VOICES OF REFORM AND CHANGE

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I acknowledge the traditional landowners of the country on which this conference is being held.
About this session...

- **ASK YOU...** What are your experiences associated with educational change?
  - Let’s answer a few key questions conversationally...

- **SHARE WHAT I’VE FOUND...** What was change like for other teachers?
  - Sharing findings from multiple case studies...
  - Sharing the research literature

- **POOL OUR IDEAS...** Identifying what we can and can’t control...
  - What strategies can we use to cope?
  - What have others done?
So... QUESTION 1: Why change?
Why change?

- Think of a time when you wanted to be part of an educational innovation or change...

- What were THE PERSONAL READINESS FACTORS for you?
  - What were the hooks that convinced you to join the reform?
  - How did you feel at the time?

Please record your thoughts ..
Teachers:

- Recognized **personal and professional attributes** to undertake change (creativity, persistence, motivation, confidence)
- Were **dissatisfied with current practice** (need for changes to their record keeping)
- Saw an **opportunity to be at the forefront** of a systemic innovation
- Anticipated **positive collegial experiences**
- Sought **benefits for students** in their classrooms
Represents a mix of cognitive, relational moral reasons for considering assessment change at this particular time.
What are the obstacles and catalysts of reform?
What are the obstacles and catalysts?

- Think of different types of blockages...
- Think of supports or catalysts along the journey...

- What were the OBSTACLES for you?
- What were the CATALYSTS for you?

*Turn over the coloured cards to view further prompts...*
OBSTACLES AND CATALYSTS

Findings and Literature:

- **Chronological element** – time and pacing
- **Physical element** - resourcing
- **Political element** – systemic messages and communication
- **Intellectual element** – professional development
- **Social & cultural element** – collegiality
- **The personal attitudinal element** - engagement
- **The philosophical element** – teacher beliefs and values
Chronological Elements of Change

CHANGE OBSTACLES - TIME
- Lack of time
- Time Management; compounding complexity of learning the new and simultaneously teaching effectively
- Long-term, financial sustainability of teacher-release queried
- Before one’s time

CHANGE CATALYSTS - TIME
- A non-judgmental time to practice
Political Elements of change

CHANGE OBSTACLES – SYSTEMIC MESSAGES AND COMMUNICATION

- New language of assessment reform (difficulty with jargon, the language for standard descriptors, the relationship between the language of outcomes and the language of assessment and the establishment of benchmarks prior to marking)
- Incomplete knowledge of the new (made knowledge synthesis more difficult)
- Message sources lacked consistency and clarity
- New pedagogic practices accompanying the reform added complexity
- Lack of philosophic clarity and perceived philosophic mis-match within systemic assessment messages initially impeded reform implementation
The social elements of change

**CHANGE OBSTACLES - COLLEGIALITY**

- Administrators experienced difficulties leading complex change (a lack of leaders’ knowledge and engagement with the reform had a negative impact)
- Loneliness and inability to locate like-minded peers

**CHANGE CATALYSTS - COLLEGIALITY**

- Informal professional relationships helpful (e.g. professional conversations, peer critique)
The intellectual elements of change

CHANGE OBSTACLES – PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Budget restraints
- Competing priorities
- Prior learning ignored
- Disconnected from teachers’ current understanding
- Availability of external experts in regional locations
- Individualized, early learning could not easily be accommodated
- After school time period not optimal
Subsequent site based implications (professional development)

- Increased the complexity of collegial relationships (professional development had isolating impact when others from site not actively participating)
- Required the discarding of some existing knowledge
- Momentum lost
- Others on-site disengaged
- No over-all professional learning plan evident
Intellectual element of change

CHANGE CATALYSTS – PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & OTHER SUPPORT

- Connection to teachers’ understanding
- Significant events in close proximity (time-wise)
- Reflection time required
- Provided a broader vision about formative assessment practices
- Class-time release (to attend professional development and as professional development follow-up)
- Professional Readings
- Practice and practical professional development follow-up in the classroom
The physical elements of change

**CHANGE OBSTACLES - RESOURCES**

- Lack of resources
So... QUESTION 3:

How did you go about changing?
How did you go about changing?

- Think of an image that describes your ‘change process’…

- What do you do first, then next, and after that?
- How did you feel at different stages of the process?

*Draw an image that captures your ‘change style’…*
PROCESS 1: Practice – to gain competence, one participant explained she needed ‘to keep building’; undertaking reform was a ‘work in progress’ for considerable time. The reforms were not questioned.

PROCESS 2: Personalize – the reform needed to be ‘blended’ and ‘mixed’ to ‘put it together’ so it would work for her. The reforms were not analysed.

PROCESS 3: Values Analyse – a pre-existing philosophy used to make judgments about what to introduce and what to ignore. Reform was ignored until she recognized that it aligned with professional values.
WHO IS HERE?

- Practicer
- Personalizer
- Values-Analyser
- Movie-maker
- Symbolizer
So... QUESTION 4:

How did you feel about change?
How did you feel about changing?

- How did you feel at the commencement of the change?
- During the change?
- Towards.. and at the end?
- Did you have personal ‘self-help’ strategies?

Design a series of emoticons and self-help strategies...
Findings & Literature:

- An array of emotions linked to change
- Teachers had several strategies for maintaining emotional equilibrium
- Strong link between beliefs, values and emotions
- At the heart lies our students
Emotional Element of Change

- Automatic part of the teachers’ narrative and expressed frequently and powerfully (unsolicited by researcher)
- Emotions evidenced by gestures, varied voice tone, expressive feelings
- Emotional expression linked to change (emotionally vocal at the beginning)
- Negative emotions were expressed at ‘high points of tension’
- Positive emotions were evident (such as confidence, self-satisfaction – linked to journey travelled acknowledged, student engagement & student progress)
- Emotional duality – positive and negative emotions expressed simultaneously
Strategies to maintain emotional equilibrium

- **Self-talk/emotional script** (e.g. excited self talk as discoveries about formative assessment was made. One laughed, gesticulated and said to herself ‘Sit down! This is what it is all about!’)
- **Inner strength** (e.g. ‘the inner me’ is important)
- **Self perception of resilience & creativity**
- **Reflection** (e.g. ‘thinking all the time’, ‘mulling it over’, ‘working it through’, ‘walking things through’)

- Same strategies also used to affirm and celebrate progress.
Important to note these processes for reform synthesis...

Teachers:
- focused inwardly to sort and sift particular information
- Imagined the concrete
- Linking particular thoughts with actions in their mind
- Worked mentally to reconcile philosophical difference
- Self-corrected previously held assumptions about students
Creating spaces for internalizing reform

KEY STATEMENT: There is an internal, sense making process occurring simultaneously as teachers enact reforms in the classroom.

☐ ELABORATING STATEMENTS:

Opportunities for personal and collegial learning and trialling are significant. However, there needs to be space for personal, reflective sense-making and synthesis. This recognizes the importance of the hidden, cognitive and affective processes that are also evident when change is undertaken.
The importance of students expressed in emotional terms by all three participant teachers of my research project (strongest theme of all!). The teacher-student relationship was deep and significant (Lasky, 2005)

- Excitement expressed, noting the assessment changes were about ‘keeping them in the picture’

- Student-watching sharpened. Student success was a cause for celebration and growing professional confidence

- Affirmed as a teacher when students were ‘good learners’ and creative. When judging reform success, one teacher stated her ‘classroom talks’.