

The Full Service School

Introduction

The changing nature of schooling within Western Australia, Australia and the world has ensured that schools as institutions have adapted and changed to meet the growing needs of society. One such change is the implementation of Full Service Schools.

Thesis

This report will seek to outline, from analysis of literature, the role of schools in working with parents and the wider community in the 'enterprise' of education and life-long learning. Full Service schooling will be examined to determine school involvement in forming greater links with the community and supporting student learning through partnership with the community, parents and students.

Organisation

This report will firstly seek to examine the characteristics and development of the Full Service School. This examination will include a brief discussion of the failure of the 'community' schooling movement. Secondly Thompson's 5 criteria will be utilised to indicate ways of creating and identifying the Full Service School. Following on is an analysis of the implications of Full Service School's development of Thompson's criteria and the resultant contribution toward 'corporate' learning goals. Finally the report will summarily indicate the possible effects, positive and negative, of community involvement within schools and on the work of teachers.

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Context of Full Service Schooling

Students at school are whole people. Groundwater-Smith, Brennan, McFadden and Mitchell (2001, p. 263) state, "Students are whole people who cannot necessarily devote themselves to study when other areas of their lives are in disarray." As early as the 1970's the rise of community schools recognised that, "schools which work with communities offer stronger chance of making a difference educationally to students"(Groundwater-Smith, et al, p.263). The community schools movement shared with Full Service schooling a common ideal, "The idea that schools can be a centre for the development of community and also remain the logical site for linking services needed by students and families. (Groundwater-Smith, et al, p.263). Therefore in many respects the community school movement can be seen as a forerunner to Full Service Schooling.

Why the community schooling movement failed?

The economic rationalisation, "downsizing of funding to schools"(Groundwater-Smith, Brennan, McFadden & Mitchell, 2001, p. 255), of the 80's and a lack of central leadership played a key role in the downfall of the community school movement. Firstly people began to have less time and money, which resulted in the collapse of the schools infrastructure due to a lack of volunteers or funding for services. Groundwater-Smith, et al. states (2001, p. 256), "the cost of running such small, community-based schools seems prohibitive to many parents." Secondly the formation of strong community relationships and involvement ensured that many 'alternative' families chose these 'alternative' schools. The involvement of many like-minded parents in decision-making shifted the balance of power resulting in those with 'different' ideas being excluded from the schools. Finally community schools were treated as, "dumping grounds"(Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.255) for unwanted or difficult students. Forced to spend more time "working on intractable problems"(Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.255) community schools consequently "could not pursue their educational aims."(Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.255)

Why the Full Service School?

There are several reasons the need for Full Service Schools have arisen. Firstly, the problems of schools and community, particularly youth, “unemployment, poverty, ill health, and/or drug cultures” (Groundwater-Smith, Brennan, McFadden & Mitchell, 2001, p.264) are complex and cannot be addressed solely by the school. Traditional schools lack adequate, “expertise or resources” (Groundwater-Smith, et al. 2001, p.264) to properly solve these inter-linked social issues. Secondly, due to current “fiscal constraints on government funding” (Groundwater-Smith, et al. 2001, p.264) Full Service Schools provide an opportunity for “maximum use of whatever services are available.” (Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.264) Thirdly, because school attendance is compulsory, for young people, the school as an institution is already geographically everywhere. Thus “the school appears as a logical focus for coordinating the development and delivery of a wide range of services” (Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.264). Finally, Schools are recognised as apolitical, non-discriminatory and inclusive of all marginalised communities and individuals. For communities the Full Service Schools offers an established community centre wherein the awareness of youth and community problems can be cultivated and viable solutions developed.

Characteristics of a Full Service School

There are a variety of different characteristics of a Full Service School. Groundwater-Smith, Brennan, McFadden and Mitchell (2001, p.266) state, “There is no single model of a FSS”. Other terms that are used when discussing Full Service Schools include, “health promoting schools, healthy cities, integrated support services, co-located services” (Groundwater-Smith, et al. 2001 p.266). The Full Service School can have many identities. Pat Thompson (Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.272) has developed a set of criteria, “a checklist of questions to ask schools in moving to include other services.” This can be utilised to identify Full Service Schools.

- 1. Words:** Full Service Schools make the community aware of the, “additional service”(Groundwater-Smith, Brennan, McFadden and Mitchell, 2001, p.272). However, communication in all forms, within and outside, the school must be inclusive. Communication must not create ‘otherness’ (Groundwater-Smith, et al. 2001, p.272). Avoidance of labelling the school, clients and students as ‘special’ can help to achieve this. Communication within Full Service Schools always seeks to “recognize and respect difference, and to celebrate differences as a source of strength and vitality in the community.”(Kemmis & Lynch, 2004)
- 2. Confidentiality:** Full Service Schools are community places. However, Full Service Schools must ensure that confidentiality of ‘clients’ remains a top priority. Teachers ensure that privacy of the students, and families, are maintained within the school and between agencies. Issues of “invasion of privacy”(Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.273) are controlled with policies, both implicit and explicit, that serve the best interests of the ‘clients’ of the school. Full Service Schools, as an example, dealing with homeless students should provide services without, “infringing privacy or confidentiality, or involving anyone other than the students themselves.”(Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.268)
- 3. Support versus Control:** The Full Service School provides a range of services in supporting community problems. The issue for the school is ensuring that support is offered and honours ‘clients’ dignity rather than simply, “telling them what to do – control through advice.”(Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.273). Full Service schools encourage the development of skills, acknowledge ‘clients’ “can make choices and mistakes”(Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.273), do not criticise or “use disapproval, threats of withdrawal of support.” (Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.274). An example of this is the Kwinana Senior High School project, which seeks to “improve social/health service delivery for children/youth and their parents/caregivers in the Kwinana region”. (Butler, 2004). Moreover as Kemmis and Lynch (2004) state of the

aims of Full Service Schools, “to enable people to develop the means of personal and collective self expression, self realization and self determination.”

- 4. Getting off:** The benefits of Full Service Schooling transform the lives of students and community. Staff at Full Service schools should believe in the self-empowerment of ‘clients’ not simply, “dependant on people continuing to need us”(Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.273). Staff, both teaching and agency, avoid revelling in horror stories (Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.273) or harbouring misplaced feelings of wanting to take ‘clients’ home as ‘pets’ (Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.273). As an example the Boston Excel collaborative initiative’s core belief, “involves creating leadership for change in an inclusive school enviroment.”(Children & Schools, 2004, p. 1)
- 5. Power:** The Full Service School empowers the community, staff and clients. Full Service Schools are sincere about this empowerment. Not working simply as a charity the Full Service School is interested, “in empowering, getting people to take charge of their own lives.”(Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.273). Different professions have different views of what empowerment means. Full Service Schools have structures of feedback that help to resolve potential differences. (Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.273) Moreover Full Service School’s have strong leadership, with a shared vision, “Vision is at the very core of leadership.”(Hybels, 2002, p.31). These consist of school administration working with “structured management committees”(Groundwater-Smith, et al p.273) that involve the agencies, teachers, community and recipients of services in decision-making. Full Service Schools are involved with “community programs and plan”. (Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.273). Full Service schools ensure “people have access and understand relevant information in order to take charge of their own situation – both individually and collectively.”(Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.273). These people include the teachers, students, agency staff and community involved within the school. Dryfoos (Phi Delta Kappan, 2002, p.393) states,

Families, young people, principles, teachers, youth workers, neighbourhood residents, college faculty members, college students and business people all work together to design and implement a plan for transforming the school into a child-centred institution

The many characteristics of a Full Service School vary but common ideals exist throughout the Full Service School movement. When questioning the integrity of a Full Service School Groundwater-Smith, Brennan, McFadden and Mitchell (2001, p.274) state schools must “question the extent to which our ethic of service is really serving the interests of those we espouse to serve.” There are many different models of Full Service Schools but the “underlying assumptions have certain features in common.”(Groundwater-Smith, et al. 2001, p.274). This assumption can be summed up as, “the interest in linking economic and social goals for both government and community action.” (Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.266) Simply put these are “local responses that fit local issues.”(Groundwater-Smith, et al p.266)

Corporate learning goals

Corporate learning involves the improvement of participation within education through accountability and partnership with the community and parents. Groundwater-Smith, Brennan, McFadden and Mitchell (2001, p.249) state,

The local school site could be the wellspring of ‘grassroots’ improvement of educational practise, where the development of a ‘learning organisation’ allows for horizontal and mutual accountability at the local level.

This reform has been in part due to the, “context where schooling budget is a large slice of public expenditure” (Groundwater-Smith, et al. 2001, p.249). Schools can be viewed as public institutions, which act on behalf of the public (Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.250). Effective schools exhibit characteristics that ‘add more value’ to the values that students bring with them. (Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.250) Finally Freitag (Journal of Instructional Psychology, 2000, p.172) states,

Schools can be, as they always have been, the vehicle that not only brings out the best academic potential in students, but also develops the best personal traits of integrity that will in turn produce a better society as a whole.”

How Full Service Schools might meet corporate learning goals.

- 1. Teacher-proof curriculum packages:** The availability of a number of curriculum packages gives teachers the capacity to “design curriculum to suit the interests and ability of their students”(Groundwater-Smith, Brennan, McFadden and Mitchell, 2001, p.252). Within a Full Service school this allows teachers to work together with agencies and the community tailoring students individual curriculum. This enables students to pursue training and education as relevant for their particular circumstances. Furthermore this serves to offer support, rather than control, allowing individuals to develop the skills or knowledge they require. Finally agencies and teachers working together can transform ‘clients’ lives utilising tailored curriculum and support services, within the school community.
- 2. Improved teacher qualifications:** Utilising “standards-based reforms” (Groundwater-Smith, Brennan, McFadden and Mitchell, 2001, p.252) effecting teacher courses, qualifications and what accounts for an “excellent teacher” (Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.252) ensures the Full Service School can recognise not only teachers, but also community and agency staff. Furthermore Full Service schools can support and empower teachers, students, agency staff and community members through formal development, and recognition, of knowledge and skills utilised within the school community.
- 3. Accountability, testing and assessment reforms:** Joint accountability, within Full Service Schools, serves to give greater capacity to teachers to teach, students to learn and the community to support the school in doing a better job. (Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.253) The reforms to accountability, testing and assessment are due to “the assumption that the way to organise change is through monitoring results”(Groundwater-Smith, Brennan, McFadden and Mitchell, 2001, p.253). The

development of better assessment allows the curriculum to change and thus improves student achievement. (Groundwater-Smith, et al. 2001, p.253). Within Full Service schools the involvement of many different agencies creates a myriad network of assessment forms. This cross-agency confidential sharing of information allows the school community, utilising assessment, to analyse, develop and support the needs of students and the community effectively. Within the Full Service School accountability is shared between the school, agencies and the community, all are empowered, responsible and support the development of the school as a community centre for learning and development.

4. School governance and management: Within the Full Service School the combination of outside agency and community support allows the school to “greater democracy or community participation in schooling”. (Groundwater-Smith, et al. 2001, p.254) Within the modern schooling environment there is more emphasis on “policies of devolution, in which schools take on more management responsibilities.”(Groundwater-Smith, Brennan, McFadden and Mitchell, 2001, p.253). Full Service Schools empower the teachers, community, agencies and students by providing opportunities for joint decision-making regarding school policies, management and administration. Full Service Schools encourage participation, through the use of inclusive communication, of all members of the community. Full Service Schools allow for the management, support and creation of ‘new practises’ with the teachers, community and agencies offering support and development within the school locale.

5. School-based curriculum development: Teachers within Full Service Schools work with agencies and the community to develop and create opportunities for students. The need to “develop quite different content, teaching methods and assessment in order to meet the needs of students.”(Groundwater-Smith, Brennan, McFadden and Mitchell, 2001 p.255) has meant that teachers “translate policy guidelines into

curriculum approaches and daily planning". (Groundwater-Smith, et al. 2001, p.255)

This provides greater support for individual student needs and allows development of skills and knowledge. Full Service Schools create opportunities for teachers and agency professionals to work, together with the community, in establishing programs that are successful and beneficial for students and families. As Dryfoos (Phi Delta Kappan, 2001, p.596) states, "community schools have access to the latest thinking about how to reorganize their academic approaches and improve outcomes for children."

- 6. Partnerships amongst teachers, students and parents:** Effective school based management "seems to promise that local decision-making will involve all concerned."(Groundwater-Smith, Brennan, McFadden and Mitchell, 2001 p.256) The collective management of the Full Service School provides opportunities for "real power sharing, and recognition of the different expertise brought to the table by all players."(Groundwater-Smith, et al. 2001,p.256). The involvement of both parents and the community allows teachers and agencies to access parental knowledge, "parents are expert about their own children". (Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.256) In turn parents and the community have access to the teachers, and agencies, professional knowledge, content and wider world. (Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.256) This support allows the empowerment of community, teachers and parents through the sharing of knowledge, resources and skills. Within the Full Service School parents are made to "feel their involvement is welcomed"(McInerney & McInerney, 2002, p.421). Full Service Schools provide a confidential, supportive and central site for the community and parents to utilise. Full Service Schools give students the power and support to develop individual skills and solve social problems. Full Service schools provide a central location for individuals to "focus on important personal and social problems". (Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.257) This supports the "development of

citizenship through action and reflection.”(Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.257) within both students and the community.

- 7. Documenting Schools:** Evaluation allows schools to develop a, “way for the school community to learn about itself.” (Groundwater-Smith, Brennan, McFadden and Mitchell, 2001, p.259). Utilising focused evaluation, with community involvement; schools can make sense of their context and specific practises. (Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.258) Full Service Schools empower and support individuals through confidential practises that use “evaluation as a tool to build a community that works together”(Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.259). Cooperation and support allow the community, agencies and teachers to “focus on improving the practise under investigation.”(Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.259) Full Service Schools provide an opportunity for the community, agencies and teaching professionals to work together toward a common vision ensuring “those who draw reflections or conclusions from evaluation are supported to make those conclusions informed and worthwhile.”(Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.259)

How could community involvement impinge on teachers work?

Heavy involvement of community can affect the work of teachers in several ways. Firstly “the involvement of teachers”(Groundwater-Smith, Brennan, McFadden and Mitchell, 2001, p.250) with many agency professionals allows a collaborative and collegial effort toward the solving the problems of students and community alike. This holistic approach is critical to effective schooling. However, a teacher’s central purpose is to teach, and success is measured by student’s progress in knowledge, skills and attitude. Other professionals, i.e. Health professionals, have differing ideals of what an empowered individual is. These differences can result in power-struggles and negative infighting within the school. Therefore Full Service Schools require, “purposeful leadership of staff”. (Groundwater-Smith, et al. 2001 p.250)

Secondly, effective teachers utilise accurate “record keeping”(Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.251) essential to maintaining an organised, focused and work centred educational environment. Full Service Schools can alleviate the pressure of record keeping, through shared responsibility with agencies. However, Full Service Schools also create issues of confidentiality, as Dryfoos (Phi Delta Kappan, 2002, p.398) states, “How much can a case manager reveal about a family or student to a school counsellor or teacher?”

Thirdly, Full Service Schooling encourages the community to view, and use, the school as central ‘community’ centre. For teachers this may mean that resources, i.e. classrooms and computers, are utilised after hours for community education. This can result in changing of classroom layouts or damage to equipment. Dryfoos (Phi Delta Kappan, 2002, p.398) states, “teacher’s do not like to share their classrooms, particularly if they find a mess in the morning or if their supplies have been touched.”

Fourthly, Full Service Schools offer agency support and community involvement in the development of educational practises and support networks. However, effective schools provide “maximum communication between teachers and pupils”(Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.251). Students involved at school solving social issues with community agencies are not engaging in knowledge with teachers. Furthermore Dryfoos (Phi Delta Kappan, 2002, p.398) states, “already overcrowded schools may have limited space available for family resource centres and health clinics”.

Fifthly, Full Service Schools offer greater “parental involvement”(Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.251) within the school environment, critical to effective schooling. An important aspect of effective teaching and schooling is the development of a “positive climate”(Groundwater-Smith, et al.p.251). Teachers and staff members must “believe that bringing outsiders into the school will make their jobs easier.”(Phi Delta Kappan, 2002, p.398) Moreover the community and agencies must share this belief, “outsiders who come into the school have to respect the teachers and must be willing to learn the culture of the school.”(Phi Delta Kappan, 2002, p.398). Conflicting values can create unnecessary tension between parties.

Finally Full Service Schools are structured to serve the 'whole' student, helping to resolve both social and academic problems. Effective teachers ensure a "work-centred environment" (Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.251) with "intellectually challenging teaching". (Groundwater-Smith, et al. p.251) Many teachers consider schools as places of teaching, learning and assessment. However, if improperly managed or organised the Full Service School can quickly degenerate into a simple community centre, running the risk of losing credibility as an educational institution and becoming labelled as an advanced community based welfare office, Centrelink with students!

There are many issues that schools must consider before moving to the Full Service School model. As Dryfoos (Phi Delta Kappan, 2002, p.398) states, "few school/community partnerships have achieved such a high level of collaboration." Strong leadership and effective planning and organisation are critical to the success of Full Service Schools. Schools must change to meet the growing needs of students, the community and society at large. Full Service Schooling offers a prospective model to meet these needs. As Peebles-Wilkins (Children & Schools, 2004, p.132) states,

School partnership initiatives produce student gains in academic achievement and non-academic development, increased school involvement of parents, improved school environments and community support, and better use of school faculties and greater community pride.

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