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Inclusive Educational Policy and the Democratic Context of Educational Leadership and Management

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1   Introduction: Democracy and Education

Schools as educational institutions represent one of the key structures in contemporary society and as such have a large number of interested stakeholders that would like to influence its actions, and control, supervise and affect the school system (Dewey 2001). The approach to education depends on politics, especially the politics of the society for which people are being educated. If there is a democratic society, or at least an aspiration to one, then education as an element of social structure should be democratic. This connection between democracy and education has already been recognised. The link can be explained by the

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simple perspective according to which those who rule cannot be successful if those who elect them and who are supposed to obey them are not educated. Dewey points out that 'democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority, it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest; these can be created only by education' (2001, p. 91).

Democracy and education are closely linked for several reasons, the most important certainly being the need of democratic society for an educated, well-informed citizen with prominent human capital. The vision of educational institutions in democratic governance must include the hopes, wishes and expectations of all members of the community, and, as such, must support the efforts of all stakeholders (Duignan 2007). This approach is quite common for democratic societies based on the idea of transparency and inclusiveness. According to Amy Gutmann (1999), democratic education and democracy in general should not be understood as the simple application of certain democratic methods used in decision making. Democratic education should be perceived as an ideal in which an individual at the end of the educational path emerges as a person with all the knowledge, skills and competences necessary for active participation in the society in which he or she lives (Gutmann 1999).

When discussing the relationship between democracy and the education system, it is necessary to distinguish between education for democracy and democratic education. Education for democracy consists of theoretical teaching about democracy and democratic values, and democratic education consists of practising democracy in education processes. In democratic education, democracy is considered the goal as well as the means of education. As noted by Ayers and Ayers (2011), democratic education is to a lesser extent directed towards the transfer of facts and dates and more towards transmitting the paradigm of tolerance, openness, and accessibility. Backman and Trafford (2006) stress that elements such as promoting and encouraging students' responsibility through alternative disciplinary measures, reducing conflicts due to the reduction of authoritarian methods and environments, enhancing the methods of testing and learning, and encouraging competitiveness and entrepreneurship among students contribute to the creation and promotion of a democratic environment in schools which means creating conditions for democratic education and education for democracy.

All this corresponds to the sociological understanding of modern education and the labour market, as one of the purposes of education highlights the design of entrepreneurial culture that makes the individual competitive on the global market and capable of adapting to numerous accelerated economic and social changes (Brown et al. 2008).

School systems in the United States promote the idea that public education systems are in the service of preparing students for participation in democratic processes. The California State Ministry of Education states that education should provide an understanding of civic obligation, including voting, considerations about civic activity, volunteering and performing public services, serving in the military or in an alternative service (Glaeser et al. 2007). On that note, Holmes (1979) sums up the goals of school systems around the world. In Sweden, political goals are often equal to educational goals: 'School work is organized to develop democracy in school, and thus in society as a whole'. In the case of the education system in Costa Rica, 'the Constitution states that the general objective of education is good citizens, a democratic way of life and human solidarity'. The 'educational system that creates educated, democratic and patriotic citizens is the goal of the Indonesian government' (Holmes 1982, cited in Glaeser et al. 2007, p. 82). The Danish Act on the Folkeskole (1995, p. 1) declares that 'the school shall prepare pupils for active participation, joint responsibility, rights and duties in a society based on freedom and democracy'. This aim presents the foundation for structuring a local democratic curriculum in schools. In other words, Danish children must learn what democracy and democratic attitudes are, and, more importantly, teaching and schooling must be based on some form of initiation that has the same characteristics of democratic societies. Such a practice has been implemented to such an extent that active participation, joint responsibility, sharing duties, intellectual freedom and equality must be practised within the school as part of the concept of democracy (Schou 2001). Education is one of the key, and, in most cases, the most important predictors of social behaviour and action, based on behaviours such as going to the polls, engaging in community work, and achieving successful personal interactions and trust (Helliwell and Putnam 2007, cited in Glaeser et al. 2007).

According to the Croatian Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (2017), the goals of education and training in school institutions include: 'educating students in accordance with the general cultural and civic values, human rights and children's rights; enabling them to live in a multicultural world; to respect diversity and tolerance, and actively and responsibly participate in the democratic development of society'. However, according to *The Research on Political Literacy Among Final Grade Students in Croatia*, the level of political and civic literacy is not in line with what might be expected in a democratic culture. The seniors show limited political knowledge in terms of fundamental political concepts, knowledge of constitutional and political organisation, and their political information is inadequately demonstrated. The conclusions of the report state: 'Integrally, these data point to the need for the systematic introduction of civic education and education of the youth aimed at ensuring a more successful adoption of relevant political and human-legal knowledge, skills and values, and it is essential that these learning processes take place in the democratic atmosphere of the school' (Bagić and Gvozdanović 2015, pp. 51–53). In an attempt to provide education for democracy and democratic education, the process of introducing civic education as a teaching subject has been initiated in Croatian schools.

The implementation of education for democracy, and even more democratic education, is largely related to and depends on governance models in educational institutions. School management and leadership can be regulated in a variety of ways, depending on the legislation of a particular country, the degree of decentralisation and the degree of democratisation of society. However, the crucial point in school management is that it is itself, directly or indirectly, an educational process. It is therefore clear that democratic approaches to school management can and should be advocated in democratic societies. According to John Dewey, we are never educated directly, but always through the use of environmental resources, whether we allow the environment to do its job or we shape the environment for a particular purpose. Schools continue to be typical institutions that shape the mental and moral disposition of their members through a defined environment (Dewey 2001).

   Scientific and expert research until the 1960s considered school leadership and management largely from the perspective of the principal as the main and sole school manager who, along with pedagogical decisions, also makes business ones about the overall school business. However, the current state of education points to the emergence of new, participatory, democratic forms of leadership and management of school institutions, involving various decision makers (stakeholders) in multiple decision-making processes (Camburn et al. 2003). This is exactly what democracy as the rule of the majority advocates, whether in its representative form or in a participatory form. Democratic education, argues Gutmann (1999), is complementary to negotiating-participatory (deliberative) democracy, a democracy based on the idea of reciprocity between free and equal individuals and, consequently, democratic governance in school institutions.

2   School Management and Leadership in Education Systems

'The way the education system is governed is important for society' (Showunmi 2013, p. 83). Contemporary times pose great challenges for the principal. Expectations from the school system have increased due to technological advances, more frequent migration and unprecedented globalisation. Schools need to adapt to these phenomena and prepare young people for the challenges that the future holds. Therefore, the principal is no longer expected to be just a good manager, but also to have leadership skills that include willingness to change and adapt the education system to society's needs. All this entails the greater responsibility of educational authorities and educational policy in directing the behaviour of the principal. The behaviour and decisions they make can be expressed through: *technical* or *economic* functions, where the school builds individuals based on the needs of the economy and society; *social* functions, when the school helps students develop the necessary competences and develop personality traits; and ultimately *political* functions that are linked to the development of the values, knowledge, skills

and competences of active citizenship through education for democracy (Cheong Cheng 1996, cited in Alfirević et al. 2010).

Tony Bush (2003, 2008) was one of the most respected authors to systematise different models of leadership and management in education. The concepts of leadership and management primarily began to develop in the trade and industry sectors, while in the field of education they came quite a bit later. The introduction of leadership and management concepts in education systems and schools is closely related to changes in educational paradigms as well as in the processes of decentralisation, democratisation and the development of social pluralism. 'Highly centralized systems tend to be bureaucratic and to allow little discretion to schools and local communities. Decentralized systems devolve significant powers to subordinate levels' (Bush 2008, p. 4). Given the specificities of the education system, leadership and management concepts need to be adapted and consist of approaches that are different from those in other areas. Bush says the fundamental reason for this is the educational aspect of the work. In the education system, leadership and management should be based precisely on the educational aspects of work as the key goals for achieving successful education and training. The practices of education management for the above-mentioned reasons are very specific and almost impossible to take over from other social spheres (Bush 2003).

Defining the concept of leadership and management is quite complex. In trying to define leadership, Bush draws on Yukl and states that the basic mark of leadership is precisely 'a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person (or group) over other people (or groups)' (Yukl 2002, cited in Bush 2003, p. 5). Leadership can be defined as an 'influence', but such a definition is criticised for its neutrality that does not explain or recommend goals and actions that necessarily fall within the responsibility of leadership (Bush 2008). Educational leadership is also defined as a function whose task is to ensure voluntary participation in achieving organisational goals in the educational environment (Vican et al. 2016). However, the key aspect of educational leadership concerns the visions or long-term plans of the educational institution and the promotion of values advocated in a given system. 'It is evident that the articulation of a clear vision has

the potential to develop schools but the empirical evidence of its effectiveness remains mixed. Wider concern relates to whether school leaders are able to develop a *specific* vision for their schools, given government influence on many aspects of curriculum and management' (Bush 2008, p. 3).

While leadership is defined more through innovation, vision and the idea of human potential (motivation of people, communication), management is more related to the system's functionality, and all that concerns the material resources (funding), supervision, staffing and efficiency. We can therefore assume that management provides the (technical) conditions for achieving the goals set by the leadership. In the education system, leadership and management complementarity is essential since excessive management can hinder or discourage the vision crucial to the education system. Successful management implies a clear link between goals, strategies and concrete actions. An adequate and successful school manager (principal) should strike a balance between school needs and community needs in setting goals and the ways of achieving them. By addressing only the demands of external stakeholders, the wider community, the principal risks losing the educational purpose of the school and failure in achieving the educational goals (Bush 2003).

In the context of the education system Bush (2003, pp. 30–33) identifies six models of management: formal, collegial, political, subjective, ambiguity, and cultural. Further, Bush identifies complementary models of leadership: managerial, participative, transformational, interpersonal, transactional, post-modern, contingency, moral and instructional. It should be noted that the more recent versions of Bush's typology (Bush and Middlewood 2013) include additional leadership models, for example a distributed and emotional model of leadership, but exclude, for instance, an interpersonal model of leadership and do not even consider management models (Buchberger 2016). These changes in school leadership and management patterns are the result of changes in school systems, but also in society in general. Given that there is more and more talk of the child being the focus of the education system and about the need to involve the wider community in the decision-making process, the management model by which the principal is the key figure in the

school system of decision making is slowly being replaced. Education in the twenty-first century requires a departure from vertical, political change into a lateral change of capacities. School leaders need to continue to have sufficient knowledge of facilities, staff, and finance management, but effective leaders today also need to encourage learning environments where school students and teachers are stimulated to exchange knowledge, build trust and promote a sense of shared responsibility (Duif et al. 2013).

Strategic thinking about the type of leadership and management that educational institutions should have cannot happen in social isolation. Principals and all those involved in leadership and management functions are obliged to listen to the needs of society and to adapt, as far as possible, the educational institutions to these needs. Education is and should be socially conditioned. Spillane and his colleagues (2001) compare principals with ship captains who sail their ship on a rough and unpredictable sea. In accordance with the above metaphor, the principal needs, as does the ship captain, to use, identify, distribute, coordinate, and utilise all the social, material and cultural resources that can improve educational institutions (Spillane et al. 2001, cited in Duke and Salmonowicz 2010). In practice, all of this means that both schools and faculties require visionary leadership and advancement, but developed in established institutional and legislative frameworks led by an effective manager (Bush 2003).

3   Distributed Educational Leadership as a Democratic School Leadership and Management Model

As previously mentioned, there are different models of leadership and management of school systems. In the rest of this paper, we will focus primarily on the distributed model of leadership. The main reason lies in the fact that, according to our understanding, distributed leadership has all the necessary features required for the realisation of democratic education and education for democracy.

As mentioned, the distributed model of leadership has only emerged as a concept recently, but it has become the most desirable model of leadership in the twenty-first century (Bush 2013). This model has emerged due to society's need for further enhancing educational management models and adapting them to the more complex and more demanding needs of society. Contemporary society is the reason for the expansion and intensification of the roles and tasks of a school leader and manager (principal), including curriculum decisions, various assessments, resource management, and cooperation with external stakeholders. With the growth of these demands, education systems have been forced to adapt to new leadership and management systems (Pont et al. 2008). Furthermore, the 2009 and 2012 PISA Studies point out that distributed school leadership is one of the key factors for successful schools (OECD 2010, 2013). The success of such schools is also a consequence of the features possessed by the schools advocating distributive leadership, such as openness, trust, organisation of learning, respect, high standards, common values and a common vision (Duif et al. 2013).

Distributed leadership is associated with concepts such as delegated leadership, scattered leadership, shared leadership, co-leadership, democratic leadership, and teacher's leadership (Bennett et al. 2003, cited in Buchberger 2016). It can also be perceived as collective decision making through the allocation of responsibility (Bush 2003). In its specific forms, distributed leadership involves different structures, forms of work, goals, ethical premises and values. Each manifestation of its form is different and adaptable to the context in which it operates (Bennet et al. 2003). It should be stressed that some authors, such as Bolden (2011) and Jones (2014), reject the idea that distributed leadership is actually democratic leadership, and as an argument they focus on the lack of evidence that decision making in such a driven educational system is brought by democratic means.

Distributed leadership in educational institutions shares a key feature usually attributed to democracy and democratic governance, which is a decentralised momentum in the governance process. Seven characteristics and features are linked to the idea of distributive school leadership, making this a leadership style complementary to democratic leadership

(Duif et al. 2013). The first characteristic relates to the school structure, which should provide everyone with an equal opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. A common vision should be found that includes shared values. As mentioned previously, it is the leader, or in the case of a school, the principal, who is in charge of defining and expanding the vision. The foundation of beliefs and attitudes in a school should be the values of trust, tolerance and high expectations, where mistakes are not punished but are considered as opportunities to learn and improve (Duif et al. 2013). Cooperation is advocated in such a school, and individuals have the right to make decisions about this themselves. Responsibility, professionalism, initiative and entrepreneurship are expected.

This type of leadership, with all its features, raises the question of the current practices of the principal's management position given that previously decisions were most often made independently. Distributive leadership, as stated by Gronn (2002), implies the participation of various stakeholders in school leadership and management processes. The aforementioned leadership vision assumes the equal involvement and cooperation of stakeholders based on dialogue where everyone has the same right to participate, but where the required expertise and experience are also taken into account (Harris 2004). This type of leadership is also known as a participatory leadership model, and it involves different stakeholders. There are visible elements of democratic school management based on human rights, the empowerment and participation of students, staff and other stakeholders in making important decisions at school (Backman and Trafford 2006). All this means that decisions concerning the leadership of an educational institution are no longer made by an independent principal, but that all interested parties have to come to a common decision. Respect for democratic principles is assumed, where, for example, all interested parties have the right to vote, and the principle of equality is respected. Such interested parties include the administration, teachers, staff members, parents, family, community members, leading local employers and elected representatives of government (members of the school board and of city councils, and state representatives), organisations, associations, professional associations, teacher associations, and cultural institutions. This means that all those

who have a personal, professional, social or financial interest or purpose can be included in the decision-making process. The reasons for their interest may vary depending on whether they are experts, professionals, parents, or whether they hold political, cultural, market or religious interests (Brčić Kuljiš and Lunić 2016).

A leadership model advocating such a broad spectrum of participants promotes generally accepted social values, trust, cooperation, care, respect, open communication, sharing information and power, and encourages all members to participate in decision-making processes (Kovač et al. 2014). Such an approach also promotes the idea of trust that is crucial in a democratic society and is based on cooperation, communication and involvement. Of course, distributed leadership does not mean that everyone is leading and managing the school at a given moment, but that everyone is involved and has the potential to lead it in the future. The share of involvement of other stakeholders in this type of leadership and in the decision-making process varies greatly (Duif et al. 2013). The distributed leadership model that is complementary to democratic leadership does not question or should not question the authority or function of the principal. Therefore, Gronn (2002) speaks of so-called hybrid management that equally includes elements of distributed school leadership and elements of individual school management. The principal is the chosen school representative, the first among equals, but the one who has full responsibility for all activities and decisions in the school. He or she is the so-called leader who offers a vision, encourages cooperation, and creates a positive environment and atmosphere. He or she takes care of the active stakeholders, but also of those with certain competences, so they can be assigned certain tasks assuming they are the best at accomplishing them. Distributive leadership therefore makes the principal a leader, not just a manager.

Distributed leadership within a school, with a pragmatic form of division of labour, has a very positive impact on increasing the efficiency of the school's employees. With an open opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, teachers and other employees feel more motivated to perform their tasks but also to cooperate with others (Day et al. 2009; Schleicher 2012). This form of leadership and collaborative culture is nurtured as the key to the development and advancement

of democratic schools (Duif et al. 2013). The need for intensifying knowledge and practices about the phenomenon of distributive school leadership has been strongly emphasised by relevant international organisations over the last few years. The activities of the OECD are possibly the most significant since they have the strongest impact on the creation of national policies. For example, the OECD's initiative *Improving School Leadership* aims to establish successful international practices of school leadership by emphasising distributed leadership as a priority of education policy around the world (Pont et al. 2008, cited in Kovač et al. 2014).

4   Conclusion: Distributed Educational Leadership for a Democratic Society

Educational policy should follow social policy, and both policies should be as complementary as possible. Democratic society demands democratic education and education for democracy. Democracy is not just a form of leadership and government, but is a wider concept of lifestyle that implies sharing experience and knowledge. Individuals share interests and awareness of the impact of their actions on others in their immediate surroundings by participating in the decision-making process. Such awareness, Dewey points out, reduces class, race, and national barriers, and similar boundaries that limit the individual's comprehension of the importance of their actions (Dewey 2001). At the end of the twentieth century, schools such as Dewey's Lab School and Brookline's 'School within a School' were prominent schools that promoted democracy and democratic education, advocating education standards that respect and advocate democratic values. They advocated the democratisation of schools to an extent that enables the proactive participation of interested stakeholders who respect and recognise democratic values (Gutmann 1999).

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The activities of the OECD are possibly the most significant since they have the strongest impact on the creation of national policies (Kovač et al. 2014). The fundamental issue of the prominent relationship between democracy and education is actually how much leadership is compatible with how much democracy (Kann 1979). This question, when it comes to education systems, relates to the relationship between a student and a teacher. Teacher autonomy is in constant conflict with democratic education, especially when considering the extent to which it can be left to the student to shape the form and content of his or her education due to the lack of necessary competences that the teacher might have (Gutmann 1999).

Finally, it is important to emphasise that the issue of authority should not be a problem in developing democracy in school leadership and management. Besides, the democratisation of leadership and management will not solve all the problems and ensure the prosperity of the school (Gutmann 1999). However, it is necessary to distinguish between democratic relations within the classroom, during classes, and democratic relations where decisions are made about the organisation and functioning of the school. The participatory approach to leadership and management promotes the development of self-confidence in all school stakeholders, encourages their mutual cooperation and ultimately creates a safe and convenient environment for the development of individuals with the competences, knowledge and skills for competent participation in contemporary society.

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