

Leadership and Management in Educational Intrapreneurship in Romania

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ABSTRACT: Through its dimensions, leadership is considered a dynamic process of organizing and coordinating a group of people, building and developing relationships at the group level, which mobilizes the members of the organization and determines them for a standard, shared vision of the organization, increasing the institution’s performance, quality, but also the facilitation of change at the level of the respective organization (Stegăroiu et al. 2019). Practical aspects, experiences, and theoretical approaches in the field of education have highlighted the existence of mutual determinations and correlations between educational leadership and positive changes made at the level of the school organization, embodied in the flexibility of teaching staff, their enthusiasm and openness to new things, to innovation. This approach aims to identify, synthesize, complete, and explain leadership in educational intrapreneurship - increasing the academic quality within the organization as a result of capitalizing on the intrapreneurial skills of the leader in the context of making changes permanent. Through the theoretical-methodological approach, the author proposed to make a valuable and relevant contribution to the existing practice, considering the investigative approach as representing the beginning of a process and not its end. The article emphasizes the importance of embracing change and developing intrapreneurial leadership in school organizations to adapt to the evolving socio-economic, cultural, and political landscape.

KEYWORDS: education, leadership, innovation, intrapreneurial skills

Introduction

The social dimension of the school organization, the centering of education on the learner, the development of the educational process from the perspective of a competence-centered curriculum, and the major, often contradictory, changes in pre-university education are some aspects that underline the imperative of educational leadership, found in the specialized literature, as an „innovative leadership paradigm” (Stegăroiu et al. 2019, 9). Both education and other social fields, such as health, national security, and politics, are directly interested in the complex issue of leadership. Leadership involves a process of social influence, including the intentional dimension, to achieve results. On a theoretical level, we pursued the scientific foundation of educational leadership and intrapreneurship at the level of the school organization by systematizing and outlining the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological aspects from the specialized literature, and on an investigative level, we pursued the understanding and identification of leadership and intrapreneurship practices in the system of Romanian education.

Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Concept of Leadership

Humanity, throughout time, has been preoccupied with the activity of leadership and the person who carries out the leadership, the leader. Leadership is an active profession aiming to maintain order and effectively manage an activity. The term “leadership” is a frequently used one, both in the specialized literature, in the field of educational management, and other fields of activity; the concept itself is considered a set of values, attitudes, and ideal managerial skills that must be implemented in the management of each field of human activity.

Etymologically, the terms “leadership” and “leader”, found in many theoretical approaches, came from the English language in the 13th century but were used in written documents only in the 19th century, in English, German old, and Saxon. The Anglo-Saxon etymological root of the words “lead” means way, road. Along the way, these meanings have transformed into the term leadership. Since “leadership” is polysemantic, it cannot be translated into Romanian by a single word expressing its true meaning. The first representations about leaders and leadership were identified in the Old Testament, where references are made to capable leaders and just laws, where they spoke of the cult of strong, courageous people and a strong government.

The art of leadership has been a subject of significant interest since ancient times. The interest in this concept and its approach since ancient times denotes the importance of leadership, including identifying individual qualities and the skills necessary to be a good leader.

The earliest ideas about leaders and leadership also contain texts from Chinese philosophy, where the respective terms denote power and influence over nature and people. Tribal chiefs or priests have acquired their position primarily due to their persuasive attitude to impose themselves, including socio-emotionally. Throughout history, in all cultures, the leader of any human group has always been the one to provide safety and clarity to others in situations of threat or in times of vital activity.

The studies related to the concept of leadership, somewhat timid, even latent in the 1970s, focused mainly on the “production of typologies of attitudes” (Stegăroiu et al. 2019, 16) experienced a development during the 1990s, through the theorists’ particular interest in explaining the nature of leaders’ behaviors and intuiting the particularities of leadership models.

Over the years, there have been many attempts to define leadership. As Stogdill (1948) suggested in *Personal Factors Associated with Leadership: a Survey of the Literature*, there are almost as many attempts to define leadership as people trying to explain it. According to Stogdill, a person does not become an effective leader simply because he has certain traits. He advocated the idea that the characteristics of a successful leader should be sufficiently relevant to the demands of the leadership position - that is, the specific challenges faced and the necessary skills, moral values, and vision. Leadership is considered a vast, complex field, so it is challenging to identify a unanimously accepted definition. It isn’t easy to find a recipe or a universal leadership development model within an institutional entity or a professional community but of the leader as a person with appropriate skills, knowledge, and attitudes.

Over time, the approach to leadership has changed fundamentally. In the first half of the 20th century, it was believed that only people born with such skills could be authentic, successful, effective leaders. Leadership was associated with great personalities during this period, bringing relevant examples. The pragmatic conclusion was discouraging enough: “If you are not born with leadership talent, you have no chance of becoming a leader” (Stogdill 1948).

Since the 1950s, many of the theoretical, pragmatic approaches to leadership have changed, in the sense that studies have focused on the individual traits of the leader, on the relationships between him and the group

members, reaching certain studies on transformational skills of the group leader. One of the most interesting approaches to the definition of leadership highlights its emphasis on group processes. From this perspective, “leadership is the process of influencing the activities of an organized group of people in their efforts to establish and achieve the objective” (Stegăroiu et al. 2019, 18).

There are some controversies on the general aspects of leadership: it is seen as a process defined through the prism of the individual actions of the leader or a process described by the exercise of influence over a group (Pânișoară and Pânișoară 2016, 65)

Today, although the idea that leadership presupposes certain native qualities is promoted and supported, competent leadership can be ensured through adequate training. Leadership is an attribute desired and required by organizations by their managers. Leaders have confidence in their strengths and generate confidence in others. Around true leaders, employees feel more competent and find work more interesting. Leadership is directly related to the ability to influence people’s behavior.

Leadership is a concept researched from a managerial, sociological, psychological, and pedagogical perspective. Cuban (1988, 154) provides one of the most explicit distinctions, associating leadership with change and management with maintenance. The author points out the importance of both dimensions of organizational activity. Administration is considered a dynamic process of organizing and coordinating the activity of a group; it is an executive activity placed under the sign of command, emphasizing procedures and avoiding risks.

Management is a process through which it is possible to achieve the organization’s objectives through planning, organization, the efficiency of the use of resources, and employee motivation. Management focuses on administrative aspects of a manager’s activity. Leadership aims at the existence of an influence process to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organization (York-Barr and Duke, 2004, 67).

Different conceptualizations of leadership led to argue that „leadership is a phenomenon that is important for organizational effectiveness” (Yukl 2002, 3). Some definitions of leadership are more valuable than others, but it cannot be claimed that this term has a clear, concrete definition. Thus, three dimensions of leadership can be identified as a basis for developing a functional definition: leadership as influence, leadership and values, and leadership and vision (Bush 2015, 34).

The central element, in many definitions of leadership, aims at the existence of a process of social influence - this process of influence being oriented towards obtaining specific results: "Leadership, therefore, assumes that the motivation and actions of some people are directed by other people to achieve goals" (Cuban 1988, 193). As Greenfield observes (Bush 2015, 18), leadership begins with the character of leaders, expressed in terms of personal values, self-awareness, and emotional and moral capacity.

Vision, another critical dimension of effective leadership, suggests that motivation to work in an organization is pursuing an individual vision. In the last two decades, researchers in the field have defined the concept of leadership from a broad psychological perspective with strong social nuances; a generally human action, leadership traces the actions of an organization, also highlighting the volitional content of the human psyche. Despite all these differences, one thing is sure effective leadership ensures the change of the organization and, implicitly, its performance.

The Training of Intrapreneurial Skills in Education

According to the definition, intrapreneurship is a way of organizing an organization that allows employees to express their creative potential, establish professional working relationships, and how they can implement their projects, managing to satisfy their personal needs and those of the organization. Practically, intrapreneurship represents the implementation of innovative practices by the organization's staff under the coordination of a leader who assumes the role of an intrapreneur to improve the organization's performance through the efficient use of human resources. Intrapreneurship emerged due to significant changes, mainly from an economic and organizational point of view, both at the macroeconomic and microeconomic levels. In the multitude of organizational development strategies and tools that appeared and developed between the 1980s and 1990s, intended to support the management of organizations, intrapreneurship seems a new, interesting, and attractive concept for some specialists but enigmatic for others (Hartley and Benington 2010, 55).

The premises that imposed the development of intrapreneurial activities in the European Union and the United States of America are mainly generated by: "the existence of a large number of large and medium-sized companies, difficult to manage, inflexible, even rigid, with various problems generated by

their relationship with the often unfavorable environment... the existence in these companies of an important number of specialists with intrapreneurial potential and who could have intrapreneurial initiative". (Niculescu 2001, 33).

In the doctoral work *Entrepreneurial Dynamics and the Organization of Firms: From Entrepreneur to Intrapreneur* by Wanscoor (1992), the most exciting and current intrapreneurial approaches helpful to organizations, especially firms, are presented. The first category of intrapreneurial approaches values the individual by emphasizing individual intrapreneurial action; thus, within the organization, it is intended to create an organizational climate and practices that favor the emergence of innovative people able to implement their intrapreneurial ideas (Gherguț 2007, 54).

The second approach emphasizes the intrapreneurship team, formed by people who want to take on responsibilities and risks and who promote intrapreneurship together. The third approach focuses on the intrapreneurial organization, an organization with highly qualified personnel and professional expertise, where the managerial spirit can determine success.

The goal of the intrapreneurial activity within the organization is to create an entrepreneurial culture in which each employee is responsible for their actions, increasing performance and quality, has initiatives, and assumes responsibility for putting them into practice. In this culture, experimentation is encouraged, and mistakes are tolerated and accepted, unlike the organizational culture based on hierarchy and control (Levine 2005, 24). The intrapreneurship represents the employees with an entrepreneurial spirit within the organization; they are those people with initiative, who propose innovative ideas, who know how to take on projects, are dedicated, passionate, have decision-making capacity, are creative, like change, and take it on. The intrapreneur is motivated and efficient, proposes solutions, and can transform an organization; he must innovate, express himself, and develop new ideas and projects.

Intrapreneurial behaviors are characterized by **strategic thinking** – intrapreneurs think about the next step what to achieve, are considered agents of change, engaged in their work, and coherent in their activities and interactions; **visual thinking** represents another characteristic of intrapreneurial behaviors – that is, the ability of intrapreneurs to visualize solutions, not to act impulsively on a solution, but to give it time, space for crystallization and development; **authenticity**, another behavioral typology specific to intrapreneurs, aims at trust and modesty, as values promoted by them.

At the level of the school organization, in terms of education, intrapreneurship consists of the development of autonomous intrapreneurial actions using existing resources, which, most of the time, are insufficiently used. Intrapreneurial organizations have a well-defined institutional development strategy, aiming to identify opportunities in the community by initiating changes and implementing ideas (Dyer 2016, 74).

Intrapreneurship refers to those members of the school organization who, on their initiative, implement and apply educational projects to increase school performance and the quality of the educational act at the organizational level. At the school organization level, intrapreneurship is evidenced by educational projects (Hartley and Benington 2010, 67). Extrapolating, educational intrapreneurship improves performance by efficiently using available resources and increasing academic quality using an appropriate motivational system (Hegheş 2020, 140).

In every school institution that wants to be effective, an actor must assume the role of change manager, overturning proven ineffective systems, changing mentalities, and determining new institutional behaviors. The managerial spirit can evaluate the success of the school organization, turning it into an **intrapreneurial unit**. The decisive role for the success of these initiatives for the implementation of change at the organizational level rests with the leader of the organization, who has intuition and long-term vision.

The intrapreneur is the person in an organization who assumes full responsibility for transforming ideas into projects through innovation and an assertive approach to risks and opportunities (Elmore 2004, 105). In promoting intrapreneurial leadership, an important role is the intellectual capital – the professional expertise of the leader, his potential to implement policies of innovation and change, and his relational capacity, which brings added value to the organization.

Conclusion

A school organization develops rapidly and achieves performance if the entire staff accepts the organizational change and if this change also motivates them adequately for the effort proposed for the intrapreneurial unit. Change can be defined as a transformation, which can be observed in time, that influences the structure and behavior of an individual, as well as the structure and functioning of the social organization of a given collectivity, and that modifies the entire

course of its history. All humans can generate solutions, new products, original ideas, cleverness, or ingenuity if that ability is fostered and developed.

To change does not automatically mean that we have to undo what existed in a system at a given time. The object of change should not be perceived and treated as poorly constructed or ineffective. Changing the organization is a mandatory way of adapting it to the needs of society and those involved. According to the opinion expressed by Senge (2016, 76), school organizations are seen “as living organisms, whose survival depends on how educators, students, parents and also the local administration manage to adapt to socio-economic transformations.”

In the multitude of institutional development strategies and tools that aim to support educational leadership to innovate, intrapreneurship is a new concept that meets the requirements of the current socio-economic, cultural, and political context.

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