# The role of school principals in creating and developing the school vision

Dr. KLODIANA LEKA
*Faculty of Education*
*Aleksandër Moisiu University, Durrës*
*Email: klodianaleka@uamd.edu.al; klodial@gmail.com*

**Abstract**

Education is well acknowledged to play a significant function in the lives of every person. School education is an important component of the personality development process. In reality, schools should prioritize closing the achievement gap between children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as the achievement gap between more gifted and less talented children. Efficient school administration and management techniques can improve students' success.

For successful management and administration, good planning of the school's work is needed, which is conceived in its medium-term plan. The mid-term plan is designed to achieve the school's vision and fulfill its mission.

A vision statement articulately explains the reasoning behind each and every one of the school's decisions as it develops and adapts through time to offer the students with the finest possible education.

The purpose of this article is to identify Albanian teachers' and school principals' perceptions of the school vision, as well as to construct and communicate a vision for the perfect school of the future.

**Keywords:** school principal, school vision, Albania

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Vision is made up of four components: purpose (goal), future image, core values, and strategy as in the below chart.

**Fig 1. The components of school vision**



Source: study data

The purpose is the core of the vision. A primary role of purpose is to offer direction and motivation. The purpose of the school should be the academic achievement of all pupils. The school should provide an effective and inspiring learning environment in which a

team of well-trained, creative, and enthusiastic teaching staff can ensure high-quality teaching practices in well-resourced school settings to meet the needs of our students in collaboration with their parents and the community.

In the law 69/2012 (Fletorja zyrtare e Republikës së Shqipërisë, 2012) amended, article 68, point 5/2 is said that the school's vision summarizes the aspiration of the community and educational workers for the quality of the school's education service ((Fletorja zyrtare e Republikës së Shqipërisë, 2012). This vision must be a vision for the education we want for our children and young people and chart the way for its fulfillment. Achieving this vision for the school will enable students to be evaluated based on their uniqueness, originality, culture, values, and heritage. They should have the chance to realize their full potential in a productive, engaging, and nurturing learning environment. Moreover, everyone in schools, including teachers and students, deserves equitable treatment.

A vision statement, according to Roberts & Pruitt, (2003), fosters collaboration and supports the faculty in their efforts to improve both instruction and student achievement. Teachers should be prepared to assume leadership roles in addressing the needs of their students, while students should be prepared to acquire the necessary skills for academic success. The vision of the school is a picture of what the school is expected to be like at some point in the not-too-distant future. (Kowalski, 2010).

The mission and vision of a school cannot be simply transferred from one group to another. They have to be formed and defined by a process that involves everyone in the school community reflecting on the community's beliefs, values, and goals collectively. They will be a representation of the school's efforts to strike a balance between the frequently conflicting viewpoints held by members of the community. The awareness of personal values that exists within a school community is given significant weight. As long as there is agreement on a core set of values, a school may tolerate a range of different values and perspectives among its students. Actions are always guided by core beliefs and principles, whether they are conscious of them or not.

It is essential for any school that aspires to achieve success to formulate both a long-term vision and a core set of principles. It is much easier to set priorities, channel resources in the appropriate direction, and ensure that everyone is on the same page as the company moves forward if they have a crystal clear picture of what the future holds.

The formulation of a school's mission statement is a challenging undertaking since it necessitates reaching a consensus on a set of underlying principles and philosophies that serve as a compass. After reaching a consensus, the change will be incorporated into the mission statement.

Following some steps will make the many brainstorming sessions necessary to write a vision and mission statement much more manageable. One of the first steps includes the identification of individual values with personnel, alongside with the discussion of ideals in the context of the Trustees' educational philosophy and values. Another step to follow is the consensus on the key values of staff, and the preparation of a draft statement as a basis for consultation by a school committee. Afterward, consultation with partner schools and redrafting in light of the views obtained, followed by more consultation and, if required, redrafting. Finalizing with the achievement of consensus leading to school community ownership of the mission statement until ensuring that the objective is accomplished.

The core elements while drafting an effective vision and mission statement are:

- Clarity
- Being Specific
- Should be attainable
- Unique
- Should inspire people within and outside the organization.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

With the ever-changing rate, form, and scope of global changes, governments are faced with increasing difficulty in putting their educational policies into practice, especially in developing countries (Townsend & Cheng, 2000; Hallinger, 1998). Consequently, leadership researchers all over the world have spent a lot of time trying to figure out what sort of leadership is necessary for schools to thrive and advance in their fields, and many of them have concluded that visionary leadership is essential. (Avery, 2004). Leaders in education must now operate more like chief executive officers by "visioning" into the future and monitoring the surrounding environment for potential drivers of change that will have an effect on the institution's operations. (Bolman & Deal, 1992).

It has been argued that vision is the first step in every successful transformation process, but in the case of educational reform, it is the very first step. (Kotter, 1990).

Research has found a favorable correlation between charismatic/visionary leadership and follower performance, attitude, and perception. However, no research has found the opposite to be true. (Baum, Locke, & Kirkpatrick, 1998).

To begin, each leader formulates a vision in his or her own unique manner, sometimes in a logical and objective manner, and often in an intuitive and subjective manner. (Nanus, 1992). Second, the style of visionary leadership, the substance of the leader's vision, and the environment in which it is rooted can significantly differ from one leader to the next. (Westley & Mintzberg, 1989). When all of these considerations are taken into account, it is impossible to provide a single, universal definition for the concept of vision. Therefore, when investigating any relationships between vision-based leadership and the performance of an organization, it is essential to consider the visionary tools that the leader actually employs rather than focusing on a theoretical definition that may or may not be related to the research at hand.

Numerous studies conducted on a global scale have investigated the relationship between vision-based leadership and increased academic achievement in schools. (Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000). As mentioned throughout the study the vision has great importance in students' achievements, quality improvement, and increasing efficiency. That is the reason this study takes over the responsibility to treat this issue to identify how the vision in Albanian schools is drafted and how much leaders manage to create visions in the function of education goals

## 3. METHODOLOGY

For this paper, the qualitative method with interviews was used. The data obtained from 34 in-depth interviews with school leaders, vice school leaders, and teachers combined with secondary data obtained from surveys that have in focus this issue. The sample used is purposeful. Thirty-four school principals from public schools in Albania

were part of this study. The questions aimed to answer how they see and perceive the school's vision and the elements which are important for the school to be successful. The study was realized during the period January-June 2022 and ethics and privacy were respected.

According to the chart that follows, 85% of the people who responded work as principals of schools, 7% work as teachers, and 8% work as vice principals of schools.

**Graph 1. Job position of the respondents**
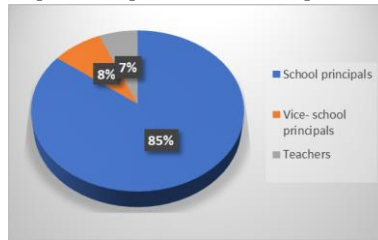


59% of those surveyed have between 11 and 20 years of professional experience, while 41% have more than 20 years of experience in teaching.

**Graph 2. Working experience of the respondents**
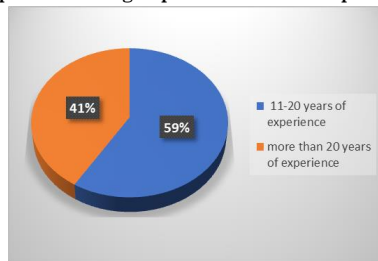


From the third graph, it is seen that, 47.1% of the respondents have been working as school principals for 5-10 years, 14.7% have been working in this capacity for 10-20 years, and 32.4% are new to the role of leadership and have up to 5 years of experience in this capacity.

**Graph 3. Experience in leadership**
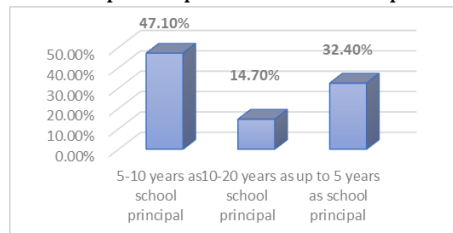


The instrument used to gather the data is a semi-structured in-depth guide that includes 10 main questions. All questions aimed to give answers to the following research questions:

1. How do school principals perceive the process of drafting and developing the school's vision?
2. How much information do principals have about the school and the area where it is located?
3. How much do they consider these data in the process of drafting the school vision?

## 3.1 Main findings

In answer to the research questions, and as a result of conducting a thematic analysis of the data that was made possible by the direct interviews, the following are some of the findings from the research:

**The first open question was: Why is your school important? Some of the most important answers were:**
*"My school is in an important part of the city and affects the education of children in the area"*
*"The school is located in an area with difficult social-economic conditions. Education through school is dominant."*
*"To meet community needs for community children's schooling for a better future and for increasing the intellectual level of the area"*
*"School means the future. The importance of school is vital to the community."*
*"Because education and formation of the new generation is the parental find of every nation"*
*"For the development of the child's personality and for the promoters to develop the critical mind and to take up the answers to their actions"*

For the respondents, the schools serve the pupils, parents, teachers, and community.

They are aware of their school's mission to depend on the area where they work and community characteristics, such as the social-economic situation, ethnicity, etc. All interviewees accept the role and importance of the school to achieve the educational goals expressed in Article 3 law 69/2012 of (Fletorja zyrtare e Republikës së Shqipërisë, 2012): "The pre-university education system aims to create the conditions and opportunities that students: build and develop the knowledge, adversity, attitudes and values that democratic society requires; to develop independently and independently; contribute to the construction and well-being of Albanian society and to confront life's challenges constructively".

In the concept of teachers and principals, as well as the community, the school is an institution that offers knowledge, and enables students to move from one study cycle to another to graduate and receive a profession. But a quality school that always works to improve its teaching side (knowledge) costs attention and activities in the service of the formation of the students and the community.

Regarding the services the school offers and how principals conceive of this element, the answers to the second question of the interview are as follows:

**What kind of services does your school offer?**
*"Education, understanding, association, love, support, vision"*
*"Offers the professionalism of the teaching staff and places it in community service along with sports and cultural environments"*

*"Equal education, civic education, talent development, community center"*
*"The school is dedicated to providing a safe and educational environment, increases the skills to promote throughout life"*

The interviewed teachers and school principals see the school more as a place where they are taught professionally and do not consider other services related to the formation of the individual, the development of the community of the area, and the social skills that are so much required today by the labor market.

In the third question, in which interviewees were asked to describe how they offered these services, most of them claim that they are offered through professionalism, interactive teaching methods and cooperation between teachers, parents, and students.

**How is this service offered?**
*"In our school, the didactic triangle works teacher - parent - pupils"*
*"All staff works dedicatedly on the other services, and there are teachers involved in cultural sports activities"*
*"Each of us works with dedication and devotion to achieve ideals"*
*"Through the cooperation of school principal-teacher, school principal-pupil, school principal -parent"*
*"High-quality curricula, motivational environment, and effective conditions"*
*"Through the educational process. Partnering with parents. Activities as a community center school"*
*"These services are offered in collaboration with teachers, parents, and other actors in education"*
*"Through teaching and learning and group cooperation along with other state support structures"*

The above answers reflect the mentality of school leaders for how they conceive the school and which is also reflected in their vision for school. Drafting the school's vision requires a coordinated and careful work. The important thing is to consider the thoughts of parents, teachers and pupils. In this way, the school's vision will rise above the beliefs, values and ideals of the three main groups (teachers, parent students).

But how much information leaders have about the values, beliefs, and ideals of teachers and the school community, the interviewer's fourth question consisted of precisely highlighting this issue. Some of the answers are as follows:

**What are the ideals, beliefs, and values your school supports?**
*"The responsibility, the dedication that we're going out on everything, and everything can be achieved"*
*"Our school believes in the values and education of generations to make them worthy for society"*
*"To teach students more contemporary values, quality teaching, and confidence in values for a better school in the future"*
*"Education of personalities with clear goals and ready for life's challenges, capable of progress"*
*"Our school believes in teacher qualities, dedication, rights, community education, etc."*

As seen and from the answers, school leaders are expressed in general terms, and concrete values, beliefs, and ideals of teachers, students, and parents, are not specifically mentioned.

Concerning the question: **What makes your school special?** Some of the answers are given below:

*"The long experience with its 120-year history as a school has formed generations"*
*"It is a more traditional school both in pedagogical staff and well-educated students"*
*"It characterizes the positive spirit, commitment, and great teachers' dedication"*
*"Our school has a qualified and long-experienced staff"*
*"The communication and the relationship with the community"*
*"Including parents in all activities"*
*"The school has pupils from different communities"*
*"What makes it special is the collaboration between staff, parents, and pupils"*
*"The climate created in its environments and the quality of teaching"*

The answers given do not indicate any specificity of the school, except that, the seniority, the composition of the school, while the particularity of the school must consist of concrete results achieved, in achieved goals, in expected achievement, by 3 components, teachers, students, parents.

**CONCLUSIONS**

This study was intended to analyze how school leaders perceive the school's vision. For this reason, the questions consisted of elements that should be considered by school leaders during the process of drafting and developing the school's vision.

From the interviews realized, comes out that: School leaders see their school as an institution that teaches and educates students, and teaching and professionalism of teachers is the main factor in the school's success, as in all answers to the questions asked teaching and learning and professionalism are obvious.

Every principal of a school needs to have the ability to prevail over challenges that stand in the way of the implementation of the goal. Filling up this implementation gap should be a priority.

Experts believe that immediate benefits, prominent recognition of what works, an emphasis on efficacy rather than popularity, and an appeal to the principles that pushed us all into this area are critical to closing the gap. (Reeves, 2007). According to contemporary education studies, instructional and leadership practices have a significant influence in enhancing student accomplishment. If this is ensured than the vision becomes a reality.

Priority should be given to effectiveness above popularity. School leaders must be highly educated in order to promote good practice in a changing environment. A school's collaborative culture should be evaluated since it impacts student achievement. It may include services for students and educators such as teacher cooperation, professional development, and collegial support. Making the case for change should be done effectively, and it should be linked with moral imperatives rather than obedience to power. (Reeves, 2007)

Based on the findings of the study, it should be stressed that school leaders should not only see school as a place where teaching takes place, and students pass or fail, but also as an important institution for the community of the area, in which the school is located. Including parents, teachers and students in the process of drafting the school's vision and mission, taking into consideration their values, beliefs and ideals will help to have a clear, accessible, specific vision that at the same time fulfills the aspirations of students, parents and teachers, but also achieves education goals.

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