

# The Administrative Management Capacity of the Physical Education Teacher as a School Principal

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** The purpose of the present paper is to investigate the performance of the Physical Education Teachers (PET) as school principals, in relation to administrative management capacity leading to school efficacy, according to the teachers' perceptions.

**Methodology:** Making use of a questionnaire (Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale-PIMRS) adapted to the Greek reality, a total number of 460 teachers of 32 schools of the Regional Administration of Primary and Secondary Education of Central Macedonia run by Physical Education Teachers (PET) participated. The gap analysis technique applied revealed statistically significant results in all the items comprised in the measurement tool.

**Results and conclusions:** Most administrative capacity factors exhibited few differences between what teachers consider significant and what is eventually applied to their school by the Principal – Physical Education Teacher, which allows for supporting that, according to the teachers' perception, the Physical Education Teacher is considered an effective School Principal. More specifically, the following were established: The "Principal's Professional Reliability & Responsibility" exhibited a mean difference of 0.17 ( $t(458)=3.675$ ;  $p=0.000$ ); "School climate" a mean difference of 0.18 ( $t(457)=4.655$ ;  $p=0.000$ ); "Professional development of teachers" a mean difference of 0.19 ( $t(458)=3.415$ ;  $p=0.000$ ); "Monitoring and assessing the students' progress" exhibited a mean difference of 0.23 ( $t(458)=4.884$ ;  $p=0.000$ ); "Principal's Training" a mean difference of 0.24 ( $t(458)=5.330$ ;  $p=0.000$ ), "Educational Mission & Targeting" a mean difference of 0.38 ( $t(458)=10.947$ ;  $p=0.000$ ); "Monitoring and improving the learning process" a mean difference of 0.40 ( $t(458)=10.362$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) and "Parents involvement" a mean difference of 0.52 ( $t(455)=12.811$ ;  $p=0.000$ ).

**Keywords:** School principal; School effectiveness; Physical education teacher (PET)

## Introduction

The quest for the effective Principal passed through successive stages. Generally, oriented towards "how does the Principal contribute to the school operation", efforts were made to clarify the relationship between the Principal's behavior and specific efficiency criteria, applying as indicators of the Principal's efficiency either the teachers' perceptions of the school management or their work satisfaction. This is the reason, for the great number of papers published abroad exploring the teachers' perceptions as a process for identifying the quality of school leadership and Principals' administrative capacity [1-4]. The present paper attempts to explore the way in which PETs can be effective school leaders. Slight deviations established in most administrative management capacity factors, thus contributing to school effectiveness between the ideal level of school management (what the teachers consider significant) and the actual level of school management (what applies to their school), allow for supporting that, according to the teachers' perception, PET is considered an effective School Principal.

Several researchers largely attribute the success of school upgrading efforts to the nature and quality of school leadership performed by the Principal [5], which significantly contributes to the effectiveness of the school unit. However, the term "school effectiveness" involves complex concepts and multiple attributes and because of this even nowadays has failed to be fully clarified. School effectiveness factors are multidimensional constructs and can be measured in terms of specific dimensions prevailing in each school [6].

Along with the teacher's quality, leadership and school culture are among the most influential factors identifying the levels of student performance, due to their significant impact on teacher motivation

and eventually on teaching quality [7]. It is very significant for school leaders to acquire the skills necessary to improve teaching and learning and through their implementation further improve the students' achievements and development [8,9]. The effective school leadership into three categories: i) personality, including self-confidence, integrity, endurance and emotional maturity; ii) work motivation, including duty, interpersonal needs and expectations; and iii) technical, interpersonal and administrative skills.

In an effort to measure the administrative management capacity of PETs as school Principals, and thus, "school effectiveness", the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale-PIMRS [10] was applied. This scale is a measure of effective school management based on the teachers' perceptions. This tool largely covers the factors mentioned above which affect the teachers' perceptions for effective operation of their schools. More specifically, PIMRS questionnaire assesses three dimensions of educational leadership: i) defining school objectives and mission (Targeting), ii) training program management and iii) promotion of a positive learning environment at school [11]. The "Targeting" dimension refers to the functions of the Principal's role in cooperation with the teachers, so as to ensure that the school

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has a clear mission and this mission focuses on its students' academic progress. The second dimension is "Training program management", which comprises instruction monitoring and assessment, as well as coordinating and monitoring of the student's progress. The third dimension, "Promotion of a positive learning environment" comprises several leadership functions, such as promoting the teachers' professional development, providing incentives for teachers as well as creating a culture of continuous improvement through the development of high standards and expectations. These dimensions represent special factors of administrative management capacity in this questionnaire, as follows: i) Educational mission and targeting, ii) Curricula: Monitoring & Improvement of learning process, iii) Principal's training, iv) Monitoring & assessment of students' progress, v) Teachers' professional development, vi) Principal's Professional Credibility-Responsibility, vii) School climate, viii) Parents' involvement [10].

The role of the school Principal in Greek reality is rather different than the same role in other European education systems, which perform wider decentralization activities and where the Principal has a strong influence on his/her subordinates. The current Principal "dispatcher" [12,13] should be transformed into a Principal "leader" to better meet the contemporary demand for effective education.

The question arising at this point is whether eventually PETs are able to undertake the management of a school which is changing and requires strengthening of the Principal's competencies.

## Objective

The purpose of the present paper is to investigate the performance of the Physical Education Teachers (PET) as School Principals, in relation to administrative management capacity leading to school efficacy, according to the teachers' perceptions. It aspires to demonstrate how PETs can be effective school leaders, by investigating the teachers' perceptions for establishing any deviations between the ideal level of school management (what the teachers consider significant) and the actual level of school management (what applies to their school).

## Methodology

### Sample-demographic characteristics

The sample consisted of the 606 teachers of all disciplines, in secondary schools of the Regional Administration of Primary and Secondary Education of Central Macedonia, run by Physical Education Teacher (PET). 459 questionnaires were filled in and the profile of the participants is as follows.

### Research tool

For the purpose of the present study, the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale-PIMRS [14,15] was selected. Researchers of school leadership consider the PIMRS scale as the most appropriate tool for measuring effective school management, based on the teachers' perceptions [10]. Initially, the scale consisted of 11 factors (subscales) and 72 questions. After being reviewed, it was limited to 10 factors (subscales) and 50 questions [16]. In the original PIMRS validation study, high reliability standards [16] were established, with an internal consistency index over .800 in alpha Cronbach test. Ever since, several studies have supported the initial validation study of the scale [8,17]. For the purposes of this study, the questionnaire was partly amended so as to effectively correspond to the survey. The adaptation of the instrument into the Greek language was performed by the Back Translation method. Its translation into Greek was made

with the help of two experienced bilingual translators, followed by its translation back into its original language. In an effort to adapt it to the Greek reality, 8 factors (subscales) and 44 questions were maintained. The reliability analysis (alpha Cronbach) in the present research exhibited satisfactory results. The internal consistency of the factors (subscales) was high on both scales of the questionnaire (.740 - .900), supporting the writers of the questionnaire. More specifically [18] insisting on construct validity without any factorial analyses, presented a meta-analysis of the reliability deriving from 52 data sets, from 43 independent empirical studies (mainly PhD dissertations), in which the questionnaire (PIMRS) was used for data collection.

Applying the gap analysis technique, the research focuses on the factors that teachers identify as effective for a school Principal, as well as whether or not these factors are present in the Principal of their school. The method tracking the presence or absence-and to what extent-of the factor competency principal is gap-analysis technique. More specifically, the average "significance" is subtracted from the average "application" of the same statement. This is the way of deriving the difference between the two averages or the gap. Statistical analysis was performed by means of statistical software SPSS 16.0. Because of the interval scale used, which allows for parametric methods, mainly averages, standard deviations and frequencies were used. In order to examine the research hypotheses, paired samples t-test was used for null hypothesis (Ho) that "there are no statistically significant differences between the mean values of each subscale of the questionnaire on the factor Competency Principal, concerning effective school administration-leadership, according to the teachers' perceptions ( $\mu_{\text{σημαν}} = \mu_{\text{εφαρ}}$ ,  $p < 0,05$ ). Also, One-way ANOVA was used to reject or accept the null hypothesis (Ho) that "The teachers' perceptions of the extent administrative efficiency (Competency Principal) their Principal actually acquires and exhibits do not depend on the teacher's gender, age, experience and specialty ( $\mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 = \dots = \mu_n = 0$ ).

## Results

The factor of administrative management capacity exhibiting the biggest discrepancy between what teachers consider significant and what is eventually applied to their school by the Principal-Physical Education Teacher, is "Parents' involvement" (Mean difference=.52). There closely follow the factors "Monitoring and improvement of the learning process" (Mean difference=0.40), "Educational mission & Targeting" (Mean difference=0.38). Further below these and not much apart from each other, there are "Principal's training" (Mean difference=0.24), "Monitoring & assessment of students' progress" (Mean difference=0.23), "Teachers' professional development" (Mean difference=0.19), "School climate" (Mean difference=0.18), "Principal's Professional Reliability & Responsibility" (Mean difference=0.17).

## Conclusions and Discussion

The factors of administrative management capacity, in which PETs were found to fall short as School Principals, are concentrated in creating a vision, learning process and relationships with parents. All these are considered key behaviors of transformational and pedagogical leadership [11]. The literature on "School Effectiveness" and "Educational Leadership" emphasizes the significance of the Principal's role as a Transformational and Pedagogical Leader. This type of Director - Leader not confirmed for sure the survey results for Directors of Physical Education Teachers. In the present study, the factor "determination and dissemination of educational objectives" is fifth among the Administrative Efficiency factors, on the basis of "materiality", and sixth on the basis of "application". It is evident from

the results that neither teacher consider the abilities/skills of this factor significant for school effectiveness nor Principals – PETs consider it significant so as to implement it in school management.

The results of the research suggest that teachers' perception of the Principal-PET's administrative efficiency vary with the teacher's age and experience. The research revealed that teachers with different years of experience (0-4 years, 5-9 years, 10-14 years, 15-19 years, 20 and more) differentiate their perceptions in five (5) out of the eight (8) factors. In addition, the survey established that teachers in different age groups (>29 years, 30-39 years, 40-49 years, 50-59 years) differentiate their perceptions in one (1) out of the eight (8) factors. On the contrary, the teachers' perception of the Principal-PET's administrative efficiency is not differentiated depending on each teacher's gender and specificity. This finding confirms that the object of Educational Leadership is not a matter of some teachers only, with some specific features, but it is rather a matter of all teachers working in the school environment of secondary education, regardless their specialty.

The conduct of the present study was approved by the Greek Ministry of Education (Register Number 164177/C2/28.12.2012). By complying with the directives of conducting research in schools, before teachers, contact was made with the Principals of the schools selected who authorized the distribution of questionnaires to the teachers of the school. The questionnaires were distributed to the teachers mainly in person by the researcher. The participant-teachers filled in the questionnaire anonymously at the Teachers' Room during breaks.

In all questionnaire items, the assessment of "significance" on the ideal level of performing the Principal's duties (which is the factor of administrative management capacity that the teachers consider significant) surpasses the corresponding "implementation", on the actual level of performing the Principal's duties (which is the factor of administrative management capacity that their Principal is actually exhibiting). This differentiation is statistically significant in all cases. A first conclusion is that teachers do not experience the leadership behaviors they expect from the Principal in their school and abilities/skills exhibited by their Principals are not the ones expected. Although transformational and pedagogical leadership in modern literature has been replaced by the "leadership for learning" [15,19,20] approach that "leadership for learning" represents a combination of pedagogical leadership and transformational leadership, should also be accepted. Keeping this in mind and moving to the next conclusion of the research, it is clearly established that we cannot characterize PETs as transformational or pedagogic leaders-Principals. The differences between effective leadership behaviors encountered in the literature [6] and those identified by the research on PETs as school Principals, might as well be due to the centralized educational system prevailing in Greece, which allows us to expect the same results if research extends to all Greeks School Principals, regardless their specialty. However, the limited discrepancies observed between the ideal level of school management (what the teachers consider significant) and the actual level of school management (what applies to their school), in most factors of administrative management capacity that contribute to school effectiveness, allows us to support that according to the teachers' perception, PET is considered an effective School Principal.

There are several limitations in the present research, while generalization of results is also limited. The biggest limitation is that the results cannot be compared to those of other similar studies. The fact that there are no similar studies investigating PET as an efficient school Principal may be due to the uniformity of the scientific fields of "Educational Leadership" and "School Effectiveness", which cannot

be approached on the basis of teachers' specialty. Another limitation is that the results cannot be generalized to all Principals-PETs, since the research was performed only to schools of secondary education. Furthermore, these results cannot be generalized to all Principals-regardless specialty-of secondary education, because the object investigated might actually involve Educational Leadership, yet the research design does not permit such generalization. Also, research has taken into account neither the views and perceptions of all stakeholders in educational process (e.g. Students-Parents) on effective management by PETs as Principals, nor the views and perceptions of senior executives of Education Administration (e.g. School Consultants-Education Managers). The research revealed the teachers' views and perceptions during the time of data collection. These views and perceptions may be different at another time of research conduct.

The identification of the Principal's abilities/skills, attempted to be pinned down by the present study assists in diagnosing needs, developing self-awareness and identifying deficiencies in administrative factors that contribute to school effectiveness. It enables the Principals-Physical Education Teachers get to know their strengths and weaknesses and confidently identify their more active presence in the Greek school. Having identified those abilities/ skills which, according to the teachers, contribute to efficient school operation, the present research can assist to the creation of either useful training program for future school Principals or Postgraduate University programs specialized in Educational Organization and Administration, or targeted training programs for principals organized by the Ministry of Education.

Finally, it should be noted that the present research would be more complete if it comprised more aspects of effective school leadership exercised by PETs, exploring the students and their parents' viewpoints on effective leadership. Such a research design proved impossible due to time constraints. The investigation of the parents and students' perceptions of effective leadership exhibited by the Principal/ PET could be a design of future research. In addition, future research could investigate the perceptions of senior educational executives (e.g. Education Managers-PET School Consultants) of school effectiveness and quality leadership in Greek schools. More specifically, researches investigating the efficiency factors on a grade level would also be of great interest. Currently researchers-with the development of multilevel models of statistical analysis, focusing not on the learning outcomes of schools, but rather on teaching and learning in order to measure school effectiveness-are able to proceed to such investigation.

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