Headteacher as pedagogical leader in pedagogical leadership in schools

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Abstract Headteachers play a vital role in leading school development. The widespread assumption that a high-quality leadership is an essential element of successful school management, leads to the question of how headteachers can influence the effective and sustainable development of pedagogical leadership in selected schools. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to determine the framework of headteachers' responsibilities when they work as pedagogical leaders in schools, and the way of its implementation. Findings from the study indicate that effective pedagogical leaders can sustain high level of pedagogical leadership by establishing trust, creating structures that promote teacher´s learning. Study results also suggest that headteachers need to be cognizant of shared norms and values among their school before initiating new practices in school organization.

Keywords headteacher, pedagogical leader, pedagogical leadership

1. INTRODUCTION

As more and more countries require better achievement from their schools, the role of the headteachers have grown far beyond that of administrator. "Never in the history of our educational enterprise has the school leader been faced with such complex responsibilities and so many change forces, both internal and external" (Creighton, 2005, p. 77). Leadership is an essential element of a successful school management and this leads the authors to the question of how headteachers can influence the effective and sustainable development of pedagogical leadership in schools. While pedagogical leadership involves knowing one's content matter and the ways in which that content matter can be implemented, it also involves the way how headteachers tackle their relationship with other key actors: teachers and students. These are intertwined. That is, pedagogical leadership not is restricted only to subject matter but it is continuously created through students' and teachers' meaning-making in educational processes, though headteachers' self-reflection and other factors. Nevertheless, some research shows that the quality of education in the school lies in the hands of headteacher and that the all their responsibilities leave them little time for focusing on pedagogical leadership tasks (Santiago et al., 2012). Therefore, the purpose of this research was to determine the

framework of headteachers' responsibilities when they work as pedagogical leaders in schools.

2. PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP

Most contemporary theories of leadership suggested that leadership cannot be separated from the context in which it is exerted (Leithwood, 2003). Bush and Glover (2003) propose the following definition:

Leadership is a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes. Successful leaders develop a vision for their schools based on their personal and professional values. They articulate this vision at every opportunity and influence their staff and other stakeholders to share the vision. The philosophy, structures and activities of the school are geared towards the achievement of this shared vision (p.8).

As schools both as organizations and institutions have been granted more and more autonomy, which adds the complexity of pedagogical leadership. Still, there is little consensus about what pedagogical leadership is, how it emerges and how it relates to education and management. Traditionally, debate has focused on the purpose of pedagogical leadership (Ellett & Teddlie, 2003; OECD, 2013). Their (1994) has used the concept of pedagogical leadership in situations where both the management and the pedagogical touch are combined.

However, delineating the concept of pedagogic leadership requires a more precise specification of the construct and different viewpoints focused on different areas. Generally, there are four main points of view about pedagogical leadership.

The first viewpoint considers pedagogical leadership as learning-centered leadership and leadership of learning, for both student learning and teacher learning. (OECD, 2013) Form this perspective it should focus on the development of teachers, students and pedagogical practice. For instance, Sergiovanni (1998, p. 37) pointed out that it

"invests in capacity building by developing social and academic capital for students and intellectual and professional capital for

teachers. Support this leadership by making capital available to enhance student learning and development, teacher learning and classroom effectiveness".

And, in MacNeill, Cavanagh and Silcox's study, they also claimed

"pedagogical leadership is a planned action, designed by human agency that acknowledges the social, political, and moral context of the learning act, which directly results in the acquisition of new knowledge, beliefs or skills for the learner" (MacNeill, Cavanagh & Silcox, 2005, p.4).

Johanna's research showed that "in classical writings about pedagogic leadership, the role of learning in educational communities is emphasized" (Johanna, 2011). Similarly, Heikka's study (2014) showed pedagogical leadership also consisted of strategic elements, which involved a wider set of stakeholders in pedagogical improvement.

The second opinion emphasized the role of headteachers and their professional development in pedagogical leadership. It is confirmed by the OECD report since

"A focus on pedagogical leadership is also essential to encourage school leaders to take direct responsibility for the quality of learning and teaching in their school" (OECD, 2013, p. 553).

And Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd (2009) researchers pointed out that

"Pedagogical leadership has a stronger focus on leader involvement in teaching and learning" (Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd, 2009, p. 37).

The third group of researchers have different standpoints. They not only thought pedagogical leadership is focused on learners but also emphasized the dynamic process of implementing pedagogical leadership. For instance, in Male and Palaiologou' s study, they said,

"we present a construct of pedagogical leadership as triangular social praxis shaped by theory, practice and the social axes relevant to the educational setting" (Male & Palaiologou, 2013, p. 3).

Furthermore, MacNeil, Cavanagh & Slicox, (2005, p.4). stated, "pedagogical leadership is based on dialogue, not monologue and the learners are essential participants in the discussion"

Finally, the fourth group of researchers thought "pedagogical leadership needs to emphasize the importance of establishing clear educational goals, planning the curriculum and evaluating teachers and teaching" (Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd, 2009, p. 38), which not only include teaching and learning but also the evaluation system of pedagogical leadership. In this study, pedagogical leadership refers to the following means:
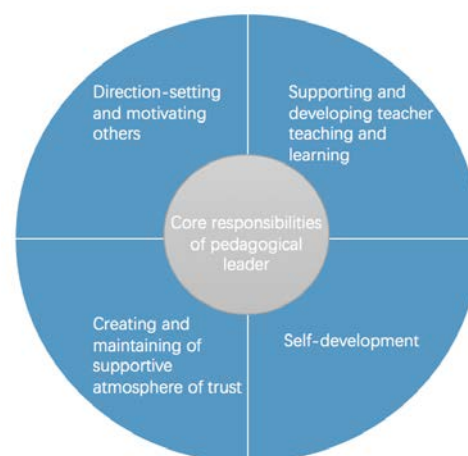
- Pedagogical leadership is a series of acts that motivates others, facilitating the acquisition of new knowledge, beliefs or skills for the learner;
- Headteachers' pedagogical leadership is involved in setting and monitoring teaching goals, providing appropriate resources, supervising the teaching programme and, by observing and providing feedback to teachers, ensuring a high-quality teaching and learning.

3. REDEFINING PEDAGOGICAL LEADERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

When dealing with the role of headteacher, three approaches to schools need to be considered: management, leadership and governance. Each approach results in different scope of headteachers' role. In this study, more attention is paid to the headteachers' role in the approach to school as organisations. The headteacher is the leader of a school, he or she is responsible for the running of the school and the interactions between teachers, parents, and pupils. Their clearly defined responsibilities, access to appropriate professional development throughout their careers, and acknowledgement of their pivotal role in improving school and student performance is vital (Schleicher, 2012, p. 12). From the perspective of effective school leadership, there is an outline of the broad territory of headteachers' responsibilities. Setting direction, managing teaching and learning, developing people and developing the organization (Leithwood and Riehl 2005; Hopkins and Higham 2007) are the main responsibilities of headteachers. Some other researchers hold more detail range of responsibilities for the headteachers, they thought headteachers need to formulate the school's aims; the appointment and management of staff; liaison with staff unions and associations; the determination, organization and management of the curriculum; appraising, training and inducting staff; responsibility for standards in teaching and learning; developing effective relationships with the governing body other organizations (DfES, 2006). However, as a pedagogical leader in practice, headteacher need to strengthen his/her pedagogical leadership also. The report from OECD (2013, p. 553) showed that "it is important that school leaders benefit from ongoing support to develop pedagogical leadership skills through high-quality, targeted and relevant professional development opportunities before being held accountable for pedagogical leadership". Therefore, the responsibilities of pedagogical leader need to be more specific.

Chart 1: Core responsibilities of pedagogical leader

As mentioned above, pedagogical leadership refers to a series of acts including motivating others, facilitating the acquisition of new knowledge, beliefs or skills of the learner. The core responsibilities of pedagogical leaders need to be guided by the research on the pedagogical leadership practices. The study of Reeves (2009) shed a light on some leadership practices and behaviors in pedagogical leadership of school leaders. In many countries, there is a lack of clarity about the core responsibilities that pedagogical leaders should dedicate their time to. Therefore, to redefine the core responsibilities of pedagogical leaders seems to be of a high importance. Besides, Nevgi's (2013) research answered how the pedagogically oriented leader supposed to do in practice, they should "creation and maintaining of good work culture in community; maintaining consistency and clarity in leadership work; understanding of the importance of the leadership of teaching works" (p. 17). And Fonsén's (2013) research showed four dimensions which could influencing the success of the pedagogical

leadership. These dimensions are "context, organisational culture, professionalism of directors and management of substance" (p. 185).

The role of the headteacher has reached a new height of demand and complexity since standards and accountability have become the expectation in public education. Based on the related studies, we propose four core responsibilities of headteachers. These are: the direction-setting and motivating others, supporting and developing teacher teaching and learning, creating and maintaining of supportive atmosphere of trust and self-development. (Chart1).

4. CONCLUSION

Effective pedagogical leaders can sustain high level of pedagogical leadership by establishing trust, creating structures that promote teachers' learning. "Whatever else leaders do, they provide the direction and exercise the influence" (Louis et al., 2010, p. 11). Many headteachers need to corporate with all the stakeholders, draw all the stakeholders into the implementation process of pedagogical leadership and effectively build the capacity of others to take on new roles and more reponsibilities. Besides, headteachers need to be cognizant of shared norms and values among their school before initiating new practices in school organization.

However, a lot of challenges still at the heart of the pedagogical leadership. These include ensuring the consistently of high quality teaching and learning, setting the direction of the school, creating and maintaining of supportive atmosphere of trust and self-development.

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