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## LOGICAL NETWORK: A MODEL FOR CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION- MAKING PROCESSES AS ANSWER TO THE CHALLENGES OF XXI CENTURY EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

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### ABSTRACT

The article focuses on the opportunities for young people at school to participate in decision-making processes. It is developed in the field of educational management and identifies some of the problems in the education system outlining the prospects for its future development in terms of child participation. The idea of creating a logical network is presented, in which each person as a subject in school life can create its model of the integrated and modern decision-making process, as a fundamental tool for the success and quality development of the educational system.

The established network will help the professional and/or young leader to determine the position in the school community (but not only), to take, analyzing all possible situations, the most appropriate form of child participation, and to be able to contribute with own resources to the process without losing the structure of belonging to the model.

The study examines the relationships between students, teachers, and school management in the community sphere, school sphere, business sphere, at a national, international, local, and municipal level.

The need for timely and firm commitment in the management of education regarding the inclusion of children in decision-making processes is presented.

**Key Words:** Education management, child participation, network, education system, decision-making

### Introduction

Understanding the responsibility and mission that professionals working with children have for future generations, it is clearly emphasized that, caring for children and the opportunities that are created for their development are the driving force that gives impetus to identify problems, outline prospects, and find practical solutions. Thus, it can be logically emphasized that the management of education raises high expectations and requirements for pedagogical science in general. Today teachers must not only perform tasks through the most modern systematic approach but also to ensure successful professional development of teachers and to meet the modern socio-economic needs and specifics of work in educational institutions. But the philosophy of management always emphasizes the so-called public foresight through which the management of education is burdened with commitments for generations to come - both socially and theoretically, economically and administratively, including the educational policies. In this regard it should be noted that theoretical progress in pedagogy, psychology, philosophy and management not only allows but also recognizes the importance of the opportunity for children to participate in decision-making processes - from the pre-Dewey era to the present day.

### *About Children's participation*

The so-called Child participation is a modern paradigm, mainly launched through policies to support children's rights, which are expanding with the adoption of the UNCRC (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). And since the UNCRC is an unprecedented act in the history of civilization, adopted by all countries and ratified by all but two, it systematically and dynamically influences its application in practice in every point of interest in which the child is present: family, school, security, justice, the state as a whole,

international cooperation (and not only). All this engages the academic world and influences a systematic approach to organizing a complex whole of events, individuals, groups, and products today - to respond to the typical for the child of the XXI century saturated multiple environments. The one that is characterized by connecting the surrounding reality with the emotions and perspectives of young people in spectrally extended points of contact - from new competencies to the universality of design.

Whatever classification of forms<sup>1</sup> of child participation is applied in this spectrum, the search for and creation of a network of interrelations, benefits, and weaknesses in the involvement of institutions, professionals and children is a necessary condition for the decision-making process involving young people. Such an approach have followed Dewey, Decroly, Parkhurst, Montessori and Neil, as well as several progressive educators, humanists, and public figures, have taken such an approach.

The main emphasis is on the quality of the child (and student) of a subject in the processes resulting from the functions of initiative, entrepreneurship, innovation, personal and social responsibility. On this basis - search and expectation of results in terms of a quality process of education of civic competence, the rationality of personal choice of the child, adequate preparation for the growing responsibilities in life, promoting cooperation and interaction, increased social responsibility and overall social progress.

### ***About the management challenges***

We traditionally explain the challenges that governance faces in the XXI century with globalization, information coverage and dynamism. And probably this is one of the reasons why the practice of macro-policies (including education) in the XXI century are developed without micro-partners - those for whom they are formed and who should justify and implement them. Because we rely upon that all processes and people are involved in the global network. Still, the dynamics of modernity require quality short-term reactions. Qualitative monitoring and effective control systems are needed. All over the world the resources available in education could be considered scarce because they are mainly of public origin. The public guarantee in school processes lowers the motivation of professionals in the pedagogical world compared to those in the economic or political world. It can then be assumed that the school's approach to community attitudes is not sufficiently mediated. And in this case, it would not be too bold to say that the opportunities for a positive development of the personality of each subject of education are stagnant. Therefore, the direct role of the school in achieving the social and economic goals set in education will not be sufficiently strengthened. The governance of the XXI century needs to balance interests through the representative participation of sufficient stakeholders; to increase the levels of competition and competitiveness as a constant line of development, as well as to ensure the personal development of the persons involved at least guaranteeing opportunities for adequate expression and benefit for the community.

### ***About the logical network – Model for children participation in the processes of decision making***

In response to management challenges in front of pedagogical (and not only) specialists, the creation of a logical network, in which each subject (whether individual or collective) manages to create its model of an integrated and modern process for making decisions, is a necessary tool. The management of the work process after the creation of a specific model of children's participation in the decision-making process needs a spine. At the same time, the product that this necessity generates is a result of a multitude internal activities. Therefore, the working process should optimally organize the implementation of internal activities in such a way as to improve the effectiveness of their application in the best result. That is why the spine includes the following horizontal elements:

1. Form of expression of the children's opinion - group format, an individual speaker, or mixed-format;
2. Geographical positioning - within the class, school, city, country, or elsewhere;
3. Age range;
4. Frequency of activities - for a single campaign, for a period (term), systematically

The spine also has basic hierarchical, vertical elements:

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<sup>1</sup> By geographical aspect, by age, according the supporting environment, by application scope, by timing, by impact or range of participation.

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1. Form of coordination among the participants - by age, by a vote of confidence;
2. Form of contact with addressees external to the specific model - identification of representative persons and mandate of representation.

In other words, the work process consists of a set of activities that are performed in a coordinated manner in a given organizational and technical environment. These activities jointly achieve a goal. Each workflow is performed by one organization but could interact with workflows performed by other organizations (Vatov, D., 2010). For example, if a high school has created an environment for developing a formal model for children's participation in school decision-making processes, a Youth Council can be developed. This council is composed of a representative and a deputy representative of each class – i.e., a total of 10 young people, of which 5 with provided representative functions and 5 with representative functions under condition (in the absence of the holder). *In this way, the horizontal elements 1, 2, and 3 are provided: 1. Individual speakers of each class and group decision-making at board level; 2. Within the school; 3. High school stage (14-18 years).* The condition that the representative and the deputy representative cannot be from the same class is accepted (when there is more than 1 class/year in the school). In this way, a standard of ethics of the approach is covered. Rules for the work of the Youth Council are adopted, based on which it is determined that this council meets at least twice a month; makes its decisions by a simple majority after a reasoned discussion; obligatorily determines priorities in the activity for the respective period, to which all students are organized and which are coordinated with the school management; considers forms of interaction with other councils in the city, region, country and beyond. This provides horizontal element 4 and vertical elements 1 and 2. This example highlights a compact format of a dialogue between school management and students, which burdens student representatives with additional commitments of community representation, but also ensures their need for expression on the one hand, and on the other hand engages daily in the implementation of school policy all involved participants, including the accumulation of civic capacity in the student.

The visualization of the logical network - model is shown in Figure 1.

#### ***About the benefit of the logical network – Model***

Painted in detail, the logical network forms a model of children's participation, which can give clear answers about the adequacy of its application in the specific school, community, or network to the people usually involved - students, teachers, school management. In this Network, different categories could be integrated for the required resource as well as success criteria (such as a form of internal monitoring). Such a Network provides at a glance a precise and clear orientation to each entity involved in the creation and/or promotion of children's participation. Through it, the professional or youth leader can determine his position about the surrounding reality; assess the pros and cons when choosing a certain form of child participation for the respective environment in which he resides; as well as implement his contribution so that the participant belongs to the situation in which it is realized and to the participants with whom it is realized, without losing structure and belonging to the chosen general model/form.

Following the introduced model, it is systematized information about the categories of forms of child participation, the benefits for children, for students, for the heads of educational institutions, for the teachers, as well as for the school itself, for the weaknesses of the involved countries and the required resource. Data on sample applications are added for the effective impact of information in its internalization by individual professionals and young people. Success indicators are also added as additional practical starting points.

#### ***The added value to the management***

The need for a timely and firm commitment to the management of education in terms of involving children in decision-making processes is emphasized by several key aspects, including:

- The changes regarding the vision of children's participation follows the changes in the development of the human and society, developing the understandings of freedom, happiness, democracy, and other basic human values.

- Children's participation in decision-making processes can refer to both public and personal cases at the same time, but separately.
- Recognition of the child as a subject in the processes gives functions of initiative, entrepreneurship, innovation, personal and social responsibility - all key competencies for any management system.
- The main value in the development of ideas for children's participation is the awareness and understanding of the role of the young person as a creator of own development.

As can be seen by the philosophy of presented information so far, a few additional comments could be made:

- The traditional for the XX century model of the leading and the follower (adult and child) can be useful in the XXI century as well, as long as it is not insisted at all costs that the role of the leader is related to the age;
- A challenge (or problem) with or on a child cannot be solved without a child. The child's position, the child's point of view, the child's opinion, and the child's decision option are a mandatory element of the professional outcome in a situation of a problem/challenge;
- Engaging the child with the following way out steps of a problem is a guarantee for preventing a recurrence of a problem, overcoming the recurrence of the same problems and experience for the professional needed for the work with other children;
- Managerial approaches in the support of professionals and personnel management should be ready to integrate the initiative and entrepreneurship of a student, to cover the ideas of freedom and self-government at the level of one educational unit.

## **Conclusion**

Regardless of the time in which the child is placed, examined or exists, she/he is special. Even placed in a summary and an average sample, the child's personality does not reconcile to be summarized and generalized for any of the professionals working directly with children; it is evident in any general information. The child's personality requires each professional to be more precise in the self-training and upgrade of the skills to be able to ask more questions and seek more information behind each report, sample, article and surrounding reality - so that is able to "Place" the child beyond the material world and elevate her/his personality and interest above the direct benefits of the environment and the situation. And this is an insisting challenge for the management of education in the XXI century, to which the logical network - model gives a possible answer by orienting in the various opportunities for children's participation in decision-making processes; in the motivation for the realization of the child's right to participate. Qualitative, sustainable, effective and efficient improvement of the preparation and application of a practical approach that allows the construction of specific structures, development of rules, norms, criteria and standards - created for the needs of the specific object and subject is the heart of the logical network - model for children's participation, which is a tool for the realization of a successful management line in education in the modern conventions of pedagogy.

Figure 1.

ATTEMPT TO MODEL CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION														NECESSARY RESOURCES	EXAMPLE APPLICATIONS	SUCCESS INDICATOR	
CLASSIFICATION	FOR CHILDREN			STRENGTHS FOR THE STUDENT			FOR THE SCHOOL	FOR THE HEADMASTER	FOR THE TEACHER	FOR THE CHILDREN/ STUDENTS	WEAKNESSES						
	up to 9 years	up to 13 years	up to 15 years	up to 18 years	elementary school	junior highschool					highschool	FOR THE SCHOOL	FOR THE HEADMASTER	FOR THE TEACHER	FOR THE SCHOOL	FOR THE HEADMASTER	FOR THE TEACHER
geographical scope	international	developing outlook, attitudes for global communication	creating contacts	getting to know foreign cultures	creating partnerships	accumulation of civic capacity	gaining confidence, building national self-confidence	educational, civic and vocational guidance at operational level	exchange, popularity, networks	authority, real-time and global level comparison	gaining confidence, exchange of experience	the global world may be too big	financial commitment	interest in foreign contacts can shift the focus from school life			
	national		increasing in their confidence	experience exchange	accumulation of civic capacity	gaining confidence, building national self-confidence	comparing educational and civic level in real time, creating a personal assessment of the national situation	exchange of experience, involvement in and networking									
	regional	gaining confidence and motivation for wider achievements					competition, increasing the results of school classes										
	local	creating conditions for comparison and personal positioning	equality, pride, confidence in defending positions				gaining confidence, building national self-confidence	promoting civic literacy through practice								small schools with up to 300 students	continuous operation for 1 academic period
	community-based	strengthening family and kinship ties, identification with the community	getting to know different communities; mastering inter-community communication and functioning				more tolerant opinion to school innovation					community resonance	deeper commitment to a particular community	insufficient readiness for effective interaction with the specific community			
age	school	enrichment of school experience	Children benefit from their participation - it contributes to their skills, strength, confidence, pleasure			accumulation of new knowledge about the surrounding world	exploring new points of view, getting to know the world	develops thinking; develops public speaking skills									
	pre-school	adaptation to new realities															limited happy children
supportive environment	school community	emphasizing the connections with the known participants															
	parish community	expanding the network of personal contacts					synchronization of the municipal educational calendar with the school one	linking the school calendar with the municipal one, therefore accumulating resources		increasing the authority and popularity at the municipal level			the risks of the small town - everyone knows each other	commitment to the policy of the local municipality, which may not coincide with the goals of the school	the risks of the small town - everyone knows each other		
	business community	early social and professional orientation	building specific links with clearly identified formations in the real economic world				specification of the educational content and practices; adequate professional orientation	adequate professional orientation		improving dialogue with the community			current professional training		fundraising for a medical incubator	realized tasks on time	
	the community	strengthening the influence of community messages															
field of application	for legislative decisions						students' thesis to be taken into account in new legislative initiatives			efficiency of the debate on the legal framework				the strong man can be taken too seriously			
	for educational activities (at school)	understanding the rules and improving adaptability to them					achieving adequacy in the school measures introduced, therefore a comfortable learning environment			adequacy of the introduced measures				creating false confidence			
	for local activities									popularity, authority				It may take time to learn			
	for non-formal education								increased civic responsibility								
extent of time commitment	once	demonstration of an example												creating an illusory idea of children's participation			
	periodically	load optimization					overcoming the fear of speaking in front of others										
	systematically	acquiring skills for allocation of additional tasks					overcoming the fear of expressing a personal opinion										
impact	public/formal																
	informal		smooth assumption of responsibility														
scope of participation	group	active socialization	competitiveness				hierarchization of personal skills in a competitive environment										
	individual						developing leadership skills										

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