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**STUDY ON THE MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNICATION
RELATIONSHIPS IN SOME SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONS**

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Abstract

Performing the management of education institutions becomes a more and more complex activity. Among the most appreciated skills of the school principal there is their capacity to manage the communication relationships at the level of the institution they manage.

The target group of this research consists of 30 students in the master's program *Educational management* in our university. The learners attending it are already teachers so that they can constitute a desirable experimental group providing both information on the manner in which acting school principals understand communication relationships and information on their expectations, as teachers, from their principals.

Research questions: Do teachers perceive the existence of certain defining behaviors for performing a management of communication relationships? Which is the expectation level of teachers as a consequence of the principal's exercise of the functions associated to the management of communication relationships?

Research methodology. Two questionnaires were applied: a. Questionnaire on identifying the perceptions of the teaching staff regarding the principals' exercise of certain communication relationships management; b. Questionnaire on identifying the expectation level of teachers related to the exercise of the functions specific to the management of communication relationships of the school principal.

Research results. Teachers have high expectations regarding the exercise by the principals of certain functions specific to ensuring the management of communication relationships even if they cannot explicitly define this concept. The results of test t for mean comparison, $t(29) = 36.887$, $p \leq 0.00$, which means that the difference between means 9.90 is statistically significant.

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Keywords: Educational management, management of communication relationships, perceptions on the management of communication relationships.

1. Introduction

In the last decades there was a special concern to make the manner in which schools are managed more efficient and, in connection with this problem, to highlight the qualities the school principal should have. From this perspective Rhines Cheney G., Davis J., Garrett K., Holleran J. define the skills of the school manager as *the set of skills, knowledge, and dispositions that a principal must have, in his or her context, in order to lead a school effectively to drive high levels of student achievement for all children.* (2010, p. 16). Among such capacities, the skills to improve the school climate, organize teacher participation in a forum that would involve teachers in a dialogue about different aspects of school specific activities or about some administrative tasks (Williams, 2006, p. 100) have a special place. In essence it is about the principal's capacity to determine and maintain good communication relationships in the school educational environment. Romanian research confirms such approach, claiming that the successful principal is the principal with good communication, relationship building and negotiation skills (The Institute of Education Sciences, 2012, p.11). In Romania, the interest for this problem exceeded the stage of purely declarative opinions through the issuance of an order of the Minister of Education (no.5549 of October 6, 2011) proposing the establishment of a national body of experts in educational management. Consequently, from that moment, a series of training programs for the acting school principals or for the persons targeting such position were organized. The mentioned programs fall under the category named *continuous training programs* or programs specific to the IInd university cycle (according to Bologna), respectively – *master programs*. The issue of communication relationships management in an education school unit is a particular problem – little covered by specialty works.

2. Purpose of the Study

Starting from the empirical observation: *communication relationships “happen” even when they are not (well) managed*, we wonder: *is there a specific management of communication relationships?* This question leads to another reflection: is it possible that someone be a good communicator (easily establish interactions to the others and have the capacity to maintain himself/herself in balanced relationships with his/her fellow human beings) without having, at the same time, the capacity to transfer such skills to the members of a group he/she manages? The clarification of such aspects may be useful in an education school unit management field where the school principal is considered responsible for the quality of the relationships that are established among team members and for the quality of the psychosocial climate existent in such organization. The purpose of the study we present below is to identify the manner in which certain teachers in several schools in the Argeş County, Romania, perceive their principals' capacity to ensure the management of communication relationships in the school units they run, analyzing their expectations in this respect.

3. Methodology

We define the communication relationships management concept as the ensemble of the activities related to the design/planning, organization, management, coordination, adjustment and control of the

quality of interactions and communicative relationships occurring among the actors of the pedagogical relationship in a school context (Iucu, R., Ezechil, L., Chivu, R. , 2008, p. 418).

3.1. Design and argumentation of the applied methodology

From the abovementioned definition, certain behavioral descriptors which are relevant for the school principal's exercise of certain functions which can be associated to the management of communication relationships were derived, *i.e.*:

The school principal:

1. periodically designs/plans activities and meetings whose purpose is to strengthen the interactions and good communication relationships among the members of the teaching staff;
2. establishes himself/herself detailed plans for the organization and performance of certain activities whose purpose is to improve the communication relationships among the members of the school organization;
3. manages himself/herself certain activities whose purpose is to determine interactions between people and optimize interpersonal communication relationships;
4. coordinates the activity of several work groups, monitoring the quality of the communication relationships that are established between people at their level;
5. intervenes when the good communication relationships between people deteriorate providing solutions to defuse conflict conditions and reestablish balance.

We use these behavioral descriptors as a referential with the role of drawing attention on the possibilities to derive the communication relationships management functions from some of the most important general school management functions. The described behaviors highlight, on the other hand, the constant concern of the principal to establish and maintain good communication relationships among the members of the teaching staff. It also supposes that the principal does not wait for the communication relationships to deteriorate to intervene in order to correct them but acts preventatively.

3.2. The experimental group

The Group is formed of 30 students, trainees of the Educational management master course. All these subjects are already teachers in the education system and shall have big chances to exercise the school principal position after the completion of the master program. Master students were put in the situation of comparing the capacity of their actual heads (school principals) to ensure the *specific management of communication relationships* to their own expectations in this respect. We suppose that the simple reflection on such behavior types will determine the nowadays master students (who will be school principals at a certain moment) to better manage the communication relationships that are established in a school organization.

3.3. Research questions

The research questions were formulated in agreement with the purpose of the study and with the needs to develop master students' skills in the communication relationships management field, *i.e.*:

1. Do teachers perceive the existence of certain defining behaviors for performing a management of communication relationships? (The point of this question is to find out the extent to which respondents are aware of the specific nature of the communication relationships management).

2. Which is the expectation level of teachers as a consequence of the principal's exercise of the various functions associated to the management of communication relationships?

In our opinion, when the behaviors of the school principal are according to the subordinates' expectations their satisfaction degree increases and – in connection to it – the master students' capacity to promote similar behaviors and attitudes also increases.

3.4. Used instruments

Two questionnaires were applied to the 30 master students:

1. Questionnaire on identifying the perceptions of the teaching staff regarding the principals' exercise of certain communication relationships management functions at the level of the school organization. This questionnaire is focused on the analysis by the master students of the manner in which their school principals ensure the management of communication relationships in the school units they manage.

2. Questionnaire on identifying the expectation level of teachers related to the exercise of the functions specific to the management of communication relationships of the school principal. This questionnaire type puts master students in the situation of becoming aware of their own expectations regarding the manners of ensuring the management of communication relationships in an education school unit.

4. Research Results

The basic observable indicators for the appearance of the positive expected effects are: the coherence of intentions, the coherence of taken actions and the coherence of obtained results. Table 1 presents information on the number of respondents (30), the mean obtained by them regarding the assessments on a scale from 1 to 5 of the manner in which the teaching staff perceive the exercise by the principal of certain communication relationships management functions at the level of the school organization (9.90), the standard deviation of such mean and the standard error, but also information on the mean obtained by the same respondents, regarding the assessments on a scale from 1 to 5 of their expectations in relation to the exercise of the communication relationships management functions of the school principal (22.33), the standard deviation of such mean and the standard error (Labăr, 2008, p. 95-97).

Table 1. One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error Mean
1. Questionnaire on identifying the perceptions of the teaching staff regarding the principal's exercise of certain communication relationships management functions at the level of the school organization.	30	9.90	1.470	.268
2. Questionnaire on identifying the expectation level of teachers related to the exercise of the communication relationships management functions of the school principal.	30	22.33	2.279	.416

Table 2 presents the results of the t test for mean comparison. We note that $t(29) = 36.877$ and $p \leq 0.00$, which means that the mean difference 9.900 is statistically significant.

Table 2. One-Sample Test

	t	df	Test Value = 0			
			Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
1. Questionnaire on identifying the perceptions of the teaching staff regarding the principal's exercise of certain communication relationships management functions at the level of the school organization.	36.877	29	.000	9.900	9.35	10.45
2. Questionnaire on identifying the expectation level of teachers related to the exercise of the communication relationships management functions of the school principal.	53.667	29	.000	22.333	21.48	23.18

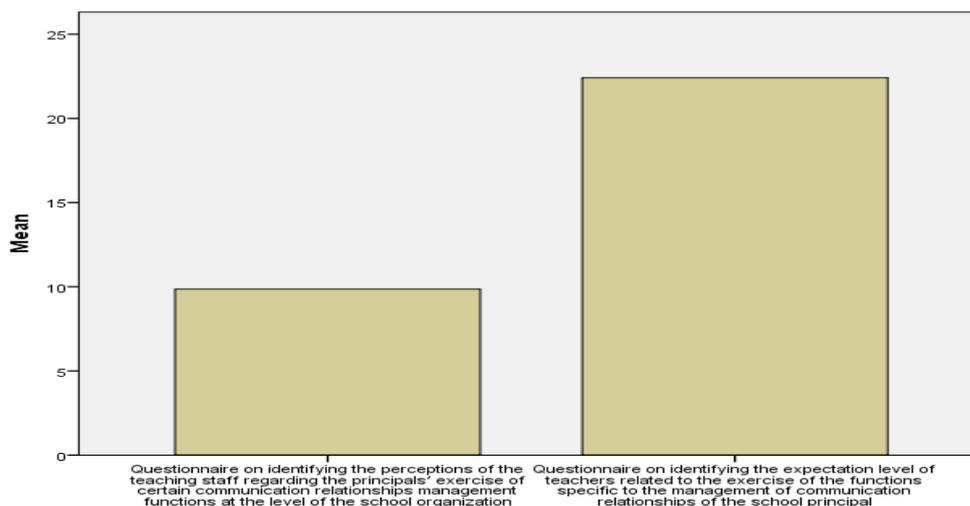


Fig. 1. Graphic representation of the perceptions and expectations of the didactical staff regarding the exercise of certain communication relationships management functions of the school principal.

Figure 1 shows the difference between the means of the teaching staff's answers regarding their perceptions on the exercise by the school principal of certain communication relationships management functions and the level of their expectations in connection with the exercise of communication relationships management functions.

5. Discussions

The results of this research indicate that teachers have expectations as regards the exercise by the school principal of communication relationships management functions which are higher than their perceptions regarding the exercise of certain functions of the principal as regards communication relationships in the school. In other words, respondents expected the school principal to better manage the communication relationships established between the members of the teaching staff finding-when necessary-solutions to mediate and negotiate the conflicts occurring at the level of the groups in the school institution. The low scores at the questionnaire on identifying the perceptions of the teaching staff regarding the principals' exercise of certain communication relationships management functions indicate that the managers in the school institution have training needs in the communication relationships optimization field at the level of the school organization. The fact that in the opinion of the 30 respondents item "your principal periodically designs/plans activities and meetings" has a low score, and item "the interest which the school principal grants to the quality of communication relationships" has a high score leads to the identification of a reality that also reveals the existence of certain lacks in the communication relationships management field in the schools the master students come from.

6. Conclusions

Please note that the article does not intend to detail the specific nature of all possible communication relationships achieved in a school context, but exclusively focuses on the quality of the communication relationships that are established between the school principal and employees. These relationships were analyzed based on the filters created by the expectations subordinates have to their chief and based on the effects they determine on the members of the teaching staff. The authors' research interests were determined by the specificity of the *Educational management* master program which is focused on the development of trainees' skills – who are teachers themselves! - to run an education school unit. The management of communication relationships was defined from the perspective of the roles a school principal has in the field of *designing, coordinating, intervening and correcting the relationships established among the subordinates*, so that a positive psychosocial climate is installed in the school environment.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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