

Qalansuwa's Education System Learns from Success

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This book was made possible by a special grant from
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Jerusalem | July 2019

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Abstract

Background

In 2011 the city of Qalansuwa entered into cooperation with the Learning from Success Service at the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute. The cooperation led to the citywide implementation of the program of Learning from Success as Leverage for School-Wide Learning.

The program operated in the following education frameworks: pre-schools, kindergartens, the Omar Ibn Elhatab Elementary School, the Elzaharaa Elementary School, the Ibn Sina Junior High School, the Haled Ibn Elwalid Junior High School, the Tomashin High School, and the Atid High School.

The first part of the book presents the worldview underlying the concept of learning from success, as well as the learning methods that were the basis of the program's ongoing learning. The second and main part of the book describes the processes of working and learning in the program, along with their products, in six of the city's 10 education frameworks.

Goals

The goals of the program were to learn from the success of the staff and understand the action principles that they adopted to achieve that success; to choose an area that the education staff believe warrants improvement, and construct and implement a program of action; to explore ways of learning that are aimed at action ("doing") and find channels to promote them; to disseminate the products of learning among the rest of the staff and other organizations.

Methods

The program's pedagogic structure rests on three intertwined methods that form the basis of its operation. These are applied as part of the on-the-job training that takes place at schools and kindergartens.

1. The first method: Learning from past success – The retrospective method
2. The second method: From a learning question to a learning quest – The prospective method
3. The third method: Learning on learning – The method of introducing ongoing learning for action

Findings

The program contributed substantially to the education frameworks in which it operated. It turned them into organizations of learning while consolidating the substantial amount of tacit knowledge commanded by the staff. The latter, for their part, exposed the motivation to cope with challenging school issues and construct action programs to address them. Learning from Success became part of the permanent lifestyle of the staff and the education frameworks.

Executive Summary

Background

The Learning from Success Service (LSS) at the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute (MJB) began operating in 1995 under Prof. Jona Rosenfeld who had long explored the ideas behind it: learning from success, ongoing learning, and helping service organizations navigate the process.

The underlying concept of learning from success is the need to expose the tacit knowledge commanded by an organization's members of staff, to turn it into action-oriented knowledge, and to place it at the disposal of the entire staff. This concept reflects the idea that people's actions are supported by tacit theories that direct and guide the actors towards action ("doing"). Moreover, learning from success teams are created with the focus on success, and on learning from success through shared reflection. The development of an organizational culture of learning was found to promote an organization's goals and an individual's ability to develop the investigative skills to look inwards at their own actions.

The work of the LSS saw, among other things, the development of the program of Learning from Success as Leverage for School-Wide Learning. The program was developed in cooperation with the Research, Planning and Training Division at the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services, the Secondary Education Division at the Ministry of Education, and the Well-Baby Clinic system at the Ministry of Health.

The basis of the program is that school members of staff learn from their success and understand the actions and principles that they adopted to achieve it. Subsequently, the education staff choose an area that they believe warrants improvement, and construct and implement a program of action. In the next stage, they explore modes of action-oriented learning and find the channels to promote them. All the products of the learning are disseminated among the given school staff and other school staffs.

The program trains schools to become organizations that conduct shared, ongoing learning by identifying past success and planning future success. It is designed to promote the mission of the education system as a whole and of schools in particular, to advance the students in all areas by creating shared ongoing learning processes for the school staff and all the stakeholders involved in the educational endeavor. The role of this learning is to identify the challenges of the ongoing work and take steps to meet them according to the vision of the school's education staff. The schools participating in the program operate

in structured learning frameworks (on-the-job training), with the help of three methods oriented at learning, independent action, and the development of reflective, joint thinking. The training rests mainly on the teachers' knowledge and thereby contributes to a limited need for external resources.

The program's widely-distributed experimental instilment began in 2002 as a cooperative undertaking of MJB's LSS and the Secondary Education Division of the Ministry of Education. As such, it was imparted to 45 secondary schools countrywide. Following the pilot's success, it was decided to implement it in elementary schools as well. The first attempt to instill it on a city-wide basis was made in Netanya, with the participation of 23 elementary schools. The process was carried out in cooperation between the General Inspector of the Ministry of Education's Central Region and the Netanya municipality.

The program's organizational structure

The organizational structure rests on three key positions in the school:

1. **The school principal** leads the program's incorporation into school life in cooperation with the learning coordinator. The principal's commitment to the program is vital for its optimal implementation.
2. **The school learning coordinator** fills the role of conducting the school learning processes and working with the principal to incorporate them. She is a significant figure in leading the on-the-job training and conducting shared learning with other schools to the extent that they subscribe to it. The coordinator is a staff member at the school.
3. **The external learning companion** is a figure skilled in learning processes who provides an organizational system with support during the various stages of learning. Their training granted them a particular worldview and determined the use of the tools to support system learning. They work alongside the school principal and learning coordinator to produce knowledge and support the processes of change ensuing from that knowledge; for example, by establishing and conducting a leading forum in the system, heading activities to create intra-organizational infrastructure for ongoing learning, and helping to formulate and disseminate the knowledge. The learning companion is not a member of the school staff.

The program's operation at the school is implemented via two learning forums:

1. **The school learning forum** refers to the on-the-job training for all or some of the teachers who take part in the shared ongoing learning of educational-professional topics. Participants learn from their individual success, and progress in their learning and "doing" by means of the three program methods (see below). The school learning coordinator plans and leads the learning forum. Sometimes the school has more than one coordinator.
2. **The school's leading forum:** Participants in this forum are the principal, the learning coordinator, the learning companion and sometimes the school inspector. The forum plans how the program will be conducted at the school, the on-the-job training, and how the new knowledge produced during the program will be distributed.

The program's pedagogic structure

Three intertwined methods serve as the basis of program implementation. They are implemented in the framework of the on-the-job training delivered at the school.

The first method: Learning from past success – The retrospective method

This method focuses on developing the ability of the learning organization (in this case, the school) to learn from past success. This makes it possible to identify the tacit knowledge commanded by staff members through retrospection and convert it into explicit, action-oriented knowledge, which can then be implemented in the future as well. The learning is designed to produce and disseminate knowledge that promotes practice, to reflect the organization's success, to broaden the professional knowledge, to arouse discussion of the concepts and attitudes, to encourage openness among the participants, and to stimulate the organization to perform the necessary changes.

The second method: From a learning question to a learning quest – The prospective method

This method was designed to develop and promote action ("doing") in the wake of a chosen learning question that represents an unresolved issue in the life of the organization. The learning question is formulated and examined, and an action plan is constructed to promote the given issue. The learning question may be chosen in various ways. For example, in some organizations, the director determines the learning question, in others, the learning question is subjected to a vote.

The third method: Learning on learning – The method of introducing ongoing learning for action

This method is designed to identify and develop the common learning patterns of the members of the learning community. In on-the-job training, participants consider how the learning takes place in order to improve and incorporate it into the organization. These learning products are collected early on in the learning sessions and documented under the first or second methods in response to the question: "How did we learn?" The data are collected in a structured process that describes the learning patterns that contributed to advancing or inhibiting the learning, and identifies the participants' subjective learning patterns, both individual and collective. In light of these data, the method makes it possible to choose from several paths of progress: A quick reaction to improve the learning following issues raised by the participants or a focus on deeper processes, according to the first method (learning from a successful learning process) or the second method (formulating a learning question and constructing an action plan to promote it for the sake of "doing").

The Qalansuwa education system learns from success

In 2011, Ministry of Education regional supervisor of the Arab sector, director of the local Pisgah Center, and general inspector of the locality initiated cooperation between the Qalansuwa municipality and MJB's LSS. The cooperation led to the implementation of the program of Learning from Success as Leverage for School-Wide Learning for the entire locality. In 2011-14 it operated in the following education frameworks: pre-school, kindergarten, the Omar Ibn Elhatab elementary school, the Alzaharaa elementary school, the Ibn Sina junior high school, the Haled Ibn Elwalid junior high school, the Tomashin high school, and the Atid high school. In addition, on-the-job training was offered, to prepare learning companions for the program.

The program contributed substantially to the education frameworks in which it operated. It turned them into organizations of learning and "doing" while consolidating the considerable amount of tacit knowledge commanded by the staff. The latter, for their part, exposed the motivation to cope with challenging school issues and construct action programs to promote them. Learning from success became part of the permanent lifestyle of the staff and the education frameworks.

The structure of the book

The first part of the book presents the worldview underlying the concept of learning from success, as well as the learning methods that were the basis of the program's ongoing learning. The second and main part of the book describes the processes of working and learning in the program, along with their products, in six of the city's 10 education frameworks: pre-schools; kindergartens (two on-the-job training courses); the Omar Ibn Elhatab elementary school; the Ibn Sina junior high school; and the on-the-job training for the program's learning companions.