THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATIONS INTO PROFESSIONAL WELL-BEING OF LITHUANIAN SCHOOL HEADS

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Abstract
The article is sought to highlight the notion of professional well-being of school heads. The relevance of the research topic is presupposed by the tensions that contemporary Lithuanian school heads encounter with under the conditions of continuous change in education. The theoretical model of factors that have an impact on school heads' professional well-being serves as a methodological approach for investigation into the said phenomenon in Lithuania. Empirical data gained through focus group discussion provides evidence on Lithuanian school heads' l professionawell-being constitution.
KEYWORDS: well-being, Lithuanian school heads.

Introduction

School leaders in Lithuania as in other OECD countries are facing challenges and pressures with the rising expectations for schools related to rapid and constant technological innovation, massive migration and mobility, and increasing economic globalization. As countries struggle to transform their educational systems to prepare all young people with the knowledge and skills needed to function in a rapidly changing world, the roles and expectations for school leaders have changed radically. They are no longer expected to be merely good managers but leaders of schools as learning organizations. Effective school leadership is increasingly viewed as key to large-scale education reform and to improved educational outcomes.

Recent educational reforms have added to the complexity of the school head's role and have demanded that school heads need new kinds of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The change and intensification of the school head's role has not always been accompanied by provision of the necessary training and support. This has impacted on the job satisfaction of school heads and had an effect on their professional well-being (Mulford, 2008).

Recent research has shown that in many OECD countries the following tendencies take place: it is difficult to attract qualified candidates to the school head's position, preparatory training schemes for the school headship are frequently inadequate, professional development and renewal is often episodic and uncoordinated, roadblocks to career advancement and satisfaction have increased, and many committed educators are leaving the profession at an earlier age than would have previously been expected (Petzko et al., 2002). The findings of research carried out in Lithuania (Melnikova, 2011) partly prove the said tendencies. The survey, which 352 principals form the whole Lithuania took part in, was aimed on disclosing respondents' attitudes towards the opportunities for leadership development in Lithuania, quality and relevancy of leadership development provision, certification procedure. The leadership development system in Lithuania was evaluated as more inefficient then efficient (33,6 %) or inefficient (20,4 %). 51,3 % of respondents pointed, that needs for competencies development, tailored to management career stages in education, are not satisfied. 59,9 % - argued, that induction is the most important phase in leadership development process and more support should be provided for beginning principals. The problems, school principals encounter with while developing their competencies, are: the lack of competent trainers (59,2 %), insufficient financing (42,8 %), lack of relevant and topical programmes (27%), traditional forms and methods (27%), location of institutions-providers of training (25 %). 40,1 % of school principals approve the certification procedure, however 48,7 % of respondents would like it to be more associated with school results.

The interest in school heads' professional well-being is presupposed by number of facts (Mulford, 2008). The list includes: challenges of school leader's role, reasonable remuneration, career prospects, professional training and development, job satisfaction, job-related stress, professional support, etc. The said factors are important for Lithuanian system of education where the new model of school quality management is being implemented. Therefore the attention should be drawn on the concept of professional well-being of Lithuanian school heads. The professional well-being of a school head is paramount to the success of an organization and often the first thing to be overlooked. Well-being is often

narrowly defined in terms of the policies and actions that promote a healthy work environment and thus reduce illness, or stress, that may be considered to be work related. However, in a wider understanding, professional well-being depends on all kind of professional support for school leaders at various stages of management career in education (Hargreaves, 2010; Bush, 2011). It covers comprehensive leadership succession frameworks (including recruitment, development and retention), career management programmes, enhancing school heads' profession prestige, professional training and development, etc.

The aim of the article is to define the concept of school heads' professional well-being and to investigate theoretically and empirically into the factors that constitute well-being of Lithuanian school heads. The methods of research are: focus group discussion, qualitative interpretative analysis of research data.

The methodology and methods of research

The model of factors hat have an impact on school leaders' professional well-being (Mulford, 2008), served as methodological basis for focus group interview. The said factors were extracted on the basis of meta-analysis of research outcomes on school heads' well-being.

Table 1. The factors that have an impact on professional well-being of school heads (Mulford, 2008)

SOCIETAL	SCHOOL LEADER'S ROLE	RECRUITMENT
Unrelenting change	Seen as too:	Clear strategy of leadership succession
Globalisation	Demanding on self and family	Shortage
Migration	Conflictual (e.g. instructional, transformational leader)	Declining candidate quality
Level of unemployment	Stressful	More likely for schools in nonchallenging circumstances
Increasing and conflicting expectations	Centralised and changeable – cannot function as a meaningful agent of change	Temptation to use non-educators
Education value in society	Lonely, isolated	Career stages
SYSTEM	Lacking support	**PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**
Shift to seeing education as a client service	Deskilled	Pre-service preparation
Leadership standards/competencies	Separated from teaching	Induction
Accountability	Remuneration and motivation system(salary level, motivation)	Professional development
Curriculum change	Closely linked to particular groups in society (gender, ethnic)	Coherence of provision
Testing		Requirements for content
Performance management		Coherence and continuity
Bureaucracy		Compliance to career stages
Paper work		**RETENTION**
Scale and constancy of change		Retention opportunities
Budget cuts/inadequate funding		**CERTIFICATION**
Teacher shortages		Certification procedure
Low ceiling career		Competencies based approach
Inflexible work arrangements		
Poor employer/employee relations		
Promotion/selection processes		
Certification		
SCHOOL		
Asked to do too much/contradictory demands		
Competition/marketing/entrepreneurship		
Demands to be 'heroic' and self-managing		
Long hours		
Time fragmentation		
Demand for community involvement/education		
Conspiracy of business		
Lack of teacher interest in leadership		

The analysis of scientific literature (Bolam, 2004; Pont et al. 2008) as well as the model of factors proposed by Mulford (2008) allowed distinguishing the main criteria for the analysis of school heads'

professional well-being. By summarizing the introduced criteria the following theoretical approach to school heads' professional well-being analysis was developed:

Table 2. Theoretical approach for the analysis of school heads' professional well-being (Source: author)

Criteria	Key issue
Vision and responsibilities of a school leader	What concept of school leadership underpins the vision of school leader's work? What is the level of school leader's autonomy ? Are the core leadership responsibilities defined and delimited? What are they?
School leadership framework/standards (competences)	What leadership competences should school leaders possess? Is there leadership framework/standards/competences that provide guidance on the main responsibilities of effective school leaders and signal the vision of school leadership. Are the standards a basis for consistent recruitment, training and appraisal of school leaders? How does leadership development system interrelate with leadership standards? Do leadership standards guide professional development of school leaders? Does the system ensure leadership competences acquisition and development process?
School leadership succession	Are there clear strategies of school leaders' succession planning in a country? Does succession planning involve identifying potential leaders and encouraging them to develop leadership practices?
Recruitment for school leadership	Is there a systematic framework insuring that the recruitment procedures and criteria used are effective, transparent and consistent? What are the eligibility criteria for school leaders? What are the selection criteria for selection candidates from a pool of eligible candidates? What are the recruitment procedures? Is there a system of middle leadership development?
Career development options for school leaders	Are there career development prospects for school leaders? Are there any opportunities provided to step up towards new opportunities (e.g. jobs in educational administration; consultant leadership etc.)?
Employment status and duration	What is the employment status of a school leader? What is the duration of appointments to headship?
Remuneration and motivation system	What are the factors influencing the motivation of individuals to apply for school leadership (e.g. intrinsic motivation; factors related to recruitment and working conditions; work overload, work-life balance; salary levels; career prospects etc.)?
Retention system	Are the incentives promoted that add value to leaders' professional experiences, work conditions and personal concerns.
Certification/licensure requirements	What are the certification/licensure requirements?
Needs analysis	How are the needs and demands of school leaders analyzed? How are school leaders' development and training needs established?
School leadership development	Does leadership development for school leaders include preparatory, induction and in-service components? What are their broad features? Is the leadership development coherent? Are the system components interrelated? How does leadership development system correspond to participants needs at various leadership career stages? How does leadership development system meet organizational challenges to leadership (succession, recruitment, appointment, etc)? How leadership development corresponds to succession planning? How leadership development responds to leadership retaining strategy? How are the programmes funded (e.g. nationally, locally, by individual grants, etc.)? Is the budget sufficient?
Professional support	What kind of professional support is available for school heads (mentorship, coaching, colleagues'' network, etc.)
Job satisfaction	Does the position of a school head provide job satisfaction? What can be done in order to increase the attractiveness of a school head's position for hose who aspire for this position? Is the school-life balance assured?

The focus group interview was organized as a part of a larger research on Lithuanian school heads' career and professional development opportunities (Melnikova, 2011). Eight experienced (of first and second management categories) school heads took part in the discussion. The data of qualitative research was analyzed applying the method of *qualitative interpretative analysis*.

The outcomes of research and discussion

As the expectations of what schools should achieve have changed dramatically over recent years, Lithuania as well as other European countries needs to develop new forms of school leadership. In this context the issues of school heads' professionalism, competence and professional well-being are of the major importance.

Informants were on the whole satisfied in their role as a school head, especially if their actual role aligns with what they would like the role to be like. To the mind of informants they rather choose more of leadership and less of management role *"that engages them more on matters related to students and staff"*. However school heads emphasized the intensification of school heads' role, continual extension of head's role and responsibilities to be performed. Informants emphasized that the clear conception of school management should be created. The conception would define education priorities, vision of school as well as activity of school heads. This conception „*should comply with changes in education*". On the other hand „*the conception should be based on Lithuanian traditions in education and foster the best thing we have in our education*". The conception would serve as a landmark for school heads' professional development and certification.

As mentioned by informants the major factor that would have an impact on the well-being of Lithuanian school heads is a necessity of consistent research on needs of school heads and their organisations. „*When speaking about our problems and well-being it is necessary to emphasize our needs and needs of our organisations*". The analysis of management activity should take place as well. The research would help to highlight the key roles, functions and responsibilities of contemporary school heads. The data received would allow arranging purposefully the process of preparation and development of school leaders as well as their certification.

According to interviewees, it is important to conduct research on competencies of school heads in order to identify „*the most significant competencies that are possessed or not possessed by school heads and to search for effective development strategies, because that would empower to react on continuously changing environment*". In the opinion of informants, research should be carried out in a centralized manner by „*some certain institution that would be responsible for such kind of research*". The methods of assessing the professional development needs should be elaborated and applied also in a centralized way. Meanwhile, research on school activity and management functions should take place at the same time. "*Such kind of research would provide data on changes that take place in schools and on the most relevant spheres of school heads' activity*".

The major attention should be drawn on school heads' work motivation. „*Existing management categories do not motivate to work better*". "*School heads are de-motivated by the bureaucracy and excessive paperwork and also by constant change in the education system*". Therefore it is necessary to search for means that would allow increasing school heads' motivation. On the one hand, it is important to speak about prestige of school heads' work in the society. The prestige should be raised and that could be partly enforced by „*career opportunities for school heads, which would include as financial as psychological issues*". On the other hand, motivation of contemporary school heads could be increased by modern methods of professional development such as „*colleague networks, coaching, mentoring*". The sharing of the newest knowledge of education management and leadership would also be a valuable motivation. Work motivation could be also increased by means of publicizing the best practice of school activity in media etc. However, informants strongly doubted about school ratings that "*actually influence the opinion of society in a quite negative way*". Motivation could also be raised by cooperation with foreign countries, mutual projects, study visits etc.

School heads pointed that well-being and quality of their work depends on the general management of school heads as human resource system. Firstly, the clear rotation system should be established in Lithuania. Secondly, it is necessary to improve the recruitment process of school heads making it more unbiased and objective by "*attracting school communities to participate in selection and appointment processes*". Moreover, it is important to increase the attractiveness of school heads' role. "*Presently the perception that the job is too stressful, demanding and unrewarding remains among teachers*". Stress and

long work hours are seen as the key turn-offs. Other factors mentioned were: role overload, negative impact on the individual's family, self-doubt, concerns over accountability, and external factors such as inadequate funding for schools and the scale and pace of bureaucratic initiatives. Finally, it is important to pay greater attention on retention opportunities. The leadership development for aspiring leaders should be ensured. The strategies of maintaining of experienced school heads as for instance "*allow some school heads to be appointed at other contexts away from school e.g. university to undertake research*". Informants expressed the wish to cooperate closely with departments of education from local municipalities, to receive professional support from them as well as to take part in their activity as experts and consultants.

One of the most important premises of quality in school heads' work is a sufficient funding. "*Naming education a priority of a state requires purposeful investment to be done*". "*Quality and well-being could not be achieved without sufficient funding*". That as well presupposes the problem of remuneration. "*There is the perception that the remuneration for the increasing responsibility and workload is inadequate*". Moreover, informants emphasized that role overload has negative impact on the one's family life. Informants proposed to look for more career and promotion opportunities.

The call for a school leadership career model goes along with coherent and continuous professional development framework. In the opinion of interviewees, there is a lack of attention spent on organization of leadership development: the consistency, coordination and clear priorities are not ensured. The principles of coherence and continuity are not implemented, the consistent analysis of school heads' needs for competencies development does not take place. The network of institutions that provide professional development services is extensive, the effective information about the provided services is ensured, however, the distribution of functions among institutions is not distinct. The certification procedure is "*quite complex, undifferentiated according to school heads' needs and purposes of their organizations*", the objectivity of certification is not sufficient.

One of the issues of a major importance according to informants is a necessity to ensure "*coherence of leadership development provision by different institutions*". A broad range of providers can cater to the varied training needs for school leadership. Training is provided by Ministries of Education or local governments, or outsourced to specialized institutions, to teacher training institutions or to a specialized body established to focus on school leadership training. Universities have also a broad range of supply. In addition, teacher and school leaders' institutions have developed their own training programmes. It is important to have clear standards that ensure that suppliers focus on good leadership development. "*Provision should respond to school heads' needs*". 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 stuff may be experienced. It is possible to encourage practitioner research, develop school leaders to become consultant leaders and contribute to programmes as facilitators, consultants and coaches.

The choice of competencies development programmes / events / sessions on various topics is extensive but chaotic, is not sufficiently tied with aspects of school activity, and does not reflect the work-place requirements and needs. The informants pointed that traditional forms of competencies development (seminars, individual consultations, conferences), methods (lectures, discussions, questions-answers) prevail in leadership development. According to the interviewees, the content of leadership development should reflect individual needs of school heads and their schools, content should become more practical and work-based, tied to particular school's activity.

The research results allow to state that professional well-being is a part of school heads' as human resource strategy. Therefore, it is necessary to create leadership succession plans, career management programmes, enhance school principals' profession prestige etc. The strategy of school heads' as human resource should have clear conceptual grounds and to be based on consistent research.

The discussion on Lithuanian school heads' professional well-being should be continued having in mind two facts. First, Lithuania needs to support and retrain the school principals who are currently on the job. Most of them were hired into schools in educational environments that were fundamentally different from today. Over time the rules of engagement for headship/leadership have changed. As the roles and responsibilities of principals have evolved, the terms and conditions of service also need to be revised. Today'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 they need more adequate rewards and incentive structures to stay motivated on the job and provide high quality leadership.

Second, 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 is an essential aspect of system leadership. Lasting improvement depends on a clear definition and better distribution of leadership tasks within schools, planned succession mechanisms, professionalized recruitment processes, preparatory training, mentoring of new leaders, working conditions that attract high quality graduates to educational leadership and a commitment to greater leadership density and capacity within schools from which future high level leaders can emerge.

Therefore the concept of school leaders' professional well-being should be an issue for further research.

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TEORINĖS IR EMPIRINĖS ĮŽVALGOS LIETUVOS MOKYKLŲ VADOVŲ PROFESINĖS GEROVĖS ASPEKTU

S u m m a r y

Straipsnyje diskutuojama apie mokyklų vadovų profesinę gerovę. Mokyklų vadovų profesinės gerovės samprata tampa aktuali šiuolaikinių švietimo sistemos reformų kontekste. Diegiant Lietuvos švietimo sistemoje kokybės vadybos modelius ir optimizuojant mokyklų vadovų atrankos, įdarbinimo, kompetencijų ugdymo(si), išlaikymo ir kt. strategijas, svarbu išskirti ir įvertinti profesinę gerovę sąlygojančius veiksnius. Todėl straipsnyje siekiama atskleisti mokyklų vadovų profesinės gerovės sampratą bei teoriškai nustatyti kriterijus, leisiančius empirikai ištirti šį fenomeną. Empirinės įžvalgos leido atskleisti Lietuvos mokyklų vadovų nuomonę apie svarbiausius gerovės komponentus. Mokyklų vadovų gerovę sąlygotų nuoseklūs kompetencijų poreikio, mokyklų veiklos, vadovų funkcijų tyrimai. Šių tyrimų pagrindu turėtų būti sukurta mokyklos vadybos koncepcija, reglamentuojanti aiškią švietimo kaitos viziją ir nusakanti mokyklos veiklos bei vadovavimo mokyklai orientyrus. Kita vertus, svarbus paties mokyklos vadovo apsisprendimas tobulėti ir tobulinti vadybinę veiklą. Tam reikia specifinės vadovų motyvavimo sistemos, apimančios vadovų darbo prestižo didinimą, karjeros sąlygų sudarymą ir kitas veiksmingas priemones. Mokyklų vadovų profesinė gerovė – tai svarbus žmogiškųjų išteklių sistemos komponentas, todėl svarbu, kad visa sistema tinkamai funkcionuotų. Kompetencijų ugdymo renginių pasiūla turi atitikti vadovų poreikius bei sietis su atestacija, kurios tikslas – tobulinti vadybinę veiklą ir visą mokyklą. Mokyklų vadovų gerovę sąlygotų tinkamas finansavimas, užtikrintas informavimas, nuoseklumo ir sistemingumo principų įgyvendinimas. Straipsnyje akcentuoja, jog esamų ir būsimų mokyklų vadovų lyderių rengimo, tobulinimo kontekstuose, profesinės gerovės samprata reikalauja tolimesnių tyrimų.