

**Teacher's Influence Scale from their Colleagues and Principals: Its
Relation with School Performance in Public Schools of the
Albanian Educational System**

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Abstract

This article aims to evaluate the relation between school performance and the Teacher's Influence Scale on certain issues from their colleagues and principals in the public educational system of Albania. For this purpose, a questionnaire was used. The sample consisted of 428 teachers, teaching at 20 public schools in the pre-university educational system in Albania who filled in self-report questionnaires with six items. The schools were chosen based on performance criteria, with higher and lower performance based on the Educational Directory of each city: Tirana, Kamëz, Elbasan and Shkodra. One of the conclusions is that teacher's influence by their colleagues is very low, ($M=2.5197$), as is teacher's influence by their principals ($M=2.1789$); but teachers are slightly more influenced by their colleagues. The school performance, in the case of Albanian public schools, is related very weak with the scale of teachers' influence. However, this relation is slightly higher in schools with lower performance. Furthermore, the school performance is overall more than the collective efforts of teacher and principals and involves the background of the school community.

Keywords: teacher collaboration; reform; pupils' expectations; social relations

Introduction

The Educational System in Albania, during these last two decades, has undertaken a series of reforms. Most of them are related to the core of schooling, for example: curricula, textbooks, standardized tests, school leadership, and professional development. Professional development is related to the classification of a school based on school performance (IShA, 2014). School performance include: general data about the school, the percent of passed pupils on the State exams, average grade, the percent of dropouts, staff development, teacher results on the qualification tests, the percent of teachers/principals in professional networks, socio-economic environment and the scale of teacher satisfaction at school. During the scholastic year 2013-2014, for the first time in Albania, the schools are listed based on their performance; hence, school performance is becoming a very important concept. This new shift is an effort to evaluate the schools based on criteria. It creates an opportunity to see what happens inside the schools or to evaluate schools from the inside-out (Elmore, 2008) rather than *vice versa*.

According to data from the Educational Directory of each city, taken in consideration in this study, the schools with better performance are located at the center of cities, in communities with high socio-economic backgrounds, have parents with high expectations for their children and are able to help and support their children with home-duties or other responsibilities assigned by the school. According to PISA results of 2009 (OECD, 2010, p.13-14), “Home background influences educational success, and schooling often appears to reinforce its effects. Although poor performance in school does not automatically stem from a disadvantaged socio-economic background, the socio-economic background of students and schools does appear to have powerful influence on learning outcomes. In Albania, as well as in many other countries, students in urban schools perform better than students in rural schools.”

The same must be said for the teachers: the teachers of schools with better performance usually have more training or more qualifications, including the right diploma. Teacher results of these schools, in qualification exams of the last 3 years are better. PISA results of 2009 (OECD, 2010) confirm this fact. In Albania, the correlation between the socio-economic background of schools and the percentage of teachers with university-level (ISCED 5A) among all full-time teachers is 0.38. Additionally, it is of note that the Educational System in Albania is very poor in granting teacher rewards or other bonuses for high performance. The socio-economic background of students and teacher performance influences student outcomes. This inquiry focuses on certain teacher attributes. The question is, “How much public school performance, in a selection of Albanian districts, is related to the influence between teachers or from the principal on school performance?”

Literature Review

Studies regarding the teaching profession has shifted from isolation to collaboration and influence (Elmore, 2008; Payne, 2011). For the Consortium on Chicago Schools Research (Payne, 2011), one of the five fundamentals ways for improving school systems is professional capacity, including the capacity of teachers to talk about their teaching with one another and the degree to which the adults in a building take collective responsibility for what happens there. For Dewey (2007), as the most mature member of the group, the teacher has a peculiar responsibility for the conduct of the interactions and communications which are the very life of the group as a community. For Payne (2011, p. 32) in the USA, “many reform initiatives of the 1990s agreed on the need for collegiality and collaboration among teachers... Norms of isolation and competitiveness may be very strong.” High quality human relationships are strongly predictive of whether or not a school can gather itself to get better. Low quality

relationships, manifested in teacher isolation, even when their numbers are small, may be enough to shape the non-cooperation culture at school. For example teachers may think that “what goes on in my classroom is my business” (Payne, 2011, p. 80). For Elmore (2008) one of the reasons why successful instructional practices never take root in a small proportion of classrooms and schools, is because teaching continues to be isolated work. Hill, Pierce and Guthrie (1997, p. 8), in addition to listing what we need to have good public schools state: “Schools should be whole organizations and true communities, act like serious enterprises that have definite goals... schools exist because their work is to do what individuals alone cannot accomplish.” Johnson & Kolderie (2011) emphasize the necessity to widen the role of teacher in decision-making of how the school runs and how the learning is handled. “This might mean that teachers form the kind of partnerships we see in other professional occupations, fully in charge and with the administrators working for them. What form this takes, or how the arrangements evolve over time in a particular school, can be left to the staff in the school to decide based on what they prefer and believe will best ensure school and student success” (p. 185).

For Elmore (2018), professional development is related with group work and collaborative practice within schools. If we want good educational practice we have to study how “teachers relate to each other in the course of their daily work” (p. 15) and we have to construct collective expectations: when expectations are collective they are factors for better achievement and performance. Cole & Weinbaum (2010) in research conducted towards reform and the scale of success, have focused on reform related to teachers’ attitudes. More than their own individual attributes, and more than new structures and materials a reform may bring to the school, teachers are influenced by the peers with whom they have formed relationship over time.

Johnson (1976) examines the relationship between school type and the participation and influence of teachers in school management, as well as between school type and the principal’s influence in certain issues and professional interaction with teachers in elementary schools. Johnson (1976) connects the word “influence” with power and control, which are born through interdependent relationships. According to Johnson, teachers involved in team teaching and joint teaching demonstrated considerably more influence in school decisions on personnel, administration, pupil management, curricula, and teaching methods than did teachers in schools where there was no collaboration. In schools where there were many teams, much joint teaching and shared decision-making, principals as well as teachers felt more, rather than less, influential. The present study is grounded in the work of research that has studied social relations that are created at school and their role in the scale of school performance (Elmore, 2008; Daly, 2010; Payne, 2011; Hess & Manno, 2011; Hill, Pierce and Guthrie, 1997, Johnson, 1976).

Method

The purpose of this study is to investigate the Teacher’s Influence Scale from their colleagues and principals, as well as its relation with school performance in public schools of the Albanian Educational System. Influence, in this study, is used according to Johnson (1976): The act of basically making the decision in question. Johnson examined teachers’ influence on four types of decisions. This study takes into consideration only pupil management, focusing on expectations regarding quality of achievement. There are three hypotheses:

H 1: Teachers are influenced by their colleagues and principals regarding expectations for the quality of pupil achievement.

H 2: Teaching years of experience are not significantly related to how influenced teachers are by their colleagues and principals.

H 3: School performance is related to how influenced teachers are by colleagues and principals.

In order to test the hypotheses, a set of questions was developed, asking teachers to assess how much they are influenced by their colleagues and principals. For this reason, the present study used a short questionnaire with six items. The survey instrument comprised demographic and influence questions. The first three items are related to demography and included: age, teaching years of experience, and gender. Two other items are related to influence by the colleagues and principal. Each of these items was scored into a Likert-type scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always); reliability for the influence: $N = 2$; Cronbach's Alpha .693. The items related to influence are:

1. Does your colleague influence your expectations regarding the quality of achievement of your pupil/student?
2. Does your principal influence your expectations regarding the quality of achievement of your pupil/student?

The last item, the sixth, regarding the quality of school performance, was fulfilled by the researcher according to the data collected from the Educational Directory. All the questionnaires were administrated by the author, in order to minimize the validity problems relating to interviewer variation and bias. The data were collected for a group of 428 Albanian teachers, teaching in low-secondary and high-secondary level, respectively: 214 teaching in schools with higher performance and 214 teaching in schools with lower performance. The schools are, in total, 20: 10 schools with higher performance and 10 with lower performance. For each city (Tirana, Kamëz, Elbasan and Shkodra) the number of chosen schools are 4 (2 for each level of performance), except Tirana city (8 schools in total, 4 of each level of performance). The sample consisted of: 332 Women (77.6 %), 58 Men (13.6 %); 38 (8.9 % failed to reply).

Sample

Data for age (4 groups), teacher years of experience (5 groups) and the statistic regarding the sample are in the tables below (1, 2 and 3). The sample is composed mostly of female teachers.

Table 1. Data regarding age of the sample

Age		Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	21-30 years old (1)	27	6.3	6.4	6.4
	31-40 years old (2)	143	33.4	33.6	40.0
	41-50 years old (3)	161	37.6	37.9	77.9
	Over 51 years old (4)	94	22.0	22.1	100.0
	Total	425	99.3	100.0	
Missing	Without answer	3	.7		
Total		428	100.0		

Table 2. Data regarding the teacher years of experience of the sample

Teacher years of experience		Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	1-5 years (1)	35	8.2	8.4	8.4
	6-10 years (2)	60	14.0	14.4	22.8
	11-20 years (3)	146	34.1	35.1	57.9
	21-30 years (4)	116	27.1	27.9	85.8
	Over 31 years (5)	59	13.8	14.2	100.0
	Total	416	97.2	100.0	
Missing	Without answer	12	2.8		
Total		428	100.0		

Table 3. Statistics

		School performance higher or lower	Gender	Age	Teacher years of experience
N	Valid	428	390	425	416
	Missing	0	38	3	12
Mean		1.5000	1.1487	2.7576	3.2500
Median		1.5000	1.0000	3.0000	3.0000
Minimum		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum		2.00	2.00	4.00	5.00
Percentiles	25	1.0000	1.0000	2.0000	3.0000
	50	1.5000	1.0000	3.0000	3.0000
	75	2.0000	1.0000	3.0000	4.0000

Results

Teacher-Teacher Influence and Teacher-Principal Influence: Results of Questionnaire

Table 4 shows the mean, median and mode of all teachers' reports, independent of the type of school performance. In each of the columns are reports for both kinds of influence: teachers from colleagues and from the principals.

Table 4. Mean, median and mode of teachers reporting

Statistics		Teacher-teacher influence, for: "expectations regarding the quality of achievement of your pupil"	Teacher-principal influence, for: "expectations regarding the quality of achievement of your pupil"
N	Valid	406	408
	Missing	22	20
Mean		2.5197	2.1789
Median		2.0000	2.0000
Mode		2.00 ^a	2.00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Tables 5 and 6 show the ranking answers with: frequency, percent, valid and cumulative percent. The responses are divided in two tables: table 5 teacher-teacher influence and table 6 teacher-principal influence. Important differences among these influences are apparent. The great majority of teachers perceived themselves to be “never” and “rarely” influenced by their

colleagues and principals. 22.9 of teachers report that they never are influenced by their colleagues and 31.1% of teachers report that they never are influenced by their principals.

At the other extreme are the answers “always” and “very often.” 2.3 % of teachers report that they always are influenced by the principals regarding setting expectations for the quality of achievement of their pupils and 4.7 % of them report that they are “always” influenced by their colleagues for the same issue.

Table 5. Ranking answers for teacher-teacher influence

Teacher-teacher influence, for: "expectations regarding the quality of achievement of your pupil"		Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Never	98	22.9	24.1	24.1
	Rarely	109	25.5	26.8	51.0
	Sometimes	109	25.5	26.8	77.8
	Very often	70	16.4	17.2	95.1
	Always	20	4.7	4.9	100.0
	Total	406	94.9	100.0	
Missing	Without answer	22	5.1		
Total		428	100.0		

Table 6. Ranking answers for teacher-principal influence

Teacher-principal influence, for: "expectations regarding the quality of achievement of your pupil"		Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Never	127	29.7	31.1	31.1
	Rarely	148	34.6	36.3	67.4
	Sometimes	76	17.8	18.6	86.0
	Very often	47	11.0	11.5	97.5
	Always	10	2.3	2.5	100.0
	Total	408	95.3	100.0	
Missing	Without answer	20	4.7		
Total		428	100.0		

Correlation of Influence with Other Variables: Teacher Years of Experience and Age

In these data, gender is excluded because the sample is mostly from females. The results of the questionnaire show the absence of any correlation between influence and teacher years of experience and between influence and age. These variables do not play any important role in the scale of influence.

Table 7. Correlation with teacher years of experience and age

Correlation		Teacher-teacher influence: "expectations, quality of achievement of your pupil"	Teacher-principal influence: "expectations, quality of achievement of your pupil"	Teacher years of experience	Age
Teacher-teacher influence: "expectations the quality of achievement of your pupil"	Pearson Correlation	1	.532**	.035	-.015
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.488	.757
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	557.342	260.815	18.177	-6.355
	Covariance	1.376	.662	.046	-.016
	N	406	395	395	403
Teacher-principal influence: "expectations the quality of achievement of your pupil"	Pearson Correlation	.532**	1	.014	-.022
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.773	.653
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	260.815	467.939	6.899	-8.272
	Covariance	.662	1.150	.017	-.020
	N	395	408	397	405

In the data collected regarding teaching years of experience (Tables 8a and 8b), teachers with 1-5 years (Table 8a) of experience have the more significant and interesting data: 35.3% of them report they are never influenced by their colleagues and 0% of them report they are always influenced by their colleagues. The same could be said (Table 8b), for this group of teaching years, about the influence from their principals. 34.3% of them report they are never influenced by their principals and 0% of them report they are always influenced by their principals.

Teachers with over 31 years of experience are more accepting of these two kinds of influences: 9.1% report they are always influenced by their colleagues and 7.3% report they are always influenced by their principals. But in all groups of teaching years of experience, the answers are mostly "never" and "rarely" regarding the influence from both colleagues and principals (see Figure 1 for Teacher-teacher influence according to teaching years of experience).

Table 8a. Teacher-teacher influence according to teaching years of experience

Crosstab Influence: “expectations of the quality of achievement of your pupil”			Teaching years of experience					Total	
			1-5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	21-30 years	over 31 years		
Teacher-teacher	Never	Count	12	11	32	28	13	96	
		% within teaching years	35.3%	19.6%	22.7%	25.7%	23.6%	24.3%	
	Rarely	Count	5	12	46	30	13	106	
		% within teaching years	14.7%	21.4%	32.6%	27.5%	23.6%	26.8%	
	Sometimes	Count	9	20	39	27	11	106	
		% within teaching years	26.5%	35.7%	27.7%	24.8%	20.0%	26.8%	
	Very often	Count	7	13	16	19	13	68	
		% within teaching years	20.6%	23.2%	11.3%	17.4%	23.6%	17.2%	
	Always	Count	1	0	8	5	5	19	
		% within teaching years	2.9%	0.0%	5.7%	4.6%	9.1%	4.8%	
	Total		Count	34	56	141	109	55	395
			% within teaching years	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

(Chi-square test: Pearson Chi-Square = 20.515^a, df = 16, Asymp. Sig. 2-sided = .198, a. 3 cells (12.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.64.)

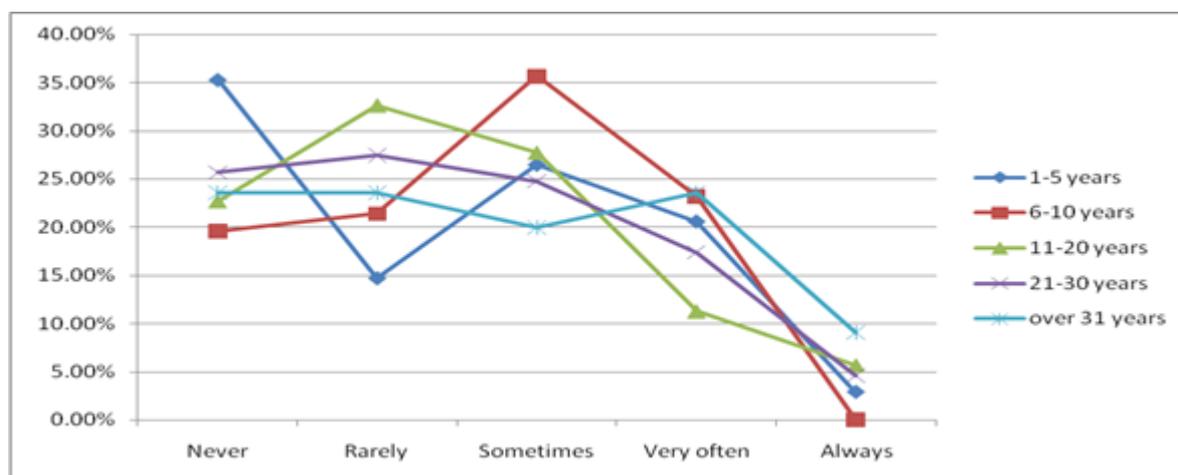


Figure 1. Teacher-teacher influence according to teaching years of experience

Table 8b. Teacher-principal influence according to teaching years of experience

Crosstab Influence, for: “expectations regarding the quality of achievement of your pupil”			Teaching years of experience					Total	
			1-5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	21-30 years	over 31 years		
Teacher-principal	Never	Count	12	14	41	37	19	123	
		% within teaching years	34.3%	24.1%	29.9%	33.0%	34.5%	31.0%	
	Rarely	Count	12	20	55	39	20	146	
		% within teaching years	34.3%	34.5%	40.1%	34.8%	36.4%	36.8%	
	Some-times	Count	8	19	24	17	6	74	
		% within teaching years	22.9%	32.8%	17.5%	15.2%	10.9%	18.6%	
	Very often	Count	3	5	14	17	6	45	
		% within teaching years	8.6%	8.6%	10.2%	15.2%	10.9%	11.3%	
	Always	Count	0	0	3	2	4	9	
		% within teaching years	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	1.8%	7.3%	2.3%	
	Total		Count	35	58	137	112	55	397
			% within teaching years	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

(Chi-square test: Pearson Chi-Square = 21.761^a, df=16, Asymp. Sig. 2-sided = .151, a. 6 cells (24.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .79).

Teacher-Teacher and Teacher-Principal Influence Related to School Performance: Results of the Questionnaire

The information presented in this section aims to evaluate the relation between teacher-teacher and teacher-principal influence with school performance. Information is classified according to school performance: schools with higher and lower performance. The evaluation of school performance is based on the same criteria, but the schools are located in different cities of Albania (Tirana, Kamëz, Elbasan and Shkodra). Data on school performance were taken from the Educational Directory of each city. In Table 9a and 9b are data for the mean, median, standard deviation, standard error, 95% confidence interval for mean, minimum and maximum and between-component variance. Schools with lower performance have a slightly greater value for the teachers' influence from their principals. Figures 2 and 3 show the medians for teacher-teacher influence and teacher-principal influence according to the level of school performance.

Table 9a. Data for the mean, median, standard deviation, standard error, 95% confidence interval for mean (Min. = 1 and Max. = 5) and between-component variance for both kinds of influence

Descriptive Influence, for: "expectations regarding the quality of achievement of your pupil"		N	Mean	Std. Deviat.	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Betw. Comp. Varian.
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Teacher-teacher	Schools with higher perform.	204	2.4755	1.05718	.07402	2.3295	2.6214	
	Schools with lower perform.	202	2.5644	1.28067	.09011	2.3867	2.7420	
	Total	406	2.5197	1.17310	.05822	2.4053	2.6342	
	Model	Fixed Effects			1.17370	.05825	2.4052	2.6342
	Rand. Effects				.05825 ^a	1.7796 ^a	3.2598 ^a	-.00284
Teacher-principal influence	School with higher perform.	206	2.0097	.93699	.06528	1.8810	2.1384	
	School with lower perform.	202	2.3515	1.17190	.08245	2.1889	2.5141	
	Total	408	2.1789	1.07225	.05308	2.0746	2.2833	
	Model	Fixed Effects			1.05982	.05247	2.0758	2.2821
	Rand. Effects				.17089	.0075	4.3503	.05290

Table 9b. Between and within group analysis

ANOVA Influence, for: "expectations regarding the quality of achievement of your pupil"		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Teacher-teacher influence	Between Groups	.802	1	.802	.582	.446
	Within Groups	556.541	404	1.378		
	Total	557.342	405			
Teacher-principal influence	Between Groups	11.914	1	11.914	10.607	.001
	Within Groups	456.025	406	1.123		
	Total	467.939	407			

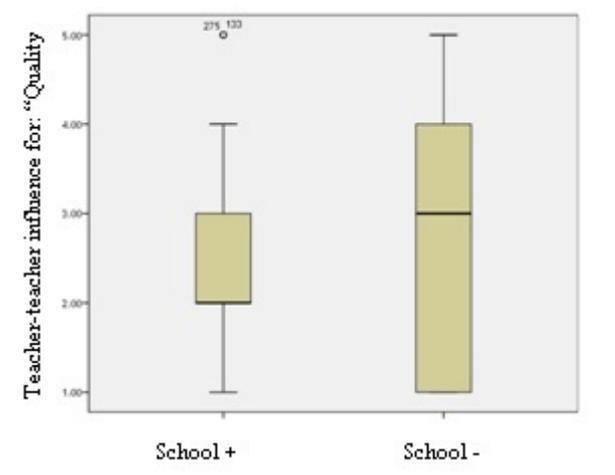


Figure 2. Teacher-teacher influence for: “Quality of achievement of pupil” (*Legend: school+ with higher performance and school- lower performance*)

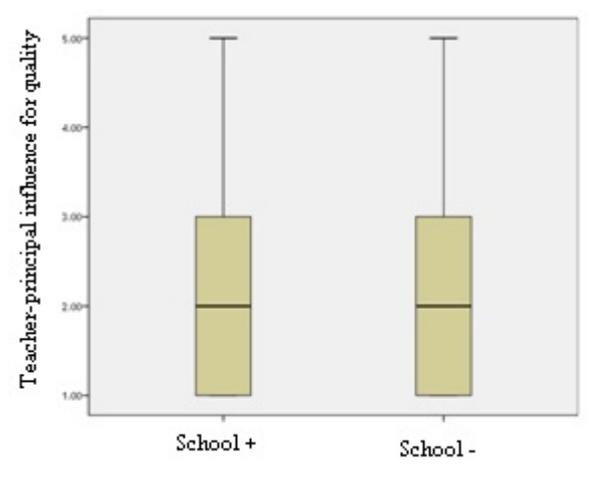


Figure 3. Teacher-principal influence for “Quality of achievement of pupil” (*Legend: school+ with higher performance and school- lower performance*)

Table 10 and Table 11 have detailed data for the answers: never, rarely, sometimes, very often and always. The greatest tendency for both kinds of influence takes place in never, rarely and sometimes. The lowest percentage is for the answer: always.

Table 10. Teacher-teacher influence, for: "expectations regarding the quality of achievement of your pupil"

Crosstab Influence, for: "expectations regarding the quality of achievement of your pupil"			School performance		Total
			Higher	Lower	
Teacher-teacher influence	Never	Count	42	56	98
		% within school performance	20.6%	27.7%	24.1%
	Rarely	Count	65	44	109
		% within school performance	31.9%	21.8%	26.8%
	Some-times	Count	59	50	109
		% within school performance	28.9%	24.8%	26.8%
	Very often	Count	34	36	70
		% within School performance	16.7%	17.8%	17.2%
	Always	Count	4	16	20
		% within School performance	2.0%	7.9%	4.9%
Total		Count	204	202	406
		% within School performance	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

School performance, results of questionnaire (Chi-square test: Pearson Chi-Square = 14.037^a, df = 4, Asymp. Sig. 2-sided = .007, a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.95).

Table 11. Teacher-principal influence, for: "expectations regarding the quality of achievement of your pupil"

Crosstab Influence, for: "expectations regarding the quality of achievement of your pupil"			School performance		Total
			Higher	Lower	
Teacher-principal influence	Never	Count	68	59	127
		% within school performance	33.0%	29.2%	31.1%
	Rarely	Count	87	61	148
		% within school performance	42.2%	30.2%	36.3%
	Some-times	Count	34	42	76
		% within school performance	16.5%	20.8%	18.6%
	Very often	Count	15	32	47
		% within school performance	7.3%	15.8%	11.5%
	Always	Count	2	8	10
		% within school performance	1.0%	4.0%	2.5%
Total		Count	206	202	408
		% within school performance	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

School performance, results of questionnaire (Chi-square test: Pearson Chi-Square = 15.759^a, df = 4, Asymp. Sig. 2-sided = .003, a. 1 cells (10.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.95).

Research Limitations

This study has some limitations:

- Schools were classified based on their performance. They were located in different cities, and included in different Educational Directories. Although the criteria are the same, the school performance of different cities is not always the same.
- The limited number of items used on the questionnaire.
- The perception of influence may have been different among teachers.

The study reports only the perceptions of teachers about this issue. The principals' view of the matter was not asked. An assumption is that, because all the reporters hold the same position, their perception about the influence, at least regarding these issues, must be the same. Also, this study focused on extreme cases: schools with the higher and lower performance. Even with these limitations, empirical studies such as this help examine what happens at the school level. For if we want improvements on a large scale, we have to go to the schools and study them from inside (Elmore, 2008).

Discussion and Conclusions

In this study, influence is examined from teacher to teacher and from principal to teacher, for an important issue: the quality of expectations for pupils' achievement. In order to test the theory that a greater degree of influence is related to better decision making, achievement and attitudes towards influence, were considered.

H 1: Teachers are influenced by their colleagues and principals regarding the expectations for the quality of pupil achievement

Pearson correlation for the two items of influence is 0.532. The results show that the teachers are influenced, in average terms, more from their colleagues than from the principals, respectively. The scale of teachers influence, regarding the expectations for the quality of pupil's achievement by their colleagues and principals, is very low. About the influence of principals, Johnson (1976) argued that "he needs only a few good communication links rather than many in order to be reasonably well informed and to exert influence by making his ideas and his judgment known." These links, in the case of principals of Albanian Public schools, seem that they are in this level: only 2.5% of the teachers say that are always influenced by principals and 11.5% very often. 31.1% of the teachers declared that they are never influenced by their principals. In Johnson's study, the result about principals' influence regarding pupil achievement is 41% (N = 77 out of 188). In the case of Albanian schools, if we group all the answers: sometimes, very often and always, this is altogether 128 teachers or 32.3% of the sample. So, regarding the teachers' perception, only 32.3 % report that they are influenced by their principals. The situation is a little bit better in the case of teacher-teacher influence.

H 2: Teaching years of experience are not significantly related to how influenced teachers are by their colleagues and principals

The Chi-Square test had a reasonable value 20.515 (df =16), although this value was not significant. According to Fox (2003: 303) for df = 16, Chi-Square must be a value of 26.296 (.05). Pearson Correlation and sig. (2 tailed) confirmed the same.

H 3: School performance is related to how influenced teachers are by colleagues and principals

In the case of Albanian Public schools, both kinds of influences are very low. It's worthwhile to note that the influence from the colleagues and principals on teachers from schools with

lower performance represent a better value (although slight). More than results of collective teacher and principal effort, school success is the result of other factors, including, but not only, the school community background. Further study also might explore another issue for Albanian public schools: the instability of principals. In almost all the schools, the principals were assigned recently, mostly after the last political election. Even after 25 years of transition, the principal position continues to be political and is under the influence of different political parties. Further studies might explore how school improvement is perhaps related to the absence of teachers' desire to set up close collaboration with principals, which makes the teachers' profession more isolated and potentially undermines school performance.

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