A CASE STUDY OF INTERVENTIONS THAT AIM AT CHANGING THE SCHOOL CULTURE

Xanthipi Foulidi[1],
Evangelos C. Papakitsos[2i],
Spyridoula Vartelatou[3]
[1]Adj. Prof. Dr., Technological Education Institute of Crete,
University of the Aegean, Greece
[2]Adj. Prof. Dr., School of Pedagogical and Technological Education,
Department of Education, Greece
[3]Curriculum Supervisor, Institute of Training,
National Centre of Public Administration & Local Government, Greece

Abstract:

This paper is a case study focusing on effective interventions in a particular school that aim at changing its culture and qualitative upgrading of the main factors in the educational process. Initially, the diagnostic analysis of the particular school is presented and then the benefits of implementing each of the required interventions are documented.

Keywords: extroversion, school culture, teachers motivation, in-school training

1. Introduction

At an upper-secondary high school (General Lyceum) of the Secondary Education Directorate of Western Attica (Greece) in the school year 2016-2017, after the use of scientific means of data collection, such as field research, observation, interview and research of school books and publications, dysfunctions were found and problems were identified in all levels of culture. Particularly about *norm-artifacts*, the school is dominated by the inability to manage discipline problems, the lack of criticism of the previous head-master and also of the support from the collaborators of school. Regarding the *espoused values and beliefs*, introversion prevails (Bouzakis, 2001), along

---

[1] Correspondence: email papakitsev@sch.gr

with lack of cooperative/team climate and trust among colleagues. Finally, with regard to the *basic underlying assumptions*, there is isolation, teacher's indifference to existing problems, their negative attitude towards change and dissociation from their responsibilities. Namely, there is a culture of stagnation and/or deterioration (Anthopoulou, 1999: 20 -22). Moreover, according to Mavrogiorgos (1998: 149): "*the failure to take responsibility, the closed nature of school, the concentration of power and the fragmentary treatment of problems intensify the inefficiency of the school.*"

2. Interventions Planning

Since a school is not a homogeneous entity, the *diversity of effectiveness* (MacBeath, 2001: 39) presupposes that effective interventions are specific, planned and appropriately tailored to each school. The existing situation in the particular school requires the planning of effective actions and makes it necessary to change its culture during the current school year. If the current head-master undertakes the coordination of interventions for the school, it is recommended in the planning phase to initially use the SWOT analysis (Table 1). This is a useful tool, since it reveals the *Strengths* (S) and *Weaknesses* (W), as well as the *Opportunities* (O) and *Threats* (T) that exist at school (Pasiardi, 2008).

Table 1: SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Existing equipment.	- Lack of suitable building infrastructures. - Low students' performance. - Increased frequency and intensity of offending behaviour.
Opportunities	Threats
- The rest of parents want their children to stay in school. - Usage of existing equipment. - Teachers' training.	- Investigation by some parents for ways of enrolling their children in another school.

Consequently, the head-master proposes a plan of actions for the proper functioning of the school by improving the learning outcomes, which he/she puts for approval to the Teachers' Council of the school. It is a multi-leveled plan that contains the following eleven actions:

2.1. In-school training programme for teachers
The design and implementation of a high quality in-school training programme for teachers (Xochellis & Papanaoum, 2000: 8; Fokiali et al., 2005), since it responds to their

real needs and leads to the development of their abilities (Table 1: Opportunities). Besides, the teaching staff determines the quality of the educational process (Xochellis, 2001: 11). In-school training ensures the maximum flexibility in space, time and pace of learning.

During the first phase of the training, all of the school's teachers emphasize their cognitive field, as well as didactic topics, to address the issues of low students' performance (Table 1: Weaknesses). The training will be carried out by the relevant regional School Adviser (Pedagogical Supervisor) by specialty, so that all teachers can redesign/reform the didactic and learning process in classroom and upgrade the teaching practices, in order to achieve the quality of teaching. During the course of training, sample teachings will be presented and discussed in some cases and videotaped teachings, specific cases and examples (case studies) and scenarios that are approached with reflective practices (Kapetanidou, 2014).

In the second phase of the training, its implementation is augmented by the Counselor of the local Youth Counseling Station and/or experts of the Training Institute of the National Center for Public Administration and Local Governance, which is the national organization in Greece that carries out such training actions for teachers. The aforementioned trainers aim to change the culture of the school, as it is linked to students' expectations (Campo, 1993) and the learning outcomes (Lakomski, 2001; Taylor & Williams, 2001; Fullan, 2001). The concept of culture includes "*a pattern of basic assumptions (discovered or developed by a particular group, when learning to deal with problems), which has been tested enough to be considered valid and is therefore taught to new members as the right way of perception, thinking and feeling about these problems*" (Schein, 1985: 6). Alternatively, it is possible to implement either asynchronous or synchronous distance-learning through a Distance-Learning Platform of a Greek or foreign University, which can be available world-wide nowadays. In this way, all teachers, without the loss of traveling time, even if they are away from their instructor, are effectively guided and supported by him/her.

Finally, it is recommended that the third phase of the training should be implemented by the local Health Education and Youth counselors, through appropriate experiential exercises and dramatization games (Gkovas, 2001). These presuppose the active participation of school's teachers (Kokkos, 2005: 86-93) and can contribute to the development of fellowship, conflict resolution, trust, support, appreciation, recognition, effective communication and collaboration among the members of the school's community (Saphier & King, 1985), which are deemed equally necessary for the smooth operation of the school.

2.2. Direct search for mobility opportunities abroad

Namely, teachers in this school undertake to prepare and submit an Erasmus proposal for training in a certified foreign center, as well as on-the-job follow-up project in another EU school under the Erasmus program. The theme of the training will be related to the new teaching methods in secondary education and the change of culture in school.

In order to ensure the participation of teachers to the program of in-school training, incentives for training are introduced, which is a key factor for their efficiency and creativity (Athanasoula-Reppa, 2008; Pasiardis, 2004). It is pointed out to everyone that among the many other benefits of training is the professional development of teachers. From their successful professional career and from the successful and impeccable exercise of their duties, inner positive feelings are created (Locke, 1969). From the interaction with colleagues, students and their parents, the feelings of happiness, compensation, fulfillment, joy and excitement result from (Akiri, 2014). Besides, people work to their fullest extent when they get the maximum satisfaction from their work (Everard & Morris, 1999: 55). At the same time, *inner rewards* are established (Robinson & Stern, 1997) that vary according to the mental needs of teachers, which are different from one person to another and from a particular period to another (Everard & Morris, 1999: 55). Indicatively, among the proposed rewards is the flexibility in the timetable and the possibility of selecting summer duties on a case-by-case basis, for the teachers that support the training project by taking roles and implementing actions to change the culture of the school.

2.3. Mentoring

The informal operation of mentoring, although not institutionalized in the Greek educational system, is judged to be highly effective (Andrews et al., 2007; Bezzina, 2006; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). It helps to the better adaptation of the newcomers to their professional environment and guides them in order to effectively overcome the existing difficulties. The mentor has a long experience, works in the same school and has the same specialty as the newly appointed teacher, assumes mainly supervisory, advisory and guiding role (Andrews, 1987) and provides emotional support for the required time (Barrera et al., 2010).

2.4. Improvement of infrastructure

The appointment of teachers accountable to improve the infrastructure (Table 1: Weaknesses) and the use of existing school equipment (Table 1: Strengths). In the bibliography, there is an extensive reference to the necessity of creating suitable conditions and teaching places for the application not only of the traditional forms of

teaching, but also of modern ones that ensure the quality of education (Pasiardis & Pasiardi, 2000; Sakellariou, 2006; Saitis, 2008: 34). Frequent communication with the relevant services of the municipality is necessary to ensure comfortable, clean and attractive classrooms, as well as laboratories with adequate lighting and adequate air conditioning, equipped with modern devices and using modern technologies (Paraskeva & Papagianni, 2008), thus providing suitable and secure public places, well-designed for presentations and exhibitions.

2.5. Development of preventive actions

The appointment of teachers accountable for the development of preventive actions related to the delinquency in school (Table 1: Weaknesses). Teachers who have implemented Health Education programmes in the past (Foulidi et al., 2016) undertake a Health Education Programme to reinforce the self-esteem of students. Even the teachers who have experience in the implementation of cultural programs undertake creative programmes for students, in which students meet their personal needs in a theater group, a cinema club, a photographic club, a radio group, a dance group and/or a music band (Papakitsos et al., 2017). The implementation of these programmes contributes to the development of a positive climate in the school (Karakiozis & Foulidi, 2016).

2.6. Collaboration of parents and teachers

The collaboration of parents and teachers to improve students' behaviour (Table 1: Weaknesses). Every teacher sets up regular meetings in off-school time and in afternoons with the parents and guardians of the students of the school (Table 1: Opportunities) to inform them about the performance of their children. In cases where teachers find problems in the families of students, it is proposed to provide meaningful and fruitful collaboration with the Counselors of the local Youth Counseling Station and the Centre for Career Guidance and Counseling. The implementation of individual parents-counseling sessions aims at improving their behaviour towards children and provides adequate parental support for students (Malikiosi-Loizou, 1999; Kedraka & Tsagkarakis, 2000; Hoard & Sheppard, 2005).

2.7. Adopting the policy of "open doors"

Namely, there should be a continuous, objective and all-round information for each member of the educational organization, regardless of his/her position, on everything that matters about the organization and to put his/her views to the leadership (Athanasoula-Reppa et al., 1999), aiming at the extroversion of the school.

2.8. The implementation of "action research" in the school

This methodology initially follows the open circular-spiral process, for achieving the diagnosis of the problems, interpreting dysfunctions and finding practical solutions (Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Katsarou & Tsafos, 2003). *Action research* is a practical way to examine someone's practice, aiming at checking if it is what it would like to be and then improve it (McNiff, 2010).

2.9. The integration of school into partnerships or networks with other schools

This collaboration contributes to the exchange of good practices among members of the educational community. It aims at effective cooperation that leads to the improvement of the educational process, to the professional development of teachers of the partner-schools (Burns, 2003) and to the effective solution of problems.

2.10. School's publications

A team of teachers should be appointed accountable for the publication of a school's journal or newspaper. The printed or digital publication of a school magazine or newspaper and the continuous updating of the school's website are considered particularly effective for achieving the extroversion of the school (Panaou, 2008: 904).

2.11. Organization of events

The appointment of teachers accountable for the organization of events for the promotion of career programmes, health education and cultural issues, with the aim of linking the school up society and enhancing the recognition of its educational and professional standing. There may be obstacles to the implementation of the above actions by teachers, who may rely on their daily workload, the low payment or the extra operating hours beyond the normal work-hours. In order to cope with them, it needs to constantly remind them of the positive results of the aforementioned actions, as well as of the participatory way of decision making (Kastanidou & Tsikanteri, 2015).

3. Implementation Issues

To implement the aforementioned actions, the school's usual logistic infrastructure (photocopier, computers, internet connection, etc.) will be utilized and no additional resources are required. It should be noted that fees are not required for the specialists who will undertake the teachers' training, since it will be carried out by the regional educational staff, namely by public officials with higher educational qualifications in supervising positions.

4. Review and Evaluation

During the implementation of the actions, the Teachers' Council monitors the initial planning and, if necessary, intervenes in corrections. After the completion of the actions, a team of teachers of the school that will be appointed by decision of the Teachers' Council will prepare the Action Report, including documented data on their effectiveness. Three small-scale quantitative surveys will be carried out, one for each group involved in the intervention project (students, teachers and parents). Emphasis will be put on measuring differences in the use of indicators in pre-implementation and post-implementation situations. Using the quantitative method of data collection will ensure the validity of the data, reliability and generalization of the research results (Burns, 2000). The quantitative data analysis will be done with the SPSS statistical package. In addition, a small-scale qualitative research will be carried out, which will utilize the individual experience of the teachers and will use elements based on the subjective view of things. It will emphasize on the lessons learned by the teachers and will highlight the best practices that can be used in the day-to-day operation of the school.

5. Conclusion

Each school has its own culture, the formation of which is contributed by all the members of the school community and, in particular, by its head-master (Anthopoulou, 1999: 23-24). Strategies for developing a positive and healthy culture are necessary and multi-leveled in schools with observed elements of inefficiency.

References

1. Akiri A.A., 2014. Teachers' Career Satisfaction and Students' Academic Performance in Delta Public Secondary Schools. Journal of Educational and Social Research MCSER Publishing 4(1): 267-272.
2. Andrews I., 1987. Induction programmes: staff development opportunities for beginning and experienced teachers. In M.F. Wideen & I. Andrews (eds.), Staff Development for school Improvement - A focus on the teacher. Sussex: The Falmer Press.
3. Andrews S.P., Gilbert L.S., Martin E.P., 2007. The first years of teaching: disparities in perceptions of support. Action in Teacher Education 28(4): 4-13.

4. Anthopoulou S.S., 1999. Counseling Support and Motivation of Educational Personnel. In A. Athanasoula-Reppa, S.S. Anthopoulou, S. Katsoulakis, G. Mavrogiorgos (eds.), Educational Management, Vol. B: Human Resource Management, pp. 187-230. Patras: Hellenic Open University (in Greek).

5. Athanasoula-Reppa A., 2008. Educational management and organizational behaviour. Athens: Ellin (in Greek).

6. Athanasoula-Reppa A., Anthopoulou S.S., Katsoulakis S., Mavrogiorgos G. (eds.), 1999. Educational Management, Vol. B: Human Resource Management. Patras: Hellenic Open University (in Greek).

7. Barrera A., Branley R.T., Slate J.R., 2010. Beginning teacher success: an investigation into the feedback from mentors of formal mentoring programs. Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning 18(2): 61-74.

8. Bezzina C., 2006. Views from the trenches: beginning teachers' perceptions about their professional development. Journal of In-service Education 32(4): 411-430.

9. Bouzakis S., 2001. Evaluation in education: historical dimensions, modern trends in the age of globalization. Evaluation and accountability of the teacher. Nicosia: Cyprus Educational Club (in Greek).

10. Burns M., 2003. Practitioner Perspectives on Successful Whole School Innovation, Collaboration and Leadership. London: Innovation Unit.

11. Burns R., 2000. Introduction to research methods. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

12. Campo C., 1993. Collaborative School cultures: How principals make a difference. School Organization 13(2): 119-125.

13. Everard K.B., Morris G., 1999. Effective Educational Administration. Patras: Hellenic Open University (translated into Greek by D. Kikizas).

14. Fokiali P., Kouroutsidou M., Lefas E., 2005. Demand for Training - The Components of the Professional Development of Teachers. In G. Bagakis (ed.), Training and Professional Development of the Teacher, pp. 131-138. Athens: Metaichmio (in Greek).

15. Foulidi X., Papakitsos E.C., Karakiozis K., Papapanousi C., Theologis E., Argyriou A., 2016. Systemic Methodology for Developing Teachers Extracurricular Training. Journal of Educational Leadership and Policy 1(2): 36-42.

16. Fullan M., 2001. Leading in a Culture of Change. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

17. Gkovas N., 2001. For a youthful creative theater: exercises, games, techniques. Athens: Metaichmio (in Greek).

18. Hoard D., Sheppard K.N., 2005. Parent education as parent-centered prevention: A review of school related outcomes. School Psychology Quarterly 20: 434-454.

19. Ingersoll R.M., Kralik J.M., 2004. The impact of mentoring on teacher retention: What the research says. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

20. Kapetanidou M., 2014. Developing the ability of schools and teachers for the improvement of learning. Neos Paidagogos 4: 9-28 (in Greek).

21. Karakiozis K., Foulidi X., 2016. Educational needs of teachers related to culture in a time of crisis. Paper presented at the 2nd Pan-Hellenic Conference of Sociology of Education: "Education and Society in the Age of Crisis". Rhodes, Greece (in Greek).

22. Kastanidou S., Tsikanteri R., 2015. Participatory decision making as a factor for improving the quality and efficiency of the School Unit. Scientific Educational Journal "ekp@ideftikos cyclos", 3(3): 19-38 (in Greek).

23. Katsarou E., Tsafos V., 2003. Linking Secondary and Tertiary Education through action research: the interplay of theory and practice. In the Proceedings of the Conference on the Connection of Tertiary and Secondary Education. Thessaloniki: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (in Greek).

24. Kedraka K., Tsagkarakis M., 2000. Parents: When not everything goes well. Athens: Pedagogical Institute (in Greek).

25. Kokkos A., 2005. Adult Education: Detecting the field. Athens: Metaichmio (in Greek).

26. Lakomski G., 2001. Organizational change, leadership and learning: culture as cognitive process. International Journal of Educational Management 15(2): 68-77.

27. Locke E., 1969. What is a job satisfaction?. Organizational Behavior and Human Performance 4: 309-334.

28. MacBeath J., 2001. Self-Assessment in School. Utopia and practice. Athens: Ellinika Grammata (translated into Greek).

29. Malikiosi-Loizou M., 1999. Counseling Psychology. Athens: Ellinika Grammata (in Greek).

30. Mavrogiorgos G., 1998. Your Teachers and your eyes. Sygchroni Ekpaideusi 100: 41-45 (in Greek).

31. McNiff J., 2010. Action Research for Professional Development: Concise advice for new and experienced action researchers. Dorset: September Books.

32. Panaou P., 2008. The use of school websites by primary schools in Cyprus. In the Proceedings of the 10th Pan-Cyprian Conference of the Pedagogical Society of Cyprus: "Quality in Education: Research and Teaching, pp. 904-915. University of Cyprus (in Greek).

33. Papakitsos E.C., Karakiozis K., Foulidi X., 2017. Systemic methodology for inclusive education policies in areas with acute social problems. European Journal of Alternative Education Studies 2(1): 32-47.

34. Paraskeva F., Papagianni A., 2008. Scientific and pedagogical skills for educational staff. Athens: Pedagogical Institute (in Greek).

35. Pasiardi G., 2008. School culture: Concept, improvement and change. At the 6th Pan-Hellenic Conference, Greek Pedagogical and Educational Research, Athens, 5-7 December 2008 (in Greek).

36. Pasiardis P., 2004. Educational leadership: From the period of propitious indifference in modern times. Athens: Metaichmio (in Greek).

37. Pasiardis P., Pasiardi G., 2000. Effective schools: Reality or utopia?. Athens: Typothito (in Greek).

38. Reason P., Bradbury H. (eds.), 2001. Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice. London: Sage.

39. Robinson A., Stern S., 1997. Corporate Creativity – How innovation and improvement actually happen. Warriewood, Australia: Business & Professional Publishing.

40. Saitis C., 2008. Educational Policy & Administration. Athens: National & Kapodistrian University of Athens and School of Pedagogical and Technological Education (in Greek).

41. Sakellariou G., 2006. Total Quality Management and Secondary Education. Post-graduate dissertation, University of Piraeus, Department of Business Administration (in Greek).

42. Saphier J.D., King M., 1985. Good seeds grow in strong cultures. Educational Leadership 42(6): 67-74.

43. Schein E.H., 1985. Organizational Culture and Leadership (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

44. Taylor R.T., Williams R.D., 2001. Accountability: threat or target?. School Administrator 58(6): 30-33.

45. Xochellis P., 2001. The training of teachers in Greece: findings, criticism, proposals. In the Proceedings of the 1st Pan-Hellenic Conference on the Connection of Tertiary and Secondary Education, pp. 35-46. Thessaloniki: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 1st & 2nd Secondary Education Directorates of Thessaloniki (in Greek).

46. Xochellis P., Papanaoum Z., 2000. The In-school Training of Teachers: Greek experiences 1997-2000. Thessaloniki: Xochellis & Papanaoum (in Greek).