

PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN LITHUANIA: THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

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Introduction

School leadership is now an education policy priority world wide. As countries are seeking to adapt their educational systems to the needs of a contemporary rapidly evolving society, expectations for schools and school leaders are changing. School leadership practice has been greatly influenced by changes in the educational governance and school contexts. Leadership development is a strategic necessity because of the intensification of a school leader's role as a result of change processes (greater complexity of school contexts; devolution of powers to school level; etc.) in education. School leadership and questions concerning optimum approaches for effective recruitment, assessment and development of principals have become matters to which an increasing concern has been devoted in education systems internationally. Hence school leadership development requires a systemic approach that would be based on the principles of sustainable education.

The systems of preparatory training, certification, selection, assessment, induction and ongoing development for school leaders are necessarily rooted in specific national conditions and contexts. Evaluating these diverse approaches, researches should first of all acknowledge the vital importance of culture and context that shape education, leadership and leadership development in each country (Bolam, 2004). However, despite such differences there has been a global trend toward a more systematic provision of leadership and management development for school leaders. The paradigm of sustainability provides a holistic perspective on school leadership development requiring consideration of economic, social and ecological forces.

In Lithuania it is widely accepted that school heads play a vital role in setting the direction for successful schools, but the existing knowledge of the best ways to prepare and develop highly qualified candidates is sparse. Among major publications Arbatauskas (1996); Kučinskienė, Kučinskas (2002); Želvys, (2003) should be mentioned. The quality of school leadership is seen critical in Lithuania to bringing about changes required to implement the reform agenda as well as for the quality of education. It became apparent that a considerable progress has been made in stimulating the leadership develop-

ment system improvement in the education system over the past few years. However, specific empiric research on how to improve school principals' preparation and training programs have not been carried out yet in Lithuania. The recent survey disclosed that training for school leadership roles in Lithuania is often inadequate, uncoordinated (Kontautienė, Melnikova, 2007, 2008; Melnikova, 2011). Despite a quite wide range of various professional development opportunities in Lithuania school heads face some problems. Firstly, school leadership development programmes should go along with leadership standards and meet school heads' needs both in theory and in practice. However, the majority of school heads reported that average leadership programmes were not aligned with the actualities of what is needed to effectively direct today's school systems. Secondly, the content of various leadership development programmes is strongly academized and is being delivered only using academic methods with no processes of applying learning back in schools. There is no differentiation, personalization or contextualization of the programmes. Thirdly, the process of leadership development should be more systemic, coherent and controlled. Assistance could be provided in elaborating individual leadership competence development plans. That would help to save time and make the leadership development process more purposeful and focused. Finally, there is a lack of competent lecturers-specialists in school leadership and management. The result of the research is a made assumption that school heads in Lithuania are neither fully prepared nor well trained and are likely to experience difficulties in their leadership roles (Kontautienė, Melnikova, 20011).

Absence of a clear theoretical background for analysis of the school leadership development system as well as the results of the exploratory research of school leadership development in Lithuania inspired the authors to analyze scientific literature in order to design a theoretical model of a coherent and sustainable school leadership development system that would ensure the development of a leadership competencies required at different stages of a leadership career.

Hence, **the aim of the paper is** to design a theoretical model of a coherent and sustainable

school leadership development system in Lithuania that would ensure the development of leadership competencies required at different stages of leadership career.

The objectives of the paper are:

- to define the notion of school leadership development as well as to highlight the principles of sustainable leadership development;
- to design a theoretical model of school leadership development.

Theoretical analysis of the school leadership development system is based on a postmodern paradigm theory emphasizing the role of a school leader as a facilitator of change, a promoter of organizational learning that enhances a school's capacities to pursue intelligent learning processes in a way that increases the organization's effectiveness and capacity for continuous improvement (Bush, Jackson, 2002; Hallinger, 2003) as well as on the adult learning theory (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Hence, training and development of school leaders must be based on a clear conception of the aims of education in general and processes in a school as a learning organization in particular. This idea must shape leadership development programmes with regards to the content, methods, patterns, etc.

So, the paper provides an insight on the main concepts and notions in leadership development and highlights the principles of sustainable organization of a school leadership development system. Approaches and methods used to support continuing professional learning of school leaders are highlighted as well. As a result, the theoretical model of a leadership development system was designed. A number of criteria for the model analysis is introduced. The **main method of the research** is scientific literature analysis.

Definition of School Leadership and Principles of Sustainable Leadership Development

The managing and leading tasks of school leadership are both complex and interrelated, so no clearly defined concept of *leadership* exists. Most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person or a group over other people or groups to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organization (Yukl, 2002). Leadership can not be regarded as a singular activity carried out by the principal. Most schools now have an extensive leadership apparatus, including deputies and/or assistant principals. A recently developing interest is connected with *distributed leadership* (Hargreaves, Fink, 2006), which means

involvement of larger numbers of the staff in school leadership. The emphasis of this article is on school leaders, including but not confined to school principals.

Analysis of scientific literature on the questions of school leadership development as well as sustainable education allowed the author extract to the main principles of a sustainable leadership development process.

Content of School Leadership Development Programs

Analysis of leadership development programs (Bush, 2008; Bush, Jackson, 2008; Huber, 2004; Pont et al., 2008) allows the author to generate a "*content model*" for leadership development. Programs may vary in structure, content and effectiveness. Some of the differences perceived depend on how the role of school leadership is conceived. Whether school leadership development focuses on managerial responsibilities, including business skills and resource management, and/or on instructional leadership skills will depend on the level of autonomy and decentralisation granted to schools and the roles leaders are asked to play. However, the core curriculum most likely of includes five main themes: *Instructional leadership*: topics related to teachings and learning, pedagogical leadership, managing teaching and learning. Leaders seek to achieve good outcomes by influencing motivation, commitment, capability of teachers. They monitor teaching and learning by checking that high standards were achieved. So modules on instructional leadership need to address these themes. *Law*: the purpose of this module is to ensure that leaders understood the main requirements for schools and their management. *Finance*: principals need skills to draw and manage the budget, audit spending and ensure that expenditure was targeted and met school objectives. *Managing people*: principals are responsible for a full range of human resources management: staff selection, induction, mentoring, staff development, deployment, appraisal, discipline. The module should include these themes. *Administration*: administration should be regarded as the function that supports the educational purpose of a school.

School Leadership Development Based on Leadership Standards

Standards are used for the certification, evaluation and professional development programmes of a principal. These principles underpin knowledge requirements, personal qualities, and leaders' actions in leadership areas. These standards offer a frame-

work of professional learning and the basis of the development of leadership programmes. Standards should be used as the basis for designing and accrediting leadership programs for school leaders and for developing and implementing assessment tools to license/certify beginning principals and re-license practicing principals.

There are two basic approaches to the standards of school leadership: a competence based approach and a performance based approach (Louden, Wildy, 1999). A competence framework for the standards of school heads' work usually identifies the key areas of a principal's responsibility. Within each of the key areas there is a subdivision of further competences. The standard of performance in each competence is to be judged by certain indicators of a principal's work. A competence based model for standards is the one that describes observable behaviors based on close scrutiny and analysis of the role of school principals. Weaknesses of this approach are hierarchical lists of dispositions, knowledge and duties; decontextualizing of performance and promise of false dichotomies of those who reach a prescribed standard and those who fail. The purpose of a performance based model for leadership standards is to specify and illustrate the range of performance within a school principal's work. The project consists of three stages. The first stage is an initial research into selecting the dimensions of a school head's work and establishment of a continuum of performance. The second phase provides an account on the content of a principal's work. The third stage is designed to develop progress maps that describe progression in development of performance in each dimension. Rich in the reality of case studies, a performance based approach appears as a potential alternative to lists of hierarchical duties and responsibilities in a competence based model as well as provides an insight in to leadership development programmes.

Differences in approaches reflect deeply rooted differences in philosophy regarding professional learning and career planning. On the one hand, it is argued that the presence of standards and mandatory requirements creates hurdles that function as disincentives for people who might consider applying for leadership positions. On the other hand, determination and assessment of standards and certification are necessary in order to enhance professionalism and to ensure quality.

School Leadership Development Involving the Identification of School Leaders' Needs

One of the key questions of leadership development systems is *needs analysis*. Watson (2003a)

points out that training may be related to the needs of individuals, the needs of schools or the needs of the national system. Needs analysis provides crucial information needed to ensure that professional learning is appropriate, valid and relevant. Needs diagnostic processes (e.g. 360-degree feedback) are usually based around national leadership standards. The principle of *needs analysis* requires the process of leadership development to be based on consistent analysis of needs for competences. Needs analysis provides crucial information needed to ensure that competences development is purposeful, appropriate, valid and relevant.

Leadership Development Needs to be Seen as a Lifelong Learning Process

A school leadership career needs to be supported through the different stages in a balanced manner, including the provision of pre-service, induction and in-service and be complemented when important changes come up.

The significance of pre-service preparation of school leaders was analyzed by Browne-Ferrigno (2003), Bush, Jackson (2002), Hallinger (2003). The notion of *preparation* suggests a preconceived orientation towards career development by potential principals and/or other education system participants. Hallinger (2003) argues that a considerable criticism of pre-service courses reflects a lack of coherence and detachment from the realities of a principal's workplace. The predominant mode of delivery is usually a lecture and discussion. Recognizing the importance of pre-service preparation for aspiring principals (Bush, Jackson, 2002) it is agreed that there is a need for fundamental rethinking of the content, structure, delivery, and assessment of leadership learning. That involves the development of a framework for leadership preparation to ensure that formal university based programs and programs offered by other providers of leadership development are complementary.

Preparation for leadership should be part of a continuous process involving both formal study and field based learning. Important connections between self-identity and career goals of individuals need to be taken into consideration when planners are designing leadership learning opportunities.

Great attention in education management literature is given to the induction process to school leadership (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Bush, Middlewood, 2005). *Induction* is the process by which new incumbents become familiar with the context in which they are leading, including a school culture. All first time participants need professional social-

ization (preparation to enter the profession) and organizational socialization (learning how to lead in a particular context) is also required. Induction has three main dimensions (Bush, Middlewood, 2005): 1) Socialization: enabling the employee to become part of the organization; 2) Achievement of competent performance: enabling the new employee to contribute to the organization effectively; 3) Understanding the culture: enabling the employee to appreciate the core values of the organization.

Successful induction should smooth the path for new principals, accelerate their socialization, enable them to make sense of the complex reality of school leadership and build their confidence to perform the role effectively. Inadequate or tacit induction is likely to slow down the learning process, and leave principals with a damaging sense of uncertainty about whether they are leading effectively or not. When induction occurs it may be regarded as a key stage in the ongoing process of continuing development.

Research draws attention to the significance of professional development for successful school leadership (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Bush, 2008; Hallinger, 2003). *Leadership development* is often a generic term used to describe any form of preparation or training for leadership, or it is specifically used to refer to activities undertaken following the appointment of a principal, that is in-service training. Induction is one phase of this process but leadership development should be seen as any professional activity undertaken once a principal has taken this position. Such provision may be complimentary to pre-service preparation or a substitute of it.

Continuing professional renewal of experienced principals is an important part of what is essentially the process of lifelong learning. At the same time programs of professional development should be made available for principals seeking to enhance their professional growth and development, principals themselves can play an important part in professional advancement of a aspiring principals and others who have been newly appointed to the position of principal, and to other positions of leadership in schools and educational institutions more generally.

School Leadership Development Should be Continuous and On-going

Consistent with the concept of lifelong learning, and assuming that school leadership involves a career - the *stages of a school leader's career* have been receiving a growing attention. For example, implicit in the data collected in Earley's et al. (2002) recent study is a call for a coherent school leadership

professional development framework which begins shortly after gaining the qualification of a teacher and continues through and beyond leadership. A number of models have been developed to describe various *stages of school leadership career* (Bush, Jackson, 2002; Bush, 2008). The eminent among them is a five stage structure: *Emerging leadership* for teachers who are beginning to take on management and leadership responsibilities, including heads of the subject/area. *Established leaders* for experienced leaders who do not intend to pursue headship, including assistants and deputy heads. *Entry to headship* for those aspiring first headship and newly-appointed first-time headteachers. *Advanced leadership* for experienced headteachers seeking to develop their professional qualities, competences and expertise. *Consultant leadership* for experienced headteachers and other school leaders who are ready to further develop their facilitation, mentoring and coaching skills. The framework is thought to provide a coherent and flexible model for development and support of school leaders at all stages of their career.

Leadership Succession and Leaders at Many Levels

Succession planning needs attention at all levels. Questions concerning optimum approaches to *leadership succession* have become matters to which increasing concern has been given in education systems internationally. Effective succession means having a clear strategy to create positive and coordinated flows of headship (Bush, 2008; Hargreaves, Fink, 2006). Researchers should investigate optimum conditions for successful succession as much as we focus on new leaders and startups.

Researches (Bush, 2008; Hargreaves, Fink, 2006; Pont et al., 2008) argues that more emphasis should be put on nurturing and developing leadership within schools, focusing on how to identify and support future leaders early in their careers best. That is why succession planning is essential to widen the applicant's pool for school leadership and increase the quantity and the quality of future school leaders. Succession planning involves fostering interest in leadership by providing opportunities for teachers to participate in leadership and to learn more about the day-to-day tasks it involves as well as offering training for aspirant leaders. Individuals who have gained some experience in leadership or aspects of it are more likely to be interested in leadership and to be confident in their capacity to lead. It is therefore important that potential leaders were given opportunities to participate in leadership early in their careers. This can be done by distributing leadership

within the school and encouraging teachers to take on responsibilities for certain areas or aspects of leadership. Interest in leadership can also be fostered by shadowing programmes which allow teachers to observe and learn more about particular activities it entails.

High potential teachers need to be identified proactively and encouraged to develop their skills. Professional development opportunities can be a good way for teachers to test their potential for management and leadership. Training opportunities may be targeted to develop leaders for schools particularly in need, or they may be embedded in broad strategies for school leadership development. In addition, inclusion of leadership topics in initial teacher training can foster interest among teachers with a leadership potential in the longer term (Pont et al. 2008).

Succession planning is essential to increase the quantity and the quality of future school leaders. It is a way to counteract principal shortages and to ensure that there is an adequate supply of qualified personnel to choose from when an incumbent leader leaves the position. Succession planning involves proactive identification of potential leaders and encouragement to develop their leadership practices. This can be done by offering training programmes for aspiring leaders and providing opportunities for young teachers to learn more about leadership through close contacts with current leaders. It can also be done by including leadership topics in initial teacher training.

School Leadership Development Should Incorporate Evaluation of Multiple Sources of Provision

One of major issues importance is a necessity to ensure **coherence of provision by different institutions**. A broad range of providers can cater for varied training needs for school leadership. Training is provided by the Ministries of Education or local governments, or outsourced from specialized institutions, or teacher training institutions or specialized bodies established to focus on school leader-

ship training. Universities also offer a broad range of supply. In addition, teacher training and school leaders' institutions have developed their own training programmes. Where there is no national orientation but a range of institutions catering for local or regional needs function, it is important to have clear standards which would ensure that the suppliers focus on good leadership development. Designing, delivering and assessing leadership programmes require complex skills, including leadership experience, understanding of relevant research and literature, and highly developed oral and written communication skills. That is why a lack of suitable course leaders and staff may be experienced. Bolam (2004) discusses challenges facing research-ambitious universities to produce high-quality research and publications on school leadership development. Another strategy is to encourage practitioner's research, to foster school leaders to become consultant leaders and contribute to programmes as facilitators, consultants and coaches.

The content of leadership development programmes needs to be tailored specifically to the changing needs of the participants, whether it is pre-service preparation, induction during the first years, or in-service provision for more experienced leaders. An overview of how the programmes for each stage are linked with each other and with leadership standards and/or certification requirements is vital for a strategic view of leadership development. Of particular importance is a need to contextualize approaches to ensure relevance and to customize approaches to ensure responsiveness to particular needs. The number of continuing professional learning approaches identified is of particular importance. These approaches: reflective practice, action science, mentoring, field based learning, etc. – are considered to be essential elements in the framework intended to support continuing professional development for school leadership.

On the basis of theoretical analysis of the principles of sustainable school leadership development organization a model of school leadership development system was designed.

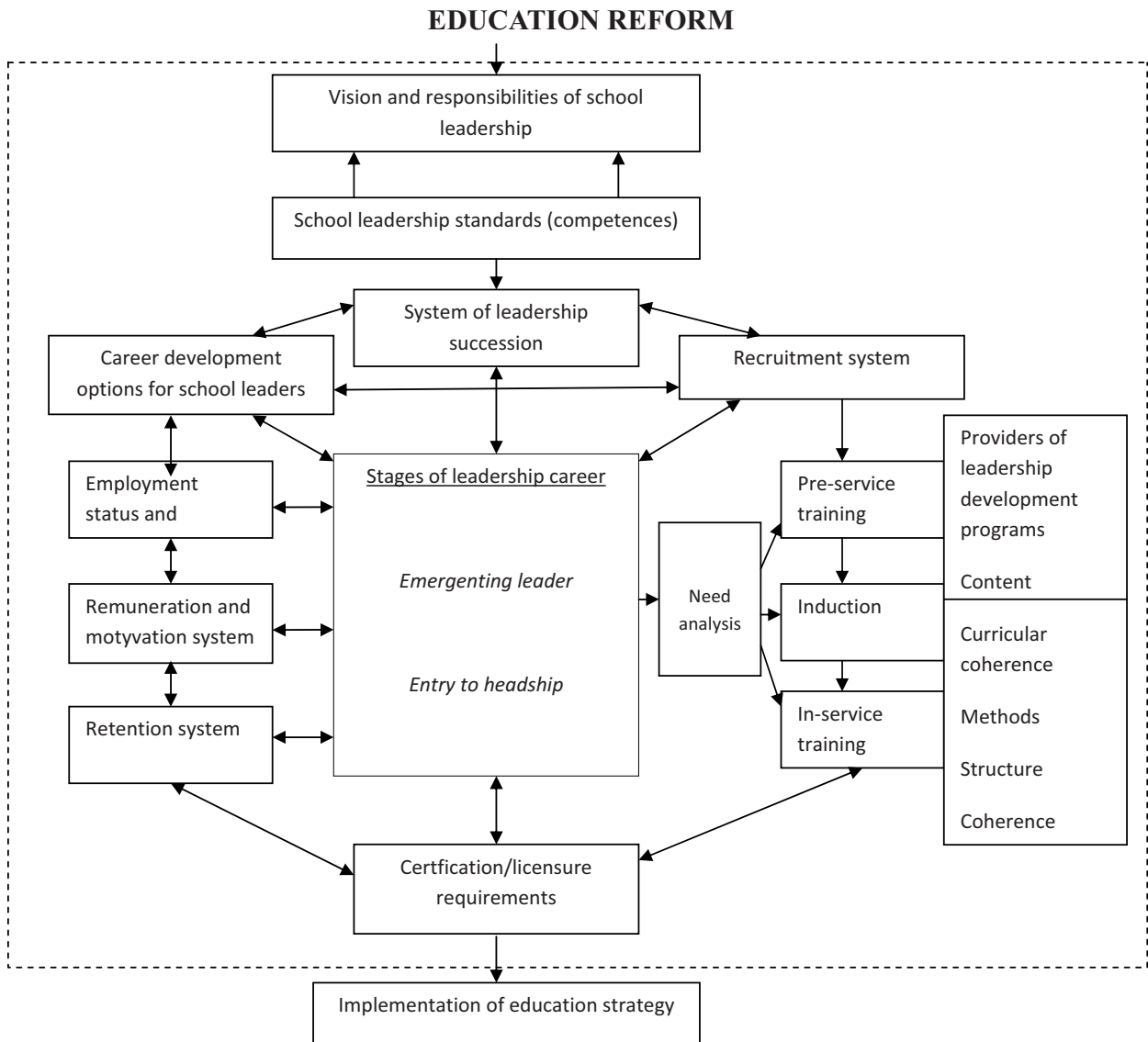


Figure 1. Theoretical model of sustainable school leadership development system (Source: author)

Discussion

As the expectations of what schools should achieve have changed dramatically over recent years, Lithuania as well as other European countries need to develop new forms of school leadership better suited to respond to current and future educational environments. In order to do so, according to Pont et al. (2008), Lithuania needs to address two sets of challenges simultaneously.

Firstly, Lithuania needs to support and retrain school principals who are currently on the job. Most of them were hired by schools in educational environments that were fundamentally different from today's. Over time the rules of engagement in principalship/leadership have changed. As the roles and responsibilities of principals have evolved, the terms and conditions of service also need to be revised. To-

day's school leaders need to learn to adopt new forms of more distributed leadership. They need in-service training to develop and update their skills and more adequate rewards and incentives to stay motivated on the job and provide high quality leadership.

Secondly, Lithuania needs to prepare and train the next generation of school leaders. Especially at a time of high demographic turnover in leadership, thinking about and caring for the future it is an essential aspect of the leadership system. Lasting improvement depends on a clear definition and better distribution of leadership tasks within schools, planned succession mechanisms, professional recruitment processes, preparatory training, mentoring of new leaders, working conditions that attract high quality graduates to educational leadership and commitment to greater leadership density and capacity

within schools from which future high level leaders can emerge.

At the same time it is important to contextualize school leadership policies. There is no single model of leadership that could be easily transferred across different school-level and system-level contexts. The specific contexts in which schools operate may limit school leaders' functions, or provide opportunities for different types of leadership. Depending on the school contexts in which they work, school leaders face very different sets of challenges. Approaches to the school leadership policy need to be based on careful consideration of the context in which schools operate and their particular challenges.

A theoretical model of school leadership development introduced in the paper provides a starting point for designing a methodological framework for school leadership development studies in Lithuania that would respond to a global trend towards a more systematic provision of leadership development, particularly for school principals.

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Summary

The paper aims at designing a coherent and sustainable system of school leadership development in Lithuania. The paper provides a theoretical insight on the main principles of sustainable education that could be implemented in the system of school leadership development. Hence the organization of school leadership development system is highlighted in two aspects: as a requirement to ensure that leadership development process was coherent and adjusted to school leaders needs at different stages of their career as well as a need to provide opportunities for aspiring, newly-appointed, and established leaders to acquire and develop the skills and competences necessary to accomplish leadership tasks. It is emphasized in the paper that the principles of sustainable education make a premise for optimization of the system of school leadership development in Lithuania.

Keywords: school leadership development, sustainable education.