THE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND ITS ATTITUDE TOWARDS INNOVATION AS ONE OF THE DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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Abstract: Slovene general upper secondary schools are modernizing their syllabus and are implementing innovative approaches as one of the dimensions of social responsibility towards the development of children and consequently the wider community. An important factor in the implementation of these changes is the headteachers, whose role is to ensure conditions which promote and enable learning. Innovative teachers must serve as both a challenge and an incentive for them.The importance of innovation for school success on one hand, as well as the type of school leadership and the importance and role headteachers play in the creation of a work environment which enables and promotes innovative approaches of teachers on the other, has lead us to research the role of headteachers in Slovene general upper secondary schools in April-May 2011.

Keywords: school leadership, innovation, teacher, head teacher, secondary school.

VODENJE ŠOLE IN ODNOS DO INOVATIVNOSTI KOT ENE OD DIMENZIJ DRUŽBENE ODGOVORNOSTI

Povzetek: Slovenske splošne gimnazije s ciljem izboljšanja kakovosti in učinkovitosti posodabljajo programe in uvajajo inovativne pristope kot eno od dimenzij družbene odgovornosti do razvoja otrok in s tem širše družbe. Omeniti velja dva projekta, ki v tem času potekata: projekt Posodobitev gimnazijskih programov (2008-2014) in projekt KVIZ[1] (2008-2014). Številne raziskave, ki so bile narejene v okviru programov OECD (Leithwood in Riehl 2003; Leithwood in drugi 2006) so pokazale, da je pomemben dejavnik pri vpeljevanju posodobitev šolskih programov in uvajanju inovativnih pristopov je tudi vodenje šol.
V ta namen smo se odločili, da v raziskavi preverimo, ali na posodobitev gimnazijskih programov (vpeljevanje inovativnih pristopov) na šolo vpliva vodenje slovenskih splošnih gimnazij, kakšen je ta vpliv (pozitiven ali negativen) in kateri so tisti dejavniki vodenja, ki so najbolj povezani z vpeljevanjem inovativnih pristopov na šolo ter kakšna so na osnovi izsledkov priporočila za nadaljnje dojemanje koncepta invoativnosti (kot del DO) v gimnazijah, Raziskavo smo izvedli v mesecu aprilu in maju 2011 na naključnem vzorcu slovenskih splošnih gimnazij.
Podatke smo analizirali s kvantitativnimi statističnimi metodami (frekvence, strukturni odstotek, aritmetična sredina, standardni odklon, metoda glavnih komponent – PCA, multipla regresijska analiza).

Ključne besede: vodenje šole, inovativnost, učitelji, gimnazije

1 Introduction

Slovene general upper secondary schools are carrying out projects for the improvement of educational efficiency and quality. These projects involve the modernization of the existing syllabus. Two projects that are currently under way, and are being co-funded by the European Social Fund and the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia, are Posodobitev gimnazijskih programov[2] (2008-2014) and KVIZ[3] (2008-2014).

[1] Zasnova in uvedba sistema ugotavljanja ter zagotavljanja kakovosti vzgojno-izobraževalnih organizacij.
[2] The implementation of a modern and innovative syllabus and the modernization of the planning and execution of curricula in general upper secondary schools (Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport, 2008).
[3] The implementation of a system for determining and ensuring the quality of educational organizations.

An important factor in the process of implementation of modernization is the school leadership, i.e. the headteacher. This is confirmed by several surveys conducted by the OECD (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2006), as well as other international surveys (Hopkins 2001; West, Jackson, Harris and Hopkins, 2000). The question that now arises is whether modernization of the syllabus of general upper secondary schools is in any way influenced by the school leadership, and, if so, which specific leadership factors are closely connected with the implementation of innovative approaches.

The aim of the article is, then, to present the general characteristics of school leadership and the implementation of innovative approaches (approaches as one of the dimensions of social responsibility towards the development of children and consequently the wider community), and to discuss the findings of the quantitative survey conducted in April-May 2011 on a random sample of Slovene general upper secondary schools.

2 Theoretical Starting Points

As stated in the Organization and Financing of Education Act (ZOFVI), headteachers are pedagogical leaders whose task is to know the educational system and the role of the school in it, as well as to be acquainted with school legislation, their responsibilities and accountability, the processes of planning, organization, and supervision of school work, and the pedagogical process (teaching, learning, and the demands of these fields on the national and school level). They also have to excel at leading meetings, problem solving, and conflict resolution (Roncelli-Vaupot 2001, 218), as well as know how to shape the professional development of their employees (Erčulj and Širec 2006, 62).

School leadership is becoming a synonymous with school success (Blackmore, Thomson and Barty 2006; Koren 2007). Leadership quality does not only consist of implementing changes (Bottery 2004; Sergiovanni 2006). Headteachers are relatively autonomous when it comes to the promotion of both education and the professional development of teachers. Quality leadership is of great importance for teacher motivation and quality teaching (Pont, Nusche and Moorman 2008). The Organization and Financing of Education Act (ZOFVI) and the Gimnazije Act both clearly state that headteachers play a central role in the planning of teacher development. According to Moors, Mahony, and Reeves (1998), school leadership means respecting teacher autonomy, being in the centre of things, working with co-workers, accepting the political and economic realities, and well as having a clear personal vision. International surveys have shown an important correlation between leadership and school improvement and change in schools (Hargreaves and Hopkins 2001; Pont, Nusche and Hopkins 2008).

In the opinion of Zupanc-Grom (1999, 16-21), quality schools have clear objectives, clear quality standards, and high levels of trust and school loyalty. Standards of teacher quality have to be constantly changed and upgraded (Ingvarson 2011, 164-177).

The influence headteachers have on teacher quality is therefore large. According to several authors, the quality of the teacher's work is also influenced by the creation of learning opportunities for students. One of these opportunities is the use of various innovative approaches of teaching (Ingvarson 2001; Erčulj and Širec 2003; Koren 2007).

Innovation means the implementation of changes which differ from existing practice. The word innovation does not only refer to new products and services, but to all fields of life, including education. Here we come across phrases such as: innovative student, innovative teacher, network of innovative schools, implementing new work methods, subjects, and programmes.

Creativity is a prerequisite of innovation (Markič 2004; Mulej and Ženko 2004). Sternberg (1999) lists nine conditions of creativity: synthetic intelligence, analytical intelligence, practical intelligence, thinking style, personality, structure of the environment, intrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation (Sternberg 1999; Armstrong 2005). The last six conditions are largely formed by the educational system – from elementary to university education (Pečjak 2004; Likar 2008). Creativity can be systematically developed in schools and is closely connected with teaching quality (Tan 2007, Makel and Plucker 2008). The educational system must therefore function in such a way that it not only transmits knowledge, but teaches creativity, perseverance, critical judgment, and taking responsibility (Likar 2008).

As science develops quickly, teachers have its current findings as temporary knowledge, i.e. something which might change or improve in light of new research and innovations. Teachers must assign divergent tasks to their students, and pose them questions which have multiple solutions and promote creativity and innovation (Pečjak 2004, 18). If teachers want to stay ahead of change, they must develop professionally (Craft 2000, 198). To ensure school development and the individual development of teachers, headteachers have to create a school climate which is conducive to teacher development (Kalin 2006, 50; Sentočnik 2006, 48-49).

Headteachers must know the characteristics of quality learning and teaching (Beers 2007; Hopkins 2007; Koren 2007). They need to have a deep understanding of the teaching process and learn about learning themselves (Stoll, Fink and Earl 2003). Innovative teachers must serve as both a challenge and an incentive to them (Kalin 2002). The

survey (Earley and Bubb 2004, 35) on teachers' attitudes towards constant professional development shows that the headteachers' knowledge and approach has a strong positive or negative impact on teachers' attitudes towards constant professional development. Consequently, it is important that headteachers create a school culture that is open to the learning of both teachers and students (Earley and Bubb 2004, 35-48).

For the purpose of the article, we focused on the role of headteachers as their role has been identified as an important component of an efficient and successful school (Cotton 2003; Goodwin, Cunningham and Childress 2003). Successful forms of cooperation consist of searching for ideas, investigating and critically examining current practice, looking for better alternatives, and working together in implementing change. As leaders and coordinators of a group of professional and educated teachers, headteachers build important relations with the employees (Koren 2007). In many ways, headteachers and teachers work together as a team (Koren 2007), and this has a large influence on student success (Wheelan and Kesselring 2005). Research has also shown that headteacher-teacher relations differ between schools, and even within the school. At the same time, they have confirmed that these relations impact student success. What is more, headteacher support for the professional development of teachers increases the teacher's use of innovative ideas (Blase and Blase 1998; Koren 2007).

The importance of innovation for school success, the type of school leadership, and the role of headteachers in creating a work environment that promotes and encourages the implementation of innovative approaches on part of the teachers, on the one hand, and the proven effect of an innovative school environment on student efficiency and success, on the other, have lead us to study the role of headteachers in Slovene general upper secondary schools.

3 Empirical Research and Results

3.1 Methodology

The goal of our research was to examine the following proposition: certain factors of school leadership have an influence on the school leadership's relationship attitude innovation.

The instrument of the research was an e-questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three sequences. The first sequence consisted of demographic questions. The second and third sequences consisted of 30 statements (Table 1) about the teachers' assessments of school leadership (derived from Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach 1999) and the attitude of the headteacher towards innovation (derived from McEwan 2003; Sheppard 1996; Blase in Blase 1998). The respondents could indicate, on a scale from 1 to 5, whether they "strongly disagree[d]" (1) or "strongly agree[d]" (5) with a particular statement. The content validity of the questionnaire was tested on ten randomly chosen teachers employed at one of the general upper secondary schools. As there were no comprehension difficulties with any of the statements, the questionnaire was not changed.

The research was conducted in April-May 2011. The questionnaire was sent by mail with a letter and a self-addressed envelope attached. The returned questionnaires were checked and prepared for computer analysis. All data was analysed by SPSS 19.0. Data was analysed using quantitative statistical methods: frequencies, percentage, principal component analysis (PCA), and multiple regression.

Table 1: Statements and Cronbach's alpha

School leadership	Cronbach's alpha 0,82
V1: Guides teachers towards set goals	
V2: Encourages teacher cooperation, e.g. team work, in-class observation.	
V3: Communicates expert knowledge about teaching and learning to teachers.	
V4: Takes decisions after careful consideration.	
V5: Encourages the implementation of new teaching methods, e.g. IKT, metode aktivnega dela.	
V6: Lets teachers make decisions about their own work.	
V7: Uses modern teaching methods with students.	
V8: Encourages the fulfilment of common goals and the school vision.	
V9: Visits classrooms and talks to students, encouraging them to express opinions about the teachers and the school.	
V10: Supervises the teachers, as supervision is important for the successful functioning of the school.	
V11: Strives for good relations and communication in the workplace.	
V12: Consistently follows the rules, as they are very important for maintaining order and discipline.	
V13: Often sits in on lessons.	
V14: Awards good results of teachers' work.	
V15: Consults the staff before taking important decisions.	
V16: Expects the teachers to fulfil their obligations.	
V17: Is successful at raising outside funds and support.	
V18: Refers to the rules when imposing order and discipline.	

V19: Expects efficient teaching which leads to good student results.
V20: Strives towards ensuring optimal working conditions.
V21: Makes it clear that employees are more important than the school building or equipment.
V22: Cares for all aspects of the functioning of the school and for the "big picture".
V23: Encourages expression of opinion and reaching consensus.
V24: Often reminds the teachers of the school vision.
V25: Gives teachers tasks and responsibilities out of trust in their capabilities.
V26: Informs external users about what the school represents and what it strives towards.

The headteacher's attitude towards innovation	Cronbach's alpha 0,86
IN1: Actively cooperates in the implementation of changes.	
IN2: Encourages teachers to explore their teaching.	
IN3: Encourages teachers to employ efficient teaching strategies.	
IN4: Encourages the implementation of innovation.	

3.2 Sample Description

Teachers from 27 (49.09%) out of 55 general upper secondary schools in the Republic of Slovenia were selected into the random sample. Each school was sent 20 questionnaires. 247 filled-in questionnaires (45.74%) were returned, with 194 respondents being women (78.55 %) and 53 respondents being men (21.45 %). Other relevant demographic data is presented in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

Table 2: Age

Age	f	Amount (%)
Under 30	31	12.55
From 31 to 40	74	29.96
From 41 to 50	76	30.77
50+	66	26.72
Total	247	100.00

Table 3: Work experience

Work experience	f	Amount (%)
Less than 5 years	32	12.96
5-10 years	39	15.79
11-15 years	58	23.48
15+ years	118	47.77
Total	247	100.00

Table 4: Field

Field	f	Amount (%)
Social sciences, foreign languages	162	65.59
Natural sciences	85	34.41
Total	247	100.00

Sample representativeness for gender, age, work experience, and field was confirmed by data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia for the 2010 school year (SURS 2012).

3.3 Testing the Statements

The analysis was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, the sequence on the headteacher's attitude towards innovation was reduced. By applying the PCA method (Principal Component Analysis), we introduced a new variable called "the headteacher's attitude towards innovation". This variable represented the effect in the regression model. In the second stage, we constructed a multiple regression model in which the sequence on school leadership represented the cause.

First stage - new variable

In the first stage, the statements from the sequence on School leadership were incorporated into the model. Sampling adequacy was then tested by using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test. The KMO measure was 0.769 (a value of 0.6 is a suggested minimum), as can be seen from Table 5. Bartlett's test of Sphericity at $p<0.05$ indicated that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix. On the basis of these results (these tests provide a minimum standard), the decision was made to proceed with the analysis.

Table 5: KMO and Bartlett's Test[a]

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling		0.769
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	266.747
	df	6
	Sig.	0.000

a. Based on correlations

Table 6 shows that the dummy variable "the headteacher's attitude towards innovation" is a good representation of the entry variables (all four statements of the third question sequence). This is shown by the rescaled values (the rescaled extraction of the variables was between 0.506 and 0.708). We can therefore conclude that the respondents attached the greatest importance to the following three statements: *encourages teachers to explore their teaching*, *encourages teachers to employ efficient teaching strategies*, and *actively cooperates in the implementation of changes.* The least importance was attached to *encourages the implementation of innovation*.

Table 6: Communalities

	Raw		Rescaled	
	Initial	Extraction	Initial	Extraction
IN4: Encourages the implementation of innovation.	0.888	0.471	1.000	0.506
IN3: Encourages teachers to employ efficient teaching strategies.	0.811	0.529	1.000	0.653
IN2: Encourages teachers to explore their teaching.	1.142	0.809	1.000	0.708
IN1: Actively cooperates in the implementation of changes.	1.099	0.592	1.000	0.539

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The new joint component can explain 60.175 % of the total variance (Table 7).

Table 7: Total Variance Explained

	Initial Eigenvalues[a]				Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	
Raw	1	2.371	60.175	60.175	2.371	60.175	60.175
	2	0.679	17.225	77.400			
	3	0.546	13.852	91.252			
	4	0.345	8.748	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. When analysing a covariance matrix, the initial eigenvalues are the same across the raw and rescaled solution.

The next step was to use multiple regression analysis. We wanted to find out which factors of school leadership had an influence on the headteacher's attitude towards innovation.

Second part – Statements affecting the headteacher's attitude towards innovation

The stepwise regression method used in the second part of the analysis showed (Table 8) that twelve school leadership statements (Table 9) displayed a statistical effect on "the headteacher's attitude towards innovation" (unstandardized β was between - 0.081 and 0.222). The remaining statements did not show any statistical effect on "the headteacher's attitude towards innovation", meaning that unstandardized β was 0.

Table 8: Model Summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
12 statements	0.895	0.802	0.792	0.45721178

All statements have a positive impact on the headteacher's attitude towards innovation (Table 9), with the exception of statements *V9: visits classrooms and talks to students, encouraging them to express opinions about the teachers and the school,* and *V12: consistently follows the rules, as they are very important for maintaining order and discipline.* These have a negative impact. The data is Table 9 is arranged in a descending manner according to the amount of effect of individual independent variables.

Table 9: Variables which have a statistical effect

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-5.428	0.248		-21.895	0.000
V1: Guides teachers towards set goals.	0.222	0.041	0.220	5.417	0.000
V2: Encourages teacher cooperation, e.g. team work, in-class observation.	0.214	0.045	0.193	4.757	0.000
V4: Takes decisions after careful consideration.	0.179	0.034	0.209	5.293	0.000
V5: Encourages the implementation of new teaching methods, e.g. IKT, metode aktivnega dela.	0.170	0.043	0.144	3.955	0.000
V6: Lets teachers make decisions about their own work.	0.148	0.043	0.110	3.473	0.001
V8: Encourages the fulfilment of common goals and the school vision.	0.139	0.051	0.107	2.695	0.008
V11: Strives for good relations and communication in the workplace.	0.119	0.046	0.103	2.570	0.011
V10: Supervises the teachers, as supervision is important for the successful functioning of the school.	0.107	0.032	0.117	3.395	0.001
V3: Communicates expert knowledge about teaching and learning to teachers.	0.089	0.033	0.111	2.708	0.007
V7: Uses modern teaching methods with students.	0.070	0.020	0.119	3.471	0.001
V12: Consistently follows the rules, as they are very important for maintaining order and discipline.	-0.074	0.038	-0.067	-1.975	0.049
V9: Visits classrooms and talks to students, encouraging them to express opinions about the teachers and the school.	-0.081	0.026	-0.102	-3.187	0.002

4 Conclusion

With their flexibility, ability of communication, integrity, dependability, and attitudes towards innovation, headteachers can promote trust and work preparedness amongst teachers (Koren 2007). The responsibilities of the teachers are to make the subject matter of their teaching interesting (through the use of general and subject-specific teaching strategies, as well as tapping into students' previous knowledge and experience), to lecture with joy (in order to awaken student curiosity), and to make sure their explanations are understandable (Marentič-Požarnik 2003).

The survey has shown that the following factors of school leadership have an impact on the headteacher's attitude towards innovation: g*uides teachers towards set goals, encourages teacher cooperation, e.g. team work, in-class observation, communicates expert knowledge about teaching and learning to teachers, takes decisions after careful consideration, encourages the implementation of new teaching methods, e.g. IKT, metode aktivnega dela, lets teachers make decisions about their own work, uses modern teaching methods with students, encourages the fulfilment of joint goals and the school vision, supervises the teachers, as supervision is important for the successful functioning of the school,* and *strives for good relations and communication in the workplace.*

Two factors of school leadership have a negative influence on the headteacher's attitude towards innovation: *consistently follows the rules, as they are very important for maintaining order and discipline*, and *visits classrooms and talks to students, encouraging them to express opinions about the teachers and the school*. We believe that this is because teachers want to take on more responsibility for their work and because headteachers could also judge the success of their work. Similarly, the implementation of innovative approaches into the classroom would require more work, effort, and self-initiative on part of the teachers and students, which could lead to resistance or at least to perceived resistance in the eyes of the teachers or headteachers.

Just as quality teaching is dependent on good and creative teachers, the quality and creativity of teachers is dependent on quality leadership.

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