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## School Principal and Leadership Style

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### Abstract:

*One of the issues of interest for successful school management is the form and style of its leadership. This study is an attempt to present an overview of the use of leadership style. The question raised in the study was: "What is the predominant style of leadership in the middle schools of Tirana city?". The study's main activity was the description of leadership styles. This is accomplished through critical review of the literature, data collected from questionnaires and interviews. The data obtained supported the hypothesis raised that: "leadership form and style in Tirana schools are among collaborative and consultative style." Style of leadership is recommended to be used according to the situation and care for human relationship oriented and the realization of objectives.*

**Key words:** school leadership, leadership style, collaborative and consultative style.

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

School leadership, as a complex activity, depends to a large extent by its form and style. "The purpose of the work of a leader is to move forward to the changes. One way to move and change direction, creates the possibility of new things

happening and very good "(Fullan, 2010:9). We have inherited a culture of school leadership, reflecting the development of society from one generation to another. In our practice, the principal is seen as a major figure in our school, but advanced professional experience (Fullan, 2001, 2004, 2010) provides analysis and reports, where the role of principal is crucial at school achievements. The principal must possess several skills, above all, being a good listener, a professional communicator, a clear visionar, an open collaborator and a positive supporter for teachers, students and parents. These skills being used according to situations, determine the leadership form and style. The crucial role of principal related with the above mentioned skills faced with actual problems of our school leadership, were the starting point for this study.

*Purpose of the study* is leadership style identification prevailing in the middle schools of Tirana city. Question raise is: What is the predominant style of leadership in in the middle schools of Tirana city?

*Interested Audiences.* Results and conclusions are important for education stakeholders to have an overview of leadership form and style used in Tirana city middle schools. These findings might serve as prerequisite for education stakeholders to createing platforms on monitoring constructive leadership and possibilities for intervention strategies

## **Leadership**

Literature and contemporary studies bring multiple definitions for leadership. "Leadership is mobilizing others to solve the problem, because they know how to solve, but to help them to cope with the problem, which is not successfully resolved "(Fullan, 2004:1). Cuilla (1998; Boulén 2004) defines the direction as a complex relationship of trust, obligation, commitment, emotional and sharing the vision for the good stuff. Leithwood (2006, 2010) makes a simple definition of

leadership calling; leadership and influence. According to Hallinger (2003) leadership should be seen as a mutual process and not just a way to influence one over the others.

Leadership is a relationship “between leaders and followers impactful targeting the real changes and outcomes that reflect their common goal” (Daft, 2005:5). Burns called "leadership as one of the most studied phenomena and less accessible to the earth" (Burns, 1978:2). Leadership is often regarded as a critical point of success or failure of the organization (Bass, 1990). Burke (2008) defines leadership as vision, change, its influence, intuition, and persuasive skills presentative reward people for doing the work and providing opportunities to learn new skills. Yulk defines leadership as a process that carries a person or group over others for structured activities and relationships in the group or organization (cited by Bush, 2013).Hoy&Miskel (2001) define leadership as the art of transformation people and organization in order to improve the organization.

### **School principal**

At the heart of the school is the leader who focuses on the development of cognitive skills of teachers, professional community, coherent programs and technical solutions. "In our days, not doing anything as steering is a big risk, but worth it to take over this valuable risk "(Fullan, 2004:3). Fullan's decade of experience (2001) calls school leadership complex because: changing school takes a long time; development of learning communities requires the manager to combine a number of features which can not be summarized in a list of tasks to be performed. In a six year study of the University of Minnesota and Toronto, including responses from 180 schools in six states, the researchers reported; "So far we have not found any school where the improvement of students" achievement have been a lack of a talented leadership "(The Wallace Foundation, 2012:3). Contemporary concept (Mita, 2004) for school

leadership and school leader is:visionary leadership, visionary leader.

*Principal and communication.* Alička (1998) emphasize the importance of communication with the staff, orally and written, thus it brings the creation of a positive and effective climate. Communication links (Rapti, 2003) headmaster-teacher develops education progress. Cooperation (Rosenholtz 1986; Elmore 2000) between the headmaster with the teachers is effective and has a great impact to school performance, particularly when the activities for achieving the goals and objectives go into teaching function. Principal (Pascu, 2003) plays in some positions; as an educational leadership and good management bureaucrat as well, he makes the connection and the cohesin of what is stated in school be implimented in activities

*Principal and teacher.* Showing care toward teachers (Alička, 1998), supporting and making them obtain satisfaction for the work they do, it is the duty of the leaders. Use with the efficiency human resources by using a suitable style, brings efficiency and accomplishment of objectives (Muka, 2003). Sipas Fullan (2008) drejtuesi duhet të tregojë kujdes në marrëdhënien me mësuesit, të mbështesë ato. Elmore (2000) highlights the importance of leaders' personality traits. According to him an emotional leader may have more success in school quality.

*Principal and student.* Principal - student relationship is indicative of the climate created by school leadership forms. Results of a study (Nano et, al.,2003) indicate that students viewed headmasters as supportive, solving problems, but also students require more attention to the voice of each of them. Fullan (2001, 2002) brings the results of his studies, in which clearly indicates the inability of students to contact the

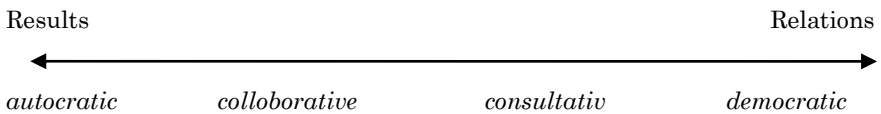
headmaster and to have a clear opinion about the school leadership.

*Principal and decision-making.* Senge (Fullan, 2001) underlines the importance of seeing the headmaster as the man who does not lead a group of ignorant, but as a person who plans, leads and teaches. Elmore (2000) analyzes and highlights the characteristics of a leadership, where responsibility is distributed. Decision making (Alička, 2006) is a complex process, not owned by the leader, but it should come as logical consequence of giving and receiving information (Alička, 2006).

*Principal and parents.* Principal is between the school and external community (Fullan, 2001; Alička 1998, 2006). Perception of parents for the school leadership is reflected by the findings of a study based on the needs of good school leaders. In this study parents request from the headmasters: curriculum implementation, appropriate facilities and monitoring the preparation of teachers and students (Nano et, al., 2003). Conclusions of another study CDE (2004) about the involvement of parents to school activities shows that parents, despite some complains, they believe that the school is a reputable institution that serves those who want to cooperate.

## **Leadership Style**

There are many adjectives that characterize leadership form and style, which often lead to confusion in determining the appropriate qualities. (Leithwood, K., Louis, SK, Anderson, S, Wahlstrom, K. 2004). Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) present a scheme of leadership styles and form orientations: orientation toward results and orientation toward relations. The more a person was concerned about the results, the less he or she would be concerned about the relationship and vice versa (cited by Everard, Morris, Wilson, 2004).



Blanchard and Hersey (1996) constructed the theory of leadership styles based on two basic concepts: the style of leadership and organization, providing staff support. They emphasized the effective use of style depending on the situation and the maturity of the staff. They listed four leadership styles: autocratic, consultative, collaborative, democratic. Blake and Mouton (1994) listed five leadership styles in two dimensions: people versus task orientation. They stressed that the best style for the effectiveness of the organization is, when the headmaster possesses them both, high orientation tasks (score), and relationship (cited by Everard et al., 2004). Alička (1998) classifies leaders according to a leadership orientation: oriented towards power; results-oriented; oriented social credibility. He lists three leadership styles: *autocratic style* - compelling, intervenes to detail; *democratic style* - delivers guidance to all members to include in the planning; *liberal-style* - based on the objectives, but do not take care of them, is not persistent.

Fullan (2001a) identified the following five traits that principals must develop: (a) a strong sense of moral purpose, (b) an understanding of the dynamics of change, (c) a commitment to developing and sharing new knowledge, (d) a capacity for coherence making and (e) emotional intelligence as they build and foster relationships. "The effective change leader actively participates as a learner in helping the organization improve" (Fullan, 2011:5). According to Goleman the principal must use some leadership styles depending on the situation (cited by Fullan 2001, 2004). He defined emotional intelligence as a leader's ability to manage himself and his relationship relative to the four emotional capabilities of self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, and social skill. In his theory, he combined the five elements of emotional intelligence and listed six leadership styles : (a) authoritarian: the leader

mobilizes people toward a vision- "Come with me".(b) affiliative: the leader creates harmony and builds emotional bonds- "People come first".(c) coaching: the leader develops people for the future- "Try this".(d) democratic: the leader forges consensus through participation- "How do you?". (e) Coercive: the leader demands compliance. "Do what I tell you". He recommends that leaders use as many of the six leadership styles as possible to create a state of "fluid leadership".

According to Hallinger (2003) effective principal responds to context and behavior takes the form of school context. Hallinger proposes three sets of leadership dimensions in his model; (a) defining the school's mission, includes framing and then communicating the school's goals; (b) managing the instructional program, includes supervising and evaluating teaching, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress; (c) promoting a positive school learning climate: encompasses protecting teaching time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers, and providing incentives for learning (cited by Leithwood et al., 2006:20).

Based on transformational leadership (Burn 1979 and Bass,1985) Leithwood & Janzi(1999, 2006) developed a model, which included some of the characteristics of transformational leadership. According to them leader who had success was that he had used a number of *mechanisms in management, staff motivation and involvement in the school climate change*. They included four dimensions in their model :(a) setting directions. includes building school vision, developing specific goals and priorities and holding high expectations; (b) developing people refers to providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualized support and modeling desirable professional practices and values; (c) redesigning the organization includes developing a collaborative school culture, creating structures to foster participation in school decisions and creating productive community relationships ;(d) managing the instructional

programme refers to the establishment of stable routines, structures and procedures to support change.

To achieve good results, to be a future leader, to lead and manage the school effectively, he should pass from time to time to one or the other style, depending on the situation. Leadership form should be oriented to results and relationships in order to create a form of collaborative support for teachers, students, parents, community

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

*Methods used.* For the purpose of this study it is used descriptive reaserch. Through critical review of the literature is given an overview of current theories and studies. Measuring the study was done through a quantitative approach to the data obtained from questionnaires and qualitative methods, interviews.

*Instruments.* The instruments used in this study were standardized questionnaires, replies given by Likert scale from 1 to 4. Instrument underwent pilot. The questionnaires were designed in three types: for leaders, teachers and students. The study is based on main data collected from questionnaires of the principals. Principals and teachers questionnaire contains 23 statements, and for students 9 statements. Qualitative data collection was conducted semi-structured interviews with parents from different schools.

*Sample.* The sample is stratified: leaders, teachers, students, parents. In this study population, the headmasters, is equal to the sample. Number of questionnaires completed by headmasters is 50, out of 54 that were distributed. While supporting data: 35 questionnaires for teachers, 30 questionnaires for students, 10 interviews with parents. To determine the sample for supporting data it was used random method.



*Data Processing.* Questionnaires were processed with SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientists software) version 16, which has facilitated the extraction of quantitative data. Data analysis and conclusions drawn is made by having the frequency percentage of each group and through qualitative analysis, interviews.

*Limitations of the study.* The study has a description of the dominant form and style of leadership, based on self-reporting of the headmasters. The study does not provide an active strategy for using the most efficient style.

### 3. RESULT

Research hypothesis on the dominant style of leadership is based on quantitative analysis of key data. The data obtained from the questionnaires of teachers, students and parents are supportive interview.

#### 3.1 Level of communication.

Based on main data obtained from questionnaires of principals and supportive data obtained from the questionnaires of teachers and students, it has been presented on the data below on *the level of communication*.

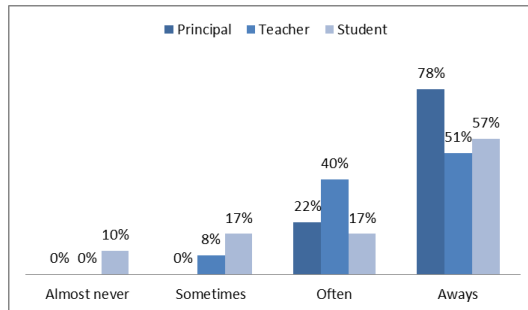
**Table 1 Level of communication**

Level of communication	Frequency of values in%		
	Principal	Teacher	Student
Almost never	0%	0%	10%
Sometimes	0%	8%	17%
Often	22%	40%	17%
Always	78%	51%	57%

By analyzing the data on *level of communication* it has been resulted that: (1) according to the majority of the principals (78%) the principal *always* informs teachers about the reforms, guidelines, curriculum changes, etc., while part of them, less than 1/4 (22%), report teachers *often* on reforms, and guidelines; (2) according to the majority of teachers (51%),

principals *always* inform teachers about the reforms, guidelines, curriculum changes and 40% believe that information is *often* provided, while 8% say it is provided *sometimes*:(3) according to the students (57%) shows that the director *always* informs about curricular changes of the guidelines, 17% assert that the principal informs *often* and 17% *sometimes*, whereas only 10% assert that the principal informs *almost never*.

The results of the responses of principals and teachers on communication guidelines, changes in the curriculum and programs, show that we are dealing with a high level of this form of leadership.



**Graphic 1: Level of communication**

### 3. DECISION-MAKING

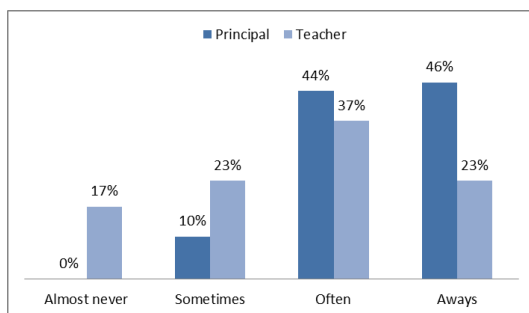
Based on main data obtained from questionnaires of principals and supportive data obtained from the questionnaires of teachers has been presented on the data below on the *decision-making*.

**Table: 2 Decision-making**

Decision-making	Frequency of values in%	
	Principal	Teacher
Almost never	0%	17%
Sometimes.	10%	23%
Often	44%	37%
Always	46%	23%

By analyzing the data on *decision-making* it has been resulted that : (1) according to principals (46%) the principal *always* involves teachers in decision making, 44% of them say often, while (10%) answer that the principal involves teachers in decision making *sometimes*; (2) according to the teachers (23%) the principal *always* involves teachers in decision making, 37% answer that the principal takes decisions *often* with the involvement of teachers, while less than 1/4 (23%) assert that the principal *sometimes* takes teacher’s opinion in decision making and 17% reply that this happens *almost never*.

Based on the results on the involvement of teachers in decision-making, principals assessment is too high and the perception of teachers is positive. By becoming part of the decision, the principal uses and trains human resources and makes them increase their job responsibility. Leadership appears consultative and cooperative in his style.



**Graphic 2: Decision-making**

### 3.3 Approach to new ideas

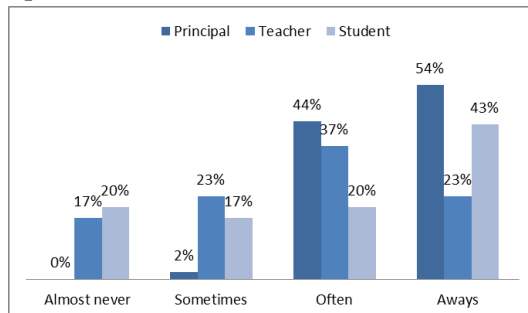
Based on main data obtained from questionnaires of principals and supportive data obtained from the questionnaires of teachers and students, it has been presented on the data below on the *approach to new ideas*.

**Tabel: 3 Approach to new ideas**

Approach to new ideas	Frequency of values in %		
	Principal	Teacher	Student
Almost never	0%	17%	20%
Sometimes	2%	23%	17%
Often	44%	37%	20%
Always	54%	23%	43%

By analyzing the data on *approach to new ideas* it has been resulted that: (1) according to principals (54%) the principal *always* welcomes new ideas from the staff, 44% report that the principal *often* takes teacher’s opinion, while a small part of the principals (2%) state that the principal almost never welcomes ideas from the staff; (2) according to 1/5 (20%) of the teachers, the principal always welcomes ideas from teachers, 32% answer that the principal welcomes new ideas *often*, while 32% say that it happens *sometimes*, and 17% answer that they *almost never* accept ideas from the staff; (3) according to the students (43%) results that the principal *always* gets the opinion of the students, 20% answer that the principal *often* gets student’s opinion, while 17% and 20% say that the principals *sometimes* or *almost never* gets student’s opinion.

Based on the findings, leadership appears as a collaborative leader who accepts ideas from staff, communication is bilateral. Teachers and students have positive perception.



**Graphic 3: Approach to new idea**

### 3.4 Avoidance of conflicts

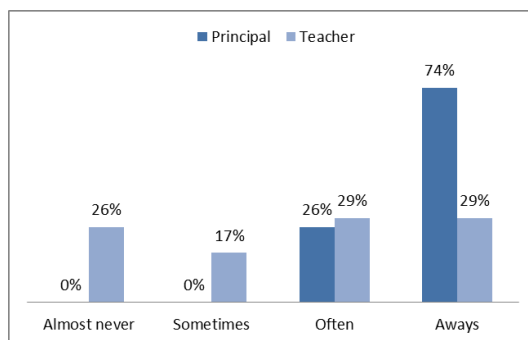
Based on main data obtained from questionnaires of principals and supportive data obtained from the questionnaires of teachers, it has been presented on the data below on the *avoidance of conflicts*.

**Table 4: Avoidance of conflicts**

Avoidance of conflicts	Frequency of values in %	
	Principal	Teacher
Almost never	0%	26%
Sometimes	0%	17%
Often	26%	29%
Always	74%	29%

By analyzing the data on *avoidance of conflicts* it has been resulted that: (1) according to most principals, (74%) the principal *always* avoids conflicts, while 26% answer that the avoiding principal conflicts *often*; (2) according to the teachers (29%, 29%) answer that the principal *always* and *often* avoids conflicts, while 17% answer that he sometimes avoids, 26% answer that the principal *almost never* avoids conflicts.

The data obtained reveal a principal who manages challenging situations, which if not resolved, becomes a serious obstacle. Teachers see the principal as the man who solves conflict situations. Avoidance or conflict resolution is indicative of professional resolution of the situation.



**Graphic 4: Avoidance of conflicts**

### 3.5 *Principal-teacher human relationship.*

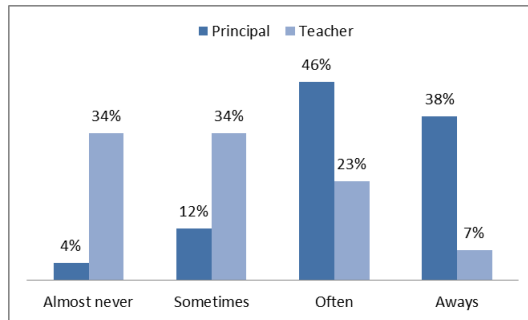
Based on main data obtained from questionnaires of principals and supportive data obtained from the questionnaires of teachers, it has been presented on the data below on the *principal-teacher human relationship.*

**Table 5: *Principal-teacher human relationship***

Principal-teacher human relationship	Frequency of values in %	
	Principal	Teacher
Almost never	4%	34%
Sometimes	12%	34%
Often	46%	23%
Always	38%	7%

By analyzing the data on *principal-teacher human relationship* it has been resulted that: (1) according to some of the principals (38%) the principal *always* shows concern to teachers' human feelings, 46% of them report that they do often, but very few of them (12%, 4%) are *sometimes* and *almost never* concerned to teachers' feelings; (2) according to a small fraction of teachers (7%) the principal *always* shows concern toward teachers' human feelings and 23% answer that it happens *often*. While most of them (34%) answer that the principal *almost never* (34%) shows concern about teachers' feelings.

Principal-teacher human relationship is an important component of leadership and key to its success. But teachers (79%), different from the principals, consider it as a lacking relationship. The difference in the perception of each side shows that for teachers in the leadership form the principal is not oriented towards human relationships, they find no emotional connection with the headmaster. This poses a risk to the school and its success, because without the support of the teacher, the leader can not be successful.



**Graphic 5: Principal-teacher human relationship**

### 3.6 Principal-student human relationship

Based on main data obtained from questionnaires of principals and supportive data obtained from the questionnaires of students, it has been presented on the data below on the *principal-student human relationship*.

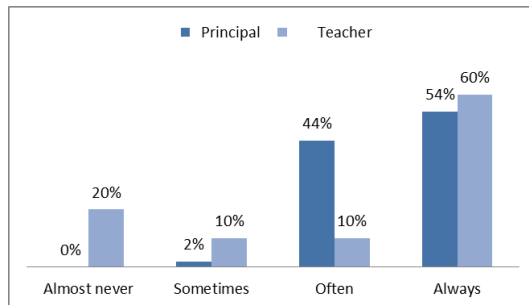
**Table 6: Principal-student human relationship**

Principal-student human relationship	Frequency of values in %	
	Principal	Teacher
Almost never	0%	20%
Sometimes	2%	10%
Often	44%	10%
Always	54%	60%

By analyzing the data on *principal-student human relationship* it has been resulted that: (1) according to the majority of principals (54%) the principal is concerned about the feelings and opinions of students, while 44% of principals *often* show concern, only 2% of them almost never show concern about the students' feelings; (2) according to a good number of the students (60%) the principal *always* show concern about their opinion and feelings, 10% of them answer that the principal is concerned often and 20% answer that the principal almost never cares about the feelings and the opinions of students.

Results obtained on the human relationship between principals and students are indicative of principals' attention to students. The principals show attention to student's concerns

by creating a familiar careing climate, which helps in solving their problems. This brings confidence to the relation between principals and students, subsecuently the relation between school and family. Principals appear more attentive to the students than to other school stakeholders, the students are either acquired by a human professional service of school, or suffer the consequences of a poor service.



**Graphic 6: Principal-student human relationship**

### 3.7 Collaborative networks with other schools

Based on main data obtained from questionnaires of principals and supportive data obtained from the questionnaires of teacher, it has been presented on the data below on the *collaborative networks with other schools*.

**Table 8: Collaborative networks with other schools**

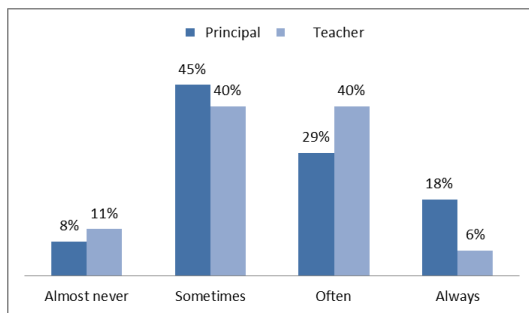
Collaborative networks with other schools	Frequency of values in%	
	Principal	Teacher
Almost never	8%	11%
Sometimes	45%	40%
Often	29%	40%
Always	18%	6%

By analyzing the data on *collaborative networks with other schools* it has been resulted that: (1) according to principals(18%) the principal of the school always creates collaborative networks with other schools, while 39% report that it occurs often. But nearly half of principal (45%) answer



that networking happens *sometimes* and 8% answer that it *almost never* happens; (2) according to a small group of teachers (6%) it results that the principal of the school *always* creates collaborative networks and 40% of them answer that networking with other schools is *often*, 40% answer that cooperation with other schools happens *sometimes* and 11% of teachers answer that it *almost never* happens.

Based on the results, the creation of collaborative networks with other schools, has revealed a limited leadership philosophy, closed only within the school. The vision of leadership plays an important role in the opening and connecting with other area schools, in order to be in line with changes in our school system. You can not have success just within the school, if you do not know what's going on around it, to confront and evaluate the school with external indicators.



**Graphic 7: Collaborative networks with other schools**

### 3.8 Problem solving

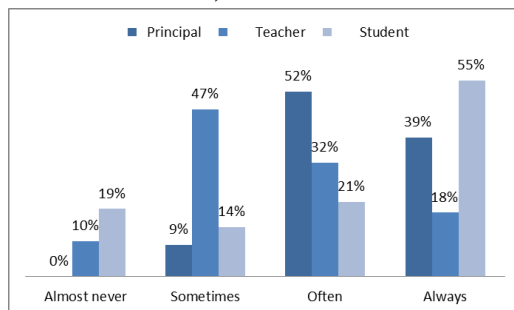
Based on main data obtained from questionnaires of principals and supportive data obtained from the questionnaires of teacher, it has been presented on the data below on the *problem solving*.

**Table 8: Problem solving**

Problem solving	Frequency of values in%		
	Principal	Teacher	Student
Almost never	0%	10%	10%
Sometimes	9%	47%	14%
Often	52%	32%	21%
Always	39%	18%	55%

By analyzing the data on *problem solving* it has been resulted that: (1) according to principals (39%) the principal of the school supports teachers and *always* solves problems, while 52% answer that they often supports teachers and solves problems. A small part of the principal (9%) answer that the principal is sometimes supportive; (2) according to the teachers (18%) it results that the principal of the school is *always* supportive, while 32% answer that the principal is often supportive, while nearly half of teachers (47%) answer that the principal sometimes solves teachers problems and 3% answer the principal almost never solves problems; (3) according to the majority of students (55%) it results that the principal of the school is *always* supportive and 21% answer that the principal *often* solves students' problems. A small group (14%) answer that the principal is *sometimes* supportive and 10% answer that the principal *almost never* solves problems.

Based on the findings above, the principal is supportive and helps on solving teacher's problems and obstacles, and it turns out that the principal is at the top of this form of leadership. But half of the teachers do not see the principal in this position, comparing with student's perception of it. This indicator weakens the attitude of relation orientation leadership, despite the fact that about 80% of principals report that they are supportive. The teachers feel good and better implement their tasks, when the leader helps, supports, creates good conditions. For the teacher, the principal is only supporting certain activities, not all.



**Graphic 8: Problem solving**

### **3.9 Qualitative analysis**

Question: *Does the principal inform you regularly about guidelines and curriculum changes?*

Parents, more than half (six of them), responded that they are not informed about the reforms, guidelines, curriculum changes and express their concerns, and four of them answered that they have got the information on curriculum changes, when they requested. Parents are unhappy and confused, as they do not have this service from schools, communication and information. The headmaster appears to be good communicators for teachers and students, but not professional and supportive for parents.

Question: *Does the school/principal invite you to speak freely of your thoughts and concerns?*

According to the interview with the parents answer that the opportunity of contributing with their ideas is controversial and limited. Some of the respondents say that contributing with ideas is legal, but the principal does not offer opportunities. Only one parent accepts that the principal offers him opportunities to contribute with ideas in all school activities. But parents do not support these indicators, they show concern for the inability to give their opinions. It is displayed a closed form of leadership for parents.

Question *Does the school background support you in the salvation of different concerns and problems?*

According to the parents' answers in the interview, it results that there is limited opportunities for being supported by the principal. Furthermore, in some cases even when they are supported the principal does not solve their problems. Only one parent says that he gets support.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings above of the quantitative analysis of questionnaires to principals, teacher, students, parents and the qualitative analysis, these are the conclusions:

Principals assess positively the form and style of their leadership according to communication with teachers, considering it as an important element in the learning process. Principals' results confirm the hypothesis raised that leadership style is collaborative: Principal's decision making is broad-based, involving teachers. It confirms the hypothesis raised that leadership style is collaborative and consultative. The principals appear to be collaborative, generating ideas, accepting opinions from staff and students. Solving the problem by avoiding conflict situations, reveals a careful and effective leadership style. The principal appears to be cooperative, but also as a trainer. It confirms the hypothesis raised that leadership style is collaborative and consultative. Creation of positive principal-teacher human relations brings efficiency. The principal shows care toward the teachers, but teachers consider this relationship missing, an indicator that weakens the reliability of this result. Creation of positive principal-student human relations is in the attention of the principal. The principal shows care toward the students. Leaders appear locked in leadership philosophy, not cooperating with other schools. This indicator is supported by teachers. Professional support in resolving obstacles, reveals a principal who is supportive of the staff, but teachers do not fully support this indicator.

Based on the study findings derived from quantitative analysis of key data, surveys of principals, we come to the conclusion that: the prevailing style in the schools of the capital city is among *collaborative and consultative style*. Leadership form is result oriented and relationship.

## 5.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the quantitative analysis of questionnaires to managers, teachers, students' parents, and qualitative analysis, we recommend: The principal ought to use these kinds of questionnaires to find out the way the teachers percept the way a school must be led, in order to have improvement. Educational institutions must find some monitoring and evaluating mechanisms of leadership styles, to improve the styles' efficiency. The principal must support and interact with parents in order to create a positive and encouraging atmosphere around.

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