THE VALIDITY OF THE COLLEGE MODEL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT IN PRE-UNIVERSITARY EDUCATION IN ROMANIA

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Abstract
Adapting and permanently connection to the requirements of economic and social development are challenges to which the education system must respond coherently and efficiently to ensure the functionality necessary for each stage of transformation/ evolution. Being a complex system under external pressure, changing a component of the structure affects the functioning of all others, directly or indirectly, and maintaining balance is possible by addressing an educational management model that best fits the individual reality of each institution.
The paper presented is a study that established the validity of the collegial model of educational management in pre-university education based on the results obtained through a focus group research that involved people from South-Muntenia pre-university education with decision-making power.

Introduction
The importance of education is recognized by all societies and in all fields that define their economic and cultural ensemble. This importance is reflected in the management of education, educational organizations, and educational management is among the main elements responsible for the evolution of this fundamental segment in the development of society (Grigorescu & Olteanu, 2014).
Educational management is the process of planning, organization, leadership, control and evaluation necessary to define and achieve the predetermined objectives of an educational institution through the coordinated use of human and material resources.
The multidimensionality of the concept has made it possible to differentiate strategies for its approach and to define it, highlighting two main directions - leadership management (educational leadership) and educational management. Differences between managerial and administrative management are determinant at the level of general functions (organization-planning, guidance-guidance, and regulation-self-regulation). Bolam (1999) defines the two types by comparison: educational management as executive function for the agreed policy and the management as the one responsible for policy formulation and, as the case may be,

organizational transformation (Bolam 1999, p.232-234). The Cuban Study (1988) offers one of the clearest distinctions between leadership and management. It associates leadership with change, while management is seen as a "maintenance-keeping" activity, but highlights the importance of both dimensions of organizational activity. In another study, Bush (1998, 2003) makes a connection between leadership and values or purpose, while management refers to implementation or technical aspects. However, effective performance, centered on educational performance objectives, implies an equal weight of leadership and management in educational institutions (especially pre-university education). On the other hand, Gunter (2001) shows that there are only slight interpretations of these terms, the syntax used for the same concept varies from the "educational administration" (still commonly used in North America and Australia) to "educational management" and, more recently, "educational leadership". Critically, Bush (2010) raises the question of whether these represent only semantic changes or whether it really generates a deeper shift in the conceptualization of leadership, and Hoyle & Wallace, in the study published in 2005, concludes that "leadership" exceeded recently the "management" as the main descriptor of what is involved in the management and improvement of institutions in the field of public services, including education.

Most of the authors studying this field believe that management in education institutions is directed towards achieving educational goals (Grigorescu & Olteanu, 2017). It emerged as a distinct field of study - the form of scientific management, in the first half of the last century in the United States, it expanded and developed rapidly after the 1960s and in Europe, especially in the United Kingdom where a series of institutions, such as the Bristol University National School Development Center for Education Management (1983), the School Management Working Group (1989), the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) (1989), were formed to impose the National Professional Qualification for Directors (NPQH) in 1997. The transformation of organizations from the industrial society to a knowledge society (the 1980s and 1990s of the 20th century) led to the diversification of management concepts and the emergence of some such as learning organization, intellectual capital, core competence, TQM Total Quality Management), knowledge management specific to educational management (Đorđević-Boljanović, 2009, p. 21).

The complex nature of educational management cannot be included in a single managerial model. Among the first modern authors to propose such models, Cuthbert (1984), Bolman & Deal (1997), Morgan (1997), who, according to the elements considered as main factors, identify and propose several types of managerial approaches. Cuthbert (1984) presents the following group of models: analytical-rational, pragmatic-rational, political, and phenomenological and interactionist. Bolman and Deal (1997) launch four models: structural, political, symbolic, and human; and Morgan (1997) associate metaphors with organizations as mechanical, organic, contemplative, cultural, political, considering management as a direct consequence of their type. Later, Bush (2010), based on the level of agreement on objectives, the concept of structure, the level of environmental influences and leadership strategies appropriate to educational organizations, and defines six managerial models, developed in close connection with leadership style. The author proposes six managerial models - formal, collegial, political, ambiguity, cultural.

All proposed models over time have among the design criteria the structure of the organization, the objectives and the reporting of the members of the organization to them, the organizational culture, the relation between the organization and the environment in which it operates, the institutional fund and the relations between the employees or the relations established between them their hierarchical positioning (Zamfir et all, 2018).

Collective model of educational management

The college model proposed by Bush in 2003 presents numerous features common to the Humanistic Model of Everard, Morris and Wilson from 2004. Both models have as their main elements the determination and formulation of policies through consensus, committees and informal groups. Also, decision taking is a process based on discussions, agreements, and power sharing between some or all members of the organization that are thought to have a common perception of organizational goals (Chitescu, 2015). Thus, it is proposed that all stakeholders in the organization to act rationally depending on how they perceive any given situation (Everard et al., 2004). It is a flexible model that emphasizes reciprocity and consensus and is considered to have the most appropriate means of managing educational institutions (Bush 2003, p.70). Brundrett (1998) states that collegiality can generally be established as the relationship that results when teachers collaborate with other teachers (Brundrett, 1998, 305) and Little (1990) explains that the reason for continuing college study and practice is that, probably, something is gained when teachers work together and something is lost when they do not do so (Little 1990, p. 166).

Collective models are linked to three leadership styles (Bush, 2010): leadership of transformation, participatory leadership, and distributed leadership.

The research's methodology

The research conducted had the focus group as an investigative technique, so to obtain the information. It is an easy method to apply and manage. Four meetings were held, attended by a number of 51 persons, who belonged to the category of directors, deputy directors, as well as that of the teaching staff members of the professorial and administrative council. They represented schools from three cities located in the South-Muntenia region, meaning Targoviste, Ploiesti and Pitesti. The sessions were held between October 20th and November 16th, 2018. By their function, individuals formed homogeneous groups, so the discussion could provide a series of viable responses to coherent interpretations of perceptions, motivations, and attitudes to the developed subject. Interviews were moderated by the authors and ranged between 45 and 75 minutes.

The limits of the research were imposed by the approaching way, meaning by using the focus group, where a small number of people were investigated, but they would be overcome by a later quantitative approach. The lack of involvement of teachers and pupils and parents' representatives in our study cannot lead to a degree of generalization of the answers received but was generated by the motivation of their very limited knowledge of the issue of the managerial mechanisms specific to the educational institutions. Another argument was the real non-involvement of parents and students in decision-making in schools in Romania.

Our study approached educational management by following the model chosen by the manager to effectively carry out the tasks assigned to it. Although the socio-economic and legislative conditions in our country draw common directions regarding the way of applying and developing the management, on all its levels, there are observed differences between the progresses made by the education institutions. The answer to these discrepancies can only be a managerial approach.

In this context, we quoted a series of hypotheses describing the present state of educational management in the pre-university education institutions from the perspective of the external viewer. The main objective was to confirm these hypotheses.

I1. The paradigm of effective educational management in Romania can be collegiality, as in European states like the Netherlands, England, Germany, and France.

I2. Middle management leaders can more easily approach and have better chances of success by addressing the collegial model of management.

I3. In the present socio-economic and political context in Romania the impediments to the implementation of the collegial model are due to a cumulus of factors (legislation, technology, human resource), less the skills and abilities of the manager.

Table no. 1 The research matrix

Dominant features of the collegial model	Questions
Limiting autocratic leadership	1. Do you agree that the managerial style should be chosen according to the situation, the leader's personality and the characteristics of the team members? 2. Are decisions made by consensus or imposed by the managerial mechanism in your institution? 3. Do you agree with the concrete objectives your colleagues propose, even if they do not personally represent you? 4. Through the given tasks, do you encourage the interaction between the members of the decision and professional groups you represent?
Representation of each functional domain	1. Do you consider the size of the appropriate decision-making group to represent all the functional areas in your institution? 2. Does the managerial model you assumed offer satisfaction and stability provide to all working groups? 3. Encouraging employee co-operation and supporting the representation of each field, the management's workloads diminish?
Communication	1. What do you think is the importance of communication with your other activities? 2. What is the type/ direction of communication predominantly used in your institution when setting goals? 3. The psychological and material comfort of all members of the institution gives them the motivation of communication that leads and facilitates finding solutions to future problems? 4. Continuing communication at various levels of the organization diminishes the oversight of the activities of your organization? 5. Without considering the hierarchy, do you attend the usual meetings and tell all spontaneously all your ideas about any problematic issue or not from the institution?
Encourages long-term planning, correct assessment and achievement of goals	1. Do you consider that the managerial approach within your institution determines managers to plan and act more closely than they would in the absence of informal groups? 2. In the case of changes are they being made progressively, with the involvement of each involved employee? 3. In the case of some performance and competence issues, do you do a detailed analysis of the results with each member of the team and then agree on goals and deadlines in a realistic and precise manner? 4. Do you consider that establishing a collective system of results monitoring, closely linked to the objectives set, is a proper assessment?

Source: Authors concept of focus group interviewing matrix

It was, also, requested a list of the five main aspects/ personal things (qualities, skills, competences) that define the internal and external organization (physical and human resources, organizational culture, legislation) that is needed for a collegiate approach to educational management.

Results and discussions

Information obtained from the discussions were analyzed in the context of validating the assumptions on which our research is based. Of the total number of participants, 58% were executives and deputy directors and 42% members of the Teaching and Management Councils. As gender distribution, 62% were women and 38% were men. The category of members of the Teaching and Management Boards was a strong point of the study, as the vast majority of them were also members of other functional boards at the level of schools (methodical, social - scholarships, school supplies, CEAC - quality assurance) had a complex view of the researched problem, being represented all levels of leadership and coordination.

The subjects of our research invoke a series of contextual factors, particularly external, which prove to be inhibitors of the transformation process. These include: permanent tensions between conventional and administrative education processes (there are no clear boundaries between the school head as a leader/ administrator/ teacher); permanent and unforeseen change of curriculum/ curricular areas, the structure of the school year and forms of assessment that require prompt response; the lack of a specific policy between educational institutions and the community, which thus excludes the involvement in the decision-making process of an important factor; the human resource less and less prepared for modern approaches to managing its own subject and classroom activities; the lack of material and psychological comfort that leads to superficiality and non-involvement. The skills and competences of decision-makers (directors, deputy directors) are not considered to be important in developing a collegiate approach to management than in times that require managing internal crises and as a determining factor in relation to the hierarchically superior level or to local public authorities (raising funds). Among these, the first places were the communication and negotiation ability. Thus, we can assert that the first hypothesis (I1) is partially confirmed but the third (I3) is fully validated.

Participants in the proposed study occupy specific middle management positions, which is why the questions that constituted the research matrix, through possible answers, could indicate the validity of the collegial model in their managerial approach. Through their responses they generated a matrix that could overlap or not with the defining characteristics of the analyzed model.

In principle, all respondents believe that the practiced way of driving is not self-directed. They emphasize, however, that managerial style is constantly changing depending on the situation, the leader's personality, the characteristics of the team members, and that there may be moments when self-rule is required. The managerial style of the institution makes teachers, students and community feel that they are directly responsible for the good schooling. Decisional consensus is a utopia. The variety of human typologies, of personalities, leads rather to a compromise necessary for the natural evolution of the institution. At the same time, the objectives assumed by the manager through the managerial project transpose his/ her vision, and possibly a decision-making group that does not represent the common values of all members of the school unit. It is also believed that encouraging group actions can minimize or annihilate the work of a director, even if his duties were.

The communication characteristic of the collegial model is generally horizontal and requires face-to-face discussion. Due to lack of centralization and careful monitoring, it leads to problems (increased response time, fragmentation, and incoherence). In the schools represented in our study, the communication is mainly done vertically, hierarchically, but there are situations where the transmission of information is done directly, spontaneously, in a collegial discussion. The link between the psychological and material comfort of employees and the motivation of communication to resolve problems quickly was not supported.

Collegiality is considered to be a process of assimilation involving the encouragement of expressing the personal vision of employees to become part of a common vision based on synergy (Singh&Manser2002, p. 57). Reflecting personal views on all stakeholders involved in the decision-making process involves planning and adopting a set of long-term goals that drive stability and efficiency at school level. Deviation of power from teachers and other components of the organizational school environment to become an integral part of the decision-making process is hampered by the resistance to change of all those involved. In this context, the peer approach to setting objectives, monitoring activities and evaluating results is often avoided.

This analysis confirms the second hypothesis (I2) in the particular context of our society and the capacity to implement the collegial management model of management in school units.

Conclusions

The Romanian education system is going through a period of structural changes dictated by legislation in constant adaptation accompanied by the diminishing of the public financing in relation to the increase of the requirements imposed by the level of responsibility that must be assumed. The position of principal, manager, becomes even more vulnerable as the exercise of repositioning the educational system in Romania involves more and more internal and external variables. The collegiate managerial model is specific to European countries, and is often called the European model. Although a series of measures common to education and structural processes have been adopted at European level, Romania, in the socio-economic and political context mentioned above, cannot apply the collegial model in educational management, only gradually but not coherently and unitarily the whole system as evidenced by the information provided by the subjects of our research.

Any auxiliary or administrative teaching staff has the authority of professional expertise, so it should be involved in the decision-making process. This involvement is argued by respondents by enumerating the numerous councils and committees existing within the school organization, and involving all members of the academic community in the decision-making process. Thus, the representation of each functional domain is supported, but representation does not imply involvement or decision-making on the specific hierarchical level because the size of the group is not always the right one. It has been emphasized, however, that decision-makers at all levels of hierarchy ensure that learning is at the heart of development plans.

The collegial model of management represents a challenge for the educational management system in Romania. It is now found at the stage where it coalesces with the formal model, generating a hybrid model whose results do not emphasize constant and targeted developments. Ignoring the limits of the Romanian educational process, its bureaucratic realities and inconsistent policies, this type of management, normative and idealistic, cannot become an alternative model to the rigid hierarchy imposed by the formal model.

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