



Country Background Report Slovenia

1. Background – everyday reality versus political framework?



In a principals meeting one of the Slovenian principals once said: "I am afraid we will have to stretch the day and open our hearts if we the principals want to be the mother and father to everybody in school, a friend and a caretaker, a smart entrepreneur, a skilled communicator, a legislation connoisseur and above all the first teacher and educator in school..."

Slovenian schools are given, in comparison to neighbouring European countries, relatively high autonomy in some fields. With this comes also more responsibility. The principals in general are satisfied with the degree of autonomy, yet they wish for more in some fields. The three issues the principals feel need tackling are: overburdening the teachers with administrative tasks, unbalanced wage system and the question of appointing principals and their unlimited term of office.

Primary and secondary school principals, belonging to two principal associations, often emphasize that they have found themselves in a difficult situation as a result of school overload, which they have not been properly trained for. State institution representatives see the principal as the upholder of law, state representative and system executive. The teachers, however, see the principal as the representative of the staff and their confidant. Besides dealing with the employees' problems, the principal must also deal with the conflicts among the teachers, students and parents. On top of that the principals have to

attend different seminars they often see as pointless. Because of the many tasks and decrees, issued by the legislator, they are never sure they have done all they can and they often do not do everything they have planned. Many principals today feel that they are losing their authority and are superficially and generally criticised by a layman public. Many of them are also politically influenced by the local community. Thus the results of the research carried out among principals are not surprising; half of the principals experience their work as extremely stressful. The most important reason for that is sheer quantity of managerial tasks carried out by principals and less pedagogical tasks they feel more confident with.

The situation of managing school institutions in Slovenia can also be assessed by following critical discussions regarding influencing principal appointment and removal by different political options. There have been many more or less successful attempts to change the school legislation in the past few government administrations. These sensitive political issues have always received good media coverage. Thus a feeling of tailoring school management to appoint politically acceptable people and influence school institution management has been created. Together with a complicated procedure of principal appointment these have caused many principals not to run for office again.

Principals feel that the problems they are facing could be overcome by simplifying the procedure of principal appointment, reorganizing the wage and incentive wage system, unburdening principals of the administrative tasks so that they can dedicate their time to their true mission in life and to the solving of real problems.

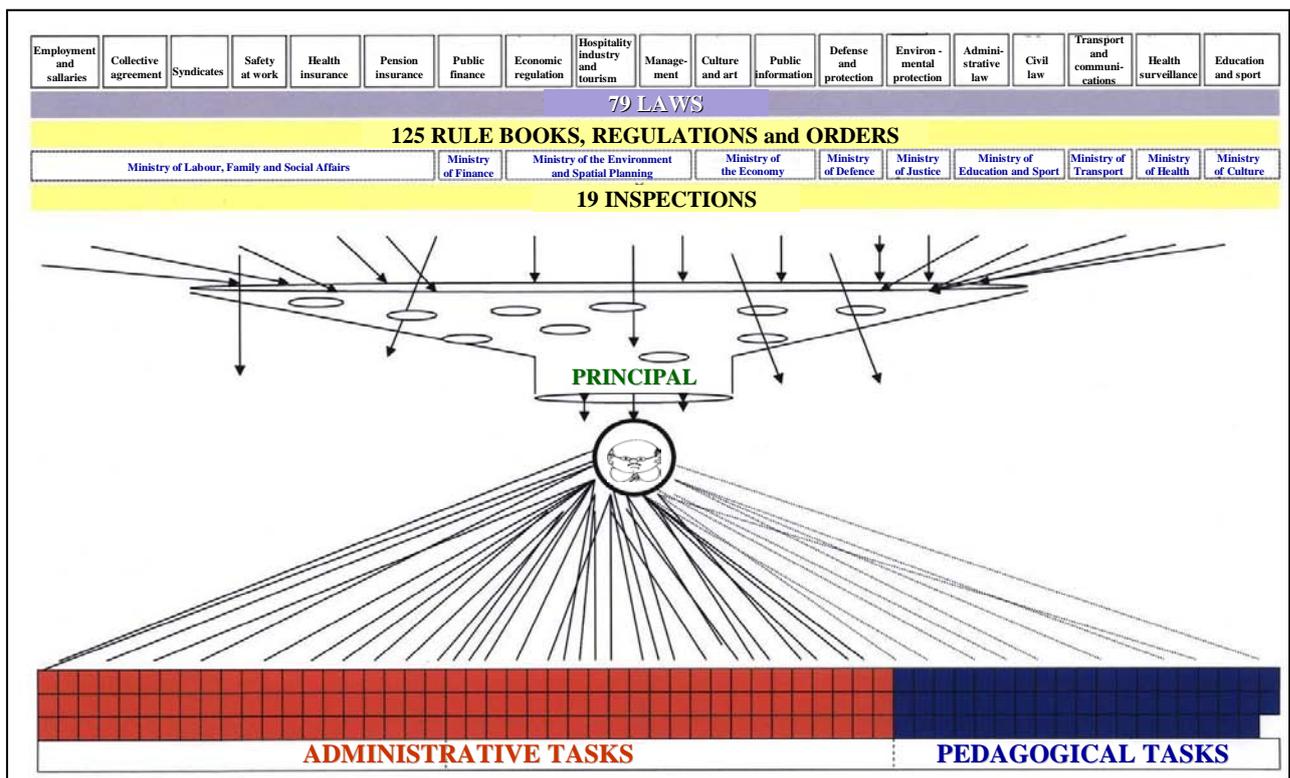
2. Context

The national context

School legislation defines precisely the role of the school leader. In Slovenia principals are, by definition, academic leaders and chief executive

officers and have besides organizing, planning and managing the activities many other responsibilities defined by the law and regulations. In an article describing the principal's powers it is written that principals perform the following tasks: they organize, plan and manage the activities, prepare development programs, draft annual programs of work, and are responsible for their execution, they are responsible for the implementation of the rights and duties of students, they manage the work of the faculty, encourage in-service education and training of educators, organize mentoring for trainees, oversee the educational activities of school teachers, monitor their work and provide advice, make proposals for professional promotion,

decide on promotion to a higher range of a wage bracket, oversee the work of school counsellors, promote the cooperation between the institution and parents (meetings with parents, parent-teacher interviews, and other forms of cooperation), inform parents on the work of school, decide upon educational measures, represent and act on behalf of schools and are accountable for performing the work within the bounds of the law, establish job classifications, employ personnel and make decisions concerning their liability, take care of the cooperation between schools and their medical services and perform other tasks according to the law and other regulations.



The authority of approving and adopting education programs is in the hands of the minister having jurisdiction over education in cooperation with the Council of Experts for General Education, whereas schools play no important role but act only as providers of education. The council of experts may form committees, groups of experts and other working

bodies for individual areas of their work. Most of the members are appointed by the minister from the ranks of experts in several fields. The council of experts among other things establishes syllabuses and curricula for the subjects or subject areas of primary and secondary schools, establishes syllabuses and the catalogues of required knowledge for the subjects of *gymnasia*

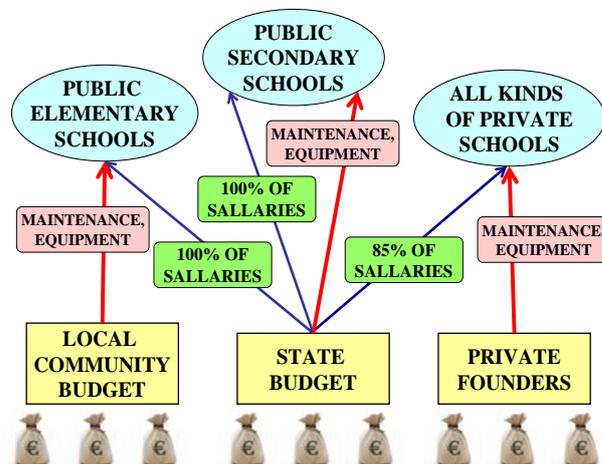
and *matura* courses, and approves textbooks and teaching aids for general-education subjects. In these fields school management does not have any direct competence.

Concerning decisions on administrative matters and performing the tasks concerning personnel, finances and organization, school boards have been founded. They are managed by superintendents, who are appointed by the minister. Local school boards perform the tasks concerning the enrolment procedure for students, keep records of redundant employees, issue consents to job classifications of schools, and perform the tasks concerning the funding assigned to them by the minister.

Slovenian schools are mostly financed from public revenues, founder's resources, less from contributions of business associations and chambers, fees paid by students, revenues from the sale of goods and services, donations and sponsorship. Expenditure of school funds for designated purposes is controlled by the appropriate body of the school inspectorate.



The state budget provides funding for the salaries of actually employed staff of all public schools (more than 95% of all schools in Slovenia are public schools). The principal decides on promotion to a higher range of a wage bracket. The state budget also provides funding for operating expenses, for the maintenance and repair of property and equipment for secondary schools, while the funding for operating expenses, for the maintenance and repair of property and equipment for elementary schools comes mainly from local community budgets.



Discussions about school autonomy and the role of the principal have been very common in the last few years in Slovenia. More autonomy means more responsibility of the management. Higher demands for quality, success and efficiency of school work, growing autonomy of the principal, opening the door to society, market-driven education and new technologies have turned school management in Slovenia into very demanding business which requires new knowledge and skills.

Autonomous acting is possible only if the participants take the set goals as their own. Therefore the principals see the higher degree of autonomy in heading towards quality, optimal and rational realization of the national curriculum and using specific school goals and conditions in realizing the internal school curriculum. The principals carry great responsibility in designing standards and criteria of school development and progress, which is one of the basic starting points of autonomy. The planned introduction of a province system in Slovenia would mean transfer of jurisdiction from state ministries to provinces, with which autonomy and responsibility of the principals and local community would increase.

The key role in understanding the school and teacher autonomy is played by the principal as the academic leader. The more centrally managed the school is and the more the principal acts only as a mouthpiece of directives from outside, the lesser is the autonomy of the school. In today's modern times the school and teachers must take into consideration different work environments,

contents and aims of teaching, and above all different students. This way the management and teachers are autonomous but also responsible for the quality of their work.

The local context

Slovenia has not yet been divided into provinces, but there are plans to do so in the near future. Present regulation places most jurisdiction of deciding and financing onto the ministry of education. Still, local communities have some jurisdiction, when it comes to appointing and removal of principals. Appointing and removal of principals is carried out by school councils, whose members are also representatives of local communities. If the founder of the school is the state (mostly secondary schools), there is one representative of the local community in the school council, while there are three representatives of the local community in school councils in elementary schools, founded by the local community. School councils appoint and remove the principals, adopt the school's development program, yearly program of work and the report on its implementation, decide to introduce above-standard and other programs, discuss the reports on educational problems, make decisions on the complaints concerning the rights, duties and responsibilities of staff resulting from their employment contracts, deal with the tasks suggested by the teachers' assembly, school inspectorate, the union, the council of parents, the student body, and perform other tasks determined by law and the charter.

3. School Leadership concepts and practices

Conceptual framework

The legislative groundwork on principal status and the managerial tasks is in general defined in the Law on Organization and Financing of Education (Zakon o financiranju v vzgoji in izobraževanju - ZOFVI). Principals' powers, requirements, procedures of appointing and removal of principals and professional training are written in this law. Financing of education, the guidance procedure for children and youth with special needs, the work of the school inspectorate, professional promotion, promotion to a higher range of a wage bracket, managing school

documents, the students' rights and duties, public advertisements, accounting etc. are defined in more than 50 laws, decrees, regulations. Salaries and bonuses of the principals are defined in the Salary System in the Public Sector Act, the Decree on salaries of directors within public sector, the Decree concerning increased performance at work in the public sector, the Rules on criteria for assessing the performance of directors in public administration.

Slovenian principals are well aware of the fact that good work cannot be performed merely on the basis of numerous laws, since the legislation does not always cover everyday unpredictable situations. It often seems that all the regulations and laws even limit the principals' creativity. Thus the principals' association believes that problems the principals are faced with should not be kept to themselves but clearly pointed to if necessary also with empirical evidence. The principals talk mainly about their workload especially because of the number of administrative tasks that make them believe their work has not been done or has not been done well. At the same time they feel they have not done everything they have planned. This is why the principals wish to change the school legislation and allow for the unlimited term of office for the principals so that they can plan and carry out their long-term goals. The principals think that all the above problems have led to a fault in the national system of the school politics that needs to be changed.

The focus on teaching and learning

The principals in Slovenia believe their role as leaders in teaching and learning is based on the model of academic leadership defined in three categories: designing the school mission, managing the pedagogic process and stimulating a positive school environment. The research on successful schools and introduction of improvements carried out among principals have shown that leadership is the key factor in success or failure. The principals have pointed out that academic leadership, meaning leadership in teaching and learning is not only about working with people, but maintaining conditions for teaching and learning, successful planning, and successful planning of the employees' growth. Therefore the precondition of successful work of the teachers and students is efficient and well-managed environment.

The principals and the teachers have found out that a positive school environment is very important for quality teaching and learning. It is connected to quality communication and co-operation, together with good relationship between the management and the teachers. The teachers have stressed that this depends to a high degree on the personality of the management, especially of the principal.

The question of leadership is connected to the planning of the employees' growth. The teachers expect the principal to give them enough opportunity for further education, training and personal growth in the form of seminars, exchange of experience and to include them in the decision-making process. The teachers also stress the great responsibility the principals have in choosing good teachers, and find it important that the principals commend them for good performance.



An important instrument of school management that can influence the quality of teaching and learning is, according to the principals and teachers, also school facilities. Good school facilities can substantially contribute to better teaching and learning, however, the effect is limited. Computers and internet access help find information faster so the teachers can spend more time actively working. According to the Slovenian principals' cooperation with local environment and other schools is also important for encouraging quality teaching and learning, as well as getting sponsors and promoting school. If the school management plans well, has clear

vision and goals and if the employees support the improvements, it will positively affect the quality of teaching and learning.

One of the different organisational structures that define teachers' behaviour is visiting their lessons so as to be acquainted with the teachers' work. The research carried out among Slovenian teachers, however, has shown that Slovenian teachers do not see this as an important factor in encouraging the quality of teaching. More important are seminars, workshops and professional field trips. Seminars and workshops are mostly organised by an external institution such as the National Education Institute. Most of them are financed by schools, and some by the ministry of education. Initiatives for attending seminars and workshops are made by teachers, especially when it comes to their professional field of work and if they are organised outside the school. If a seminar or a workshop is intended for all the teachers at one school, the lecturers will come to the school and lecture there. The initiative for organising a seminar or a workshop comes from the principal or the teachers. If the seminars are well-prepared and include practical knowledge, they can influence substantially the quality of the teachers' work. Besides, attending seminars brings additional points with which a teacher can be professionally promoted and promoted to a higher range of a wage bracket.

The quality of the teachers' work can also be improved by team work (project team, teachers' assembly, teaching staff of individual classes, professional working groups, school development team) and by encouraging participation in different projects, such as inter-disciplinary work, publishing school paper, organising field trips and international exchanges, international projects, organising school competitions etc. The principal's role to encourage cooperation, to listen to the employees and to help them solve their problems is very important.

Restructuring and re-culturing school organisations

Improving the work of the school institutions depends on the organisation and structure of the management and the help of several other elements. Schools have different experience, however, there are some common growing trends in improving school work. The principals get the

help in the structures prescribed by the legislation. These are: the assistant principal or assistant principals, the assembly of teachers, the programme teacher assembly, the teaching staff of individual classes, the homeroom teacher, professional working groups, the council of parents and counselling services.

Besides the already mentioned structures the school management has the autonomy to found other more or less formal ways of leadership that allow for better school work. These are school development teams, complaint committees, student bodies, sports and cultural groups etc. It seems that creativity and dynamics in setting up these structures have risen in the last years. The progress was noted also by the foreign experts, who visited a great number of Slovenian schools in 2008. The work of the structures is described in details in the following paragraphs.

Each school appoints an **assistant principal** (if a school is bigger, there can be several assistants), who helps the principal with managerial and academic tasks. The assistant acts according to the principal's written authorisation and in his or her absence.

The assembly of teachers is composed of all the educators and discusses and decides on professional matters concerning education, forms opinions on annual programs of work, proposes above-standard and other programs, decides on the update of education programs and their provision in compliance with law, issues opinions on the appointment of principals and assistant principals, makes proposals for the promotion of educators, gives an opinion on the principal's proposals and decides on educational measures.

The program teacher's assembly is composed of the educators that teach in the education program and other professionals that participate in the program. The program teacher's assembly carries out planning and performing of the assessment of knowledge and other tasks defined on the basis of delegated legislation. It is managed by a teacher appointed by the principal.

The teaching staff of individual classes are educators who carry out educational activities in individual classes. The teaching staff of individual classes discuss problems concerning educational

activities of classes, establish programs of work for gifted and talented as well as less able students and decide on educational measures.

Homeroom teachers administer the work of the teaching staff of individual classes, analyze educational and study results of the class, look for solutions to educational and study problems of individual students, cooperate with parents and the school counsellors and make decisions concerning educational measures.

Professional working groups in schools, composed of teachers of the same subject or subject area discuss problems concerning individual subjects and subject areas, coordinate the criteria for the assessment of knowledge, make proposals to the assembly of teachers for the improvement of education and study, discuss the comments of parents and students, and perform other tasks set forth by the annual program of work.

Each school has to form a council of parents composed of one representative from each class elected by the parents at their meetings. The council of parents proposes above-standard programs, approves principal's proposals for above-standard services, issues opinions on proposed development programs for schools and annual programs of work, discusses the principal's reports on educational problems, discusses parents' complaints concerning education, elects their representatives to councils of schools and performs other tasks in compliance with law and other regulations.

Each school has **counselling services** offering advice to students, teachers and parents. Counselling is carried out by counsellors who can be qualified psychologists, education specialists, social workers, social educators, and educators for students with special needs. They work together with parents, teachers and management in planning, monitoring and assessing the development of schools and carrying out educational activities and offer vocational guidance. The counselling service participates in the preparation and execution of programs tailored to the needs of individual students with special needs.

Recently schools have been founding **development teams**, which deal with projects, especially with the forthcoming project of gymnasia reforms. When a school tackles a project or a process of reforms, practical solutions, instructions, and experiences of those who have planned or tried the process are most welcome. The school development team is a group of teachers, who encourage the process of mutual learning and changing, as well as coordinate development activities. The teachers help the management realize plans and projects.

Besides the above mentioned school structures, there are others helping the management. The **complaint committee** deals with the protection of students' rights, the **quality committee** deals with the quality of educational work, the **student body** deals with the students' interests and realization of school duties and goals together with the school management.

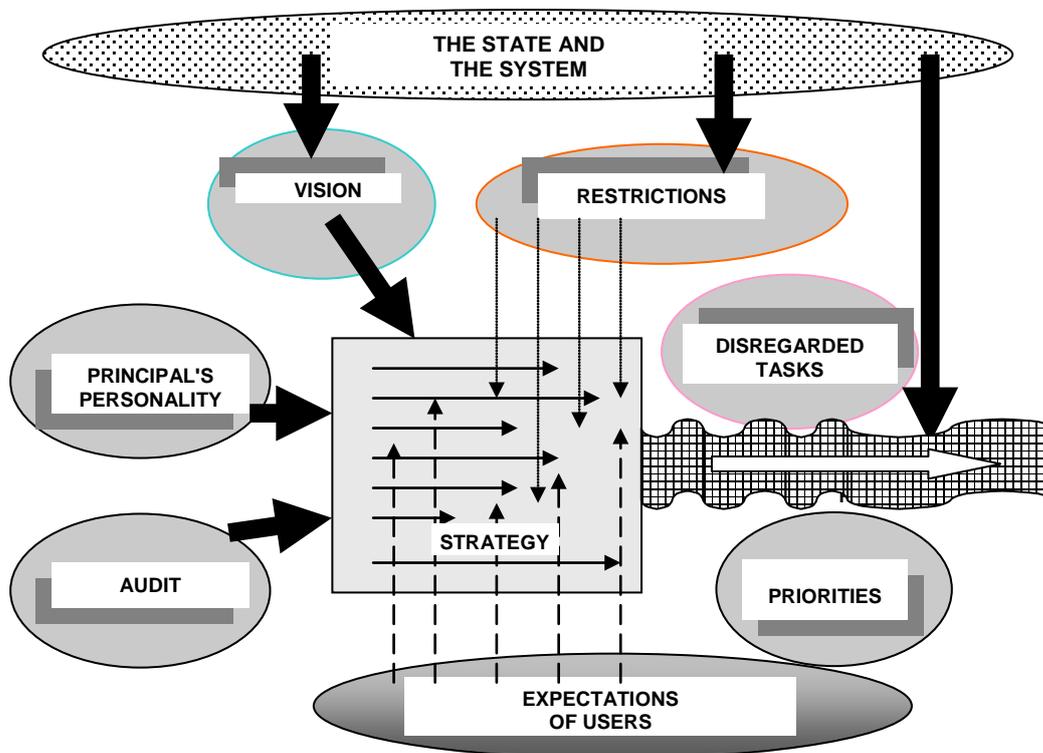
Establishing and negotiating the direction of school development

Searching for common goals and values is the goal of every principal. Therefore it is important that all the above mentioned committees and bodies follow the principal, not because they have to but because they want to. The principal's duty is to convince the staff the implemented changes

will improve the quality of work. To do that, the principal has to communicate well, listen to different opinions, and express his / her view in a way that all the participants (teachers, students, parents and politics) will support his / her school development vision. There are many factors that influence good strategy needed for that. The state and the system are developing global vision of the school development through legislation, but at the same time also limiting the principals' work. The principals are also faced with expectations of the parents, students, local community and the public. These expectations often exceed school management capabilities and abilities.

In a kind of vicious circle the public and the media pressure the politics that then often succumb to the expectations of the potential voters (especially the parents). The political structures then burden the principals with extra tasks and together with the public expect them to complete them. Consequently the principals often complain of too much stressful work and are forced to prioritize. Under the influence of external factors a concept of principal's work exists in every school. It brings different results in managing school institutions because of the principal's different abilities, competences and personal characteristics.

Model of a principal's working concept



System leadership and cooperation in networks

Slovenian schools work with the public in different fields and their experience is mostly positive. If the schools know how to attract different institutions, such as government, state, and local institutions, profit and non-profit organisations, individuals and media, then their image in large, usually critical public is positive. Schools gain their reputation by working with the public. This holds true especially for secondary schools, which are fighting for survival on the account of a low birth rate. Besides, working with the public brings quality to the school as well as other institutions.

In Slovenia schools work most intensively with local communities on different projects, especially in elementary schools since the pupils and their parents come from a local environment. In Slovenia the founders of elementary schools are local communities, who have three representatives in the school council and can

therefore influence some of the decisions made by the council. This way the local community has a say in appointing and dismissing the principal, drafting the schools' development program, annual programs of work and others. Secondary schools can also be involved in local environment, especially in smaller cities and towns, where local consciousness is more present and people know each other well. In the capital, where the concentration of schools is the highest, and schools are attended by students from all over Slovenia, more energy is needed to cooperate with institutions than in smaller cities and towns, where the number of schools is lower, and personal acquaintanceship between the principal and representatives of local communities makes cooperation even easier.

When we talk about working with the public, there is no universal model to follow. Schools have absolute autonomy but also great responsibility in this area. Consequentially, one can find extremely innovative and varied forms of cooperation with local institutions, state

institutions and individuals. Many schools work with local communities in the field of ecology (environmental activities, tree planting, waste recycling, cleaning the school surroundings), they cooperate with local museums, libraries, retirement homes, police, fire brigade, health centres and individuals, for example, farmers, tradesmen, and other experts. Schools place importance also on media coverage, so they publish several school papers available to the public to keep it informed about the school activities. Local communities and local companies often donate the money needed for such projects or act as sponsors. Working with local companies is especially important for vocational secondary schools, because the students get their qualifications there.



As we can see the role of the principal is very important when it comes to communication with institutions. Slovenian principals must have a good relationship with local institutions. At the same time they have to know how to motivate their staff to cooperate actively, and listen to the initiatives coming from the teachers, students, parents, media and local institutions.

Working with other institutions, on a local, regional and national level, as well as working with other schools is an important basis for quality leadership when it comes to teaching and learning. New ideas and experience are shared. Slovenian principals have a relatively high degree of autonomy when it comes to teaching and learning, therefore there are several different examples of managing school institutions. A good

example of cooperation and networking is the project *Learning school network*, which has been in operation for several years and unites elementary schools. Its goal is to influence quality improvements in educational work by networking and cooperation. As a result, a network of schools, which designs strategy for efficient and sensitive coping with violence and violence prevention, has been created. There are quite a few similar networks dealing with different questions in Slovenia. A valuable exchange of experience can also be seen in Principal association meetings. Good experience of individual schools can create a model of management that can act as a bridge to the super system, but not in a strictly formal way, since a model of management cannot be simply transferred into every school. Schools differ one from another, therefore also the characteristics of a city principal are different from a village principal's.

Example of good practice and a success story

Managing Diocesan Classical Gymnasium as an example of good practice

The Diocesan Classical Gymnasium is one of a few private gymnasiums in Slovenia and is believed to be one of the best and better managed in the country. With 700 students enrolled it is one of the biggest schools in Slovenia. Besides the principal and two assistants, teachers and other professional staff are made equal according to their education and years of work experience in terms of competence, rights and obligations. The principal of the Diocesan Classical Gymnasium believes that a modern school with all the activities cannot be managed only by the principal and assistants, so he delegates the work to individual teachers. The following tasks have been taken over by the teachers: managing and coordinating projects on a national level, managing international activities (school exchanges, international projects etc.), organising and realising project days, managing and realising matura exams, managing school chronicles and photo chronicles, managing the school webpage, running music and art activities, sports activities, harmonising interests between the management and the staff, social life of the staff (the staff room

senior), mentoring the student body, counselling the students with special needs, running professional working groups, inter-disciplinary work, assessing the quality of teaching, school evaluation and development, attending to the general image of the school, mentoring school papers etc.

The leader is responsible for each of the tasks assigned in accordance with the annual program of work. He / She is absolutely autonomous in the work and can freely choose co-workers and create temporary or permanent working groups. The leaders coordinate the activities with the principal and assistants on a weekly basis. General matters are coordinated by the members of the staff, i.e.: the principal, assistants, the staff room senior, the school counsellor, the school paper mentor and the student body mentor. Once a week the so-called Messages are published for keeping all the teaching staff informed. Anybody who wishes to publish something has to send an e-mail to the principal who then publishes it. Individual teachers, who manage these activities, can get an extra bonus, which can amount to 20 % of the teacher's salary. 2 % of the money intended for the salaries can be spent for rewarding the staff. These bonuses are periodical and do not repay the trouble in full. The system would not work without the teachers' enthusiasm. Therefore enthusiasm and unselfishness are two key qualities of a good teacher, and the result is a job well-done.

An example of good practice at the Diocesan Classical Gymnasium is also the model cooperation with the general public. The teachers work with several local, regional and state institutions and as activity managers communicate with the media. School work is often presented to the printed media, as well as radio listeners and TV viewers. Every year the school publishes *Megaron*, a school paper intended for the general public, where all the school events are described and photographs published. The event with the greatest media coverage took place at the school centenary, when a concert was organised in Gallus hall in Cankarjev Dom. The event was broadcast live on national television and attended by several ministers and other state representatives, diplomatic representatives, and the Prime minister of Slovenia, who was also the official speaker. The event got great media coverage and

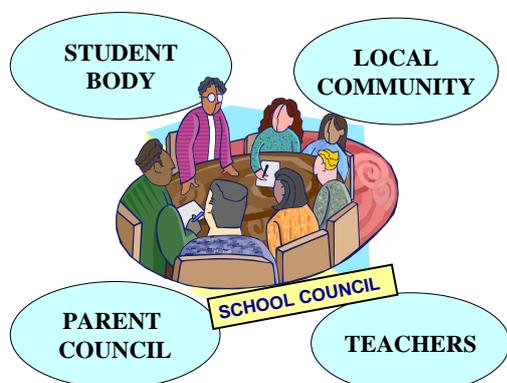
the school published an extensive book about the history of the school.

4. Recruiting and educating school leaders

Recruitment and retention of leaders

Under Slovene legislation a person can be appointed principal of a public school if he/she meets the requirements stipulated for teachers or counsellors at the school recruiting the principal, has a university degree, has at least five-year work experience in education, has the title of councillor or adviser or has possessed the title of mentor for at least five years, and has passed the examination for principals. The program for the principals' qualification lasts for a year and comprises 144 lessons. It is carried out by the School for principals, founded by the Slovenian government. The fees have to be paid by the participants themselves, however, they are often paid by the school where the candidate works.

Besides formal stipulation a principal must possess many other competences to be successful. Non-formal competences are the principal's key qualities since it is the opinion of the parent council, local community and teachers. Before making a decision for the appointment of the principal in high schools and gymnasiums the students give their opinion on the candidate. The local community, the council of parents and the students explain their decision, and the assembly of teachers votes anonymously. The school council decides with the majority of votes of all the members allowed to vote. After the candidate is chosen the suggestion is sent to the minister to appoint the principal. If the minister does not give his / her opinion in 30 days the school council can appoint the principal without the approval of the minister. After the procedure the school council decides on the appointment of the principal and notifies all the candidates who have applied.

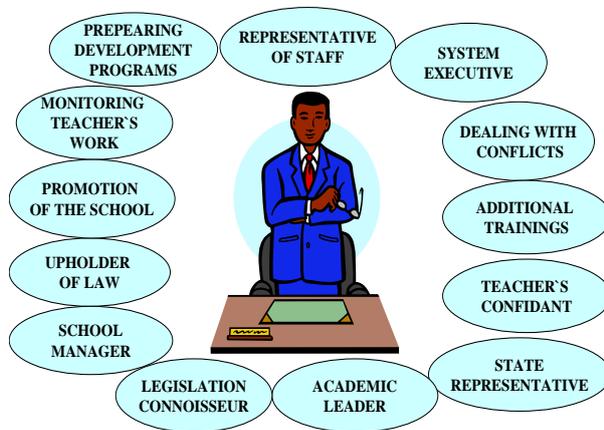


Principals are appointed for five years and can run for office again. The principals, however, think that the system allows appointing principals on the basis of political appropriateness by people who do not have any professional competences. According to Slovenian principals the real competences, which make running for principal successful, are several professional competences such as psychology, pedagogy, didactics, legislation expertise, information technology skills, organizational skills, communication skills, social skills, working with adults, solving conflicts, responsiveness; and personal characteristics such as tolerance, openness, constructive criticism, curiosity, reflection, openness for accepting criticism and self-regulation. In real life it often seems that candidates who are closer to the political party of the minister or the local community have been appointed principals instead of the candidates with all the necessary skills and competences. This is also one of the reasons why the principals demand a change in the way of appointing and retention of principals. The suggestion for unlimited term of office has not yet been harmonized since it is opposed by some principals.

Attractiveness of school leadership



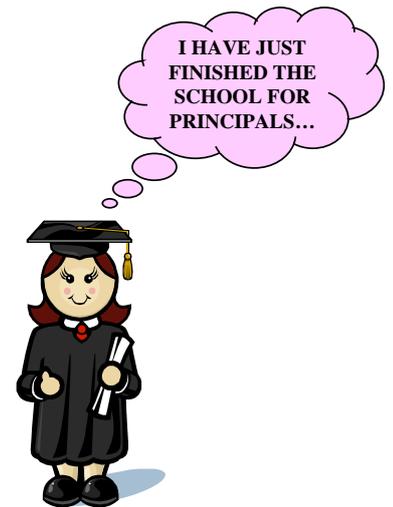
How attractive is the work of a principal in a Slovenian school? In the years after the attainment of independence the quantity of the principals' work has grown extremely, especially when it comes to management. Their responsibility has grown, the respect for authority has reduced, and their dissatisfaction with the wage system has increased. It seems that the career of a principal is no longer as attractive as it was decades ago. This is clearly seen in the number of candidates for principals and reappointment. The public expects the principal to do administrative and managerial work well and be a good academic leader, always ready for improving the school quality. He / She is expected to know how to communicate successfully with the parents, local community, state institutions and media. The principal has to be an expert in marketing and management and report to the public about the school quality as well as be prepared to be assessed by other institutions. Thus it is not surprising that the work of the principal is not as attractive as it used to be. The research among Slovenian principals has shown that managerial tasks take up to two thirds of the principals' time, while academic work takes only a third, even though the principal's education is primarily of educational nature. The same research has shown that half of the principals see their work as very stressful and the main reason is too much administrative work. The principals do not wish to be managers, but educators, and want more help with management, law enforcement and clerical work.



Besides, they are not satisfied with the new wage system of September 2008 that has, in their opinion, completely devalued their work. They oppose the wage freeze and reproach the government to have completely destroyed the wage balance. There is a possibility that a teacher in the highest range of a wage bracket, with the title adviser and with increased work load receives a higher salary than the principal. This is proven by the fact that a principal who has just started work is classified in the 42nd wage range, while a teacher in the highest range of the wage bracket, with the title adviser and with increased work load is classified in the 43rd. The state's answer is that the principals have the option of receiving the 13th or even the 14th salary for successful performance. In real life most principals are rewarded with the 13th salary. Nevertheless, the association of the principals still threatens to go on a work-to-rule strike. The principals demand the abolishment of wage imbalance, because they believe that the best workers need to be rewarded or there will not be any left. Quite a few principals have left their jobs in order to try their luck in local and parliamentary elections, local and state politics and even business.

National structures of pre-service, induction and in-service education of school leaders

The government of Slovenia founded the School for principals in 1995. The program of the school for principals and the contents of the examination for the certification of principals is determined by the minister upon a proposal by the Council for General Education. Once a year, the school for principals advertises the pre-enrolment procedure and determines the terms for the certification examination of principals.



The mission of the school is to educate and qualify the principals in their role as the educator. Within the school activities numerous seminars, workshops and literature with instructions and guidelines are offered, but the lecturers are well aware of the fact that there is no list of competences, skills and characteristics that would automatically ensure successful work for the principals. Therefore the future principals are taught to react in real-life situations and critically put theory into practice. The program for the principals' qualification is carried out in subjects with 20 contact lessons and partly as distance learning (40 hours of independent work). There are 6 subjects each year. The participants must choose additional subjects (16 contact lessons) and do 44 hours plus 8 hours to complete the education. It is estimated that the participants do 428 hours of work. The participants are put into groups of 16 to 18.

The program for the qualification of principals

subject	hours
Introduction	20
Organization Theory and Managing	20
Planning and decision making	20
The principal as an academic leader	20
People in the organization	20
Legislation	20
Additional subjects and the completion of the program	24

The main fields of education are management in education, theory of organisation and leadership, planning and decision-making, people in the organisation, the role of the principal as academic leader, school legislation etc. The school for principals is trying to teach the future principals the basis of management, acquaint them with the basis of teamwork and qualify them for solving practical examples of the implementation of changes in school. The principals are taught to link the characteristics of the school they run with their style of leadership. They are taught to transfer the theory of planning and decision-making into practice and use different tools to assert the vision and mission of the school. The principals learn the basic principles of working with the teachers by recognising examples of good practice and mistakes. As academic leaders

they learn about running meetings, managing conflicts, and observing the lessons. The school pays a lot of attention to the knowledge and interpretation of the education legislation.

The school for principals does not only educate the future school leaders, but provides also additional training, such as: management for a quality school, communication, what is new in education legislation, motivating co-workers, the principal's role in developing teacher's professionalism, management for learning, women in management etc. Besides, the school organises several projects, i.e. *Principals research their work*, which encourages research and develops professionalism, and *Management for learning*, where principals monthly discuss school management and learning, exchange experience and improve the practice of teaching and learning in schools.

The school for principals is of the utmost importance when it comes to education and qualification of school leaders. Besides the school for principals there are seminars organised by professional groups of principals, the National Education Institute and several universities, where Slovenian principals can gain knowledge and competence.



Coaching and other forms of support

The school for principals plays an important role also in supporting the principals at work. Besides education, the school publishes books, magazines, and is involved in research and experimental development in the field of education. The magazine *Leadership in education* (*Vodenje v izobraževanju*) deals with theory of school leadership and offers practical articles that can help the school leaders in their everyday work. Different opinions on leadership, changes in school, examples of good practice, books and magazines on leadership in education, interesting people, information about educational experience in other countries, and seminar and conference reports are presented in the magazine. The school for principals organises seminars on implementation of information technology and e-education in schools as well.

Despite the diverse offer of programs available at the school for principals Slovenian principals often turn for help to the principal association or to colleagues. The association for elementary schools principals and the association for secondary school principals allow exchanging opinions and experience as advisory bodies, but do not employ experts to help the principals. As a result a proposal to found a so-called principal service (within the principal associations) to perform services connected to the work of principals has been made. A service web page with all the documents transparently organised (laws, regulations, examples of good practice, statistics, guidelines) would make problem solving easier and cheaper. The principal service would also help the principals find the solution to the problems not mentioned on the site. The service would sign a contract with a law firm to help with legal questions. It would remind the principals about the upcoming duties and prepare solutions, for example document outlines, guidelines, software etc. The service would do some administrative and accounting tasks, organise seminars and principal conventions. It would set the standards for the software in schools, prepare literature for the principals' public appearance and inform the media about the work and viewpoints of the principal association. The legal possibilities and financing of the service are still under discussion. The idea, however, has shown what the principals miss most, that is the help with managerial tasks.

5. To sum up: challenges, areas of innovation and underlying evidence

If we sum up the findings reached when studying different aspects and problems with leadership in education in Slovenia, we can see that there is an intensive debate going on among the principals about the situation and problems they are faced with. The debate is going on primarily in the principal associations, which are advisory bodies, where the principals can exchange their opinions and experience and look for suitable solutions. Often there are misunderstandings with the government when the principals feel the need to defend their interests to improve the quality of their work of leading school institutions. The problems the principals have lately been confronted are the overburdening with administrative tasks, unbalanced wage system and the question of appointing principals. The solutions they propose involve school legislation change that would facilitate the appointing of the principals and unlimited term of office, the wage system change and the foundation of the principal service that would help the principals with their everyday problems when managing schools. On one hand schools in Slovenia have a high degree of autonomy in some fields, but on the other they have to abide by countless rules and laws so the work of the principals has brought more responsibility. Therefore there are quite a few principals who experience their work as very stressful.

So what does life look like in the future? The principals believe that the most important period is ahead of them. It will define the future status of the principal on a professional level. The principals are also considering founding a new association for all the preschool institution principals as well as elementary and secondary school principals. They are also considering creating a trade union for the principals. In the future the principals will have to review and analyze thoroughly their work and make a decision whether or not the current scope of demands (the principal as the academic leader, clerk, economist, lawyer, supervisor and counsellor) has outgrown the individual's capabilities. The following questions will have to be answered: Is the principal optimally and

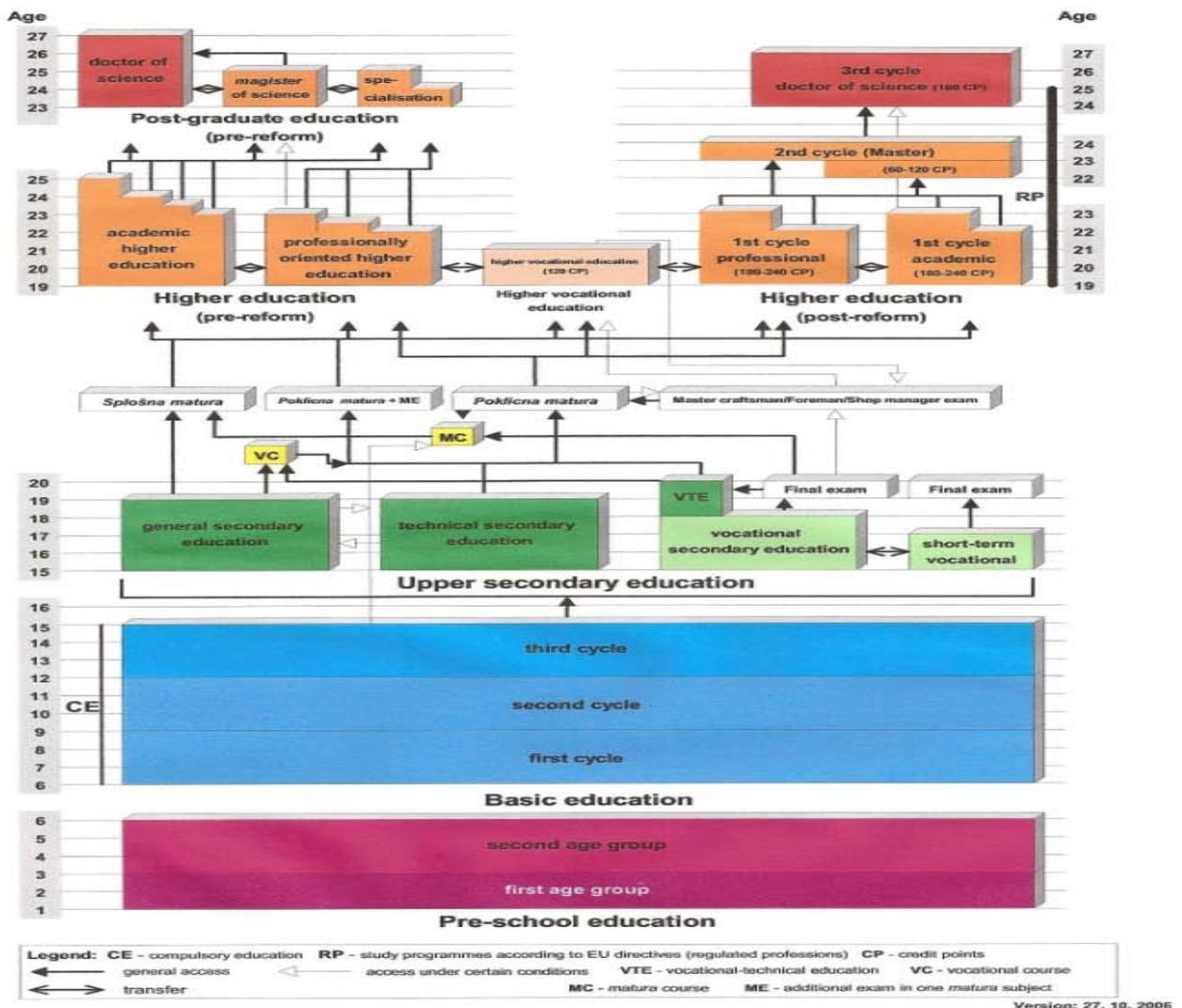
equally burdened and capable of adapting to all the legislation demands? Is the principal able to perform all the tasks imposed by the legislation? Is the principal able to learn the law changes passed by the parliament? Which tasks are inevitably connected with the work of the principal? What have the principals been doing in the past and what are they doing today? What and where is the autonomy that would satisfy and allow universal

consensus and what needs to be changed to make the work of the principal successful?

All these questions will sooner or later have to be well-weighed and answered to maintain the quality and balanced system of education. The principals will have to take active role and assume responsibility.

Appendix

The structure of the Education System in Slovenia



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