

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES IN LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION IN SLOVENIA BASED ON SOME SELECTED PROJECTS

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Abstract. This paper presents the significance of the role of the head teacher and the importance of the National School for Leadership in Education, founded in 1996 with the aim of empowering head teachers with ongoing new knowledge and skills, as well as Slovenian legislation referring to the conditions for head teachers, the procedure of selecting head teachers, their responsibilities as well as numerous tasks the head teacher has to perform. According to the data, most head teachers in Slovenia are female. Head teachers are facing numerous bureaucratic tasks, lack of time for pedagogical leadership, and inappropriate career development. Regarding the challenges mentioned, three current topics, programmes or projects, which include a large number of head teachers, are presented in the paper. The first deals with the development of the programme Managing and leading innovative learning environments which consists of three pillars: (1) Consultancy, (2) Distributed leadership, and (3) Managing head teachers' career. The second topic represents projects in the field of quality, and the third one tackles the field of entrepreneurial competences of head teachers and leadership teams. In spite of various projects and programmes in which the head teachers participate in order to acquire new competences, head teachers are still facing a lot of challenges on a daily basis. Only some of them are mentioned in the paper, such as cooperation or partnership with parents, amending the procedure of the appointment of head teachers, and the need for various forms of support, required by head teachers in their work.

Keywords: head teachers, innovative learning environments, quality, entrepreneurial competences, Slovenia.

INTRODUCTION

The role of head teachers is one the most important factors in assuring the quality of learning and teaching young people in schools and other educational institutions. While there is little evidence of direct impacts and effects of the head teacher's leading on the students' achievements, most authors

in the field of leadership in education (MacBeath & Dempster, 2009; Male & Palaologou, 2012; West-Burnham, 2009) mention the head teacher's indirect influence, which is shown mainly in creating the conditions for learning and teaching. Encouraging and ensuring professional growth of teachers are among the key factors influencing the quality of lessons.

Furthermore, the policy at the European level also emphasizes the significance of leadership and leadership teams. In their 2009 decisions the Ministers of education of the European Community (EU, 2009) communicated very clearly that successful leading of schools is the most important factor in creating an appropriate learning environment. In addition, the most recent Communication of the European Commission (EU, 2017) included supporting school leaders for excellent teaching and learning in the priority areas for the support of reforms in the field of education. Consequently, most European countries have developed programmes for head teacher trainings.

In 1996 the Government of the Republic of Slovenia established the National School for Leadership in Education, whose mission is to strengthen the abilities for leading. This entails the implementation of the principles of life-long learning of head teachers and education staff who carry out some leadership tasks. The support includes annual conferences for head teachers and assistant head teachers, various seminars and workshops, as well as publicizing and participation in national and international projects (<http://en.solazaravnatelj.si/index.html>). However, the main activity of the National School for Leadership in Education is the headship licence programme.

Due to the rapid changes in the role of head teachers, the ways of training are also changing, incorporating new topics and programmes. Both global trends and head teachers' needs in Slovenia have to be followed. At the moment, there are quite a few projects and programmes in progress in Slovenia, aimed at developing new competences of head teachers so that they will be able to cope with various roles they have to perform in the rapidly changing knowledge-based society.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

In Slovenia, schools are led by head teachers who, in addition to exercising pedagogical leadership, also manage their schools. The term 'school leader' defines a head teacher who exercises the function of a pedagogical (instructional) leader and has, in accordance with the framework act, i.e. Organization and Financing of Education Act (hereinafter referred to as: the ZOFVI), certain authority and responsibilities for the implementation

of the curriculum, for leading the whole pedagogical process, as well as for managing finance and the school processes according to the legislation. The number of employed technical, administrative and auxiliary staff is defined according to the number of enrolled students or classes.

Organisation and Financing of Education Act (2016) includes some articles, referring to the head teachers of educational institutions. Article 53 lays down the conditions the head teachers have to meet. The requirements for the appointment are as follows: to meet the requirements for being a teacher, to be a mentor or advisor for at least five years,¹ and to have or acquire the headship certificate. Newly appointed head teachers without the certificate have to complete it within their first year as acting head teacher. A head teacher has permanent employment as a teacher yet he/she performs the function of a head teacher for five years. This can be extended by subsequent elections. He/she is appointed and dismissed from the head teachership by the School Council, which is in charge of conducting both procedures. The School Council consists of 11 members, five of whom are representatives of employees, three representatives of the founder, and three representatives of parents or students in secondary schools.

Before the appointment (or dismissal) the School Council acquires an opinion from: the teachers' assembly, the local community where the school is located in the case of a kindergarten or primary school, parents' council, and students in the case of upper secondary educational institutions.

When the Council has selected the candidate for the head teacher from the applicants, the well-argued proposal for the appointment is submitted to the minister who is supposed to deliver an opinion. If the minister does not deliver his/her opinion within 30 days of the date the proposal was submitted, the Council may decide about the appointment of the head teacher without the minister's opinion.

Article 49 of the Organization and Financing of Education Act (2016) lays down the responsibilities of the head teacher who is the pedagogical leader and manager of a public kindergarten or school. As many as 23 tasks are included, connected with management and pedagogical leadership. Most of the tasks are difficult to distinguish as either managerial or pedagogical tasks, since they are mainly interconnected. They include: organisation, planning and managing the institution; organisation of mentorship for trainees; proposing promotion of education staff to titles and deciding on the promotion of employees to the higher salary brackets; taking care of cooperation with parents; responsibility for the quality assessment and assurance

¹ Mentor, advisor and counsellor are titles that teachers acquire as a part of their career advancement.

with self-evaluation, and annual reports on the self-evaluation of school or kindergarten. However, some head teacher's responsibilities can undoubtedly be regarded as management: ensuring that decisions adopted by the state authorities are implemented; representing the school or kindergarten; being accountable for the legality of the institution's work; adopting decisions regarding the staffing structure of posts and concluding employment contracts, as well as ensuring the disciplinary accountability of employees.

The performance of head teachers is established annually by the School Council on the basis of the criteria defined for each level of educational institutions.

CURRENT STATE OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN THE COUNTRY

According to the data by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, at the moment there are 853 head teachers in Slovenia. There are more women than men, and the average period of employment is 27 years (Table 1).

Table 1. Head teachers in Slovenia (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, February 2019, KPIS)²

Institutions	Total	Male	Female	Average employment period
Kindergarten*	108	7	101	25
Primary school**	483	170	313	28
Music school	67	36	31	23
Institutions for special needs***	21	13	8	26
Secondary school	160	76	84	27
Residence halls for students	14	5	6	29
Total	853	307	543	27

Legend:

- * independent public kindergarten
- ** includes primary schools with adapted programme
- *** institution for education of children and juveniles with special needs

² KPIS (Personnel wage information system) is an application of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, aimed at accessing web applications by which the Ministry and educational institutions exchange information. According to the way of providing funds for the operation of the institutions, it is compulsory for primary education. Primary education institutions report in detail about each employee and that is the basis for providing the funds for the operation of the institution. Funds for the operation of kindergartens are provided by municipalities. Secondary schools are financed according to the number of students and the price of an individual secondary school programme.

There is little research on the leadership in education in Slovenia. Some data can be found within TIMSS, PISA and TALIS international studies, but those are not primarily concerned with the area of leadership. National research is mainly limited to master's or doctoral theses while extensive research on headship has not yet been conducted. The National School for Leadership in Education has conducted a few minor qualitative investigations as we wanted to take into account not only international trends but also the Slovenian context. Therefore, the challenges presented are mainly the result of long-term experience in working with head teachers and knowledge of the area of educational leadership.

A lot of bureaucratic tasks. Head teachers (or directors in case of upper secondary school centres) are relatively autonomous in several areas: selection of staff, allocation of resources for material costs, purchasing equipment for the school, designing the content of the elective part of the program, organisation of school work, ensuring the quality of educational processes, and cooperation with the environment, to mention only the most relevant references. Nevertheless, the operation of a school is limited by the growing number of rules in different areas, such as fire safety, personal data protection, regulations in the field of safe food, etc. Recently, agitation has been caused mainly by the new regulation of the teachers' working hours. It has been proposed by the Ministry that the 40-hour week should be recorded more precisely and transparently, i.e. teaching hours, meetings, preparations, professional development activities, etc. This causes a lot of administration but also teachers' dissatisfaction. In spite of the fact that each government promises less bureaucracy, in practice the latter is constantly increasing.

Not enough time for pedagogical leadership. The double role of head teachers – as pedagogical leaders and managers, as defined in the Organization and Financing of Education Act – is not something characteristic only for Slovenia. Most European countries report similar regulation (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2010). In Slovenia, there has been no consensus on separating the roles to managerial and pedagogical ones, neither among head teachers nor politicians. There is a prevalent general opinion that head teachers do not devote enough of their time to pedagogical leadership, as they are often weighed down by legal and financial responsibilities and are thus unable to spend more of their time on lesson observations, discussions about learning, or their own learning. However, the above are the essential dimensions of leading for learning (Southworth, 2011).

Inappropriate career development of head teachers. In Slovenia, teachers can be promoted to three titles: mentor, advisor and counsellor. They

are promoted on the basis of participation in various forms of training and additional professional work. However, there are no such opportunities for head teachers. They can be promoted as teachers, i.e. in their subject area in which they were active before they became head teachers. Achievements in leadership or life-long learning of head teachers are not taken into account in promotions. In other words, a head teacher could in theory remain a head teacher after obtaining the headship licence without any further training in leadership. Some amendments, which should encourage head teachers' professional development, are being prepared at the national level.

Therefore, the responsibility brought by the new role (from teacher to head teacher), and numerous changes require appropriate support so that head teachers are able to lead their employees successfully and thus ensure an appropriate environment for student learning. This is the reason why in 1996 the Government of the Republic of Slovenia established the National School for Leadership in Education (NSLE).

Slovenia has a well-developed system of lifelong professional development of school leaders. It begins with the pre-service programme, leading to the headship licence, which is one of the conditions for being appointed to the headship position. It lasts for one year (144 contact hours, 1 day shadowing, assignments, and self-study). It is aimed for head teachers, who are obliged to finish it within a year (app. 20% of participants) and for so called "candidates for head teachers" (app. 80% of participants). The latter can be any teacher who would fulfil the legal conditions for becoming a head teacher. Newly appointed head teachers can also participate in the program Mentoring for Newly Appointed Head teachers. It is intended to be systematic support and assistance for head teachers in the first term of headship. Later in their career head teachers can choose among several longer programs of at least one year duration, such as Leadership for Learning, Headship Development, and Head Teachers' Networks. All of them are based on the latest research findings and active methods of professional development. However, this is not the complete offer of professional development training opportunities for head teachers. There are annual conferences, shorter courses of 1 or 2 days, duration covering mainly new legislation and/or developing specific skills. They are delivered either by The National School for Leadership in Education (NSLE) or by other public or private institutions (*Pravilnik o nadaljnjem izobraževanju in usposabljanju strokovnih delavcev v vzgoji in izobraževanju*, 2004).

The core of NSLE activities has been the pre-service programme leading to the official licence. Its main goal is to train participants for the tasks of school and kindergarten leadership and management as defined within

education legislation, as well as to develop competences contributing to personal and organisational efficiency. Participants of the program are head teachers and head teacher candidates (all those teachers that fulfil legal conditions to be appointed head teachers): The program is implemented in small groups of 18 to 21 participants so active methods such as workshops, work in groups, case studies, role playing, exchange of participants' experiences, and presentations of particular organizations can be used.

The programme for Headship Licence³ consists of 6 compulsory modules:

- Introductory module: head teacher as a manager and as a leader, team building, learning styles, and change management;
- Organizational theory and leadership: organisational theory, models of school organisation, school leadership;
- Planning and decision making: vision, planning, approaches to decision-making;
- Head teachers' skills: managing conflicts, running meetings, observing lessons;
- Human resources: climate and culture, motivation, staff professional development;
- Legislation.

Other programmes complement the initial training. NSLE, and also the Faculty of Education of the University of Primorska, coordinate or participate in several national and international programmes. In this paper the focus will be on three themes, projects and programmes which are being implemented at the moment and include a rather large proportion of head teachers: a development programme titled Leading and Managing Innovative Learning Environments (VIO), Introducing and piloting model of assessing and assuring quality in education (OPK), and development of entrepreneurial competences in primary and secondary school (projects Entrepreneurial Competences for School Leadership Teams – EC4SLT, POGUM⁴ and PODVIG⁵).

³ More information about Headship Licence Programme is available on web page NSLE: <http://en.solazaravnatelje.si/Activities.html?#HeadshipLicenceProgramme>.

⁴ POGUM (POdjetnost Gradnik zaUpanja Mladih) is the abbreviation for the project coordinated by the National Education Institute Slovenia) titled Strengthening entrepreneurial competences and enhancing flexible transition between education and environment in basic schools.

⁵ PODVIG (POdjetnost V Gimnaziji) is the project also coordinated by the National Education Institute Slovenia, titled Strengthening entrepreneurial competences and enhancing flexible transition between education and environment in gymnasias.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME: MANAGING AND LEADING INNOVATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS (VIO)

The VIO programme started in 2016 and will be finished in 2019. It is co-financed by the European Social Fund, and supervised by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. It consists of three fields or pillars: consultancy (SV), distributed leadership (DV), and managing head teachers' career (VKR). The fields ensure support on three interlinked levels: personal level (VKR), institutional level (DV), and the level of external support (SV) (Erčulj & Goljat Prelogar, 2016). Teaching managers and developing their abilities for leadership takes place at three interlinked levels (NCSL, 2014). As it is emphasised that also more flexible forms of supporting head teacher's leading should be developed and that the contexts and contemporaneity of the designed programmes should be taken into account, particularly the intertwining of education and experiential learning in specific situations, the significance of life and work experience, reflexivity, interactivity, and support by colleagues and networking, the Consultancy pillar places great emphasis on the support to head teachers in their pedagogical and managerial function (Schleicher, 2012).

Level or Pillar Consultancy

The starting points for Pillar Consultancy were the head teachers' needs in the Mentoring programme for newly appointed head teachers (Erčulj & Goljat Prelogar, 2016). It was found out that head teachers need continuous and systematic support in pedagogical leadership and particularly in management (e.g. employment relationships, internal acts, and similar). That was pointed out also by the Association of Head Teachers. For that purpose, the National School for Leadership in Education has developed new forms of consultancy within Lifelong learning programmes for head teachers – training for leading schools and kindergartens II – IV in the period from 2011 to 2015: setting up e-support to head teachers providing examples and templates of internal acts and answers to questions, consultancy visits for the review of the educational institution internal acts and topical workshops. When the programme finished, the NSLE only kept answers to the current questions that head teachers address to the legal expert because other forms of support were not financed after the end of the projects. In the field of pedagogical leadership, NSLE employees have conducted only a few pilot consultancies that individual head teachers requested, but a systematic approach to consultancy has not been developed yet. VIO has been an opportunity to establish and develop consultancy as one of the NSLE activities.

The term “consultancy” means support where an external expert (in case of VIO project an expert from the NSLE or an experienced head teacher with the required references – head teacher expert) helps the head teacher analyse and improve practice in a specific situation or when dealing with a specific problem (Erčulj & Goljat Prelogar, 2016). Consultancy is also a form of help which is not based on providing advice but serves as support for head teachers to look for own solutions (*Ibid.*). It is focused on current problems and adapted to everyday changes – i.e., it is very contextualised and encourages conscious decisions by the person who is being advised, which means that it does not offer actual solutions (*Ibid.*). Kubr (2002) defines consultancy as all forms of support or help in the content, process, and structure of tasks where the counsellor is not directly responsible for the implementation but helps those who are. In management, counsellors are usually specially trained counsellors, often experienced managers who have developed certain practice and possess the knowledge they can apply to support others. In case of VIO both aspects are linked, as counsellors are experts in the legal field as well as experienced head teachers or “head teachers experts” (Erčulj & Goljat Prelogar, 2016).

Counsellors (in the legal field and experienced head teachers) assume various tasks. They are experts for the content; participants in problem solving, they look for and assess various possible solutions, encourage decision-making and implementation of the solutions, and they are also experts for the consultancy process and thinking practitioner (Kubr, 2002). According to the author (*Ibid.*), the counsellor has to have certain personal characteristics such as: reliability, flexibility, persistence, discipline, and professional self-confidence.

The evaluation for consultancy, which included head teacher experts, has been completed. Forty-two consultancies have been carried out, half from the area of management and the other half from pedagogical leadership. This form of consultancy is new in our system because head teacher-experts have not been involved in consultancy so far. In practice, two visits to head teacher-consultees were carried out in each case: the first one for definition of the problem, and the second one for searching for solutions. Between the two visits, the head teacher-expert and NSLE expert discuss possible solutions.

The participating head teachers praised such ways of work, except the time and location distances (in few cases). They liked the way of consultancy (counsellors did not impose their solutions), willingness to help, and the opportunity to exchange examples of good practice. This is one of the answers: “I always understood the course of counselling as a professional

discussion of problems and as help of the counsellor who already had practical experience in our challenges.” We were also interested in how the consultancy affected their leadership. Some of the answers are summarised as follows: “I received confirmation for my decisions; I have more professional self-confidence, I gained new knowledge, I gained a new perspective on school leadership.” Other questions referred to the organisation of the consultancy, support by the NSLE and sustainability.

Level or pillar entitled Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership refers to the “middle management” who directs, organises, and leads the institution’s work together with the head teacher. Distributed leadership should support the head teacher’s leadership and management.

Distributed leadership is defined as the practice of leading which encourages engaging expert help which exists in the collective (Erčulj & Goljat Prelogar, 2016). Distributed leadership is considered to empower leadership teams and as a way of thinking and acting which supports the development and changing of the educational institution. The design of this Pillar was based on an international project “European Policy Network on School Leadership” (EPNoSL), led by Kathy Kikis-Papadakis from the Foundation for Research and Technology (FORTH), Greece, and lasting from 2011 to 2014. Three partners from Slovenia participated in the EPNoSL Project: National School for Leadership in Education, Faculty of Education of University of Primorska and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. Various materials were created within the EPNoSL project which could be used for training of teams, for example a publication titled *School Leadership for Equity and Learning: The EPNoSL Toolkit* (2015). Certain forms of distributed leadership existed in Slovenian practice, as exemplified by the role of assistant head teachers and heads of subject groups and class teachers, i.e., middle management (Erčulj & Goljat Prelogar, 2016).

Different activities have been carried out in the framework of this pillar: investigating one’s own practice through different questionnaires, interviews and observations, identification of “good practice” of distributed leadership, development and implementation of the training programme for management teams, consultancy to management teams, networking among teams, sharing practice, peer support and collaborative learning. Different forms (models) of distributed leadership were piloted in the pilot schools.

Level or pillar entitled Managing head teacher's career

The Glossary (2011) defines career as a process in which an individual plans his/her working, personal and educational path, which can take place independently or with the help of a counsellor. Different types of careers are listed, e.g. in addition to the vertical, also horizontal, expert or spiral career⁶ (Kotur, 2012). It should be added that different types of careers can change and that in a certain time one type, e.g. vertical, prevails, which then changes into horizontal, and similar.

In the programme, Managing head teacher's career, the pillar is defined as empowering the head teacher for better self-knowledge, being aware of opportunities in society, strengthening decision-making skills, and transitioning along the career path (Erčulj & Goljat Prelogar, 2016), which is linked to different types of career.

Managing a head teacher's career pillar includes mentoring as well as consultancy, linked to the two head teacher's functions mentioned – leading and managing. Managing a head teacher's career pillar emphasises the development of career management skill (Ažman *et al.*, 2018). It is based on “the assumption that only a head teacher who possesses the career management skill can encourage such development in the education staff who, in turn, can strengthen it on the basis of their experience and knowledge with children, pupils and students” (Ažman *et al.*, 2018: 6). The programme developed and strengthened career management skill in five areas: knowing oneself, knowing the environment, decision-making, transition, and proactivity (Ažman *et al.*, 2018).

Four non-structured interviews conducted with head teachers in 2016 (in Erčulj & Goljat Prelogar, 2016) revealed that:

- the interviewed head teachers are facing the need for individual support and support by people who are important to them (e.g. other head teachers, family, colleagues);
- they know the areas where they are strong but sometimes they find themselves in circumstances where they would need help due to the versatility of the challenges at work;
- they do not think a lot about the future and plan their education on the career path loosely, although the system of re-election every five years forces them to consider that; and

⁶ Horizontal career means a shift in the same institution or between institutions, i.e. by changing the scope of work at the same level or by changing profession (Kotur, 2012). Expert career denotes a narrow focus or specialisation in one domain while spiral career means periodical changes of work domains, profession or specialisation (*Ibid.*).

- they have not thought about career development outside the area of education.

Work on the three pillars of the VIO programme will be concluded with design of a model of comprehensive support to head teachers and proposals for system solution for the implementation of the model.

PROJECTS IN THE FIELD OF QUALITY

Since 2010 the National School for Leadership in Education has been implementing national projects for implementing quality assurance in education (OPK). Training for self-evaluation and empowering schools for undertaking self-evaluation have been conducted in the projects so far. The new OPK project, which started in 2016, involves establishing self-evaluation indicators. OPK programme aims at defining a common concept of quality assessment and assurance at the level of educational institutions (the level of pre-schools, primary and secondary schools) and indirectly at the level of the educational system. The concept is being piloted within the programme. The goals of the programme are as follows:

- to establish a uniform system of quality assessment and assurance, to standardise the understanding and approach to the self-evaluation of schools and kindergartens while taking the area specifics into account;
- to strengthen the ability to implement self-evaluation at the system, organisational and individual levels;
- to develop and prepare the selected⁷, compulsory and selected reference frameworks and indicators for the introduction of improvements and the related self-evaluation of kindergartens and schools;
- to establish “professional cores”⁸ at public institutions for supporting kindergartens and schools in assessing and assuring quality;
- to establish cooperation between the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and professional cores for continuous, efficient and sustainable operation of the quality assessment and assurance system.

In addition to the National School for Leadership in Education, partners in the programme are the National Education Institute, Centre for Vocational Education and National Examination Centre. There are 32 participating schools, half of which are developmental and half of which are pilot schools.

⁷ They select only a few of them. This is agreed among partners in the consortium.

⁸ Professional cores denote groups of experts within public institutions that will support schools during their self-evaluation and improvement process.

The developmental schools are involved in the development of quality indicators as active partners. Quality indicators and standards have been created for the following fields:

- learning and teaching (subfields: achievements by students or development and learning of children, professional development of education staff, and school climate and culture);
- management of schools;
- quality management;
- cooperation with the environment.

At the moment, it is somewhat unclear how self-evaluation of schools will be carried out. It is likely that it will be a combination of compulsory indicators, defined by the minister, and optional indicators, defined by schools according to their priorities. All the purposes of collecting data are not clear yet, either. It is certain, however, that self-evaluation results will not be used for ranking of schools. The solutions should be provided by the new White Paper, which is supposed to define the role of public institutions in the field of quality assessment and assurance.

ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCIES

We confirmed that from many aspects, managing a school is similar to managing a small company (Cencič & Štemberger, 2016). Head teachers play a prominent role in schools; it has been increasingly evident that they urgently need competencies in the area of entrepreneurship. The fact is that various educational changes demand entrepreneurial leadership (Hentschke, 2009). School heads need entrepreneurial skills in order to effectively manage their schools. Unfortunately, only very few universities offer formal entrepreneurship training for school heads.

One of the definitions of entrepreneurship, also adopted and supplemented by the Thematic Working Group on Entrepreneurship Education⁹ (2014) is that entrepreneurship refers to an individual's ability to turn ideas into action, to be innovative, take risks, plan and manage projects with a view to achieving objectives, and being able to seize opportunities (Thematic Working Group on Entrepreneurship Education, 2014). Entrepreneurial competencies are comprised of components that are deeply rooted in a person's background (traits, personality, attitudes, social role, and

⁹ The policy guidance document of the European Commission to support the entrepreneurship education across the European Union (EU) member states.

self-image) as well as those that can be acquired at work or through training and education (skills, knowledge, experience) (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2010). Entrepreneurial competencies are closely linked with leadership and management competencies; while management competencies are about what managers should be able to do, leadership and entrepreneurial competencies are more about how people behave. Developing leadership and entrepreneurial competencies is about helping people to learn to behave in certain ways (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2010). Entrepreneurial competencies require active methods of engaging learners to release their creativity and innovation; entrepreneurial competencies and skills can be acquired or built only through hands-on, real life learning experiences and with cooperation and partnership with colleagues (Entrepreneurship Education, 2013). For this reason, the European School Heads Association (ESHA) together with Newcastle University / North Leadership Centre (UK), EdEducation LTD (UK), University of Jyväskylä / Institute of Educational Leadership (Finland), University of Primorska (Slovenia) and Bucharest University of Economic Studies (Romania) aim to develop a training course to equip school leaders and aspiring school leaders with the necessary entrepreneurial competencies to lead, manage and improve schools. The name of the project was Entrepreneurial Competences for School Leadership Teams (EC4SLT), and it lasted from 2014 to 2016.

One of the objectives of the project was to establish an enquiry network to identify best practice and identify gaps in provision in the delivery of four areas of entrepreneurial competence: (1) strategic thinking and visioning; (2) team building, personnel management and development; (3) communication and negotiation skills; and (4) financial resources mobilization and optimization. On the basis of a literature review, the four competence areas mentioned were broken down to corresponding competencies (EC4SLT, 2014).

In each participating country (Great Britain, Finland, Romania and Slovenia) four primary and secondary schools or other educational institutions were invited to take part in the project. As a result, in addition to the University of Primorska, the Slovenian team includes the following four partners: two primary schools, one high school and an institution engaged in work with deaf and hard-of-hearing students. The schools are located in different parts of Slovenia. Based on the criterion of "good example schools", these four schools were invited to participate in the project. The work in Slovenia in each school and at the University of Primorska was based on active teaching methods in workshops for all participating school teams. Workshops were run on the basis of cooperative learning and were mainly

organised in groups, which were (depending on the objectives) composed of members from the same school or from different schools. For each school critical points were also identified and cooperative action research aimed to improve the situation was planned and carried out. The final results of cooperative research (professional enquiry) were presented at the final international conference in Koper, Slovenia (13 June, 2016).

Among the implications for educational policies we point out training that emerges from practice for practice, through reflection and research, and it includes training at work, as well as coaching led by the project group. Learning at work, based on cooperative learning and reflection through research is the most efficient way of learning (EC4SLT, 2014). Education at school and at the university as well as the presentation of the results of the study is an example of active, cooperative learning and it develops partnerships among various institutions.

VIEW TOWARD THE FUTURE

At the moment, the position of head teachers is rather complicated and requires system solutions. Head teachers' salaries were raised after year-long negotiations with the Ministry. Undoubtedly, one problem is that head teachers are constantly scrutinized by various stakeholders. There is a lot of pressure exerted by parents with whom a dialogue and partner relationship will have to be established, where the school will be able to protect its professional autonomy and parents will be involved in co-creation of the school policy. Trust between the parents and the school will have to be re-established and thus decrease the number of anonymous reports to the inspection service.

Currently, discussions on creating a new White Paper are starting. Undoubtedly, there will be changes also in the field of leadership in education, but at the moment there is no clear picture of the direction of changes. The appointment of head teachers should be reconsidered, as the present regulation is not appropriate. The procedure of obtaining opinions on the selection of the head teacher is complex, particularly when considering the fact that the opinions are not binding. The influence of employees is too large and a lot of head teachers find it difficult to adopt less popular decisions although they may be beneficial for students. Therefore, we are expecting a solution which will be democratic enough and at the same time contribute to higher professionalization of the head teacher's job. Fewer burdens with administrative tasks would also contribute to that.

Head teachers are of key importance in assuring quality in schools. They have to know the principles of leadership and implement them so that learning and teaching are improved. At the same time, they have to act as role models, followed by both the employees and students. They have to be flexible and responsive to continuous challenges they are facing; they should also continuously develop new competences for additional roles they play in society. Therefore, they need enough autonomy, and at the same time all of us who work in education have to provide them with appropriate support in the managerial and pedagogical field of their work.

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