ENGAGE IN CURRICULUM REVIEW

Guidance for Curriculum Review sponsors: HoS/HoD and/or SDTL/DDTL

Models for Leading Change

We outline below how Kotter’s (1996) 8-Step Model for Leading Change can be applied to your curriculum review. This may be useful when considering how to demonstrate your commitment to curriculum change to colleagues.

Creating a climate for curriculum change

1. Establish a sense of urgency

Use an evidence informed approach to create the need for curriculum change. Be sure to celebrate success as well as areas for enhancement.

2. Build a guiding coalition

Appoint CF Lead(s) for overall responsibility of the review and T & L ‘champions’ to lead on various strands of the work. When apportioning roles, it is important to consider whether the individuals have the credibility and confidence of the staff that will need to implement change. Be sure to give the team sufficient time and recognition to undertake the role, meet any staff development needs, and support them in undertaking their role.

3. Create a strategic vision

This helps to guide the process, and ensures there are no surprises later on.

Engaging and enabling curriculum change

4. Communicate the vision

Communicate your priorities clearly through a range of mechanisms e.g. place it high on the agenda for School/Departmental meetings; make it explicit in strategic plans.

5. Empower others to act

Remove barriers to change quickly and encourage innovation and creativity. Recognise and reward staff for their contributions. Identify staff that are resisting change and address their concerns, openly and honestly.
6. **Plan for and create quick wins**

Celebrate success along the way to maintain momentum.

7. **Sustain momentum**

Change School-level policies where necessary to sustain change. Monitor and evaluate progress and keep learning from experience. Celebrate success and don’t be afraid to admit when things haven’t quite gone to plan.

8. **Institutionalise the new curriculum**

Ensure that continuous curriculum review and enhancement becomes embedded in the culture of the School/Department.

However, it would be naïve to believe that successful curriculum change comes about by simply following the exact steps outlined above. It is more complex than this as it involves people who react to change in very different ways. There are several models that may help you unpack the more emotional aspects of change.

For example:

Knoster *et al.* (as cited in Villa & Thousand, 2005) focused on 5 areas necessary for sustainable change and outlined the results when one of these key factors is missing. This is depicted in the diagram below (Black shading=absence).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Skills &amp; confidence</th>
<th>Action plan</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Successful curriculum change</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>Confusion</td>
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<td>Vision</td>
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<td>Tick-box exercise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
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<td>Anxiety &amp; poor execution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
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<td>Inability to act</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
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<td>Frustration</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Knoster *et al.* (as cited in Villa & Thousand, 2005).

The Change Curve (otherwise known as the Kubler-Ross Curve or SARAH Model) can be helpful in helping you recognise how people respond to change, and what you can do to support them through curriculum change. Please see Schneider & Goldwasser (1998) for a brief overview.

You may also find the following principles for effective leadership useful.
Principles for Effective Leadership in Teaching & Learning

Gibbs et al. (2008) conducted interviews with HoD, academics and students across 19 departments in 11 ‘word class’ international research-intensive universities which were renowned (and verified by a range of internal and external KPI’s) for their excellent teaching. The study concluded that effective and multi-faceted leadership is in many cases ‘pivotal’ to excellence in teaching and learning. The authors identified 9 principles for effective leadership which we summarise below. In the context of the curriculum framework, we found these principles useful in our pilot projects.

1. Establishing credibility and trust
Effective leaders often have credibility as leaders of teaching, through either internal or external recognition as outstanding role models. They are well informed about the teaching and learning the School/Department undertakes and have an open-door policy to allow them to listen to the views of staff.

2. Identifying teaching problems and turning them into opportunities
Effective leaders openly acknowledge and articulate problems, allowing them to mobilize others to tackle the issue in a positive way.

3. Articulating a convincing rationale for change
Effective leaders present a convincing pedagogic and practical argument for change, using evidence and external expertise to build a case.

4. Dispersing leadership
Effective leaders give both responsibility and support to other staff in their School/Department, acknowledging their own areas of strength and weakness and complementing this with expertise from others.

5. Building a community of practice
Effective leaders provide regular opportunities for staff to get together and discuss teaching, often for little obvious short-term benefit but with longer-term community building in mind.

6. Recognising and rewarding excellent teaching and teaching development effort
Effective leadership explicitly recognises teaching in decisions about promotion, pay and reward and supports, endorses and celebrates award schemes that recognise colleagues who make significant contributions to teaching and teaching development.

7. Marketing the department as a teaching success
Effective leadership makes use of teaching excellence to boost student recruitment and to build a sense of pride about teaching in the School/Department placing it on an equal footing with research success.
8. Supporting change and innovation

Effective leadership is aware of the risks involved in change and innovation and the potential for a minority of dissenters to block it. Effective leaders acknowledge and plan for these risks and pay attention to building and sustaining a vision for change.

9. Involving students

Effective leadership actively involves students in diagnosing problems in the curriculum and in owning the solutions to these problems.

References


