

Introduction

Objectives and Use

This book is intended for senior officials in ministries of education in small states including those with responsibility for the management of personnel, finance and physical resources. It deals with the special features, issues, and problems that make the work of senior education administrators in small states significantly different from that of their colleagues in larger systems. It explores methods and procedures and offers suggestions about how one can deal with them. While there are several excellent works for the general, senior education administrator, none are directed specifically towards the multifunctional roles of senior officials working within the particular parameters of small states.

The handbook can be used in a number of ways. It can help to identify and clarify problems recognizing that colleagues in other small states tend to face similar situations. It can be used as a generator of ideas. It can provide the basis for workshops and think-tank sessions. In conjunction with other works, it can serve as a training manual to help prepare junior officials in small states aspiring to administrative and managerial posts.

Contents

Each chapter deals with a major theme related to educational administration in small states. The first chapter identifies the special characteristics that influence the work of senior education administrators in these countries. It demonstrates how, apart from the influence exerted by the scale factor, educational systems in small states, and the work of their officials, are often conditioned by weak economies and limited physical, financial and human resources. The social ecology of small states, with their closely knit, integrated and transparent communities, constitutes another major variable which renders the work of senior education officials significantly different from that of their colleagues in larger countries.

The second chapter looks into the demands made on senior education officials whose multiplicity of jobs leads to unscheduled

routines amidst continuously changing roles. Stressing the primary importance of self-management, it suggests practical time-management techniques, and the use of modern office equipment and methods to control and lessen stress.

The third chapter looks into the problems of establishing staffing needs within the constraints of limited resources and the difficulties of establishing staff recruitment policies. It suggests ways of managing the available human resources without creating conflict in highly sensitive, often personalized and close communities.

The fourth chapter deals with the senior education administrators' role as an evaluator of the work of officials and the institutions in which they operate. It argues for an evaluation style that takes into account the sensitive, transparent communities of small states. The chapter suggests work assessment methods which serve as feedback mechanisms as well as positive reinforcers rather than methods of reprimand.

Some education administrators become too absorbed by bureaucratic procedures to the extent of forgetting the primary function and ultimate educational objectives of their post. The fifth chapter focuses on the education administrators' role in promoting curriculum development. It stresses that this function is not limited to those whose work is directly involved in the education process, but extends to officials who provide support services which facilitate the attainment of educational goals. In this vein the chapter evaluates the merits and limitations of centrally-set curricula and points to the benefits and pitfalls of school-based or individual school-developed syllabi. It makes a case for small states to evolve an intrinsic style of professional development of teachers through collegial collaboration in curriculum design and implementation.

The sixth chapter makes a case for the special training needs of education and non-education personnel in these countries. It argues for the establishment and maintenance of a consistent professional development policy which exploits local resources to the full, utilizes the services of foreign experts, and maximizes the benefits of specialized training overseas.

The seventh and final chapter focuses on the management of educational resources. It suggests procedures for establishing priorities and adopting efficient and fair methods of procuring equipment. It evaluates the merits of small school-based resource units vis-a-vis national resource centres. It identifies dangers faced by

small states that rely too heavily on foreign aid so that technological dependence leads to cultural domination.

Structure

Each chapter consists of two main parts. The first raises and discusses specific issues that emerge from the chapter theme and their effect on education systems in small states. The discussion is practice oriented, with technical jargon purposely kept to a minimum. At the same time, care is taken to ensure that theoretically sound administration and management principles are infused throughout the text. Boxed sections are intended to highlight particular points of view, sometimes reinforcing, sometimes challenging the text.

The second part of each chapter is devoted to follow-up activities which pose problems and suggest tasks that are associated with the theme and the issues raised in the first part. Practical research, case-studies and suggestions for further discussion encourage educational administrators to relate to, and to focus on, issues relevant to their particular local conditions. The case-studies are intended to stimulate discussion and inquiry into local administrative and operational procedures. The examination of fictional accounts becomes particularly useful when an analysis of authentic situations can cause tension and acrimony.

Whilst this book raises themes and issues that are typical and representative of small states, it should be borne in mind that although small states are similar in many ways, they also exhibit great diversity. The case is also made that being small is not necessarily a handicap. The book argues that small states have an ecology of their own; they are not miniature versions of larger, more prosperous countries. Their educational problems should be considered in this perspective. A most significant feature of this ecology is the social interaction that emerges from their small closely-knit and transparent communities. The scale factor and the social dimension intertwine and in a significant manner condition the life and work of education administrators in small states. This view permeates the book.

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