THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

ROLUL MANAGERULUI ŞCOLAR ÎN IMPLEMENTAREA PROGRAMELOR DE EDUCAŢIE SOCIALĂ

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Rezumat: *Implementarea oricărui tip de program educativ în cadrul şcolii presupune implicarea intensă a managerului şcolii. Acestuia îi revine responsabilitatea de a monitoriza implementarea programului atât la nivel organizaţional, cât şi la nivel de conţinut. În acest context, în cazul programelor de educaţie socială, managerul trebuie să asigure elaborarea documentelor solicitate, circularelor necesare, ghidurilor educaţionale, precum şi organizarea trainingurilor tematice pentru profesori, cooperarea eficientă între grupul managerial, cadrele didactice, familie şi elevi.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *manager şcolar, educaţie socială, schimbare, factori de rezistenţă, oportunităţi de perfecţionare, abordare proactivă etc.*

The school principal should monitor any program implementation and student learning in order to determine the appropriate investment of time for specific strategies and activities. It is important that the principal should know how to manage and lead the implementation of any afterschool program. The principal should ensure that they have the necessary policy documents, circulars and guidelines on hand. They should study these documents and internalize all the fundamentals of the program curriculum. When choosing a suitable program the principal must work through the following phases with his staff:

- diagnosing the pupils' problem;
- planning for change;
- implementing change and reviewing developments.

Working as a team with the staff would ensure that those who are affected by the implementation of programs are involved from the beginning in the planning. Whoever makes the final decision, the staff must feel that they were consulted as a group, as well as individuals, and that their opinions have had some influence on the final decision.

Principals should be aware of the fact that adapting any new program is in fact a process of change and most people resist change because it is threatening and uncomfortable especially when the outcomes of change are unknown or unfavourable.

It is important for the principal to know the factors of resistance in order to eliminate them. Resistance to change may be caused by different factors at different levels. The following factors may cause resistance to change:

- Some staff members may exhibit resistance to change if they perceive a lack of personal control over unfolding events;
- Other members may have attitudes towards change based upon their previous experiences of organizational change. Their attitudes may be based on lack of trust and misunderstanding the intentions of change;

- Staff members' resistance may be caused by group cohesiveness, social norms, participation in decision-making and autonomy for self-determination of actions. In this case, the distribution of organizational power and authority will mediate the levels of resistance experienced under different circumstances. Any change that emanates from outside the group is likely to be perceived as a threat to the status quo because the group will value highly its social interactions but will possess little power to influence the change process;
- At an organizational level factors such as organizational structure, climate culture and strategy, may contribute to resistance to change [9].

The principal should eliminate the barrier of feelings of loss of control by ensuring that the change process does not focus on just the technical aspects of the solution intended to produce change, but also on the staff members who must deal with the change. No matter how it is arranged, there are often members of the staff who miss account of change. Such people must be made to feel that the organization will be willing to spend much time and energy on their particular problem. The principal should create a psychologically safe environment that allows his staff to overcome their anxiety about change, the anxiety caused by fear of seeming incompetent, failing, or losing self-esteem. It is important also to mention that acceptance and commitment do not always just happen automatically when people are exposed to a good idea, but they are created through a process of involvement. Moreover, teachers and staff members are more apt to support something they helped to create, are more willing to believe the information they helped to collect and more energized to work on problems they helped to define.

Additional thing that the principal can do is to provide training opportunities. Resistance towards change can be reduced by training which aims to make staff more flexible, honest and open with each other. The principal must work out a staff development program related to the proposed change. The training should have the effect of drawing out the individual from entrenched positions, forcing him/her to look at the problem from several angles, and making him/her more receptive in general. Moreover, staff members can move from the acceptance phase into the commitment phase if they perceive that the benefits of the change exceed the costs of disruption.

Training is a vital component in the acquisition of managerial competence as is a clear understanding of how to ensure the successful implementation of change. Previous studies have emphasized the importance of training before implementation of any program by stating that training is a prerequisite for meaningful and successful implementation of any program.

Staff members need to make sense of it before being able to take any control over the process. The principals should consider a fundamental shift in their developmental philosophy and practice [3].

Moreover, during the implementation of any program the principal should move from a reactive diagnostic-oriented performance improvement approach to a proactive, preventive approach that focuses on identifying what educators do well and creating

growth and development plans that maximize their contributions.

This approach suggests that excellence is the result of training that builds on strengths while managing their weaknesses. Thus, the principal should adopt a developmentally oriented philosophy whereby his/her efforts are dedicated to employees' continuous improvement based on their strengths [5].

Principals should consider the following when addressing a program:

- The soundness of the program because not all program proposals are authentic;
- Understanding the failure of well-intentioned programs. New policies may be sincerely hoped for, but adopted naively without r understanding the specific programs needed for implementation;
- Guidelines for understanding the nature and feasibility of particular programs. Analysis is needed to understand the feasibility of the program. For curriculum change, this would mean checking if the goals, beliefs and teaching strategies involved in the change were mutually consistent and coherent, clearly understood and achievable;
- The realities of the status quo. The principal must understand the existing realities for all the people involved in order to assess the feasibility of the proposed programs;
- The deepness of the program. New programs can strike at the core of the learned skills and beliefs of educators, creating doubts about their sense of competence and purpose;
- The question of valuing. The principal must check if a particular program is valuable.

Therefore, it implies that in order to transform and improve the school, the principal should ensure that educators understand what they are going to do. The principal should also focus on changing the mindset of all stakeholders, improving the internal functioning of the school and improving the key function of the school, namely teaching and learning.

The principal and educators should take the opportunity of an era of change as a chance to achieve positive development in their curriculum. However, it is important for the principals to know that even if change is received enthusiastically, there is no guarantee that it will be satisfactorily implemented. The principal should have instructional leadership skills in order to manage the implementation of any new program effectively.

Training of principals and educators in any social program and its implementation is a prerequisite for successful implementation of the curriculum. Principals cannot manage the implementation of the curriculum successfully if they are not well trained. Like educators, principals need to be orientated in the new curriculum prior to implementation.

Moreover, the training of principals and educators is one of the key activities in a curriculum management process. The training of principals and educators in a new curriculum is deemed to be ineffective if it is concentrated and scheduled to take place prior to implementation only, like in the form of once-off training. The principals and educators' training and support in the curriculum should be continuous.

Strategies for monitoring and supporting teachers and tours:

- Continuous contact with teachers and tours to provide advice and

assistance, to encourage mutual contact between educators as well as effecting contact with learners and parents.

- Clear communication to illustrate roles, to explain terminology, illustration of possible means of evaluation and to supply answers to the frequently asked questions.

- Provision of a support service, for example, explaining time-tabling, support by supplying material, setting an example, creating a safe and trustful climate. Compensation such as praise and acknowledgement, but also intrinsic aspect of compensation, where successful implementation is regarded as sufficient compensation; this creating an opportunity for professional growth by means of improved perspectives and increased responsibility [14].

Adequate teaching and learning resources are some of the requirements for successful implementation of any program. Principals need to make significant decisions which determine the effectiveness of their schools in meeting their aims. The term 'resource' can be interpreted in a variety of ways depending on context, it can include teaching staff, support staff, materials, services, premises as resources, knowledge, technology, power, material, people, time, assessment, information and finance.

In order to achieve the core purpose of the school, which is teaching and learning, financial resources need to be transferred into other forms of resources. The most important resources in this context are the resources that will enable educators to implement the program. The principal must lead the process of drawing up the budget and prioritizing items on the budget as part of resource allocation. The process of drawing the budget should consider the way in which learning outcomes will be achieved through the deployment of particular resources. Furthermore, the principal is responsible for the task of setting the budget, involving drawing together a range of information about the likely outcomes from the present budget period as well as requirements and expectations about the next one. The next step of the resource management is the resource utilization which is concerned with putting the budget plan into operation. The principal should ensure that enough human resources have been employed and teaching and learning materials have been supplied and distributed in such a way that curriculum implementation will be successful.

The final process in the resource management cycle (acquisition, allocation, utilization and evaluation) is the evaluation of the past use of resources with a view to informing future decision-making [6]. Teachers and tours should be informed of the intention to bring changes in the curriculum and be given reasons for such changes. The principal and the management team should embark on curriculum change awareness through meetings, seminars and pamphlets so that teachers and tours can accept the changes in the curriculum before they go for training. The curriculum change awareness campaign will help to instil commitment to the changes on one hand and to minimize resistance during curriculum implementation, on the other [14]. Principals may also organize workshops at school level and invite knowledgeable people in the implementation of the curriculum of tutoring programs to facilitate training.

In order to implement an effective program the principal should care for providing adequate facilities such as classrooms, halls, libraries, laboratories and playing fields. Schools should have adequate classrooms to alleviate overcrowding of learners. Proper implementation of the curriculum cannot take place if learners are overcrowded. Languages, especially the practice of individual reading cannot be treated fairly in overcrowded classrooms. Proper classrooms with adequate air ventilation are conducive for learning and teaching. Furthermore, the curriculum of programs should have life as a learning area which consists of a learning outcome that could be implemented on a playing field. As such, the availability of a proper playing field is a prerequisite for teaching and learning of this learning outcome. Thus, schools should have playing fields which enable learners to practice track events and various invasion games. Therefore, adequate facilities are a prerequisite for the implementation of the curriculum. Similarly, the availability of resources, funds, training of principals and educators and positive school climate are equally important for the success of the curriculum implementation [ibidem].

This position is based upon the assumption that teachers are the prime implementers of any program that is connected to pupils [2]. Numerous of previous studies have posited that the teachers' attitudes have a significant influence on students' performance. Negative teachers' attitudes cause lower expectations from the pupil while positive attitudes cause higher expectations [1], [12]. For instance, when teachers have negative attitudes towards a certain group of pupils this may lead to reducing the pupils opportunities to learn and interact. Moreover, these negative attitudes may weaken pupils' self-beliefs and lead them to reduce their own expectations from themselves and the learning process in general. But positive teachers' attitudes may increase the student opportunities for learning and enhance the pupils' performance, self-expectations and self-esteem [15].

According to Principal's Guide to Effective Afterschool Programs, because outer school programs are inherently different from school programs, sites must successfully negotiate a role transition when the last bell rings. The coordinator is the appropriate staff member to fulfil such responsibilities; he or she is the "principal of outer school," with the school principal as his or her key support. This role transition requires deliberate negotiations on the principal's part to delegate responsibility and institutionalize this alternate leadership structure. As Liaison to the school day staff and families and as supporters of the program in general, principals must consciously initiate and follow through with this role transition [4]. Though coordinators are just as crucial in this transition, principals can empower the coordinators by allowing them space to take on responsibilities and assume leadership. The role of coordinator must be central to any discussion concerning outer school programming or leadership. Coordinators are responsible for everything from managing daily program operations to evaluating student progress, training staff, and fundraising. Given the wide range of requirements of the position, coordinators must be highly qualified individuals with the capacity to take on multiple roles [10]. First, principals must be

aware of the extensive demands on coordinators and the diverse skills set required doing the job effectively. This awareness should directly guide the process of hiring and selecting a coordinator. Even when the coordinator is hired by an outside lead agency, the principal should have input on the selection. Second, as Liaison and Supporter of the outer school program, principals must convey the complexity of the coordinator position to their regular day staff so that the staff values the coordinator as a professional. Finally, as Resource Providers, principals must do everything in their power to secure salaries for coordinators that reflect their qualifications. If the lead agency rather than the principal determines the coordinator's compensation, the principal can advocate on the coordinator's behalf. The more principals believe in the value of the position, the more likely they will be to allocate or advocate for sufficient funding [13].

The principal-coordinator relationship building is an essential component of successful outer school programs. Any discussion of principal involvement in programs must adequately reflect the critical nature of this relationship. Principals and coordinators who share common visions and expectations, who communicate regularly within a structure that work for both of them, and who collaborate to link the program with the classroom usually express satisfaction with their working relationships [7].

Program design and staffing decisions must take this relationship, and its implications, into serious consideration. Principals must be aware of the expectations they have for their coordinators and of the extent to which they want to maintain or let go the program leadership. Principals should understand the collaborative nature of afterschool programming and expect to work closely and consistently with their coordinators. Outside agencies responsible for placing coordinators at school sites must dedicate adequate time to getting to know individual principals and coordinators so they can pair teams accordingly [8].

Coordinators need to understand potential principal roles as much as principals do. Coordinators stand to benefit from taking part in creating a model of effective principal involvement. Because an effective program depends on an effective coordinator, coordinators must take initiative in ensuring that they have the necessary resources, access, and information necessary to do their job. Taking an active part in determining the model of principal involvement at their site is one way to do so. Coordinators can help their principals to be effective communicators by requesting regular meetings and institutionalizing a structure to ensure such meetings take place. They can increase the likelihood of their principals' being effective resource providers by keeping principals abreast of program needs and of the potential consequences for pupils if these needs are not met. They can help their principals to be effective visionaries by discussing their own visions for the program with their principals and finding common ground. They can encourage their principals to be effective supporters and Liaisons by seeing that principals get copies of program memos, inviting them to all program events, and inviting themselves to regular day staff meetings and professional development opportunities. In sum, coordinators must devote

time and energy to developing effect-tive working relationships with their principals and do everything in their power to ensure that their principals have confidence in the coordinators' abilities and qualifications [11].

Though programs are diverse in their designs, leadership structures, and school cultures, principal involve-ment is essential in any school-based afterschool program. Programs must assess their unique strengths and chal-lenges to determine a model of princi-pal involvement that works for them. Effective principal involvement that supports program goals requires con-sistent input and buy-in from coordi-nators, agency partners, grant admi-nistrators, program managers, and principals themselves.

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