

# Summary

The title "Let's Fly a Kite" symbolizes a joint endeavor undertaken by school people and facilitator to diagnose the current state of a school using a developmental model shaped like a kite.

The kite results from sustained research programs linked to application and field development in the Netherlands for almost twenty years (De Caluwé, Marx, Petri, 1988). The focus of the developmental model represented by the kite is the interconnectedness of educational and organizational characteristics of a secondary school. Five models, each representing the educational and organizational structures of a school are positioned in an area defined by two continuums: 1) differentiation and integration; and, 2) mechanistic and organic coordination. The five models represent prototypical situations. In reality, schools may differ from the prototypical models in many respects and many schools' actual descriptions may lie between two or more models or scattered across the kite. A diagnostic tool has been developed to determine the particular position of a school. The application and improvement of this instrument is the subject of this study.

The fundamental reason for performing this study is the personal and continuing concern of a facilitator trying to match his theories, insights and experiences to the needs of the school. The school is considered to be a client system having concerns, goals and strivings of its own, and these may lead it to seek outside assistance dealing with its problems. The relationship of a facilitator with the client magnifies the relationship between theory and practice, and this has to be resolved by both parties in order to serve the client best.

This study has two goals: 1) to improve the diagnostic tool and the method of using it; and, 2) to provide insight into the diagnostic technique.

Three fundamental questions must be answered:

1. What are the results of a diagnosis as determined by the school?
2. How can this instrument be improved?
3. Is there a way to transfer the method and process of this diagnosis?

The study has been performed in a "real life situation" for both facilitator and school and, in doing so, the basic concern of linking

theory and practice has been dealt with. This dual approach i.e., helping the schools and wanting to improve the method of diagnosis involves two levels:

1. The process of diagnosing a single school by means of a research based instrument and an external facilitator,
2. The situations of the schools as a whole with the facilitator directing his role toward a research orientation.

### *The basics of this study*

Five case-studies provide the basis for this book. Each case-study describes the diagnosis-process of a school that requested assistance in examining its own situation. The schools were not approached by the facilitator for research purposes.

Chapter 1 'Development of the models' gives a personal and historical account of the process and factors that contributed to the development of the kite. The influence of the nation-wide experiments with comprehensive secondary education in the seventies is articulated. The importance of the educational and organizational models for traditional education, as originated by Marx, is shown. In both views the developmental approach is prominent and the merger of both appears to be a logical step.

The second focus is the application and use of the models. Starting with the purpose to understand schools-in-development better, the models soon came to serve as a frame of reference enabling schools to better understand and judge their situation and to discuss further development. Ultimately the models are being shaped as a diagnosis instrument whose use is to determine the placement of a school in the developmental area of the kite. Using the diagnosis instrument made it more important to pay attention to the context of the school and to view the school as a client system.

Chapter 2 'The instrument' describes the two parts of the instrument used in this study: 1) the components of the educational and organizational models, and, 2) the procedure to execute the diagnosis. This chapter is an excerpt from a previous book that provides schools with an orientation to the models and outlines the benefits of doing a diagnosis (Petri, 1990).

Chapter 3 'Methodology' deals with a number of issues concerning the methodological status of this study. The essence of the study is the

facilitator being asked to assist the school in diagnosing its situation. This implies that there is no experimental situation created by a researcher. The diagnosis is done within the framework of the school and its need to clarify the situation and to get a better view of ways to develop. Five situations (one consisting of two schools to be merged) were selected from the thirteen studies performed in order to represent a variety of schooltypes, aims of the diagnosis as stated by the school, and factual processes.

### *Diagnosis and diagnostic tool*

School diagnosis is defined as a means to determine the difference between the current state of a school and the goals or values envisioned by a school. The diagnosis may result in a change effort but it function as a "diagnosis as such", and is not necessarily a part of a developmental process. It is argued that a clear distinction between the roles of the school people and the external facilitator is necessary and that during the process reflection is needed to safeguard this distinction. The diagnostic tool consists of two parts:

1. a chart of five educational and organizational models, their components and specific values; and,
2. a procedure involving several steps in which the interaction between participants is crucial.

A diagnostic assessment program is designed based on the instrument and the specific needs of the client-school. The interactive nature of the process and contextual information may cause differences in the way the diagnostic process as a whole will develop in a specific school.

### *Interactive diagnosis*

The necessity to respond to the clients' needs and the starting point of using a research-based tool requires a highly interactive process. The school has to learn the "language game" of the instrument in order to obtain a clear and fresh view of its situation. The facilitator helps to match the educational/organizational "language game" to the "language game" of the client-school in order to promote assimilation of both. Interactive diagnosis is done through the process of collecting data by the participants of the school. This is a group activity to reach understanding and consensus. The interaction is prominent in the feedback sessions where data are discussed to obtain a meaningful and shared picture of the school and where any discrepancies are evaluated. The facilitator must match his interpretation to the views and context of the school.

An interactive diagnosis consists of four actions:

1. design of the diagnostic assessment program;
2. data collecting;
3. interpretation of data; and,
4. evaluation.

### *Case-study*

The context and the diagnostic process are described in a case-study. It is a rich and relevant means to collect data (from schools) in order to explore theories in social science. It is argued that the case studies described offer valid information on a diagnostic process because the main focus is to serve and assist the client and the client therefore is willing to cooperate. Facilitator and client share interests and ultimately the client will benefit from the diagnostic tool.

### *A bridge between clinical and statistical knowledge*

The orientation of this study on natural (and particularly on clinical situations) in which clients are taking the initiative and requesting something from a facilitator, raises the question of whether it can be considered legitimate scientific data. Schein (1993) views this "clinical research" as an extension of action research based on the Kurt Lewin assumption that one cannot understand a human system without trying to change it. It is linked to ideas of "grounded theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and phenomenological discovery, and is in sharp contrast with the prevailing paradigm of quantitative and statistical methods. In our view, based on the synthesis expressed by Van Strien (1986), both ways of accumulating knowledge should be brought together. The diagnostic process of the "Kite" is based on empirical research and on the understanding (the German "verstehen") of a particular situation. The process is enhanced by the interaction of the client (who brings in contextual data and reflects on the values of the tool) and the facilitator (who explores the data from the tool and the contextual information). Alternately, this process can be seen as the confrontation of the "language games" of both parties sharing the goal to obtain a clear and valid portrait of the school. The merger of both paths to knowledge in a particular situation produces context-related knowledge which can be used to improve the situation of the client and the diagnostic program. Moreover, it can be used to invoke new insights into organizational theories of schools.

Chapter 4 'Case studies' gives five descriptions of schools involved in a diagnostic process. It begins with a description of the context, the needs

of the school, the diagnostic program and an account of what occurred. The interpretation of the data are a major portion of each case-study as are the conclusions and evaluations. Each case-study includes a compact predictive description based on the diagnostic process.

Chapter 5 'Results' focuses on the results of the diagnostic process as seen by the school. It is based on (rather open) interviews at the school with the participants of the diagnosis held approximately eight months after finishing the diagnosis. In considering the interview data and the diagnostic process of each school we found six factors relevant to the results:

1. initial need of the school;
2. sample of participants being involved in the diagnosis;
3. schools' view of the role of the facilitator;
4. assimilation of language games; and,
5. contextual factors;
6. position on the "kite".

In four out of five case-study situations the goals of the schools have been attained; in one situation the goals were not met. In the four situations participants claimed to have gotten a better insight in their school and to be able to design more valid strategies for further development. In the one school without desired results only individual learning took place which could not be connected with the functioning of the school. In three situations the school leadership initiated factual improvements in the functioning of the organization.

Chapter 6 'Improvement of the diagnostic tool' provides a description of activities and information that lead to the improvement of the charts (models, components and values) and of the diagnostic procedure. It is a mixture of clinical observation, formal evaluation, experts' opinions and theoretical reflection and research contributing to the new tool. Extensive changes in the charts resulted. The changes in the assessment procedure mainly reflect the enhanced flexibility of the original procedure. The emphasis on reflection and learning is expressed in a more articulated "step by step" procedure, borrowed from the American version of the tool (Petri & Burkhardt, 1992).

The changes in the charts are more profound, especially in the educational models. This is due to the fact that new legislation related to the first phase of secondary education required a different focus ("basisvorming") which made comprehensive background of the

educational models less valid. Moreover, the educational components needed clearer distinctions (more specificity) and some theoretical updating. The organizational models and components were not as greatly affected by the new legislation and the main improvements are found in the descriptors of the values of the components.

Chapter 7 'Interpretation: magic or tailor-made' clarifies the interpretation of the data. Interpretation (action 3 in the diagnostic process) consists of three sub-actions:

1. positioning the data in the "kite";
2. exploring and explaining the position; and,
3. determining the discrepancies.

The three sub-actions are illustrated by a narrative introspection of the facilitator; the interpretation is focused on the concept of a "dominant model". It is assumed that a single school has a tendency to relate to one model more than the others and the interpretation starts with a search for this model. In this process the data, especially the conflicting ones, have to be judged and evaluated against this assumption and this may result in the schools' more balanced position on the kite. Attention is paid to the specific relation of the models to the contextual factors of the school. The interpretation is done independently for both the educational and organizational models, but the results of both will be connected to provide the overall picture of the school. The interaction between participants and facilitator is highlighted in all sub-actions of the interpretation process. An interpretation strategy concludes this chapter.

Chapter 8 'More to say about the case studies' explores and expands on the information and the experiences of working with the schools. Three points are discussed. First, the mixture of models in each school draws attention since there is not one school with a consistent educational and organizational model. The explanations or interpretations are related to the types of mixtures expressed:

1. students' guidance and counseling is accountable for the mixture in four cases;
2. setting model (different ability levels) determines the mixture in two schools;
3. school leadership causes a mixture of models in three cases;
4. size of the school (small) makes a specific kind of mixture in two cases;
5. subject departments cause a mixture in one school.

The mixtures of models in a school may be explained by the different orientations of the people in the school and the influence of parents (sometimes focused on attention for their children, sometimes focused on achievement). Differences are contingency factors which shape the organization (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1969). Another way to explain the mixture is through the perspective of development, i.e., a school that has expressed a wish to develop its educational processes first needs organizational structures to support this change. Often this is reflected in the position of the school leadership and in a shift in coordination mechanisms.

Secondly, attention was also drawn to the difference between the position of the schools on the kite before and after the interpretation. The ambiguity of the value statements defining the components has been responsible for much variation of the scores, but it is argued not to be the main cause. According to Argyris & Schön (1978) people in organizations can share an "espoused theory" to explain the functioning of the organization: this contradicts observable/objective phenomena or the "theory-in-use". Individual "espoused theory" will be discussed and sorted out in the interaction process of data collecting, but the collective (cultural) views are not. It is the facilitator who can question the collective theory by providing his interpretation of the data and expressing his doubts related with some scores. The emerging discussion and reflection can shed another light on the functioning of the school and move the school to another position on the kite.

Thirdly, the results lead to the learning organization. In our case studies the individual participants stated that they learned from the diagnostic process. But only in three schools actions were taken (by the school leadership) as a consequence. The characteristics of the organization in the other three schools were not suitable for actions or supportive of the perspective of change. So individual learning does not automatically lead to organizational learning, and it is concluded that there are more conditions to be fulfilled in order to make the shift from individual learning to organizational learning. Theoretically, the innovative/unit model is valued as a learning organization.