

## ***School manager profile in the decentralized educational system – comparative research in the European countries***

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**Abstract:** *The leadership competencies and the managerial abilities are important for every school development. However, to obtain the best results in the educational system, as in every public institution, it is important that the legislative framework to emphasize the managerial abilities, but also to allow them to develop their ideas and implement their strategy.*

*The educational system requires manager's flexibility and imagination but at the same time it requires a lot of responsibility and rigor in obtaining the educational goal. This paper aim is to compare the manager's legislative barriers and responsibility and to analyze if the national framework allows them to develop a personal approach in managing the school. The paper presents some characteristics concerning national regulations in the educational system, pointing out the responsibilities of a manager's and the means that allows him to obtain the best results.*

*Using Eurydice tools and network, the OECD reports, the national arrangement concerning the educational policy and scholar's researches, we compare the educational background and regulations concerning school manager's duties, job requirements and decision-making choices within four decentralized educational systems.*

*We present a short analysis of the recruitment process and responsibilities of public school managers and a comparison of these procedures within four countries: Romania, France, Spain and Finland. Our aim is to find the best legislative model that allows and explains long term school development.*

**Keywords:** *Management, education, comparative research, decentralization, public manager.*

**JEL:** *H10, H70, I20.*

### **Introduction**

Unofficial and unprofessional evaluations but also official analysis and reports of OECD, Eurydice, European Commission are drawing attention to the changes in the educational system, and the needs of major adjustments from top management to low managerial positions.

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It is widely accepted that the educational system, in the globalization and migration context, must adapt and rearrange on flexible structures easily connected with the national and international environment.

There are opinions considering that schools are covered with bureaucratic sediment and the initiative, creativity and professional judgment have been paralyzed and the expected reform successes it is neutralized (Murphy, 2013). The bureaucratic management practices are considered to interfere with learning, with the needs and interests of educators within the school. Also, the existing organizational structure of school is neither sufficiently flexible nor sufficiently robust to meet the student's needs and to allow parents and citizens to govern and reform the school (Cibulka, 1991; Murphy, 2012).

Nowadays, the community participation is an important instrument to ensure accountability and school functioning improvement. This means that the management of schools, including the funding management, should be decentralized to local authorities as far as possible.

An OECD Report, emphasizes schools management changing landscape over recent decades: "Schools and schooling are being given an ever bigger job to do. Greater decentralization in many countries is being coupled with more school autonomy, more accountability for school and student results, and a better use of the knowledge base of education and pedagogical processes. It is also being coupled with broader responsibility for contributing to and supporting the schools' local communities, other schools and other public services" (OECD, 2008).

Nowadays, school managers need to be aware of the changing environment and adapt to the technological innovation, globalization and international labor migration. Every country's educational system must prepare all their graduates for a changing environment, must transfer to them the much needed knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for the job and the citizenship integration.

The education decentralization, started in 2011, in Romania, helps to locate the decision making process as close as possible to the point of implementation and on the same time to construct the governance of each school as a partnership between the professional staff, e.g. principal and teachers, and the community, e.g. parents and the local council.

As stated in Radó, the decentralization process should lead to a greater level of professional, organizational and financial autonomy. These conditions are necessary for the educational services improvement. Also, for a school is important to be empowered to react to external expectations that may vary from school to school, from settlement to settlement. Schools should be operated in a way that allows periodical adjustment to the changing needs of students, parents, and the local communities (Radó, 2010).

## **1. School manager's profile in the decentralized educational system and in the European context**

Nowadays, the school manager have a dynamic role and needs to learn to overcome some old habits, e.g. the habits of an administrator and regulations executor and become more oriented on the learning processes and the school outcomes.

For their school success, they will have to prove to be able to initiate, implement and manage educational projects and programmes oriented towards their school internationalization and develop student's competencies and skills required by a globalized society.

The development of a sustainable educational system needs, first of all, a coherent legislative background, but also supportive managers with leadership competencies and entrepreneurial vision. The teaching conditions are influenced by the administration and leadership provided by principals, and it is widely assumed that school leadership directly influences the effectiveness of teachers and the achievement outcomes of students (OECD, 2009).

Regarding the specific objectives of the research, these aim:

O1: to analyze the decentralization process and its particularities in the educational system, within four European countries;

O2: to establish the differences and similarities of the school management within the analyzed countries;

O3: to compare the recruitment process for the managerial positions and the head-school possibilities to implement his/her strategies for school development.

### **1.1 The decentralization of the educational system and its managerial requirements**

Feldman and Khademian are defining the public managers broadly. Public managers manage people and/or programs that serve the public. Some plan for cities, others educate children, regulate industries, promote public health, and provide security. These managers bring together the participants necessary to pursue and enact their core tasks (Feldman and Khademian, 2007).

There is no specific definition of school manager but it concerns practices and operations of educational management. The field of educational management relates varying approaches and established disciplines including economics, general management, psychology, sociology and political science. Good health management is expected to produce planned work done with the help of assigned people, within the allocated budget and within the given deadlines (Farah, 2014).

School managers, as public sector managers have unique tasks, requiring knowledge and standards to apply it. The manager plays an increasing role in the educational programs development and in the application of Governments educational plans.

Therefore, it is important to equip a school manager with the knowledge and skills to interact multiple changes and complex task of managing human being. The main objective of the schools is to produce creative learner's who will be leaders of tomorrow (Farah, 2014).

The decentralization of the educational system occurred differently from country to country, in different period of time and in different ways. Scholars and politicians have recognized and accepted three form of decentralization: deconcentration, devolution and delegation of authority and resources.

The educational systems typically lie somewhere along a “decentralization continuum” and may encompass elements of all three forms of decentralization depending upon the choices governments make, what governments choose to decentralize, and what the goals are for decentralization (Weidman & DePietro-Jurand, 2012).

The measurement of an educational system degree of decentralization is sometimes difficult to establish. Some specialists classify the decentralization matter considering the percent of educational revenues offered by local sources or by analyzing the share of educational resources. In table 1 are summarized the main differences between the three types of decentralization than could be encountered in the European countries, as in every other part of the world. The three decentralization models are afterwards describe, using Weidman and DePietro-Jurand review and analysis and Radó discussions on the topic.

**Table 1. Comparison of the decentralized systems categories**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Deconcentration</b>	<b>Delegation</b>	<b>Devolution</b>
Central government full responsibility	Yes	Yes	No
Permanent transfer of decision	No	Yes	Yes
Local regulation and responsibility	No	Yes	Yes
Very fast withdrawing of local decision powers	Yes	Yes	No
Stability for medium/long term planning	No	No	Yes

*Source: Weidman and DePietro-Jurand, 2012*

Deconcentration is considered the weakest form of decentralization, within the central government retains full responsibility, but administration is handled by regional or district offices. The deconcentration may be the first step taken by governments in their efforts to decentralize. In this situation, the Ministry of Education remains responsible for the actions and tasks of its agents. The deconcentrated decisions are typically implementation type, most of the deconcentrated decisions are kept at central level. In the South Eastern Europe, the typical pattern of deconcentration is to transfer all important matters to one single organization. It is the case of the Regional Departments in Serbia and the Regional Inspectorates in Romania. Those institutions are the depositories of diverse

administrative, professional support, professional evaluation, and financial management tasks.

Delegation is a more extensive form of decentralization. The delegation allows the permanent transfer of decision-making responsibilities in education from the central government to lower levels of government such as provinces, municipalities and districts. As stated in Rado, in this case, the transfer of decision-making is temporary, and can be withdrawn quite easily. Therefore, decentralization by delegation does not create the necessary stability for medium- or long-term planning and allows little room to clearly (re)define the roles of the actors at the lower levels. An example of delegation of the educational system is in Bulgaria. In this educational system, the top management delegates some of their decision-making competencies to lower-level actors. The funding issue and related decision-making competencies are delegated to municipalities; municipalities delegate decision-making competencies either to the directors of the schools or to entities supervised by the municipalities. However there is a clear difference between local tasks and delegated tasks. The local tasks are the marginal services that are not compulsory to provide, so are funded by the revenue of the self-government.

Devolution refers the permanent transfer of decision-making responsibilities in education from the central government to lower levels of government such as provinces, municipalities and districts. The decentralization by devolution refers to the expansion of the latitude within which autonomous actors regulate matters that were once regulated by the central government in the centralized system. An example of devolution in the educational system can be encountered in Hungary. Local self-governments have as mandatory tasks the provision of educational services to pupils living in their territory. The central government may interfere in the way that devolved tasks are performed (e.g. setting qualification requirements for directors).

Concerning the decentralization and other measures in the educational domain, the European Union gradually took over the role of the World Bank in influencing government agendas in most countries of the region. It happened earlier as the first of the South Eastern European countries joined the European Union, and will most likely happen again in other countries. Even in the rest of the countries, the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance funds of the EU is playing a remarkable and growing role (Radó, 2010)

## **1.2 Recruitment and evaluation process of school managers**

The decentralization is an alternative that allows a better use of resources and strengthening the relations between school activities and different stakeholders. The efficient division of responsibilities in a decentralized system requires explicit and transparent rules defining who has authority and who will be held accountable, which are the requirements for a certain position (Androniceanu, 2013). Legislation needs to describe the role and tasks at each level of government; set limits on the

authority and responsibilities at each level; and specify coordination mechanisms among the different levels to facilitate decentralized decision making (Ciobanu, 2013).

As mentioned in an OECD report, in the 80's the managers were encouraged towards educational research and policy to emphasize activities that benefit the classroom instruction. So, manager's official and formal functions were the student's instruction and learning. Lately, specialists consider that principals are "the most effective of all potential instructional leaders because they are situated within the school context, unlike upper-level administrators in ministries". That is way many governments agreed that for the managers accountability development is necessary to promote professionalization and special training (OECD, 2008).

For some countries, the principals are just teachers, chosen by teacher boards for a certain period of time, with a lack of autonomy concerning the legal possibility to make decisions about the teaching alternatives or the curriculum design and adaptation to school needs. Institutionally there are serious limitations and a structural inability to design settings that can improve the learning of all students (Bolívar and Bolívar, 2011). So, it is important to establish what a school manager can and cannot do in order to improve the teaching practice and therefore the student's learning (Bolívar & Moreno, 2006).

After the 1990's, the European and national legislation strengthened the position of the school manager by delegating power to local authorities and schools. The local authorities can establish more easily the tasks of the principal and guide them through professional development necessary for the school benefit.

In some countries, like France and Finland, school managers need to obtain a certain certificate in educational administration, before an appointment as a principal. School manager initial training must be completed with knowledge about school administration, financial issues and legislative aspects of school ruling.

An appointed school manager should have, if we follow the Finish requirements: (i) a master's degree, (ii) qualifications for teaching at that particular school, (iii) adequate teaching experience, and (iv) a certificate in educational administration, or at least long principal preparation program at university, or knowledge in educational administration gained in some other way (Alava, 2007).

These basic requirements are different from country to country, from educational level to educational level, from settlement to settlement, but everybody agrees that school manager's professionalization, administrative preparation and focus on leadership competencies development are important conditions for school management success.

## **2. Comparative research on the managerial profile in European countries**

### **2.1 Romania case**

#### ***2.1.1 An overview at Romanian regulations for school managers***

In Romania, the educational system is managed at national level by the Ministry of National Education. It cooperates with other ministries and other local and central structures subordinated to the Government, mostly with the County School Inspectorates. The School Inspectorates are considered deconcentrated structures, that control the implementation of national legislation and monitors the quality of school activities so that the performance indicators set by the Government are reached (Law of National Education, 2011).

The general legal framework for the organization, administration and provision of education is established through the Constitution and the latest Law of National Education enacted in 2011.

As mentioned in Eurypedia's online databases, the National Education Law regulates the structure, the organization and functioning of the national state, private and confessional educational system. The law aims at forming by means of education the mental infrastructure of the Romanian society, in accordance with the new requirements imposed by Romania's EU membership and by the existence within the context of the globalization and sustainable generation of a highly-competitive national human resource, capable of functioning efficiently in the present and future society.

The National Education Law establishes for the public educational principal the tasks and the conditions to access this public position. However, it is well known that in Romania, despite the efforts to diminish the political interference in the educational system, the media and other organizations claim that school managers are appointed considering their political preferences and not demonstrated management competencies.

#### ***2.1.2 School manager's recruitment and duties in the Romanian educational system***

In the Romanian educational system, management positions can be occupied only by permanent teachers with at least second didactic grade and five years seniority in education, distinguished for their professional, managerial and moral qualities. All teachers in management positions need to have an attested training in the area of educational management or at least attain such a training programme after the appointment.

Generally, the candidates are school teachers, but there are cases when the manager is selected out of the school teacher's board. However, all candidates need to be recommended by the Teacher's council and have to prove their professional competence through the very good rating awarded for the previous year activity.

The managerial position, as other public positions need to be based on open competition, meaning an open recruitment procedure. This procedure, for the educational sector, is started by the County School Inspectorates and includes CV analysis and interview to evaluate the candidate's knowledge regarding school legislation and educational management.

The conditions and the procedure of selection are established by the government and the school inspectorates have the duty to apply it and chose the best candidate. Manager's activity is evaluated annually by the General School Inspector. The evaluation is similar to regular teachers, except its focus on the managerial duties, mentioned within the job-description established by the school inspectorates.

As mentioned in the National Educational Law number 1/2011, the principals of the state educational institutions have the task to ensure the executive management, assume the public responsibility for the unit he manages, manage the budget allocation, establish with the Board of Directors help the operational regulations within the institution, submit the draft budge and manage human resources selection, training, motivation and determination of work within the institution. The school manager takes decisions with the School Board assistance. The School Board includes 7 up to 13 members including school teachers, parent's representatives, mayor representative and local council representative.

After the selection the school manager concludes the management contract with the mayor, or the president of the council of the administrative territorial unit where the education institution operates.

## **2.2 French case**

### ***2.2.1 An overview at French regulation for school managers***

The French educational system is ruled by the Department of National Education, which governs within the framework defined by the Parliament. The Parliament states the fundamental principles of education through law no. 89-486 of July 1989, the law no. 2005-380 of April 2005 and the law no 2013-595 of July 2013. Traditionally, the French educational is strongly centralized, with a republican tradition, where the state is playing a major role in its governance. However, under the global changes, the educational system have changed and moved towards an open and demanded decentralization.

The decentralization of competences in the educational system administration started in the 1980's. Since then, the local authorities have been playing an increasingly and significant part in governance. Grated power is now given to regional and other local authorities placed under the authority of the National Education Minister. Currently, the local authorities are involved even in the funding process of education. Table 2 describes the specific duties of local administration and state in the educational field.

**Table 2. Duties distribution in the decentralized educational system in France**

<b>Overview of competencies</b>	<b>Primary school</b>	<b>Lower Secondary</b>	<b>Upper Secondary</b>
Investment, infrastructure and running costs	Municipality	<i>Department</i>	Region
Pedagogical costs	Municipality	<i>Conseil general</i>	<i>Conseil regional</i>
Recruitment, training and allocation for teachers	State	State	State
Curriculum	State	State	State

*Source: French National Education Minister, 2012*

As mentioned by the National Education Minister, France has 26 regions (30 academies responsible for the local administration of education), 101 departments and 37 thousands municipalities, each of them with specific tasks in the educational system.

The State devolved some of its competencies to local level, mostly the investments in construction or reconstruction, the running and infrastructure costs but also the some pedagogical costs. However, the State keeps full responsibility for the personnel recruitment and curriculum decision.

### ***2.2.2 School manager's recruitment and duties in the French educational system***

In French high-school, management staff is recruited from teachers, educational guidance, inspection or administrative personnel, after a competitive examination or from a list of suitable candidates.

The recruitment process demands following two steps, first of all are centralized the candidates submission, containing administrative information, career history, a cover letter listing the extent and variety of their experience and also a letter of recommendation.

Afterward, the candidates will be invited to perform their presentation before a panel followed by an interview. The purposes of those evaluations are to establish the candidate's professional skills and knowledge. For their preparation, the candidates must review a case study on the implementation of educational policy in a teaching establishment. The evaluators must get a sense of the candidate's motivation, aptitude and communication skills.

The candidates for school management will need to promote an exam that takes place in three phases: preparation: 2 hrs; presentation: 15 minutes; interview: 45 minutes. The exam takes place in the first quarter of the year in progress. Enrolment deadlines are generally between early October and mid-November of the previous year.

After the recruitment process, the selected candidate is removed from their current position and are assigned to an académie and appointed as assistant school

directors by the recteur, with the status of management personnel-in-training. During this time, they will focus on knowledge and competencies development in areas like education, pedagogy, administration, legal and financial issues concerning the school, but also human resources management and general organization of the public institution. After those two years, if the recteur esteems that the training programme is completed, the candidates are certified to become school directors.

### ***2.3 Spanish case***

#### ***2.3.1 An overview at Spanish regulation for school managers***

In Spain, the Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education enacted in 2013, modifies the 2006 Education Act. The reform in Spain follows accomplish the main objectives of the educational system: reduce school leaving rate, improve educational results and stimulate the entrepreneurial spirit among students, prepare the students for the changing situations of the knowledge-based society.

Also, the Act on the Improvement of the Quality of Education makes changes in the administration and management of the Spanish education system: in the curriculum and the distribution of competences, in the participation in the running and governance of public and publicly-funded private schools, in school autonomy, in mixed-membership governing and teaching coordination bodies, in public school management, as well as in the evaluation of the education system (Eurypedia, 2014).

The decentralized educational model distributes the competences among four stakeholders: the State, the Autonomous Communities, local administration and schools.

As mentioned on Eurypedia, European Encyclopedia on National Education System, the central education administration executes the general guidelines of the Government on education policy and regulates the basic elements or aspects of the system. Regional education authorities develop the State regulations and have executive and administrative competences for managing the education system in their own territory.

The schools have pedagogical, organizational and managerial autonomy for their resources. This autonomy is accompanied by the participation of the education community in the schools' organization, governance, running and evaluation.

A synthesize of the competencies distributions in the decentralized educational system is presented in table 3, summarizing the most important activities related to the educational system and the institutions in charge.

**Table 3. Powers delegations in the decentralized  
Spanish educational system**

Overview of competencies	Responsible stakeholder		
	State	Autonomous communities	Local administration
General organization of the educational system	•		
Authorization of institutions		•	
Build of public institutions			•
School maintenance			•
International cooperation in education	•		
Policies to encourage and provide for research	•		
Educational planning development		•	
Student guidance and support		•	
Financial support and the subsidies		•	

*Source:* Adaptation of informations using Eurypedia database, 2014

The State is responsible, as in other countries for the general organization and functioning of the system, the establishment of general policies necessary to encourage training and research. The general financial support and the authorization of institutions is the charge of the autonomous communities, while the local administration must assure the maintenance and build of public institutions.

### ***2.3.2 School manager's recruitment and duties in the Spanish educational system***

The school management is not principal's entire responsibility but the management team made up of the principal, the head of studies, vice-heads, secretary, heads of halls of residence. So, every institution is governed by the teaching staff that combines their teaching with leadership and management. The Education Act enacted in 2006 promotes a collegiate headship, in which the management team carries out its duties coherently, in accordance with the instructions of the head-teacher.

The secretary is the only member in the management team that cannot be named by the school head, as he is appointed by the Education Authority and they have a definite assigned post at the school.

The head-teacher is in priority elected among the teachers of the concerned institution and the selection process is carried by the school itself. A committee mad up of the representatives of the Education Authority and the school board will analyze objectively the assessment, the academic and professional merits accredited by the candidates and the assessment of their management project. The

committee members will vote their favorite proposal and it is selected the one that obtained the highest score.

The recruitment process is regulated by Education Authorities through State normative and establishes the procedures for selection and the requirements to take part in the competition.

The conditions to access a managerial position in a school are: minimum five years as a career civil servant teacher, be working in a public educational establishment with a length of service of at least one year by the time the vacancy is announced, submit a management project describing its objectives, lines of action and assessment.

As in other countries, teachers working in the concerned institution have priority and only if there are no applicants within the school, the committee will take into consideration the applications from other educational establishments.

After selection, the candidate must complete an initial training programme organized by the Education Authorities, before being appointed as school manager. Are excepted only those candidates that can prove previous training or experience in the field. School managers training programme consists on a theoretical course and a practical period. The theoretical course includes fundamental aspects of the Spanish Education System: legislation, organization and human resources management, work strategies and other contents related to the school management. The practical period appoints the selected candidate to a tutor with experience in the position of school manager. Usually, the practical period lasts six months.

The two training programmes are evaluated by a committee and the result of the evaluation influences if the candidate is appointed or not on the post. If the candidate fails in any of the stages will need to re-enter an new selection process.

## **2.4 Finnish case**

### ***2.4.1 An overview at Finnish regulation for school managers***

As mentioned on the Eurypedia educational database, in Finland, the educational system is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Finnish National Board of Education works with the Ministry to develop educational aims, content and methods for primary, upper secondary and adult education. The national education administration steers the provision and development of education and training mainly through funding and information.

Local autonomy in education is quite extensive in Finland. Local administration is the responsibility of municipalities. Municipalities provide most of pre-primary, primary and upper secondary education in Finland and commonly give individual schools a large autonomy in designing their own curricula and education. The distribution of competencies is summarized in table 4, emphasizing the role of the ministry, board of education and the local administration in the organization and functioning of the system.

**Table 4. Powers delegations in the Finnish educational system**

Overview of competencies	Responsible stakeholder		
	Ministry of Education and Culture	National Board of Education	Local administration
General educational policy	■		
Implementation of the policy aims		■	
Develop educational objectives	■	■	
Develop content and methods		■	
Allocation of funding			■
Curricula			■
Recruitment of personnel			■
Delegate the decision-making power			■

*Source:* Adapted after the Ministry of Education and Culture Report, 2012

A characteristic of the Finnish educational system is that the local authorities solely determine the school autonomy that must be passed on schools. The schools must respect the current regulation but they have the right and the option to provide educational services as they consider optimum for their community. Therefore, the budget management, the acquisitions required for pedagogical matter and the recruitment of personnel are fully schools responsibility.

The decentralization process began in Finland since the 70's up to 80's when the traditional structures were replaced by flexible structures, adapted to pupil's personal development. The decentralized system allowed teachers to design their curriculum and chose the strategy they consider the best. The volunteer decision to decentralize the educational administration taken 40 years ago, the constant effort to improve cooperation between schools and the work environment, the setting of standards in pre-service and in-service teacher training contributed to the system performance today.

#### ***2.4.2 School manager's recruitment and duties in the Finnish educational system***

Responsibility for the operations of basic education schools and upper secondary schools, according to Eurypedia database, rests with principals, who are assisted by vice principals. Principals are generally required to hold a higher academic degree and teaching qualifications for the level of education in question. In addition, they are required to have appropriate work experience and the Certificate in Educational Administration or sufficient knowledge of educational administration. There are no formal qualification requirements for vice-principals,

but as they are generally appointed from among the teaching personnel of the school, they hold teacher qualifications.

Principals are recruited in an open process. This means that vacant posts are advertised and the education providers set the criteria to be observed as part of each selection procedure.

In Finland, the successful teachers may become principals. They are appointed by the local municipal authority, after open procedure recruitment. To be selected, the candidate must have a master's degree, the qualification for teaching at that particular school and an adequate teaching experience. Also is necessary to prove some competencies and knowledge regarding school administration. Candidates hold a certificate in educational administration or a principal preparation program at the university or other experience in the educational administration.

School-head in Finland have financial responsibilities regarding the school budget, as in the other analyzed country. A characteristic for the manager within the Finnish System is that their authority over the teachers is limited because they are not demanded to observe and evaluate teachers.

In Finnish culture, teaching is one of the most important professions of society, and substantial resources are invested in teacher education. They are entrusted with pedagogical independence in the classroom, and schools have likewise enjoyed significant autonomy in organizing their work within the national curriculum.

Finland's high performance in the OECD assessment is generally attributed to a high degree of school and teacher autonomy in decision-making.

There are 416 Local Education Authorities in Finland, including communes and cities. These municipalities have great powers, like budgets allocation for education, health and social services. They design the specific curriculum, determine the appointment criteria for principals and conducting self-evaluations (OECD, 2007).

Among education leaders, the heads of the departments of education in municipalities can exert strong influence on educational development in Finland, in general, and on the development of school level leadership, in particular. While there is a national requirement for selecting principals (management training qualifications or equivalent experience), municipalities for example can refine the criteria to choose whether principals should have managerial power or rather be pedagogical leaders. Some of the municipal leaders have explicit and pronounced concepts about how school leadership should be organized and improved and they take effective steps to achieve these ideas (OECD, 2007).

### **2.5 Comparative analysis on managerial school model of recruitment and evaluation in the E.U. states**

Although all the analyzed systems are adapted to the European community requirements, and are focused on European principles and general legal framework, every country is still keeping its particularities and habits that can make the difference between a solid and sustainable reform and a failure.

There is a general opinion regarding the educational system within the analyzed countries. For example, Finland is considered to have a very performing educational system, France with a still high degree of centralization, preserving the republican tradition, Spain has ongoing reforms for educational system modernization and Romania it is on his early stages of the effective decentralization process.

For us is important to analyze not the general administration of the educational system, but the options that the school management has to implement their strategies and their leadership competencies. Every settlement has particularities, given by its students, the specialization, the location, the local working needs, so is mandatory to adapt the teaching strategies rapidly and efficiently. The manager and the management team have the means to evaluate the needs of their students and consequently adapt their decisions.

It is important that the recruitment process in the educational system to provide qualified and skilled personnel. This is the reason way is important to follow a rigorous selection procedure and to set specific and clear condition to access a managerial position. Table 5 summarize a comparison of the managers recruitment conditions within the analyzed countries

**Table 5. Conditions for secondary school manager's recruitment**

<b>Conditions</b>	<b>Romania</b>	<b>France</b>	<b>Spain</b>	<b>Finland</b>
University preparation	University degree	University degree	University degree	Master's degree
Managerial experience	Not required	Not required	Not required	Not required
Teaching performances	Min. second didactic grade			
Teaching experience	Min. 5 years	Min. 2 years	Min. 5 years	Required but not specified
Training program for managers	After appointment	Before appointment	Before appointment	Before appointment
Employees in the concerned institution	Desirable	Not mandatory	Yes, min. 1 year	Not specified

Concerning the initial training, the managerial position requires, in every analyzed country a university degree, and before or after the appointment the attendance of a training program for managers. In countries like Spain, the

attendance and the promotion of the training program is mandatory, but in other countries, like Romania, the manager's can attend these courses after the appointment. However, every government will consider necessary a special training for a school managerial position. It is important how these trainings are conducted because a teacher needs to learn about his position requirements, duties, responsibilities, general and particular regulation concerning the daily activities.

Regarding the work experience, no managerial experience is mandatory, but teaching experience is required. Up to five years of teaching are necessary to be assigned on a managerial position. In some cases, like Spain, is strictly mentioned that the candidate for a managerial position should be employed in the concerned institution prior one year before job announcement. In other countries is preferable to appoint an internal candidate, but not mandatory.

The teachers performances, and the professional results are mandatory in the recruitment process. In Romania is necessary to have minim second didactic grade, in Finland are appointed managers the successful teachers, in France are appointed teachers from the aptitude list.

If the requirements are accomplish, the candidate can submit the application. The selection procedure has some characteristics in every country, but every system follows the European rules specific for civil servant selection. In table 6 is synthesize the selection process procedure established in every country, for the management position recruitment.

**Table 6. Selection process procedure**

<b>Selection phases</b>	<b>Romania</b>	<b>France</b>	<b>Spain</b>	<b>Finland</b>
Open public procedure	✓	✓	✓	✓
Presentation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Written examination	✗	✗	✗	✗
Interview	✓	✓	✓	✓
Educational project	✓	✓	✓	✗

In every country the head-school is recruited after an open public procedure. The municipality, the county inspectorate, the committee or the school itself announces publicly the available position, the conditions and the deadlines for the candidature submission. Every country follows a procedure established by national regulation specific for civil servant in general, with the specifications for the educational field. The selection process is undertaken within the school, the evaluations of the candidates is made by a committee including representatives of the school, local administration and another education authority specific to the country.

The candidatures are evaluated particularly in every country, for example in Romania, are awarded qualifications, and the best result means the candidate is selected. In Spain, the decision to select a candidate is taken with the majority of the committee members votes. In every analyzed country, the school Teacher

Assembly must be informed and agree to the nominalization of the new head-school.

Specific of the selection process in the educational system, for the managerial positions, is the necessity to present a Leadership Project (Spain), case study on the implementation of educational policy in a teaching establishment (France), Institutional Development Project (Romania). Therefore, the head-school managerial competencies are evaluated through this practical examination of a personal managerial project.

Every school needs the best management team, and the recruitment process should offer the best candidate for the position. However, the candidate skills are not sufficient to the school performances, but the legal framework that sustain or restraint individual ideas or strategy. Therefore, table 7 compares head-school duties within their school. All four countries are characterized by a decentralized educational system, where the head-school and the local community representatives should cooperate and develop the best strategies within the legal and general purposes.

**Table 7. School-head responsibilities in the decentralized educational system**

<b>School-head responsibilities</b>	<b>RO</b>	<b>FR</b>	<b>ES</b>	<b>FI</b>
Represent the school, the State and ensure executive management	✓	✓	✓	✓
Manage budget facility	✓	✓	✓	✓
Human resources management (selection, training, employment, periodical assessment)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Propose organizational and operational regulations	✓	✓	✓	✓
Assumes public responsibility for the performance of the facility it manages	✓	✓	✓	✓
Propose the pedagogical and educational policy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Curriculum choice for the facility	x	x	x	✓
Encourage cooperation with all school stakeholders	✓	✓	✓	✓
Contract works, services and supplies	✓	✓	✓	✓

The head-school duties are established by national regulation and the local administration. School-head competencies in the decentralized educational system are common and similar in every country. Although, the educational system in every country has its particularities, the decentralization specificities and the educational general goal common for every system unified the head-school duties. The job description detailed in the national educational regulations allowed us to conclude that in every country are made efforts to ensure school-leaders the freedom to use the available resources to reach the best outcomes.

Currently head-school are free to manage the school resources, they have the freedom the chose the human resources, the priorities within the school budget, get involved in international cooperation through projects and programmes. However, in some countries, in order to manage the resources, the government and

the local administration should fund properly the educational system and support the human resources development and permanent training.

Regarding the curriculum choices, the head-school and the teachers have limited options. Their duty is to follow national curriculum and try to adapt it to the students needs. Sometimes is insufficient this approach, and the effort to diversify the curriculum is mandatory for the teaching success and for diminish school leave rate.

### **3. Conclusions**

Changing the school structure is not an easy task, nor a one-time event, but a continual process of change, assessment and timing with system needs. The legislative framework, the international good practices, the stakeholder's initiative and constant involvement can be considered important milestones for school progress.

The interdependences within the educational system are so high, so not only the decisions directly involving the system itself are important, but also the general overview of the national politics. The school connections with the local administration, unions, associations, organizations, labor market, students, parents, and the long term implications of these relations make the educational system easy to set back.

A functional educational system is characterized by an efficient cooperation of state and school representatives. School's increasing autonomy, accountability, better outcomes demands good connections that can be managed in an efficient way only by a qualified leader. Nowadays, the school principal must transform into a powerful leaders able to react and connect to the changing environment.

The analyzed educational systems are in different stages of the decentralization process, some of them at the beginning of it, like Romania, some of them gathering the positive outcomes of strategic decisions taken more than 30-40 years ago, Finland constituting the best example. Our research allowed us to establish that the national regulation for school managers is adapted to European requirements and even if there are particularities within every country, the preoccupation for the development of the educational sector is common and highly regulated in the national framework in the past 5 years.

The legislative measures taken in Romania in 2011, in France in 2005 and 2013, in Spain in 2006 and 2013 positively influence the educational system, but the result of the implementation are expected to come after many years. The cooperative model of decentralization specific to the Scandinavian countries proved its viability and success.

Every European community member promotes transparency of decisions and efficient use of resources in the public administration. The countries that best implement the national regulations and the European requirements are the ones that can report long-term stability and progress.

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