DEVELOPMENTAL LEADERSHIP – AN ATTEMPT TO DEFINE SPECIFICITY OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Abstract

Author raises the issue of specificity of educational leadership trying to show that such specificity has to be based on central value of educational organizations. In educational context such central value should be individual human development. Paper describes different ways of understanding leadership and educational leadership present in literature and gives some postulates how educational leadership can be defined, proposing to call such type of leadership a developmental leadership. A description of such type of leadership and conditions of its introduction to education are the main aims of the paper.

Keywords: leadership, educational leadership, development, developmental leadership.

Introduction

The concept of leadership, present in management and educational management theory since many decades, had became especially popular during the last twenty years. Many authors in the area underline importance of using concept of leadership and importance of introducing leadership into practice of educational organizations that want to raise their achievements [Potter, Reynolds, Chapman 2002; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, Hopkins 2006]. There are even some suggestions in educational research that educational leadership (not educational management) is the key factor in raising educational effectiveness of schools and educational success of students [Marzano, Waters, McNulty 2005]. It is not surprising then that theories and paradigms of leadership are very frequently transferred from general management theory and used to build understanding of leadership in educational contexts across the world. It has become very popular in theoretical educational discussions in Poland too as the Polish educational system is searching for ways of improvement of schools. Unfortunately in practice leadership concepts are still far less popular than educational management concepts [Kwiatkowski, Michalak 2010]. All this makes it necessary to raise the issue of leadership in education and its specificity.
What is leadership – different paradigms

If leadership matters, it would be very important to answer a basic question about the meaning of leadership. The concept itself comes from the field of general management theory and was unfortunately, as many other concepts, transferred to educational management theory without thinking about specific values of educational organizations and specific needs of leadership in education. Such an attitude is present from the very beginning of development of educational management theory and practice and makes it extremely difficult to build specific and adequate to educational needs theory of educational management [Bottery 1990; Bottery 1992].

The core element of leadership is the fact that it can appear in a social context of a group and is always about influence of some people on other people in order to achieve certain objectives [Northouse 2007]. How does that influence look like and how through that influence organizational objectives are reached is understood differently and that is the reason why since the beginning of its presence in management theory leadership was described and defined in so many different ways. There are also numerous attempts to classify those different paradigms of leadership. Let us have a closer look at some of them, that can be useful from educational leadership perspective.

Shields [2009] for example describes three paradigms of leadership: transactional, transformational and transformative. First type of leadership – transactional – is based on interpersonal (transactional) talents of a leader. He/she creates conditions for reaching organizational objectives through complex system of agreed regulations describing obligations of all members of organization and setting out rewards and punishments. Such type of leadership is very common in schools as they are challenged by demands of narrowly understood public accountability focusing attention of school leaders on school inspection and test results. Looking from the deeper educational perspective such leadership may lead to “depersonalisation”, when interests of school as organization and teachers as responsible for reaching certain goals are more important than interests of development of students [Precey 2011]. Transformational leadership is based on a creative vision of a leader who inspires others and together with them creates conditions for achieving organizational goals according to that vision. Transformational leadership motivates members of organization, stimulates them to act, creates conditions for development. The main problem of such leadership is, that it focuses on leader’s vision and develops organizational and personal potential according to that personal vision of a leader which is always an external factor from the perspective of individual development of members of organization. From that point of view transformational leadership may mean and very often means indoctrinal leadership. Transformative leadership appears when school and members of school community take active role in transformation of unjust world outside the school or within it. It implies individual and organizational transformation and development but source of that development is again