Innovate Session

CONFERENCE PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Title:

EXPERIMENTING OUR WAY INTO THE FUTURE – HAS OUR CHANGE PROCESS, CHANGED ANYTHING?

Presenters:

Vicki Bell, Director Leadership and Professional Learning, Catholic Education Services, Diocese of Cairns, Queensland, Australia

Lee MacMaster, Principal, St Andrew’s Catholic College, Diocese of Cairns, Queensland, Australia

Catholic Education Services is in the third year of a transformational process to become a world class education system. Schools and system together, are co-creating a suite of intersecting and aligned frameworks and processes as the seminal tools moving us from an old culture of compliance and inspection to a new culture of co-responsibility and subsidiarity with a non-negotiable focus on wellbeing and learning for all students. We are continually shape a shared understanding of and commitment to school improvement and learning to be flexible and experiment our way into the future. Co-creation of actions and processes, ‘testing’ them out’ and constantly shaping and reshaping ideas and plans is a cornerstone of our approach. We are learning to continually evaluate the why and the how of what we are doing and that superimposing a new way of relating and working together onto existing structures and processes does not work. Old structures are no longer fit for purpose in our new culture and are being reimagined. Being partners requires a continual reshaping of relationships and governance. New ways of working must be founded in ongoing, purposeful capacity building for school and system leaders. As a small regional Catholic education office in Far North Queensland, Australia, servicing twenty nine Catholic schools and 11000 students, we believed change would be ‘easy’.
Innovate Session
Leading capacity for Change

The focus of this strand is on leadership at multiple levels, such as the individual practitioners, school, cluster, zonal or district level, and the role of leaders in increasing individual and collaborative capacities to bring about and sustain innovative changes in school.

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Catholic Education Services shared our 2 year journey of creating a system wide school improvement culture during an Innovate session at ICESI 2017. Now in our third year, schools and system together, are co-creating a suite of intersecting and aligned frameworks and processes including a School Effectiveness Framework, Leadership Framework and Professional Learning Framework as the seminal tools moving us from an old culture of compliance and inspection to a new culture of co-responsibility and subsidiarity- enabling us to purposefully focus on what really matters – wellbeing and learning for all students (Fullan 2003). Our greatest realisation is that this exciting work is yet to change anything! We are learning that change is hard work – for everyone. We are constantly evaluating, refocusing and rethinking our change processes. To sustain the momentum, we are learning key lessons. We need to be relentless in our post implementation communication so that we are continuing to shape a shared understanding of and commitment to school improvement (Leithwood and Mascall 2008). This is ongoing, ensuring we are talking about the ‘right things’ (Fullan 2003) constantly, creatively and constructively within a context of meeting to work. We are learning that we need to be flexible and experiment our way into the future, co-creating actions and processes, ‘testing’ them out and constantly shaping and reshaping to ensure ideas and plans actually work in reality. We are all gradually letting go of the need to ‘get it right’ before we act. We are learning to continually evaluate the why and the how of what we are doing and not just jumping onto the next ‘new’ thing. Our ‘Skinny plans’ (Fullan 2009), for example, were just rhetoric not clarifying either strategy or creating a shared sense of purpose. We are learning that superimposing a new way of relating and working together onto existing structures and processes does not work. Old structures are no longer fit for purpose in our new culture and are being reimagined. Being partners requires a continual reshaping of relationships and governance. It requires the commitment of each individual in each relationship if it is going to evolve into genuine, robust partnerships. Finally, we
are learning that new ways of working must be founded in **ongoing, purposeful capacity building** for school and system leaders. New and glossy frameworks do not bring about school improvement. We need to be focussed on what people think and ultimately what they are doing if we want reflective teachers and active learners.

As a small regional Catholic education office in Far North Queensland, Australia, servicing twenty nine Catholic schools and 11000 students, we believed change would be ‘easy’. Our purpose in sharing our ongoing story is to continue our change dialogue identifying our challenges, learnings and how we have had to continuously recreate and reimagine. We want to make a difference and actually change what leaders across the organisation actually do so that we can deliver on wellbeing and learning for ALL our students – every student, every class, every day.
REFERENCES

2016. *Diocese of Cairns, Catholic Education Community Strategic Directions 2016 – 2019*


Fullan, M. (April 2011). Choosing the Right Drivers for Whole System Reform *Centre for Strategic Education Leading Educational Thinking and Practice: Seminar Series 204*