

ERD 2016: Education, Reflection, Development, Fourth Edition

Change Implementation in the School

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Abstract

<http://dx.doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2016.12.45>

Processes taking place in schools in the modern era are very dynamic and the school as an organization must make adjustments and adaptation to a modern society. Therefore, it is crucial for the school principals to lead the necessary changes based on the management tools and methods of organizational excellence. The article deals with organizational changes in Israeli school, including Kotter's 8 step change model (2003), which includes a description of each stage and its implementation during the change management process, the objections to change inside and outside the organization, finding creative solutions based on analysis of the responses and monitoring. The article reviews the E.F.Q.M. Excellence Model and its integration in the school and the staff, as a central axis of the change that took place and which led the school to an organizational excellence. The article presents the school's significant successes, which is positioned as one of the best schools in the district.

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Keywords: Leading change; the E.F.Q.M. Excellence Model; Objections; Kotter's 8 step change model.

1. Introduction

The multidisciplinary school for excellence and social leadership "Sh'chakim" was established 6 years ago.

A huge old school which had worked for more than 30 years, according to the local educational reform was reorganized and rebuilt due to dissatisfaction with a variety of parameters such as: poor academic

achievements, the lack of public confidence in the local education system and up to 40% of students leaving the city for other educational institutions (Maysless, 2009).

The goals which were set by the Municipality and the Ministry of Education for the school principals that were assigned to conduct the re-construction and innovation demanded extensive, significant and in-depth changes.

Leading this change was a structured process of implementing organizational change, by using the E.F.Q.M Excellence Model. As part of my thesis, the practical deployment of the E.F.Q.M. Excellence Model in school was deeply researched.

This management method leads to an organizational change, which requires special and structured preparation from a school principal and thoroughly organized pre-implementation stages as Kotter (2003) and Fuchs (2007) indicate.

Processes that are taking place at the school in the modern era are very dynamic, and a school as an organization has to make necessary changes and meet the needs of a modern society (Harpaz, 2012). Therefore, it is crucial for the school principal to wisely lead the necessary organizational changes based on the management tools and the E.F.Q.M. Model.

The article deals with the organizational changes in the school and represents a tiny glimpse into an education organization, if it is on the government level, district education departments or school principals who want to bring the education system in general and schools in particular to organizational excellence.

The article will depict the achievements of the school and the improvement processes to excellence, display stages of change and ways to recruit staff.

2. Trend Change

Schools in Israel are tested by several parameters which determine whether schools are excellent or not.

The parameters are numerous and various, but they are not identical to all the schools because of the different sectors of the Israeli society: a secular sector versus a religious one, a Jewish sector versus an Arabic one and so on.

Moreover, urban education systems can set goals on a local level, which constitute the attainment of excellence locally regardless of national standards. For example, lack of public trust in the local school system results in leaving it for neighboring cities. First, we will present the data and indicators, which testify to the continuous process of improvement over the years to strive for excellence. A number of issues which are key indicators of the school's growth presented in this article.

2.1. Matriculation Exams

The matriculation certificate is issued by the Ministry of Education and is a certificate that indicates the end of mandatory schooling (K-12) and the success of the finals. A full matriculation certificate is a basic prerequisite necessary for studies in most institutions of higher education and studying for a bachelor's degree.

Presented here my school's academic achievements over the years, and for this year, the eligibility of 93% in matriculation exams, compared with a national average of 52% entitlement.

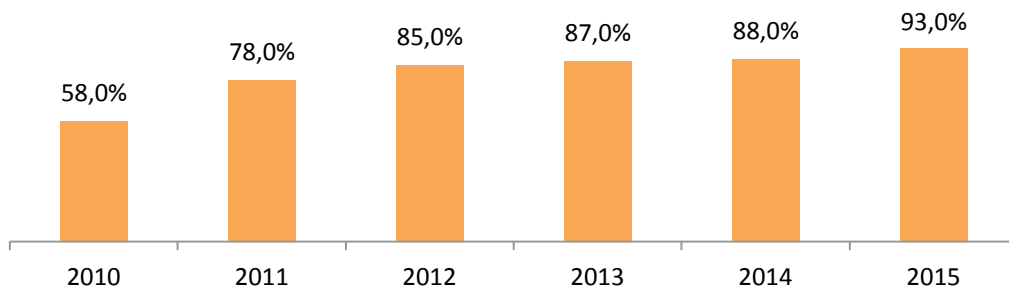


Fig.1. The school's academic achievements

2.2. School attractiveness - increase in the number of students studying in the school

Israeli schools are budgeted according to the number of students enrolled at the school. The budget includes everything that is needed to operate schools, especially in the framework of teaching hours, the budget for administrative personnel - secretaries, accounting, technicians, maintenance workers, ongoing operating budget and so on.

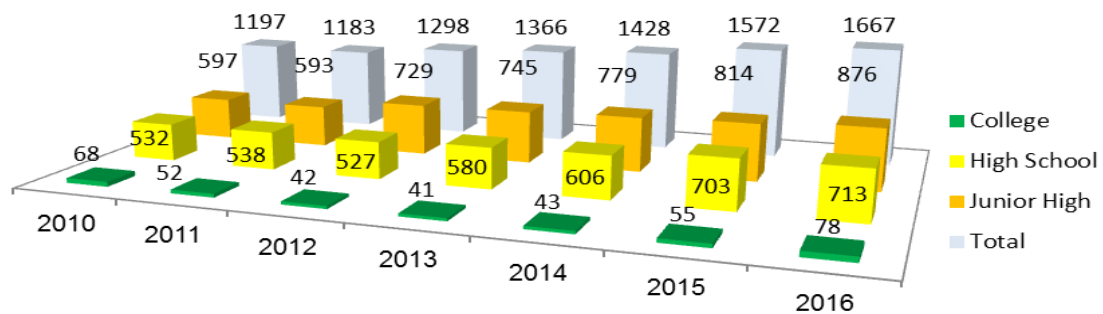


Fig. 2. Number of students.

A consequence of the increase in the number of students is the increased number of classes in school that led to recruiting dozens of new teachers for work in the school.

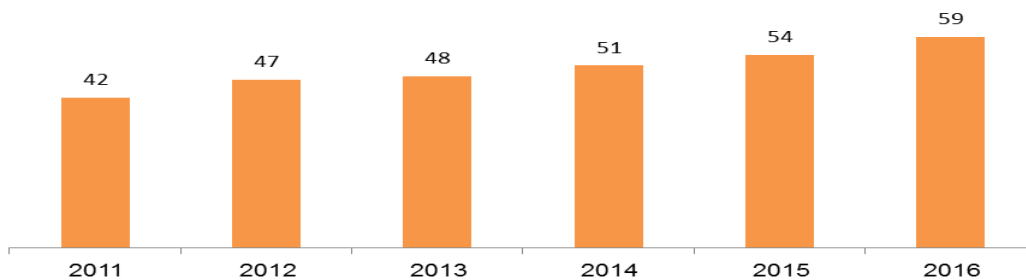


Fig. 3. Number of classes.

2.3. Trends and innovative learning options – "a cadet department"

When a school is situated in a competitive surrounding, the school principal's responsibility is to create an attractive framework for a powerful learning environment. If not, students will not register and it has a critical impact on the life of the school as an organization.

This chart reflects an upward trend in the degree of attractiveness of a cadet department (that aims at combining academic and military education).

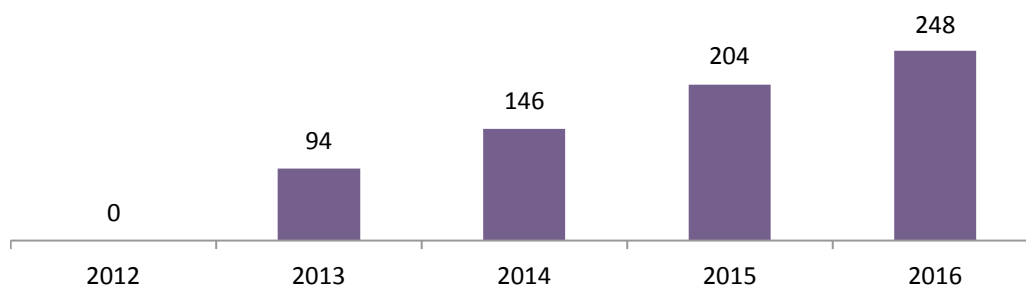


Fig. 4. Number of cadets.

In this section we've seen the growth trends of the school over the years, key parameters which are the cornerstones of the test results in practice of the school management process.

In the following part the stages and methods of change deployment in the school will be presented.

3. Stages of change

Stages of change that took place in the school according to Kotter's 8 step change model (2003).

3.1. Create a sense of urgency

To expose the entire school staff to a process of change requires carrying out a number of activities to create a sense of urgency and motivation to action.

3.1.1. Personal conversations for mutual acquaintance and examining internal organizational forces and lowering the level of change concerns.

3.1.2. Workshops for the entire staff to determine the name of the school, which will include the key values by which the school will operate. Determining the name of the school together gave a feeling of cooperation, partnership and the opportunity of each individual to have an impact.

3.1.3. General workshops for strategic planning and decision making according to SWOT analysis. SWOT examines the strengths and weaknesses of the internal factors and the opportunities and risks of external factors.

At the end of the process we came up with a list of advantages, weaknesses, opportunities and risks as a basis for adjusting the resources and capabilities of the organization to the competitive environment in which the school operates.

With the help of this management tool the whole staff was involved and engaged in analyzing the current situation of the school.

Results of mapping and SWOT analyzing formed the basis for setting school goals, strategic planning and decision making.

3.2. Forming a powerful coalition

As noted, the school was established on the basis of the old school and yes, most of the school board and other school staff stayed at their positions like in the past.

There was no desire and ability to change the workforce mainly due to a lack of previous acquaintance of the principal with the school staff.

The goal then was to lead change and succeed with the existing school staff.

A number of activities were done to motivate the management team, to show confidence in them and help the team see the change through.

3.2.1. Personal conversations aiming at exploring strengths and weaknesses of every employee and alleviating concerns regarding job responsibly and function. The school board members had been working for many years in the school and were a part of the team that led the school to the situation that demanded an urgent change.

3.2.2. Workshops aiming at personal empowerment and professional training.

3.2.3. General meetings aiming at defining areas of responsibility for each position in the school.

3.2.4. Data analysis and setting goals in cooperation and transparency.

After getting to know the staff better partial changes were made to the workforce, since not all the board members and officers met the expectations or had the ability to continue to lead the required change. There were some workers that their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) was so low that it was not possible to restore it and therefore changes were made in some school positions. These changes led to objections and resistance among the school staff.

3.3. Creating a vision and strategy

One of the most significant processes that took place in the school is the process of creating a vision for the school. After 5 meetings a school vision was created. It contained numerous phrases and sayings that were supposed to reflect the school goals. After a year we found out that nobody from school staff remembered the school vision. It was clear that the vision was not good! The vision was long and contained complicated passwords and statements and was especially devoid of emotions.

We started the process again and six months later a powerful and strategic vision that every student and staff member knows and recognizes was shaped!

From a strategic point of view, the school as an organization has undergone profound changes from the management style decentralization to a "focused" management style.

The beginning of the school-building process included dozens of areas of change and at the same time as part of the implementation of the method - E.F.Q.M. we began the process of developing a school strategy. The following chart shows the amount of tasks set out in the beginning of the school building process as opposed to concentration on the correct strategy over several years.

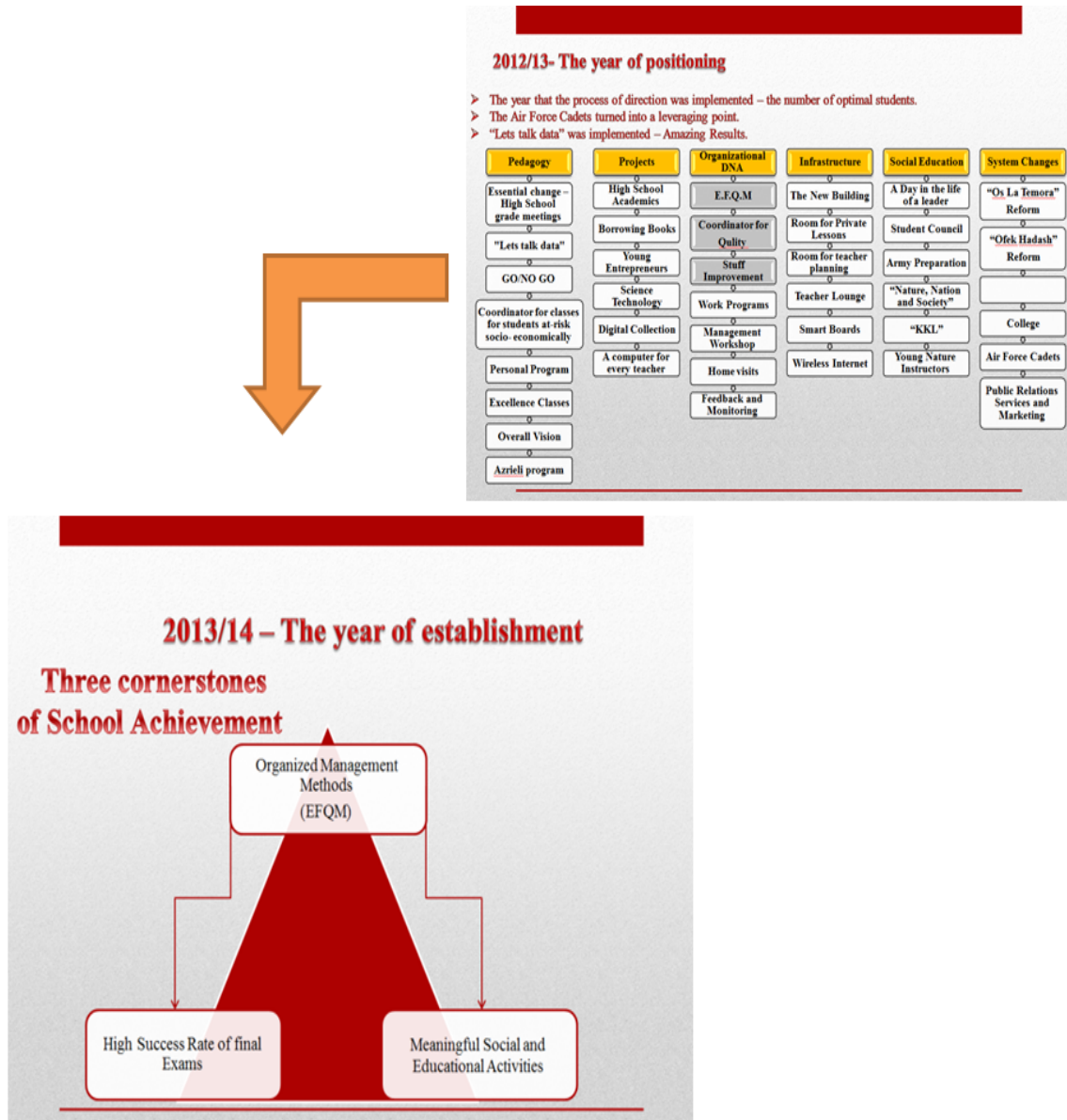


Fig. 5. The amount of tasks

3.4. Communicating the vision

After shaping a vision, a number of things were done to communicate it.

3.4.1. Adding a school vision as part of the school logo.

3.4.2. Making a school stamp with a new school logo (with the school vision on it).

3.4.3. Having education lessons explaining the school vision and its meaning.

3.4.4. *Every time if anyone whether it was a teacher or a student or any of the parents acted not according to the school vision, the actions were implemented in order to come back to the school vision and behave accordingly.*

Today all the school work interfaces are aware of the school vision which is the basis for the learning educational work of the school.

3.5. *Empowering others to act*

The process of empowering others started from the first year since the opening of the school in its new format and included workshops that aimed at defining the jobs, positions and areas of responsibilities of each executive employee. In addition, the school staff of the same work field had unique workshops relevant only to their position area.

For the School Board - defining job function responsibility workshops, seminars on how to determine the goals and objectives, a curriculum writing workshop.

For Homeroom Teachers - workshops to define the role of a homeroom teacher and a classroom management training program and a "how to make a meaningful dialogue" seminar.

For Subject Coordinators - pedagogical management workshops, workshop for defining the position of a subject coordinator, workshops on teamwork.

A process of feedback and monitoring between job interfaces caused the division of authority and accountability: the principal -board members- other school coordinators- teachers.

3.6. *Planning for and creating short-term wins*

Creating short-term educational achievement is problematic because it is a long-term process of several years (Sergiovanni, 2002) and as it is stated in 8 steps process for leading change, one of the significant steps is creating short-term accomplishment.

There are a number of issues that will create spark for a momentum of change, which are relatively easy to see in the short term.

3.6.1. *Learning environment – students.*

3.6.2. *Working environment – teachers.*

School resources were invested in the learning and the working environment: the floor was changed, office and classroom furniture was replaced, the entire school was repainted and all the classes were computerized and equipped with smart boards, etc.

Ortner (2001) highlights the impact of the learning environment for students' attitude towards school in general and learning in particular. He emphasizes its positive impact on school climate and students' achievements.

Here are some pictures to illustrate the new learning and teaching environment.



Fig. 6. Learning and teaching environment

3.7. *Increasing the number of students who receive a complete (Bagrut) Matriculation Certificate*

As described above, the subject of Matriculation Certificate Holders is the main index to position schools in Israel and therefore, this issue had to be at the center of change and the change had to demonstrate progress on this issue.

Many efforts have been targeted to achieve progress in the short term and therefore, many resources and time have been invested. In the first year the progress was at the level of a real revolution: an increase of approximately 20%.

On the one hand, this achievement strengthened the processes of change but on the other hand, there were objections from the veteran staff members in the school.

3.8. *Consolidating improvements and producing still more changes*

Each and every stage of the process of change was recorded in words and pictures in the letter that is called "School Newsletter" which is weekly mailed to the whole school staff. Moreover, any positive change which led to successful outcomes was published in the local newspapers.

These moves have been made to establish and implement the changes and outcomes among the staff and the local community for the purpose of returning and gaining confidence in the local educational system. Each year other key issues were chosen for implementing change and for giving rise to a further overall change process.

During the general staff meetings the outcomes and results of the change were presented to build and reinforce trust of the staff in the structured, organized and professional change process.

3.9. *Institutionalization of new approaches*

In my opinion, this issue is the ideal situation, when (positive) changes become an organizational culture not by authority and power, but by belief in a new way.

This issue should be thoroughly tested and is a core subject for further research.

4. **Conclusion**

As described above, we are discussing a change in a school which has undergone reorganization. Numerous objections were expressed and as Kotter (2003) states that opposition to change never disappear but will always be the fate of the principal who runs the organization in a constantly changing reality. In order to mitigate the objections while leading change, it was necessary to preserve the steps of change under an organizational framework because of several reasons:

- A. Leading change is a very difficult task and there is no room for an error in a reality where there is an existential need – organizations that achieve their goals.
- B. Psychologically, when implementing change is supported externally by a recognized method, the level of opposition decreases.
- C. A structured framework of organizational excellence methodology makes the change process safer, fluid and less vulnerable to mistakes.

The E.F.Q.M. excellence Model has been selected as the basis for leading change and will be the compass for organizational excellence.

The first step was done as the basis for leading change and which constitutes the first phase of the E.F.Q.M. method implementation is the establishment of an "Improvement Team".

"The improvement team" which included representatives of a variety of employees of the organization, mapped the needs of the school that required change and determined the issues for a change according to their priority.

That's the way the process of change started and its outcomes can be seen in Chapter 3.

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