

Aide-Mémoire of the first professional practice analysis session with primary schools headmasters

Thiès, 21 December 2022

The aim of this session was to analyse the institutional and organisational framework of the headteacher's role. More specifically, the aim was to analyse with the headteachers the texts, standards and official regulations that govern their functions and missions, and to put this into perspective with their actual experience and practices in the field, in particular by highlighting the challenges and constraints they face. The discussions from this session are included in this checklist.

1. On the training and appointment of school headmasters

How do you become a headteacher today?

There is **no initial training** to become a school headmaster. Those wishing to become headteachers are subject to an application process set out in the "**Guide pratique du mouvement des personnel enseignants**" published by the Human Resources Department (DRH). The post of headteacher is reserved for teachers, pre-school educators, assistant teachers and contract teachers with a professional qualification.

Applicants fill in a 'wish list' via the MIRADOR application but also submit a physical application to the IEF. Within the IEF, a committee centralises and validates the applications, which are then forwarded to the IA, which in turn sends them to the central administration for processing.

In their application, candidates must provide evidence of their :

- grade
- seniority in teaching
- seniority in the body to which the employee belongs
- seniority in positions held
- co-ordination of a joint teaching unit (middle and secondary schools)
- a merit mark of 12/20 or above.
- average of the last two administrative marks¹ greater than or equal to 18/20
- participation in an innovative programme

The post of director is awarded firstly on the basis of rank. In other words, the position is awarded to the most senior candidate. In the event of a tie in grade or category, candidates are ranked according to the following criteria:

- the number of points
- seniority in step
- gender
- marital status (married first)
- the number of children

When it comes to awarding points, women are given bonus points for their gender to encourage them to move into positions of responsibility.

1. About the role of headteachers

¹ This mark is awarded every 2 years by the inspector during a class visit.

Is there a document that tells managers what is expected of them? Is there a process that enables inspectors to take ownership of the content of this document? Is there a shared vision of the inspector's role within the profession?

Yes, there is a "Terms of Reference **for School Principals**" which is made available to headmasters when they take up their duties. This document emphasises that the headteacher is one of the key people in the quality management structures, and his or her role is divided into three areas

- From a **pedagogical point of view**, his main role is to provide close supervision of teachers and, secondarily, to act as a coach and facilitator/trainer, especially for new teachers.
- From an **administrative point of view**, he/she is expected to provide leadership in school management and the management of school resources: organisation of the school, organisation of teachers, organisation of school resources, collaboration with partners and conflict management.
- On the **social front**, the main role is to represent the institution in the community.

These terms of reference are the reference document that enables the directors to have a shared vision of what is expected of them. However, the directors explain that there is no formal process to enable new directors to familiarise themselves with their new duties. For them, the terms of reference are useful for knowing what is expected of them, but the difficulty lies above all in putting them into practice. Identifying the strategies to be implemented to meet the specifications remains a challenge for managers.

Here are some of the directors' reactions:

"We're given a school to run. We're given the specifications and we make do with them, gaining experience as we go".

"You learn the job on the job, which takes a lot of time and sometimes causes a lot of damage".

"It's also a question of legitimacy.

"If we look at the sources of conflict in schools, it's often when teachers identify shortcomings in the headteacher. When the headmaster's competence is called into question by the teaching team, it has consequences for his credibility and authority.

The directors deplore the lack of training before they take up their duties. They explained that training was sometimes provided on an ad hoc basis as part of projects or by partners. However, they regretted that the training of directors was not planned in a harmonised way at national level, as it could happen that from one training course to another they received contrary advice. In addition, they point out that the role of headteacher has changed a great deal, and headteachers are now expected to be "leaders". In addition to the pedagogical aspects, they feel that they also need training in: management, pedagogical leadership, project management, budget management, ethics, etc.

2. About the norms and standards governing the inspector's work

What are the existing standards and actual practices on the ground with regard to :

- **Number of class visits**

An *unloaded headteacher* is expected to provide **10 hours of teaching supervision per week, with at least 2 teachers per week**. For *directors who are not discharged*, they are expected to provide at **least 10 hours of teaching support every 2 weeks**.

The directors' terms of reference state that directors are also required to :

1/ Check:

- preparation books at least one day in advance;
- the rota books for each class once a week;
- lesson books by class and by week ;
- composition books.

2/ Assessing teachers annually

However, the directors claim that they are unable to meet this deadline because of the administrative workload they have to handle at the same time. This sentiment was unanimously shared by all the directors present. One director mentioned, for example

"I'm the head of 6 classes, I teach one class, I don't supervise, I don't have the time.

While the headteachers consider that their primary role is to supervise and support teachers, they deplore the fact that far too many administrative tasks have been added to this - in particular "the collection of endless statistics". This prevents them from effectively fulfilling their role as educational supervisors. They also point out that they are finding it increasingly difficult to enforce their authority on teachers, which complicates their supervisory role:

"The director's word is no longer respected".

"Everything the head teacher says is questioned by the teacher, which makes it difficult to supervise".

"Supervision is the backbone of the manager's role in the establishment.

"We need to restore the director's authority".

- **Number of Pedagogical Support Units (Cellules d'Animation Pédagogiques - CAP)**

The directors' terms of reference state that the director is required to organise :

- 1 educational and cultural activity session per month (4 hours) ;
- 1 quarterly meeting with communities on school issues and pupil performance;
- 1 monthly meeting of the teaching team to discuss student performance and strategies to improve it.

The headmasters point out that a distinction must be made between the Cellules d'Animation Pédagogiques Externes (CAPE) and the Cellules d'Animation Internes (CAPI). Headteachers are responsible for organising 1 CAPI per month within their school to deal with the difficulties affecting

their own school. Unlike the CAPEs, which are pooling sessions between several schools in the same zone.

How are the issues addressed at the CAPI meetings identified?

At the start of the year, the first CAPI is a "planning session", during which the headteacher carries out a diagnosis to find out what themes/issues the teachers would like to tackle. It is on the basis of the themes identified at this first session that the headmaster plans the year's sessions. The final session is an evaluation session that allows the director to take stock of the year.

However, the directors complain that they have less and less freedom to choose the subjects addressed in the CAPIs. They often receive 'orders' from elsewhere - often projects and programmes implemented by the Ministry - which target the subjects that need to be addressed:

"We're not always free to choose the themes, because sometimes they're imposed on us. One programme recently made numeracy a priority, but we weren't consulted. For us, it's geometry that poses more of a problem.

"The needs and difficulties on the ground are not taken into account. We are not consulted before defining the themes for the pedagogical coordination units".

- **The administrative and teaching workload**

In addition to the educational aspects, the specifications indicate that the director also has a number of administrative duties. In particular, directors must keep a number of administrative documents up to date:

- School management documents (enrolment registers, asset registers, visit logs, supervision logs, medical visit logs and teachers' council logs)
- Student and furniture statistics
- List of staff names
- Class timetable and headmaster's timetable
- The school's internal rules
- Students' school files
- The time quantum control book
- The monograph notebook

However, what takes up most of the headmasters' time are the "endless orders" from central level, which the IAs and IEFs pass on to the headmasters. Indeed, headmasters say they are overwhelmed by "reporting duties" and complain about the lack of coordination and planning in requests, which are often made at the last minute and in a hurry.

Managers also question the usefulness of the information they collect and pass on to management. They feel that this information is not used for remedial purposes because there is never any feedback. In other words, what's the point of reporting statistics if no solutions are proposed in return?

3. The approach planned for the remainder of the project

In view of the issues raised, analysis of professional practice appeared to be a problem-solving tool that was well suited to the difficulties faced by headteachers. For the rest of the project, a three-stage approach was adopted by mutual agreement. These are :

1. Train school heads to make professional practice analysis their own. The idea is to ensure that everyone involved has a good understanding of how it works and how it is organised, and to think about how it could be extended to the whole system.
2. Apply the concepts acquired during training to the resolution of concrete problems. In this respect, the directors have identified and retained priority concerns that could be addressed during the various practice-sharing sessions that will be planned until May 2023. These are :
 - Managing directors' workloads
 - Managing conflict and the social climate within the school
 - Lack of training, interest and motivation among teachers
3. Capitalising on the process implemented in this experiment with a view to scaling it up within the education system. At this level, the crucial role of the monitoring committee, whose members have still not been stabilised, was emphasised. As a reminder, it must be made up of Ministry staff from the various central education departments, as well as officials from the decentralised level. This point should be brought to the attention of the programme's focal point.