CHAPTER 12

NO SIMPLE FIXES FOR SCHOOLS IN CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES

Contextualization for Germany

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In recent years, interest in improving underperforming schools, schools with dysfunctional configurations, or schools in challenging circumstances has increased significantly. Research of failing schools has shifted to research on school turnaround. Reforms and initiatives were launched intensively in some countries. In many countries, however, the introduction of educational standards-based monitoring and quality management systems has made the differences in school quality obvious. Schools that do not meet expectations or perform worse in benchmarking are identified by these diagnostic approaches (e.g., in particular, through the external evaluation of school inspection). What interventions promote efficient and effective school improvement or school turnaround is moving to the front of academic and political discussion.

This topic is also increasingly on the agenda in German-speaking countries. Some German federal states, such as the city states of Hamburg, Bremen, and Berlin, have already addressed this issue and started projects to develop support measures. Moreover, the need for successful quality development also arises in other German federal states, as well as in other German-speaking countries such as Austria, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland. In Switzerland, for example, I chaired a summer symposium in 2009 for the cantonal cadre association of the German-speaking and multilingual cantons that also focused primarily on school turnaround. The fact that the topic of "school development in schools in challenging circumstances" affects not only the organizational level but also the system level becomes particularly clear from the findings of previous research and evaluation projects internationally. This is also reflected in the fact that the school administration or the school authorities are increasingly turning to this topic, including not only "school turnaround" but "district turnaround."

This chapter reviews international efforts on school turnaround, identifying areas that are key to supporting leaders trying to lead such challenging work. Then the chapter identifies characteristics of German approaches that are similar and different. The chapter concludes with recommendations contextualized for supporting school turnaround in Germany.

SOME INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Understanding Low School Performance

While internationally there has been research into the effectiveness of schools since the 1970s, which has produced a fairly comprehensive level of knowledge that distinguishes successful schools, the knowledge about the characteristics of dysfunctional school situations is still lacking. From an efficiency perspective, failing schools are sometimes described in terms of psychological dysfunction. Studies on ineffective schools show specific characteristics at the student level, the class level, as well as the school level, or they identify external causes (location) as well as internal causes (school). In summary, the following risk factors, which may lead to school failure, are identified in international scholarship (Altrichter, Gußner, & Maderthaner, 2008; Altrichter & Moosbrugger, 2011; Clarke, 2004; Fink, 1999; Gray, 2004; Hargreaves, 1994, 2004; Harris & Chapman, 2002; Hochbein & Duke, 2011; Hopkins, Harris, & Jackson, 1997; Huber, 2012; MacBeath & Stoll, 2004; Murphy & Meyers, 2008b; Potter, Reynolds, & Chapman, 2002; Stringfield, 1998; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000):

- difficult conditions at home
- behavioral problems of the students

- strong turnover among the students
- low skill level of the students
- low qualification of teachers
- low level of collegial cooperation
- high faculty turnover
- unprofessional school management
- lack of school management (goals, strategy, structure, processes, behavior, tools)

More extensive experiences and findings on school development strategies for failing schools can be found in the United States and England over the last few decades (Hopkins, 1996; Mortimore, 1991; Murphy & Meyers, 2008a; Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll, & Russ, 2004; Murphy, 2009; Myers & Stoll, 1993; Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2012; Stoll & Meyers, 1997; Wallace et al., 1990). In general, differentiated measures tailored to each individual school are needed and not a panacea strategy. Moreover, the schools need time to go through the following stages of development: mission statement or audit; school program as well as the initiation, implementation, and institutionalization of suitable improvements; and evaluation of the implementation and beginning of a new quality cycle (Huber, 2011; Huber, Hader-Popp, & Schneider, 2014; Meyers & Hitt, 2017). However, there are some strategies that can generally be considered helpful for many schools:

- rapid intervention with directly perceptible success
- strengthening of the school administration
- ensuring transparent objectives
- initiating intensive continuous professional development
- revising the curriculum
- structuring teaching/learning processes more clearly
- focusing on school programme work
- defining goals more clearly
- strengthening cooperation and incorporating external support
- inspection and accountability
- "reconstitution"—closure of the school and reopening it after a redesign

For failing schools that have been certified by the school inspectorate as significantly below the expected performance level and have shown little capacity to improve, four strategies are recommended (Huber, 2011; Huber, Moorman, & Pont, 2008; Huber & Muijs, 2007; Huber et al. 2014):

- federations and partnerships with higher performing schools

- promotion through networks (in which school groups form cooperative arrangements and offer an intensive and extended service to all pupils within a specific geographical area)
- new incentives for greater system responsibility (through significantly increased financial support for admission of students with the greatest risk of failed or unfinished school careers)
- municipal responsibility (through pooling of functions and roles of locally operating authorities to allow for greater coordination of a system that increasingly delegates responsibilities to the local and individual school level)

Collectively, these results suggest a need for combined school and educational policy strategies that foster equal and parallel capacity at the school and throughout the system to establish more cooperative ways to work, new standards of engagement, and more flexible and problem-oriented working cultures at all levels.

Considering the Implications of School Systems on Leaders of Low-Performing Schools

As far as the school administration is concerned, system leadership is considered a concept of school development in which school administrators take advantage of functionally meaningful cooperation opportunities in order to achieve the goal of advancing the regional school system as a whole.

British education policies have brought a large number of changes to schools and the school system by transferring a range of decision-making powers to the school level, while at the same time introducing core educational standards, core performance measures, evaluations, and accountability responsibilities. New initiatives were launched in rapid succession. The main focus of the reform was improved school administration, including, for example, the establishment of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and the many different training and continuous professional development programs offered for all levels of management and leadership roles. The motto "High Challenge, High Support" indicates the overall intention of the English government since 1997 to raise the overall educational level and reduce performance differences among students as well as to increase educational outcomes for a very heterogeneous student body. The following topics stand out as key drivers within the programs:

- setting ambitious standards in the nationwide curriculum and in the national standardized tests of the students
- responsibility transferred to the level of the individual school

- collecting data and setting goals
- access to "best practice" and offer of continuous professional development and training
- accountability obligation of schools
- combination of interventions and inspections

"City Challenges" is a specific example of a project in England. The goal of the programme was to significantly reduce the number of underperforming schools in Greater Manchester, Black Country, and the London metropolitan area by 2011, while simultaneously increasing the number of excellent schools significantly, especially among socially disadvantaged children. The program builds on partnerships between the Department for Children, regional education authorities, schools and colleges, school administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders across the district boundaries (Hutchings, Greenwood, Hollingworth, Mansaray, & Rose, 2012). Work is done with

- intensive and school-specific support for schools with below-average student performance,
- a city-wide systematic quality campaign for school management and other school leadership tasks,
- targeted individual work with disadvantaged students,
- data-driven cooperation between the schools, and
- the premise of "Local solutions to local problems."

A number of other programs—Schools Facing Exceptionally Challenging Circumstances (SFECC), Excellence in Cities, NCLS: NLCs, Extended Schools, School Federations—have been implemented with similar aspirations and varying levels of success.

In New York City, various turnaround strategies have been developed over the past decade to improve underperforming schools. They include:

- the "fresh start" model, in which the "unsuccessful" school was dissolved and new smaller schools were founded in its place
- the turnaround "from the inside out," in which smaller schools were founded to address the needs of the respective pupils without the underperforming school being closed first
- the model school turnaround with a new workforce, where both the headmaster and about half of the faculty were replaced, but all the school's ongoing programs were maintained
- the creation of new and largely autonomous charter schools financed by the state and the municipality but exempt from many state and local regulations.

Overall, these strategies have reshaped how education is delivered. Their success, however, has been uneven.

SOME GERMAN EXPERIENCES

In Germany, there has also been a bit more than 10 years of experience in working with particularly underperforming schools through projects in the German city states of Berlin, Hamburg, and Bremen.

In Bremen, the action program "Schule macht sich stark" (SMS, School is Getting Strong) was implemented from 2004 to 2009 and marked the first nationwide school development project for schools in difficult circumstances, which was intended to strengthen and support the entire school development process. This project ran in parallel to a quality development campaign, which included the obligation to create annual work plans and school programs, and included external evaluation of all general education schools. The objectives of the project were to ensure mastering basic competences (mathematics and German) and to increase independence and responsibility of the students for self-propelled learning. The program's activities included strengthening school leadership through coaching and counseling, staff development and teacher training, and assisting with learning progress diagnosis. The coaching of the school administration by an external coach and a network of the involved school management teams, which extend beyond the actual duration of the project, are considered to be particularly successful.

In 2006, a process consulting method called "proSchul" was established in Berlin with the goal to provide schools in need of development with a seamless consultation process immediately after school inspections. The voluntary process consultation takes place in a triangular relationship between school, proSchul, and the school inspectorate. In principle, this systematic approach to school development, characterized by goal orientation; transparency; strengthening collegial cooperation and communication, involving as many participants as possible; evaluation as a tool of process monitoring; and systemic consideration of the organization, teaching, and staffing, can be considered effective.

In Hamburg, the State Institute for Teacher Education and School Development carried out the project "Unterstützung von Schulen in schwieriger Lage" (Supporting Schools in Difficult Circumstances) in the years 2007–2010. Support services in the developmental areas of teaching and teaching skills, teaching-related cooperation of the faculty, as well as management and control of the development process were the focus. Evaluation of the KESS-7 data and initial learning surveys in grade levels 5 and 7 of the participating schools, as well as qualitative surveys with school

administrators and faculty members, were conducted. The project's coherence can be highlighted as successful because of the support provided for teaching, cooperation, management, and control, each of which had a high level of adaptability for the individual school situation.

In Berlin, another project was initiated in 2012–2013 by the Robert Bosch Foundation (RBSG) in cooperation with the Senate Department for Education Youth and Science in Berlin (SenBJW). The project "School Turnaround—Berliner Schulen starten durch" (School Turnaround—Berlin Schools Are Taking Off) aims to support ten schools in a particularly critical situation. Furthermore, this practice-based project is supposed to provide important insights into the governance mechanisms, competencies, motivations, structures, processes, and resources necessary to make a turnaround. Research on measures of school development in particularly underperforming schools, which takes into account German contextual conditions, is needed. Findings of a mixed-method longitudinal study of this project were presented at various conferences (e.g., ECER and AERA in recent years and a comprehensive report will be finalized in 2018 by Huber et al.).

Success Factors and Recommendations for a State-Specific Approach in Germany

The lessons learned from international contexts and initial turnaround programs in Germany are important to consider when thinking about the necessary framing of school turnaround in German states. In this section, the chapter builds on the lessons identified above and our ongoing research to provide an overview of many important factors and recommendations to give leaders on various levels in the school governing in Germany an opportunity to lead successful school turnaround.

School Turnaround Organization and Some Fundamental Principles

Careful Integration Within the Specific Context of the Respective State

It is recommended to not separate the school turnaround project from other projects and programs implemented in the respective state. The project should take advantage of other reforms and school development support initiatives and be integrated accordingly. This poses a challenge, as existing and planned measures have to be carefully orchestrated. This is a governance issue that needs to be addressed by the central stakeholders of the state education system and other school governing agencies. So naturally, this goes beyond an explicit project about school turnaround.

***Combination of Strategies for the School and for the Level
of Education Policy***

Shortcomings that seem striking in individual schools often originate outside the school and can only be influenced to a certain extent in the individual school. It should therefore be considered: All school interventions must be supplemented by measures that are incumbent upon political action that focuses on poverty, an uneducated family background, unemployment, health deficits, deficient housing, lack of education competence in families, lack of life-management strategies, and so on. It requires a multilevel approach and synergy of individual school activities, education policy strategies, social policy, economic policy, cultural policy, and domestic policy in general. This refers to the projects mentioned above on a pragmatic level. Although this recommendation goes far beyond the project itself, the project and the schools are of course integrated into these relationships.

Balance of Freedom and Guidelines

In addition, a careful balance between freedom and guidelines seems to be important to maintain control. This includes providing the schools with clear guidelines and clear timelines (especially in the beginning) and thus offering them a level of security through orientation options. Providing direction is particularly important in regard to the goals to be achieved. It should be decided on a case-by-case basis to what extent methods for achieving these goals can be set or chosen in the schools themselves.

Individualized Support Instead of "One Size Fits All"

As individual organizations, schools are different. It is well known that their development needs are very different and that there is no school improvement measure or "panacea strategy" that will help everyone equally (cf. Hopkins, 1996; Huber, 2006, 2007; Huber & Muijs, 2007). Therefore, a differentiation of school development strategies is necessary. It is important to establish a link between a classification of schools according to their level of individual development and different strategies for school improvement. Strategy policies are grouped according to criteria such as the range and the number of set priorities, the respective focus (e.g., curriculum, teaching methods, school organization), inclusion of data actually obtained at the respective school or rather more general survey results, the extent of external support, the level of the school's already existing required problem solving and adaptation skills, and so on. Hopkins assumes that each school needs a "package" of strategies tailored to its individual level of development. This is certainly true in the context of dysfunctional schools. What is needed is an accurate analysis of the school and an understanding of why it is performing so badly, which has led to what mechanisms keep the difficulties or dysfunctionality going.

Organizational Diagnosis, School Inspection, and Accountability

Project Start Requires Clear Criteria for the Selection of Schools

Based on international experience, clear and very strict criteria for the selection of the schools for the project (possibly even foregoing voluntary action) can provide a sound basis for school turnaround or related measures. According to a value-added-oriented approach, pupil data should be analyzed at two points in time (e.g., at school entry and then at the end of the respective cohort's graduation) in order to state the "value" that the school has "added." As a result, the sometimes big performance differences at school entry are taken into account. We recommend a catalogue of criteria that combines student, organization, and management characteristics or input, throughput, and output characteristics. The available data from the various sources of quality diagnosis should be used. In addition, a detailed analysis of the school's internal situation at the beginning is extremely relevant, whereby a clear revelation of the problems (only at the beginning!) cannot be spared. In the context of the demanding and supporting work with the school administration, a clear objective agreement and transparent contracting are indispensable. In individual cases, it may be advisable to increase the pressure from the outside to give school management argumentation support and backing in cases of great dysfunctionality, as the experiences in Bremen show.

Use School Inspection Results

School inspection was often criticized and suspected of not having any positive effect. This was due to the fact that people linked it with the "name and shame procedure" in England, which was often seen less as a solution to the problem but rather as an aggravation of the problem. However, there are indications that in some cases, the external pressure of an inspection may be needed to help schools identify their problems and launch improvement initiatives (Ainscow, Muijs, & West, 2006). Moreover (e.g., as part of the scientific support work), additional data should be submitted to schools as a formative evaluation in the further course of the project.

External accountability can be seen as a necessary driver of change as well as a measure to ensure that these efforts are sustained and that sustainability can be developed. Quality control of the school development program is seen as a key component, and inspection and accountability should even develop positive motivational factors in terms of the feedback they bring to the school's development efforts. This is the task of regional school supervision.

Orientation of the Objective and the Diagnosis on the School Quality Framework of Action in the Respective State

For reasons of consistency and connectivity for all stakeholders—that is, the school authorities, the school inspectorate, the school administration, the teachers, the representatives of the support system, and the coaches—it is recommended to model the objective and the diagnosis of the project schools after the action framework for school quality. It can be safely assumed that this in turn also increases acceptance. The objectives of the project schools should take the important areas of the state school quality framework into account.

The ascertainment of the objectives of the project schools should be based on both the quality framework (with regard to general guidelines) and the respective school-specific profile (with regard to special measures), which is reflected, for example, by the results of the school inspection. The goal should be to achieve significant improvement in the prioritized quality areas, characteristics, and criteria (and indicators for operationalization) that are relevant for the respective school context (i.e., according to inspection levels A, B, C, D, at least one step increase in the D-rated characteristics or criteria). Additionally, other particularly relevant aspects should be taken into account that may not have been identified through the quality framework and the results of the school inspection and that are caused by the special situation of the school. In addition to the results of the school inspection, the school's audit includes further information, such as that provided by the school itself, the school authorities, or the scientific support for the project.

Professional School Authorities Act Profoundly and Persistently

The regional school authorities play an important role in the use of the inspection results and the target agreement with the school. They are an important part of the established quality management system.

The school supervision with its dual role as a controlling and supporting authority should provide professional assistance in the sense of professional "promotion and challenge." Above all, they should show a supportive, not just a controlling attitude. A professional school supervision attaches importance to educational aspects. An increase in the professionalism of the school supervision (such as an intensification of their advisory skills) is desired. Professionalism also includes the perception of responsibility and persistence (tenacity) in the target agreement and in process monitoring.

Organizational Change

"Small Is Beautiful," not "Big Is Better"

In some cases, a procedure known in New York as the "Fresh School Start" would be advisable, namely to create smaller schools from large

schools. The existing large school is hereby not closed, but split into several smaller schools. These smaller schools define their future profile according to the characteristics of their respective student body. This procedure recognizes the need to pay much more attention than ever to the needs of students and to include these needs in the development of the school. For example, schools cooperate with partners within and outside the school system who support the school or teachers. For example, they assist in responding to students' individual needs (e.g., students in need of psychological support, others who need help from a youth welfare service, or cases where the entire family needs assistance, etc.).

In Extreme Cases: "Reconstitution"

Implementing types of "reconstitution," as found in England and the United States, is a radical measure that cannot be generally recommended but should be reserved for extreme cases. In this process, the "failing school" is temporarily closed and reopened later with new school management, new faculty and, usually, even a new name. In this process, the buildings are often renovated. On the one hand, this process seems to make sense in England and the United States because it considers the importance of school management and the qualities of the faculty in terms of the effectiveness of a school. On the other hand, it must be considered that "reconstitution" as a strategy led to very different results and was only successful in selected cases (Ainscow, West, & Nicolaidou, 2004; Hardy, 1999).

School Fusion, Development of School Networking, Up to the Merger of Schools

A strategy that relies on increased cooperation between different schools can also be considered successful. In England, collaboration, networking and, in isolated cases, the pooling of regionally close schools, one of which can be considered successful and the other in dire need of improvement, is a measure that can be considered successful in the context of system leadership. A central role in the establishment of such school networks, which form heterogeneous instead of homogeneous partnerships, is played by the school leaders. School leaders seize on functionally meaningful cooperation opportunities in order to achieve the goal of increasing quality. In addition to cooperation within the school or cooperation within the school management team, cooperation between and with other neighboring schools plays an important role. School leaders as system leaders assume that it is not possible to act effectively if they do not see their own school as part of a larger system. This larger system includes the parents and the political community in which the school operates and other schools in and even beyond the community, as well as the school administration and other organizations.

For example, four major national initiatives in England have encouraged such collaboration: "Excellence in Cities," "The Leadership Incentive Grant," "Networked Learning Communities," and "School Federations." These initiatives have inspired a plethora of collaborative arrangements, from groups of schools that work together on a voluntary basis and groups that received assistance from financial resources and incentives to work together, to others who received a direct mandate to work together (West, Ainscow, & Muijs, 2006).

Collaboration among peers in the sense of professional learning communities can be seen as a potentially improving method. In this case, the benefits of learning together and expanding the knowledge base together are connected with gaining benefit from the social capital that exists in other schools and learning from the skills and knowledge of colleagues, as they may be larger in some areas in other schools (Muijs, Ainscow, & West, 2006).

Examples include transfer projects at the schools in Bremen (such as the systematic quality control and subsequent documentation of successful teaching materials, internal planning tools, in-depth instruction, and targeted language support). Successful or improved schools, in turn, should play a positive role as a source of inspiration for other schools.

Human Resources Measures

Change of School Administration and Exchange of Teachers

Closely linked to questions of school development are questions of personnel selection, qualification, personnel development, and consulting and potentially also of transfer, replacement, or lay-off. At all levels (teaching staff, school leadership, school authorities, and school administration) similar problems arise when individual stakeholders are perceived as unsuitable for the respective task. In the event of a turnaround, it may be necessary and also advisable to exchange members of the school leadership, especially the headmaster/principal, as well as parts of the faculty (Kutash et al., 2010). That seems extremely difficult in German states. Nevertheless, one should think about this personnel policy aspect and explore the legal scope.

There should be options to have colleagues and school administration members move from the school to other areas. The fact that they are "promoted to leave" (including to administrative positions and regional training), however, does not seem to be a sustainable solution unless they are well matched and their skills can be well implemented. The need exists both from an individual perspective (educators need career prospects when they are unable or unwilling to work at school) and from a systemic perspective: What can happen to stakeholders who turn out to be unfit for their workplace? It is important in this case to give the stakeholders the opportunity

to leave their workplaces (with as little loss of face as possible)—this applies to school leaders as well as teachers and school administration.

In terms of staffing, including transfer and potentially resignation, the civil service law proves to be problematic if, in the case of a staffing, positions are filled on the basis of career path requirements. Even if teacher aptitude may potentially help clarify other decisions, it is still not matter of course in the case of transfer that employees in the school service can be transferred (possibly against their will). Colleagues who cannot or do not want to support a new concept should be allowed to change schools or be forced to do so.

Personnel Development: Further Education for Motivational and Skill Development

Professionalization of the School Leadership

Headmasters/principals and school leadership teams need special support in order to promote the development stage or developmental step of the school with the help of professional skills (e.g., cooperation with other school leaders, coaching, etc.). The coaching of the school leadership by an external coach and a network of the involved school management teams is considered to be particularly successful.

In addition, the school leadership needs to be strengthened, as effective school leadership is seen as a key factor for improvement (Harris, 2002; Leithwood, Harris, & Strauss, 2010). While more cooperative forms of school leadership (e.g., distributed leadership) have recently been seen as more effective and sustainable than when the school leadership relies solely on the shoulders of a headmaster/principal, there are a number of indications that this may not necessarily apply to failing schools. This difference might be most evident in the initial stages of improvement, when a strong and more directive leadership on the part of the headmaster seems necessary, so that the school can "take off." Often this means establishing a new school leadership because the existing one has proven to be weak or ineffective (Hopkins et al., 1997). However, it does not make much sense to import a successful headmaster from another school because it depends on the fit between management/leadership and organization. (This was evident in the relatively poor success of the "Super Heads" program, in which the United Kingdom government transferred school headmasters/principals who were successful in certain schools to other, less successful schools in the hope that they would succeed as well [Dimmock & Walker, 2002].)

It is also important to remember that while a strong leader may be a key factor in improving failing schools at the beginning of the development process, it does not mean that this remains the best strategy throughout the

process. Rather, it seems that school management and leadership should be much more cooperative after the initial steps, so that the development can be sustainable and the competence level of the entire school increases (Chapman, 2005).

In some cases, this may even require further changes in the leadership team because it can be quite difficult for headmasters/principals to change their style from a more directive to a more cooperative, delegating one, not least because of the mistrust that arises in the faculty. They are used to a certain style of their headmaster and find this change may not be authentic and credible. Particularly in view of new tasks in the context of system leadership, school leaders need advanced skills through appropriate measures of qualification and support.

Qualification should also rely on outside experts. Experts from science, school authorities, continued education, counseling, and school practice (members of school management and steering groups), in particular, experts who have successfully supervised a school turnaround, should be included.

Intensive and Tailored Training of the Faculty

It is essential that the faculty undergo intensive training to develop the necessary educational skills, and it must be given more responsibility to grow into a real learning community (Hargreaves, 2004). This includes the support of a systematic, didactic-methodical training of the teachers. It is not meant to be a "one-size-fits-all" program based on the "watering can" principle, but rather a tailor-made in-school continuous professional development, or even better, a CPD series (potentially at first focussing on basic topics that may concern the entire faculty, then increasingly individualized for class or grade/subject teams, or even lesson coaching for individuals), as provided in all programs, including those in Hamburg and Bremen. This includes the support of the transfer of what was learnt into the classroom and the provision of phases of reflection on success/failure. In addition, support for teaching material and, above all, strong support for the creation of cooperative structures in the faculty are needed.

Focus: Advanced Training for Improved Teaching

The experiences of various national and international programs and projects conclude: A truly cause-related support for schools in challenging circumstances and a relief of the teachers can be seen above all in the guidance for cooperation of the teachers and for concrete steps, which lead to an improvement of the teaching situation. On the other hand, quickly introduced individual measures (which can be additionally useful, but cannot replace the focus on improving the teaching situation), such as violence prevention training, are not themselves sustainable. A focus on teaching

and learning processes can not only lead to improvements in this area, but actually positively influence the entire school life.

Teacher training, which focuses on the expansion of teaching methods and knowledge about learning methods, is extremely helpful for schools in difficult situations (e.g., Joyce & Showers, 1988/1995). As has already been emphasized, these approaches must be tailor-made for the individual school, since the potential and needs of the faculty members differ considerably from one school to another.

Qualification of Regional School Authorities

Development and consultancy opportunities for regional school authorities would also make sense in order to sensitize them in the context of a few, very specifically focused qualification measures for dysfunctional school situations, to increase their skills, recognize the diversity of such dysfunctional school contexts at an early stage, and familiarize them with tools and options for intervention planning and implementation.

The goal for the regional school authorities is to learn how they could incorporate the existing support measures in their state or region, formulate school-specific performance agreements for these contexts, commission the advisory and support measures, and know which strategic controlling measures should be implemented.

For this type of qualification, outside experts should also be used, as well as colleagues from the regional school authorities who have already gained experience and succeeded in their actions. Furthermore, a subject-oriented exchange of experience should be made possible in the context of existing or to be established staff meetings.

Information Events for Additional Stakeholders

For additional important stakeholders from the support system as well as the school maintaining body (municipality), a focused information event (either target-group-specific or jointly) on the topic should be organized (during which the possible need for further follow-up events can be determined).

Improve Education, Counseling, and Care Provisions Overall

Revising the Curriculum

In part, the school-specific curriculum should be better adapted to the needs of students, and the teaching processes should more specifically stimulate students' interest. This may, for example, lead to incorporating more job-related educational content in some schools. In addition, greater

flexibility in learning content, including core subjects such as language and mathematics, could definitely help specific schools achieve better results.

Structuring Teaching/Learning Processes More Clearly

Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, compared to students with a high socioeconomic background, may need more structure and more positive reinforcement from the teacher. They will need to receive the learning content in smaller units, each followed by instant feedback (cf. Hattie, 2009). This should include more direct instructions, a more integrated curriculum in terms of grade levels and subjects, and a more intense integration of the learning content with everyday experiences as well as practical application of what has been learned.

Mortimore already emphasized in 1991 that effective instruction in these schools should be very teacher-centred with a strong practical focus while still providing students with enough challenge and stimulation. It is important to create consistency in the teaching approach. This has a direct impact on improving the results (Mortimore, 1991).

Conduct Diversity Management

Dealing with diversity also means targeted work with disadvantaged students: identifying barriers to learning for socially disadvantaged students and developing support programs for this group, partly through training programs for their teachers (to develop diagnostic and promotional skills), and partly with mentoring activities for the students themselves.

Networked schools can join in groups and contract with service providers—for example, to teach native German, school coaching and mentoring, behavioral coaching with students, specific subject education, and support for other issues common to these schools.

Increased Cooperation in the School Environment and Outside Support

Multilevel Cooperation in the School System

Linking the schools' useful existing and new programs is highly recommended, as elaborated above. Outside support is an important element in helping failing schools improve. The support may come from, for example, the school authorities, but also from networks within and beyond the school district.

Premise "District-Wide Solutions for District-Wide Problems"

As a school maintaining body, districts are important partners. Issues with district-wide effects must be addressed with solutions affecting the

entire district—for example, a quality system for mobile reserves, demand planning for teachers' workplaces, school development partnerships, district-wide offers for additional leisure activities, and so on. The support must be long-term and sustainable, which is better than aiming for short-term improvements to get the school out of the spotlight quickly.

The establishment of school networking recommended above, based on the example of England, should include cooperations with nonschool partners (foundations, the economy, other educational institutions, youth welfare, etc.; at the same time assumption of the logistical/organizational task areas by outside facilities, at least in the beginning, otherwise overloading threatens; see below).

Strengthening Advisory Services and Using Existing Ones

Counseling and support systems play a major role both for school leadership and teachers directly (e.g., through regional training with well-qualified consultants with relevant experience in the specific field including leadership, competent coaches, school psychology, etc.), as well as for parent associations and students themselves. On the one hand, it means the establishment of a solid internal school counseling network and, on the other hand, cooperation with outside specialists such as youth welfare, drug counseling centers, street workers, conventional medical services, hospitals, youth psychiatric institutions, the police, but also the employment agency, which is indispensable to provide effective individual case counseling and support for students. Educational counseling centers as a contact point for parents (through church or city or funded by charities) are important cooperation partners, and denial of their support by the schools would be a gross flaw. Of course, special emphasis should be placed on intercultural cooperation, because families with a migration background who are educationally deprived can hardly be reached with the established "official" structures.

Extracurricular Offers

In addition to the extracurricular cooperation partners already mentioned above, schools should incorporate citizens' initiatives, district initiatives, associations (sports and cultural associations), cultural institutions (museums, theaters, etc.), religiously oriented groups (e.g., Christian or Muslim), and cooperative associations, but also companies/business enterprises and contact persons. School leaders considering themselves system leaders make efforts to bring experts to the school who can provide extracurricular offers, but also to open up learning places outside the school to pupils. The school must be useful and responsibly permeable to its environment.

Reinforce Strengths, Make It Possible to Experience Success Quickly, Which Leads to Self-Efficacy Experiences of the Stakeholders

Reinforce Strengths

Those involved in schools in difficult situations have often lost sight of, and the belief in, how their actions contribute to success. Therefore, it is important to keep an eye on strengths in the course of a change process instead of focusing on weaknesses (treasure hunt instead of fault investigation/resource orientation). Enjoyment of the workplace, target adjustment ("for children and adolescents"), mutual social support, motivation, and moral/educational ethos are the key foundations for positive development and must be promoted accordingly.

Positive Changes in Self-Image and Opportunities for Self-Efficacy Experiences of Teachers and School Administration

The basis for the more promising path is a positive change in the teachers' self-image (which used to be very negative in the sense of "we can't do anything in these difficult circumstances anyway"). School leadership needs special support in overcoming this counterproductive self-image as a model.

Rapid Intervention With Directly Perceptible Success

A favorable strategy is to initially focus on factors that are relatively easy to change. The intervention should lead quickly to direct and tangible results (Hopkins et al., 1997). This may, for example, also include changes that affect the spatial infrastructure of the school, which is clearly perceptible from the outside and which potentially has a positive influence on motivation. Of course, the individually chosen strategy depends on the conditions and the capacity of each school.

Systematic Overall Development and Coordination of Lesson Development, Organizational Development, and Personnel Development

Specific Support and Concern for Coherence

Schools in difficult situations need targeted help in deriving school-specific goals from the program objectives in conjunction with the organizational diagnosis. It is important to ensure coherence by skillfully linking the areas of teaching, cooperation between the stakeholders, and steering/administration/leadership, at first with strong guidelines, then with strong participation/autonomy.

Support should include:

- the provision of manageable diagnostic tools with appropriate support materials
- more efficient collaboration between lesson developers and school developers, predesigned report formats for the school administration to set up a process of regular internal evaluation, and documentation
- the guidance of the steering groups by school development consultants or turnaround coaches
- concentration or, if necessary, modification of the school's curricular priorities according to the needs of the student body (see above)
- the development of an improved counseling culture at the school (for pupils and parents, but also staff counseling)
- a data-driven goal controlling and intensive consultation of the leadership staff by the school supervision

Give It Time and Observe Developmental Steps

The general rule for school development is that school improvement takes time. Everything involved in this process requires skills, motivation, and resources, which are usually unavailable in failing schools. Ideally, the following development steps should be taken: Creation of a school program should be based on a vision of a school or a mission statement or an audit. The school program ideally arises from a dual perspective, namely, a forward view and an accounting of past and present efforts. This is followed by three overlapping phases:

- the initiation, which is the presentation and introduction of new ideas and methods as well as the promotion of acceptance and commitment
- the implementation phase
- the institutionalization, in which the innovations become an integral part of the school's standards, structures and work routines.

The cycle of quality closes when the institutionalization is followed by an evaluation, which gives indications of the success of the school development process as well as of the next steps to be planned.

Ensuring Transparent Objectives With Clearly Defined Goals

An important part of the work of the school administration in the initial stages will be to improve the development of what is known in England as

a "shared vision"—that is, a shared, transparent idea of how and where the development should go, and the goals that should be the focus (Muijs et al., 2004). One difficulty may be that there could be some mistrust on the part of the faculty (e.g., Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005). It requires intensive communication, team building activities, and, in some cases, a change of faculty staff so that such a vision can emerge. Care should be taken to focus activities rather than blind activism and to launch a series of actually disparate, possibly mutually blocking activities.

In addition, the overall intervention measures should be managed very well, and systematically coordinated measures must have clearly defined objectives. This may be easier in smaller organizational units. Overall, this is mainly about the work on structures and processes, the behavior of the members, as well as the other, undoubtedly complex aspects that make up a culture (in this case: school culture).

CONCLUSION

What becomes clear: While the United States turnaround models are designed to be relatively radical with school closures and layoffs of staff, the projects in the German federal states rely heavily on supporting the schools, empowering and increasing the competence of the school/internal stakeholders and various cooperations with school/internal stakeholders. School leadership seems to be an important key factor in all projects. School leaders, who are able to restore the ability to act by establishing an appropriate leadership organization and to focus their work on pedagogical issues, play a special role. In England, there is a strong reliance on school networks, where schools in difficult situations collaborate, network, or even merge institutionally with successful schools in the area. Due to cultural and legal differences, solutions from the international context have to be examined closely, but within the framework of the melioristic function of international comparative educational research and educational planning, they represent an extremely interesting potential for stimulation.

All of the strategies outlined in the above cases are part of the school turnaround, but they are not a quick-fix recipe for success. In order to be successful in the long run, different approaches are needed that are tailored exactly to the unique circumstances of the individual school (Huber, 2006, 2007; Huber & Muijs, 2007) and contextualized to the respective school system.

School turnaround requires concerted action with professional, profound, and persistent action of all of the involved leadership stakeholders. In addition to intervention architecture, especially the school authorities and the active participation of the school board at the system level and the

school administration at school level are part of the first successful steps, followed by a gradual involvement of the entire faculty.

However, we should remember that all school interventions are limited. Assuming that failing schools are often found in low SES catchment areas, and that the effect of a school explains about 10% to 40% of the variance in student achievement, it becomes clear that much more complex interventions are needed that go beyond the reach of the school and include the school environment. Schools cannot compensate for all the weaknesses and shortcomings of a community or a society, and no matter how well-intended and professional school development is, it cannot absorb the bad social circumstances in which students live outside of school. Ultimately, the key to school improvement lies in political action and measures that focus not only on the individual school or the school system but also on community development in terms of poverty, unemployment, health deficits, deficient housing, educational difficulties, and lack of life-management strategies of parents, to name but a few.

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