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# Teoretické, empirické a legislatívne determinanty vo vzdelávaní riadiacich pracovníkov v SR

## Theoretical, Empirical and Legislative Determinants of Education of Education Managers in the Slovak Republic

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#### **Abstract**

Outputs of different national and international surveys point to the fact that one of the biggest problems of schools in Slovakia is their insufficient funding. Another shortcoming in school seems to be the effective training of school managers. The key to success in the education sector is the degree of its ability to bring new ideas that are useful for the development of theory and that are in practice creating new or added value. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare such workers for the education sector, not limited only to teachers. Educational administrators are no longer expected to be merely good managers but leaders of schools as learning organizations. The paper outlines the theoretical basis of education of school managers and a brief description of its implementation in accordance with current legislation through various providers is focused on the competencies necessary for successful performance as a school principal and to evaluate the scope of powers given to schools in terms of their optimal needs in relation to their real needs and requirements.

**Keywords:** Education management. School leader. Functional education. Lifelong learning. Key competences. Implementation of legislation.

#### Introduction

The requirements of the present orient the process of management of educational institutions towards the environment of market mechanism; from education managers, it requires a substantially wide range of knowledge, skills and competences, cyber principles respected in managerial practice, and principles of human resources management which significantly determine a person-oriented approach (Pisoňová et al., 2021).

In the current new conditions of schools being legal entities operating in the competitive environment (Hašková, Pisoňová, 2019; Hašková, 2019), the management and organization of education requires the provision of adequate rational management effectively using all available resources (Pisoňová, Hašková, 2022).

School leaders in OECD countries included Slovak Republic are facing challenges and pressures with the rising expectations for schools and schooling in a century characterized by rapid and constant technological innovation, massive migration and mobility, and increasing economic globalization (OECD, 2001). Management is one of the most important but also the most difficult and most problematic areas in social activities in general. In education, the need for clarity, sobriety, but also the awareness of the complexity of relationships not only within the school, but also in the relations of the school with regional self-government, with parents, local community and the state, is particularly important. As countries struggle to transform their educational systems to prepare all young people with the knowledge and skills needed to function in a rapidly changing world, the roles and expectations for school leaders are changing radically. Effective school leadership is increasingly viewed as central to large-scale education reform and to improved educational outcomes (Hargreaves, Halász & Pont, 2007).

### Theoretical background of education management

An important management element enabling an organisation to achieve the set objectives is a headteacher. Management is a practical activity. It is a subjective, purposeful human activity aimed at setting the right objectives, and the most appropriate paths and means to achieve them; management is the summary of all activities that need to be carried out to ensure the function of the organisation (Sedlák, 2008; Malejčík, 2006; Veber et al., 2009). In the case of education management, the accent on social management principles, cyber principles, and human resources management principles, which significantly determine the person-centred approach, is understandable. Considering the fact that it is necessary to make appropriate changes within the schools themselves, these changes should be aimed at the field of internal management in order to streamline their internal organization and support the managerial administration, and the expansion of various support and service duties.

Management theorists claim that up to 40% of performance depends on management. Any mistakes in management will greatly affect a large number of people, each change affects a considerable number of citizens, and therefore it is a big gamble to allow oneself to make a mistake in the management and the concept of education (Zelina in Hašková, Pisoňová 2019).

As it is in holistic approaches, each and every element or part within the large and complex school system as a whole inevitably has a context that influences it (Shaked, H., Schechter, Ch., 2017). The purpose of leadership and management education is to foster effective leaders and to support them in their headteacher roles. Headteacher preparation is regarded in many countries as crucial aspect of school development and progression (Cowie,

Crawford, 2009). The scope of teachers' professional responsibilities is determined mainly by the following processes: administrative, personnel-related (recruitment and reorganisation of didactic vacancies), legal, financial, political (including state education policy) (Cooper et al., 2016). Most often, the role of the headteacher is performed by a teacher who relates to a particular educational institution and has taught at the school for years. By gaining new competences in school management and leadership, the teachers are given a chance to change their professional roles (Eger, Pisoňová & Tomczyk, 2017). Head teachers cannot anymore function as building manager tasked with adhering to district rules, carrying out regulations and avoiding mistakes. They must fulfil roles of educational visionaries and change agents, instructional leaders, curriculum and assessment experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special program administrators, community builders (Pisoňová, Hašková, 2022).

Educational leaders face unpreceded accountability pressures in what is clearly a 'results driven' business. As these environmental pressures intensify, leaders and managers require greater understanding, skills, and resilience to sustain their institutions (Adams, Muthiah, 2020). To support the development of programmes that would support the training of strong school leaders, a team of researchers from the Stanford School of Education conducted a nationwide study of models of pre-graduate and further education for headteachers (Pisoňová, Hašková, 2022). Research has shown that the programmes provide the coherent curriculum based on theories and principles from school managers' practice; they have strengthened reform initiatives. Staff training in this area requires identification of those areas that need to be improved as well as special analysis of the catalogue of roles played by school managers. An in-depth analysis in this area determines further professionalising of the analysed occupation and emphasises the attractiveness of professional career in the school management sector (Alonderiene, Majauskaite, 2016; Clarke, 2016). The aim of each organisation, school, is to install a headteacher who will enhance it (Kubeš et al., 2004).

The main strategic goal of the management of schools and educational organizations is to ensure high-quality education provided to society (Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2008; Pont, Nusche & Hopkins, 2008). To achieve this in society, it is necessary to create opportunities for adequate professional managerial training for employees involved in the management of schools and school facilities and in the management of various educational organizations (Bitterová, Hašková & Pisoňová, 2011; Eger, Pisoňová & Tomczyk, 2017). At the same, time this goal requires management that combines social vision with effective management skills, and this requires a staff in education and training organizations with capabilities being knowledgeable in networks, technology transfer, capacity building, elaboration of teaching materials and their application in teaching, being knowledgeable in pedagogical research in order to facilitate and streamline access to new knowledge and acquisition of new knowledge, to create new learning environments and to develop highly

qualified education systems corresponding to societal and economic needs while respecting regional specificities, to accept new educational opportunities provided by new, modern technologies and encourage the use of these technologies for educational purposes, to use technical, educational, managerial and institutional systems for the development of the quality of educational opportunities (Pisoňová, Hašková, 2022).

Legal support as well as the content of functional education and its equivalent in higher education institutions are based on empirical surveys on educational needs of leading pedagogical staff. The curriculum is based on the empirical trends from abroad, managerial science, and examples of good practice. In 2008, OECD published results of a study in frame of which school leadership policies and practices of 21 countries around the world were analyzed and compared (Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2008; Pont, Nusche & Hopkins, 2008). Aim of the study was to find out answers to such questions as what leadership roles are most effective in improving student learning, or how to allocate and distribute different leadership tasks, but also, how to ensure current and future school leaders develop the right skills for effective leadership. However, dominantly the study was focused on innovative practices that provide good examples of systemic approaches to school leadership (models of school organization and management that distribute education leadership roles in innovative ways and promising practices for preparing and developing school leaders including the head teachers). The report's authors concluded, that systemic leadership needs to come more from the head teachers themselves and from the agencies committed to working with them. One of the new roles the head teachers have to fulfil, according to the authors, is to work beyond their school borders so that they can contribute not only to the success of their own school but to the success of the system as a whole. Besides that, they suggested that top-down approaches are not likely to work well. Preparation programs that encourage industrial models of leadership and management that focus on control are no longer appropriate for creating effective school leaders for professional learning communities in the 21st century. Effective leaders in contemporary schools must be prepared to deal with complexity and facilitate the learning and leadership of others (Peterson, 2002; Schleicher, 2012; Jacobson, Cypres, 2012; Simon, 2015). Currently educational organizations must additionally, to providing basic educational functions, reflect continuously increasing very heterogeneous requirements of their customers, that is either their students or legal representatives of children.

The scope of rights and duties of a school head teacher in Slovakia is set by the Act on State Administration and School Self-Governance in Education. A head teacher is responsible for observance of generally binding rules, study plans and syllabi, for professional and educational standard of educational work, for effective use of funds allotted for provision of the school activities, and for property management (Pisoňová, Hašková, 2022).

## Management of educational institutions in the context of empirical findings

The identification of the key competences needed under the current conditions of Slovak education for the successful management of a school (for successful performance in the position of school manager, leader) was based on an analysis of the reflection of the management competences of the heads of pedagogical and professional staff working in the position of school principal (Hašková, Pisoňová 2019). There where perceived competences as an integrated set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and experience that are necessary for the qualified performance of certain activities, performances and decision-making, which are reflected inprofessional performance (Obdržálek, Polák et al., 2007).

The research results (Hašková, Pisoňová, 2019) showed that to improve the work of Slovak school principals, to make them more successful and efficient, the training of the principals in service (i.e., programs of their further education) should involve study matters such as:

- priority determination and time management;
- delegating tasks and responsibilities;
- forming and development of organizational abilities;
- independent decision making; decision making in conflict, under stressful conditions;
- communication skills, carrying out difficult discussions, mastering objections;
- emotion management (acceptance of failure, critique, accountability of mistakes made).

Schools and school principals are also moving within a functioning market environment, in which a distinct competitive struggle is typical. In this environment of competition, schools have to fight for their existence constantly, particularly by improving the quality of the educational process and by providing other services that current or potential customers (the pupil's or student's legal representatives) are interested in. There is a growing demand for additional funds from extra-budgetary sources, the implementation of marketing strategies, effective management of teams, and so on.

All this requires a minimum of basic orientation from the principal in managing accounting, marketing, project management, educational and related law, people leadership, and so on. Applied to management practice, it is the need for advanced provision of all primary and secondary resources, enabling the most optimal outcomes of education. This need is shown schematically in the graph of Figure 1.

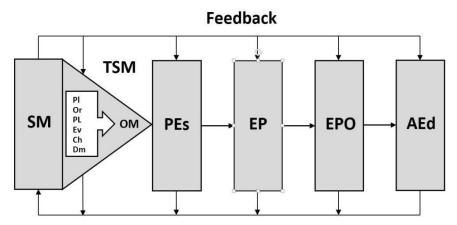


Figure 1. The principal's tools in the process of optimizing outcomes of education.

SM – Subject of Management (principal, school's leadership), OM – Object of Management. Specific Objects of Management: PEs – the school's employees, EP – educational process, EPO – outcomes of the educational process, AEd – application of the educated in the labor market, TSM – Tools of the Subject of Management, (the principal's tools in the managing process: Pl – Planning, Or – Organizing, PL – People Leadership, Ev – Evaluation, Ch – Checking, Dm – Decision making).

Source: Pisoňová in Pisoňová and Hašková (2022, p. 254)

Figure 1 shows the interconnectedness and correspondence between the individual variables of the optimization processas well as the complexity of these relationships. It is clear from the diagram that pedagogical management is influenced by many other factors. First and foremost, it is represented by the principal who, through his or her tools, influences the school's employees (both kinds of employees: pedagogical as well as the operational). Under this leadership, the teaching staff either is, or is not able to ensure a high-quality education process (rearing and teaching process) and consequently its outcomes (the pupils or students' value system and acquired education) and application of school graduates in the labor market (success of students in higher education, in the case of graduates of vocational secondary schools, colleges and universities success in the labor market). At the same time, the way of managing and coordinating the individual sub-systems is within the full competence of the principal.

Based on the research findings (Eger, Pisoňová & Tomczyk, 2017; Ševkušić, Malinić & Teodorović, 2019) just these management areas absent in practice, or they are presented in on an insufficient level. The reason is very often questioned quality of head teacher (of school and school facilities) managerial preparation. This regards mainly issues of e.g., economic and financial management of educational organizations, managerial accounting, conflict adjustment, media preparation, self-management.

According to another of the current surveys (project *Learning makes sense*, 2016 – 2019, of the program *Effective Public Administration* supported by the European Social Fund) this education, which is compulsory for each head teacher, helped only to one-fifth (20%) of the head teachers in their acting within the given leading (managerial) position. The majority of the head teachers (65.9%) (Pisoňová, Hašková, 2022).

## Legislative aspects of the educational process of education managers

In the period prior to the application of the Act No. 138/2019 Coll. and the Decree No. 361/2019 Coll. on education in professional development, research on the level of managerial training for headteachers in the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic was carried out. The main objective of the study was to analyse the educational needs of headteachers in the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic with focus on all key areas. The main objective was specified to set the following partial objectives: to identify the level of content of functional education or completed managerial training in pedagogical management, economic management, legal management, school management, and project management. Recommendations by the Slovak respondents are that the training should contain less theory and more examples from practice, respondents considered the training to be sufficient. According to the respondents' statements, there was a lack of information on economic management. The recommendation was also to change everything. Stricter conditions for obtaining education were also recommended by respondents. Respondents recommended that the training should be provided by practitioners; and some of them suggested to cancel the training completely (Pisoňová et al, 2021).

In accordance with the valid Act No. 138/2019 Coll. on pedagogical staff and professional staff and its amendment No. 414/2021 Coll., Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 361/2019 on Proffesional Development Education, it is necessary to carry out managerial training in the professional development of Slovak education managers in the form of functional education or as part of bachelor's or master's studies focused on education management. Functional education is organized in the range of at least 220 hours as an approved functional education program divided into a basic program and extension programmes and modules. The legal support and change of the content of functional training modules was based on the results of empirical surveys on the educational needs of managers before the above-mentioned legislation. The content and objectives of the programmes, the competences of functional education programmes' graduates correspond to those of the leading pedagogical and professional staff in the professional standard of the headteacher. Graduate of the basic module and extention modules of the functional education program can evaluate a competence profile of pedagogical and professional employees in relation to the goals of the school education program and to the professional standards, can apply in management practice the correct procedure for creating the concept of the school or school facility, the strategic plan of the school or school facility, can use their personal preconditions in the management of a school or school facility etc. The legislation introduces the institute of management portfolio as an output of functional education.

The provider is the Methodology and Pedagogy Centre (an organisation established by the Ministry of Education); the Centre for Lifelong Learning of the Pedagogical Faculty of the Catholic University in Ružomberok and the Centre for Further Education of the Comenius University in Bratislava are the providers through lifelong learning and further professional education. Lifelong learning consists of school education and further education following the level of education and acquisition of professional competences necessary for the performance of management activities (Pisoňová et al., 2021).

The equivalent of functional education is provided by the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra by the accredited study programme Education Management and Public Administration, which replaces functional education. Due to this step, the Slovak Republic approached the developed OECD countries, which carry out managerial training in close continuity of theory with practice, that is with an emphasis on implementation of theoretical knowledge from management into specific management situations. The study includes compulsory, optional compulsory and optional university courses, as well as management training of personnel skills and compulsory management practice. The first degree of the full-time curriculum is divided into a period of 3 academic years, while the second, master's degree, into 2 academic years. In external form of study, the length of study is a year longer, in each of the above degrees, bachelor's and master's. Successful completion of the study is conditioned by passing a state exam in one main and several compulsory elective subjects, as well as successfully defending a bachelor's or master's thesis before a state-exam commission, whose members are university professors, associate professors and assistant professors with third degree education.

The profile of a graduate of the tertiary study program Management of Education and Public Administration is a parallel of the functional education program Management of Education and is based on the requirements set by the Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education. Its content is divided into a basic module and four extension modules.

Graduate of the basic module and extention modules of the functional education program can create a draft of an internal regulation, focused on a certain area of management, usable in one's own management practice, can implement in management practice the specifics of various types of planning and plans with an emphasis on the strategic management of the school organization, can apply the correct procedure of creating a strategic (conceptual) plan of the organization during management practice. Understands the importance of methods of internal and external analysis of the organization,

can choose the appropriate strategy of the organization, and knows the appropriate implementation tools of the chosen strategy and the mechanism. Understands the process of school management and school facilities, i.e., the managed section, in the context of the content of managerial functions, has knowledge in the field of management and financing of schools and school facilities. Knows the concept of school marketing and can implement it in school management practice. Has knowledge about controlling and its importance, hasknowledge about internal and external control mechanisms of the school organization. Also is able to use his potential in the process of managing the organization, can design a self-evaluation plan for one's own school or one's own school facility. Knows the legislative framework of management, the cycle of financial management (financial planning, financial decision-making, organization of financial processes, financial analysis and control) and the possibilities of multi-sourced financing of schools and school facilities in connection with legal standards and their compliance to ensure institutional stability, can implement in his management practice principles of the procedure for resolving the issue of covert leadership, resolving conflicts, creating work teams and creating conditions for the elimination of sociopathological manifestations in workplace behavior etc. In accordance with requirements of the Slovak Accreditation Agency, subjects included in the study program can be taught only by university teachers who reach and can prove their adequate involvement in research activities and national and international research projects in the given areas (areas of the given subjects), and have sufficient amount relevant publications (connected with their research activities) (Pisoňová, Hašková, 2022).

As a result of changes in accreditation criteria and practice requirements, since the academic year 2021/2022, it is possible to study at the bachelor level in the study programme Special Pedagogy, Pedagogy, Education Management and master level in the study programme Special Pedagogy, Social Pedagogy, Education Management (Pisoňová, Hašková 2022).

#### Conclusions

Under the changing social and economic conditions at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century a great deal of responsibilities were passed from the central authorities to local municipalities and individual schools. New demands require new professional competences and calls for the professionalization of school leaders have become part of a wider movement for school reforms and support in the system of education of school managers. Previously, a school leader represented a practicing teacher with added technical and administrative duties, whilst a contemporary school leader should be a professional, a full-time manager responsible for and developing instructional, human, financial and physical resources to ensure the sustainable quality of the education which the schooloffers and provides.

The mission of the school leaders has become to cope successfully with managing changes and school improvement (Hašková, Pisoňová 2019). The support of education providers in the field of school management is a qualitative stimulus in their dynamic growth and development based on scientific research and its application in practice, the implementation of legislative standards.

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