

New and Old Paradigms of Educational Management in Latvia's Context

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The last 10 years in Latvia has been marked with the appearance of new school managers.

The generation of the previous school principals, the so-called “the old soldiers”, grounded their work on school managing theoretical conceptions which were introduced and ruled in the educational system of the former Soviet Union. The chief conceptions were the following:

- school is one of the elements of the state's educational system, which strictly implements the mandatory instructions of superior institutions;
- the school principal is a manager who is in charge of the school administration, accounts to and receives directions from superior educational management institutions and the party leaders;
- the school principal organizes the planning of the school's work, controls the work, supervises the educational process, is responsible for the school's achievements;
- the school principal searches ways and means of cooperation with the pupils' parents, the society, enterprises and puts it into effect;
- the school principal often takes decisions by himself or together with the party organization;
- the school principal gives accounts on the realization of the decisions to the party organization and superior district and town educational management institutions.

The majority of school principal – “formal leaders” devoted their work to administration, mobilization of financial and material resources, the development of contacts with other institutions and organizations. The real managers of the educational process and school management very often were school deputy directors, who had a good professional knowledge of the study process, who developed the study environment and who actually realized the mission of school with an authority of confidence and competence.

The school principals of the 21st century in Latvia based their activities on the new paradigms of educational management:

- the paradigm of humane education;
- the paradigm of the democratisation of education;
- the paradigm of value education;
- the paradigm of global education;
- the paradigm of mutual responsibility and conformity;

- the paradigm of the continuous development of education.

The educational management in schools is characterized by *two aspects*: the first aspect: of the content in the changing educational process – the system of goals, the structure of the content, the means of stressing the urgency of the changes and the results.

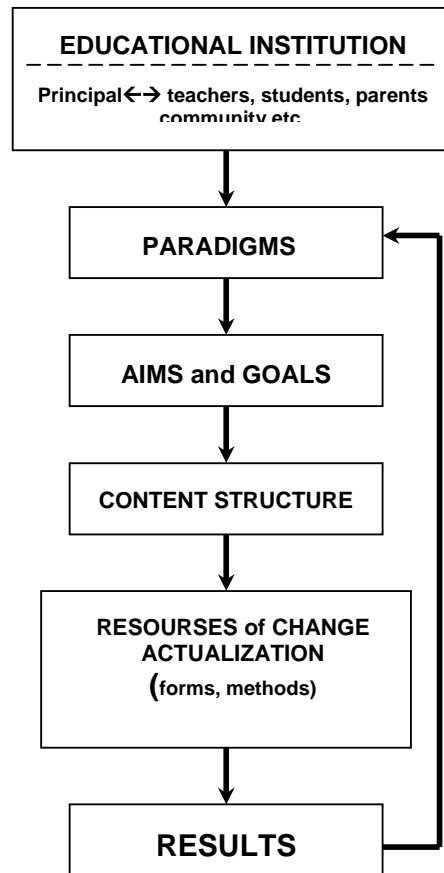


Figure1. The Content Structure of Educational Management

The second: The organizational structure of educational management: initiation, implementation, evaluation and institution.

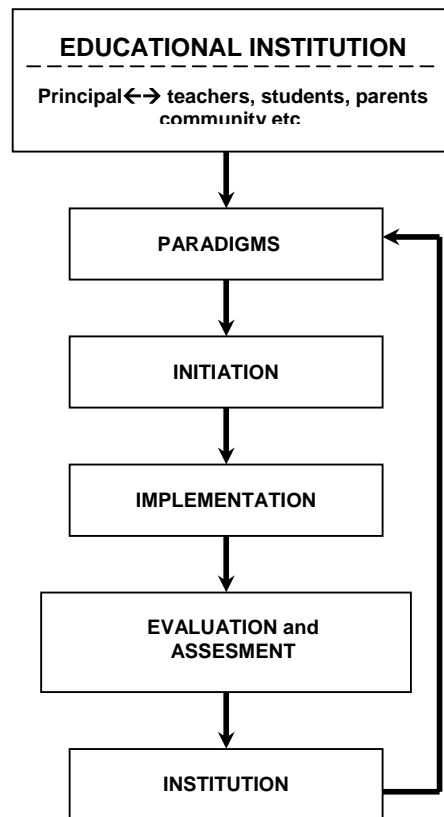


Figure2. The Organizational Structure of Educational Management activities

The rapid coming of the new paradigms in schools is especially typical nowadays when Latvia has been given an opportunity to cooperate with the other countries of the EU.

The results of a mini case-study:

Participants:

A group of full-time 2nd year master degree students in Educational management. The majority of who have not worked at school yet, and those who have begun to work at school program being master degree students.

B group. School directors and teachers who at the same time are part-time students of Pedagogy master's programmes and work at school. This group had a more than 10 year educational work experience. Thus, it is possible to compare the situation in Latvia's education earlier and at present.

Both the groups were asked the following questions:

1. How to define the 'school management'?
2. How to define the 'educational management'?
3. What are the problems of educational management at present?
4. What are the main tasks of the school directors at present?

Here are the variants of answers to the questions and comments on them:

1. The notion “school management”.

There appeared two dominant points of view in the answers:

The first, the traditional one, which is like the definition given in books on pedagogy: “school management is a branch of the science of pedagogy, which investigates and interprets pedagogically the management process of educational institutions and the administrative, pedagogical, legal, work and other relations arising in this process”.

The respondents of group A (full-time master degree students) mentioned also some other characterizations of “school management”:

- effective management of school with a formed management structure, a successfully worked out internal control system and its implementation;
- supervision of the educational process at school, which includes evaluation, the disclosure of causes and their adjustment.

The respondents of group B (part-time education master students) gave the following characterization:

- school management helps exert influence on the teaching staff in order to achieve the goal set;
- a specific influence, when the director works with people in a world of unpredictable changes;
- management and internal control, with the help of which the director attempts to achieve greater effectiveness. This point of view was expressed by more than half of the respondents. Here seems to be the influence of the optimization theory worked out by J.Babansky.

2. The notion “educational management”

Group A gave definitions, which correspond to the educational management as one of the branches of management science, which “investigates the processes of decision making in the system of educational institutions; the functions of these institutions, their structure; the informative basis for carrying decisions; effective activities and their evaluation; the relations with customers and consumers. Educational management includes planning, organization, motivation and control, aimed at a better employment of the staff, the financial, material and information resources”.

There were given additional characterizations:

- the working out of the education policy, the education conception,
- the education programmes and the process of their implementation in educational institutions;

- educational management is part of the science of management, which also includes school management as a particular sphere.

Group B interpreted education management as a problem to be practically solved, the direct management of the work of the school:

- it is the school administration: the director, the deputy-directors, heads of methodological unions;
- it is the administration of educational establishments;
- it is science about the history of school management and the tendencies of its development.

The differences in the definitions could be explained with differing theoretical preparation of the master degree students. The education management master degree students have already acquired the theoretical courses of educational management; they have got acquainted with and try themselves to solve the problems in practice in their educational institutions. The master's programmes have widened their scope of vision of the existing problems.

The master degree students of group B are teachers working at school and directors-practitioners who have received the traditional education of teachers, in which the dominant place is taken by the theory of the educational process, the teaching theories and methodologies, but the aspects of school management are shown only as a narrow function of management. That is why their answers concerning educational management problems mainly contained statements of practical character, which have little connection with educational management.

3. Educational management problems in research and practice

The answers of group A:

- they are common in all the countries and particular in each separately (globalization, the development of IT, processes of changes);
- the development and implementation of new standards, e.g. Bologna Declaration, Europe's education space;
- the creation of educational management models on the state, regional, self-government and school level, which should be implemented in the contemporary environment related to the history of civilization and the existing structures;
- ensuring management in the education reforms in the processes of changes;
- the innovative activities of the education manager – a leader with a wide competence;

The answers of group B laid stress on the practical problems and difficulties in the work of schools:

- the activities of the director when making up the school development plan;

- the problems of the director as the administrator, lack of resources, lack of qualified teachers, a great number of “old” teachers, lack of young teachers or the young teachers leave schools for other institutions;
- low salary of the director, that is the reason why it is difficult to find directors of schools and other educational institutions;
- there are innovations, not tested in practice, which have been implemented in schools in an administrative way;
- there is no undivided point of view about educational management therefore it is difficult for the director to choose the right one. (Nostalgia for the party committee, who gave all the directives).

The conclusion: the enumeration of the problems by the master degree students differs depending on the education obtained before, the length of service – “the old luggage” - differing attitudes towards educational management and the director in the process of changes in the society, with the development of democracy and an educational system based on humane values.

4. The main tasks of the school director’s activities

Both the groups characterized in greater detail the problems of educational management theory and practice.

In group A the tasks of both aspects prevailed. Group B had put stress on the aspect of practical activities, to be done by the director, the administrator, who is responsible for the planning, organization, control, the development of contacts with the environment and the presentation of the school. ‘The director leads, the deputy-directors and the teachers are the doers of the work’.