Embedding change

Design and Implementation of assessment processes in medical education is complex. To effectively embed change which will stick, it is important to think through how to introduce the change and how to approach it from a multi-dimensional perspective including consideration of political, cultural, structural and people frames.

Current literature regarding innovation for assessment in medical education focusses on the quality of educational product and is theoretically grounded in psychometrics.

Increasingly, it is becoming evident that whilst the quality of the innovation in medical education is vital, quality alone does not ensure success. This is because the context and times in which we find ourselves are ones of complex change and disruption.

Quality of product- consistency and standardisation of decision-making

To maximise the success of innovation and sustainability of educational programs, we need to explore program design and implementation in terms of complexity and adaptive systems.

Implementation challenges and solutions for integration of workforce development across the continuum are multiple and key issues summarised below:

- Importance of not reinventing the wheel – leveraging off good practice
- Professional development of supervisors to equip them to undertake new assessment approaches
- Change management
- Agile project innovations
- Resistance to change
- Ensuring models are fit for purpose – stakeholders have opportunities to have their say
- Communication of change
- Technology infrastructure and access
- Implementing competency based approaches so they move to integrated programs of assessment
- Implementation that works across diverse settings
- Monitoring of success to inform continuous improvement

A new lens? Complexity and Adaptiveness

It is useful to consider change from a complexity and adaptivity lens when undertaking innovation which:

- is large scale
- involves high stakes decisions
- is national or global
- involves changing/contesting the perception and role of education provider
- interfaces with employer processes
- disrupts existing practices
- prompts significant personal reaction from stakeholders.

Interactions of high stakes health education change in complex adaptive systems

Stepping Out the Change

Three Horizon Thinking is a useful framework to consider the TIMING and SPACING of change activities.

Three Horizon Thinking is based on research into how organisations sustain growth. This framework stresses that throughout their lifecycle organisations must attend to existing businesses (horizon 1) whilst still considering areas they can grow in the future (horizon 2 and 3).

- Horizon 1 represents those core activities of the business most readily identified with the company name. Here the focus is on improving performance to maximise remaining value.

- Horizon 2 encompasses emerging opportunities including to consolidate new businesses and may include significant investment in technology and spatial infrastructure, capability growth and processes.

- Horizon 3 contains ideas for profitable growth down the road – for instance, small ventures such as research projects, pilot programs or minority states in new businesses which focus on new ways of growing the business and exploring new markets and ideas of what and how to do the business.
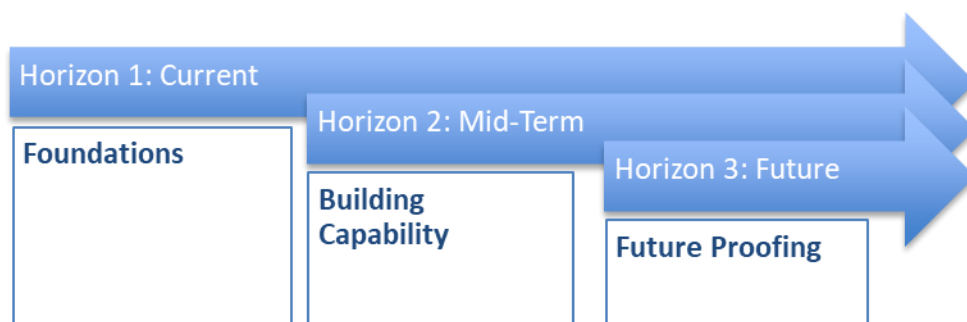
Horizon 1: Current

Foundations

Horizon 2: Mid-Term

Building Capability

Horizon 3: Future

Future Proofing

Figure 1: Three Horizon Thinking

The Four Frames[1] **is a useful tool to help us with the change TAKING HOLD and EMBEDDING in the Imagination, Systems and Institution.**

It is based on research into how organisations adopt a balanced approach to leadership and organisational change. This framework stresses that throughout their lifecycle organisations must attend to activity in four key frames: the people, the political (adapted to partnerships in the proposed model), the culture and the structural.

Reframing organisations, through use of these four frames identified by Bolman and Deal, recognises that when many organisations face challenges a common default solution is the structural frame, which results in structural change. By seeking activity in all four frames research shows that change is more likely to be acceptable to stakeholders and leads to enduring change to practice.

Structure emphases the task related elements of work. It concentrates on strategy, measurable goals, clarifying tasks, responsibilities and reporting lines, agreeing metrics and deadlines and creating systems and procedures.

Political addresses the idea that individuals and interest groups often have competing (often hidden) agendas, especially in times when budgets are limited and organisations need to make difficult choices. In this frame we see coalitions – building partnerships and alliances to support key initiatives.

People places emphasis on people's needs, human contact, personal growth through learning and education and job satisfaction.

Culture focuses on people's need for a sense of purpose and meaning in their work. It includes creating a motivating vision, attending to rituals including celebrations and everyday behaviours, which demonstrate and reinforce the value of the key initiatives.

Combining the two thinking tools for change together, The Three Horizons and Four Frames, yields a useful planning model that considers timing, spacing and embedding of change, as depicted in Figure 2.
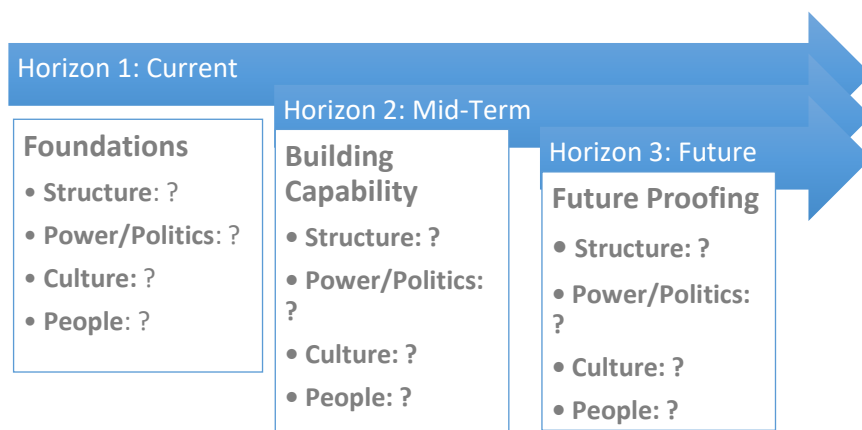
Horizon 1: Current

Foundations
- **Structure**: ?
- **Power/Politics**: ?
- **Culture**: ?
- **People**: ?

Horizon 2: Mid-Term

Building Capability
- **Structure**: ?
- **Power/Politics**: ?
- **Culture**: ?
- **People**: ?

Horizon 3: Future

Future Proofing
- **Structure**: ?
- **Power/Politics**: ?
- **Culture**: ?
- **People**: ?

Figure 2: Three Horizon Thinking and Four Change Frames

[1] Bolman, L. G. and Deal, T.E. (1991) *Reframing Organisations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership* Jossey-Bass Business and Management Series, San Francisco, USA.

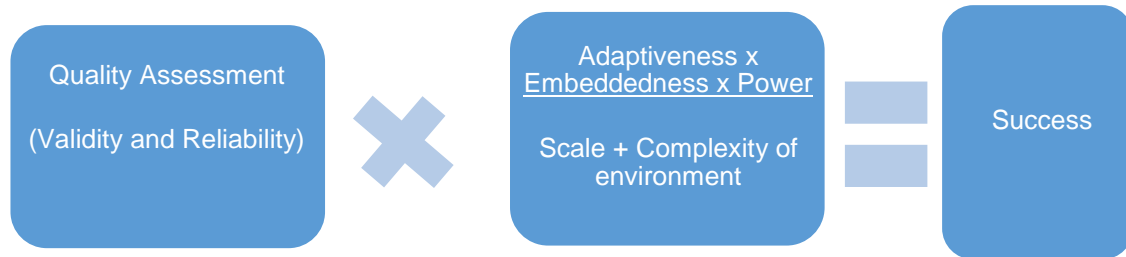The key message in considering change is that **context matters**.

Figure 3: A model of success

Strategies for implementation and embedding change

The following questions and support strategies based on the leadership and organisation reframing change model of Bolman and Deal[2] is designed to explore some broader issues of design and implementation of the change including about the structural, people, power/political, and cultural issues.

Structure

The structural frame of an organisational change focuses on elements such as review of the organisational structure and impact of the change on workflow. In this frame strategy is established and resource management and technology infrastructure is considered. It also takes into account key tasks which need to be undertaken related to the change and role definition - who is doing what.

Key focus questions

1. **Strategy:** What is the change management and implementation strategy for your organisation?
2. **Governance and policy:** How does implementation of the change impact governance and policy at your organisations and for other stakeholders i.e. health services? What are the legal frameworks and legislation impacts?
3. **Technology Infrastructure:** Will implementing the change impact of the technology infrastructure at your organisation?
4. **Project planning:** How will your organisation establish a project plan setting out clear tasks and role delegation to implement the change?
5. **Organisational structure and workflow:** What is the impact of the change to the structure and workflow?

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[2] Bolman, L. G. and Deal, T.E. (1991) *Reframing Organisations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership* Jossey-Bass Business and Management Series, San Francisco, USA.

6. **Roles and responsibilities:** How will the change impact the roles of people at your organisation and roles of other stakeholders?

7. **Resource management:** How will implementation be reflected in resource management planning?

People

The people frame explores impacts on people. This frame focuses on the support required to enable people to actively engage in the change, the need to assess whether your organisation has the necessary capability to manage the change and stresses the importance of establishing plans post implementation for staff. Support strategies in this frame focus on communication, training, engagement and capability plans. It stresses the importance of rewards and recognition throughout the change process. The people frame acknowledges that people will have different reactions to the change ranging from early adopters to resistors. This frame focuses on listening to their voices and leveraging off their strengths to refine your development, risk management and implementation plans.

Key focus questions

1. Engagement: What is the strategy and method to engage stakeholders?

2. Capability Assessment: How capable is your organisation to design and implement this change? Are additional resources and/or support plans required?

3. Communication: What is the communication plan related to the change? What are the key messages, how can communication about the change be delivered using trusted sources to those impacted by the change?

4. Training: What education and training should be accessed and promoted to support your organisation and stakeholders to gain the skills they need to adopt to the new way?

5. Reward and recognition: How can your organisation reward and recognise efforts of stakeholders as they engage in the change?

6. Champions: Who are the champions of the change and how can their energy, support and skills to help with the change?

7. Managing resistance: What is the nature and reason for and sources of the resistance and fear of change - what aspects should be considered in improvements to approaches in minimisation of risk and which concerns are unfounded? What is the strategy for turning unfounded negativity around?

8. Post implementation plans: What are the ongoing requirements of the change post implementation? What plans do you need to put in place to ensure ongoing support for staff and stakeholders in maintaining the system?

Power/ politics

The power/political frame recognises that the implementation of change may involve shifts in the power dynamics between different groups impacted by the change. A useful strategy for mapping the political landscape is to create a 'heat map' of your organisation and stakeholders to draw a visual representation of the supporters and resistors of your planned change. This frame can reveal some of the underlying barriers and threats which if left unattended can result in lack of engagement with and adoption of the

change. In addition, this frame includes new opportunities and ways of working. The power/political frame includes positive and enabling strategies such as the forging of new partnerships and networks and the mobilisation of non-human agency through the use of technologies. Encouraging individuals and organisations to form partnerships and new networks dedicated to new ways of working can render broad benefits at an individual, organisational, community and system level. Central to this frame is resilience and the openness of spirit to explore new opportunities to innovate, create efficiencies and minimise risk.

Key focus questions

1. Power dynamics: what are the power dynamics within your organisation? What are the attitudes towards change, and specifically change related to adoption of new assessment practices?

2. Heat maps: Consider drawing a visual heat mat showing the adoption of the change for your organisations and stakeholders - red for resistance, orange for luke-warm, green for champions.

3. Resistance plans: What is the plan to manage those resistant to change?

4. Partnerships and networks: What partnerships and networks can you engage in to support the implementation of the change?

5. Non-human agency: How can the change be used to improve efficiencies, minimise risk and innovate in your organisation and stakeholders?

6. Resilience: How is your organisation planning to build resilience through the change process during implementation?

7. Openness to new opportunities: How is your organisation planning to foster and lend power to the opportunities the change achieves for individuals, organisations, systems and stakeholders?

Culture

The cultural frame is typically thought of as "the way we do things around here". Culture is expressed in the everyday acts and behaviours accepted and reinforced by the organisation and individuals within it. The organisational culture is reinforced through an official account and the rituals and stories it tells internally and externally. To instigate cultural change one can draw on the evidence of ethnography (observation of how things are actually done in the organisation), symbols and most powerfully through the behaviour promoted and modelled by its leaders. Importantly, culture is enduring and complex to change. It requires time, patience, a commitment to learning, quality improvement and collective efforts drawn from implementation of strategies in the other frames to evolve and instigate positive change - from little pockets of change big things can grow.

Key focus questions

1. The way we do things: If you had to describe "the way we do things around here in terms of attitudes and adoption of assessment approaches" at your organisation - what would your answer be?

2. Official accounts: What is your official account of the promotion of fair and transparent methods of fostering change?

3. Everyday acts and behaviours: How consistently is the official account reinforced by the everyday acts and behaviours of your organisation and stakeholders?

4. Rituals: What rituals does your organisation have related to assessment practices? What new rituals could you introduce to reinforce the use and value of potential change?

5. Symbols: What symbols represent your organisation and how do they relate assessment? What new symbols could be introduced to reinforce the value of change?

6. Stories: What stories are told at an official and informal level related to assessment?

7. Leadership: How supportive are the key leaders at your organisation for change? How is your organisation going to encourage champions for change?

8. Modelling: To what extent does your organisation model adaptiveness and change in everyday behaviour?

9. Time: Consider the profile and personalities in your organisation. What are their time preferences - quick adoption or slower processing including reflection. What is a reasonable timeframe to bring about change? How can you break this change down in manageable bite size chunks and progressively implement viable solutions and innovate further to improve systems and approaches?

11. Organisational learning: How do you gather and act on insights and feedback loops to further improve systems?

Further reading

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