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TEAM LEADING IN EDUCATION GROUPS

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to comprehend the processes of team leading in education field. Moreover, the teachers and the students will provide the information and meanings of this complex process by responding to some key questions during a brainstorming session. The essential purpose of the study is to understand how successful teams are developed, leaded and maintained by shared or distributed leadership. This study is focused on conceptualization of collective activity in order to act together to accomplish team goals. Teamwork and high-quality education are related and interdependent for group success, therefore the educational leader should apply the shared leadership method. Shared or distributed leadership means developing a strong culture by involving each team member, asking for his expertise, skills and competences. In practice, distributed leadership has proved to be a good method to inspire the group members, to give them specific tasks and to watch them fulfilling them. Promote effective teamwork where teachers cherish the learning culture, the principles of respect and cooperation between students and teachers. This formula of collaboration will put together different ideas, different approaches and different perspectives which will make the educational group work more precise and effective. This paperwork aims to sustain the importance of team building and leadership in educational institutions and present the most important and relevant approaches in this field of high interest. Educational system will be enriched if teams will bring together different perspectives and ideas.

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Keywords: Leadership, team leading, organisation, efficient communication.



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1. Introduction

In the 21st century, as the age of technology and universal access to information, the notion of a teacher has been redefined. The teacher is no longer perceived as a "source of knowledge", nor even as a tool for its transmission to the students. Nowadays, the role of a teacher is more and more often defined as the "leader of education", "coordinator of the learning process", "mentor or coach" for the students (Polzer, 2003). This is mainly because the most important task of modern teachers is not to present or to "give" information during lessons, as, for example, Wikipedia has perfectly replaced the traditional teacher in this role, no matter what we might think of this change.

2. Problem Statement

In the actual context that we live on, both teachers and students must have teaming skills. The problem is that the knowledge base and skills for teambuilding are not traditionally interfered with school settings. The contemporary teacher has a much wider scope of responsibility, such as:

- Building a cohesive team of students pursuing together their educational goals;
- Arranging educational situations that allow students to independently and actively construct their knowledge;
- Coordinating students' activities in the context of implementation of the curriculum and functioning in the school organization;
- Initiating and coordinating class, school and out-of-school projects;
- Organizing the school's cooperation with the students' parents and their social environment.

Not everyone is born to be a leader. Some people are better suited for this role, some are not. However, leadership skills and leadership attitude, like any other type of competence, can be developed and trained. By leadership we understand the "ability to influence or control others in social communities" (Yukl, 2010), "any activity that affects the attitude of the group" (Sheard, Kakabadse, & Kakabadse, 2009), "influencing the group's thoughts, feelings and actions related to the goals of the team" (Burns, 2003). All these are true, but we want to point out the following remark: "leadership involves using influence, without resorting to coercive measures" (Burns, 2003). Leadership is about all the changes in individuals and social systems that can be done by one person, using motivation, morale and performance mechanisms. Every decision one makes, every step we take in our activity, each idea we want to implement can't be accomplished by oneself/ourselves (Edmonson, 2013). All the strategies, all the plans, all the processes must be executed by teams. So, teams are requested for every single action we make. Team building is the process of leading the collective performance to achieve goals. We can find teams and the process of team building in all areas, such as politics, science, education.

Team building helps increasing communication, promoting trust and gives teachers a sense of belonging to something larger than themselves. Teams need to make a concerted effort to include all stakeholders in the task of developing the team. This does not happen by chance, it must be an agreed-upon procedural issue from the bottom up and from the top down. Once a team begins to think collaboratively and concretely the benefits begin and old habits fade away (Turk et al., 2009).

Teamwork and high-quality education are related and interdependent for group success, therefore the educational leader should apply the shared leadership method. Shared or distributed leadership means

developing a strong culture by involving each team member, asking for his expertise, skills and competences. In practice, distributed leadership has proved to be a good method to inspire the group members, to give them specific tasks and to watch them fulfilling them. Promote effective teamwork where teachers cherish the learning culture, the principles of respect and cooperation between students and teachers. This formula of collaboration will put together different ideas, different approaches and different perspectives which will make the educational group work more precise and effective.

Communicating effectively within a team may improve students communication competences, where competence "can be defined as representing the proved capacity of selecting, combining and adequately use of knowledge, skills and other achievements like values and attitudes to successfully solve a series of working or learning situations or for professional and personal development with efficacy and efficiency" (Soare, 2015). It requires a positive attitude to change habits, old ways of working, in order to change people and open to new ways of working. It is vital that teachers build an environment liable for communication, listening and shared ideas. Teachers who choose to implement a shared leadership should "help their colleagues to clarify values, frame problems, set goals, argue respectfully, construct and test theories, reach agreement and design documents that guide their work" (Printy & Marks, 2006).

3. Research Questions

Both teachers and students should explain, from the very beginning, their duty, goals, values and perspective when starting to work with/in a new group. In this study we will refer to the student's groups from the universities. The teachers from the higher education system are dealing with new groups of students every year, so we want to research and propose some ways of action for this specific situation.

The main research question is: *What should the teacher do first, when starting to work with new groups, in order to set a shared vision?*

Two hypotheses have been raised in this paper.

1. Students can be involved in a process of constructing the Vision Statement as they know very precisely what they want, what they can do and how they can do it. The first hypotheses will test if students can help teachers in defining the Vision Statement.
2. Teachers can use shared or distributed leadership for creating a collaborative teamwork. The second hypotheses tests if the model of distributed leadership can be used in team leading of education groups.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to propose a sample of vision statement that may be used by all the teachers when starting to work with new groups and to justify the effectiveness of this method. The essential purpose of the study is to understand how successful teams are developed, leaded and maintained by shared or distributed leadership. In other words, the purpose of the study is to comprehend the processes of teambuilding in education field. Moreover, the teachers and the managers will provide the information and meanings of this complex process by responding to some key questions during a brainstorming session.

5. Research Methods

In order to respond to the purpose of this study, data were collected from 2 groups of 10 students/group in the first academic year from the University of Pitești (Romania), from bachelor's degree in Journalism and Master program in Organizational Communication, at the beginning of the academic year 2018-2019. The method used for gathering data was brainstorming, so the vision statement was developed collaboratively by the students of this groups and 2 teachers who accepted to test this team leading model. It is important that the statement to be developed by the teachers in order to create a process in which the team can contribute in a community effort to the inputs on the vision statement. The brainstorming session was conducted by the teacher responsible for the group. First, the students were asked to read some notes about organizational culture, leadership, distributed leadership, team leading, groups and member roles, values, principles. Next, each student from the group was asked to write his thoughts about the vision for their work group in four areas: Culture, Leadership, Learning and Graduates. The students were told that all their ideas and suggestions were correct, nobody will be criticized for his ideas, the brainstorming aims to find out which are everyone's perspectives on these four areas and to build a common vision for the group. Students could express their thoughts, as long as they respect the topics, were encouraged to take the lead, to assume necessary roles, to support each other and to ask anything that its unclear to them.

6. Findings

By applying the shared vision, a team is more cohesive and reunited around a precise set of values. The team is acting responsibly for the future and wellbeing of the group. Students are involved in the planification, implementation, controlling and evaluation processes (management functions), some of them can take over the lead of the team, following the strategy assumed from the beginning (Shared Vision), everyone's interests, ideas, expectations and goals are known and included in the team strategy. For student teams, because we are dealing with adults' learners, this model of distributed leadership is convenient and suitable, because it draws on each team members' strengths and expertise. In education, "educators may conduct the group to a culture of lifelong and functional learning" (Langa, 2016).

Table 01. Model of Distributed Leadership for teachers

Distributed Leadership on educational groups – model for teachers	
<p>Step 1. Select the group Establish an effective team structure Find out more about your team – survey (Who is on the team? How were they selected, on which basis? What are their skills? What skills will be required for them? Which is which or what role each member performs? What norms and rules lead this team? Set the meeting schedule.</p>	<p>Step 2. Define the Shared Vision Create an agreed and assumed culture Explain the leadership model -Distributed Leadership Communicate with students Find out their expectations, their goals and their believes</p>
<p>Step 3. Develop the capacity of team leaders Define roles for individuals Encourage leadership skills for students Plan meetings Deal with problems Gather the team Create team agenda Count team performance Assessment findings</p>	<p>Step 4. Implement distributed leadership Analyze problems Create strategies Create plan solution Review common problems Discuss roles and functions</p>
<p>Step 5. Align the help of leadership structures to support desired student learning outcomes University's structures and roles that need to sustain team goals</p>	

This model for teachers helps decreasing differences between real outcomes and students' expectations. The Vision Statement resulted from this research, based on the student's responses, provides four essential components for education: Culture, Leadership, Learning and Graduates. As Zlate (2004) mentioned, there is a set of abilities that most of the authors consider being appropriated for managers and, we could say, for team members too: "conceptual abilities, human abilities and technical abilities". Through distributed leadership all the members of the group will develop this set of abilities specific to managers. The conceptual abilities will enhance "the capacity of strategic thinking, to make long term decisions" (Zlate, 2004, p. 171), which are essential to team leading. "Human abilities are the capacity to work with people and through them, to be effective as a member of a group, to motivate people, to engage in solving conflicts" (Zlate, 2004, p. 171). Technical abilities involve know-how and "knowledge of methods, techniques, equipment" used for production (Zlate, 2004, p. 171). Acquiring these skills is possible by practicing a distributed leadership within the team, and this will generate genuine leadership practice.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, teachers who are educational leaders can develop a collaboratively strategy for leading a team by consulting the team members, in this case the students, who will be involved in decision-making process, in implementing the strategy agreed. Students that were involved in this research mentioned that this different approach is fruitful for them and for the team, they felt encouraged to contribute to the leading strategy, in touch with each other, and they were confident that by applying a shared vision all the objectives, activities and results of the group will be achieved and fulfilled.

It was found that the current states on team building leadership skills of students were implemented at a moderate level overall and in each aspect and the desirable states were implemented at the highest level in overall and in each aspect. As regards the need priority in developing the team building leadership skills of student groups was ranked high.

The shared vision is suitable for distributed instructional distributed leaders who work to create coherent, suitable and sustainable learning environments for their students. Students are encouraged to get involved, to have a pro-active implication, are sustained in the learning process and control most of the steps of this process and that will make them more responsible in further activities. This model creates an occasion for students to engage in the leading process which gives them more confidence in their abilities and competencies, an opportunity for exercising, under the teacher's oversight, a simulation of team management.

Teacher will coordinate and refine the shared vision when necessary, will be able to create a simulating work environment, based on students' ideas and feedback. Its helpful for the educational leaders to create a leading strategy created with the help of students.

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