

LEADERSHIP OF PROGYMNASIUM TEACHERS IN ORGANISING THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

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Introduction. Researchers (Harris, Jones, 2019; Hunzicker, 2017; Berry, 2019, Smylie and Eckert, 2018 etc) have recently been developing the discussion on the topic of teacher leadership, directing attention towards the transformations of a teacher into a teacher-leader, putting an emphasis on the work done by teachers-leaders as well as putting efforts in order to assess the development of teacher leadership in a wide and systematic way. Although progymnasiums in Lithuania were instituted more than two decades ago, it has further been sought for this type of school to reflect new educational challenges, improve the quality of lower-secondary education, and guarantee accessibility to education. **Problem questions:** In what way is leadership important to teachers? How is teacher leadership expressed while organising the educational process? And what are the possibilities for increasing the effectiveness of the organisation of the educational process at a progymnasium? **The aim of research** is to reveal the leadership of progymnasium teachers in organising the educational process.

Theoretical background. One of the scientific approaches to leadership is Situational Leadership Theory (1985, Northouse, 2009). Tabrizi and Rideout (2019) develop the idea of Blanchard (1985), and emphasise that leaders should be capable of adapting to a situation instead of copying other strategies of activity that look successful. Harris and Jones (2019) distinguish three essential dimensions of 1) leadership as influence, 2) leadership as action, and 3) leadership as the development of pedagogical excellence aimed at the evaluation of teacher leadership in the broader context of educational change. Espinosa and Gonzalez (2023) put the emphasis on the versatility of teacher leadership, with the possibility of applying different ways and styles of leadership: the leadership of a teacher can be empathetic, comforting, motivating, showing an example or sharing wisdom.

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH. Based on the positivist approach (Creswell, Creswell, 2018), the empirical research conducted has revealed the relationship between teacher leadership and educational process at progymnasium. *The method of questionnaire survey (written)* has been chosen for the study. The teachers from 7 progymnasiums of Western Lithuanian region, that organise educational process, have participated in the research. 120 respondents have been included into the sample of the quantitative research. The questions for questionnaire have been focused on the elements of situational leadership according to the situational leadership model (SLII) of Hersey and Blanchard (1985).

IBM SPSS Statistics 29.0.0.0 (241) version has been applied while in processing the research data for the identification of variable relationships the Spearman correlation coefficient has been counted.

RESEARCH FINDINGS. Statistically significant, weak, positive correlation between the statement that teacher leadership adds to implement progressive ideas and novelties at progymnasium and the age of research participants ($r=0.253$; $p<0.01$), i.e. elder respondents tend to agree more frequently with the statement that leadership at progymnasium helps to implement progressive ideas and novelties. When there is the pupil of exceptional abilities, the major part of respondents have identified that, when the tasks are delivered, they tend to focus on the purpose with the encouragement and stimulation to express one's own opinion provided. Statistically significant, weak, negative correlations have been identified between the professional experience of the respondents and the statement deliver the task to the pupils with the exact directions what should be done and attentive control of their work provided ($r=-0.253$; $p<0.01$) and the statement after the delivery of the task, directions are avoided, the attention is paid to the opinion of the pupils, they are praised abundantly with the feedback provided ($r=-0.202$; $p<0.05$), i.e. the respondents with longer work experience tend to agree less frequently with the statement that, after the task for the pupils is delivered, they should be provided with the exact directions on what should be done exactly directing their work; the teachers with longer work experience tend to agree less frequently that, after the delivery of the task, the directions are not avoided, they tend to pay less attention to the pupils' opinion, do not provide enough praises and feedback. The respondents tend to choose the responses corresponding to the coaching and delegating styles of leadership. The majority of respondents deliver a task encouraging the pupils to fulfil it and stimulating them to share their opinion.

CONCLUSIONS

With the quantitative research conducted, it has been revealed that leadership is important for progymnasium teachers as it encourages to take part in the implementation of advanced ideas and novelties, overcome the challenges received, act harmoniously and build the community of progymnasium. Teachers at progymnasium apply different leadership strategies (provide the gifted pupil with a possibility to take responsibility for the fulfilment of the task, provide the pupils with abundant praise, encourage to express their own opinion; tasks are delivered avoiding directivity, paying attention to the opinion of the pupils; the pupil is allowed to make decisions on how the task is going to be fulfilled; the pupils are encouraged to share their opinion, praised abundantly with their achievements recognised willingly, feedback provided etc. Within the educational process, there are coaching and delegating styles of situational leadership dominating with the flexibility that helps to react to educational situations and make effective decisions revealed.