

# Managing and Leading Innovative Change

So we want to lead innovation and change in our school.  
Let's put the good ship Innovation on to the sea of reality.



In preparation to cruising we need to consider the soundness of the vessel, its crew and piloting for the long haul.

**SOUNDNESS:** There are 3 main aspects of soundness we need to consider...

All three are vital and must be soundly covered and accounted for before embarking on the voyage. "Two out of Three ain't bad!" says the song. But in this case 'two out of three' ain't good enough. It only takes one hole to sink the boat.

**THE CREW:** Your crew may be supportive and active participatory members, or they may be mutinous and tend towards sabotage. Many will fall somewhere between these extremes. Valid, meaningful, and lasting change needs a climate of collaborative and reflective practice to thrive. Your crew is likely to consist of three groups:

Group 1:	Group 2:	Group 3:
Those who resist scrutiny and counsel, who do little self reflection on their own practice. They go through the motions	Those who reflect on their own practice but do not welcome outside eyes or ears.	Those who pursue self evaluation and are open to collegial input.

The majority will probably be in group 2, though this will vary from school to school and from time to time. There are in fact certain factors and procedures that can influence teachers to move from one box to another.

Teachers will move back down the scale when:

- there are pressures to comply with set practice,
- these are reinforced by authoritative feed-back,
- there is a competitive environment,
- they are surrounded by critical parents and leadership.

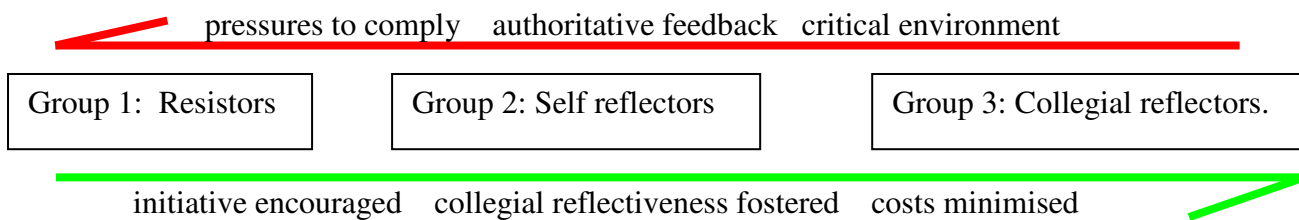
~~pressures to comply authoritative feedback critical environment~~

Group 1: Resistors

Group 2: Self reflectors

Group 3: Collegial reflectors.

Teachers will also move up the scale when there are other factors present that include: Encouragement for initiative, collegial reflectiveness is modeled and fostered, costs are minimised, and gains are recognisable.



It may be worthwhile considering “starting small while thinking big”. Carefully select the crew to go on the voyage. You can always pick up more crew as you go. It is easier to bring additional people on board with a well functioning crew than to amalgamate people from across the three groups into a functioning team.

**PILOTING FOR THE LONG HAUL:** Piloting (leading) for the long haul encompasses a journey that comprises the three stages of initiation, implementation and institutionalization.

**Initiation:** Getting started.

There has to be a **clear need**, recognised by the crew, for the change. Within schools this can often be clarified by asking the following question. Are our current practices and procedures as effective as we want in terms of realizing our educational and learning goals for our pupils?

There has to be a **strong advocacy** for the change. Usually this is best comprised by a combination of outside voice (critical friend) supported by the leadership of the school and a group of committed staff. A **clarity of vision** is required. This is where we are

going, this is why we are going there, and this is how we are going to get there. Of course this needs to be supported by some level of **adaptability**. Unexpected contingencies may require for plans and objectives to be modified as needed. The sea of reality is not always calm.

The vision has to be founded on **practicality**. It has to be do-able.

The vision also has to be supported by **adequate resources**.

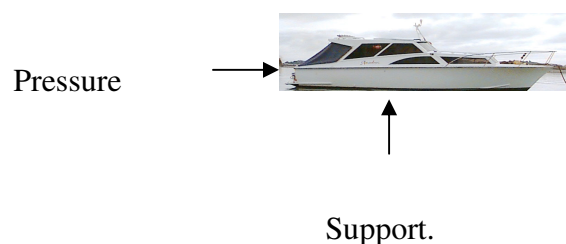
**IMPLEMENTATION:**

**‘Start small – think big’.** It may be school wide change that is desired, but a long voyage only starts with the first small step. Plan for the big result but take it in small bits.

It will be essential to have **continuing sound counsel**. Your external voice needs to be heard throughout the process, this voice needs to be added to by other voices both within and external to the crew. Where other outside voices contradict or conflict with what you are doing, these need to be critically analysed for any validity and then filtered so they don’t create confusion in the crew.

**Internal expertise** needs to be fostered and recognised by the whole crew. External expertise is often expensive, and there will be need for ongoing professional development as part of the collegial support and collegial reflection. As expertise is developed within the crew this needs to be recognised, fostered developed and used.

**Hazards:** In piloting through this stage you have to really balance two major aspects.



You need enough pressure to gain momentum (need, advocacy, and staff).

Support to keep it afloat (vision, resources, and commitment).

Logically we would think that full understanding needs to precede action, however **action before understanding** is often far more effective. It is through action that we gain an understanding of how the concept really works and why it is effective in facilitating learning. This is where the role of effective collegial reflection has value, this becomes the force that turns the rudder. The problem with a rudder is that the vessel has to be moving before the rudder has any power. When the vessel is sitting still the rudder can be turned from lock to lock and it has no effect at all. The vessel needs to be moving. Action is required.

### **Institutionalisation**

This may not sound nice, but it is what we really want. We want this change to be long term, to become a normal part of 'what we do here'. It has to fit with the rest of what we do. Where there are conflicts with other aspects of the institution then there needs to be changes made for a comfortable fit. These may be changes within the innovation or changes to other aspects of the institution. If discomfort is constant the change won't be. An ongoing commitment to problem solving is a major aspect of institutionalizing change and innovation.

To summarise then, if we want our innovations and changes to be effective and long lasting, we must plan and prepare for aspects that propel and support the change. These factors generally break down to the four main aspects of vision, people, and resources.

The change has to be driven by clear practical vision and a combination of people that include group 3 crew, outside voices and internal expertise. The change also has to be supported by resources but not to the extent that it is dollar sensitive in the long term.

**Credit:** Much of this material is summarised from chapters 8 and 9 of David Perkins book "Smart Schools: Better Thinking and Learning for Every Child", 1992, The Free Press, New York.



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