

Mandated Change : Can it be Made to Work?

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Abstract

Many changes introduced into schools are introduced as mandated changes by politicians and/or educational administrators. Such a decision-making process is contrary to the prevailing views espoused in many studies examining effective change processes. Yet for the most part much of this research is based on schools initiating their own curriculum changes. Few studies examine the effectiveness of state mandated changes imposed on schools. This study examines the implementation of one mandated change in a group of Australian secondary schools and evaluates teachers' perceptions of the impact of the mandated change on their schools. Using the model of implementation advocated by Crandall and his co-workers the factors that promoted and hindered the change are examined.

The research methodology guiding this study is outlined as an appendix.
Setting the scene

Educational change as a process has been widely researched in the past fifteen years or so. Today many publications and research studies attest to the complexity of the process and examine the desirable themes promoting effective and long-lasting change and/or innovation. For example, Fullan in the latest edition of his book on educational change makes the point that effective reform requires the presence of six themes: vision building, evolutionary planning, initiative-taking and empowerment, staff development and resource assistance, monitoring/problem -coping, and restructuring. He believes that it is the presence of a combination of these themes that promotes effective innovation. He further argues that successful innovation requires consideration of the pre-implementation and readiness issues and requires a developmental approach. The general idea behind such an approach is that the successful combination of these processes and ideas promotes the development of meaning and consequently effective change. Such ideas are reinforced by many research studies such as Crandall and others and Louis & Miles. From these studies the overall argument developing in the educational change and innovation literature is that effective change and/or innovation requires pre-planning, structure, ongoing thought, resources and the ability to cope with day-by day problems and issues in an effective way.

Yet not all educational innovation comes about in such a meaningful way. Often innovations are introduced into schools through mandation. These policies may reflect the views of significant political leaders or are introduced because a politician or educational administrator wishes to institute a specific policy or a not well thought out educational idea. The opportunities for clearly thought out planning and the transmission and acceptance of meaning are often limited when change is mandated by such sources. Yet the reality of change and innovation for schools in such circumstances is that they generally have no choice but to implement the mandated change. In such circumstances schools do the best they can to implement the change or innovation but often the attempt imposes considerable stress and/or demands on schools. The scope and complexity of the mandated change often determine whether it is actually implemented and becomes institutionalised.

The decision by the New South Wales (NSW) Minister of Education & Youth Affairs to convert a number of comprehensive high schools into academically selective high schools without consulting the schools involved or their communities, provided the setting for this exploration of how teachers in four schools in this study reacted to a major educational change imposed upon them. Before undertaking the analyses of the issue it is necessary to provide a brief contextual description of how decision-making is carried out in NSW education and to outline the nature of the educational change that was introduced.

Educational decision-making in NSW

In common with established legislative practices in all Australian states the state Minister of Education has responsibility for elementary and secondary education. The Minister can directly order educational administrators to carry out the educational policies of the state government of the day and the administrators must adhere to these wishes. In spite of many significant decentralised initiatives introduced into the various Australian state educational systems over the past decade or so the reality still remains that the relevant minister has the authority to institute any policy that he/she wishes. Schools and their communities may not particularly like the specific policy the minister implements but the only recourse they have is to vote the minister's party out at the next election or to subvert actively or covertly the intent of the particular policy, an act that poses considerable risk for the schools involved.

The 1988 NSW state election brought to power a conservative government whose Minister of Education instituted a range of quite radical educational policies within a short space of time; radical in the sense that they profoundly re-organised the administration and curriculum of NSW schools. In reality they represented a reversion towards the curriculum policies advocated by reports such as *A Nation at Risk* or *Action for Excellence*. One of these policies involved increasing the number of selective high schools that were to meet the needs of the academically gifted and talented secondary student. NSW has long had a number of these schools attracting the top 15 percent of academically talented students. However, the government in power prior to 1988 had a policy of slowly closing down these schools so that by 1988 only nine out of 17 selective high schools were left, with the majority of schools (250 plus), being comprehensive high schools. To increase the number of selective high schools the Minister decided in 1988 to convert a number of existing comprehensive high schools enrolling students from Years 7-12 into selective high schools. These nominated schools were to enrol their first cohorts of selective students into Year 7 in 1990. Students were to be able to apply for enrolment no matter where they lived in the state and were given a selection test battery comprising general abilities, language and mathematics tests. In the first year of testing (1989) over 9,000 students applied for entry into 17 selective high schools and this number doubled the next year. Clearly there was a community demand for places in the selective high schools.

The implementation of the new policy

Until 1988-89 the nominated schools were typical comprehensive schools located in various parts of urban NSW. They catered for a wide range of student abilities and interests and were variously successful as educational institutions. There was nothing remarkably different about the nominated schools when compared with other comprehensive high schools beyond their relatively close access to public transport. As one selective high school principal was later to comment 'there was nothing to

distinguish us from other schools in the area'. The Minister consulted briefly with his central administrators and quickly selected the schools to become selective high schools. He contacted each school principal on the phone and told them that they were to become selective high schools the next school year, about one school term away. The reaction of the principals varied considerably. Some were sceptical about the decision believing it would never happen, others were pleased with the prospect. Their greatest concern was the impact it would have on their communities for it meant that the majority of local students would not be permitted to enrol in what was once their neighbourhood school. Interestingly, none of the principals in the nominated schools was opposed to their school becoming a selective high school. Other concerns quickly surfaced such as the need for schools to re-examine their existing educational programs and teaching resources.

Teachers exhibited a range of opinions about the proposal. Some were delighted at the prospect while some were philosophically opposed to the move. Some tried to initiate union involvement in the decision to get it overturned. However, the majority of the school faculties were watchful and apprehensive but were neither openly supportive nor critical of the Minister's decision. All teachers were given the opportunity to apply for transfer to other schools if they wished. While on the one hand this appeared to be a useful way of getting rid of potential opposition to the proposal, on the other few teachers applied for transfers as it would have meant that they ran the risk of getting schools in less favourable situations or geographically distant from their present locations.

In many ways it is easy to downplay the effect the change in purpose had on the four schools investigated in this study. Essentially, these schools were going about the same overall tasks they had before as they endeavoured to achieve curriculum objectives and processes that were similar for all NSW schools. While the cohorts of selective students were progressing through the school there were still cohorts of comprehensive students

completing their secondary education in the higher grades. Outsiders would not easily identify any major process changes occurring within the schools as they were no obvious variations in routines and resourcing. Yet within the faculty staff rooms, the school executive planning sessions and within overall staff meetings there was considerable discussion and apprehension as the teachers came to terms with the implications of the innovation for their short and long-term planning and teaching. Teachers who had attended or taught in other selective high schools attempted to sketch out the implications for others while the principals and their school executives attempted to work out appropriate ways of planning for the transition. The Ministry of Education and its bureaucratic support base were in no immediate position to provide direct guidance or help to the schools. The change in policy meant that they had to re-establish a separate unit to manage the selection process and to oversee the general welfare of all the selective schools. Many administrators believed that the innovation would

not cause any great problems for the schools as they would be 'advantaged by getting all those smart kids'. While a direct grant of \$10,000 was made available to each school to help them with the purchase of new resources, modifications were made to the staffing allocations for these schools. These staffing modifications would later seriously disadvantage the schools for teaching resources such as those catering for non-English speaking students were withdrawn. Some administrators had judged that the schools 'no longer had a need for such support with the introduction of the selective students'.

Yet within the schools the innovation made a dramatic impact on the ongoing planning and perceptions of the staff and students. The teachers believed that their resources were inadequate to meet the needs of the selective students and the majority of teachers were apprehensive about how they were going to teach 'these bright kids'. The school executives and teachers looked around for outside assistance that was not always easy to find. Each school spent one pupil-free day discussing how they were going to 'cope' and invited outside teachers who were teaching in the few continuing selective high schools to share their practices with them. Overall, it would be fair to comment that the level of expertise in each of the schools about how to teach and plan for students in the selective classes was quite limited. By and large the Minister who set up the new program, left the schools to implement his program in the best way they could and provided them with limited resources to translate his political will into reality.

Analysing the effects of the innovation

To determine how the schools went about implementing and institutionalising the mandated change the analytical framework outlined by Crandall and his co-workers is followed. Crandall's research suggests that administrative pressure and support, user effort and subsequently commitment, stabilization of use and organizational change directly promote the institutionalisation of the intended innovation. Threats to the successful institutionalization of change come from environmental turbulences, career advancement motivation and stability of staff, program leadership and the vulnerability of the innovation. These factors provide an analytical framework to examine the institutionalization of the mandated changes the four schools went through as they moved from being comprehensive high schools to selective high schools. The data used to illustrate and analyse this innovation were collected in 1990 following the processes summarised in the Appendix.

The following analyses examine each of these factors in turn to explore the teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the mandated change.

Supports to institutionalization

a) Administrative pressure and support

There is no doubt that in a centralised educational system such as NSW the

opportunity is there for Minister and the senior administrators to exercise

substantial legislative and bureaucratic pressure on schools to achieve their goals. In NSW this legislative power rests in the various Education Acts of parliament. These acts mandate that schools must follow the directions of the Minister and/or the senior educational administrators. Yet there are many instances where certain administrative and curriculum innovations are introduced but are not effectively implemented by schools. Generally, these situations occur when schools are not given sufficient resources to implement the proposal or the suggested innovation is not in keeping with the prevailing culture of the schools involved. In the case of the selective high schools the administrators moved quickly to implement the Minister's directive that additional schools be established and the school principals had no choice but to establish the necessary processes to ensure that from the beginning of the next school year they enrolled the first cohorts of elective high school students.

Presenting schools with a virtual fait accompli meant that any opposition that arose had little time to organise. Yet there was substantial community and teacher opposition to the new changes. Parents opposed the reality that they were going to lose access to their local comprehensive school unless their son/daughter was able to pass the entrance test. The teachers' union was politically and philosophically opposed to the Minister's imposition of the change on the schools and the educational system and raised substantial vocal opposition to the proposal. The administrators charged with the implementation of the proposal retreated to the background realising that the decision was essentially a political one and kept their own counsel. School principals had to weather the storm aided in part by the public and legislative support of the Minister. Two of the four principals were subjected to intense community, teacher and union pressure to resist the innovation. The strength of the Minister's mandation and the requirements of a strong centralised system supported them in their implementation of the new policy. As one stated 'without the overt support of the Minister it would have been difficult to change over'. The administrators worked quietly in the background to bring about the change knowing that the Minister was not going to be swayed by the opposition. The situation was a clear example of innovation being imposed upon schools through the administrative pressure of the political leaders with varying degrees of support for it coming from the administrators. Not to do so would probably have cost the administrators their jobs.

b) User effort

Crandall and his co-authors claim that one of the key factors influencing the implementation of change is the degree of user effort people apply. User effort may well be initially determined by the values one holds towards the innovation in question. In this situation the policy of establishing selective high schools was supported by the majority of the teachers involved (See Table 1). These data suggest that 84% of the

teachers were supportive of the principle of having selective high schools to meet the needs of academically talented students. Sixty percent stated that these schools would provide opportunities for gifted and talented students to achieve better than they would in a comprehensive school and 67% supported the schools as being philosophically appropriate for the educational needs of our society.

Yet the time was not a propitious one to introduce such a change for the interview data suggested that over half of those teachers and school executive members indicated that they believed that teachers would not, in the then contemporary industrial climate, put themselves out to implement the changeover to being a selective high school.

One way to judge the amount of user effort the teachers were prepared to put into preparing for the change is to examine the extent of teachers' enrolment in inservice courses designed to prepare them to teach selective students. Seventy-two percent of the teachers claimed that they required specifically targeted inservice courses to cope with the change. To this end the schools attempted to provide support for teachers by devoting their

staff development days to issues concerned with teaching gifted and talented students. However, only 13 percent of them enrolled in specific inservice courses provided outside the school to cope with the demands of the innovation. Most of the teachers completing the open ended section of the survey commented that they believed that they were inadequately prepared for the change but the relatively small percentage of teachers who went out of their way to attend externally provided inservice courses suggests that the level of user effort indicated by such a figure was quite low.

TABLE 1 General Attitudes About Selective High Schools
Percentage Responses (N = 104)

Item	SA*	A*	D*	SD*
I believe that selective high schools:				
1. provide an academic emphasis which is needed for academically talented students	32	52	16	0
2. enable teachers to focus on the needs of academically able students	36	56	7	1
3. offer an atmosphere where academic achievement is valued	46	51	3	0
4. provide competition which spurs students to achieve better	26	56	16	2
5. provide the opportunity for students to achieve better than they would in a comprehensive school	21	39	34	6

6. foster the development of highly talented students 29 53 17 1
7. are philosophically inappropriate for the educational needs of our society 14 19 44 23

Yet the teachers did put effort into changing their classroom practices. Seventy-three percent indicated that they had to change their teaching approaches to cope with the pressures of teaching the gifted and talented students and 65 % claimed that their teaching had improved as a result of the imposed change. Such responses would indicate that the majority of teachers had put considerable effort into preparing themselves for changes in their classroom behaviours. In some cases these strategies represented the need to adjust to the pressures exerted by the students, in many others they arose because the teachers enjoyed the efforts put in by the students and worked hard themselves.

Where the amount of user effort was judged to be comparatively low was in terms of whole school planning by all the schools' teaching staffs. However, the schools' executive spent a considerable amount of their meeting time prior to the introduction of the change and in the first year, planning for the changes in their curriculum and organisational practices. Essentially most of this planning concerned House's technical perspectives such as the restructuring of existing curriculum practices, reporting to students and parents and the collection of new resources. Cultural issues such as whole school policies in pastoral care, managing the gifted underachiever and providing enriching experiences beyond the mainstream curriculum, rarely were considered. Of course it may be too much to expect the schools to consider such issues considering the amount of planning time they had at their disposal.

c) Subsequent commitment

One of the significant findings emanating from Crandall's study is that commitment is not a necessary condition to bring about implementation of a innovation. While there was the majority of teachers could be said to be committed to the change there was still a substantial minority of teachers (33%) who were not committed to the establishment of their school as a selective high school. Further, 43 % of the teachers perceived that the establishment of selective high schools was an elitist act that promoted a feeling of superiority among the students. The fact that a significant minority of teachers were not committed to the principle of having selective schools might suggest that they would not teach effectively in them. Yet 77 percent of teachers indicated that their commitment grew over time the more they taught the students. Interestingly the commitment was to helping the students perform better in school rather than to the overall innovation of establishing selective schools. Some teachers (36 percent) commented that the students are 'exciting to teach'.

While some teachers were undoubtedly committed to the innovation, commitment could be seen to grow slowly for the majority of teachers. Only a longitudinal study could tell if that commitment grew or decreased over time.

d) Stabilization of use

Stabilization of use concerns the teachers getting to know the innovation, internalising it and shaping it to their own ends. In this study because data were collected over one year it is not possible to comment on the stabilization of the change in the school in any comprehensive way. Suffice it to say that the schools are still functioning as selective high schools three years after their initial changeover from comprehensive to selective high schools.

e) Organizational change

According to Crandall and others, institutionalization of change is aided if the administrators vary organizational processes and policies to facilitate its introduction. In this study the administrators left most of the running to the school principals and the only direct support they gave was the small monetary grant given to each of the school to purchase additional resources. This lack of strong administrative support was a matter of concern to the principals. They believed that they were left to their own devices to bring about the organizational innovations that would promote effective institutionalization of the innovation. The principals thought that at times the central administrators formulated administrative requirements for all schools that were counterproductive in establishing organizational changes in their schools.

In many ways the principals considered the greatest organizational support they received was provided by informal networks they established with each other over the telephone and at various meetings. Such sharing of opinions guided their deliberations in the establishment of curriculum innovations and in organizing on-going staff development and inservice activities. These latter activities were usually controlled by staff committees which facilitated the input of all staff opinions about the changes that were occurring within the schools. The committees proved to be powerful avenues for innovation and for the consideration of various ways of handling different options that often confronted the schools in deciding the way ahead.

Examining each of the supports to institutionalization above it may be said that there were a number of pressures and supports that facilitated the implementation of the innovation but the greatest pressure on the schools to bring about a satisfactory result was the reality that the Minister of Education had mandated the creation of the schools as selective high

schools. The central administrators left most of the running to the school principals who were forced to improvise in different ways, for there were no models to guide them in the transition from being a comprehensive to a selective high school. Pressure was there to ensure that the innovation went through but that pressure could not guarantee the quality of the implemented changes. Monitoring the quality of the processes accompanying the innovation was left to the skill of the principals, school executives and teachers who were by and large extremely professional in their approach to coping with the demands thrust upon them.

Yet as the research indicates all too clearly, having such support is not enough to ensure that innovation is implemented for there are a number of threats that can affect its institutionalization. The main factors likely to threaten successful implementation are discussed in turn.

Threats to implementation of the change

a) Environmental turbulence

Crandall and his co-workers state that environmental turbulence around a school will limit or directly hinder the implementation of a change effort. The innovation examined in this study came about at a time of severe disruption within the NSW educational system. The morale of teachers in the NSW educational system was at an all time low. They perceived that their roles were under attack from all sides as governments, employers and various right wing community pressure groups were blaming the schools for the lack of productivity in the economy. Moreover, the teachers saw their salaries and working conditions decrease in a comparative sense. These two factors strongly influenced their attitudes to the innovation and as one deputy principal claimed ' the Minister couldn't have chosen a more inopportune time to attempt such a change'.

However, the principals commented that the teachers' low morale was focused on the wider issues of the profession and not about their work in the school. This was mainly evident in the fact that teachers were less keen to take on extracurricular activities, a situation that has particularly affected these schools as they changed from being comprehensive to selective high schools. As one Principal said, there was a real problem in asking teachers to do any more, because they were loath to take on more when their efforts were often denigrated by the media and the community generally. This was not an easy time for the implementation of change yet the schools managed to bring about initial change in spite of the external pressures that retarded their efforts.

b) Career enhancement motivation

This threat relates to the desire of teachers to move on to other challenges by transferring to other schools or to leave teaching for other careers. In the case of the schools in this study such a possibility was not a real option for most teachers. The deliberate reduction in the number

of teaching places in all schools coupled with the higher levels of unemployment within the general community meant that teachers found it difficult to get another position.

The data in Table 2 suggest that the introduction of the innovation proved to be an attractive event for the majority of the teachers. They enjoyed teaching the students and judged them to be more motivated than students in comprehensive schools. Such attitudes would suggest that the teachers were stimulated by the innovation but the restricted opportunities to move to other schools lessened their opportunities for career advancement elsewhere.

.C5.TABLE 2 Teachers' Perceptions of the Qualities of Students in Selective Schools (N= 104)

Item	Response- Percentages			
	SA*	A*	D*	SD*
1. it is stimulating to be working with academically able students	49	46	4	1
2. there is a very positive atmosphere among the students	23	66	10	2
3. the students are more motivated to work than those in comprehensive schools	30	53	13	4

c) Stability of staff

Having constant staff turnover is likely to affect the implementation of any innovation claim Crandall and others. Commonsense suggest that the introduction of new ideas requires teachers to be satisfied with their employment conditions and general school culture. If teachers are constantly moving from a school it is argued by Crandall that such movement is often a proxy for dissatisfied school staff. In the case of the schools in this study there was a comparatively stable and experienced teaching force as the data in Table 3 indicate. Overall in NSW there has been a lessening in the number of teachers resigning from the teaching service and/or transferring to other schools because of the decreased employment opportunities in the wider workforce caused by the economic recession that struck Australia. The majority of the teachers (63%) in the schools had taught for more than 11 years and 50 percent had taught in their present school at least since 1986.

.C5.TABLE 3 Length of Time Teaching at Present School (N= 104)

Commenced Teaching at	%
Present School	
In 1989, 1990	25
In 1987, 1988	25
Between 1980 and 1986	33
Before 1980	17

d) Program leadership

Throughout the above analysis one factor that is frequently repeated is the effort the principals devoted to implementing the innovation once the Minister decided it was going ahead. The principals guided the processes and created the necessary opportunities within the schools to ensure that the innovation was successfully implemented. Consequently, the absence of leadership was not a threat to the institutionalization of the innovation.

e) Vulnerability of innovation

Crandall and others highlight the vulnerability of the innovation as threat to its institutionalization. By this they believe that it is necessary to introduce structural and procedural changes to ensure that the innovation is carefully planned and so lessen its vulnerability. Yet it may be that even if such changes are carefully thought out the scope of the innovation may be difficult for individual schools to handle in spite of the care and attention they devote to their planning. While some researchers (e.g. Fullan) argue that it is better to start off innovative changes on a small scale to increase the chances of successful implementation this innovation did not have such a luxury. The schools had to implement a broad scale reform that affected the whole of their teaching, curriculum and administrative policies and practices.

In the case of this innovation there is no doubt that the majority of the teachers (79 percent) believed that the changeover represented a major adjustment to their teaching and curriculum planning practices that required substantial planning and consultation to ensure that it was implemented correctly. Had the planning of the schools been less than was desirable the innovation would have still occurred as the students were going to enter the schools come what may. The quality of the education the students received would have been lower if the planning and execution were less than desired but the reality meant that the students would have still been enrolled.

Examining the threats to this innovation it may be said that of the five threats discussed only one, environmental turbulence, was present to such an extent that the successful implementation of the innovation was threatened. Yet while there was environmental turbulence present the lack of alternatives to teachers meant that the power of the Minister was sufficient to ensure the innovation was introduced.

How successfully was the mandated change implemented?

Based on the observational, interview and survey data collected over the project success may be evaluated in terms of the three perspectives of the change process described by House technical, political and cultural. At the

technical level, the schools were moderately successful in changing their practices. Politically, the school executives were able to master support for the change as the majority of the teachers either supported the policy of establishing selective high schools or they were neutral. Outright opposition was very limited and those few teachers who were philosophically or politically opposed to the change tended to transfer to other schools or were comparatively quite in their opposition. At the cultural level i.e the change was introduced spasmodically. Some faculties relished the chance to review their teaching and curriculum practices, other faculties had great difficulty in changing their predominant culture as they attempted to meet the needs of their new clientele.

Reflections On The Mandation Of Change as a Successful Change Strategy

The nature of a mandated change enforced on schools has a lot to do with the chances of its successful implementation and institutionalization if the prevailing research is any indication. Evaluations of mandated regulatory changes such as Chapter One requirements (Clayton ; Winfield)

or curriculum practices (Goodlad, Klein & Associates) suggest that the schools often go through the motions of meeting the regulatory compliance requirements but the true spirit guiding the new regulations is not institutionalized. Consequently, mandation is not highly regarded by writers in the field (Charters & Pellegrin; House) as a means of maintaining a school's normal equilibrium and providing a secure base for implementing new ideas. These writers claim that mandation is not accepted by teachers as the preferred way of considering and planning for change as they usually work from a collegial, sharing base.

Yet the mandated change was successfully introduced to the four schools in this study even though it represented a major change for the schools and their communities. Each school had to redefine its purpose and had to develop new curriculum and organizational processes that meant more than minimal compliance with the Minister's policies. The policy he gave them was narrow and very specific: they had to enrol their first cohort of selective students within a three month period. If Louis & Miles' evidence about changing high schools is indicative of the outcomes of such a brief then the implementation of the policy was likely to run into problems. Yet the problems the schools encountered in implementing the policy were comparatively minor. Why then were the schools comparatively successful when it came to implementing the change?

Though the Minister mandated the change one of the advantages flowing from the decision was the de facto recognition by the administrators that the schools had to implement the changes themselves. While the administrators did not help the changeover process to any great extent their comparative non-involvement meant that the schools were free to plan their own policies and processes. The Ministerial policy defined the parameters of the change to be implemented and the schools were free to devise their own policies

and processes to implement the policy.

Each school was fortunate that his/her principal was an active and involved leader who did not dominate school decision-making. The schools had to work to the timetabled reality that the change was going to happen in the next school year. Though the administrative pressure was always there the schools did not perceive it as a negative force. Perhaps in many ways they were conditioned to administrative mandates having taught in the NSW system for some time. This experience enabled them to distance themselves from the substantive pressure and get on with their day by day activities. The principals by providing positive leadership were able to establish processes for the active involvement of the individual faculties and for the establishment of whole school development activities.

The principals were helped by having stable staff establishments and the fact that the majority of the teachers supported the innovation and were prepared to modify their current practices though this required substantial work on their part. These steps resulted in each school developing a coherent school policy that provided the framework for their future development. Acting against the implementation of the innovation was the political and industrial turmoil that surrounded the introduction of the changes. But as has been noted the turmoil largely appeared to be external to the four schools as they 'turned inwards' to plan for the innovation. The greatest obstacle they faced was the lack of resources which was to some extent overcome by the teachers' ingenuity. While there is some concern that the lack of resources will handicap their work as the students progress to higher grades the advantage they have on their hands to plan for such an important problem is time.

From the technical perspective described by House the schools could be judged to be successful in their change endeavours and the Minister's mandation reinforced their technical implementation of the change. Yet at the political and cultural levels their implementation of the change still was immature. This immaturity no doubt reflects the speed with which the schools were forced to introduce the change. Many writers such as Louis and Miles have pointed out that it takes a long time to implement changes in a

multilevel institution such as a high school.

Conclusion

Implementing mandated change poses specific problems for schools for it is contrary to the prevailing wisdom that change should be introduced through a collegial, developmental approach. Today schools systems are increasingly faced with changes that are externally imposed upon them as politicians become more actively involved in setting the educational agenda. Developmental, collegial models of change are not appropriate ways of responding to the pressures of immediate educational change most politicians want. Politicians for their part have marshalled substantial

community support for their educational agendas and the community is looking for immediate responses from schools no matter how unrealistic such expectations may be.

The research literature is replete with many examples of mandated changes that have failed to be implemented successfully as there is a marked discrepancy between the actual results and the intended results of the innovation. Yet as this study has shown it is possible to develop appropriate strategies that facilitate successful implementation of the innovation. In this case implementation was obviously helped by having many teachers supporting the innovation involving a clearly defined goal. However, it is believed that this commitment was by itself not enough to achieve the successful implementation of the policy. Thoughtful leadership at the school level involving the schools' faculties facilitated the implementation of the policy.

Examining the scoreboard for this particular change it may be concluded that the Minister 'won'. He was able to force through a major policy and have it implemented very quickly. Without a doubt he was helped by the quality of the leadership and teachers in the schools involved in the study. Without such support it is likely that the change would not have succeeded. Perhaps a lesson for politicians who wish to mandate successful innovation in schools is to pick their targets carefully. This Minister succeeded by luck rather than by careful planning.

Note:

This report is based on data collected as part of a larger study by Adams, Ball, Braithwaite, Kensell & Low (1991) Meeting Community Needs: NSW Selective High Schools in the 1990s. This study was supported by grants from the NSW Department of School Education and Macquarie University. The comments do not necessarily represent the views of the NSW Department of School Education or its officers.

The constructive comments of Christine Deer and Tony Koop in the preparation of this article are appreciated.

Appendix : The design of the study

To achieve the research objectives of the study, a series of case studies was undertaken in four selective high schools. These four schools were established as coeducational selective high schools. They enrolled their first cohort of selective students at the beginning of 1990. All the other classes in these schools were comprehensive classes.

A comparative case study methodology was used as the basis of this study. Data were collected from each of the schools as separate case studies to identify, if possible, common themes across all of the case studies that merited comment. The common framework for each school is the extent to which each school meets the needs of their selective students who follow centrally provided curriculum goals that require local implementation and

interpretation. The relationships between the policy requirements stated by the Minister and the practices followed in the schools also provide a common framework for analysis. There are common goals in each of the schools but the achievement of these goals is mediated through a range of factors such as the prior experiences of the participants, local expectations, contextual differences and student responses.

Data collection methods;

Data were collected through a variety of techniques: document reviews, interviews and surveys. All document reviews and interviews were conducted by the project team.

A selective high school which was not part of the sample was approached to assist as a pilot school for the project. Exploratory interviews at this school assisted in the development of the interview schedules used in the sample schools. Student surveys were also trialed at this school.

Interviews

The teacher interviews were conducted with members of the executive and teaching staff in Term 1, 1990. They included the Principal (approximately 2 hours) Deputy Principal (approximately 1 hour) and two Head Teachers (approximately 40 minutes) and eight teachers. The Principal was asked to select teachers who were representative of the total staff in terms of gender and teaching disciplines, had taught in the school for at least the last two years and were teaching selective students. Issues covered in the semi-structured interviews were school characteristics, staff attitudes and characteristics, attitudes to students, curriculum practices and perceptions of parental views of the school.

Data from the interviews were recorded on the interview schedules and written up by project team members following the completion of the interviews in each school.

.C3.Surveys

Surveys were based on the research questions and were developed from findings of the interviews and other sources from the related literature.

The surveys were administered to teachers in each of the schools

The teacher questionnaire, given in Term 4 of the first school year, was developed to explore issues which emerged in the teacher interviews as well as including other issues arising in subsequent involvement with the schools. The questionnaire asked for demographic information, teacher attitudes towards and opinions about selective schools, resource needs, teacher perceptions of working in selective schools and general issues concerning selective schools. 104 completed teacher surveys were obtained from the four schools a response rate of 59 percent. The completed surveys represented teachers from all faculties and 57 percent of the returns were from female teachers and 43 from male teachers compared with the four schools' population of 59 percent male and 41 percent female.

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