

Changing school culture and practices - an action research project with soft system methodology used by educational psychology

This article discusses how an organisational change project was used to promote inclusive practice within a small, local authority maintained, rural primary school in the East of England. The project followed a soft systems methodology (Checkland & Scoles, 1990) to develop a sustainable action plan, aimed at utilising the available resources to improve the emotional stability of the school following a significant period of challenge.

The impact of the project was reviewed with the participating school staff, six months after the initial project. Evaluation suggested that staff had valued the support from the Educational Psychology Service and changes had been maintained, thus increasing school's resilience in dealing with subsequent challenges they encountered.

The project assumes a number of implications for practice. Firstly, in a local climate where schools are under a multitude of pressures and where educational psychology services are typically seen as offering casework support, it offered an alternative and innovative way of working, positioning the Educational Psychologists as truly scientist practitioners, not only in their own views, but also for the school involved. Secondly, it is hoped this practice, by its own nature, has produced long term, systemic changes, for the school, and ultimately the children it serves. Lastly, the authors hope that such work will gain popularity amongst schools and colleagues working in the field of educational psychology, as although not involving a quick "fix" of individual, child specific problems, it is deemed to be an effective use of human and financial resources for schools, long term.

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