

THE REALISATION OF QUALITY IN INVITING SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA*

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Abstract

Providing quality education is the single most important issue in education today. Advocates of Invitational Education (IE) maintain that the effective implementation of its philosophy can lead to quality education in schools. This article describes a qualitative study of how inviting schools in the United States of America succeed in implementing and sustaining IE, thereby providing quality education. The study was done in selected schools in New Mexico and Kentucky in the United States of America that had previously received the prestigious International Award for Invitational Education. The purpose of Inviting school awards is to recognise schools, districts, and universities throughout the world that exhibit the philosophy of IE (Inviting School Award Program 2005). The findings reveal that adherence to IE principles also revealed adherence to Quality Management (QM) principles, which are, the key role of leadership; focus on the customer; teacher collaboration, and empowerment; continuous improvement; and professional training.



NOTE: This module has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and sanctioned by the National Council of the Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a scholarly contribution to the knowledge base in educational administration.

Introduction

One of most important developments to influence schools in the last 20 years has been the drive for quality education (Taylor, 2003). This is the result of the growth of a competitive market and questionable quality of teaching and learning in many schools. In the quest for quality in education, staff, and students must be continuously engaged in a process of finding opportunities for improving the learning process and the quality of the learning experience.

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Education legislation worldwide has placed staff in schools under enormous pressure to improve students' performance in school to ensure that they become lifelong learners, contributing citizens and effective employees in an international marketplace (Partee & Sammon, 2001). These demands have been accompanied by an emphasis on schools that nurture these expectations for student performance and reflect staff members' new responsibilities to account for students' learning (Anonymous, 2001/2002). Since Invitational Education (IE) is regarded as the product of conscious and well-planned thinking as well as regular evaluation, based on a strong commitment to certain basic values about people and how they should be educated, it presents an appropriate approach to addressing this issue (Novak & Purkey, 2001).

Many school development efforts have often been hampered by "factory model" operating procedures (Purkey & Strahan, 1995). This usually includes defining problems, breaking them down, developing solutions, and testing those solutions. In contrast to the factory model, IE advocates a "family model" where schools develop more successfully through collaboration (Purkey & Strahan 1995; Rhodes & Houghton-Hill, 2000). The more collegial the relationships among principals and staff, the more dramatic the progress towards school improvement will be (Brandt, 2003; Purkey & Strahan, 1995). When everybody participates in school improvement, everyone experiences a real sense of ownership of the process (Purkey & Strahan, 1995). The process itself invites participation and provides a systematic strategy for cooperative action. In itself, the process of developing inviting schools corresponds to the process of pursuing a quality system in the school. The quality management (QM) paradigm includes concepts such as the importance of leadership, focus on the customer, collaboration, empowerment, and continuous improvement, concepts which are characteristic of the new direction in improving education (Waks & Frank, 1999; De Bruyn, 2003).

Quality Management and Invitational Education

Dr. W. Edwards Deming first introduced the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM) to Japanese industrial leaders nearly 50 years ago (Bonstingl, 1996; Sallis, 1997). This philosophy of quality replaces outdated and counterproductive, top-down, authoritarian modes of functioning with collaborative, community-building leadership practices. TQM has generated numerous studies since 1980 (Hahn & Bart, 2003). It focuses on achieving quality and can be defined as a philosophy and a long-term process of continuous improvement towards perceived standards of excellence to meet and exceed the needs and expectations of customers through an integrated system of tools, techniques, and training (Waks & Frank, 1999; De Bruyn, 2003; Detert, Kopel, Mauriel & Jenni, 2000). Applying it to education, successful schools have the ability to meet certain standards in providing services to continuously meet the needs of customers. Customer satisfaction is an essential institutional goal and is considered to be the "acid test" of an organisation's effectiveness (Daugherty, 1996; Oakland & Oakland, 1998; Taylor, 2003). Many authors believe that the quality movement is the answer to educational needs because QM provides a structured, systematic educational delivery system, which leads to an improvement in student performance, motivation, self-esteem, and confidence (Cramer, 1996; Weller & McElwee, 1997).

IE has been implemented not only in the schools studied in this article, but also in more than a hundred other schools throughout the United States of America, Canada, Hong Kong, and other countries (Purkey & Strahan, 1995). IE is a theory of practice that emanates from the self-concept theory and the perceptual tradition (Kok & Van der Merwe, 2002; Novak & Purkey, 2001). The aim of IE is to create an entire school environment that intentionally invites success for everyone in the school (Egley, 2003). It focuses consciously on broader goals than students and their performance (Purkey & Strahan, 1995). There are certain key assumptions for communicating caring and appropriate messages that are intended to invite the development of human potential (Friedland, 1999; Novak & Purkey, 2001; Kok & Van der Merwe, 2002; Purkey & Strahan, 1995). These assumptions are,

1. People are able, valuable, and responsible and should be treated accordingly. IE supports the fundamental belief that EVERY student can succeed (Purkey & Strahan, 1995). In essence, the mandate No Child Left Behind in the United States of America confirms this view. The essential nature of human beings is appreciated when they are respected (Dreher, 2002). This process starts with self-respect that leads to integrity and ultimately to personal empowerment. Self-respect leads to respect for others, which in turn has the potential to empower people.

2. Education is a collaborative, cooperative activity. For the sake of empowerment of staff and learners, they need to be involved in education (Friedland, 1999). Constantly controlling learners and staff is contrary to their developmental needs and creates an uninviting climate (Friedland, 1999; Brinson, 1996).
3. People possess untapped potential in all areas of development. People have untapped potential in all areas of human development (Friedland, 1999). If principals and teachers are optimistic about what each student can become, they have to create places, policies, programmes, and processes to nurture everybody and allow them to develop their unlimited potential (Friedland, 1999; Kitchens, 1998).
4. Human potential is best realised by places, policies, programmes, and processes that invite fulfilling behaviours and by people who make a shared effort to respect themselves and others (The Concept of Invitational Education, 1998; Friedland, 1999). The four P's mentioned in the assumption provide a framework for school development (Purkey & Strahan 1995; Novak & Purkey, 2001). In a quality system the different components interact to implement quality. Since quality refers to every process in a system, a review of any process constitutes a valuable indicator of whether quality has been attained (Hahn & Bart, 2003).

Research Problem

Arcaro (1995) believes that quality education is only possible when everybody in a school develops particular attitudes that acknowledge the key role of leadership, focus on customers, and recognise the importance of teacher empowerment and teamwork, continuous improvement, and training. These aspects are regarded as the integral principles of QM (Beavis, 1995; Daugherty, 1996), but may also be applied to IE. Thus, the main research problem of the study described in this article is, How do the aforementioned QM principles manifest in schools that have received recognition for being inviting schools?

Research Design

A qualitative research design was considered to be appropriate for this study since it allowed the researcher to gain insight into the perceptions of principals and staff on the realisation of IE in their schools. The researcher entered the subject's "life world" in order to understand the phenomenon in its naturally occurring state (Fouche, 2005; Rudestam & Newton, 2001). The study attempts to understand the meanings and intentions that underlie the everyday actions of participants, but does not attempt to explain behaviour in terms of universal laws.

Sample

The study used purposeful and convenient sampling to select information-rich cases (Johnson & Christenson, 2000; Patton, 2002). A well-known American IE consultant helped to identify five inviting schools in New Mexico. She also referred the researcher to a board member of the International Alliance of Invitational Education, who identified inviting schools in Scott County and one high school in Fayette County, Kentucky. Permission was granted by the Superintendent of Scott County, Kentucky, to visit three inviting schools in his district, two elementary schools and a ninth-grade school. The IE consultant helped to identify five inviting schools in New Mexico, two early childhood centres and three elementary schools. All the schools have a diverse population of students in terms of income, culture, and national heritage. Family income in these schools ranges from substandard poverty to affluence.

Interviews served as the main data collection method (Patton, 2002; Rudestam & Newton, 2001) as they enable people to report information about their beliefs and experiences (Thomas & Brubaker, 2000). Interviews were conducted until the research reached "theoretical saturation" (Rudestam & Newton, 2001), that is, the point where no new relevant data were discovered. The interviews were conducted with

- principals from all nine schools and one assistant principal.
- teachers from each school. The principals were asked to identify suitable teachers for the interviews. Depending on the school programme, the researcher conducted interviews with individual teachers or with focus groups of teachers.
- IE consultant.

A general question opened the interview, What do you think influences the effective implementation of Invitational Education? Subquestions included the following, What role does the principal and teachers play in the effective implementation of IE? What effect does conditions inside and outside the school have on the effective implementation of IE? The interview process gave participants an opportunity to share insights and raise questions that the researcher had not anticipated. This approach influenced the scope, sequence, and content of the various interviews. The interviews were conducted during April 2004 at each of the identified schools. Principals were interviewed in their offices, while interviews with focus group teachers and individual teachers were conducted in specially arranged venues. The interviews with the principals and individual teachers lasted about 60 to 90 minutes. The focus group interviews lasted about ninety minutes. Permission was granted by all respondents to take down field notes and to tape record the interviews (Warren, 2002; Patton, 2002; Johnson, 2002). These notes were expanded by the researcher immediately after completing each interview, as a verifying measure. The recorded interviews were later transcribed on a computer (Johnson & Christenson, 2000).

Data analysis

After carefully reading the field notes and transcribed interviews the data were segmented and inductively coded, thereby generating codes and categories (Johnson & Christenson, 2000; Patton, 2002; De Vos, 2005). The first step in the phenomenological analysis was epoche, that is, eliminating subjectivity by noting prejudices or assumptions regarding IE (Patton, 2002). The second step involved bracketing (phenomenological reduction) by placing preconceived ideas within brackets. This was done when reading the transcripts and field notes for the first time in order to identify the data in pure form (Poggenpoel, 1998). Memos that reflected what the researcher had learned from the data were written in the margins of the transcripts (Johnson & Christenson, 2000). Significant comments were then grouped into categories and units of meaning were put into these major categories (Johnson & Christenson, 2000). A number of subcategories within each major category were then identified. A literature control was conducted to identify this study's contribution to that of previous research conducted on QM and IE.

1 Soundness of the Study

Guba and Lincoln's model for trustworthiness refined by Poggenpoel (1998) was used to ensure the validity of the research. The four strategies to ensure trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Poggenpoel, 1998) and are summarised in Table 1 (Poggenpoel et al., 1994; De Vos 2005).

TABLE 1, STRATEGIES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS

Strategy	Criteria	Application
<i>Credibility</i>	Reflexivity	Field notes taken
	Triangulation	Interviews conducted with principals and teachers at nine schools, field notes, literature control
	Checking	Literature control of description of TQM in education
	Authority of researcher	Previous experience of qualitative research
<i>Transferability</i>	Nominated sample	Purposeful, convenient sampling with Superintendent of district and consultant
	Comparison of sample	Sample reflective of community
	Dense description	Complete description of methodology including literature control and verbatim quotes from interviews
<i>Dependability</i>	Dependability audit	Question checking with literature and school in pilot study, data analysis protocol
	Dense description of research method	Research methodology fully described
<i>Confirmability</i>	Triangulation	As discussed
	Triangulation	As discussed
	Reflexivity	As discussed

Results and Discussion of Results

Although not deliberately intended, the major categories that emerged from the data during data analysis coincided with the QM principles, even no specific questions were asked that directed the responses to that end. These include the key role of leadership, a customer focus, teacher collaboration and empowerment, commitment to continuous improvement, and training opportunities (Beavis, 1995; Daugherty, 1996).

The Key Role of Leadership

A number of participants indicated the key role of leadership in implementing and sustaining IE, which is also a key principle of QM. They believed that the successful implementation of IE depends on how it is modelled by the principal. One principal explained it as follows,

As leaders we take teachers to areas they wouldn't normally go. So I am setting an example, I try to demonstrate how to treat people... I treat teachers in front of students the way I want them to treat

students... I try to be a positive role model, treat teachers with respect, brag about them a lot.

The views of other principals supported this view, "If he [the principal] is not first ... [in] modelling IE and demonstrating it, it won't happen... He has to be creative in modelling it;" "If the leader doesn't do it [IE], there is no way others would do it. What is emphasised gets done;" and "The leader is the first and foremost ... she should walk her talk and get [her] hands dirty."

Many teachers supported the idea of principals modelling IE, for example, "It [IE] starts from the top. If they want people to do good things, they should do it;" and "He [the principal] is the face of the school. He should be the face of IE."

A prerequisite for modelling IE is for principals to "buy into" IE. Two teachers explained this idea as follows, "Leadership plays the biggest part, because if the leader doesn't think IE is important, others won't. You need someone to spearhead the initiative," and "The principal has to buy into IE and has to support it ... if the principal doesn't back it, it won't work."

One principal mentioned the idea of resistance when implementing a new initiative. Others, however, believed that the principal could "bring" the approach to the school, be the "seed" and continue to endorse it, even when resistance is experienced. The principal remarked,

We have to bring awareness of IE to the school. We have to start with the principal. All I can do is to bring the knowledge there ... There is a lot of resistance. You will have to keep presenting it, you keep presenting it. It will take two to three times. The staff may call it fluff.

The effective implementation and sustainment of IE depends on effective leadership in schools (Bernauer, 2002; Gerber, 1998; Detert et al., 2000). The same is true for QM. Daugherty (1996), Sallis (1997), and Weller and McElwee (1997) believe that QM starts at the top and that the first and key step in implementing QM is to obtain distinct and visible commitment and support from leadership. Detert et al., (2000, 159), however, believe that the "buying into of new behaviours" is crucial for the effective implementation of any new approach, including IE. This implies that principals provide an appropriate model for staff to follow which is consistent with the values of leaders (Yu, Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Without the support and modelling of principals, QM cannot be effectively implemented in schools (Detert et al., 2000). Principals are therefore held responsible for their roles as leaders of the quality effort. This implies that they have to educate themselves about QM practices and model the practices in whatever they do.

Leadership's role and its commitment to QM have to be made clear to everybody in the system and shared values and beliefs have to be communicated to all (Arcaro, 1995). This necessitates a clear vision as well as the effective communication of this vision (Swift, Ross & Omachonu, 1998; Smith, 1999). By creating a clear vision, principals support staff in their understanding of the fact that they are making a meaningful contribution.

Thus it is imperative for principals striving towards IE in their schools to have a clear vision. Frazier (1997) and Detert et al., (2000) also regard a vision as a critical step and the starting point for creating a strategic QM plan for the institution. Many participants supported the importance of a vision. Two principals explained this respectively as follows,

For invitational learning it takes inviting teachers to see the rainbow, to have a dream ... You need to have a vision.

If you don't have a common vision, you won't accomplish your goal ... I always say we don't have a good school because of me, but the principal has to be the key leader in sharing the vision and continuing motivating people towards the vision. The principal has to articulate the vision. I have to walk the talk. I am the head leader of the school. Once you get the people on board, its shared leadership.

According to Yu, Leithwood & Jantzi (2000) the inspiring nature of a vision may promote emotionally stimulating processes. It also holds together the individual empowered professionals (Robinson & Carrington, 2002). Daugherty (1996) is of the opinion that for schools to function effectively, role players should be directed towards a shared vision. The shared values of staff members influence their behaviours and actions, which subsequently have an influence on the quality of the school (Smith & Coldron, 1999; Robinson & Carrington, 2002). The principles of both IE and QM indicate the key role that people (customers) play.

Focus on the Customer

Principals can help teachers to realise that they can make a difference in student performance when being

inviting. Since teachers are the “action parts” in classrooms, their role is vital for the effective implementation of IE. IE can lead to a pattern of beliefs and expectations of teachers in the schools that guide their attitude and behaviour (Brinson, 1996; Drejer, 2000). The effectiveness of their influence, however, depends on their attitude and commitment in implementing IE.

Throughout the interviews the importance of teachers in the implementation of IE and the key focus on students were stressed. One principal asserted,

The principal, you know, sits in a little office, but they [the teachers] make it happen. In Invitational learning it’s about the kids. If we can invite them to learn, my goodness! Here’s the deal, not only to attend conferences, but the principal has to see that it’s carried out. You have to keep on reminding them [the teachers].

A few other principals also confirmed the importance of teachers in realising IE, “Teachers are the key people and I feed the teachers and teachers feed the children. They have the most impact. They are behind closed doors. I have to feed the information... Teachers can nurture the parent community and bring them to school”; “Teachers are the wheels of the programme. It happens in the classrooms. They are the action parts. Their role is very important”; “It would be impossible to implement IE without the teachers. Teachers have to buy into it” (IE consultant); and “The most important thing is teachers. They are not an add-on. They deliver instruction to students.”

The literature confirms that quality will be unlikely to improve in education without recognising that every educational output has “customers” (Dalrymple & Srikanthan, 2002; Kayser, 2003; Waks & Frank, 1999). According to QM 1a customer-focussed organisation’s primary goal involves determining who the customer is and seeking from the customer the characteristics of quality required to meet and to exceed the customer’s needs (Racer 1997; Weller & Melee, 1997; Taylor, 2003). Customers are subcategorised into internal and external, with internal customers referring to people within the school, including staff, students, and parents. The communication process between different customers in a school can generate a motivational atmosphere and develops a sense of belonging and importance when customers try to understand each other’s needs (Barry, 1991). It also implies that such an atmosphere may foster teacher collaboration and empowerment. Educator collaboration and support are necessary for school development to be effective (Brandt, 2003; Rhodes & Houghton-Hill, 2000; Richardson, 2003; Wilma, 2003).

Teacher Collaboration and Empowerment

Collaboration between staff in the school is an assumption of IE. Two teachers and a principal respectively expressed their perceptions of staff working together,

If you have a faculty that don’t work together, it’s a hard obstacle to overcome. You can’t start IE without team building.

If you are not part of it, have ownership, it [IE] won’t work. Everybody should be involved.

Teachers play a major role ... If we become a team, a family, working towards the process, we will make it. Also remember that one apple spoils the barrel ... You need to include and invite everyone. People make the building, not the building the people.

Although collaboration between staff members is acknowledged, the quality of relationships can be vital when implementing IE. A teacher and a principal respectively referred to the influence of teacher relationships,

I think that how teachers get along is seen between the lines by students. If a staff member has conflict, it will affect students. Staff should realise that their behaviour affects students and the invitational school.

A little negative talk, negative action of teachers can really pull the school down.

Since staff collaboration plays such an important role, it is essential to select the right staff members. Various participants supported the importance of hiring the right people. The IE consultant succinctly expressed her views as follows:

Hiring, inducting, and indoctrinating new staff members is crucial in sustaining the IE spirit. The most effective way to assure continuity is to appoint the right staff members ... The hiring of the right staff applies to all positions in the school. Lots of times you can’t hire them, so then you have to train them. Everyone is equally important – the janitor, the secretary, it takes everybody on board.

A teacher supported this view: “Hiring new staff is important ... You have to find the best candidate. If we hire the right people, students are successful, the climate will take over. You don’t create an inviting school. You have an inviting school.” A teacher also warned against incorrect appointments, “Don’t hire sour apples. It takes one person to put a sour apple in the barrel to make the whole barrel sour.”

Collaboration will contribute to the development of a positive school culture that is committed to change and the creation of better learning opportunities for all (Robinson & Carrington, 2002; Rhodes & Houghton-Hill, 2000; Wilms, 2003). Furthermore, collaboration can improve quality, efficiency, and job satisfaction (Swift et al., 1998; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999). Team members can draw upon strengths and complement each other’s knowledge and skills in becoming more inviting in their schools. When everybody participates in school development, everyone experiences a genuine sense of ownership of the process (Purkey & Strahan, 1995). According to Purkey and Strahan (1995), “membership” is a hallmark of an inviting school. However, the most powerful predictor of learner performance is the quality of relationships among staff (Barth in Purkey & Strahan, 1995). Wilms’ study (2003) also indicates that staff value collaborating with one another.

Since teaching is a lonely profession, there should be opportunities for teachers to share their achievements and problems encountered when employing new strategies for change to happen (Robinson & Carrington, 2002; Bernauer, 2002). Sharing encourages teachers’ reflection and broadens their perspective (Ho-Ming & Ping-Yan, 1999; Dixon, 1998; Blackmore, 2000). It contributes to the development of a positive school culture that is committed to change and the creation of better learning opportunities for all learners (Robinson & Carrington, 2002; Rhodes & Houghton-Hill, 2000). The shared values of members in a school community affect their actions, which subsequently has an influence on the school’s culture (Smith & Coldron, 1999; Robinson & Carrington, 2002). Thus it is essential to identify people who have the potential to work collaboratively in achieving the aims of IE. Principals play a major role in providing opportunities for staff collaboration and their empowerment. Two principals expressed their role in empowering staff, “I’m leading them [the teachers] to places where they don’t want to go. Growth is painful. We work together;” and “I have to walk the talk. I am the head leader of the school. Once you get the people on board, it’s shared leadership.”

Teacher empowerment is based on the belief that people want to feel good and proud of their efforts (Frazier, 1997). It is assumed that everyone has the potential to make a contribution to quality schooling, which is reflected in his/her behavioural and personal contribution to the quality effort (Gallegos, 1996; Frazier, 1997). Empowerment is seen as the fundamental transfer of authority and responsibility that includes the following, the process by which people are allowed to make decisions regarding assigned tasks; people’s involvement in the creation of ways to maintain a productive and satisfying work environment and their involvement in daily problem solving and decision-making (Williams, 1994).

Literature confirms that QM is all about staff collaboration and the empowerment of people so that they can make decisions about how best to improve their practice (Quong & Walker, 1996). Current developments in leadership show a shift from bureaucratic managerial styles to different leadership styles that promote shared decision-making (Campbell, 1997; Asbill & Gonzalez, 2000). Furthermore, principals can help teachers realise that they are making a difference with learners and foster feelings of efficacy (Edwards, Green, & Lyons, 2002). There is also a positive relationship between a principal’s actions and teachers’ affective outcomes such as feelings of trust, respect, job satisfaction, empowerment, higher levels of commitment to institutional goals and perceived leadership effectiveness (Bernauer, 2002; Campbell, 1997; Asbill & Gonzalez, 2000; Edwards et al., 2002; Mahoney, 1997; Bjork, 2000; Edwards et al., 2002; Yu et al. 2000). Mahoney (1997) confirms this by stating, “Successful leaders are able to commit people to action.” Furthermore, IE can lead to a pattern of beliefs and expectations among all role players in the schools that guide their attitude and behaviour (Brinson, 1996; Drejer, 2000).

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Attaining the prestigious IE award does not mean that the school has “arrived.” It becomes even more important after the honour has been bestowed on the school to continuously demonstrate what it means to be inviting. One participant explained what may happen if there is a lack of commitment to continuous development.

IE has to be revisited ... If you don’t have continuous development, it may die. You have to understand

the concept, but you need to have a strong tradition to keep us inviting. Continuous encouragement is needed. . . . It's human nature to slack off on things. We know what it is to be inviting, but it is not the same as in the beginning. In the beginning we had more discussion, surveys ... to follow through is very important. Don't stop with surveys. Our school was more successful when we were more inviting.

To reculture and improve schools means to develop collaborative work cultures that focus in a sustained way on the continuous development of teachers in relation to creating and assessing learning conditions for all learners (Fullan in Robinson & Carrington, 2002; Bernauer, 2002). IE and invitational learning (IL) are maintained by the Alliance for Invitational Education as a means of improving classrooms and climates in schools (Asbill & Gonzalez, 2000; *The Concept of Invitational Education*, 1998).

The responses of participants regarding the necessity of continuous development are supported by literature (Moore, 2000; Robinson & Carrington, 2002; Richardson, 2003). The methods employed for development will, however, depend on the needs of the staff.

The QM paradigm also strives towards constant development and those institutions which practise it engage in continuous improvement (Goetsch & Davis, 1995; Sallis, 1997). Ongoing continuous improvement involves everybody and is both a bottom-up and top-down approach (Frazier, 1997; Swift et al., 1998; De Bruyn, 2003). Schools that are quality minded believe that there is always room for more improvement that better meets their customers' expectations (Beavis, 1995; Goetsch & Davis, 1995). Continuous improvement implies appropriate training to equip staff with the required knowledge and skills for the implementation of a particular approach.

The Importance of Training

To inculcate IE, it is important to provide suitable training programmes. One principal described her school's way of training in these words,

We started with [IE consultant] and brought her back for a refreshment course. She reinforced it and the next year we plan to take it on ourselves, I mean the workshop. You have to give invitations in small doses. They [teachers] can otherwise be overwhelmed ... We also have periodic meetings one-on-one ... We also got sponsors for the Atlanta Conference.

A teacher elaborated on this comment,

A one-time shot is not enough. You need a mentoring programme and a person who is committed to help and support us [teachers]. This is especially true for isolated cases of uninviting behaviour ... Being inviting is intentional. It doesn't always come naturally.

A few participants referred to the importance of conducting training in a venue away from school to inculcate IE. The IE consultant said,

From my experience, I learned that one of the best ways to move a group of teachers from the awareness and understanding levels to the application and adoption levels to get all staff on board is to have a retreat dedicated to IE. Much can be accomplished where staff meets away from school... It will take an effort on their part, but it's worth it ... It can speed up the process by one year, a three-day retreat. Get people in the retreat where they are away from usual worries and chores.

The idea of having a retreat away from school was supported by a teacher. She also elaborated on when, how, and by whom such programmes should be presented,

You have to make professional development appealing. I went to a retreat ... I don't want to catch up work once I get back to school ... I love a hands-on workshops. I don't like to be lectured to, I want to participate ... I would like to have someone who is not on the staff who has a lot of experience, who doesn't have attachments to the staff, who is not biased. It should be a venue away from the school.

Another principal was more explicit about the timing of IE programmes and elaborated on the inviting atmosphere of such programmes.

At the beginning of school or in summer teachers are more relaxed to implement IE. If individuals' minds are too overloaded it won't work... For the workshop have food, feed the body and soul, we all like to eat ... Also make it aesthetically pleasant to everyone ... Keep it within two hours.

One assistant principal disagreed with this view, "We feel comfortable at school to be trained by people in our own building. We feel more comfortable to ask questions."

The IE consultant referred to various strategies for IE training. “First I think they should read the fastback [a publication] of IE. They [the staff] also need to see the video journal of education on IE.” The importance of a video on IE and visits to schools that have successfully implemented IE was also supported by a teacher,

One thing you need is a video of IE showing how it’s working. You should make visits to schools that are working. This is the first thing. You have to show that it is working. If an outsider comes in, they could say it won’t work. You can talk, talk, talk, but until they see it, it won’t work.

All professions require a continuous development of knowledge and skills, and teaching is no exception (Sparks & Richardson, 1997; Somers & Sikorova, 2002; Vincent & Ross, 2001). It is also unanimously recognised that a teacher’s professional development does not end the initial pre-service training (Ho-Ming & Ping-Yan, 1999; Somers & Sikorova, 2002). The knowledge and skills of staff members in schools over time tend to deteriorate, while new developments in educational thinking make their teaching skills outdated or inefficient (Campbell, 1997). Moreover, teachers will not change their teaching practice unless they learn new ways to teach (Sparks & Richardson, 1997; Wilms, 2003).

It is obvious from the responses that the views of participants differ on where, when, how, and by whom programmes should be implemented. Literature also reveals different perspectives. Trent (1997) and Sachs (1999) recommend that staff go to another setting for a few days, away from the school’s day-to-day routine. Burke (1997) and Ribisch (1999), however, believe that professional development cannot be conducted in the same type of environment for all teachers. This implies that schools have to select programmes for IE that suit them best.

The necessity of training lies at the heart of QM (Swift et al., 1998; Detert et al., 2000). The implementation of QM usually begins with awareness training of role players which is viewed as an organised development exercise designed to improve team members’ knowledge of and skills for performing various functions and activities of QM (Lewis 1993).

Conclusion

It is clear from the findings that the schools agreed upon the major aspects required for the effective implementation of IE, the key role of leadership, a focus on the customer, the necessity of teacher collaboration and empowerment, continuous improvement and the obligation of training. These aspects are also regarded as essential principles of QM.

The key role of leadership describes principals as visionaries who guide the school community in its continuous development towards being inviting. Although it is accepted that leadership is the key to any school improvement, little change is possible without the active contribution of teachers. Their influence on students as primary customers may have a crucial influence on quality learning. One of the most important things that professionals can do in inviting schools is to work collaboratively as a team of empowered professionals. Although the study revealed sound QM practices in applying IE assumptions in schools, the necessity of continuous improvement by means of constant training was also indicated in the study.

Implementing IE encompasses a long and arduous process which may also be difficult to sustain. These schools prove that implementing the paradigm has taken a long time and that the journey is not over yet. Schools considering a process of school improvement through IE should realise that this approach is not designed to give fast fixes to issues in education. However, it does have the potential to bring about tremendous change in the quality of schools. IE provides an opportunity for people to work together and reconfigure education and learning.

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