

Investigation into planning and managing in schools: Templates and frameworks for delegations and/or specific initiatives.

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Executive Summary:

This sabbatical has allowed me to reflect on research findings and follow up on work I have been doing with templates for school management after a PDPC centre experience in June 2008.

Purpose:

To investigate the planning and management of schools, and how templates for delegations/or and specific initiatives can be used to improve school management.

To have time to reflect on educational management and the philosophy that is behind them.

To research the various types of management models available to use as a Change Management tool in a school setting.

To investigate how templates and frameworks for delegations and/or specific initiatives can be made that best suit the purpose they are to be used for.

To reduce the accountability paper trails that are required to track various projects that are happening within the school.

Background:

In the New Zealand education system as it is presently set up schools are more and more required to take on new work but we are not seeing anything taken away that we should not do. This is creating an environment that is not sustainable. This is leading to the New Zealand school system going into overload. What is more frightening for our pupils is that most of this new work is not directly linked to improved pupil learning. These government and **Error! Contact not defined.** initiatives are required to be undertaken by schools and are applied in a broad-brush approach to get those schools not performing, up to standard. The downside of this is all schools are required to carry these changes. Should our policy makers look closely at this, I think so. If they don't it is like punishing the whole class for one person's bad behaviour. With this background in mind principals' must effectively manage the educational setting they are in so they can give pupils the best deal they can.

In our role as principal of a school we are required to know and continue learning different management methods and have structures in place that allow us to carry out many different functions. We are required to monitor and report on these functions and this can be a time consuming job. There can be many different reasons for reporting about the same project and we must look to work smarter on the how we do this. Let us take the annual student learning targets for example. We need to report to our community, Board of Trustees, Ministry of Education and the staff and students within our school. This requires us to report in different formats for each of the audiences thus complicating the process. This process needs to be in the same format for each group to keep it simple but we must be able to produce a different commentary where necessary for each group.

This type of situation arises in schools many times over for many different reasons and we are being over burdened with the accountability paper war. This accountability paper war needs to be made easier or totally done away with. It does not mean we are not accountable. It just means we have got to get rid of unnecessary paper work. The purpose of my investigating is to try and achieve this.

The idea was sparked when I identified at my visit to the PDPC centre last year this area of template usage as being one of my areas for

development. This I hoped would allow me to be more effective as a professional leader within the school. To do this I needed to have more professional leadership time and less management commitments.

Activities undertaken:

Complete my PDPC programme plan with visits from my mentor at least twice during this programme implementation time.

On returning to school following the PDPC part of my plan included securing a mentor. I successfully secured the services of Peter Grant (Consultant) and this certainly helped me to complete the objectives I had set in my professional development plan. This gave me six months with my mentor to work on a change management model and to start a trial using it. Appendix (Flowchart ChangeMan, Management of Change). We were also able to investigate some templates that could be used for management purposes. The areas of interest for me were specifically the New Curriculum and the extra units our school would receive over 2009 and 2010.

To trial Management of Change model within the school that staff can adopt when investigating a new initiative or an issue.

It was decided to introduce the new model for change management to staff at a staff meeting. This was to allow discussion and to explain that a trial would be run to see if the model would work or did it need further modification or was there a better method to handle change. We may also need further training on how to use the model if we were to adopt it for any future changes at the school. During this discussion the staff could see that the most important implication was that it meant all personal agendas could be dealt with on a professional basis, as they were included in the cycle as part of the process.

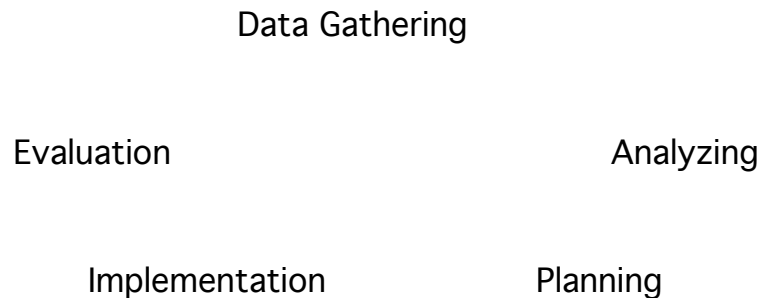
The model was to be trialled by the staff on a couple of simple issues so we could see if it would work or if it required some modifications. One of these trials involved reviewing our new staffroom usage and tidiness. Appendix (Action Plan Staffroom).

Findings:

Review research readings for School Management and a Change Management Model that would most benefit our school.

The Change Management model we presently used was based on a simple formula that Prebble & Stewart (1993) suggested was the best to use for school development. This was used with the staff without having any professional development on how to use it. All recent research suggests that this will cause many implementation issues and you will not get the best results.

The model below shows the Prebble & Stewart model steps. We used this change management process and in many cases this worked well.



New research however has added to this model by including the areas of Professional Development, Risks and Barriers and a Reporting area. The placement in the cycle of these added areas has made refinements to the model. The other important finding was that everyone should have ownership of the process and know what his or her role is in the process. Fullan (1993) also stated there is usually an “implementation dip” that “things often get worse temporarily before they improve”. This statement is still relevant to the modified model. As stated above we embarked on a trial of the model using the staffroom as a focus.

Modified Management of Change model

Identify Issue

Gather Data

- What data?
- Why

- Quality, sufficiency
- Plan
 - Use school template
 - Specific
 - Based on data objective / s
- P.D.
 - Professional Development
 - Can we provide it internally?
 - Who needs to be involved?
- Risks / Barriers
 - Look for vested interest in status quo
 - Balance other change, too much
- Implementing
 - Template
 - Timeframes realistic
 - Delegations possible
- Review
 - Review against set criteria
 - What do we need to do?
 - Consolidate progress to date
 - Do we need to further explore the issue?
- Report
 - Is there sufficient paper trail that shows process and outcomes.

See Appendix (Flowchart ChangeMan) for the new Change Management model.

The most important new area is professional development, this has always been an implied part of the old process but it now has become a focus area because if you want to progress change the participants involved must have the skills required to carry this out. These skills may take the form of a particular skill set or learning a new process. When the planning stage is happening the professional development area needs to be focused on and included. The staff selected need to be aware of the skills required and new skills they will learn while being involved with the new initiative. Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) 2007 concludes that the best PD

takes place when the following conditions apply:

- 1 Where leaders are actively involved and participate and promote the initiative.
- 2 Focus on the skill or process that is to be learned.
- 3 Focus on developing a supportive learning culture within the school where all involved are learners.
- 4 To create conditions for distributed leadership, where other staff can be developed as leaders.
- 5 Provide time for the PD to take place.
- 6 The expectation is that all teachers/staff will be engaged in the learning process at some point.

All of these conditions must be included when implementing the professional development programme for it to bring about the best results.

Change has a hard and soft side to it and schools usually do the soft side well. This soft side includes; culture, leadership and motivation. These elements are important for success, but managing these alone isn't sufficient to successfully implement a new initiative. We must also focus on the hard side. Sirkin, (2005). This recent research indicates that the hard side of change management is made up of the following components:

- 1 The ***duration*** of time until the change programme is completed if it has a short life span, if not short, the amount of time between reviews of milestones.
- 2 The project team's performance ***integrity***; that is, its ability to complete the initiative on time. That depends on member's skills and traits relative to the project's requirements.
- 3 The ***commitment*** to change that top management and employees affected by the change display.
- 4 The ***effort*** over and above the usual work that the change initiative demands of employees.

In the research they call these four factors the DICE (Duration, Integrity, Commitment and Effort) factors. These DICE factors can be used to work out how well any change many go and it can help in the barriers/mitigations section of the cycle to minimize or remove some of these issues. You can also work out a DICE rating to see how well the

initiative many be carried through. For further information I suggest you read the Sirkin article.

Schools have worked on the soft change factors mainly in the past and have become very proficient at doing this. Now we need to look at the DICE factors as part of our cycle and factor these in.

As part of the reporting area the templates have proved to be a great way to track and report new initiatives.

During the development and collection of these templates different ones were trialed depending on the type of initiative, and also depended on the areas of delegation, review and reporting required.

The very simple templates had three sections only they could have others added if required.

These sections were named:

Responsibilities

Actions

Outcomes

Reporting (added depending on the project).

Two other templates were developed that served the purpose of managing different types of initiatives. The naming of the columns can be anything you want. I have listed the sections we used below for two of our initiatives and we found these to be very good. We used the first one for the Staffroom initiative and the second for the New Curriculum.

These sections were named:

How/What

When

Who

Outcome

Review

These sections were named:

Aspect

Time

Goals

Actions

Expected Outcomes

Delegation/s
Reporting
Comment
Barriers (could be included if needed)

We found that when you write what goes in the column that it was very important to be specific as this helped all parties involved. The language used if it was an action would include a verb. The time taken to get these parts right saved us time later as specific goals were being reported on.

Implications:

The Management of Change model process followed by staff was the most important part of this process as they now own the model and can use it when necessary. We do need to go back and look at the structure of the model each time it is used and be quite specific about following the cycle. This makes sure that all personal agendas are placed to the side while not being forgotten. During the cycle there are places that address most of these issues and these tend to be in the PD and the barriers areas.

This then allowed us to get on with the real business, the new initiative.

The templates have enabled us to better manage the projects that are being carried out in the school. We have been able to utilize these for keeping the board informed about what is happening and how each initiative or project is progressing. When asked about the templates the board felt that they were better informed about the projects because they could easily monitor them. They could clearly see what had been happening and if there needed to be any amendments made. In this way the board could ask for further information or be asked for further support and see clearly why it was needed. A good example of this is the New Curriculum implementation plan template. Appendix (Curriculum review Plan Dec 200809-1).

The more templates we made up the more we were able to refine them for the job they were being designed for. I would even go so far as suggest that the annual reporting cycle for the MOE could be put on a one page document, the student learning could be attached as a separate

document as this is the most important part. This would certainly simplify something that we all do in different ways.

This work has definitely made a difference to how we record what is happening in the school. Our ability to report simply at various stages has been made easier and it keeps everyone informed. When a new template is required each section can be modified and improved depending on what reports many need written for this initiative.

Conclusions:

With the inclusion of these two new management tools in our repertoire we are more able to manage the initiatives happening in our school. This can only be positive from the management teams perspective and the other members of our school community are better informed about what is happening. ICT has played a huge part in making this possible because you can quickly develop new formats to suit whatever you are doing and save them for future use. These can be retrieved and modified for similar projects in the future.

More time can now be spent on the principal's role as a professional leader within the school. I have been actually able to have a more inclusive management style and delegate projects to more staff members who are very capable of carrying them out. The extra units schools now have at their disposal has also made a significant difference to being able to delegate more responsibility to other staff, we have the ability to pay people for this, we all know it is not just dependent on money but also time.

It took a year to carrying out these relatively minor initiatives but the time involved will be more than saved in the future. Fullan was certainly right when he stated, you will go into a trough before you learn the new skills. I now believe my role of Principal has been made a little simpler. The work carried out leading up to the sabbatical has improved our school's capacity to operate new initiatives. This was certainly evident when we had our recent ERO review and they could quickly see what our plans were and how they were being monitored.

The management of change model and the templates are available for you to copy and change at your leisure, see the appendix.

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Appendix