

FROM THE GENERAL MANAGERIAL SKILLS TO THE SCHOOL MANAGER'S SKILLS

Cristina STAN, Ph.D. candidate
“Valahia” University, Târgoviște
krisciuca@yahoo.com

Abstract

Training and skill development represents a process in progress during the whole career and involves specialized training both within the organization and throughout the professional and social environment. Notion of skill/ competence has been the object of investigation for many sciences. Clarification of notion of competence/skill is necessary for those who want to deal with competences, no matter is about their competences or of the others. In cognitive psychology and in educational sciences, in ergonomics and in economy or in human resources management, the concept of skill or competence is situated in the middle of the individual and collective performance and all of us want to develop. In education, the art of management is very important because it better highlights the principle's/ school manager's personality and his/ her personal example has an essential role in realizing the established objectives for school. The art of running a school is in fact the art of working with people that means a new, modern and distinct dimension of the one who runs the education institution.

Keywords: *management, competence, school manager, performance*

JEL Classification: F₁₉, B₁₉, M₁₂, M₅₄

Introduction

Definitions of skill or competence vary according to the theorists who elaborated them. Most often, they revolve around some key words such as: standard request, job performance, knowledge combination abilities and behaviour/ attitudes, but it is also expressed by notions such as qualification, ability in the context of a certain position/function.

The aim of this article is to explore keeping in mind the term concept of competence or skill in order to clarify the meaning and the signification it may have, to analyse and compare the school managers' skills profile from different countries and the regulations of these countries, which establish the necessary criteria of adhering to this position.

Comparing different definitions in dictionaries to those found in studies in the literature, the term of skill/ competence can be presented as a structural-functional assembly, dynamically made up of: cognitive competences (knowledge, information, data), operational competences (action schemes, algorithm work, techniques of solving difficult problems) and attitudinal behaviour materialized in character features, behaviour and qualities of the personality. (CEDEFOP, 2002)

Introspect and self-reflection on one's own career give the manager the possibility to relate to the requirements and standards of a school manager position, to realize the gaps between the personal aspirations, the level of his/her own competence and the possibilities of improvement. The responsibility for professional development goes to the manager and the career development path being established according to the personal aspirations, to the personal view on what he/she will do in future.

Literature review

Most often used definition of the term competence/ skill (and closest to the way McClelland – considered the father of the term skill or competence, defined it) is that which considers competence/skill as being the sum of knowledge, abilities and attitudes participate to a person's capacity to fulfil efficiently the responsibilities of his/her job (to be efficient, for short). (McClelland D.C., 1973)

For some others (Barth, R. 1986; Marks, H. & Printy, S., 2003; Sergiovanni, T. 1987), the school manager is considered the one who has pedagogical expertise. This keeps high performance standards, monitors the educational process, coordinates the application of the curriculum and monitors the pupils' progress.

To work with pupils and teachers, the managers from education need special knowledge from the adults', children's and young educational domain. The educational manager's success depends on his/her ability to direct, organize, guide and motivate the contributors, partners in order to achieve the established goals. What is specific to schools is the fact that the manager leads two categories of people, pupils and teachers. For the manager, this means a permanently adaption of management principles, of leading style, of understanding abilities, according to those who have problems in school. To face and manage these, the manager needs "managerial knowledge, professionalizing management, interdisciplinary approaching theory and managerial practice, to consider the process both art and mastery". (Niculescu, M. 2007).

The skill or competence approach must be dimensional realized: on one hand, the competence attributed, also called the official authority, and, on the other hand, the actual competence, also called personal authority. The first one refers to the freedom to make decisions, the right to make decisions of that who has the position of manager, the possibility to involve in making decisions in order to solve the problems which might appear in the domain he runs. The second focuses on the knowledge, qualities and skills the person who has the position of manager must have to be able to run the activity in good conditions. This second dimension of competence can and must be treated in two ways: professional skills and managerial skills. (Nicolescu, O. & Verboncu, I. 2002)

The triad skill/competence – authority – responsibility represents the managerial process drive and, at the same time, a factor of self-control because the manager knows the limits he can do his job and which the limits are in his responsibilities according to the managerial competence. (Toca, I. 2008)

In the last years, more countries focused on clarifying and redefining the function of the main role in establishing the competences /skills standards expected in the school managers' formation, recruitment and evaluation.

1. The school manager's competency profile in different countries

In Quebec, the competence profile is defined by the MELS and it is made up of six "transversal competences" which impregnates all the necessary competences to run an institution [6] and ten competences grouped in four management domains/areas. For each competence, the Ministry associated key actions. There were found 136 key-actions.

Table 1

School managers' skills/competence in Quebec

Policy and management	Teaching and learning	Personnel management	Partnership	Resources
Common vision	Consulting partners	Effective communication with staff	Awareness, Expectations communication	Resource use planning
Collaborative work	Improving learning	Promoting the development	Determining resource	Expected results
Coordination of activity	Data analysis	Delegating responsibilities	Keeps contacts with communities	Personnel motivation/imputation
Promotion change	Reporting of results	Conflicts management	Supporting the development	Negotiating meetings
Implementation of a successful plan	Providing professional competence for each team	Showing respect	Intervention at each level in making decisions regarding the educational process	Efficient management of financial and material resources
Code of ethics	Monitoring learning	Common practice driving		Positive relations with families and communities

Source: adapted after William, MELS and ISLLC 2008.

In the United States, this movement of defining standards of skill/ competence started with publishing the report A Nation at Risk in 1984. In 1996 Interstate School Leaders Licence Consortium (ISLLC) published Standards for school managers, guide for training of school principals based on three principles: keeping it away from the bureaucracy and hierarchy, which dominated the American academic world, reviving debate and questions about teaching and learning and finally increasing of collaboration and parents' partnership and community. In 2002, National Policy Board for Education Administration (NPBEA) published L'educational

Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC). This new standard is now accepted and used by the national organizations in more than twenty states in the United States of America. In general, to access a school manager position, one needs experience in teaching, training in educational management and many times a master (Cattonar, 2007). Since its launch in 1996, ISLLC is used as a base for employment, training and evaluation in schools from 43 states from the USA (Adams-Rodgers, L. 2008).

In England, Department of Education and Skill published in October 2004 a document, which describes the managers' skills/competences (www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications). These standards are used in managers' recruitment, evaluation and training.

In Canada, the manager's role is similar to that of an administrator (friendly attitude, cooperative, kind, gives freedom to teachers, se of his intelligent, nice, keeps discipline, boring, good administrator and organizer, honest, has sense of humour, is agreeable, open, conscientious, patient).

In France, a protocol, a result of some agreements between Ministry of Education and unions, published in January 2001, offers the framework for school managers' training, activity at national level headed by the management direction on the base of departmental orientation in collaboration with l'École Supérieure de l'Éducation Nationale. The manager's required skills/competences of an educational institution are grouped in four domains/areas, as shown in the following table:

Table 2

Skills a school manager in France needs

Domains	Professional competences
Management of educational services	1. Structure of school organisation based on the students' educational needs
	2. Support the development of educational practices adapted to the students' needs
Management of educational environment	3. Assistance to the school council in executing the role according to the law.
	4. Direction one project elaboration in applying a successful plan focused on the students' performance
	5. Supporting cooperation and partnership development focused on the students results
Human resources management	6. Providing schools with competent teachers
	7. Development of teachers and auxiliary teachers staff practice competences
	8. Improving teachers' managerial and professional skills
Administrative management	9. Effective and efficient administration of financial resources
	10. Efficient and effective administration of material resources

2. The school manager's competency profile in Romania

In Romania, managerial skills required in an effective school leadership/run, in the actual context the one of orienting towards the professionalizing of leadership positions, of training and controlling in the educational system, can be presented in competences categories, specific competences, application areas and ways of achieving. According to the Educational Law, art. 97, *the school manager/ the principle does the executive management of the educational institution.*

The school manager's competency profile was ready in the actual form in 2002 in a work group from the National Centre for Teacher Training from School Education of the Education and Research Ministry. It was published in "Formarea Continua" magazine, numbers 3-4 and now it is on the Ministry site and C.N.F.P. I consider important these to be presented because they represent the starting point permanent training, which are accredited at national level to with the view of being read by both the actual school managers and those who are going to apply for this job in educational system.

Table 3

**Skills required by the position of manager/deputy manager
in the educational system in Romania**

CATEGORIES OF SKILLS/COMPETENCES	SPECIFIC SKILLS	AREAS OF APPLICATIONS
I. Communication and networking skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> To select the appropriate ways and means of communications in order to make the management more efficient. <input type="checkbox"/> To adapt to various unforeseen situations to solve the educational problems. <input type="checkbox"/> To find solutions to conflict situations after the investigation through mediation and negotiation to assure a climate of trust and responsibility. 	Climate of work Consulting, The relation with community and partner institutions, Communication with students
II. Psychosocial skills/competences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> To value individual and group features of the interlocutors for an efficient communication. <input type="checkbox"/> To adopt an appropriate behaviour in relation with the interlocutors to create a climate of collaboration. 	Professional ethics
III. Abilities of using information technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> To synthesize information to create a database useful to the educational management. <input type="checkbox"/> To value the information from the database in order to make the decisions according to the specific realities of the educational environment. 	Managerial activity

CATEGORIES OF SKILLS/COMPETENCES	SPECIFIC SKILLS	AREAS OF APPLICATIONS
	<input type="checkbox"/> To use the techniques and computerized information technologies to make the activity more efficient and to assure its quality.	
IV. Leadership and coordination skills/competences	<input type="checkbox"/> To design the activities in order to achieve a quality educational approach. <input type="checkbox"/> To design the activities in order to achieve the objectives from the management plan. To coordinate the educational process in order to realize school improvement. <input type="checkbox"/> To manage the decision making through accountability or delegating responsibilities in the working groups from school.	Educational process Meeting management
V. Assessment skills/competences	<input type="checkbox"/> To establish the assessment objectives and criteria respecting the principles of total quality management. <input type="checkbox"/> To use assessment techniques and instruments specific to the educational process. <input type="checkbox"/> To evaluate the educational approach in order to identify what the personnel need to improve.	Educational process Initial and continuous training of staff
VI. Competent management and resource management	<input type="checkbox"/> To manage financial and material resources according to the priorities of the management plan respecting the general and specific rules. <input type="checkbox"/> To manage the decision making by assuming the responsibility or delegating the responsibility in the working groups from school. <input type="checkbox"/> To select the human resources according to the specific unit.	Financial and material resources Human resources
VII. Competent targeting institutional development	<input type="checkbox"/> To analyse the educational context in which the institution operates in order to design an appropriate strategy of institutional development. <input type="checkbox"/> To design the strategy of institutional development. <input type="checkbox"/> To promote the national and European values in education through programs and partnerships.	Programmes and partnerships

CATEGORIES OF SKILLS/COMPETENCES	SPECIFIC SKILLS	AREAS OF APPLICATIONS
O	<input type="checkbox"/> To evaluate their own activity in order to increase the management quality <input type="checkbox"/> To select their own training way for the career development, according to personal aspirations and the institution features.	Managerial carrier

Source: the site of The National Centre for Training of Educational Personnel from Education, from the Ministry of Education

Specialists from the Institute of Education Sciences define school manager like this: “The manager is a key factor in introduction of any educational change. With no competent, well-prepared managers, able to decide fast and efficiently in various conditions, the educational reform will fail. In the context of managerial activity, which is defined as an art which makes the things come to life in organizations through the others, the manager is the one who procures, allocate and uses material and human resources to achieve goals.” (Ministry of Education, Science Education Institute, 2001)

Analysing and comparing the school managers’ competency profile from different countries we can see that for successfully fulfilment of duties and of school mission, for realization of strategic and operational objectives of school, for management and coordination of teachers, their guidance and motivation, effective networking of school managers in the educational environment or in the exterior, the school manager must have the following skills/competences:

- legal competence;
- social competence;
- economic, financial and administrative – household competence;
- managerial competence (psycho-pedagogical and educational) which implies.

Conclusions

Training and development of management skills represents a complex process based on special and permanent improvement during the entire career. Talent and native skills have an important role but they are not sufficient to make a good manager. Modelling skills is a process of human resources management, which gained more and more supporters among both practitioners and researchers from the entire world. It involves identifying and describing the competencies/skills, which are necessary to get good performances. Development of these skills is a responsibility shared between managers, school organizations, school inspectorates, professional associations and universities. Universities, among others, are responsible for adapting strategies, which contribute to development of skills for school managers. From this perspective, universities offer specialized programs in education administration and their success is a prerequisite to do the job all right.

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