

Quality Education News

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Dear Supporter of Quality Education

Education Excellence is EVERYONE'S Responsibility

You might have seen the TV advertisement. The family is getting ready for the start to the school day. Socks and sports kit are missing as well as the car keys. Everyone's a little bit short-tempered. When the daughter asks her mother for something she can't find, mom replies crisply that it's not her responsibility to find it. Daughter somewhat cheekily replies with words to the effect that, "... but you are responsible because it's your job!"

In a school a similar scene can play out. When things go wrong or something important has to be done, the responsibility can be dumped on the principal or a member of the senior management team. Staff members can shy away from being accountable. It's easier to pass the responsibility on to someone else. After all, they're being paid a little extra at the end of the month!

The 2018 motto for National Quality Week is, "Quality is everybody's responsibility." In quality-focussed organisations across South Africa the meaning behind the motto will be analysed. Offices and reception areas will be festooned in green and white (the official Quality colours) from Monday, 5 November to Friday, 9 November.

No two schools have identical sets of core values. Yet all of them - even if they don't use the exact words - have an awareness of personal responsibility. So, for example, you might visit a school that's litter-free. Yes, the ground and maintenance staff have a huge responsibility in keeping the school so clean and neat. Yet everyone else is responsible too.

From the youngest to the oldest in the school, there's realisation that litter belongs in bins. Nobody walks past a soft drink can or piece of paper lying on a pathway. It's picked up and binned. At home time, the teacher and children ensure that the classroom floor is litter-free. When the sports match is over, the players and coaches have a quick 'chicken parade' to make sure that chip packets, bottles and sweet wrappers are put where they belong.

In our young democracy, we're constantly talking about our rights. That's good. Do we, however, sometimes forget our responsibilities?

Children rightly expect to be treated with respect. In return for that right, however, comes responsibilities. Daily homework is to be diligently done; punctuality is the norm for arrival at school in the morning. Children are expected to be respectful and well-mannered. On the opposite side of the desk, there are the teachers' responsibilities of treating children with compassion and kindness as well as giving stimulating lessons.

When schools fail to be places of quality education, there are a few stand-out reasons. One major reason is that the children, parents, teachers and education department officials shy away from their respective responsibilities.

National Quality Week is an opportunity for everyone to revisit their personal responsibilities, to re-focus their efforts. When everybody does what they're meant to do, school stress goes down and happiness levels are most likely to go up.

It's not difficult to make folk aware of how everyone has a part to play in transforming a typical school into one of extraordinary quality. The concept of personal responsibility can be highlighted at assemblies, sport practices and staff meetings. Children can design eye-catching posters and write short paragraphs on the topic of, "**I'm a responsible Quality Kid because...**"

Celebrate National Quality Week in your own classroom, school or education regional office. When everyone accepts personal responsibility, there's one guaranteed result: The education workplace becomes a place of educational excellence.

Sincerely

Richard Hayward



This free newsletter is a social responsibility initiative of SAQI. The newsletter is distributed to schools and education practitioners locally and internationally. If you'd like to be put on the mailing list, please contact Mrs Vanessa du Toit on vanessa@saqi.co.za

Dr Richard Hayward, the editor, does school leadership and management programmes under the aegis of SAQI. They are endorsed by the South African Council for Educators (SACE). Programmes earn Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) points. For more details, kindly contact him on rdhayward@yahoo.com or ☎ 011 888 3262.

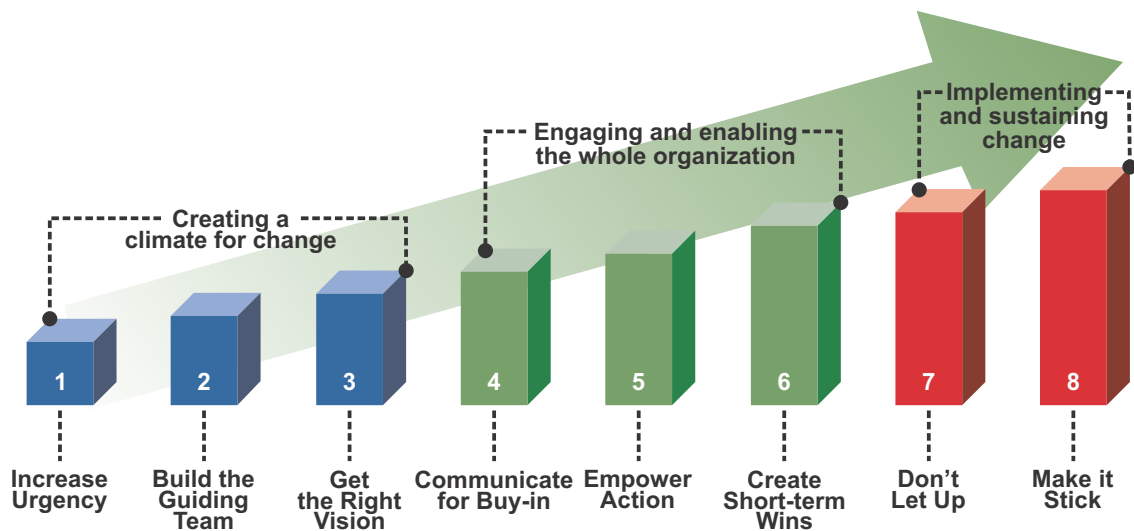
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Why do 70% of change plans fail?

Why is it that so many great new ideas never become a reality? John Kotter was a professor at Harvard Business School and in his book, *Leading change*, Kotter (1988) maintains that 70% of major change plans fail. Why?

Kotter believes that the main reason is the lack of prior planning. When there's a logical step-by-step plan in place, the chances of success are high. He designed a simple eight-point process that should turn any great idea into a good success story.



Acknowledgement: femerall.files.wordpress

The eight steps are:

1 Increase urgency

Not all change is for the better. Sometimes change is a waste of time. Don't make changes for the sake of change. At this first step, it's important that those involved in the change can see the reasons for the need for change. If the change is needed, put in a sense of urgency.

A school, for example, could have a drop in learner enrolment. That could have dire long-term consequences. Income from school fee payments could drop and the school would be unable to maintain its current level of facilities and resources. Should the decline continue, the school could lose teaching staff and in an extreme case, it might be forced to close its doors.

2 Build the guiding team

Every idea for change starts with the thoughts of a single person. If you're that person, build a guiding team that supports you. The guiding team doesn't initially have to be members of the school management team. This start-up team can chisel great ideas to make them more acceptable to others.

Yet for change to get real momentum, the support of one or more staff who are in senior management team positions will become vital.

Include on board your guiding team those with the expertise. They can become your critical friends; they'll often be able to tell you what will and won't work. Remember that every staffroom has folk who aren't in formal leadership positions but have great influence. Their opinions can sway a whole staffroom. Try to get them on board.

3 Get the vision right

Great change ideas can fall flat because they're too fuzzy. They're too huge and difficult to grasp. Simplicity can be powerful. To help sell the vision, identify a few values that are central to the change. There was the teacher who wanted to start a school Outreach Programme. Her starting point to colleagues was to suggest that the initiative would make for a more compassionate and empathic school – values that were already stated in the school Mission Statement.

When the vision is clear, everyone understands more easily why their help is needed.

4 Communicate for buy-in

Now it's time to bring everyone else into the team. Have the meeting to explain the intended change. Yet don't limit the talking to that one occasion. Whenever there's a chance, repeat the message. Keep the

change plans in everyone's mind. Be Duracell-battery enthusiastic!

No doubt there'll be verbal and written obstacles to overcome on the way to bringing about change. Address people's anxieties and concerns.

5 Empower action

Wonderful change ideas can – if you're not vigilant – collapse at this point. Folk might be willing but they maintain that there aren't enough resources. Make sure that there's enough time to spend on bringing about the change; make sure that there's enough expertise and money to get started.

Empower others to drive the changes. Pass on the baton to those who can take the change further. Let them take charge in their areas of expertise and enthusiasm.

6 Create short-term wins

There are many steps to climb on the way to arrive at the intended goal. In Japanese change theory management, there's a concept called 'kaizen'. The word refers to the need for continuous gradual improvement. Meaningful change is seldom a sudden event. It's usually a slow process over time.

Every gradual step on the way towards bringing about the change deserves celebration. Have a party! A celebration keeps people enthusiastic, in good spirits and motivated.

7 Don't let up

The intended change is in sight. There can be the tendency to 'slack-off' a little. Don't let up. On the athletics track, the runner has completed the race only when the whole body has crossed the finishing line.

8 Make it stick

Now that the change has been achieved, embed it in the school culture. Policies might have to be adapted, amended or deleted. School rules might need a make-over. Mission and Vision Statements might need to be rewritten. Long-held traditions of the school might need to be tweaked or even hugely transformed.

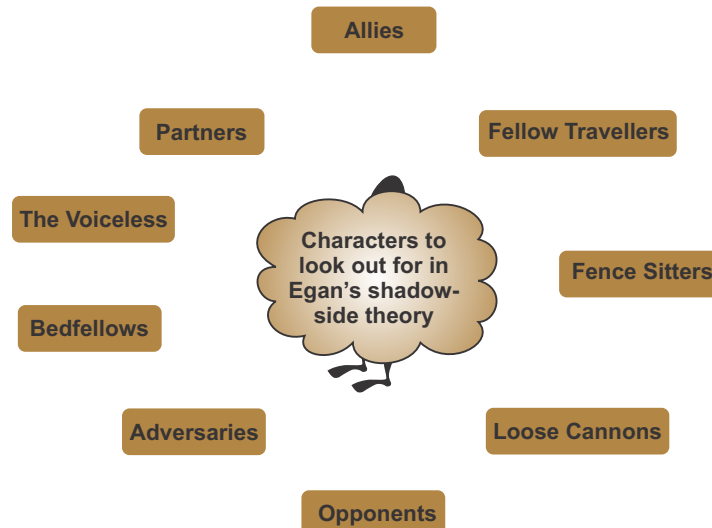
There'll be the need to keep everyone aware of the new realities. School assemblies, parent and staff meetings are opportunities to remind everyone.

In time, the changes will become culturally ingrained. They will become natural to everyday-life and the school will be a much better place for all.

How do I manage the good, the bad and the ugly?

As you – the change agent – bring about change, there'll be a range of responses from your stakeholders. If you're fortunate, you could have many enthusiastic supporters. However, the likely reality is that there will be those who disagree. That disagreement could be mild but in some cases, it could be severe. In extreme cases, there could even be saboteurs. They'll do anything to derail the change plan and cause its' failure.

To ensure the eventual success of your intended project, there's a need to understand the dynamics to be found in most groups. Manage the different stakeholders well and you'll succeed. Ignore them or try to carry on regardless and there's a strong likelihood that you'll fail.



Acknowledgement: www.safaribooksonline.com

Stakeholders in your change team

Allies: They're on your side from the word go.

Fellow travellers: They support the intended change but not necessarily you.

Fence sitters: These folk haven't decided whether or not to support the change.

Loose cannons: You have no idea whether or not they will support the change.

Opponents: They reject the change but have nothing personal against you.

Adversaries: These people don't like the change and they don't like you.

Bedfellows: They support the change but are wary as to whether they can trust you.

Voiceless: In the team they have no influence or power to either accept or reject the change.

Partners: They support your intended change.

Egan's Shadow-Side Theory

In the world of politics, leaders need to have 'political savvy'. Think Angela Merkel, Vladimir Putin, Cyril Ramaphosa and Donald Trump. To get what they want, they have to play political games. They learn (but not always!) when to open their mouths and when to keep them shut. If you want to bring about change in an aspect of your school, you'll also need to play politics.

Gerald Egan (McGrath 2017: 148-149) argues that for different folk, different strokes need to be applied. He also refers to working on the 'shadow side' with those who can't be dealt with in the normal organisational way. To put it bluntly, a bit of manipulation and Machiavellian thinking might be needed.

Obviously, Allies and Partners need to be kept 'onside'. Adversaries and Opponents might have to be marginalised as you push forward with your intended changes. Fence sitters and the Voiceless should be seduced (Egan's word) to ensure that they don't join those who are opposed to the envisioned change.

You, the change agent, need to do your homework before starting to talk about intended changes. Understand the unique personalities of your various stakeholders. Try to sixth-sense the likely position that they will each take. As you take your first steps towards change, start with your probable supporters. They'll give you the confidence and courage to make bolder steps.



CHANGE

A bend in the road isn't the end of the road...unless you fail to make the turn

How successful was your change?

If the change has been successful, there's time for celebrations. The team is delighted by the end result. If you personally planted the change seed, there's a deserved special sense of achievement. Maybe the team could have a celebratory party. If the change was a capital works project such as building a new classroom, there could be a cutting-of-the-ribbon Opening Ceremony. Yet in the midst of the fanfare of brass bands, bright balloons and sparkling champagne, two tasks still remain.

Firstly, there's a need to critically analyse the final results. There's a need to ask questions such as:

- Did we have to lower our expectation levels of change? If so, why?
- If the change brought about exceeded our expectations, what were the factors?
- What unplanned factors did we come across that helped us bring about change?
- Were there unanticipated factors that hindered our change efforts?
- What have we learnt that can make our next change project move along even more smoothly?

Secondly, there's a need to revisit the change project sometime

in the future. That could be in a month, three months, a year or even longer. Seldom does a change have an absolute 100% success result. There are often unintended consequences that could be negative.

One example is the school that expanded its' extramural programme but made participation compulsory for every child. About 90% of the school community were appreciative but the other 10% were unhappy. The 10% raised objections, some of which were reasonable. One cited instance was regarding transport to get home after sports fixtures that ended late in the afternoon. Another, was the need of children of certain faiths to attend after-school religion classes.

Bringing about improvement change can undoubtedly be beneficial. Be aware though of unintended negative side-effects. Be adaptable. If you're prepared to tweak your original plan, your change will be a success.

References

Kotter, J P 1988. *Leading change*. Harvard Business Review Press: New York.

McGrath, J & Bates, B 2017. *The little book of big management theories*. Pearson: Harlow.



Quality Education News is a social responsibility project sponsored by SAQI. This electronic-format newsletter is distributed across South Africa, the continent and beyond. Copies go to the UK, Europe and wider. The editor is most grateful for the feedback from readers.

Paul Harding is the Managing Director of SAQI and it's through his goodwill that all the QEN expenses are met. Immense appreciation goes to him. Huge appreciation goes as well to Vanessa du Toit and Aubrey Jansen. Vanessa efficiently does many administrative tasks in regard to the publication. Our graphic designer, Aubrey Jansen, adds sparkle and colourful creativity around the written words on every page. Special words of Thank You go to this awesome threesome!