

The Educational Project, an Instrument of Autonomy, Participation and Collaboration

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Abstract: *In this article, we sermon about the project culture in general and particularly about the educational project of the school. We want people, groups of people and especially schools to be intelligent organizations integrated in such intelligent entities. Organizational intelligence defines it as the ability to grasp the problem and mobilize resources for its solution. It is therefore, in spite of the difficulties and problems present, the capacity to propel oneself (throw oneself well before) into the future. We want schools to be smart organizations and we provide the tools for that.*

Keywords: Education, School

1. Introduction

According to ViviKoffi et al. (1998 pp. 5-7), the major concern of 21st century organizations is to achieve maximum productivity with a minimum of resources, their major challenges are: rationalization, reengineering and reallocationStaff.

At the level of the schools, as an organization, the challenge would be as follows: "how to conceive, organize, plan, and run a school that would be efficient and up to the requirements of the 21st century? The authors converge: this school should only be one where the actors (students, teachers, parents, educational assistants, and other stakeholders) think, learn, and think together about improving student learning.

This implies going beyond the current school model, the school of the elite, directed from top to bottom, without participation, limiting access to new ideas only to professionals; a school of isolation, which allows incompetence to settle and persist; a school that advocates only sacrifice and duty as unique values, not tolerating any wave before the decisions taken by the authorities, thus advocating passivity and canonizing the pyramidal, hierarchical organization of society. This school only trains in planning, organization ("already existing" resources), direction and control; a school that only strengthens authoritarianism, the fragmentation of tasks. Should we not move to a school where we will work in collegiality, where the vision and the mission will be shared; a school whose only aim would be the educational success of students. A school that accepts and teaches the sharing of power, responsibility among members (the determinants of improvement and the effectiveness of the school). In this new school, the tasks of the management would not be limited to day-to-day management, but would go as far as to develop among teachers and all members of the school community, the skills necessary to participate effectively in the management of the school establishment. In these schools, the accountability, the performance of the accounts will be required at all levels. In these schools, one would tolerate the challenge of authority and the claim would be accepted. It would be a school of individuals, of

consultation; we would consent to the sharing of authority, participation, collective reflection. Errors will not be perceived as weaknesses of the organization but will be recognized as a springboard for improvement. And therefore, in this school, members of the school community will be active.

Not to mention that the intelligence of the organization is the result of the contribution of each of its members, in a common vision. It is based on a dialogue of all actors and focuses on improving the learning of all. We dream of a renewed school system whose basic unit would be a smart school, one that thinks, who learns and acts in and with all of its components.

Let's return to the field, observe the school that is before our eyes, and analyze it so that its gaps serve as a springboard for drawing the school of our dreams.

2. Educational project as an idea that encompasses the concept of project and education

2.1 The concept of project

Since the educational project claims to create a future close to construction, this meaning has been theorized by various authors such as Pacheco and Morgado (2002: 11), who speak of the project as a set of intentions that pretend to give meaning and anticipate the action. In the same vein, Carvalho and Diogo (2004, p.8) tell us about it as a means by which man enters into the game of history, gives a reference to these actions, projects and projects himself into an anticipated future. In the same framework of project definition, Barbier (1993, p.22) presents it as a series of intentions between reality and what is desired, which tends to reduce the gap, on the one hand, between values and speech, and on the other acts.

2.2 The concept of educational project

Following these authors, the educational project appears to us as a presupposition of an evolving action, the result of an intention of satisfaction of a real necessity. According to

Carvalho (1992: 144), projects are "in themselves" organized bodies of woven propositions of intrinsically harmonic concepts, generators of (tentative) consensus and behavioral coaches.

In this case, we still defend the existence of a strong connection between the notion of education and the notion of project. "Educcere" is equivalent to pulling from the outside and "projccere" even throwing forward. This connection makes the term educational project almost redundant (Carvalho, Adalberto, 1992).

The concept of education has a broader understanding than simply optimizing the teaching / learning process. This definition can be found in the one presented by Costa (1996, p.5), for whom the educational project is an organizational instrument for the expression of the collective will of the school-educational community, meaning useful to the participation and corporatization of the autonomy of the school-community.

2.3 The educational project as a result of a decentralization policy

It is fundamental to analyze the assumptions underlying decentralization policies, with special attention to the concepts of autonomy, participation, collaboration and the educational community.

Educational projects, which are the fruit of the decentralization of the education system, are enacted by laws and enjoy a large margin of autonomy. This is what Ball (1994, p.25) asserts, when he says: "School organizations fit within the framework of the micro-politics model, often seen as the dark side of organizational life." There is no need to recall here that the political dimension of organizations, by its aspects of the struggle for power, forces with anarchic, chaotic tendencies ..., is seen in the study of organizations as shadow and not the light of these (the organizations).

It is in this field of action that the key concepts are: power, diversity of ends, ideological dispute, conflict, interest, political activity and control.

The actions of teachers and other actors in the educational community (the educational project's discussion area) can be studied in the context of macros and micro-politics (Ball, stepen, 1994), (Pacheco, Jos, 2002).

In terms of political macros, we question the aspects of the foundation and organization of powers not only expressed in official documents, but also in moments of production of these texts. In this sense, we recognize the central role of the central administration, especially in what is verified by the production of a body of legislation with the aim of regulating educational policies.

In terms of micro-politics, we look at the place of local actors, namely in organizational spaces, knowing that schools are places that are not always under total control of the central administration. It is in this sense that one admits the specification and even the perfection of the policies;

since the state cannot control everything and the praxis of decisions is complex and unstable.

It is within this political framework that the educational project is a training tool developed by the educational community, serving as a bridge between normative and formal regulation and informal normative regulation. To say, between what the Ministry of Education decides and what the school thinks is feasible according to its possibilities. In this case, faced with the decisions that come from above, the school is placed in an interpretative, advocacy and non-deterministic perspective (Elmore, Richard and Sykes, Gary, 1992) but, it also opens, for itself, a space of reconstruction of values, experiences, an interval of realization, according to its own interests, of the objectives that it sets itself.

2.4 The educational project, an instrument of autonomy, participation and collaboration

In this framework of valorization of the political micros, one associates the concept of autonomy, participation, collaboration and educational community. This association is clearly found in Costa (2004 pp. 85-114). The latter, although he deplores the even stronger dependence of schools with external powers, advocates a certain exercise of autonomy on the part of the actors in education. It insinuates, however, that the latter always take into account the participation of several actors in the educational process (educational community) so that this autonomy does not mean, in any case, the separation but its opposite: an approximation of the school to those who attend it, to its beneficiaries and to the entities to which it belongs. Thus, the whole process of construction of the educational project becomes an exercise of participation that involves motivation and mobilization of all stakeholders through dialogue and sharing.

According to Madeira (1995: 187), autonomy in its true sense when the school field (like a magnetic field) is capable of generating sufficient energy to trigger the process of organizational and social change: at local, regional and why not national and continental. Thus we can affirm that the educational project is a fundamental document for the organization and channeling of the efforts and intentions of the educational community in order to contextualize and optimize the process of the transmission and acquisition of the material. For Barroso (2004: 58) school autonomy may have a less functional and more utopian meaning. We speak here in terms of the concept of "real utopia": the creative image of the future. This image is designed to solve a present problem but whose realization depends on an optimistic view of society and its ability to activate change.

Going further, Barroso (2004) shows that a utopian vision of school autonomy transcends the simple administrative and normative alteration of school management skills and methods. Strengthening the school's autonomy should not be defined in isolation, he tells us. It still requires, on the one hand, an increase in the regulation of the state and its administration with a view to creating and strengthening a set of skills and means that the basic management bodies must possess in order to decide on matters of their competence. The other side of the retrocession medal of

autonomy is that: the state must create conditions so that the autonomies, transferred to the entities, are built. Therefore, empowerment should not be a total secession or imposition on the part of the central government. On the contrary, even if it is the own schools that have to express their desire to attain a high status of autonomy; the State must keep its prerogatives to plan and coordinate. We will not forget that autonomy is an investment and that it learns. It is necessary to stimulate and cultivate pedagogy of autonomy that must go from the central administration to the small components.

Carvalho and Diogo (2001) argue that the educational project could play several roles for the educational communities in that it allows the transition from the ideal to the action, assuming itself as organizer of diversity and constructor of spaces autonomy, generator of decentralization, and catalyst for democracy and communication. It requires competence and promotes teamwork.

Feel the need for a project, initiate a process that will lead to its development, succeed in the involvement of the elements of the organization, make it executable by operationalizing it, analyze its implementation and reformulate it, making it suitable to the school as a dynamic community, are not just the stages of a process but the determination to fully assume the space of autonomy.

The elaboration of the educational project also becomes a moment of collecting contributions on what should be, conceptually education and school: the referential values, the ends, the strategies to be used and the actions to carry out.

2.5 The educational project, a practice without a definitive recipe

The space of action being ample, each school must use it according to its conditions: human, social, cultural and even economic. The great recipe is that the educational project must not be developed to answer an imposition but, its *raison d'être* must be fruit of a will to share its social space, to think itself like public service of education and to organize itself to improve its services to the community that the school integrates (Formosinho, João and Machado, Joaquim, 2000 pp. 117-138). This is why factors such as negotiation, decision-making, participation, must be taken as fundamental elements that simultaneously contribute to the quality of the project to ensure its realization.

Practices such as: its elaboration by a small group that presents it only to the teachers for its approval (Silva, Maria, 1994 pp. 16-28), its burial in the drawers, the copied and adapted projects without minimally corresponding to a deep reflection on the school and its specificity, the undefined principles, orientations and values of the school that make the project an accumulation of activities without finality or strategies ..., there are practices to avoid. (Samento, Manuel, 1993, p 29).

However, practices such as: the methodology from the diagnosis of the school situation to pose as a problem, the identification of problems leading the school community to inventory all the possible solutions, these solutions resulting

from the criteria that take into account the concept of education defended by the community (Carvalho, Angelina and Diogo, Fernando, 2001), the link between the work of diagnosis and that of evaluation ..., are fundamental and unavoidable practices, which prove a great deal openness, a high level of critical thinking or better, a great capacity for self-criticism. They are also essential aspects that must be considered for the school to approach its community. (1995 pp.167-190).

Thus the educational project will become a guiding instrument of educational action in a particular social context. This document, with the participation of the educational community, articulates the conception and the operationalization of the strategies of the development of a school. The educational project thus becomes a vital piece for the construction of the autonomy of the school and its participative construction refers to the notion of a school open to the community, which before a pluralistic democratic ideal promotes the educational success of the students. (Carvalho, Angelina and Diogo, Fernando, 2001).

Alongside the Educational Project, it is important to speak about operational planning documents that function as fundamental instruments for the realization of the educational project. This is the case of the curricular project of the school, where all the pedagogical and non-pedagogical activities to be developed during the school year are planned. Another instrument, which is in concomitance with the educational project, is the rules of internal order. This document should serve as a guide for relationships between individuals and even between groups. It must contain the rights and duties of the actors, the operating standards of services and standards of cohabitation (Rocha, 1996). It should also be noted the curricular project of the class, where are planned and programmed, by the professor, practices that will affect the education of his student promotion. (Carvalho, Angelina and Diogo, Fernando, 2001).

Of all this, Lima (2003) warns us that the establishment of a project culture in a school has to face the individualistic culture in vogue and, in Africa, there is a question of fighting against the culture of culture fatalism that does not see the problems and when we see them, we do not know how to ask them in terms of solvable questions. We expect the manna to fall from the sky, from the hierarchy. If not, we conform to reality: Culture we call "pakavilism", the Swahili word: paka vile: "it's like that". How many times during radio or television broadcasts, the micro walker, do not we expect this expression: "Bakubwabwatwangelilie¹ ..." Thus, we do not know how to mobilize resources to solve problems, and when we should refer them to the hierarchy, according to the principle of subsidiarity, we would pass only those who can find a solution only at a higher level after even a report on the efforts of attempt of solution on the part of the lower level. It's starting to seem out of our culture.

¹Swahili: que les grands (les autorités, la hiérarchie) puisse y jeter un coup d'œil, pour nous. Pour dire, qu'ils puissent résoudre ce problème.

2.6 How to justify our option for the school's educational project?

We rely on organizational analysis of successful institutions. Studies by T. Peters and R. Waterman reveal that successful organizations do not just have a structure, a staff, a management style, a strategy (s), personal management procedures and resources) and a culture (the shared values) but also, they have a systemic approach to problem solving and production. They know their mission in the environment where they are. They know, as a body, their purpose, the actors, the resources, the decision-making mechanism and they have the result indicators. Before acting, successful organizations carry out strategic analysis (strategic diagnosis, development plan and action plan). Their management of human resources is characterized by the training and knowledge of everyone, the organization chart, functions and reports of subordination. Special attention is paid to management style and communication. These organizations also opt for the total quality approach, which favors customers and users. They focus their being and act on the expectations of users in relation to the organization and draw up a list of indicators of the achievement of these expectations for the evaluation of results.

According to the study made by Freitas and Moura, there is a great acceptance of the practice of project administration even in education, (Freitas, et al., 2008). But the inconsistency is due to the lack of mastery of this technique, which in turn is the result of a lack of study that defines its epistemology and its axiology. So, there is little knowledge about this practice. Practice which, however, begins to impose itself as one of the methods of servicing an administration that wants to be democratic. And when it is used, project administration ends up being a practice without sufficient knowledge of which the actors are less prepared and, consequently, one derives little profit from it at the risk of causing a degradation of its practice for lack of a conceptual foundation.

Another reason why opt for project-based school administration is that it creates synergy, a phenomenon that causes many factors to work together and create a global effect. The dynamism of project-based management brings forces together and continually collaborates to achieve the desired results. Separate groups or individuals support each other in solving problems and difficulties in order to move forward more quickly and efficiently. However, this requires a good atmosphere within the organization to break the wall of pride and competition.

Contextualization is also one of the reasons why we opt for school administration by project. As we inform the Rhône-

Alpes Network (2017), it is a question of knowing how to take into account a project by studying all the possibilities of its implementation while passing by the identification, the planning, the realization and the evaluation said project. School empowerment, therefore, does not mean breaking relationships with the educational hierarchy, or with other sectors of society, or even with other local schools, but rather ensuring unity and the junction, to ensure the authenticity, to the specificity of a school inserted in a clean environment.

This brings us back to practice that focuses on the recipients, taking into account the beneficiaries of the product, their expectations regarding the services, asking themselves the major questions of type: will they be satisfied or not? What are their needs? On the other side, the objectification of the results. The dynamism of the project is towards the aim. The project, printed, is a setting on paper of the product of the thoughts.

Since we want the school to be an effective and efficient organization, for the reasons mentioned above and for many others, we opt for the school to be organized around an educational project that unites and directs it. His actions, let's take a look at the essential content that an educational project of the school must contain.

2.7 Suggestive, the essential content of an educational project

Using the figure below, we give the strategic process of school management by project.

From this figure we retain that for a long-term program, the school manager gives priority to the identification of the mission, vision, objectives and strategies. Then, especially with the management team, with whom he takes care to discuss the first elements, they proceed to swot analysis of the institution and its environment. The management team, along with the middle managers, indicates the results, formulate the strategies and identify the activities. The operational base, guided by the middle managers and under the supervision of the management team, studies how to implement the strategies and plan the activities. Together, the indicators are set for further evaluation of the results. The hiatuses found during the evaluation as well as the new ones are the starting point for a new process.

From this process, we set the elements of an Educational Project that we present in the table above.

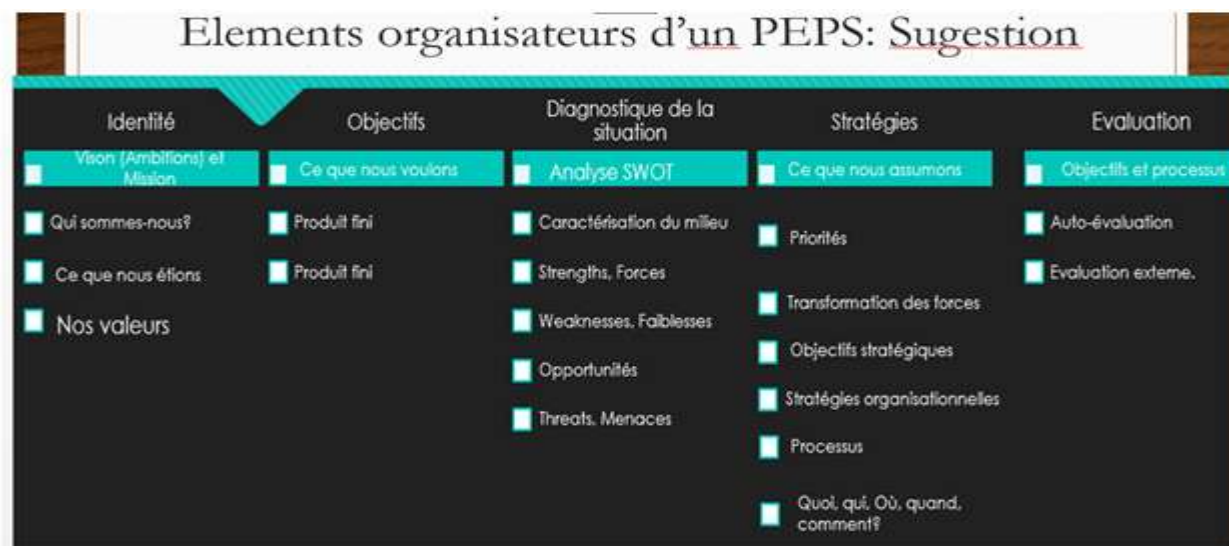
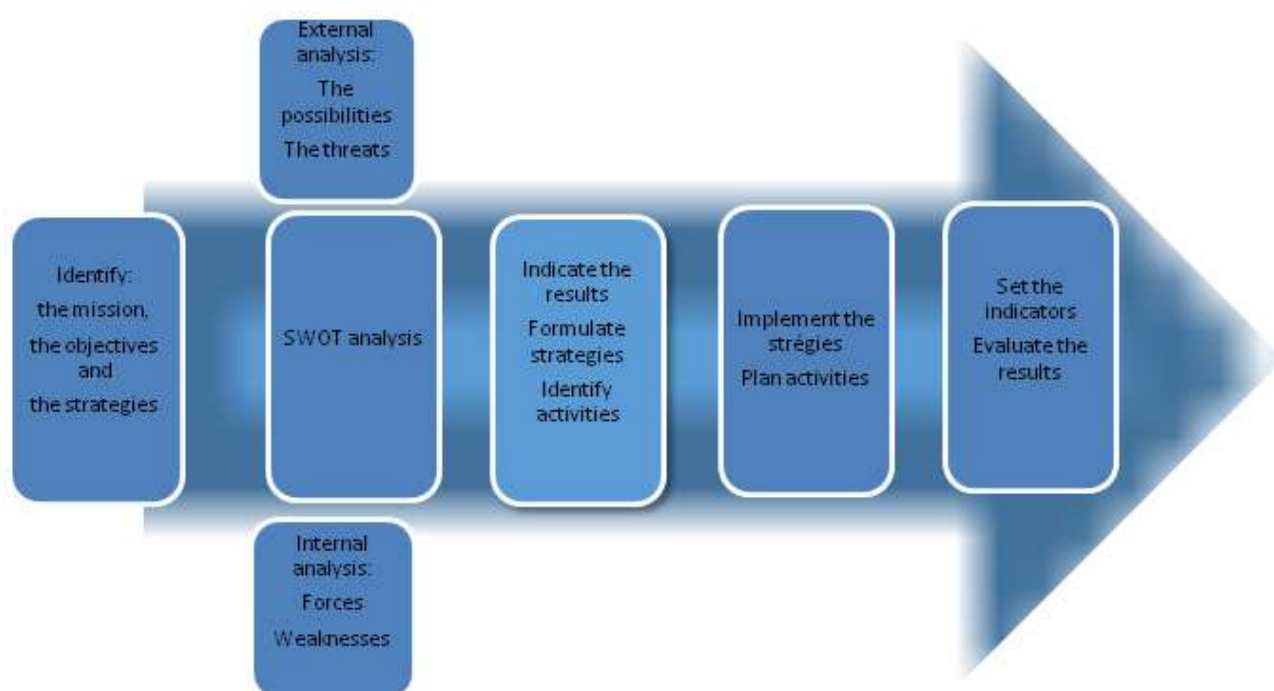


Figure 1: Elements of a P.E.



For the elaboration of the Educational Project, we first recommend the determination of the identity of the educational institution. In this part we will clearly highlight the vision, ambitions and mission of the school. We will say roughly what the institution is, its history and its values.

In the second part, we will point the objectives, which are intended. We will define the finished product of the organization, the profile of the man we want to form, the result.

The third part, which is analytical, always according to the objectives, we will characterize the environment where the school is located and then, in a more systematic way, we will analyze the institution and its environment using the SWOT analysis.

The fourth part, which will focus on strategies, set priorities, study, how, depending on the objectives, transform weaknesses, opportunities, threats in force or simply, how to avoid threats. The organizational strategy, will resume the

organization chart and operational plan will answer the questions what, who, when how..

The last part that of evaluation, will set deadlines and indicators. It will be remembered that evaluations (internal or external) will only focus on objectives, their achievement and strategies. If not, it is an overflow that might not do well to the institution.

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