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Decision-Making Styles of Russian School Principals

This work discusses the results of a pilot project performed in 2013–14 within the framework of the Asian Leadership Project international comparative study, which continues research of school leadership in Europe and America since years 2006–2008. Alongside with Russia, the pilot project also included Australia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. After analyzing statistical reports on the Russian Federation as a whole, as well as on Moscow and Krasnoyarsk Krai in particular, we created a profile of an average school principal and identified their specific features across regions (age, sex, years of experience, competencies, etc.). Upon investigation of decision-making styles (A. Rowe’s Decision Style Inventory) applied by school principals in Moscow and Krasnoyarsk and by award winners in the School Principal professional competition, we found that contextual factors and personal and professional attitudes of school principals have considerable effects on school leadership

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style. This paper also discusses changes in school leadership styles over recent decades, managerial methods used by Russian school principals, and similarities and differences between school leadership practices in Russia and Canada. The report describes the concept and design of a future large-scale study of these issues.

1. Project history

We typically associate a figure of the school principal with revered educators like Janusz Korczak and Anton Makarenko. Their images live on in the minds of millions of Russians and provide cover for the wise and caring, yet dependent and dissatisfied Soviet-style principals so widely found in today's schools.

Who are these average Russian school principals? How do they make decisions (if they do)? What is their gender and age? With whom do they communicate; by what means do they organize cooperation within and outside the collective? What are their value systems and views of their profession? Are they leaders of their schools and pedagogical collectives?

Our study was launched by an invitation from the Center of Leadership Development in Education, National Research University–Higher School of Economics (NRU HSE) to participate in the Asia Leadership Project international comparative study. This project started in 2014, involving Russia, Australia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. It follows the project Improving School Leadership, which was carried out at the initiative of the OECD Directorate of Education in conjunction with the OECD Education Policy Committee in 2006–8. This study examined the phenomenon of school leadership in twenty-two OECD countries.¹

Project organizers proceeded from the assumption that “unlike the concept of principalship, which became popular in the mid-twentieth century, the concept of leadership has gained recognition over the past decade. The first concept is based on the industrial model of schooling, under which the functioning of the organization (school) is the responsibility of members of the

administration. With the leadership concept, however, managerial powers are distributed among different participants who perform different functions and have different roles both within and outside of the school” [9]. The project designers formulated a series of research questions based on these two notions of management.

1. Who are the leaders in today’s schools?
2. What professional skills and personal qualities are desirable for leaders both within and outside of the collective?
3. What qualities do today’s successful school principals have? Who becomes a principal and how? Are they all leaders of their collectives?
4. What is the composition of effective management teams and how are these teams formed? Who distributes powers among their members? What do members of management teams work on during the day, week, or year? Where and how are leaders trained?
5. How are leaders in the educational sphere trained?
6. And, finally, the main question (main managerial problem): Are school management styles connected with a school’s education results? If yes, then how?

At the final conference of the Improving School Leadership project in April 2008, researchers, policy makers, and practitioners all agreed that education systems in any country can be improved only when school leadership systems are successfully developed. This means that the primary task of education researchers is to study the existing corps of principals and their work and training.

It became clear during the stage of designing the study that the picture of school leadership in a multinational and multireligious country like Russia would be extremely varied and that managerial personnel would have their own specific characteristics in transitional countries, where both ownership relations and managerial institutions and mechanisms are going through transformations. This meant that, first of all, a picture of an average principal in Russia would have to be created by region and not for the entire country and that, secondly it is unlikely that a principal in Russia would be called

a school leader (principals are customarily considered administrators or managers). Also not typical for Russia are management teams that can plan the development of an organization, let alone principals who are prepared to dominate in their collectives, while at the same time following the orders of their superiors.

2. Managerial decision-making styles

At the informational stage of a society's development, requirements for the organization of the education process change. The main change is a move from teaching to learning. Clearly, movement toward this change is possible only by changing the nature of the relationship between the parties to the education process, which is defined, among other factors, by the decision-making style typical of leaders of educational organizations (schools).

The fact that the decision-making style of school principals influences the pace of education reform was confirmed in a study of school directors conducted in the Canadian province of New Brunswick. In 2002, the provincial government published an education development plan focused on improving the performance of all students. The strategy for achieving this goal included modernizing the learning process and transforming schools from hierarchical organizations to communities of professional collaboration. These types of communities involve a special form of leadership and school management, which includes active cooperation between teachers and the school administration, participation in the decision-making process by all stakeholders, and distribution of responsibilities for decisions. Over three years, the decision-making styles of 166 out of 259 principals at New Brunswick schools were studied.

It was revealed that, from 2002 to 2005, there was no move toward professional collaboration between principals and teachers (toward the participation of all the parties in the decision-making process and in the distribution of responsibilities), despite efforts to reform the education system in the province. Under one-quarter of principals surveyed were open to collaboration to resolve highly complex cognitive tasks using the conceptual approach as the

dominant decision-making style. Within the classification system established by A. Rowe, which was the basis for testing management styles, these kinds of principals are known as “high-class rational specialists.” These kinds of teachers love change, enjoy variety, examine all the details of a situation, and take their time making decisions. However, they prefer to solve tasks outside of partnerships with their colleagues, which does not promote the development of professional communities, that is, a change in the nature of the relationships that exist as part of the education process. The most widespread styles in high schools remained directive (33 percent) and analytical (25 percent) [13].

This study’s conclusions offered little comfort: Canadian principals continued to use a leadership style that does not contribute to results-oriented cooperation between teacher and student. Canadian researchers believe that one of the reasons this quality has been able to survive against the modernization of the education system is that the contemporary hierarchy of the education system encourages the use of the directive and analytical management styles. In other words, principals are merely conforming to the system in which they work.

The Canadian study used Alan Rowe’s inventory to monitor principals. The decision-making model he created is based on two variables: the leader’s focus on a goal (solvable tasks) and the cognitive difficulty of these tasks (Figure 1). Thus, the two expansions of this that characterize the behavior of a school leader are:

- (a) focus on the *colleague* as a *co-agent* for achieving a goal, or as a *worker* who acts as a *means* for resolving a task;
- (b) interest in *resolving* assigned and / or independently formulated tasks that are *cognitively difficult* (because they use additional information, require unconventional solutions, etc.), or interest in *streamlining tasks* as much as possible and solving them.

Table 1 lists the classifications and descriptions of decision-making styles according to A. Rowe. These classifications and

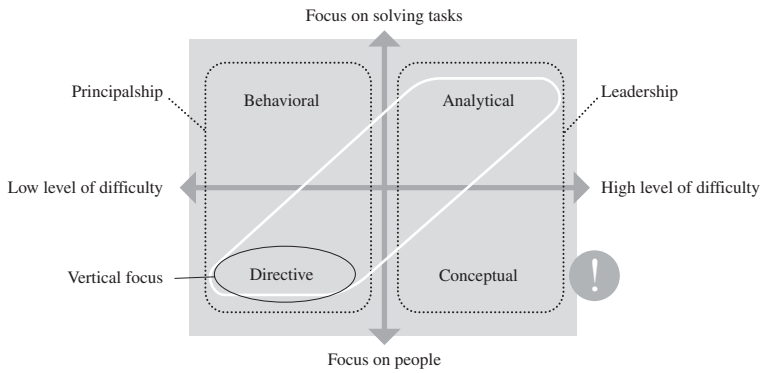


Figure 1. **Decision-making styles** (Alan Rowe)

descriptions can be used to form a picture of the leader's characteristics and possible consequences for the collective he or she leads.

There is no doubt that, the pure forms of these styles are never encountered in nature. Instead, there are dominant and subsidiary (preferred and avoided) styles. None of these styles are good or bad; different styles are appropriate for different managerial tasks. The decision-making style consists of means and options that leaders most frequently use to prepare and arrive at decisions. The leader's style is reproduced by employees which in a school does a great deal to determine the nature of the relationship between parties in the education process.

A. Rowe's inventory consists of twenty closed questions, each with four possible responses corresponding to each of Rowe's decision-making styles.² Respondents must rank the options by assigning them points (8, 4, 2, 1). According to Rowe, the more characteristic one option is of a person's management activities, the more points this option receives.

The characteristics of the decision-making method respondents choose are divided into four columns: preferred way for making decisions; amount of information required for this; format in which the information is presented; and the goal that the respondent focuses on when making a decision (Table 2). The total points for each column represent the frequency with which

Table 1

Decision-making styles, according to A. Rowe

| Style | Under stress | Motives | Focus when solving problems | Way of thinking |
|---|---------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Directive Focused on solving tasks of low cognitive difficulty | Explodes | Status, power | Rules | Focus on solving tasks |
| Analytical Focused on solving tasks of high cognitive difficulty | Follows rules | Change | Analysis and understanding | Logic |
| Conceptual Focused on people and solving tasks of high cognitive difficulty | Not stable | Recognition | Intuition | Creativity |
| Behavioral Focus on people and solving tasks of low cognitive difficulty | Avoids difficulties | Acceptance | Emotions and instinct | Emotional sensitivity |

Source: [Filinov, 2009].

the directive, analytic, conceptual, and behavioral styles are used in decision making.

Respondents' answers are collected in a table and then the total number of selections for each style are counted.

3. Overview of studies on school principals in Russia over the past twenty years

A retrospective analysis of the development of the profession of school principal in Russia shows that, since the gymnasias of tsarist times, generations of school directors have considered maintaining internal order and carrying out requirements to be the main aspects of their job [4]. For centuries, the leading components of a school director's job in Russia were supervision and control over the

Table 2

A. Rowe's descriptors for approaches to decision-making

| Name of Decision-Making Style | Preferred form for making decisions | Amount of information required | Preferred form of information | Decision-making focus |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Analytical | Individual | Large | Written | Selection of optimal option |
| Directive | Individual | Small | Oral | Time and practicality |
| Conceptual | Group | Large | Descriptive | Selection of optimal option |
| Behavioral | Group | Small | Oral | Relationships with people |

activities of students and teachers. School administrators did not have managerial skills; their main task was to fulfill directives from above with speed and precision. Therefore, loyal and obedient teachers generally rose through the ranks to become directors. After their appointments, directors typically spent a month attending professional development courses in the areas of finance and administration. From the point of view of their employer, successful directors did not need strategic planning and social design skills or knowledge of pedagogical innovations and research methods in the social sphere. A degree in higher pedagogical education continues to be sufficient in Russia for a person to become a teacher, a director, or a manager in the education system.

An overview of contemporary studies in education management and school leadership show that far more attention is devoted to this topic abroad than in Russia. In fact, the list of Russian publications in this area from the post-Soviet period is limited to several dissertation studies on school administration (e.g., 2; 3; 5]. Usually the conclusions reached in these works are grounded not in empirical data but in general assertions, theoretical models, and expert opinions.

One of the most significant studies, in our opinion, was the study of 1,400 school directors from six regions of Russia [6]. The goal of this study was to determine if school administrators are the initiators of and driving forces behind innovations to improve the functioning of their schools. The authors evaluated

the attitude of school directors to innovation, various aspects of the decentralization of education management, and the introduction of Western management technologies into practice. The results showed that no more than 1.5 percent of principals surveyed were completely independent and focused on applying new technologies. Most respondents characterized themselves as somewhat independent, but innovative and focused on better ways to organize education (Russian ways, that is, not ways recognized by the international academic community).

The goal of a survey of 282 school directors in four Russian regions, led by L.I. Fishman, was to study the professional values and stereotypes of school administrators [12]. The results found that there were five clusters of directors that differed significantly in terms of the nature of their values. The majority of directors made up a cluster with relatively high requirements for their activities (“typical” or “traditional–progressive” leaders). The remaining education managers were grouped into small clusters characterizing their specific professional views (“functional leaders,” “pseudocontemporary leaders,” “power seekers,” and “educational administrators”). Fishman maintains that after the first few years of work, the professional views and attitudes of school directors stop undergoing any significant changes. Moreover, syncretism and the absence of any patterns or reflexive analysis are typical of the structure of their professional consciences. External factors have the greatest influence on the formation of their professional attitudes. These factors include the requirements of supervising agencies for their activities and the outcome of these activities and regional personnel policies. Fishman concludes that the strict regulation of activities in the absence of clearly defined expectations makes the system less manageable and leads to a greater variety of professional cultures that are far removed from the logic of education management.

4. Hypothesis

We surmised that the management decision-making styles of school leaders would differ from region to region of Russia and

that one of the factors underlying these differences would be the specific content of regional educational policies. This would include management decision-making styles of leaders in the education system for the given territory, their approach to selecting and distributing personnel, and the nature of cooperation between stakeholders in educational institutions. We also posited that school directors who have won professional competitions differ from their colleagues in terms of decision-making style. They are more independent in their preferences and focusing on solving tasks with a high level of cognitive complexity.

5. Methods

The following materials were used to paint a picture of an average school principal for both Russia as a whole and the pilot regions in the study (two districts of Moscow and Krasnoyarsk Krai):

- data from the Federal statistical survey of Russia in education (form No. 83-rik “Information on the number and composition of workers at institutions implementing general education programs”; this information was gathered for the Russian Federation as a whole, Moscow, and Krasnoyarsk Krai over a period of four years from 2009 to 2012);
- results of questionnaires for school directors in the TALIS-2008³ study;
- the regulatory and legal framework governing the activities of directors at regional educational institutions, primarily the procedures for appointing principals (context-dependent factors);
- description and analysis of the professional practices of the best school principals in Iamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug.⁴

Common decision-making styles of school principals were evaluated using an online questionnaire, during which principals also filled out A. Rowe’s survey.

Moscow and Krasnoyarsk Krai were chosen for questioning principals, Moscow because it is the most developed region in the country and Krasnoyarsk krai because it is a massive, remote region far from the capital that stretches north to south and has a preponderance of village schools. Krasnoyarsk krai was also chosen because, during the most recent general elections in Russia, it produced a result that was close to the overall results for Russia. This means that this region may be tentatively viewed as “Russia in miniature.” In Krasnoyarsk krai, 874 of 1,128 principals took part in the survey.

Moscow’s Central District and South-Western Administrative Okrug—an administrative district on the city’s periphery—were selected for the survey. A total of 273 principals of schools located in these areas were surveyed (100 percent).

The results of each survey were compared against each other and against the results of random surveying of principals of general education institutions who won the Principal of the Year⁵ professional contest in 2011–13. Twenty-seven of the thirty finalists were surveyed.

One of the goals of this pilot study was to collect information using Rowe’s inventory and use these results to identify a collection of characteristics typical of the corps of principals (management decision-making styles), which could either be corroborated or disproved in the course of a larger-scale study. Since we charged ourselves with the tasks of obtaining information about management decision-making styles and determining the sensitivity of the tool set to the conditions of Russian reality, we limited ourselves to studying dominant styles (Rowe’s methodology offers designations for preferred, i.e. dominant, styles and styles that are avoided).

The respondent’s answers were collected in a chart and the total number of answers corresponding to one style or another was counted. Then, since we were only trying to determine the dominant decision-making style, we found the standard deviation for the total amount of each of the four columns for the entire range of observations. If the total amount for a given respondent was higher than the mean for the entire sampling plus half the

standard deviation, then this style was considered the respondent's preferred (dominant) style.

This data made it possible to obtain "profiles for management decision making." Each profile specifies the frequency of applying various decision-making styles by one of three groups of school principals. At this stage of the study, we did not correlate individual styles for a group of principals with the mean results for the region because this task was for the next stage of the study. Instead, we tried to discern an average picture by region.

We tested one more hypothesis based on the results of the online questionnaire. Having nominally divided the questions on the Inventory into two groups (the first giving professional characteristics of decision-making styles and the second giving personal characteristics as shown in [Table 3](#)), we evaluated the level to which school principals are willing to settle for a compromise in their activities. While directors may give in to administrative pressure from above in regard to decisions affecting their professional characteristics, according to our hypothesis, it is not so easy for them to make decisions if they have to sacrifice their personal principles. Offsetting the two profiles against each other when they overlap (professional and personal characteristics) shows the extent to which school principals are prepared to sacrifice their principles when making a decision. We called this phenomenon administrative aberration.

6. Results

The first group of results gives a statistical portrait of school principals in Russia as a whole and in two of its regions. The second group refers to the characteristics of decision-making styles for three categories of principals: two groups working in regions that participated in the pilot project and the winners of the School Principal professional contest. The third group of results makes it possible to evaluate how applicable the selected tools were for the study of decision-making styles common to school principals and determine the scale of the next stage of the study.

Table 3

Questions on A. Rowe's inventory that assess the professional and personal components of decision-making styles

| | Professional | Personal |
|----|---|--|
| 1 | I expect my colleagues to work quickly and efficiently, to follow orders with precision | My main goal is my status, to be the best |
| 2 | In my work I aim for practical results, the best solutions | I like technical work, working with people |
| 3 | When planning, I focus on current problems, on achieving goals | I work best with others one-on-one, in a small group |
| 4 | When using information, I prefer to focus on specific facts, a wide-ranging overview of specific opinions | If possible, I try to avoid long debates, unfinished work |
| 5 | When I encounter a problem, I use tried-and-true approaches, seek new solutions | I am especially good at remembering dates, working with people |
| 6 | When I'm not sure what to do, I rely on my intuition, look for facts, seek a compromise | When I am with other people, I usually speak with someone, think through what other people have said |
| 7 | If I am in a hurry, I make a decision and act quickly, pursue the priorities I have chosen | I am good at remembering dates and facts, people |
| 8 | I like working with people who are energetic and ambitious | My work gives me power, recognition |
| 9 | My decisions are practical and exact, take the needs of others into account | When I am under stress, I become uneasy, forgetful |
| 10 | I don't like losing control, following paradigms | Other people find me aggressive, disciplined |

6.1. Statistical portrait of school principals in Russia

As of the 2012–13 academic year, there were approximately 44,500 school principals in Russia. Six hundred and ninety-seven principals (about 1.5 percent) worked at private educational institutions. Sixty percent of principals worked at village schools and 74.4 percent were women.

An average Russian principal is a woman aged forty to fifty-five, who works full-time at a state school, usually in a village,

and has an additional teaching load. These principals have a first-category qualification and a higher pedagogical education.

Most principals have served in administrative positions for over twenty years and have retained their positions in spite of major changes that have occurred over this time in education policy and the organizational and financial status of institutions, teachers, and even principals (Figure 2).

The school integration process, which is currently under way in Moscow and is accompanied by a growth in the income of principals, has yet to lead to an increase in the number of administrators who have not previously served as subject teachers. The number of Moscow principals who enter classrooms as teachers on a daily basis remains high, and this figure is significantly higher than the mean for the Russian Federation and Krasnoyarsk krai (Figure 3).

It is possible that this shows that principals believe that they themselves must participate in the modernization of the academic process by setting standards. As “the teachers of teachers” love to say, Russian principals are more focused “on education” than on fulfilling administrative and managerial functions. In order to test this hypothesis, a special study must be organized on other grounds to obtain results on principals by school type and

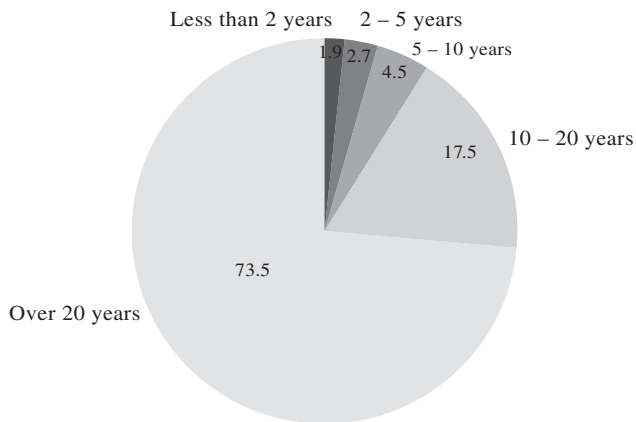


Figure 2. Length of employment of principals at state schools (percent)



Figure 3. Share of principals at state schools holding more than one position at the school (%)

category, number of students, and so forth.

Regulatory and objective-based documentation developed in Krasnoyarsk krai and the Central and Southwest districts of Moscow were analyzed as contextual factors affecting the makeup of the workforce of principals and the notion of effective and results-oriented principal activities. This documentation shows that the level of requirements for the professional qualification of principals is quite high. In both regions, principals are appointed on the basis of a competitive selection. The results of the educational institution’s activities are taken into consideration during performance reviews and when setting incentive payments.

New rules for the competitive selection of candidates for the position of principal have been in effect in Moscow since 2013.⁶ Appointment to this position is possible only on the basis of the results of a competition in which no fewer than two candidates have participated. Also, candidates must have considerable knowledge of education management, experience as a successful leader, and the ability to maintain the stable functioning and development of an institution. Only leaders who have clearly demonstrated their ability to introduce measures to support and

stimulate the successful activities of workers at an educational institution are recognized as effective.

In Krasnoyarsk krai, the requirements for professional qualifications while hiring and during the probationary period are also quite high. Appointment to the position of principal⁷ takes into account the voices of the Civil Service and Personnel Department, Administration of the governor of Krasnoyarsk krai. Group conversations, written tests,⁸ discussion of the candidate's vision for school development, and individual interviews with the hiring panel may all be used to evaluate a candidate's personal and professional qualities. Candidates are judged on the following criteria: level of management activity, tactical and strategic thinking skills, speed at adapting to new conditions, ability to analyze their own capabilities and organize an appropriate path of behavior, and ability to forecast development processes.

Both regions determine the scale of a principal's salary on the basis of the mean salary earned by workers at the principal's educational organization. In Moscow,⁹ the size of a principal's salary is set annually by the head of the district office of the city's Department of Education pursuant to Recommendations on a compensation plan for workers at state education institutions, with account for an efficiency coefficient set for the school's place in citywide ratings for the previous academic year. For schools on the Top-400 list, the coefficient fluctuates between 3.25 and 4. In other words, a principal's salary is set by multiplying the mean salary of school workers by the corresponding coefficient. Additionally, the law states that school principals must present information about their incomes, property, and liabilities.

In comparison with data from Fishman's 1999 study, the current level of requirements for principals has increased significantly over recent years. Is it possible, then, to assert on the same grounds that school principals have changed substantially over the same period? Hardly, since most principals today have been in their positions for over twenty years and thus also participated in empirical studies in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Twenty years ago researchers established that principals in

Russian schools gave little thought to the goals of management activities.

As Fishman's report states:

When we speak of the general model for managing the education system supported by the respondents, we should note the obvious internal inconsistencies. This comes out very clearly in responses to the question about the main goals of school management. Less than one-quarter of principals surveyed believe that their goal is "to ensure that students achieve certain educational results." Forty-four percent believe that the function of management is "to create conditions for securing the educational process," nearly 17 percent focus on "creating a supportive psychological climate at school," and about 12 percent strive to "satisfy the interests of members of the student body." Finally, 3.5 percent of respondents are focused on "satisfying the interests of members of the teaching staff." Thus, only a minority of principals clearly see educational results as a goal of management activities. [Fishman, 1999]

So, have the professional characteristics and values of school principals changed? How have reforms and innovations in education influenced them?

6.2. Decision-making styles of the principals of educational organizations

Figure 4 presents data on the decision-making styles of three groups of respondents. The results clearly show that the directive style is the dominant style for principals in both Moscow and Krasnoyarsk krai. This means that these principals strive to achieve appreciable results by being dominant over their subordinates. They are focused on solving tasks and prefer to rely on the simplest organizational charts and a minimal amount of data to do this.

These results are not too promising in terms of the potential for reform among principals in Russia. Interestingly, these results are analogous to the data obtained in New Brunswick, Canada, where the decision-making styles of school principals also turned out to be firmly entrenched and did not change even after a three-year campaign to reform education management.

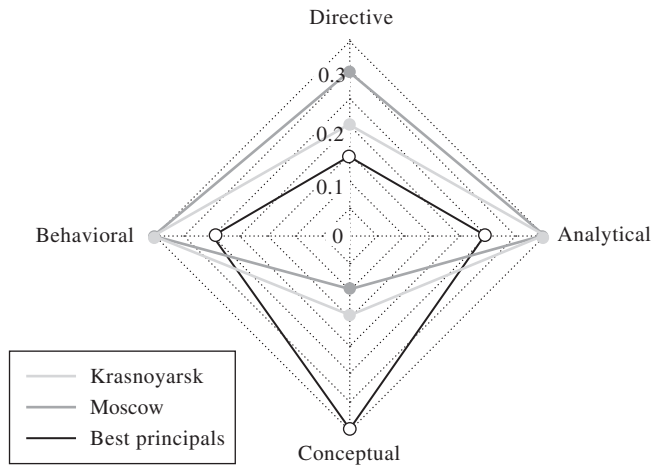


Figure 4. Profiles of the decision-making styles of school principals in Krasnoyarsk Krai and Moscow and winners of the School Principal competition in 2011–13 (the share of dominant decision-making styles of school directors for each group are plotted along the axes)

Results for the winners of the School Principal competition, however, stand out in sharp contrast. Approximately 60 percent of these principals regularly use the conceptual style in their school management practices. Perhaps this is why they are better and why almost one-quarter have changed their place of work over the past five years.

Principals combining the conceptual and analytical styles fit in well with the conception of leadership, because for them handling problematic situations is a norm. When principals use the conceptual style they try to solve highly complex cognitive tasks by focusing on the collective. This quality is extremely important for conducting a meaningful transformation of the existing system.

The behavioral decision-making style is characteristic of the large part of Russian respondents (see Figure 4). This type of principal is focused on people, open to proposals, easy to communicate with, and friendly, but does not make solving highly complex or poorly defined tasks a priority, which can slow development.

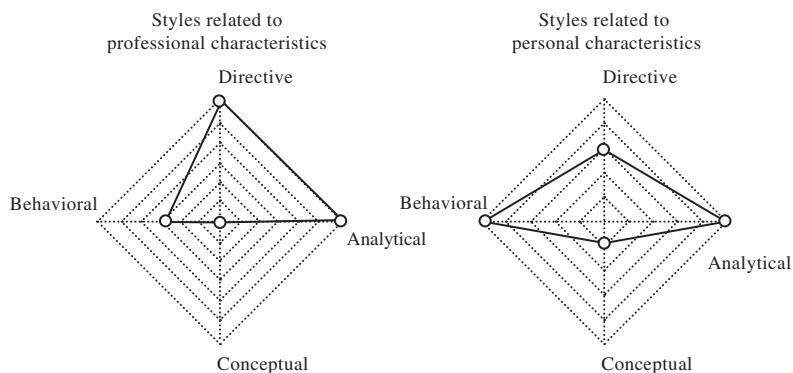


Figure 5. Profiles of the decision-making styles of school principals in Moscow (professional and personal characteristics, the share of dominant decision-making styles of school directors for each group are plotted along the axes)

Our data, which show a clear hierarchy in our education system, tally with the results of the Canadian study. Figures 5–7 illustrate the effect of administrative aberration. While the survey results for principals in Moscow and for the competition winners can be interpreted in different ways, the almost mirror image we obtained in Krasnoyarsk krai shows that principals there almost always act against their own personal policies when carrying out orders from their superiors. Given this antagonistic situation between regional education authorities and the principals of subordinate institutions, there is little likelihood that any reforms will be carried out from above.

7. The project's future

The results of this study show that Rowe's methodology for determining management decision-making styles can be applied to identifying types of behavior exhibited by principals of educational organizations in Russia.

However, a whole series of questions emerge along with this. Are the patterns identified during the pilot study true for other regions? Are the results only applicable to principals, or can they also be applied to managers from other spheres who encounter the

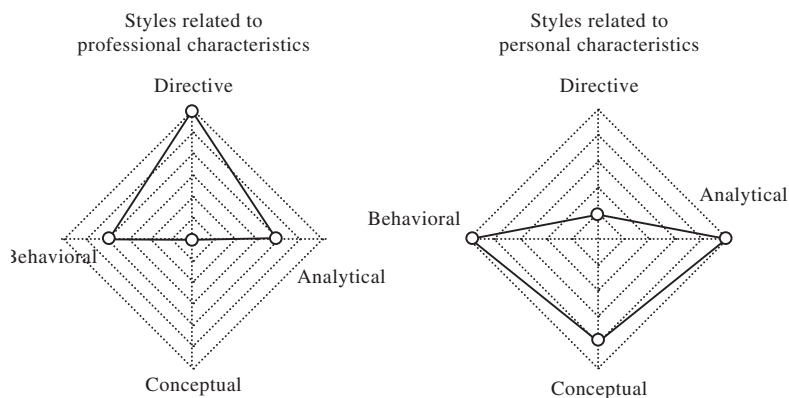


Figure 6. **Profiles of the decision-making styles of school principals in Krasnoyarsk Krai** (professional and personal characteristics, the share of dominant decision-making styles of school directors for each group are plotted along the axes)

same difficulties? We plan to clarify this during the next stage of this project.

We intend to survey two groups of respondents. The first group will consist of principals at schools whose students participated in the 2011 TIMSS¹⁰ international comparative study on quality in education. As a result, we will be able to understand the connection

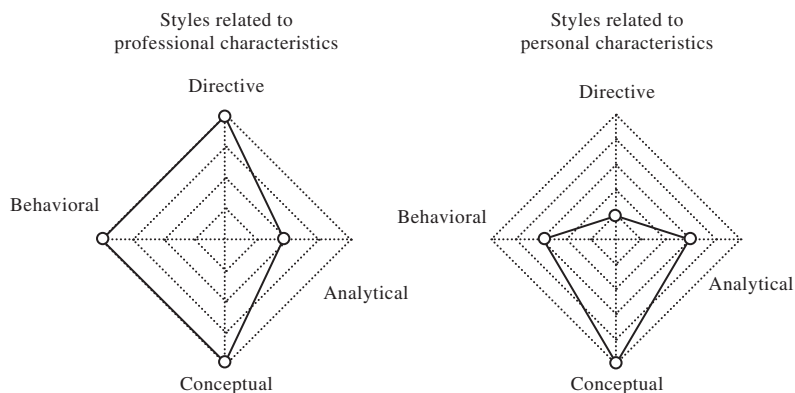


Figure 7. **Profiles of the decision-making styles of winners of the School Principal competition for 2011–13** (professional and personal characteristics, the share of dominant decision-making styles of school directors for each group are plotted along the axes)

between decision-making styles practiced by school principals and the educational achievements of students as measured by TIMSS. On the basis of this data it will be possible to corroborate or reject the conclusions of a study conducted by McKinsey & Company [1] that wise school management plays a leading role with excellent teaching when it comes to student achievement of high educational results.

The second group will consist of the principals of 200 schools from one region in each of seven federal districts. These regions include Krasnodar, Stavropol, Perm, and Khabarovsk krais, Yaroslavl, Novosibirsk, and Samara oblasts, and two districts of St. Petersburg.

A unique feature of the sample used in the second stage of the study is that it includes groups of principals from different types and kinds of schools: lyceums, grammar schools, and subject-specific schools; city and village schools; elementary, middle, and high schools; and autonomous, budget-funded, and state-owned schools, that differ by number of combined classrooms (up to 4, 5–11, 12–22, 23 or more).

Finally we plan to conduct a comparative analysis of the decision-making styles of average school principals from each of the seven regions with finalists in the School Principal competitions from 2011–2013, as well as with Russian managers working in other areas.¹¹

Another challenge that we plan to tackle is to check the working hypotheses formulated during focus groups with principals of educational organizations in these regions.

As a result of this study, we believe that we will be able to confirm our hypothesis that existing regional differences make it impossible to create a unified management system in Russia through change; only general framework regulations are possible. This means that a process to develop flexibility and variation in the systems for training, advanced training, continuing education, and professional development of management personnel at educational institutions must be launched. It is only these types of actions in combination with measures to humanize and democratize management of the system that can lay the groundwork for continued work to achieve the modernization of the education system.

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Notes

1. For more detail see materials prepared by O.V. Perfil'eva, assistant director of the Information and Coordination Center for Cooperation with the OECD, Institute of International Organizations and International Cooperation, NRU HSE [“Sovershenstvuiia sistemu shkol'nogo rukovodstva . . .”].

2. N.B. Filinov's 2009 translation of Rowe's forms and methodology are used here.

3. Teaching and Learning International Survey—an international comparative study on the training and work of teachers that is regularly conducted in over thirty countries.

4. Prepared by attendees of the professional development program run by the Institute of Education, NRU HSE for school principals in Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug in the 2013–14 academic year.

5. This contest has been held since 2010. It was first launched by K.M. Ushakov, doctor of science in pedagogy, editor-in-chief of the journal *Direktor shkoly*. The idea was to gather principals of schools in different regions of the country and give them the opportunity to speak about themselves and their problems and successes, share experiences, and discuss the further development of Russia's education system.

6. Order of the Moscow Department of Education No. 201r of 15 October 2013 "On the approval of procedures for preparing decisions on appointments to the position of principal of state educational institutions implementing general education programs under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Department of Education."

7. Decree of the Administration of Krasnoyarsk Krai of 12 October 2000 No. 787-p "On the approval of provisions on managing state institutions in the krai."

8. These contain no fewer than thirty questions to check the candidate's knowledge of the fundamental principles of current civil, labor, tax and banking laws; methods for managing organizations, financial audits and planning, etc.

9. Decree of the Government of Moscow of 22 March 2011 No. 86-PP "On conducting a pilot project to develop general education in Moscow."

10. TIMSS—Trends in Mathematics and Science Study. The goals of this study are the comparative analysis of the educational training of high school students in math and science in countries with differing educational systems and the identification of the unique features of educational systems that measure different levels of student achievement. In 2011, over sixty countries participated in this study. Two hundred ten schools from forty-two Russian regions took part.

11. A study of this nature is currently being conducted by a group of research fellows in the Faculty of Management, NRS HSE under the supervision of N.B. Filinov, dean of the faculty.

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