

APPROACH OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT EDUCATION THEORY

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ABSTRACT

The school director, any kind of school, from kindergarten to high school, state or private, is constantly subject to new sets of challenges: scientific, educational, legislative, administrative, social, so that at this moment the role he plays in the community it has many more values than 20 years ago, and we can already talk about the institution of the school director. In this sense, the school director must develop skills and competencies on three different levels: manager, leader, coach. The work aimed to summarize the main roles that school principals have, as well as the ways of action by which they can fulfill their roles. In order to lead effectively and responsibly, the school director must know and apply the principles and functions of the didactic process, the functions of institutional management, communication strategies with students, parents, teachers, educational partners, create a safe and open environment for students and parents, to be able to manage crisis situations and difficult situations that arise in this activity, to have thorough knowledge of financial management and marketing. Also, to achieve the institutional objectives, the school director must have leadership qualities to be a model in this sense, to support his team and to motivate his team to complete the tasks.

KEYWORDS: *coach, leader, manager, principal, school.*

DOI: 10.24818/IMC/2023/05.09

1. INTRODUCTION

Coaching has proven its effectiveness, being considered an effective method of developing leadership and management skills, both at the individual and group level. Coaching contributes to the development of communication skills, decision-making, planning and shaping better relationships between team members. Despite these benefits, coaching in the management of pre-university educational institutions is not yet a widespread practice. Some school principals may feel that this is too expensive or too difficult to implement, while others may feel that there is no need for coaching or that management skills can be developed by other means.

However, there are some successful examples where coaching has been successfully used in the management of pre-university educational institutions. These examples indicate that the coaching technique can be considered effective in the process of improving leadership and management skills and should be considered a viable option for developing the management skills of pre-university education staff. It is necessary to establish what is the impact of coaching for the pre-university education system in Romania.

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2. ROLES OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT EDUCATION THEORY

2.1 The coaching and the school principal

The institution of the school principal goes through multiple reformations, both from an institutional and formative perspective (Crompton & Smyrniot, 2011).

The school principal contributes to the increase of the visibility of the school unit due to the formal and informal influence he exerts on the school community and, through this, on the local community. The principal boosts school performance by mobilizing sources, funding, human capital, marketing that can generate a positive impact on students and teachers (Narayanasamy & Penney, 2014).

The school principal interferes with different social and professional categories, from students, teachers and parents, to suppliers for utilities, educational materials, maintenance and repair of educational spaces, associations for the promotion of education, in various forms. Depending on the ability to communicate, the degree of involvement, persuasion, empathy, technical, legal, administrative knowledge, the principal can attract capital of influence for the school in terms of opportunities.

Instructional content and coaching involve conversations about student learning data, setting goals and practices based on each student's abilities and desires. Also, the school manager is guided to adapt the operational plan focused on the growth of the school, depending on the internal resources, the development perspectives of students and teachers alike (Brannback & Carsrud, 2009).

To know managers' perception of how coaching could help them in their current work, 200 managers' employees responded to the questionnaire in Table 1.

Table 1. Questionnaire on coaching

Questions	very much	much	little	not at all
It would increase the cohesion of the collective	34	24	8	3
It would solve most of the school's internal conflicts as an organization	23	16	5	1
It would cause a decrease in existing conflicts in the collective	16	14	5	2
Would punctually solve some conflicts/problems within the school as an organization	7	6	3	1
It would determine a proactive attitude on the part of colleagues towards you	6	3	2	2
It would cause an irritation of the collective	1	2	7	23
It would cause a decrease in your performance in front of your subordinates	1	3	8	31
It would represent an additional task, not being included in the job description	7	6	4	2
It would be a waste of time, it would be useless	2	3	3	2
Total	93	69	45	67

The use of coaching techniques at the level of school units by the director, according to the questionnaire, would help sensitize the director to a series of stimuli coming from the collective, students and teachers. Most respondents believe that, through coaching, the director can be more attentive to the way of communication and transmission of work tasks, in a participatory and

motivating, encouraging and responsible way, for the school community, which would lead to an increase in collective cohesion and a decrease of existing conflicts at the level of the school unit. Currently, many schools in Romania face a high level of physical and verbal violence, bullying, lack of cooperation, abandonment, which requires a series of actions to increase the level of trust in teachers in order to influence students to accept school as a means of motivation for the development of positive attitudes and behaviors, to the detriment of negative ones.

2.2 The school principal in the modern vision

The leader must be supporting his team in openly expressing their thoughts and feelings. Teachers must feel free to ask constructive questions about the actions of the principal and his team regarding plans in relation to the school community, and the principal must ensure that he provides the information necessary to complete a task (Deakin & Freel, 1998).

At the same time, a school manager must face external pressures, at institutional, social-political, technological level. The pressures, if he cannot cope with them, end up overwhelming him, turning the school into a field of unpredictable and contextual changes (Cunningham & Eberle, 1993). That's why the trainer/coach can help identify the guideline of the educational development plan in agreement with the education of young people to acquire the necessary skills to be used in the knowledge society, which is constantly changing. At the same time, the trainer/coach has the role of foreseeing the danger of the lack of education adapted to the labor market: unemployment, engaging in activities that do not converge to personal motivation and long-term success.

One of the team's objectives is the implementation of the "friendly school" concept, which gives increased possibilities for the manifestation of the free, combative, critical spirit, in congruence with tolerance and mutual respect, in agreement with the natural, technological, social environment (Berman, 2019).

In order to increase the degree of motivational involvement of students in school programs, especially those who need support, it is necessary for teachers to support the motivational, skill-based path of complementarity between the interest and the resource of the students. In this sense, teachers themselves will be trained through coaching programs to identify students' needs, stimulate them to achieve them through intellectual efforts and sustained creative work.

Teacher support involves an integrated, complex, comprehensive approach: civic spirit, ecological climate, healthy eating, civilized and responsible behavior, career preparation, self-interest awareness, accountability. Such an integrative approach will determine the translation of the scoring system from "Grades" to "Scores" that will allow the establishment of criteria from simple to complex. This method of assessment will determine the use of an assessment grid of the student's quantitative and qualitative achievements in order to obtain a score that allows an objective and specific assessment of each student. Such a system allows students their own assessment of the score before it is actually given by the teacher or examiner, which contributes to the student's assumption of responsibility and at the same time increases the motivation to obtain a predictable result in relation to the effort made and the intended goal.

In the view of coaching, the educational process combines the technical field with the psycho-social-emotional field, some issues being necessary to be solved, in the view of the trainer/coach using elements that involve a state of calm, patience, empathy, which influences the school community at attracting and implementing educational projects that involve changing the mentality of peers regarding community issues and that can be solved through higher education (such as cleanliness, environmental protection, security, decency, mutual respect) (Mukherjee, 2014).

Professional development through the use of coaching techniques uses various teaching methods, in the online or offline environment, having teaching tools that can provide feedback immediately or after carrying out subsequent internships in the training process in the form of messages or observations on the degree of appropriation of training lessons (Ben Salem & Lakhali, 2018). Thus,

opportunities are provided for participants to engage in the coaching process to increase their repertoire of skills (Bourner et al., 1996). In addition to supporting coaching knowledge and skills, the development of the ability to interrelate with teachers based on inquiry-based research techniques is also considered.

2.3 Important roles of the principal in the new interpersonal communication framework

In the new interpersonal communication framework the school principal has an important role in promoting effective communication and collaboration among school team members, as well as in maintaining a good relationship with parents and the local community (Whitmore, 1992). Among the most important roles of the principal in interpersonal communication (Ponte Regis et al., 2007) we find:

1. Promoting open and effective communication between school team members – the school principal must be a leader who encourages communication and collaboration between teachers and support staff in the school so that a quality learning experience for students can be provided.
2. Creating a safe and open environment for students – to stimulate them to be creative, express themselves freely, ask questions, use the answers for their own development.
3. Increasing the level of closeness between teachers and parents, for the exclusive benefit of students. When engaged in school activities, parents feel involved and informed about school progress and events, generated by the student-teacher relationship.
4. Development and implementation of communication strategies – the principal must develop and implement effective communication strategies that promote the commitment and involvement of all stakeholders in school activities.
5. Crisis and difficult situations management – the principal must be prepared to manage crisis situations and communicate effectively with all parties involved to minimize the negative impact of these events.

Overall, the school principal has a crucial role in promoting effective communication and collaboration between members of the school team and in maintaining a good relationship with parents and the local community. He must be prepared to manage difficult situations and develop effective communication strategies to promote school success (Cairns-Lee, 2015).

Promoting open and effective communication between members of the school team is one of the most important roles of the school principal (Peterson & Hicks, 2006) through which he achieves an effective and open relation between teachers and additional staff in the school in order to ensure a quality learning experience for students.

Promoting open and effective communication between school team members

To promote open and effective communication in the school, the principal can consider the following strategies (Bux, 2016):

1. Organizing regular meetings – The principal can organize regular meetings between school team members, including team meetings, meetings with school departments and meetings with support staff. These meetings can be an opportunity for teachers and support staff to share ideas, discuss problems and identify solutions to improve school performance.
2. Use of Technology – The principal can use technology to promote communication among school team members. This may include using a messaging system or online platform to facilitate quick and efficient communication.

3. Encourage open communication – The principal can encourage school team members to communicate openly and express themselves freely without fear of repercussions. This can encourage team members to become actively involved in school issues and offer constructive solutions.
4. Creating a Collaborative Environment – The principal can create a cooperative environment by encouraging teamwork and collaboration among teachers and support staff. This can stimulate communication and sharing of ideas and lead to improved school performance.
5. Ensuring that information is communicated clearly – The principal must ensure that information is communicated clearly and that all members of the school team have a clear understanding of important information relating to the school and its activities.
6. By promoting open and effective communication among school team members, the principal can assure the school community that all teachers and additional staff are working together to improve school performance and provide students with a quality learning experience (Couteret, 2005).

Creating a safe and open environment for students

Creating a safe and open environment for students is one of the most important responsibilities of the school principal (Nonaka & Nishiguchi, 2001). A safe and open environment can help improve students' academic performance and their social and emotional development.

To create a safe and open environment for students, the principal can consider the following strategies (Moos & Visser, 2016):

1. Develop clear policies and procedures – The principal can work with teachers and additional staff to develop clear policies and procedures regarding acceptable and unacceptable behavior in the school. These policies and procedures should be clearly communicated to students and parents.
2. Encouraging tolerance and mutual respect – The principal can promote tolerance and respect among students by organizing activities that encourage these values. For example, they could organize activities to help students learn about different cultures and religions.
3. Identifying and managing behavior issues – The principal should identify and manage student behavior issues. This process could include implementing counseling and social and emotional development programs to help students learn to manage their emotions and resolve conflicts in a positive way.
4. Promoting a safe physical environment – The principal should reassure the school community that the physical environment of the school is safe for students. This process could include ensuring school security by monitoring access and exits, ensuring adequate emergency escape routes and ensuring adequate safety equipment and facilities.
5. Promotion of a culture of open communication – The principal should create a culture of open communication where students feel comfortable expressing their ideas and concerns. This could include the organization of regular meetings with students and taking into account their suggestions and comments on improving the school environment.

In general, creating a safe and open environment for students involves developing a culture of tolerance, respect, and open communication within the school (Kirzner, 1973). By implementing these strategies, the principal can help improve students' academic performance and social and emotional development.

Strengthening the relationship with parents and the community.

Strengthening the relationship with parents and the community is essential to the success of a school. The school principal plays an important role in this process by promoting open and effective communication between parents and the school and by involving the community in school activities. In this sense, the principal can use a number of techniques to improve the relationship with parents and the community (Bruneel et al., 2012):

1. Open and effective communication – The principal should communicate with parents regularly and keep them informed about school activities and student progress. This can be done through regular emails, newsletters, parent meetings or an updated website.
2. Involvement of parents in school activities – The principal should encourage parents to participate in school activities such as celebrations, sports activities or volunteering. This can help improve parent-school relationships and help create a stronger community.
3. Developing partnerships with community organizations – The principal should develop partnerships with community organizations, such as non-governmental organizations, the public library or community centers. These partnerships can help improve the relationship between the school and the community and provide additional resources for students and the school.
4. Encourage feedback and comments – The principal should encourage feedback and comments from parents and the community about school activities and student progress. This can be done through surveys or meetings with parents.
5. Addressing issues constructively – The principal should address the issues and concerns of parents and the community constructively and try to find solutions to the issues raised. This can help improve the relationship between the school and parents and help increase parents' confidence in the school.
6. By implementing these strategies, the principal can improve the relationship with parents and the community and contribute to the creation of a strong educational community (Bosma, & Levie, 2009).

Development and implementation of communication strategies

The development and implementation of communication strategies is essential for any organization, including a school unit (Maiga et al., 2013). To ensure effective communication between all those involved in education (students, parents, teachers, support staff), the school principal must develop and implement a series of communication strategies.

Among the communication strategies that could help the principal to develop and successfully implement relations with the school community, there are identified (Burger & Van Coller-Peter, 2019):

1. Establishing Communication Objectives – The manager needs to establish his communication objectives in order to develop the right strategies. A goal might be to increase parental involvement in school life or to raise awareness of student behavior issues. In the current period, there are a number of communication barriers between students-teachers-parents that could be solved through empathy and good communication. In order to reduce the barriers in student-teacher communication, the school community will call on a series of specialists (psychologists, school, educational counselors, game-learning coaches and role-playing games), which could create a good relationship between the subjects of the educational act.
2. Identifying the target audience – It is important for the principal to identify the target audience for each communication strategy. For example, a communication strategy for parent involvement may

be different from a communication strategy for student involvement. Parents, in the current period, constitute an element of incursion in the educational process that must be used with moderation and caution. Parents can exercise their educational support by encouraging children/students to develop their skills of empathy, accountability and social responsibility, the educational act itself, with the learning-assessment stage being the exclusive responsibility of the school. In order to increase parents' confidence in the relevance of the educational act for an active integration, in the future, on the labor market, the school will prove the quality of the educational act measured by the degree of promotion in periodic assessments and graduation exams without the participation of students with the pecuniary support of the parents, in the system of alternative education-private lessons. In order to give up on private lessons, parents must be convinced of the quality of the educational act and the quality of the assessment, alike.

3. Choosing the right communication channels – The principal must identify the right communication channels to reach the target audience. For example, to communicate with parents, the principal can use e-mail, the newsletter, the school website or dedicated mobile applications.
4. Creating a clear and coherent message – The principal must create a clear and coherent message for each communication strategy. This message should be easy to understand and address the target audience in an appropriate manner.
5. Encourage feedback and comments – The principal should encourage feedback and comments from the target audience to evaluate the effectiveness of communication strategies and to further improve them.
6. Monitoring and assessment of communication strategies – The principal should monitor and assess the communication strategies to determine how effective they are and adjust them accordingly.
7. By developing and implementing an effective communication strategy, the principal can improve relationships with all those involved in education and contribute to the success of the school (Grant, 2014).

Crisis and difficult situations management

A school principal may encounter difficult situations and crises that require special approaches to be handled effectively. These situations may include security incidents, disciplinary issues, health issues, death of a student or staff member, financial issues, etc. (Johnston et al., 2008). It is important that the principal is prepared to deal with these situations and manage crises in a professional and effective manner

A number of steps can be used to manage crises and difficult situations in school (Garvey et al., 2014):

1. Choosing a Crisis Management Team – The principal should create a crisis management team that includes staff members, parent representatives, and other experts. This team must be prepared to deal with any crisis situation and establish a plan of action in advance.
2. Fast and effective communication – The principal should communicate quickly and effectively with everyone involved in the crisis situation. This may include sending email messages, phone calls, text alerts and updates on the school website or social media.
3. Maintain a transparent and open relationship – The principal should provide relevant information, answer questions and maintain a high level of communication with members of the school community.
4. Observance of confidentiality – The principal should be careful not to disclose information that could violate the confidentiality of students, parents or other persons involved.

5. Providing resources and support – The principal should provide resources and support for all those involved in the crisis situation. These may include psychological support, counselling, financial assistance or any other type of support that may be needed.
6. Learning from experience – After the crisis situation is over, the manager should analyze the limit situations and learn from the experience. These lessons can be used to improve future crisis management plans.
7. By effectively managing difficult situations and crises, the principal can protect students, school staff, and the community and help maintain an optimal educational environment for the school community (Ludvigsson, 2003).

3. CONCLUSIONS

The school, in addition to the learning space, is a time of learning. Learning is a quality of a person to distinguish between what is good, valuable and useful and what contributes to the understanding of the meaning of life and the role of life as a whole, for the individual and his relatives, in the present and in the future. No future can be good without knowledge, skills, capabilities, competences. And these must consist of sustainable advantages. In this process, of learning, an important role is played by the principal of the educational unit who temporarily takes care of a school and makes it acceptable, accessible, useful.

The modern principal is the one who capitalizes on the resources, human and material, in bringing value to the school, through the good relationship with the internal and external influencing factors of the school. An important role in this strategy is played by the relationship with the parents, which must be built on mutual trust, but above all on increasing the school's ability to offer quality, safe educational programs that facilitate the act of learning in an eminently free manner, as provided by the country's fundamental law, the Constitution.

Thus, coaching becomes necessary to support the school principal so that he can face the challenges and be able to be a manager, leader and coach both in the approach to educational and institutional management.

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