

THE DECISIONAL SYSTEM FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF PREUNIVERSITARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract: *The educational management has a multiple, decisive character: social – the good functioning of the educational institutions; pedagogical – the accomplishment of basic functions of the educational system, formation of personality; systemic-compliance with the general management system; economic - satisfying the company with labor resources; multidisciplinary - the interference of information from different fields during the educational act. Some interpretations lead us to the complex management of the educational management, claiming that in their activity the school principals must accomplish all the tasks submitted to the education and society system. Through this prism, the educational management requires the school header functions such as: the continuous improvement of the activity, the implementation of educational policies, the rational valorization of the pedagogical resources, the psycho-pedagogical counseling, etc. The school managers set the objectives, the strategies and the policies, represent the organization in relations with the central and/ or the local government, being responsible for the overall decision-making processes of the organization. They are interested in developing long-term plans, the main responsibility being to guide the work in the future, to formulate objectives and strategy at the educational institution's overall level, to facilitate and stimulate the organization's adaptation to change and to monitor relations with the community or the company in which it operates.*

Key words: *decision making system; pre-university education; school managers; education.*

Introduction

Educational management is manifested at different levels: the macro-management of the education system and the educational process, by country and by level: European, national, local; intermediary - the management of school organizations, which refers to the coordination of educational structures by top managers in education, from the minister to the school principal; micro - management of student classes that analyze the way in which lessons and classes are organized by operational managers in education (teachers).

The issue of educational management has a special significance in the context of a modern society consisting of a set of organizations that regulate or facilitate almost all aspects of human existence. In this context, it is increasingly accepted that school should be seen as a complex type of organization, a system with a set of own goals, with a certain distribution of power and authority, with specific functions and responsibilities, consisting of the necessary integrated parts which allow them to function in an attempt to achieve their goals.

We therefore consider that the levels at which management is manifested in an educational establishment are the same as in any functional organization, namely:

- top management (leadership);
- middle management (level of committees/departments/compartments);
- first level management (college student level).

From this perspective, educational managers are people who, by using a set of laws, principles, methods, etc., depending on their personal abilities, lead a certain hierarchical level of the school organization to achieve the goals pursued.

In this respect, the specialty literature presents the following order of types of educational managers:

- kindergarten teacher, primary school teacher: leads the didactic activity at the level of a collective - class or group;
- head teacher: conducts educational activity at the level of a class or group of students;
- speech therapist teacher: conducts the process of language training and psycho-pedagogical assistance specific to pupils and parents at the territorial and county level through logopedic and inter-school centers through logopedics;
- counselor teacher: conducts the psycho-pedagogical activity of pupils, teachers and parents at the territorial-county level through the psycho-pedagogical and inter-school assistance centers, through the psycho-pedagogical assistance offices;
- methodist teacher: conducts the methodical activity at territorial and county level through the Teaching Staff Houses and at the inter-school level through the methodical committees;
- director: leads the activity of an educational unit on a global level;
- school inspector: conducts inspections of various types: school, general, territorial inspections.

In the educational environment, the success of the managerial approach is conditioned by the fact that the teachers have certain categories of competencies that are directed to the management, coordination, organization, communication, resource management, but also competencies that are dependent on the plasticity of their personality.

2. Roles and competences in educational management

From research in the field (for example, those of Henry Mintzberg) (Mintzberg Henry, 1998: 231-240) it has been noticed that managers devote much of their communication time-to meetings, telephone conversations, correspondence solving, etc. and that they have certain responsibilities (within or outside their organization) that do not fully fall into the category of managerial functions. The conclusion of these studies was that the manager activities define three categories of roles, each of these groups being subdivided into subroles:

Table 1. Categories of roles

Interpersonal roles	Representation
	Leader
	Binder
Informational roles	Monitor
	Dissemination
	Speaker
Decision making roles	Entrepreneur
	Mediator
	Resource distributor
	Negotiator

Each of the 10 managerial roles has its importance in the overall workforce of the managerial structures, thus:

- **Representation:** attending ceremonies, official meetings, events, etc. Although it does not seem to have much significance, this role consumes an important part of time for a manager.
- **Leader:** Establish a working environment where employees work together to the optimum level to achieve the organization's goals. It is a very important role for the manager because it involves the interaction with the staff and the complex skills.
- **Binder:** maintaining relationships and contacts outside his/ her department, with other managers from other departments of the same organization or other organizations.
- **Monitor:** Identify and select the most useful and relevant information from the many formal and informal sources (reports, minutes, mass media, specialist magazines, rumors, etc.). Managers who fail to fulfill this role correctly are left to be influenced by unreliable sources of information, overwhelmed by a huge amount of information that consumes them very precious time and makes inappropriate decisions.

- **Dissemination:** Sending relevant information, values and beliefs to the organization's staff so that there is good communication at all levels.
- **Speaker:** the authority to speak as a representative of the organization.
- **Entrepreneur:** Promoting change at the organization level, implementing new ideas, identifying new opportunities and starting new projects. It is the most important decision-making role of a manager, involving the assumption of the risks of major decisions that produce/ not significant changes to the advantage of the organization.
- **Mediator:** Reducing tensions and conflicts and resolving crisis situations at various levels of the organization.
- **Resource distributor:** the correct allocation of resources (money, time, equipment, workforce and space) according to objective criteria and identified needs.
- **Negotiator:** Making decisions in situations where issues related to resources, contracts, mergers, etc. are negotiated.

An old controversy between specialists relates to the educational ability of managerial skills. In other words, managers are inborn or can they be created by education? Talent and natural inclinations undoubtedly have an important role, but becoming a manager is the result of a process of personal transformation. Expanding the perspective and conception of the world and life, raising the level of consciousness, discovery of the right motives and principles create the necessary premises for becoming a person capable of leading others, that is, a person who deserves to be followed by other people and they are in the care and not subordinate. People who are optimistic, who are easily connected with others, who are organized, communicate excellently, are endowed with intuition and empathy, showing strength of character, who have a developed sense of social communion and who develop the necessary technical skills are clearly advantageous in the occupation and successful fulfillment of managerial functions. Given the complexity of work and the impact it has on the organization, modern management is a process that involves a set of competencies ranging from those related to the use of information technology and statistics.

Managerial competence is highlighted by the ability of leaders to carry out their specific activities to the standards adopted by the organization. The complexity, diversity and intensity of the manager's activity differs depending on the position in the hierarchical level, the compartment / field of activity, the profile and size of the organization. In the educational environment, the success of the managerial approach is conditioned by the teachers' holding the following categories of competencies:

Communication and networking skills:

- communication and relationship efficiency of the managerial approach;
- adjustment to unforeseen situations for the operational problem solving;
- solving conflict situations, following investigation, mediation and negotiation to ensure a climate of trust and accountability.

Psycho-social skills:

- value the individual and group competencies of the interlocutors with the aim of establishing effective communication;
- adopting an appropriate behavior in the relations with the interlocutors in order to achieve a collaborative climate.

Competencies to information technologies use:

- integration of information for the creation of a database useful for the managerial act;
- value the information in the database in order to make decisions in accordance with the realities specific to the educational environment;
- using computerized information technology and technologies to make the activity more efficient and ensure its quality.

Management / coordination and organization skills:

- designing activities in order to achieve a quality educational approach;

Evaluation competencies:

- setting the objectives and evaluation criteria with respect to the principles of total quality;
- using the evaluation techniques and tools specific to the educational process;
- evaluation of the educational approach in order to identify the necessary training of the personnel.

Administration and management resources:

- managing the material and financial resources according to the priorities of the managerial plan in compliance with the general and specific legislation;
- management of the decisional act by taking responsibility or delegating responsibilities within the working groups;
- selection of human resources according to the specificity of the unit.

Institutional development competencies:

- analyzing the educational context in which the institution operates in order to design an adequate institutional development strategy;
- designing the institutional development strategy;
- promoting national and European values in education through programs and partnerships.

Self-management competences:

- evaluation of their own activity in order to increase the quality of the managerial act;
- selecting the training path for career development in accordance with the personal aspirations and the specifics of the institution.

3. The decision characteristics and the role of managerial decisions in pre-university education system

Decision making is the central activity of a manager; all other activities are carried out to ensure that the decision has already been taken to implement and monitor its effectiveness.

Managers should decide when and to what extent their subordinates will be involved in decision-making, as employee involvement determines the quality of decision-making and participation in decision-making.

Managerial decision in education is required at all levels of the system and the learning process. Its pedagogical specific quality is marked at the level of managerial decision: effective, efficient, prospective.

The effective pedagogical decision implies the managerial responsibility assumed in establishing the objectives of the reference activity. We take into account the responsibility shown by the school manager employed as a decision-maker at different levels of the education system (school inspector, school organization director, professor, teacher-head master, teacher-advisor, teacher responsible for methodological committee, etc.) in correctly designing education/training objectives that can be effectively and socially achieved by the end of the reference activity.

Effective pedagogical decision engages the responsibility of the school manager who must ensure the achievement of the objectives of the reference activity. In any case (school inspector, director, professor, etc.) will involve the "five mental skills" required in managerial leadership for:

- a) "optimal time organization at the level of assessment: initial (diagnostic and predictive) - continuous (formative) - final (summative);
- b) "focusing on external contribution, adapting efforts to results, not to the work to be done";
- c) focusing on "their strengths" and those led "and on the strengths of the situation";
- d) targeting major areas or priorities "where a higher field will produce remarkable results";
- e) stabilizing effective system-based decision-making as a reference activity strategy, avoiding its fragmentation "in several decisions, meaning making wrong decisions". (Drucke, 2007: 40)

The efficient pedagogical decision implies the optimal valorisation of pedagogical resources (informational, human, didactic-material, financial) existing in a managerial context (of top - the ministry of education, intermediary - school inspectorate, basic - school organization, class of pupils etc.), throughout the reference activity, within a particular education/ training cycle, partially or fully carried out.

Effective pedagogical decision engages the optimal valorisation of existing pedagogical resources within a managerial process that requires, in a normative sense: (Drucke, 2007: 124-141)

- a) focusing on generic issues, solvable through strategic solutions, not procedural adaptations;
- b) defining the specifications needed to solve the generic problem, set between “minimum goals” - “limit conditions”;
- c) adopting the strategic solution “from what is right, not from what is acceptable”, so as not to “omit important things and lose any chance to formulate a useful answer”;
- d) the application of the optimal strategy solution, which “must correspond to the capacity of the people called to do it”;
- e) the integration of the strategic solution within a reverse link circuit (external feed-back initiated by the educator-manager, internal feed-back initiated by the educated) “in order to ensure the continuous verification, in relation to the real events, of the expectations they are at its foundation”.

The prospective pedagogical decision implies respecting the managerial function of positive anticipation of future results, achievable in relation to the nature of the assessed domain (pupil, pupil class, concrete education / training activity, school organization, educational system / territorial, national, etc.) and the time spent throughout the education/ training cycle and at the end of it.

A. Decision classification

Decision types are categorized into four main categories, as follows:

- strategic decisions,
- operative decisions,
- administrative decisions,
- programmable and non-programmable decisions.
- **Strategic decisions** are basic, complex, long-term, reflecting the organization’s major goals.
- **Operative decisions** are taken in the short term, they are repeated, so they are routine.
- **Administrative decisions** focus on establishing authoritarian and communication lines.

“The programmable ones are taken by computer. Some scheduled decisions are repetitive, others are routine decisions. For repetitive learners, education units

have written and unwritten policies designed to simplify decision-making, save time, and allow good work coordination. Routine decisions are not necessarily simple.

Non-programmable decisions are taken by man under unstable conditions or in single situations. To solve these problems there are no pre-established procedures either because they have not been met, or because they are very important and complex". (Tîrcă, 2011: 128)

A good manager has the ability to make unscheduled decisions, and the time allocated to making these decisions increases at the expense of the time allocated to programmed decision-making, which is the main concern of other teachers in the school unit with various lower responsibilities.

After the horizons of the organization's activities, the decisions can be: (Joița, 1995: 97-98)

- *strategic* (for more than one year);
- *tactical* (refers to activity or sub-activity, for periods shorter than one year);
- *current* (they are the most frequent and aim at achieving specific, specific tasks, consisting of tasks and tasks, the reference periods are shorter, respectively several weeks).

In relation to the level at which management is located, the decisions are:

- at top level;
- at medium level (methodical committees, workshops, etc.);
- at a lower level;

By their frequency, decisions can be:

- periodically (at defined intervals);
- randomly (at irregular intervals);
- unique (exceptional character).

The ability to predict classifies decisions in: anticipated; unpredictable. In relation to decision-making competence, there are: full decisions; informed decisions.

The sphere of coverage highlights the existence of individual decisions; collective.

B. Decision-making factors

The undertaken investigations have shown that the most important constituent elements of the decisional situation are: the decision-making factor or the decision-maker and the decisional environment.

The decision-making factor or the decision-maker is represented by "a manager or a managerial body which, by virtue of its objectives, tasks, competences and responsibilities, takes the decision in that situation". (Nicolescu, Verboncu, 1997: 206)

The decisional environment "consists of all the endogenous and exogenous elements of the organization, which make up the decisional situation, characterized

by the manifestation of some direct and indirect influences on the content and the results of the managerial decision". (Nicolescu, Verboncu, 1997: 206)

In the decision-making process, the primary factors of the decision fall into interdependencies, which are reflected in the characteristics of the decisional situations that they generate. Mainly there may be three situations: certainty, uncertainty, risk.

The certainty is characterized by the maximum likelihood of achieving the objective pursued using the intended way. The elements involved in the decisional situation are of the type of controllable variables, their characteristics are known, and their evolution can be accurately anticipated.

Uncertainty occurs when the probability of achieving the goal is high, but the way in which there is a need to do has serious doubts. Such situations involve a large number of variables, with few exceptions controllable, some insufficiently studied, hence the approximate anticipation of their evolution.

The risk occurs when the objective is achievable, with an appreciable probability of realization, but there is great uncertainty as to the most appropriate ways to proceed. An appreciable share of variables is uncontrollable and even the evolution of some of the controllable variables is difficult to predict.

4. Stages of the decision-making process in pre-university education system

The rational decision-making process consists of a series of steps that managers follow in choosing the alternative considered optimal. These steps are:

- 1) *"Identifying and defining the problem* is the first step in developing strategic decisions. At this stage it is necessary to recognize the situation that requires the strategic decision (made in time and space), by specifying the component elements and the persons or compartments of which it is part, determining the degree of novelty of the problem, an operation that can indicate to what extent the experience and the previous processes are also useful in the directions in which efforts must be made to complete the knowledge and working methods
- 2) *The correct definition of the problem* creates the premises for the proper specification of the objective. Quantitative techniques can be used to measure past achievements and anticipate the evolution of future factors and conditions.
- 3) *Determining alternatives or decisional variants*, how to achieve the goal. For this purpose various techniques of harvesting ideas are used, such as: sinectic, brainstorming, Delphi technique, etc. At this stage it is essential to gather the main information characterizing each possible course of action and their logical ordering. To this end, lists containing the elements indispensable to the evaluation of the identified alternatives, highlighting the potential advantages and disadvantages of each of them, are drawn up.

- 4) *The decision process continues with the implementation of the decision.* This stage must be prepared with a lot of attention, particularly for decisions that bring about radical changes in the organization's activities.
- 5) *The decision-making process does not end once the decision is implemented, but continues with the evaluation of the results obtained.* At this stage it is determined the extent to which the fixed objectives have been met, the causes that generated the possible deviations, the unpredictable factors that have put their mark on them". (Gherguț, 2007: 80)

5. Component elements of the decision-making process in the pre-university education system

The key elements of a rational decision-making process tailored to school unit conditions are as follows:

- a) "Decision-making aims to solve problems related to the effective development or development of the activities of the school unit.
- b) The quality of human factor work is essential for the effectiveness and efficiency of the decisions made.
- c) In decision-making environment factors not only those in the organization but also those exogenous who intervene in the given issue are included.
- d) The influence of the decisional environmental factors is manifested at each stage of the decision-making process, indirectly through the decision makers. This way of influencing the decisional course again highlights the importance of the human factor in decision-making, its considerable influence on the effectiveness of the organization.
- e) In the last two stages of the decision-making process, the influence of the decision-making environment is manifested directly. The results of the decision-making process depend not only on the quality of decision-making and the efforts of the decision-making center, but also on the joint action of environmental factors, whose evolution can not always be accurately predicted, especially in situations of risk and uncertainty. There is a direct, univocal relationship between the environmental factors and the evaluation of the results, in the sense of influence of the decisional environment on the assessment of the effects of the decision.
- f) The model is a concretisation of the systemic approach of the decision-making process in the organization. Each stage serves as a premise or basis for departure for the next.
- g) At the end of the model, interdependencies that exist between decisions are suggested". (Nicolescu, Verboncu, 1997: 217)

Such a model is theoretically useful in that it provides a coherent picture of the decision-making process as a whole, on the main elements and contemporary phases, as well as on the correlations between them. From the point of view of

practice, its usefulness is that it can be used in the training and refinement of school managers and specialists in pre-university education.

6. Raising and modernizing the decision system

As a result of the investigations carried out, several requirements have been outlined that the decision must meet in order to effectively fulfill the multiple functions of the organization. These requirements are (Nicolescu, Verboncu, 1997: 217):

- 1) "The decision must be *scientifically proven*. In order to achieve this major goal it is necessary for the managerial staff to have both the knowledge, the methods, the techniques and the necessary decision-making skills.
- 2) The decision must be *empowered*. This requirement is to be understood in a double sense. Each decision is required to be adopted by the management body in whose service task it is expressly registered.
- 3) Each decision must be integrated, *harmonized in all decisions adopted or designed* taking into account the organization's strategy and policies. Integration of decisions is required to be done both vertically and horizontally, guaranteeing the realization of the principle of decision-making and action. Vertical integration refers to the correlation of decisions made by each manager with decisions taken at higher hierarchical levels. Horizontal integration refers to the correlation with decisions related to the other involved activities with which they are in interdependence relations.
- 4) The decision must fall within the optimal design and implementation period. In order to ensure that the decisions conception and implementation, in particular strategic and tactical decisions are enrolled, an optimal approach to management is required in the optimal period.
- 5) The proper decision formulating is an essential condition for effective enforcement. The decision must be formulated in a clear, concise manner and contain the objective and main operational parameters, it must indicate the objective pursued, the mode of action envisaged, the resources allocated, the decision-maker and the period or period of application".

7. Decision methods and techniques used in the pre-living education system

The adoption of complex decision-making decisions is made possible by using a wide range of decision-making methods and techniques that facilitate the choice of the optimal variation, each of which is embedded in a particular decision-making model.

Depending on the volume, structure and quality of information they receive, decision models can be: (Nicolescu, Verboncu, 1997: 219-221)

- ✓ "deterministic (centered on information with high precision); non-deterministic; probable."

The use of these methods and decision-making techniques leads to an increase in the degree of rigor and implicit effectiveness of the decisions adopted, differentiated according to the typology of the decisional situations involved.

Decision-making methods and techniques can be grouped, depending on the type of decision-making situation involved, into three categories:

- ✓ *methods and techniques for optimizing decisions in certainty*: global utility method, additive method, Deutch-Martin algorithm, decision table, decision simulation;
- ✓ *methods and techniques for optimizing decisions in uncertainty*: optimistic technique, pessimistic technique, technique of optimality, proportionality technique, regression minimization technique;
- ✓ *methods and techniques for optimizing risk decisions*: the decision tree, the mathematical expectation method.

Depending on the objectives pursued, the methods applicable in pre-university education can be grouped into three categories:

A) Methods of execution

“In order to motivate staff, the institution can provide material rewards for outstanding achievements in its own activity with the help of indicators systems to raise awareness of employees of educational institutions towards the realization of general public interests.

In order to determine citizens to observe and execute administrative decisions, democratic states can offer conditions: political, legal, economic, social, in accordance with the rules of the rule of law (the method of cointerest and persuasion) or the constraint method when appropriate. Economic information and information campaigns are needed to present economic and social policies”. (Brezoianu, 1991: 98)

B) Methods of organization and operation

“We consider it useful to give a brief overview of the five methods of organization used in the state administration and implicitly in the school institutions: the method of rational organization of administrative activities; sitting method; effective management method; the method of capitalizing on work experience; the appropriate method of structuring the program.

We mention that the hearing method is used whenever necessary (the length of the session may vary from 15 minutes to 2-4 hours in relation to the issues debated, the number of participants depends on the method used and the type of decisions taken).

The quality of the decisions depends on the accuracy of the methods used. For effective schooling managers, they need to know very well: their work; social reality; social interests; specific laws; the people they work with.

The method of structuring the officers' program leads to increased efficiency of their work through: comfort, open organizational climate, adequate technical endowment etc". (Brezoianu, 1991: 120)

C) Methods of research

"They impose the diagnostic analysis by: documenting/ investigating the area being approached, causal analysis of data/ information using the cause-effect diagram, identifying deficiencies and positive aspects, formulating proposals for improvement". (Sfez, 1997: 510)

In decision-making processes, a particularly important place is the manager's risk attitude. These types of risk curves of the decision maker depend on the resources employed, the level at which the risk decision-making process has reached, and we have: the risk aversion curve, the risk predominant curve, the risk preference curve with modifiable stake. So, depending on the resources employed, the risk aversion manager needs the highest security probabilities. At one point he makes no more decisions than 100% safe.

In a school, it is important that any person in a leadership position has a set of qualities, skills and knowledge on which to make decisions. Among these qualities we mention: flair, self-control, intuition, sociability, communicativeness, honesty, ability in leadership, ability to understand. The style of the manager's management depends on the success of the educational establishment in which he operates. "The golden rule of any effective action (so the key to success in school leadership) is to combine control with the guidance of those involved in implementing decisions, against the backdrop of a work-centered climate of personal initiative and responsibility" (Jinga, 2008: 140).

Conclusions

The particular importance of decision-making processes in all management processes imposes a permanent concern for strengthening the capacity of pre-university education institutions to develop quality decisions that lead to increased efficiency and competitiveness.

The quality of decisions in a school organization depends on many variables ranging from the level of training of managers to how to structure the authority within that organization. Within a school organization, due to the complexity of the activities carried out, several types of decisions can be developed and applied in terms of grouping criteria.

Knowing the particularities of these decision-making categories is important not only from a theoretical point of view, but perhaps from a practical point of view, because their correct resolution and decision-making depend on the proper choice of methods and techniques.

The decision is to choose a possible alternative. It is a matter of managerial choice and competence, by decision, the manager decides on the modalities of the practical action meant to lead to the achievement of the designed objectives and triggers these actions.

All managerial activity can be summed up, in essence, in a chain of decisions. The complexity and growing diversity of the environment in which the public organization (school) actively generates problems that require resolution and enforcement. The limited nature of human, material, financial or informational resources implies a certain responsibility in achieving the objectives according to the most advantageous ways of allocating and using them.

The decision is found in all the functions of the management, while the quality of the adopted decisions influences significantly the effectiveness of the educational process of the educational units:

- forecast ends with the decision on the objectives and directions of action;
- organization ends with the decision on the forms and methods of organization;
- coordination ends with decisions to harmonize staff and activities;
- training ends with decisions on incentives motivating staff;
- control ends with corrective decisions in order to achieve the objectives.

Decisional variants involve a lot of creative managerial thinking, often consulting experts, data collections, selective research / analysis, quantitative analyzes that are evaluated and compared on the basis of decisional criteria, in order to make the most rational decision.

Even the environment (the state of nature/ objective conditions), represented by all the internal and external conditions, can be influenced by the decision-maker (only described, anticipated) and influences the consequences of a decisional variant and, implicitly, the decision.

The evaluation allowed the managers of the educational institutions to learn from experience, thus increasing their ability to take and implement effective decisions. The focus on evaluation has enabled problem solving to become a dynamic and continually improved activity. Each decision-maker managed to build a feed-back system containing information on the state and implementation that underpinned its adoption.

Based on this system, the decision-maker (the director and the board of directors) can correct the decision-making process, or it can return to the decision-making process itself, which will have a positive, positive effect on the performance and efficiency of the managerial process.

In conclusion, the decision is nothing more than choosing a possible alternative. It is therefore an issue of choice but also of managerial experience involving, on the one hand, the knowledge of managerial theory and especially the decisional techniques, and, on the other hand, the knowledge of the school's problems and of the specific ways of solving them.

Thus, the golden rule of any effective action (ie the key to success in school leadership) is to combine control with the guidance of those involved in implementing decisions, against the backdrop of a sustained work climate, personal initiative and responsibility.

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