

The role of the school principal in increasing the quality of teaching

ALBULENA LALA ZEQRIRI

PhD Candidate, elementary school teacher

OSMAN OSMANI

PhD Candidate

Lecturer at University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina”

Abstract:

Education has a significant importance since it is considered a national asset which influences the economic development of a country. Therefore, education must be a national priority. The teaching quality is one of the greatest concerns in the field of education in Kosovo. Although many efforts have been made in this regard, the improvement and the promotion of quality education for all citizens still remains one of the most strategic plans of our state and policy makers of education. Kosovo needs a more effective education system, particularly in the education management. This study aims to explore the role of school principal in teaching quality, and the ways how to reach better results. The methods used in this research are interviews, surveys, and data collection from the selected literature. The research started in November 2016 and was completed in January 2017. It was found that in order to improve school effectiveness, principals must engage in activities, create a working atmosphere, and provide the school and the staff with the appropriate resources. The school leader is responsible for the overall progress of the school in general and the provision of quality education in particular. The education system must prepare school leaders throughout trainings in order to improve education in general.

Key words: principal, school, teaching quality, influence, key factor.

INTRODUCTION

Students are always in a great need for effective schools. An effective school needs to be led by a good leadership. Part of this leadership is surely the principal. A lot of books have been written on the role of the school principal in teaching quality. The most well-known are: "The Governance and Leadership in Education," by Halim Hyseni, Nikoleta Mita, Jahi Salihu, and Dukagjin Pupovci; Michael Fullan's "The New Meaning of Educational Change"; "Teacher Training and Capacity Building of Municipalities and School Principals in Kosovo", funded by the EU office, etc. Moreover, a lot of information can be found in different websites in this aspect; a few of which have become the source of this scientific paper. This scientific paper aims to identify the factors which lead to school's effectiveness. It is of great importance since school principal is characterized as one of the most influential factor in increasing teaching quality. Therefore, through this study we intend to analyze and find out the challenges, the role, and the influence of the school principal in improving and increasing teaching quality, as well as finding solutions to overcome these problems.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To this research paper, we addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the role of school principal in teaching quality?
2. How can the school principal influence teaching quality?
3. Which factors indicate teaching quality in the school?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

To back up our research, we raised the following research hypothesis: The school principal plays a significant role in increasing teaching quality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Here we provide a selective and a concise framework of an active and impressive effective school.

Knowledge in postmodern times is considered the main resource of a country. Therefore, effective school is a solution to postmodern problems. Thus, education's effectiveness should be Kosovo's priority in order for its citizens to gain knowledge which as a consequence would contribute to economic development, effectual increase, and innovation. Effective schools are led by good leaders. According to the studies, the leader is one of the major factors who contribute to the work progress and school efficiency. S/he is the one who works deliberately, cooperates with other members of the leading team, and involves them in decision-making. Hyseni, H. and others, (2003: 222-235) share the opinion that the school leader must be an excellent teacher who guides and have accurate information of what is happening in the classroom. According to them, s/he should know how to intervene at the right moment. Besides, the leader should be familiar with teaching strategies, and assess students' progress. Even though, the leader has no direct influence on learning outcomes, his/her influence on the school and its culture influences classroom practices and the quality of teaching and learning. Reynolds and Taeddlie (2000) hold the opinion that there are five elements which make the school principal an effective leader: cohesion, commitment in engaging the others, being instructive, providing frequent and personal control, and recruiting suitable personnel. Fullan says that the role of the school leader is very complex. According to him, the school leader is directly engaged as a promoter and facilitator of continuous improvement in school. This is proved by numerous studies that have been carried out in the past which consider the principal's role as the central role in promoting and preventing changes at school. From these studies it is seen that in schools where principals cooperated

with parents, teachers, and community members for each and every initiative, positive and effective changes were evident. According to Fullan cited in Leithwood and his colleagues (Fullan (2010); Leithwood, 2000; Leithwood and others, 1999) principals focus on creating appropriate conditions for the development of their school, by supporting and promoting professional development of teachers, and by observing teachers' commitment and capabilities. According to Elmont (2000) (cited by Fullan (2010)), in order to run the school in a qualitative manner, the principal must combine all factors for a continuous improvement (Fullan, 2010: 209-223). The specific factors which indicate the quality of education are: results, successes, the culture of teaching and learning, professionalism, leadership and management, the strategy for developing the quality, and comprehensiveness and infrastructure management. All these factors depend on each other; only if combined together can provide good results.

Successful schools and quality education are achieved only by dedicated and hard-working management staff. Effective education prepares a vision that contains a high level of dedication to teaching and learning ("Teacher Training and Capacity Building of Municipalities and School Principals in Kosovo", pp. 25-31). Quality occurs when students learn and achieve results that can be measured if:

- the school creates values;
- there is planning and vision;
- there are specified indicators for evaluating the obtained results;
- there are leaders who manage changes in education;
- the school provides continuous professional and methodological trainings, and if
- the school promotes and develops quality education for all students.

These quality standards can only be achieved throughout the school principal and other actors' dedication. The school quality monitoring is based on three levels: national, local, and school level (ipkmasht.rks-gov.net).

THE METHODOLOGY

We collected the data in the municipality of Viti, Kosova. A questionnaire was designed explicitly for this research. The questions were compiled about the school principal's performance in increasing and developing teaching quality. We distributed the questionnaire ourselves, and informed the respondents, i.e., teachers about our survey's purpose. They were told that they can be part of our study voluntarily, and that we will not disclose their names. SPSS package was used in order to analyze the statistical data. The qualitative data were collected through interviews carried out with school principals.

Participants

100 teachers from 10 different schools, and three school principals were the sample; therefore the findings of our research cannot be generalized.

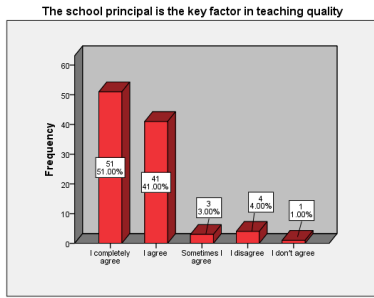
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative data

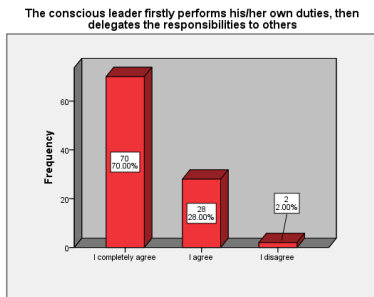
The analysis of questionnaires

Below we present the quantitative data from the questionnaire. The results are illustrated with graphics. They are described and analyzed.

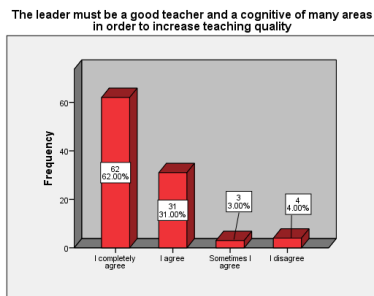
Albulena Lala Zeqiri, Osman Osmani- **The role of the school principal in increasing the quality of teaching**



In the first statement, "The school principal is the key factor in teaching quality", 51 out of 100 respondents, or 51% fully agreed, 41 or 41% agreed, 3 or 3% agreed partially, 4 respondents disagreed, and 1 or 1% did not agree at all.

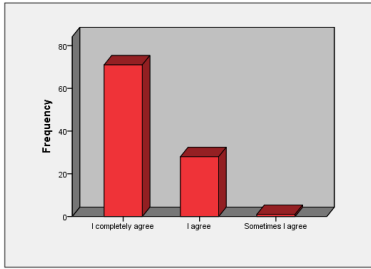


In the second statement, "The conscious leader firstly performs his/her own duties, then delegates the responsibilities to others", 70 out of 100 respondents, or 70% fully agreed, 28 or 28% agreed, and 2 or 2% did not agree.



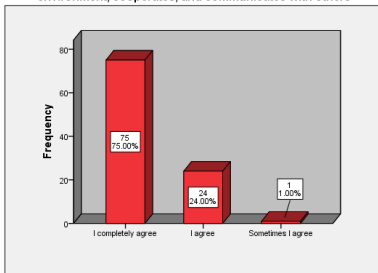
In the third statement, "The leader must be a good teacher and a cognitive of many areas in order to increase teaching quality", 62 or 62% fully agreed, 31% of the respondents agreed, 3 of them agreed partially, and 4 disagreed.

The school is effective when all educational staff participates in increasing teaching quality



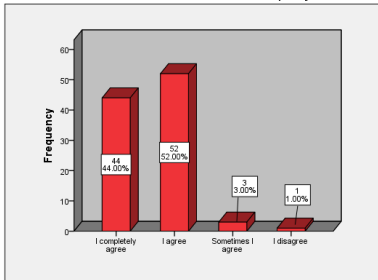
In the fourth statement, "The school is effective when all educational staff participates in increasing teaching quality", 71 respondents out of 100 fully agreed, 28% agreed, and 1 or 1% partially agreed.

A good school manager creates a positive and inclusive environment, cooperates, and communicates with others



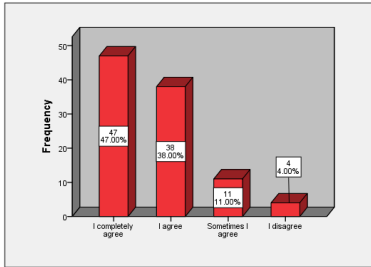
In the fifth statement, "A good school manager creates a positive and inclusive environment, cooperates, and communicates with others", 75 or 75% fully agreed, 24 out of 100 respondents agreed, and 1% agreed partially.

The school leader facilitates school quality



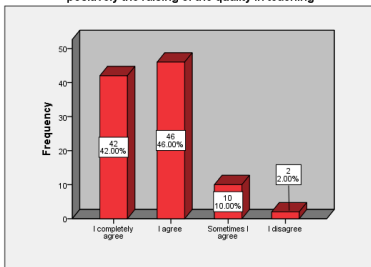
In the sixth statement, "The school leader facilitates school quality," 44 or 44% fully agreed, 52 agreed, 3% agreed partially, and 1% disagreed.

The school leader improves school's infrastructure and promotes the professional development of teachers to increase quality



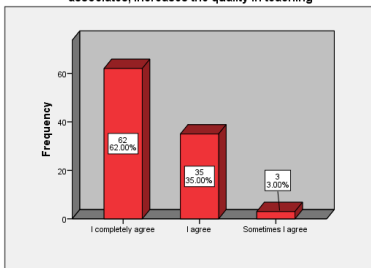
In the seventh statement, "The school leader improves school's infrastructure and promotes the professional development of teachers to increase quality", 47 of the respondents fully agreed, 38 of them agreed, 11 or 11% agreed partially, and 4 or 4% disagreed.

The appointment and training of coordinator of quality influences positively the raising of the quality in teaching



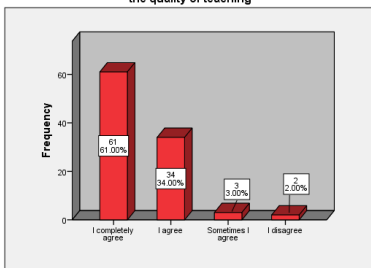
In the eighth statement, "The appointment and training of coordinator of quality influences positively the raising of the quality in teaching", 42 or 42% of the respondent who took place in our study fully agreed, 46 of them agreed, 10 partially agreed, and 2 or 2% did not agree at all.

Motivation and the positive attitude towards staff and other associates, increases the quality in teaching



In the ninth statement, "Motivation and the positive attitude towards staff and other associates, increases the quality in teaching", 62% fully agreed, 35% agreed, and 3% partially agreed.

Continuous monitoring and the publication of the results increases the quality of teaching



In the tenth statement, "Continuous monitoring and the publication of the results increases the quality of teaching", 61 out of 100 respondents fully agreed, 34 of them agreed, 3 or 3% partially agreed, and 2 or 2% did not agree with this.

From the analysis of the questionnaire, we can see that the majority of respondents hold the opinion that the school principal has a key role in teaching quality. The findings suggest that the leader of the school should be aware of his/her duties at the school; s/he should communicate and cooperate with the staff, and the others in order to increase quality and create an environment and a working atmosphere. In order to improve and increase teaching quality at school, the respondents suggest that the principal should appoint the coordinator of quality, initiate professional development of teachers, motivate, monitor, and public teachers' results and successes.

Qualitative data

The analysis of interviews with school principals

The following are the qualitative data from interviews and questionnaires, classifying the main topics that are addressed and questions related to the main research.

The principal of the vocational upper secondary school "Jonuz Zejnullahu" in Viti, Mr. Nijazi Lutfiu says that the school principal has a great influence on teaching quality, and is the key factor in this respect. He says that principals must be accountable for their responsibilities, and serious in their work. This is a way of influencing the others. Further, he claims that successful principals delegate their responsibilities, and cooperate with the school's general coordinator and the quality coordinator –the one who gives necessary advice to the teaching staff on various aspects of teaching. He emphasizes that they should consult about deficiencies and improvements that can be made in the school. Thereon, they have to create a positive climate and cooperate with teachers. Besides, they should also create collegial environment where teachers collaborate with each other in terms of professionalism which as a consequence reflects directly on teaching. According to him, a good leader

monitors teachers 'performance and students' results during each semester.

Almost the same opinion holds the principal of the lower secondary school "Hysen Terpeza" in Tërpezë, Mr. Sahit Sahiti. According to him, there are many ways to influence teaching quality. First of all, principals must be responsible for their work. They must check annual, monthly, and daily teachers' syllabuses, and monitor in classes. Besides, the leaders must have experience in teaching. Collaboration with teachers, parents, students, and the community in order to enhance teaching quality is a means of an effective school. Apart from that, he declares that they must employ respect, praise, collegiality, and correct attitude towards all, etc. The aforementioned says that the improvement of infrastructure contributes not only on the school rules, but also on teaching quality. He emphasizes that the quality is achieved through monitoring classes and students' success, etc.

The principal of the upper secondary school "Kuvendi i Manastirit" in Pozharan, Mr. Fadil Rama says that the school leader is undoubtedly the key factor in teaching quality. According to him, the school leadership influences the quality and efficiency in organizing school work in general. He shares the opinion that the principals should:

- be familiar with all problems;
- be communicative with everyone;
- be cooperative with the staff so that they reflect positively in teaching;
- be fully prepared, experienced, and trained for leadership;
- be familiar with other areas;
- check whether the plan is being implemented or not;
- check whether the success have been achieved;
- have regular meetings with parent council, the governing council of the school, students council, and committees for monitoring student learning;

- motivate teachers with gratitude, publication in the media.

The three interviewed principals declare that in order to improve teaching quality, schools must be equipped with didactic resources. Therefore, according to them the leader must cooperate with governmental and nongovernmental organizations in order to provide the school with tools and create conditions for teachers' work.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We finally conclude that the quality of teaching depends on many factors, ranging from the infrastructure of the school, the school environment, means of concretization, teachers' preparation, their training, school board, parents, students, teachers' motivation, communication, and cooperation of all school stakeholders. The data collection from the literature review, questionnaire, and interviews suggest that schools' principals have a major influence on teaching quality, which consequently proves our hypothesis. The principals organize the operation of the whole working process at school; they are accountable for their work, especially for teaching quality. Besides, they are the ones that can create a teacher-student collaborative atmosphere. They are in charge of inciting teachers and students' enthusiasm and confidence in teaching and learning.

In order to be an effective leader, the school principal should convey the goals and visions of the school in a successful manner; his/her collaboration with the school staff would undoubtedly enhance their skills. Hence, they must get involved finding solutions for problems. They are the ones who improve the infrastructure by cooperating with governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to create an

appropriate environment for teaching and learning. Factors that indicate teaching quality are as follows:

- the culture of the school;
- the effective leadership;
- the strategy for the development of quality;
- responsibility;
- school principals' dedication and hard work, etc.

If there existed a strong relationship provided by the school principal and the school board, students' performance would be far better.

REFERENCES

1. Hyseni, H., Mita, N., Salihaj, J. dhe Pupovci, D., (2003). *Qeverisja dhe udhëheqja në arsim*, Qendra për arsim e Kosovës (KEC), Prishtinë.
2. Fullan, M., (2010). *Kuptimi i ri i ndryshimit në arsim*, Qendra për arsim demokratik (cde), Tiranë.
3. *Trajnimi i mësimdhënësve dhe ngritja e kapaciteteve të komunave dhe drejtorëve të shkollave në Kosovë*, <https://www.giz.de/>
4. Gojani, D. H. *Roli i udhëheqjes arsimore në edukimin cilësor*, <http://ipkmasht.rks-gov.net/>
5. Reynolds, D. & Teddlie, C. (2000). The process of school effectiveness. In C. Teddlie & D.