

GOAL MANAGEMENT & TEACHER COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

In organisational studies, a general consensus exists that specific, meaningful and formalised goals are a distinctive component of any organisation (Scott 2003). Various research has pointed out that management of school goals is often characterised as a vague process and the goals tend to lack direction for concrete action. Furthermore, the main goals of a school should be linked to the development of human resources (i.e., teacher competence) and cooperative work among school members rather than just maintain formal positions and organisational infrastructure (Murphy and Torre, 2001, 73).

This paper seeks to investigate how the process of managing goals is being carried out in Latvian schools. The investigation takes a qualitative approach to outline the perceptions and actions of the school management team. Empirical data was gathered by conducting face to face structured interviews with principals and middle management representatives (N=39) in ten schools from a large municipality in Latvia. The study included different types of schools: primary school, comprehensive school, selective secondary school, evening secondary school, and mixed language (Russian/Latvian language) school. The interviews consisted of three main inquiry themes:

- *school's purpose, existence, main functions;*
- *expectations from different stakeholders;*
- *professional learning support for teachers (regarding the kind of support provided in the past, identifying additional learning needs and the most effective approach for professional learning).*

Interviews were held in schools between January-March, 2013. The average length of an interview was 30 minutes. The aim of data analysis was to answer the following research questions:

- *How does the school management team describe and interpret the main goals of their school?*
- *How is teacher professional learning managed?*
- *How does the setting and attainment of goals relate to teacher professional learning and overall competence development?*

Analysis of the interviews gave first-hand insight into the current situation of the school management's capacity to carry out goal management in relation to teacher competence development. The paper discusses the theoretical and practical importance of specificity of school goals, meaningful actions to achieve them and ways to align goals with development of teacher competence.

Keywords: *school management, goals, teacher competence development, organisational studies*