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# Educational leadership: Executive summary (Extended version)

Belgrade and Jagodina/October 2014

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This report was produced within TEMPUS project Master program in Educational Leadership  
(EdLead) 543848-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-RS-JPCR.

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

## BACKGROUND

There is great interest in educational leadership in the early years of the 21st century. In many parts of the world it is recognized that schools require effective leaders in order to provide the best possible education for their students. Research evidence indicates that the quality of leadership makes a significant difference to school and student outcomes. Leadership is the second most important schooling factor – after teacher quality – that impacts student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004). The educational reform agenda sees leadership not only as an important *target* for the reform, but also as an excellent *vehicle* for implementing and effecting other changes.

These are the main reasons why educational leadership needs to become a concept of soaring importance in Serbia. As there is currently no adequate support for the professional development of preschool and school principals within the education system in Serbia, TEMPUS project Master program in Educational Leadership (EdLead, 543848-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-RS-JPCR) was created with the aim of designing and implementing a high quality master program and professional development courses in educational leadership for current and aspiring school leaders in Serbia. The research team in charge of providing the research base for the master program has dually approached the topic. The first step in designing the program was to perform an extensive overview of state-of-art theoretical concepts and empirical findings on educational leadership, as well as of effective education leadership programs. The second step consisted of a two-part research – qualitative and quantitative – examining state of the affairs of school leadership in Serbia, especially in the domain of professional development needs of the school principals.

## STATE-OF-ART: THEORY, RESEARCH AND PROGRAMS

### Theories of educational leadership

There are many different definitions of leadership. Most of them include the following key elements: influence, intention, function, context, vision and personal and professional values. Bearing in mind all these common elements, we support the *definition* of educational leadership as the work of mobilizing and influencing others to articulate and achieve the educational organization's shared intentions and goals.

In this report, the review of theories of leadership describes some of the main *approaches* to leadership (leadership traits; leadership styles and behaviors; leadership skills; leadership roles, competencies and practices; situational and contingency theories of leadership, as well as different *models* of leadership (transactional, transformational, instructional, distributed and integrated). While each of these lines of thought sheds light on various aspects of leadership, the prevalent belief today is that leadership should be thought about in an integrative way. When thinking of effective leaders

we have to consider traits and competencies, behaviors and practices, situation and contexts, etc. More specifically for educational realm, it has been increasingly argued that leaders should be both transformational and instructional leaders. Transformational leadership provides the conditions that support school improvement, and instructional leadership attends to the issues that actually matter in improving student achievement. In other words, school leaders not only need to provide fairly direct assistance to the instructional improvement efforts of their staff, but they also need to build organizational contexts which support and enable such efforts.

The **integrated model** of educational leadership, advocated, among others, by Leithwood and colleagues (2006) offers comprehensive, pragmatic and focused view on leadership. At the heart of this model lie creation of the vision, development of people, redesign of the organisation, and management of teaching and learning. These four broad categories of leadership practices, and the 14 more specific sets of behaviours they encompass, are based on robust research evidence about what successful leaders do. This integrated model may provide a firm theoretical and operational framework that would be very relevant and helpful for the Serbian context.

1. *Building vision and setting directions.* This category is about the establishment of a focus to the individual and collective work of school staff and creating shared purpose as a basic stimulant for one's work. The more specific practices in this category are building a shared vision, fostering the acceptance of group goals and demonstrating high-performance expectations.
2. *Developing people:* practices in this category make a significant contribution to motivation, but their primary aim is building not only the knowledge and skills which teachers and other staff need in order to accomplish organisational goals but also the dispositions (commitment, capacity and resilience) to persist in applying those knowledge and skills. The more specific practices in this category are providing individualised support and consideration, fostering intellectual stimulation, and modelling appropriate values and behaviours.
3. *Redesigning the organisation.* The specific practices included in this category are concerned with establishing work conditions including building collaborative cultures, restructuring and reculturing the organisation, building productive relations with parents and the community, and connecting the school to its wider environment.
4. *Managing the teaching and learning programme.* The specific practices included in this category aim to create productive working conditions for teachers by fostering organisational stability and strengthening the school's infrastructure. Specific practices are staffing the teaching programme, providing instructional support, monitoring school activity and buffering staff against distractions from their work.

## **Leadership standards**

With the increasing range and complexity of demands on school leaders, many educational systems have described the *competencies* and/or *practices* of school leaders in sets of standards. For the purpose of this report, we analyzed five frameworks of standards from different countries to provide illustrations on what is included in the standards and how the standards are organized: Ontario Leadership Framework (Canada), National Standards for Head-teachers (England, UK), The Standard for Headship (Scotland, UK), Leadership Western Australia framework and Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards (US). The analysis shows that although the five standard frameworks represent different contexts, the standards cover similar “territory”. There is considerable commonality in the way in which each set of standards describes the core features of effective leadership practice, which mostly stem from the integrated model of educational leadership. The five standard frameworks also shared these common purposes: (a) enhance student learning outcomes, (b) clarify expectations about school leadership for all those affected by it (e.g. principals, staff, parents, pupils, employers and policy makers), (c) enhance the quality of educational leadership, (d) provide a framework for professional development, (e) provide a framework for certification, (f) provide a framework for self reflection and assessment. Finally, we presented in more detail the structure of the framework of standards in Serbia - Standards for Competencies of Leaders of Educational Institutions (2013). The Standards have been defined in *six domains* of leader’s work each of which was comprised of a list of indicators giving specific and detailed description of a competency.

## **Research base of educational leadership**

A number of studies has documented that **effective education leadership makes a difference in improving learning and pupil engagement** (Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; McTighe & O'Connor, 2005; Waters et al., 2003). Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn in school. Leadership influences on student achievement are mostly indirect, exerted through their impact on school staff, culture and organization. The total (direct and indirect) effects of leadership on student learning are estimated to account for about a quarter of total school effects (Halinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000 in Leithwood et al., 2004).

Instructional leadership exhibits an effect on student learning. High-performing principals focus more on instructional leadership and developing teachers, noting that their greatest skill is the ability to coach others and support their professional development (Barber et al., 2010). Robinson and colleagues (2009) found that the impact of instructional leadership that emphasizes the importance of establishing clear educational goals, planning the curriculum and evaluating teachers and teaching is almost four times that of transformational leadership. Shatzer et al (2014) also reported that instructional leadership explained more variance in student achievement than did

transformational leadership. However, the impact of transformational leadership is not insignificant in some studies (e.g., Ross & Grey, 2006), especially taking into account that it is rather difficult to measure and relatively distal to the teaching and learning process (Robinson et al., 2009).

Both instructional and transformational leadership approaches seem to be necessary for good school outcomes. Research by Marks and Printy (2003) strongly indicates that students in schools with integrated leadership show significantly higher achievement than those in schools that did not have such leadership. The authors propose that transformational leadership provides the conditions that support school improvement, while instructional leadership focuses on the issues that actually matter in improving student achievement.

Looking into practices and dimensions of successful leadership in more detail, one indeed finds elements of both instructional and transformational approaches. Successful leaders: a) define their values and vision to raise expectations, set direction and build trust; (b) reshape the conditions for teaching and learning; (c) restructure parts of the organization and redesign leadership roles and responsibilities; (d) enrich the curriculum; (e) enhance teacher quality; (f) enhance the quality of teaching and learning; (g) build collaboration internally and (h) build strong relationships outside the school community (Day et al., 2010).

Although successful principals use the same basic leadership practices, there is no single model for achieving success. Principals contribute to student learning and achievement through a combination and accumulation of strategies and actions tailored to specific context. The way school principals apply leadership practices, rather than the actual practices themselves, demonstrates their ability to respond to the context in which they work. Differences in context affect the nature, direction and pace of leadership actions (Day et al., 2010).

Overall, data seem to be unambiguous in regards to the importance of school principals: School principals' educational values, decision-making strategies and leadership practices shape the inner processes of every school, while key school staff perceives them as carriers of leadership in the institution (Fullan, 2003; Møller, 2009; Ross & Berger, 2009; Seashore Louis et al., 2010; Witziers et al., 2003).

### **Effective programs of educational leadership**

In almost all European countries, teaching experience is a qualification for becoming a principal. In 21 EU countries or regions training for principalship is also required<sup>1</sup>. In majority of these countries, this training takes place before the appointment, which means that it is offered to teachers

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<sup>1</sup> This training is not the continuing professional development (CPD), which is considered a professional duty in 23 EU countries (Eurydice, 2013).

or deputy principals who are either aspiring or selected to be principals<sup>2</sup>. In the Czech Republic, France, Austria, Slovakia and Sweden, new principals can acquire the training within a specified period after their appointment. The duration of principalship training varies between one week in Romania (although this is being increased by the new legislation) and a 60 ECTS masters' program in Malta. Most countries require 150-250 hours or 15-30 ECTS of formal training (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2013). In some EU countries, even though there is no formal requirement for principals to enroll in training, many principals do. For example, in the Netherlands, principals usually finish a master-level program in educational leadership.

In educational systems beyond Europe, training of principals has an even stronger foothold (Young et al., 2009). Globally, these programs have grown in number since the mid-1990s (Barber et al., 2010). Pre-service or induction master-level programs in education or leadership preparation programs are required or highly expected from principals in the United States, Ontario and Alberta in Canada, New Zealand, Singapore (Barber et al., 2010; Taipale, 2012). For example, due to the shortage of principals, a new 15-month long training program leading to a Master's degree has been designed at several University of California campuses (Taipale, 2012).

It is worth mentioning that a group of countries (e.g., England, Northern Ireland, Slovenia) has started developing and implementing a holistic, coherent approach to leadership development, which includes pre-service training, induction programs and in-service training (OECD, 2008).

Throughout the world, a variety of institutions at various government levels offer a variety of school leadership courses and programs<sup>3</sup>. The preferred provision of the program depends on the "set of country imperatives and contextual features including national culture and traditions, priorities, pedagogical traditions and beliefs about individual and social efficacy" (OECD, 2008, p132).

Significant providers are higher education institutions. In Sweden, six universities organized by Swedish National Agency for Education offer 30 ECTS to principals. In Finland, the Institute of Educational Leadership operating within University of Jyvaskyla offers 25 ECTS program in educational leadership. In Scotland, the principals can take the Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH) from several Scottish universities before their appointment. At the University of Edinburgh, SQH consists of 5 courses and is equal to two-thirds of a master's degree. In Norway, the National Programme for Principals can be integrated into university Master's degrees in leadership. It also functions as pre-service training and is open to teachers. In New Zealand, University of Auckland

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<sup>2</sup> This does not preclude some of those countries from having induction training as well.

<sup>3</sup> In some countries qualification and / or training can be obtained through multiple pathways.



delivers the 18-month long induction program. In Ontario, a 185 hr Principals' qualification program is carried out predominantly by universities (Taipale, 2012).

In a few countries, specific public institutions in charge of preparation of principals exist at the national level, like the National School of Leadership in Education in Slovenia, National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) in England or Ecole Supérieure de l'Éducation Nationale (ESEN, a higher education institution under the auspices of the Ministry of Education) in France. (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2013; Taipale, 2012). Yet, in other countries (Sweden, Australia, Spain) municipal and regional levels are free to provide training (OECD, 2008). Private non-university providers, such as Executive Leadership Institute (ELI) in New York City area are also present (Taipale, 2012).

There is evidence that leaders who engage in formal training programs are more effective, particularly when the training is of a high quality. For instance, 43 percent of schools led by an NCTL graduate in England raised their standards of leadership and management between 2005 and 2008, as assessed by independent inspectors, compared to 33 percent of schools not led by an NCTL graduate (Barber et al., 2010). In a longitudinal study in Sweden, the school leaders' use of teachers in leadership processes, as well as more collective work among teachers, have appeared as a result of training (Blossing & Ekholm, 2005, in OECD, 2008).

Research data show that key features of **effective programs** do not vary much and that there is considerable similarity in the nature and content of leadership programs internationally (OECD, 2008). Davis and colleagues (2005, in OECD, 2008) found that effective programs are research-based, have curricular coherence, provide experience in real contexts, use cohort grouping and mentors and structure for collaborative activity between the program and the schools. More specifically, the key elements of the most effective school leadership development programs are:

- The targeted *recruitment* of teachers with substantial leadership potential (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Darling-Hammond et al., 2010).
- A *coherent and standard-based curriculum* emphasizing instructional leadership, organizational development, and change management, aligned with state and professional standards (Davis et al., 2005; Sanders & Simpson, 2005).
- *Active, student-centered problem-based learning* that integrates theory and practice and stimulates reflection; such program is supposed to include work-based learning, action research, field-based projects, journal writing, diagnostics and portfolios of evidence about practice (Bush & Glover, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2010).
- Professional support in the form of structured and continuous *mentoring and peer supervision* (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Hobson, 2003; Luck, 2003).

- *Practice-based learning* which includes designed and supervised internships, analysis of classroom practice, learning activities that use on-the-job observations (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Davis et al., 2005).
- Learning contents and activities that fit *individual and whole school development plans*, as well as contextual factors that influence practice (Huber, 2004; Moorman, 1997).
- *School-university and school-districts partnerships* focused on instructional innovation as a shared vision (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Davis et al., 2005).

For the purpose of informing the Master program Educational leadership in Serbia, we analyzed in more detail fourteen educational leadership development programs from the Netherlands, Finland, United Kingdom, Slovenia, Hungary, Romania, Canada, USA and Australia, that were deemed effective by the partners in the project. Analysis showed the following features. Programs are provided by one institution or a consortium of institutions. The length of the programs varies from 6 months to 5 years, but majority of the programs last between one and two years. Almost all programs offer full time study option. Programs are targeted to different groups of students. We recognized: (1) master programs offered to diverse leadership roles and positions, (2) master programs for principals (current and future) only, and (3) optional principal preparation courses. Some of the programs are modularized and the modules consist of one or more different courses.

In regards to the curriculum, we have mapped thirteen major themes covered by the analyzed modules and courses and those are: Theories of leadership, Education policy, Educational leadership, Leading the development of organization, Quality management, Leading the development of people, Improving teaching and learning, Law and finance, Research and evaluation, Management of curriculum, Leading inclusion, Leading partnership, Leadership in practice. Almost all programs heavily include problem-based and practice-based learning that intertwines theory and practice (e.g. program-directed activities and assignments in leader's school; case study; leadership practicum report; evidence portfolio linked to the Standard; school improvement plan reflective analysis; action research project). Programs provide opportunities for matching individual development plans of the candidates with strategic plans of their school organizations. The final exam may be in the form of a Master thesis, written or oral assignment, or Final Exam.

### **NEEDS ANALYSIS: QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE STUDY**

Based on the results of the theoretical analysis and in-depth review of Serbian standards of competencies for principals two studies were performed: a qualitative and a quantitative. They were conducted from March to June 2014.



## Qualitative study

The qualitative research was done with the aim of gaining insight into the barriers faced by school principals in Serbia, their potential solutions, as well as the competencies that the principals need to improve their performance. Participants in the research were: (1) principals, teachers and school counselors from pre-schools, primary and secondary schools in Serbia. There were ten focus groups (6 with principals, 3 with teachers and 1 with school counselors) coming from urban and suburban schools in Belgrade, Novi Sad, Kragujevac and Niš; (2) heads of the regional school authorities of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, representatives of the local government, the Institute for Education Quality and Evaluation and the Institute for the Improvement of Education. There were 7 interviews with these representatives. Considering the sample, the prevalent perceptions in this report are those of school employees.

Results of the analysis indicate two broad categories of **barriers** to effective school leadership in Serbia: (a) *barriers related to the system* as a whole; and (b) *barriers related to the school* as an organization.

System-level barriers refer to: (1) insufficient and insecure school funding; (2) employment policy and evaluation of teachers' work; (3) inadequate selection of school principals and lack of their continuing professional development; (4) legislative issues, (5) mismatch between work of different institutions; and (6) negative image of educational institutions in society.

*Insufficient and insecure schools funding.* In addition to the low salaries of school principals (in comparison to their responsibilities and duties), all participants highlighted the lack of financial resources for everyday functioning of schools, as well as for the purchase of equipment necessary for the implementation of high-quality education, professional development of employees and stimulating work of high-quality teachers. Also, the principals complain about the non-transparent and inequitable distribution of finances from local authorities which are responsible for the funding of schools and they believe that such distribution is politically motivated.

*Employment policy and evaluation of teachers' work.* The existing regulation on hiring teachers (the selection is limited to the surplus teachers from other schools) is highlighted as one of the obstacles for effective school leadership. Furthermore, due to the fact that teachers are employed for an indefinite time period, principals are not able to fire low quality teachers or teachers who make serious offenses at work. The instruments of rewarding and sanctioning employees are not elaborated at the system-level, and procedures developed at the school-level are perceived as insufficiently effective.

*Inadequate selection of school principals and lack of their continuing professional development.* When it comes to the selection of school principals the participants claim that political affiliation of

candidates is more important criterion than ability. Another problem may arise if the mandate of school principal becomes limited to two terms of four years each, as such proposal is currently being considered in Serbia. This would prevent those principals who prove themselves as good managers to continue to perform this function. The participants also emphasized that there is no organized form of pre-service education and induction of school principals. In addition, the programs of in-service education for principals are assessed as insufficient and there are no mentoring or other forms of professional support. The participants believe in defined standards of competencies for school principals as a positive step towards improving the management of schools, but they find the standards are very complex and demanding.

*Legislative issues.* The main objection with regard to the legislation, is that different laws and bylaws (in education, but also in other areas) are not mutually compatible and that they change frequently. School principals are also mentioning the lack of clear and consistent interpretation of legislation in certain situations. Thus, in relation to the law, all research participants describe their actions as "walking the thin line" or "being in the gray zone" because school principals are often forced to rely on themselves in situations that are not precisely defined by law.

*Mismatch between the work of different institutions.* The participants indicate that various requests sent to school principals by the relevant institutions, such as the Ministry of Education, regional school authorities, and the two national Institutes are often redundant or not aligned with each other causing increased paperwork and creating resistance among employees.

*Negative image of educational institutions in society.* The participants complain about the negative attitude of the society towards school, which is particularly evident in parents' disapproving attitude toward teachers. They explain that media greatly create bad image of the school by reporting only negative events in schools in a sensationalistic manner.

At the school level, the participants cited the barriers to high quality leadership that come from (1) principals, (2) teachers, (3) parents and (4) other school staff.

*Principals as the barrier.* Two main factors are mentioned in this category, work overload and lack of competencies of school principals. Although perceptions on these factors are shared by all participants, there are some differences in opinions between principals and other participants. The school principals primarily complain of a large burden of the various roles and responsibilities, as well as having all the responsibility for them. Also, they point out that too much of managerial and administrative work prevents them from paying serious attention to the quality of teaching. Other participants, however, emphasize that school principals lack the knowledge and skills needed for effective leadership. They argue that school principals are insufficiently familiar with the modern teaching and strategies for evaluation teaching quality. As a special problem they point out that principals rarely visit school classes and, when even they do, they are not competent to give

feedback to teachers on the observation. They also find that school principals do not know enough about legislation and legal and economic matters, and that they have difficulties in balancing between the two main roles of school leader: pedagogical leader and manager (which the school principals cited as the barrier also).

*Teachers as the barrier.* All participants point out that a large number of teachers are insufficiently motivated to improve their work and that they are not critical enough to the quality of their teaching practice. It is perceived that teachers are reluctant to accept the fact that their working time does not end with the realization of school classes. Therefore, conflicts between school principals and teachers occur and school principals are forced to rely on a small number of motivated teachers.

*Parents as the barrier.* It is noted that parents are given too much rights and authority, especially through the Council of parents. In participants' opinion, parents are too much involved in making important decisions such as selection of textbooks or elective courses, without being sufficiently competent. In addition, the majority of participants perceive that a significant number of parents have high expectations of school but that they are not interested enough in contributing themselves to the education of their children.

*Other school staff as the barrier.* Participants also believe that lack of expertise, insufficient number of employees in legal and accounting services in schools and their frequent changes hamper the high quality management of school.

A variety of potential **solutions** was proposed by the participants. There were two large groups of solutions: those that referred to good practices that principals undertake in their own schools and those that refer to solutions at the level of the system. Within the responses that referred to the examples of good practice within schools, most related to the improvement of teaching quality and motivating and rewarding good teachers. The main suggestions within the system-level responses were harmonization of laws and bylaws, implementation of clear procedures, and changes of certain parts of laws and bylaws. Also elaborated were: depolitization of selection of the principals; creation of an institutionalized training for school principals lasting at least a year, with strong emphasis on pedagogical competencies, alongside induction phase and licensing; formalization of distributed leadership within schools; introduction of an accountability system – rewarding and sanctioning – for teachers; introduction of pay grades for teachers and principals, etc.

The analysis of participants' responses about the **competencies** which school principals need to have for effective school leadership indicates a large number of skills and knowledge in various fields. Nine broad response categories were identified: (1) *Instructional leadership* (referring to the knowledge and skills required to lead and organize the educational processes in school, i.e., planning, realization and evaluation of teaching, knowledge of modern methods of teaching, etc.); (2) *Development and management of human resources* (includes skills and knowledge relating to

selection, monitoring and improvement of teachers and other employees, i.e., skills of motivating employees, planning their professional development, etc.); (3) *Organizational development* (refers to the knowledge and skills necessary to plan, organize, oversee and evaluate the work of school, i.e., planning and implementing changes based on evidence, seamless functioning of teams, etc.); (4) *Communication competencies* (related to knowledge and skills for effective communication and cooperation between different actors within and outside school, i.e., assertive communication, conflict management, etc); (5) *Knowledge of the education system and direction of education policies* (with a comparative perspective); (6) *Law and administration* (refer to the knowledge and skills that are necessary to ensure the work of the school in accordance with legislation, i.e., knowledge of legislation in education, administrative procedures, etc); (7) *Financial management* (related to knowledge and skills of accounting and finance, i.e., budget planning, finding donors and grants, etc.); (8) *Project management* (knowledge and skills needed to participate in projects that can provide additional financial and material resources for school, i.e., how to design evidence-based and sustainable projects, etc); and (9) *Establishing identity as a leader* (referring to the qualities and personal values, as well as personal and professional development).

### **Quantitative study**

The quantitative study focused on the needs assessment for improvement of principals' competencies from their point of view. The sample in the quantitative study consisted of 200 principals from Belgrade, Vojvodina and Central Serbia (129 elementary school principals and 71 secondary school principals). School principals took part in the study by filling out a questionnaire designed for this purpose. The questionnaire comprised of two parts. The first part gathered contextual information, whereas the second part of the instrument (82 items) was focused on principals' perceptions in respect to (a) how important they perceived specific tasks to be as part of their overall duties and (b) the extent to which they perceived the need to improve their knowledge and skills in order to perform each task more effectively. All tasks were divided in six categories corresponding to six domains of the Serbian Standards of competencies for school principals (Pravilnik o standardima kompetencija direktora ustanova obrazovanja i vaspitanja, 2013).

The results point to a conclusion that most of the principals that took part in the study (a) perceive that all tasks specified in the instrument (and, by extension, in the Standards of competencies) represent important professional duties of principals, and (b) state that they either mostly need or very much need to improve their knowledge and skills on these tasks. On average, over two thirds of principals (67.60%) mostly need or very much need the improvement on the tasks listed. Furthermore, all domains of Standards are, to a certain extent, equally perceived as those where development of knowledge and skills is mostly or very much needed (Figure 1). On *each* of 82 tasks listed in the instrument, more than half of principals placed themselves in the "mostly need improvement" or "very much need improvement" category.

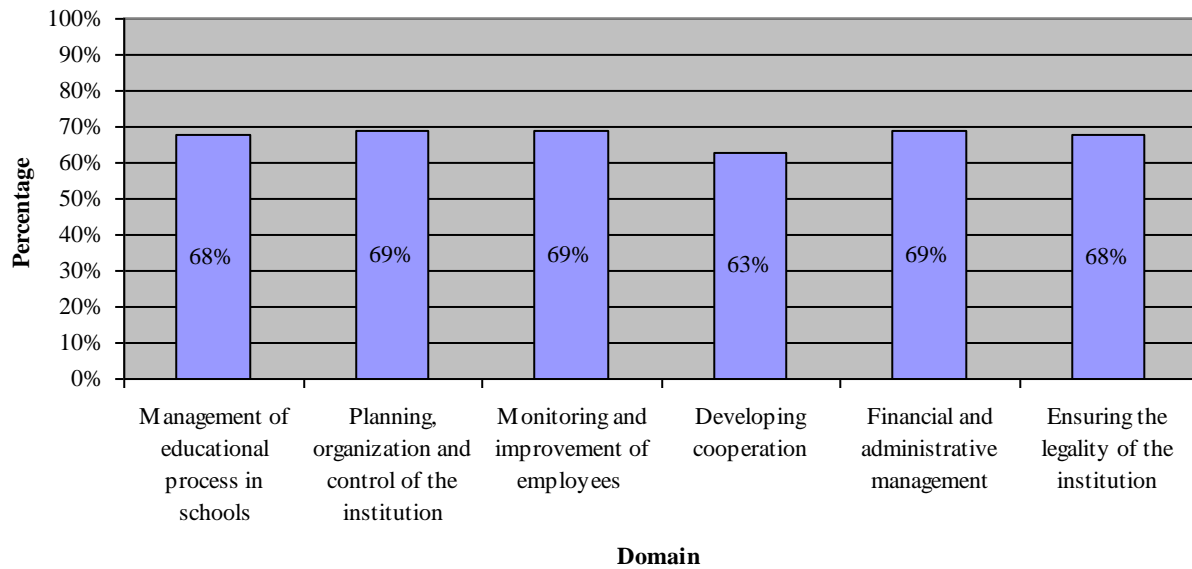


Figure 1. Percentage of principals who mostly or very much need to improve their skills and knowledge in each domain of the Serbian standards for competencies of school principals.

Results show that in respect to the Domain I of the Standards – *Management of educational process in schools*, on average 67.58% of Serbian principals perceive that they mostly need or very much need to improve their skills and knowledge (Figure 1). The most important tasks in this domain in terms of need for development are: encouraging teachers to use teaching methods which develop functional knowledge and creativity of pupils; creating climate in which children with developmental difficulties are equally included in class and extracurricular activities; monitoring the implementation of IEPs; and encouraging teachers to respond to different educational needs of different groups of pupils. Over three quarters of principals responded that they either mostly need or very much need to advance their knowledge and skills on the above mentioned tasks.

In the Domain II of the Standards – *Planning, organization and control of the institution* 68.59% of Serbian principals on average perceive that they mostly need or very much need to improve their skills and knowledge (Figure 1). Tasks within the Domain II where these percentages were over 75% were: initiating educational projects and pedagogical innovations in school; strategic planning of changes in school; writing project proposals for school improvement; and encouraging teachers to assume greater responsibility for pupil achievement.

Results related to the Domain III of the Standards – *Monitoring and improvement of employees* shows that 68.67% of principals on average declare themselves as needing improvement (Figure 1). Most needed advancement of knowledge and skills is in the following tasks: following contemporary trends in leadership in education; planning and monitoring professional development of all teachers; and evaluating quality of the work of the employees. As before, the most pertinent

tasks were those where more than 75% respondents placed themselves in the “mostly need” or “very much need” improvement response categories.

In the Domain IV of the Standards – *Developing cooperation*, principals perceive that they cope somewhat better than in other domains. On average, 62.74% of principals think of themselves as mostly needing or very much needing improvement of their knowledge and skills in the domain (Figure 1). The most important task in terms of developmental needs of the principals is inclusion of their school in national and international projects and cooperation with relevant educational institutions in the country.

The Domain V of the Standards – *Financial and administrative management* of the institution is, to a degree, different from other domains. Even though the average percentage of principals who mostly need or very much need to improve knowledge and skills in this domain (68.99%) (Figure 1) seems not to be much different from other domains, almost half of the tasks in this domain are perceived by principals as critical in terms of their improvement needs. These include: efficiently managing school finances; providing resources for unhindered school functioning; efficiently planning and implementing the public procurement of goods and services in line with legal regulations; and being familiar with legal and accounting tasks.

Finally, the results referring to the Domain VI of the Standards – *Ensuring the legality of the institution* show that, on average, 67.65% of principals mostly need or very much need improvement in respect to the tasks that comprise the domain (Figure 1). No specific task showed over 75% responses in the “mostly need” or “very much need” category, which in no way diminishes the importance of developing knowledge and skills of principals in this area.

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Based on the extensive overview of state-of-art theoretical concepts, empirical findings, and effective educational leadership programs, as well as on the results obtained from two research studies, a conceptual framework for the master program in educational leadership in Serbia was created.

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