

MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES IN THE ESTONIAN SCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract

This thesis talks about the school education system in Estonia, its structure, form and methods of management, as well as the similarities and differences between the principles of management in general education schools and the school management system in Uzbekistan.

Keywords: school structure, school management, management board, decentralized school.

Today, it has become common to mention Estonia among the countries with a developed education system. Looking at the results of the international PISA tests conducted in 2015 alone and involving 540,000 students from 72 countries, Estonia ranked ninth in math literacy, sixth in reading literacy, and sixth in science literacy. It was recognized as one of the best educational systems in the world by recording the third result in the exams¹.

The PISA results of 2018 were even higher. In this international test, in which 600,000 schoolchildren from 79 countries took part, Estonian students ranked third in all indicators: math literacy, reading literacy, science literacy, after China and Singapore². In these tests, they were able to surpass countries whose educational system is recognized by the whole world, such as Finland, Japan, South Korea, Great Britain, Germany, and the United States.

Estonia has launched significant initiatives to improve the quality of the education system. These include adjustments to the mechanisms of school financing, the establishment of the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020, the 2011 curricular reform in general education, the 2013 new standard for vocational education and the introduction of a new competency-based career system for teachers. In this dynamic policy context, there is an apparent desire to improve the use of school resources. This report analyses the use of resources in the Estonian school system, with a particular focus on the organisation of the school network, the funding of school education, school organisation and operation, and the teaching workforce. It identifies policy areas with potential efficiency gains or requiring further public investment³. Correct and effective reforms in the education system of this country serve as the main foundation of today's success of the country's education system. As in Finland, educational reforms in Estonia have been long-term and gradual.

¹ <https://www.businessinsider.com/pisa-worldwide-ranking-of-math-science-reading-skills-2016-12>

² <https://www.statista.com/chart/7104/pisa-top-rated-countries-regions-2016/>

³ Santiago, P. et al. (2016), OECD Reviews of School Resources: Estonia 2016, OECD Reviews of School Resources, OECD Publishing, Paris. P. 13.

Among the achievements of the country's education system, it is permissible to recognize the management system of general education schools, the independence given to schools.

In international comparison, Estonian schools have a high level of equality, just like in Finland. At the same time, Estonia has one of the most decentralized school systems in terms of decision-making, with an international survey showing that in 2010-11, 76% of decisions in Estonia were made at the school level, compared to an OECD average of 41%⁴. The National Regulation on the Public Education System defines only issues such as student evaluation criteria, maximum class sizes, minimum monthly salaries for teachers, and all other issues are reflected in the School Regulation.

In Estonia, the head of the school and various representative bodies bear the main responsibility for the organization and management of school activities. Various representative bodies include the Board of Trustees, the Board of Teachers, and the Management Board. Within the limits of his authority, the head of the school is responsible for the organization and the effectiveness of education and upbringing, other activities carried out in the school, the general condition and development of the school, legality and purposeful use of funds. Estonian schools have autonomy in determining tasks, terms of service and salaries for teaching and non-teaching staff⁵.

We can see that the structure of management apparatus in Estonian schools also has some differences compared to other countries. Usually, in addition to school principals and their deputies, Estonian schools employ "head teachers" who are responsible for teaching and learning. In the schools visited during the OECD audit, this position was commonly referred to as 'Pedagogical Program Coordinator'. Larger schools employ a 'financial manager' who takes responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school⁶.

The school is headed by the head of the school. The head of the school is responsible for the organization and efficiency of education, other activities carried out in the school, the general condition and development of the school, legality and purposeful spending of funds within the scope of his authority. The school has a teacher's council, whose task is to analyze and evaluate teaching and learning, to make decisions within its competence and to make decisions about teaching and learning. The school director, head teacher, teachers, assistant specialists and other persons appointed by the head of the school are members of the teachers' council. A representative of the students' council participates in the activities of the teachers' council. At this point, it should be noted that in this country, where liberal opposition prevails, the opinions of schoolchildren are also taken into account when organizing the activities of educational institutions.

⁴ Santiago, P. et al. (2016), OECD Reviews of School Resources: Estonia 2016, OECD Reviews of School Resources, OECD Publishing, Paris. P. 156.

⁵ Santiago, P. et al. (2016), OECD Reviews of School Resources: Estonia 2016, OECD Reviews of School Resources, OECD Publishing, Paris. P. 159.

⁶ That source P. 164.

Another governing body is the Board of Trustees, which includes the owner of the school (representative of the state or local government), the majority of the members of the board of teachers, representatives of parents, alumni and organizations supporting the school (including school staff 'must not'), the student council representative, if any, (note that upper secondary schools must have a student representative)⁷.

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Despite the fact that there are a number of similarities between the school education system of Estonia and Uzbekistan, some obstacles may be encountered in introducing all the features of the Estonian experience in our country. One of the first and main obstacles is demographic indicators. The population and the number of students studying in general education schools are 37 times less (!) compared to the indicators of Uzbekistan⁹. These factors, in turn, affect such indicators as the number of schools, the maximum capacity of classes in schools, the basic technical base of schools. For example, in Estonia there are on average 24 students in high school classes, while in our country this figure is 30-35.

Another aspect is mentality and cultural factors. Estonia has long been dominated by democratic and liberal views, and these factors are reflected in the people's culture, way of life and worldview. The reforms carried out and implemented in the country are carried out taking into account these. Therefore, applying successful foreign experience may not always work. Of course, each educational system has its own characteristics, and copying it completely is not always considered effective. In adopting successful experiences in education, each nation must adapt it to its own mentality and culture.

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