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THE NEED FOR LEADER CREATION AMONGST ROMANIAN SCHOOL PRINCIPALS – EDUCATIONAL POLICY ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Many theories of leadership and organisational climate gave been formulated over the years. This paper focuses both on transformational and transactional management and on supportive organisational climates. The theory of transformational educational management was developed as a response to the need for reform in educational systems in the 1970s and 1980s. The central convincing argument for educational staff was the assumption that a transformational leader motivates both teachers and students through increasing their consciousness regarding operational objectives and inspiring them to forego personal interest in favour of the organisational 'greater good' (Marks and Printy , 2003, p. 375). This strand of theory attributes certain leadership factors to the transformational leader like idealising influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualising consideration amongst others.

The transformational leader came about as a response to the need for schools to be led successfully through innovative reforms. This type of leader underlines and accentuates ideas of change, innovation and the influence teachers have in these processes. On the other hand, transactional leadership is based on promoting a negotiation model which helps reaching a certain motivation level. This level is usually expressed through an accepted amount. Conversely, transformational leadership refers to certain assumed responsibilities and moral principles. Both leadership models aim to improve school environments, ultimately targeting progress through building leadership capacities amongst all those involved in facilitating school activities (apud Nedelcu, 2013).

Keywords: transformational leadership; transactional leadership; educational management; school climate;

The main objective of this study is to analyse the organisational climate and leadership styles in pre-universityteaching. The focus here is on the impact leadership has on organisational climate. Derived from the central aim, certain specific objectives will be pursued:

- Highlighting the link between organisational climate and leadership;
- Performing a comparative analysis of the participants' leadership styles;

- Performing a comparative analysis depending on gender and professional experience of leadership styles;
- Discovering the best predictive factors of organisational climate considering leadership styles.

Research hypotheses

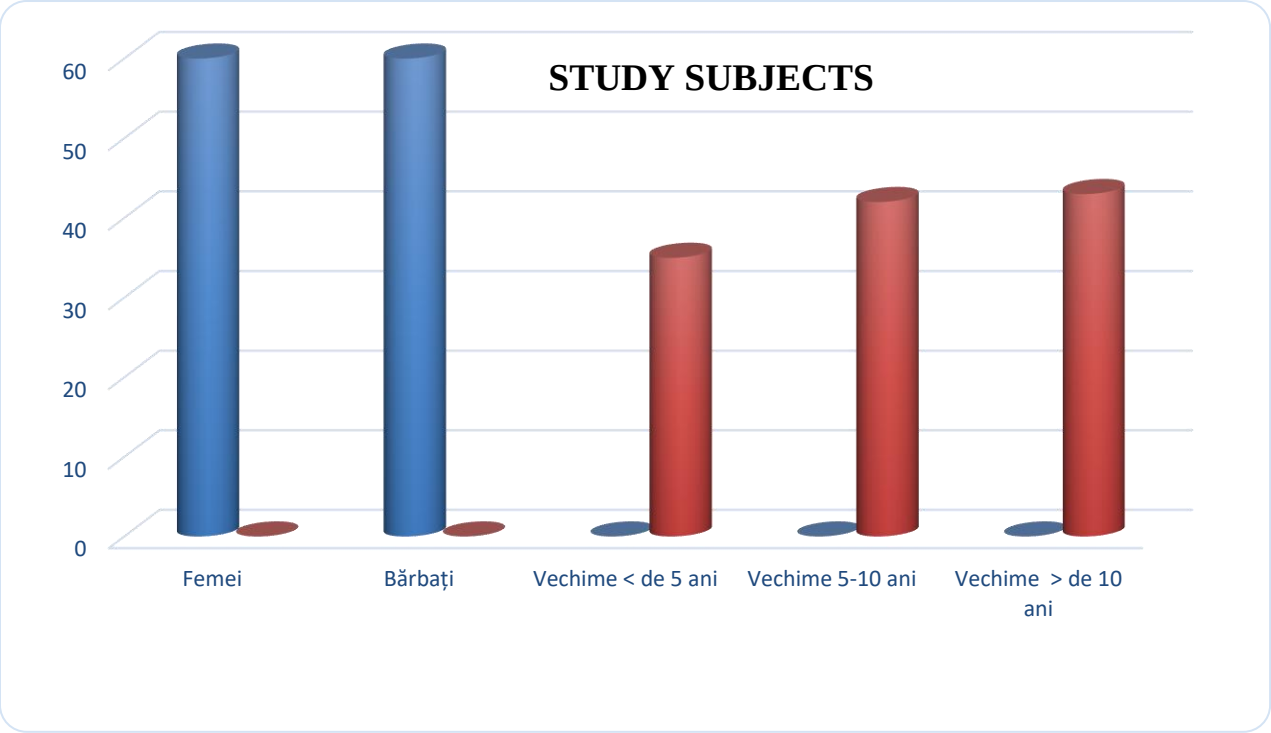
1. **Leadership styles (transformational, transactional) are correlated with organisational climate factors (supportive organisational climate; directive organisational climate):**
   1.1. Transformational leadership is positively linked with supportive organisational climates;
   1.2. Transformational leadership is negatively linked with directive organisational climates;
   1.3. Transactional leadership is positively linked with directive organisational climates;
   1.4. *Transactional leadership is negatively linked with supportive organisational climates.*

2. **There are significant statistical differences regarding leadership styles (transformational; transactional) between the different categories of participants in this study:**
   2.1. *Significant differences exist between men and women regarding transformational leadership;*
   2.2. *Significant differences exist between men and women regarding transactional leadership;*
   2.3. *Significant differences exist between teachers with less than 5 years of professional experience, those with a professional experience level between 5 and 10 years and those with professional experience greater than 10 years regarding transformational leadership;*
   2.4. *Significant differences exist between teachers with less than 5 years of professional experience, those with a professional experience level between 5 and 10 years and those with professional experience greater than 10 years regarding transactional leadership;*

3. **Leadership styles (transformational, transactional) are good predicting factors for supportive organisational climates;**

Participants

For the purpose of this study, 120 primary school teachers from the Iași, Vaslui, Neamț and Suceava counties were selected. Out of these teachers 60 are male and 60 female. 35 have less than 5 years professional experience, 42 have between 5 and 10 years professional experience and 43 have been teaching for more than 10 years.



Research methodology

Procedure:

Taking into consideration the objectives of this study, the application timeframe and the methods used for the collection, processing and interpreting the data, this research piece is applicative, transversal and quantitative in nature. The method of enquiry by questionnaire was used. The test subjects were presented with a set of three psychological instruments based on the questionnaire method and a questionnaire aimed at collecting general data on the subject.

Instruments

The first instrument used was the MLQ Questionnaire – Multifactor leadership behaviours for the study of different leadership styles.**MLQ** has been used in thousand research programs and PhD and masters theses. The multifactor leadership questionnaire is a largely researched and validated instrument. Avolio and Bass bring solid evidence for its fidelity and validity in their **MLQ** handbook. Its validity is also showed in detail through several factor analyses that have led to the development of this model. Moreover, a study by Antonakis (2003) supports the nine-factor leadership model and its stability in a range of situations. The fidelity score for the **MLQ** subscales ranges from medium to very good (Antonakis, Avolio, &Sivasubramaniam, 2003). In 1985 Bass developed the **MLQ** questionnaire through which he was able to differentiate between 'transformational' and 'transactional' leadership. Transformational leadership is understood as being a leadership style which can produce change. Transactional leadership, on the other hand, pushes the group to work on the basis of transactions: the leader offers rewards when the objectives he

sets are met. Ultimately, Bass identified four types of transformational leadership, two types of transactional leadership and two types of laissez-faire leadership. The MLQ questionnaire has two forms, namely, the Self Form and Rater Form. The Self Form is meant to be completed by a leader or an aspiring leader. They evaluate themselves and their own behaviour, therefore playing the role of the assessor and the assessed simultaneously. This form can be applied through a classic personality test or questionnaire centred on leadership qualities. The Rater Form is meant for the collaborators, superiors, colleagues and subordinates of the assessed subject. The former assess the latter through the prism of the latter's behaviours. The present study will use the Rater Form. The Questionnaire is composed of 24 questions and allows leadership style assessment on a 5 level Linkert scale (from 1 – never to 5 – always). This study will focus on transformational and transactional leadership. The four transformational leadership styles are: charismatic leadership (questions 4, 6 and 24), inspirational leadership (questions 13,19 and 21), individual consideration (questions 2, 11 and 12) and intellectual stimulations (questions 7, 15 and 17). The two transactional leadership types are contingent reward I (questions 3, 8 and 14) and contingent reward II (questions 10, 16 and 23). The Alpha-Crombach internal consistency coefficient for the MLQ questionnaire is 0,754. This demonstrates the high viability of the instrument and allows for the usage of the questionnaire's results to illustrate the statistical extrapolations pursued by this research.

Examples of questions:

Transformational leadership: My ideas determine my subordinates to rethink ideas they did not previously consider.

Transactional leadership: The work my subordinates do for me determines what they receive in exchange.

The transformational leadership independent variable contains questions 2, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21 and 24.

The transactional leadership independent variable contains questions 3, 8, 10, 14, 16 and 23.

The second instrument used here will be The Organisational Climate Description for Elementary Schools (OCDQ-Re) Questionnaire which studies organisational climate in elementary schools.This instrument was developed by Wayne K. Hoy in 1972 and it is used on a large scale when studying organisational climate in schools. The OCDQ-RE questionnaire contains 42 questions targeting six factors that measure three approachesto the school's management – supportive, directive or restrictive – and three dimensions of teaching staff interaction – collegial, intimate and disengaged behaviour. Each of these dimensions was measured though an OCDQ-RE subtest. The internal homogeneity for the used scales is relatively high: supportive (.94), directive (.88), restrictive (.81), collegial (.87), intimate (.83) and disengaged (.78). The factors that define a teacher's openness index are collegial, intimate and disengaged behaviour (Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp,1991). The answers are spread on a four-stepped Likert scale ranging from 'rarely occurs' to 'sometimes occurs', 'often occurs' and 'very frequently occurs' scored from 1 to 4 respectively. This study will focus on directive and supportive behaviour factors.The Alpha-Crombach internal consistency coefficient for the OCDQ-RE questionnaire is 0,780. This shows that the instrument displays a high degree of validity and allows for the use of the questionnaire's results to illustrate the findings of this research.

Describing organisational climate factors pursued by this study:

1. *Supportive climate* - supportive behaviour, open to suggestions from teachers. Praise is genuine and often used and criticism is constructive. Competences are valued and the principal takes both personal and professional interest in their teachers. This factor is assessed through questions 4 + 9 + 15 + 16 + 22 + 23 + 28 + 29 + 42.

2. *Directive climate* – rigid behaviour manifested through constant control and oversight of all the teachers' activities, up to the smallest details. This factor is assessed through questions 5 + 10 + 17 + 24 + 30 + 34 + 35 + 39 + 41.

Examples

Supportive climate: the principal treats their teachers like equals.

Directive climate: the principal leads with an iron fist.

Results and debate

To evaluate the first hypothesis (*transformational/ transactional leadership styles corelate with supportive/directive organisational climate factors)* the Pearson Correlation was used. Following the statistical processing of the data corresponding to sub hypotheses 1, 2 and 4, a significance level lower than 0.005 was obtained, while the significance level for sub hypothesis 3 was greater than 0.005. Thus, the first hypothesis is partially confirmed:

- a statistically significant positive correlation exists between the *transformational leadership* independent variable and the *supportive climate* dependent variable;
- a statistically significant negative correlation exists between the *transformational leadership* independent variable and the *directive climate* dependent variable;
- a statistically significant negative correlation exists between the *transactional leadership* independent variable and the *supportive climate* dependent variable;

1.*Transformational leadership is positively correlated with a supportiveorganisational climate.* Taking into consideration the results, a small positive correlation exists between transformational leadership and supportive organisational climate, $r = 0.238$, $p<0.001$. Therefore, subjects with high transformational leadership tend to obtain high supportive climate scores as well, and vice-versa.

2.*Transformational leadership is negatively correlated with a directive organisational climate.* Taking into consideration the results, a small negative correlation exists between transformational leadership and directive organisational climate, $r = -0.201$, $p<0.001$. Therefore, subjects with high transformational leadership tend to obtain low directive climate scores as well, and vice-versa.

3. *Transactional leadership is negatively correlated with a supportive organisational climate.* Taking into consideration the results, a small negative correlation exists between transactional leadership and supportive organisational climate, $r = -0.259$, $p<0.001$. Therefore, subjects with high transactional leadership tend to obtain low supportive climate scores as well, and vice-versa.

Table 1.Correlations between transformational/transactional leadership, supportive/ directive organisational climate:

	Correlations	
Transformational leadership	Sig. (2-tailed)	**Pearson Correlation**
Supportive climate	*0.009*	0.238**
Directive climate	0.004	-0.259**
Transactional leadership	Sig. (2-tailed)	**Pearson Correlation**
Supportive climate	0.022	- 0.209**
Directive climate	0.385	

**p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001; si. – statistically insignificant*

The obtained results can be validated with the help of existing studies in expert literature. Allen, Grigsby and Peters have examined the relationship between transformational leadership and organisational climate through a correlative study. The data used for the study was collected from a sample of principals and teachers from schools in a small south-eastern Texas school district. The multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ-5X) was used to measure the degree to which principals display the qualities of a transformational leader based on the teachers' perceptions and was used by the responsible principals for self-assessment. The School-Climate Inventory-Revised (SCI-R) was used to measure the teachers' perception of school climate. The results showed a statistically significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and supportive school climate based on cooperation and respect. The principal always listens to the teachers' opinions, frequently comments on their activity, always supports them, offers them autonomy and avoids direct control. Moreover, the relationships between teachers are friendly (Allen, Grigsby and Peters, 2015).

Lambert and Leithwood (1999) showed that transformational leaders increase the capacity of others to produce first order learning effects. For example, they cultivate a climate in which teachers are engage in a continuous learning process and they usually share what they learned with others. Transformational leaders work with other teaching staff to identify their personal objectives and then tie these to wider organisational objectives (Barth, 1990; Lambert, 2002). This approach is believed to increase engagement amongst staff who see the link between their goals and the school's mission. These changes are conceived as secondary effects and the main aim is to cultivate the conditions that encourage others to be self-motivated and engaged in the improvement of the school, without specific directions from above, in a supportive organisational climate. Leithwood (1994) observed that the primary effects of this strategy are realised through promoting the group's objectives, shaping the

desired behaviour of others, intellectual stimulations and individual support (for example, towards the personal development of teaching staff). In these schools, principals were better at supporting their staff, giving recognition, recognising school issues, they were more approachable, they looked for new ideas and spent plenty of time to develop the human resources at their disposal. Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) observe that transformational leadership has strong direct effects on school conditions which, in turn, have powerful direct effects on classroom conditions, accounting for 17% on the supportive climate variance.

Moreover, other studies support the fact that transformational leadership has a significant effect on the teaching staff's perception of school climate, their commitment to produce positive change within the school and the organisational learning that takes place (Bogler, 2001, Day et al., 2001, Fullan, 2002). Regarding the results, transformational leadership has a significant influence on teachers' perception of reformative progress registered within the school and improvements in student achievement. These observations are centred on two traits of transformational leadership: its distributive nature and its orientation towards developing capacities in a wider spectrum of school community members. Jackson's (2000) evaluation of attempts to develop transformational leadership in a number of English schoolswithin a bigger project, shows that a set of principles regarding a more dispersed, flexible and receptive leadership model, adapted to the specific context of the school, rather than an inflexible and hierarchic model, based strict norms, is a model that better encourages the emergence of a supportive organisational climate, which seems to be a new paradigm in educational leadership (apud Marks șiPrinty, 2003).

To test the second hypothesis(statistically significant differences exist regarding leadership styles (transformational; transactional) between the different study subject categories)the *Independent Samples t Test* was used to identify the differences between the means of unrelated groups, when the dependent variable is normally distributed and the *One-Way ANOVA* test for two variables, with the independent variable having three categories.

2.1 After the statistical analysis of the data for sub hypothesis 2.1 (*significant differences exist between men and women regarding transformational leadership*), a significance level greater than 0.005 was obtained. The results do not confirm this hypothesis as statistically significant differences between men and women regarding transformational leadership were not observed.

2.2 After the statistical analysis of the data for sub hypothesis 2.2 (*significant differences exist between men and women regarding transactional leadership*), a significance level greater than 0.005 was obtained. The results do not confirm this hypothesis as statistically significant differences between men and women regarding transactional leadership were not observed.

2.3 After the statistical analysis of the data for sub hypothesis 2.3 (*significant differences exist between teachers with less than 5 years of professional experience, those with a professional experience level between 5 and 10 years and those with professional experience greater than 10 years regarding transformational leadership*), a significance level greater than 0.005 was obtained. The results do not confirm this hypothesis as statistically significant differences between the different categories analysed were not observed.

2.4 After the statistical analysis of the data for sub hypothesis 2.4 (*significant differences exist between teachers with less than 5 years of professional experience, those with a professional experience level between 5 and 10 years and those with professional experience greater than 10 years regarding transactional leadership*), a significance level greater than

0.005 was obtained. The results do not confirm this hypothesis as statistically significant differences between the different categories analysed were not observed.

As described above, there are no significant differences in teaching staff perceptions of transformational or transactional leadership depending on their work experience. Bulach and Lunenberg (1995) found that there are no significant differences in staff perceptions of school climate and principals' leadership styles (Bulach&Lunenberg, 1995, apud Angleton et all., 2015). A possible explanation for this could be the different survey instruments used or the size of the subject sample.

Multiple linear regression was used toanalyse **the third hypothesis** (leadership styles (transformational, transactional) are good predicting factors for supportive organisational climates), with the aim of finding the best predictive model for the dependent variable 'supportive organisational climate'. The 'stepwise' method was employed, a procedure through which independent variables are introduced in the model and tested one by one, with insignificant ones being eliminated. In the end, the predictive model which best explains the variance is left.

Certain conditions need to be met prior to employing multiple linear regression as a data analysis method:

- the dependent and independent variables must be normally distributed – the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test compares the distribution of certain values for each variable with a standard normal distribution;
- the relationship between dependent and independent variables must be linear – a scatter plot – matrix graphical analysis will be used to illustrate the correlations between the variables and their nature (positive or negative);
- the residuals must be normally distributed – the histogram compiled after the competition of the regression will show if errors are normally distributed;
- avoiding multicollinearity – the correlations between independent values will be investigated using the Pearson correlation; the independent variables with a strong correlation will be highlighted;
- avoiding homoscedasticity – an investigation will be conducted into whether residuals present the same variance at every level of the independent variables. This information will be extracted from the graph that is automatically generated by the regression. This will show if the points are randomly spread around the zero value. To verify the efficiency of certain explicative models of supportive organisational climate based on the independent variables transformational and transactional leadership, the stepwise multiple regression method was applied.

The model's results were statistically significant. The first test used for regression analysis is a global signification tests of the coefficient assembly $F(2, 117) = 8.139$, $p<0.001$. The most pertinent predictive model is composed of *transformational leadership and transactional leadership* because it accounts for 10.7% of the dependent variable's variance *supportive organisational climate* (4.8% for *transformational leadership* and 5.9% for *transactional leadership*). The following coefficients were obtained: *transformational leadership* 0.162, $p < 0.001$; *transactional leadership* – 0.200, $p < 0.001$. In this case, the constant has the value 23.452, $p < 0.001$.

The regression equation is as follows:

CS = (C)23.452 + 0.162 × LTr – 0.200 × LTs

C = 23.452 – constant; **CS** – supportive climate measured through transformational and transactional leadership; **LTr** – transformational leadership score; **LTs** – transactional leadership score.

Example:

If a transformational leadership score of 30 and a transactional leadership score of 15 were obtained, the regression equation would be:

CS = 23.452 + 0.162 × 30 – 0.200 × 15 = 23.452 + 4.86 – 3 = 25.052

Table 2. **Regression output - ANOVA; Model Summary; Coefficients.**

ANOVA						
MODEL2	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Regression	101.343	2	50.672	**8.139**	**,000**	
residuals	728.448	117	6.226			
total	829.792	119				
Model Summary						
	R	Rsq	Adjusted R Sq	Std. Error of the Estimate	RSqh	Fch
1	0.238	0.56	**0.048**	2.57594	0.56	7.054
2	0.349	0.122	**0.107**	2.49521	0.66	8.759
Coefficients						
(Constant)	23.452	2.548		9.204	**,000**	
sc transformational	0.162	0.50	0.285	3.237	**,002**	
sc transactional	-0.200	0.68	-0.261	-0.261	**,004**	

Thus, we can say that 10.7% of the *supportive organisational climate* independent variable's variance is explained by the *transformational leadership* and *transactional leadership* independent variables' variance.

The results of the present study are in agreement with the results of other studies in this domain which reported the same results. Leadership is a key component of a school's success. Transformational leaders have a great potential when it comes to influencing school climate (Bass and Riggio, 2006). In this study, all five transformational leadership factors (idealised attributes, idealised behaviour, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration) have displayed significant positive relationships with the seven dimensions of school climate, underlining the importance of the style of leadership. The teaching staff's general perception of leadership influences the general perception of the school climate as well. The results of this study are in agreement with the findings of Hallinger and Heck (1998) who discovered that transformational leaders have a positive impact on the teaching staff's perceptions and on school climate (apud. Adams et al., 2017).

Other previous research (Bird et al., 2009; Rhodes et al., 2009)describe how a teacher's perspective of school climate is tightly linked with their perception of their school principal's leadership style. When teachers believe their principal has a high number of attributes that align with their aspirations and principles, they identify more easily with them and notice a much more positive supportive school climate (Bird, Wang, Watson, & Murray, 2009). The teaching staff's perceptions observed in this study were similar with those identified by Vos et al. (2012), who state that the teachers' perception of school climate was influenced by the principal's behaviour. A leader who represents a role model and a support structure for their staff and behaves in concordance with the values they promote can easily build an engagement to the school and its objectives, fact which can determine teachers to perceive the school climate as a positive, supportive one (Gumus et all., 2016). Moreover, the transformational model is comprehensive because it offers a normative approach to the school's leadership, focusing on the process though which leaders seek to influence the school's results and not the nature or the direction of these results. It is powerful and complex and it manifests itself when one or more teachers engage with each other in such a way that administrators and teachers alike lift each other to ever higher levels of engagement and dedication, motivation and morality (Matthew, 2017).

Micro research - The need for leader creation amongst Romanian school principals

For the purpose of clarifying the results of the empirical study and the proposal of certain pertinent recommendations regarding the agenda of management educational policy a quantitative micro research was put together. The aim of this research is to identify the informational gap regarding the initial and continuous training for principals and administration council members and to offer guidelines regarding the professional development of informal or formal leaders to strengthen the direct transfer of knowledge, skills and capabilities with the aim of improving organisational climate through tackling existing difficulties.

Regarding the research methodology, a **structured interview guide** was used which was comprised of twelve open questions. The questions had the aim of examining the following: the percentage of time principals allotted to administrative tasks, education-themed discussions with teachers, managing teachers' behaviour, the extent to which the subjects apply efficient methods (transactional or transformational) with the aim to mobilise/ motivate

teaching staff to take initiative/ increase their involvement. Another studied aspect was the principals' disposition to offer support to their teachers when it comes to personal or career development and their perception of the organisational climate (the relationships established between leaders and the other teachers), as well as the extent to which they collaborate to maintain an optimum atmosphere. Furthermore, the questions aimed to expose certain difficulties that exist in educational institutions when it comes to organisational climate and manifested leadership, as well as assembling a list of proposals from principals meant to surmount these difficulties.

For the purposes of this research, eight principals from state educational institutions at different levels from Iași and Pașcani were interviewed. The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via telephone and were recorded with the permission of the participants whose identity will be kept anonymous.

The analysis of the interviews revealed the following results which have been exposed below in SWOT specific categories, which are usually employed in educational policy analysis.

When it comes to **strengths**, a great number of principals encourage or even finance professional development courses for their teachers, with the belief that the teaching staff will apply what they learnt to produce positive change at school level; also, most principals did take part in school management-specific accredited courses that tackle the issues of leadership and deliver organisational behaviour improvement strategies with the aim of offering a quality education.

One of the observed **weaknesses** is the fact that the roles of leaders in pre-university teaching institutions are mostly focused on activities such as planning, developing organisational policy or decision making aimed at obtaining good results in agreement with quality assessment standards. It is then clear that activities such as socialising and regulating organisational policy, control, staff development with all that this brings like knowing the personal and professional development needs of staff members, motivating them, involvement in the staff recruitment process as well as involvement in the creation of a desirable organisational climate take a secondary place. At the same time, not all educational institutions have an express, clear and assumed vision to which individual objectives can be linked. This is caused by the fact that documents produced by the school's management meant to outline the school's ethos and vision are, most times, superficial and adopted or prescribed by the principal and are not a representation of the involvement of all the teaching staff, meaning that values and principles are not truly shared. Another aspect which must be considered is the fact that strategic planning in schools usually adopts national strategic targets without performing any diagnostic operations along with the whole of the teaching staff in order to produce a set of specific needs that strategic planning should be based on.

Moreover, 6 out of the 8 interviewed principals have identified a lack of decision-making skills amongst administrative staff resulting in the latter rarely being involved in improving school climate. The reluctance of certain actors to take initiative and propose changes and solutions for improving school climate and improving the relationship between principals and teachers was cited as a major impediment for a transformational approach to leadership by 5 of the interviewees. At organisational climate level, principals mention that the most frequent conflicts appear due to different mentalities (either between senior members of staff and new members of staff, the latter being treated as uninitiated, unknowledgeable, excluded, without being involved in the life of the schoolor between individualists and collectivists). Another obstacle in the way of transformational leadership and an open climate, mentioned by most

principals, is the resistance to change displayed by the Teacher's Council and the lack of leverage when it comes to motivating staff.

The results of these interviews are in agreement with the statistics of a study performed by the Romanian Institute of Educational Sciences in 2014 on a sample of 150 principals and deputy-principals in Romania. This study shows that most of the principal's activities are dedicated to administrative tasks (19%), followed by teaching (15%), managing student behaviour/ communicating with students (12.01%), discussions with teachers on educational themes (curricula, teaching - 11.67%), school self-assessment and quality assurance of the school's activities (11.36%), assessment of their own activity (9.38%) and lesson observations (9.08%). At the same time, the researchers observed the creation of a hierarchy of basic competences that principals find most important. Strategic management and planning competences are considered very important by the respondents - this is highlighted by the fact that planning and managerial projection documents are the first thing to be requested by principals when performing regular inspections. Human resources management skills find themselves just below the former in this hierarchy, with the interviewees finding them important as they especially refer to legal or regulatory aspects which, if breached, could produce legal repercussions. Communication and conflict management skills and the ability to intervene in the operations of the organisation are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy. The ability to intervene in the operations of the organisation refers to ways of using feedback received from students, teaching staff, parents or school inspectors (Institute of Educational Sciences, 2014, p35).

Thus, it can be noted that actions related to socialising and regulating organisational policy, control, staff development with all that it brings, like acknowledging the personal and professional development needs of the staff, motivating them, involvement in the recruitment and selection process as well as involvement in the creation of a desirable organisational climate are placed the bottom of the priority list.

Diagnosis studies and observations alike demonstrate the existence of a leadership skills crisis in the Romanian system, even if, lately, certain positive steps have been taken towards applying modern management theories and strategies. All international studies show a positive correlation between the quality of school management and the quality of education offered, which is manifested through the students' results in national and international assessment and high engagement levels amongst teaching staff. Research conducted by the Institute of Educational Sciences and other studies (TALIS, 2019) have, on the other hand, identified obstacles related to the leadership skills crisis amongst managers: the absence/ insufficiency of strategic management and educational leadership knowledge/skills amongst people involved in leading educational institutions; seeing management techniques and instruments as a goal in themselves rather than a way of increasing efficiency; the absence/ insufficiency/ inadequacy of quality related policies, objectives and strategies for long, medium and short term; the presence of reductionist attitudes an preconceptions like: 'quality is obtained through detecting issues/ irregularities and correcting/resolving them' and not through preventing them from happening in the first place; the mostly formal interaction with parents, the local community and teachers at school level.

According to the*Annex to OMECTS no.3545/212* regarding the adoption of pre-university educational management policy developed as part of the *Professionals in educational management* project, a very wide variety of managerial approaches exist in the system: focusing mostly on the administrative aspect, while neglecting proactive management, organisational culture, quality and (self-)assessment; the focus is not on the quality of the management process but on the final product, resulting in the preponderance of directive, monopolising or transactional leadership approaches based on superficial exchangesand the

lack of a climate that encourages high performance and quality; not all managers have the capacity to create a culture that encourages everyone's ideas and contributions (capacity usually associated with transformational leaders), a culture in which participation in decision making processes is encouraged dominates rather than one of negotiation; informational management is reduced to spreading the information received local, county or national levels of authority; there is no balance between the promotion of academic culture (a necessary dimension of a favourable academic climate) and that of a functional culture adapted to the end goals of each specialist domain, principals often treating teachers at each level the same, without taking into consideration the specific variances at each level of schooling.

General conclusions; limiting factors; future research directions

General conclusions

All the issues mentioned above can be traced to the lack of leadership proficiency amongst school managers, fact which amplifies difficulties within the school system by ignoring the truly important resources available – human resources – for the creation of an open organisational climate, characterised by support, collegiality, high engagement and distributive leadership.

Judging by the results of various studies and the priorities set by different national and international reports when it comes to educational leadership, the following **opportunities** can be identified with the aim of exercising effective leadership for the qualitative growth of the managerial act:

- The development of normative and regulatory instruments (standards) regarding educational management at local and county levels;
- The development of formative standards in the categories of management, advisory and control staff, corelated with occupational standards, which would ensure concordance with strategic priorities at system levels in the field of pre-university educational management;
- Attracting more funding from the European Union to fund leadership training for principals in schools which struggle with high degrees of abandonment, low attendance and lack of teaching staff;
- Decentralisation and an increase in school autonomy to increase the role of the Administration Council and the formal leader in selecting and recruiting staff.

The results of previous studies on leadership styles and current organisational climate challenges highlight the following guidelines as **policy recommendations** in the field of training and recruiting managers and Administration Council members:

A. At national level (responsible actors: The Ministry of National Education):

- Reconfiguring the responsibilities of the formal manager through decentralising teaching units and assuming institutional autonomy, fact which will allow the educational leader the following: supporting, assessing and developing human resources in accordance with real-life situations and local necessities; establishing performance indicators and ways of increasing the responsibility degree of teaching staff;

- Professionalising the school manager position through transforming it into an attractive job proposition, establishing certain criteria and a desirable educational leader profile for the selection of competent candidates who are conscious of the need for innovation and change in schools as organisations;
- Rethinking wage levels for principals and Administration Council members with the aim of motivating them;

B. **At county level** (responsible actors: school inspectorates, various training bodies):

- Elaborating adequate managerial training programmes, themed mainly on the formation of leadership competences based new evidenced standards and practices for principals and administration council members;
- Developing assessment instruments aimed at testing the abilities of leadership, guidance and control staff in the pre-university educational system;
- The implementation of a mentoring and counselling department within the County Inspectorate to offer guidance to newly appointed principals;
- Promoting informational and communication technologies at local and county educational management levels, as well as managerial training through employing a dedicated educational management portal; the portal will offer multiple collaboration opportunities.

C. At local level (responsible actors: principals, members of the Administration Council, The Teachers' Council, local authorities):

- Implementing the strategic management of human resources and a transactional motivation strategy (for example, attracting funds from local agents for teaching staff that is actively involved in the school's life and actively contribute to its values);
- The distributive application of power through task distribution and a real participative decisional act;
- Ensuring a leadership style that goes beyond school limits through the careful selection of Administration Council members and their training (Local council representatives, union representatives, representatives of the mayor), and ensuring their involvement in school life with the aim of observing and confronting the issues and shortcomings facing the school;
- The selection and training of members of the parents' committee to encourage active participation which would generate initiatives for involvement and a visible transformation of the partnership between school and family;
- The implementation of traineeships/ regular sessions centred on instructional/ transformational leadership for teaching staff with the aim of establishing, promoting and sharing strategies for the improvement of the educational and managerial act at institutional level, turning the school into a more visible entity, establishing and sharing a common vision, developing common problem-solving strategies for the school.

Naturally, risks exist that can minimise the impact and slow the implementation of educational policies in the filed of training and recruiting managers and members of the Administration Council with the improvement of the organisational climate in view. The following are amongst the most pressing: national educational policy is established by the Ministry based on consultations with other institutions and ministries that might have little

interest in the school management or educational leadership; human resources management in pre-university education is the responsibility of the Ministry and it is implemented as local level through County School Inspectorates and the methodology of teaching staff mobility (recruitment, selection, appointment and transfer) is established every year through a ministerial order, creating a great fluctuation in staff mobility, with well bonded teacher groups being rare, and cases in which managers can select people who truly identify with the school's mission and would consistently contribute to the school are exceptions; the existence of a strict legislative frame regarding the attributes of the principal, the members of the Administration Council, the teacher's council, centred on the administrative-managerial side; Insufficient involvement on the side of the management department within the County School Inspectorate in the counselling and support of principals with the aim of tackling certain issues.

To conclude, a durable leadership should be aimed at creating an open organisational climate through: establishing, embedding and utilising efficient ways to communicate, implementing participatory decision making, increasing the responsibility of all the members of the organisation, power distribution (practicing distributive leadership), socialising actions, developing and improving staff through acknowledging their personal and professional development needs, motivating staff both through transactional (financial stimuli, empowerment, promotions) and transformational means (individual consideration), the involvement of the formal leader in the staff recruitment and selection process and the involvement of all staff in the creation of a functional organisational climate.

Several **limiting factors** that might affect the results of this research have been identified, the first of which is the relatively small number of participants in the quantitative study. A second factor which must be considered is the impossibility to control tendencies which make participants offer inaccurate answers to questions to create the illusion that the situation that they are in is better than in reality. Finally,the study was focused on the Moldavia region of Romania, fact which does not offer the possibility of generalising the results at national level.

As a **future research direction**, a need to perform additional research aimed at assessing the relevance of the present study has been identified. Also, the development managerial policy agenda propositions through advancing certain common problem-solving strategies in schools would be a desired step forward.

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