

# Creating and embedding change in schools: our evaluation approach

This presentation was given to the  
Sport New Zealand Advisory Group

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# The challenges of change

- School improvement is “immensely complicated” (Stoll, 2009)
- Large scale, “top-down” reforms have not produced the desired results, nor have solely “bottom-up” reforms
- One design challenge is creating processes to balance factors that don’t appear to go together (e.g., top-down and bottom-up approaches) (Fullan, 2007)

## Key message

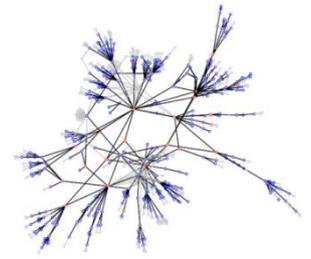
Planning for change is a **design process**, that involves a careful consideration of the **process** as well as the **product** or desired outcome (Thomson, 2010)

**Evaluation implication: Both process and outcomes will need to be addressed**

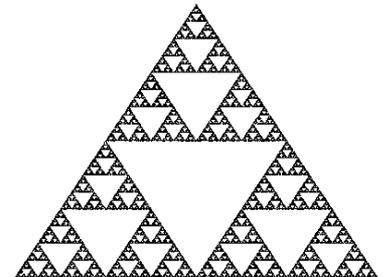
**Process evaluation** to inform similar change in other schools

**Outcomes evaluation** to gain evidence of impact of changes

# Schools and complex systems thinking



- In any system, the **sum is greater than the parts**; the contribution of one part is best understood in relationship to the others
- **Systems learn and change** (e.g., adapt or self-improve), but this can be unpredictable or via multiple pathways
- Change in a **system is cyclical** rather than linear (e.g., not cause and effect)
- Each **school system** is nested within wider systems (e.g., the education system)
- **Classrooms** are systems within school systems



- Change is a **multi-layered activity** that is impacted on by a range of inter-related variables within and external to each school system
- The more **variables that are aligned** with the direction of change, the more likely it is that change will happen (Fullan, 2007)

**Evaluation implication:**

**We need to look at the parts of the system *in relation to each other*. This suggests a mixed methods case study approach.**

# Interactive implementation variables

(adapted from Fullan, 2007, p. 87)

## Characteristics of the expected change

- **Need** (Does the initiative address priority needs?)
- **Clarity** (Are goals and processes clear?)
- **Complexity** (What is the extent and difficulty of the changes?)
- **Quality/practicality** (Is the initiative supported by high quality teaching resources and professional learning opportunities?)

## IMPLEMENTATION

### External factors

- **Government** (Are Government agendas aligned with the initiative?)
- **Other agencies** (Are the roles and expectations of support agencies clear?)

### Local (school) characteristics

- **Principal** (Does the principal actively support the initiative?)
- **Teacher** (Do teachers have opportunities to lead/be part of professional learning communities?)
- **School board and community** (Does the Board of Trustees/parent community support the initiative? Are their roles clear?)

## Tangible features

- school-wide policies, structures, and leadership roles
- opportunities for teacher professional learning
- the timetable and course structures
- curriculum and assessment policies/practices (e.g., NCEA-driven practices in secondary)
- the connections made with parents and community

## Intangible features

- the school and leadership culture (is the school a learning organisation?)

### Evaluation challenge

Both **tangible** and **intangible** aspects can support or hinder change. Change processes need to tap into what is happening **beneath the surface** (Stoll, 2000)

- School leaders play a key role in **developing schools as learning organisations** that work to **self-improve** (Fullan, 2005, Senge, 2000)
- Learning organisations **harness the expertise of their community** to support self-improvement

## Evaluation challenge

**Capacity building should be integral to the evaluation strategy.**

**For this to happen leaders of change in the school need to be actively involved in the evaluation process.**

**The evaluation process should also align with, and support existing processes of school self review**

## Case study activities will include:

- Researcher interviews with key players
- Researcher focus groups with students
- Student (**Me and My School**) and teacher (**pedagogy**) surveys of engagement
- Teacher action research projects (**engagement, NCEA gains**)
- Lead teacher collation of relevant data (**attendance, participation in sport, contacts beyond school etc**)

# Three important dimensions of PLD that supports change (BES)

**CONTEXT** (actively supported, extended time, access to external expertise, challenge prevailing discourses, professional community of practice)

**CONTENT** (integrate theory/practice, clear links between teaching and learning, use assessment to focus, promote sustainability)

**ACTIVITIES** (align with goals, variety, teacher discussion/negotiated understandings, ongoing focus on student learning)

(Timperley et al., 2007)

## Key message about resources

Teachers need more than materials and a 'how to' guide. Instructional materials are not sufficient in themselves to bring about change. (Timperley et al., 2007)

**These three types of criteria (context, content, nature of PL) point to the breadth of features about which data will need to be gathered**

**Evaluation implications: Teachers' opportunities to engage actively with the initiative and shape its direction in their own classes will be vital – *but they will need to be challenged.***

**An inquiry approach** should create the space and incentive for teachers to take ownership of change in their class

**Opportunities to learn together** should be enabled by partial funding of lead teacher time. Their dual roles as leader of change/inquirer into change in the school, will be vital. Their opportunities to interact with each other will also be important.

## Learning organisations utilise community strengths (Fullan, 2007)

- **Parents and whānau:** effective partnerships require clarity of purpose and appropriate processes and support (Bull, 2010)
- **Students:** are under-utilised as resource people who can actively support change (Senge, 2000, Fullan, 2007)
- **Local agencies:** agency goals need to be aligned with school goals

How partnerships support change will be an important aspect of the evaluation

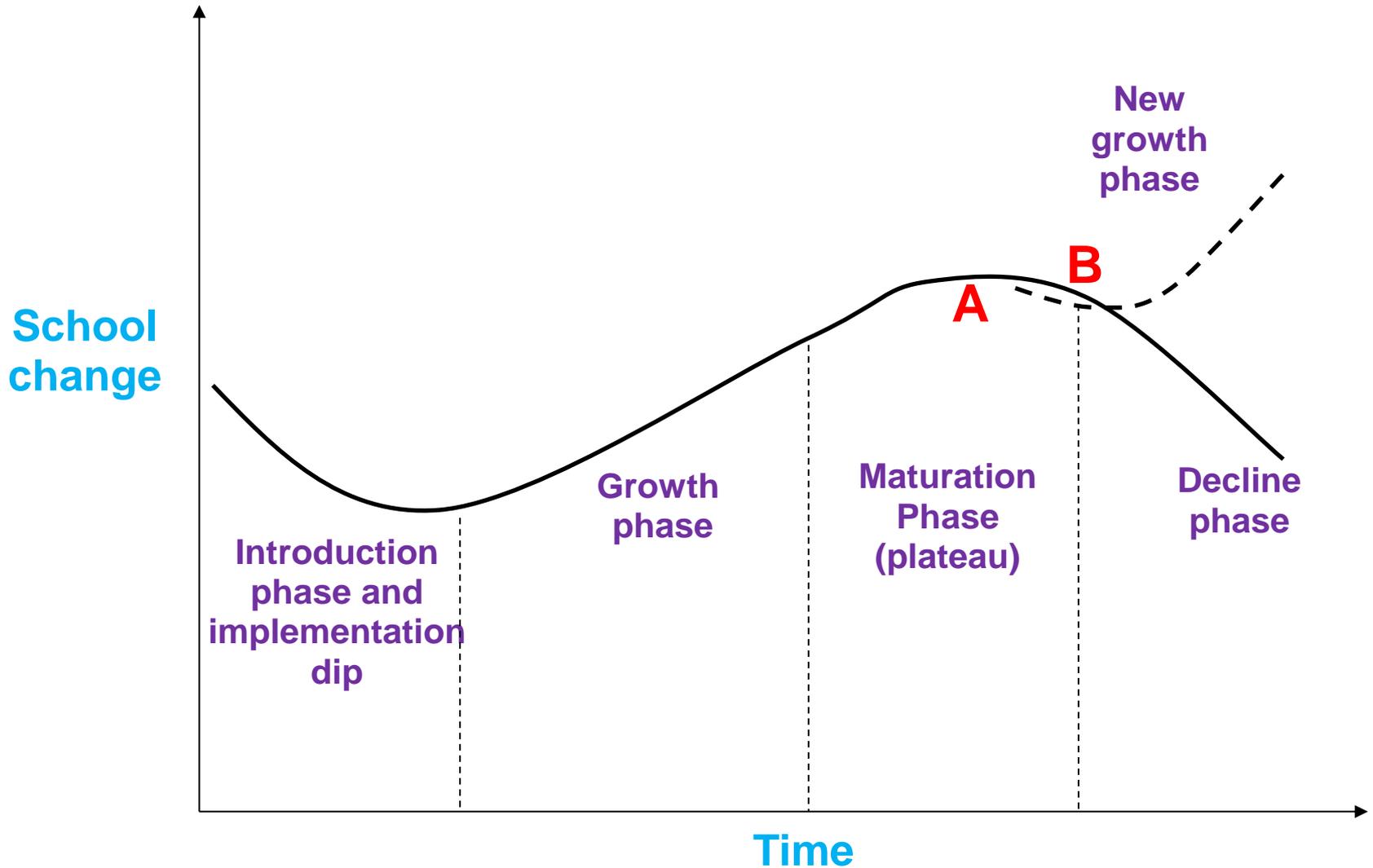
# Sustaining change

- Change used to be thought of as a linear process of
  - **initiation**
  - **implementation**
  - **institutionalisation**
- Current views see change as an ongoing cycle of plateaus (Fullan, 2004)

## **Key message**

Systems-thinking sees change as an iterative cycle

# The s-shaped growth curve



# Sustainability factors

## Key message

The quality of a programme does not predict sustainability over time (Savaya & Spiro, 2012)

### **Funding**

- different sources of funding are used as well as non-financial resources and support
- a low (not high) % of costs are provided by the initial funder

### **Programme leadership: The initial funder is**

- highly involved in the initiative
- future-focused and plans for sustainability

### **Local leadership (e.g., schools)**

- the host organisation has buy-in and high staff involvement
- the programme has a champion

### **Community support**

- the programme has community support and a range of patrons

# Implications for the evaluation

Different forms of resources, support, and leadership will be needed at different stages – the evaluation questions will need room to evolve as the project unfolds

It is really important that the evaluation unfolds as a three-way partnership (Sport NZ, partner schools, NZCER).

NZCER will “hold up the reflective mirror” as supportive outsiders, but we will not be making “judgments from on high”.

This presentation was downloaded from <http://www.nzcer.org.nz>