

# Role and Significance of Reflection in Educational Management

## Función y significado de la reflexión en la gestión educativa

**Tsibizova Oksana**

Russian State Agrarian University - Moscow Timiryazev Agricultural Academy, Moscow,  
Russian Federation

[tsibizova.oksana@bk.ru](mailto:tsibizova.oksana@bk.ru)

**Pogorelskaya Svetlana**

Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, Moscow, Russian Federation

[pogorelskaya02@bk.ru](mailto:pogorelskaya02@bk.ru)

**Chernova Natalia**

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Moscow, Russian  
Federation

[nata\\_chern02@bk.ru](mailto:nata_chern02@bk.ru)

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\* Correspondence

Email: [tsibizova.oksana@bk.ru](mailto:tsibizova.oksana@bk.ru)

### Abstract

The article examines reflection as a socio-psychological phenomenon of educational management. It is demonstrated that reflection, as a basic process of management activities, is associated with activities, thinking and communication. Such components of motivational and goal-setting structure as motivation and goal-setting, information framework for activities, decision making and implementation of activities, action plan reflection, management action implementation, reflection of achieved results are studied.

**Keywords:** Reflection, educational management, motivational and goal-setting structure, governance.

## Resumen

El artículo examina la reflexión como fenómeno socio-psicológico de la gestión educativa. Se demuestra que la reflexión, como proceso básico de las actividades de gestión, está asociada a las actividades, el pensamiento y la comunicación. Se estudian los componentes de la estructura de motivación y fijación de objetivos, como la motivación y la fijación de objetivos, el marco informativo de las actividades, la toma de decisiones y la ejecución de las actividades, la reflexión sobre el plan de acción, la ejecución de las acciones de gestión y la reflexión sobre los resultados obtenidos.

**Palabras clave:** Reflexión, gestión educativa, estructura de motivación y fijación de objetivos, gobernanza.

## Introduction

The “management” is relatively new for the Russian scientific community. Its usage is attributed to the commercialization of many areas of human life. Currently, management is commonly understood as both science and art as it covers activities meant to mobilize labor, intellectual, physical and financial resources for the managed structure to operate in an effective way.

Educational management is the result of transformation of education into a commercial product. It is educational management that is meant to serve as a groundwork for the governance of educational organizations providing a framework for variable educational services by mastering educational management and an innovative approach to the promotion of educational services.

The personality of the head of an educational organization plays a huge role in educational management as his/her ability to deal with and encourage staff members to perform and advance in career and creativity drives the commercial and organizational success of the educational organization. The nature of the built-in organizational structure, intraorganizational psychological climate, etc. depend on the personality of its head, his/her capacity for reflection and self-reflection.

This article is meant to study the role and significance of reflection and self-reflection of heads of educational institutions.

## Degree of Development of the Issue

An innovative aspect of management of education governance development is associated with the development of the information system of education governance (Martha Alicia Magaña Echeverría, Pedro C. Santana-Mancilla, & Victor Manuel De la Rocha Cazares, 2012) as well as the built-in system and artificial intelligence (Yashu Wang, 2021). Scientists have also highlighted issues related to studying the “scale” of impact of intellectual structures on education governance when applying new educational technologies, academic motivation and academic performance in natural science (Kordloo, Behrangi, 2020).

A national aspect of education governance is covered in works of E.J., Kipsoi, K. John, & H.C. Sang (2012). The lack of information technology in educational process governance, output quality, labor productivity and cost reduction through cost analysis interferes with the processes of quantitative and qualitative rise in the country's education level.

The role of educational management in the context of preventing high-school dropouts has been studied by H. Greg and A. Shannon (2019). To prevent at-risk youth from dropping out, educators paired mentors with youth for the hope of increasing graduation rates. The article analyzes activities of education governance organizations that provide educational services. It demonstrates that the pairing of hired mentors with students is a critical component of education governance organizations.

According to H. Darmadi (2018), education is a capacity-building process for students to meet their vital interests as both individuals and community members.

The research of T. Soderstrom, J. From, J. Lovqvist and A. Tornquist (2012) focuses on features of higher education governance in view of transition from distance learning to online learning. The findings showed that when all distance learning courses had been converted to online courses, the number of students increased. Online courses attract a lot more students than conventional courses. Online courses contribute to a better working environment for teachers. However, a well-designed education governance strategy is needed. Therefore, teacher training needs technical and educational support as well as strategic leadership.

M. Connolly, C. James and M. Fertig (2017) believe that educational management and educational leadership are central concepts of educational institutions. However, their meaning and the difference between the two in an educational organization remain controversial. Scholars have concluded that education governance is closely related to responsibility for educational system operation. Educational leadership, on the other hand, represents an aspect of influencing others in an educational environment to achieve certain goals. Educational leadership does not necessarily involve responsibility for educational system operation. Here, the concept of responsibility underestimated in addressing organizational issues in educational institutions comes into the picture.

Educational leadership issues are studied by scholars M. Connolly, C. James and M. Fertig (2017). The article provides a brief overview of the significance and concept of leadership in theory and practice. The point is made that success is inevitable because quality educational leadership traditions offer an opportunity for further improvement in educational leadership.

Donnie Adams, Gopinathan Raman Kutty and Zuliana Mohd Zabidi (2017) suggest that leadership theory is related to education governance. Educational managers are performance-oriented. This approach commercializes their activities. With workload increasing, leaders and managers need a set of certain personal qualities, resources that help manage educational institutions. Considerable efforts are required to ensure the future heads of educational institutions have necessary practical training aimed at professional development and fostering new mindsets.

Analysis of research papers shows that studying educational management features is a promising area of research. With the apparent diversity of work, issues of reflection of heads of educational organizations and its role in educational management are out of sight of scholars.

## Methods and Techniques

The work included theoretical analysis methods and quantitative and qualitative data processing techniques. Reflection in educational management was studied on the basis of activity reflection approach (activity reflection test).

Two groups of respondents took part in the experiment. The first group included 49 respondents: principals and headmasters of educational institutions aged 27 to 64.

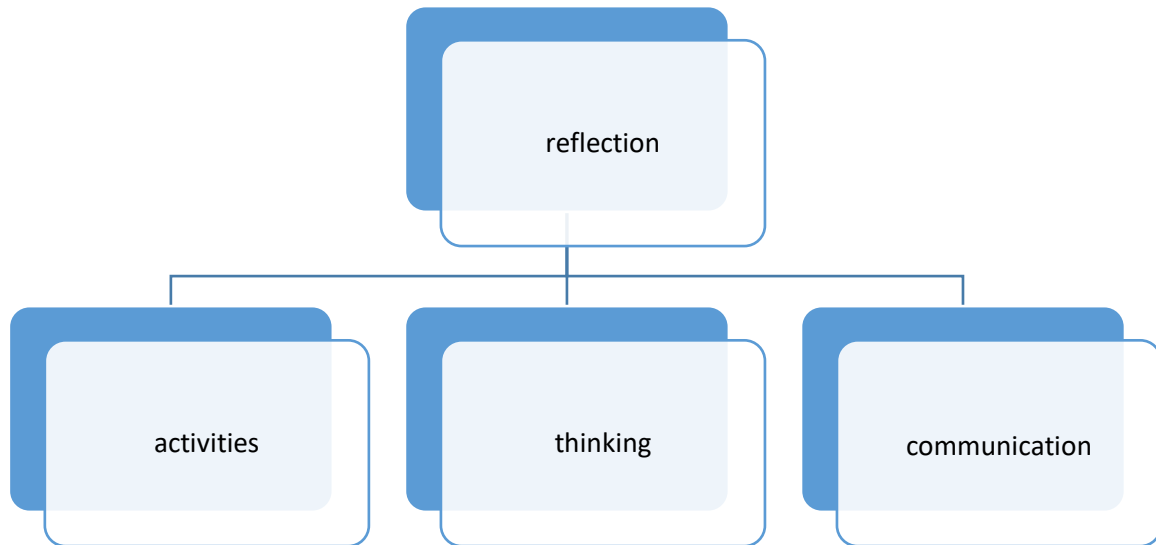
The second group included 83 respondents. At the first stage, educational institution executives were tasked with filling in a test form consisting of 42 theses. The second stage included statistical processing of the data. All theses were grouped into 6 theoretical blocks:

- 1) reflection of activity goal (an executive clearly understands what he/she wants; having this understanding, the executive sets specific tasks for himself/herself);
- 2) reflection of external and internal conditions (an executive has a clear sight of his/her strengths, capabilities and needs);
- 3) reflection of decision-making processes (when making a decision, the head takes into account what other people think, but makes his/her final decision independently);
- 4) reflection of action plan (when making an administrative decision, the head is guided by a premeditated plan);
- 5) reflection of management action progress (when engaged in management activities, a manager always has criteria to control his/her action and achieve planned results);
- 6) reflection of achieved (intermediate) results (intermediate results help do things by making adjustments; the head always knows which actions have led to achieved results, he/she knows what he/she has done right or wrong, what was helpful or harmful).

## Reflection as a Factor Affecting Educational System Management

Reflection is a basic process in management activities. Reflective thinking enables to control and govern managerial decisions. Reflection in educational management means a set of processes resulting in adjustments of management activities of learning process facilitators. The management decisions are adjusted in thinking, activities and communication (Figure 1).

## Correction of management methods



Initially, management activities are adjusted at the mental and thinking level, then a management activity decision is made, which is implemented in the intercommunications with subordinates.

Reflection helps observe specific features of management activities, which results in the facilitator reconstructing his/her management activities. Reflective processes occur both in conflict situations, rivalry and in partnership and cooperation.

Professional reflection helps understand to what extent the head of an educational organization meets common professional standards, how efficiently he/she takes his/her advantages, uses knowledge of strengths and weaknesses of his/her activities, finds ways to self-improvement. Reflective education governance promotes to the formalization of pedagogical activities. Addressing reflective training tasks with education involves building a reflective training model.

Professional reflection means improving an executive as an actor involved in management activities. According to B.Z. Vulfov and V.N. Kharkin (1995), professional reflection is related to inner work, the self-correlation and the capacity of the individual self with what the profession requires and ideas about the profession, which are unequal at each stage of professional identity. It means that the professional reflection of educational managers is related to specific features of the management system and executives' own pedagogical experience.

Since reflection involves awareness of goals and means of activities performed by an executive.

A manager's reflection ability becomes manifest in such activities as:

- 1) formation of skills to assess the real situation in the pedagogical process, including behavior of those involved in the educational process;
- 2) ability to determine the goal of pedagogical influence;
- 3) analysis of existing problems;
- 4) ability to make decisions;

- 5) ability to identify existing interpersonal or group interactions;
- 6) ability to choose organizational behavior strategies and tactics;
- 7) ability to assess own official position;
- 8) ability to choose the strategy of own behavior;
- 9) assessment and explanation of own official position.

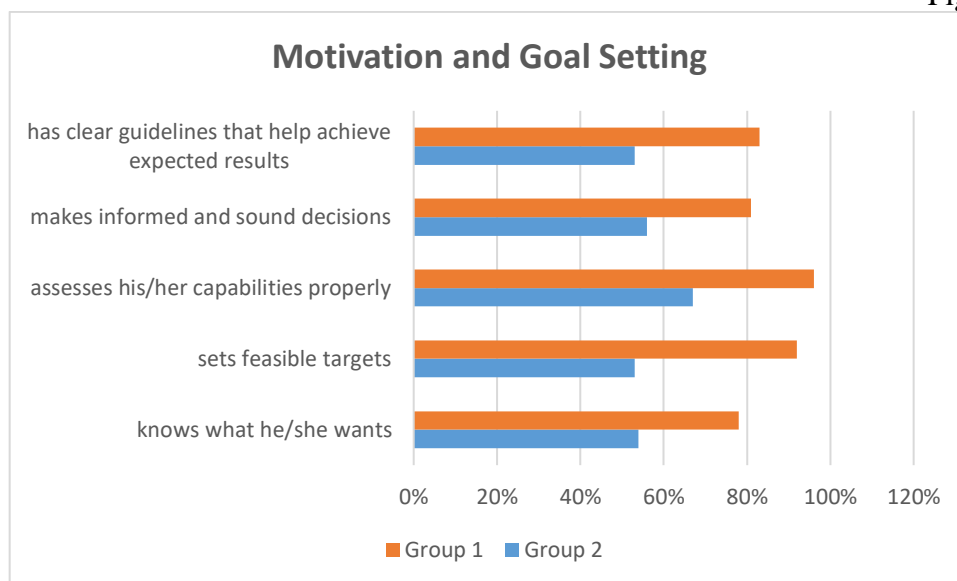
Consequently, reflection is a complex process of self-cognition, self-direction, reasons and self-image formation.

### Experiment Results

The conducted research shows that reflection is a basic feature of an actor in the management process. The most important components of management activities of educational process facilitators are motivation and goal-setting. Management activities mean activities associated with group and personal interactions with colleagues, subordinates, etc.

Motivation and goal-setting are the major mechanisms of reflection, since they are responsible for high performance. The motivational and goal-setting structure includes (Figure 2) clear guidelines that help achieve expected results, the ability to make informed and sound decisions, the ability to assess own capabilities properly, the ability to set feasible targets and awareness of the educational organization’s goals.

Figure 2



The experiment findings show that managers and subordinates assess motivation and goal-setting capabilities of heads of educational organizations in different ways.

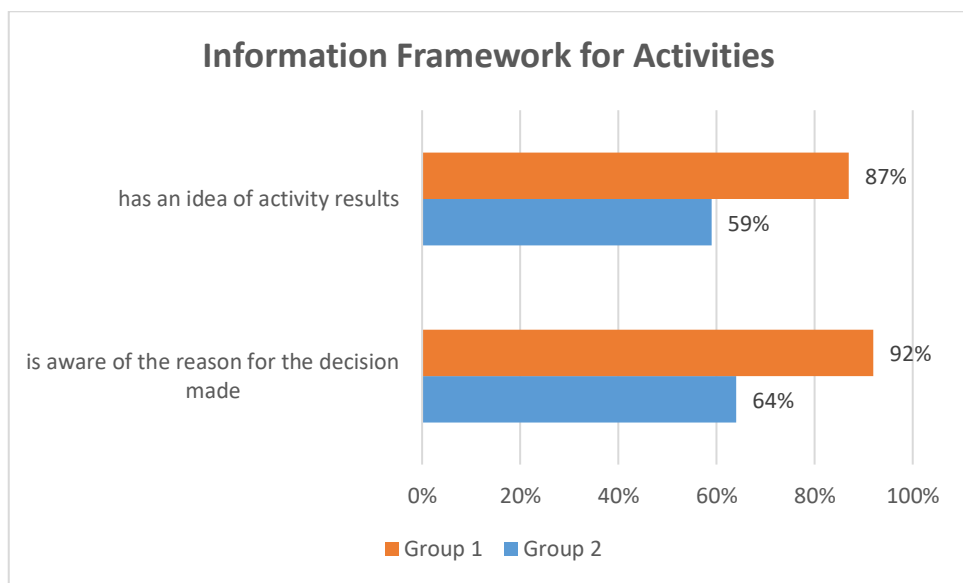
Deputy principals and headmasters of educational institutions have a relatively low level of reflection of management activities. They overestimate their motivational and goal-setting abilities.

78% of respondents believe that they always know what they want and set their targets accordingly. Only 54% of respondents in the second group agree with this statement. They believe that managers overestimate their goal-setting abilities.

According to 92% of respondents in the first group, managers set goals for themselves and their subordinates that fit the situation and educational process. Only 53% of respondents in the second group agree with this statement.

97% of respondents in the group of managers think that they assess their capabilities properly when taking a certain management action. Only 67% of respondents in the group of subordinates agree with this statement. 81% of Group 1 respondents and 56% of Group 2 respondents believe that educational process facilitators typically make informed and sound decisions that produce desired results.

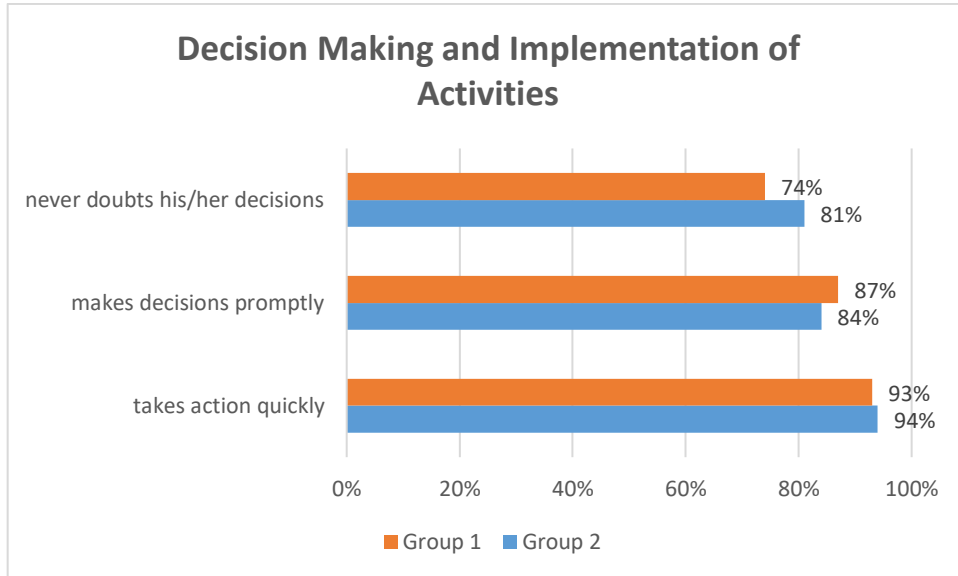
83% of executives and 53% of subordinates believe that managers have clear guidelines that help them monitor progress and achieve expected results. The information framework for activities describes the ability of organization heads to arrange their activities along the “goal – result” trajectory (Figure 3).



As is evident, 92% of the first group respondents believe when they set tasks for their subordinates, they have an idea of activity results. Only 64% of the second group respondents agree with this statement. 36% of respondents from the group of subordinates believe the managers cannot confirm why they have made a certain administrative decision, they lack strength, patience and time to consider their administrative actions.

87% of executive respondents of educational organizations make administrative decisions knowledgeably. Only 59% of subordinates agree with this statement. Therefore, when analyzing their behaviors, heads of educational organizations overestimate their administrative actions.

The management decisions by managers of educational organizations mean addressing a lot of difficulties. In this context, the skills of addressing difficulties and the ability to neutralize any cause of difficulties are essential. Decision making in educational management means choosing between alternatives. In order for a management decision to be made correctly, there need to be tools to assess alternatives (Figure 4).

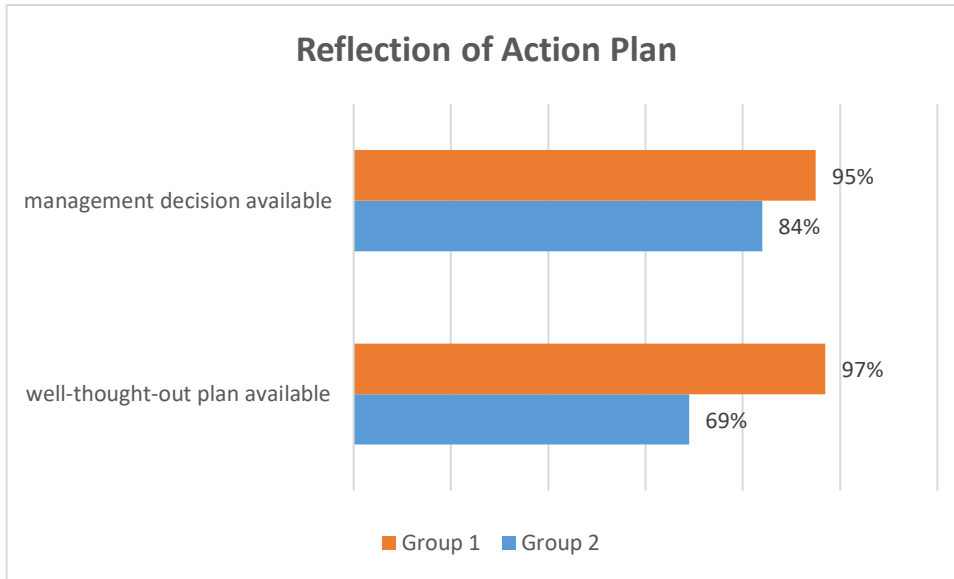


Thus, both managers and employees of educational organizations assess decision-making and implementation skills in a similar way. Managers and employees of educational organizations assess decision-making and implementation skills in a similar way.

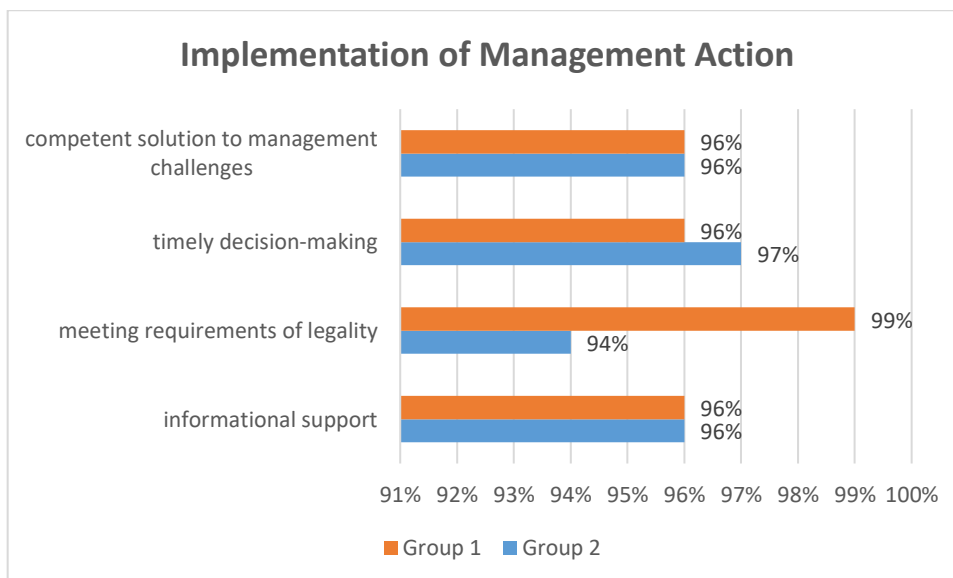
Managers and subordinates working in an educational organization easily realize what they want. They easily proceed with action (93% of executives and 94% of subordinates). According to both respondent groups, managers naturally know what they want and what they are doing (87% of the first group respondent and 84% of the second group respondent). According to the respondents, managers assess possible risks and factors affecting the management process. They have little to no doubt about decisions they make (74% of the first group respondent and 81% of the second group respondent).

Managers assess possible risks and factors affecting the management process. Managers have little to no doubt about decisions they have made. An action plan is crucial for the management process (Figure 5).



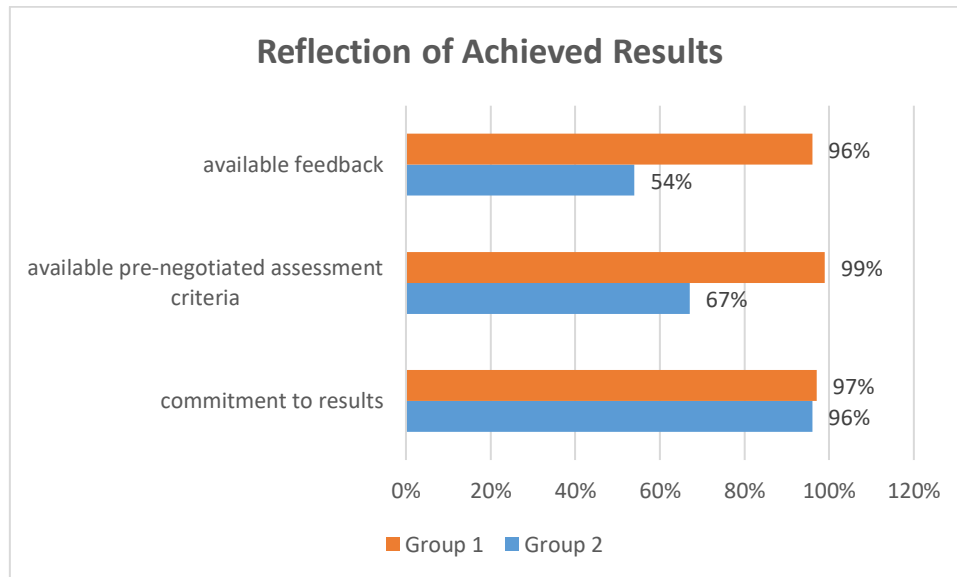


The above data prove that 97% of executives believe they always have a clear plan when performing management activities. This rate in the group of subordinates is much lower. It accounts for 69%. According to executives (95%), managers can mold clear administrative decisions. This rate is quite high (64%) in the group of subordinates. The quality of management decisions determines how well they fit the current management environment. Management activities can be successful, if managers foresee possible developments and take into account the most likely outcome of possible events (Figure 6).



According to both respondent groups, meeting the requirements of informational support is conditional upon managers' ability to identify problems and causes of any disagreement or problem. With informational support, managers can manage the implementation process. According to the respondents (96% of both group respondents), managers generally meet the informational support challenge. Each of managers' decisions meets the requirements of legality (99% in the first group and 94% in the second group), i.e., any instruction of managers cannot but comply with legislative acts adopted at the state, regional, municipal level, as well as at the educational organization level.

Timely decision-making is also crucial for determining the way a management decision is implemented. 96% of the first group respondents and 97% of the second group respondents agreed with the thesis “timely decision-making”. Prompt correct and informed decisions are of value in management activities. 96% of both group respondents agreed with the thesis “competent solution to management challenges”. Management reflection helps read the resulting activities (Figure 7).



It should be noted that commitment to results is the major factor of management activities. Changes (intermediate and final) are assessed based on the evaluation of research findings. According to 97% of the first group respondents, heads of educational organizations cope with the task of “commitment to results”. A similar pattern repeats in the second group (96%).

The difference in the two groups has to do with the “available pre-negotiated assessment criteria”. 99% of executive respondents and 67% of subordinate respondents agreed with this thesis. The same is true for the “available feedback”. This thesis was supported by 96% of executive respondents and 54% of subordinate respondents. Significant difference shows the need for reflection in managers and the need to reassess the understanding of achieved results.

## Conclusions

Thus, the study has shown that the process of reflection is the major mechanism for improving the performance of organization managers. Owing to reflection, heads of educational institutions can assess their behavior and make correct management decisions. The factors interfering with management activities are as follows:

- 1) Lack of goal-setting skills. Empirical data indicate a lot of managers have poor skills of defining clear boundaries.
- 3) Stereotypes and behavioral patterns influence the successful management of organizations. As a rule, stereotypes and patterns have a negative impact on educational institutions. There are following stereotypes: “a woman is a poor manager”. Executives need

to be guided by social values. Reflection in management activities is an important stage to be constantly referred to. Reflection helps realize goals, reasons, trajectories, etc. Managers need situational reflection, which helps them realize what is going on “here” and “now”.

Managers analyze the quality of incoming information, specific communication of information to subordinates, the awareness of what needs to be done to improve the efficiency and quality of educational institution management.

Retrospective reflection constantly refers to the previous management experience. Projective reflection incorporates with the future projections. This is the very stage designing the trajectory of personal and organizational development.

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