Comparative analysis on leadership types in Hungary

Attributes of the school as a system

Because the school as an organization is having peculiar attributes, the analysis of the school leader types can not be conducted in the same mechanic way as it may be feasible in the case of other economic organizations. Some examples:

- With the evolve and escalation of the internet the school as the main institution for conveying information has lost its power

- Beyond the transmission of knowledge the function of the school is also socialization

- Its (the school's) function is also to provide work for its employees (workplace)

- Its circle of "clients": parents, student, social environment

- Its target group: students, other than that it's hard to define

- Its success is hardly commensurable (the thriving people, the satisfied social economical environment…?)

- The regulations of its inner functioning is stricter than in the case of the economical organization, therefore the authority of its leaders are more limited

It is important to bear in mind the above mentioned facts, since in Hungary there is a tendency to analyze schools and their leadership in the same way as any other economic organization, whereas in fact, similarly to a hospital, the "product" of the school is the human being itself. Hence the evaluation criteria of the schools and its leaders differentiate at several points such as their position, assignments, and their criteria of success from other actors and businesses of the market.

The attributes of school leaders in Hungary

The school leaders in Hungary do not possess complete authority over the work progress, the organization structure, and the professionalism in their schools. Although they exercise the rights of the employer, they at least to a certain degree are obligated to involve the school staff into the decision making process of the school. School leaders also need to undertake teaching a limited number of classes. Hence they are overburdened, and due to their various assignments they often have personal conflicts.

School leadership types

In Hungary the school leader types can be divided into two distinctive groups.

One type is the charismatic creator of a school which is not only different from the traditional schools of the national school system but also a critic of them itself. These institutions are usually not maintained by the state.

The other type of school leaders are normally leaders of schools maintained by the state or the municipality. They are not strategists at the first place, but employees of the state or the municipality. Among them we can certainly find great leaders with excellent qualities as well as officials merely doing their job.

In the school management the division of leadership creates leaders on different levels. The following leadership types are prevalent:

Contacting and keeping in contact with the external environment

- Spokesperson
- Decision maker
- Entrepreneur
- Counter of malfunction
- Division of resources
- Negotiation

The manager type of school leaders

Within this frame in schools which are not maintained by the state or the municipality it is

more common to have the manager type of school leader, for (s)he has to possess excellent envisaging and creating skills, otherwise the subsistence of the school would be jeopardized under the current economic circumstances.

The manager type of school leaders is managing his/her school according to the model of the so called open system, which requires excellent leadership skills from the school leader. To be in possession of these qualities, the school leader must attribute great importance to the external legitimization and to the mobilization of inner and external resources. It is also important to be able to react swiftly to the prompt changes, and to the unexpected challenges.

School leader types in the rational model

Before the revolution school leaders in Hungary primarily conducted their leadership according to the so called rational model, which emphasizes the regulations of the inner procedures. They highlight functions of effectiveness, monitoring and coordinating. The political revolution in 1989 and the yet evolved practice of the creation of financial sources has led to the alteration of the conception from the middle 90s. The school leaders were urged to tailor the school management according to the special needs of their institution and the reinforcement of coordination among schools have become more important.

The school leader types in the human relations model and the inner model

Consequently although the so called "human relations model" has become more significant the sort of mobilization of human resources, the encouragement of teamwork, and school leadership based on mentoring is still not yet an attribute of the Hungarian education system.

The constantly changing regulations, the uncertainty of financing, the obligation of the procurement of the necessary financial needs, the recurring social challenges all strengthen the importance of the flexibility, the effectiveness of action, and the ability to react promptly to changes.

According to a recent survey, presumably due to the waxing influence of the human relations model, Hungarian school leaders consider cooperation as one of the most important factor of school leadership. Thus it is presumable that cooperation as the indispensible attribute of the proper functioning of the school systems is to attain more importance in the future. Placing cooperation as the main priority also means the acceptance of the leadership type which is based on mentorship, incentive and on the so called "inner model".

On the other hand the proficiency of leadership, the sound values and principles and confident school management have also reached important placing in the survey. Therefore one may draw the consequence that the presence of the rational leadership model is still fairly strong.

Furthermore the survey exposes that according to the opinion of the school heads who have been questioned, the management skills are also quite important, whereas only the ¼ of the school heads attributes importance to the execution of self interest.

The opinion of school leaders of the primary schools and the secondary schools differentiate only at two aspects. Primary school leaders tend to put educational professionalism to the first place, whereas secondary school heads give priority to management skills.

The result of the survey concerning the main goals of school management

A survey has been conducted regarding the main objects of the school leads. The survey reveals the difference between the answers given to the question posed in a confidential (closed) way and to the question posed in an open way.
The question in an open way: "Please name the most important objects that you would like to achieve in your school!"

The question in a closed way: "Please take a look at the packet of cards. At the back of the cards there are a few possible objects for your school. Please put these objects to an order according to their importance. Start with the most important one!"

School objects	Open	Closed
Adaption (to the environment, to the maintainer of the school, to the labor market)	5	7
Ambience	7	3
Effectiveness, efficiency	3	4
Sustainability, money	1	6
Integration of students with disadvantage	6	5
Competency and skill development	4	1
Transmission of culture and values	2	2
Number questioned school heads	511	594

Source: Examining the efficiency of the schools 2005

It is clear that the transmission of culture and values are equally important for school leaders. On the other hand questions such as adoptions to the environment, relationship with the partners or the integration of the disadvantaged students are less privileged when the question is posed in a closed way. To most of the school leaders the most important thing is the sustainability. It is interesting to note that competency and skill development is not given countenance spontaneously, but only elevated to the top when the question is posed in a closed form. This may lead to the conclusion that objects that are constantly emphasized by the official education policy such as skill development, integration, are only superficial for the school leaders, for the management and the sustainability of the school as well as the commensurable efficiency of the students are far more important for them.

References:

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