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The Long Struggle to Turn around an Inhumane, Corrupt, Paramilitary School Specialized for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties

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This case study examines a series of events that took place in West Germany at a specialized school for students with emotional and social needs. ...

Keywords

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Description

This case study examines a series of events that took place in West Germany at a specialized school for students with emotional and social needs. It focuses on a struggle lasting several years that was waged in this school and its environment to put an end to an inhumane, corrupt, paramilitary leadership, school culture and pedagogy. Some one thousand pages of text as well as media contributions from both TV and radio were evaluated and supplemented with interviews for the study. Analysis of these materials reveals the tight linkage between professional incompetence, human character deficits, intrigues, power struggles and micropolitical processes in a school and among the authorities supervising it. Additionally, it illustrates the shortcoming in German education law, which makes scant provision for firing professionally unqualified individuals from school administrative positions. Further, the detailed change strategies deployed are distilled into an effective overall change strategy that relies on highly principled and action-oriented individuals inside the school working together with the same type of individual outside the school. Ultimately, after some 5 ½ years, it succeeded in removing the principal from office thus clearing the way for long-overdue pedagogical reforms. The implications of these findings are relevant to preservice teacher training, leadership preparation programs, continuing professional development as well as potential revision of administrative procedures relating to the appointment and removal of school administrators

Responsible

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