
Concept of the Master program: Leadership in education

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Master program Leadership in education

Concept paper for the Master academic study program and professional development courses in Leadership in education to be organized and implemented by University of Kragujevac, University of Belgrade, University of Novi Sad and University of Nis.

Goals of the Master study program and professional development courses¹

The master program and professional development courses aim to improve professional competencies of current and future leaders in schools and other educational institutions by advancing their theoretical and practical knowledge of educational leadership.

The program and courses should allow the students to successfully: 1) acquire deeper understanding of state-of-art educational leadership concepts, theories and empirical research; 2) gain applied knowledge and skills in educational leadership that would allow them to improve educational institutions in which they work; 3) build and improve competencies specified in the Serbian Standards for Competencies of Principals; 4) become lifelong learners and reflective practitioners.

Target group

The target group for the Master program in Education leadership consists of two subgroups. The first subgroup is expected to be larger and to come from the employed sector. The program's primary target are the school principals and other school employees with potential to become school principals (assistant principals, pedagogues, psychologists and teachers interested in leadership) who come from pre-university levels of education (pre-school, primary and secondary education).

¹ The most desirable modality of the courses of professional development – on part of the universities but also extrapolating from research findings that emphasize long-term development instead of short courses – is that they be courses offered in the Master program which would be recognized by the Serbian Institute for Improvement of Education (IEE) as a means of awarding certain number of points to school employees as part of their professional development requirement of gathering 100 points of professional development work in 5 years. Likewise, the most desirable means of training principals in Serbia would be for them to complete Master program in Educational leadership that would be officially required for the principalship by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological development (MEST), or, in the least, complete a set of select courses from the Master program equaling 30 ECTS and covering six areas of Serbian Standards for competencies of principals. However, it is not determined yet whether and how regular university courses can count toward professional development requirement of school employees. Similarly, the regulations regarding the preparation of principals are still being written by the IEE & MEST.

Also, there may be the need for shorter orientation courses to be developed for new principals entering workforce; while partners in this program are willing to develop those shorter courses as well – and consider whether and how they can also count toward the progression toward the Master degree – precise formats of these courses cannot be developed until the Ministry and IEE express more clearly how they envision preparation of the principals.

Having this in mind, professional development courses will be, at this point, treated as courses offered in this Master program.

The program also targets employees in state and NGO local and regional education sectors, school board members, and other parties interested in educational leadership.

The program's second, smaller target group is graduated bachelor students who are aspiring educational leaders. The second subgroup represents the graduates directly coming from bachelor studies, likely from the field of social sciences, including education and teacher training, but also from other fields.

This implies that the program should be sufficiently flexible in content, to allow different learning pathways, and also accommodating to the working schedules of employed students. Both target groups should be able to demonstrate their experience in the field of education leadership and practice and/or special interest for further work in education leadership through the entrance essay and/or the interview.

The program's main student body will come from Serbia.

Organization of the program

Master program would be organized and offered at two locations – University of Kragujevac² and University of Novi Sad³. While accreditation, administration and finances would be under purview of each university independently, the structure of the program, syllabi, literature and teaching methods would be in most part identical, as they would be jointly prepared by professors from the Universities. University of Belgrade and University of Nis do not have sufficient capacities (people- and space-wise) to accredit and undertake independent or joint programs, but will contribute to the Master program by developing content and taking part in teaching coursework offered by University of Kragujevac and University of Novi Sad.

Students would be enrolled at University of Kragujevac or University of Novi Sad with the right to attend courses at either location (live or via video-conferencing). Professors at University of Belgrade or University of Nis can also offer courses live (at University of Kragujevac and University of Novi Sad) or via video-conferencing, depending on the precise arrangement with the University where they are teaching. Students enrolled at University of Kragujevac or University of Novi Sad but located elsewhere (closer to Belgrade or Nis) could attend part of the lectures via video-conferencing from University of Belgrade or University of Nis. The precise arrangements of

² At University of Kragujevac, the program would be accredited and implemented by the lead Faculty of the University of Kragujevac in this project – Faculty of Education in Jagodina. Some courses or parts of courses in the program would be offered by professors at two other Faculties of the University – Faculty of Economics in Kragujevac and Faculty of teacher training in Uzice, as well as by professors from other partner institutions in the project – University of Belgrade, University of Nis and University of Novi Sad.

³ At University of Novi Sad, the program would be accredited and implemented by the Faculty of philosophy. Some courses or parts of courses in the program would be offered by professors from other partner institutions in the project – University of Belgrade and University of Kragujevac.

these suggestions will be decided by the partners and will be included in the cooperation agreement that they will sign.

Having in mind that the largest target group of the program is expected to be employed, the courses should probably be offered during the weekend, as a once or twice a week longer time slot per course with a course being comprised of 4-8 such meets and individual or group student work in-between.

The language of the program would be Serbian with a future possibility of offering courses in English (foreseeing participation of European mobility students or organization of summer schools open to international participants).

Curriculum of the master program

The Master program would be comprised of four major parts (underlined), totaling 60 ECTS. The selection and content of the courses is based on the holistic examination of the reports – outcomes of Act 1.1. and Act 1.2 – while also taking into account realities of education system in Serbia (e.g., accreditation requirements, existing capacities and expertise at Faculties, etc). The following is the proposed model:

1. Core courses (24 ECTS)

The courses that will be described below were selected as core courses because: a) they encompass those roles and behaviors that resurface again and again in the pre-eminent theoretical and empirical literature as the most pertinent and necessary for educational leaders, b) their subject matter is offered most frequently as obligatory coursework at exemplary universities throughout the world, and c) they contain what has come up as necessary for the principals in Serbia in the qualitative and quantitative part of the needs analysis. Three of the core courses cover the first three Standards for competencies of principals in Serbia. Another course – *Introduction to leadership in education* – is offered as obligatory, too, in order to frame and position the entire field of educational leadership. The core courses would address the following topics:

- a) *Introduction to leadership in education* (6 ECTS): theories of leadership (general and in education); education leader's roles, competencies and practices; effective educational leadership; preparation of education leaders; evaluation of education leaders; trends in educational leadership.
- b) *Leading educational organizations* (6 ECTS): vision and mission (placing focus on a strong learning culture with high performance expectations and provision of a safe, healthy and inclusive environment); problem identification / opportunity for change using clear criteria and data (for example, via Standards of quality for educational institutions);

decision-making; strategic, evidence-based planning and thinking (for example, in the process of school development planning); developing procedures; selecting and leading teams; sharing leadership; organizing and delegating work; coordinating people, teams, and procedures; quality management (monitoring, evaluating and undertaking corrective measures). Addresses the following Standards: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, partly 1.2.1, 1.2.2 and partly 1.2.5.

- c) *Pedagogical leadership* (6 ECTS): importance and effects of teacher quality; teaching based on current learning theories; evidence-based characteristics of high quality, effective teaching (supportive learning environment, cognitive activation, classroom management/structuring); Area 2 of Standards of quality for educational institutions (Teaching and learning); individualization; motivating students; lesson observations (using evaluation criteria); plans for improvement of teaching; teacher planning, implementation and evaluation of lessons (individual and collaborative; exchanges of good practice), curriculum planning. Addresses the following Standards: 1.2.1, 1.2.2., 1.2.3, 1.2.4, partly 1.2.5, and partly 3.4.
- d) *Developing people* (6 ECTS): teacher competencies (Standards for competencies in Serbia and other countries); selecting employees; organizing induction and mentoring; adult learning and effective professional development; leading professional development of employees (teacher appraisal, giving feedback, directing, mentoring, measuring progress, evaluating impact of professional development); accountability mechanisms (motivating / rewarding and sanctioning); dealing with resistance; creating positive school culture and pleasant working environment (ethos, sense of belonging to school; cooperation and team work; joint school activities); professional and personal development of leaders (leadership identity; moral purpose, integrity and values; emotional and social intelligence, resilience and flexibility; time and stress management). Addresses the following Standards: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, mostly 3.4, partly 1.2.1.

2. Elective courses (12 ECTS)

These courses aim to allow more flexible learning pathways to students with different aspirations and needs, but also to keep them grounded in the most relevant themes in educational leadership. The names and content of the courses will be presented below; it will be also pointed out which indicators of the Serbian Standards for Competencies of Principals these courses address. The following is a potential set of courses.

- a) *Communication and partnerships* (6 ECTS): timely communication with staff; assertive communication; advocating; conflicts and negotiation; listening skills; constructive criticism; nonverbal communication; written communication (evidence-making); leading

meetings; presentations (public and other); PR and school marketing; constructive relationship with Parent council; effective family-school partnerships; community partnerships; school networks; constructive partnerships with municipality and regional school authority; partnerships with private, public and NGO sector; networking with domestic and international leadership and teacher associations. Addresses the following Standards: 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4.

- b) *Finances, law and administration in education* (6 ECTS): accounting; budget planning; resource management; making financial reports (monthly, yearly); tendering procedures; Serbian education laws and bylaws; school regulations (operationalization of school practices); timely following and informing employees about changes; enforcement of regulations; administrative procedures (kancelarijsko poslovanje). Addresses the following Standards: 5.1, 5.2., 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3.
- c) *Using data in education and project management* (6 ECTS): national and international educational assessment (equity and quality); sources of information; following and using research; collection and evaluation of information / information systems; computer-based and other data analysis; action research; finding projects and donors; writing project proposals; project planning and management. Addresses the following Standards: partly 1.2.5., partly 2.4.
- d) *Educational systems in comparative perspective* (6 ECTS): organization of schooling (including horizontal and vertical alignment and the system of examinations, promotions and certifications); governance (centralized / decentralized; public / private); financing of education (revenue; level of funding; distribution / mechanisms of funding, such as per-capita financing; efficiency of funding / cost-effectiveness); quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation (including accountability mechanisms); equality of educational opportunity (selection; tracking; repercussions of financing arrangements, etc); curriculum; teacher training.
- e) *Education policy and educational change* (6 ECTS): formation, implementation and evaluation of education policies; education policy / reform examples; school improvement; characteristics of successful and unsuccessful school improvement programs; ownership and sustainability of changes.

3. Leadership Practicum (6 ECTS)

Practice would be undertaken in master student's school or other place of work. For non-employed students, it would be good if practice could be undertaken in schools that have become practice schools in the ongoing "Razvionica" project in Serbia. Practice would be led conjointly by professors and mentors (experienced principals) in the program. It would encompass shadowing,

journal writing, practice-based assignments / exercises, etc in relation to the course materials and topics.

4. Master thesis (18 ECTS)

Master thesis will have an empirical component and will be valorized by its practice value and actual or potential contribution to the field of practice.

Teaching methods

The quality and success of the program will depend as much on the teaching methods as they will on the content of the courses. It is of paramount importance that courses offered in the program respect the basic tenets of adult learning: that the experience of the adult learners is rich and should be used as a resource, that they need applicable knowledge, that they need to actively participate in their learning, and so on. Report on the Act 1.2 suggests that high quality, effective programs:

- Emphasize active, student-centered problem-based learning that integrates theory and practice and stimulates reflection; Teaching methods include lectures, readings, self-reflection, group discussion, case analyses, role playing; journal writing, diagnostics, etc.
- Include practice-based learning, which consists of designed and supervised internships, analysis of classroom practice, learning activities that use on-the-job observations;
- Utilize mentors and peer learning, and develop communities of practice such as principals' networks, study groups and peer coaching activities.

Duration

Master program in Leadership in education would consist of 60 ECTS. By Serbian law, the student remains in the student status for two years total if s/he enrolled in a 60 ECTS program. The studies should be possible to finish in one year, but that might be hard for employed students. It would be good if there could be two yearly intakes (in October and in February), to allow more options to students, but that may be quite hard to accomplish due to the relatively rigid accreditation procedure and multiple professional obligations of professors. Enrollment in individual courses without aiming for degree completion (or, degree completion at a later time, as credits would accumulate toward the degree) should be highly promoted as a means of professional development (should IEE and MEST allow university-level courses to formally enter the system of professional development). Should a subset of courses be proclaimed as training for principalship, then corresponding ECTS would be spread over two semesters.

Tuition

There would be no tuition for students during the lifetime of the project. After the end of the project, the tuition would be charged per individual course at the university organizing the course. If university-level courses enter the system of professional development, then municipalities could fund some or all of the tuition, as financing professional development in Serbia is the obligation of municipalities. Ideally, MEST would proclaim the master program as required for principals, and would finance their tuition. Alternatively, and more realistically, MEST could proclaim a subset of courses as obligatory training for principals, and potentially fund the appropriate part of the tuition.

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