Principles for helping a school
to transform itself

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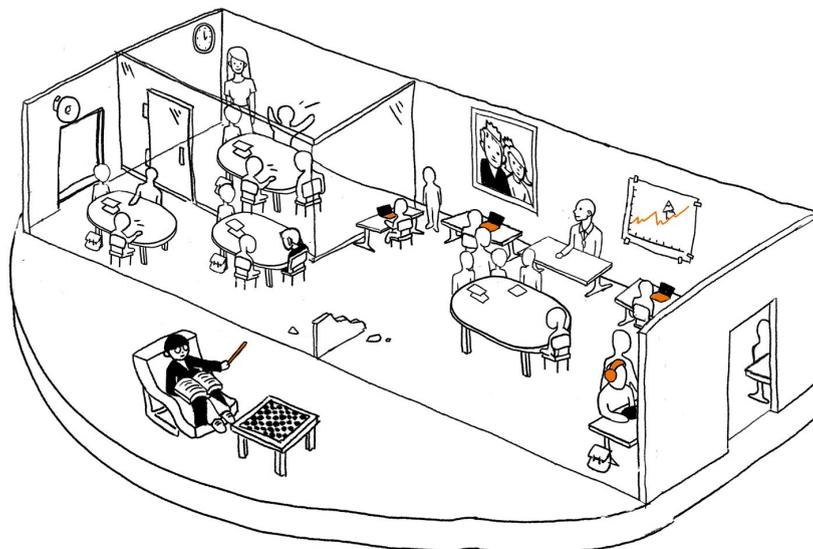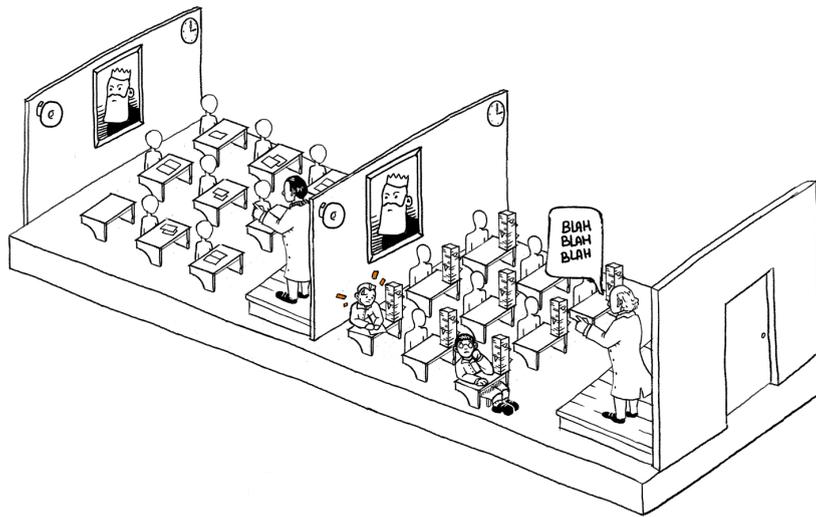
Change resistance

will be the number one enemy of your school's transformation.

Foundations

We find out how we can better accompany schools through practice and by helping others to do so. These experiences lead us to value:

1. Supportive management.

2. Actors who take back ownership of their school.

3. A flexible and systemic approach.

Principles

These 3 foundations are supported by the following principles:

1. Supportive management

reverse caricature: authoritarian or absent management.

Embody the change and its goals.
A management that embodies the example to be followed by its collaborators shows that it is possible. The teacher does the same for his or her colleagues and students.

Coach the management.
A critical external friend experienced in change enables management to reflexively improve its action.

Be sincere.
A healthy relationship based on trust is essential for long-term success.

Shaping a steering committee.
The most volunteers lead the project.

2. Actors who take back ownership of their school

reverse caricature: bureaucrats cloistered on rails.

Co-constructing a unifying vision.
Establishing together the major objectives of the school is the basis for the interpersonal relationships necessary for a solid commitment.

Moving forward with the volunteers
and allow time for the more timid.

Spend time together,
sometimes residential to treat relationships.

Break down barriers,
lowering the barriers between places and roles.

Get students and parents involved
as primary actors.

Anticipate and manage resistances,
consider that they are expected from any human process of change and adaptation.

Celebrate success,
small and large progresses, value change.

3. A flexible and systemic approach

reverse caricature: scattered DIY that runs out.

Sign a contract,
ensure the commitment of a majority.

Establish a plan
of action to achieve the goals and set a guideline for action.

Equipping and training
to ease the transition for those who want to apply but are not ready to develop.

Valuing the existing,
Collect and build on relevant and functional initiatives.

Create a sense of urgency,
so that routine and accessory don't shut out important actions.

Diagnose and measure
to objectify and support the school's progress.

Encouraging self-evaluation
of the educational team to strengthen their questioning reflexes and to better embody the desired posture in the students.

Readjust on the basis of the results,
recognize course errors and adapt actions flexibly.

Valuing short-term gains,
the tangible benefits to keep motivation when faced with difficulties.

Institutionalize change.
As soon as the change is effective, it must be consolidated in writing and legitimised from a regulatory and legal point of view.

Communicate clearly and frequently,
because leaders often consider that communication is explicit when in fact it is not.

Principles explained

This section of the document details the principles listed above. Practices that have had some success are isomorphic, where the proposer embodies what he proposes. That is, "do with teachers what you want them to do with their students in a 21st century classroom".

1. Supportive management

Management must mobilize the means to make people want to change. If the school management does not show that it wants to change, how could hesitant teachers dare to do so? The school management is the main leader of the transformation and is an example for the team members. Change is overwhelming. The management must be a convinced beacon when difficulties make the team doubt.

Embody change and its goals

As a director, are you intensely present while being in a backward posture? Are the trainings you offer to teachers a model of what they should do with their students? Is your office in an ivory tower, like the teacher on the podium, or among your team, like the teacher among his or her students?

Showing, as management, that one is oneself in the process of change is a healthy prerequisite before expecting change from others. Transitively, encourage your teachers to embody the attitudes they are looking for in students.

Coach the management

Being at the top of an organization is often a lonely and anxious position. Having a neutral interlocutor who is not emotionally involved is all the more salutary as the latter is used to change in organisations. If the connection between the school's main external support person and the management is not good, then the support person should be changed. If it is the management that is too problematic, it is a sign that this school should not be engaged in an intense change.

It is necessary to be able to immediately answer a teacher's concern or difficulty in implementing change. This work of accompaniment is consequent. Either a valued member of the school team is given time for this task instead of his or her usual work. Or, the external support person has to come more often, for example once a week.

Be sincere

Forcing the path is sometimes tempting, but in the medium term, it can disempower teachers by sending the message that they are not really in control and that your desire to mobilize them is not sincere.

Shaping a steering committee

The most volunteers need to get together to motivate each other, to inform each other about the process and to decide on the next steps. This steering committee is usually led by the management, often in a pair. The roles and contributions of its members are complementary. Involving less motivated people reduces the risk of fracture.

Don't hesitate to open this steering committee to onlookers, to expose it to the curious. Keep it in a prominent place (in the playground when the weather is nice, in the canteen just after a meal, in the teachers' room, etc.) and in a time favourable to spontaneous participation.

2. Actors who take ownership back of their school

Co-constructing a unifying vision

Mobilize yourself around a vision, a unifying objective that you will have taken the time to co-construct and write with the educational team. Asking the question "in what direction to change?" is already a little bit of change.

Not all members of the educational team will take the same path in the transition. Clear operational goals and indicators set out as a beacon to ensure that these paths are not scattered.

Moving forward with the volunteers

Although a majority of teachers have previously committed themselves to participate in a change, not all are ready to be pioneers. Let the most enthusiastic lead the way. The more timid prepare themselves by observing. Not forcing them doesn't mean leaving them on the sidelines. Taking care of the hesitant helps to prevent them from becoming restive.

The actors of change in a school are to be understood in the broadest sense. They are teachers, educators, management. It would be unwise to forget the administrative and labour personnel, as well as students and parents.

Spending time together

Caring for the well-being of the team and creating a positive group dynamic is essential for opening up and coping with change. A teacher must trust colleagues to publicly question his or her practices.

Spending time together builds relationships. A team building activity in a restaurant or in the woods sometimes brings much more benefit to a team than a pedagogy seminar. Relaxing a tense atmosphere must be the number one objective before starting to reflect on the content of the transformation. These activities can extend from the steering committee to the whole educational team.

Activities and trainings allow to better understand and accept differences, to better manage relationships between colleagues. A good understanding of human behaviour avoids many prejudices and clarifies misunderstandings about each other's attitudes.

Break down barriers

Take every opportunity to unseal the classroom, from teamwork on a transversal project to the exchange of teachers with another school, through the involvement of parents in the learning process.

Get students and parents involved

The school of the 21st century is organized less by the frame, but rather by its committed actors. Thinking and implementing change for students without involving them is disclaiming responsibility and removes from the project a disruptive creative force that is often extinguished in adults. Likewise, to exclude parents from the reflections is to exclude them from the school, which does not embody the teaching of the 21st century that opens the school to its community. A school that is afraid of its parents must take care of itself.

Anticipate and manage resistances

In any change, difficulties and obstacles arise, whether they come from the outside or from the staff. Being attentive to them makes it possible to carry out the necessary so that they do not become blocking points.

For example, for staff, activities and training help to bring about a change of state of mind, to develop openness and curiosity, and to see change with more hindsight and less stress. If you don't have self-confidence, how can you trust your students?

Celebrate success

Taking the time to show that a step has been reached, can save more time than going straight to the next step.

3. A flexible and systemic approach

Sign a contract

Is the majority of teachers in the school willing to give opportunity for change? A clear commitment (probably requiring a difficult debate) precedes strong participation. Not intimidating the hesitancy, but rather taking the time to accept their fears allows for collective preparation before a stronger commitment and the beginning of a transition. A management that is willing to accept a refusal and abandon will be more sincere in its request for commitment from its team and will be willing to waste more time in the process.

Establish a plan

This method does not contain an action plan, since it is specific to each school. Co-constructing this action plan with the educational team allows the team to take

responsibility for its realization and to reassure them about the uncertainties related to the transformation.

Equipping and training

When external advisors offer tools and training, it facilitates the transition for the majority of teachers who need to function first in a ready-to-use environment, before they have the cognitive availability to adapt this environment to their personality, experience and students.

These tools and trainings can cover topics such as pedagogy, organization and psychology. This can take the form of a ready-to-use textbook with its website, an internship in another school, worksheets, etc.

Training that reinforces the capacity to question reflexes and the harmonious management of interpersonal relations allows to increase personal skills that are missing for part of the educational team but which many of the principles explained here call upon.

Value the existing

The educational team has already taken many initiatives. Collecting and valuing the best ones, as well as those that are less good (without being harmful), helps to reassure the whole team (initiators and observers) that innovation is not a risky act in the school. Rather than a clean slate, showing that the school's culture and spirit are preserved helps to unify teachers.

These initiatives were probably taken in a dispersed order and in isolation. Showing that they contribute to the realization of the shared vision of school transformation will make them more meaningful and promote their diffusion within the school.

Create a sense of urgency

What is important is not often considered urgent. This opens the door to routine activities that consume the schedule and leave change behind. Change is a source of anxiety. A slight but persistent sense of urgency can help to get through it.

Diagnose and measure

What is the status of the school regarding each of the characteristics of the 21st century school? A diagnosis by the educational team already allows to become aware of the goals to be reached and the priorities that will have to be established. A complete and objective external diagnosis.

Measuring the benefits of change will calm the most anxious. Was some time wasted on the short-term program? Yes, but to the benefit of student motivation? Has the atmosphere in the team changed? Has the absenteeism rate changed?
A university partner can help to provide objectivity and credibility to this measure whose criteria can be co-constructed with the educational team.

It only takes a few months for a group of humans in a more comfortable situation to adapt their level of demand and forget the misery that was theirs. Measuring at the beginning of the project enables sometimes salutary reminders.

Encouraging self-evaluation

In order for the educational team to strengthen its reflex of constructive questioning, it is often judicious to encourage him to self-evaluate its progress, in addition to the external measure that may be implemented.

Readjust on the basis of the results

Make a plan in advance and avoid sticking to it no matter what. The reality is complex and changing. If you have to stay the course, you have to adjust to the waves. To do this, we measure the results, share them and compare them to the initial goals.

Value short-term gains

The final goal to be achieved is set, but far away. It is necessary to value the tangible benefits in order to maintain the motivation of the whole team facing the difficulties of the transformation.

Institutionalize the change

As soon as the change is effective, it must be made explicit in regulations, written decisions of the organizing authority and other institutional laws in order to consolidate its durability.

Communicate clearly and frequently

Sharing a common vision is only possible if everyone is aware of the changes that are taking place. This aspect is often not taken into account. However, without effective communication, the message can quickly be transformed and lead to misunderstandings. It is better to over-communicate redundantly than not enough.

Many people have a channel of communication from the management to the whole educational team (newsletter, valves, website, etc.). Weekly work meetings should not be left out, which are a powerful channel from colleague to colleague..

Quotes and examples

The rest of this document will consist of a series of quotations from a wide variety of sources and examples. This will be the longest part of the document. Do not hesitate to extend it with your contributions!

"There is still time to start a project, not to reform, but to redesign the school model and, more generally, how to enable everyone to develop knowledge. " (Devauchelle, 2015, p.15)

« The self-evaluation, the professional development, the leadership and the innovation can be put at the service of a project and an educational organization to achieve more equity and efficiency. »

(Muller & Normand, 2015, p.244)

« […] this work has allowed to bring out the importance of an institutional and organizational environment conducive to the expected change, the need to take into account the nature of the educational situations encountered by teachers and the importance, given the complexity of the work expected, of being able to be supported by a teaching staff whose authority, which means power and legitimacy, is strong. »

(Dupriez, 2015, p.161)

The authors carried out research when accompanying higher education teachers in the face of a pedagogical innovation. On this basis they elaborate five positive aspects of the support process.

"1. Establish a *side-by-side* relationship.
2. Focus on teachers' representations based on three key moments in the collaboration (the teacher's situation, agreement on the target to be reached and agreement on how to proceed).
3. Target the teacher's *focal point*.
4. Recognize the teacher's pedagogical skills.
5. Create and maintain the *professional development zone.*"

Martine St Germain et Daniel Labillois , cinq gestes pour bien accompagner le changement (St-Germain, M. & Labillois, D. , 2016, p.27)

1. Supportive management

Have supportive and convincing management

Embody change and its objectives

« Example is not a means of educating, it is the only one. »
GANDHI

Management coaching

« The idea of a triangulation of diagnosis, self-evaluation and audit between inspectors, critical friends and academic authorities would allow for better cross-checking of informations, greater objectivity and better acceptance of the evaluation by teachers. Each in his or her own role and based on his or her own expertise, would enrich the information of the other, for better collective intelligence in the service of student success. »

(Muller & Normand, 2015, p.73)

"The management is the master of this great mission for which the ECS is performing. It leads, lovingly and with conviction and determination, the whole school and the partner community. "

(Levesque, 2011, p.37)

"In all the schools, the role of the school management was essential, whether it was to encourage entry into the system, to set up an awareness strategy or to organise educational guidance with the referents. "

Rey, 2016, p. 21

"PMS agents very frequently encounter this implicit demand [for management coaching] from management of basic education, who rightly feel isolated in the many tasks for which they are responsible."

Anne François, pedagogical advisor in CPMS

Be sincere

Shaping a steering committee

« It is also in this way that the development of cooperative and transformational leadership within each institution will be encouraged, through the establishment of participatory

structures led by the organizing powers, with the support of the representative and coordinating bodies.»

<div align="right">(Pacte sens, 2015 p.54)</div>

In reference to Dumont (p.80 ,s.d.), the action plan will be written by a team [here steering committee] composed of :

1. "the school principal, assisted by a member of the administrative staff
2. (The critical friend, if he participated in the self-evaluation. He or she could be responsible for writing the synthesis of the debates).
3. department / discipline managers
4. the accountant
5. a representative of the :
   - administrative staff
   - educational assistants or maintenance personnel
   - parents
   - students"

<div align="right">(Dumond, s.d., p.80)</div>

"His task [as critical friend] is to guide the group members to conduct the evaluation according to the terms of reference, generating discussion and debate. "

<div align="right">(Muller & Normand, 2015, p.48)</div>

« systemic reform is successful if it is clearly supported by a diversity of actors at each level of the education system, and if possible by external groups close to the education system. These actors must mutually support the main goals of the reform. [...] this process of change can only be based on shared leadership among those responsible for the different levels of the education system [..].»

<div align="right">(Fullan, 2008 cité par Dupriez, 2015, p.32)</div>

[…] the importance of working systems between teachers allowing to go beyond this cellular structure by making teachers' classroom work the subject of analysis with colleagues, whether through direct observation between peers, observation by video or the analysis of traces (of students' grades or productions for example) of the work done in class.

<div align="right">(Dupriez, 2015, p.159)</div>

2. Actors who take ownership again of their school

Co-constructing a unifying vision

"Leadership leading to essential transformations can only come from the school principal, and in this sense, mobilizing and shared leadership is essential. The support of the school

board, the school commission, and the government is essential. This type of governance has the potential to create a positive synergy for the benefit of the children, the school team, and the entire community. It is this leadership that makes the school really inclusive, which means that it is open to all differences through a fruitful partnership in the service of each child. "

<div align="right">(Levesque, 2011, p.38)</div>

"What motivates teachers, despite the predictable obstacles and difficulties, is the shared vision of a work site that allows complex issues to be resolved and calls on their common creativity, rather than a process based on financial incentives or sanctions."

<div align="right">(Rey, 2016, p.11)</div>

"[...] Two important conditions emerge to encourage change: teachers will adopt new practices if they manage to preserve their autonomy of judgement and if they feel a kind of congruence between their professional identity and the practices to be adopted."

Aubépine Dahan, 2011, thèse sur le changement dans une institution publique (Dahan, A, 2011 cité par St-Germain et Labillois, 2016, p.25).

Moving forward with volunteers and focusing on individuals:

Residential time together and nurturing relationships

"The idea is to set in motion a dynamic of change and a sharing of responsibilities in an environment conducive to risk-taking and mutual trust. Improving interpersonal relations is also a key factor for success.."

<div align="right">(Muller & Normand, 2015, p.149)</div>

"This would require that teachers be trained in child and adolescent psychology and, additionally, in the psychology of students and teachers; but also in the neural, cognitive and emotional foundations of learning."

<div align="right">(Collectif Ecole : changer de cap)</div>

« It is necessary to introduce and develop in teaching the study of the cerebral, mental and cultural characteristics of human knowledge, of its processes and modalities, and of the psychic and cultural dispositions that make it susceptible to error or illusion. »

<div align="right">(Edgar Morin)</div>

Break down barriers

"In order to educate "network actor" behaviour, we need an interactive and open school; a school where teachers constantly and actively demonstrate their complementarity; a school that trains students in cooperation; a school that broadly welcomes other actors in society, in business, in local communities, in the State, in the artistic world, etc., in order to raise

awareness of the diversity of their contribution, their equal nobility and their equal necessity... "

<div align="right">(Serieyx, 2004, p.165)</div>

« Within schools, often invited to become more autonomous than before, collective work becomes a leitmotif (Marcel, Durpiez, Périsset & Tardiff, 2007). [...] It [collective work] should now be present in all schools and become a mode of work coordination, allowing to link each teacher's classroom work with the school's project. » . Collective work is also considered to be a key resource for teacher cooperation and professional development. »

<div align="right">(cités par Dupriez, 2015, p.77)</div>

"This "individualism" on the part of teachers can probably only be overcome where the school project values and calls on the collective skills of educational teams." (Dupriez, 2015, p.152)

"Fullan and Hargreaves (2012) share this conviction that the group is more powerful than the individual, that peer interactions are more important than individual capital in changing a system."

<div align="right">(Fullan & Hargreaves, 2012, cités par Rey, 2016, p.10)</div>

Students and parents

« The idea of a parentocracy proposed over 20 years ago by Brown (1990). The place now taken by parents in the monitoring of schooling and schoolwork is such that he suggests that we are now in a system of parentocracy rather than meritocratic schooling, which means a system in which the means and desires of parents play a central role. »

<div align="right">(Draelants, 2014, p.425)</div>

Anticipate and manage resistances

Celebrate success

3. A flexible and systemic approach

"Suggest what is feasible, I keep hearing. It's as if they're saying to me, " Suggest doing what we're doing, or at least suggest some good that goes hand in hand with the existing evil. This type of project is much more fanciful than mine, because in this alloy, good is spoiled and evil cannot be cured. I would rather follow the established practice than to take a good one in half; there would be less contradiction in man, he cannot aim at the same time at two opposing goals..."

<div align="right">(Rousseau, 1762, p.3)</div>

Establish a contract

"Studies in recent years have converged on the importance of actors' commitment to implement any kind of change.

(Rey, 2016, p.22)

Plan and roadmap

Create a sense of urgency
"Eat a live frog first thing in the morning and nothing worse will happen to you the rest of the day."

Mark Twain

Diagnose and measure

"No matter how good a school is, there is always a possibility to improve its operation and efficiency."

(Dumont, s.d. , p.4)

"In order to do the evaluation, Dumont (s.d.) proposes the mobilisation of a "Critical Friend". This person is external to the educational community, is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and will work in collaboration with all the actors of the school. Therefore, "Open, frank and sincere, he is the ally of the school which he intends to serve by his critical spirit, his sense of dialogue and consensus. "

(Dumont, s.d., p.7)

Identify the existing
« Successful change is informal, complex and paradoxical. It works best when it happens unconsciously, much like the variations in breathing rhythm that occur without our knowledge. It is established more effectively when it is based on the potentialities that any system has to evolve.
Paradoxically, it is when we accept ourselves in our own failings and feel recognized that we can enter more easily into a process of change. It is then that resources and skills become easily mobilized to achieve the desired ends.
The respect and valuing of people and groups of people make change more dynamic. Many teachers are already ready to do so, if they are recognized for their efforts and skills, and especially if they are accompanied in their missteps.»

(André Giordan)

"Within a learning community, teachers must agree to make their work public, and to use their work as a basis for discussion with their colleagues."

(Little, 2003 ; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009 cités par Dupriez, 2015, p.148)

"The reform must therefore be thought out and implemented on the basis of the idealism and professionalism of teachers. [...] In terms of motivation, a mistake must be avoided in any case: a reform that begins by criticizing the existing system and its teachers may not succeed in bringing them into the change and therefore may not achieve the desired results. "

"[...] Changing practices would first of all require an understanding of what exactly they cover, with a presumption of the " professionality " of the educational actors to be recognized. "

Self-evaluation

"The self-evaluation (or internal evaluation), which is at the very heart of quality assurance, allows, with the necessary and/or desired frequency, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of a school, section or discipline with a view to making the necessary improvements as soon as possible. "

"The intensive use of external tests and performance indicators is sometimes experienced as a form of violence by teachers, which must therefore be kept at a distance between indifference and hostility."

"It [Result Steering] simultaneously helps to move the projector to certain aspects of the work, while at the same time shading other aspects of the work. As we have seen below, the fact of evaluating some goals rather than others contributes to bringing some dimensions of the educational project to the forefront and to obscuring other dimensions that the authorities have not considered useful to measure or that it is not (today) reasonable to evaluate (well-being, citizenship, etc.)."

Readjust on the basis of the results

Showing short-term gains

Institutionalize the change

« The research on school effectiveness has indeed shown (but with small size effects and significant differences between research) that cooperation between teachers, a common vision of a school project, and pedagogically (rather than administratively) focused leadership are characteristics that are more present in effective schools. »

Clear and repeated team communication

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