

PROFILE OVERVIEW ON THE PRINCIPALS OF VOCATIONAL MUSIC EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

In both general education and vocational schools in Latvia, school leaders are supported by deputy school leaders (OECD, Education in Latvia 2016).

In this paper, the authors show the main survey results and give an overview on the principals of vocational music education institutions in Latvia. This research continues their previous work by emphasizing the main advantages and disadvantages of the principals' professional profile and as the leaders of educational institution, overall.

Object of the research: the profile overview on the principals of vocational music education institutions.

Aim of the research: to create the profile of the leaders of the institutions of vocational music education.

Method of the research: online survey (17 closed questions and 2 open questions), in which 80 respondents (from 110 principals of the institutions of vocational music education in Latvia) participated.

The main results of the survey:

- *mainly principals are educated in performing arts, education and management;*
- *mainly principals are promoted teachers who come from the pedagogical staff of current music school;*
- *there are by 10% more male principals who earn higher salaries than female.*

Keywords: *vocational music education, management, school leadership, principals*

Introduction

In this research the authors are focusing on the lower level of vocational education in Latvia, which officially represents institutions of vocation-oriented music education –

so called music schools or music and art schools and their principals. The leadership and development of institutions of the vocational music education in Latvia is a responsibility of the music school principals – *leaders*.

A key person in any school is the school leader. In both general education and vocational schools, leaders are supported by deputy school leaders. School leaders are usually teachers who were promoted to (deputy) principals upon passing a local competition (OECD, 2016).

Music education system in Latvia consists of state, municipal and private education institutions that provide vocation-oriented, vocational secondary and higher education programs. The goal of vocational education in Latvia is to provide opportunities for further education after the elementary or secondary school, to acquire initial vocational qualifications, develop skills for continuing vocational education, and acquire the right to continue education at a higher education level (Stige-Skuskovnika, 2018).

The institutions of vocational music education (so called art and music schools) are placed under the authority of the Ministry of Culture and coordinated by the Latvian National Cultural Centre. At the moment, Latvia has 51 music schools and 59 music and art schools. Generally, these schools are founded and maintained by municipal governments. Children may attend these schools in addition to attending regular school.

As stated in Latvian regulations, recruitment of school principals depends highly on their teaching qualifications and experience. There are just standard regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers on school principal recruitment. Music school principals are recruited with non-terminated contract by municipalities of Latvia which means that the Latvian National Cultural Centre has no possibilities to interfere in decision-making (Stige-Skuskovnika, 2018).

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Method and Sample

The research presented in the paper is a part of a larger scientific work analyzing different types of topicalities and trends concerning the work of principals of the institutions of vocational music education in Latvia. In this case, the key task was to analyze the survey results and find out the main conclusions about the current profile of the principals as leaders in so called music schools, and music and arts schools.

To achieve the aim, a survey was carried out and results were analyzed. Online survey (17 closed questions and 2 open questions) was organized from the 12th till 26th September, 2018.

Thanks to the personnel of Latvian National Cultural Centre, who showed a deep interest in authors' research: they were as an intermediator in communication between authors and music school principals.

80 school principals (from 110 principals of the institutions of vocational music education in Latvia) participated in the survey. The review of survey results is given sequentially choosing the most significant questions and their results for creating the profile of the principals.

Characteristics of participants of the survey according to gender and age parameters see in Figures 1 and 2. From 80 school principals who participated in the survey 62 are female and 18 male respondents (see Figure 1).

Proportion of male/female principals

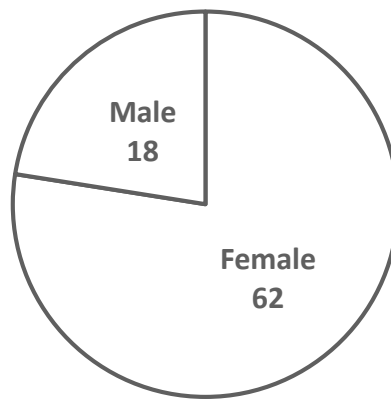


Figure 1. Proportion of male/female participants of the survey (N=80)

From 80 school principals, 45 are in the age group of 51 – 65 years, 25 – in the age group of 38 to 50 years, 7 – in the group of 25 to 37 years and only three respondents are 66 and more years old (see Figure 2).

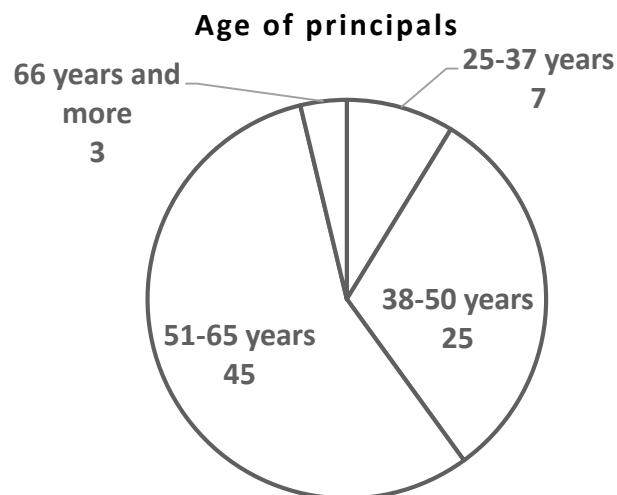


Figure 2. Age of survey participants (N=80)

According to the participants' education parameter, one principal holds a doctor's degree, 61 – a master's degree, 17 – a bachelor's degree and one has a short cycle education diploma.

Principals from five Latvian regions participated in the survey (see Figure 3).

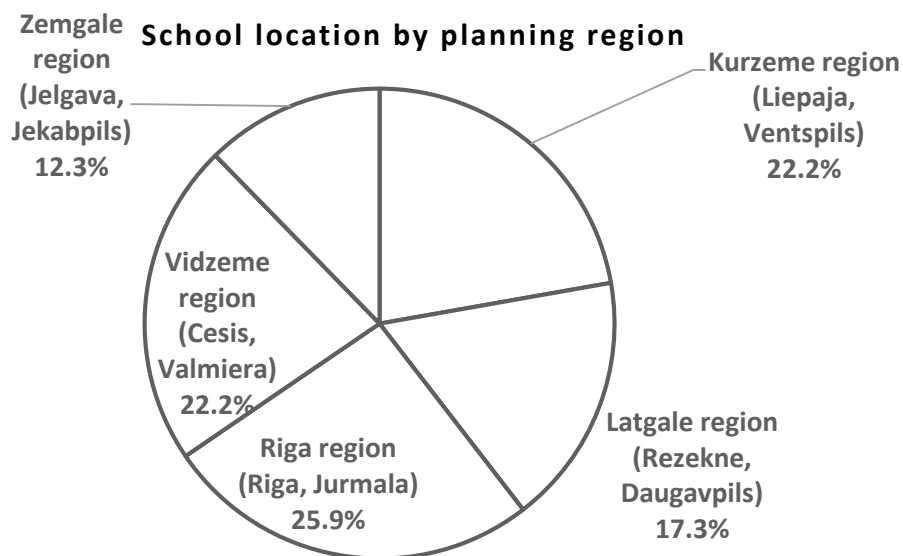


Figure 3. School location by planning regions of survey participants (N=80)

Almost all schools that have less than 300 pupils (92%) have less than 50 employees; most of schools with 300 and more pupils have 50 – 250 employees (86%), and only half of the rest of big schools have more employees (three in total) (see Figure 4).

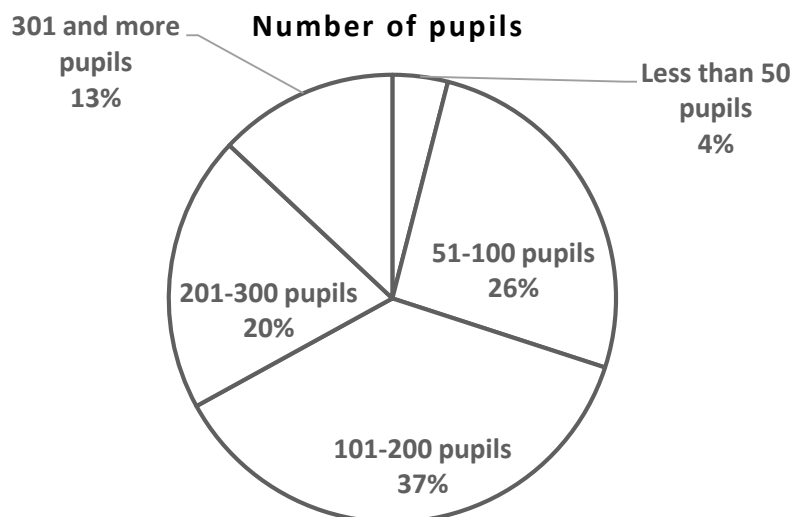


Figure 4. Number of pupils of survey participant schools (N=80)

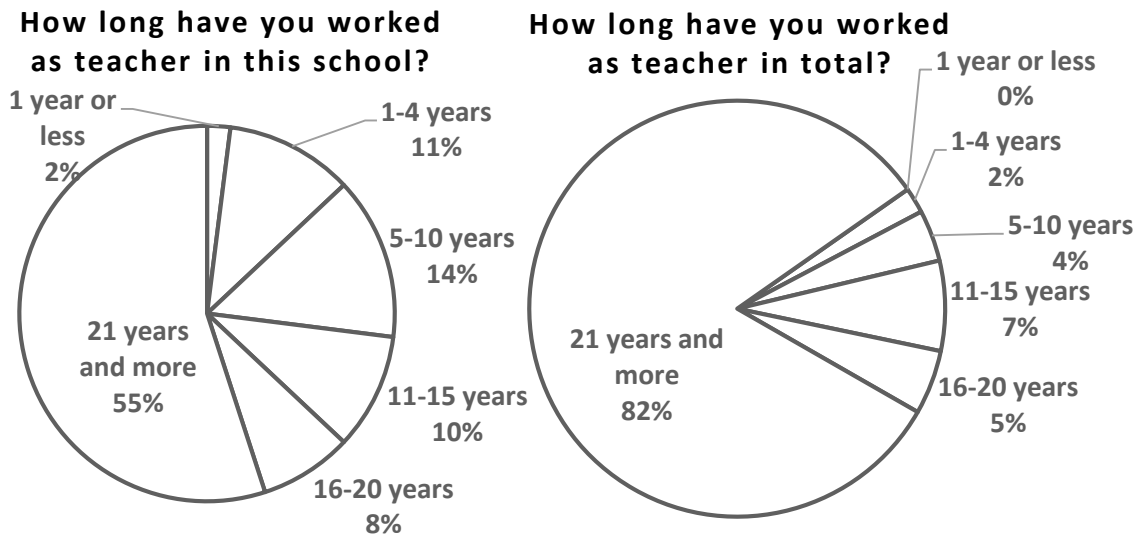
Overall, the overview of characteristics of survey participants shows the average school principal who is a female, at the age of 51 to 65, holding a master's degree.

Results and Discussions

No statistical differences by gender were discovered (not by school size, region or previous experience of the principal).

A. Pedagogical experience

72% of principals, who currently are not working as teachers, have more than 21 year of pedagogical experience.



Figures 5-6. Pedagogical experience of survey participants (in current school vs in total) (N=80)

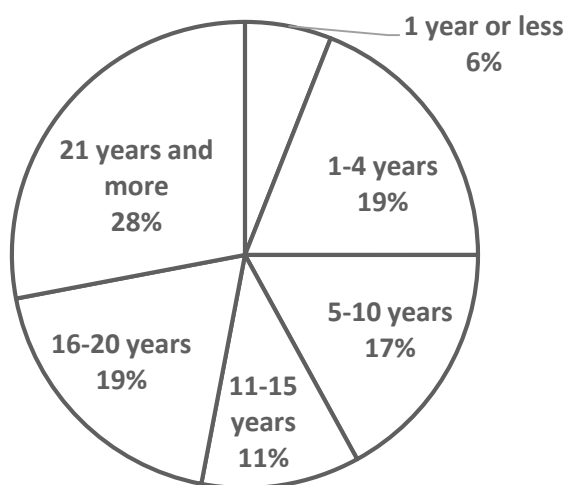
As Figure 5-6 shows, the greater part of survey participants has worked as teachers more than 21 years (82%) and 55% of survey participants are working in current school more than 21 year.

B. Leader's experience

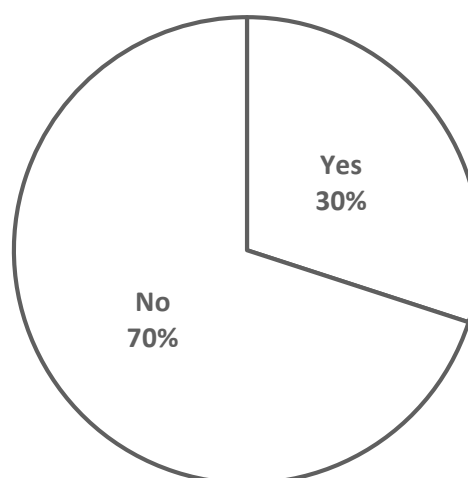
88% of principals who do not have previous experience in a leading position have been working in the current school as teachers for more than 21 year.

If the respondent has had a previous experience in a leading position, he/she could specify the position (for example, most popular answer was *deputy director*) (see Figure 7-8).

How many years are You working as principal?



Did You have experience in leading position before the principal position?



Figures 7-8. Leader's experience of survey participants (years in current school vs experience in total) (N=80)

Also Figure 7-8 shows that 28% of survey respondents have been working as principals in current school for 21 and more years. Very close results show 17% of principals who are principals 16-20 years and 1-4 years. The authors conclude that school principals are mostly new or well experienced in their position.

Participants of the survey mentioned the following knowledge and skills as necessary for an effective school leader (see Table 1).

Table 1. Knowledge and skills mentioned by survey participants (N=80)

Knowledge	Skills (soft)
Financing	Communication skills
Human recourses	Cooperation skills
Pedagogy	Skills to act as a team member
Management	Leadership skills
Music	Creativity
Education	Planning skills
Law	Motivation
Psychology	Responsibility

Quantitative results show that 68% respondents have mentioned *leadership skills* as very important skills for a principal. These skills were mentioned in both closed and open type questions. 40% of respondents pointed out *communication skills*, mostly as a communication with pupils, teachers and parents. But 14% of principals specified the target groups for communication – pupils and teachers; 9% of respondents pointed out communication with parents. 20% of respondents of the survey believe that it's important that the principal is a professional musician. But 16% indicate that the knowledge of law is necessary.

There are no differences between leader's experiences as a principal, if authors analyze the mentioned skills. In all categories the respondents have pointed out leadership skills, communication skills, knowledge about law and being a professional musician. These results are the same also by age.

It is worth mentioning that the respondents who have been working as principals for 15 and more years indicate *self-development skills* as very significant. Also, only these respondents mentioned that it's very important to be *modern* and *study modern teaching and leadership methods*.

The young principals (experience in a principals' position up to four years) mentioned a lot of different skills and knowledge necessary for work (for example, financing, psychology, technology). The results also highlight the fact that by gaining the experience and with years principals pay more attention to the communication with different target groups, as previously mentioned – communication with pupils, communication with teachers, communication with parents. This shows that the precise and well-considered communication with specific target groups, could say with stakeholders, plays a very important role.

The results of this survey prove that there are almost no differences by age or leadership experiences of principals; they couldn't be divided into fewer categories as authors presumed. So, the next steps for the research should be considered carefully.

Conclusions

1. Mainly principals of the institutions of vocational music education in Latvia are educated in performing arts, education and management. The research confirms the assumption that the principals are mainly promoted teachers who come from the pedagogical staff of current music school. Very rarely they do have specific knowledge and education in management or leadership despite of its impact on the development of all school processes and pedagogical environment.
2. 70% of principals of schools with 300 and more pupils have previous work experience in a leading position. 70% of principals of smaller schools (less than 300 pupils) do not have previous experience in a leading position.
3. As most important knowledge and skills for effective school leader the participants of the survey (N=80 school principals) mentioned the following necessary knowledge and skills: a) knowledge in financing, human resources, pedagogy, management and music as well as b) leadership, communication,

self-development skills and modern teaching and leadership methods. Respondents note that they are ready to raise the level of knowledge and skills in the field of finance, management, pedagogy and psychology, since it affects the quality of education establishment management.

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Received 11.03.2019

Accepted 01.07.2019