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The role of the headmaster
in managing a school

A school does not exist without students, teachers, administration and management staff. Headmasters of educational units are more and more often identified with managers, leaders, people managing a school turning out new generations of students each year. Openness to changes, pedagogical innovations, equipping with state-of-the-art hardware, a specific school management style, an repute in the environment, a position in the ratings are all elements influencing the school image. The educational market is highly competitive, in addition to public schools private schools are also founded and they enjoy greater and greater popularity. It will depend on the manner of managing the school and the headmaster's decisions whether in the time perspective a given educational unit will stay in the market or it will cease to exist.

Key words: headmaster, management, school, management style, standards of education, pedagogical innovations.

Introduction

When we talk about school, we primarily mean students, teaching staff, teaching level, results of external examinations. These are the elements which are most often interesting for students' parents and young people who after completing a specific level of education must take a decision related to the choice of the next school only at a higher level. An educational unit is not a profit-oriented enterprise. The aims of school and the tasks of teachers arise from the *Act on the Education System* of 7 September 1997 and the *Teacher's Charter Act* of 26 January 1982. Any actions undertaken by a teacher are connected with the fulfillment of the basic functions of school: the didactic and

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the educational-care one. Yet, it is only one aspect of the functioning of school, and the school of 21st century in particular.

In accordance with Article 7 of the *Teacher's Charter*, the school is managed by the headmaster who is a teacher, the Chair of the Teachers' Board, the superior of all the employees, he or she exercises pedagogical supervision, decides about admitting students to school, and about removing a given person from the students' list[1]. But he is also a manager who should be effective in his activities, a leader, a person managing the school, who must be familiar with marketing, economics, logistics, all the more that school is a specific workplace and this is for several reasons.

Firstly, it works with minors, often also with disabled people, particularly in the case of integrated schools or classes.

Secondly, students are a subject of school, performing the key role in it. Without them, school does not exist.

Thirdly, the good of students is the most important.

Fourthly, every year new students appear in the school, with different problems and requirements. Therefore, cooperation with a guidance counselor, a psychologist, a career counselor is important.

Fifthly, in fulfilling its tasks, school must cooperate with students' parents, inform them about possible problems of a young person.

There are no such principles of functioning in any other organization or firm.

School is created by people: teachers, administrative workers, students, as well as the headmaster and deputy headmaster. According to the *Teacher's Charter,* the headmaster manages the school, disposes of funds defined in the school's financial plans, cooperates with other school bodies. Less and less the headmaster is identified with a teacher, and more and more often he is called an education manager.

The aim of the article is an attempt to present the headmaster's tasks as a leader managing a team of people.

Every educational unit must adapt to the changing reality, all the more that every year a new generation of youth starts education in it. At present, we talk about Z generation, namely people born in the times of the Internet and technological novelties. For students they are not something exceptional, they deal with them then and now. However, it all requires a different approach to the teaching process, both from the headmaster and teachers. Also, which is important in the case of school headmasters, it is necessary to think about such school management styles so that they were possibly most effective and efficient, at the same time not forgetting that the good of the child (student, even the adult one) is the most important.

Selected management styles in school

In the organizational theory, numerous management styles are isolated. The choice of the most appropriate ones, owing to which effects will be achieved, depends only on the headmaster, his knowledge of the environment in which the educational unit functions, the employed workers. "Management style is a practically shaped and relatively permanent way of influencing the subordinates by the manager, so that their behaviour led to achieving a predetermined goal"[2].

The aim of the headmaster, regardless of the school's level, particularly in the case of the demographic decline and closing schools, should be primarily to keep the school on the educational market via achieving the best possible exam results, implementing educational projects and programmes, equipping the school with hardware. Young people want to attend a school which is interesting, which has something to offer, something that nobody else has proposed to them yet. The effects which young people obtain, an increase in their competences, skills are products of school. All workers employed in a given educational unit work on this effect, but without effective management of the team of people it may be hard to achieve. The factors influencing the course of managing people are:

"1. the manager's personality, namely his temper, organizational talent, the sense of responsibility, activeness, sensitivity, sociability, eloquence, in-born talents, predispositions;

2. the character of the group: the size of the group, the age and expectations of the group members, experiences of individual group members;

3. the situation of managing: the whole situational context in which leading a group is undertaken, and the state in which the group is"[3].

The team of people managed by the headmaster, their attitude to work, fulfillment of the assumed goals is a very important link in the process of managing an educational unit, another link are students. Without their engagement, dynamics, creativity even the most basic aims cannot be achieved, or it may be very difficult. And here the first conclusion is drawn, namely the headmaster manages the teaching staff and the students. In the process of managing a school there is one more subject – these are students' parents. External individuals whose contact with an educational unit very often boils down to meetings with the class teacher. The headmaster does not manage parents but he has to cooperate with them. Without that, work of the school will not be good because parents expect specific actions from teachers and the headmaster, and the teaching staff expects specific

behaviours from the young people's carers. Building a positive relation between the students' parents, the class teacher, teachers and the school headmaster is a necessary condition to achieve the assumed goals. If any of the links does not function well, it is hard to expect spectacular effects. It is not always possible to change the students' parents, persuade them to our arguments. The same with students. It is often a long-term and difficult process but without it even the best organization will not succeed.

In managing a team of people by the headmaster, it is possible to reach for specific management styles. Each of them has its advantages and disadvantages and only on the leader it depends which one he will choose.

The first one may be the democratic style in which "the manager delegates a considerable scope of power but keeps the final responsibility for the execution of tasks and the means of control and intervention which are to ensure the fulfillment of the team's objectives"[4]. It is one of the types of management styles according to Lippit and White. In the case of creative, responsible and committed school employees (particularly teachers), this style could bring the desired effects.

Another one is the integrative management style, when the headmaster "trusts the skills of his employees and lets them choose the proper path. The style is based on the following principles: supporting, linking activities and requiring results, and is clearly requirement-oriented. The style is focused on accomplishments and broadening the scope of employee independence"[5].

The third one is the consultative management style, "related to such activities of the manager which strive for the inclusion of subordinates in the process of organizing their work, with the maintenance of the superior's right to make final decisions about the way, place and time of fulfilling the actions by them"[6].

All the mentioned styles rely on great independence of employees, freedom of actions, include them in the decision-making process. In such a situation we cannot talk about a headmaster – autocrat imposing his point of view and strictly exacting it without accepting suggestions and ideas of co-workers. In a well functioning school, just like in any organization, trust to employees is an important element of good interpersonal relations. When leading or managing, the headmaster has to adapt to the recommendations of the Minister of Education, the education authority, the organ managing the school. Without the employees' trust, he will not achieve any effects.

The school headmaster employs various specialists. In the case of very young teachers, as in any other institution hiring people without

professional experience, the supervision of the headmaster is necessary, which does not mean that the teaching staff with a lot of years of service are not subject to control. When we talk about the quality in school, control is inscribed into the work of every employee. It can be, for example, lesson observations.

An educational unit is a set of different personalities, both when we talk about teachers and students. In school, as in any other organization, we can distinguish three types of behaviour:

"1. Cooperation, when people work with one another in a harmonious way in order to achieve the common interest;

2. Rivalry (struggle) where individuals strive for the realization of separate goals and their actions aim at disturbing one another in the realization of the goals;

3. Neutrality which is a result of adopting the attitude of individuals' indifference to activities of others"[7].

In an educational unit, we can come across various types of behaviour. The headmaster's role is to recognize the predispositions of his team and choose a management style which will ensure success. The image of the school in its functioning on the educational market is a necessary condition to maintain the continuity of operations of the educational unit.

The elements influencing the school image

An educational institution does not operate in the vacuum, and no headmaster can be indifferent to the principles of competition. School is a service providing institution. And these services should be positively commented in the local environment and it would be even better if in national rankings the school had a high position. Every educational establishment, even the best one, must take care of its image and offer the best possible products to its students (service recipients). It is does not, others will do. For schools it is equal to "death" on the market. The lack of the youth means the reduction of hours, dismissing employees and gradual phasing out the school's activities up to its closure. It is probably the worst scenario for an educational unit, but it is a realistic scenario.

There are numerous definitions of the firm image. According to A. Proszowska, "the image of the organization... is a common opinion about the firm"[8].

The images of the school can be various. It is assessed differently by graduates, teachers, current students, former workers, previous man-

agement staff. Therefore, the school must be open to potential clients, and the notion of openness can be interpreted in different ways. The article adopts the definition of openness related to the school's going outside. Showing to interested people the method of teaching, the school functioning, everything which will encourage young people to choose this educational unit, and not another one. That is why marketing activities are so important. "School marketing, contrary to the marketing of profit-oriented organizations, focuses not around needs but values (cultural, emotional, moral)"[9]. In its activities, a school should be focused on potential students and their parents. It must persuade to itself both, and the expectations of those subjects towards school are really big. A good headmaster must introduce such changes in his unit which will make it more attractive, not only from the point of view of the employed staff (although it is vital), but also its external appearance or the school yard.

The first factor influencing the school image may be an opinion which functions in the society. Both young people and their parents often ask graduates or students about the level of education, teaching staff, safety in the school, extra-classes, optional courses, etc. Therefore, all kinds of rankings are so popular. The position in a ranking is often included in building the school image.

The second factor may be the exam pass rate, which is connected with the way of teaching in a given school. Such information appears on leaflets, websites of educational units very often. It is particularly visible in general education and vocational secondary schools where professional examinations are additionally taken during school-leaving exams.

The third element may be an educational offer which must be adjusted to students' needs and to the labour market. Therefore, studies related to the demand for given majors are necessary. When closing non-profitable and non-prospective ones, it is necessary to think about opening new ones which will make students interested. Otherwise, no school will stand competition. The same as in the case of the lack of providing school with access to the Internet. At social networking sites young people willingly share opinions about the school they attend.

There are many more elements like this. Teachers, the headmaster, students – they all work for the school image. They are all identified with a specific educational unit. "Competition on the educational market actually takes place among real people, and not educational establishments. For this reason, the knowledge about who manages a given organization is of key importance for the marketing and strategy of

competition"[10]. Whatever happens in the school, both negative and positive, will be associated with the headmaster. Therefore, he must know what to expose and what to work on in the promotion of the school. Competences of the headmaster in managing people are assessed by all interested parties: from students and their parents to the education authority. The activities of the headmaster, his behaviour, the way of influencing the school work shape its image.

Conclusion

Economic, social, and sometimes also political changes do not omit Polish schools. Every year, next generations of young people start education in educational units. The choice of school by students is influenced by numerous factors, they are, among others, the opinion about the school, the pass rate of external examinations, teaching staff, safety, cooperation with higher schools, implementation of educational projects and programmes. Students' parents also influence decisions taken by young people and related to shaping the further path of development. A good kindergarten also means good primary, middle, secondary school, and finally a higher school. On the educational service market, there are a lot of schools offering to young people teaching foreign languages, quite often niche ones, various courses giving new qualifications, proposing interesting extra classes. Every headmaster must realize that competition on this market is fierce, all the more that in addition to public schools, private schools are founded. If a given educational unit wants to survive, it must be entrepreneurial and modern. The demographic decline has already caused that young people choose schools which stand out, are different than others, have the educational offer which nobody else has, and teachers introduce pedagogical novelties awakening passions and interests of students. Such activities must be coordinated by the headmaster-manager who should know how to reach a very difficult client, namely a student and his parent. The choice of a school has impact on the further life of a young man. School activities must be responsible because it builds its reliability on the educational market. The headmaster, identified with an education manager, must have a developed strategy of managing the school to be able to introduce changes and take right decisions.

Endnotes

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