Reading 1

Changing management to manage change: a new plan for South African schools

Department of Education

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This excerpt outlines the key principles underpinning a suggested new approach to the organization and management of South African schools. The approach being proposed – while not new – is unusual in South Africa which has a school system characterized by hierarchical and authoritarian structures and cultures. The 'Changing management to manage change' report suggests the need for a move towards a more participatory and reflective management style in South African schools. Its emphasis on *participation,* on setting *goals,* and on frequently *assessing* whether these goals are being met, reflects the broader paradigm shift within South African education towards a *learner-centred, outcomes-based* pedagogy supported by *continuous assessment.*

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Some assumptions about management

(…) Management in education is not an end in itself. Good management is an essential aspect of any education service, but its central goal is the *promotion of effective teaching and learning in schools.* (…) The task of management, *at all levels* in the education system, is ultimately the creation and support of conditions under which teachers and their students are able to achieve learning. Management should not be seen as being the task of the few; it should be seen as an activity in which *all members*

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of educational organizations engage. The extent to which effective learning is achieved, therefore, becomes the criterion against which the quality of management is to be judged.

Starting with schools

The primary focus for any new approach to management must be the school and its community. (…) Schools are the building blocks for transformation of the education system. It is in schools that the culture of teaching and learning must be recreated, and the foundational lessons of democracy learned. The South African Schools Act places us firmly on the road to a school-based system of education management: schools will increasingly come to manage themselves. This implies a profound change in the **culture and practice** of schools. The extent to which schools are able to make the necessary changes will depend largely on the nature and quality of their internal management.

Schools vary enormously (…) but despite their very different conditions and levels of resourcing, all these schools will have to accept responsibility for developing the capacity to manage themselves. (…) In improving the quality of teaching and learning, education management **must be more supportive than directive** of the change process. This means reconceptualizing, first the management of schools, and second, the ways in which other bodies in the overall education system relate to schools. Taken together, this means a whole new way of doing business.

Change is likely to be a continuing process (…). Since organizations never remain static, education management development is about developing the capacity to **manage the change process** and managing people. Both from the Task Team's own experience and the lessons learned from abroad, we know that you cannot **mandate** change to occur: **passing a law will not, by itself, ensure that change will occur.** Furthermore, individual schools may become highly innovative for short periods of time, but may not sustain innovation without support. It is therefore very important to examine the role of other organizations in supporting or detracting from the efforts of schools to change (…). This is especially true in South Africa, when so much change is occurring at every level of the system, and where the concept of the 'self-managing' school is very new.

Achieving self-management

At the heart of new policy initiatives is a process of **decentralizing decision-making** about the allocation of resources to school level, and a significant **process of democratization** in the ways in which schools are governed and managed. These processes are closely related to a trend towards institutional autonomy which is occurring in other parts of the world. In these countries, the move to school self-management is based on the understanding that decisions should be made by those who best understand the needs of students and the local community.

> " **Management … should be seen as an activity in which all members of educational organizations engage…** "

Studies have shown that self-management can lead to greatly improved school effectiveness. However, the move toward self-management in itself offers no guarantee of positive change. Real transformation will depend upon the nature and quality of internal management. Self-management must be accompanied by an *internal devolution* of power within the school – by giving teachers greater decision-making power – and in transformational leadership.

devolution: sharing part of one's power with others

How then can schools develop the capacity to attain these ambitious goals? The new approach to developing education management depends on the following elements:

- planning according to a value-driven mission;
- managing through participation and collaboration;
- developing the school as a learning organization;
- drawing on other levels of the system for support.

A value-driven mission

(…) We advocate an approach which is driven by the values and mission of the school. Furthermore, we suggest that these are developed and owned by more than just the principal, or some outside authority. A true *culture* of teaching and learning, as well as a supportive management culture, can only thrive in a school where the major stakeholders feel *ownership* of the school's mission and ethos.

ethos: the set of beliefs which gives a school its particular character

However, it is insufficient merely to adopt a formal mission statement. The mission statement is only useful to the extent that it provides a visible symbol of what the teachers, parents and students in the school really believe in. The values that underpin the mission of the school shape the notion of quality for that school, but do not by themselves *achieve* that quality. Only by actively involving all members of the school community in the implementation of the mission can one hope to generate the kind of commitment necessary to foster continuous school improvement.

Participation and collaboration

(…) We propose an *integrative* and *collaborative* approach to school change and management. It is collaborative in that it involves all staff and stakeholders, and integrative in so far as it informs all management processes and outcomes in an organizational setting. Decisions related to concerns such as student learning, resource management, and staff management and development, should be made on the basis of common, agreed principles. In this approach, management is shifted from being an expedient response towards being a value-driven approach, and one founded on consent and consensus. It links goal setting, policy making, planning, budgeting and evaluation at all levels of the school.

expedient: based on what is most convenient or easy to achieve

Planning – in other words, translating school policies into action through shorter term development plans – becomes the prime respon-

sibility of senior staff and community representatives, but with wide consultation. This process creates the opportunity for negotiating immediate targets for action and provides guidelines to individual staff as to how they can work most effectively. Because the vision is translated ultimately into individual action, effectiveness can be evaluated by comparing actual achievement against stated intention.

Schools as learning organizations

Learning organizations treat changes as an ongoing feature of their existence. They make change part of their organizational ethos, and support individual and collective learning as part of their mission. Managers need a wide variety of competencies to carry out their responsibilities, and the learning organization provides the organizational context in which these competencies can be developed.

learning organizations: this Reader includes a number of other readings which develop the concept of a 'learning organization' further. In particular, read the articles by Peter Senge, and Davidoff and Lazarus.

The learning organization develops the capacity to learn and reflect, and the capacity to innovate. It uses these competencies to mobilize and use resources efficiently, and to achieve the larger task of managing the changing environment inside and outside the school so as to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Management development thus combines education, training and support in the context of organizational development, staff development and curriculum development with the aim of improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Drawing on other levels for support

We have stressed that schools must accept prime responsibility for developing the capacity to manage themselves, and the capacity of those involved in management. This responsibility rests heavily on the shoulders of principals and school governing bodies, who will look to other parts of the education system for support.

Although we understand the particular short-term need for capacity building among new governing bodies, we would like to sound a note of caution for the future. We believe it to be preferable that initiatives for the preparation of school governors *not* be separated from broader individual and organizational development initiatives. In the approach to school-based management which we are advocating, school governors are integral partners in the process. (…) Although we have focused on the central responsibility of schools and the support role of local departments, we are aware that in every province there are many other potential sources of support. These include tertiary institutions, non-governmental organizations, private sector organizations and professional associations. We believe that these organizations and institutions are both able and willing to be involved as providers and supporters. We strongly advocate initiatives to establish partnerships between schools, local education departments and other locally-based sources of support and expertise. (…)

Shifting the focus from the old to the new approach

The approach to education management which we propose is appropriate for all levels of management in the education system. It is an approach which combines individual performance and development with organizational development and, if successfully adopted, provides the means to develop in schools the capacity to manage change effectively in pursuit of their ultimate purpose.

However, we are equally aware that what we are proposing represents a radical culture shift for schools and their established ways of working. (…) The emphasis in schools is currently on short-term tasks – there exists what we might call a culture of dependency – in which strategic decisions are expected to be taken outside the school. Clearly, most schools presently have only a limited awareness of the potential for planning which could be done at the school level, and they generally lack an understanding about the skills required. Resistance is the most common reaction to change of this nature, so it is essential that education managers are aware of the factors leading to resistance and how to manage it. Resistance to change can manifest itself in many ways: from the slow processing of salary cheques to the simple refusal to work in new and different ways. Resistance to change flourishes where there is poor communication, little or no active participation or involvement in decisions, and where tensions are allowed to simmer unchecked. To overcome such resistance, it is necessary that there be open lines of communication, participation and involvement of all stakeholders, and an atmosphere of facilitation, support, negotiation and agreement. (…)

Develop individuals or schools as a whole?

When approaches to the management of education are essentially authoritarian, non-consultative and non-participatory, as has been and still is the case in our country, management development tends to focus predominantly on enhancing the skills and competence of key individuals in the management hierarchy, so that they may carry out their line functions efficiently. However, it seems to us that, under conditions of decentralization and a significant shift towards school-based management, it is inadequate simply to focus on individuals.

The implications of decentralized management in the education system suggest a broader and more inclusive understanding of education management development. This is why we have said (…) that we are committed to the view that South Africa's strategy for education management development must embrace:

- the development of managers: the education, training and long-term support of managers;
- the development of management: articulating and operationalizing

> " *To overcome resistance … there must be lines of communication, participation by all stakeholders, and an atmosphere of facilitation and support …* "

articulating: expressing clearly, and openly making known

the principles of good management practice in South Africa;
• the development of organizations: developing and sustaining effective structures, systems and procedures for improved management.

Of course, these elements of education management development are interrelated, and this is implied strongly in our advocacy of a participatory and holistic approach to the management of schools. The approach needs to become part of people's understanding of what it is to manage schools. There will thus be a need to interpret and integrate the approach into current understanding and practices. In the approach we suggest, it is clear that the understanding of who should be involved in management becomes much more inclusive, and this means that education management development can no longer be seen as being the preserve of the few.

The focus is on building effective schools, staffed with effective people with the common purpose of promoting effective learning. Thus, although individual competence is vitally important, such competence needs to be related to the development of effective organizations and should be developed in the context of such organizations. A close link between individual development needs and organizational development needs must therefore be established. (…)