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SCHOOL

TECHNICAL COUNCILS. REFLECTIONS AND EXPERIENCES

LOS CONSEJOS TÉCNICOS ESCOLAR. REFLEXIONES Y EXPERIENCIAS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this reflective writing is to identify the problems faced by the functioning of the School Technical Councils in order to make a theoretical-hypothetical proposal of academic and administrative reorientation; the text is the product of the experiences lived for more than five years of active participation in the work meetings of the School Technical Council and its corresponding actions of accompaniment implemented by the zone supervisor in different schools of the secondary level, telesecondary modality in the state of Hidalgo, Mexico. The results point to understand the School Technical Councils as an administrative activity regulated by the work guide issued by the Secretariat of Federal Public Education at different times of the school cycle, which seeks to implement a curriculum and study programs for basic education; even when it is understood as a space in which teachers work collaboratively this is not fulfilled, among other reasons, because of the individualistic culture that permeates in telesecondary schools.

Keywords:

School Technical Council, work sessions, reflective practice.

RESUMEN

El presente escrito reflexivo tiene por finalidad identificar los problemas que enfrenta el funcionamiento de los Consejos Técnicos Escolares (CTE) para con los resultados hacer una propuesta teórico – hipotética de reorientación académica y administrativa; el texto es producto de las experiencias vividas por más de cinco años de participación activa en las reuniones de trabajo del Consejo Técnico Escolar y sus correspondientes acciones de acompañamiento implementadas por el supervisor de zona en distintas escuelas del nivel de secundaria, modalidad Telesecundaria en el estado de Hidalgo, México. Los resultados apuntan a entender al CTE como una actividad administrativa regulada por la guía de trabajo que emite la Secretaría de Educación Pública Federal en distintos momentos del ciclo escolar, la cual busca implementar un Plan y programas de estudio para la educación básica; Aun cuando se entiende como un espacio en el cual los docentes trabajan colaborativamente esto no se cumple, entre otras razones, por la cultura individualista que permea en las escuelas Telesecundarias.

Palabras clave:

Consejo técnico escolar, sesiones de trabajo, práctica reflexiva.

INTRODUCTION

The School Technical Councils in Mexico originated in the educational reforms implemented by the federal government in the 1990s. The common factor of these reforms was to improve the quality of education through the active participation of the different actors involved in the teaching-learning process (teachers, principals and supervisors).

In the early nineties, the National Program for the Modernization of Education was implemented and with it, the process of educational decentralization began, in which the federal entities were assigned the responsibility of organizing, regulating and evaluating the basic education services offered.

The Federal Executive transfers and the respective state government receives, the school establishments with all the technical and administrative elements, rights and obligations, movable and immovable property, with which the Secretariat of Federal Public Education had been providing in the respective state, up to date, the educational services mentioned, as well as the financial resources used in their operation (Government of the State of México, 1992).

To this end, greater participation was conferred to teachers and principals in school administration and management actions, who, organized in the Technical Councils, made collective decisions. This was in contrast to the centralized and hierarchical structure that prevailed, characterized by reduced spaces for the participation and collaboration of the different educational agents in pedagogical decision-making. In 1992, it was said that the Technical Council was *“when a group of teachers meet in their schools to discuss, it shows to a large extent the way in which day-to-day relationships are lived among teachers, with principals, with children and also with parents. These internal management processes in schools are of enormous importance for understanding the quality of the results that each one builds, with the participation of all”* (Fierro & Rojo, 1994). (Fierro & Rojo, 1994, p.6).

The guidelines for the creation of the Technical Councils were generated from the National Agreement for the Modernization of Basic Education, a figure that, in the long term, replaced the National Technical Education Council, which was responsible for the updating of in-service teachers in technical-pedagogical and technical-administrative aspects at the national level, and at the state level, similar bodies operated in each of the federative entities.

“The center of updating... will be located in the technical councils of each school and will involve sector heads, inspectors, school principals, State Education Technical Councils and sector and zone technical councils”. (Government of the State of Mexico, 1992)

With the creation of the National Teaching Career Program, the Technical Councils were strengthened as spaces for the continuous training of in-service teachers, with the purpose of transforming teaching and learning practices. In this context, they constitute a strategy to promote analysis, reflection and collaboration among teachers and principals, allowing them to make decisions close to the context, to the realities of the school and to the learning of students. In this sense, *“teachers’ meetings play an important role in observing the educational scope of the work of a group of teachers when they become an authentic work team. The moments of collegial exchange are an important support for the effort to work together”.* (Fierro & Rojo, 1994, p.6)

The Technical Council, with the enactment of the General Law of the Professional Teaching Service, changes its name to School Technical Council. Given that *“the daily work of teachers, their experience in the classroom and in the school community are processes that require interaction, dialogue among peers and adherence to the applicable provisions. With this vision, the Secretariat of Public Education recovers and strengthens the figure of the School Technical Council, since it is there where challenges are detected and the path is traced towards constant improvement, in which each one has a fundamental role”.* (Mexico. Ministry of Public Education, 2013).

The General Law of the Professional Teaching Service made it possible to establish the normative bases for the evaluation, promotion and recognition of teachers; this fact turned the School Technical Councils into collegiate bodies with the participation of principals and the total number of teachers in the school, whose objective is to analyze academic results, share experiences, design pedagogical strategies, establish goals and make joint decisions to improve the quality of teaching.

From this point of view, the school is understood as *“the heart of the educational system, therefore... it requires the design of a new regulatory framework for school supervision, the administrative discharge of schools and the strengthening of School Technical Councils”.* (Mexico. Secretariat of Public de Education, 2013).

DEVELOPMENT

At the national level, the contributions of Hernández-Cruz (2014), argue the figure of the School Technical Council as a sociability instituted by the Mexican educational system in 2013, the study analyzes the transition from educational reform to reform in the school, understanding it as a learning community; however and at the same time Luna-Guzmán (2020), in his article State of knowledge on the resignification of policies on school management autonomy in the framework of School Technical Councils, points out that the oldest reference identified in Latin

America, is that of Ezpeleta (1990), but it is not a result of empirical research, but rather a theoretical contribution on the importance of the institutional dynamics of schools for pedagogical work.

It is not until 2003 that the first empirical research results are found in Jiménez (2003), with his study on school restructuring and the new patterns of regulation of teaching work, and in Tapia (2003), on the initial state of indigenous education primary schools in the Quality Schools Program.

As mentioned above, the organization of School Technical Councils varies according to the specific needs of each institution; however, they are generally held based on the federal regulatory provisions set forth in the school calendar; regular monthly sessions, extraordinary sessions, and sessions at the beginning or end of the school year are observed; they constitute a space for collaboration and reflection to make the best decisions in order to improve academic processes.

In this sense, Orlor & Abendaño (2009), support the importance of this collegiate body and identify these work interactions as *“a space in which teachers provide different views on students and the teaching and learning processes”* (p.1); therefore, it is required that School Technical Councils establish collegiate work sessions systematically in their organization and that they constitute the strategy through which teachers reflect on their own practice in order to generate new strategies that promote teaching to learn. Therefore, the reflective practice of teachers is a tool that has a favorable impact on professional development and professionalization of the teaching practice, conditioning the identification of strengths and areas of opportunity in the academic processes in which teachers are involved.

Therefore, it is important to redefine how one of the tasks that consolidate the work of the School Technical Councils is the generation of a space for analytical reflection related to the organization and planning of the Annual Work Plan, which considers the approach to the topics that support the curricular decision-making by the teacher; which transcends in the design and organization of the teaching, learning and evaluation process, according to the demands and needs of the students, in interaction with the school, institutional and family community.

It is also emphasized that in the first ones, the teaching collectives analyze the students' progress, exchange pedagogical experiences, plan activities and strategies to improve learning, and review the results of the standardized evaluations in the educational system (diagnostic exam promoted by the National Commission for Educational Improvement, The Early Warning System), which are a set of indicators, tools and procedures that allow teachers and supervisors to have systematic and timely information about students who are at risk of not

achieving the learning objectives set forth in the curriculum for basic education.

Extraordinary sessions are determined by the group of teachers and deal with unforeseen issues related to the school's operation. Finally, there are the sessions at the beginning and end of the school year: they are convened at the beginning and end of the school year to deal with issues related to the continuous training of teachers, the construction of the diagnosis and the design of the action plan that regulates the school's actions, so that at the end of the year the results of the action plan can be evaluated.

The School Technical Council sessions are regulated by the guides provided by *“the Undersecretary of Basic Education makes available to all teachers of initial, special and basic education in its different levels and educational services the work guide”* (Mexico. Secretariat of Public de Education, 2013); these are updated periodically and their content may undergo modifications; the sessions may last half a day and even a full day, it is important to highlight that the organization may vary from one school to another, since each institution has the possibility to adapt them to its needs and specific context.

Some common elements observed among the guides are: they start from a purpose, establish goals to be achieved in the session, point out the importance of School Technical Council, analysis and reflection of academic results, identify areas for improvement and the planning of actions to raise the learning level of students and teachers; propose activities for evaluation and follow-up of the implemented actions; suggest didactic resources for learning, mainly the incorporation of technological tools to the teaching processes, and offer complementary theoretical information to the proposed topics.

These foundations specify the role of the School Technical Councils as spaces for the reflective analysis of teaching practice which has a direct incidence with the generation of self-evaluation and co-evaluation processes, from the results of these evaluation processes, *“the transformation of teachers' work is promoted, since with their process and results knowledge can be mobilized by sharing experiences, points of view, and related conceptions about that work.”* (González et al., 2017)

In this area, School Technical Councils should systematize reflective practice in order to transform and improve daily classroom practice, since reflection consolidates collegial work among colleagues and gradually increases the capacity to innovate in teaching and learning processes (Perrenoud, 2007). To develop the reflective practice of teachers in the context of School Technical Council, it is important to consider the contributions of Domingo & Gómez (2021), when they argue as axes for analysis: personal experience, the professional situation and reflection itself; where experience helps to relearn and consolidate

knowledge in an adequate interaction of theory and practice.

The reflective practice of teachers as a systematic attitude of analysis and assessment of their teaching work in order to design new strategies that can have a positive impact on their teaching. Domingo & Gómez (2021) also mention that reflective practice should rescue the teaching knowledge, should be endorsed to situations, actions and concrete problems and should be linked to action and transcend the classroom space, it should be focused on two areas of the educational process: inside the classroom (teaching activities, curriculum, students and teachers' professional performance) and outside (educational policies, teachers' working conditions, institutional educational projects). Within this same line of thought, the process of teacher reflection consists of several stages: the observation of events or situations experienced; the explanation and critical analysis of the teacher's actions, the contrast between his or her theories, knowledge and beliefs and the difficulties encountered during the teaching and learning process; the identification of difficulties, achievements and lessons learned; the design of new strategies to face new teaching situations, taking into account the relationship between education and the student's environment.

CONCLUSIONS

It is important to point out that from some experiences lived by the author, in the state of Hidalgo, the organization of the School Technical Council goes through different moments, first the central administrative areas (Area Managers) meet with the sector heads, followed by the sector heads with the zone supervisions, in turn, the latter with the school principals, and finally the principals with the group teachers, in this regard Gómez (2019), states that leadership is one of the fundamental elements for the good functioning of the School Technical Council, however, there are multiple leaderships with different interpretations and intentions, which complicates its operation.

In this context, some challenges can be noted: the implementation of change actions in the classroom face the resistance of some teachers; the lack of time of principals and teachers due to administrative burdens; in urban-marginal and marginal communities, the lack of material, technological and financial resources limit the development of improvement activities determined in the School Technical Council; the lack of effective communication in schools, the bureaucratization in the development of School Technical Council sessions; the geographical dispersion of schools, multi-grade schools; among other challenges.

It is also important to consider that the improvement plans defined in the School Technical Council are tools that allow

establishing goals and specific actions for educational improvement and innovation in and from the school, such plans are built with the participation, commitment and collaboration of the different actors of the school. However, they have become an administrative requirement that is far from their true intentions.

In this teamwork body, teachers recognize collegial work as an element that should be privileged for the successful development of the different School Technical Council sessions, but, unfortunately, it is fractured due to the individualistic practices that underlie among the teaching staff, to the weak communication processes among the different actors, to the limited follow-up after the CTE sessions, and to the limited follow-up after the School Technical Council sessions, the limited follow-up after the work sessions, the lack of awareness of the importance of collective work and, in general, the work dynamics of the School Technical Councils is evidently passive, since they wait for the indications of the administrative areas and the publication of the guidelines established by the federation.

It is also important to emphasize that reflective practice should be promoted among teachers in order to improve teaching and promote the autonomy of teachers regarding their practice and the curricular integration demanded in the curriculum of the New Mexican School.

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