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Scraping the Tip of the Iceberg: The Multifaceted Roles of School Leaders

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Abstract: Educational leadership is an important issue for the modern educational reality. The purpose of this article is to emphasize the necessity of the modern leader teacher not just to be limited to the performance of their duties, but to function as a manager of human relations, as a connecting link with society, and as a shaper of the school climate. The article concludes that contemporary social conditions require that the helm of school leadership should be in the hands of people who possess both the knowledge as well as the skills to cope with the demands of this complex role.

Keywords: cooperation school-society, educational leadership, HR management, ideal leader, school culture

Introduction

The role that the educational leader is called upon to play is particularly complex, since they must possess basic management knowledge, contribute to the formation of an appropriate climate, and coordinate the Teachers' Association, acting as an animator, while at the same time they must be the connecting link between the school unit and the wider local community. All this multi-role nature makes the task that they must carry out particularly difficult, since they are often called upon to make decisions, which may also conflict with each other (Lemoni & Kolezakis, 2013). Below there is a brief mention of some of the key roles that a leader teacher is called upon to serve in the needs of the modern school.

Research Results

The educational leader as a human relationship manager

The leader teacher is a central person in shaping the school climate (Price, 2012). As Northouse (2015) argues, the situations that arise in the school environment and are related to the school leader can be resolved through communication, since human interaction constitutes a basic function of a group and presupposes the existence of a voluntary influence on the behavior of its members (Chance, 2013). It becomes clear from the above that the utilization of processes of dialogue and communication by the educational leader is considered particularly important for increasing the dynamics of educational leadership in the school (Brezicha et al., 2015). In order to be effective in their work, the educational leader must be characterized by a number of leadership skills, such as the intended inspiration, the motivation of the school's human resources, the gift of communication and persuasion, systemic thinking, the ability to receive creatively decisions and problem solving through rational thinking, the existence of emotional intelligence and self-regulation such as anger management (Bouradas, 2018, p. 92), so that they can deal with the daily challenges that arise in an optimal way.

The educational leader as a connecting link with society

The way in which the school is interested in its students is also reflected by the interest it shows in the families of its students. If the school perceives the students as individual entities, then it is not able to perceive the important role that the family can play as a partner in the school education of the children, since the partners have common interests but also responsibilities, providing the appropriate opportunities for development (Epstein, 2018).

Of particular interest is the fact that a theory that comes from a completely different field than that of education, such as the theory of social capital, is also applicable in the field of education. The theory of social capital is based on the idea that relationship formation through the creation of social networks between the actors involved contributes to the educational outcomes of students (Ehlen et al., 2016; Green, 2018). More specifically, it argues that there are influences between the home, the school and the community, which interact and can affect the students, thus necessitating the direct cooperation of the decision-makers for the benefit of the children (Epstein & Sheldon, 2016).

Partnerships between the school and agencies can help improve school climate, strengthen school programs, develop networks with the school and the wider community, help teachers understand parents, who in turn will help support teachers' efforts. The goal between school, family and society cooperation is not to reproduce successful students but to guide and motivate them to produce their own successes, through a safe and cooperative framework for themselves (Epstein, 2018).

Educational leaders can play a catalytic role in this entire project, as it is particularly useful to form and maintain communication with the local community. This can be achieved through regular meetings, newsletters and social media, as channels to inform parents and community members about school activities, achievements, and daily challenges (Blank, 2017).

The leader teacher as a shaper of school culture

For an organization, having a culture is particularly important because it gives meaning to every part of its operation as well as to all the elements that it is consisted of. One of the most basic functions of culture is the formation of attitudes and behaviors, but also ensuring the stability of the organization (Amiras, et al., 2018). When it comes to culture formation, the role of the leader teacher dominates, as they should act as a role model that conveys the core of shared beliefs, values and behaviors. They should take care to promote cultural awareness and respect for individuals as well as group differences (Blair, 2010),

implement programs and innovative actions with the participation of teachers, parents and the local community (Dickerson & Helm-Stevens, 2011). To achieve the above, it is considered necessary to promote the training and cooperation of teachers with other school units, encouraging feedback and giving courage in times of crisis (Amiras, et al., 2018).

An educational leader should know the culture and history of their school as well as be able to evaluate aspects of organizational culture in education and identify which are constructive and which are detrimental (Golia, et al., 2013). According to Saitis (2012, p. 234–241), the role of the school administration in shaping the school culture focuses on three main axes. The first area concerns the cooperation of the leader teacher with the other involved members of the school, which should be the result of targeted actions since they will act as a role model and be committed to the vision of the school in which everyone will participate together for decision-making. The second area is related with the communication of the educational leader with the students and specifically to manifest their love and interest for them in practice, and the third and last area concerns the communication of the educational leader with the parents of the students through regular meetings.

Envisioning the model of the ideal educational leader

The complex nature of school units requires a leadership personality with a multitude of abilities and skills capable of coping with modern socio-economic changes. The ability to lead is not limited to a few individual leaders but requires a good knowledge of the concept of leadership and increased self-awareness to become an effective leader (Raptis & Grigoriadis, 2017). After all, a leader is made, born and emerges, as reasonably argued by Saiti and Saitis (2014) and is a result of both the inherited nature of leadership ability and a mixture of education-training and experience. By the term leading executive, we refer to the person who holds a job through which they can make decisions that directly affect the work of the others within the organization, while the elements that make it up are the authority of the executives, the responsibility of the leading executives and the enforcement (Saiti & Saitis, 2014). Effective instructional leadership grounded in the concepts of school leadership for learning is second only to teacher instruction as one of the most important factors contributing to student learning and school improvement (Hallinger, 2011). Characteristic elements of a leader's results are the knowledge of the conditions surrounding their school unit and being able to manage it effectively, solving problems, satisfying the needs of team members and satisfying the values of the whole (Saiti & Saitis, 2014).

In literature, one finds a wealth of research regarding the profile of the effective leader teacher, with the common denominator being the uniqueness of each one, focusing their attention on teaching and on the participants in the educational process, acting in a pedagogical way and making a regular reflection through which they take responsibility for creating safe and welcoming environments for their students (Barkman, 2015).

Conclusions

The modern school is called upon to contribute substantially to the formation of complex personalities capable of coping with everyday challenges. The role of them who lead the school unit becomes particularly important, since they must effectively fulfill a series of objectives. It must be a bet, both for each educational leader individually, as well as for the decision-makers of the educational policy, the formation of education executives freed from the narrow frameworks of the bureaucratic handling of responsibilities. The continuous social changes, as well as the daily challenges, require an educational leader who will be a patchwork of a multifaceted amalgam of personality and knowledge, who will be able to perceive the importance of their role and the responsibilities they are called to perform, having as their guiding principle the power that its actions and innovations have in creating integrated citizens of tomorrow.

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