

Relationship between Teachers' Attitudes about Principals' Communicational Jobs toward School Size, Level of Teachers' Education, Workload and Gender

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to examine teachers' attitudes about principals' communicational job. Secondary aim is to examine whether number of shifts, number of students, teachers' level of education and teachers daily and weekly workload predict teachers attitudes about principals' communicational jobs principals perform. Sample consists of school teachers (N=80) that covered ISCED 1, 2 and 3, educational level from the Republic of Croatia. Sample is intentional and occasional, and present experienced teachers suitable for this type of research. The scale constructed for this research has been extracted from the scale for principals' role estimation constructed by Burcar (2010). Findings show existence of principals' communicational jobs in the schools as informing, reporting and verbal communication. Gender differences in the scale exist and in the subscale for verbal communication as well. In the prognosis toward principals' communicational jobs the level of teachers' education has statistically significant but negative predictive value.

1. Introduction

1.1. Management, leadership, principal, job, role

Many different articles pointed that management and leadership exist in profit and nonprofit sector and accordingly in educational institutions as well. During last fifteen years, there are plenty of researches and articles in both, profit and nonprofit sector dealing with the managers and leaders roles, jobs and tasks they perform. In this research, we examined the principals' communicational jobs, which is a basic pillar for principals' communicational role performance. Much more precisely, we examined principals' communicational jobs from the teachers' angle.

There are plenty of researches dealing with managers and leaders' communicational role and all of them mostly guide us to conclusion that communicational role is one of the most important role that managers and leaders perform. Principals' roles in educational system has been seen as and through managers and leaders roles as well. In the background of the role, acting could be seen, what is explained by Burcar (2013), "Through acting, tasks were realized. By realizing tasks, goals were achieved. Achieving goals guide to the role accomplishment." Principals in Croatian school system perform many different jobs: a) collecting and dividing information's, b) communicating with staff, pupils, parents, superior and local community, directly or through technology, c) strategic planning depending on human resources, teaching and other resources, and pupils as well, d) managing, administrating and organizing as a chairperson, responsible person, and well skilled person, e) supporting and lecturing (building relations, motivating, educating, and supporting) highly educated staff to produce high level of the pupils output, f) evaluating, which analyze, monitor and evaluate processes and results, g) learning as permanent investing in its own knowledge, skills and behavior, h) binding with community through various protocol activities (Burcar, 2014).

1.2. Communication and school management

In the contemporary educational conceptions education is described as an interpersonal relation or complex process of interactions between educational subjects, for what communication is one of the most important tools. Communication as multidimensional process includes information, confirmation, feed-back and interpretation (Arlesig, 2008). Communication is information transfer under the condition that receiver understands sent information (Weihrich & Koontz, 1998). Burcar (2013, p.187) implies that principals transfer information's through communication, what is one of the crucial pillars of managing and leading. Furthermore, communication in the organization has broader purpose than simple information transferring. Communication is a process for activity coordination, understanding, developing and accepting goals of organization (Heide et al. 2005).

School is an educational institution with its' educational potentials and elements (Vrcelj, 2000). In the school many different processes conduct, not only educational, but also business processes such as planning, organizing, coordinating, evaluating, etc. In the contemporary business environment school has been researched as a working organization and as a system which have incomes, transformational processes and measurable outcomes on the educational market.

Researches about school management whose components are: managing and leading (Staničić, 2006, p.21) shoves the importance of principals' communicational role inside this components. Burcar (2010, p.84) pointed that the role of the principal in the school is orientated toward management and leadership, and to work with and through the teachers for what excellent communication is the basic presumption. It is hard to realize principals' roles without clear, bidirectional and unambiguous communication.

Athanasoula–Reppaa, Makri–Botsaria, Kounenoua i Psycharisa (2010, p. 2207-2212) pointed that in organization such as school, communication is the most important tool for developing excellent relations and school effectiveness as well. Clampitt, (2005) observes that effective leader must have realistic view onto communication and their direct and indirect effects. At the same time, principal must understand the complexity of communication. Witherspoon (1996, p.204) reinforces this argument and adds that leadership exists only through communication. Communication includes verbal and nonverbal message and 90% of interpersonal communication is explained with their nonverbal part (Verderber & Verderber 1998). According to Nilsson and Waldemarsson (1994, p.10), communication is important both through the perspective of psychology and sociology.

Burcar, (2014, p.91), pointed that the principals are involved in following processes: planning, decision making, organizing, coordinating, communicating, influencing and evaluating. Joyce and Coral (2001, p.3-4) from Duke (1988, p.308), extracts principals' role of relation builder through communication. Cooley and Shen, (2003, p.635) observes that 71% of the principals declares that they are engaged in public relation jobs daily or weekly, and 65% of them that they allocate time for communication with staff daily or weekly. Blase, Jo and Blase, Joseph (2002) in their conclusion of the research carried out two the most important communicational tasks for principals: 1. communication with teachers about teaching and 2. Communication with teachers in the purpose of influence on teacher's permanent professional development.

The lack of communication in the school is significant mistake principals make (Bulach, Boothe, & Pickett, 1998, p.16). Teachers, as potential candidates for principals, have wrong perception of principals' jobs, and they do not know what they can expect if they become principals one day (Burcar, 2010, p.261).

Finally, we can conclude that interpersonal relations, education, teaching, management and leadership cannot exist without visible and recognizable communication.

The goal of this research is to examine teachers' attitudes about principals' communicational jobs. To examine whether number of shifts, number of student, teachers' level of education and teachers' daily and weekly workload as well predict their attitudes about principals' communicational jobs in the school. The parenthetic goal of this study is to examine whether gender difference exists in these variables. This goal arisen as idea based on the results that Kochan, Spencer and Mathews (1999) offered. They examined principals' roles in the context of personal job estimation on the sample N=541. Authors suggest that women are mostly orientated toward global business surroundings, for example, need to create a pleasant working environment and relationship, while man are most business/task orientated, which suggests differences in the techniques of reaching management and leadership goals. However, it is important to note that differences in their study are statistically significant on the item level.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

According to findings, that there is no statistically significant difference between jobs they perform Croatian elementary and secondary school principals (Burcar, 2013, p.150), the empirical research was carried out on the sample, consist of elementary and secondary schools teachers* from the Republic of Croatia (N=80). They work in ISCED 1, 2 and 3 educational institutions. They fulfills questionnaire with their own will during one of the national conferences for teachers. They belong to expert working group responsible for teacher training expertise. Sample presents 20 men and 60 women. At the moment of examination 3 teachers had high school degree, 57 teachers had high educational level (university degree), 15 of them baccalaurean degree and 5 of them had scientific degree (Master of Science or Doctoral degree). Sample covered different level of education, different gender and both primary and secondary education teachers. We can say that sample is intentional and occasional, representative, very experienced and suitable for this type of study.

2.2. Instruments

Principals' communicational activities were examined with scale designed for this study. Items for the scale have been extracted from instrument for principals' role estimation constructed by Burcar (2010). Designed scale has three subscales; for informing, reporting and verbal communication. Scale contains 33 items with Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient $\alpha = 0.93$ with internal consistency of the variables 0.29 in average, and there is no need for questionnaire reduction. Table 1 provides examples of statements for each subscale.

Each statement in the questionnaire can be agreed from 1 (totally disagree) to 6 (totally agree). The results of three subscales were formed so that the total score (sum of rounded answer) was divided by the number of particles, thus an average scale of assessment was shown for each subscale. Thus, the results of respondents in each of these scales can range from 1 to 6. A higher score on the subscales means a higher level of agreement. Participants also entered data about the number of students and shifts at school in which they work their educational level and their daily and weekly workload expressed in working hours.

Standard statistical methods for homogeneity and dispersion have been used in this research (descriptive statistics, variable testing), as well as T- test for independent sample have been used for testing differences between two samples and regression analyzes for testing prediction of perception about principals managerial and leadership jobs.

* In the text term teacher has been used for both man and woman, except in the part where differences will be explained.

Table 1. Sample of statements for subscales

Subscales	Sample of statements
Attitudes about informing (11 items) INF	«Principal read application and petition. » «Principal informs themselves on the parents meeting. »
Attitudes about reporting (7 items) REP	« Principal report students about events important for them. » « Principal report staff about events important for them. »
Attitudes about verbal communicating (15 items) VCOM	«Principal speaks with students. » «Principal speaks with professional associates. »

2.3. Procedure

Examination was conducted on one of the national conferences organized by HPKZ¹. Teachers fulfilled questionnaire with their own free will in their free time between classes. Testing took 10-15 minutes per respondent in average.

The participants' task was to indicate to what extent they agree with the statement for each argument in the list of items. The degree of agreement varied from 1 (totally disagree) to 6 (totally agree).

The results of respondents in each of these scales can range from 1 to 6. A higher score on the subscales means a higher level of agreement.

The results are sorted in Excel, a spreadsheet program and processed in Statistica for Windows 4.0. Modules for descriptive statistics, module for distribution testing, t-test and regression analyzes have been used.

3. Results

The results of tested variables show normal distribution of the results (Table 2). Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for variable informing is: $d=.0743615$, $p=n.s.$, for variable reporting: Kolmogorov-Smirnov $d=.0844308$, $p=n.s.$, and for variable verbal communicating Kolmogorov-Smirnov $d=.0737115$, $p=n.s.$

Table 2. Distribution normality

Tested variable	INF	REP	VCOM
K-S d	0,74	0,84	0,77
P	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.

K-S d – Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality; p – level of significance,
n.s. – not significant

Descriptive statistics for tested variables are shown in Table 3. It is obvious that participants work in the school from one to three shifts what is reality in the Republic of Croatia. Teachers work 7.5 hours a day and 39.4

¹ Hrvatski pedagoško književni zbor

working hour a week in average, what is higher result than daily and weekly workload regulated with legislation as a direct contact with students. They work in schools with 582 students in average.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for subscales of the scale for teachers' attitudes about principals' communicational jobs and data about school size and teachers workload as well (N=80).

Variables	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Informing	4,64	0,76	2,73	6
Reporting	4,81	0,83	3,14	6
Verbal communication	4,64	0,58	3,40	5,93
Working hour/day	7,66	1,76	1	10
Working hour/week	39,41	11,10	7	85
No of shifts	1,81	0,42	1	3
No of students in the school	582,20	268,47	18	1200

Correlations between subscales are shown in table 4. Correlations between subscale results are high and statistically significant what implies the same object of measurement, communication.

Table 4: Correlation matrix

	Reporting	Verbal communication
Informing	.61*	.46*
Reporting	-	.61*
Verbal communication		-

* $p < .05$

With the T-tests, differences between the men and women on the tested variables have been checked. As it can be seen in Table 5, there is no statistically significant difference between men and women in informing and reporting subscale, but in subscale for verbal communication statistically significant difference exists $p < .05$ ($p = .47$).

Table 5: T-test for independent sample

	Male (n = 20)		Female (n = 60)		T
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Informing	4,64	0,78	4,65	0,75	-0,31
Reporting	4,78	0,83	4,82	0,84	-0,19
Verbal communicating	4,42	0,61	4,72	0,56	-2,01*
Communicational job in total	4,57	0,60	4,71	0,59	-0,95

* $p < .05$

3.1. Regression analyses results

In this study we would like to understand how the level of education, school size, teachers' workload and gender as well, predict teachers' attitudes about principals' communicational jobs in the school. Firstly, the analyses showed that regression of predictors onto principals' communicational jobs is statistically significant on the level $p < 5\%$ ($p = .03132$). The multiple correlation coefficient was 0.41 ($r = .41$), the coefficient of determination is 16.87% ($R^2 = .1687$). In the results forecasting to principals' communicational jobs, highly participate variable: teachers' educational level, which standardized regression coefficient has negative direction -26 ($\beta = -.26$; $p = .021$).

Secondly, we would like to understand how the same variables predict attitudes about principals: informational job, reporting job and job called verbal communication.

The analyses showed that regression of predictors onto principals' informational jobs is statistically significant on the level $p < 5\%$ ($p = .02188$). The multiple correlation coefficient was 0.42 ($R = .42$), the coefficient of determination is 17.92% ($R^2 = .17918$). In the results forecasting to informational jobs, highest participate variable: teachers' weekly workload which standardized regression coefficient is 44 ($\beta = .44$; $p = .03$). Furthermore, in the results forecasting to informational jobs, participate variable; level of teachers' education, as well, which standardized regression coefficient has negative direction -22 ($\beta = -.22$; $p = .047$).

Thirdly, the analyses showed that impact of predictors onto principals' verbal communication is statistically significant with the level of significance $p < 5\%$ ($p = .04386$). The multiple correlation coefficient was 0.40 ($R = .40$), with the coefficient of determination 15,86% ($R^2 = .1586$). In the results forecasting to verbal communication, highest participates variable: gender, with standardized regression coefficient 24 ($\beta = .24$; $p = .03$). Furthermore, in the results forecasting to verbal communication significantly participates variable: teachers' educational level, which standardized regression coefficient, has significant but negative direction -30 ($\beta = -.30$; $p = .0080$).

Regression of predictors onto variables which explains reporting is not statistically significant.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn from the findings of this research provided on the sample ($N = 80$) which presented 20 male and 60 female primary and secondary school teachers from The Republic of Croatia (ISCED 1, 2 and 3 educational institutions). They work in the schools with 582 students in average. They work in schools with two shifts in average, and their weekly workload is 39.41 hours and daily workload is 7.66 hours in average. In organization such as school, communication is the most important tool for developing excellent relations and school effectiveness (Athanasoula-Reppaa, Makri-Botsaria, Kounenoua i Psycharisa, 2010, p. 2207-2212). Effective leader must have realistic view onto communication and their direct and indirect effects (Clampitt, 2005). Principal must understand the complexity of communication. Leadership exists only through communication (Witherspoon, 1996, p.204). Communication includes verbal and nonverbal message.

Through the results of empirical part of this research, it can be concluded that teachers considered that principals' execute communicational job, what is expected because the conclusion offered by Duke (1988) that principal is relation builder through communication, and according to the fact that communication is in contemporary school expected principal's behaving, what is pointed by Ärlestig (2008). Our findings are close to conclusions that principals understand importance of communication as a tool for message distribution and interpersonal relation building explained by Johansson (2003) and function of communication as well, what is concluded by Dimbleby and Burton (1998). It is obvious that principals' communication is visible in Croatian schools, what is close to conclusion offered by Ärlestig, (2007, p. 262) that communication is the most common tool that principals use in daily work. Witherspoon (1996, p. 204) says more clearly: «Leadership exists only through communication». It seems that findings of our research are on the track to conclusion that Croatian

principals understand that the most common principals mistake is a bad interpersonal communication and ineffective interpersonal relations, what is stressed by Bulach, C., Boothe, D., & Pickett, W. (1998., p. 16). Our findings confirm high results in subscales: informing, reporting and verbal communication, what is expected as well, because of the definition that communication understands information transfers for sender to receiver explained by Weihrich and Koontz (1998).

Secondly, high correlation on subscales shows relations between informing, reporting and verbal communication, what leads us to conclusion that all of them belong to area of principals' communicational jobs. We can conclude that there is no statistically significant gender difference on the scale for principals' communicational job, but for verbal communication gender difference is statistically significant on the subscale. This finding surprised us because of the fact that many researches pointed that women's intuition is women's ability for better detection for detail in appearance and behavior and nonverbal communication as well (Sindik, 2008, p. 50).

Thirdly, according to the regression analyses results, it can be concluded that impact of predictor variables: gender, level of education, teachers' daily and weekly workload, number of school shifts and number of student in the school onto attitudes about principals' communication is statistically significant. The highest impact to the result prognosis has teachers' educational level, but with negative direction, what surprised us and it can be one of the goals for future studies.

Furthermore, the regression analyses results on subscales shows us that regression of the same predictors are statistically significant onto teachers' attitude about principals' informational jobs and verbal communication jobs.

In prognosis of informational jobs the biggest influence has variable: teachers' weekly workload, from what it can be concluded that teacher who work longer have better overview onto principals' communicational jobs. Big influence in the prognosis has teachers' educational level as well, but with negative direction. This means that highly educated teacher are worse forecasters of principals' informational jobs, what can be one of direction for future studies.

Further, the results show that a variable gender has higher impact in the prognosis of principals' verbal communication. This leads us to conclusion that women better perceive principals' verbal communication than men. The level of education has high predictive impact in negative direction to verbal communication, what is similar to results extracted for informational jobs.

Findings from our research leads us to comprehension that gender difference about perception of principals' communicational jobs exists on the level of verbal communication and that gender, educational level, and weekly workload are predictors for teachers' attitudes about principals' communicational jobs.

Finally our study confirms teachers' perception about principals' communicational jobs: informing, reporting and verbal communicating. Teachers have attitudes about them because they are visible, what means that principals perform them. Principals are communicators.

All findings can be practically used for principals' lifelong learning system planning and implementation. Communicational trainings will be applicable for principal's permanent education. For future researches it will be wise to include a few more variables, the ways and channels of communication, for example.

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