

Učinkovito upravljanje školama na lokalnoj razini

Kovač, Vesna; Rukavina Kovačević, Ksenija; Rafajac, Branko

Source / Izvornik: **Croatian Journal of Education : Hrvatski časopis za odgoj i obrazovanje, 2017, 19, 175 - 207**

Journal article, Published version

Rad u časopisu, Objavljena verzija rada (izdavačev PDF)

<https://doi.org/10.15516/cje.v19i1.2214>

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:186:440121>

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Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-09-19**



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Efficient School Management at the Local Level

Vesna Kovač¹, Ksenija Rukavina Kovačević² and Branko Rafajac¹

¹Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka

²Archdiocese of Rijeka

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to develop theoretical framework that can be applied in the analysis and empirical research on school management efficiency in the Croatian context. The paper contains explanations of significant dimensions based on which it is possible to monitor the practice of school management at the local level, and provides discussions regarding modalities of measures for strengthening school and student capacities that are implemented in certain local self-governments. A review of available data reveals that investment priorities of local self-government units in various types of interventions significantly vary in different local environments and that the possibility of investing in programmes that are thought to be connected with strengthening the achievements of schools and students depends on how developed the existing material prerequisites for the smooth operation of schools are. Guidelines for using efficient support mechanisms in cooperation between local management authorities (school founders) and school institutions are also analysed and proposed.

Key words: education policy; managing the education system; school efficiency; school management; school principals.

Introductory Considerations

Although the trends of strengthening the decentralization process of education system management are strongly advocated in public educational and political discourse, there do not seem to be much available data in Croatia on the effective decentralization mechanisms which can lead to the desired improvements of achievements of schools and students in specific local environments. Detailed analyses of the efficiency of activities by local and regional self-governments and their units

in charge of education matters have not been conducted, therefore, it is not known which types of interventions in a given local environment can be linked more strongly to achieving better success of schools and students. That this is not an easy task has already been indicated by a simple description of the education management structure at the local level: the identification of stakeholders, their roles, powers, responsibilities and their interactions reveals a complex network of functions and relationships. Describing the nature of the decentralization of education system using a few common indicators or questions presents another challenge. For example, how was the financial, political, administrative or professional decentralization conducted; how was the decentralization of decision-making regarding key educational issues implemented; how does the established relationship of authority and responsibility between the state level, local level and school level function; do local education authorities have or use appropriate mechanisms and instruments for making good decisions in the interest of improving the quality of their schools. Even though we still do not have accurate data that can link different dimensions of school management at the local level with better achievements of schools and students in Croatia, we will start from the assumption derived from the results of recent PISA and TALIS research: education systems and schools with a greater degree of decentralization of education, as well as the schools that have acquired greater autonomy index in the relevant decision making are more successful (OECD, 2013, 2014).

The purpose of this paper is to develop theoretical framework that can be applied in the analysis and empirical research on school management efficiency in the Croatian context. We will explain significant dimensions based on which it is possible to monitor the practice of school management at the local level and we will discuss examples of (potentially good) measures for strengthening school and student capacities that are implemented in certain local self-governments. Examples for illustration have been selected based on the available data regarding financial investments in various types of school programmes/projects in several towns and municipalities, by school founders in Croatia, in the academic year 2015/2016.¹ A review of available data reveals that priorities and the amount of investments in various types of school programmes significantly vary in different local environments and that the possibility of investing in programmes that are thought to be related to strengthening achievements of schools and students depends on how developed the existing material prerequisites for school

¹ The data used were published in the official gazettes of local self-government units and relate to the decisions regarding the financing of public needs in the current year. Planned expenditure for the following categories of expenses related to education was monitored: capital investments and maintenance; procurement of equipment; investments in extracurricular activities and school activities outside the classroom and investments related to the special needs of students or schools. These examples allow us to identify the priorities of programmes and projects and the amounts of awarded grants. However, we cannot derive conclusions from the available data on the actual effectiveness of funded programmes. The examples relate to the following towns and municipalities: Rijeka, Delnice, Kastav, Novi Vinodolski, Split, Zadar, Zagreb and Fužine.

functioning are. From these indicators we can detect guidelines for shaping necessary (decentralisation) interventions on the level of state and local self-governments, but also the guidelines for using more efficient support mechanisms in cooperation between the founders and schools.

However, this discussion should be included into the wider context of global and Croatian education policy. Therefore, we will first show the basic highlights of ongoing discussions on the need to strengthen the decentralisation of education system management with the purpose of identifying the main problems and possible approaches to the way they can be solved through decentralization processes. The presented starting points confirm the importance of new considerations regarding effective school management at the local level. It is followed by an overview of different possible ways to implement decentralization with a particular focus on monitoring the quality of established relationships of power and responsibilities between stakeholders at different levels of management. Furthermore, we will discuss the appropriate mechanisms for strengthening the management capacity of stakeholders who are assigned the responsibility for making certain types of decisions. We will comment on the possibilities of applying different instruments of efficient school management at the local level and specify those that are thought to have a significant effect on strengthening the achievements of schools and students. Encouraging different models of cooperation between schools is highlighted as an effective mechanism for strengthening the school capacity and as an indicator of efficient school management at the local level.

Ongoing Discussion on the Strengthening of Decentralization Process of Education System Management

Nowadays the role of local education authorities in the management of schools should be viewed in the broader context of global educational trends focused on strengthening the decentralization of education system management (Ben-Peretz, 2009; OECD, 2013; Croatian Parliament Official Gazette, 2008; Radó, 2010; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Most authors agree that the fundamental purpose of advocating the implementation of the decentralization of education is connected with the effort to improve access to education and the quality of educational services and to democratize the decision-making process, but also to achieve an adequate level of organizational, financial and professional autonomy for the providers of educational services. A whole set of measures designed to improve the Croatian education system, which are defined in the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology of the Republic of Croatia (Croatian Parliament, 2014), addresses the issues related to the necessary improvement in the efficiency of the education system management with an emphasis on redefining the roles and responsibilities of local self-government units in that process. For example, it is evident that there is a problem of non-uniformity of working

conditions in schools situated at different geographical locations, which threatens the creation of equal opportunities to (high quality) education for all students.² Also, it is not evident in the financing system that there is a clear strategy of capital investments and investment maintenance, so due to the high costs of construction and maintenance schools are perceived as a significant burden to local (and state) budget.³ The implementation of measures for establishing mechanism for coordination and joint planning of all governing bodies in the education system is also announced, as well as the monitoring of their effects. In this context, the importance of clearly defined roles and competences of stakeholders responsible for or interested in education is emphasized, with particular focus on those at the level of local and regional self-governments. An agreement was reached in the Strategy (Croatian Parliament, 2014) that the education system management needs to be significantly improved. Finding better ways to define roles, power and responsibilities at different levels of the education system management certainly represents a necessary precondition for improving the general quality of the education system functioning, especially when we can already identify overly complex (and thus expensive) forms of education which Ball (2009) calls “heterarchies”. These superstructures reveal that a complex mixture of hierarchies, networks and markets is at work in the education management processes⁴. That may lead to intertwining, multiplication and rivalry of authority and influences between different coordination bodies (Woods & Simkins, 2014), which can be perceived at the level of individual schools through unequal working conditions or achievements of different levels of quality. In the Croatian education system there is a number of different (governing) bodies that perform professional, advisory or administrative functions at the national and local level. Established as

² The results of research on the educational accomplishments of eighth grade students conducted by the “Ivo Pilar” Institute on a sample of 46,196 students in 842 regular primary schools during the academic year 2007/2008, point to several factors that affect students’ achievement: school location (urban or rural), whether the school is affiliated to a larger school or not, shift work, school size, field day classes, whether a student is a commuter or not, educational level of parents, and so on. Authors suggest the following: to make schools more successful, we must intervene in their status characteristics, and work more effectively with their founders, but also work on making affiliated schools independent, invest in those schools that are located in the areas of special state concern, organize additional classes for children whose parents have a lower level of education and unburden the existing school curriculum.

³ The problem of unclear strategy for the allocation of funds by the central education authorities for the decentralization functions of capital investments at the local level is also indicated by the fact that in 2007 the City of Rijeka, as the founder, was approved funding for only one project (extension of one elementary school) in the amount of 3.5 million HRK, although they had applied for four projects. In the same period the City of Split was approved funding for the construction of a new school and five extensions in the amount of 60 million HRK. The City of Zadar was approved funding for the construction of two new schools in the amount of 50 million HRK, while Zagreb County was approved funds in the amount of 79 million HRK (source: Grad Rijeka (2007)).

⁴ Heterarchies can be perceived by observing the existing bodies which are responsible for the coordination and supervision of various aspects of the education system at the national, local or regional level. One line of these bodies can follow the delegation of power vertically from the competent ministry to the local self-government units. The second line follows the vertical that runs from the central government agencies that are in charge of education to their affiliates at the local level, where the number of agencies and the type of duties delegated to them should be monitored. The influence of certain NGOs should also be added, as well as various forms of market mechanisms that are reflected in certain aspects of the operation of individual schools.

government bodies, agencies or public institutions, national councils, centres or offices, those bodies can be seen as formally established bodies for the integration of the education system at the national level, but there is not enough empirical data on their real efficiency and contribution, whether their role is respected by authorities that have appointed them and that they report to, their mutual communication and possible overlapping of roles and interests (Kovač, Buchberger, & Rafajac, 2015). If we include the fact that frequent changes of political governments also bring about changes in the organization of those same bodies, even without relevant data on their existing (in)efficiency, a picture of very complex (and often unclear) intertwining of different influences and powers emerges.⁵ Ball calls it “a confusing interplay of trust/distrust” (Ball, 2007, p. 3).

Another aspect of the debate regarding the effectiveness of (decentralized) school management focuses on the relationship of schools with the local education authorities and other external stakeholders in the local environment, as well as on the extent of school autonomy in the management and decision-making “from the inside”. It has been emphasized recently that schools are not and cannot be extensions of the state bureaucracy, but that they should be regulated and guided at the regional/local level according to their needs and capacities. In his study on the implementation of the decentralization of education in South-eastern Europe, Radó (2010) draws attention to the necessary improvement of these decentralization management features of the Croatian education system, pointing out that schools in Croatia have not yet used their “decentralization potential” in terms of achieving greater independence in the local context, creating efficient partnerships with other schools and increasing the quality of their educational services. In this context, the role of local education authorities is particularly emphasized, as they must work to adequately ensure and strengthen the capacity of schools in their respective areas, while following the course of implementation of important decisions.⁶ In discussions on efficient education management practices at the local level, there is an initial assumption that each level of school management contributes to some degree to the strengthening of the efficiency of individual schools (Fullan, 2007). Although in scientific publications we can frequently come across more findings from research that examined the interconnectedness of certain aspects of school management by a school principal and school efficiency (Kovač, Staničić, & Buchberger, 2014), it was also discovered that

⁵ According to the Croatian Government Programme for the period 2016 - 2019 (<https://vlada.gov.hr/programi-strategije-planovi-i-izvjesca/14636>) one of the guidelines is the abolition of agencies that operate under the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, and the establishment of the Institute for Education, which would presumably take over all the responsibilities and tasks of the existing agencies (for the entire educational system) with the introduction of professional pedagogical supervision and the main school supervisor who is to be appointed by the Croatian Parliament for the mandate of 5 years.

⁶ At the request of the founders, schools are required to submit to the founder their Report on the implementation of the Annual School Plan for the current academic year (before that the Report is presented to the Teachers' Council, the Parents' Council and the School Board), as well as the Report on the school curriculum.

some aspects of how bodies responsible for education in the local self-government units operate can also contribute to achieving better success of schools and students. This will be discussed in more detail in the further text. It is also important to consider the question of whether all relevant resources and instruments are available to these bodies so that they can use them to ensure permanent improvement in the achievements of schools under their supervision. The starting point for a discussion on these and related issues can be found in the very nature of the education management decentralization.

The Nature of Education Management Decentralization

Decentralisation is most often described as a transfer of authority or of the right to make decisions on certain issues which are of public interest, from the state level to lower levels, but the understanding of the purpose and the manner of its implementation in a given context of national education requires monitoring of a large number of elements. It is well known that decentralization can be carried out in various forms, depending on the strength of the authority assigned to lower levels. The most common forms are deconcentration, delegation and devolution (Kovač, Buchberger, & Rafajac, 2015)⁷. However, it is also important to monitor some other aspects of decentralization, for example, whether administrative, political, professional and market decentralization was carried out. In other words, it is important to consider whether the lower level bodies have got their legitimacy (the right to decide) through administrative, political, professional or economic mechanisms (Radó, 2010).

The nature of education management decentralization in an individual national system is determined by the agreement reached by key stakeholders on the issues of autonomy, control and variety (providers) of educational services (Woods & Simkins, 2014). Simply put, by giving autonomy to some lower instance of management, the central government will be relieved from the burden of responsibility for making one part of decisions. In doing so, it is assumed that locally made decisions will be more appropriate to the specific context in which individual schools operate. Control that the central government keeps should ensure that every school provides the guaranteed quality of educational services and adequate working conditions. The achieved variety

⁷ The weakest form of decentralization is *deconcentration* which refers to the transfer of certain administrative powers to the lower levels of decision-making bodies that are directly subordinate to the central government agency. The purpose of such transfer is to bring services closer to direct beneficiaries and to increase the efficiency of the central administration, and as a rule it does not diminish the role of the state. *Delegation* means that authority is transferred to the organizations which are supervised directly by the state. The transfer of the right to make decisions is temporary, which does not create the stability for medium or long-term planning. The strongest form of decentralization is *devolution*, and its main characteristic is that it is founded on law. The transfer of decisions is permanent, and the state can intervene only through prescribing frameworks for carrying out the delegated tasks.

of educational services means that specific groups of students receive educational services that are appropriate to them⁸. It is a common practice for the highest levels of authority (the state) to keep responsibility for the basic issues regarding the functioning of the education system and accordingly to implement the instruments of control over them. One of the most important instruments of state control over education is the national education curriculum⁹ with the use of standardized tests for evaluating student achievements. At the same time, measures are defined which are to be applied in case the achieved results are lower than expected. Those measures can be adopted and applied at the level of local governments, individual schools or individual students. What complicates the application of this seemingly simple principle is the question of responsibility for monitoring how appropriate decentralization instruments and resources are secured, awarded and used.

By providing appropriate autonomy of the education system at the local and regional level, it is possible to reconcile the needs for educational services between citizens and socio-economic entities that operate in a given community (Kandeva, 2001; Smerdel, 2006). When the local government mostly carries out the decisions made by the central government then its role as the representative of the local community and as the school founder becomes problematic. In relation to the “higher” and “lower” level of decision-making, education structures at the local level are in a very difficult situation, to say the least. If they act as an extension of the “headquarters” (government agents) and concentrate on the monitoring of pre-defined school performance indicators, without adjusting to the developmental capacities of local schools, they risk alienation both from schools and parents. On the other hand, if they develop their own performance indicators and in close cooperation with schools design development plans, in a certain sense they risk alienation from the central government and the possible failure in terms of achieving the national achievement standards (Campbell, 2000; Munn, 1992).

An important prerequisite for the development of a framework for the analysis of school management practices at the local level is to understand the matrix of

⁸ The analysed examples reveal that founders invest a large part of the funds to cater for the needs of students who require an extended stay in the school, as well as those students who need special support. For example, in their budget for 2015 they have provided the following funds for *extended stay* needs (and all-day class): Zagreb (31,096,000 HRK), Rijeka (1,417,000 HRK), Zadar (1,350,300 HRK), Split (600,000 HRK), Kastav (150,000 HRK), Novi Vinodolski (65,000 HRK). Through various programmes, they have provided the following funds in their budget for the purpose of *improving and providing assistance* in teaching and education: the City of Rijeka for the programme “Rinkluzija”, the municipality Fužine for the programme “Assistance in Education” (5,000 HRK), Novi Vinodolski for co-financing the Department of speech and language disorders (1,000 HRK) and for teaching assistants (40,000 HRK). The City of Zadar is another city that provides funds for teaching assistants (2,284,900 HRK) and so does the City of Zagreb, which provides funds for teaching assistants/professional communication intermediaries (4,400,000 HRK).

⁹ The National Curriculum Framework in Croatia (MZOS RH, 2011) is a legal framework which is used as a basis for defining and adopting school curricula, while taking into account educational needs and priorities of students and of the school, as well as of the community in which the school operates.

education management (see: Eurydice, 2012, pp. 50-51). It is used to connect the types of key decisions in the field of education¹⁰ with the stakeholders who participate in the decision-making. One domain that clearly illustrates the degree and type of the implemented decentralization is the decentralization of funding. However, it is also important to note the following: a) which level of government is responsible for ensuring a certain share of financial resources for education; b) where and how it decides on the allocation of resources; and c) who makes decisions on the types of costs. What should be taken into account when deciding on the nature of decentralization of funding is the following: which level of government is most familiar with the developmental and other needs of the school; which stakeholder has preconditions and the competence to make the best decisions in order to strengthen the school capacity; can that stakeholder ensure uniformity of working conditions in different schools; who does the stakeholder report to and how is the stakeholder accountable for the quality of the decision he/she has made. Commenting on the financial decentralization of education in Croatia in the context of the general crisis in the public sector financing, Nikolić (2007) points out that insufficient financial investment in any sector of education has multiple negative consequences. For example, if you are not investing enough in teachers' salaries or at least as much as in the salaries of other highly educated professionals in the public sector, that will often lead to the negative selection of the teaching staff and consequently to the lower quality of teaching in schools. It can also lead to having less competent school personnel in charge of the school management and governing, which is not to be disregarded.

Related to this is the matter of responsibility of stakeholders at the lower levels of the decision-making process. Developing a system that will guarantee the quality of work of those stakeholders who are given the authority to make decisions is a necessary mechanism that must accompany every step in the implementation of the decentralization processes. In this context it is possible to use the framework for monitoring the responsibilities of individual stakeholders which consists of three basic elements: a) monitoring the structure of responsibility (which responsibilities they have taken on and how they have been assigned; b) monitoring the parameters of responsibility (who individual stakeholders report to with regards to their decisions);

¹⁰ For the purpose of international comparisons of data on the types of management in individual national systems, the following taxonomy of decisions is used: (a) Decisions related to human resources (with regards to the selection of the school principal and determining his/her duties and powers, as well as with regards to the recruitment of teachers); (b) Decisions related to the financial resources (the use of public resources for capital costs, maintenance costs and the procurement of computers and other equipment, as well as raising funds from private sources); and (c) Decisions related to teaching and learning (determining the content of obligatory and optional parts of the syllabus, the selection of teaching methods, textbooks, grouping students and students evaluation criteria). It should also be mentioned that differences may also occur in the way decisions are made: for example, the participation of a given stakeholder in the decision-making process does not necessarily mean that he/she is authorised to make the final decision, which is why such comparative data should be interpreted carefully.

and c) monitoring the implications of responsibility (the way changes occur as a result of activities that were carried out) (Allen & Mintra, 2010; Glatter, 2012). Analyses in accordance with the proposed framework could provide a valuable basis for studying efficiency of current practices in the education systems management (and its decentralization).

Strengthening of the Management Capacities for the Decentralized Management of Education

It is well known in Croatia that the following entities play a significant role in making decisions on educational issues at the local level: school founders or the offices of local self-governments (counties, cities and municipalities) in charge of education issues; regional government administration offices and regional branches of Education and Teacher Training Agency. Considering the responsibilities that were assigned to them¹¹, it is necessary to examine to what extent those stakeholders can perform each of those roles or whether they are also provided with sufficient capacities and instruments for their smooth implementation.

It is possible to isolate several attempts of grouping such roles and their importance for achieving better school success. Fullan (2007) grouped individual roles into three areas of management at the local level: a) pedagogical (activities related to the learning processes, teaching and professional development of pedagogues), b) political (activities related to the provision of resources, establishing collaborations and networks) and c) managerial (activities related to supervision, support, planning, inclusion)¹². It can be concluded that the consequences of neglecting or inadequate functioning of any of these three areas of management are directly visible in weaker results achieved at the level of individual schools or the level of local self-government. Radó (2010) lists and comments on the following roles that are assigned to school founders in most national systems:

1. coordination of the regional plan for the development of the education system;
2. balancing between the existing school capacities and education needs (in terms of the number of students who have met the conditions for enrolling into schools);
3. mediation between the interests and needs of parents and the local community for educational services, where expressed interests and needs can be an addition to those established at the national level;
4. carrying out regular legal and financial control over the school operation, including the evaluation of the principal's work;

¹¹ A more detailed list of responsibilities and functions of individual stakeholders is regulated by the Primary and Secondary School Education Act: consolidated text of the Act (OG 87/08, 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 126/12, 94/13, 152/14), in force since 30th December 2014.

¹² These examples of cities and municipalities show that school founders invest significant amounts in the area of pedagogical management (in support of school programmes that are focused on strengthening students' competences and the specific needs of schools or students, like co-financing the transport or textbooks and teaching assistants).

5. ensuring social equality in the local context by connecting educational services of the school with demographic characteristics of the local community;
6. coordinating cooperation between schools in order to improve school achievements.

The comparative analyses carried out in the countries of South-eastern Europe reveal that the role of the local level in the management of education is still marginal¹³, so it would be useful to re-examine the need for strengthening the capacities of individual local management bodies for the optimum implementation of each of the mentioned and assumed roles.

The following set of studies (Campbell, 1999; Codingley & Kogan, 1993; Ranson, 1992, etc.) isolated those tasks of local education authorities that significantly contribute to raising education standards and to educational achievements. They are the following: a) creating the vision of development with appropriate education strategies; b) providing financial support to schools in order to strengthen their capacities and enhance the quality of educational services; c) establishing equal preconditions for the development among schools that are based on the inclusive education system; and d) intervening in situations when possible tensions arise between different stakeholders (e.g. parents, students and school). In order for these roles of local education authorities to be optimally carried out, it is important to recognize available instruments of efficient education management at the local level and to use them in the analysis.

The Instruments of Efficient School Management at the Local Level

Dufour and Marzano (2011) also point out that the way schools are managed at the local level has a significant influence on achieving better student success and that it generally improves the school system. The role of local self-government units is crucial and it is achieved through finding support strategies that strengthen the capacities of individual schools, their principals and teachers, which are necessary for the achievement and maintaining of the established objectives¹⁴. However, it is important to emphasize that support strategies must be continuous: their positive effect is visible and it is monitored exclusively through the achievement of long-term viability of good school results. It is also important to set clear objectives in terms of expected student achievements at the level of local self-government and the level of individual schools and specific groups of students, and to define the strategies that

¹³ It is worth mentioning that Croatian legislation provides for the decentralization of education (Article 2.7 of the Primary and Secondary School Education Act (Croatian Parliament, 2008)).

¹⁴ Newman et al. (2000) use the concept of “school capacity” to describe the collective performance of the entire school staff who work together in order to improve student learning. The authors have identified five interrelated components of the school capacity: pedagogical competences and teachers’ attitudes, professional (expert) communities, common programmes, technical resources and the management of school by the school principal.

lead to the achievement of those objectives, as well as to agree on the indicators that will be used to monitor their implementation. The aim of monitoring the performance of individual schools at the local level is not to publicly rank or evaluate them, but to monitor and evaluate the progress of individual schools in relation to the previously achieved results and their specific conditions. It has already been mentioned that there are no systematic data available in Croatia either on measures taken by the individual local self-government units in order to strengthen the efficiency of schools under their jurisdiction, or on the direct connection between measures used and the improvement of the efficiency of schools. However, it is possible to make some assumptions from the data obtained in the conducted research studies that examined activities of local self-governments in other national contexts.

Honig and Rainey (2012) have investigated the characteristics of the *policy* initiatives at the local and school level and their connection with the improvement of educational achievements in individual schools. Research has shown that better school success is connected only with the initiatives that are: a) focused on teaching and learning in schools; b) accompanied by investments in the strengthening of school capacities which were necessary for the implementation of pedagogical initiatives; and c) active in including local self-governments in their implementation. It was also revealed that some management strategies of local self-governments are in strong correlation with better educational achievements. Those are, for example: reducing things that are distracting teachers from basic school activities, efficient mechanisms of establishing connections with parents, community and the business sector and the joint creation of school development plans (Fullan, 2007).¹⁵

Some indicators of efficient school management at the local level can be obtained from the results of research studies that examined cooperation between local education authorities and schools, in the systems that carried out a higher degree of education decentralization and school autonomy¹⁶ (Campbell, 2002; Parish, Baxter, & Sandals, 2012; e.g. Riley et al., 1999). The examinees, mainly school principals and representatives of local education authorities, evaluated and commented on the efficiency of various roles and areas in which local education authorities operate in terms of strengthening the school autonomy. Research has shown that local education authorities highly support the idea of increasing the autonomy of schools in the future and the management model that is based on the needs of the school. Particularly emphasized is the importance of encouraging mutual cooperation between local schools, which becomes a development priority of management at the local level.

¹⁵ Examples of selected cities and municipalities mentioned in this paper show that the initiatives of local governing bodies are often more focused on the support of programmes that aim at strengthening students' competences than on the support of those that aim at strengthening the competences of teachers. On the other hand, it is not known in what way local self-government units in Croatia get actively involved in monitoring the implementation or the development of common strategies for the development of schools.

¹⁶ In this example research studies conducted in England, Wales and Scotland are presented.

School principals also believe that school efficiency greatly depends on mutual cooperation and support of local schools. It is important to emphasize that they do not see the autonomy of schools as a way to distance schools from the influence of local authorities, but as an opportunity for a more efficient cooperation with various external stakeholders (Parish, Baxter, & Sanders, 2012).

There are only few studies that provide information on the importance of competences required for the creation of efficient partnerships and the creation of vertical and horizontal networks between different levels of decision-makers in education (e.g. Daly et al., 2013). The authors start from the assumption that taking an appropriate position in these social networks is connected with the possibility of gaining access to relevant resources (information, consultation, expertise) and the ability to manage the flow of those resources within the network. It has been revealed that the stakeholders who assume better positions in social networks, and those are the stakeholders who achieve higher quantities of exchanged resources (regardless of whether the stakeholders receive or provide resources to other stakeholders), and stakeholders who achieve smaller social distance with other stakeholders (they have better communication and connections with other stakeholders in the network) have more success in undertaking initiatives for improving the achievements of schools and students. In such social networks, achieving central position is significantly influenced by the acquired management competences, particularly having organizational, managerial and financial skills. It is therefore necessary to examine how individual stakeholders, who are entrusted with the duty of education management, are trained and selected for carrying out their duty successfully.

The presence of local education authorities in some schools is visible through a variety of activities that support existing school capacities for the purpose of developing efficient teaching and learning. Efficient local self-governments develop specific and recognizable strategies for improving the achievements of schools and students. Hatcher (2014) recognizes three types of such strategies that differ depending on their primary focus: a) preventive and corrective strategies that aim at supporting weaker schools so that they could meet the national standards of achievement; b) development strategies (they include preventive and corrective measures) that result in guidelines for the improvement of curriculum or introduce some additional programme dimensions in order to improve professional opportunities; and c) critical strategies (they include preventive, corrective and development measures). They examine the dominance of neo-liberal education policy indicators that are visible in the primary concern of the education policy makers for the economic efficiency of education.¹⁷ This type of strategic education management at the local level of government, accompanied by the inclusion of more stakeholders in the

¹⁷ From the examples of the examined programmes/projects that received funding in cities and municipalities, a significant use of development strategies can be observed.

decision-making process, directly reduces the traditional politicization of education at the local level. To what extent depoliticization is possible depends on whether the representatives of various stakeholders in the decision-making bodies represent only the external stakeholders in school management bodies or the stakeholders actually and directly participate in the decision-making. In this context, it would be worth examining to what extent external stakeholders, especially external members of school boards, really mediate between schools and local self-governments in making decisions about strategies for improving the achievements of schools and students that will be applied.

Holme, Diem, and Welton (2014) examine and comment on the effects of different types of interventions that are being implemented in school districts from the local levels of governance with the aim of responding to changes in the external environment. Most frequently analysed are the responses to increasing demographic changes that are characteristic of certain districts, that is, the changes in the demographic characteristics of the student population in schools¹⁸. The authors noticed that the districts usually carry out the so-called *technical interventions*, which include changes in the model of teaching, shorter training for pedagogues or minor adjustments of school curricula. Less commonly considered and implemented are the so-called *normative interventions* (for example, they refer to education of parents, teachers and students about new cultures in order to overcome potential resistance and fears of negative consequences resulting from the inclusion of different groups of students in schools), which affect the nature of daily interactions in schools and classrooms, without which the achievement of the desired effects of technical interventions could be hindered. Political interventions can be seen in the inclusion of new stakeholders in the governing bodies at the local level of government that correspond with the current demographic changes.¹⁹

Finally, it is important to observe how education system (de)centralization reflects on the level of relations between schools and other entities of education management (Pastuović, 1996, 2012). In this context, it is possible to monitor to what extent the existing degree of (de)centralization allows or prevents the implementation of some desirable trends, such as cooperation between schools and entities in the external environment. It also raises the question of the desirable degree of school autonomy, as well as of cooperation between schools, which will be discussed in more detail below.

¹⁸ Most frequent are the changes in the socioeconomic status of students' families, changes in the stratification of students with regards to national, religious or cultural differences (often as a result of increasing migrations of population) or other changes that require schools or local communities to carry out appropriate interventions or adjustments in working with new groups of students.

¹⁹ Considering the mentioned categories, examples from our cities and municipalities show that Croatian authorities mostly implement technical interventions (e.g. "ZAKI" computerization of libraries in Delnice, E-math classrooms in Rijeka, EDU(cative) bookmarks in Delnice, additional programmes in Novi Vinodolski, the programme of early foreign language learning in Zadar or the procurement of books for school libraries in Zagreb), while programmes that would fall into the category of normative interventions are less frequent (e.g. certain segments of the programme "Moja Rijeka" in Rijeka).

Encouraging Cooperation between Schools: The Powerful Mechanism of Efficient School Management at the Local Level

Some indicators that point to strong presence of representatives of local education authorities in schools (which are also connected with better achievements of schools and students) are mutual sharing and analysis of information on school achievements, joint decision-making on the development plans and providing support for their implementation (Fullan, 2007; Rilley et al., 1999). In this context, especially emphasized is the trend of promoting active partnerships between local schools and active coordination of the school network. An important function of school partnerships is the accomplishment of the “school-to-school support”. Such partnerships do not only have a preventive role, in terms of identifying schools in the local environment that need assistance, but they also have the role of connecting with schools that are successful, whereby both parties gain certain benefits. The network of principals that operates (or should operate) on the principle of trust and reciprocity represents an efficient management tool for improving the operation of all local schools. However, it should be kept in mind that successful schools are not always willing to provide support and resources to schools that are not sustainable. The ethical dimension of cooperation and support is the pillar of schools partnerships, but in some systems this dimension is subordinated to the demands of competitiveness and competition in education²⁰.

An efficient mechanism for encouraging partnerships between schools is achieved through different models of school organization at the local level (Woods & Simkins, 2014). Commonly used models in practice are those of grouping a number of schools in *local federations*. They aim at strengthening the capacities of schools that were achieving unsatisfactory results through restructuring of school management or allowing the joint use of school resources. More radical models of connecting schools are *local school chains*, which are taken from the jurisdiction of their local self-governments due to their weaker results and assigned to other authorities. More common examples are *local collaborations of schools*, which cooperate or share resources in some selected activities, such as participation in initial education and professional training of teachers, without changing their organizational or management structures.

²⁰ The importance of strengthening the cooperation between schools is also recognized by the European Commission through its programme Erasmus+ that offers schools and the relevant local self-governments specific instruments for the financing of projects that aim at creating efficient partnerships (European Commission, 2016) in order to improve the standards and the quality of teaching and learning.

Through such programmes, “strategic partnerships” offer partners cooperation on issues of common interest for a period of one to three years with the purpose of creating innovative project results (such as curricula, handbooks, methodology, etc.) and/or exchange of good practices and initiating new forms of cooperation with partners from different areas. What must be emphasized is that the decision on the use of such mechanisms depends on the interest, capacities and commitment of individual local self-government units and schools, which will consequently probably lead to new differences in the efficiency level of individual schools.

Such interventions in organizational and management structures of schools also touch upon the issue of the involvement of new stakeholders from the local community who may show interest in (co)decision-making regarding the school issues. The search for measures that would result not only in the strengthening of the collaborative dimension of schools, but also in the strengthening of capacities of the competent local self-governments that would initiate and maintain efficient forms of cooperation, once again raises the question of appropriate distribution of power and responsibilities for school management and school achievements. A higher degree of school autonomy generally leads to a greater cooperation between schools, while the creation of horizontal professional networks of schools is associated with the strengthening of school capacities and with the frequent introduction of desirable innovations in the school operation. Higham and Earley (2013) interpreted the attitudes of school principals on school autonomy and changes in the role of local education authorities. In doing so they refer to the recent legal framework in the UK which provides schools with a greater level of (financial) autonomy while reducing the budget funds of local education authorities. Although school principals share the belief in some positive implications of the higher degree of school autonomy, they also expressed their fear that reducing the support of local education authorities could have a bad effect on the level of achievements by students and schools. Since certain political and managerial activities must be independently performed in schools with a greater level of autonomy, principals expressed their concern that the redirection of their focus on managerial activities, instead of on activities related to learning and teaching, would be too great. In any case, schools and school authorities are quite aware that their evolution and sustainability largely depend on the mutual support and cooperation on the local level, and also on the strength of their partnerships with other external stakeholders. It is precisely the wide range of partnerships that best illustrates the vibrancy of the school system and the quality of educational services at the local level.

For example, research studies conducted by Higham and Earley (2013) show that the majority of school principals share the belief that schools can profit more from strengthening their local network and cooperation, rather than from strengthening their autonomy. In that process, local self-governments have the primary responsibility. Mutual cooperation and support between schools encouraged by the local self-government becomes especially important in the conditions in which competition is the main driver of key decisions on education policy.

Conclusion

Effective school management at different levels of decision-making is a common topic in the national and international educational and political discourse. However, unlike other communities in which systematic data on the efficiency of actions undertaken by local decision-making levels and their implications on the improvement of the quality of school (better achievements of schools and students) are being

collected and analysed, such analyses are missing in Croatia. Research studies on the efficiency of local governing bodies, their contribution, their role and responsibilities, and their communication with other entities in the education management are not being conducted (Kovač, Buchberger, & Rafajac, 2015). According to Croatian Strategy for Education, Science and Technology (Croatian Parliament, 2014), national education policy suggests a more precise definition of roles and levels of responsibility of all instances in charge of or interested in education, as well as finding better ways to define their power and responsibilities. In our circumstances, the starting point for the research on this phenomenon could be previously presented results of conducted research studies and examples of efficient education management in other national contexts. However, in doing so, the specific social and political context, as well as the economic conditions to which Croatian education is currently exposed, should be taken into account. Also, the fact that Croatia is implementing a number of important projects and programmes that are supported by local self-governments and school founders should not be ignored: future research and analysis will provide more information on how to prioritize support and on its actual efficiency or effect on strengthening the achievements of schools and students.

Acknowledgment

This paper is part of the project *Investigating School Leadership in Croatian Schools From a Distributed Perspective* (IScLEAD) (IP-2014-09-1825) funded by Croatian Science Foundation and the project *Examining the Characteristics of School Leadership in Croatian Primary Schools* (13.04.1.3.13) supported by the University of Rijeka.

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Vesna Kovač

Department for Education
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
University of Rijeka
Sveučilišna avenija 4, 51000 Rijeka, Croatia
vkovac@ffri.hr

Ksenija Rukavina Kovačević

Archdiocese of Rijeka
Ivana Pavla II. No. 1
51000 Rijeka, Croatia
ksenija051@gmail.com

Branko Rafajac

Department for Education
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
University of Rijeka
Sveučilišna avenija 4, 51000 Rijeka, Croatia
branko.rafajac@ffri.uniri.hr

Učinkovito upravljanje školama na lokalnoj razini

Sažetak

Svrha je ovog rada razvijanje teorijskog okvira koji se može primijeniti za analizu i empirijska istraživanja učinkovitosti upravljanja školama na lokalnoj razini u hrvatskom kontekstu. U radu su eksplicirane bitne dimenzije prema kojima je moguće pratiti praksu upravljanja školama na lokalnoj razini, i komentirani su primjeri modaliteta mjera jačanja školskih i učeničkih kapaciteta koje se provode u određenim lokalnim samoupravama. Pregled dostupnih podataka pokazuje da prioriteta ulaganja jedinica lokalne samouprave u različite tipove intervencija bitno variraju u različitim lokalnim zajednicama, a mogućnost ulaganja u programe za koje postoje indicije da su povezani s jačanjem školskih i učeničkih postignuća ovisi o tome koliko su otprije razvijene osnovne materijalne pretpostavke za nesmetano funkcioniranje škola. Analizirane su i predložene smjernice za korištenje učinkovitih mehanizama potpore na relaciji suradnje između lokalnih instanci upravljanja (osnivača škola) i školskih ustanova.

Ključne riječi: obrazovna politika; školski menadžment; školski ravnatelj; učinkovitost škole; upravljanje obrazovnim sustavom.

Uvodna razmatranja

Iako se u javnom obrazovno-političkom diskursu snažno zagovaraju trendovi jačanja decentralizacije upravljanja obrazovnim sustavom, u Hrvatskoj nema mnogo dostupnih podataka o učinkovitim decentralizacijskim mehanizmima koji u specifičnim lokalnim okruženjima mogu dovesti do željenih poboljšanja školskih i učeničkih postignuća. Ne provode se detaljne analize učinkovitosti djelovanja lokalnih i područnih samouprava i njihovih jedinica zaduženih za pitanja obrazovanja, pa nije poznato koji tipovi intervencija u određenom lokalnom okruženju mogu biti snažnije povezani s postizanjem boljih školskih i učeničkih postignuća. Da to nije jednostavan zadatak, ukazuje već jednostavna deskripcija strukture upravljanja obrazovanjem na lokalnoj razini: identificirati aktere, njihove uloge, ovlasti i odgovornosti te njihovu međusobnu interakciju otkriva složenu mrežu funkcija i odnosa. Opisivanje prirode decentralizacije obrazovanja prema nekoliko uobičajenih pokazatelja ili pitanja predstavlja drugi izazov: primjerice, na koji je način provedena financijska, politička, administrativna ili profesionalna decentralizacija; na koji je

način provedena decentralizacija odlučivanja o pojedinim ključnim obrazovnim pitanjima; kako funkcionira uspostavljeni odnos ovlasti i odgovornosti između državne, lokalne i školske razine; posjeduju li i koriste li se lokalni obrazovni autoriteti primjerenim mehanizmima i instrumentima za donošenje kvalitetnih odluka u interesu poboljšavanja kvalitete svojih škola. Iako još nisu dostupni precizniji podaci koji mogu dovesti u vezu različite dimenzije upravljanja školama na lokalnoj razini s boljim školskim i učeničkim postignućima u Hrvatskoj, krenut će se od pretpostavke derivirane iz rezultata recentnih PISA i TALIS istraživanja: uspješniji su oni obrazovni sustavi i škole u kojima je proveden veći stupanj decentralizacije obrazovanja i čije su škole stekle veći indeks autonomije u donošenju relevantnih odluka (OECD, 2013, 2014).

Svrha je ovog rada razvijanje teorijskog okvira koji se može primijeniti za analizu i empirijska istraživanja učinkovitosti upravljanja školama na lokalnoj razini u hrvatskom kontekstu. Eksplicirat će se bitne dimenzije prema kojima se može pratiti praksa upravljanja školama na lokalnoj razini, i komentirati primjeri (potencijalno dobrih) mjera jačanja školskih i učeničkih kapaciteta koje se provode u određenim lokalnim samoupravama. Primjeri za ilustraciju odabrani su na temelju dostupnih podataka o financijskim ulaganjima u različite vrste školskih programa/projekata u nekoliko gradova i općina, osnivača škola u Hrvatskoj, u školskoj godini 2015./2016.¹ Pregled dostupnih podataka pokazuje da prioriteta i visina ulaganja u različite tipove školskih programa bitno variraju u različitim lokalnim zajednicama, a mogućnost ulaganja u programe za koje postoje indicije da su povezani s jačanjem školskih i učeničkih postignuća ovisi o tome koliko su otprije razvijene osnovne materijalne pretpostavke za nesmetano funkcioniranje škola. Već na temelju tih pokazatelja mogu se uočiti smjernice za oblikovanje potrebnih (decentralizacijskih) intervencija na razini države i lokalnih samouprava, ali i smjernice za primjenu učinkovitih mehanizama potpore na relaciji suradnje između osnivača i škola.

No tu raspravu valja uklopiti u širi kontekst globalne i hrvatske obrazovne politike. Stoga će se najprije prikazati temeljni naglasci aktualnih rasprava o potrebi jačanja decentralizacije upravljanja obrazovnim sustavom s ciljem identifikacije glavnih problema i mogućih pristupa njihova rješavanja putem decentralizacijskih procesa. Prikazana ishodišta potvrđuju važnost novih promišljanja o učinkovitom upravljanju školama na lokalnoj razini. Slijedi osvrt na različite mogućnosti provedbe decentralizacije s posebnim usmjerenjem na praćenje kvalitete uspostavljenih odnosa ovlasti i odgovornosti između aktera na različitim razinama upravljanja. Nadalje,

¹ Upotrijebljeni podaci objavljeni su u službenim glasilima jedinica lokalnih samouprava, a odnose se na odluke o financiranju javnih potreba u tekućoj godinu. Pratili su se planirani izdaci za sljedeće kategorije troškova vezanih uz školstvo: kapitalna ulaganja i održavanje, nabava opreme, ulaganja u dodatne nastavne i izvannastavne aktivnosti škole i ulaganja vezana uz posebne potrebe učenika ili škola. Iz tih se primjera mogu uočiti prioriteta programa i projekata, kao i visina dodijeljenih iznosa. Međutim, iz dostupnih podataka ne može se zaključivati o stvarnoj učinkovitosti financiranih programa. Primjeri se odnose na sljedeće gradove i općine: Rijeka, Delnice, Kastav, Novi Vinodolski, Split, Zadar, Zagreb i Fužine.

raspravlja se o odgovarajućim mehanizmima jačanja upravljačkih kapaciteta aktera kojima je dodijeljena odgovornost za donošenje određenih tipova odluka. Komentiraju se mogućnosti primjene različitih instrumenata učinkovitog upravljanja školama na lokalnoj razini i izdvajaju oni kojima se pripisuje značajan efekt na jačanje školskih i učeničkih postignuća. Poticanje različitih modela suradnje među školama ističe se kao učinkovit mehanizam jačanja školskih kapaciteta i indikator učinkovitog upravljanja školama na lokalnoj razini.

Aktualne rasprave o jačanju decentralizacije upravljanja obrazovnim sustavom

Ulogu lokalnih obrazovnih vlasti u upravljanju školama danas valja promatrati u širem kontekstu globalnih obrazovnih trendova usredotočenih na jačanje decentralizacije upravljanja obrazovnim sustavom (Ben-Peretz, 2009; NN, 2008; OECD, 2013; Radó, 2010; Rizvi i Lingard, 2010). Većina autora suglasna je s tim da je temeljna svrha zalaganja za provedbom decentralizacije obrazovanja vezana uz nastojanje da se poboljša dostupnost obrazovanja, kvaliteta obrazovnih usluga i demokratizira proces odlučivanja, ali i da se stekne primjerena razina organizacijske, financijske i profesionalne autonomije pružatelja obrazovnih usluga. Cijeli niz mjera poboljšanja hrvatskoga obrazovnog sustava definiranih u Strategiji obrazovanja, znanosti i tehnologije Republike Hrvatske (Hrvatski Sabor, 2014) dotiče se pitanja povezanih s nužnim poboljšanjem učinkovitosti upravljanja obrazovnim sustavom s naglaskom na redefiniranje uloge i nadležnosti jedinica lokalnih samouprava u tom procesu. Primjerice, evidentan je problem neujednačenosti uvjeta rada u školama na različitim geografskim lokacijama, što ugrožava ostvarivanje jednakih mogućnosti (kvalitetnog) obrazovanja za sve učenike.² Također, u sustavu financiranja nije vidljiva jasna strategija kapitalnih ulaganja i investicijskih održavanja pa se škole zbog visokih troškova gradnje i održavanja često percipiraju kao značajan teret lokalnih (i državnih) proračuna.³ Najavljuje se i provedba mjera izgrađivanja mehanizama koordinacije i zajedničkog planiranja svih upravljačkih tijela u obrazovnom sustavu, kao i praćenje

² Rezultati istraživanja obrazovnih postignuća učenika osmih razreda koje je proveo Institut „Ivo Pilar” među 46.196 učenika u 842 redovite osnovne škole u školskoj godini 2007./2008. ukazali su na nekoliko čimbenika koji imaju efekte na učenička postignuća: lokacija škola (urbane odnosno ruralne), je li škola matična ili područna, rad u smjenama, veličina škole, terenska nastava, je li učenik putnik, stupanj obrazovanja roditelja itd. Autori sugeriraju sljedeće: da bi škole bile uspješnije, mora se intervenirati u njihova statusna obilježja, odnosno učinkovitije raditi s njihovim osnivačima, ali i raditi na osamostaljenju područnih škola, ulagati u one škole koje su na područjima od posebne državne skrbi, organizirati dodatnu nastavu za djecu roditelja s nižim stupnjem obrazovanja i rasteretiti postojeće školske programe.

³ O problemu nejasne strategije raspodjele financijskih sredstava od središnje obrazovne vlasti za decentralizacijske funkcije kapitalnih ulaganja na lokalnoj razini govori i podatak da su 2007. godine gradu Rijeci kao osnivaču bila odobrena financijska sredstva samo za jedan projekt (dogradnju jedne osnovne škole) u visini od 3,5 milijuna kuna, iako su aplicirali za četiri projekta; u tom istom razdoblju gradu Splitu odobrena su financijska sredstva za jednu novu školu i pet dogradnji u iznosu od 60 milijuna kuna; gradu Zadru dodijeljena su sredstva za dvije nove škole u iznosu od 50 milijuna kuna, a Zagrebačkoj županiji sredstva u iznosu od 79 milijuna kuna (izvor: source: Grad Rijeka (2007)).

njihovih učinaka. U tom kontekstu naglašava se važnost jasno definiranih uloga i razina nadležnosti dionika zaduženih ili zainteresiranih za obrazovanje, posebno ističući one na razini lokalnih i područnih samouprava. U Strategiji (Hrvatski Sabor, 2014) je usuglašen stav da upravljanje obrazovnim sustavom treba znatno unaprijediti. Pronalaženje boljih načina definiranja uloga, ovlasti i odgovornosti na različitim razinama upravljanja obrazovnim sustavom svakako predstavlja nužan preduvjet za poboljšanje opće kvalitete funkcioniranja obrazovnog sustava, pogotovo kad se već prepoznaju pretjerano složene (time i preskupe) forme upravljanja obrazovnim sustavom koje Ball (2009) naziva „heterarhijama”. Te nadstrukture ukazuju na djelovanja složene mješavine hijerarhije, mreža i tržišta u procesima upravljanja obrazovanjem⁴. Pritom može doći do isprepletanja, multipliciranja i nadmetanja ovlasti i utjecaja između različitih tijela koordinacije (Woods i Simkins, 2014), što se na razini pojedinih škola uočava preko neujednačenih uvjeta za rad ili postizanja različitih razina kvalitete postignuća. U hrvatskom obrazovnom sustavu ustrojen je veći broj različitih (upravljачkih) tijela koja na nacionalnoj i lokalnoj razini obnašaju stručne, savjetodavne ili administrativno-upravne funkcije. Ustrojena kao tijela državne uprave, agencije ili javne ustanove, nacionalna vijeća, centri ili uredi, ta se tijela mogu promatrati kao formalno ustrojena tijela integracije obrazovnog sustava na nacionalnoj razini, no nema dovoljno empirijskih podataka o njihovoj stvarnoj učinkovitosti i doprinosu, uvažavanju njihove uloge od autoriteta koji su ih imenovali i kojima odgovaraju, njihovoj međusobnoj komunikaciji i eventualnom preklapanju uloga i interesa (Kovač, Buchberger i Rafajac, 2015). Ako se tomu doda podatak da se izmjenama političkih vlada često događaju i promjene u ustrojstvu tih istih tijela, iako za to ne postoje relevantni podaci o njihovoj dotadašnjoj (ne)učinkovitosti, stječe se dojam o vrlo složenoj (nerijetko i nejasnoj) isprepletenosti različitih utjecaja i ovlasti,⁵ ono što Ball naziva „zbnjujuća međugra ne/povjerenja” (Ball, 2007).

Drugi aspekt rasprave o učinkovitosti (decentraliziranog) upravljanja školama usredotočenje na odnos škola s lokalnim obrazovnim autoritetima i drugim vanjskim dionicima u lokalnom okruženju i na opseg školske autonomije u upravljanju i odlučivanju „iznutra”. U posljednje se vrijeme ističe da škole nisu i ne mogu biti ekstenzije državne birokracije, nego trebaju biti regulirane i vođene na regionalnoj/ lokalnoj razini prema vlastitim potrebama i kapacitetima. O nužnosti poboljšanja tih

⁴ Heterarhije se mogu uočiti promatranjem postojećih tijela zaduženih za koordinaciju i kontrolu različitih aspekata obrazovnog sustava na nacionalnoj ili lokalnoj, tj. područnoj razini. Jedna linija tih tijela može se slijediti kroz vertikalnu delegiranu ovlasti preko resornog ministarstva do jedinica lokalne samouprave. Druga linija prati vertikalnu koja se spušta od središnjih državnih agencija zaduženih za obrazovanje do njihovih podružnica na lokalnoj razini, pri čemu valja pratiti broj agencija i vrstu zadaća koje su im delegirane. Tome valja pridodati i utjecaj određenih nevladinih organizacija, kao i različite forme tržišnih mehanizama koji se reflektiraju u određenim aspektima djelovanja pojedinih škola.

⁵ Prema Programu Vlade Republike Hrvatske za mandatno razdoblje 2016. – 2019. jedna je od smjernica ukidanje agencija u Ministarstvu znanosti, obrazovanja i sporta, zatim osnivanje Zavoda za školstvo koji bi, pretpostavlja se, preuzeo sve ingerencije i poslove postojećih agencija (za cijelu prosvjetnu vertikalnu) uz uvođenje stručno-pedagoškog nadzora i institucije glavnog školskog nadzornika kojega imenuje Hrvatski sabor na 5 godina.

decentralizacijskih značajki upravljanja obrazovnim sustavom u Hrvatskoj upozorio je Radó (2010) u svojoj stručnoj studiji o provedbi decentralizacije obrazovanja u zemljama jugoistočne Europe, ističući da škole u Hrvatskoj još nisu iskoristile svoj „decentralizacijski potencijal” u smislu većeg osamostaljivanja u lokalnom kontekstu, stvaranja učinkovitih partnerstava s drugim školama i povećanja kvalitete svojih obrazovnih usluga. U tom se kontekstu osobito ističe uloga lokalnih obrazovnih autoriteta koji moraju primjereno osiguravati i jačati kapacitete škola na svom području istodobno prateći tijek implementacije važnih odluka.⁶ U raspravi o učinkovitim praksama upravljanja obrazovanjem na lokalnoj razini polazi se od pretpostavke da svaka razina upravljanja školama u određenoj mjeri doprinosi jačanju učinkovitosti pojedinih škola (Fullan, 2007). Iako iz znanstvenih publikacija češće i više doznajemo o rezultatima istraživanja o povezanosti određenih aspekata ravnateljskog vođenja škole i učinkovitosti škole (Kovač, Staničić i Buchberger, 2014), utvrđeno je da neki aspekti funkcioniranja tijela nadležnih za školstvo pri jedinicama lokalnih samouprava također mogu doprinijeti postizanju boljih školskih i učeničkih postignuća, o čemu će biti više riječi u nastavku teksta. Važno je također razmotriti pitanje imaju li ta tijela na raspolaganju sve relevantne resurse i instrumente kojima mogu osigurati trajno unaprjeđenje postignuća škola u njihovoj nadležnosti. Polazište za raspravu o tim i sličnim pitanjima nalazimo u samoj prirodi decentralizacije upravljanja obrazovanjem.

Priroda decentralizacije upravljanja obrazovanjem

Decentralizacija se najčešće opisuje kao prijenos autoriteta odnosno prava na odlučivanje o određenim pitanjima od javnog interesa od državne prema nižim razinama, no razumijevanje svrhe i načina na koji se ona provodi u određenom nacionalnom obrazovnom kontekstu zahtjeva praćenje velikog broja elemenata. Poznato je da se decentralizacija može provesti u različitim formama, ovisno o snazi dodijeljenog autoriteta nižim razinama: najčešće se pojavljuju oblici koji se nazivaju dekoncentracija, delegacija i devolucija (Kovač, Buchberger, i Rafajac, 2015)⁷. No, važno je pratiti i neke druge aspekte decentralizacije, primjerice, je li provedena administrativna, politička, profesionalna i tržišna decentralizacija. Drugim riječima, valja razmotriti jesu li tijela legitimitet na nižim razinama (pravo na odlučivanje) dobila administrativnim, političkim, profesionalnim ili ekonomskim mehanizmima (Radó, 2010).

⁶ Na zahtjev osnivača škole su dužne predati osnivaču Izvješće o realizaciji Godišnjeg plana i programa rada škole za tekuću školsku godinu (s Izvješćem se prethodno upoznaje Učiteljsko vijeće, Vijeće roditelja i Školski odbor), kao i Izvješće o školskom kurikulumu.

⁷ Najslabiji oblik decentralizacije je dekoncentracija, a odnosi se na transfer određenih administrativnih ovlasti na niže razine odlučivanja koje ostaju direktno podređene središnjoj vladinoj agenciji. Svrha takvog transfera je približavanje neposrednim korisnicima usluga, odnosno povećanje učinkovitosti središnje uprave i u pravilu ne umanjuje ulogu države. Delegiranjem se autoritet prenosi na organizacije koje država direktno ne nadzire. Prijenos prava na odlučivanje je privremen, čime se ne stvara stabilnost za srednje ili dugoročno planiranje. Najснаžniji oblik decentralizacije je devolucija, čije je obilježje utemeljenost u zakonu. Prijenos odluka je trajan, a država može intervenirati samo propisivanjem okvira prema kojem se provode delegirani zadaci.

Priroda decentralizacije upravljanja obrazovanjem u pojedinom nacionalnom sustavu određena je postignutim dogovorom ključnih dionika o pitanjima autonomije, kontrole i varijeteta (pružatelja) obrazovnih usluga (Woods i Simkins, 2014). Pojednostavljeno rečeno, dodjelom autonomije nekoj od nižih instanci upravljanja rasteretiti će se središnja vlast od odgovornosti za donošenje dijela odluka. Pritom se pretpostavlja da će lokalno donesene odluke biti primjerenije specifičnom kontekstu u kojem djeluju pojedine škole. Kontrola koju pritom zadržava središnja vlast trebala bi osigurati da se u svakoj školi postižu jamčena kvaliteta obrazovnih usluga i primjereni uvjeti za rad. Postignuti varijetet obrazovnih usluga znači da specifične grupe učenika dobivaju njima primjerene obrazovne usluge⁸. Uobičajeno je da najviša razina autoriteta (država) nužno zadržava odgovornost za temeljna pitanja funkcioniranja obrazovnog sustava i u skladu s time implementira instrumente kontrole nad njima. Jedan od važnijih instrumenata državne kontrole nad obrazovanjem jest nacionalni obrazovni kurikulum⁹ uz upotrebu standardiziranog testiranja postignuća učenika. Paralelno s time, definiraju se mjere koje se primjenjuju u slučaju ostvarivanja nižih rezultata od očekivanih. Te se mjere mogu donijeti i primjenjivati na razini lokalnih uprava, pojedinih škola ili pojedinih učenika. Ono što otežava primjenu tog naoko jednostavnog principa jest pitanje odgovornosti za praćenje načina na koje se osiguravaju, dodjeljuju i koriste odgovarajući decentralizacijski instrumenti i resursi.

Primjerenom autonomijom obrazovnog sustava na lokalnoj i regionalnoj razini moguće je uskladiti potrebe za obrazovnim uslugama između građana i društveno-ekonomskih subjekata koji djeluju u određenoj lokalnoj zajednici (Kandeva, 2001; Smerdel, 2006). Kad lokalna vlast uglavnom provodi odluke koje donosi središnja vlast, tada njezina uloga kao predstavnika lokalne zajednice i osnivača škole postaje problematična. Naime, u odnosu prema „višoj” i „nižoj” razini odlučivanja obrazovne se strukture na lokalnoj razini u najmanju ruku nalaze u nezahvalnoj situaciji. Ako se ponašaju kao produžena ruka „središnjice” (vladini agenti) i koncentriraju na praćenje prethodno definiranih pokazatelja uspješnosti škole, bez prilagođavanja razvojnim kapacitetima lokalnih škola, riskiraju udaljavanje od škola i roditelja. S druge strane, ako razviju vlastite pokazatelje uspješnosti i u bliskoj suradnji sa školama oblikuju planove razvoja, u izvjesnom smislu riskiraju udaljavanje od središnje vlasti i moguće

⁸ Iz analiziranih primjera uočava se da osnivači velik dio sredstava ulažu za potrebe učenika koji traže produženi boravak u školi, kao i za one kojima treba posebna potpora. Primjerice, za potrebe produženog boravka (i cjelodnevnog nastave) osigurali su u svom proračunu za 2015. god: grad Zagreb (31.096.000,00 kn), grad Rijeka (1.417.000,00 kn), grad Zadar (1.350.300,00 kn), grad Split (600.000,00 kn), grad Kastav (150.000,00 kn), grad Novi Vinodolski (65.000,00 kn). Za potrebe unaprjeđenja i pomoći u nastavi i obrazovanju osigurali su u svom proračunu putem različitih programa: grad Rijeka za program „Rinkluzija”, općina Fužine za program „Pomoć u obrazovanju” (5.000,00 kn), grad Novi Vinodolski za sufinanciranje Odjela za govorno-jezični poremećaj (1.000,00 kn) i za pomoćnike u nastavi (40.000,00 kn). Grad Zadar također osigurava sredstva za pomoćnike u nastavi (2.284.900,00 kn), kao i grad Zagreb za pomoćnike u nastavi/stručne komunikacijske posrednike (4.400.000,00 kn).

⁹ Nacionalni okvirni kurikulum u Republici Hrvatskoj (MZOS RH, 2011) predstavlja zakonski okvir na temelju kojega se definiraju i donose školski kurikuli, uzimajući pritom u obzir odgojno-obrazovne potrebe i prioritete učenika, škole i sredine u kojoj škola djeluje.

neostvarivanje nacionalnih standarda postignuća (Campbell, 2000; Munn, 1992).

Važna pretpostavka razvijanja okvira za analizu prakse upravljanja školama na lokalnoj razini je razumijevanje matrice upravljanja obrazovanjem (vidjeti Eurydice, 2012, str. 50 i 51). Njome se povezuju tipovi ključnih odluka iz područja obrazovanja¹⁰ s akterima koji sudjeluju u odlučivanju. Domena koja dobro ilustrira stupanj i vrstu provedene decentralizacije je decentralizacija financiranja. Pritom je važno uočiti sljedeće: a) koja je razina vlasti odgovorna za osiguravanje određenog udjela financijskih resursa za obrazovanje; b) gdje se i kako odlučuje o raspodjeli resursa i c) o kojim vrstama troškova tko odlučuje. Ono što treba uvažavati prilikom odlučivanja o prirodi decentralizacije financiranja jest sljedeće: koja razina vlasti najbolje poznaje razvojne i druge potrebe škola; koji akter ima pretpostavke i kompetencije za donošenje najboljih odluka u pravcu jačanja školskih kapaciteta; može li taj akter osigurati ujednačenost uvjeta za rad u različitim školama, kao i kome i kako akter odgovara za kvalitetu donesenih odluka. Komentirajući financijsku decentralizaciju obrazovanja u Hrvatskoj u uvjetima opće krize financiranja javnog sektora, Nikolić (2007) upozorava na to da nedostatno financijsko ulaganje u bilo koji segment obrazovanja ima višestruke negativne posljedice. Primjerice, ako se ne ulaže dovoljno u plaće nastavnika, ili barem u jednakoj mjeri kao u plaće drugih visokoobrazovanih profesionalaca u javnom sektoru, najčešće dolazi do negativne selekcije nastavnog kadra i kao posljedica toga do slabije kvalitete poučavanja u školama. Nije zanemarivo da to može dovesti i do lošijeg školskog kadra odgovornog za upravljanje i vođenje u školama.

Povezano s tim je i pitanje odgovornosti aktera upravljanja na nižim razinama odlučivanja. Razvijanje sustava osiguravanja kvalitete rada pojedinih aktera kojima je dodijeljena ovlast za donošenje odluka neophodan je mehanizam koji mora pratiti svaki korak provedbe decentralizacijskih procesa. U tom kontekstu može poslužiti okvir za praćenje odgovornosti pojedinih aktera koji se sastoji od tri temeljna elementa: a) praćenja strukture odgovornosti (koje su odgovornosti preuzeli i na koji im je način odgovornost dodijeljena); b) praćenja parametara odgovornosti (kome su pojedini akteri odgovorni za svoje odluke) i c) praćenja implikacija odgovornosti (načina na koji se događaju promjene uslijed poduzetih aktivnosti) (Allen i Mintrom, 2010; Glatter, 2012). Analize po predloženom okviru mogle bi pružiti vrijednu osnovu za istraživanje učinkovitosti aktualne prakse (decentralizacije) upravljanja obrazovnim sustavima.

¹⁰ U cilju međunarodne usporedbe podataka o tipovima upravljanja u pojedinim nacionalnim sustavima koristi se sljedeća taksonomija odluka: a) Odluke vezane uz kadrovske resurse (s obzirom na izbor školskog ravnatelja i određivanje njegovih dužnosti i ovlasti te s obzirom na zapošljavanje učitelja); (b) Odluke vezane uz financijske resurse (korištenje javnih resursa uz kapitalne troškove, troškove održavanja i nabavu računalne i ostale opreme, kao i pribavljanja sredstava iz privatnih izvora) i (c) Odluke vezane uz pitanja nastave i učenja (određivanje sadržaja obaveznih i izbornih dijelova programa, odabir nastavnih metoda, udžbenika, grupiranje učenika i kriterija vrednovanja učenika). Tome valja pridodati da se razlike mogu pojaviti i u načinu odlučivanja: primjerice, sudjelovanje određenog aktera u donošenju odluka ne mora nužno značiti da taj akter ima autoritet za donošenje konačne odluke, zbog čega takve komparativne podatke valja oprezno interpretirati.

Jačanje upravljačkih kapaciteta za decentralizirano upravljanje obrazovanjem

Poznato je da značajniju ulogu u odlučivanju o obrazovnim pitanjima na lokalnoj razini u Hrvatskoj imaju sljedeći subjekti: osnivači škola, odnosno nadležni uredi lokalnih samouprava (županija, gradova i općina) za pitanja školstva; regionalni uredi državne uprave i regionalne podružnice Agencije za odgoj i obrazovanje. Razmatrajući nadležnosti koje su im dodijeljene¹¹, valja propitati u kojoj mjeri ti akteri mogu samostalno i učinkovito realizirati svaku pojedinu ulogu, odnosno jesu li im istodobno osigurani dostatni kapaciteti i instrumenti za njihovo nesmetano provođenje.

Moguće je izdvojiti neke pokušaje grupiranja takvih uloga i njihovu važnost za postizanje boljih postignuća škola. Fullan (2007) je pojedine uloge grupirao u tri područja upravljanja na lokalnoj razini: a) pedagoško (aktivnosti vezane uz procese učenja, poučavanja i profesionalno usavršavanja pedagoških djelatnika), b) političko (aktivnosti vezane uz osiguravanje resursa, stvaranje suradnji i mreže) i c) menadžersko (aktivnosti vezane uz nadzor, podršku, planiranje, uključivanje)¹². Zaključuje da su posljedice zanemarivanja ili slabijeg funkcioniranja bilo kojeg od ta tri područja upravljanja direktno vidljive u postizanju slabijih rezultata na razini pojedine škole ili razini lokalne samouprave. Radó (2010) navodi i komentira sljedeće uloge koje se dodjeljuju osnivačima škola u većini nacionalnih sustava:

1. koordiniranje regionalnog plana razvoja obrazovnog sustava
2. balansiranje između postojećih kapaciteta škola i potreba za obrazovanjem (u terminima broja učenika koji su stekli uvjete za ulazak u škole)
3. posredovanje između interesa i potreba roditelja i lokalne zajednice za obrazovnim uslugama, pri čemu iskazani interesi i potrebe mogu biti nadopuna onima postavljenima na nacionalnoj razini
4. izvođenje redovite pravne i financijske kontrole poslovanja škola, uključujući i evaluaciju rada ravnatelja
5. osiguravanje socijalne jednakosti u lokalnom kontekstu, povezujući obrazovne usluge škole s demografskim posebnostima lokalne zajednice
6. koordiniranje suradnje između škola s ciljem poboljšanja postignuća škola.

Komparativne analize provedene u zemljama jugoistočne Europe pokazuju da je uloga lokalne razine u upravljanju obrazovanjem još uvijek marginalna¹³, pa vrijedi dodatno ispitati potrebe za jačanjem kapaciteta pojedinih lokalnih tijela upravljanja za optimalno provođenje svake od navedenih i preuzetih uloga.

¹¹ Detaljniji popis nadležnosti i funkcija pojedinih aktera reguliran je Zakonom o odgoju i obrazovanju u osnovnoj i srednjoj školi: pročišćeni tekst zakona (NN 87/08, 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 126/12, 94/13, 152/14), na snazi od 30. 12. 2014.

¹² Navedeni primjeri gradova i općina pokazuju da osnivači škola značajna sredstva ulažu u pedagoško područje vođenja (na potporu školskim programima koji su usmjereni na jačanje učeničkih kompetencija i na posebne potrebe škola ili učenika (sufinanciranje prijevoza ili udžbenika, zatim pomoćnika u nastavi).

¹³ Valja podsjetiti da je u Hrvatskoj decentralizacija obrazovanja predviđena Zakonom (čl. 2, st. 7. Zakona o odgoju i obrazovanju u osnovnim i srednjim školama (Hrvatski Sabor, 2008).

Sljedeća skupina istraživanja (Campbell, 1999; Codingley i Kogan, 1993; Ranson, 1992 i dr.) rezultirala je izdvajanjem onih zadaća lokalnih obrazovnih vlasti koje imaju ključan doprinos u podizanju obrazovnog standarda i obrazovnih postignuća. Izdvojene su sljedeće: a) izrada vizije razvoja s odgovarajućim obrazovnim strategijama, b) pružanje financijske potpore školama u cilju jačanja njihovih kapaciteta i jačanja kvalitete obrazovnih usluga, c) uspostavljanje jednakih pretpostavki za razvoj među školama utemeljenih na inkluzivnom sustavu obrazovanja i d) posredovanje u situacijama mogućih tenzija između različitih dionika (primjerice, roditelja, učenika i škole). Da bi se u optimalnoj mjeri ostvarile navedene uloge lokalnih obrazovnih vlasti, važno je prepoznati i u analizi se koristiti dostupnim instrumentima učinkovitog upravljanja obrazovanjem na lokalnoj razini.

Instrumenti učinkovitog upravljanja školama na lokalnoj razini

Dufour i Marzano (2011) također ističu da način upravljanja školama na lokalnoj razini ima značajan efekt na postizanje boljih učeničkih postignuća i općenito na unaprjeđenje školskog sustava. Ključna uloga jedinica lokalne samouprave realizira se putem iznalaženja strategija potpore kojima se jačaju kapaciteti pojedinih škola, njihovih ravnatelja i učitelja, nužni za postizanje i održavanje zacrtanih ciljeva¹⁴. Ono što valja naglasiti jest da strategije potpore moraju biti kontinuirane: njihov je pozitivan efekt vidljiv i prati se isključivo putem postizanja dugoročne održivosti dobrih rezultata škole. Pritom je važno postaviti jasne ciljeve u terminima očekivanih učeničkih postignuća na razini lokalne samouprave, pojedine škole i određene grupacije učenika, definirati strategije koje vode prema postizanju takvih ciljeva te dogovoriti pokazatelje koji će se koristiti za praćenje njihove realizacije. Cilj praćenja rezultata pojedinih škola na lokalnoj razini nije njihovo javno rangiranje ili ocjenjivanje, već praćenje i vrednovanje napretka pojedine škole u odnosu na prije postignute rezultate i njezine specifične uvjete. Već je rečeno da u Hrvatskoj nisu dostupni sustavni podaci o mjerama koje pojedine jedinice lokalnih samouprava poduzimaju u cilju jačanja učinkovitosti škola u njihovoj nadležnosti, niti o izravnoj povezanosti korištenih mjera s jačanjem učinkovitosti škola. No, neke se pretpostavke mogu izvući iz podataka o provedenim istraživanjima aktivnosti lokalnih samouprava u drugim nacionalnim kontekstima.

Honig i Rainey (2012) su istraživale obilježja *policy* inicijativa na lokalnoj i školskoj razini i njihovu povezanost s poboljšanjem obrazovnih postignuća u pojedinim školama. Istraživanje je pokazalo da su s boljim školskim uspjehom povezane isključivo inicijative koje su: a) usmjerene na učenje i poučavanje u školama, b) popraćene

¹⁴ Newman i suradnici koriste se konceptom „kapacitet škole” kako bi opisali kolektivnu učinkovitost cjelokupnog osoblja škole koje zajedno radi na poboljšanju učenikova učenja. Autori su identificirali pet međusobno povezanih komponenti kapaciteta škole: pedagoške kompetencije i stavove nastavnika, stručne (profesionalne) zajednice, zajednički programi, tehnički resursi škole i ravnateljsko vođenje (Newmann i sur., 2000.)

investiranjem u jačanje kapaciteta škole koji su bili neophodni za implementaciju pedagoških inicijativa i c) aktivno uključivale lokalne samouprave u njihovu provedbu. Doznaje se također da su neke strategije djelovanja lokalne samouprave u visokoj korelaciji s boljim obrazovnim postignućima. To su primjerice: smanjivanje pojava koje učiteljima odvlače pažnju od temeljnih školskih djelatnosti, učinkoviti mehanizmi povezivanja s roditeljima, zajednicom i poslovnim sektorom, kao i zajedničko stvaranje razvojnih planova škola (Fullan, 2007).¹⁵

Neki pokazatelji učinkovitog upravljanja školama na lokalnoj razini mogu se izdvojiti iz rezultata istraživanja suradnje lokalnih obrazovnih autoriteta sa školama, u sustavima koji su proveli viši stupanj decentralizacije obrazovanja i školske autonomije¹⁶ (primjerice: Campbell, 2002; Parish, Baxter, i Sandals, 2012; Riley i sur., 1999). Ispitanici, uglavnom ravnatelji škola i predstavnici lokalnih obrazovnih vlasti, procjenjivali su i komentirali djelotvornost realizacije različitih uloga i područja djelovanja lokalnih obrazovnih autoriteta u uvjetima jačanja školske autonomije. Istraživanje je pokazalo da lokalni obrazovni autoriteti izričito podupiru ideju povećanja autonomije škola u budućnosti i model upravljanja utemeljen na potrebama škole. Posebno se ističe važnost poticanja međusobne suradnje lokalnih škola, što postaje razvojni prioritet upravljanja na lokalnoj razini. Ravnatelji škola također smatraju da učinkovitost škola u dobroj mjeri ovisi o međusobnoj suradnji i podršci lokalnih škola. Važno je naglasiti da se autonomija škole pritom ne doživljava kao način udaljavanja od utjecaja lokalnih autoriteta, već kao prilika za učinkovitiju suradnju s različitim vanjskim dionicima (Parish, Baxter, i Sanders, 2012).

Malobrojna su istraživanja koja donose podatke o važnosti kompetencija potrebnih za stvaranje učinkovitih partnerstava, zatim stvaranje vertikalnih i horizontalnih mreža između različitih razina donositelja odluka u obrazovanju (primjerice, Daly i sur., 2013). Autori polaze od pretpostavke da je zauzimanje primjerene pozicije u tim socijalnim mrežama povezano s mogućnošću stjecanja pristupa relevantnim resursima (podacima, konzultacijama, ekspertizama) i sposobnosti upravljanja protokom tih resursa unutar mreže. Doznaje se da akteri koji zauzmu bolje pozicije u socijalnim mrežama, a to su akteri koji ostvaruju veću kvantitetu razmijenjenih resursa (bez obzira na to je li akter primatelj ili davatelj resursa drugim akterima), zatim akteri koji ostvaruju manju socijalnu distancu s drugim akterima (ostvaruju bolju komunikaciju i povezanost s drugim akterima u mreži) imaju više uspjeha u poduzimanju inicijativa vezanih uz unapređivanje školskih i učeničkih postignuća. Pritom značajan efekt na zauzimanje središnjih pozicija u takvim društvenim mrežama imaju stečene upravljačke kompetencije, napose posjedovanje organizacijskih, upravljačkih i

¹⁵ Primjeri odabranih gradova i općine koji se navode u radu pokazuju da su inicijative lokalnih upravljačkih tijela češće usmjerene na potporu programa čiji je cilj jačanje određenih učeničkih kompetencija nego one koje su usmjerene na jačanje kompetencija učitelja. S druge strane, nije poznato na koji način se jedinice lokalne samouprave u Hrvatskoj aktivno uključuju u praćenje implementacije ili izradu zajedničkih strategija razvoja škola.

¹⁶ U ovom primjeru se prikazuju istraživanja provedena u Engleskoj, Walesu i Škotskoj.

financijskih znanja. Stoga je neophodno propitati na koji se način pojedini akteri, kojima se povjerava dužnost upravljanja obrazovanjem, osposobljavaju i biraju za njezino uspješno izvršavanje.

Prisutnost lokalne obrazovne vlasti u pojedinim školama vidljiva je putem različitih aktivnosti potpore postojećih kapaciteta škola s ciljem razvijanja učinkovitog učenja i podučavanja. Učinkovite lokalne samouprave razvijaju specifične i prepoznatljive strategije poboljšanja školskih i učeničkih postignuća. Hatcher (2014) uočava tri tipa takvih strategija koje se razlikuju prema svojoj primarnoj usmjerenosti: a) preventivno-korektivne, koje su usmjerene na potporu slabijim školama kako bi udovoljile nacionalnim standardima postignuća; b) razvojne (uključuju preventivno-korektivne mjere) koje rezultiraju smjernicama za unaprjeđenje kurikula ili uvode neke dodatne programske dimenzije u cilju poboljšanja profesionalnih šansi i c) kritičke (uključuju preventivne, korektivne i razvojne mjere). One propituju dominaciju pokazatelja neoliberalne obrazovne politike vidljivih u primarnoj brizi donositelja obrazovnih politika za ekonomsku učinkovitost obrazovanja.¹⁷ Takav tip strateškog upravljanja obrazovanjem na lokalnoj razini vlasti, praćen uključivanjem većeg broja dionika u proces odlučivanja, direktno smanjuje tradicionalnu politizaciju obrazovanja na lokalnoj razini. Koliko je depolitizacija moguća ovisi i o tome da li predstavnici različitih dionika u tijelima odlučivanja samo zastupaju vanjske dionike u tijelima upravljanja školom ili dionici realno i direktno sudjeluju u donošenju odluka. U tom kontekstu vrijedilo bi propitati koliko vanjski dionici, posebno vanjski članovi školskih odbora, doista posreduju između škola i lokalnih samouprava u donošenju odluka o strategijama poboljšanja školskih i učeničkih postignuća koje će se primjenjivati.

Holme, Diem, i Welton (2014) propituju i komentiraju učinke različitih tipova intervencija koje se s lokalne razine upravljanja provode u školskim okruzima s ciljem reagiranja na promjene u vanjskom okruženju. Pritom se najčešće analiziraju reakcije na sve veće demografske promjene karakteristične za pojedine okruge, odnosno promjene u demografskim karakteristikama populacije učenika u školama¹⁸. Autori uočavaju da nadležni okruzi najčešće provode takozvane *tehničke intervencije*, koje podrazumijevaju promjene u načinu poučavanja, kraće osposobljavanje pedagoških djelatnika ili manje prilagodbe školskih kurikula. Rjeđe se promišljaju i provode takozvane *normativne intervencije* (odnose se primjerice na edukaciju roditelja, učitelja i učenika o novim kulturama u cilju prevladavanja mogućih otpora i strahova od loših posljedica uključivanja različitih skupina učenika u škole), koje utječu na prirodu svakodnevnih interakcija u školama i razredima, bez kojih može biti ometeno postizanje željenih efekata tehničkih intervencija. *Političke intervencije* su vidljive

¹⁷ Iz primjera promatranih financiranih programa/projekata u gradovima i općinama uočava se značajna primjena razvojnih strategija.

¹⁸ Najčešće se radi o promjenama u socio-ekonomskom statusu obitelji učenika, promjenama u stratifikaciji učenika s obzirom na nacionalne, vjerske ili kulturološke razlike (česta posljedica većih migracija stanovništva) ili drugim promjenama koje od škola ili lokalnih zajednica zahtijevaju odgovarajuće intervencije, tj. prilagodbe u radu s novim skupinama učenika.

preko uključivanja novih dionika u tijela upravljanja na lokalnoj razini vlasti koje bi odgovarale aktualnim demografskim promjenama.¹⁹

Na kraju, važno je promatrati na koji se način (de)centralizacija obrazovnog sustava odražava na razini odnosa škole i drugih subjekata upravljanja obrazovanjem (Pastuović, 1996, 2012). U tom kontekstu moguće je pratiti koliko postojeći stupanj (de)centralizacije omogućava ili sprečava realizaciju nekih poželjnih trendova, primjerice suradnju škole i subjekata u vanjskom okruženju. Pritom se otvara pitanje poželjnog stupnja školske autonomije, kao i suradnje među školama, o čemu više u nastavku koji slijedi.

Poticanje suradnje među školama: snažan mehanizam učinkovitog upravljanja školama na lokalnoj razini

Neki od pokazatelja snažne prisutnosti predstavnika lokalne obrazovne vlasti u školama (ujedno povezani s postizanjem boljih školskih i učeničkih postignuća) jesu uzajamno pružanje i analiza informacija o školskim postignućima, zajedničko donošenje odluka o razvojnim planovima i pružanje potpore za njihovu realizaciju (Fullan, 2007; Rilley i sur., 1999). U tom se kontekstu posebno naglašava trend poticanja aktivnog partnerstva među lokalnim školama i aktivnog koordiniranja mreže škola. Važna funkcija partnerstva škola je realizacija podrške „škola – školi” (*“school-to-school support”*). Takva partnerstva nemaju samo preventivnu ulogu, u smislu prepoznavanja škola u lokalnom okruženju kojima je potrebna pomoć, već i ulogu povezivanja sa školama koje su uspješne, pri čemu obje strane stječu određene prednosti. Mreža ravnatelja, koja djeluje (ili bi trebala djelovati) po principu povjerenja i uzajamnosti, predstavlja učinkovito upravljačko sredstvo za poboljšanje rada svih lokalnih škola. Pritom valja imati na umu da uspješnije škole nisu uvijek voljne davati podršku školama koje su neodržive i ulagati u njih resurse. Etička dimenzija međusobne suradnje i potpore je stup partnerstava škola, no u nekim je sustavima ta dimenzija podređena zahtjevima za konkurentnošću i tržišnim natjecanjem u obrazovanju²⁰.

¹⁹ Prema navedenim kategorijama primjeri naših gradova i općina pokazuju da nadležna tijela u Hrvatskoj uglavnom provode tehničke intervencije (primjer ZAKI-informatizacije knjižnice u Delnicama, E-matematičke učionice u Rijeci, EDU(kativnog) straničnika u Delnicama, dodatnih programa u Novom Vinodolskom, programa ranog učenja stranih jezika u Zadru ili nabave knjiga za školske knjižnice u Zagrebu), a nešto rjeđe programi koji bi pripadali kategoriji normativnih intervencija (primjer nekih dijelova riječkog programa „Moja Rijeka”).

²⁰ Važnost jačanje suradnje među školama prepoznaje i Europska komisija preko programa Erasmus+ nudeći školama i nadležnim lokalnim samoupravama konkretne instrumente financiranjem projekata stvaranja učinkovitih partnerstava (http://ec.europa.eu/education/opportunities/school/institutions_hr.htm) s ciljem poboljšanja standarda i kvalitete poučavanja i učenja.

„Strateškim partnerstvima” partnerima se putem takvih projekata omogućuje suradnja na pitanjima od zajedničkog interesa u razdoblju od jedne do tri godine u cilju stvaranja inovativnih projektnih rezultata (kao što su nastavni programi, priručnici, metodologije itd.) i/ili razmjene dobrih praksi i pokretanja novih oblika suradnje s partnerima iz različitih područja. Ono što valja naglasiti jest da odluka o korištenju takvih mehanizama ovisi o interesu, kapacitetima i zalaganju pojedinih jedinica lokalnih samouprava odnosno škola, što će za posljedicu imati nove razlike u razini učinkovitosti pojedinih škola.

Učinkovit mehanizam poticanja partnerstva među školama realizira se putem različitih modela organiziranja škola na lokalnoj razini (Woods i Simkins, 2014). U praksi su poznati modeli grupiranja određenog broja škola u *lokalne federacije* u kojima se putem restrukturiranja načina upravljanja školom ili dodjeljivanjem prava na zajedničko korištenje školskih resursa nastojalo ojačati kapacitete škola koje su postizale lošije rezultate. Radikalniji modeli povezivanja škola su *lokalni lanci škola*, koje se zbog slabijih postignuća izdvajaju iz nadležnosti lokalne samouprave i dodjeljuje drugim autoritetima. Češći primjeri su *lokalne kolaboracije škola* koje surađuju ili dijele resurse u nekim odabranim djelatnostima, primjerice sudjelovanju u inicijalnom obrazovanju ili profesionalnom usavršavanju nastavnika, bez promjena njihovih organizacijskih ili upravljačkih struktura. Takve intervencije u organizacijske i upravljačke strukture škola istodobno dotiču pitanja uključenosti novih dionika iz lokalne zajednice koji mogu iskazati interes za (su)odlučivanje o školskim pitanjima. Potraga za mjerama koje bi rezultirale jačanjem suradničke dimenzija škola, ali i jačanjem kapaciteta nadležnih jedinica lokalnih samouprava koje bi pokretale i održavale učinkovite oblike suradnje, ponovno otvara pitanje primjerene razdiobe ovlasti i odgovornosti za upravljanje školama i školskim postignućima. Veći stupanj školske autonomije uglavnom dovodi i do veće suradnje među školama, a stvaranje horizontalnih profesionalnih mreža škola povezuje se s osnaživanjem školskih kapaciteta i češćim uvođenjem poželjnih inovacija u rad škola. Higham i Earley (2013) interpretirali su stavove školskih ravnatelja o školskoj autonomiji i promjenama uloge lokalnih obrazovnih vlasti. Pritom se referiraju na recentni pravni okvir u Velikoj Britaniji koji osigurava školama veću razinu (financijske) autonomije, istodobno smanjujući proračunska sredstva lokalnim obrazovnim vlastima. Iako školski ravnatelji dijele uvjerenje o nekim pozitivnim implikacijama većeg stupnja školske autonomije, istodobno upozoravaju na to da smanjivanje potpore lokalnih obrazovnih vlasti može loše utjecati na razinu učeničkih i školskih postignuća. Budući da se u školama s većom autonomijom određene političke i menadžerske djelatnosti moraju samostalno obavljati u školama, ravnatelji iskazuju bojazan da će doći do prevelikog preusmjerenja njihova fokusa na menadžersko-upravljačke poslove umjesto na aktivnosti povezane s učenjem i poučavanjem. U svakom slučaju, školama i školskim vlastima je sasvim jasno da njihova razvojnost i održivost ponajviše ovise o međusobnoj podršci i suradnji na lokalnoj razini, ali i o snazi partnerstva s drugim vanjskim dionicima. Upravo širok raspon partnerstva najbolje svjedoči o živosti i dinamičnosti školskog sustava, ali i o kvaliteti samih obrazovnih usluga na lokalnoj razini.

Primjerice, istraživanja Highama i Earleya (2013) pokazuje kako većina školskih ravnatelja dijeli uvjerenje da škole više profitiraju jačanjem svoje lokalne mreže i suradnje nego jačanjem svoje autonomije. U tom procesu lokalne samouprave imaju primarnu odgovornost. Međusobna suradnja i podrška između škola potaknuta lokalnom samoupravom osobito dobiva na važnost u uvjetima u kojima su konkurencija i tržišno natjecanje glavni pokretači ključnih odluka obrazovne politike.

Zaključak

Učinkovito upravljanje školama na različitim razinama odlučivanja česta je tema u domaćem i inozemnom obrazovno-političkom diskursu. No, za razliku od drugih sredina u kojima se prikupljaju i analiziraju sustavni podaci o učinkovitosti djelovanja lokalnih razina odlučivanja, i njihovim implikacijama na poboljšanje kvalitete škola (boljih školskih i učeničkih postignuća), u Hrvatskoj takve analize nedostaju. Ne provode se istraživanja o učinkovitosti lokalnih upravljačkih tijela, njihovom doprinosu, njihovoj ulozi i odgovornosti, njihovoj komunikaciji s drugim subjektima u upravljanju obrazovanjem (Kovač, Buchberger, i Rafajac, 2015). Prema Strategiji obrazovanja, znanosti i tehnologije Republike Hrvatske nacionalna obrazovna politika predlaže jasnije definiranje uloga i razina nadležnosti svih instanci zaduženih ili zainteresiranih za obrazovanje, kao i iznalaženja kvalitetnijeg načina definiranja njihovih ingerencija i odgovornosti. Polazište za istraživanja tog fenomena u našim uvjetima mogu biti prije prikazani rezultati provedenih istraživanja i primjeri učinkovitog upravljanja obrazovanjem u drugim nacionalnim kontekstima. Pritom valja uvažiti specifičnost društveno-političkog konteksta i ekonomskih prilika u kojima se trenutno nalazi hrvatsko obrazovanje. Ne treba zanemariti činjenicu da se u Hrvatskoj provodi niz značajnih projekata i programa koje podupiru lokalne samouprave, odnosno osnivači škola: više podataka o načinu određivanja prioriteta potpore i njihovoj stvarnoj učinkovitosti, odnosno efektu na jačanje školskih i učeničkih postignuća, pokazat će buduća istraživanja i analize.

Napomena

Ovaj rad nastao je u okviru Projekta *Istraživanje školskog vođenja iz distributivne perspektive u hrvatskim školama (IScLEAD)* (IP-2014-09-1825) koji financira Hrvatska zaklada za znanost i Projekta *Ispitivanje obilježja školskog vođenja u hrvatskim osnovnim školama* (13.04.1.3.13) koji podupire Sveučilište u Rijeci.