

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION: PROFESSIONALISM VERSUS EMOTIONAL SATISFACTION? A CASE STUDY FROM LATVIA

Manuel Joaquín Fernández González

Institute of Pedagogical Sciences, University of Latvia
manuels.fernandezs@lu.lv

Laimite Senkāne

Institute of Pedagogical Sciences, University of Latvia
lsenkane@edu.riga.lv

Abstract

Research on educational leadership is one of the scholars' main tasks for improving quality and effectiveness of education. The objective of this study is to explore the way educational leadership is understood and implemented in an educational institution with high-quality standards in Latvia. Based in the reference frame proposed by S. Gento for Educational Leadership and Quality of Education (Gento, 2002), a study with a parallel mix design, using questionnaires and interviews, has been conducted at the Institute of Pedagogical Sciences of the University of Latvia in 2012-2013. The research question has been put forward – what the institution's head, teachers, researchers and students think about the importance given to and the existence of the main features of the quality of education and which educational leadership strategies are used inside this institution.

The results indicated that, when striving for professional excellence, effective educational leadership can include emotional crisis, which can be profitable in a context of institutional and social wellbeing, based in mutual trust and confidence. The discussion underlines the specificity of the findings in comparison with similar research in other European countries.

Keywords: Educational leadership, quality of education, professionalism, emotional crisis

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays educational effectiveness and quality of education is more than ever a topical concern for policy makers and educators all around the world. The recent economical crisis raised awareness of the necessity of coordinating efforts at all levels (supranational, national and institutional) for improving quality of education and for learning to act with social responsibility when using the public assets allocated to educational activities (Tooms & Boske, 2010).

In order to promote a better knowledge of what quality of education is and how it can be improved, research on educational leadership, as one of the main aspects of

the educational process, is one of the most relevant tasks for academics of the third millennium (Capper & Frattura, 2009; Young, Crow, Murphy & Ogawa, 2009). A deeper insight of the way educational leadership is understood and implemented in high-level educational institutions around the world is an important contribution to the task of scientifically defining what quality of education is.

The recent enlargement of the European Higher Education Area opened new possibilities for researching innovative and successful ways of understanding and implementing educational leadership and quality of education in post-soviet countries (Michalak, 2008), but the situation in the Baltic countries such as Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia remains quite unexplored. The objective of this study was to explore the way educational leadership and quality of education are understood and implemented in an educational institution with high-quality standards in Latvia, as a case of good practice. The main research question was: how the different sectors of the institution (head, teachers, researchers and students) perceived the importance and evidence of the main features of the quality of education and which educational leadership strategies were used inside this educational institution.

The theoretical framework of the study is the model proposed by S. Gento (Gento, 2002) for researching Educational leadership and Quality of education. The quality of an educational institution is defined as the intentional enhancement of all the dimensions of the person (corporal, spiritual, relational and transcendental), through a process of participation and interrelation that leads to personal and social wellbeing. Accordingly to this theoretical framework, the quality of an educational institution is characterized by four identifiers and seven predictors of quality. The identifiers are *educational product* (considering that the most specific product of education is related to the acquisition of values), *students' satisfaction*, *staff's satisfaction*, and *impact of educational product* in different contexts or fields where the beneficiaries live and work. The predictors of quality are: *availability of material and personal resources*, *institution's organisation and planning*, *management of resources*, *educational methodology* and *leadership abilities* of the institution's head, researchers and teachers.

In the proposed reference framework, a pedagogical leader is defined as the person (or group of people) with the ability to provoke the release, from inside, of the energy existing in other persons, enhancing their agency for attaining in a most effective and comfortable way their personal and socio-professional goals. Accordingly to this conception, in this study educational leadership was analysed through the following eight dimensions: *charismatic*, *emotional*, *anticipatory*, *professional*, *participatory*, *cultural*, *formative* and *administrative*.

Within this theoretical frame, we tried to understand which aspects of quality of education were most important and evident and which leadership strategies were used to reach them in the selected Latvian institution. We were also interested in understanding how the different components of quality of education and educational leadership were structured, ordained, and how they related to each other in this institution. We tried to grasp which were the institution's main priorities, where they came from, how they were shared by the members of the institution and how they were implemented in practice. More specific questions were formulated during

the data analysis and interpretation of the results: what was most important in the institution: staff's personal charisma or institution's attractiveness? the managerial or the pedagogical aspects? the emotional wellbeing of students or reaching the expected learning outcomes? whose interests, individuals' institution's or external, defined the direction of the work of this institution?

METHODOLOGY

In order to answer to the research questions, a study was conducted at the Institute of Pedagogical Sciences at the University of Latvia (IPS) from September 2012 till February 2013. The IPS was founded in 2007 and it is recognized nationally and internationally as a high-quality institution promoting excellence in pedagogical research and offering innovative and flexible study environment for master and doctoral students. It has been ranked as one of the best educational institutions in Latvia in 2012.

The study had a parallel mix design, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Mixed methods allowed to combine the high reliability of scientifically validated quantitative research instruments (questionnaires) with the interpretative phenomenological approach, where participants constructed and provided meanings based on their self-perceptions of their interaction with the institution through different practices (research, studies, direction). In September 2012 the research tools (two electronic questionnaires) were chosen, adapted and piloted. In December 2012 data collection started (questionnaires and interviews). Data analysis, interpretation and discussion of results with participants was done in January-February 2013.

The two questionnaires on Quality of education (166 items) and Educational leadership (176 items) used in this study were elaborated under the direction of S. Gento in 2002 (Gento, 2002) and updated in the fall 2012 by the research group "Pedagogical Leadership and Quality of Education" of the Spanish university *Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia* (UNED). The questionnaire on quality of education was divided in 2 parts. The first part contained four identifiers of quality, including 21 features (indicators), and the second one contained seven predictors of quality, with 51 indicators. The questionnaire on educational leadership addressed the eight dimensions of educational leadership mentioned in the introduction and contained 80 indicators (ten features or characteristics for each leadership dimension).

The respondents were asked to evaluate each item of questionnaires in a 9-point Likert scale from two different lenses: the 'importance given to' and the 'found evidence of' them in the institution. This double perspective was interesting for investigating the research question more accurately, because it allowed grasping the difference between the respondents' expectations (importance) and the reality they perceived (evidence). For this study an online version of these questionnaires was created using *Google Forms* to improve reliability, minimizing errors in data transcription. During the elaboration and validation of both online questionnaires different versions were piloted and the best ones were retained for the study.

As it was said, this study focussed on the Institute of Pedagogical Sciences (IPS) of the University of Latvia. 18 answers to the questionnaire on Quality of education

and 15 to the questionnaire on Educational leadership were recorded. All respondents had a good knowledge of the IPS and they belonged to different sectors of it: students (N=19), researchers (N=5), teachers (N=8), and the Head. The reliability analysis of both questionnaires showed a very high reliability for both sets of answers (Cronbach's α for the questionnaire on Quality of education = 0.971; and for the questionnaire on Educational leadership = 0.993).

Parallely to this work, four semi-structured interviews were conducted at the IPS. The choice was made to interview a representative from each sector of the IPS (student, researcher, teacher and the Head), in order to enrich the study with different points of view. For the choice of the respondents the following criteria were retained: representativeness (Head), years of experience in the institution (a master student in her last year and a researcher co-founder of the Institute were chosen), good knowledge of the study programs offered in the institution and of the pedagogical processes (the chosen teacher was also study program manager, she knew all the students and had a broad perception of pedagogical work in the institution) and, if possible, the ability of speaking English fluently for avoiding biased translations. The guidelines for the interviews were provided in the mentioned reference frame (Gento, 2002). The average time of interviews was 30 minutes. Interviews were recorded in audio and/or video format.

Data processing. For quantitative data processing, the data obtained from the online survey were downloaded in an Excel file from the *Google Form*. After a preliminary data cleaning, data were imported in SPSS_19 software for further analysis. As regards qualitative data processing, interviews were transcribed and imported in AQUAD_6 software. Interview coding was done by two researchers working simultaneously to improve reliability: researchers read the transcriptions, looking for unities of meaning (phrases and short paragraphs) that expressed the importance and evidence of the different aspects of educational leadership and quality of education, and coded them. The system of codes was partly provided by the reference frame of the study and partly developed from the new relevant topics that emerged in respondents' answers. During the coding process researchers were aware that "qualitative analysis has something to do with the "quality" of events and states captured in our data. Therefore, our codes ... have to inform also about their quality – or expressed bluntly: Were these events good or bad?" (Huber & Gürtler, 2004, p. 90). So, additionally, each unity of meaning was evaluated as positive (+) or negative (-), according to the sense given by the respondent during the interview.

The methods used for quantitative data analysis with software SPSS_19 were: reliability analysis (Cronbach's α), frequency analysis, cross table analysis and paired sample *t* test. The methods used for qualitative data analysis with software AQUAD_6 were: frequency analysis (F), cross table analysis and linkage analysis. For improving the reliability of the interpretation of results, the preliminary results of this study were transmitted to all the students, teachers and researchers that participated in the study or worked in the institution, using *Google Docs*. They were asked to make comments and/or to answer to the researchers' or other participants' questions. Their contributions were used in the final interpretation of results.

RESULTS

In this section we will present first the quantitative results obtained from questionnaires, and then the qualitative results obtained from the interviews. At the end we will present a short summary of results, based on the comparison of qualitative and quantitative data, to introduce the discussion section.

RESULTS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

This section is divided in two parts: results from the questionnaire on Quality of education and results from questionnaire on Educational leadership.

Results from the questionnaire on Quality of education

We present first the results concerning the main identifiers and predictors of quality, and then a deeper analysis of their main features (indicators). As regards the identifiers of quality (see Table 1), the identifier *Institution staff's satisfaction* had the highest rank in importance ($M=8.00$, $SD=1.06$) but there was less evidence of it ($M=7.06$, $SD=1.14$). *Values as educational product* had lowest rank in 'importance given to' and in 'found evidence of'.

Table 1. Ranking of the four identifiers of quality of education

Importance				Evidence		
Rank	Identifier	Mean	SD	Identifier	Mean	SD
1	1.3. Staff's satisfaction	8.00	1.06	1.4. Impact of educational product	7.22	1.06
2	1.4. Impact of educational product	7.89	0.83	1.2. Students' satisfaction	7.22	1.21
3	1.2. Students' satisfaction	7.78	1.06	1.3. Staff's satisfaction	7.06	1.14
4	1.1. Values as educational product	7.56	1.15	1.1. Values as educational product	7.06	1.21

Regarding the predictors of quality (see Table 2) *Head's leadership* had the highest importance ($M=8.17$, $SD=0.71$) and evidence ($M=7.67$, $SD=1.03$), followed by *teachers' Leadership* (importance $M=7.89$, $SD=0.83$; evidence $M=7.50$, $SD=0.62$). The predictors *Availability*, *Management of resources* and *Organisation and planning* had the lowest importance and evidence.

Table 2. Ranking of the seven predictors of quality of education

Importance				Evidence		
Rank	Predictor	Mean	SD	Predictor	Mean	SD
1	2.5. Head's leadership	8.17	.71	2.5. Head's leadership	7.67	1.03
2	2.7. Teachers' leadership	7.89	.83	2.7. Teachers' leadership	7.50	0.62
3	2.4. Educational methodology	7.83	1.04	2.4. Educational methodology	7.44	1.20
4	2.6. Other directives' leadership	7.76	1.03	2.6. Other directive' leadership	7.29	1.10
5	2.3. Management of resources	7.67	1.29	2.2. Organisation and planning	6.67	1.45
6	2.1. Availability of resources	7.56	1.10	2.3. Management of resources	6.67	1.49
7	2.2. Organisation and planning	7.56	1.15	2.1. Availability of resources	6.61	1.33

In general, the overall importance given to the identifiers and predictors of quality was notably higher ($M=7.76$) than the found evidence of them ($M=7.16$). The paired sample t test indicated that this difference was statistically significant: $t(19)=4.13$, $p=0.01$, $d=0.92$. The effect size (d) according to Cohen (1998) was very high. This gap between the importance given to and the found evidence of them could indicate a certain level of dissatisfaction in the institution.

The next step of the investigation was the analysis of the features (indicators) of the identifiers and predictors of quality. Some comments of the respondents accompanied the presentation of the results.

Regarding the features of the identifiers of quality (see Table 3), the indicators that got highest importance ranking were *Intellectual values as educational product* (1st out of 21), *Students' satisfaction by the opportunity of free self development* (2nd/21) and *Impact of educational product on social context in general* (3rd/21). The indicators ranked with the lowest importance were related to the identifier Values as educational product: *Aesthetic or artistic values* (21st/21) and *Transcendent values* (20th/21). *Impact of educational product on family context* was also low ranked (19th/21). All these indicators had a similar evidence ranking.

It is interesting to note that the importance/evidence of the indicators *Impact of educational product* in "social context" in general is high, but "in family context" is very low. Low ranked indicators are all related to the "external/non professional environment" (family, art, spirituality). One of the participants in the discussion noted that in her opinion these results were characteristic to Latvia: being a post-soviet country, the materialistic world view is still very deeply rooted in mentalities. Maybe this is the reason why people don't give importance to or simply don't understand the meaning of these spiritual and family values and their relation with quality of education. However, the high standard deviation observed indicates that opinions are much divided in this regard.

Table 3. Ranking of main features (indicators) of the identifiers of quality of education

Importance		Evidence	
Rank	(Identifier) Indicator	(Identifier)	Indicator
<i>Highest</i>			
1	(Educational product:) Intellectual values	(Students' satisfaction...)	...by the opportunity of free self-development
2	(Students' satisfaction...) ...by the opportunity of free self-development	(Educational product:)	Intellectual values
3	(Impact of education...) ...on social context in general	(Staff's satisfaction...)	...by the results obtained by the students
4	(Students' satisfaction...) ...by the acceptance they receive	(Students' satisfaction...)	...by the acceptance they receive
5	(Impact of education...) ...on professional context	(Staff's satisfaction...)	...by their work and prestige

		Importance		Evidence	
Rank	(Identifier)	Indicator	(Identifier)	Indicator	
<i>Lowest</i>					
18	(Educational product:)	Social and ecological values	(Educational product:)	Transcendent values	
19	(Impact of education...)	...on family context	(Impact of education...)	...on family context	
20	(Educational product:)	Transcendent values	(Educational product:)	Physical and emotional values	
21	(Educational product:)	Aesthetic or artistic values	(Educational product:)	Aesthetic or artistic values	

Regarding the features of the predictors of quality (see Table 4), the indicators that got the highest importance rates were *Professional dimension* of the leadership of the head of the institution (1st out of 51), and the *Professional* (2nd/51) and *Emotional* (4th/51) dimensions of the leadership of the teachers of the institution. Several high-ranked predictor features were related with the socio-emotional environment in the institution: *Positive atmosphere of interpersonal relationship* (6th/51) and head's and teachers' *Participatory dimension (promoting participation)* (7th/51 and 5th/51). For each single indicator, the importance and evidence rankings were very similar, with some exceptions: for example, *Management of human resources* had a moderate rank in 'importance given to' (25th/51) but very low rank in 'found evidence of' (46th/51).

The features of the predictors of quality that got the lowest ranks of importance and evidence were related to Availability of resources: *Economical resources* (importance: 47th/51; evidence: 51st/51), *Furniture* (50th/51 and 48th/51, respectively), *Building and facilities* (importance: 49th/51). Organizational and managerial aspects also were low ranked: *Implementation of organisational components* (importance: 48th/51), *Functioning principles* (evidence: 47th/51), *Meaning of institution's mission or 'raison d'être'* (49th/51). The participants commented this point saying that in Latvia people were used to get good results with the little resources they had at hand and they did not care too much about getting new resources, simply because it was not thinkable in Soviet context. Also they commented that in Latvia most of researchers and teachers were doing their work driven by personal conviction and a sense of vocation, not for making money. So there were not in these fields many people with an entrepreneurial mind, who could look for, and find, the necessary financial resources to improve the situation.

Table 4. Ranking of main features (indicators) of the predictors of quality of education

Rank	Importance		Evidence	
	(Predictor)	Indicator	(Predictor)	Indicator
<i>Highest</i>				
1	(Principal's leadership)	Professional dimension	(Principal's leadership)	Professional dimension
2	(Teachers' leadership)	Professional dimension	(Teachers' leadership)	Participatory dimension
3	(Educational methodology)	Impulse to creativity	(Principal's leadership)	Participatory dimension
4	(Teachers' leadership)	Emotional dimension	(Teachers' leadership)	Professional dimension
5	(Teachers' leadership)	Participatory dimension	(Educational methodology)	Dedication or hard working
6	(Educational methodology)	Positive interpersonal relationship	(Principal's leadership)	Training or formative dimension
7	(Principal's leadership)	Participatory dimension	(Educational methodology)	Positive interpersonal relationship
<i>Lowest</i>				
47	(Availability of resources)	Economical resources	(Organisation and planning)	Functioning principles
48	(Management of resources)	Implementation of organisational components	(Availability of resources)	Furniture
49	(Availability of resources)	Building and facilities	(Organisation and planning)	Sense of institution's mission
50	(Availability of resources)	Furniture	(Availability of resources)	Non teaching staff
51	(Availability of resources)	Non teaching staff	(Availability of resources)	Economical resources

Results from the questionnaire on Educational leadership

As to present the results of the questionnaire on Quality of education, in this section the results concerning the eight dimensions of educational leadership are presented first, and then the main features (indicators) for each dimension are analysed.

The results (see Table 5) indicated that *Professional dimension* of educational leadership was the most important (M=8.00, SD=0.93) and evident (M=7.87, SD=0.99) in the institution. The *Emotional dimension* was as important as the *Professional dimension*, but its evidence was ranked lower (4th out of 8, M=7.53, SD=1.13). Surprisingly, *Charismatic dimension* was low ranked in importance (6th/8), but it was the second most evident (M=7.8, SD=0.86). Another surprising result was that *Anticipatory dimension* of leadership was important (3-4th/8, M=7.93, SD=1.07), but there was little evidence of it (7th/8, M=7.29, SD=1.33). *Administrative dimension* rank was the lowest in importance and evidence.

Table 5. Ranking of the eight dimensions of educational leadership

Importance				Evidence		
Rank	Dimension	Mean	SD	Dimension	Mean	SD
1	Professional	8.00	0.93	Professional	7.87	0.99
2	Emotional	8.00	1.13	Charismatic	7.80	0.86
3	Formative	7.93	0.88	Formative	7.60	1.18
4	Anticipatory	7.93	1.07	Emotional	7.53	1.13
5	Participatory	7.87	0.92	Participatory	7.47	1.06
6	Charismatic	7.87	0.92	Cultural	7.33	1.45
7	Cultural	7.60	1.35	Anticipatory	7.29	1.33
8	Administrative	7.43	0.94	Administrative	7.14	1.03

The next step of the investigation was the analysis of the main features (indicators) of each dimension of educational leadership (see Table 6). Two indicators of the Professional dimension appeared in the first place in importance (*Intervention in methodology*) and evidence (*Intervention in evaluation*). The indicator of the Charismatic dimension *General and specific personal preparation* was very well ranked in importance and evidence (4th out of 80 and 2nd/80 respectively). Other high-ranked indicators were related to the Anticipatory dimension of leadership, i.e. *Clear vision of ultimate goal* (importance: 3rd/80), and to the Formative dimension, i.e. *Impulse to research* (evidence: 5th/80).

As it was the case for the features of the predictors of quality of education, several high-ranked indicators of educational leadership were related with the socio-emotional environment in the institution: *Recognition of collaborators' professional value* (importance: 2nd/80; evidence: 4th/80), *Enhancement of positive interactive atmosphere* (evidence: 3rd/80) and *Promotion of collaborators' team working* (importance: 5th/80).

Lowest ranked indicators were mainly related with the culture of institution and the administrative dimension of leadership: for example, *Impulse to institution's own organizational profile*, which had the lowest rank in importance and evidence (80th/80), *Impulse to institution's autonomy* (importance: 77th/80), *Impulse to institution's cultural accommodation to context* (importance: 79th/80), *Supervision of documents* (evidence: 78th/80) and *Information to community on institution's life* (evidence: 77th/80).

Table 6. Ranking of main features (indicators) of the dimensions of educational leadership

Importance			Evidence	
Rank	(Dimension)	Indicator	(Dimension)	Indicator
<i>Highest</i>				
1	(Professional)	Intervention in methodology	(Professional)	Intervention in evaluation
2	(Emotional)	Recognition of collaborators' value	(Charismatic)	General and specific personal preparation
3	(Anticipatory)	Clear vision of ultimate goal	(Cultural)	Enhancement of interactions
4	(Charismatic)	General and specific personal preparation	(Emotional)	Recognition of collaborators' value
5	(Participatory)	Promotion of team working	(Formative)	Impulse to research
<i>Lowest</i>				
76	(Cultural)	Impulse to institution's accommodation to context	(Formative)	Promotion of relationship with training agents
77	(Cultural)	Impulse to institution's autonomy	(Administrative)	Information on institution's life
78	(Charismatic)	Having passed a selecting process	(Administrative)	Supervision of documents
79	(Professional)	Impulse to accommodation to context	(Participatory)	Balance between delegation and control
80	(Cultural)	Impulse to institution's organizational profile	(Cultural)	Impulse to institution's organizational profile

Some important differences between importance/evidence ranking for a same indicator were found: high importance together with low evidence rank was found in the indicator of the Formative dimension *Impulse to obtaining grants to research* (importance: 9th/80; evidence: 54th/80), and in two indicators of the Anticipatory dimension: *Vision of how the institution has to be structured* (importance: 26th/80; evidence: 69th/80) and *Setting demanding but attainable goals* (importance: 31st/80; evidence: 70th/80). These gaps could indicate unfulfilled expectations or non congruent actions. On the contrary, several indicators of the Charismatic dimension (*Representativeness, Recognized legitimacy, Having passed a selecting process*) had low importance rank but high evidence rank, indicating their unexpected/spontaneous character.

Summarizing the results obtained from the analysis of both questionnaires, two main aspects were outlined: (1) the *Professional dimension* of educational leadership was the highest ranked in importance and evidence, and several features of quality of education related with professionalism got also highest importance rates (institution's *Professional dimension, Intellectual values*); and (2) the *Head's Leadership and teachers' Leadership* had highest importance and evidence, but at the same time, the institution's

social environment was high ranked (*Positive atmosphere of interpersonal relationship, Participatory dimension*). These results will be confronted with the results of the analysis of qualitative data obtained from interviews.

RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS

During the interviews the respondents were asked to describe how they perceived the different dimensions of educational leadership, and secondarily to make reference to different aspects of quality of education in the institution. The analysis was done in two steps: (1) a frequency analysis (F) of the unities of meaning that were found in the interviews; and (2) looking for inner linkages between the unities of meaning, to unfold latent structures of meaning in the respondents' accounts.

Frequency analysis

A total of 217 unities of meaning regarding the importance (F=61) and evidence (F=156) of the educational leadership dimensions were found (see Table 7). As it has been said, the dimension importance/evidence was coded as high (+) or low (-), according to the evaluation made by the respondents. Following an interpretative phenomenological approach, the results of the frequency analysis are presented in Table 7 and commented using citations from respondents.

Table 7. Frequency of unities of meaning in interviews

Importance		Evidence											
	Respondent*							Respondent*					
Codes	A	B	C	D	total	%	Codes	A	B	C	D	total	%
IMP_participatory (+)	0	0	3	15	18	30%	EVID_participat. (+)	3	11	9	9	32	21%
IMP_professional (+)	2	0	2	9	13	21%	EVID_professional (+)	4	6	5	8	23	15%
IMP_formative (+)	0	0	0	6	6	10%	EVID_formative (+)	3	4	5	5	17	11%
IMP_administrative (+)	0	0	0	5	5	8%	EVID_participatory (-)	3	2	3	5	13	8%
IMP_charismatic (+)	1	0	0	4	5	8%	EVID_emotional (+)	6	0	6	0	12	8%
IMP_anticipatory (+)	0	1	1	3	5	8%	EVID_charismatic (+)	3	5	1	3	12	8%
IMP_administrative (-)	0	0	2	1	3	5%	EVID_anticipatory (+)	2	5	0	3	10	6%
IMP_emotional (+)	1	0	1	1	3	5%	EVID_administrat. (-)	2	0	1	6	9	6%
Other	0	1	0	2	3	5%	EVID_administrat. (+)	3	0	1	2	6	4%
							EVID_cultural (-)	3	0	3	0	6	4%
							EVID_cultural (+)	2	1	1	1	5	3%
							EVID_anticipatory (-)	1	1	2	1	5	3%
							Other	3	1	0	2	6	4%
Total unities of meaning	4	2	9	46	61	100%	Total unities of meaning	38	36	37	45	156	100%

*Respondents: A=Teacher; B=Researcher; C=Student; D=Head

The frequency analysis showed that *Participatory dimension* of educational leadership was the most frequently mentioned as being important (F=18, 30%) and present (F=32, 21%) in the institution. As the Head of the institution put it, "*participatory dimension is extremely important. It is an active participation, where everyone is aware of the work of the team and is always involved in it. In the team each one should be able to replace or to be replaced by another person*". The student commented: "*I can say that the strongest point in this University is this democracy, that here [teachers] don't just use their theory, but they let you choose what is important for you, what you want, and this is important*". However, it is interesting to note that a number of unities of meaning expressing difficulties in the participation processes were also found in the data (F=13, 8%). Commenting this point, the researcher stated that "*we are involving master students and doctoral students in data collecting, processing and analysis... but they are often changing, it is not always a stable participatory process*".

The *Professional dimension* of educational leadership was the second most mentioned (importance: F=13, 21%; evidence: F=23, 15%), with a clear focus on the "seriousness" and international scope of the institute. For example, the student commented: "*my teachers ... are absolutely leaders and I want to follow them. I can see that they are so deep inside their knowledge and so deep in what they are doing... this is a big pleasure!*"; the researcher stressed "*the international dimension, ... that is the first thing: we meet an international audience, and we are one of the rare cases where we have research members in all five ASEM research networks [refers to the Asia-Europe Meeting – ASEM Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning], and all five are from this Institute*". In the opinion of the Head of the institute, this professionalism and international projection of the institute "*makes the institution itself charismatic, attractive ... this is an original, charismatic institution*".

Regarding the dimension *Professional development* (importance: F=6, 10%; evidence: F=17, 11%), the student stated that

"...for me it is important to see that ... every time they [teachers and staff] are catching new information about what is going on in the European Union, and they don't teach just what they are used to teach. They are developing; they are trying to be 'inside'. They love their work and I also love my work, I love what I'm teaching ... and I'm every time improving, for me and for the people that is working with me. I think this is the most important part".

During the analysis of the *Emotional dimension*, the interviews revealed the existence of regular emotional crises in different fields. The situation "*can vary from the most comfortable and marvellous situations to somehow emotionally uncomfortable situations*" (teacher). As regards the learning process, "*well in general at the beginning, there was panic ... I was completely shocked about what was going on*" (student); "*During the learning process the emotions sometimes explode ... by moments the situation is quite unpleasant*" (teacher). Speaking about some managerial aspects, the researched said: "*I think that nobody is satisfied about these external aspects*"; also the head recognised that "*it is quite difficult to develop, when you need to jump from one project to another; it is difficult to delegate*" (Head). These emotional crises are

sometimes perceived as an obstacle (F=7), but more often as an impulse to work better (F=10): *"It is hard to say whether satisfaction is the process driver, because, if I'm satisfied, I can think that it is time to stop and I will not wish to do anything more. Short breaks are necessary. But something starts to happen and we change only when we are a little unsatisfied"* (Head). The role of these emotional crises will be one of the main points of discussion of this study.

The most frequently mentioned weakness of the institution is the *Administrative dimension* of leadership (F=5): *"The administrative dimension is the weakest in the Institute ... this is related with the fact that we are not completely independent, we depend administratively on the University"* (Head). The instability of the workplace appeared also as a weakness (F=5): as the teacher put it, *"for improving both researchers' and teachers' wellbeing, it would be necessary to reduce the anxiety that you don't know if in one or two months you will be still working or not working anymore here"*.

During the analysis of the interviews, a number of other aspects related to the understanding the respondents had of educational leadership and quality of education were found (93 unities of meaning). Regarding the understanding of quality of education, it was mostly related to the active participation in the process of becoming a competent and recognised professional (F=7). As the teacher put it, *"product ... high-quality product, it gives satisfaction to all the parties involved. This is what the whole team looks for: good research, projects ... this is the key!"* Respondents characterised the institution's leadership as being oriented towards the personal and professional development (learning) of the staff and students, (F=16), helping them to become leaders in their position. For example, the head of the institution said: *"I rather agree with those who think that leadership is not essentially a personal characteristic, but the ability of leading the processes. I think that everyone has to be a leader, not just the head of the institution, but also any member of the staff and even any student should be a leader"*. And the teacher understood leadership as *"the ability to collaborate with a set of employees, but also the ability of delegating, creating subgroups, which form their own leaders, and then people are both in the process and also guide it"*.

Linkage analysis

When respondents spoke about a specific dimension of educational leadership or quality of education, they made spontaneously reference ('linked') to other dimensions. The analysis of these inner linkages allowed to reveal the latent structures of meaning implicit in respondents' accounts, and to understand better which role and importance each dimension had for them.

The analysis of the linkages revealed that two dimensions of educational leadership, the *Participatory* and the *Anticipatory*, appeared to be specially linked with the others, but in different ways. The *Participatory* dimension was often mentioned spontaneously when respondent spoke about the other dimensions (for example, 11 linkages with *Emotional* dimension, 7 with the *Anticipatory* dimension and 6 with the *Professional* dimension were found); this can be understood as if this *Participatory* dimension was perceived as an appropriate background or context for the other leadership dimensions. Commenting this point, the researcher stated that *"there is a*

team of researchers; ... difficulties don't affect the team of researchers. Moreover, we have such a good team, that we are helping each other also outside of the institution". Regarding the second one, the *Anticipatory* dimension, when respondents spoke about it, then they spontaneously spoke about the *development* of other dimensions, such as the *Participatory* (7 linkages), *Professional* (6 linkages) and *Satisfaction* (4 linkages): respondents perceived *Anticipatory* dimension of leadership as the catalyser that enabled or facilitated higher participation, professionalism and satisfaction in the institution.

Summarizing the results obtained from the analysis of interviews, the *Participatory* dimension had a predominant importance and evidence in respondents' accounts, together with *Professional* dimension. Participants considered that *Anticipatory* dimension had a positive impact in the other dimensions. The importance and evidence of *Emotional* dimension of leadership was ambiguously valued in interviews.

The overall results of this study indicate that in the IPS the professionalism and quality of education come first, and this makes the institution attractive, more than teachers' and staff's personal charisma does. Students' and staff's emotional satisfaction is not the first priority: it is mainly related to social wellbeing that includes the sense of belonging to a learning community, but leadership for learning includes some moments of emotional crises or discomfort. A central dimension of educational leadership is the *Participatory* dimension: it is the context where other leadership dimensions (emotional, professional, formative etc.) can develop. Administrative and managerial aspects are not considered to be a priority.

DISCUSSION

The discussion section is organized around two main topics that emerged from the comparison of the results of this study with recent scientific literature. The first is the relation among educational leadership, quality of education and learning. And the second, the relation among educational leadership, participation and wellbeing.

LEADERSHIP, QUALITY AND LEARNING

As it has been stated, the institution analysed in this study is attractive because it puts quality first. But quality is understood as a learning process, not just as a result. For enhancing quality as learning, educational leadership is primarily *for learning*, not for managing. This finding is congruent with recent leadership studies in education. For example, speaking about the process of Europeanization of education, S. Clarke and H. Wildy stated that nowadays in Europe, "the interdependence of leadership and learning, at least in the rhetoric of educational policy, seems to have been recognised" (Clarke. & Wildy, 2009, p. 354). Moreover, recent research presents academic leadership as a 'self-designed' lifelong learning process (Ismi, 2011): leadership itself is learning.

However, this study has revealed that leadership for learning and as learning can include some moments of emotional crisis. In this institution, students and staff's emotional satisfaction is not considered to be the most important aspect of quality of education, but rather a collateral consequence of seeking for professional development

and excellence. And this could imply going through learning periods of personal or relational crisis and discomfort. Lifelong learning processes are not exempted of periods of instability and emotional risk that, if well managed, allow reaching a greater personal and professional development (Antes & Mumford, 2012). Recent research enlightens also the positive role emotional crises can have to enhance the individual's agency in constructing his or her academic identity inside a community of practice (Ismi, 2011).

The appearance of crisis in learning processes can be not just an "unavoidable eventuality", but a concrete "planned strategy", as it was in this institution. Recent studies on management and leadership showed that a balanced positive-negative strategy resulted in higher quality solutions and more viable visions than an exclusively positivity strategy that focused mainly on positive outcomes and means for attaining success (Antes & Mumford, 2012). In Higher education settings, creating relatively uncomfortable situations can be a pedagogical way of enhancing students and teachers' reflection and meaning-making. L. Moos (2009) called "soft leadership" this kind of non-directive strategy, understood as a pedagogical approach that influences the way people thinks, helping students and teachers to 'make sense' of the educational processes, and whose effects are, ironically, more profound and 'harder' than those of a more directive or 'hard leadership'.

Provoking intentionally a controlled emotional dissatisfaction comports certain risks: losing motivation, mental fatigue, burn-up syndrome etc. However, in recent studies tolerance for risk-taking was found to exert positive effects on innovative performance, if accompanied by appropriate support (Alpkan, Bulut, Gunday et al., 2010). In educational and research environments, taking the risk of provoking a certain students' or staff's emotional dissatisfaction could help to enhance their creativity and innovation skills for facing new problems. As one of the participants in this study put it, "*creativity, concerning the functions to assume and the way of solving problems and improving uncomfortable situations, is very important, and I think we are very creative here*" (researcher).

This aspect of leadership, leadership as learning and for learning through crisis that enhance proactive thinking and creativity, is also related with the second topic of this discussion. Leadership learning happens in communities of learning that promote their own educational quality through participatory learning processes.

LEADERSHIP, PARTICIPATION AND WELLBEING

The results of this study indicate that in this institution the *Participatory* dimension of educational leadership is most important. Participation is the context where the other leadership dimensions (emotional, professional, formative etc.) develop. This finding confirms the views of a number of authors who see leadership learning as a process of participation and interrelation that leads to personal and social wellbeing (Gento, 2002), a collaborative and critical process (Oord, 2013), and a form of participation and interaction within specific socio-cultural settings (Wenger, 1998; Engestrom, 2001). In this context, educational leadership appears as the ability of creating, organizing and exploiting opportunities for participation and collaboration,

empowering students and staff with a bigger autonomy and self governance, rather than in the capacity of organizing their teaching-learning work.

However, participation is based on shared interests. In order to foster participation, the educational leader's guidance for learning how to combine personal and institutional interests is crucial. In this study teachers and researchers appear as being personally interested and involved in their work, in spite of material constraints and time shortage. Also in recent literature the educational leader's ability of combining his/her own personal interests with the mission and needs of the institution appears as a key point in his/her role model function: "instead of looking at an academic leader as a passive participant... academic leadership identity involves the dynamic [active and reciprocal] interaction between individual projects and the rules determined by his or her communities of practice" (Ismi, 2011, p. 831).

In addition, educational leadership demands also the ability of combining external and institutional interests. The problem of combining external demands with internal objectives has been addressed in other European educational research from different points of view. For some scholars, the project of Europeanization of Higher Education to make European educational offer more attractive in the world education market could be considered as part of a globalising, even imperialising project (Robertson, 2009) that generates conflicts between the interests of Europe, of each concrete country and of each educational institution. As regards educational leadership, L. Moos summarises the new leadership role found in the Danish educational context as "translating the external expectation into internal demands" (Moos, 2009, p. 404), and subsequently putting back schools' own educational visions, renouncing somehow to act and lead proactively. In this regard, M. Nicolaidou (Nicolaidou, 2008) advocates rather for a "higher order conceptualisation of leadership" that is defined by the capacity to adapt external changes in accordance with internal purposes. The priority is to make the effort of choosing an adequate response to external demands that allows realizing the institution internal purposes, instead of renouncing to them or acting less proactively.

This study indicates that the paradox revealed by Clarke at European level concerning school leaders, who are "primarily responsible for leading learning while simultaneously being forced into managerial approaches" (Clarke. & Wildy, 2009, p. 356), appears also in Eastern Europe. In the IPS, the dilemma "leading for learning" (internal purpose) versus "leading for managing" (external demand) also exists and creates tensions and some discomfort, but, as this study reveals, these problems do not take over the work of the institution and they are solved "by elevation", i.e., not caring too much about managerial aspects. Managerial problems are seen as something normal and they don't interfere in the pedagogical and research processes, mainly because teachers and researches have a personal interest in their work, evolve in an institutional culture of mutual support and maintain an attitude of 'getting the work done' in spite of these difficulties.

Elements of crisis can even reinforce the internal links and social wellbeing inside the learning community. As E. Wenger puts it, "the use of the term 'community' does not usually imply harmony or collaboration" (Wenger, 1998, p. 85). In the institution,

this social wellbeing is related with mutual confidence and trust rather than stability of workplace or good incomes, which are not granted for sure. The charisma (attractiveness) of the institution itself is based mainly on the existence of a socially reassuring environment and of a "team of leaders". Some scholars recently highlighted the importance of having a strong leadership team as one of the prerequisites to establish a world class university (Day, 2009; Salmi, 2009).

In conclusion, leadership as learning and for learning can include crisis that enhance thinking and creativity. And leadership as participation and empowerment creates the institutional social wellbeing, based in trust and confidence, which allows overcoming the crisis that can appear when trying to combine personal, institutional and external interests.

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