

Change management of Germany's public IT-project for feedback management in schools (SEIS)

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Abstract: With more than 1,400,000 returned questionnaires, Self Evaluation In Schools (SEIS) is the largest feedback management project for German schools including more than 5,700 institutions. The individual software is a full-hybrid system enabling online, paper and mixed evaluations. It delivers various reports, time series and other products enabling to improve the internal quality management. The project has been started in 2004 by the Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008 taken over by a public consortium, from 08/2013 to be continued separately by several federal states.

1 Introduction

SEIS has been started in 2004 by the Bertelsmann Stiftung, since 2008 the project was hosted by a consortium of seven federal states, the German schools abroad and the German-speaking Community in Belgium. From August 2013 on, each of the project partners will host the system individually for itself, as no basis for prolonging the state contract has been found up to now. The project is a prominent example for change management and public-private-partnerships in the field of e-government.

2 The project

The system comprises the feedback of different perspectives, usually at least students, teachers and parents are interviewed. Additional items for interviewing the non-teaching staff (as secretary, caretaker) and in case of a vocational school also the practical trainers are included. The items are translated in ten languages including English, French, Turkish, Russian, Bosnian, Spanisch, Portuguese, Italian, Greek and Polish. Assistance for Arabic speaking parents is given.

Recent upgrades of the item sets now includes the up-to-date topic of inclusion, been brought up as a consequence of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities demanding to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels. As second

topic, questions of full-time schooling now can also be covered. This includes on the one hand side additional questions covering the relevant needs, on the other hand side the technical framework to contrast the results of part-time with full-time students and parents, finally introducing the staff for afternoon courses as new perspective.

With a fiscal view, SEIS is an example, how a close cooperation between several federal states can reduce costs by using the economies of scale. A public consortium has been brought up in order to operate an office, give support to the customers and to maintain the system. The federal state of lower saxony acts as administrative and fiscal host for the project. The other project partners reimburse their part of the costs and govern the strategic adjustment on a regular basis.

3 Lessons learned

Meanwhile, the question of self evaluation has lost the political priority it has had some years ago. This resulted in difficulties of bringing the consortium together for another five years, bridging different political constellations within the federal states. Finally, from August 2013 on, every project partner will continue the work on his own. This will make it impossible to continue the high standard of qualified support for the customers and increase the costs. Moreover the large data pool covering different school forms in many regions of Germany will break up.

The project has shown, that feedback management is an important module of quality management in education. As education is usually one of the largest public budgets, controlling of this budget should be of major interest. Technically it has shown, that a full-hybrid system is still necessary to do so, as online interviews of parents resulted in break-down of the returns from around 85 % to 45 %, decreasing the reliability of the data. Feedback management should always be able to address all relevant segments of customers, so the parents should not be locked out.

The trend in other sectors advises to enhance the system in order to integrate multidimensional data in order to improve the analytical value. As the consortium can not carry out this task any more, a more flexible approach should be used, integrating the standard software already in use of the administrative bodies. Efforts for automated document solutions and feedback management within the federal authorities should be brought together in order to reduce costs and improve quality.

References

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