A School Change Consultancy Model in Twelve Steps

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Based on organizational innovation theories, but also on concrete experiences with school consultancy, GALE developed a 12-step model to coach organizational change related to sexual education and sexual and gender diversity. This model is quite advanced and giving it to school managers may work demotivating (it shows how long and intensive real change is). But for external or internal consultants, it is useful to keep in mind, or even to track progress – if you are able to engage in a multi-year consultancy process.
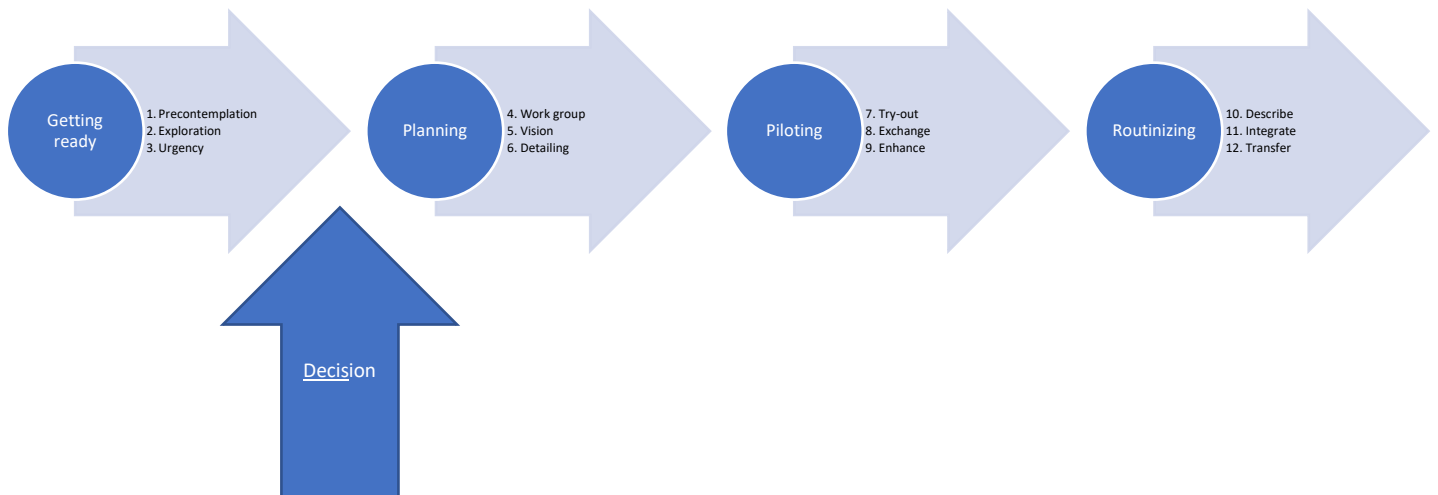
This consultancy guide can be used as a checklist for school counselling.

- Each step can be prepared and evaluated based on the points for attention per step.

- It is possible to include the 12 steps in an Excel overview and to indicate per school how far the guidance is.

- The consultant can possibly create an Excel diagram which consists of a (five-point scale; not good at all - very good) for each step. The consultant can then assign an assessment of the quality of the execution of each step. By also noting an explanation of the score, the consultant can increase their own reflection and the learning process to improve their consultancy and eventual impact in the school.

Everett Rogers distinguishes 5 groups of personnel who are gradually involved in the support.

- Innovators : always enthusiastic about innovation

- Trendsetters : follow the innovators and set the tone for others (Rogers calls these *early adopters*)

- Benevolent staff: join if it seems successful (Rogers calls these the *early majority*)

- Conservatives : join if the majority joins (Rogers calls these the *late majority*)

- Remainers : remain in resistance, or want an exceptional position (Rogers calls these the *laggards*)

The main strategy of a successful innovation is to *gradually* and step-by-step involve these groups, until the organization commitment for the new routine is so great that external consultancy is not necessary any more. The 12-step consultancy plan gives suggestions on how to concretely do this.

| Getting ready | 1. Precontemplation
2. Exploration
3. Urgency | Planning | 4. Work group
5. Vision
6. Detailing | Piloting | 7. Try-out
8. Exchange
9. Enhance | Routinizing | 10. Describe
11. Integrate
12. Transfer |

Decision

Phase 1: Getting ready

Goal: to arrive at a supported decision to develop a policy on sexual and gender diversity

Step 1: Consider the Situation

- Prepare a conversation with the management by taking stock of what you already know about the school

- Assume that the school knows little or nothing about the topic sexual and gender diversity, and possibly thinks that it is only about incidental implementation of a lesson

- Have "triggers" at hand that can increase the urgency of the school representative to take action, like an example of bulling, a complaint or a coming-out or gender transition

- Make a personal and professional connection with the school representative, gauge how personal motivations align with your progressive vision on the topic

- If the school management shows willingness, explore how to increase urgency among innovators and early adopters, including managing staff

Step 2: Exploration

- Look at both general rules and practices around social manners and safety (such as antibullying policy), and also at specific measures and interventions around sexuality and gender; no reference to sexual or gender diversity may reflect a taboo but also just a lack of awareness

- Look not only at behavior and attitude, but also at school policy and the physical school environment (separate gender toilets, changing rooms, graffiti)

- Don't just look at students, but also at staff and parents

- Use hard number if you can find or organize research..,

- but also gauge opinions and feelings (and underlying values and standards)

- Preferably discuss preliminary conclusions as widely as possible; the more the conclusions are shared by the school community, the greater the chance of support

Step 3: Decide

- Discuss results of exploration, strive for recognition of urgency

- Discuss possible priorities

- Promote prioritization of one or a few "levers"; a few interventions that will "automatically" call for further and wider organizational and cultural change

- Stimulate that not only innovators, but as many early adopters as possible want to participate

- Make sure that the priorities/levers are attractive to the early majority and not provoke great resistance from the conservatives/late majority

- Treat laggards respectfully, but don't involve them too much in the innovation activities and don't give them excessive space

Phase 2: Planning

Goal: extend support to trendsetters and benevolent staff/early majority

Step 4: Start/Create a workgroup

- Encourage that the "lead" working group mainly consists of innovators and trendsetters and that at least one member of management (as a trendsetter) is involved
- It is preferable that the working group is part of an existing structure, for example the care team or the citizenship working group
- Ensure that the working group(s) have sufficient resources and support (paid project staff hours, space to meet, support management)

- Support the working group by making it clear which process they are going into, and that this process also includes broadening support

Step 5: Formulate a Vision

- Start by formulating a vision that aligns with the broader vision of the school

- Involve all stakeholders (including staff, students, parents) in the vision formation

- Don't just think about promoting pleasant relational development, but also about broader manners and control

- Do not only consider the personal development of students, but also the social context: different views on gender, cultural views on relationships and sex, heteronormativity, legal requirements

- Think about how the (middle class, relatively progressive) culture of the teachers (focus on free choice and tolerance) relates to the culture of the students and their parents (sometimes: street culture, priority for cultural or religious norms at odds with your own more progressive vision)

- Ensure that the final formulation of the vision can be supportive and distinctive in any future conflicts about values and standards

Step 6: Elaborate the Vision

- Work out the vision into priorities (levers for school culture change) and a concrete implementation plan

- Determine how the school receives and wants to deliver students (start and end point of the learning path)

- Provide attention within the lessons in the form of a continuous learning line

- Provide attention within student care (own and external care for questions about relationships and sexuality)

- Provide attention within the school environment by building relationships and sexuality into group formation (golden weeks) and manners (social norms, agreements, rules, reporting unwanted sexual approach, discrimination, sexist/homophobic bullying, complaint procedures, rehabilitation after unjustified complaints)

- Ensure attention within school policy by adjusting policy documents, protocols and communication about this (school environment, website)

- Make sure the plan includes a division of labour and a schedule for the pilot

- Make sure that the staff knows and is willing to perform the agreed task, especially involve the trendsetters and the benevolent; spare the conservatives and the laggards

- Involve students and parents in implementation where possible

Phase 3: Piloting

Goal: see if the plans work as intended and improve

Step 7: Run a Pilot
- Try out the plans as an "experiment" (pilot); this makes it clear that nothing is imposed, but that everyone involved becomes co-owner of the innovation

- Monitor the implementation (make a checklist of the concrete planning and keep track of whether it is being carried out as intended)

- Collect positive and negative experiences

Step 8: Share Experiences
- Deliberately spread the positive experiences to the entire school population and parents; this increases support

- Discuss the negative experiences or pitfalls in a non-blaming way

- Look for joint solutions

- Organize mutual support

- Evaluate the pilots and decide which improvements the school wants to keep and how pitfalls are overcome

Step 9: Improve Routines and Rules
- Make the improvements visible to the entire school population and parents

- Continue to enable all stakeholders to provide feedback on improvements and suggest further improvements

- Make sure it is clear that the improvements support the integral school vision

- Ensure that it is clear that specific improvements are part of a broader package of education, policy, environment and signalling that as a whole contributes to an improvement of the school climate (school culture).

Phase 4: Anchoring

Goal: to ensure that the improvements become part of the school culture.

Step 10: Describe

- Document the results of the pilot

- Publish the vision on the website

- Provide an action protocol for sexually transgressive behavior and respect for sexual and gender diversity

- Write a guidance for the spiral curriculum

- Document the lessons

- Create a document with tips for student guidance and referral in relational and sexual problems

- Describe the improvements in such a way that people who were not involved in the development understand why the measures and interventions were designed and adapted and how they can or should be applied

Step 11: Integrate

- Review existing curricula, protocols and policies and determine where the newly developed improvements can or should be integrated

- Adjust relevant curricula , protocols and policies

- Make sure that the school policy cycle explicitly includes a re-evaluation moment for the policy on relational and sex education

- Ensure that the decision on the adjustment is accepted through the regular decision-making procedures

- Ensure new curricula, protocols and policies are communicated to all relevant stakeholders

- Ensure that it is clear how stakeholders (pupils, teachers, other staff, parents) can provide feedback in the future and how they can propose improvements

Step 12: Transfer

- Develop guidelines/folders for new parents, students and staff on how the school deals with the theme of relationships and sexuality together

- Actively inform parents about the policy before enrolling or upon enrolment, if necessary have them sign a "social" contract

- Inform and actively involve new students in the agreements on manners (Golden Weeks, Ground Rules on class level, ensuring that agreements in classes remain in line with school-wide agreements through annual adjustment of school-wide rules, so: bottom-up process)

- Introduce new staff to the policy through an introductory course (the theme of relationships and sexuality integrated into a broader intro course) and guidance in the first year of appointment

Note: this publication is a translation of the original Dutch version: Stappenplan voor de Gezonde School-adviseur - School en veiligheid:
https://www.schoolenveiligheid.nl/stappenplan-voor-de-gezonde-school-adviseur/