

Managing for @ School of Success

1st Short Term Joint Staff Training Event - "School Autonomy"

11th to 15th April, 2016 - Portugal

Meanings

Concepts and arguments shaped differently by international practices

This chapter presents the main results of a task performed during the training event. It consists on mapping the main differences related with school autonomy among partners within M@ss project. Working in small groups, joining participants from different countries, the task consisted in pointing out the answers of some kicking off questions that introduce main concepts related with schools' autonomy. These main concepts were accountability, students' admission, school's dropout profile, stakeholders, headmaster's career, school effectiveness, human resources management, budget and innovation. Each small group choose some concepts and did notice the main differences reported by participants concerning their own management practices. The following text express these concerns and related practices.

The first key word was **Accountability** and the kick off question was "To whom should directors be accountable ? How and how often ?"

Directors must be accountable to the school community and to government administration (Ministry of Education; General Inspection Board). In Spain, School foundation show the budget to two entities (regional government and foundation).

The director presents the results of school work (mainly students' results) to the general council (formed by teachers, parents, staff (not in Italy), students (secondary), representative of the community.

In Portugal, the School general council meets three times a year, and take a knowledge what is happening at school. Some suggestions or proposals can be presented. They approve activities out the pedagogical items. By the end of the school year the director gives accountability to the general council about budget plan, activities plan, students results, discipline.

To the ministry of education, directors send information regarding organization of the school year; specific activities (at random); budget (prevision and results), once or twice a year.

Also, information concerning school population and students achievement are included in a Platforms (to compare the beginning and the end) and available in a public way (Portugal)

Furthermore, The General Board inspection evaluates schools in a more framed way, each 4 years.

The second key word concerns **Students' admission** and the kick off questions were: "Is it possible to refuse students? Following which criteria?"

The following concept discussed was the School dropout profile. The questions to start discussion were : "How is dropout defined ? Which are the main risks of dropping out ? And at what level of schooling?"

In Italy and Spain, students leave the school at the age of 16 (compulsory school). In Portugal at the age of 18 due to the compulsory scholarship enlargement. The risks of dropping out, in Portugal are related with lower socioeconomic status of families, namely of gipsy communities. Figures related dropout are low, and there is not a formula or a profile of dropout risk.

The next concept is an important one concerning schools' activities as it concerns Stakeholders. The questions launched to map schools' practices were following: "Who are stakeholders? Which are their role within Schools ? Are they coopted or invited to partnerships by schools, or it is a mandatory decision?"

Stakeholders identified were Enterprises, private Foundation, Cultural Associations, Municipality, Parents and Parents' associations, Health centers, within the more important.

Their main roles are:

- To cooperate with school – as much as they know what the school is doing and how students are prepared they could cooperate more and better.
- To link school with workplaces – namely, because in some courses offered by schools, students practice with workers before they finish their professional studies
- To provide specialized information.

Other important issue regards the **Headmasters' career**. "How do headmasters access their career ? Which skills, certificates and requirements are necessary ? Who chooses them ?" were the questions that were discussed. This show the different scenarios lived in the several countries.

In Spain the schools headmasters' career is twofold, depending of the schools' nature:

- In private and semi-public school – the owner proposes a person that has to be approved by the councils (no requirements).
- In public schools – there is a selection process (they propose themselves). There is a comity (inspection, teachers, parents...) who decide who is the best – they prepare a plan for that school. He or

she has to hold a master's degree or a post graduation before or after selection. He or she is selected for three years and he or she can continue without time limits.

In Italy, there is a national competition and selection with regional lists (one for each region). The regional board director calls the ones in the list that want to apply for a particular school and he/she chooses (by the age).

School effectiveness

Which are the headmaster's main concerns regarding school effectiveness ? What is an effective school ?

Human resources management

(including teachers, educational technicians and other staff)

Which are the main concerns related with such issues – recruitment, coordination and evaluation.

Budget

What is the main source of School's budget ? What is it paying for ? Is it possible that schools have a private budget ? What are its main sources ? What does the private budget paying for ?

Innovation

Is innovation an important topic within schools' daily life ? Which are the main issues regarding innovative practices performed by schools ?



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