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HAS THE CHANGE OF EDUCATIONAL PARADIGM REACHED EVERY SCHOOL AND EVERY CLASS?

Abstract

This rapidly changing world demands new skills and competencies for students and teachers whose role as professionals is also changing. Traditional approach to teaching/learning process involves the directed flow of information from a teacher as sage to students as receivers. How effective this transmission of the information has been can be tested by different tests. In OECD Background Report for the International Summit on the Teaching Profession (2012) it is stated that changes in the demand for skills have evident implications that teachers themselves need to acquire new competencies to be able to work effectively. In today's world where young generation is IT literate, routine or subject based knowledge is being digitized, teachers "need to enable people to become lifelong learners, to manage non-rule-based complex ways of thinking and complex ways of working that computers cannot take over easily" (p. 35).

Key words: educational paradigm, alternative education policies, teacher's managerial skills

Introduction

The term globalization has become a term used almost every day in the last two decades. Sahlberg (2004), a leading educator from Finland, says that globalization is typically understood as an economic, political and cultural process that changes the role of many countries in relation to global markets, agreements, and traditions. No doubt that globalization influences the field of education and this issue has become frequently analyzed in this context. Sahlberg (2004) admits that still a little work has been done on the pedagogical implications of globalization on teaching and learning and explains that globalization is having an effect on teaching and learning in three ways:

- educational development is often based on a global unified agenda,
- standardized teaching and learning are being used as propellant to quality improvement,
- stress on competition is clearly evident among students and schools.

So teachers no longer work in stable contexts, they have to rethink how teaching/learning process is organized at schools and make it more flexible, in order to able to build students' 21st century skills which is set up by a complicated mix of opportunities, challenges and demands of today's society.

GERM vs Alternative Education Policies

As Hargreaves (2003) underlines, two decades of education reforms due to globalization, have led to rigid standardization, commercialized teaching, learning

for tests and external control that has casualized teachers in many countries rather than empowered them to teach better.

In his book *Finnish Lessons* Sahlberg (2011) juxtaposes trends of The Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) which is promoted in global education policy markets with alternative education policies which can serve for creation of a good education system, such as the system in Finland:

GERM

- focus on core subjects
- standartization
- test-based accountability
- market-based management
- data and control

Alternative Policies

- broad and creative learning
- personalization
- professional responsibility
- educational leadership
- collaboration and trust

Fullan (2011) emphasises the same idea when talking about ‘wrong drivers’ – deliberate policy forces what have little chances of achieving the desired result:

- accountability vs capacity building,
- individual teacher vs group solutions,
- technology vs pedagogy,
- fragmented strategies vs integrated/systemic strategies.

The ‘right drivers’ or ‘do drivers’ mentioned by Fullan (2011) are the following:

- foster intrinsic motivation of teachers and students,
- engage educators and students in continuous improvement of instruction and learning,
- inspire collective or team work,
- affect all teachers and students.

The role of schools and teachers within the context of lifelong learning

Kivunja (2014) points out: “As the world has transitioned from the 20th century Industrial Age to the 21st Information Age, there is an increasing awareness that the skills that led to success in the 20th century are no longer sufficient to lead to success and prosperity in the 21st century” (p. 2). Alongside all the changes in today’s society, new expectations appeared towards the schools and teachers. Nowadays schools are the institutions where the basis for lifelong learning are set up and developed. In terms of teaching/learning process teachers in modern classrooms are no longer lecturers, they are facilitators whose main task is to organise the teaching/learning process accordingly and act as managers of this process. It is a totally new role for the teachers which involves the management of the process which is:

- challenging,
- important,
- and never boring.

Accordingly, teachers must change their way of thinking and accept that the traditional understanding and functioning of teaching/learning process where teachers’ primary responsibility and activity have been directly instructing students and acting like the purveyors of knowledge and students – the recipients is not successful any more. In this kind of learning context students will not be able to

construct their knowledge and manage their own learning if teachers do it for them. If teachers determine what is important for students to know, the way how they should know something and how they should learn it, then students cannot become constructive learners. Having analysed contemporary literature about teaching and learning, the authors of this article come to the conclusion that it is very essential for students to act as intentional knowledge constructors and construct their own meaning for the world. Teachers' roles then shift from handling knowledge to helping students construct more tenacious conceptions of the world.

Hattie (2009) argues that not all teachers are effective, not all teachers are experts and not all of them have powerful effects on students. People live in a rapidly changing society full of challenges, opportunities and demands where new patterns of work and new business practices have developed and, as a result, new kinds of workers, specialist and experts with new and different skills, are required. And this is very important for education as well. And no matter if teachers want to call themselves 21st century educators or not, they are definitely not the same teachers as they were last century, and if somebody thinks he still did not change than he needs to look for another job in another field.

Howard et al (2011) consider that meaningful learning will result when learners are engaged in:

- knowledge construction, not reproduction
- conversation, not reception
- articulation, not repetition
- collaboration, not competition
- reflection, not prescription.

The same idea was expressed by Ausubel (1963) when he wrote about the learning theory. He believed that learning new knowledge relies on what is already known. That is, construction of knowledge begins with observation and recognition of events and objects through concepts students already have and they learn by constructing a network of concepts and adding to them. Ausubel's theory also focuses on meaningful learning because according to his theory, in order to learn meaningfully, students must relate new knowledge to relevant concepts they already know. It is interaction of new knowledge with already existing learner's knowledge structure. Ausubel contrasted meaningful learning with rote learning and stressed that knowledge stored during meaningful learning is fundamentally organized differently than knowledge learned by rote, and affective associations are also different.

Medel-Añonuevo (2001) asserted: "Today in the 21st century, we find ourselves anew amidst the loud voices proclaiming the importance of lifelong learning. What is clear is that the context of lifelong learning has changed and the utopian and generous vision hitherto characterizing lifelong learning has now become a necessary guiding and organizing principle of education reforms. It is recognized today as an indispensable tool to enable education to face its multiple current and emerging challenges" (p. 1).

Lifelong learning has several definitions. It is defined as learning pursued throughout life; flexible learning that is diverse and available at different times and places, etc. Delor (1996) has worked out four 'pillars' of education for the future:

- learning to know,

- learning to do,
- learning to live together, and with others,
- learning to be.

In other words, all those pillars make the framework of ‘learning to learn’ what is of an extreme importance of both teachers and students – it is teachers should promote and help their students to develop this and in students turn it is essential to be aware of the skill’s ‘learning to learn’ need and necessity because the primary responsibility for learning is the learner’s.

Gerver (2012) says that he as a parent expects his children’s schooling to prepare them for the challenges of the future and to help them develop the skills and behaviours that will see them flourish in the middle of the twenty-first century and beyond. As he further explains that “the issue is not that we have generations of children who don’t want to learn, the problem is that they don’t want to learn when they can’t see the point of the learning” (p. 21).

Fadel (2012) says that teachers need to have the time and flexibility to develop knowledge, skills, and character, while also considering the meta-layer – the dimension that includes learning how to learn, interdisciplinarity, and personalisation.

It leads to the question if learning is a process or a product? As Novak (2011) says: “over the past 30 years there has been major advances in our understanding of human learning. Behavioral psychology that dominated education for more than half a century began its demise in the late 1970’s and pretty much collapsed in the 1980’s. Almost all competent educational psychologists have moved toward cognitive rather than behavioral models of human learning” (p. 3).

There are various definitions of a term *process*, for example “a set of actions, changes, or functions bringing about a result”, but in fact these explanations of a term ‘process’ mainly refer to business. When talking about a teaching/learning process, the authors of this article define it as ‘a systematic implementation of related actions in order to reach some result’. Accordingly the result or product is students’ higher-order skills, for example “4 C’s” of Creativity, Critical thinking, Communication, Collaboration.

Methodology

The pilot research was conducted with the aim to find out Latvian teachers’ views about the significance of managerial skills in their work. For school selection the regionality principle was observed, specifying the school location (urban/rural), the number of students, teachers’ qualification, local government support, the language of institution, school results in the state tests, etc. 288 teachers from 25 schools of Latvia took part in the questionnaire.

In order to evaluate opinions on the following skills:

- 1) *classroom management* (discipline, organizing teaching/learning process, emotional/psychological/physical environment),
- 2) *cooperation with parents*,
- 3) *development of students’ skills*,
- 4) *evaluation of students learning outcomes*,
- 5) *cooperation with colleagues*

teachers were asked to score the significance according to their understanding and experience (5 – the most important; 1– the less important).

There are a lot of discussions concerning the shift of educational paradigm. In fact this shift has already been made but if it happened at teachers' work at schools – the question is open. No doubt, it is very crucial to be able to manage a successful teaching/learning environment. Different theoretical sources articulate the art and science of teaching/learning as essential knowledge, skills and qualities. For example, Connecticut State Department of Education has worked out The Common Core of Teaching (2010) where six domains are stated:

- 1) *content and essential skills* (teachers understand and apply essential skills, central concepts and tools of inquiry in their subject matter or field),
- 2) *classroom environment, student engagement and commitment to learning* (teachers promote student engagement, independence and interdependence in learning by facilitating a positive learning community),
- 3) *planning for active learning* (teachers plan instruction in order to engage students in rigorous and relevant learning and to promote their curiosity about the world at large),
- 4) *instruction for active learning* (teachers implement instruction in order to engage students in rigorous and relevant learning and to promote their curiosity about the world at large),
- 5) *assessment for learning* (teachers use multiple measures to analyze student performance and to inform subsequent planning and instruction),
- 6) *professional responsibilities and teacher leadership* (teachers maximize support for student learning by developing and demonstrating professionalism, collaboration with others, and leadership) (p. 4).

Latvian teachers were asked to rank five managerial skills according to their significance in teachers' work and the results were the following:

- 1) *development of students' skills* (29,86%),
- 2) *classroom management* (discipline, organizing teaching/learning process, emotional/psychological/physical environment) (24,65%),
- 3) *evaluation of students learning outcomes* (17,36%),
- 4) *cooperation with parents* (15,97%),
- 5) *collaboration with colleagues* (12,15%).

Having compared these results with the theoretical background of a contemporary teaching/learning process, we can conclude that all five managerial skills the teachers of Latvian schools consider inessential. For instance, a lot of authors argue that interdisciplinarity is of a high importance when implementing effective teaching/learning, but Latvian teachers ranked 'collaboration with colleagues' as a skill of less substantiality. The authors make a conclusion that the teachers in schools of Latvia are not aware of the role and necessity of managerial skills in their everyday work with students, what proves that the negotiations about the change of educational paradigm last for decades but the implementation of it is far from the practical teachers' work. In order to improve it, teacher training programs and in-service courses should be developed and adapted to the demands of contemporary society.

Conclusions

1. The change of educational paradigm has occurred, but the implementation of it in teachers' work is still open. The teacher's role goes well beyond information giving and acting as a lecturer. New educational paradigm includes all those dimensions which are mentioned by Sahlberg (2011) when he talks about alternative educational policies.

2. In order to implement a new educational paradigm in schools and classrooms, teachers first need to change their way of thinking.

3. One of the challenges for the schooling today is meta-layer (learning how to learn, interdisciplinarity, systems thinking, personalization, etc.) dimension which is essential for developing lifelong learning habits because learning takes place not only in schools but it is also social issue, but the results of the research showed that the teachers are not aware of the need and importance of managerial skills and they are not ready to shift from the traditional understanding of a teaching/learning process to that one of a student learning centred.

4. In order to make teachers realize themselves as managers, it is necessary to develop teacher training programs and in-service courses. It should lead to a change of teachers' way of thinking what in its turn will come to the educational paradigm implementation in schools.

5. It is necessary organize courses and seminars, learning teams in order to encourage teachers for interdisciplinary collaboration, cooperation with parents and society.

6. Such managerial skills as *development of students' skills, classroom management* (discipline, organizing teaching/learning process, emotional/psychological/physical environment), *evaluation of students learning outcomes, cooperation with parents, collaboration with colleagues, etc.* should be developed.

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