Research concerning psychological abilities of the successful school manager

C. Novac

Corneliu Novac
Reader
TSTD - University of Craiova

Abstract:
The current research tackles a particular aspect of psychosocial problem of successful school management: the extent to which psychological variables related to the personality of the leader may condition the efficiency and implicitly the success of his managerial actions. By applying the NEO PI-R questionnaire to 50 teachers and school managers in the district of Dolj, we have come to the conclusion that the most important psychological variables that influence the success in management are: sociability, agreeability openness to new teaching experiences, analytical and emotional intelligence.

We have also tried emphasize the skills needed for a school manager in his attempt to fulfill the requirements resulting from his status and to motivate his subordinates in achieving the goals of the organization, be it a class of pupils, a school, a school inspectorate or a ministry.

Key concepts: managerial success, adaptive conduct, characteristic adaptations, personality traits, the BIG FIVE model, sociability, openness to creative ideas, agreeability, reliability, analytical intelligence, emotional intelligence.

1. Managerial success – a multi-determined psychosocial variable

The term 'management' found its way into the field of education due to the school personnel's preoccupation to, on the one hand, bring to light all the educational resources available and to increase the efficiency of the educational act, on the other hand. In this regard, the actions undertaken by school management are to increase the performances of the learning institution. All the psycho-pedagogical research agrees on the complex multi-factorial features of

success achievement in "the science and art of leadership in socio –human organizations", as the field of management is synthetically defined (Moraru, 1995; Cosmovici, Iacob, 1998; Prodan, 1999; Joiţa, 2004).

Management is a science because its is based on synthesizing and generalizing the practical experience of leadership, on the formulation and application of principles and laws of leadership, on the implementation of the most efficient solutions to the problems of a socio –human organization.

Management is at the same time 'the art' of the leader in achieving objectives through the mobilization of efforts on the part of all the members in that particular organization. In other words, management is the art of working with 4 elements: ideas   (the prospect, the objectives, syllabi, strategies); relations (organizational structures, relations between elements, actions, tasks, the authority/freedom balance, centralization/de-centralization); people (training, motivation, release from authority, stimulation, evaluation); resources (specification, diversity, preoccupation, adaptation, functionality, integration, furthertraining)-E. Joiţa, 2004, p.17.

In this respect, the success of any management activity in the field of education presupposes taking into consideration in equal measure all the possible psycho-social implications which may determine the efficiency of the leader's behavior, as well as those which make up the respective school institution. In other words, the psychological dimension of the personalities of those involved in the educational relationship (teachers, school inspectors, pupils etc) should provide the starting point and the finishing line in achieving the success of leadership in the educational activity.

Psychology research indicates that success, especially in the educational field, is conditioned by psychological components such as: general aptitudes and special psycho-pedagogical ones, the capacity of self-perception, the motivation for self-achievement, of social appreciation, psycho-social competence etc. (Mitrofan, 1998; Cosmovici, Iacob, 1998; Joiţa, 2004).

2. Modern research on evaluating the structure and dynamics of personality within the framework of managerial requirements

The uniqueness of one's personality and behavior represents a priority in the explanatory preoccupations of psychology. Recent psychological research in this direction indicates that the infinite variability defining the psychological specificity of the human way of being is determined by the simultaneous differentiation of the traits of personality, on several levels.

These psychological structures result from the impact of basic psychological and motivational tendencies, on the one hand, and from the psycho-social variables (parental or educators' requirements, influences from the social cultural norms, from the entourage etc.) on the other. The structures

in question account for the multitude of adaptive conducts of the subject or for the characteristic adaptations, as specialized terminology names them. These conducts are nothing but the feno-typical expression of basic psychological tendencies of an individual's and of his/her personality features. As a subdivision of these specific adaptations there arises a person's self image and simultaneously we witness the emergence of the cognitive, affective and behavioral infrastructure of the character structure of that person.

As shown by psycho-genetic research, the character is interiorized with respect to all the values transmitted by the socio-educational environment to the child as requirements to abide by. Once internalized, these values will influence the child's behavior, the character being the highest ranking structure of relations and self-regulatory for personality. Concluding, character traits in leaders or subordinates may affect the organizational activity in a positive or in a negative way.

3. The methodology of research, concepts, objective, investigation approaches

On the basis of recent research in the field of personality psychology, the present research has sought the accomplishment of the following objectives:

- establishing a set of features relevant for the successful behavior of a school manager;
- setting into practice a valid model of evaluation for the respective features;
- establishing a profile for the successful manager in the educational field based on the relation between the personality traits and the specific behavior generated by them.

Our investigative attempt has relied for theoretical support on the latest and most notorious personality explanatory theoretical concept i.e. the five dimension factorial model conceived by P.T. Costa and R.R. McCrae (see Minulescu, 1996).

From a methodological point of view, we have used the NEO-Personality Inventory-Revised Questionnaire (idem) in order to identify the dominant personality traits, as they are configured in the structure of the personality of the successful manager. The subjects tested included 50 teachers, school managers with acknowledged experience in the field of school management, participating in a post-university training course.

4. Presentation and interpretation of research data

The data obtained as a result of using the NEO PI-R questionnaire have revealed the fact that following competences are of the utmost importance in

leadership efficiency. They are tightly related to personality traits. The most important ones are listed below:

− Sociability: the most successful leaders display considerable social skills, which is understandable since they spend most of their time in relationship with their subordinates;

− Openness to creative ideas- successful leaders are usually open to new teaching experiences;

− Agreeability contributes to managerial success; good leaders are generally cooperative and flexible, knowing how to rephrase a difficult situation in positive terms.

− Reliability is characteristic of a good leader in the sense that when asked to perform certain actions, the others need to know they can rely on him/her;

− Analytical intelligence is found in successful leaders, helping them think strategically.

− Emotional intelligence makes successful leaders be aware of their own qualities and defects, thus helping them create and maintain social relations.

The way in which these personality features are manifested in action proves very useful to leaders in the educational field.

5. Conclusions

An efficient leadership operates under the conditions of psycho-social relations within an organization, setting into value the psychological resources of the members in that organization, which is also valid in the educational field. From here derives the idea that the manager of an educational organization (be it a class of pupils, school, a school inspectorate or ministry) should take into consideration all the psychological and social implications of the leadership dynamics. In this regard, the school manager should take into account all the invisible psycho-dynamic processes that influence the behavior of the members in that organization, the one-on-one relations that exist in the sub-groups and in the entire organization.

Also, the manager must identify the potential personality disorders of the subordinates and forward measures to counteract them. This type of measures refers to the acknowledgement of dysfunctional behavior.

By knowing these personality structures the manager will be able to identify to a greater extent the sense and significance of various behavioral motivations of subordinates in the organization. Thus the manager will have at his disposal a variety of measures for effective intervention in solving interpersonal conflicts as well as for better understanding his/her own decisions thus ensuring the success of the organization under his leadership.

Bibliography:

Golu, P., Golu, I., 2003, *Psihologie educaţională*, Ed. Miron, Bucureşti.

Iucu, R.B., 2000, *Managementul şi gestiunea dusei de elevi. Fundamente teoretice şi metodologice,* Editura Polirom, Iaşi.

Joiţa, E., 2004, *Managementul educaţional. Profesorul-manager,* Editura Sitech, Craiova.

Mihuieac, E., 1999, *Ştiinţa managementului. Teorie şi practică,* Editura Tempus, Bucureşti.

Millon, T., 1996, *Disorders of Personality: DSM IV and Beyond*, New York, John Wiley

Minulescu, M., 1996, *Chestionarele de personalitate în evaluarea psihologică*, Garell Publishing House, Bucureşti.

Mitrofan, N., 1988, *Aptitudinea pedagogică,* Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, Bucureşti.

Moraru, I., 1995, *Introducere în psihologia managerială,* Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, Bucureşti.

Popescu-Neveanu, P., 1978, *Dicţionar de psihologie,* Editura Albatros, Bucureşti.

Prodan, A., 1999, *Managementul de succes. Motivaţie şi comportament,* Editura Polirom, Iaşi.

Zlate, M., 2004, *Tratat de psihologie organizaţională şi managerială,* Ed. Polirom, Iaşi.