Article

Factors Influencing the Strategic Development of General Secondary Schools

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Abstract: Meeting the educational needs of society is contingent upon effectively organizing the educational process in alignment with both current and future demands within the management of educational institutions. Strategic management plays a crucial role in facilitating the introduction of innovations and implementing necessary changes while considering these factors. This study explores the formulation of a management strategy aimed at the development of educational institutions, taking into account contemporary needs as well as the various factors that influence its execution, including their positive and negative impacts. The strategy for managing general education institutions focuses on addressing identified educational needs. This involves establishing priority directions that enhance the quality of education and implementing necessary changes within the institution aligned with the goals and objectives that foster these directions. Such changes are influenced by various external and internal factors, including students, parents and their representatives, teachers, and the management team. While some stakeholders support these changes, recognizing their significance, others may resist due to the challenges and inconveniences that arise during the transition.

1. Introduction

Management strategy has emerged as a critical requirement of the 21st century, aimed at alleviating the complexities confronting educational systems globally. Its purpose is to facilitate effective change management with minimal disruption.

Given the uncertainty of the future, characterized by unpredictability, there is a pressing need for strategic activity planning. This planning should not rely on a fixed, externally imposed set of goals; rather, it should focus on establishing consensus around a series of short-term objectives derived from shared values (Bell, 1999).

In the modern era, education and academic practices have faced significant and extensive technological advances. We are witnessing that fields such as the development of artificial intelligence and its impact on education (Tuomi, 2018), the generative model of ChatGPT (Hu, 2023) are becoming a part of social life. But today's world population seems to be united by digital technologies, but they live apart from each other as different societies with their own ideologies and values. In such a situation, it will be necessary to develop successful strategies for effective management of educational systems.

2. Materials and Methods

As globalization and the rapid advancement of technology continue to reshape civic spaces and labor markets, education systems have increasingly diverged from the evolving demands of global economies and societies (World Economic Forum, 2020). Amid the decline of numerous professions and the emergence of new ones, alongside significant demographic shifts, general secondary education institutions hold a critical responsibility in equipping citizens and the workforce for a globalized future. Consequently, it is imperative for schools to adapt to current and forthcoming changes, ensuring that students are better prepared to be resilient and competitive in the evolving landscape (Liang, 2024).

Strong competition necessitates a collaborative approach to strategic activities, which involves assessing the environment, formulating a comprehensive set of strategic plans, and executing these plans effectively (Sammut-Bonnici, 2015). In today's context, it is imperative to identify key factors and challenges influencing the strategic development of educational institutions, addressing these issues through a scientific methodology.

The absence of comprehensive research in this area hinders the strategic development of schools amidst the rapid shifts in global perspectives and the acceleration of technological advancement (Lu, 2024). This study identifies the factors influencing the strategic development of schools through the administration of questionnaires, individual interviews, and observations of the activities conducted by principals of comprehensive schools.

3. Results

A. Schleicher (2022) posits that strategy is essential for effective leadership and serves as a means to achieve long-term objectives. When analyzing the PISA results, it becomes evident that leaders in high-performing educational systems successfully persuaded their citizens to invest in education as a forward-looking priority, rather than allocating resources to short-term goals. Moreover, they emphasized the importance of prioritizing quality over quantity in the workforce. This strategic approach involves meticulous planning of daily, weekly, and monthly actions for the years ahead.

Strategy is often employed alongside terms such as innovation, change, and reform, forming a cohesive conceptual framework centered on purpose. Reforms are implemented to address crises within the educational system or specific institutions, as well as to facilitate adaptation to external changes affecting education. Such reforms necessitate both changes and innovations. To effectively manage this process, leaders must utilize strategic approaches (Schilling, 2024).

Ioana Marin and Andreea Marin-Pantelescu (2020) underscore the importance of implementing educational management strategies to create a high-quality, appealing, and competitive education system that responds effectively to labor market demands. Strategic management within schools involves planning and forecasting changes, with a focus on the implications of decision-making and management practices. N. Bloom (2014) highlights that while a strong correlation exists between effective management and enhanced educational outcomes, the primary distinction lies in the school manager and the specific management strategies they employ.

To enhance the quality and efficiency of education, it is imperative to adopt innovative educational tools and experiences. As noted by Safström and Månsson (2022), the education sector faces mounting pressures from market demands, necessitating new pedagogical approaches. In light of this, there is a pressing need to cultivate an educational movement aimed at innovating and expanding educational offerings, addressing underlying challenges, and fostering greater involvement among all stakeholders within the educational community (Rikkerink, 2016).

To foster innovation in general secondary schools, it is imperative for each institution to develop its own strategic approach. Although we are still progressing

toward an educational framework that adequately addresses the demands of contemporary society, incremental yet consistent efforts are being made to revise educational content and implement curricular changes. Significant transformations are urgently required within our current educational paradigm (Valdés Sánchez & Gutiérrez-Esteban, 2018). However, for these enhancements to take effect, a comprehensive overhaul of the educational system is necessary, aimed at cultivating an innovative school culture. As Bas (2014) advocates, this strategy should be grounded in pragmatism and contextualization, thereby providing a sustainable, holistic vision capable of facilitating strategic action.

In the formulation of a long-term, analysis-driven management strategy for the implementation of the educational concept in general secondary schools, the role of participants is crucial. Zhang and Zhou (2015) highlight the importance of innovation agents in shaping this strategy, referring to these participants as agents. These agents can be categorized into various types; specifically, they may be classified as external or internal agents based on their relationship with the educational institution (Tann, 2021).

Internal agents can be defined as all people in the center of education, such as students, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel (Adu et al., 2014). In the same line, it can be said that external agents, although they perform some function in the school, are related to it from the outside. For example, parents or their substitutes, consulting experts and educational management bodies, as well as people or institutions that are part of the school environment, but maintain some relationship with it, can be called external agents. (Lubienski et al., 2022). Based on this classification, it is possible to identify external and internal agents that facilitate or hinder the process of developing an effective management strategy (Figure 1).
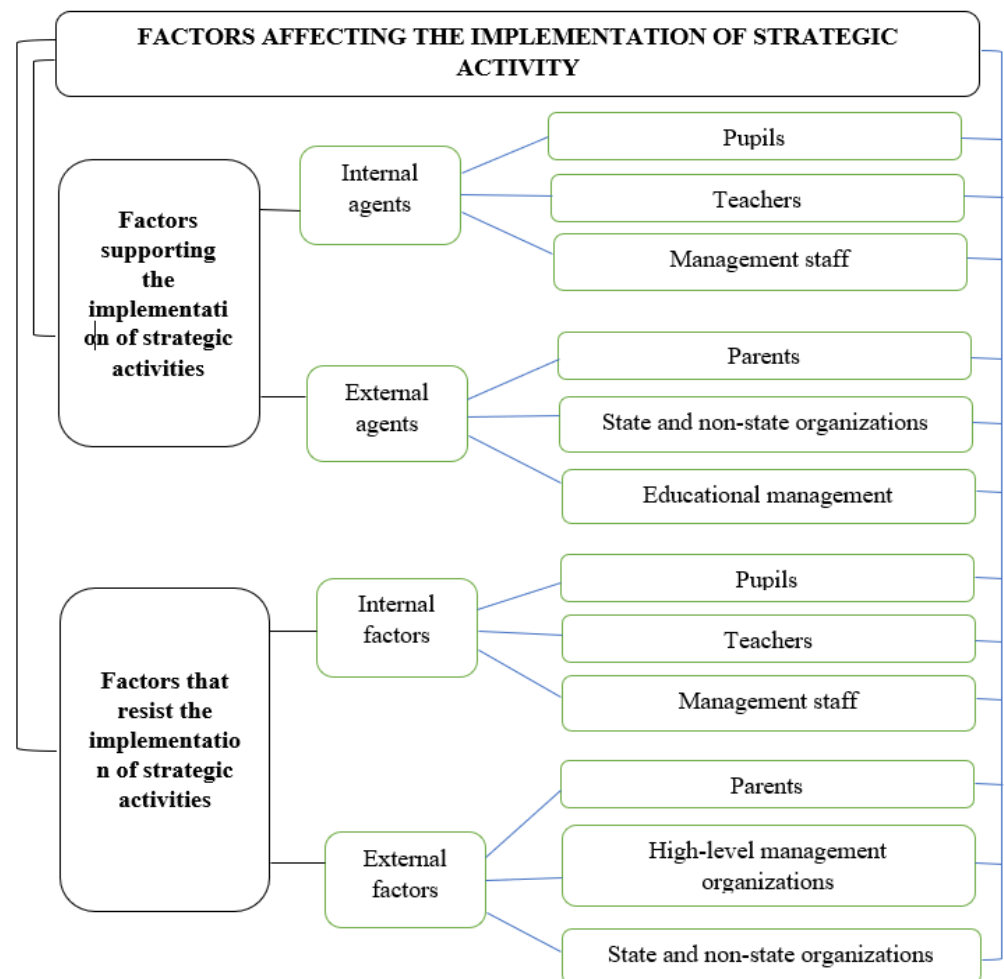

Figure 1. Factors affecting the implementation of strategic activities

4. Discussion

Factors that support the strategic development of the school are people or elements that support the development of the strategy and its implementation, support educational innovation, feel the changes in society and understand the essence of reforms. We have combined them under the names of internal and external agents mentioned above.

The following can be specified as internal agents:
1) Teachers are pedagogic staff who are able to implement innovations in the school, mastering the elements that make up the didactic activity of the class.
2) Pupils are a group of learners who help the implementation of innovations and reflect the results of changes in themselves. Today, it is appropriate to accept them as a factor affecting changes by involving them in the implementation of changes in the educational process, instead of seeing them as simple receivers of the educational process. Then they turn from simple receivers of knowledge into builders of their own knowledge.
3) Organizational culture with characteristics such as work environment, employee trust, motivation, communication, mutual understanding supports changes and innovations.
4) Leadership Teams are strong management teams that are critical to the success of educational change and innovation. It is a force capable of helping all agents do their best, enabling innovation through planning, motivation, action, and evaluation.

Contributing factors related to external agents include:
1) The main factor for the success of parents or natural and legal persons replacing them is the understanding of the essence of reforms in the educational system, the changes implemented in schools, and the introduced innovations. Because they drive innovation processes by supporting, benevolent, trusting, and motivating internal agents.
2) State and non-state organizations support changes in schools materially and morally, protect against various external threats, help to overcome obstacles. This puts them in the category of external support agents.
3) Educational management is a science or field that studies and teaches the secrets and rules of effective management of educational institutions. Educational management provides scientific support for strategies to be implemented by school management. It shows the ways to anticipate the problems of the educational institution and eliminate them. It teaches how to identify the causes of resistance factors and how to eliminate them. It helps managers to improve their management skills and understand the benefits of changes and innovations.

The factors that prevent the implementation of the strategy in general education institutions are the same agents described above, and when they cannot accept, understand or understand the content of innovations and changes, they go to the path of opposition and inaction.

It is also essential to categorize the internal and external factors that hinder progress. Internal factors include:
1) The non-acceptance of proposals for changes among students creates an additional challenge for teachers trying to implement these innovations. In this case, students' fear and uncertainty hinder the development of innovative processes in education.
2) There are several factors that limit teachers' efforts to introduce innovations among students. While they may accept innovations as supplementary activities, they often shift to a position of resistance and inaction due to the inconveniences they face in the process of implementing changes in education.

3) Decisions made by the management team and failure to create a healthy collaborative environment prevent the implementation of innovative practices defined in the strategy in the teaching team.

The following factors can be identified as external impediments:

1) The existence of differences between their previous educational experience and the current educational practice in which their children participate is the reason for the emergence of barriers to innovation by parents or their substitute natural and legal entities. This creates distrust and resistance to changes in education.

2) The lack of support from high-ranking state bodies in the management of the educational system creates great difficulties in the implementation of innovations. In this case, redundancies and tasks whose results have not been analyzed in advance, formality and, in short, bureaucracy are the hindering factors. Too often, an overabundance of innovative initiatives leads to teacher and management teams becoming oversaturated with innovation and change (Theodoropoulos, N., & Kiprianos, P., 2020).

3) State and non-state organizations, especially local government agencies, do not support the changes and do not pay serious attention to the changes implemented in general education schools.

Therefore, the fact that heads of general education institutions take these factors into account when developing a management strategy and implementing it serves to increase the effectiveness of management activities.

5. Conclusion

When considering that the primary role of general education institutions is to ensure quality through the effective organization of the educational process, it becomes evident that the achievement of the goals and objectives outlined in the management strategy will significantly impact not only the students but also their parents or guardians. This endeavor is intrinsically linked to the individuals and legal entities involved, including educators and the management team.

Furthermore, given that state general education institutions operate as higher organizations overseeing educational management and are subordinate to local government authorities, it is essential to analyze their approach to education. This includes examining the strategies they implement and their relationships with other non-governmental organizations.

To effectively devise and implement a management strategy for educational institutions, leaders must possess strong leadership and management skills, as well as cultivated human qualities that align with core values. In this context, it is essential to apply the principles of educational management to leadership practices grounded in scientific methodology.

Consequently, the strategic development of educational institutions is a process that is intricately linked to the examination of influencing factors and their effective management.

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