Secondary Senior Manager Sabbatical Report

Title: Measuring the effectiveness of collaborative, inter-school interventions for managing 'at risk' students in Invercargill secondary schools

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Acknowledgements:

Executive summary

This report investigates how best to define, measure, record and report on effectiveness in the context of the Invercargill Student Support Network (ISSN). The investigation included a literature review of evaluation methodologies and research into other models of collaborative educational programmes for at-risk students and how they measure effectiveness. An effectiveness framework for the ISSN has been suggested for consideration.

Main findings:
1. In order to assess effectiveness there needs to be a clear understanding of what effect or difference is trying to be achieved.
2. There is a range of evaluation methodologies and a comprehensive evaluation framework involves a range of evaluation methods.
3. Each evaluation methodology has its own parameters about what it measures and how it is measured, which brings advantages and disadvantages for each methodology. It is important to understand these limitations before selecting a methodology.
4. New Zealand organisations which run similar programmes to the ISSN use a range of methodologies and there is little in common between them, except for the methods required by contractual obligations.
5. It is recommended that the ISSN uses for its effectiveness framework the Results Based Accountability (RBA) methodology. This would keep the ISSN in line with current and projected MOE requirements, would enable existing evaluation methods to be incorporated and would provide sufficient flexibility to incorporate the different programmes and services of the ISSN. It should also be feasible financially and logistically.

Purpose, Background, Rationale

The Invercargill Student Support Network (ISSN) is an Invercargill secondary schools initiative to provide more effective interventions for at-risk students that attend the six local schools. At-risk students are defined as (i) those who are stood-down or suspended; (ii) students who are clients of CYF, mental health agencies, Youth Aid or related agencies; (iii) or are likely to fit either category (i) or (ii).

An evaluation of the ISSN was conducted by external evaluators in 2011. One of the recommendations was to "be explicit in establishing measurable outcomes that can then be used to achieve the programme's intent. This will provide stakeholders and staff with a clear strategic direction to guide programme

development….can also be used to inform self-review and to enable the ISSN to demonstrate the social return it is achieving". In addition, although there is currently some anecdotal and qualitative measure of success combined with some data measurement, there is a need for a more robust empirical measure of effectiveness and an internally agreed framework and measures of effectiveness.

The purpose of the sabbatical was to undertake an investigation into how best to define, measure, record and report on effectiveness and to develop an effectiveness framework that supports the vision of the ISSN.

Methodology

The investigation involved:

(i)   a literature review of evaluation methodologies

(ii)   research into other New Zealand models of collaborative educational programmes for at-risk students and how they measure effectiveness

(iii)   the investigation and choice of an effectiveness framework for the ISSN that can be further developed

Findings

i.   Literature review of evaluation methodologies

A paper by Simon Hager-Forde, *Literature Review of Evaluation Methods and Methodologies* prepared in 2012 for Community Waitakere is an overview of evaluation methodologies. In it, the author looked at eight specific evaluation methods suitable for small community development organisations interested in developing their own evaluation frameworks.

Hager-Forde made some pertinent observations:

(p.5) "Evaluation in its simplest form is about understanding the effect and impact of a whole organisation…as a practice it is not so simple…in order to assess impact we need to be clear at the beginning what effect or difference we are trying to achieve…it offers insight into the impact programmes and services have on high level principles and more specific outcomes and goals".

(p 8/9) "Comprehensive evaluation frameworks involve a range of evaluation activities to assess different aspect of the organisation"

There are three types of evaluation – all use quantitative and qualitative data

1. Formative: undertaken at the development stage of a programme or service to inform programme design and review (This was undertaken by various people in the lead up to the formation of the ISSN).

2. Process: tracks how a programme or service is doing , documenting what actually happens (this occurs in the ISSN Annual Report and other reports prepared throughout the year)

3. Outcome/summative and impact evaluation: has the programme or service done what it was designed to do. Impact evaluation is more interested in short and medium term effects, whereas outcome evaluation is done at critical or end points to assess long term effects. (Impact evaluation is what is not done well by the ISSN currently.)

The following table summarises key methodologies and their advantages and limitations:

Methodology	What it measures	Advantages and Limitations	Comments in relation to ISSN
1.Appreciative Inquiry A process rich methodology that uses a questioning framework to elicit current strengths in a programme or organisation. Seeks to affirm and build on those, as opposed to focusing on problem areas.	Current strengths and capacity (the positives and areas that are working well)	Flexible approach that can be applied to programme or whole organisation Will require "questions"/discussion to be well facilitated Given its flexibility, organisations can choose the level of intensity and therefore the time and financial resources required	Annual SWOT analysis of Connect two, Fresh start, activities centre and attendance service conducted by staff to inform any changes to the programmes in the coming year
2.Empowerment Evaluation Internally led, rather than external expert led process Strong focus on meaningful participation of all stakeholders in evaluation, including staff at all levels, funders, clients, community members.	Progress against mission and vision of an organisation through assessing progress against goals using agreed indicators/measures	Flexible approach that can be applied to programme or whole organisation Will require evaluation expertise which may need to be sourced externally, but should not be positioned as the evaluation leader, rather 'critical friend'. To be done well, needs to be an on-going process, requiring a change in the way the organisation operates.	Some attempt to assess progress against goals, but not linked to workshop style data. ISSN does try and involve most stakeholders (Students, parents, schools, staff) in evaluating the different programmes.
3.Social Value Broad concept (rather than specific methodology) interested in the social value programmes have on people's wellbeing, connection and participation in decision making	What sort of difference is being made and how much of a difference is being made	Value is not an objective fact and many social value metrics fail because they assume value is objective Measuring social value is challenging due to complexity Not useful to adopt it as an all in one method of evaluation	This would appear to be what is wanted by stakeholders, but its limitations would make less useful as a methodology for the ISSN.
4.Social Capital Interested in the quality of networks and relationships people have and the economic, social and community value they can provide.	The quality and value of social connections, networks and relationships and the impact they have in getting economic, community or social value.	Not likely to work at programme level, and could also be problematic at an organisational level To be done well, it is likely to require a range of community development organisations in an area collaborating	Given that the ISSN is supposed to provide a multi-agency approach, this would initially appear to be a worthwhile methodology. However the indicators are that it would be difficult to implement at an organisational level.
5.Social Return on Investment (SROI) Tells the story of how change is	The value of social benefits compared to the costs of achieving those	Will require either well trained staff in SROI methods or external experts	Looks like this would deliver the story of the impact of the ISSN, but it would require significant financial and
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6.Outcomes Based Evaluation Systems of planning and evaluation that are most interested in assessing the result of what a service, organisation or programmes achieves for the intended audience, client group or community Most interested in outcomes rather than the inputs and outputs required to get there	Impact of programme activities on desired outcome Focused on tracking changes to people, communities or organisations over time Flow on alignment to other key organisational functions: -Reporting -staff development -funder accountability	Requires organisational commitment at every level and some protected time to develop and discuss outcomes, indicators and activities For best results, using external facilitation for workshops to develop core components of RBA or logic models is recommended Considering the popularity of both RBA and Programme Logic, there are many external resources (including models and worksheets) and resource people available to assist groups Regular, good quality data will be required	This would appear to be a worthwhile methodology to implement - It would assess what the programmes achieve for students at risk - Alignment to reporting, staff development and funder accountability - Is becoming the preferred method by the government for managing their contracts
7.Scorecards and Dashboards Primarily interested in measuring organisational performance Gives a snapshot of how an organisation is doing, against a set of domains	Data that acts as a meaningful metric of performance across key domains like mission, financial, donors, clients and processes	Most suitable for whole organisation evaluation, as opposed to programme specific or community wide evaluations Time intensive and uses quantitative data only and limited in its ability to measure longer term social outcomes	Could be useful as part of the evaluation framework by providing regular data on agreed indicators
8.Developmental Evaluation Process of evaluation that is more interested in evaluation as an adaptive learning exercise, rather than an accountability exercise	Real-time feedback on programmes and services, with a focus on generating learning and service/programme development	Requires developmental evaluator/s to come into the programme or organisation to lead the evaluation Has a focus on learning, therefore requiring organisational commitment to on-going learning and development	This would appear to be what happens on a regular basis using the ERO indicators for Activities Centre and AE. However it does not actually measure impact.

Other research/papers about measuring effectiveness include:

Building your measurement Framework: NPC's Four Pillar Approach by Anne Kazimirski and David Pritchard, June 2014. A model of outcomes based evaluation, the Four Pillar Approach is a process to build an effective measurement framework. Key to this is distinguishing between understanding what you aim to achieve and how to measure that change. The four steps are:

i.   Map your theory of change: a map of how an organisation, service or project intends to deliver its desired outcome, setting out the causal links between your activities and your end goal.

ii.   Prioritise what you measure: prioritise the most important outcomes and focus on measuring those

iii.   Choose your level of evidence: the level of evidence will depend on the needs of your stakeholders

iv.   Select your sources and tools: decide what data you need and select or develop measurement tools or data sources to capture it.

Results Based Accountability^{TM} (RBA) was developed by Mark Friedman, author of *Trying Hard is Not Good Enough*. It is an outcomes based management framework and is used internationally and in New Zealand across a wide range of sectors. RBA is incorporated into the contracts framework that the government uses to procure services as the mechanism to support an increased focus on outcomes in government contracting. This will include in the future the Attendance Service and Alternative Education funding.

There are three key concepts:
i.   2 types of accountability: population and performance
ii.   3 types of performance measures
iii.   7 questions to enable stakeholders to identify the means linked to achieving agreed ends

NZ Navigator is a free on-line self-assessment tool that has been developed for New Zealand community organisations to help them review nine different aspects of their organisation's operation: Direction, Governance, Leadership, People, Administration, Finances, Communication, Evaluation, Relationships. It is focussed on building strong and effective organisations and communities. Once an assessment is completed a report is generated with charts, scores, feedback and resources (including an action plan) to assist to further develop the organisation. Because the tool is self-administered, it presents an opportunity for groups to be open and honest about key aspects of their organisation. It also provides a benchmark for future evaluation and any two assessments can be compared to see the progress made. The results can also demonstrate the work being done to funders/stakeholders and highlight those areas where some organisational development activity can be supported. This is basically a scoreboard/dashboard methodology of evaluation.

Evaluating to Understand is a planning, monitoring and evaluating process published by the Barefoot Collective which is committed to community based change. This process follows the view that "evaluations are not always strategic or innovative. They are sometimes based on a simplistic analytical framework that does not acknowledge the complexity of reality. In evaluation, the core issue is to take time, to create a space/time continuum for reflection and continuous improvement. Evaluative approaches are only tools that allow each of us individually, collectively, institutionally (and it is crucial to act on these three levels at the same time) to strengthen ourselves and our processes, and to correct ourselves or to redirect our efforts if necessary".

ii.   Other New Zealand models of collaborative educational programmes for at-risk students and how they measure effectiveness

Most collaborative educational programmes for at-risk students are either collaborations between an individual school and a community organisation or programmes/services initiated and provided by a community agency to a number of schools who voluntarily opt to use the service.

Most of the models that are offered in Otago and Southland were investigated by interviewing managers or key personnel face to face. Other models in the rest of New Zealand were investigated using information available online.

Otago/Southland models

The Dunedin Secondary Schools Partnership (DSSP) vision statement is "A collaborative education community that values and includes all schools working together to improve student achievement".

As well as having the contract for Alternative Education and London House, they also have a number of other contracts/agreements with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development and local organisations, including Maori mentoring, family support, AE transition, transition to work, and scholarship tutoring. The DSSP measures effectiveness by using the individual contract's reporting requirements, which the providers supply.

London House Learning Centre is the name of the Dunedin Activity Centre. It also houses a short term (5 day) programme funded by the participating schools. They measure/evaluate student progress by reporting progress at 3 and 6 weeks against referral behaviours. Students are tracked once they return to school either by phone call or a visit. The data is not collated or reported on. The centre reports to its managing school under the NAGS once a term. Evaluation of the centre is provided by the ERO reporting cycle.

The Otago Youth Wellness Trust (OYWT) works with youth aged 11 – 18. It has formal contracts with the SDHB, MSD, MOE (via Datacom) and the DSSP. Their main way of working is a wraparound model based on the Milwaukee Project. They use a number of methods to measure effectiveness.

An appreciative enquiry method was used to provide an evaluation framework and as a reflective tool for developing the organisation as a whole. This involved three researchers and was funded through lotteries money. The organisation's annual report is based on RBA methodology and uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures. They have developed their own Snapshot Tool (based on the HEADSS assessment) to use both as a practice tool as well as for evaluation. They also provide separate reports for funders depending on requirements. OYWT operates on a continuous quality improvement model with an annual retreat. 2 out of their 18 staff mostly focus on evaluation, which drives the organisation.

The Gore Social Sector Trials have many different streams of measurement. Nationally the SSTs have struggled to measure effectiveness due to the conundrum of what impact is due to the trials and what is due to what is happening in the community generally. Some of the methodologies and methods used are the logic model, RBA, and specific data such as achievement at L2 and SDQ comparative data. Locally, effectiveness is measured against the locally developed Action Plan which is outcomes based, with milestone targets. Specific contracts also determine what is measured and how. Methods used are both qualitative and quantitative, with a high use of surveys. Each programme/service which is part of the Gore SST has its own measure of effectiveness/impact. The coordinator reports monthly with up to 20 hours taken to prepare the report.   Most of the evaluation of the SSTs is done at the national level.

Other New Zealand models

AIMHI (Achievement in Multicultural High Schools) is the longest running secondary schools' consortium in NZ, established in 1995. It consists of nine secondary schools based in South and East Auckland, which are typically decile 1 with an average roll of 1,000. The purpose of the initiative was to:

- o Increase the rolls of participating schools and improving attendance of existing students
- o Raise the levels of performance of the school and students in: student achievement, governance and management, school/community relationships, integrated social services support policy
- o Achieve sustainable self-managing schools

One of the features of the AIMHI initiative has been the involvement of a research team which provided an initial research report which highlighted the issues and made suggestions and then provided some on-going research. Some of their measurement methods include analysis of achievement and retention data, feedback from students, parents, staff and other stakeholders, and a developmental evaluation/enquiry approach.

The Foundation for Youth Development's mission is to collaborate with communities to develop, coordinate, manage and deliver programmes that are proven to bring positive changes to the lives of young New Zealanders and their families. It has a culture of continual development and a strong commitment to evaluation and research. This has resulted in partnerships with two universities. Evaluation activities include randomised control trials, longitudinal studies, narrative interviews, participant questionnaires and surveys plus the development of a Theory of Change and Programme Logic model. FYD has a full-time research and evaluation manager and two part-time research and evaluation staff.

Victory Village in Nelson is a partnership between Victory Primary School and Victory Community Health Centre. The Health Centre is the first community organisation to be located on a primary school campus with services and activities operating out of a shared, purpose built space containing a school hall and community centre facilities. Evaluation activities include gathering attendance numbers, gathering feedback, focus groups, data on volunteer engagement plus a research project by the Families Commission which included a literature review, interviews, observation and a photo voice component. Victory Village is moving towards an outcomes-based evaluation model.

The Starpath Project is a partnership between the University of Auckland and 34 secondary schools in Auckland and Northland to address disparities in educational achievement for Maori and Pacific students and students from low socio-economic communities. The Starpath team works mainly with schools, carrying out evaluation research and professional development. They have eight full-time research and professional development staff. Methods used include establishing and maintaining data bases, target setting, tracking and monitoring student progress, academic counselling and parent-student-teacher meetings. Funding comes from the MOE through the Tertiary Education Commission matched equally by private funding.

Implications

A quote from a report on "Designing a Programme to Support Non Profits Identifying, Understanding and Reporting on their Effectiveness and Results" is apt here: "One-size fits all will not work, and investment in monitoring and evaluation will always need to be proportional in terms of time, effort, and complexity."

Specifically:

1. There appears to be no one best way to measure effectiveness.

2. The ISSN needs to be clear and agreed about what its vision and mission is before putting in place effectiveness measures.
3. There needs to be a range of methods used to measure effectiveness.
4. Evaluation is an on-going process which is only of value if the learnings are put into practice.
5. The organisations or programmes with the most comprehensive effectiveness measures and/or evaluation methods either contracted professional expertise or else employed people specifically for the task.
6. RBA appears to be the preferred method of evaluation by government departments. Considering that the ISSN holds three contracts with the Ministry of Education (AE, Activities Centre and Attendance Service) it would be prudent to investigate this method further.
7. Currently the ISSN uses several methods (but no over-arching methodology) to evaluate its programmes and the overall organisation. Some of these are listed below:
    i. Attendance service – quarterly report generated by MOE/annual questionnaire on use of AS/referral numbers/pro-active initiatives review
    ii. Connect Two – annually count those who go on to access other programmes/total number of students/which schools use it/gender/ethnicity/modules accessed
    iii. Fresh Start – gender/ethnicity/destination/no of weeks on programme/student evaluation/parent evaluation/stakeholder evaluation
    iv. Activities Centre – annual report to BOT/gender/ethnicity/student evaluation/destination/stakeholder evaluation using ERO indicators
    v. Alternative Education – 6 month report to MOE/destination/gender/ethnicity/achievement/ monitoring report using NEGS and NAGs
    vi. Annual report – financial/key happenings/aggregated data on usage/destination data

Conclusions:

It is recommended that the ISSN adopts the RBA framework as the overarching methodology for measuring the effectiveness of their programmes and organisation.

The reasons for this are:

1. Existing evaluation methods and data can be used in the framework
2. Some of the initial work has been done as part of the preparation for the 2011 evaluation
3. It should be a low-cost methodology – the only extra cost to the organisation may be the use of an external facilitator to help with the process.
4. Due to the popularity of the model there are lots of resources available to assist in setting up the framework
5. It would appear to meet the requirements of this investigation into how best to define, measure, record and report on the effectiveness of the ISSN as it should:

    a. Measure and report on the impact of programme activities on desired outcomes
    b. Be able to tracking changes to the organisation over time
    c. Have a flow on alignment to other key organisational functions such as reporting, staff development and funder accountability

Discussion document for implementing RBA in the ISSN

1. What is RBA? (brief overview)

   Results Based Accountability (RBA) is a system of planning and evaluation that is outcomes based. There are three key concepts:
   a. Two types of accountability:
      i. *Population accountability* is about improving conditions of wellbeing for whole populations. (e.g. reduction in youth crime due to actions of Youth Aid, Attendance Service and youth justice sector)
      ii. *Performance accountability* is about an agency holding accountability to deliver outcomes to client populations (e.g. Attendance service reducing non-attendance at school)
   b. Three types of performance measures
      i. How much did we do?
      ii. How well did we do it?
      iii. Is anyone better off?
   c. Seven questions which are used to identify the means (strategic/action plans) linked to achieving the agreed 'ends' (population and performance outcomes)

2. What is required to set it up?
   a. Requires organisational commitment at every level and some protected time to develop and discuss outcomes, indicators and activities
   b. For best results, using external facilitation for workshops to develop core components of RBA is recommended

3. Suggested timetable for implementing RBA

Timeline	Actions	Who is involved
By end of Term 3 2015	1.Prepare background documents – gather info and data on what ISSN already does and how it fits in the RBA model 2. Find mentor	Director
October 2015	Workshop: Outline the model Answer questions 1&2 of RBA model - Who is the target group? - What is the end we are trying to achieve? Set up working group	Trust members, liaison staff, ISSN staff
November 2015	Development of framework based on questions 3-7 of RBA model for discussion/recommendation/adoption	Working group – suggest 1 Principal or delegate, Director, 1 liaison person, 1 ISSN staff member
December 2015	Adoption of framework	Trust/management group

February 2016	Implementation of framework	Director and ISSN staff
June 2016	Review of implementation	Working group