



Aalborg Universitet

AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

Are traditional food service organisations ready for organisational change? – a case study of implementation of environmental management in a work place canteen facility.

Mikkelsen, Bent Egberg

Published in:
Foodservice Research International

Publication date:
2004

Document Version
Early version, also known as pre-print

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Mikkelsen, B. E. (2004). Are traditional food service organisations ready for organisational change? – a case study of implementation of environmental management in a work place canteen facility. *Foodservice Research International*.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- ? Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- ? You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- ? You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

ARE TRADITIONAL FOODSERVICE ORGANIZATIONS READY FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE? (A CASE STUDY OF IMPLEMENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT IN A WORK PLACE CANTEEN FACILITY)

BENT EGBERG MIKKELSEN¹

*Department of Nutrition
Danish Institute for Food and Veterinary Research
19 Mørkhøj Bygade
DK 2860 Søborg, Denmark*

Accepted for Publication November 28, 2004

ABSTRACT

Eating at work will increase in importance for companies of the future. This is attributed to canteens' role in the image that companies project, in the companies' tremendous responsibility for the health of staff and as an employee incentive. Because of social changes, canteen will be able to gain a new role as competitor to the traditional retailer by organizing the purchase of groceries via the workplace and by supplying ready-made meals to take home. Alongside these developmental tendencies, demands are being made to acquire the ability to pick up on impulses, analyze them and through involving staff convert them into organizational initiatives within the organization and finally, to have them converted into specifically permanent initiatives for the organization. When it comes to outsourced foodservice, this task is manifestly a management affair. When it comes to traditional in-house organized workplace, canteen things are different. In these cases, the foodservice organization is bound by their peripheral status at the edge of the company landscape, and their opportunity to adapt to demands of the future is different from when it comes to the specialized foodservice operator. Here learning is a watchword and in order to investigate this claim, a case study was carried out of a development process in a traditionally organized in-house foodservice organization. The development process was related to implementation of environmental management in the organization. This present case shows that the ability to learn is an important feature for an organization that is going to be capable of reacting to challenges from the outside world in an efficient manner. By efficiently backing up the learning processes that come with the process

¹Corresponding author. TEL: +45 7234 7424; FAX: +45 72 34 7119; EMAIL: bem@dfvf.dk

of change, the organization can increase its collective knowledge. Individual learning processes take the form of processes that are set in motion by influences from the surroundings, after which the organization seeks to analyze them and transfer this knowledge into specific actions and then act upon it. The present case showed that traditional in-house canteens, given appropriate assistance, are quite capable of meeting such organizational challenges as in this case, environmental management. However, organizational development needs to take place to be able to meet other challenges in the future. Results show that the principles of the learning organization make a good theoretical framework in order to understand this type of organizational development. The distinctive features, which other comparable foodservice organizations can attempt to build into their organization to their own advantage, are summed up with 10 distinctive guidelines for the learning foodservice organization.

INTRODUCTION

The foodservice industry grew throughout the 1990s (Hurst 1997). In the U.S., food away from home accounts for 50% of the food expenditure (Byrne and Capps 1996). In Europe the proportion is smaller with 30–35% reported in Germany (Möllenberg 1998), but the foodservice sector as a whole is growing (Société Francaise de Santé Publique 2000). One of the fastest growing sectors is foodservice in workplace canteens (Möllenberg 1998). In Denmark, workplace canteens are the fastest growing segment of the foodservice sector with a 12–15% yearly increase in the procurement of food (Haman 2002).

There are several reasons for the growth. One is that, companies regard going to canteens as being a central activity in the employees' workday and foodservice is regarded as part of the incentives offered by companies. Hence, foodservice must be of high quality if it is to attract and keep employees (Kirketerp 2001). Also, canteens play an important role in matching the expectations of guests and business partners visiting companies for meetings (Horwitz 2002). But as canteens are getting a more central role in the daily lives of the employees and in the company, canteens are also facing new challenges. With conflicting political, economical, technological and cultural forces at work, operators must reconsider and adjust their competitive methods (Hurst 1997). Some of the challenges that European canteen operators face include the fact that many companies realize that canteen foodservice has important health implications. Because many employees are having most of their lunches at work, canteens have the important obligation of offering healthy meals. Many companies are taking interest in offering healthy meals and fit-

ness opportunities at work. Many employees and companies expect canteens to pay attention to environmental issues. These include concern for products that guarantee animal welfare, organic foods, as well as non-GMO (Genetically Modified Organisms) foods. Authorities are expected to meet foodservice organizations with new requirements regarding food safety, labeling, the environment and occupational health. Owners, on the other hand, are expected to an increasing extent to focus on cost-effective foodservice organizations.

Such challenges are similar in that they often require the organization to detect new trends or demands, to analyze them, to transform them into concrete actions for the organization and subsequently, to carry out the necessary changes that may result from the demands. An important question is therefore: are traditional foodservice organizations as those responsible for canteen foodservice ready to react to changes and develop organizations that can meet the different demands? In many companies workplace foodservice is organized in-house, meaning that foodservice is managed by the company in which it is operating. This is different from contract foodservice in which foodservice facilities are owned by the company, but where the foodservice is operated by an external operator. Both layouts are illustrated in Figure 1.

In in-house foodservice, layouts of the foodservice organizations along with the other service units of the company play only a peripheral role in the company compared with the company's core business as pointed out by Mintzberg (1983). This may mean that the foodservice organization is only to a limited extent involved in the organizational change processes that the rest of the company experiences.

In addition, foodservice organizations differ very much from other companies, for example, in the manufacturing industry in terms of their industrial relations and the way they are organized. Characteristics of foodservice organizations include low pay, high labor turnover, high rates of dismissals, accidents and absenteeism (Lucas 1996; Hurst 1997). Another characteristic is that foodservice is traditionally women's job (Poulin and Aubry 1997). Also in foodservice, there is little tradition for taking advantage of research results and methods (Moskowitz *et al.* 2001).

Gabriel (1988) has characterized foodservice organizations traditionally where tasks are carried out according to precise specifications and with very little involvement of the employees. Most of the organizations are small with less than five employees (Bech and Mikkelsen 1996). The educational level varies and most of employees are unskilled workers.

For these reasons it is believed that traditional foodservice organizations are less prepared for applying modern management principles compared with other organizations.

It is a basic assumption that in order to meet future demands, foodservice organizations must develop their ability to learn. As per definition, foodservice

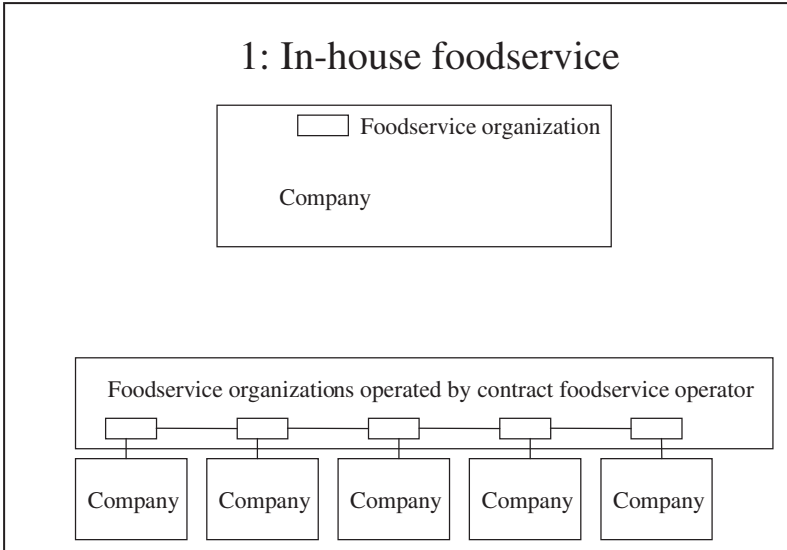


FIG. 1. IN-HOUSE AND CONTRACT FOODSERVICE

The figure illustrates the two different ways of operating foodservice. In in-house foodservice (1), the operation is owned and run by the company in which it is operating. In contract foodservice (2), facilities are still owned by the company in which it is operating but the operation is run by an external operator, who usually will run a number of other operations as well.

organizations are designed to be good at performing routine tasks such as producing and serving meals under well defined and stable conditions. But when stable conditions in the outside world change and result in increased pressure on the organization to change, it is necessary to consider new management principles that could act as guiding principles.

Therefore, principles of the learning organization plays an important role in this study, both as an inspiration for designing the study and as a theoretical frame for putting the findings into perspective.

The concept of the learning organization began to develop in the late 1970s. Argyris and Schon (1978) published the book *Organizational Learning – A Theory in Action Perspective*, which was the first attempt to describe a framework for the learning organization. Peters and Waterman (1982) analyzed a sample of successful companies and reported the results in the book, *In Search for Excellence*. These results were pasted together to become the image of the learning organization. Later on Morgan (1986) reviewed the principles along with other organizational theories in *Images of Organizations*. Senge (1993) elaborated further on the subject in *The Fifth Discipline*, and Peddler *et al.* (1997) have taken a European perspective on the issue in *The-*

Learning Company – A Strategy for Sustainable Development. According to Peddler *et al.* (1997), a learning organization is “an organization that facilitates the learning of all its members and consciously transforms itself and its context.”

While other theories are good for classifying organizations that operate under conditions that remain constant, the principles of the learning organization have proven to be a good theoretical basis for the kind of management that is needed under conditions of perpetual change. The principles suggest that not only individuals, but a group of people as well, such as those working together in an organization, can learn collectively, and that this learning is essential if the organization is going to survive in a competitive environment.

The principles of the learning organization in this study are used to explain the results and develop recommendations. The concept of environmental management encompasses the practical framework for the change process in the current case. It is based on the principles of quality management developed by Feigenbaum (1983), Deming (1990) and others. This framework describes in theoretical terms how an organization can work systematically with quality issues and how this work must be handled as a management issue.

The framework is often referred to as the PDCA cycle because of its four steps: *plan, do, check* and *act*. It is the blueprint for Quality Management and Quality Management Systems. Welford (1995) and others have developed the ideas further into principles for environmental management.

Over the last 10 years, the ideas of environmental management has developed from a technical approach toward a more organization- focused approach. In modern organizations, environmental management is understood as a process that involves the whole organization and its employees and not just as a process on a technological “fix” or “bolt on” approach (James 1994). Also, the approach taken by Feigenbaum (1983) in Total Quality Management underlines the importance of involving the employees in quality and environmental management processes.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the study was to study how a traditionally in-house foodservice facility could handle a major organizational change such as that resulting from a desire to implement environmental management. The purpose was to study the strengths and weaknesses in the organizations’ approach to the implementation process and to develop a set of guidelines that foodservice organizations can use to be better prepared for organizational change processes.

METHODS

The study was carried out as a case study at an in-house operated foodservice organization of a large Danish pharmaceutical company. The foodservice organization serves approximately 6000 meals per day and has approximately 150 employees. Foodservice production is organized in four central foodservice kitchens responsible for the production of hot and cold foods for cook-chill delivery to around 30 canteens. However, only a part of the foodservice organization was selected to be involved in the case study. Thus, the case involved one central kitchen and two canteens.

During the planning stages of the research project, this particular foodservice organization was hoping to improve its environmental performance. The foodservice organization was being met by requirements to benchmark its operations in environmental terms, but it was clear that there was limited expertise within the foodservice organization. Also evident was the lack of organizational framework to start the process toward environmental management.

In addition, it became clear that the foodservice organization was different in terms of environmental impact compared with the rest of the plant. Therefore, it was feared that only limited help could be obtained from the corporate environmental department. For these reasons the foodservice organization agreed to make its organization available for the research project in which the researcher should act both as a process consultant, helping the foodservice organization in implementing environmental management, and as a researcher studying what kind of organizational barriers the environmental management implementation process would encounter.

The approach that was used is based upon the action research tradition (Greenwood 1999; McNiff and Whitehead 2002). With traditional empiric research, it is assumed that the researcher tests a given research hypothesis by studying the field "from outside" and without involving the research object. However, in complex organizational systems, it is rarely possible to study the field from outside and do it without involving the research object.

In action research, it is assumed that the practitioners of the field possess knowledge, albeit tacit, which the researcher is interested in using theoretically and generally. While the researcher is developing research understanding of the field, practitioners are able to glean knowledge and inspiration from the researcher, thereby gaining knowledge in order to launch initiatives and instigate developmental processes that would not otherwise be practicable.

The research project followed the environmental management implementation process in a 9-month period in which the organization adopted a policy, carried out an environmental review, adopted action plans and set up environmental goals. During this implementation process the researcher carried out

the qualitative interviews using open questions. These were done with the employees responsible for implementing environmental management as well as with the foodservice management group. The interviews, which were carried out as group interviews, took place at the beginning as well as at the end of the project. These interviews focused on the expectations and motivations for participating in environmental initiatives, the perception of the process as well as the perceived effects and outcomes of the process. Individual interviews were carried out with the corporate environmental management department and the technical department responsible for supplying waste, energy, foods and chemicals and for disposing waste.

In addition, systematic observations focused on observing the same three parameters were carried out as the researcher participated in meeting activities related to the environmental management process. As a third type of empiric data, written document such as standard operational procedures, quality management manuals, minutes and agendas from projects meetings were made available to the researcher for analysis.

The approach of the research project is illustrated in the right column of Figure 2, which illustrates its interrelationship with the progress of the project and the environmental management activities.

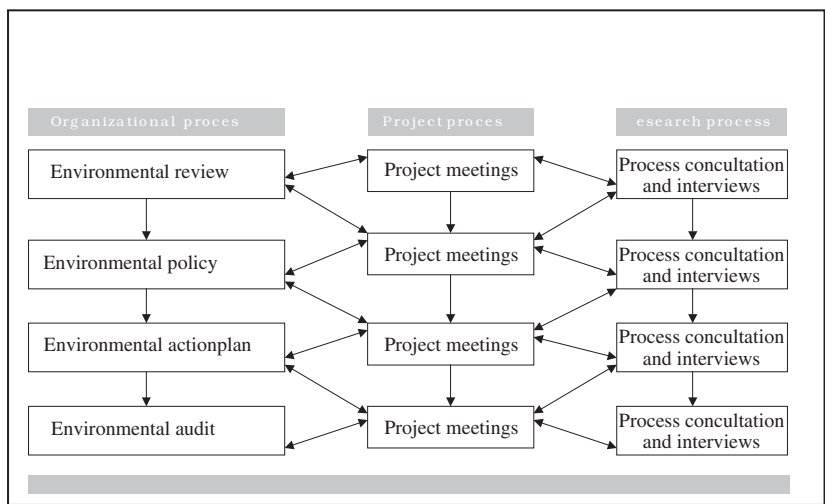


FIG. 2. FLOWSHEET OF CASE ACTIVITIES

The figure illustrates the three simultaneous activities of the case project. On the left are the different organizational steps in the environmental management process; in the middle are the project activities related to the implementation process carried out in cooperation by the researcher and the staff; and on the right are the activities carried out by the researcher.

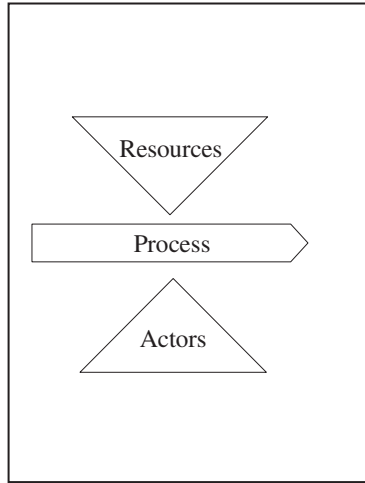


FIG. 3. FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS OF IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS ACTIVITIES

The figure illustrates the frame for analysis of the activities involved in implementation of environmental management in the organization. In this frame the implementation process is understood as a process that is driven by a number of actors with a certain amount of resources.

The results of the interviews were analyzed on the basis of an understanding framework inspired by Håkansson's (1997) network model with a view of being able to evaluate the implementation process. Relative to the network model, the implementation of environmental management can be perceived as a process, as illustrated in Figure 3.

RESULTS

The results showed that the organization achieved some definite results in the environmental area and that environmental management could quite easily be implemented within the organization in question. However, results also showed that there were a large number of organizational barriers that made the process difficult. In the following sections the results are reviewed on the basis of three central concepts with the analysis framework: process, actors and resources.

Process

A core assumption in the project was that the process should proceed in close collaboration with the staff, while making use of their knowledge. Thus,

management, staff and researchers became the central actors in the process. Interviews showed that implementation of environmental management was initially slow, and momentum was lost because of certain barriers such as lack of expertise and limited involvement of participants.

It became clear early on in the process that the foodservice organization was not itself capable of planning and carrying out the readjustment phase necessary for environmental management. It was basically a question of resources and actors with appropriate knowledge. Here there was a need to identify the necessary resources, primarily in the form of knowledge, and identify the actors who could contribute knowledge to the project. It turned out that it was necessary to use both internal and external participants.

Interviews showed that foodservice management was not convinced that it was necessary to involve staff and that it was not clear in their minds that a permanent process of change in the organization would be brought about by introducing environmental management.

Interviews also revealed that management was unsure about involving staff in the project. This uncertainty was partly rooted in the fact that the foodservice organization has a number of routine tasks that needed to be carried out and partly because management was afraid of draining the organization's workforce. Later on it was revealed that these reservations were based on false ground. It soon became apparent that a number of viable propositions were to be suggested for environmental management when selected members of staff became involved. It also removed certain misgivings that the staff had with regard to the project. Later on, the staff that had been selected could report back to their colleagues how the environmental project was progressing.

Management also realized quite quickly that involvement did not necessarily mean that the staff in question needed to participate in *all* decision-making processes related to environmental management. When it came to certain questions, they also realized that they were dependent on staff input because these were the people who possessed practical know-how. For example, measuring energy consumption in the first instance led to the company's technical department installing energy meters in an ergonomically inexpedient manner. When the plan was presented to the staff, it became clear that it would make discharge really difficult and that alternative ways of installing meters should be suggested.

Interviews showed that the staff were personally committed, and that they were adamant with regard to the need for the environmental work. This meant that there was a tremendous team spirit from the start.

However, even though the interviews showed that there was a high degree of motivation amongst the ordinary employees with regard to the environmental management project, the interviews also showed that they did not quite

have the necessary credentials for involvement in project-based processes of change.

All in all the process led to significant progress with environmental work in the organization as an organizational framework was set up for environmental work. However, it was also clear from the beginning that the process could have proceeded far more easily if organizational readiness had been in place from the start. Nonetheless, the organization was not able to reap the full benefits of the learning potential that came about in the process.

Participants

Management and staff in the foodservice organization were evidently the central actors in the process, although a number of other actors were also important. It became clear that implementation of environmental management demands involvement of a large number of actors outside the foodservice organization because actors possessing the knowledge were not available within the organization.

It proved to be beneficial to consider more systematically how these actors could be embraced within this specific task and it was here that the peripheral position of the foodservice organization was reflected traditionally within the company hierarchy. The organization had a good working relationship with the actors necessary for carrying out daily routine tasks, which the organization was to perform, i.e., producing, distributing and serving food, although in the past the organization did not have very much need for identifying and involving other types of actors for ad hoc tasks.

At the beginning of the implementation process, these other actors inside and outside the organization were approached in an unsystematic way. But later on, it was revealed that there was a need for a more systematic analysis of internal and external actors to be able to take advantage of the established network.

Surveying and participant analysis proved to be an efficient tool, which contributed to ensuring that actors with the necessary knowledge and expertise could be identified and involved. A number of the company's internal actors, including the work environment department, the refuse department and the environmental department became involved in the project. There was success in getting these actors to carry out important tasks in connection with environmental management. In other cases, identifying relevant actors was unsuccessful. For example, with environmental management it was shown that technical measurements of water, energy and refuse would have been far easier to carry out if the company's technical department had been involved earlier.

It was also shown that there was a tremendous need to involve external actors in environmental management. For example, it was shown that the supplier of disposable tableware could be involved and supply the necessary environmental data for setting up an environmental account for packaging and disposable tableware. All in all the suppliers proved to be valuable actors that were interested in becoming integrated into greater teamwork with regard to the environment.

Resources

Compared with the organization's past needs, it was shown that environmental management made heavy demands on a number of new resources, primarily in the form of knowledge. Whereas other projects of change would often entail turnkey solutions from the supplier, it was necessary now for the organization to proceed with its own learning process regarding environmental management. This entailed the requirement for new types of knowledge that were not needed before.

The environmental management process revealed a tremendous need for knowledge, which could not be filled simply through the participant network, but which required learning and skills development. The foodservice organization met this challenge by appointing officers for certain types of tasks. For example, some users were appointed to water consumption, energy consumption and waste handling and to be in charge of skills development in that area.

The organization also succeeded in accumulating a considerable amount of knowledge regarding new methods that can be applied to processes of change. Consequently, methods that had not traditionally been brought into use within the organization were put into use. This applies to the future workshop and participant analysis. It proved to be well suited to the project work and the organization had practice in applying these methods.

The organization also expanded its knowledge about other aspects of the project work. This meant that people learned to work in a more experimental way with problems that environmental management revealed. In doing this, people learned how an experimental approach could also result in mistakes. One of these was when carrying out meter readings of water and energy, decisions were taken that later proved not to be the best but which were unavoidable because the organization was moving on to new territory with the environmental management process.

Guidelines

Experience accumulated through this experiment can be outlined in 10 guidelines, which can be used by practitioners, consultants and researchers in

connection with organizational development of in-house foodservice. These guidelines concern both internal and external factors.

Be Ready for Change. Many of the processes of change in the future will take place in the project environment. Such surroundings are in fact a good framework for carrying out tasks, which the organization is not always accustomed to. Therefore, an organization must strengthen its readiness for change by building up and maintaining expertise within project work. It must be ready to work with new subjects and must have the ability to put intersectional and interdisciplinary activities to use, of course within the appropriate framework of time and resources.

This building up of expertise must take place concurrently with the organization being able to carry out its routine tasks, so the foodservice organization must be flexible enough to carry out both tasks. The organization must be capable of converting impulses from the surrounding area into necessary organizational changes.

Maintain a Flexible Organization. When the surroundings are precarious and the processes of change are permanent, the organization must be prepared and must have adequate flexibility. The staff must be capable of complementing and replacing each other if it is necessary. Besides this, the organization must be capable of allocating staff for the project tasks.

By having an organization where several disciplines are represented, getting staff complement and replace each other is manageable. This reduces vulnerability resulting from absences, which means that many resources are available for carrying out tasks.

Involve Staff. Involving staff is important in all processes of change. It can be perceived both as a necessity and as an extra value. Often, involvement is perceived as a necessity in order to avoid resistance to the process of change, but this should not be the case. Instead, involvement ought to be perceived as an extra value, which is capable of giving impetus to this process because of the fact that staff possess a great deal of knowledge about daily operations and are often capable of suggesting specific solutions to problems. This way, there is an assurance that active input from staff are available when solving problems. Also by involving staff, there is a sense of certainty that they will work for the process of change rather than against it, and it makes management more receptive to suggestions put forward by staff.

Support Interdisciplinary Activities. The challenges of the future will necessitate interdisciplinary activities irrespective of the subject matter. Areas of interest may include the introduction of healthy food, new serving or

production concepts or environmental management. Each process demands an interdisciplinary approach because the organization rarely possesses all of the required expertise. These must be obtained from other departments or outside the company, and in most cases, the complexity of the task means that a great number of disciplines need to work together.

While the foodservice organization tends to possess extensive knowledge on practical cooking operations and foodstuff, it is necessary to include in this process professionals with, for instance, technical, chemical, health and environmental backgrounds. There are a number of interesting learning perspectives in this because partnership between people representing several disciplines and educational backgrounds will typically lead to the completion of the task, thus building up on collective knowledge. The foodservice organization can also attempt to achieve a synergy effect by enabling an interdisciplinary approach to be reflected in the work force, for instance, by employing staff with different educational backgrounds.

Support an Experimental Approach. Solutions to unusual problems always bring risks of mistakes. It is often possible to manage routine tasks in the service organization by means of appropriate risk assessment and management, which cuts down the risk of errors. On the other hand, when carrying out nonroutine tasks with developmental projects such as these, a more experimental approach is needed, and here, risk assessment cannot be used as a safeguard. This means that the organization must accept that there are certain risks of mistakes being made. With this, experimental approach will often mean a greater likelihood that new and creative solutions are found with present problems.

Support Training. With learning come opportunities that can be gained when participating in projects, although it is important not to ignore the learning that takes place within formalized teaching. In many organizations there are only limited resources available for further training and often there is a tendency to be inflexible with regard to those who are allowed to participate in further training courses. But if the organization strives to be a true learning organization, it is naturally important that learning opportunities are accessible to all staff.

Learning by participating in courses does not only take place in the formal teaching situation; it takes place informally and spontaneously by meeting other professionals. The added bonus of training is the chance to build and maintain networks.

Interpret the Surroundings. The foodservice organization must be capable of observing and discovering traits in fellow professionals. This

means that the organization must participate in workshops and other professional networking group activities. It does not necessarily have to be manager participation. All that is necessary is to have a few who participate, who maintain networks and who are capable of reporting back to the organization, where new knowledge is converted into action.

Such professional networks can also be used in other contexts and can contribute to compensating for the fact that the traditional in-house catering organization is often isolated within its own organization. This can contribute to creating the vertical integration that can be used in purchase and product development contexts.

Build up and Maintain Networks. Such networks have an obvious potential when it comes to incorporating knowledge from outside the organization. There are a great number of professionals outside the organization that can be involved when it comes to instigating the process of change and getting it started.

This applies for instance to foodstuff suppliers, equipment suppliers, Occupational Health Service (BST), regulatory authorities, researchers and educational institutions. Moreover, it applies to other foodservice organizations and trade associations. With this, a systematic overview of these actors carried out by one participant is a great asset.

Such networks can be more or less formal. There may be definite projects but in most cases it will be about experience exchange network (ERFA) groups, which can be run either by the members themselves or with secretarial help from organizations or companies. The network can contribute to supplying the organization with knowledge, which can be renewed.

Get the Most out of Partnerships. As opposed to networks, partnerships are specific business partners involved in external matters. These business partners are associated with specific developmental activities as opposed to the network, which often has a looser structure. The ability to carry out tasks in a partnership can enable people to perform more efficiently because partners have greater knowledge and more resources. Generally speaking, suppliers of foodstuff, manufactures and equipment suppliers are the obvious partners. Also, such commercial partners will often be interested in having access to the knowledge, which their clients possess because it will help boost their competitive ability in the market.

Another type of partnership is one that promotes knowledge. This is feasible with research partnerships. Within a number of professional disciplines, applied research is carried out in participatory settings. However, this is very limited when it comes to catering. This is because, traditionally, the academic tradition has not been valued in this sector. The present case is a

good example that practice and investigation can be included in the practical learning process.

Be Visible. For the foodservice organization of the future, questions of nourishment, health and environment are focused on more and more. This is important both for staff and management of the company foodservice.

Therefore, the foodservice organization and its staff must be capable of doing more than merely applying innovation; it needs to improve its capabilities of informing people about innovation. This entails that the organization must be capable of equipping staff who have client contact to be able to communicate basic values. This means that it must be capable of handling media that is available for internal communication.

DISCUSSION

It is clear that although the main purpose of the foodservice unit is to produce and serve meals, the organization must also be vigilant and farsighted in order to stay competitive with contract catering companies. Foodservice, like other sectors of the food industry, will be challenged by rapid changes in society and the ever changing trends in consumer demands. This is especially a challenge for traditional in-house foodservice organizations because their position in the company of which they are a part is peripheral, thus, their ability to react to changes in demand are not the same as dedicated foodservice operators. The findings indicate that in order to stay competitive, learning is a watchword for such foodservice organizations.

The organization must be able to enter into a learning process in which it is capable of reacting to impulses from its surroundings and converting them into changes within the organization, as illustrated in Figure 4. The figure shows a model of how this development can take place. The organization picks up on impulses from the surrounding area, resulting in an organizational development process that can transform it into a more receptive organization. In this process where the organization picks up, analyzes and adopts specific approaches with the result that they encounter a great many opportunities for learning, the outcome leads to an increase in the organization's collective knowledge. The results also show that the principles of the learning organization are a good theoretical framework for the type of organizational development that traditional canteens should strive for.

In the research case the change process studied was implementation of environmental management but the result can easily be transferred to other types of change processes. The important point is that challenges and change needs, which from a first impression seem simple, can turn out to be quite

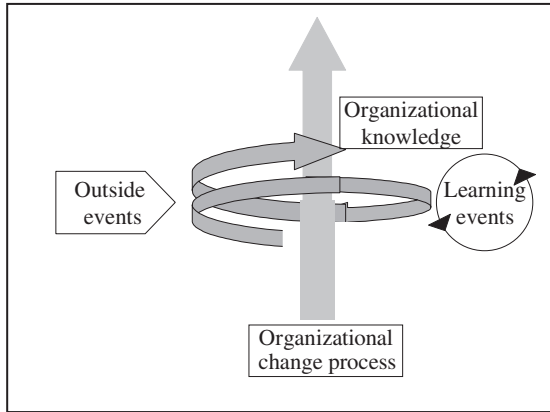


FIG. 4. ILLUSTRATION OF THE ORGANIZATION LEARNING PROCESSES DURING THE PROJECT

The principles have both implications relating to the interior as well as the exterior of the organization. The learning organization must possess the ability to detect and understand important trends *outside* the organization, must analyze the implications of these trends and must be able to transform these trends into concrete changes *inside* the organization.

complex and to involve an organizational change process. This view is supported by Maier and Finger (2001), who studied the case of implementation of organic foods, and Chenoweth and Kilstoff (2002), who studied change processes in health care organizations. The important point is that meeting one type of challenge and successfully implementing the necessary changes make the organization better prepared for future changes resulting from other impacts.

Although the case is a traditional in-house organized foodservice operation, the findings and guidelines are not limited to such organizations. They can easily be adopted by other types of foodservice organizations. However, because the findings are developed in a larger organization and because larger foodservice organizations are expected to be better in adopting more advanced management principles, it is clear that the findings are primarily of value to larger foodservice organizations.

The case study also points to the fact that research partnerships with practitioners can be a promising research method for researchers who want to study the very complex nature of foodservice and foodservice organizations. Thus, the case showed that researchers might conceptualize the thinking of practitioners and that practitioners on their side can help define important research challenges. Because the foodservice sector does not have a tradition of applying research-based knowledge, more research practitioner partnerships might be able to boost innovation and development in this sector.

REFERENCES

- ARGYRIS, C. and SCHON, D.A. 1978. *Organisational Learning – A theory in Action Perspective*. Reading. Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA.
- BECH, C. and MIKKELSEN, B.E. (eds.) 1996. Workplace canteens – results from a national survey [in Danish. Kantinebranchen – Resultater Fra En Landsdækkende Undersøgelse]. Report 4 from Catering 2000.
- BYRNE, P., and CAPPS, O.L., Jr. 1996. Does Engels law extend to food away from home? *J. Food Distrib. Res.* 27(2), 22–32.
- CHENOWETH, L. and KILSTOFF, K. 2002. *J. Nurs. Manage.* 10, 235–244.
- DEMING, W.E. 1990. *Out of the crisis: Quality, productivity and competitive position*. Cambridge University Press/MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- FEIGENBAUM, A.V. 1983. *Total Quality Control*, 3rd Ed., McGraw-Hill, New York.
- GABRIEL, Y. 1988. *Working Lives in Catering*. Routledge, London.
- GREENWOOD, D.J. 1999. *Action Research*. John Benjamin Publishing, Amsterdam, NL.
- HÅKANSSON, H. 1997. Product development in networks. In *Understanding Business Market*, 2nd Ed. (Ford, D., ed.) pp. 475–496, Dryden, London.
- HAMAN, K. 2002. The Danish Foodservice sector 2002, Institute for Agroindustrial Studies. Horsholm, Denmark. www.ifau.dk Last accessed December 6, 2004.
- HORWITZ, J. 2002. Working lunch. *Archit. Design* 160, 38–43.
- HURST, A. 1997. Emerging trends in college and university foodservice. *Journal of College & University Foodservice* 3(3), 17–32.
- JAMES, P. 1994. Quality and the environment: from total quality management to sustainable quality management. *Greener Management International April*(6), 62–70.
- KIRKETERP, C. (2001) VAT due only on the consideration paid for the supply of canteen activities. *VAT Monitor January/February*, 46–47.
- LUCAS, R. 1996. Industrial relations in hotels and catering: neglect and paradox? *Brit. J. of Ind. Relat.* 34, 267–286.
- MAIER, S. and FINGER, M. 2001. Constraints againts organizational change processes regarding the introduction of organic products: case findings from the Swiss food industry. *Bus. Strat. Environ.* 10(2), 89–99.
- MCNIFF, J. and WHITEHEAD, J. 2002. *Action Research – Principles and Practice*, 2nd Ed., Routledge Falmer, London.
- MIKKELSEN, B.E. 1993. Foodservice and the environment: a European perspective. *J. of Food Serv. Syst.* 7, 93–104.
- MORGAN, G. 1986. *Images of Organization*. Sage Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks, CA.

- MOSKOWITZ, R. GOFMAN, A. ITTY, B. KATZ, R. MANCHAIHAH, M. and ZHENYU, M. 2001. Rapid, inexpensive, actionable concept generation and optimization: the use and promise of self-authoring conjoint analysis for the foodservice industry. *Food Serv. Technol.* 1, 149–167.
- MINTZBERG, H. 1983. *Structures in Five*, Prentice Hall Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- MÖLLENBERG, F. 1998. Gemeinschaftsverpflegung zwischen Kostendruck und Herdersatz. *Ernährungs-Umschau* 45, 433–435.
- PETERS, T.J. and WATERMAN, R.H. 1982. *In Search for Excellence – Lessons from America’s Best-Run Companies*, Harper & Row, Cambridge.
- PEDDLER, M. BURGYOUNE, J. and BOYDELL, T. 1997. *The Learning Company – A Strategy for Sustainable Development*, McGraw-Hill, London.
- POULIN, L. and AUBRY, F. 1997. Quelques Considerations sur les conditions de travail des femmes dans le secteur de l’hébergement et de la restauration. *Teoros* 4, 19–20.
- SOCIÉTÉ FRANCAISE DE SANTÉ PUBLIQUE 2000. *Health and Human Nutrition – Element for European Action*, Présidence Française de l’Union Européenne, European Commission, Dg Sanco – Health and Consumer Protection.
- SENGE, P. 1993. *The Fifth Discipline*. Century Business, London.
- STORGAARD, K. 1998. Dialogue between research and development. In *Making the Global Village Local?* (Hetland, P. and Meyer-Dallach, H., eds.) p. 202, COST A4, Social Sciences. European Commission, Bruxelles.
- WELFORD, R. 1995. Environmental strategy and sustainable development. *The Corporate Challenge for the 21st Century*. Routledge, London.