

*There is a lot of research material on what constitutes effective schools. In the 1980s and 1990s much of this was often summarised in the form of lists of characteristics of effective and ineffective schools, and the material below draws together this kind of literature, taking in research from around the world. Student teachers will observe that leadership and management, as well as key issues in effective teaching, learning and assessment, motivation and challenge, also feature highly in such lists.*

## **Defining effective schools**

This article is divided into five sections:

- 1 Identifying characteristics of effective schools
- 2 Schools succeeding in difficult circumstances
- 3 Key factors for school effectiveness in developing countries
- 4 Implications for quality development principles
- 5 School leadership and the effective school.

### **1 Identifying characteristics of effective schools**

School improvement concerns the raising of students' achievements and the school's ability to manage change (Reynolds *et al.* 2001). One can compare one's own school and individual performance against a set of benchmarks and criteria from the international literature on school effectiveness and school improvement. In terms of school effectiveness it is possible to identify several characteristics of effective schools. For example, the seminal work of Rutter *et al.* (1979) identified eight main characteristics:

- school ethos;
- effective classroom management;
- high teacher expectations;
- teachers as positive role models;
- positive feedback and treatment of students;
- good working conditions for staff and students;
- students given responsibility;
- shared staff-student activities.

This was echoed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (Department of Education and Science, 1988), who suggested twelve characteristics of effective secondary schools:

- good leadership by senior and middle managers;
- clear aims and objectives that were translated into classroom practice;
- an emphasis on high academic standards;
- a relevant but orderly and firm classroom atmosphere;
- positive relationships with students, encouraging them to express their view;
- a well-planned curriculum;
- concern for students' overall well-being, with effective pastoral systems;

© Keith Morrison, 2004

Published on the companion web resource for *A Guide to Teaching Practice* (RoutledgeFalmer).

- well qualified staff who possessed effective subject and pedagogical knowledge;
- suitable and stimulating physical environments;
- effectively deployed resources;
- positive relationships with the community;
- the capability to identify and solve problems and to manage change and development.

Smith and Tomlinson (1990) suggested four key characteristics of successful secondary schools:

- effective leadership and management by senior and middle managers;
- teacher involvement in decision-making;
- climate of respect between all participants;
- positive feedback to and treatment of students.

In the primary school sphere Mortimore *et al.*'s (1988) influential *School Matters: The Junior Years*, Mortimore (1991), Alexander *et al.*'s (1992), Sammons (1994) and Reynolds *et al.* (1996) identified the following factors as critical to the success of schools:

- purposeful leadership by the headteacher (principal);
- the involvement of the deputy headteacher (vice-principal);
- involvement of teachers;
- consistency amongst teachers;
- structured teaching sessions;
- intellectually challenging teaching;
- a work-centred environment;
- limited focus in teaching sessions and the reduction to three or four at most in the number of activities/curriculum areas taking place simultaneously in classrooms;
- maximum communication between teachers and students;
- increased whole class interactive teaching;
- parental involvement;
- record keeping;
- a positive climate in the school.

In an important short paper in 1991, the Institute of Public Policy Research (Brighouse and Tomlinson, 1991: 5) suggested seven key characteristics of effective schools:

- 1 *Leadership at all levels*: strong, purposeful, adoption of more than one style.
- 2 *Management and organisation*: clear, simple, flatter structures.
- 3 *Collective self-review*: involving all staff and leading to developing new practices.
- 4 *Staff development*: systematic and involving collective and individual needs.
- 5 *Environment/building/uplifting ethos*: visually and aurally positive, promoting positive behaviour, high expectations.
- 6 *Teaching and learning*: creative debate amongst teachers and curricula and pedagogy.
- 7 *Parental involvement*: parents as partners in education.

Sammons *et al.* (1995) and Reynolds *et al.* (1996) identify eleven factors of effective schools:

- *shared leadership* (firm purposeful, participative - the leading professional);
- *shared vision and goals* (unity of purpose, consistency of practice, collegiality and collaboration);

- *a learning environment* (an orderly atmosphere and attractive environment);
- *concentration on teaching and learning* (maximisation of learning time, academic emphasis, focus on achievement);
- *high expectations* (all round, clear communication of expectations, providing intellectual challenge);
- *positive reinforcement* (clear and fair discipline, feedback);
- *monitoring progress* (monitoring pupil performance, evaluating school performance);
- *pupil rights and responsibilities* (high pupil self-esteem, positions of responsibility, control of work);
- *purposeful teaching* (efficient organisation, clarity of purpose, structured lessons, adaptive practice);
- *a learning organisation* (school-based staff development);
- *home-school partnership* (parental involvement).

Reynolds (1995) summarises much research as indicating seven major factors in creating effectiveness:

- 1 *The nature of the leadership by the headteacher* (setting the mission, involving staff).
- 2 *Academic push or academic press*: high expectations of what students can achieve, creating large amounts of learning time (including homework) and entering large numbers for public examinations.
- 3 *Parental involvement* (parents as partners in and supporters of education).
- 4 *Pupil involvement* (in learning and other aspects of the school).
- 5 *Organisational control of pupils* (reinforced by cohesion and consistency in the school together with collective ownership of practices and effective communication).
- 6 *Organisational consistency across lessons in the same subjects, different subjects in the same years and across years.*
- 7 *Organisational constancy* (limited staff turnover).

Key features of effective schools appear to be emerging (cf. Weindling, 1989):

- an emphasis on learning;
- the learning environment;
- purposeful teaching;
- high expectations;
- shared vision and goals;
- professional leadership;
- monitoring progress;
- home-school partnerships;
- pupils' rights and responsibilities;
- positive reinforcement;
- staff development;
- outside support.

Hopkins *et al.* (1995): schools can 'make a difference' if they develop four features:

- *enquiry and reflection by staff* (embracing needs assessment, support structures, setting priorities);

- *collaborative planning* (in the context of shared visions; involvement of several partners; developing and utilising mechanisms for collaborative planning; action planning and development planning);
- *staff development* (involving support for new initiatives);
- *involvement of students* (at all stages of the process of development).

It may also be useful to look to Australia for evidence on defining effective schools. From Australia come these five key factors ([http://www.hi.is/~joner/eaps/cs\\_effs.htm](http://www.hi.is/~joner/eaps/cs_effs.htm)):

- 1 'Strong leadership at the building level;
- 2 'Best practice' teaching;
- 3 An organisational climate that supports good work by teachers;
- 4 Curriculum that fosters an 'instructional emphasis' or an 'academic press'
- 5 A pupil progress measurement system that is geared more to the next lesson's teaching than the next grade promotion.'

With this in mind, Australian academics and policy analysts were critical of simplistic school effectiveness policies on several grounds (ibid.):

- 'questionable methodological procedures;
- narrow concepts of effectiveness;
- the emphasis on standardised achievement;
- the danger of recreating the dream of the efficient one-best system of instruction;
- the conservative and simplistic prescriptions for effectiveness, improved standards and excellence.'

By contrast it was reported that Australian school communities valued the following, often intangible elements of school effectiveness (McGaw *et al.* 1992):

- 'positive relationship with learning;
- development of a positive self-concept;
- sense of self-discipline and self-worth;
- students' living skills – becoming a productive and confident member of the adult world;
- the development of appropriate value systems;
- the preparation of the student for the next stage of learning.'

Further, in an important study of New South Wales, it was suggested that, whilst schools clearly make a difference, it is within-school (e.g. teacher-specific) and out-of-school factors that contribute most to school effectiveness, e.g. socio-economic status, parental; behaviour. Only a small proportion of the variance between schools is accounted for by whole-school factors (Wyatt 1996).

In the Australian context, a major study in 2000 (Reynolds *et al.* 2000) reported some initial reluctance, for a range of reasons (e.g. standardised testing procedures) to be involved in school effectiveness programmes and monitoring (see also Wyatt 1996). The Australian Education Council's *Good Schools Strategy*, commencing with its *Effective Schools Project* in 1991 collected data from over 2,300 Australian schools (30 per cent) through the Australian Council for Educational Research and found four key areas which contributed to school effectiveness:

- staff (65 per cent of the responses);
- school ethos (58 per cent of the responses);
- curriculum (52 per cent of the responses);
- resources (48 per cent of the responses).

The research reported little appetite by schools for simplistic measures of effectiveness, and, indeed the New South Wales Teachers Federation banned such published data. The researchers identified several implications for educationists:

- 1 Accountability was a local issue, with little interest in large-scale testing programmes designed for accountability to a wider audience.
- 2 Problems of discipline and behaviour management did not appear to be a major barrier to effective schools.
- 3 School effectiveness was seen to be much more than maximising academic achievement. 'Learning, the love of learning; personal development and self-esteem; life skills; problem solving and learning how to learn; the development of independent thinkers and well-rounded, confident individuals, all rank as highly or more highly in the outcomes of effective schooling as success in a narrow range of academic disciplines' (Reynolds *et al.* 2000: 22).
- 4 The role of central administrators was to set broad policy guidelines and to support schools in their efforts to improve, particularly through providing professional support services.

Since this early study, there has been a range of research into school effectiveness, improvement and quality in Australian schools, not least through the work of Caldwell, who is a major influence in Anglophone countries in terms of autonomous schools, devolution of school budgets and resource allocation, the marketisation of education, and self-managing schools. In 1995 the New South Wales government promised, as part of its election platform, that it would publish fairer school information though further development is still necessary here (Wyatt 1996). With the development of market forces in education, and consumerism, both in Australia and New Zealand (the latter being a major world mover in terms of injecting market forces into education), attention is increasingly being given to school effectiveness research in Australia, particularly, as in other Anglophone countries, in the field of the value-added factors of schooling in Victoria and New South Wales and student outcome data (Hill 1995; Wyatt 1995).

The school improvement literature tells us that effective schools are frequently self-managing and self-improving – they do it to themselves, often with some form of external support. Gray *et al.* (1999: 5) suggest that effectiveness describes above-expectation pupil academic performance, and improvement is a sustained upward trend in effectiveness. An improving school is one that increases its effectiveness over time – increasing the value-added it generates for students over time. For improvement to be effective requires: vision, monitoring, planning, and performance indicators.

Commenting on school effectiveness in Australia, Wyatt (1996) suggests that underpinning the school effectiveness literature is a view that:

- (a) all students can learn, under the appropriate conditions (i.e. that school's are not simply sorting mechanisms for later life);

- (b) school effectiveness depends on the equitable distribution of learning outcomes across the whole student population (not just a minority who may go on to University);
- (c) effective schools 'take responsibility for students' learning outcomes, rather than blaming students and their environment';
- (d) the more consistent are the teaching and learning processes within the school, the more effective the school is.

Clearly one has to be extremely cautious in understanding and approaching the concept of school effectiveness. It is not a unitary concept; rather it is complex, multi-dimensional, and not reducible to single or simple measures. What is clear is that *teacher effectiveness* plays a very considerable part in school effectiveness. Further, the provision of checklists of characteristics of effective schools is often accompanied in the literature by caveats against simplistic benchmarking; the problem is one of *process*, of support, of changing individual teachers, not of producing or emulating checklists.

Drawing together the several features of effective schools outlined so far, a common core of features emerges, indicating overall characteristics of effective schools. It would be useful, perhaps, for principals and schools to identify where they stand in relation to the factors indicated.

<b>Teachers and teaching</b>
High teacher expectations
Effective classroom management
Teachers as positive role models
Positive feedback to, and treatment of, students
A relevant but orderly and firm classroom atmosphere
Suitable and stimulating physical environment
Consistency amongst teachers, e.g. expectations, behaviour, planning
Structured teaching sessions; a concentration on teaching and learning
Intellectually challenging teaching and a work-centred environment
Monitoring progress and record keeping
<b>Curriculum</b>
A well-planned curriculum
Clear aims and objectives translated into classroom practice
An emphasis on high academic standards
Effectively deployed resources
<b>Management</b>
Good working conditions for staff and students
Effective leadership by senior and middle managers
The capability to identify and solve problems
Capability to manage change and development
Teacher involvement in decision-making
Climate of respect between all participants/stakeholders
A positive climate in the school
Clear, simple, flat structures
Shared vision and goals
Leadership which builds teamwork
A vision of academic success and how to improve
Careful use of targets
Use of performance data to guide decisions, targets and tactics
Teamwork both within staff groups and stakeholders
Time and resources for reflection and research
Non-dominating senior managers
<b>Students</b>
Students given responsibility
Shared staff-student activities
Positive student/teacher relationships
Encouraging students to express their view
Concern for students' overall well-being; effective pastoral systems
Pupil rights, responsibilities and building self-esteem
Pupil involvement in learning and other aspects of the school
Positive student attitudes to school
Maximum communication between teachers and students
Good behaviour by students
<b>Community</b>
Positive relationships with the local community
Parental involvement in the life and work of the school
Home-school partnership planning
Links with business, commerce and industry
School governance

<b>Staff development</b>
Collective self-review and planning
Staff development to meet individual needs
School-based staff development
Well qualified staff with effective subject and pedagogical knowledge



## 2 Schools succeeding in difficult circumstances

Schools which succeeded ‘against the odds’ in improving against a background of significant pupils and community disadvantage (Maden and Hillman 1996) shared several characteristics:

- a leadership stance which embodies (in its leadership team) an builds a team approach;
- a vision of success couched in academic terms and including a view of how to improve;
- careful use of targets;
- improvement of the physical environment;
- common expectations about behaviours and success;
- investment in good relations with parents and the community.

Internal preconditions for successful improvement (Ainscow *et al.* 1994; Gray *et al.* 1999) in such schools include:

- transformational leadership in the leadership team, offering the possibility of change;
- school-side emphasis on teaching and learning;
- commitment to staff development and training;
- use of performance data to guide decisions, targets and tactics;
- teamwork both within staff groups (collaborative planning, effective communication) and with stakeholders (involvement of teachers, pupils, parents in decision-making);
- time and resources for reflection and research.

Characteristics of less successful schools (Stoll and Myers 1998, Teddlie and Stringfield 1993) have been found to be:

*At whole-school, including leadership, level:*

- lack of competence needed to improve;
- unwillingness to accept evidence of failure;
- blaming others – pupils, parents, etc.;
- fear of change and of outsiders who embody it;
- belief that change is for other people;
- controlled by change rather than in control of it;
- dysfunctional relationships, with cliques;
- goals that are not plausible or relevant;
- lack of academic focus;
- principles who take no interest in curriculum and attainment;
- passive about recruitment and training;
- school does not build longitudinal databases on pupils; progress – not outcomes-oriented;
- valid improvement strategies are adopted but not carried through;
- governing/managing bodies may be passive, lack knowledge or have factions (maybe political or ethnic).

*At classroom level:*

- timetable not an accurate guide to academic time usage;
- inconsistency, including some high-quality teaching;
- low expectations;
- emphasis on supervision and routines;
- low levels of teacher-pupil interaction about work;
- pupils perceive teachers as not caring/praising etc.;
- high noise levels and lots of non-work-related movement;
- lots of negative feedback from teachers.

What one can see here is that weak schools are weak not simply because they do not possess characteristics of effective schools, i.e. an *absence* of certain features, but they also possess additional features which contribute to their failure, i.e. the *presence* of certain factors.

Effective intervention to weak schools (Fullan 1992; Hopkins and Harris 1997; Stoll and Myers 1998) involves several matters:

- early and determined action;
- resources are needed – lots of them – but this will not work without strong management in place;
- simultaneous action at whole-school (leadership), teacher and classroom levels;
- balance of pressure and support;
- internal and external processes, top-down and bottom-up, must be co-ordinated;
- making tangible environmental improvements;
- acknowledging failure, facing up to problems, preparing an action plan which is aimed at regaining commitment as well as re-establishing basic competences in three months;
- implementing the action plan, restoring leadership, re-establishing sound management, improving teaching and learning (within 18 months, within which time morale and self-esteem are re-established by early success);
- pursuing a project for improvement single-mindedly and consistently.

One can see that to improve weak schools involves action at a range of levels, and that the school has to face up to these with honesty and with differentiated action. Critical to success is the involved, committed and supportive behaviour of the principal and leaders at all levels of the school.

### 3 Key factors for school effectiveness in developing countries

Reynolds *et al.* (2000: 240) reported a range of factors affecting achievement in developing countries (including Thailand and India) (see table below). The factors associated with student achievement in developing countries were not always the same as those conventionally used in some school effectiveness research. In terms of positive factors these included, for example:

- Length of instructional programme      86 per cent
- School library activity                      83 per cent
- Years of teacher training                  71 per cent
- Textbook and instructional materials      67 per cent

Low effectiveness generating factors were:

- Teachers' salaries                            36 per cent
- Reduced class size                            24 per cent
- Pupil grade repetition                        20 per cent

<b>School quality indicator</b>	<b>Expected direction of relationship</b>
<i>School expenditure</i>	
1 Expenditure per pupil	+
2 Total school expenditure	+
<i>Specific material inputs</i>	
3 Class size	-
4 School size	+
5 Instructional materials	+
6 Instructional media	+
7 School building quality	+
8 Library size and activity	+
<i>Teacher quality</i>	
9 Teacher's length of schooling	
* total years of teacher's schooling	+
* years of tertiary and teacher training	+
10 In-service teacher training	+
11 Teacher's length of experience	+
12 Teacher's verbal proficiency	+
13 Teacher's salary level	+
14 Teacher's social class background	+
15 School's percentage of full-time teachers	+
16 Teacher's punctuality and low absenteeism	+
<i>Teaching practices/classroom organisation</i>	
17 Length of instructional programme	+
18 Homework frequency	+
19 Active learning by students	+
20 Teacher's expectations of pupils performance	+
21 Teacher's time spent on class preparation	+
<i>School management</i>	
23 Quality of principal	+
24 Multiple shifts of class each day	-
25 Student repetition of grade	+

The research indicated that resource variables were significant factors in contributing to school effectiveness (e.g. financial resources. Availability of textbooks, equipment), as were teacher quality variables (e.g. initial and post-initial training, competence levels).

#### 4 Implications for quality development principles

School improvement projects have several common features (Morrison 2002); they:

- are not initiated from the top;
- include all stakeholders;
- are not undertaken simply for political or micropolitical motives;
- are non-threatening to students and staff;
- obtain high levels of commitment from all participants;
- consider relationships amongst individuals;
- use external agents as for advice;
- include considerable staff development;
- include monitoring;
- rely on effective leadership and leadership support;
- promote, and build on a positive school climate;
- have a problem-solving orientation;
- include considerable staff input;
- have leadership which enables rather than prevents or blames;
- keeps parents informed and involved;
- builds non-hierarchical relationships in schools.

That said, it is difficult to find agreement in what constitutes high quality because people ascribe different meanings to quality. For example, drawing on a range of literature, Morrison (1998: 74) identifies eight interpretations of quality:

- quality as that which the consumer defines as quality;
- quality as reliability;
- quality as excellence;
- quality as the extent to which predefined objectives have been met;
- quality as fitness for purpose;
- quality control;
- quality assurance;
- total quality management (TQM).

Quality assurance – the main thrust of quality development – has four elements:

- 1 everyone on the enterprise has a responsibility for maintaining the quality of the product or service;
- 2 everyone in the enterprise has a responsibility for enhancing the quality of the product or service;
- 3 everyone in the enterprise understands, uses and feels ownership of the systems that are in place for maintaining and enhancing quality;
- 4 management (and sometimes the consumer) regularly checks the validity and reliability of the systems for checking quality.

The management style advocated for quality development focuses on *people*, their perceptions, concerns and potentials. Quality development ignores the human element of an organisation at its peril; quality development involves personal development, investment in human capital, and a broadening of individuals' horizons.

Further, quality development in this view is about personal and collective empowerment (c.f. Hargreaves and Hopkins's (1991) book on school and quality development that is entitled *The Empowered School*). Quality development through empowerment argues for flatter management, collegial, collaborative and participatory approaches, and recognition that quality leaders might not be members of a senior management team. Quality development, in this view, is active and dynamic rather than passive and reactive.

The values and norms of the quality development process set out by the international Institutional Development Program (IDP) are (Dalin *et al.* 1993):

- 1 The school is the unit of change and responsible for its own development.
- 2 Ownership is necessary.
- 3 What is best for schools can best be judged by the teachers.
- 4 The change process is a learning process that requires feedback.
- 5 The school is an open system; changes in one part of the organisation impact on other parts of the organisation.

The authors argue that those with management responsibility for change and development need to believe:

- 1 Improvement is vital and that real needs are the focus.
- 2 Outcomes are partly dependent on starting points – real needs.
- 3 The institution itself has the main resources necessary to accomplish objectives.
- 4 Cooperation is critical for success.
- 5 Openness and trust is central for organisational development.
- 6 Staff development is essential for quality development.
- 7 Feedback from all to all is essential.
- 8 Colleagues and management are responsible for ongoing supervision and assessment.
- 9 Management has the responsibility for structuring the process and clarifying the conditions, expectations and action steps necessary.
- 10 Management has a major role in developing the work climate.
- 11 Management has the responsibility for group growth.
- 12 Management has responsibility for conflict management and problem solving.
- 13 Task of change is long-term – to change a culture.
- 14 Management has ultimate responsibility for securing resources, sheltering the process from undue interventions and marketing the project externally.
- 15 Projects and project groups are important.
- 16 Cooperative planning work is necessary.
- 17 Peer supervision is important, including: regular meetings, continuity, group size, peer supervision in classrooms, students as partners.
- 18 There should be planning and development of tailor-made courses to import knowledge, skills etc.

They suggest that a learning organisation – a quality-developing school – should possess eleven characteristics:

- 1 Prepare for even distribution of power.
- 2 Develop problem-solving and negotiation skills.
- 3 Influence rather than authority is important.

- 4 Training takes place in the institution, not away from it, in real-life situations.
- 5 Real needs and real needs for leadership are identified.
- 6 Formal leaders need to step back.
- 7 Necessary competencies are identified and developed.
- 8 Openness and trust by school leaders needs to be practised.
- 9 School leaders to receive feedback and learn new skills.
- 10 Several perspectives have to be included: individual teacher, colleagues, students, parents, researchers, politicians and decision makers.
- 11 Support: (i) school-based curriculum and staff development; (ii) management and organisational development support; (iii) internal assessment process to provide feedback.

Juran (1988; 1993) argues that quality requires hands-on leadership by school board members and administrators, that massive training is a prerequisite of quality, and that everyone in a school must be trained. Hopkins (1994) argues for the need to address ten principles in developing quality for effective schools:

- 1 The main focus should be on teaching and learning in classrooms.
- 2 Ongoing staff development is vital.
- 3 Leadership should empower everyone to achieve individual and institutional goals.
- 4 All members of the school should build and share the visions and purposes of the school.
- 5 The school's priorities should reflect those purposes and vision.
- 6 Concrete planning should address the priorities.
- 7 The substance of staff development should be teaching skills as well as subject knowledge.
- 8 Collaboration is essential for staff development.
- 9 Monitoring and reflection are integral to the process.
- 10 Policy implementation must be sensitive to contextual and professional needs.

Further, Hopkins *et al* (1995: 60) argue for several considerations in quality development that build on teacher development – a central feature of quality assurance in effective schools:

- 1 Staff development time to be used effectively in schools;
- 2 Adults as well as students to learn in the school.
- 3 Staff to turn to colleagues for assistance.
- 4 Teachers to discuss pedagogical improvements.
- 5 Teachers to lead staff development activities in schools.
- 6 Teachers to observe each other in classrooms.
- 7 Teachers to provide feedback to each other and analyse their teaching.
- 8 Teachers to decide the content of in-service education.
- 9 Teachers to encourage each other to try new ideas.
- 10 New ideas met externally on in-service programs to be discussed in the school.

Burridge *et al.* (1993) suggest that the core processes of quality development can be addressed through six questions:

- 1 Where are we now? (Audit, stocktaking, establishing base-line, identifying strengths, weaknesses, needs.)
- 2 Where do we want to get to? (Vision building, mission statement, aims, objective setting.)

- 3 What do we need to focus on? (Establishing priorities for action - with criteria - target setting, key issues.)
- 4 How do we get there? (Identifying tasks, roles and responsibilities, steps, timescale, action planning, staff training/support/resources/information.)
- 5 How are we doing? (Progress checks - monitoring, evaluation, action research, formative evaluation, process evaluation, reflection on progress, collaborative enquiry.)
- 6 How have we done? (Success criteria, success check, final review, summative evaluation, how far have we travelled from the base-line, what have we achieved, what has been the impact of our changes, do we need to rethink our vision/aspirations.)

In a Total Quality school, Arcaro (1995) suggests:

- There is room for improvement in every educational process.
- Every improvement, however big or small, is worthwhile.
- Small improvements add up to significant change.
- Mistakes are treated as opportunities to improve.
- Everyone shares responsibility for trying to prevent problems and for fixing problems when they do occur.
- Everyone in the school or district is committed to continuous improvement.

In planning development and change Egan (1993) suggests a three-stage model:

*Stage 1: The current scenario*

What is going on? What are our current problems and challenges? What opportunities need developing? What are our priorities?

*Stage 2: The preferred scenario*

What possible scenarios do we prefer? What is the agenda for addressing these scenarios? What is the map of the desired package of outcomes?

*Stage 3: Action strategies*

What possible strategies are there to move the system from the current to the preferred scenario? Which are the best strategies? What is the plan whereby the strategies are translated into action?

This echoes the work of Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991) who suggest that an action plan for change should identify *preparations* (initial tasks), *routes* (tasks) and *destinations* (targets). Action planning, argue Dalin *et al.* (1993), should indicate goals, a sequence of activities, tasks that can run in parallel, time frames, resources and decision points.



## 5 School leadership and the effective school

School leadership is an essential component to any effective school and the demands made of principals are complex. One can divide the exercise of principalship into many dimensions, including (Department for Education and Employment 2000):

### A. *The core purposes of the principal:*

‘To provide professional leadership for a school which secures its success and improvement, ensuring high quality education for all its pupils and improved standards of learning and achievement’ (p. 4);

### B. *Key outcomes of principals:*

- *schools* where there is a positive ethos, where efficient and effective use is made of staff, accommodation and resources, and where financial control and administration are effective in securing the implementation of the school development plan and where self-evaluation takes place;
- *students* who make progress in relation to their abilities and who are enthusiastic about learning;
- *teachers* who have a secure knowledge of their subjects(s) and teaching, evaluation and planning, and who are supported in their work;
- *parents* who enjoy an effective partnership with the school.

### C. *Professional knowledge and understanding:*

- What constitutes quality in educational provision; characteristics of effective schools; strategies for raising students’ achievements; how to promote the all-round development of students (not simply academic);
- Application of IT to teaching, learning, assessment and management;
- How to gather and use data to establish benchmarks, to set targets for improvement, to monitor and compare standards, to improve standards;
- How to plan, organise, develop, monitor and evaluate curricula, teaching and learning, assessment and evaluation, home-school liaison;
- Knowledge of how leadership style can be used to promote positive learning and practice in staff and students;
- Management strategies, legal frameworks, equal opportunities, teachers’ rights, protections and responsibilities, external relations;
- Staff development and career development;
- Strategies to promote equal opportunities, multicultural education, citizenship and teaching for diversity.

### D. *Skills and attributes of the principal:*

- *Leadership skills:* managing *with* people to achieve shared goals; creating and securing commitment; managing change; prioritising and planning; building high performing teams; coordinating work and practice; devolving responsibilities; motivating and inspiring staff, students, parents and the wider community; being a

role model for staff and students; seeking advice and support; handling people sensitively and resolving conflicts; energising and enthusing staff.

- *Professional competencies and expertise*: achieving credibility and offering professional direction for the school; making use of data on school performance; learning from and applying effective practice from other sources; being up to date with developments in school-related aspects of education.
- *Decision-making skills*: investigating and solving problems; thinking creatively and imaginatively to anticipate and solve problems; demonstrating effective judgement.
- *Communication skills*: through a variety of media; genuine two-way communication (i.e. where feedback makes a difference to the Principal); listening; asking for, and providing, information, opinion and advice; negotiating, consulting, maximising communication; encouraging creative disagreement; replacing a blame culture with a learning culture.
- *Self-management skills*: being available; working under pressure; accepting that one may not have the right answer; admitting error and one's own limitations; being involved in one's own professional development; self-evaluation.
- *Attributes*: personal impact and presence; adaptability to changing situation and new ideas; energy, vigour, enthusiasm; intellectual ability; reliability and integrity; commitment.

*E. Key areas of being a principal:*

- *Strategic direction and development of the school*: leading by example: providing inspiration and motivation; embodying the vision for the school; creating an ethos and vision to promote effective teaching and learning and achievement by students; securing the willing commitment of staff, students and parents; operating democratically; creating a clear and shared development plans – with priorities, short-term, long-term and medium-term targets, financial implications and accountability, all to secure improved student achievement and teacher effectiveness; securing the willing commitment of teachers and parents; ensuring the involvement of teachers and the community in agreeing the direction of the school; monitoring and evaluating the activities and outcomes of the school; securing policies for all aspects of school practice, development and achievement.
- *Teaching and learning*: creating an environment which promotes motivated and effective teaching and learning and consequent standards of achievement; agreeing, planning and implementing the most effective curricula to meet the goals of the school; identifying areas for development and improvement; providing support for teaching, learning, teachers and learners; encouraging free thinking, creativity, autonomy and higher order thinking; keeping up-to-date with new developments in teaching and learning; being innovative and open; supporting risk-taking; being a model of effective teaching and learning; monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning for all students and staff; ensuring equality of opportunity and uptake for all students; creating positive strategies for all students to learn; linking with the outside community and the world of work; crating and sustaining effective partnerships with parents and the community to maximise students' achievements; ensuring that the school provides the maximum 'added value' for all students and staff, taking due account of starting points.
- *Leading and managing staff*: maximising the contribution of staff to effective student learning and achievement; promoting constructive and positive working relationships between all parties in the school; monitoring, evaluating and improving the quality of the activities of the school; ensuring clear delegation; using appraisal for staff and school

development; being accountable to staff and parents; providing career development for staff; being open; acknowledging one's own limitations; motivating and enabling staff to perform their work to the highest standard; leading professional development in the school; being a model of good practice; being both involved in the day-to-day work of the school and able to stand back from it to see a larger picture; understanding staff expectations and promoting their motivation.

- *Efficient and effective deployment of staff and resources*: recruitment, development and retention of high quality staff; maximising the deployment of staff; using funds to maximum benefit; monitoring the range, quality, quantity and use of all available resources in order to improve the quality of teaching, learning, achievement and value for money.
- *Accountability*: being open and accountable to teachers, parents, school managers, the wider community; providing information to all stakeholders; creating and developing a school in which everyone recognises 360° accountability; presenting an accurate and complete picture of the school and its performance to all stakeholders; ensuring that parents are well informed about the curriculum attainment and progress of the students, and how they can support the school's goals.

Clearly the list is formidable; that is a fair reflection of reality. The task of quality development for effective schools is complex.

## **Bibliography**

Ainscow, M., Hopkins, D., Southworth, G. and West, D. (1994) *Creating the Conditions for School Improvement*. London: David Fulton.

Alexander, R., Rose, J. and Woodhead, C. (1992) *Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools*. London: Department for Education.

Arcaro, J. (1995) *Quality in Education*. Florida: St. Lucie Press.

Ball, C. (1985) What the hell is quality? In C. Ball (ed.) *Fitness for Purpose*. Guildford: Society for Research in Higher Education.

Brighouse, T. and Tomlinson, J. (1991) *Successful Schools*. London: Institute of Public Policy Research.

Burridge, E., Ginnis, P., Hammond, L. and Smith, A. (1993) *Quality Development*. Birmingham: Birmingham City Council Education Department.

Burridge, E. and Ribbins, E. (eds) (1994) Promoting improvement in schools: aspects of quality in Birmingham. In P. Ribbins and E. Burridge (eds) (1994) *Improving Education: Promoting Quality in Schools*. London: Cassell.

Dalin, P., Rolff, H. and Kottkamp, R. (1993) *Changing the School Culture*. London: Cassell.

Department of Education and Science (DES) (1988) *Secondary Schools: An Appraisal*. London: HMSO.

Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) (2000) *National Standards for Headteachers*. London: DfEE.

- Egan, G. (1993) *Adding Value*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass Inc.
- Finch, J. (1994) Quality and its measurement: a business perspective. In D. Green (ed.) *What is Quality in Higher Education?* Buckingham: Open University Press/Society for Research in Higher Education.
- Frazer, M. (1994) Quality in higher education: an international perspective. In D. Green (ed.), op. cit.
- Fullan, M. (1992) *The New Meaning of Educational Change*. London: Cassell.
- Gray, J., Hopkins, D., Reynolds, D, Wilcox, M., Farrell, M. and Jesson, D. (1999) *Improving Schools: Performance and Potential*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Green D. (ed.) (1994) *What is Quality in Higher Education?* Buckingham: Open University Press/Society for Research in Higher Education.
- Hargreaves, D. and Hopkins, D. (1991) *The Empowered School*. London: Cassell.
- Hill, P. (1995) *School Effectiveness and Improvement*. Inaugural professorial lecture, Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne.
- Hopkins, D. (1994) School improvement in an ERA of change. In P. Ribbins and E. Burrige (eds), op. cit.
- Hopkins, D. and Harris, M. (1997) Understanding the School's Capacity for Development: Growth Stages and Strategies. *School Leadership and Management*, 17 (3), 401–11.
- Hopkins, D., Stoll, L., Myers, K., Learmonth, J. and Durham, H. (1995) *Schools Make a Difference*. Southampton: Resource Base, Television Centre.
- Juran, J. M. (1988) *Juran on Planning for Quality*. London: Collier-Macmillan.
- Juran, J. M. (1993) *Quality Planning and Analysis* (third edition). London: McGraw-Hill.
- McGaw, B., Piper, K., Banks, D. and Evans, B. (1992) *Making Schools More Effective*. Hawthorn, Vic.: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Maden, M. and Hillman, V. (1996) *Against the Odds*. London: Routledge.
- Morrison, K. R. B. (1998) *Management Theories for Educational Change*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Morrison, K. R. B. (2002) *School Leadership and Complexity Theory*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Mortimore, P. (1991) School effectiveness research: which way at the cross-roads? Paper presented at the Fourth International Conference for School Effectiveness and Improvement, Cardiff.
- Mortimore, P. (1993) School effectiveness and the management of effective learning and teaching. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*. 4 (4), 290–310.

Mortimore, P., Sammons, P., Stoll, L., Lewis, D. and Ecob, R. (1988) *School Matters: The Junior Years*. Shepton Mallett: Open Books.

Raisbeck, I. (1994) Royal Mail: developing a total quality organization. In D. Green, op. cit.

Reynolds, D. (1991) School effectiveness in secondary schools: research and its policy implications. In S. Riddell and S. Brown (eds) *School Effectiveness Research: Its Messages for School Improvement*. Edinburgh: HMSO.

Reynolds, D. (1995) The effective school: an inaugural lecture. *Evaluation and Research in Education*, 9 (2), 57–73.

Reynolds, D. (2000) School effectiveness: the international dimension. In C. Teddlie and D. Reynolds (eds) *The International Handbook of School Effectiveness Research*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Reynolds, D., Sammons, P., Stoll, L., Barber, M. and Hillman, J. (1996) School effectiveness and school improvement in the United Kingdom. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 7 (2), 133–58.

Reynolds, D., Teddlie, C., Creemers, B., Scheerens, J. and Townsend, T. (2000) An introduction to school effectiveness research. In C. Teddlie and D. Reynolds (eds) *The International Handbook of School Effectiveness Research*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Reynolds, D., Hopkins, D., Potter, D., and Chapman, C. (2001) *School Improvement for Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances*. London: DES.

Rutter, M., Maughan, B., Mortimore, P. and Ouston, J. (1979) *Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and their Effects on Children*. London: Open Books.

Sammons, P. (1994) Findings from school effectiveness research: some implications for improving the quality of schools. In P. Ribbins and E. Burrige (eds), op. cit.

Sammons, P., Hillman, J. and Mortimore, P. (1995) *Key Characteristics of Effective Schools: a Review of School Effectiveness Research*. Report by the Institute of Education, University of London, for the Office for Standards in Education.

Smith, D. and Tomlinson, S. (1990) The school effect. In T. Brighouse and J. Tomlinson, op. cit.

Stoll, L. and Myers, K. (1998) *No Quick Fixes*. London: Falmer.

Teddlie, C. and Stringfield, S. (1993) *Schools Make a Difference*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Weindling, R. (1989) The process of school improvement: some practical messages from research. *School Organisation*, 9 (1), 53–64.

Wyatt, T. (1995) *Models for the Analysis of Student Outcomes Data*. Quality Assurance Directorate, New South Wales DSE, internal working document.

Wyatt, T. (1996) School effectiveness research: dead end, damp squib or smouldering fuse? *Issues in Educational Research*, 6 (1), 79–112.