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BUILDING EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: PURPOSES, GOALS AND KEY MANAGEMENT ISSUES

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يتطرّق البحث إلى مفهوم «الفعاليّة المدرسيّة» فيبيّن تشعّب مضامينه وفقاً للمنظور البحثي المعتمد، ثمّ ينتقل إلى تحليل أهميّة بناء مدارس فعّالة في عصرنا الحالي، نظراً للدور التربوي المنوط بالمدرسة بشأن تأمين الإندماج الإجتماعي والفرص الدراسيّة المتساوية لجميع الأولاد. ويفنّد جميع الأهداف الأكاديميّة والإجتماعيّة والإستراتيجيّة التي تبرّر قيام مدارس فعّالة . كما ويشدّد على ضرورة اعتماد الأسلوب الإداري التنظيمي Management تجاوباً مع آليّة العرض والطلب المتجدّدة مع الظروف الحاليّة المتغيّرة للحكومات . وعليه فإنّ التركيز على خلق ثقافة مدرسيّة متمايزة وتشاركيّة من شأنه تحسين نوعيّة التعليم والحياة ضمن المدرسة .

Building effective schools is a challenging task and one which has been the focal point of many studies in recent years. Educators have been given a plethora of advice on ways to cope with the multiplicity of problems of a rapidly changing social, technological economical and industrial world. Change is now the only certainty. Alvin Toffler (1980) signaled the emergence of this new society in his book *The Third Wave*. He suggested that a powerful tide was surging across much of

the world creating a new value system, new technologies, new geopolitical relationships, new lifestyles and modes of communication that demanded wholly new ideas, analogies, classifications and concepts.

Changes to the culture of work, such as the processes of decision making and decentralization as well as the establishing of a strategic mission and vision, are currently transforming the structure of the school system. They have also given rise to new relationships within school organizations, particularly new models of leadership. These changes reflect a wider and more comprehensive set of values shaping social reality in recent decades and require a different approach to creating educational excellence. New and increasing demands are being place on educational administrators who need to develop modern ways of thinking and innovative goals. They also need new management and leadership skills. Problems brought by structural and cultural change are complex and value laden, given the increasing participation of a variety of stakeholders in the educational decision making process.

The devolution of management responsibility to the school level means that schools are becoming more organizationally demanding. Rising expectations about higher academic standards and the need for the schools perform a greater variety of social education, coupled with economic and political pressures for efficiency and accountability add to the already considerable workload on teachers and educational managers. Special talents and skills will be required of all educators, especially those in leadership positions, in the 21st century.

PROBLEMS WITH DEFINING AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL

Effectiveness is a fundamental concept in the management of schools and school systems. However, there is no uniform definition of an effective school. Definitions vary depending on the orientation of those examining the issue. For instance, McGraw, Banks and Piper (1991 : 2) suggest that "An effective school is one that achieves greater student learning than might have been predicted from the context in which it works". Similarly, Chapman (1991 : 1) states that "An effective school is one that promotes the progress of its students in a broad range of intellectual, social and emotional outcomes, taking into account socio-economic status, family background and

prior learning". For Murphy et al. (1985) an effective school must always have either tightly coupled curricula or structured opportunities to learn. Nevertheless, it is argued that effective schools meet the challenge of finding a balance between security and stimulation through developing mechanisms which establish what good teaching is, then go on to accentuate the importance of ongoing skills acquisition, define the standards by which teachers measure success in teaching, signal the need to develop new teaching skills and provide ways to learn and improve.

Literature on school effectiveness shows trends towards decentralization and the emergence of the self-managing school. Purkey and Smith (1985) suggest a model for creating an excellent school through:

- classroom research on teacher effectiveness;
- research into the implementation of educational innovation;
- research into school organization which identifies the role of school culture in school improvement; and
- research into consistency between effective schools and the experiences of practitioners.

Yet, Finn (1984; 518) mentioned another factor in school effectiveness which he called strategic independence. He pointed out that "the central problem faced by policy makers who attempt to transform the findings of effective schools into improved educational practice at State or local levels is the tension between school-level autonomy and system-wide uniformity". Strategic independence aims to overcome this problem by recognizing the school as the key organizational unit in the public school system, encouraging schools to be different except for the core of cognitive skills and knowledge and devolving more budgetary authority to the school level.

Research by Coleman and Hoffer (1987) stressed the importance of establishing the strongest possible linkages between school and community. They examined the performance of schools on key indicators and highlighted the importance of what they termed "social capital" as a key determinant of effectiveness. Sizer (1984) believed that one imperative for better schools is giving teachers and students room to take full advantage of their different capabilities; a situation which implies that there must be

substantial authority in each school. Goodlad (1984 : 275) suggested "genuine decentralization of authority and responsibility to the local school within a framework designed to assure school-to-school equity and a measure of accountability".

More recent research by Reynolds and Packer (1992) stated that in the 1990s the agenda for schools effectiveness researchers and practitioners will be broadened. In the first instance, the range of outcomes expected from schools is likely to be significantly enlarged by the various competencies required for employment and by the further competencies necessary for functioning in an information-oriented society. Second, the change in the nature of leadership and management tasks required of teachers, particularly senior teachers, will be more market oriented, that is, serving educational clients, resource management, program budgeting, corporate planning, etc. The measurement of effectiveness will have three strands: pedagogical, psychological and organizational.

THE PURPOSES AND GOALS OF BUILDING EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

The link between education and general economic well-being of individuals and the nation has been the issue of extensive worldwide discussion in recent decades. Schools are increasingly taking over the responsibilities once the domain of church and family to provide a whole range of life skills as well as preparation for vocational capabilities. In both areas, the pedagogical emphasis is on developing creative, flexible, motivated individuals who can participate fully in society's activities. Another purpose for building an effective school is to ensure a focal point where equality of educational opportunity is provided for all students.

Within the effective school model, there are three types of goals: academic, social and strategic. The academic goals are provided by state authorities and represent the academic standards which must be achieved. Success for teachers and students is measured by testing programs where the accomplishments of students are judged according to set indicators. Mastery of basic skills and fundamental processes are also as a necessity for intellectual development. Social goals are obtained from the value system of society and represent the basis for the production of good citizens. The

concept of developing "moral" and "ethical" characters is a social goal expected in an effective school. Personal goals of emotional and physical well-being are viewed as being crucial in the process of self-realization. The effective school has at the very heart of it the need to develop dignity in each student and staff member who passes through it. It aims to develop compassionate, sensitive individuals who have a wealth of joy within themselves and the ability to proclaim that joy to others. Strategic goals are derived from the educational marketplace which helps determine the management of resources, financial considerations, budgeting requirements, types of services to be provided, promotional activities and staff development needs.

KEY MANAGEMENT ISSUES IN BUILDING EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

Traditionally, schools have been structured on a rational, bureaucratic model characterized by compartmentalization and isolation. However, in the most recent decade, a new model has emerged. Mulkeen and Cooper (1987) and Kanter (1983) point out that this model is based on the integration of organizational structure to bring about greater responsiveness and flexibility. The motivation for this new model is the marketisation of educational processes. Bureaucratic control and homogenization has been removed and schools have to compete with one another to offer the best product and service at an attractive price. According to Dimmock (1992) schools in large, centralized systems did not have to be responsive to market needs.

The imperatives of market driven restructuring require school-based management.

Two types of pressure changed the market for education product. Firstly, an increasingly competitive world market was calling for different competences in workers and secondly, fiscal constraints on governments required greater cost effectiveness from all government services. According to Beare (1991), local empowerment is the means by which educational providers can offer the degree of responsiveness clients demand and accountability governments need.

Responsiveness and flexibility are closely linked to the organizational structure and culture of the school. Sashkin and Egermeier (1994 : 12)

believe that this restructuring involves "changes in roles, rules and relationships between and among students and teachers, teachers and administrators and between administrators at various levels from the school building to the district office to the state level".

Research into effective schools provide useful insights into what constitutes an effective school culture. Duignan (1987), Murphy et. al. (1985), and Erickson (1987) all provide important indicators of the characteristics of an effective learning culture in schools. In this culture, organizational members have a strong sense of purpose and vision for the future based on their values and beliefs about what is fundamental to human life, the purpose of education, the nature of curriculum, the way children learn and grow and the nature of interpersonal relationship.

Duignan (1987) and Fullan (1987) both suggested that a good leader is crucial to creating a vision for the school and encouraging an organizational culture conducive to reflection, criticism, negotiation and compromise. Successful educational leaders become "agents of organizational learning". Talented leaders also build effective networks and mould normal interactions of daily school life into dynamic yet focused outcomes. Dimmock (1991 : 160) suggested that "more coordination and control among the elements of a school are a likely consequence of school-based management. Less control from the center imply more control at the school level". Excellent leadership, therefore, is vital to school-level control and to ensure the participants in the planning process, that is teachers, parents, community, are properly informed, do not exert undue influence, have an opportunity to provide feedback and are involved in monitoring and reviewing outcomes.

Contiguous with good leadership, an effective school has thoroughly professional staff who set high but realistic standards, monitor their own effectiveness and are willing to be innovative. Mortimore et. al. (1988) said such teachers were actively involved in whole-school curriculum planning but developed their own curriculum guidelines and participated in decisions on which classes they would teach and were consulted on issues affecting school policy. Rowe (1991) argued that effective teachers are "organized, methodical, reflective, collaborative...(and) are willing to try new ideas and adapt". As school staffs are charged with the responsibility for implementing

the major curriculum changes and new thrusts in school improvement, it is crucial that they support the values espoused by the school and the school system.

In a market-driven educational environment, the parents as consumers are out of necessity going to have a closer relationship which school-based management. The school must rely more heavily on support from its local community and the parents are important linkages in this respect. McGraw, Piper, Banks and Evans (1992 : 92) concluded that "if parents feel important in the education process, they can be a great back-up and support for teachers' efforts – thus they need to be constantly involved in the life of the school". Parents can be good public relations representatives and advocates. They can also provide vital financial and resource support. There are of course reservations about the types and levels of parental involvement. McGraw et al. suggested, however, that "guidelines must be defined to ensure that the school is not unreasonably influenced by parent involvement or through pressure groups".

School-based management affects students as consumers of the education product, albeit a slightly different experience to that of their parents. A school that ignores the needs of students will not be effective. McGraw, Piper, Banks and Evans (1992 : 114, 117 and 118) deem that "students should find their experiences relevant" and "students should be motivated to learn ... are encouraged to take risks in order to stretch themselves and in order to learn form their mistakes ... to take increasing responsibility for their own learning". To do this effectively, students require a sense of belonging, self-esteem, development of personal and social skills and to have some input into the formal decision making structures through student representative councils.

CONCLUSION

Building effective schools in the 21st century has many issues at its very core. In this new century as compared to the past, the current agenda is becoming more demanding in all facets. Outcomes are greater and the focus on developing "active" individuals is becoming an increasing priority. Reassessment of the organizational processes in order to achieve the

optimum in one's ability to learn and think must also be addressed. Effective schools in the dawn of the 21st century must rely on marketing, parental and community support, the need to keep staff and students motivated, the maintenance of healthy staff and student relationships and the ability to accept and deal with change.

Building effective schools is about developing a school-based management system and culture that has as its focus its clients. These clients are students, parents, employers and communities. These groups have always been clients of the school system, but in today's highly skilled and competitive commercial and industrial environment, they now have a new importance. They are making new demands for relevance, accountability and for participation in decision making process. Effective schools are the ones with the responsive personnel and with the will to compete in the educational marketplace.

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