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DEVELOPMENTAL LEADERSHIP – AN ATTEMPT TO DEFINE SPECIFICITY OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Abstract

Author raises the issue of specificity of educational leadership trying to show that such specificity has to be based on central value of educational organizations. In educational context such central value should be individual human development. Paper describes different ways of understanding leadership and educational leadership present in literature and gives some postulates how educational leadership can be defined, proposing to call such type of leadership a developmental leadership. A description of such type of leadership and conditions of its introduction to education are the main aims of the paper.

Keywords: leadership, educational leadership, development, developmental leadership.

Introduction

The concept of leadership, present in management and educational management theory since many decades, had become especially popular during the last twenty years. Many authors in the area underline importance of using concept of leadership and importance of introducing leadership into practice of educational organizations that want to raise their achievements [Potter, Reynolds, Chapman 2002; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, Hopkins 2006]. There are even some suggestions in educational research that educational leadership (not educational management) is the key factor in raising educational effectiveness of schools and educational success of students [Marzano, Waters, McNulty 2005]. It is not surprising then that theories and paradigms of leadership are very frequently transferred from general management theory and used to build understanding of leadership in educational contexts across the world. It has become very popular in theoretical educational discussions in Poland too as the Polish educational system is searching for ways of improvement of schools. Unfortunately in practice leadership concepts are still far less popular than educational management concepts [Kwiatkowski, Michalak 2010]. All this makes it necessary to raise the issue of leadership in education and its specificity.

What is leadership – different paradigms

If leadership matters, it would be very important to answer a basic question about the meaning of leadership. The concept itself comes from the field of general management theory and was unfortunately, as many other concepts, transferred to educational management theory without thinking about specific values of educational organizations and specific needs of leadership in education. Such attitude is present from the very beginning of development of educational management theory and practice and makes it extremely difficult to build specific and adequate to educational needs theory of educational management [Bottery 1990; Bottery 1992].

The core element of leadership is the fact that it can appear in a social context of a group and is always about influence of some people on other people in order to achieve certain objectives [Northouse 2007]. How does that influence look like and how through that influence organizational objectives are reached is understood differently and that is the reason why since the beginning of its presence in management theory leadership was described and defined in so many different ways. There are also numerous attempts to classify those different paradigms of leadership. Let us have a closer look at some of them, that can be useful from educational leadership perspective.

Shields [2009] for example describes three paradigms of leadership: transactional, transformational and transformative. First type of leadership – **transactional** – is based on interpersonal (transactional) talents of a leader. He/she creates conditions for reaching organizational objectives through complex system of agreed regulations describing obligations of all members of organization and setting out rewards and punishments. Such type of leadership is very common in schools as they are challenged by demands of narrowly understood public accountability focusing attention of school leaders on school inspection and test results. Looking from the deeper educational perspective such leadership may lead to "depersonalisation", when interests of school as organization and teachers as responsible for reaching certain goals are more important than interests of development of students [Precey 2011]. **Transformational** leadership is based on a creative vision of a leader who inspires others and together with them creates conditions for achieving organizational goals according to that vision. Transformational leadership motivates members of organization, stimulates them to act, creates conditions for development. The main problem of such leadership is, that it focuses on leader's vision and develops organizational and personal potential according to that personal vision of a leader which is always an external factor from the perspective of individual development of members of organization. From that point of view transformational leadership may mean and very often means indoctrinational leadership. **Transformative** leadership appears when school and members of school community take active role in transformation of unjust world outside the school or within it. It implies individual and organizational transformation and development but source of that development is again

very often external. The basic value underlying transformative leadership seems to be interest and good of community or broadly speaking society, not interest of individual development of a person which is reducing educational value of such a type of leadership even if social change still really is not realized task of contemporary schools [Precey, Rodrigues Entrena 2011; Shields 2009].

The most popular is an attempt of Avery [2004], who describes four different types of leadership present in general management theory. First type, called **classical leadership**, is built on charismatic personality of a leader who uses power of formal authority and force to impose his/her ideas. It can be described using examples of great leaders in our history, still is very frequent in some forms but no longer possible in democratic society. Second type, called **transactional leadership**, described above, uses interpersonal skills of a leader to impose his/her ideas. Third type of leadership named **visionary leadership** (similar to transformational) develops around visionary ideas of a leader. Fourth type of leadership described by Avery, called **organic leadership**, needs involvement of all members of organization in the leadership process. It implies distribution of power and obligations, involvement or inclusion of everybody in the leadership process. Avery values such leadership but wrongly tends to think that such process leads to disappearance of leadership, calling such state a **leaderless organization** [Avery 2004]. The idea of involvement of all members of organization in leadership is present also in paradigms of leadership called distributed and democratic leadership [Gronn 2002; O'Neill 2002]. Distributed leadership does not serve properly educational values because it implies the idea of distribution that is always an act or process controlled by someone and built on values external to individual development of a person who receives distributed powers. Democratic leadership has more potential as it is not result of decision of one person only or few people in a group, but it is still based more on value of democratic organizational process than value of individual human development as it should be [Woods 2004].

As it is clearly visible, different ways of defining leadership present in literature have elements that are important for educational leadership, they are all not completely adequate for needs of educational organizations. There is a growing necessity to define such adequate educational leadership.

Educational leadership – developmental leadership

When we try to define educationally adequate leadership, we have to start from defining core value of educational organizations. That value should be a central point for assessing all processes connected with leadership in schools as organizations and more generally educational management in theory and practice [Łuczyński 2011].

The main aim of education is (or should be) individual human development of students and all other people involved in educational processes [Piaget 1997; Dorczak 2012]. Leadership adequate for the needs of educational or-

ganizations has to be built on that value as central one. Author proposes to use term of **developmental leadership** to call such educationally adequate type of leadership. Development is the most important value in that type of leadership and all actions undertaken within such leadership process have to be focused on supporting individual development of members of educational organization both students and teachers. Having in mind importance of that central value some other characteristics of developmental leadership have to be underlined:

First of all, developmental leadership should be focused on educational and developmental needs of all and create conditions for involvement of all. That notion of involvement of people in schools in the leadership process becomes very popular in many theories. Alston for example uses the term of **co-leadership** or **multi-leadership**, describing best practices of American schools [Alston 2002]. Developmental leadership has to go at least one step further. It should value potentials of all regardless the fact that those potentials are different avoiding mistakes of talent management approach that tends to undervalue those less talented in organization and focus on few only, those who can quicker and better support the process of achieving organizational goals because they are more talented [Davies, Davies 2011]. On the one hand focus on all members of organization has to be derived from focus on every individual as central value, on the other hand it has to be seen from the perspective of community to prevent individualistic and egoistic attitudes that can defragment or even destroy community that is natural and necessary environment for individual human development. Michael Fielding describing such school reality uses a very adequate term of **person-centered school community**. He argues that school as organization constructed on such basis can serve development of individual and community as learning community that serves individual needs, not uses or abuses individual. He also argues that educational leadership has to take into account that person-centered perspective in order to be really educationally valuable type of leadership [Fielding 2006a; Fielding 2006b]. Some authors describing educationally sensitive leadership use term of **inclusive leadership** underlying both necessity of inclusion of every member of school as organization in leadership process and necessity to serve educational needs of every student [Ryan 2006]. Such focus on revealing and valuing potentials of all those involved in school life in different roles is the basis for learning processes on individual level that are central part of broader developmental processes [Fink 2005].

That focus on the value of learning is the second characteristic central for educational leadership called here developmental leadership. Many authors argue that learning should be central value of educational management and leadership as it is also one of central values of educational organizations. They even try to define specificity of educational leadership building it on that value of learning [MacBeath, Dempster 2009; Mazurkiewicz 2011]. It seems that such thinking focusing on learning only is educationally wrong. It is of course obvious that learning is a central element of development but learning alone may

sometimes not contribute to development at all or even block, disturb or prevent development of individual. In educational organizations learning should be subordinated to development as central value and the same applies to educational leadership that should value learning and create best possible conditions for learning, but only as part of broader processes of individual and community development.

Third important thing constructing good educational leadership is an interactive character of developmental leadership. Educational process is only possible in social interaction, development – an interactive process. Really educational leadership has to be developed in interaction between members in organization and needs high level of communication skills. It must be stressed that it even is not possible without good conditions for communication and good communication skills of partners of leadership process [Komives, Lucas, McMahan 2007]. Traditional types of leadership such as transactional, transformational or even classical are interactive but different partners of that interaction are not equal. Developmental leadership is different because it needs that interactive process to be constructed on value of equality between all partners involved.

Fourth feature of developmental leadership, its constructive character, is strongly interrelated with the previous one. It is obvious, accepting constructivist theory that social reality is created during the process of interaction and discussion. Developmental leadership has to take that into account and consciously manage that process helping members of organization to structure their environment according to their developmental needs of seeking sense in organization and in broader social contexts [Sułkowski 2005]. The role of schools and education in general is to constructively criticize, challenge and if necessary transform social reality we live in. It is especially important as individual development happens in broader social context and is influenced by social change. Developmental leadership should take that aspect into account and focus on building individual and communal capacity of active involvement contributing to social change [Shor 1992].

Developmental leadership needs also special organizational environment to be developed. It can be called a knowledge based organization. Educational leadership needs certain knowledge necessary to develop all listed characteristics and competencies of developmental leadership. The most important elements of that knowledge are:

- knowledge of the nature of human development;
- knowledge of the nature of learning process;
- knowledge of the teaching process and methods;
- knowledge of communication;
- knowledge of interpersonal processes and aspects of group life;
- knowledge of social change processes and the role of school in society;
- knowledge of organizational change.

All this makes the task of becoming educational leader highly demanding and difficult and creates challenges for those responsible for development of educational leadership abilities among members of educational organizations.

Conclusions

As it was said, the task of building potential of educational leadership seems to be very difficult as it is a very complex and highly demanding phenomenon. At the same time the issue of educational management and leadership is not always central in educational reforms or is limited to narrowly understood educational management as set of technical skills that can be easily delivered through short training or through introduction of managers trained in the area of business management to schools. In Poland, but also in many other countries, public discussion in that field lacks the issue of leadership or focuses on understandings of leadership that are not adequate to educational needs. It seems that it is necessary to built institutional structure helping to develop theory and practice of educational management and leadership that will be specific and adequate to the nature of educational processes and needs of individual development of students in schools. There are some examples as National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services in UK or Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership in Australia, that can be used as inspiration for creation of such institutionalized (and through that more sustainable) ways of development of educational leadership. They are worth considering as models useful in the process of development of school leadership thou some authors argue that such centrally organized institutions may bring a danger of using them to influence education politically [Thrupp 2005]. Such danger exists and can only be answered through development of professionalism of both teaching profession and school leaders.

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