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Educational Leadership – Roles on Work Performance

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Abstract: The research objective was highlighting the importance that the headmaster's leadership style and the organizational environment have on teachers' perception regarding work performance achievement. Thus, it is to be analysed whether those who are appointed in management positions understand the true meaning of the task they have and the strong impact their leadership style and their way of facing problems in the most unexpected moments can have on the entire organization. At the same time, it is to be studied which are the factors that influence the progress and performance of an organization, what is the level of involvement of the human and material resources necessary to obtain the proposed results and how we can improve both the management activity and the relationships with the employees in order to achieve all the set objectives. In this regard, we conducted a research that aimed at highlighting the role of the headmasters' leadership style, as perceived by teachers and the organizational environment, on how teachers perceive work performance. The results of this research may be the basis for future more thorough research, with a larger teacher sample, aiming at identifying a larger number of answers at the same questions and their interpretation, in order to verify if the present study hypothesis will be confirmed too.

Keywords: *school management; educational leadership; work performance; management style; organizational environment; leader.*

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1. Introduction

Studies showed that both leaders as well as managers have a major responsibility regarding goals and objectives setting, as well as the activities by which the employees succeed in fulfilling all the assignments. However, it must not be overlooked the fact that between being a leader and a manager there are some major differences. The Romanian publications define management as "the human, informational, physical and financial resources coordination in order to reach the organization's primary goal – obtaining products and services desired by a certain company segment" (Clipa & Clipa, 2019; Clipa & Greciuc, 2018b; Eval, & Roth, 2011). Leadership is defined as being "a social influence process including an intentional dimension exerted by one individual (or a group) on other individuals (or groups) aiming at structuring the activities and relationships from a group or organization" (Bush, 2015; Clipa & Greciuc, 2018a; Yulk, 2004). Regarding the fact that the management or leadership can become more performing, the literature highlights, first of all, the importance of the management style used by leaders or managers in order to improve it and the managerial environment in which each individual carries out its activity. In order to achieve this, both a performing leader and an organizational environment, where respect, achievements acknowledgement and positive human relationships prevail are required.

2. Educational management

Educational management is a field of study and activity which observes the educational organizations way of functioning and leadership. This area of interest does not have a unique, universal definition, as it derives from more subjects among which sociology, political sciences, economy and general management.

Bolam (1999) asserts that the educational management is „ an executive function aiming at putting into practice the approved policies" and draws attention regarding the difference between educational management and leadership, at the bottom of which lies „ the responsibility for the policies development and where applicable, organizational transformation" (Bolam, 1999).

Bush opines that „educational management must take into account especially education's aims and objectives". He is also the one asserting that „the aims or the outputs offer fundamental milestones in supporting the educational institutions management. The management aims at achieving

certain educational objectives. If the connection between aims and management is not clearly defined, there is the danger to slide towards *managerialism*, highlighting the procedures at the expense of the educational aims and values" (Bush, 2015; Bush et al., 2019; Eval & Roth, 2011).

2.1. Educational leadership

The term of educational leadership is taken into account by Gunter (2004) as deriving from the notion of „educational administration", which became „educational management". Bolam (1999) sees this change as „a paradigm change". But still how can we define educational leadership? Rima Bezede defines educational leadership as „an extension and consolidation process of the professionalism by authorizing the teacher to put forth its leader abilities and exercise leadership in his current activity, as part of it" (Bezede, 2015). Yukl (2004) defines leadership as „a process of social influence including an intentional dimension exercised by one individual (or a group) on other individuals (or groups) aiming at structuring activities and relationships from a group or organization" (Bush, 2015; Clipa & Greciuc, 2018b; Yulk, 2004).

The term of educational leadership was long studied in countries as America, England, Wales, resulting in some projects as the one in 2008 from Cambridge University - International Teacher Leadership. The projects initiators created a set of instruments and materials, in order to support the teachers that are leaders, aiming at improving the teacher's professionalism (Bezede, 2015).

2.2. Manager vs Leader

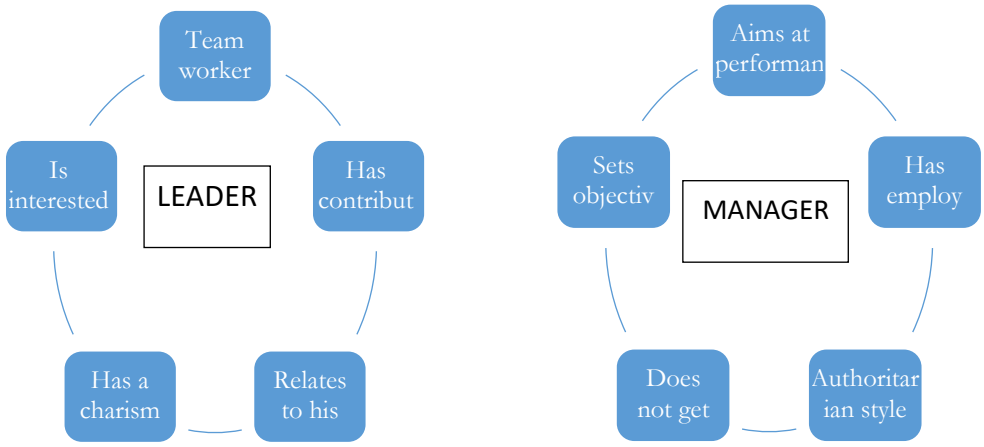
As Bush asserts (2015), the terminology used in order to describe how a school leadership is administrated by the headmaster evolved in time from the term „administration", to „management". Nowadays is mentioned more as „leadership", a way of describing what it actually means to manage and improve the organizational environment in a school, assure quality and meet the school's clients need for development. Can we speak about differences between management and leadership?

Cuban (1988), reckons that one of the clearest differences between the two terms is the fact that leadership is most of the times associated with "change", while management means „maintaining". He supports his statements explaining that leadership implies influencing people's actions in order to reach to desirable results. Any real leader will know to shape well established structures, motivate the team in order to undertake and successfully finish a task. Also, the leader will demand ingenuity, talent and

energy from the team. Regarding the manager's activity, Cuban (1988) thinks that his activity supposes keeping efficient the organizations current activities, without aiming at a certain change „ although, often, the manager claims leadership skills, its global task is maintaining and not change" (Bush, 2015; Cuban, 1988).

Regardless of any author's opinion, it has to be highlighted that leadership and management are equally important under the circumstances in which a school aims at developing, performing and building an image to ensure its credibility within the community. If we were to compare what a leader and a manager do, we would have the following diagram:

Figure no. 1: The differences between leader and manager
Source: Drawn by the author based on literature



Regardless of any author's opinion, it has to be highlighted that leadership and management are equally important under the circumstances in which a school aims at developing, performing and building an image to ensure its credibility within the community. Regarding the educational management and leadership, the key components of scholar achievement and performance are both the headmaster's management style and organizational environment. During the last few years, the changes required for the educational system were discussed, both from an organizational point of view and schools' management. Any teacher would like to work in an environment of good cooperation between colleagues and be guided, supported and motivated by an educational leader that has an auspicious

management style in order to build and maintain a good image of the school.

2.3. Management styles

The management style is defined as the way a manager or a leader know how to put to use its „knowledge, qualities and skills in its relations to the employees and the actual development of these work processes" (Nicolescu & Verboncu, 2008).

In 1939, Kurt Lewin et al., sets three management styles, related to each manager's way to exert the executive power:

- *The autocratic – authoritarian style*: the leaders make unilateral decisions, dictating work methods and do not accept the employees' participation to the initiation of their own actions. It is considered to be an efficient management style, but it can lead to tensions, complaints or even frustrations inside the organization, states which can result in some employees refuse to fulfil the manager's tasks.
- *The democratic – participative style*: the leaders let the group members choose their own working methods and involve them in decision making regarding each activity aim and objective. The management is flexible and responsible, and has a good leader -employees 'cooperation, which makes every team member willingly work to reach the target goals.
- *The liberal or „laissez- faire" style*: leaders leave the team the freedom of decision, give them the materials they need for their activities, they are not interested in the way the team's activities evolve. This style generates the organization's low efficiency.

The studies showed that a leader does not take only one management style, but it adjusts its own style to the situation the managed organization faces. As a result of the researches, Lewin et al. (1939) concluded that the democratic style is highly above the other two styles.

The literature increasingly mentions about two other leadership models, which influence the employees work performance. The two models are: the transactional and transformational models. These two models will be briefly described trying to highlight the influence each has on the employees and their work performance.

The transformational leadership has the following important characteristics:

- The leader recognizes its employees' needs and tries to give them the possibility to improve and achieve performance.

- The employees are involved in activities from all points of view, since the leader wants them to develop leader skills too.
- The leader always looks for ways to make its employees aware of the importance their level of involvement has in order to achieve the objectives, encouraging also the team spirit.
- Through his example of sustained effort, determination and sacrifice, the leader encourages the employees to grow, achieve performance above the expected limit, be motivated and show availability to accept new challenges.

„Leadership generates thus trust, respect and a willingness for team work, together with the others in order to achieve the same objectives" (Iliescu et al., 2008).

The transformational and transactional leadership models are often contrasting. Miller (2001) defines the scholar transactional model as „the leadership in which the relations with the teachers are based on a change of valuable resources" (Bush, 2015; Goleman, 2008; Miller, 2001).

Judge and Piccolo (2004) distinguish between the three dimensions of the *transactional leadership,* summing up the characteristics of each dimension:

- „ The circumstantial reward. The extent to which the leader makes constructive changes with his followers.
- The management by exception - active. The active leaders monitor their followers, anticipate problems and undertake correction actions.
- Management by exception – passive. Passive leaders wait until behaviour causes problems in order to take action" (Bush, 2015, p. 138).

Avolio and Bass (1995) describes transactional leaders as the leaders who know what to ask from their employees and make sure they carry out their tasks (Bass, Avolio, Iliescu, Beldean & Sîntion, 2007). Also, the leaders reward the employees or promise to reward them for carrying out their tasks, disregarding sometimes the results. The same author asserts that the transformational leadership completes the transactional and the fact that „transformational actions cannot fully replace the transactional ones, but when present, they are responsible for unique variations of the performance levels, becoming often higher than the ones caused by the active transactional leadership" (Iliescu et al., 2008). Menon (2014) felt that managers make their mark on the management style through their temper, character and skills [...]. Regarding education managers 'style, it can be defined as their own, specific way to act, in order to achieve the

objectives; these characterizes their activity and differentiate it from the activity of other study units managing teachers" (Menon, 2014).

We ask ourselves most of the times which is the best management style in order to perform. It is specified in the literature that each manager has to adjust his style with respect to the situations they confront with.

2.4. The organizational environment and the teachers' work performance

Romanian researchers, Nicolescu and Verboncu (2007) assert that the organizational environment represents „the totality of the organization's social and human characteristics as a complex system: The decision making practices along the hierarchy, collective management bodies functioning, accomplishment of the enterprise social functions, general work environment of stimulating work performance and taking part in the management, cooperation relations between work teams, departments, services, workshops, offices" (Constantin, 2008; Clipa & Greciuc, 2018 a; Clipa & Clipa, 2019; Hatos, 2016).

Organizational environment and its influence on the individual and collective performance, was studied by many researchers before and after The First World War reaching the conclusion that there is a number of organizational environment factors that influence both the individual and collective performances. Lewin, Lippitt and White (1939) assert that factors as cordiality, roles structure, risk acknowledgement, responsibility, colleagues and headmaster's support, standards imposed by the organization's policies, as well as some conflictual situations that can emerge, are definitive within the organizational culture, regarding work performance. Schneider (1975), thinks that the objectives and how clear are those to the employees, work environment, the degree of group affiliation, autonomy or certain bureaucratic rules are other factors that can have a decisive influence on the organizational environment and work performance (Schneider, 1975).

Building on the literature and the results of the studies presented above, the paper aim is a comparative research of the organizational environment in Romanian primary and middle schools, the management style taken by the headmasters of four Romanian teaching institutions (middle schools, from the rural and urban areas), teachers opinion regarding the headmaster's leadership style and their perception on the work performance in the schools they teach at.

3. Research objective

The research objective was highlighting the importance that the headmaster's leadership style and the organizational environment have on teachers' perception regarding work performance achievement.

3.1.Research methodology

3.2.Research hypothesis

1) Teachers' perception regarding work performance positively correlates to the type of school environment they teach at.
2) The organizational environment factors are directly responsible for the way teachers perceive work performance.
3) The way teachers perceive the headmaster's leadership style positively correlates with their perception regarding work performance.
4) There is a significant difference between the ways in which teachers perceive work performance, with respect to the level of education they teach at.

3.3. Instruments and Procedure

Research variables

a) Independent variables- school's organizational environment, and its factors (task, structure, relations, motivation, support, management, change, performance), headmasters leadership style (transformational, transactional, passive/ avoidant)
b) Dependent variables- teachers' perception on work performance.

Sample

This study was taken by 80 teachers (40 primary school and 40 middle school teachers), from two counties (Suceava and Botoşani) who teach in the rural (40 teachers) and urban areas (40 teachers). As a training level 4 of the teachers graduated a high school in the domain, 50 teachers have a bachelor degree, 13 graduated masters, 12 have post-university studies and 1 teacher has a PhD diploma. With respect to the teaching degree, most of the teachers who were part of the study obtained the 1st teaching degree.

3.4. Tools used

A. Research tool applied to the headmaster

The research tool applied to the school headmasters in this research was the MLQ Questionnaire (Multifactorial Leadership Questionnaire) 5X Form version, designed by Bernard M. Bass and Bruce J. Avolio (2004), who drawn more versions of this questionnaire and tested them on almost all organizational levels in fields as industry, education, in governmental and military organizations, in order to determine the leadership behaviour of the managing persons. In Romania, the studies for the translation and adaptation of this questionnaire began in 2005. This version of the questionnaire comprises 45 items, scored on 12 scales: nine scales and sub-scales assess leadership behaviours while three scales measure performance and the results related to these behaviours. It must be highlighted also, that these scales and sub-scales are grouped into four distinct categories: *transformational scales*(the questions 10, 18, 21, 25, 6, 14, 23, 34, 9, 13, 26, 36, 2, 8, 30, 32, 15, 19, 29, 31), *transactional scales* (the questions 1, 11, 16, 35, 4, 22, 24, 27), *scales of passive/avoidant behaviour* (the questions 3, 12, 17, 20, 5, 7, 28, 33) and scales measuring *the leadership results* (the questions 39, 42, 44, 37, 40, 43, 45, 38, 41) (Iliescu et al., 2008). The answers given to each question are measured on Likert scale, having the next values: 1- none, 2- very rare, 3- sometimes, 4- often, 5- frequent or always.

B. Research tools for teachers

The set of four questionnaires applied to the teachers aimed at assessing aspects related to the organizational environment, the perception regarding work performance and the leadership style set by the school's headmaster.

In order to assess the aspects related to the schools that were part of the study organizational environment we applied the C.O.IV questionnaire (Organizational Environment) created by Constantin T. and validated as a result of its application on a sample of 566 subjects (general population). The questionnaire comprises 40 items structured so that it could measure the following factors from an organization: *the task* (clear objectives), *structure* (efficient organization), *relations* (positive relations), *motivation* (the stimulating motivation), *support* (performing support), *management* (efficient management), *change* (attitude for change) and *performance* (general performance). For the answers given to each question it was used a scale from 1 to 7, 1 meaning never agree, and 7 – always agree (2- rarely agree, 3- sometimes agree, 4- not agree, nor disagree, 5- often agree, 6- very often agree). For each factor, the total score results from calculating the arithmetic mean of the five assertions specific to each factor.

In identifying teachers' perception regarding their activity performance in school it was used a questionnaire with a summative scale – *The working place performance scale,* designed by Griffin. The questionnaire has 27 items which assess the ability in accomplishing individual tasks, both as a member of a team and an organization (1. *You did adequately important aspects of your work.; 12. You helped your colleagues when they asked you to, or they needed it*; *21. You discussed in a positive manner about the organization.*), the adaptability to the individual tasks, as both a member of a team and a school organization (*4. You've adjusted well to the changes in your main duties. 15. You responded constructively to the changes related to the way your team works. 23. You managed the changes related to the way the organization functions*) and the pro-activity in doing the individual and group tasks at school level (the questions 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, 18, 25, 26, 27). For the answers to be registered 5 steps Likert Scale was used (1- to a minimum, 2- on a small scale, 3- to some extent, 4- in a great measure, 5- to a greatest extent).

The third questionnaire from the applied set - **Identifying the managerial style**- asked them to answer 15 questions so that the answers reveal the present situation at their working place in order to identify the headmaster's managerial style from the teachers' point of view.A1 to 5 scale was used in order to register the answers (1- total disagreement, 2- they do not agree, 3- uncertain, 4- agree, 5- totally agree). The 15 questions of the questionnaire were grouped to measure the headmaster's control in school (*1. the manager controls everything so as not to mistake the group of teachers; 7. He agrees listening to the teacher's opinions even though he does not approve.*), the accomplishing of the managerial tasks (*3. The manager frequently appeals to the teacher's competitive spirit in order to accomplish the tasks sooner; 11. The manager seeks for more and more original solutions to carry out the tasks presenting them to the employees*) and attitude toward the other teachers (8. *Discourages any discussion which affects work environment; 13. The manager encourages establishing powerful liaisons between the employees.*).

The fourth questionnaire the teachers were asked to fill in, aimed at how teachers appreciate the relations to the school's headmaster. The questionnaire comprises 18 questions with answers on a scale from 1 to 5(1- almost always, 2- always, 3- often, 4- sometimes, 5- almost never). The questions were formulated so that the teachers may give information about their objectives and tasks clarity, *(3. It is very clear in everything he asks me to do; 9. It presents and explains to us the objectives and strategic orientation of the organization we work at.*), the way their work is appreciated and the support given by the headmaster to each teacher (10. *It gives me favourable conditions for my development on this position; 13. It encourages an environment based on mutual trust and respect*) and

how the headmaster – teachers' communication takes place (2. *It creates a favourable to communication environment. 5. It listens to my opinions before making a decision which influences my branch.*).

3.5. Procedure

In order to collect the necessary data for our research, there were applied two sets of questionnaires: one filled in by the headmasters from each school which was part of the study and one set of four questionnaires applied to the teachers. The questionnaires were applied through the paper and pen method, with the help of eight volunteer teachers from the schools involved in the study. The volunteers explained to the headmasters and teachers the importance of giving answers that reflect their personal opinion and the fact that the participation in this study is volunteer and the collected data will be used for research only.

4. The Research Interpretation and Results

4.1. Hypothesis verification

In order to verify the first hypothesis of the study, a Pearson Correlation T test in SPSS was done, between the *independent variable*- organizational environment and *dependent variable* – the teachers' perception regarding work performance.

Hypothesis I- *Teachers perception regarding work performance positively correlates to the type of school environment where they work.*

The results prove that teachers perception regarding work performance positively correlates to the organizational environment inside the school: (*r* =, 413, N = 80, p =, 000). Thus, the more the organizational environment is positive the more performant the teachers perceive themselves in their school activities. The size of the effect is medium. The hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 1. Correlation analysis between the variables of the first hypothesis

		Teachers perception regarding work performance
Organizational climate	Pearson Correlation	,413**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000
	N	80

The second hypothesis of the study aims at verifying whether the factors of organisational environment are directly responsible for the teachers' work performance perception. To analyse the relation between the factors that compose the organisational environment of a school and the way the teachers perceive the work performance, we applied Pearson correlation within SPSS software. The result of the analysis showed that there is a positive correlation between the eight components of the organizational environment and the teachers' perception on work performance. The size of the effect is average. The Pearson correlation data are shown in the table below. Hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 2. *The results of the Pearson correlation coefficient between independent variables –components of the organizational environment and dependent variable – perception of the teachers regarding the work performance*

		C.O. workload	C.O. relations	C. O. support	C. O. Management	C. O. Motivation	C. O. Structure	C. O. Change	C. O. Performance
Perception of the teachers regarding the work performance	Pearson Correlation	,310**	,380**	,425**	,361**	,276*	,380**	,459**	,431**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,005	,000	,000	,001	,013	,001	,000	,000
	N	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80

The third hypothesis – the way the teachers perceive the leadership style adopted by the director positively correlates with their perception on work performance was also tested through Pearson correlation analysis, in SPSS. The results indicated that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between the two variables (r = , 313, N = 80, p = , 005). The more teachers perceive the headmasters as performing leaders, the more grows the level of their own perception regarding work performance. The size of the effect is average. Hypothesis is confirmed.

Table3- *The results of the difference between the variable – managerial style of the headmaster as perceived by the teachers and the variable – teachers' perception regarding work performance*

		Teachers' perception of work performance
Headmaster's managerial style as perceived by the teachers	Pearson Correlation	,313**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,005
	N	80

The last hypothesis of the study aims at verifying whether there is a significant difference between the way's teachers perceive work performance depending on the teaching level they profess in. We applied the t test for independent samples. The result of the analysis showed that there is an insignificant difference between the teachers from primary school (M= 4,38, SD = ,682) and teachers from gymnasium (M = 4,34, SD = ,430) regarding their perception on work performance: [t (78) = 0,370, p = ,712]. These results indicate the fact that the level a teacher teaches in gymnasium does not influence its work performance. Hypothesis is infirmed.

5. Conclusions

An adequate conception on school has to take into account its fundamental elements as a social system and the way these elements are organized for the whole to be coherent. The fundamental elements are not only the persons that hold certain roles, but the behaviours of a large number of stakeholders, organized in groups, whose cohesion is given by a network of interpersonal relationships, managed by a structure invested with authority (Antoniakis, 2003; Hatos, 2010).

With regard to the research questions and, more specifically, to the first hypothesis, arises through the quotation of the relevant literature that indeed the characteristics of the educational style of leadership, affect the perfromance of the school directly or indirectly because these characteristics' enable, contribute, shape and influence the leadership style and consequently the result itself. This result are underline the same results with others authors (Dimopoulos, 2020; Politis, 2001).

With respect to the teachers perception regarding performance and organizational environment, we can say that these are in a interdependence report, since, the organizational environment may lead to performance or may be the expression of a certain level of it, according to the leadership style taken, by the interpersonal relationships inside the teacher team, as well as the common objectives that all stakeholders involved in the schools activity have. Also, the headmaster'sleadership style can result in performance (Clipa & Greciuc, 2018a; Menon, 2014).

As a conclusion, in order to have a performant education in Romanian schools it is necessary to develop an open to change organizational environment, with teachers eager to achieve performance, motivated by leaders who know the art of efficient leadership for a school.

5.1. Strengths and limitations of the research

Among the strengths of this research is the fact that it was proven once again that we cannot be performant in our jobs if we do not have an open organizational environment, dominated by efficient organization, positive relationships, the support for achieving performance and a positive attitude for change. Also, the second strong point is the fact that no matter of the county and school in which the headmasters develop their activity, they search for constructive relations to the teachers which teach in their schools and combine the leadership styles so that the objectives and performance standards could be achieved.

The limitations of the research could stand in the fact that the schools involved in our study lie in geographical areas with a medium to low living standard, where sometimes the teachers make great efforts in order to achieve remarkable performances. Another limitation of the study might be that there were chosen only ten teachers from each school, five from the primary level and five from the gymnasium. The answers might have been influenced by the relations they have with the volunteer teachers that applied the questionnaires or with the headmaster.

The results of this research may be the basis for future more thorough research, with a larger teacher sample, aiming at identifying a

larger number of answers at the same questions and their interpretation, in order to verify if the present study hypothesis will be confirmed too in the case of a more than 10 participants from each school.

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