

# THE REFLECTION OF THE EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AT THE DEPARTMENTAL SCHOOLS IN CZECH REPUBLIC

Jana Marie Šafránková - Eva Urbanová

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## Abstract

Purpose of papers based on summarizing the results of the authors' survey on the reflection of students of the study programme Educational management and headmasters of departmental schools in Czech Republic. The goal of the paper is to define and discuss reflections of professional practice by educational management students in terms of their theoretical knowledge, practical skills, management and human resources management development potential. From the perspective of future management of the students, authors' research results support the assumption that educational management students have a good chance to succeed on the school management based on the experience gained by this professional praxis in the time of study. The research questions are: What knowledge and skills are more important for students' educational management practice? The results confirm the main findings of earlier studies and show some interesting tendencies in the students' analyses of managerial practice that students are very motivated to learn and study by best practice examples, but in this connection, they complain of theoretical subjects with connections and practical applications.

**Key words:** management, education, higher education, departmental school

**JEL Code:** I21, I23, M53

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## Introduction

In the context of a rapidly evolving and changing society, there is demand for demonstrable use of learning outcomes in practice. The role of a school's principal is often underestimated, although the implications of his/her decision-making influence a wide range of educational activities on a daily basis.

There was great interest in educational leadership in the early 21st century because of the widespread belief that the quality of leadership makes a significant difference to school and student outcomes. There is also increasing recognition that schools require effective leaders and managers if they are to provide the best possible education for their learners (i.e. Tulowitzki P. 2019). Schools need trained and committed teachers, but they, in turn, need the leadership of highly effective principals and support from other senior and middle managers (Veteška, 2011). While the need for effective leaders is widely acknowledged, there is much less certainty about which leadership behaviours are most likely to produce favourable outcomes (Veteška, 2013). Bush examined the theoretical underpinnings for the field of educational leadership and management, assessed different leadership models, and discussed the evidence of their relative effectiveness in developing successful schools (Bush, 2004).

In the Czech Republic as well as abroad, emphasis is on the professional preparation of school principals, their lifelong learning and the development and cultivation of their competences. (Šafránková, Šikýř, 2018). Schools are open systems, which is why they include much heavier duties for managers; it can be concluded that school managers, the head teacher and his deputies have to cope with many different problems and even crises. (Dos, Sagir, Cetin, 2015). Considering that some university-based principal preparation programmes may not be properly training principals for leadership roles, "grow your own" leadership development programmes have become more popular across the US (Tingle, Corrales, Peters, 2017).

The education of directors and other senior staff must necessarily reflect the ongoing changes in the education sector and society as a whole (Lapina, & Stuken, 2018). The head teacher must be comprehensively educated in many areas with sectoral overlaps, be an expert in school management, and manage the quality of teaching with the ability to reflect on external influences on education. However, since there is no obligation for prior systematic training in the field of school management, leadership, law or economics, the system has long been in the position of experienced and certified teachers who are, however, not ready for the principal's job. The image of a democratic principal with a participative leadership style is more effective, people work with pleasure, fulfil more tasks, are motivated to perform their work, they feel respected, appreciated and have high self-esteem, which can only benefit the school organization and the educational act (Iurea, 2017, Bolam, 2014).

There are many studies about the specific components of a district leadership development programme incorporated into the curriculum in order to positively influence the effectiveness of school principals as school leaders (Dorczak, 2017, Harrogate 2015). The author argues that what is missing is thinking about professional development of leadership/managerial competencies as a developmental process that has to be planned and organized as a long process of development in different roles played in school/s, and that formal courses and training can only support this process (Dorczak, 2017). The professional work, identity and recruitment of head teachers (HTs) is analysed in Wales too. There the head teacher role towards organisational professionalism was reoriented, and the professional framework for educational leadership in Wales was revised (Connolly, Milton, Davies, Barrance, 2018). Campos-García, Zúñiga-Vicente, describe Spanish educational organizations (secondary schools) and employee motivation of two sets of characteristics related to leaders: demographic (gender and age), and professional development (tenure, prior career experience in the organization and training). (Campos-García, Zúñiga-Vicente, 2019). The importance of the principal's role in New Zealand aspiring principals for secondary school principalship in improving student learning outcomes has been acknowledged; however, there is global concern about the availability of appropriate professional education for principals (Service, Dalgic, Thornton, 2018). The shadowing/mentoring component of the programme allowed aspiring principals to gain an understanding of the complexity of a principal's role by shadowing and being mentored by experienced principals in a range of New Zealand schools. In addition to providing them with a network of effective principals, the experience led the aspiring principals to reflect on the development of their leadership (Service, Dalgic, Thornton, 2019).

## **1 Goal and Method**

The purpose of this paper is to summarize the results of the authors' survey on the reflection of students on the study programme "Educational management and headmasters of departmental schools in Czech Republic". The goal of the paper is to define and discuss reflections of professional practice by educational management students in terms of their theoretical knowledge, practical skills, management and human resources management development potential. Methodology for analyses of professional practice is based on quantitative research methods by using questionnaire with 15 questions Likert scale, 15 open questions and 10 identification of respondents. At the end of the winter semester of the

academic year of 2018/2019, a research survey was conducted among 129 students of the 1st - 3rd year of the School Management program (47 + 43 + 39) aimed at evaluating managerial practices. After completing the practice in the given semester, the students completed their assessment focused on the content, organization and lecturing skills of the school principal where the practice took place, and at the end they made a self-reflection. The data analysis was based on the calculation of relative frequencies (as a share of the total number of respondents), and the evaluation of the dependence of responses on age using contingency tables and chi-square tests of independence.

From the perspective of future management of the students, the authors' research results support the assumption that educational management students have a good chance of succeeding in school management based on the experience gained by this professional practice during the study. The research question is: What knowledge and skills are more important for students' educational management practice?

## **2 Results of the authors' survey**

Therefore, in the preparation of future leaders of teaching staff, especially school principals, it is necessary to look for possibilities of linking their theoretical training with practice in an authentic school environment that is able to pass on management competencies that are in line with the professional profile of a graduate of the School Management program at the Faculty of Education of the Charles University.

During the bachelor study program, students of the given program will receive a practical part of the training at schools cooperating with the department, which creates conditions for the verification of acquired knowledge in practice and helps the process of converting knowledge into skills. It is a specific form of teaching (managerial practice) that allows connecting the theoretical part of teaching, distance activities, various forms of discussions and practical demonstrations directly in a school environment, and it is always focused on specific subjects of study (Information and Communication Technologies, Theory and Practice, School Management, People Management, Law, Economics and Financial Management and Educational Process Management) in accordance with the curriculum, thus helping management staff on their way to professionalization.

In these practices, the students realized the demandingness of school management, the lack of appreciation by the state, the public and the insufficient staff and material support that

principals receive. Many things that are not clear from lectures are explained in managerial practice.

The purpose of management practices particularly:

- To address current issues in school management in an authentic school environment, link the acquired theoretical knowledge with practice and create student's competence in a particular area of school management.
- To create optimal conditions for students to get acquainted with the widest possible range of schools and school facilities; other workplaces.
- To create conditions for gaining new impulses and inspiration for students' own management work.
- To convince students of the need for insight and comparison of different conditions at different workplaces.
- To teach students how to use these inspirations in their day-to-day management work, thereby strengthening their competence.
- To analyse the needs of managers and convince them of the need to ask questions and find answers to possible alternative solutions.
- To eliminate the closure of schools and school facilities.
- To eliminate barriers between different types of schools, between schools of different founders and, last but not least, staff of different ministries.

Student practice evaluation results:

- Overall, the practice was beneficial and an important part of teaching.
- Applying knowledge and experience in your own school.
- The possibility to visit all kinds of schools (kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, high schools).
- Experience with colleagues is also a great benefit, as is the exchange of experiences, advice and new ideas in the field of school management.
- Through managerial practice, it is possible to look at schools where students would not normally look.

- Managerial practice will be appreciated by people working in education as well as others, as they can gain interesting knowledge from the world of management that can be applied in other fields.
- Friendliness, readiness, willingness to share sometimes negative situations and their subsequent solution by school heads.

Through practice, students have a lot of new experience and advice to do their work. Some of the theoretical things that they learn are easier to understand if they see them in practice and they know it really works or doesn't work. Oftentimes, practice motivates them to discuss their course and content subsequently in teaching. We need to be patient in this profession, because the results of some of the measures that have to be taken cannot be seen immediately, and it is important to persist.

- Sharing information and documents. Documents provided by other schools become a guide for students on how to create a similar document and how to approach it in practice.
- Practice helps shape the school image that students would like to lead, where they would like to send their children, and where they would like to work as educators. In practice, the mentality of education and principals sees the direction in which education is heading.
- Hearing how they solve the same problems in different types of organizations (not just schools) is priceless.

The results of the research clearly show that the practical preparation of students of the School Management study program in the form of managerial practice at schools is a beneficial and important part of the study (78% and 90% respectively). The main reason for this is that many students aspire to the post of school principal, and through this practical training they become familiar with the reality of school institution management, including all its pros and cons. The practice links theoretical preparation based on lectures at the faculty with practice in an authentic school environment, where the verification of acquired knowledge in practice helps the process of converting their knowledge into skills. A great benefit of practice is the school principal as a presenter who is ready and willing to share his or her experiences, calmly and negatively, and to give students practical advice on the issues of managing various types of

schools (kindergartens, elementary schools, secondary schools, high schools). You didn't just look in everyday life. An integral part of the practice is often the sharing of information and documents that become a guide for students to create and implement a similar document at their own school (84% and 87%, respectively).

**Table 1: Students opinions of managerial practice**

Students opinions of managerial practice	1st. - 2nd year of study	Percent age	3rd year of study	Percent age
1.Awareness of the difficulty of school management, lack of appreciation by the state, public, and little staff and material support that directors receive.	80	89 %	33	85 %
2.Sharing information and documents. Documents provided by other schools become a guide for students on how to create a similar document and how to approach it in practice.	76	84 %	34	87 %
3. Get to know each other, exchange experiences, advice and new ideas in school management.	75	83 %	35	90 %
4. Possibility to look at schools that you would not normally look at.	72	80 %	30	77 %
5. Friendliness, readiness, willingness to share with negative situations and their subsequent solution by school heads.	71	79 %	29	74 %
6. Overall, practice has been beneficial and an important part of teaching.	70	78%	35	90%
7. Practices help shape the image of the school that students would like to lead, to which they would like to send their children and where they would like to work as educators. In practice, the mentality of education, the mentality of directors, sees the direction in which education is heading.	69	77 %	20	51 %
8. Possibility to visit all kinds of schools (kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, high schools).	69	77 %	35	90 %
9. Some of the theoretical things that students learn are easier to understand if they see them in practice and they know it really works or doesn't work.	56	62 %	27	69 %
10. Possibility to compare your way of working with someone else's work in a similar way.	52	58%	18	46%
11. Managerial practice will be appreciated not only by people working in education but also outside, as they can gain interesting knowledge from the world of management, which can be applied in other fields as well.	50	56 %	23	59 %
12. Knowledge is passed on by people who know very well the school and its management.	48	53%	25	64%
13. Many things that are not clear from the lectures are explained in managerial practice. Through practice, students will gain many new experiences and advice on their work.	43	48 %	17	44 %
14. Oftentimes, practice motivates them to discuss their course and content subsequently in class.	35	39 %	14	36 %
15. Applying knowledge and experience from practice in your own school.	35	39 %	22	56 %

Source: Authors' research

Students greatly appreciate their mutual acquaintance with their colleagues, as well as the school principals in practice, the exchange of experiences, advice and new ideas in the field of

school management. Although some students do not work in education, management practices are appreciated by them because they can gain interesting insights from the world of management that can be applied in other fields (56% and 59%, respectively). One of the aims of school management practice is to familiarize students with the job of a school principal, which is very diverse and certainly not stereotyped. This work does not only consist in managing educational process, but also in personnel and material organization, which involves seeking human capital as well as financial resources. Students are aware of the difficulty of school management, lack of appreciation by the state, public and insufficient staff and material support they receive (89% and 85% respectively). A positive finding in the research is that the practice helps students shape the school image they would like to lead, to which they would like to send their children and where they would like to work as teachers. In practice, the mentality of education and the educational environment (77% and 51% respectively) is seen as the direction of education. Main differences between opinions of student 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year of study and 3<sup>rd</sup> year of study are evaluation of practice in question 7 and in applying knowledge and experience from practice in your own school in question 15.

## **Conclusion**

This paper summarizes the current results of the authors' research focused on students' school management managerial practice. The results confirm the main findings of earlier studies cited above and show some interesting tendencies in the students' analyses of managerial practice that should be well analysed and discussed. These tendencies lie in the fact that students are very motivated to learn and study by best practice examples, but in this connection, they complain of theoretical subjects with connections and practical applications. This satisfaction can increase the motivation of students for managerial practice.

Main results of the research show that the practical preparation of students of the School Management study program in the form of managerial practice at schools is a beneficial and important part of the study because many students aspire to the position of school principal, Firstly the theoretical preparation based on lectures at the faculty with practice in an authentic school environment helps the process of converting their knowledge into managerial skills by school principal and share his or her experiences. Secondly an integral part of the practice is the sharing of information and documents that become a guide for students to create and implement a similar document at their own school.



This work does not only consist in managing educational process, but also in personnel and material organization, which involves seeking human capital as well as financial resources, the scientific value of this paper is in one of first analyses educational management practice in Czech Republic.

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## Contact

Doc. PhDr. Jana Marie Šafránková, CSc.  
Department of Andragogy and Educational Management  
Faculty of Education, Charles University  
Myslíkova 7, 110 00 Prague 1  
[Janamarie.safrankova@pedf.cuni.cz](mailto:Janamarie.safrankova@pedf.cuni.cz)

RNDr. Ing. Eva Urbanová  
Department of Andragogy and Educational Management  
Faculty of Education, Charles University  
Myslíkova 7, 110 00 Prague 1  
[Eva.urbanova@pedf.cuni.cz](mailto:Eva.urbanova@pedf.cuni.cz)