If there is no connection, you create no real value

THE APPROACH OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AT AGORA

Rien Spies is a member of the Executive Board of Agora, the foundation for special primary education in Zaandam. He works in his organization for several years with Continuous Improvement, addressing Jay Marino. We asked him about the experience with this approach.

alignment

"Alignment means for us: Are we doing the right things, we do them good? But what defines what are the good things? With this we get the identity of the organization of the school, in the classroom, but also that of the student and the teacher. Shared values are leading. From these values you formulate the outcome of your education. Only then can you work on goals, organize the process and see what you need there. These shared values also determine what you promise to parents, pupils, staff and society. It determines the raison d'être of the school. The

alignment is essential. If there is no connection, coordination and agreement between all levels in the educational organization, you create no real value. Then everything is unclear, employees, parents and students. The mission of the school group, the school and the classroom are in line with each other, derived from one another and aligned. If the supervisor has no idea what is in the relationship between child and teacher is important, there is no can be monitored.

Identification on one page

Agora was the one-page plan (Identity) is a real eye-opener.   The strategic policy 2008-2011 covered 84 pages. It was hard, but no one except the drafters knew really well what it said. The 2011-2015 version had 12 pages. A lot better and there were 1500 printed. In each section the plan came back repeatedly. Every teacher knows him, at least .... In the United States we saw the one page paper plan. It hung in every office, in every school and in every classroom. And everyone we asked for it, knew it. It gave focus and direction to the policy.   The strategic policy of Agora was also translated to one page, and from 2012 we know for sure that all of the 700 employees knows it.

Of course you will work this out in sub-plans.   But that need not be again precisely to anyone of the height. It also depends in 2 x 2 meters in the Chamber. Each director meeting, meeting of the GMR, the Supervisory Board, in each course is visible. Can always be noted: where it went to?

> " *A school plan in Agora the road we go from mission to realize the vision. The processes in between, we send. Clear objectives, SMART formulated follow naturally.* "

Rien Spies
Member of the Executive Board of Agora

shared leadership

The leadership at all levels of Agora important. At the level of the foundation,

in school, in professional learning communities (at school and board level) and in the classroom. Shared leadership, that's the point. However, this does mean that it must be clear who directs shows. Has built a clear structure which is not derived from existing functions, but based on what is needed. The development of the organization is leading. Always focused on the learning of children. "

teacher professionalization

Agora operates, like all governments, to the professionalization of the teacher. It is not about the stack of certificates and diplomas, how important they are at Agora. What we want to achieve is that all employees are autonomous professionals. Nice concept, but what we mean? The professional will firstly confidence. Not only the leadership, but we work too, that the parents give confidence. Here is part of the teacher is very much aware of the great responsibility they bear. The most valuable asset of any parent is entrusted to you, you have to draw everything inside it. Every talent must be developed.

And further, you shall make answer, or better accountability.   You are not paid, because the initiative lies with the teacher. In addition, the professional should work, the right people around him to deploy and schools continuously. Only then will the necessary culture of trust.

Agora has a master HRM.   Consisting of the teachers register, competence dossier calls cycle, the dossier et cetera. But the heart is the activity that leads to the professional culture. Every teacher we speak to them, we take them, we share, we ask for help and commitment, we ask for feedback.

PLG

Agora has been working for some time with professional learning communities (plg's). We believe that the professional should be able to work in an environment that requires him to be professional. An environment that challenges the teacher questioning, to work together and share. The five disciplines Senge should always be the starting point, but need not necessarily be always visible. They are the leaven in each plg.

Essentially in a plg goes bad for three things: P: act professionally, L: learning by working, G: with others. In a plg it always goes to a research question. Which need not be complicated, but if there is no demand, then no plg.

At school level, analyze plg at Agora small groups in which three to five teachers together with data education in their assigned groups and evaluating the process. They formulate goals, make plans, hypothesize and again studied and stored after the execution. This creates a PDSA cycle (Plan-Do-Study-Act). That is the main tool of any plg: this is based on data and focusing on results.

Supra-school Agora has fourteen themed plg's.   These always consist of an inner circle of three to six people and an outer circle of about thirty people. They have

two tasks: research and knowledge, and organizing training sessions, meetings and the like. We started with the top administrative PLG along with other governments and research institutions. Some PLG are linked to professorships.

Aligning goals at all levels

Agora we started the alignment itself.   As was quickly called on everyone realize that the tuning and aligning goals and visions is essential. Please, we experienced even begin immediately. The lotus chart is a handy model. All the elements are to perform both administrative and school level and at the level of the group.