

Quality and Development Planning in Education

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This paper deals with development planning in schools as the basic managerial activities, especially in a changing environment. It is stressed that collaborative organisational culture is one of the conditions for development planning to become a learning process. Many issues that are presented at the institution/school level can be also applied to the institutions at the national level. This paper is written on the basis of the management study which was part of my master study and the experiences I gained when I worked in national educational institutions during preparation and implementation of the new educational legislation in Slovenia. I also gained specific experiences and insights into the school system by providing different training programs for headteachers in the National Leadership School.

CHANGES AND SCHOOL CULTURE

Implementation of changes at a school or at a national level is undoubtedly a demanding process. State institutions, responsible for development of education as a whole and specifically for individual schools and head teachers, need to pay attention to appropriate knowledge and various conditions (climate for changes) which are necessary to implement changes.

Some authors (Fullan 1991; 2000; Hopkins 1989) state that changes need to be introduced gradually. They also argue that the need for change is not sufficient. People should wish the change, they should have appropriate knowledge and skills to implement the change. Japanese saying 'Improving what we are already doing well instead of innovating', also point to the need of gradual changing. Murgatroyd and Morgan (1993) stress the importance of everyday activities which may contribute more to improvement than to a single innovation: 'Every daily event presents itself as an opportunity for systematic improvement.'

Fullan (1991) argues that to introduce change only to be a step ahaed of others does not mean improvement. A lot more has to be changed, yet

change is not measured in quantity but closely related to values and attitudes. In this respect many authors point to the school culture as one of the basic characteristics of effective/good schools (Preedy 1993; Reynolds 1994; Fullan 2000).

Understanding the culture of a school is a prerequisite to making school more effective (Preedy 1993).

School must understand that improvement is not just about implementing innovation and change, but about changing its culture (Hopkins 1989).

Understanding the culture of any organisation is especially important when we want to implement changes. Every change interferes with the organisational culture. It is vitally important that we understand the culture when changes are being implemented so that they will influence the quality of education and bring about the change in classrooms. Experts in state institutions, head teachers and those involved in the implementation of changes have to be well trained not only in terms of the content of change but also in the management of change. Since effective changes depend on the culture of schools all those involved in implementation need to be aware that culture cannot be changed by laws.

Cultures get changed in a thousand small ways, not by dramatic announcements emanating from the boardroom (Fullan and Hargreaves 1992).

Changes in the area of education undoubtedly have an evident effect on educational institutions and their management. Implementation of changes require a new approach to management.

Now managers must establish a new approach to management that will enable the organisation to maintain and improve its performance in a changing environment (Drucker 1990).

Determine clear vision, mission, goals and program of activities is what would make it recognised in wider educational area and improve its image (Sallis 1993).

The new approach to management has to reinforce the process of planning and evaluating. The appropriate qualifications and motivations of head teachers are needed.

NEW APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT

A systematic approach to planning is becoming essential for every school (Giles 1997). The emphasis lies on the process of planning which is considered more important than the final document itself.

The development planning also presents a unique opportunity for professionals to strengthen, reinforce, and rebuild the culture of educational organisations (Reynolds 1994).

Each institution, at national or school level, need to have at least two plans: strategic and tactical. Both need to be adjusted and supported by appropriate resources. Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991) state that 'the institution's development plan cannot be an accumulation of separate plans'. He shares this opinion with other authors as for example: Caldwell and Spinks (1988), Sallis (1993), Mintzberg (1994). They state that any organised group of individuals who work together effectively have a common purpose – they share the same goals and values.

Each member of the enterprise contributes something different; but all must contribute towards a common goal, a common performance (Drucker 1990).

GOALS

Decisions about goals are made in relation to priorities and available resources (people, time, money).

It is right an institution should reach high, but not so high as to produce incredulity in its publics, [...] effectiveness is judged by the degree to which objectives have been attained. The institution cannot successfully pursue all these goals simultaneously because its budget is limited and because some of the goals may be incompatible (Stoner and Freeman 1992).

Being dependent on a budget allocation discourages an institution from setting priorities and concentrating, [...] yet nothing is ever accomplished unless scarce resources are concentrated on a small number of priorities (Drucker 1990).

INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING

Drucker (1990), Fullan (1991), Murgatroyd and Morgan (1993), Kotler (1991) and Sallis (1993) claim that educational organisations depend on the staff who delivers the service therefore they should be involved in the process of planning much more systematically.

The importance of the human element in an organisation is increasing with change. Change demands innovation, and innovation demands that we unleash the creative potential of our people, they have to take initiative, assume a much greater responsibility for their own organisation and management (Murgatroyd and Morgan 1993).

More and more governments in developed countries (Bush 1986; Bush and West-Burnham 1994) see the value in having an educational system where the customers influence inputs and outcomes. It can be expected that parents will be much more interested in school work, especially because pupils' achievements influence their choice of further education.

The school has to satisfy many publics. Increasing the satisfaction of one group might reduce the satisfaction of another. The school must balance the needs and expectations of each group, it has to manage responsive relationship with most or all of them (Bush and West-Burnham 1994).

EVALUATION

The first step in planning is the analysis of the present situation – initial audit.

When the institution has made its school audit and identified strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities, it is prepared to take the decisions about the institution's current and future programs and markets, and about needed changes in the institution's structure, people and culture (Davies et al. 1990).

The implementation of the plan has to be monitored. The evaluation of the programme will be one of the criteria for the next development plan. Different approaches to evaluation have to be used for projects or institutions, at national and school level, for example:

- constantly monitoring all the activities,
- preparing the annual report for projects, schools, institutions,
- preparing cyclic evaluation of specific programmes.

The common and central aim of all these approaches to evaluation is:

[...] to help institutions diagnose their present situation, plan, implement, evaluate, and readjust themselves in order to meet internal and external requirements with increasing effectiveness (Hopkins 1989).

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AS A LEARNING PROCESS

As already stated 'development planning' should not be introduced for 'the planning sake'. A number of authors, such as Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991), Davies and Ellison (1992), Shipman (1979), Bush and West-Burnham (1994) consider development planning 'a take-off point for school improvement projects'. If development planning is introduced professionally it can be used as a learning process directed to quality of each individual school and to the national educational system. It means that co-operative atmosphere may be established by this process and it will consequently lead to development where pupils' achievements are most important.

A co-operative atmosphere in schools must be developed whereby all participants involve themselves in self-renewal activities (Reynolds 1994).

Grounded in Hargreaves and Hopkins' development planning cycle and in my findings (Trunk 1995), a new scheme of development planning spiral emerged. I present it in figure 1.

I emphasized:

- The planning is needed in order to start from current institutional position. Appropriate culture is needed. Yet, there is no general, common or overall culture. It is specific for each institution and contextually embedded therefore an institution has to decide about the right moment to start its systematic development planning.
- Different approaches to evaluation should be integrated within planning.

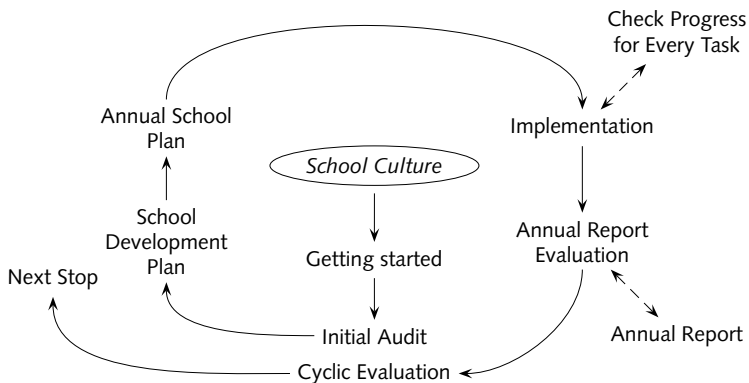


Figure 1: Development planning spiral – institutional learning process (adapted from Trunk 1995)

- Next development plan must be built upon the developments of the previous year but it must also look ahead to the needs of forthcoming years. It can be stated that development planning is another word for growth. It can be presented as a spiral.

Development planning may become the core process and activity of every school if it is supported by other activities that a school implements, especially the evaluation process. The state and national institutions are expected, however, to offer appropriate external support, i.e. systematic *INSET* and counselling in curriculum and management, if quality in schools is desired. Demands and support activities for schools are presented in figure 2.

IN CONCLUSION

Every school and school system require a capable manager/leader, the one who is professional and can embrace both areas, management and education, effectively into his/her everyday practice. In stable environment that is focused on systemic and organisational maintenance the role of managers is easier than in unstable, changing environments. Schools today are confronted with many and fast changes in environment (Fullan 1998) and therefore the ideal to have head teachers as instructional and pedagogical leaders only, seems to be unrealistic. Head teachers need to be skilled, trained and educated in the area of educa-

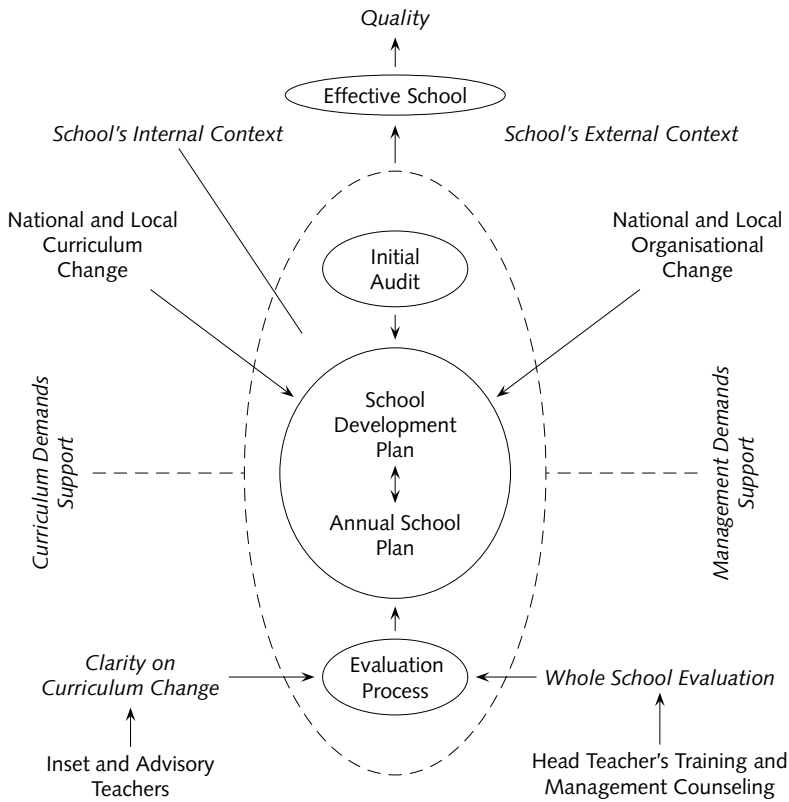


Figure 2: Development planning as a core of school's growth to quality (adapted from Trunk 1995)

tional management and leadership in order to bring about changes and facilitate the processes that lead to institutional and individual's growth and development. Planning and organisational culture are two essential elements of growth, they are means and ends of leadership and management. They, however, do not simply occur, they need to be managed and led.

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