THE ROLE OF THE HOME ROOM TEACHER ON EVALUATING HOW FAR OR CLOSE IS THE ALBANIAN SCHOOL FROM BEING A TRUE ORGANIZATION (SELF ASSESSMENT COMPONENT)

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Abstract

The education reform in Albania, especially after '90s, has changed a lot in the last two decades by dealing with its "ups and downs". The leading education institutions of our country have constantly attempted to be in line with the latest trends and developments of worldwide education. Sometimes by implementing ready them and others by adapting them. Education system in our country has changed in all directions, aspects and it is still changing.

The new philosophy that considers the school as an organization is based on the concept of "School-based Management". Many countries used their abilities to implement this new spirit by developing worldwide models, precisely 4 models.

In the existing models in the developed countries, of USA and Europe, also on those in the East, Asia and Africa, the inclusion of all the interest groups in the management and administration of the school is a real trend. The implementation process of the "School-based Management" project is continuing with great success even in our region (Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia). The different forms of the existing "School-based Management" are explained based on the decision-making power and how it is transferred.

This study is based on a solid theoretical basis that the 4 above mentioned models, to define which should be the best model to be implemented in Albania by taking the direct contribution and position of the homeroom teacher.

The enriching exploratory and the field empirical study shows the role of the homeroom teacher in relation to the self-evaluative ability of each school, as one of the key elements of the authenticity.

To conclude both theoretical basis and empirical study results are the primary sources that shows us if our country is ready or not to consider school as an organization.

Key words: *management, school, decision making, model, organization*

1. INTRODUCTION

Facing with different challenges, many educational reforms have been implemented during the 1990s and 21st century in order to increase the effectiveness of school education and development not only in Canada, the US and the UK in the West, but also in Asia, in the Pacific regions, Australia, New Zealand, China, Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, etc.

School-based management (SBM) is considered to be one of the most important educational reform and the most dominant international trend, which emphasizes decentralization down to the school level, as the main tool that promote effective decision-making, improve internal processes, and exploitation of resources in the process of teaching and learning, to meet the various obligations of school-based educational needs. According to Cheng, besides of the challenges related to difficulties and problems in the implementation of SBM, there are established a lot of opportunities for schools, teachers, parents, education officers and even leaders engaged in education reform, in reevaluating educational practices, developing themselves, modifying roles, formulating innovation, and improving the educational outcomes of their schools[1].

[1] Cheng, C. Y, (2003) New Vision of School-Based Management: Globalization, Localization and Individualization. School-Based Management an International Perspective, p.31 (ISBN: 965-444-031-8, 2003)

According to different practices and studies, school based management is irreversible and the main challenge is to balance centralization and decentralization, related to the favorite or necessary values and people ability to deal with the respective duties.[2]

There is a tendency in present models of the developed country as in USA and Europe, but also in the Eastern countries, Asia and Africa, which is related to the involvement of all stakeholders in the school management and administration. The implementation of the "school-based management" project, continues on successfully in our region (Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia). Explanation of the other form of the "school-based management," is based on the decision-making power and the power-level given to the school.

According to this, Leithwood and Menzies provide four models of school-based management:

1. **Administrative Control:** this (Dutch model) exceeds the decision-making authority to the head of the school.
2. **Professional Control:** (Finnish model) exceeds the decision-making authority to the teachers, aiming to have more information about the teachers need during the teaching activities
3. **Community Control:** (Mexico, New Zealand, Salvador etc.) Exceeds the decision-making to parents or community.
4. **Balanced Control:** (Michigan, some states of Mexico, etc.) balances the decision-making between parents and teachers, who are the two main actors in every school[3].

Generally, worldwide, there are trying to balance the decision-making by mixing the four models.

School-based management (known as local management or self - management of school), is part of the school reform movement in a worldwide level. Caldwell, BJ, & Spinks, JM consider the building of school based management systems as a "footprint" of major change in education, by focusing on learning outcomes and society information[4]. On the other hand, Cheng Yin Cheong provides the idea of a new vision for MBS through the globalization, localization and individualization processes aiming the transfers, adaptation and development of values, knowledge and behavior technologies in different countries and societies to meet the individual needs and characteristics[5].

School management and administration in the Albanian pre-university system is developed in a positive, especially after the approval of the new law on "pre-university education system". There are obvious tendencies and practices of power transfers of the decision-making to the base, parent involvement as well as groups of interests. "The Board of School" is an important stakeholder that provides management responsibility. The establishment of The Board of School, its composition and some main tasks are defined by the new law while previously it was only included in the Normative Dispositions, by giving priority to the increasing of the executive competences on school management. Despite the importance of this process and the establishment of the legal basis, still have difficulties in the law implementation and the structure function. This is related not only to the capacity of the structure elements, but also with the structure concept by defining the role, the right and responsibilities of each member according to the association interests.

The homeroom teacher position in the Albanian education system has been changing and evolving through the years, by taking into consideration its crucial role in the holistic evolution of the education in different levels including school, stakeholder parents other actors involved in the education.

[2] Caldwell, Brian J. 2005. School-Based Management p.68
[3] Leithwood, K., and Teresa Menzies (1998). "Forms and Effects of School-Based Management: A Review." Educational Policy 12(3):p.325
[4] Caldwell, B. J., & Spinks, J. M. (1988). The self-managing School. London: Falmer Press. P:65
[5] Cheng Yin Cheong (2003) School based management, an international perspective, p.38 (ISBN: 965-444-031-8)

The main duties of the homeroom teacher in the Albanian education system are:

- **Educator**, conducting an educative holistic approach, especially with the students within a classroom.
- **Coordinator**, of all the educative teaching and learning activities in the classroom.
- **Facilitator**, following and facilitating teaching and learning activities.
- **Advisor**, of the education process, behaviors and progress by informing all the other stakeholders in the upper levels of the school administration.
- **Contact person**, keeping in touch with all parents and trying to involve them in their children education by including them in internal and external school environment by using the same approach.

The teacher's role mentioned are reflected in the Normative Dispositions that serve as a guideline of homeroom teacher duties and responsibilities. On the other hand, based on the SBM philosophy, the homeroom teacher's duties and responsibilities should be redesigned in accordance with the institution/organization. The redesign of this key actor as well, a change agent, will ensure the sustainability of the organization. On the other hand, the redesigning is always related to the management/leadership style of the head of the schools.

There are two points of view that address the issue of management style and suit our country. **The first** relates to institutional theories and the entire background context they carry, which tries to give a theoretical answer to the Albanian model. **The second** relates to the management styles that exist in accordance with researchers. Each of these points of view gives an answer on their own to the Albanian model.

To conclude, the whole information collected in the school fieldwork is an important indicator of the school status reality in Albanian education system. The empirical research that contains the two points of views elements gives the image of a self-evaluation that schools do relation with:

1. The applied curricula,
2. Leadership and school management,
3. Teaching and learning,
4. Climate and ethics in school,
5. Development of human and financial resources,
6. Evaluation and school achievements,
7. Care and support of the children-students.

All mentioned elements contribute for a better organization of the Albanian of school-based management model by projecting the school in principle as an existing and true organization.

2. METHODOLOGY

The leadership skills development in education has become a great interest research area especially in management and administration sciences. There are currently some existing researches where there is partly information, knowledge and objectives of study on this issue. But none of them is studied to make the connection of the management/administration to the school. Some of these research studies, are referred to the strategically leadership platforms in education, researches on the development of professional competencies in management and administration of education, especially in school, or researches that have great focus on the development of leadership skills as an integral part of educational reform in Albania.

This study intends to bring in a modest way, bibliographic sources, monographs, articles, reports, manuals, education and management international manuals on school management as an organization and institution focusing on the role of the homeroom teacher in the school. These materials provide a solid conceptual basis, both theoretical and methodological that enables exploration and deeper study of this area. They also help us to re- define and deepen the argument explanation and the necessity of a critical view in this study.

The information sources of this study area are related to two directions:

- **Theoretical studies**, mainly based on of the administrative managerial theories, but focusing on the organization/institution school; and simultaneously,
- **The empirical study**, the survey area undertaken in support of the hypothesis of this study.

The documentary records review, both theoretical and methodological and the data collected through empirical area study in educational institutions, served to carry out qualitative and statistics analyzing, as well as the comparisons and correlations of the study.

Many research objectives were drafted and elaborated in order to achieve the aim of the study, such as:

Theoretical literature Identification and review on the management area generally, but translated into the education area, which deals with governance and administration issues focusing on the key factors that contribute to the change. Researches, trends, theories and authors who provide conceptual, theoretical and methodological information in this area, served as a basis or analytical reference framework for all the scientific work. Based on the theoretical and conceptual analysis there were defined the concepts of "leadership", "leadership in education", "leader" "formation of leaders" and the key variables of the study "leadership skills ", "styles of leadership", "competences of the leader", descriptive or explanatory theories of the phenomenon of leadership in education, as well as the most effective methodological ways to implement this study.

1. It was undertaken an empirical study to test the raised hypothesis through the development of a holistic questionnaire in some school, aiming to verify the current issues related to the case study, the lack of capacity to realize the required philosophy in nowadays Albanian education system, as well as specific features that characterize the management/leadership area and all other elements, taking into consideration one of the basic indicators of the institution existence as an organization: ***the ability, opportunity and its capacity to successfully implement the self-evaluation process***. The structured questionnaire was considered to be the appropriate instrument for collecting quantitative data and empirical necessary information for the study.
2. Dealing with statistical analysis based on data collection through the applied questionnaire on the study area, using analytical and explorative techniques on the phenomenon.
3. Findings Presentation as logical implications of theoretical analysis as well as quantitative and qualitative one.

There is no single holistic theory even in the educational management. The leadership and management theories have three main features:

1. Tendency to be normative related to the nature of educational institutions and the individual behavior within them.
2. Be selective or partial (if they emphasize certain aspects of the institution).
3. Based on or supported by the practice observation in educational institutions.

Leadership and management are often considered as essential practical activities. The gap between theory and practice stands as a Gordian knot of education administration. Instead of moving it, it has become a permanent feature, because it is embedded in our way of building theories. This gap will be moved after building better theories that stress the practice effects[6].

[6] Tony Bush, 1996, 2007. Theories of Educational Management. p:3

As a result, the redesigning of the homeroom teacher is a historical evolution based mostly on centralization or even decentralization of the Albanian education system. The latest development in the "life of the homeroom teacher" is related to the Communism indoctrination of political system (communism regime) during the 70's where:

The indoctrinations on the '70s related to the ideological and political orientation of the holistic process and activities of education changed the focus, role, responsibilities and duties of the homeroom teacher from the highlighted relationship teacher-student-family focusing on the purpose of personal and group improvement to the ideological teacher and homeroom teacher into a form of political leader, legally called or named as commissary, responsible primary for the ideological and political behavior and later on the student knowledge.

Based on these result the whole nature of the homeroom teacher activities and objectives has changed, reshaping also the "product" that was being "processed" inside the schools, including parents and all the other actors.

Based on the Normative Dispositions, the role of the homeroom teacher has not changed a lot in terms of engagement in the school. It has been some shrinkage in school external activity as well as the most important element, *it was vanished the political indoctrination* by no replacing a new model of management or direction and leaving the existing model just in terms of decentralization.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- The Institutional Theory
- The diversity of theories on institutions diversity
- The Neo institutionalization theory
- The normative institutionalization
- The institutional theory of groups of interested
- The collegial models
- **Leadership Theories**
    - The "big" man theory / Personality Theory (1930-1940)
    - The behavior-based Theory
    - The situation/case based theory (1960)
- **New Management Approaches**
    - The Interactive management theory
    - Transformational management Theory (1970)
- **Studies on Models and Management Styles**
    - Liker model of management
    - Authoritarian management style
    - Consultative management Style
    - Collaborative management style
- **The model "direction to achieve the goal"**
    - Directive leadership style
    - Supportive management style
    - Collaborative management style

- Goals oriented to Management style
- Inspirational leadership model (charismatic)

4. RESULTS / FINDINGS

According to the empirical research, the head of the educational institution role is still authoritarian. It is concluded during the research process. The most important thing is to specify its role. The role of head of the institution, in any case, is to coordinate, support, monitor and follow step by step the entire process, without exercising his / her official authority that can affect the results. There is no doubt that this redesigning role of the head of the institution must be followed by the redesign of the internal actors of the organization, especially of the homeroom teacher.

The head of institution urges that the findings should be real and reliable because this is considered the only way to identify problems that can improve the institution process in the future. These elements mainly make pressure on the position of the homeroom teacher, making it one of the primary sources of information, based on its role in the school. Information is “the food” for the institution administration and organization but if it is structured as one or even some of the abovementioned models, it gives the homeroom teacher a new level of importance and responsibility.

The effective implementation of the self-assessment process requires the involvement of the institution, school staff, providing "flow" by everyone, but also the fulfillment of some "preconditions".

The change agents right away after the head of the school are needed to be the homeroom teacher, as the link in between school’s- staff -students. In order to have a structured and well organized self-assessment process, home room teacher has a crucial role not only the ability to achieve this procedure but also on the further improvement and sustainability of this process.

One of the main findings of the field research process was that, the head of the institution should be convinced that it is not and cannot be the only one that ensures the success of school and institution job. This brings in to the light the hidden centralized structure of decision-making inside the Albanian schools.

Also, management must be convinced of the usefulness of the self-assessment process.

Training, continuous professional development of the whole mechanism ensures going in the right direction.

It has to be stressed that the self - assessment process requires time and the necessary "reasonable speed". By the school year starting, the school management team members propose the members of the self-evaluation team that is approved by the school board.

The role of education leadership in the development challenges and rapid changes

According to the expression “Drivers for change”, a leader should be able and willing to focus his/her work on various ways. Firstly, they should guide the staff to achieve their goals and ensure a better future for them and the community. On the other hand, they need to test, evaluate the requests coming from outside/external, find the proper time and place when and where the right moment to integrate them is. The primary aim of the school is to increase the student learning capacity, but related to achieving process not all schools have the same internal capacities.

The SBM model in our country is intended to be a combination of all the above models, institutionally including parents and all stakeholders. This model must be based on the Institutional Theory and the functional structures establishment because of fulfilling these criteria:

a) via the "normative impacts" offers an approach for a structure such as "school-based management",

b) Gives you the opportunity to select and adapt an advanced model: the application of SBM model where parents are institutionally involved and play their role in this structure, in order to achieve an effective school.

c) Expresses integration need of some or one component model (such as parents) which leads to modification or adoption of other components.

d) Shows the possibility and the institutionalization ways of this model. In this management model will be clearly defined the interest groups that will be involved, their role, function and interaction reports according to the instructions.

e) Possible and needed evidences and institutional barriers on institutional parental involvement in this model (according to the institutionalization theory),

Some *problems* in the implementation of this model:

- Staff and Budget Management Competences cannot be delegated easily because they can profit in an abusive manner.
- Decision-making power delegation at the school level changes the dynamics of power; some external school groups, in central or local government, lose some power and always try to retrieve it.
- Introducing a new mindset brings difficulties and obstacles related to the old mentality.
- Teachers should be focused on and spend more time in the school, a new mentality. The workload will be needed more funding.
- Another obstacle is the management and leadership actors' preparation.
- To conclude, if the schools want to be and perform as a real organization, it will be required redesigning of the leadership and management model, as well as to redefine the homeroom teacher role as a connection of leadership and students.

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