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**THE PRINCIPAL'S INFLUENCE ON SCHOOL'S PERFORMANCE**

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**Albulena Lala Zeqiri**

South East European University, Macedonia, lena-fa@live.com

**Abstract:** The role of principal is very important. It is him/her to be accountable for working process. Obviously, each school aims to achieve the highest performance results, therefore education policies should be focused on strengthening the role of the school principal in order to have a higher performance. The principal must know how to manage the school s/he runs by relying on school bodies and adapting the appropriate strategies.

The research was conducted in several schools in the municipality of Viti. Both quantitative and qualitative paradigms were used. It is questionnaires and interviews that served as research instruments. The questionnaires were conducted with 100 teachers, whereas the interviews were conducted with one education official of the Municipal Education Directorate and four school principals.

This paper's hypothesis is, *'Principal's good managerial skills and dedication provide a higher school performance'*.

This paper's research questions are as follows:

- How does management influence school's performance?
- Are principals responsible for an effective school performance management?
- What strategies do principals use for better school outcomes?

**Keywords:** Principal, performance, strategies etc.

**INTRODUCTION**

Governments want education to be one of the main priorities for country's development, therefore special strategies need to be developed to achieve this goal. Schools, through principals, can increase their capacities; therefore, governments too should strengthen the role of the principal with the aim of achieving the highest level of performance. The principal plays the main role in school management, and thus his/her role is extremely high in all the activities that take place in the school. Each school has its own characteristics, and each principal manages the school in the ways s/he finds most appropriate. In this paper, we will find out which the most suitable forms for school management, respectively for performance enhancement are, and what else the managers must do in order to enhance the performance of their schools.

**Literature review**

Each organization requires high level performance and promotes it. The high level of performance is much more related to the quality of people working in the organization and the work they do than the infrastructure improvement. The management sets employee expectations and their action in contributing to the best interest of the organization. Each organization, in each case, has its own specifics, therefore there is no universal solution to performance management issues; every school needs to develop its own strategy and practices (Banfield and Kay, 2013, p. 401).

Schools as organizations have changed a lot lately. Now teachers work in teams by setting high priorities and common planning, where team leaders are responsible for the performance and results of their team.

Actually, the school staff has changed too, where a whole class of professionals such as: curriculum administration assistants, appraisal administrators, IT teams, teacher assistants, and many others who support teachers' work in the classroom are included. Heads of the departments are leaders in teaching and learning, not just resource administrators. All this requires new ways of working at school, namely on school performance management (Tranter & Percival, 2006, p. 1).

According to Burnham & Bradbury (2003a), the development of a culture of high sustained performance can only be achieved through effective leadership by recognizing all educational activities and the culture of professionalism. Even though policies are set from the outside, leaders still have significant capacity to determine how they work, the quality of professional relationships they might have, the culture and ethics, etc (p. 2). For performance management to work, the commitment of the staff must be ensured. It is also motivation which contributes to this success, in addition to the creation of a culture of improvement (p. 5).

Even Zbar, Marshall and Power (2007) emphasize that to succeed at school the staff should be dedicated to its work, and should be responsible for development and quality. As far as their support is concerned, it is the principal who should be accountable for doing the job as efficiently as possible. The role of school principal is to challenge and support school staff in providing the highest standards and quality for teachers and students, respectively improving

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school performance. For better performance, attitudes and behavior should be changed as well, by reinforcing and disseminating good school practices (p. 5).

Each school operates in its context by adapting and designing issues based on performance management processes. The main performance management process includes planning, training, reviewing, and rewarding to ensure continuous improvement and performance development of the school.

Leaders or managers should constantly strive to improve students' performance by improving teachers' performance. They should promote their teachers' expectations, assist them in setting objectives, and provide guidance and support to improve their performance, and give feedback on their performance.

For performance management to be successful, the team leader's skills and engagement, and the quality of his/her relationship with the teachers are important factors. This is achieved by providing teachers with support to solve their problems, and persistent opportunities for capacity building and self-assessment. Together, they should set objectives that guide the strategies for improving performance (pp. 52-53).

**Managerial strategies for improving school performance**

Strategies are plans for organizations to achieve success and show better performance. These strategies began to be applied in the domain of economy in order to gain profits and satisfy customers. Later on, they became important even for other domains. According to different researches, organizations using strategic managerial skills show higher performance.

Organizational managers often face many unsafe situations. It is through strategic managerial skills that they decide which actions to take. Even the best strategies may fail if the management does not properly implement or evaluate them (Robbins and Coulter, 2012, p. 225).

It is important for the school to continuously improve its performance, move forward, and through education leaders, to prepare students for their self-governance. This happens when students instead of learning about democracy abstractly are given chance to see that action, or be part of it by participating in school governance (Novak, 2002, p. 159).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The current research was conducted in a few schools operating under the municipality of Vitia (which comprises of 20 schools in total, with 20 school principals and 670 teachers). Four principals and 100 teachers of four different schools, randomly selected, were sample of our research. Also, part of the research was an education official at the Municipal Education Directorate.

A review of the data from the selected literature was done; the collection of qualitative data was achieved through semi-structured interview method with the education official, whereas the interviews were conducted with four school principals. The questionnaires were offered to teachers in order to collect quantitative data on the influence of principal in improving school performance.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Analysis of questionnaires conducted with teachers**

Of 100 participant teachers, 22 of them strongly agree that their school performance is enhanced as a result of good managerial skills of the school principal; 47 agree, 9 are not sure, 19 disagree, and 3 strongly disagree. That the school principal engages the staff to have a high performance is claimed by 27 of the teachers who strongly agree, 42 agree, 4 are not sure, 23 disagree, and 4 strongly disagree. 18 out of 100 teachers strongly agree that the principal shares responsibilities and duties with others in order to have a high performance, 49 of them agree, 7 are not sure, 21 disagree, and 5 strongly disagree. 25 of the teachers fully agree that their principals regularly plan, supervise, and evaluate the performance process, 37 teachers agree, 9 are not sure, 20 disagree, and 9 strongly disagree. 21 of the teachers strongly agree that the principal of their school supports and rewards teachers' performance to have a high performance, 36 agree, 7 are not sure, 32 disagree, and 4 strongly disagree. That their school principal develops and disseminates good practices in school to enhance performance is claimed by 24 teachers who strongly agree. 42 out of 100 agree on this regard, 8 are not sure, 17 disagree, and 9 disagree at all. 29 of teachers strongly agree that their school principal endeavors and helps to increase teachers' performance, 38 agree, 11 are not sure, 18 of them disagree, and 4 strongly disagree. 32 teachers fully agree that their school principal develops good relationships with the staff to improve school performance, 41 agree, 7 are not sure, 14 disagree, and 6 strongly disagree. 28 teachers strongly agree that their school principal uses strategies to increase school performance, 36 agree, 8 are not sure, 19 disagree, and 9 strongly disagree. 33 of teachers strongly agree that the performance of their school is constantly improved as a result of the effective work of their school principal, 39 agree, 8 are not sure, 14 disagree, and 6 disagree at all.

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**Analysis of the interview with the education official**

Mr. Zijadin Ahmeti, the Education Official at the Municipal Education Directorate of Viti, states that good management influences school's performance greatly. He points out that the role of the principal in this regard is enormous as s/he contributes positively to the school development through management.

While some of the principals take full responsibilities in school management, the others are less-responsible. The majority of principals have attended trainings on school management by attending the modules which provide space to study every step of the management. Practically, school management is hampered by the limited budget of the school. Each principal plans based on school's development plan, but for various reasons, especially economic ones, s/he cannot meet his/her expectations, which then influence the performance of the school.

Mr. Ahmeti says that principals should manage the school properly even with the existing conditions. They are responsible for finding various donors for staff training, co-operation with the community, the School Board, the Parent Council, the Teachers Council, the Students Council, etc. Managing all these bodies within the school and co-operating with members outside the school provides success to the school. The principal should develop a strategy for enhancing the quality of education to improve school performance.

**Analysis of interviews with school principals**

Mr. Mujë Tafa, the principal of gymnasium upper-secondary school "Kuvendi i Lezhës" says that it is good managerial skills that regulate the organization's work, the staff relations, and the duties and responsibilities of each member of the school. This way, the school works well and its performance is normally enhanced. He also adds that the strategy to enhance and improve the performance is through collaboration with all school workers, as well as with the community by creating a mutual trust which contributes to finishing every duty and responsibility that belongs to him as a principal. This school's principal continuously and accurately supervises and evaluates school's performance, despite the unsatisfactory available infrastructure conditions. He is pleased with the current performance of the school he manages, and highly appreciates the good professional preparation the teachers have. He further claims that this is even proved by students' average grade success in the last period. In the near future, he plans to improve the performance even further, mainly by improving infrastructure conditions, and by cooperating much more with the school staff, the Municipal Education Directorate, the Mayor, various organizations to find donors in meeting school projects, and all this will definitely enhance the level of performance.

The principal of the lower secondary school "Njazi Azemi" in Sllatina, Mr. Asllan Fana argues that good school management plays a very important and influential role in school's performance. He adds that in order to enhance school performance, he organizes competitions in and outside school environments. With this commitment, the performance of teachers and students advances, claims he. Mr. Fana claims to be very vigilant in the entire teaching process, and tries to track the achievements in the educational processes. He is really satisfied with the school's achievements he manages. Different results, cooperation with other schools, twinning with the 9-year school "Bajram Curri" from Durrës, and many other activities are the best indicators for the successes of his school. Of course he is aware that more can be done, but given the limited opportunities in material terms, it is difficult to achieve all the foreseen projects that enhance school's performance.

In the interview conducted with the principal of the vocational upper-secondary school "Jonuz Zejnullahu" in Viti, Mr. Njazi Lutfiu shares the opinion that it is good managerial skills that contribute greatly in improving school's performance. He fully implements the MEST Administrative Instructions on Advancement and Autonomy of Vocational Education and Training Institutions, and the School Regulation for Educational Workers and Students approved by the Municipal Assembly as strategies to achieve success. The implementation of personal and positive attributes and all other human characteristics that lead to continuous improvement of quality in education also are great contributors in this regard. Coordination with the professional actives, co-operation and sharing responsibilities of the School Board Council, Parents Council, Students Council and all other accompanying committees established within the school give a tremendous contribution too. All these influence the performance of the school he leads. He claims to supervise and evaluate the performance process continuously in the school he manages, because it is the duty and responsibility of the school principal to influence the correction of the gaps and other needs of the school.

This school's principal is satisfied with the performance of the school he runs, although an unreal opinion prevailed for years about this school. Now, another belief and approach towards this institution exist, because its mission and vision creates opportunities for a much larger perspective for new generations. To enhance school performance, Mr. Lutfiu says he will try to be on the line of responsibilities prescribed on him, never hesitating to cooperate with all potential actors, who can influence the quality of education.

The lower-secondary school principal of "Nazmi Pajaziti" in Radivojc, Mr. Nezir Hasani says the principal can have a great influence on the performance of school through co-operation with other actors at school. He says he has created a collaborative atmosphere with teachers, parents, and students to achieve the highest results. The principal

of this school emphasizes that he continuously supervises the performance process, starting from internal evaluation, checking daily, weekly, monthly, and annual plans, as well as monitoring and observing teachers, and the checking the reports of the regional inspectors who conduct external evaluations. Then, all these are compared to the expected results to take the needed steps. He claims to be satisfied with what his school has achieved so far, but to constantly look for more.

### **DISCUSSION**

What was said in the literature review section was also confirmed by the findings, where good school's management greatly influences school's performance. Most of the teachers expressed their satisfaction with the management their schools provide, but there were also unsatisfied ones. Most of the teachers are not satisfied with the support and reward the school principal provides. There were many who did not agree that their principals engaged all teachers equally in the performance enhancing, that their principals planned, supervised, and evaluated the performance process and used strategies to enhance performance. Some of them were not sure whether the principal contributes to increasing teachers' performance or not.

From the interview conducted with the education official, it is revealed that if the principal manages the school in a fair way the performance will be enhanced, although this does not happen to all principals, because not all of them take their responsibilities equally. And besides this, the infrastructure conditions may also be an obstacle to the development of school performance. The principal should cooperate with all internal and external stakeholders, and find donors to fund projects to improve school conditions. Most of them are trained on school management, so they need to know how to manage the school in all respects.

The management, according to teachers, regulates the whole school performance and the relationship between the staff by sharing duties and responsibilities.

Principals use appropriate co-operation with all members of the school by creating mutual trust, meeting their duties and responsibilities as principals, taking responsibilities and implementing administrative regulations and instructions, developing competitions to manage achievements, coordinating professional actives, co-operating and sharing responsibilities with other members of the school, continuously monitoring the performance to see achievements and shortcomings, etc. And most of the obstacles in this regard were unfavorable conditions at school, and the lack of financial means to support projects that would increase the quality of learning.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. School performance is much more related to the quality of people working there than the technical conditions.
2. Continuous assessment of school performance by the principal determines the level of achievements, and finds out management shortcomings.
3. Collaboration with all school members, sharing duties and responsibilities, i.e. the commitment of the staff improves management and enhances the performance.
4. Good relations, support, reward, and motivation of the staff positively influence the performance of the school.
5. The dissemination of good practices and positive attitudes of the principal increases the results of the performance.
6. The continuous effort of the school principal to improve students' performance improves teachers' performance, which consequently enhances the school performance in general.
7. The positive management strategies influence higher school performance.
8. Principals should be more responsible while managing the school, because this influences the performance of school.
9. The principal should cooperate with all actors inside and outside of school, as well as find donors to carry out school projects in order to increase the performance.
10. Principals should apply in practice the management knowledge obtained from "School Leadership and Management" training, in order to improve school management to enhance performance.
11. Principals should use special strategies for school management and find new ways to increase performance.
12. Principals should be more careful in engaging other members of the school, supporting and rewarding teachers for their work, etc.

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