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Ethical and Professional Problems in the Management of Educational Organizations

Daniela JEDER¹

Abstract

A successful management is characterized by performance, productivity, efficiency, innovation, quality- but to be able to speak about authentic results, all of them must be built on moral values. The present study focuses on educational management issues and sheds light on a less discussed issue in this space - the phenomenon of mobbing or harassment at work. So, the idea of the need for a rigorous training of school managers both ethically emerges.

Keywords: ethical management, schools, culture and deontological ethics, mobbing, training managers, ethical competence, collectivist spirit, spirit of autonomy.

Introduction

Overall, the smooth running of things and ethics are closely connected. More than ever, education should be defined by quality and efficiency, but this level can be reached only through an ethic educational management. However, the effective management in schools depends heavily on the ethical culture of managers, their deontological culture and implicitly by the presence of competences in this register. Ignoring this field of executive training generally brings consistent prejudice to the school and its actors in particular.

1. An aspect to consider: mobbing or moral / psychological harassment in school

One of the most sensitive areas of management, moral harassment at the workplace lies in the attention of researchers worldwide.

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1.1 What is mobbing in educational organizations?

Swedish psychologist Heinz Leymann introduces the term of mobbing analyzing certain phenomena "of injustice, defamation, violation of rights, psychological harassment, aggression that are influencing people at work, which generate significant personal prejudices, but also at the organizational level, they simply stretch from a simple injury and isolation in the working group up to suicide." (see M. Zlate, 2007)

Leymann means by mobbing "a communicative situation threatening to produce the individual serious physical and psychological harm. Mobbing is a process of destruction; it consists of hostile actions which, taken individually, may seem harmless, but through repetition have dangerous effects." (as cited. Zlate, 2007, 628). Mobbing involves "hostile, aggressive situations that imply confrontations, moral maltreatments, contempt of personality, vexations, mockery ", which are practiced systematically, on extended periods of time and that can be damaging psychologically, psychosomatically and socially, so we can speak about «psycho-terror at work". (Zlate, 2007, 629) Thus, the phenomenon of mobbing cannot be confused with isolated mere teasing or with some ways to motivate (less inspired) the employees. The process must register with a certain constancy, for a period of at least six months, experts say.

The pressures of this kind are emotional and psychological harassment in the workplace; they can be direct - through verbal or physical aggression or indirect - through the social isolation of the employee, through intimidation, threats, and aim to denigrate the person, undermine and trigger a state of fear, putting the person in a humiliating situation to eventually lead to the victim's renunciation to the job by resignation. Persecutions of this kind come from colleagues or from certain senior colleagues who feel somewhat threatened by potential competitors. Research has shown that "in essence, the process of social marking and systematic destruction of the mobbing victim is a management problem." (Zlate, 2007, 637)

Unfortunately this phenomenon is extended in almost all the fields, thus also in the space of educational institutions, and those who bear the greatest responsibility are school managers who cannot build a psychosocial climate appropriate to the requirements established by the Labour Code which states: *"relations at work should be based on the principle of good faith, which means that all actions of the employer must pursue the aim of good operation of the unit. In no case should the actions of rulers endorse the personality or moral and professional integrity of an employee."* Data show that in the Romanian space reality is different. Figures presented by the National Council for Combating Discrimination, and those of organizations concerned by the phenomenon

in the national space, are revealing in this respect. The study, "Is there psychological violence at work?", conducted on a total of 1,180 participants, shows that 90% of respondents believe that there is psychological violence at work, and more than three quarters (76%) believe that the origin of violence at the workplace comes from managers to subalterns. More than 50% (56%) of the respondents feel the psychological violence from the workplace at a high or very high intensity. (see Gâlca, 2003)

Literature (Legeron, 2003; Bouchard, 2006; Bell, 2007) makes portraits of the bully and the victim that we can identify in our schools. Among the harasser's frequent points we remind hypocrisy, egocentrism, fear of competition (which describes poor professional points), tracking preserving and / or enhancing power by eliminating potential competitors. Lack of decency, civility, abuse, capricious behavior, but also the ability to manipulate him are also characteristic.

On the other parts, there are the victims, who do not have a standard psychological profile; but are usually distinguished as atypical people "qualified above average, enthusiastic, intelligent, dedicated, but may be victims also the individuals who are noted and are considered a threat by colleagues." We must point out that not all who are acted upon are conscious of what happens to them. Only those with a certain level of emotional intelligence notify the abusive and irrational action of the perpetrator / perpetrators and live more intense the distress that has been caused to them.

After several investigations, Swedish psychologist Leymann (as cited. Zlate, 2007: 631) provides a taxonomy of aggressors' behaviors, which we summarize:

- a. actions involving limitation for the victim to express - the victim is prevented from expressing her viewpoint, is interrupted when speaking, the colleagues criticize her, insult, threaten her or on the contrary, they ignore or refuse the contact with her etc. .

- b.- actions that aim at the victim's isolation - the victim is never spoken to, moreover, colleagues are forbidden to talk to her , the physical presence of the person is denied or she is given a workspace that isolates her from the rest of the colleagues etc. .

- c. actions of disregard of the victim in front of the colleagues - various rumors about the victim are launched, she is ridiculed, claiming that the victim is mentally ill, there is even the constraint for the victim to do a psychiatric examination, a disability of the victim is invented, unjust noting, in malicious terms of the victim's labor;

d. - actions of professional discredit of the victim - no tasks are assigned or some below or above the level of qualification are allocated, sometimes they have to perform humiliating, unnecessary and absurd tasks;

e.- actions aimed at compromising the health of the victim - the victim is entrusted dangerous tasks or harmful to health, the victim is physically assaulted, without gravity, as a threat, etc.

All of these behaviors are particularly harmful and trigger panic attacks, anxiety, depression, abnormal behavior, loss of motivation for activity, decrease of efficiency, etc. negative self-image, etc. issues that can lead to absenteeism, frequent holidays or early retirement (for example in Sweden, a study showed that 1/3, 1/5 of the prematurely retired have undergone specific treatments to mobbing) or job loss. (Zlate, 2007, 641)

1.2 Results of a study aimed at the phenomenon of mobbing in school

In Romania, the term mobbing is not sufficiently known, though, as we have already seen, the phenomenon manifests itself with ferocity in many fields; therefore, those that react or defend themselves in court for such treatment in the workplace are very few. Neither the legislation helped that fact until recently.

To see how school educators identify this phenomenon in school, we conducted an investigation based on a questionnaire in which we followed three aspects: 1. Identification of the presence of the phenomenon of mobbing / moral harassment in schools; 2. Forms of conduct which exhibit this phenomenon 3. How would they be affected by such behavior?

The study involved 105 teachers - educators, primary teachers/schoolmistresses and teachers (who teach at all levels - preschool, primary and secondary school) in Suceava, Neamt and Botosani. We note that participants are students and MA of the Faculty of *Science of Education* from the University *Stefan cel Mare* Suceava who learned during the courses in *Ethics of education and training* or courses of *Pedagogy* issues regarding the mobbing phenomenon. The questions had also open answers, and the results highlight the way educators identify the phenomenon in schools and also aspects that highlight ethical and deontological dimensions of the management practiced in school.

We present selectively some obtained data.

1. More than half of respondents (56%) identified this phenomenon in their school or heard of its presence in other schools;

2. Of the forms of behavior that are affected by this phenomenon, in hierarchical order, are met: intimidation, isolation, rumors, threats, ignoring etc. which means a constant unbearable pressure

3. Educators noted that such behavior can affect them mentally and emotionally ("*would lose calm,*" "*would always be stressed,*" "*would cry,*" "*could not focus,*" "*would become anxious*" etc.), would not be efficient at school or in other types of activities, would get sick, lose time on issues that not related to the act of teaching, would leave work, etc.

In conclusion, the management in our schools can and must forcefully be improved. Concerns raised by teachers on this phenomenon say a lot about the unreadiness of managers ethically. It seems that the majority of managers lack of transversal skills of ethics and professional deontology register (Jeder, 2008; Apostu, 2017; Terec-Vlad & Trifu, 2017) which triggered major repercussions within the organizations they lead.

Conclusions

Why use mobbing? Beyond the explanations that point to the mismanagement registered at school, a cause could be the characteristic of our society. Psychologist David D. speaks in his *Psychology of the Romanian people* about a collectivist society which "*is specific (now Ed) mostly to Eastern European companies. One such group tends to always express values that all members believe in or at least most of them. Who thinks otherwise should better be silent, and if he is not silent he risk opprobrium or isolation. The problem is that in a predominant collectivist society it is hard for one willing to take the first step, so that he can be followed by others. On the opposite pole, there are the autonomist companies, which are made up of individuals with different views and the debate is a usual practice. Such individuals exist in the Romanian society, but it took several shocks to wake them up.*" (David, 2015).

So we can say that we are still somewhat tributary to such a collectivist model. Training school managers from deontological and ethical perspective could change the perspective on the respect for dignity at work which is fundamental for every person.

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