

CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP: STRATEGIES FOR LINKING THE WRITTEN AND DELIVERED CURRICULUM

Dr. Lena Damovska, Institute of Pedagogy, Faculty of Philosophy
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University-Skopje, Macedonia
E-mail: damovska.lena@gmail.com

Received: May, 04.2014.
Accepted: May, 23.2014.
Original Article
UDK 371.135:005.322(497.7)

Abstract. The focus will be put on teachers as curriculum leaders, being challenged on a daily basis by how to attend to the delivered curriculum(the practice) without neglecting the written curriculum(the theory), and vice versa, all the while analyzing strategies that will link both curricula and implement these conclusions in their further teaching practice.

Curricula present written guides identifying the content and material that should be covered, and are given to teachers (sometimes) as a detailed guide to follow religiously. However, as opposed to theory, practice is a different and delicate matter, as the teachers tries not to overstep the boundaries of the curriculum already include as much of their own creative energy as possible.

These points will be expanded through analysis of the results of a qualitative research on the understanding of the content of leadership, done on pre-school and primary school teachers, whose everyday contact with their pupils will illustrate the reality of leadership in schools in the local context of R. Macedonia.

Furthermore, the "how" of overcoming the challenges on the path of successful school leadership, however tricky they might be will be analyzed from firsthand experiences and compared through the matrix of what is considered able to "correct". As educators, we successfully bridge the gap between theory and practice, to apply the theoretical know-how in a realistic classroom setting, and to convert the written paradigms into practice, thus only through educational leadership can we overcome the pedagogical challenges and effectively transfer the knowledge to the students, bringing about positive outcomes.

Keywords: *Curriculum leadership, Preschool teacher, Primary school teachers, Written curriculum, Delivered curriculum.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers as curriculum leaders are challenged on a daily basis by how to attend the delivered curriculum, without neglecting the written curriculum. "The written curriculum is intended primarily to ensure that the educational goals of the system are being accomplished: it is a curriculum of control." (A. Glatthorn, F. Boschee, Bruce. Whitehead, 2007, p. 8).

"The written curriculum is an important component of authentic literacy-the ability to read, write and think effectively". (A. Glatthorn, F. Boschee, Bruce. Whitehead, 2007, p. 14).

The delivered curriculum consists of the routine, practices, policies and culture that guide our behavior. It is what the teacher do. The delivered curriculum is a curriculum that an observer sees in action as the teachers teach.

It is imperative that teachers have a since of their personal and professional mission in educating their children. The supervisor who facilitates a "head and heart" leadership approaches elicits and shares in that mission. Traditionally schools have been traditionally curriculum centered. Teachers planning stemmed from the curriculum. Teachers taught that curriculum and students were expected to learn that curriculum. Those who did be considered smart, the rest of the students were good and nice but they were not smart.

Today more and more educators are creating children-centered classrooms. In a children-centered classroom, planning stems from the children's needs and talents. Teachers respect each child and they create the curriculum activities appropriately. Each child cannot have a same, unique learning program, teachers can design individual plans and create a special learning opportunity. Basing instruction on a children's needs moves teaching

Corresponding Author
Lena Damovska, Institute of Pedagogy, Faculty of Philosophy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University-Skopje, Macedonia
E-mail: damovska.lena@gmail.com

further away from work that is predictable, constant and discrete. This shift has enormous implications for how teachers work and how they supervised.

“If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there. This advice, given by the Cheshire Cat Alice as she wandered through Wonderland, captures the importance of goals”.

Without goals, where and how we will spent our time or how we will focus our energies? Do we focus on developing a particular aspect of curriculum, or do we create a new assessment instruments?... A considerable part of the difficulty in setting and following through on professional goals is that there are so many worthy directions. Each of the activities listed above is not only needed each is also necessary. How can we fail to address curriculum, pedagogy and assessment? How can we not strive to meet the needs of all students? How can we not make the extra effort to work with parents? ” (T. R. Hoerr, 2005, p. 47).

2. RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHODS

For the purpose of this paper, a qualitative research in preschool and primary school education was done.

The research included two educators in kindergarten (one from a private kindergarten, another from a public kindergarten) and two teachers in primary school (grades 5 to 8).

The choice was not random, since these are educators of the finest kind who collaborate with the Institute of Pedagogy, as well as being mentors to students from the Institute of pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje), working in institutions (kindergartens and schools).

We discussed the following with them:

- The concept of leadership, and how they understand it;
- How they implement it;
- How competent and conscious they feel about their power as educators and teachers to children;
- If they are satisfied by their own achievements and the achievements of the children;
- How much their personal goals overlap with their professional goals;
- Which strategies they implement the realization of the curriculum.

3. RESULTS

Result from Kindergarten Teachers

- Public Kindergarten, Skopje

1. *How much is the kindergarten teacher is aware of the concept of leadership in the realization of the program?*

- Teachers are little aware of the concept of leadership. A larger part of them regards themselves as ‘performers’ of the goals set by their superiors, without much awareness of their significance and role in the educational process. However, they are becoming more and more aware of the importance of the educator as carrier of the work in preschool institutions, which furthermore contributes to their active participation in the creation, organization and realization of the educational work, not only in the boundaries of the institution but even further.

Kindergarten Teacher

- Private Kindergarten, Skopje

In private kindergartens, there is a flexible structure of the program. The teacher is undoubtedly a leader in the realization of the program, since in my experience it has been shown that the educator can always be productive and achieve excellent results, if they are given the freedom to work and express their own creativity. They are an active segment, a programmer, a planner, a diagnostician, and organizer, and a ‘performer’ of the educational work.

2. *How much does the kindergarten teacher comply with the set program and do they improvise?*

- Public Kindergarten, Skopje

- Teachers are legally obliged to realize the existing program, and often they follow it, since they are controlled by the agencies/organs that are superior to them. In addition, in my experience, there has always been certain improvisation included in their work for a multitude of reasons. Through improvising, the teacher’s search for the means and roads to realize their ideas/concepts, hence enriching their educational work. For example, work on projects, which were initiated by the educators themselves, as a result of the need for modernization, deepening, and expanding the existing program choices.

- Private Kindergarten, Skopje

- The effects of the freedom of working only emphasize the independence of bringing decisions and the choice of the teacher. The program in kindergartens should always be followed, and the set goals be achieved, but

there are also certain exceptions. Teachers in private kindergartens are not limited, they have higher self-confidence, they are satisfied with their choice of profession, they have an innovative approach to work, they want to experiment and try out various teaching approaches. The flexibility of the day-to-day activities offers various opportunities.

3. Does practice come before theory?

- Public Kindergarten, Skopje
- The relationship between practice and theory should be seen through their unity and mutual complementation. On the one hand, it is true that in certain cases practice can come before theory and can initiate new theoretical suppositions, but on the other hand, the limitless feature of the human mind opens up the possibility of always posing different theories that advance the practice.

- Private Kindergarten, Skopje
The basic tendency of the contemporary world is needed for the practitioners to take over the key role at the moment of the implementation of the theory.

4. How much does the existing system of kindergartens/schools limit us?

- Public Kindergarten, Skopje
- It is a common occurrence that I am not always on the same page with my superiors, who need to give their permission for every single activity we have planned – no matter if it is a project, school visit, or TV show. This is done because they do not want large differences regarding the educators' function, and because they are headed towards unification. Any institution interested in advancing the educators' work should give them their full support, thus motivating them towards future activity and taking self-initiative. This is how advancement and development of the educators' work are achieved.

- Private Kindergarten, Skopje
- Flexibility is extremely important for private kindergartens because they offer openness in view of the organization of whole-day accommodation, inclusion of the parents or other collaborators, as well as professional development. Thus, kindergartens do not limit the teacher in their choice to make changes, to include the parents' participation, or to choose their means of professional development.

5. How much is the voice of the kindergarten teacher listened to?

- Public Kindergarten, Skopje
- Not much. In Macedonia, there is no teacher union, through which we can move towards progress and improvement in this line of work. The teachers are rarely included in the preparation of the legal standpoints, and only formally are they included in the preparation of the programs.

- Private Kindergarten, Skopje
- Educational work with children of preschool age is very responsible, difficult and complex work, filled with a multitude of specific and intricate situations. The teacher knows the children of their group well, in addition to their parents. So the teacher is in the position of being able to direct their work towards modernization and inclusion of the educational process.

6. To what degree is the kindergarten teacher in Macedonia, in fact a leader?

- Public Kindergarten, Skopje
- Unfortunately, very few teachers understand the need to be proclaimed as 'leaders' in their work. In fact, the leader must be a real manager when leading and organizing the group, communicating with parents, and working with other educators.

- Private Kindergarten, Skopje
Unfortunately, our mentality cannot grasp the importance of the teacher in the preschool period of the children's lives, and it all influences the future of the younger generations, forming the foundation of every country.

7. Can the kindergarten school teacher assess what is right? How much freedom is the teacher allowed?

- Public Kindergarten, Skopje
- In ideal conditions, when all the teachers will have quality initial education, love and dedication to their jobs, continuous professional development, and a high level of professionalism, then it sounds like a good idea to include independence in their teaching. A good teacher knows how to best assess the needs of the group and appropriately organize their work, with a huge degree of responsibility.

- Private Kindergarten, Skopje
Sometimes the teacher is left on their own to make an assessment, possibly even being wrong, in order for it to come under

self-evaluation, with the idea of making them aware of whether they are right or wrong in their decisions. This is a frequent practice in private kindergartens: giving the teacher freedom in order to develop confidence, as well as be supported by the rest of the educational team, who is open to cooperation and support.

II. Result from Primary School Teachers

1. How much is the /primary school teacher aware of the concept of leadership in the realization of the program?

- Primary School Teacher 1 (Grades 5-8)

- Leadership is a dynamic process of work. Leadership has to be seen as a means or form of managing the behavior of the pupils, parents, or colleagues. Regarding leadership in the realization of the program, the kindergarten school teacher/primary school teacher need not feel limited in its application. A teacher with a heart and the mentality of a leader carries their students through the tasks.

- Primary School Teacher 2 (Grades 5-8)

- The concept of leadership in the realization of the program means making the dynamics of learning and developing the practice that will follow the steps of such dynamics.

2. How much does the /primary school teacher comply with the set program and do they improvise?

- Primary School Teacher 1 (Grades 5-8)

- In all honesty, the teacher and the curriculum itself are for the child, and not for the sake of the program. The curriculum centers towards the child, hence dictating the tempo. The teacher is merely the 'performer' and carrier of the whole program. Only with the right attitude and a real dedication can unbelievable results be achieved.

- Primary School Teacher 2 (Grades 5-8)

- It is a very common challenge for teachers to make students achieve the knowledge and acquire the skills that are required by the National Teaching Program, so they create learning activities that will engage pupils and cover several developmental aspects. For instance, the pupils who learn in a stimulative environment will be able to effectively solve problems and come to solutions.

3. Does practice come before theory?

- Primary School Teacher 1 (Grades 5-8)

- Theory is the basis of practice. Knowledge and research represent a significant process in the growth - not only for the pupils but also for the teachers. We grow while learning. Only through learning does the theory turned into practice, and the practice into theory.

- Primary School Teacher 2 (Grades 5-8)

No, they complement each other, but the teacher must instigate the pupils to research the world, to support their efforts to asking questions and searching for the answer, and to challenge them to comprehend the complexity of the world.

4. How much does the existing system in schools limit us?

- Primary School Teacher 1 (Grades 5-8)

- The existing system limits us to a significant measure, but at the end it is up to the 'performer' of the curriculum to successfully play out the process of teaching/learning, in which the child will be raised, in the real sense of the word.

- Primary School Teacher 2 (Grades 5-8)

The system of kindergartens/schools allows us to give pupils the opportunity to think with their own heads, to put questions, to come to solutions to posed issues, and to work responsibly.

5. How much is the voice of the primary school teacher listened to?

- Primary School Teacher 1 (Grades 5-8)

- In our environment the voice of the teacher is especially quiet. They feel inhibited for several reasons, but this is our battle and we should handle it. The teacher models the foundation and the future of a nation, and regardless of the current situation they should hold their head up and go to have a clear vision.

- Primary School Teacher 2 (Grades 5-8)

- The teacher does not prepare the pupils for the world today, but for the world tomorrow, the world that is difficult to imagine. They provide an environment of trust, polite behavior, and fair and equal inclusion.

6. To what degree is the primary school teacher in Macedonia, in fact a leader?

- Primary School Teacher 1 (Grades 5-8)

- This is an issue that can be extensively discussed. It mostly is dependent on each individual, their personality traits, and personal aspirations. However, I can talk about my own experience. I am always in leadership 'mode', and instigate my pupils to develop and deepen their individual affinities.

- Primary School Teacher 2 (Grades 5-8)

'Leader' can be used as a label for the teacher who can create a classroom in which the pupils will continue working on given activities, whether the teacher is in the classroom at that moment or not.

7. Can the /primary school teacher assess what is right? How much freedom is the teacher allowed?

- Primary School Teacher 1 (Grades 5-8)

- This is different for each and every teacher. The practical work is of great importance, as well as the experience and the personality of the teacher. Freedom should be an integral part of the curriculum, since the teacher has their hands untied and fully takes over the situation. When I have freedom in my job, then successfully completed goals and tasks come as a logical consequence.

- Primary School Teacher 2 (Grades 5-8)

-Much freedom is given to the educator in the preparation of the pupils for the 21 century, encouraging them to search for answers on their own.

8. Have there been any changes in the modernization of the work with the introduction of new programs after the year 2000?

- Primary School Teacher 1 (Grades 5-8)

- Yes, there have been changes. The pupil is now the center of attention. The introduction of the new teaching plans and programs, the forms of assessment, as well as the implementation of ICT in teaching, has definitely enriched the work of the teacher in an upward direction. In conclusion, it is the teacher who should constantly include novelties in their teaching in order to see positive development

in the pupils.

- Primary School Teacher 2 (Grades 5-8)

- Indeed, there have been changes after the year 2000; such as, changes in the teaching plans and programs (focus on different abilities and skills), changes in the curriculum and learning (the pupil being the center of attention), changes in how assessment is done (establishing standards and a code of ethics of assessment), changes in technology (computerization and ICT), and changes regarding classrooms (managing and organizing the classroom).

4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSIONS

The practitioners (preschool and primary school teachers) in Macedonia represent significant factors for the quality realization of the educational process. The model of a teacher becomes crucial, regardless of the quality of the theoretical model of the written curriculum. The learning environment, the support of the management and the children's parents are also crucial factors in the educational process.

In the contemporary profile of leadership in the educational process, self-evaluation and the ability for reflection of the educator and teacher have become necessary and more than needed.

However, they are becoming more and more aware of the importance of the educator as carrier of the work in preschool institutions, which furthermore contributes to their active participation in the creation, organization and realization of the educational work, not only in the boundaries of the institution but even further.

The relationship between practice and theory should be seen through their unity and mutual complementation.

On the one hand, it is true that in certain cases practice can come before theory and can initiate new theoretical suppositions, but on the other hand, the limitless feature of the human mind opens up the possibility of always posing different theories that advance the practice.

Diversity should be addressed throughout the curriculum as teachers seek to promote an understanding and awareness of one another.

Often when teachers make plans and create strategies, they limit their selves to

focus on the written curriculum. In fact, most powerful, messages come from a school delivered curriculum. The delivered curriculum consists of the routine, practices, policies and culture that guide behavior. It is what they do.

The new programs and expected results for the children require constant consciousness and following the new strategies for teaching and learning.

Four powerful lessons about leadership in (Hoerr, T. R. 2005). *The Art of School Leadership*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Alexandria. Virginia, USA).

- Be inclusive: all of us are smarter than any of us.
- Be clear: It is your decision, my decision or our decision?
- Be fair to yourself and others: Know the difference between excellence and perfection.
- Be someone who makes a difference: Why do you want to lead a school, a grade?

Conflict of interests

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- Glatthorn, A. A., Boschee, F. and Whitehead, B. M. (2009). *Curriculum Leadership: Strategies for Development and Implementation* (2nd edn.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Hoerr, T. R. (2005). *The Art of School Leadership*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Alexandria. Virginia, USA.
- Key Data on Teachers and School Leaders in Europe*. European Commission. 2013 Edition, http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/151EN.pdf
- Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco. Jossey-Bass.
- Sarason, (1999). *Taching as a performing art*. New York: Teachers. College Press. <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice>