

## THE ADMINISTRATIVE ABILITIES OF PRINCIPALS OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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### ABSTRACT

The schools of primary education on a daily basis have to cope with a diversity of strategic and organizational issues, such as decision making on educational issues, improvement of infrastructures, cooperation with the Directorate of Primary Education, cooperation with parents and the local community. Nowadays the school has to be flexible and competitive. The growing needs require capable managers with qualifications such as strong personality, leadership, knowledge and mainly developed social and communication skills. For the management of the school, the Principal is required to have management knowledge and a multifaceted and continuous scientific training in topics such as planning, organizing, counselling, assessment, motivation, efficiency, effectiveness, achieving goals, management and human resource management.

This study investigates the level of skills of principals, as perceived by primary school teachers of regional unit of Kavala. A survey that was carried out on a sample of 387 teachers showed that teachers consider that the management of teaching staff, the management and administration of the school, communication and relationship with the external environment by their principal is successful. It also showed how important is the role of principal in the development and progress of the school.

Keywords: Administration, School Unit, Directorate of Primary Education

JEL Classification

## 1. Introduction

The school unit is an independent and self-reliant organization of education, has specific project, identifies and pursues goals, utilizing effectively the resources that it has at its disposal, providing the right to knowledge and learning to students [1]. Management is the process by which the objectives of an organization are achieved by combining the efficiency, effectiveness and equity, to have the most success with the help of few resources available and with the participation of other workers [2]. The school administration is an ongoing and continuous energy, which coordinates its members, to provide education with positive results [3]. Undoubtedly, the role of management is very important and crucial to the growth and development of the school. The development of a common vision, organization and focus on discussing issues with staff, focus and protect the values and goals of the school community, the adoption by teachers and parents clearly rules for decision-making, implementation of decisions community, the pressure on the political and local community play an essential role in the administration [4]. Management of primary school education units in Greece, exercised in accordance with Law 3848/2010 by the Director, the Deputy Principal and Teachers' Association.

The leadership in the school plays a key role in the operation and its effectiveness depends on the planning, organization, guidance and motivation, as well as the control of all persons who are members of the specified school [5]. The leadership capacity of the managers of the management of schools is often the key factor of the difference between effective and ineffective school [6]. According to some scholars, the manager who has the administration-leadership capability encourages a positive school climate, including high school culture, teaching and learning, assessment, academic and non-academic performance, two-way communication, accountability, teaching staff and attitudes of the student population and the relationship between schools, families and the wider community [7], [8], [9].

Robinson [10] states that the effective leader plays a decisive role in the course of the school with a positive impact, providing quality teaching and learning. For this reason, the principal of the school shall be equipped with a range of appropriate skills to bring the school unit, teaching staff and the student population at a high level of success and maintain its effectiveness [11].

## 2. Literature Review

The characteristics of the people who manage the administration of schools according to [12] and [13] are: broad vision, creativity, good communication skills, self-confidence, building administrative participation, influence, respect, the charisma and decency.

The manager-leader must be ready in all respects and in particular have knowledge, academic abilities, skills and experience to be able to apply them in every situation [14]. Communication skills, leadership skills and decision making skills are necessary features for effective management of teaching staff [15]. The managers of the administration must be people open and receptive to change and innovation, lifelong learning and to keep alive the prospect of organizing learning in the school [16], [17], [18].

Eren [19] states that leadership is a combination of skill and knowledge to achieve a common goal of a group of people animating them to take action to implement this. It is the sum of knowledge and skills for the collection and management of people around an idea or an object [20].

According Andrews and Soder [21] a feature which must have greatly the management of school is to always know what is happening within the school environment and to note the presence [17], and to be governed by democratic principles in working with faculty, possessed by industriousness to a model, be decisive as regards the role of leadership, mentor and guide.

The relationship management with the teachers is very important for the proper functioning of the school [22], while the good relationship management with students helps to develop a healthy school environment [23]. The contribution of the chief management of staff and financial resources, cooperation of the administration with teachers to make decisions and solve problems, encouragement and motivation of teachers to their professional development and crisis management is found in studies of [24], [25], [22], [26], [27].

The director of the school should have communication skills with the outside world, the local community and organizations [28], [25]. The management of the school should have good relations with the local community and local government to resolve issues relating to building infrastructure, maintenance, supply of consumables, stationery to school, purchase necessary equipment (electronic computers, photocopiers, printers, interactive whiteboards, illumination boxes, etc.), the organization of public events to inform and address the concerns in education, making programs to students employed outside the school unit creatively. Securing financial resources of local authorities is crucial to a very high degree to provide quality and upgraded educational work in a school [29], [30], [31], [32], [24].

İmamoğlu and Yerlisu [33] in their research on management-leadership skills among managers with different ages and gender showed that there is no difference between management and leadership subjects. The survey results of Chua et al. [34] show that the management-leadership of managers is important and related to years of service in the administration of the school and academic qualifications. This finding suggests that formal training is necessary for the managers before taking their position. The selection of people capable to govern contributes to the development and evolution of school [35].

From the literature review it is clear that the principal of schools should be a person who is distinguished for management and collaboration capabilities with school staff, students and their parents as well as with the external environment. Also must have leadership skills needed in management and organization of schools. This work aims to capture the view of teachers of regional unit of Kavala on the aforementioned skills of their managers.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Population and Sample**

The Population of the study is consisted of 1.200 teachers of primary education of Regional Unit of Kavala. From them, 40% are male and 60% are female. The collection of necessary data for the implementation of the research objectives was done using a structured questionnaire which was sent via internet to all permanent teachers of regional unit of Kavala, during May and June of 2014. The final sample of the study consisted of 387 teachers (33% of the population), and 26,6% of whom are male and 73,4% female. The average age of teachers is 42 years and the average length of service is 15 years. Specifically, the average age for men is 46 years and for women 40, while the average length of service for men is 20 years and for women 13 years. The average length of service in particular school is approximately 5,5 years. In the 43,4% of the schools, the principal is male and in the remaining 56,6% is female. Regarding the additional qualification of teachers, found that 1% holds a doctorate degree, 11% a postgraduate degree, 11% hold another degree, 17% have Retraining, while 46,3% have ICT1 and 13,5% ICT2. A great part of teachers have a certification title of foreign language, with most important of them the English language.

#### **3.2 Questionnaire's Description**

The questionnaire that was the research tool of this research consists of two parts. The first part includes questions relating to demographic data (gender, age, experience, qualifications, additional qualifications, etc.) and questions through which the view of teachers reflected on the factors that might affecting the administrative capacity of managing the school unit (gender, age).

In the second part of the questionnaire, which resulted from an extensive literature review, contained 31 questions which are the basic administrative skills which teachers were asked to express their degree of agreement.

Specifically, the first factor that refers to the teaching staff management skills consist of eight (8) questions which arose from the work of Powell [24], Grissom and Loeb [25], Ching [22], Yildirim and Bastug [26], Boonla and Treputtharat [36] and Ross and Gray [37]. The second factor relates to the ability of organizing school consists of six (6) questions which were adopted by Deeboonmee and Ariratana [38], Grissom and Loeb [25], Yildirim and Bastug [26], Shun [28], Taylor [27], Robinson et al. [39], Louis et al. [40], Costellow [23]. The third factor that also consists of six (6) questions concerning the management skills of school and were selected from the work of Shun [28], Deeboonmee and Ariratana, [38], Grissom and Loeb [25], Ghimire and Martin [41] and Costellow [23]. The fourth factor refers to the management capacities of the school environment and consists of eight (8) questions that are selected from the work of Grissom and Loeb [25], Taylor [27], Shun [28], Costellow [23], Horng et al. [42], Boonla and Treputtharat [36], Louis et al. [40] and Robinson et al. [39]. Finally, the fifth factor includes three (3) questions that are raised by the work of Grissom and Loeb [25] and Shun [28] and refer to communication skills with the external environment.

All the questions of second part are statements and have been evaluated in a 5-point Likert scale from 1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree.

#### **3.3 Validity and Reliability Test**

To ensure the appropriateness of the research instrument it was tested for Content Validity and Construct Validity through (1) a review of questions for face validity, (2) factor analysis and (3) computation of Cronbach's Alpha. Previously validated measures are used whenever possible and a pilot test in a panel of experts (professors and professionals) was done. Factor analysis reveals that all measures are uni-dimensional. The extraction

of factors was done with Principal Component Analysis method, using Orthogonal rotation of the axis and Varimax method which is one of the most popular methods of Orthogonal rotation according to Sharma [43] and Haier et al. [44]. In order to test if the data are appropriate for factor analysis, Bartlett's test of sphericity was performed. Furthermore, the Measure of Sampling Adequacy (M.S.A) of Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (K.M.O) was used. Sharma (1996) suggests that K.M.O has to be greater than 0.8. In order to determine the number of factors the criterion of Eigenvalue was used. Factors whose Eigenvalue is over one are selected. Finally, the significance of loadings was checked. In a sample of more than 350 individuals, a loading more than 0.30 is considered as significant [44]. After running a factor analysis with 31 items, a factor model was created with 5 distinctive factors. The reliability of each factor was checked with Cronbach's alpha index which is the most widely used method of reliability assessment in operations management research. Nunally [45] suggests that Cronbach's alpha should be greater than 0,7. The results can be seen on table 1 and are very satisfying as they cover the restrictions which were mentioned earlier.

**Table 1. Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis**

Statements:	Loadings	Factors
<b>The Principal:</b>		
Collaborates with teachers to make decisions	0,777	Management of teaching staff Eigenvalue =8,395  Cronbach's a=0,928
Encourages and motivates teachers for their professional development	0,670	
Solves the problems together with teachers	0,795	
Respects the views of teachers	0,798	
Advises and guides teachers in strategic decisions	0,623	
Allows teachers to work in their work with their own way	0,660	
Creates trust climate	0,816	
Contributes significantly to the reduction of teacher stress	0,763	
<b>Develops a safe school environment</b>	0,725	Organization of unit school Eigenvalue =4,741 Cronbach's a=0,879
Deals with concerns from staff	0,672	
Manages budgets & resources	0,794	
Maintains campus facilities	0,777	
Manages non-instructional staff	0,760	
Interacts/networks with other principals	0,505	
<b>Manages the teaching staff and students</b>	0,507	Management of unit school Eigenvalue =3,690 Cronbach's a=0,891
Manages crises	0,501	
Fulfills the paperwork and requirements	0,750	
Manages students services	0,529	
Completes specific training requirements	0,514	
Understands legal issues	0,563	
<b>Develops relationships with students</b>	0,606	Internal Relationships  Eigenvalue =5,631 Cronbach's a=0,931
Communicates with parents	0,663	
Advises students and parents	0,701	
Resolves conflicts among staff	0,548	
Speaks informally with teachers for students	0,689	
Contributes to positive climate between teachers-students-parents	0,679	
Supports teachers and students	0,637	
Interacts socially with school staff	0,509	
<b>Communicates with the local community to obtain financial resources</b>	0,695	External Relationships Eigenvalue =1,974 Cronbach's a=0,843
Collaborates with the local community and organizations	0,522	
Uses the communication with the Municipal Authority to strengthen the school goals	0,563	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy:		0,964
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	10796,115
	df	465
	Sig.	0,000
Total Variance Explained:		72,27%

## 4. Data Analysis- Results

### 4.1 Basic Measures

The 92% of the teachers believe that the level of management is not depend from the gender of the Principal and moreover they believe that male and female have the same administrative abilities. However, half of them (50%) believe that the level of management depends on the age of the principal.

According to the teachers' opinion, the skills of principals of schools are very satisfactory as the average value ranges between 4,36 and 4,46. In particular, assess as higher the management of teaching staff (4,46) and the ability of organizing school (4,45), and although very high, assessed lower the school management capacity (4,45). The deviations that are shown are due to the different view of teachers and are relatively small and suggest their almost identical views.

**Table 2. Basic Measures**

Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coefficient of Variation
Management of teaching staff	4,46	0,60884	13,65%
Organization of unit school	4,45	0,58706	13,19%
Management of unit school	4,38	0,64699	14,77%
Internal Relationships	4,41	0,61740	14,00%
External Relationships	4,36	0,73263	16,80%

### 4.2 Analysis of Variance

Through variance analysis there isn't any significant difference found between male and female teachers according to the view for the Principals' capacities'. F-statistics is not statistically significant for all factors (Sig.>0,05). As a conclusion, the educational staff regardless gender, appreciate to the same extent the Principals' capacities.

**Table 3. ANOVA by Gender**

Factors	F	Sig.
Management of teaching staff	0,265	0,607
Organization of unit school	0,658	0,418
Management of unit school	0,170	0,897
Internal Relationships	0,040	0,949
External Relationships	0,251	0,617

The type of teacher (teacher, kindergarten teacher, trainer, English, etc.) is a factor which is responsible for the differentiation of assessment of competencies of managers to factor "Administration of School" as the value of the statistics F (10,546) is significance (Sig. = 0,001 <0,05). In particular, the kindergarteners appreciate less (4,2) capabilities of the directors in relation to teachers of primary schools (4,5). Diversification is also observed in factor "Communication and Relations with the External Environment» (F = 6,096 Sig. = 0,014 <0,05) where teachers evaluate higher (4,4) the abilities of managers to communicate with the external environment, relative to kindergarten (4,2).

**Table 4. ANOVA by type of teachers**

Factors	F	Sig.
Management of teaching staff	0,095	0,758
Organization of unit school	2,982	0,085
Management of unit school	10,546	0,001
Internal Relationships	0,746	0,388
External Relationships	6,096	0,014

#### 4.3 Cluster Analysis

Different groups of perceived abilities of principals were identified using a cluster analysis based on the z-transformed scores of the mean of five factors. The squared Euclidean distance, in combination with Ward's method was used for combining clusters. Examination of the dendrogram and the agglomeration schedule suggested a two cluster solution. In the first cluster belongs the 37% of the teachers and in the second the 63%. The first cluster is characterized by a conservative evaluation of principals' abilities and is composed by younger teachers with less experience and teachers who work in kindergartens. The second cluster consists of primary school teachers, older and more experienced. Their opinion about the skills of principals is clearly better than the teachers of the first cluster.

**Table 5. Cluster Analysis**

Factors	1st Cluster Means	1nd Cluster Means	F	Sig.
Management of teaching staff	3,89	4,79	393,047	0,000
Organization of unit school	3,84	4,82	711,260	0,000
Management of unit school	3,72	4,77	632,517	0,000
Internal Relationships	3,82	4,77	499,250	0,000
External Relationships	3,75	4,71	265,748	0,000

#### 5. Conclusions

The modern school is affected by the new standards and requirements in order to achieve its objectives. The existence of many difficulties in achieving these objectives makes necessary and appropriate the management by the heads of schools in many areas. From the analysis of the survey, the results confirmed that the majority of principals of primary schools are men whereas of kindergartens are women. The majority of teachers who constitute the sample of the research beyond the basic qualifications have attended at least one training course and one out of five hold a master's degree. The opinion of teachers about the skills of the principals of the schools is identified as positive. They say that the management of teaching staff, the management and administration of the school, the external relationships are being managed successfully. In particular, in the factor "teaching staff management" teachers believe that the principal helps to build a climate of trust and confidence and respects the views of the teachers.

In the factor organizational management of the school, the principals pay special attention to developing a safe school environment and to the maintenance and configuration of the school. Concerning the administration of the school unit the principals perform efficiently their bureaucratic obligations while effectively contribute in creating a positive climate between teachers and students. Finally, they manage to develop trusting and collaborating relations with the local community and the organizations. The results of the study showed how important the role of the principal of the school unit is for its development and progression as seen in the research of Shun [28], which contributes firstly to the professional development of teaching staff and then follows the assurance of quality, the strategies which he/she apply, the training curriculum, communication with parents, the external environment and the local community, and finally the management of resources and teaching staff.

The management of the student population, the assurance of a safe school environment and the appropriate developmental strategies were outcomes that emerged also in the investigation of Deeboonmee and Ariratana [38]. The management capability found not to be affected by the sex of the school principal, but mostly by the years of service as an administrative member and his/her qualifications and agrees with the research of Piaw et al. (2013), in which the results showed that men and women have about the same capacity in the school administration which is more dependent on management experience and years in administration. The data are also consistent as far as the understanding of legal issues by the Executive is concerned. The results in terms of the contribution of the head teacher to student management but also to assurance of a good school climate and environment agree with the survey results of Deeboonmee and Ariratana [38].

The contribution of the principal, to the management of staff and financial resources, to the cooperation of the administration with teachers for decision making and problem solving, in the encouragement and motivation of teachers towards their professional development and in the crisis management is found in the investigation of Powell [24], Grissom and Loeb [25], Ching [22], Yildirim and Bastug [26], Taylor [27], Robinson et al. [10], Louis et al. [40], Costellow [23], Shun [28]. Regarding the advisory role of the principal to teachers for the conflicts between them, his informal conversation with teachers about students, communication with

the local community to obtain financial resources, the use of communication with the Municipal Authority to strengthen the school goals, communication and cooperation with other Managers of school principals, management of support staff and the care for the maintenance and shaping the school, the results of research related to the research of Shun [28].

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