

# Organizational and School Development: A Training for Headteachers

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## *1. School Reform Demands School Development*

In Europe, public schools are more and more going to be run as autonomous schools. From the point of view of the educational system, the current school reform is a process of decentralisation of competences and centralisation of control and regulations. At the level of schools as organizations, reforms concern organizational and pedagogical matters. Organizational autonomy and curriculum autonomy at schools can be completed with autonomy in budgetary decisions and standards that follow state regulations.

Experience in decentralisation exists predominantly in Scandinavia and the USA. Within the OECD and outside Europe, New Zealand has the most comprehensive school reform program, while within Europe it is the Netherlands (Dalin, 1989, pp. 300) and England (Capaul, 2001, pp. 99) that are most advanced. Consequently, headteacher training programs vary considerably on an international level (Huber, 2003). Somewhat paradoxically, decentralisation goes along with an increased centralisation process. Centralised are above all nationally defined standards such as quality standards, quality control, curriculum planning and core exams. Efficiency measurement on a national level has become an international challenge. The (semi-) autonomy of schools is moving within the borders of predefined concept. This explains for the fact that increasing autonomy of schools also leads to an increased need for evaluation and an increased pressure on schools for being held to account by the municipality or the local school authority.

Efforts for school autonomy aim at two goals. First, a more effective use of resources and second the creation of modern and better schools. Therefore, it is hoped that in connection with new public management an optimised expenditure of the existing resources can be achieved (Thom et al., 2002). Thus, the aim of autonomous schools lies in the attempt to renew the bureaucratic structures that have grown over time and to react more flexibly to a quickly changing environment and society – particularly as regards the effective use of resources and pedagogical issues. This involves more autonomy in curriculum design, increased competence in decision-making for teachers when it comes to pedagogical issues, as well as more room for creativity. Pedagogical concepts are likely to be implemented if headteachers lead their school by initiating team development at school and by bundling teachers' efforts and experiences with the aim to develop excellent schools (Huber, 1997; Rüegg, 1998; Senge et al., 2000).

Several actors are inflicted by this process of decentralisation. These are the government council, the board of education, the directorate of education, the supervisory board, the municipality, the local school authority, principals and teachers. As a result of the installation of (semi-)autonomous schools, tasks and responsibilities of all these actors in the educational sector change. Even though the aims and responsibilities are not completely sorted out yet, measures have already been taken. According to Fink (in Hargreaves, 1995, pp. 29), there exist two types of systemic reforms. First, there is a government-initiated change, based on the assumption that education cannot reform itself and that the system is broken and needs readjustment or reinvention (top-down). This is what has been termed legislated changes. Remarkably enough, these government-initiated changes do not involve the professional community, i.e. the teachers. Second, there is a form of systemic change which, as opposed to governmental guidelines, roots in partnerships between schools and universities, including all personnel (bottom-up). Both reform types, however, aim at creating new 'model' schools as an alternative to more conventional schools.

Under these circumstances we suggest case studies, simulations and empowerment of the core actors to support the development of schools. The use of case studies and simulation will be discussed based on results of the European project PROFILE (Professional Investigation and Headteacher Training. Project of Sokrates II, Comenius 2.1 Research Based School Management) and illustrated with examples of the headteacher training of the University of Applied Science in Education, Zurich (At the University of Applied Science in Education (Pädagogische Hochschule Zurich/CH) a Postgraduate Course for Headteachers and Mastercourse in Management of Education can be completed).

## ***2. Teaching Headteachers***

A clear shift in school reform is the institutionalisation of the function of headteachers in public schools. The current state of reform challenges headteachers in their function as school leaders as well as change agents. The aim of a specific training for headteachers is to prepare and support them in their new professional role.

Furthermore, current tendencies in Switzerland as elsewhere (Hargreaves, 1995, Huber, 2003) provide evidence for the emergence of a profession of "headteacher". The concept of "a primus inter pares" will be replaced by the concept of "a principal". Accordingly, an increasing number of schools advertise posts for headmaster/headmistress. The American model, where managers lead a school without having a specific pedagogical background, seems to meet little acceptance in Europe. Especially schools in Germany and Switzerland point out that because education is the core business of schools, the managerial position should be held by a pedagogue.

There is every indication that it makes perfect sense to offer a further education in educational management for pedagogues. Therefore, the curriculum is defined by the requirements that are expected of these professionals. Moreover, headteacher training should not be thought of as an on-the-job training (Gonon & Stolz, 2004) but rather as a qualification unprejudiced by any organization. This includes complex learning contents that go beyond a situational notion of school management in a specific community and instead opens up opportunities on the labour market (Hansen, 2004). It is the employer, however, who defines the concrete job profile which is based on the situational school management model. Consequently, the headteacher training above all needs to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

## ***2.1. Tasks and competences of Headteachers***

The specific duties of headteachers have been analysed and identified from many different points of view (Brägger, 1995; Capaul, 2001; Huber, 1997; Huber, 2003; Senge et al., 2000). The tasks may be many and various, ranging from administration to personnel recruitment – but as practice shows, the time to fulfil the tasks varies from a few hours per month up to a full-time management position (Huber, 1997; Rustemeyer, 1998).

When we focus on competences we talk about tasks that are connected to responsibility and decision-making. Most common is the division into four different fields of competence:

- 1) organizational competence
- 2) pedagogical competence
- 3) financial competence
- 4) personnel competence

To these more general areas of responsibility Rustemeyer (1998) adds the field of public relations. Based on her study, headteachers deal up to 89.7% with organizational tasks, 79% with personnel issues and 63.8% with administration.

Headteachers share competences with school authorities, communities and teachers. Based on the international TIMSS+ study, where schools have been interviewed in to their specific division of competences it is obvious that figures vary considerably among the countries that took part in the study (Huber, 1997).

Headteachers in France, for instance, are in charge of organizational competences at a rate of 94%. With 10.6%, headteachers in Portugal have the lowest level of organizational competence. As a reference point, the average is a rate of 71.2% (Germany 74.4%, Austria 73.4%, Switzerland 52.3%). Pedagogical competences involve the following tasks: set up standards for marking schemes, decide what course books are to be used, define regulations for homework assignments, exchange of information with parents, define learning contents and what subjects are to be offered. The average figure

for the amount of headteachers' pedagogical competences ranges at 32.5%. Swiss headteachers are placed at a rate of 16.4%, which is the lowest figure of all OECD countries as regards this area of responsibility. Opposed to this, New Zealand is ranked on top with a rate of 81.5% (Germany 34.6%, The Netherlands 49.8%).

When you compare headteachers' competences at elementary and grammar schools, you realise that there exist significant differences (The headteacher training program for grammar schools in St.Gallen/CH for example defines the following six core areas of responsibilities: pedagogical leadership, human resources, management of resources, preparation and implementation of teachers' involvement, school boards and personnel managers, public relations and evaluation/reporting [Capaul, 2001, p.107]). It is especially the competences in personnel and financial matters, which rarely lie within the headteachers responsibility, that reinforce the broader meaning of autonomous schools. In Switzerland, according to the 1995 TIMSS+ survey, headteachers at elementary schools did not have any financial and personnel competences (Huber, 1997).

Accordingly, headteachers were predominantly assigned organizational and pedagogical competences. It is precisely these areas that the headteacher training focuses on. Comparing the competences internationally it is likely, however, that in the medium or long term these areas of responsibility are going to be brought in line with those of grammar school headteachers.

## ***2.2. Example of a Headteacher Training in School Development***

The training we present is to make headteachers understand what school development is about and to discuss what their role in this process is. School leaders must be able to understand the complex processes in their school. Clearly, headteachers will be confronted with change processes in some way or another and must be able either to initiate, to implement or at least to handle change.

The units are designed for people who wish to become headteachers in the near future or for those who have just started their function as headteachers. They should have experience in leadership (for example: project leader, team leader). We presuppose a pedagogical background as well as knowledge and experience in communication skills and project management.

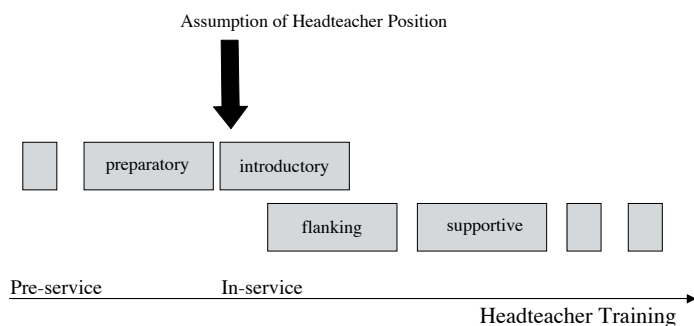


Figure 1: Headteacher Training in Relation to the Position

The learning aim of this four-day seminar is to perceive the organization as such, do individual observation, get to know the organizational development cycle, as well as receive concrete tools for one's one practice in the day-to-day business as headmaster. The planning game that is carried out is rather similar to the case study method combined with a simulated and accelerated organizational development process.

As the participants come from different backgrounds, some already being headteachers, others still preparing for the function, we work with different roles during the case work as case-giver and consultants. The crucial point of the training is the theory-practice relation. During the seminar the perspective is switched from involvement to case-solving, testing alternatives, meta-reflection, discussion and theoretical background. Dialectics become even more vital for headteachers on the job who are confronted with virulent processes of organizational change (Planning games cannot only be used as preparatory tool for professionals but also as learn control at the end of the training [Capaul, 2001]).

If we had participants who already are in a position of headmaster and who are confronted with concrete problems such as difficulties with the school board about the distribution of competences, discussions with teachers or problem cases on a social or emotional level (as opposed to problems on the subject level), an intensified role play would be necessary. When it comes to taking strategic decisions, one could also imagine carrying out a suitable simulation that, once a decision is taken, allows to play it through, in order to give the participants the opportunity to live through a scenario. Insofar we understand this seminar as the skeleton for an introduction into organizational school development which can be complemented with various elements taken from the planning game method. These can be tools such as simulation, gaming, role play and case study (Capaul & Ulrich, 2003).

### 2.3. Content of School Development

The content of the training is based on recent knowledge about change processes and organizational school development (Schley in Altrichter et al., 1998, pp.13-53). We particularly rely on a systemic perspective and are in favour of a double loop learning cycle (Agyris & Schön, 1994; Senge et al., 2000). The development of organizational theory of the last hundred years outlines how the ideas of steering and intervention have emerged over time (e.g. Schreyögg, 1999). The presentation of (international) comparative studies raises the awareness of different perspectives and will therefore be an introduction to reflection and discussion (Hargreaves, 1995; Huber, 1997).

Based on Rolff et al. (2000, p.16), we understand school development as a triple process, defined as pedagogical school development consisting of quality management, human resources and organizational development.

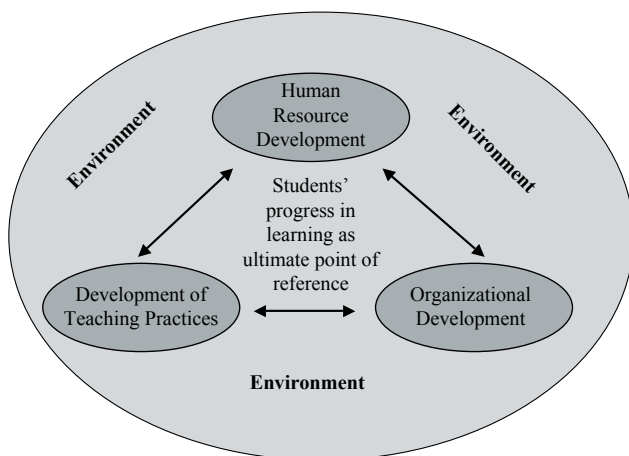


Figure 2: Pedagogical School Development (according to Rolff et al., 2000, p.16)

The simulation goes along with the four-step cycle of change:

- I Organizational Analysis (collect data, analysis of data and diagnosis)
- II Develop Visions and Aims (visionary work, formulate aims)
- III Implementation (formulate measures, testing phase)
- IV Evaluation

As for the phase model it has to be pointed out that this is one possible model, and a simple one as such, that contains multiple consecutive steps. We also find two five-phased models, one by Schley (Schley in Altrichter et al., 1998, p.42) and one by Capaul (2001, p. 95). Schley's model, which functions anti-clockwise, consists of: perception, analysis, conception, implementation, evaluation. Capaul's phases are divided into: starting point/conditions, research/development, fusion, adaptation, controlling/evaluation.

The shortest phase model that is known has been designed by Lewin and consists of three phases: unfreezing, moving, freezing. The phase model according to Lippett & Lippett consists of six steps: contact and introduction, formulation of the contract and build-up of a employee-employer relationship, definition of the problem and diagnostic analysis, set aims and define measures, implementation and efficiency control and safeguarding and continuity. The phase model according to Dalin & Rolff even differentiates eleven steps: initiation, introduction, steering group/client, contract, data collection, feedback on data, aims/priorities, implementation, institutionalisation, evaluation, outcome/exit. (see Rolff et al., 1998, pp. 29-34).

The chosen four-step cycle of change leads through an analytical process that is based on research. It is not only applicable to school development processes on an organizational level but also to the evaluation of teaching practices or other knowledge-based change processes. This model is complemented with insights of the learning organization, particularly with the double loop learning process according to Senge et al. (2000).

#### ***2.4. Structure and Design of the Headteacher Training***

The training on school development lasts two days and can be carried out with 12 to 40 participants. However, we recommend groups of 24 participants. The complete postgraduate headteacher training takes a year and involves 200 seminar-lessons and 160 hours of self-study which equals 16 ECTS. The Postgraduate Course for Headteachers also is part of a Mastercourse in Management of Education (60 ECTS) at the University of Applied Sciences in Education in Zurich (Pädagogische Hochschule Zürich).

During the two day training in school development units of presentation and individual work or group work alternate. The participants go through the four-step cycle in units of reception and of involvement. This allows for a better combination of theory and practice.

The process starts with an introduction into organizational change and the organizational development cycle. First, everybody analysis their own educational organization according to a questionnaire provided. This individual work is meant to raise the ability to analyse and observe. For the organizational diagnosis we divide the participants into groups with six people each. There should be at least two potential case-giver per group. Since not all participants bring along an actual real life case with them, the group can either work on a participant's case or work on a designed case. The case-giver presents their case and has their colleagues make a diagnosis. We suggest the use of the SWOT (= strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) diagnosis which is introduced, explained and exemplary applied to this specific case. The ability to observe, match perspectives, reflect on a case and getting to know the systemic perspective of an organization is an important learning aim in this first step.

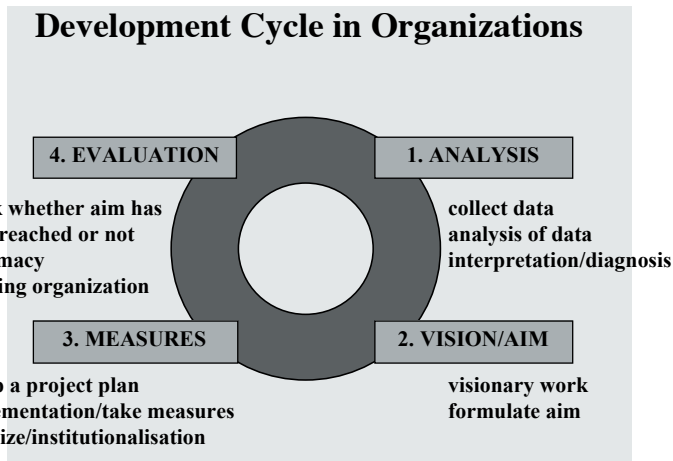


Figure 3: Four-step Development Cycle in Organizations

In a second step, the visionary work, the group develop visions for the future of the organization they have analysed. This can be done using creativity techniques such as painting, creating sculptures or play theatre. Participants can do this based on their knowledge of the case at hand. We could also introduce the element of role models and assign each participant a specific role of one of the actors involved in the school development process. A role play is also a suitable tool to discuss problems that are inherent in the system of the school/organization that has been presented. It would be an ideal transition to discuss the topic of how to deal with resistance.

In the third phase of the OD cycle where measures are planned and taken, the group still works on the same case. As already mentioned above, this can either be a real-life case or a designed one. The solution is not clear from the beginning and needs to be developed together. The technique how to design plans that is taught to the participants is also used in project management. Participants work on a catalogue of possible measures that could be taken and which are grouped according to priority. Also, on a time scale, they develop implementation measures in the form of milestones.

For the fourth step of the OD cycle, the evaluation, a theoretical concept has been introduced. The difficulty here is that the participants have not gone far enough with their project yet so that they could fall back on concrete examples. One could, however, work with already existing and selected examples in this phase of the cycle. From our own experiences we recommend that, if possible, for all of the four phases the same case is used so that all steps can be consequently carried out.

To make the simulation on school development even more lively the case study which has been used for experience-based learning could be complemented with individual elements of a role play. This is particularly desirable

if you want to show the power play of the actors involved in a school development process. To this end, you could also design specific constituents that can be used to deepen the knowledge.

## ***2.5. Experiences and Reflection on the Training***

The alternation of theoretical instruction and the exemplary use of the four-step cycle of change have proven to be effective. Participants appreciated that they could work on real-life cases. At the same time the need for some theoretical background as well as some instruments could be met. Crucial for the success of the group work are the composition of the group and the choice of the case the group is working on. We suggest that groups are formed by the trainers in advance to guarantee that at least two practising headteachers are part of each group. Perhaps you also want to bring some case studies with you to have something in reserve. These decisions, of course, have to be made according to the participants' background knowledge.

In case problems crop up and questions arise during the seminar, some participants might want to talk to the trainer individually or exchange experience with other participants and colleagues. To support network building we suggest people meet in learning groups or quality circles. To be clear about the role of the trainer, we do not offer coaching on the spot. This is even more important when trainers take exams at the end of the course. In any case it might be useful for schools and departments to look for external support during their own school development process. Consulting, however, cannot replace the headteacher training. Headteachers need an educational background in pedagogy as well as in management. They should be enabled to understand and create school development processes as well as to place them in an international context of school reform.

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