Leadership for democracy: developing democratic organizations

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Abstract

What seems to be one of the core values that shapes our understanding of the main goals of educational institutions is development. It should be discussed on at least four different levels: individual, group, organizational and social. Individual human development should be seen as the most important precondition for all the other types or levels of development. Using L. Kohlberg's theory of socio-moral development, the paper discusses necessary organizational changes in schools necessary to create better conditions for individual development of all students, teachers and others involved in school life. It also offers a description of "inclusive" and "developmental" school culture supporting individual development of all. Presenting the results of the research on perception of school culture among teachers of Polish schools, it tries to discuss the chances of building such organizational culture that comes from introduction of a new school evaluation system. Finally the paper looks at the implications for leadership. It suggests a definition of educational leadership as "developmental leadership" and tries to characterize that type of leadership.

Introduction

Thinking about the educational leadership paradigm adequate for the specificity of schools as organizations requires coming back to basic values and asking the question of core educational values. The answers for such questions that, at least, since late 1980s have dominated the discussion in the field of educational management underline such values as quality, accountability or sometimes, more relevantly to the educational context, learning (McBeath, Dempster, 2009; Mazurkiewicz, 2011). Pointing out the limitations of such approaches that focus more on the values that are important from the perspective of state, society or school as organization, neglecting or undervaluing the interest of an individual that is taking part in educational processes, some authors suggest that educational leadership ought to be person-centred (Fielding, 2006) and promote democratic school climate that allows everybody to participate fully in school organizational life (Woods, 2004; 2005). Many authors argue that

the only acceptable answer about core value for educational organizations has to be strongly focused on individual human development and underline the necessity of creating schools as organizations that are managed or led to support individual development of students (Piaget,1977; Bottery, 1992; Kohlberg, Meyer, 1993). All other values have to be seen from the perspective of the development of all individuals that constitute the school and all different aspects of educational management and leadership have to be defined taking into account that fact of centrality of human development as the core educational value (Dorczak, 2009; 2012). This assumption leads to the necessity of building a specific school climate or culture that would be inclusive, participative and democratic and that would be able to support equally the development of all (Dorczak, 2013).

Development as the main educational value

Accepting that individual human development has to be the central value underlying the development of educational management and leadership theory and practice is not enough. It is important how people involved in educational understand individual development as a process because there are different way of understanding that process leading to completely different educational practices (Dorczak, 2012).

Looking from the theoretical perspective, developmental and educational psychology offers at least three different theories of development that explain that phenomenon in a completely different way.

Very popular theories, represented for example by the behaviourist theory, claim that development is completely determined by factors that are situated in the environment and the process of development is a gradual learning process that produces more and more "reactions". During such developmental process all is determined by external forces and because of its nature, development can be (or even must be) organized according to external plans. We can imagine how the traditional thinking about education

as a tool for knowledge transmission or more recent neoliberal approaches asking schools to 'produce' students equipped with predefined sets of knowledge, skills and competencies use (or are a product of) such mechanistic understanding of individual human development.

Other psychological theories claim that development is a process that lets the already given abilities and talents develop gradually and is determined by factors that describe the process before it starts. All is determined by the already given talents and the role of education is to create good conditions for the development of those talents. Nothing can be added from outside of the process, but also nothing can develop inside the process apart from the talents that had been already given before it even started (the most popular contemporary approaches use the concept of genes carrying human abilities and talents) .

Both of the described theories define development as a process that is determined by external factors that does not allow any autonomy. Fortunately, there are theories that describe development differently, underlining its autonomous character. Such theories argue that development can be best defined as an autonomous process that happens in the context of the environmental conditions and already given talents but in its nature is independent (or can be independent) from both factors, through the role of the autonomous activity of the human mind that allows to make the process really free and creative (Bottery, 1990; Dorczak, 2012).

Such understanding of development is represented by Lawrence Kohlberg who, building on Piaget's theory (1966), developed a well-known theory of socio-moral individual development (Kohlberg, 1984). Having such autonomous understanding of development as a basis, Kohlberg argues that schools have to be transformed into just and democratic communities in order to create proper conditions for such human individual development that can fully take place only if schools are organized in a way that allows every individual involved in that process to take an equally active part in all different aspects of school life and its work as educational organization. He also argues that

the existing schools present an organizational culture that does not really allow them to be organizations that are 'development-friendly'. That leads to the recommendation that school organizational culture has to be transformed into a more participative, democratic and inclusive one. In his pedagogical experiments he proposed such school culture and described the process of its building (Power, Higgins, Kohlberg, 1989). Looking at the existing schools and school systems in the second decade of the 21st century, it seems that more than thirty years after Kohlberg's attempts his recommendations are still waiting for being implemented in more than experimental schools only.

Transformation of school culture as the necessary condition to support the development of individuals

Educational experiments of Kohlberg and his team suggest that in order to transform schools into organizations that really support individual development, a deep change of school organizational culture is needed (Anderson, 1982; Power, Higgins, Kohlberg, 1989). The main features of organizational culture that can serve well the needs of individual development of all involved in school life are: collegiality of such culture, participative character, focus on team work on different levels, inclusiveness and democratic process of decision making in different (all) areas of school work. Charles Handy describes such culture as focused on involving everybody in team work that, on one hand, through synergy maximises team work results but, on the other hand, also maximises the chances for individual development of everybody involved in school life (Handy, 1995). Others underline the positive emotional and interpersonal aspects of such culture that create good developmental environment (Deal, Peterson, 1999). Such culture also has to be inclusive in that respect that it involves everybody according to their potentials on one hand and needs on the other (Dorczak, 2013). It also has to be focused more on the value of the individual and of the democratic process than on organizational and

formal values (Fielding, 2006). It has to create good environment for involvement of all in decision making processes on equal terms by empowering people autonomously rather than distributing powers to them. Such culture can be called a fully democratic culture and is crucial both for individual development of an individual and for the democratic development of community and society (Woods, 2004). Educational leadership theory and practice have to be redefined and those features have to be taken into account in that process (Mazurkiewicz, 2011).

School culture of Polish schools and its transformation – research

The existing school culture in most contemporary societies does not create good conditions for human individual development because it can be noticed that it has features that limit or may even suppress the autonomous processes of development. The dominant picture of school culture around the world can be described as rooted in the mechanistic understanding of development and learning (De Corte, 2010) that leads to understanding education according to the cultural transmission code that values the traditional vision of schooling with focus on teaching and not learning, centrally predefined curricula, traditional passive teaching methods, testing and assessment done by external bodies, etc. Comparative analyses of educational systems around the world show that such culture dominates in school practice both at the level of leadership and management and at the level of teaching in classrooms (Bottery, 1992). More resent research carried out in Poland tried to find out if such traditional culture is really dominant in Polish schools.

In that research, Charles Handy's typology of four organizational cultures was used together with his questionnaire to assess school organizational culture. The questionnaire consists of 15 questions asking about different aspects of school functioning such as: management roles, styles of work of teachers, team work, work division, communication, decision making, motivation, conflict and problem

solving, relations with the external world, etc. (Handy, Aitken, 1996). It allows to find out how the respondents assess organizational culture of their organization (school). Handy proposes four types of organizational culture naming them using four Greek gods' names.

The Zeus culture is characterised by a highly centralised organizational structure with the school head teacher controlling everything and deciding about all aspects of school organisational life. Such culture is based on the charisma and power of a leader that is understood in traditional terms as a strong personality influencing others and forcing them to follow him or her. In such a culture one person dominates everything and all others have to follow him or her. Looking from the perspective of individual development, it is obvious that such culture does not create proper conditions for the development of all individuals except the leader who is 'a Zeus'.

The Apollo culture is described as a culture that is built on rules and regulations that determine every single step of all members of the organisation including the head teacher who is formally in charge. It is called sometimes a bureaucratic culture which underlines its highly formal character. Individual development in such a culture is seen as a process which can be (or have to be) precisely pre-described and controlled. It must be noticed that such understanding is typical for the traditional educational ideology dominant in educational thinking in most contemporary school systems.

The Athenian culture is described as teamwork culture that values participation and involvement of all members of the organization, uses their potential and gives them the freedom of action in their work. Such possibility of autonomous involvement of everybody and using the potentials of all members of the organization create good environment for the individual development of all involved in organizational processes. It must be argued that it also creates the possibility (or at least a better chance) of such involvement of students in schools with this type of culture.

The last type of organizational culture proposed by Handy is called the Dionysian cul-

ture. It is a culture of independent individuals that define their own methods of work and work independently. It is a culture of total individual freedom that values individual work, decision making and stresses the necessity of satisfying individual needs. It looks as a very good culture for individual development but it is in fact not a very good context for both individual development and learning as they are highly social processes and cannot lead to good results when the necessity of placing them in social contexts is neglected (Vygotsky, 1978).

The research on school culture of Polish schools using the framework proposed by Handy was carried out between January, 2011 and December, 2012. It consisted of two parts to show possible ways of transformation school culture towards a culture that is more adequate for the needs of individual development. The first part of the research aimed at finding out the organisational culture of randomly selected Polish schools. The second part was carried out with the participation of schools that actively took part in educational reform introducing evaluation to Polish school inspection system. The main idea of that reform was to replace traditional school inspection that controlled schools from outside in a more traditional style with evaluation system which involves all members of the school community in the process of collecting, understanding and using the data. The authors of the transformation of school inspection expected that it would contribute to the transformation of schools into organizations with a more participative, inclusive and democratic school culture that would support better the development of individuals within the democratic society framework of the 21st century (Mazurkiewicz, Berdzik, 2010).

The results of the first part of the research show that unfortunately the bureaucratic culture of Apollo type dominates in teachers' understanding of their schools' culture and the positive (from the perspective of educational values) culture of Athena type is noticed only by one fourth of the respondents that took part in the study. See the results in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Organizational culture of randomly selected Polish schools according to teachers' assessment

Type of organisational culture	Number of subjects assessing culture as such	Percentage
Zeus club culture	309	20,20%
Apollo role culture	641	41,90%
Athena task culture	372	24,30%
Dionysus freedom culture	188	12,29%
Not determined/ not complete	20	1,31%
Total	*1530*	*100%*

Source: Own research

The second part of the research was carried out, as it has already been explained, as a part of a project introducing evaluation to Polish educational system. The project that introduced the reform focused strongly on training evaluators and school heads to do external and internal evaluation. Since its beginning in 2009 to the time when the presented research was carried out, in involved more than 400 Polish school of different type. The research done with the participation of a group of teachers from those schools shows that they assess the organizational culture of their schools quite differently than teachers from schools that were not involved in the project and had not experienced evaluation as a method of inspection. The results of that part of the research are shown in Table 2 below.

As it can be seen, the Athenian type of culture dominates and the less supportive (from the perspective of development) cultures of Apollo and Zeus type are much less present than in the study of randomly selected school that do not take part in the evaluation project. The results show that schools can be transformed into organizations of culture different from the bureaucratic or person-centered types that do not serve the interests of individual development of students and all others working in schools.

Table 2. Organizational culture of schools active in the project on school evaluation according to teachers' assessment

Type of organisational culture	Number of subjects assessing culture as such	Percentage
Zeus club culture	108	7,06%
Apollo role culture	329	21,50%
Athena task culture	691	45,17%
Dionysus freedom culture	359	23,46%
Not determined/ not complete	43	2,81%
Total	*1530*	*100%*

Source: Own research

Conclusion

Educational leadership that can be called as such only if it is based on educationally central values of human individual development and learning has to be focused on the transformation of school culture. The existing educational organizations do not create positive environment for the full development of potentials of all, they give such chance to some focusing on talents, though (Davies, Davies, 2011). The transformation of school organizational culture can be stimulated by reforms such as the reform of school inspection and the introduction of more interactive, participative and democratic approaches such as school evaluation. They can create more a development-friendly school organizational climate that is needed to support development of our democratic communities and society.

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