

Social Work & Education

©SW&E, 2021

UDC 37.086 (495)

DOI: 10.25128/2520-6230.21.1.8.

Christos Katis,
PhD student, Greece;
chkatis@hotmail.com

Article history:

Received: January 10, 2020

1st Revision: February 16, 2021

Accepted: March 30, 2021

Katis, Ch. (2021). The innovative PROFLEC-CY program for the professional development of educational leaders: Results of the participants' evaluation. *Social Work and Education*. Vol. 8, No. 1. Ternopil-Aberdeen, 2021. pp. 106-115. DOI: 10.25128/2520-6230.21.1.8.

THE INNOVATIVE PROFLEC-CY PROGRAM FOR THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERS: RESULTS OF THE PARTICIPANTS' EVALUATION

Abstract. The article presents the results of the evaluation of implementation of the innovative program for the development of educational leaders “Professional Learning through Feedback and Coaching” (PROFLEC) in Greece, which tried to combine valid and reliable personalized feedback and advisory guidance. The Program included the provision of the CPSM-CY diagnostic tool, the provision of individual feedback report to the participants, the conduct of a training day and the organization of group meetings for counseling guidance to the participants. The evaluation of the value of the Program by stakeholders, according to the results of a relevant survey through a questionnaire and interviews, was positive. It was found out that feedback and counseling as strategies that promote reflection on action can help educators develop professionally and personally, improve their practices and influence the operation and organization of their school. Educational leaders possess more knowledge than they realize, therefore with the proper empowerment they can face the challenges of their professional life more effectively.

Keywords: educational leader; self-assessment; leadership self-perception; feedback; counseling; school.

Introduction

Research demonstrates the important role that educational leaders play as the main drivers of change and improvement in schools. Therefore, in recent years, professional development bodies for educational leaders in Europe and internationally, are making efforts to create effective training programs for educational leaders. At the same time, in addition to short-term or long-term leadership development programs by universities or educational authorities, alternative schemes are being sought. As part of this search, the Professional Learning through Feedback and Coaching (PROFLEC) program combined reliable and valid feedback and group counseling guidance. The current work discusses the implementation of the Program in Greece.

PROFLEC (Project number: 528356-LLP-1-2012-1-CH-COMENIUS-CMP) is part of the European Program “Lifelong Learning – Multilateral Partnerships”. The Program was coordinated by the Institute of Management and Economics of Education-IBB of the University of Teacher Education Switzerland. The other partners were: Center for Educational Research and Evaluation, The University of Manchester (School of Education), Masaryk University, University of Oslo (Department of Teacher Education and School Development-ILS), University of Seville (IDEA), The Danish School of Education, University of Aarhus. Vanderbilt University (USA) also participated as a third partner (third country).

The first phase of the Program concerned the administration of the CPSM (Competencies Profile for School Management) – CY diagnostic tool. The tool was derived from a translation and adaptation of the original CPSM research tool, from German into Greek and included statements concerning general (18 dimensions) and specialized (9 dimensions) leadership training skills. When administered, the tool was accompanied by a questionnaire with which demographic data were collected, as well as views on scales, e.g. for school leaders’ self-efficacy (Petridou et al., 2014). The grant was made electronically during the period February-March 2014 after an invitation to all Principals of public schools of all levels of Education in Cyprus (487), to which 166 Principals (34%) responded. The vast majority of these Directors (147 people, i.e. 88%) successfully completed the process of completing the tool.

The second phase provided for the preparation of a personalized feedback report for each participant, based on the diagnostic tool. The report, which was strictly personal, since it was accessible only to the person directly concerned, consisted of two parts: (a) the results in relation to the reference group consisting of all the Directors who completed the tool in Cyprus (social weighting) and (b) analysis of all dimensions and their explanation with descriptions of behaviors in the upper and lower quadrants, which allowed the identification of personal possibilities and perspectives. The report was forwarded individually to all the Directors who successfully completed the completion of the tool (Phase AD).

The third phase was the organization of a training day that aimed to explain the theoretical framework of the Program and, through group and individual activities, to help participants identify ways to improve their leadership behavior, so that they can improve practices in their school unit. In the third phase, 53 people took part, who declared their participation in the open invitation sent by K.E.E.A. to all who completed the CPSM-CY.

In the fourth phase, a number of participants (30 people) were invited to take part in group counseling sessions. In the case of Cyprus, the mentors-guides were Primary Education Inspectors, who had previously attended a relevant intensive education-training program and had studied the relevant program guide (see Nicolaidou & Aas, 2013). The invitation to participate in the meetings was addressed to a group of Primary Education Directors of a specific province. During these meetings the participants, with the help of the Counselors, used their feedback report to prepare and implement personal professional development plans.

Methodology

An attempt was made to evaluate the views of the participants for all phases of the implementation of the PROFLEC Program through: the provision of a structured evaluation tool at the training day (Phase C) and the conduct of group and individual interviews with participating Principals and counselors – leaders (Phase D).

The survey involved 5 managers and a mentor. The ages of the respondents ranged from 45 to 55 years old, they were all male holders of postgraduate degrees. The data were analyzed by the method of thematic areas which were based on the evaluation tools.

The evaluation tools used were: the CPSM-CY diagnostic tool, the provision of individual feedback report to the participants, the conduct of a training day and the organization of group meetings for counseling guidance to the participants.

Of particular interest is the evaluation of the experience of the participants in the Program. According to the statements in the questionnaire, the Program was considered successful in promoting the professional development of these leaders (Table 1). The vast majority of participants agreed that their involvement helped them: (1) reflect on their leadership approach, gain a clearer picture of themselves, their motivations, and their role as leaders, (3) to clarify their personal goals and aspirations, (4) to develop new ideas and knowledge about their work, (5) to better understand their strengths, the points where they have weaknesses, as well as their needs for personal development, (5) to reflect on changes in the way they perform their role, (6) to reflect on the way their school is organized, (7) to ask about changes in relation to priorities at their school. In addition, all Managers stated that they would recommend to other colleagues to participate in the Program.

Table 1: Evaluation of experiences from the participation in the Program

Questionnaire statements	Not at all	A little	A lot
The feedback report has led me to reflect on my approach to leadership.	4,4%	35,6%	60,0%
I feel that I have gained a clearer picture of myself and my motivations as a result of my participation in the PROFLEC Program.	4,4%	64,4%	31,1%
I feel that I have a better understanding of what my role as a leader entails as a result of my participation in the PROFLEC Program.	2,2%	40,0%	57,8%
Dealing with the tool has offered me new ideas and knowledge about my work.	2,2%	53,3%	44,4%
My participation in the PROFLEC Program has made me wonder if I should make changes in the way I perform my role.	2,2%	44,4%	53,3%
My participation in the PROFLEC Program has made me think about the changes I need to make in the way my school is organized.	4,4%	53,3%	42,2%
My participation in the PROFLEC Program has made me reflect on the changes I need to make in relation to my priorities at school.	8,9%	44,4%	46,7%
My participation in the PROFLEC Program has made me reflect on the changes I need to make in the way the school interacts with external actors.	28,9%	55,6%	15,6%
My participation in the PROFLEC Program will probably affect my relationships with the other colleagues in the school leadership team.	15,6%	42,2%	42,2%
My participation in the PROFLEC Program will probably affect my general relationships with colleagues within the school.	17,8%	55,6%	26,7%
My participation in the PROFLEC Program may affect my relationships with other stakeholders.	22,2%	71,1%	6,7%
In relation to the future, the PROFLEC Program has helped me to clarify my personal goals and ambitions.	4,4%	66,7%	28,9%
In relation to the future, the PROFLEC Program has helped me better understand my strengths, my weaknesses, and my personal development needs.	2,2%	31,1%	66,7%
In relation to the future, the PROFLEC Program has helped me to better understand the strengths of colleagues, the points where they have weaknesses, as well as their needs for personal development.	17,8%	53,3%	28,9%
I would recommend other colleagues to participate in the PROFLEC Program, if given the opportunity.	0%	28,9%	71,1%

Results

Diagnostic tool evaluation

In the interviews, in individual cases, objections were expressed regarding the extent of the diagnostic tool and the feedback report (Phases AD-BD). Despite being noted for its large size, the majority of participants found the diagnostic tool useful. As one of the participants characteristically pointed out, this is '..rich since it covers globally what is happening in the school by organization and administration [...] it touches every aspect of our daily life [...] it personally made me think, I thought about my approach and my daily school practice on various topics' (Principal 2).

Feedback Report

The feedback report was also considered quite extensive, which raised suspicions as to its targeting. This reaction may be due to the lack of familiarity of the Principals in Greece with the detailed analysis of their leadership skills and abilities, and the citation of reports on possible effects on the school in terms of staff motivation, school culture and relationships as well as educational leadership (implications). on a personal and professional level, but also in school organization / administration).

Evaluation of the Conference

In addition, in the interviews the participants claimed that the Conference (Phase DG) gave them the opportunity to understand the content of their feedback report and to interpret their results. For example, one of the participants in the Conference said: 'I firmly believe that the Conference helped the participants to understand where they are in terms of their role and skills [...]. It is a good start for reflection and self-criticism. If one considers what the report says about everyday life at school, one will find many simple everyday examples that concern us' (Principal 1).

Evaluation of the Meetings

Finally, the participants found the counseling sessions (Phase D) helpful and worthwhile, and supported their continuation since, as one of the participants stated: 'they were excellent and valuable, as well as the reflection on how to whom I work for' (Director 5). The participants referred to the added value of the meetings, both for themselves and for their schools.

In particular, it seemed that the meetings helped to promote creative discussion on issues that concerned everyone. As mentioned: 'It is fantastic to be able to see yourself as a leader from another perspective and at the same time realize that you are not in isolation, that you are not the only one going through all this. I will keep all the suggestions because I consider them valuable [...] I want to thank everyone who accepted me in the team' (Director 5). Another participant stated characteristics:

Human communication and human relations is a difficult subject, your suggestions are important to me and you helped me realize that it is not necessary as a Director to always converge with everything we agreed as a teachers' association, it is ok for me now to be able to I deviate, meaning that I can substantiate my view as Principal for the well-understood interest of the school and our children. I have learned a lot from you and I have noted all your suggestions. I hope we are given the opportunity to continue ... (Manager 7).

The importance of interaction through these meetings was also mentioned by a mentor, saying that there were benefits for him as well: 'I am shocked by our discussion and by the fact that through this process we were able to bond as a team to the extent that to be able to share so many issues, even personally, so that we can practically support each other '(Counselor-guide 1). At the same time, the participants mentioned the difficulty of the reflective process and the importance of the willingness of the participants to identify areas of weakness. The comment is also characteristic:

It is very difficult to work with yourself, it is always easier to work with others. I thought very seriously about what we discussed, and I was able to realize that everything is due to selfishness and fear of failure [...] it is a way to realize that everything we live every day can damage your self-image and show that you are inadequate or even incompetent sometimes, this hurts your ego. You helped me understand this last time and so I read my feedback report again. Now I realize that I have to accept that I am not perfect and that I can make mistakes [...] so why stress so much, when I can correct them? I learned that it is not the end of the world if something unexpected happens that lands you abnormally in the fact that it is okay to make mistakes... (Manager 3)

The participants also referred to the composition of the groups for the development of healthy relationships of mutual respect and mutual support, suggesting that grouping should be done on the basis of specific criteria, such as years of service in the position. They also stressed that the mentors-guides should devote enough time to the beginning, in order to create the appropriate atmosphere of trust between the participants.

They also stressed the importance of faithfully implementing this PROFLEC consulting protocol to build trust. This protocol, as stated by one of the participants, allowed equal treatment of all:

I [all] had the same opportunity to speak, to be heard and to be heard, it was a very democratic process based on meritocracy and respect for the other as an individual and as a professional [...] I have never had such an opportunity where I was given equal time to talk about what concerns me and even for others to address the issue that concerns me and try to analyze it and find possible ways in which I can move, based on my school and its peculiarities. (Manager 4)

Discussion

The PROFLEC program attempted to combine valid and reliable feedback, through feedback report, and advisory guidance through group meetings of training leaders. In summary, through the data collection, it became clear that the participants made a positive evaluation of the Program, as it evolved through the four phases. This finding is consistent with the results of other research that highlights the positive results of similar programs for the educational leader, both personally and professionally (Luthans & Peterson, 2003; Smither et al., 2003).

Research shows that valid and reliable feedback can help educational leaders better understand their role, but also reflect on their job-fit (Goldring et al., 2009). In addition, counseling is widely used in a variety of professional fields (Judge & Cowell, 1997) and is increasingly part of professional leadership training programs (Hobson, 2003; Reiss, 2006; Schein, 2009; Underhill et al., 2007). This strategy is in line with the needs of leaders for learning, while also enabling them to respond to problems in their daily lives (McGovern, et al., 2001; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Goldring et al., 2009; Mavrogordato & Cannon, 2009; Goff et al., 2014) and enhances their capacity for judgments and decisions (Thach, 2002). At the same time, counseling can be the link between feedback and personal reflection.

In countries with strong activity in the preparation and training of leaders, in recent years there is a tendency to move from centralized and conservative models to more dynamic and flexible formats, where learners are considered responsible for their learning through active participation and reflection. Combining feedback and counseling can ensure the development of feedback (Cannon & Witherspoon, 2005; Aliche & Sedikides, 2009). Based on this finding, the implementation and coexistence of the two strategies in the Cypriot education system needs further investigation, especially since the opportunities for valid and reliable feedback to educational leaders by colleagues, evaluators or even parents and students remain minimal (Nicolaidou & Petrid, 2011). The need therefore arises to consider providing educational leaders with opportunities for feedback on their practices based on a valid and credible assessment of their competencies / skills (Marks & Printy, 2003).

At the same time, due to the lack of research data on the potential impact of counseling in the longer term (Smither et al., 2003; Ellison & Hayes, 2006), there is a strong need to assess the value of such a program for the school. Therefore, the impact of the Program on the educational leader's day-to-day practice itself needs further investigation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, feedback and counseling as strategies that promote reflection on action, as reported by Schon (1983), can help educators develop professionally and personally, improve their practices and influence the operation and organization of their school. Obviously, educational leaders possess more knowledge than they realize.

Therefore with the proper empowerment they can face the challenges of their professional life more effectively.

References

Alicke, M.D., and Sedikides, C. (2009) Self-enhancement and self-protection: what they are and what they do. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 20(1), 1-48.

Cannon, M.D., and Witherspoon, R. (2005) Actionable feedback: unlocking the power of learning and performance improvement. *The Academy of Management Executive*, 19(2), 120-134.

Ellison, J., and Hayes, C. (2006) *Effective School Leadership: Developing Principals Through Cognitive Coaching*. Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon.

Goff, J., P. Guthrie, E., Goldring, E., and Bickman, L. (2014) Changing principals' leadership through feedback and coaching, *Journal of Educational Administration*, 52(5), 682-704

Goldring, E., Cravens, X.C., Murphy, J., Porter, A.C., Elliott, S.N., and Carson, B. (2009) The evaluation of principals: what and how do states and urban districts assess leadership? *The Elementary School Journal*, 110(1), 19-39.

Hobson, A. (2003) *Mentoring and Coaching for New Leaders*. Nottingham: National College for School Leadership.

Judge, W.Q., and Cowell, J. (1997) The Brave New World Of Executive Coaching. *Business Horizons*, (4), 71-77.

Luthans, F., and Peterson, S. J. (2003) 360-degree feedback with systematic coaching: Empirical analysis suggests a winning combination. *Human Resources Management Journal*, 42, 243-256.

Marks, H.M., and Printy, S.M. (2003) Principal leadership and school performance: an integration of transformational and instructional leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39(3), 370-397.

Mavrogordato, M., and Cannon, M. (2009) Coaching principals: a model for leadership Development. *Paper presented at the University Counsel For Educational Administration Convention, Anaheim, CA, November*.

McGovern, J., Lindemann, M., Vergara, M., Barker, I., and Warrenfeltz, R. (2001) Maximizing the impact of executive coaching: Behavioral change, organizational Outcomes, and return on investment. *The Manchester Review*, 6, 1-9.

Neufeld, B., and Roper, D. (2003) *Coaching: A Strategy for Developing Instructional Capacity: Promises and Practicalities*. Washington, DC: Aspen Institute Program on Education.

Nicolaidou, M., and Aas, M. (2013) *Proflec Coaching Guide*. PROFLEC- LLP Multilateral programme (2012-2014, Project number: 528356-LLP-1-2012-1-CH-COMENIUS-CMP).

Nicolaidou, M., and Petridou, A. (2011) Evaluation of CPD Programmes: Challenges and Implications for Leaders and Leadership Development. *Journal of School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 22(1), 51-85.

Petridou, A., Nicolaidou, M., and Williams, J. (2014) The Development and Validation of the School Leaders' Self-Efficacy Scale (SLSES). *Journal of Educational Administration*, 52(2), 228-253.

Reiss, K. (2006) *Leadership Coaching for Educators: Bringing Out the Best in School Administrators*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Schein, E.H. (2009) *Helping: How to Offer, Give and Receive Help*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Schön, D.A. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. USA: Basic books, Inc.

Smither, J.W., London, M., Flautt, R., Vargas, Y., and Kucine, I. (2003) Can working with an executive coach improve multisource feedback ratings over time? A quasi-experimental field study. *Personnel Psychology*, 56, 23-44.

Thach, E.C. (2002) The impact of executive coaching and 360 feedback on leadership effectiveness. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 23(4), 205-214.

Underhill, B., McAnally, K., and Koriath, J. (2007) *Executive coaching for results*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler: Publishers, Inc.

ІННОВАЦІЙНА ПРОГРАМА PROFLEC-CY ДЛЯ ПРОФЕСІЙНОГО РОЗВИТКУ ОСВІТНІХ ЛІДЕРІВ: РЕЗУЛЬТАТИ ОЦІНЮВАННЯ УЧАСНИКІВ

Крістос Катіс, аспірант Тернопільського національного педагогічного університету імені Володимира Гнатюка, Греція; chkatis@hotmail.com

Анотація. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена потребою у визначенні ефективності програм для підготовки лідерів у сфері освіти як головних рушіїв змін та вдосконалення у школах. У статті представлені результати оцінювання впровадження інноваційної програми розвитку лідерів у сфері освіти «Професійне навчання через зворотній зв'язок та коучинг» (PROFLEC) у Греції. Програма включала забезпечення учасників діагностичним інструментарієм CPSM-CY, надання індивідуального зворотнього зв'язку, наставництво впродовж навчального дня та організацію групових зустрічей для консультування учасників.

Проведене дослідження мало на меті оцінити ефективність програми на всіх етапах її реалізації. Його результати засвідчили, що загалом оцінка програми зацікавленими сторонами за результатами проведеного анкетування та інтерв'ю була позитивною. Учасниками також були визначені умови, необхідні для ефективної реалізації кожного з її елементів. За результатами проведеного дослідження встановлено, що зворотній зв'язок та консультування як стратегії, що сприяють рефлексії над діями, сприяють професійному та особистісному розвитку педагогів, вдосконаленню їх практичної діяльності та діяльності навчального закладу в цілому. Встановлено, що педагоги-лідери, володіючи необхідними знаннями, при створенні відповідних можливостей, можуть ефективно впливати на вирішення професійних проблем.

Ключові слова: освітній лідер; самооцінювання; самосприйняття лідерства; зворотній зв'язок; консультування; школа.