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## **MANAGERIAL SKILLS OF TEACHERS IN SCHOOLS OF LATVIA IN THE CONTEXT OF LIFELONG LEARNING**

### **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to discuss the changing roles and skills of a teacher in context of lifelong learning. This has been accomplished by the review of the literature on management, managerial skills in business field as well as education. The results of this practical research outline teachers' understanding of managerial qualities and readiness to act as managers of teaching/learning process.

*Key words:* management, managerial skills, teacher's role, lifelong learning

### **Introduction**

Skills and competencies of teachers in the 21st century face new demands and challenges (Downes, 2010; Minocha et al., 2011; Alvarez, 2009; Thach & Murphy, 1995; Shaikh & Khoja, 2011; Selvi, 2010). The teachers need to assist students to acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding. Nowadays students need to know how to plan their learning and be responsible for this process so it proves that traditional teaching approach might not produce desired results any more (Downes, 2010; Minocha et al., 2011; Alvarez, 2009; Thach & Murphy, 1995). It is also expected from 21st century teacher to collaborate with all sectors of the educational community in planning, managing, implementing, and evaluating programs (Shaikh & Khoja, 2011; Selvi, 2010). Besides professional, pedagogical, psychological and methodological skills and competencies, teachers should also have managerial skills in order to help their students learn to learn.

### **Theoretical background**

If such terms as 'management', 'manager', 'managerial skills' are mentioned, as a matter of fact they are connected with business world meaning the coordination of the efforts of people to accomplish goals and objectives using available resources efficiently and effectively. All this include processes with various activities and people managing them mainly with an aim to gain profit. Managers are those who design and facilitate the production of useful outcomes from any kind of a company. In order to do that managers should have the ability to make business decisions and lead subordinates within a company, in other words, they need certain managerial skills. According to Katz (2007) the most common skills are:

- 1) human skills – the ability to interact and motivate;
- 2) technical skills – the knowledge and proficiency in the trade; and
- 3) conceptual skills – the ability to understand concepts, develop ideas and implement strategies.

As Gore and Begun (2012) point out that management is a practical skill and it is very essential for effective functioning of an organization and it finds a place in

all kinds of organizations, including educational ones. Management can be viewed from two aspects:

- 1) 'management' as a subject taught at schools;
- 2) 'management' as a process resulting in effective managers.

Schermerhorn and Chappell (2000) define four functions of a management process:

- 1) planning;
- 2) organizing;
- 3) leading;
- 4) controlling.

Donnelly, Gibson and Ivanchevich (1991) add the fifth function which is personnel selection. These authors classify the roles of a manager in three groups with the following managerial functions:

- 1) interpersonal roles;
- 2) informational roles;
- 3) decision making roles.

Management process with its business accomplishment cannot be overtaken and put 'copy/paste' in education field, such as schools, in teaching/learning process because every field has its own aspects and characteristics, but similarities can be found. Business field deals with 'controlling' function, but in a teaching/learning process it is 'evaluation' when a teacher evaluates students' work. Feedback is a very important aspect here because it works both – a teacher gives feedback to students and students give their feedback to a teacher about succeed and failed activities. On the basis of this feedback a teacher analyses and plans further steps in the teaching/learning process.

Mintzberg (1973) identifies a set of ten roles commonly filled by managers. These roles fall into the same three categories as defined by the above mentioned authors:

1. informational roles – how a manager exchanges and process information:
  - *monitor* – collecting information from organizations, both from inside and outside the organization,
  - *disseminator* – communicating information to members within the organization,
  - *spokesperson* – representing the organization to the outsiders.
2. decisional roles – how a manager uses information in decision making:
  - *entrepreneur* – initiating new ideas to improve organizational performance,
  - *disturbance handlers* – taking corrective action to cope with adverse situation,
  - *resource allocators* – allocating human, physical, and monetary resources,
  - *negotiator* – negotiating with trade unions or any other stakeholders.
3. interpersonal roles – how a manager interacts with other people:
  - *figurehead* – ceremonial and symbolic role,
  - *leadership* – leading organization in terms of recruiting, motivating, etc.,
  - *liaison* – liaising with external bodies and public relation activities.

Having analysed various theoretical sources about management and managerial skills the authors of this paper hold the following point of view – a teacher might be

an expert in his/her field, but that's no guarantee of success, teachers nowadays need a set of skills that are particularly well-suited to times of change and challenge:

- 1) *organizational skills* – set priorities, delegate, motivate and develop students;
- 2) *communication skills* – get your point across, inspire others to achieve better results and demonstrate emotional intelligence;
- 3) *collaboration skills* – so it is possible to value and celebrate differences, build rapport, form alliances and negotiate effectively;
- 4) *critical thinking skills* – approach problem solving logically, research options, avoid biases and focus on meaningful data to draw the right conclusions – even under pressure;
- 5) *emotional intelligence* – build your self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management, be a source of energy, empathy, earned trust and optimism;
- 6) *evaluation on the basis of feedback* – ‘performance review’ in both ways: a teacher – students and students – a teacher.

A teacher's role involves more than simply standing in front of a classroom and lecturing. A changing role of a teacher may cause unease for those who have entrenched in traditional understanding and approaches of teaching/learning process. An effective teacher understands that today teacher's profession has become multifaceted. Thach and Murphy (1995) consider that teachers are responsible for operating educational system and they need strong and efficient professional competencies. According to Shaikh (2009, 2011) and Selvi (2010), it is necessary to redefine teacher's skills because a teacher transfers changes into educational system, hence, a teacher needs new skills that must deal with all these new changes effectively.

The change of a teacher's role is underlined in Hattie's (2012) classification of 8 ‘mind frames’. If teachers:

- 1) believe that their fundamental task is to evaluate the effect of their teaching on students' learning and achievement,
- 2) believe that success and failure in student learning are about what they, as teachers, did or did not do... teachers are change agents,
- 3) want to talk more about the learning than the teaching,
- 4) see assessment as feedback about their impact,
- 5) engage in dialogue not monologue,
- 6) enjoy the challenge and never retreat to ‘doing their best’,
- 7) believe that it is their role to develop positive relationships in classroom,
- 8) inform all about the language of learning, then they are more likely to have major impacts on student learning.

From the aspect of lifelong learning a teacher should teach students to learn not only in a school, but the whole life. It demands students' understanding about learning in continuously changing world. Knowledge is not an issue which can be given, schools and teachers can only provide methods how to gain knowledge. And, no doubt, a teacher is a key person because a process is implemented exactly the way how a teacher manages it.

Hattie (2009) gives five major dimensions of teachers as ‘change agents’ explaining that such teachers:

- 1) identify the most important ways to represent the subjects they teach – they know how to integrate new knowledge with students' prior knowledge, they can adapt lessons according to students' needs,
- 2) create optimal classroom climate for learning – it is based on trust where mistakes are welcome and they do carry fear effect,
- 3) monitor learning and provide feedback – teachers are aware that a typical lesson never goes as planned and they are flexible to any changes,
- 4) believe all students can reach the success criteria – teachers show a passion that all students can succeed,
- 5) influence a wide range of student outcomes not solely limited to test scores – teachers help students to develop deep and conceptual understandings, teach them to develop multiple learning strategies, encourage to take risks in students learning, etc.

From the aspect of lifelong learning where students learn to become their own teachers, the concept of a teacher as a manager is very important in an effective teaching/learning process. The effectiveness of teaching methodologies and styles have been examined for years, but the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) collected data from 11 countries and identified five dimensions which Turner-Bisset (2001) listed them as follows:

- 1) Knowledge of substantive curriculum, areas and content.
- 2) Pedagogic skills, including the acquisition of and ability to use a repertoire of teaching strategies.
- 3) Reflection and ability to be self-critical, the hallmark of a teacher's professionalism.
- 4) Empathy and commitment to the acknowledgement of the dignity of others.
- 5) Managerial competence, as teachers assume a range of managerial responsibilities within and beyond the classroom.

Teaching/learning process is a complex act. Danielson (1996) estimates that a teacher makes more than 3,000 nontrivial decisions every day. For example, Hunter compared teaching to surgery, "where you think fast on your feet and do the best you can with the information you have. You must be very skilled, very knowledgeable, and exquisitely well trained, because neither the teacher nor the surgeon can say, 'Everybody sit still until I figure out what in the heck we're gonna do next'" (Goldberg, 1990, p. 43).

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development outlines the key characteristics of teachers which emerged as hallmarks of the teaching/learning process:

- willingness to put in the necessary time,
- love for the age group they teach,
- an effective classroom management style,
- positive relationships with students,
- consistent excellence,
- in-depth content knowledge,
- capacity for growth,
- steadiness of purpose and teaching personality.

Rokeach (1973) points out a set of values which are important for a teacher as a manager. He classifies them in 2 groups:

- 1) instrumental values which refer to preferable models of behavior,
- 2) terminal values which refer to the goals that a person would like to achieve during his lifetime.

On the basis of Rokeach's framework of values, the list of character qualities for a teacher as a manager of a teaching/learning process was worked out and used for the pilot research about teachers' understanding and ranging of these qualities according to their importance.

Thus the new concept of a teacher as a manager of a teaching/learning process requires consideration of strategies and procedures to increase flexibility so that the curriculum:

- 1) is delivered through different teaching methods,
- 2) meets the needs of all learning styles,
- 3) helps students to link theory with practical life,
- 4) encourages students to get involved in learning process and be responsible for their own learning, as well as to understand outcomes and have opportunities to review, record and reflect on their progress,
- 5) supports assessment for learning through teacher, peer or self-assessment.

## Methodology

The pilot research was conducted with the aim to study the readiness of teachers to be managers of a teaching/learning process. For school selection the regionality principle was observed, specifying the school location (urban/rural), the number of students, local government support, the language of institution, etc. 150 teachers from 20 schools of Latvia took part in the questionnaire. In order to evaluate teachers' readiness to become a teaching/learning process managers, they were asked to make the scale of qualities significance according to their understanding and experience.

## Results

The ranking of the research results was done. The results show that the qualities put by teachers in a certain order according to their significance arranged the following:

- 1) the most significant:
  - a) ability to cooperate (coefficient 175)
  - b) creative thinking (coefficient 172)
  - c) honesty (coefficient 163)
  - d) ability to captivate (coefficient 139)
  - e) communication (coefficient 132)
  - f) responsibility (coefficient 122).
- 2) as less important qualities are considered the following ones:
  - a) wide horizon (coefficient 56)
  - b) self-development (coefficient 43)
  - c) flexibility (coefficient 35)
  - d) self-control (coefficient 34)
  - e) ability to reflect (coefficient 22).

## Conclusions

On the one hand those qualities which were defined by teachers as of top significance stress that teachers understand and are aware of the necessity and capability to cooperate, think creatively, to have good communication skills, etc., because an effective manager of any process cannot do without them. But on the other hand, the ranking of less important managerial qualities shows that teachers are not ready for becoming managers in education field because they are not ready for continuous self-development, empathy, self-reflection, etc. – they do not consider these qualities very significant. That, for its part, means that these managerial qualities which are so important in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are not developed to students in teaching/learning process. If teachers do not hold managerial skills and qualities themselves, they are not able to teach them to their students. The above mentioned allows to make the conclusion that teachers do not see themselves as the implementers of change of paradigms in education.

The similarities of the pilot research about Latvian teachers can be drawn with the conclusion of the research carried out by Wang, Haertel and Walberg (1990) where five very important factors which teachers should be aware of in managing a teaching/learning process and helping students learn are defined:

- 1) a teacher uses such strategies which ensure students active involvement in a teaching/learning process;
- 2) meta-inquiry or thinking about own thinking; it means that a teacher explains his flow of thoughts and teaches students to stop, analyse and evaluate the result they have got and on the basis of it to plan next steps;
- 3) process of inquiry what is based on the sequence of subject knowledge;
- 4) home environment/parent support;
- 5) social relation between a teacher and students; an effective teaching/learning process takes place in a positive atmosphere.

Having analysed the above mentioned, there is no any basis to claim that all teachers in schools of Latvia are ready to become managers of a teaching/learning process and that not all of them are aware of a teacher's key role in that process.

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