenegro's educational system. Namely, in 2004, the program of professional training of the principal of educational institutions, which had nine modules, was introduced: 1. Modern theories and principles of learning and teaching; 2. Theoretical approaches and practical experience in curriculum planning; 3. Assessment and assessment systems; 4. The art of communication; 5. Theories of organization and management; 6. People in the organization; 7. Planning and decision making; 8. Principal as a pedagogical leader; 9. Legislation in education and education. In the period from 2005 until 2008, the training program included the following modules: 1. Communication at school; 2. The Principal as a pedagogical leader; 3. School quality; 4. Legal regulations in education; 5. Organization and management; 6. Planning and decision making and 6. People in the organization. In the period from 2009 to 2012, a modular program for principals included the following topics: 1. Communication at school; 2. The school principal as a pedagogical manager; 3. Quality of education at school; 4. Planning and decision making; 5. Organization and management; 6. Managing change. The themes i.e. modules from 2013 until today include: 1. legislation and administration; 2. planning, programming, organizing and monitoring the work of the educational institution; 3. teaching/learning; ensuring the quality of school work; 4. human resources management; 5. cooperation with parents, school board, local and wider communities; 6. managing the financial and material resources of the school and 7. Vocational school in its surroundings.

The program features six modules: Legislation and Administration; Planning, programming, organizing and monitoring the work of the educational institution; Teaching/learning; Ensuring the quality of the work of the institution; Human Resource Management and Collaboration of Principals with parents, school board and local and wider community.

Since 2019, one of the obligations of the participants of the training program for principals is to produce a professional paper, an end-of-course written work, which includes theoretical and practical elaborations of a problem of the educational process of the institution they manage. This final

paper should be focused on finding solutions aimed at improving the work of the institution, identified by Department for quality assessment, as an area that needs to be improved. The trainee should, with the help of literature, acquired competencies and mentor support, offer a solution to the problem his or her institution faces.

In the period from 2004 until 2015, this training was completed by 321 principals of educational institutions, what can be seen in the Study on the needs of vocational training of the leaders of educational institutions from 2016, as shown in the Table 1.

Table 1. Number of trained principals per year

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2015	Total
No. of principals	43	36	30	43	33	32	26	19	21	18	20	321

When it comes to the type of institution, as can be seen from the table below, the largest number of educated principals work (or have worked) in primary schools.

Table 2. Number of trained principals according to the institution in which they work

Type of institution	Elementary music schools	Kindergartens	Elementary schools	Gymnasiums	Secondary vocational schools	Student's dormitories Resource centers
No. of principals	7	29	233	25	20	7

A recent report on the training needs analysis showed that out of the 30 offered options regarding the needs for the professional development of managers of educational institutions, principals chose 15 which in their opinion should be included in such a training program for future principals: introduction to the methods of monitoring and evaluating the quality of teachers; familiarizing principals with the school self-evaluation methodology and quality management model; learning about the basic motivation theories and ways of motivating people at work; learning about the techniques

of project design and submitting applications; learning about the examples of successful teaching organization (regular, additional, supplementary, practical, etc.); training in the application of information technologies in the work of the principal; learning about the criteria for determining the quality of teaching; being able to successfully resolve conflicts between people (non-violent conflict resolution); training in planning and programming (drawing up an annual and long-term plan of work and school development plan); learning basic communication skills (negotiations, meetings, presentations, reports, etc.); learning basic leadership styles (knowing which styles are appropriate for certain situations); learning basic teamwork techniques and how to train team leaders in school; to learn contemporary approaches to learning (active and interactive teaching and learning); getting acquainted with the legal documents and regulations in the field of education and learning how to establish effective cooperation with the surroundings (local community, employers, etc.)

When it comes to secondary vocational schools, due to the specific nature of their organization, in the domain of financial and material resources management as well as the domain of cooperation with individuals, businesses and institutions at local, regional or national levels, the Financial and material resources management of the school and Vocational school and its surroundings modules have been developed as well. The reason is in the difference in the internal functioning of the schools. Namely, in the elementary school and gymnasiums there is a minor portion of legal income (for example, renting of the training rooms, exhibition rooms). Vocational schools are directed to the more intensive cooperation with companies, having the driving courses, various services, like tourism, agriculture, machine facilities etc., creating the bigger potential for the income, what is a reason for having an additional module – Financial and material resources management.

The only research carried out by the Bureau for Educational Services about the needs of professional training of the principals of educational institutions (*Study on the Needs for In-service Training for the Principals of Educational Institutions*, 2017) has set the following research goals: Gathering and systematizing the experience of the principals regarding the quality and effects of training they attended; Confirmation of the dominant activities and problems in the work of the principals of educational institutions in Montenegro and Modification of the future content of the professional training of the principal.

The set questions and tasks in the conducted research were: whether the content of the training for principals, influenced the increase in the efficiency of school management; whether the organization and manner of work

in the principal's training contributed to increasing the efficiency of school management; determining the basic orientations and the dominant areas of the principal's work; determining current problems in the principal's work; identification of competencies – of knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for efficient management of the school, i.e. determination of the profile of the ideal principal of the school, as well as determining the future contents and vocational training programs for the principal.

The survey was conducted through a questionnaire, and all principals of educational institutions in Montenegro participated (184 totally), i.e. principals of pre-school institutions, elementary schools, gymnasiums, mixed schools (gymnasiums and vocational schools), vocational schools (three-year and four-year), special schools, and the principals of the student dormitories.

The findings of the *Study* (2017: 31) of the Bureau for Educational Services' research on past training programs reveal the following:

1. The training of principals has significantly contributed to the improvement of efficiency of management of schools.
2. The main contribution to increasing managerial competencies of principals has been attributed to the following modules: Improving the quality of school work, Principal as a pedagogical manager; and Communication at school.
3. Training has greatly influenced the improvement of communication skills, democratic management of the school and working with people. The enormous impact of training refers to the skill of school management, the skill of assessing and organizing pedagogical work, as well as on the skills related to conflict resolution and the application of quality standards.
4. On the other hand, the perceived below-average contribution of the training was related to monitoring of the teaching process, expanding knowledge on contemporary methods and forms of teaching and learning, the skill of planning pedagogical work, and the skill of teaching. The least impact was made on the knowledge of schoolwork, knowledge of pedagogical process, and knowledge of laws and regulations.
5. The offered training, given its content, is mostly adapted to elementary school principals, and least adapted to the principals of elementary music school. An analysis led to the conclusion that there are basic orientations of managing educational institution: orientation towards people; orientation towards work conditions and orientation towards results (goal and development). The majority of principals belong to

the third type and remain dominantly engaged in the affairs related to the planning and organization of the work of the institution; management and administration of the institution; monitoring and analyzing the results of the work of the institution, interpersonal relations and school atmosphere.

6. It has been established that the job of the principal of educational institutions in Montenegro is significantly burdened with problems related to unfavorable working conditions and insufficient interest of the environment, local community, and parents in the work of the school. The next are the teacher-related issues: teachers' unwillingness to change, insufficient training and workload. Finally, there are problems concerning the safety of pupils in school, conflicting relationships, and lack of (or poor) students' achievements.
7. The ideal manager, in the opinion of the interviewed principals, is characterized by: firstly, the ability to set up a realistic and clear vision of school development and to organize, lead and develop a collective in accordance with this vision (developmental competence); secondly, the successful principal organizes the work of the school / institution in accordance with the law and individual qualities of the employees and is able to create favorable conditions and remove obstacles in the work of the institution (practical competency); thirdly, the successful principal is familiar with modern methods, forms and organization of pedagogical work, as well as with the methods and criteria for determining the quality of the work of the school (pedagogical competency); fourthly, the successful principal knows the principles of successful communication and ways of motivating people, shows success in mediation and conflict resolution, and democracy in decision-making (social competence). In addition to the above professional competencies, a successful principal in our conditions is characterized to a great extent by personal qualities, such as openness to people, cordial relationships, dedication, fairness, etc.

A VIEW TOWARDS THE FUTURE

A leadership career and the level of principal professional development should be a matter of choice, so the leadership should not be a task which is forced or accidental. According to this concept, the choice of the right people to leadership positions is one of the key priorities of Montenegrin education policies. The regulations set official conditions for people who want to

become principals, and professional experience of working in the classroom is the main condition for placing someone in that position. The length of experience required varies from three to thirteen years (generally ranging between three and five years), and includes administrative experience, leadership and managerial skills, as well as the completion of special training programs.

Research in this area shows that educational leaders spend about 40% of their working hours on administrative matters, meaning that the roles of leaders of educational institutions need to be redefined, so that they could redirect their time and energy towards improving the training of teaching staff and quality of teaching (*How to Assess the Quality of School Management and Leadership?*, 2015: 46).

School leadership can be strengthened by engaging in three key activities, so it is necessary to:

- Enable school managers to focus more on improving the learning process rather than on administration. This requires the development of administrative support mechanisms so that managers can focus more on achieving better results in the areas of: learning/teaching, communicating with students and parents, and strengthening relationships with key partners, including businesses and local authorities.
- Strengthening mechanisms for the selection of managers and for the choice of right people for leading positions remains a real challenge. Measures that can help in the selection of managers can be as follows: an objective and professional analysis of the fields of work and the roles that leaders must assume; the competencies they should possess; establishing transparent criteria for the evaluation of candidates; establishing and redefining mechanisms for identifying potential managers and their training.
- Developing more efficient mechanisms for professional development of principals, which will be able to respond to the specific development needs of each participant.
- All the above points to the ever-growing need to develop and implement the concepts of lifelong learning and the professional development of all stakeholders in the education system, especially principals. This will completely eliminate the political influence on their work, in order to finally establish a system of professional management of educational institutions.

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Justina Erčulj has been working in education for almost 40 years. Since 1996 she has been employed in the National School for Leadership in Education as a lecturer and lately as a programme and project developer. She has been involved in the development of several programmes for head teachers, such as the programme for headship licence, mentoring newly appointed head teachers, head teachers’ learning networks, etc. From 2016 on she has been coordinating an extensive national project “Leading and managing Innovative Learning Environments”. She has also coordinated or participated in international projects aimed at support for head teachers. At the moment she has been the lead Slovenian partner in Erasmus+ project “Leading Learning by Networking”. Beside this, she has also been a member of national project POGUM aimed at the development of entrepreneurship competencies of primary school head teachers. Her main interests are in the areas of head teachers’ lifelong learning programmes at different stages of their professional career. She is also interested in closer cooperation between schools, business companies, and different actors in schools’ environment. Therefore she has been searching for new ways of professional development that would help head teachers perform their role more effectively. She has been a member of several editorial boards of professional journals for teachers and head teachers in Slovenia.

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Slavica Ševkušić



Dušica Malinić



Jelena Teodorović

There are good arguments in favour of a publication about the development and current status of leadership in education in the context of the education policy and practice of Eastern and Central Europe. Indeed, compared to publications about educational leadership in Western Europe and Anglo-Saxon countries, there is a gap in knowledge... *Leadership in education - Initiatives and trends in selected European countries* reflects in a clear and readable manner the many developments and challenges of educational leadership in the selected countries and the work of many people who are committed to the scientific study of this field and to the development of schools and educational leaders.

Prof. Em. Dr. Eric Verbiest, University of Antwerp, Belgium

It is a great idea that the Institute for Educational Research, Belgrade, Serbia, Faculty of Education, University of Kragujevac, Jagodina, Serbia, and Hungarian-Netherlands School of Educational Management, University of Szeged, Hungary, have taken the idea to create very acute and topical material for education, school leaders and policy makers, and not only them: it is also very useful for students in higher educational institutions studying programmes of educational management and teacher education. This book gives us insight not only into educational leadership, but also the policy of education, the system of education, and vision of the future of the development of educational leadership.

Prof. Paed. Dr. Ilze Ivanova, University of Latvia, Latvia

The book reviewed here presents a range of qualities. The first of these is its cognitive value. The texts collected in the publication create a multi-voice and thus a rich picture of the experiences gathered during the process of development of leadership in education in selected European countries. It happened thanks to the careful selection of authors and the quality of the texts they have prepared... The book provides intellectual tools to analyze what happens when we undertake the effort to carry out changes in social practice. The message of the book is to encourage further exploration, emphasizing the ambiguity, ambivalence, and complexity of educational leadership.

Prof. Dr. Henryk Mizerek, University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland

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