CZECH PRIMARY SCHOOL VISIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Přemysl Doležal, Renata Skýpalová

College of Regional Development and Banking Institute – AMBIS
Lindnerova 575/1, 180 00 Praha 8
E-mail: premysl.dolezal@ambis.cz; renata.skypalova@ambis.cz,

Abstract:
Human capital is an important resource for every school, regardless of its size, organizational structure or type. In order to promote the school's development, motivational leadership needs to make optimal use of the staff's potential. The aim of the paper is to discuss the findings of the 2019 questionnaire survey of primary schools' visions from the perspective of educators, defining major challenges faced by head teachers. 347 teaching staff of 19 primary schools from two regions of the Czech Republic participated in the survey. The results suggest that teachers expect the school management to stimulate the material development and working climate of the school as well as to raise their motivation and support along with strengthening their competencies.

Introduction

The management and development of human capital is a coherent process, as Kucharčíková and Mičiak (2018) point out. Human capital represents the knowledge and skills used by employees performing their work tasks thus pursuing the organization's goals declared in the vision statement to be shared by the management and employees. Such a common vision is motivating for both current and newly recruited staff. In terms of the school environment, Rozkovcová and Urbánek (2017) argue that the longer the teachers work at the same school, the less likely they are to resign, a commonly agreed vision building the teaching staff loyalty. Visionary leadership affects team process and performance since it is positively linked to the staff's creativity (see Zhou et al., 2018).

The key stakeholders – teachers, pupils, students, parents, the general public and the Ministry of Education – place their demands on the school management to guarantee the quality of education provided (cf., e.g. Huang, 2011). A school vision was identified by research done in 27 primary and secondary schools in Alberta, Canada, as an essential precondition for effective school management (Mombourquette and Carmen, 2017).

Effective managerial control and motivation of the teaching staff is a vital part of the daily systematic management of human capital in schools (Runhaar, 2017), involving not just the evaluation of the effects of the internal and external environment, but also establishing strategic goals and visions of how to achieve them (see Grenčíková and Špánková, 2016). Proper

management support is required for the staff striving to reach high working standards and the enhancement of their skills and knowledge (cf. Litsareva, 2015).

1. Objective and method

The present article deals with the school development vision from the perspective of pedagogical staff. It aims at defining current challenges for managements at Czech primary schools to share their visions with the staff. The authors' questionnaire survey and available literature on the management of schools and human resources were used. The questionnaire included four questions on expectations regarding vision statements. The survey, conducted in 2019, was attended by 347 teaching staff from 19 primary schools in Olomouc and Zlín regions.

The following two hypotheses were tested:
Hypothesis I.
H0: Employee identification with the current school vision does not depend on the school size (measured by the number of staff).
HA: Employee identification with the current school vision depends on the school size (measured by the number of staff).

Hypothesis II.
H0: Employee willingness to participate in the creation of the school vision does not depend on the school size (measured by the number of staff).
HA: Employee willingness to participate in the creation of the school vision depends on the school size (measured by the number of staff).

The chi-square test of independence was performed to verify the hypotheses, i.e. to check whether the responses depend on the size of the school in terms of the number of teachers (10 or less, 11–40, 41–70, 71 or more). The test compares two-dimensional data summarized in the contingency table, r and s denoting the number of rows and columns, respectively. The following formula is used for the calculation:

$$n_{ij} = \frac{n_{i.} \cdot n_{.j}}{n}$$

By comparing empirical and theoretical tables, the probability of the (in)dependence of variables can be determined. Using the test criterion $\chi 2$ and the degree of freedom (r-1) * (s-1),

$$x^2 = \sum_{i=1}^{r} \sum_{j=1}^{s} \frac{\left(n_{ij} - n'_{ij}\right)^2}{n'_{ij}},$$

the tests were carried out at a 5% level of significance.

2. Survey results

This section sums up the outcomes of the questionnaire survey. Recent trends noted in the literature indicate that it is desirable for the school management and staff to cooperate in creating a common vision for the school's further development, full participation in the school's future being an incentive for teachers to continue working at the school. The head teacher should lead their team not only to create but also fulfil the common vision together. In the survey, 219 respondents identified themselves with current visions of their schools, contrary to 128 teachers (i.e. more than a third) who did not comply with them (see Table 1).

Table 1: *Current school vision*

School size	Yes, I identify myself with the current vision.	No, I do not identify myself with the current vision.	Σ
10 or less staff	21	53	74
11–40 staff	28	46	75
41 – 70 staff	61	34	95
71 and more staff	77	26	103
Σ	**188**	**159**	**347**

Hypothesis I.
H_0: Employee identification with the current school vision does not depend on the school size.
H_A: Employee identification with the current school vision depends on the school size.

Chi-square statistic $x^2 = \sum_{i=1}^{r} \sum_{j=1}^{s} \frac{\left(n_{ij}-n'_{ij}\right)^2}{n'_{ij}} = 11{,}689$

Critical chi-square value $\chi^2 = 9{,}734$ Level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$

Source: authors' own elaboration

The hypothesis of the dependence between employee identification with the current school vision and the school size was also tested, data analysis not revealing a significant difference in responses (p> 0.05). The resulting chi-square test value ($\chi2 = 0.989$) was lower than the critical value (7.347), the null hypothesis (I) thus not being rejected (cf. Table 1).

Respondents were also asked about 15 priority areas related to the current school vision (see Table 2). For each of them, the participants answered whether they were part of their school's contemporary vision. Seven areas were chosen by more than half of the respondents. These are the quality of education (67 %), teaching plans with regard to pupils' interests (67 %), head teacher's leadership (55 %), motivation and support from the school management (57 %), sustainable development of school equipment (67 %), responsibility for school development shared by each staff member (77 %) and continuous school innovation (71 %).

Table 2: *Priority areas included in the current school vision statement (in %)*

Priority	Yes	No
The main priority of the school is quality education	67	33
Teaching plans are provided by the school in line with pupils' interests	67	33
The school's objectives are set with regard to the needs of all stakeholders (parents, pupils, teachers, the public)	31	69
The school strengthens the competencies of teachers	27	73
The head teacher is a leader supporting staff development	55	45
School management motivates and supports the employees	57	43
The school regularly evaluates the fulfilment of its vision and goals	44	56
The school constantly cares about its material development	67	33
Every staff member is responsible for school development	77	23

The school's priorities are decided jointly	47	53
The school is trying to actively involve parents in its endeavours	33	67
The school management tries to foster a good working climate	44	56
The school is constantly driven by the need to innovate	71	29
Staff are willing to devote part of their free time to school	45	55
Teaching plans are designed in cooperation with external experts	11	89

Source: authors' own elaboration

Respondents were also asked about future school visions (see Table 3). They indicated which of the 15 areas they considered important for setting out the school's new vision. More than half of respondents picked five key areas, namely the quality of education (59 %), teachers' skills improvement (51 %), support and motivation of staff (87 %), continuous school equipment upgrade (83 %) and favourable working climate (78 %).

More than a third of educators questioned replied that it was unimportant to take personal responsibility for the school development (39 %), set targets for all stakeholders (32 %) and compile syllabuses with the help of external experts (36 %).

Two areas were identified by around a third of respondents as totally irrelevant to the school's vision, namely the need to devote part of teachers' free time to the school (31 %) and to develop teaching plans in collaboration with outside practitioners (30 %).

Table 3: *Priority areas for future school vision statement (in %)*

	Very important	Important	Unimportant	Completely unimportant
The main priority of the school is quality education	59	34	7	0
Teaching plans are provided by the school in line with pupils' interests	49	23	27	1
The school's objectives are set with regard to the needs of all stakeholders (parents, pupils, teachers, the public)	35	23	32	10
The school strengthens the competencies of teachers	51	21	27	1
The head teacher is a leader supporting staff development	48	47	4	1
The school management motivates and supports the employees	87	11	1	1
The school regularly evaluates the fulfilment of its vision and goals	34	54	9	3
The school constantly cares about its material development	83	13	3	1
Every staff member is responsible for school development	33	27	39	1
The school's priorities are decided jointly	48	47	4	1
The school is trying to actively involve parents in its endeavours	33	47	15	5
The school management tries to foster a good working climate	78	13	6	3

The school is constantly driven by the need to innovate	48	47	4	1
Staff are willing to devote part of their free time to school	21	26	18	31
Teaching plans are designed in cooperation with external experts	23	11	36	30

Source: authors' own elaboration

The last question concerned the teachers' willingness to participate in shaping the future school vision. More than half of the respondents (219) stated that they were willing to take part in the school's vision creation. Data analysis also showed a significant difference in responses relative to the school size according to the number of staff (p> 0.05). The resulting chi-square test value ($\chi2$ = 11.689) was higher than the critical value (9.326), so the null hypothesis (I) was rejected. It can therefore be concluded that the preparedness to engage in the development of the school vision depends on the size of the school (see Table 4).

Table 4: *Willingness to take part in the creation of a school vision*

School size (no. of staff)	Yes, I am willing to participate in creating a school vision	No, I am not willing to participate in creating a school vision	$\sum$
10 or less staff	45	29	74
11–40 staff	46	29	75
41–70 staff	61	34	95
71 and more staff	67	36	103
$\sum$	**219**	**128**	**347**

Hypothesis II.

H_0: Employee willingness to participate in the creation of the school's vision does not depend on the school size.

H_A: Employee willingness to participate in the creation of the school's vision depends on the school size.

Chi-square statistic $x^2 = \sum_{i=1}^{r} \sum_{j=1}^{s} \frac{\left(n_{ij}-n'_{ij}\right)^2}{n'_{ij}} = 11,689$

Critical chi-square value $\chi^2 = 9,326$ Level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$

Source: authors' own elaboration

3. Implications and recommendations

Research to date has confirmed that human capital is a critical resource for any organization (cf., e.g. Laskowska and Danska-Borsiak, 2016), the line manager bearing responsibility for managing employees to achieve the required performance and meet the set objectives (Kucharčíková and Mičiak, 2018). In the school environment, head teachers and their deputies are in charge of this agenda, creating a vision of the school development being also within their competence. The results of the present survey indicate that teachers are willing to take part in it, their involvement depending on the size of the school. In schools with 41 or more employees, teachers are more committed to being engaged than in schools with fewer teaching staff. The readiness to engage oneself is therefore influenced by the school size. In any case, it is advisable for the management to make use of the declared preparedness of teachers to participate in the development of the vision statement. Within this framework, teachers most often highlight support, motivation and good working atmosphere inspired by the school management. In the staff's view, the vision should also stimulate the boost of their competencies and material development of the school. Only two of these priorities – empowering teachers to become more

competent professionals and working climate improvement are included in current vision statements of the majority of respondents' schools. It is thus worth paying sustained attention to the aforementioned areas since a common sharing of the vision enables the management to develop the school and the teaching staff in the long run.

The teachers were also asked about their satisfaction with the current school vision. More than half of them seem to be happy with it. Having checked whether the size of the teaching staff had an impact on their satisfaction, the dependence was not proven.

Conclusion

The survey of the school vision creation from the perspective of pedagogical staff is quite unique in its focus on the issue of a common vision sharing and its overlap into the sphere of human resources management. The authors undertook a questionnaire survey on a sample of 347 teaching staff at selected primary schools in Olomouc and Zlín regions of the Czech Republic. The results are useful for headmasters and their deputies developing a school vision.

The analysis of the findings suggests that teachers are willing to participate in creating the school vision, especially in schools employing more than 40 staff. As part of a future vision, educators demand that the need for continuous material development, a good working climate, motivational and supportive leadership and strengthening the staff members' competencies be addressed. It is primarily the responsibility of the head teacher as a leader to take these requirements into account and involve teaching staff in crafting the vision statement.

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