



The Process of Improving Schools in the Perspective of Cultural Transition

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Proposal Information

This study describes the process of improving schools by intervening in Arab-speaking language schools in Israel, and explains the consideration involved in planning and applying based on the adopted concept framework that was taken beyond the cultural change. The project assess the cultural distance between the interventor and the functional framework of the schools: in the initial interaction, dealing with the peripheral elements of the cultural framework, compared to the ones at the core (center) of the school, understanding the steps and working relationship with the school teams, describing the finding that assisted the interventor to diagnose and assess measuring tools appropriate to the proposed concept, and determining the findings that indicate the results achieved during the project and at its end.

The intervention is perceived as the interaction of two cultures; that of the interventor and that of the school. The anthropology literature perceives this meeting as a process of learning. This learning process is reciprocal between the two cultures in contact. The contribution of each culture is differential; the “strong” culture contributes to the “weak” culture, or in other words there is a “giving” culture, and a “receiving” culture. This process has an implication on the individual and on the cultural elements of both cultures.

Methodology and study-procedure

This study suggests a conceptual framework adopted from the field of cultural change and cultural contact in anthropology, when the basic assumption is that in the process of cultural change is analogue to the process of intervention in education (IIE), and it can be used to the improvement of the IIE process, considering the constrains dictated by the education policy maker.

The study opens analyzing the strategies that were suggested to improve and increase efficacy of the school. The strategy of intervention aimed to change and improve the schools using “a change agent” or “interventor” was decided to be the practical option. This strategy has been in use in Israel and in other countries. It is relatively inexpensive, and it tries to increase the productivities of the school.

This conceptual framework, assist those involved in the area of IIE to understand the process, consolidate intervention patterns and criteria to evaluate the process and results of IIE, as well as propose steps in the process of intervention.

Results

This study has found 2 basic elements which adds a new perspective to process of improving schools in the perspective of cultural transition

1. Distribution of Cultural Elements to Center and Periphery

The description of the cultural pattern disperses the cultural elements in the hypothetical space that has a center and periphery. The location of the elements is a reasoned hypothetical, and its value is in that it gives different significance to the various elements in this space. This distribution is important in the process of intervention, as it gives different weight to the elements in the pattern. The interventor has now a new dimension to consider before choosing the candidate elements to be included in the process of change at the different stages of the process.

The changes of the elements of the peripheral are relatively easy to change, nevertheless, the pattern essentially did not change, it will continue to maintain itself, and eventually will reject the changes from the periphery. The present study claims that this sorting is essential, and later the interventor will decide on two schematic intervention patterns that are presented in the study.

2. The Cultural Distance between two Cultures in Contact

The distance between two cultural patterns when encountered reveals the degree of change required. The larger the distance, the longer it takes to institutionalize the required change. The terms used in schools such as “level of use” or “capacity of change” suggest the level of cultural distance. When those are small compared to the required change, more time is

needed. This is one of the reasons that a group of schools treated by the same interventor using the same strategy, over the same period of time show bigger difference at the end or during the project, compared to that existed in the beginning.

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