A SCHOOL PRINCIPAL AS A CHANGE LEADER IN EDUCATION

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Abstract. *Successful school management, whose "comprehensive content" includes both administrative and pedagogical aspects, is a decisive factor for the implementation of change in teaching and learning, promotion of pupils' learning achievements and the improvement of the quality of education in general. However, the role of school principal as a change leader gets increasingly emphasized as opposed to traditional principal's role of administrator or manager.*
This study focuses on the personal experience of school principals and interpretation of their experience, reflecting the principals' understanding of the role, nature and essence of leadership as an aspect of school management. This is a phenomenological research study. Research sample: the principals of general education schools (N=9). The aim of the study is to explore principals' understanding of what it means to be a change leader in a school, what leadership functions are prioritized, and how school principals balance their leadership functions with those of administration and management.
The data have been gathered using semi-structured interviews. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of school principal's role as a change leader is facilitated by: 1) awareness of one's personal qualities; 2) delegation of responsibilities; 3) strengthening of the school culture and its values; 4) implementation of a personalized approach highlighting the individual abilities of each teacher in the organization; 5) strengthening of the school as a "learning organization".
Keywords: *change leader, leadership, school principal.*

Introduction

Changes, vividly reflected in educational practice, determine a tense and professionally challenging scope of activities for the school principals, as they must be able to solve problems, develop innovations and come up with new management solutions (Msila, 2019; Saleniece et al., 2019). A school principal must be "*three, five or even seven in one*". The school principal has to be a good manager who handles the financial matters of the school, a good diplomat who is able to resolve the conflicts of mutual relations when emotions get very intense. Also, the principal must be a good teacher who knows how to work with today's students who have different individual learning needs and thinks about the development of the school as a whole.

The multidimensionality of school principals' work is revealed in several research studies, for example, on the influence of school principals on students' learning achievements (ten Bruggencate et al., 2013; Choi & Gil, 2017), and on teachers' professional development (Hauge, 2019; Ganon – Shilon et.al., 2020). Models of school leadership have been studied, for example, what is the role of the principal in a centralized school leadership team and what is it when the leadership role is collegially delegated to a management team or to people outside the management team, primarily the teachers (Choi & Gil, 2017), which leadership styles of school principals are the most effective during the educational reforms, e.g., a conceptual decision-making style as dominant and the analytical one as a backup or the analytical leadership style as dominant and the conceptual one as a backup (Kasprzhak et. al., 2015). Globalization, technologies, rapid development as well as abundance of information require the school leader to search and find the direction in which to go.

In today's world, many education systems are implementing smaller or greater changes (Ganon-Shilon & Schechter, 2018; Kasprzhak et.al., 2015; Ganon – Shilon et al., 2020). In Latvia, the education reform was initiated in 2016, the essence of which is linked to the introduction of a new curriculum at all levels of education and to the transition to implementation of competency-based approach. This reform highlights the constructive cooperation of teachers, personalized and in-depth learning for students, as well as curriculum alignment issues and curriculum development, strengthening the cooperation between the teachers on school level while planning and implementing the process of learning and upbringing (Valsts izglītības satura centrs, 2017). A good school management is a critical factor for implementing the changes in teaching/learning approaches, ensuring the learning achievements of students and the increase of quality of education as a whole (Geske & Rečs, 2019).Therefore, the role of the school principal is stressed more and more in the educational document s and research studies. The pedagogical leadership role of the school principal is also emphasized in the *Teaching and Learning International Study* (TALIS) conducted by *Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development* (OECD) (OECD, 2016; OECD, 2019). For a school principal, the pedagogical leadership role is highlighted as primary, opposed to the traditional roles of an administrator or manager, and it is linked to the changing approach of the school management (Schleicher, 2015; McCaffery, 2018; Rečs, 2020).

This article presents the example of Latvia, exploring the understanding of comprehensive school principals on the essence of leadership as one of the management aspects during the period of changes in education. The research questions seek to clarify how school principals explain the concept of leadership, what contributes to becoming a change leader, what leadership functions dominate in the activities of school principals, and how the functions of a leader, administrator and manager are balanced.

The aim of the study is to explore principals' understanding of what it means to be a change leader in a school, what leadership functions are prioritized, and how school principals balance their leadership functions with those of administration and management. The data have been gathered using semi-structured interviews.

The Context of Leadership

Leadership, when compared to management and administration, is considered to be a much more sophisticated and complex activity of management (Butkeviča & Zobena, 2017; Connolly et al., 2019; Rečs, 2020). Of course, when leading the educational institution, the school principal needs manager's characteristics, because as a leader he/she not only operates in order to define the strategic goals and conceptual steps for achieving them, but he/she also must be involved in, or at least understand, the daily functioning of school and its formal manifestations. Here it is appropriate to refer to a holistic vision of the understanding of the principle of reality – wholeness, which states that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, and it cannot be explained by its individual parts. The parts are harmoniously linked and can only be understood through the dynamics of the whole. No parts exist independently. Thus, the three roles of the principal – a leader, a manager and an administrator complement each other, but none of them reflects on its own all what the work of school principal implies. Administration includes the completion of day-to-day administrative tasks that are necessary for ensuring the bureaucratic procedures and activities of the school. Management means managing the day-to-day work of the school. Leadership, in turn, includes such essential modern school management functions as maintaining the school's vision and strategy, creating a culture of collaboration in the school, and promoting the professional development of the teachers. Thus, a good school principal must be a good leader, a good administrator and a good manager. However, in educational practice there is a topical question - to what extent should

the school principal fulfil each of the mentioned roles, and to which of these roles a priority should be given in the leadership practice of a principal?

The Genesis of the Concept of Leadership

Explanations of the concept of leadership can be found as early as the 19th century, with emergence of the Great Man's theory, the essence of which is expressed in the slogan "*Great leaders are born, not made*".

According to this theory, a person is either a natural-born leader or not (Halaychick, 2016).

Consequently, in the beginning of 20th century, an idea similar to the Great Man theory arose, stating that specific individuals have leadership abilities and people inherit certain characteristics and traits, which make them better suited for management/ leadership. The character traits that were often attributed to great leaders are extraversion, self-confidence and courage. This view was explained by Personality Trait theory, and it focuses on identification and analysis of specific characteristics of leaders, where the fundamental question was "who is the leader". This definition of leadership emphasized the personality traits of a leader and his/her ability to meet the goals (Northouse, 2016). It was suggested that the leader must be intelligent, confident, enthusiastic, in good health, able to take initiative, socially active (Northouse, 2016; Halaychick, 2016). However, the weak point of this explanation is the fact that many people have leadership-related personality traits, yet many of these people never turn to leadership positions.

In 1950-60's, it was recognized that it is impossible to name and create an absolute and comprehensive list of leaders' characteristics (trait approach), which would be innate, and all the leaders would have them (Halaychick, 2016). The concept of leadership emerged, focusing on the issues related to leader's behaviour and leadership style trying to find an answer to the question "what a leader must do, and how".

It was recognized that effective leadership is not only a question of leader's qualities, but also of the balance between behaviour, needs and the context. Good leaders are able to appreciate the needs of others, understand the situation and adjust their behaviour. Success depends on several variables, including leadership style, character traits of the team members and the specificities of the situation. Two types of leadership were determined:

- task-oriented leadership (leaders set the goals and clear guidelines for action);
- relationship-oriented leadership (leaders have a responsibility to support and encourage others) (Golubeva, 2010).

Another important leadership definition emphasizes the situations in which a leader operates and is able to adapt (Halaychick, 2016). This vision is explained by Situational Theory, which states that the leadership style depends on the ability and willingness of other employees involved to take on and to accomplish the particular task. Such vision allows leadership to be seen as a flexible phenomenon, the content of which varies depending on the specifics of the environment and contradicts the idea that it is possible to determine the ideal style of leadership identifying all the characteristics of a good leader.

In Situational theories, leadership is defined as a relationship between the people who opt for leadership and for those who choose to follow them, based on mutual interests and needs (Daniels et al., 2019). A Leadership is a way of affecting other people's internal motivation, which allows the leader's followers to believe that their values and interests are taken into account in the process of cooperation (Gerpott et al., 2020). Thus, leadership activities may be explained as a process of interpersonal relations between the leader and his/her followers when the leader persuades the followers to take the action to achieve certain goals.

Behavioural Theories reveal the belief that a person is not born a leader but becomes a leader by learning and observing, emphasizing the leader's activity (Halaychick, 2016).

The concept of leadership is also explained by Transactional and Transformational approaches (Halaychick, 2016). In Transactional approach, the manager-employee relations are constructed and based on the relationship of exchange, i.e., for good performance the employee receives additional remuneration, bonuses, security or other real benefits, but for a result that failed - a reprimand or punishment. The leader actually intervenes only when the required standards are not met. In turn, the Transformational approach to leadership has a strong moral dimension. In Transformational approach a leader takes risks, builds trust, and sets a vision (Daniels et al., 2019). Leader's relationship with employees is based on emotional ties, where the leader, thanks to his/her charisma, ability to persuade and inspire, is turning to the emotional side of the employees, and, obtaining the approval, ensures the smooth functioning towards the achievement of common objectives (Rečs, 2020).

The 21st-century research on leadership in schools (Northouse, 2016; McCaffery, 2018; Daniels et al., 2019; Gerpott et al., 2020; Bøje & Frederiksen, 2021) is based on modern leadership theories that state a leader is:

- a visionary leader. It is assumed that the leader will be able to perform his/her role due to certain criteria, for example, (1) behaviour, which includes good communication skills, ability to focus on the important things and to act consistently, (2) personality traits, such as confidence, long-term planning skills.
- a 'learning organization' leader. The leader drives development of organizational culture, for example, is able to develop and change the values and attitudes in the organization, to ensure the achievement of objectives and is able to manage change, and so forth.
- a liberating leader. In a competitive situation, the greatest advantage comes from the way a leader leads, directs, encourages his/her group of people/employees. If a leader acts responsibly towards his/her employees, it results in a reduction of staff absence due to illness, increase of employees' resistance, formation of stronger individual and team morale, observation of deadlines, and so forth.
- a discretionary leader. The explanation of discretionary leadership is based on A. Maslow's 'Pyramid of Needs', which reveals a hierarchy of needs and priorities. The Discretionary Effort Leadership model is based on the following priorities: safety and security, social acceptance, emotional commitment, rational alignment, authentic contribution.

Visionary leadership, Learning Organization leadership, Liberating leadership and a Discretionary Leader theories were formed in the 20th century, in response to global changes, including the increase of competition, the rapid flow of information, new organizational principles, etc. They all stress that the emphasis is not only on one person - the leader, but on efforts to promote the role of the middle-level managers in the work of the organization. This is possible by giving them greater opportunities to influence the processes in organizations ("discretionary leadership"), both by stimulating and using the leadership potential of each employee (liberating leadership) and by changing leadership roles (Golubeva, 2010; Rečs, 2020). So, on the one hand, leadership is distributed within the organization to a wider range of managers, on the other hand, the learning of individual employees and the organization as a whole is promoted (leadership in learning organizations). Thus, the concepts "leadership" and "leader" have changed over time and are supplemented with a new meaning and content.

A Leader – School Principal. An Experience of Latvia

A general portrait of Latvian school principals is provided by the results of the international survey OECD TALIS, 2018 (Izglītības Pētniecības institūts, 2019).

In Latvia, the average age of school principals is 54 years, 16% of all school principals are men and 84% - women, 25% of them are over 60, 11% have only a bachelor's degree, 27% have a recognized master's degree (in Latvia, diploma recognition takes place for HEI Diploma's obtained before December 26, 2000, when the new legal regulations in the Law on Higher Education Institutions entered into force) 58% have master's degree , 4% - doctoral degree. In Latvia, 96% of school principals work full-time. The distribution of responsibilities for full-time school principals revels that 50% of them act only as principals, but 50% combine the duties of a principal and a teacher.

The OECD TALIS 2018 research study, with participation of 136 school principals from Latvia, reveals that a wide range of leadership functions are implemented in their schools. Research data suggest that leadership in schools is directed towards promoting teachers' responsibility for the learning outcomes of pupils (indicated by 90% of school principals); ensuring that teachers take responsibility for improving the learning skills (83%); providing feedback to teachers based on observations (81%); elaborating the administrative procedures for schools and preparing the reports (71%); supporting cooperation between teachers in developing new teaching methods (70%); solving disciplinary problems in the classroom in cooperation with teachers (62%); observing the teaching/learning activities in the classroom (36%); solving problems related to the timetable (24%) (Izglītības Pētniecības institūts, 2019).

Methodology

A phenomenological study was conducted, which is useful if the phenomenon, in this case the perception of the school principal as a change leader, is not much conceptualized. The focus of the research was the personal experiences of school principals and the actions they take in relation to the research phenomenon, as well as their interpretation of these experiences. This study seeks to explore the school principals' understanding of what it means to be a change leader in a school, what leadership functions are prioritized, and how school principals balance their leadership functions with functions of administration and management.

The research sample was the principals of comprehensive education schools in which children are taught from Class 1 to 12, with the exception of one school, where the first level primary education (Class 1-3) is an autonomous unit with its own headmistress (see Tabe 1). Using the snowball method, the school principals from two largest cities of Latvia were involved in this study, and their schools had similar indicators, such as the number of students per school. The data were obtained through semi-structured interviews, without directly asking the questions about the research phenomenon. The school principals were invited to reflect on their activities, responsibilities, revealing the challenges they face in their professional work, and visualize how they see themselves as school principals in the near and distant future. The aim of the research was to explore the understanding of the comprehensive school principals' of the essence of leadership as one of the aspects of the management of the educational institution during the times of educational change.

The research questions put forward for this study: 1) how do school principals define the concept of leadership; 2) what promotes the becoming of a change leader; 3) what leadership functions dominate in the activities of school principals and how the functions of a leader, administrator and manager are balanced.

*Table 1 **The characteristics of the research sample***

Code	Gender	Length of service as principal	The size of the school (amount of children)	The workload volume as principal
P 1	man	16 years	986 (Classes 1-12)	100% principal
P 2	man	9 years	779 (Classes 4-12)	100% principal
P 3	man	1 years	714 (Classes 1-12)	90% principal 10% teacher
P 4	woman	14 years	937 (Classes 1-12)	100% principal
P 5	man	5 years	1477 (Classes 1-12)	100% principal
P 6	woman	8 years	892 (Classes 1-12)	100% principal
P 7	woman	2 year	926 (Classes 1-12)	100% principal
P 8	woman	23 years	1172 (Classes 1-12)	90 % principal, 10% teacher
P 9	woman	8 years	850 (Classes 1-12)	100% principal

Research results

Acknowledging that the roles of school principals – leader, manager and administrator complement each other and can be seen as a whole, all principals particularly highlighted the role of a leader in the description of their activities, linking it to such concepts as '*time for change in education'* (P8), "*change"* (P3), "*education reform*" (P4), using the concept "*change leader*" (P1, P6, P2) in conversations. Describing themselves as change leaders in education, the school principals suggest that a change leader is a person who inspires, creates a vision of the school, allows others to follow him/herself, is an example to others: "*A leader, standing in front of an audience, helps to set visions, goals and results to be achieved, implement the changes"* (P4); "*The principal is an originator of direction and values*" (P2); *"My main task is to be a change leader"* (P5). Describing themselves as leaders, school principals relate it to the processes of change in education, emphasizing their activities more than specific qualities characterizing them. Thus, the goal-oriented and task-oriented leadership is highlighted.

When asked how to become a 'change leader', the school principals mention that the most important aspect is to know oneself, to be aware of one's own values and beliefs, habits and virtues. It was suggested that "*Self-knowledge is the way to build relationships with other colleagues*" (P5); "*Only through self-knowledge one can know others*" (P2); or "*Being a change leader means serving – oneself and others, which takes place through self-knowledge, values, clear goals and virtues*" (P6). The following statement expresses this idea even more precisely: "*The change leader must be able to balance three aspects – self-awareness, one's vision, values and virtues, and a career (work, leisure)*" (P4).

Summarizing the views of school principals on "*to become a good change leader a person must now oneself well*" (P1), it can be concluded that the principals consider a good self-knowledge as a primary "tool" for becoming a convincing change leader. This knowledge also allows them to get to know others better, understand their knowledge, habits, value formation process, as well as build personalized relationships. The principals acknowledge that self-knowledge as an aspect of leadership is *"a deep and individual work with oneself"* (P7), although they also point in direction of professional development courses, seminars and pedagogical supervisions, which have increasingly been present in educational practice in the last six years. If initially pedagogical supervisions were the initiative of individual school principals or administrators of educational boards, then in 2021, the guidelines were designed for organizing and implementing pedagogical supervisions in schools by the Quality Assurance Department and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science.

The observations of the interviewed school principals reveal that this professional perfection will be effective only if the person him/herself takes what is needed from what is offered, without perceiving the professional development as a mandatory coercive measure. "*There is a need for analytical skills, ability to choose what is going to work in my school, and to take what I need and what my school needs. To select what is needed. In order to do that, the principal must know oneself well, know his/her colleagues, know his/her school. Only then you can take what you need, adapting it to a specific situation, to one's needs. There will be no ready-made recipes, but you must know what you need, and you must be able to take it*" (P4).

School principals, as change leaders in education, are the ones who develop and communicate the new vision and beliefs. However, in order to come to a new conviction, school principals themselves must change; change their habits, beliefs and opinions. This process marks a transformation of the way of thinking and old habits, and school principals find it difficult to implement. If a school principal changes his/ her vision and opinion, it does not mean that others will do so as well. "*On the one hand, it is closely linked to my beliefs and views as a principal. On the other hand, it is a question of how I communicate it to others. I believe that everyone has freedom of choice – also in their views. I can't ask people to think exactly the way I do. Everyone has the right to express his or her opinion and the right to be heard*" (P5). It is pointed out that, in cases of disagreement, the most important thing is to maintain mutual respect. "*When I express my actions, behavior and example, I also give others the opportunity to express their views showing them respect. Feelings of respect must be shown. I have the right to request that my opinion is respected, but for the sake of my opinion, I cannot sacrifice the views of my colleagues. That is a way to despotism*" (P5).

In this process of transformation, it is most important for the change leader to be able to keep/ maintain this subtle nuance between openness, freedom, trust and control, which characterizes a democratic leadership style. The respondents acknowledge that this can be a time-consuming process, and this way "*the changes in educational practice come more slowly and create a lot of moaners; but I find this process more understandable and acceptable because I base it on my personal leadership values which I trust and follow*" (P5).

It can be concluded that school principals believe that they can become change leaders through self-exploration, self-development and professional perfection, in other words, through self-knowledge, working with oneself and being an example to others demonstrating that change is possible.

The school principals prioritized the following leadership roles: communication at all levels of activity (horizontal and vertical cooperation), delegation of responsibilities and strengthening of partnerships. Maintaining positive communication at all organizational levels of the school contributes to the satisfaction and well-being of all parties involved. "*... It allows me not to feel alone and gives regular feedback, shows the 'temperature' of the educational institution*" (P3).

The synergy between the school principal - change leader, teachers, parents, and learners and the synergy between the principal - change leader and the management team – deputy principals, learning consultants is acknowledged. "*... A change leader works at all levels, ... and clear functions need to be defined here*" (P8).

The change leader of works not only with the vision, defining the goals of the institution, but also communicates and cooperates with all stakeholders "*... preparing the ground for students to develop a holistic personality*" (P4). When on the one hand, leadership is distributed within the organization to a wider range of school management staff members, for example, deputy principals, and on the other hand, the leadership of individual employees is promoted, we can speak of a learning organization, where delegation of responsibilities and development of partnership result in the development of organizational culture. Although school principals have clearly defined roles, duties, responsibilities and necessary competences, for example,

financial literacy, the change leadership functions are expanded with new aspects, which can no longer be overseen and implemented by the school principal alone. This gives a positive boost to the principals to delegate the leadership responsibilities to other staff members of the institution and to encourage them to take on the functions of a change leader.

In Latvia, this process became relevant after the educational reform was launched in 2016 introducing the competency-based education. The need arose for the leaders who could promote the new approach of teaching and learning in the educational process. In order for students to become proficient in the learning process, it is necessary to help the teachers to change their current attitudes about students' learning and the learning process in general, emphasizing the in-depth learning and the change of the role of the teacher in the learning process. Admitting that the school principal can no longer lead alone all ongoing multidimensional changes in education, the pedagogical leader, or a learning consultant, as it is defined in Latvia, becomes the change leader in the context of teaching and learning. The duties of a learning consultant are delegated either to the deputy principal in methodological work, or to the head of the subject area, or to a teacher who has become a learning consultant-expert by attending a certain amount of professional development courses and has demonstrated the acquired skills in practice. "*It is important that the learning consultant is not the school principal or even his/her deputy. Learning consultant is a new step for pedagogical cooperation and self-growth. A learning consultant is a confidant, which a teacher invites to his or her lesson*" (P9). "*It is important to distinguish whether the observation of lessons come from the management, which is more of a hierarchical approach, or whether it is a voluntary observation of the lesson to provide methodological assistance*" (P5). "*It is significant that the learning consultant comes from the teaching staff and not from the management. The learning consultant does not report to the management. His/her job is to support and help, not to punish*" (P5). "*Learning consultants work as pedagogical leaders in the classroom*" (P2).

In order to arrive at such level of trust, which marks new aspects in the educational environment, it is essential for the school principal, as a change leader, to delegate pedagogical leadership responsibilities by building trust, partnership and a learning organization. "*It's a matter of what culture we want to achieve*" (P1). "*The ability to be a leader is equivalent to the ability to delegate responsibility and the ability to rely on the team*" (P8).

Explaining the goals of change, working with the staff, encouraging, and supporting the teachers and other staff members to understand and accept these changes, strengthening the teamwork and personalized learning are acknowledged as dominant leadership roles in the daily lives school principals. The principals admit, "*Change does not have to be big, radical and everything does not have to be perfect. But the principal must to see what needs to be corrected, and perhaps it is more important to notice particularly the little things*" (P8). "*Change has two parts: an arrangement stated on a paper and the belief. If the majority has the belief and confidence, then it is a united force and change will take place*" (P5). "*A principal cannot talk about change if there is no order in his/her team*" (P3).

Personalized learning is associated with the school principals' conscious desire to understand the individuality, originality, and personal characteristics of their employees. The well-being of teachers and their individual goals are taken into account. In personalized learning, "*it is important to remember that change is person-cantered and that the person's individual goals are paramount*" (P8).

School principals exercise all three roles (administrator, manager and leader), recognizing that the workload of the principal depends on the size of the institution, his/her management style and personality. In smaller schools the management team is also smaller, and the role of the principal depends on the situation and the needs of the particular moment. "*Looking at the time lag, there are situations when I am 100% administrator and 0% leader or manager. And then there are days when I am a 100% leader*" (P1). In contrast, in schools with a larger

management team and with more than one deputy principal, the school principal is more of a leader. "*The bigger the institution, the more the principal can afford to do new things*" (P5). Then the leadership function comes to the fore, and the principal uses leadership for staff development and implementation of innovations. It is emphasized that the advantage of 'big schools' is a strong management team where responsibilities can be delegated, and in many situations the principal not even gets involved. "*In fact, a well-organized school can do without a principal*" (P5). "*In a well-organized environment, a principal is a generator of change. The rest is the work of the deputies*" (P7).

"*It is much easier to put out a fire (and the principal has to do it) if there is a large team and if there is a possibility to delegate responsibilities for solving the problems. In small schools, on the other hand, where the management team is small, the possibilities for delegating are not so many, but the relationships then are more personalized*" (P8). Thus, it can be concluded that the way a school principal builds and leads his/ her team also determines the school's culture, staff's sense of belonging and the sense of 'being involved'.

Discussion and conclusion

According to modern leadership theories, school principals identify themselves as change leaders, who create a vision for the school, new goals, who can inspire, influence and persuade others, and they are focused on constructive action and communication. "*When I have a vision, I communicate it to others, and we continue to implement it together*" (P2). However, as noted by the principals, this process is not always so smooth. Teachers do not always immediately understand, accept the vision and goals, and are not always ready for change. Significant transformations take place in each person and in the organization as a whole during this process. Self-knowledge and awareness of personal qualities help to become a change leader. In turn, self-knowledge is a way of knowing others better, and it serves as a way to know how to inspire, persuade, and interact with others. School principals positively evaluate professional development courses, seminars and pedagogical supervisions, but pointing out that, to have a positive effect, they must be voluntary, but the school principals must clearly be aware of the needs of their schools.

The influence of a principal as a change leader is related to the formation of the school's culture and values, and to the belief that the school is a learning organization. It is related to personalized learning, which highlights the abilities of each teacher within the organization and points to individual achievements and collaboration to solve problems and achieve common goals of the school. The individual contribution and participation of each employee is important for the school as a learning organization. "*I am in a favour of a networking model, not a hierarchical model*" (P5).

Delegation of responsibilities emerge as an important feature in the change leader's functions. Principals acknowledge that in order to implement the content of the planned education reforms, in the learning process the teachers need a leader from the pedagogical environment. The study showed a positive relationship between the principal – the change leader and the learning consultant, which implements a function of a pedagogical leader.

The development of a management team and the delegation of responsibilities to their deputies allow the school principals to focus more on the implementation of leadership functions, to think more about the school's vision and plan its development and growth. It is undeniable that school principals fulfil the roles of administrator, manager and leader, but the proportionality of these roles is related to the size of the school management team, as for the principals with a larger management team it is possible to delegate many tasks to their deputies, while retaining the responsibilities of a leader. It is expected that school principals, by becoming and strengthening their positions as change leaders, will contribute to the ongoing school reform

and will set an example by creating new values and a foundation for meaningful changes. A change leader is able to strengthen personalized learning and to build a school, which is a learning organization.

Thus, leadership is a gain and an opportunity for everyone, it has open borders that allows the knowledge to be disseminated in many different ways.

Further research in this area should focus on how to improve the role of the pedagogical leader (learning consultant). As it was stated, "*I don't know now if I have chosen the right person. He is a good teacher, but will he be a good pedagogical leader*?" (P3). Addressing this issue could be one of the tasks of the school as a learning organization.

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