

PRIORITY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

**INVESTIGATION OF
METHODS OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

April 10, 30, 1986

WHAT DO YOU IDENTIFY AS THE WEAKNESS OF OUR CURRENT N/A PROCESS?

manipulating discussion	Voting too diverting	Must be extremely well organised and run (pre-primary)	Are the needs being validated?
can be manipulated (voting...)	Some people feel their specific ideas get lost in needs ranking (generalization)	For old schools a little 'incestuous'	Lack of full understanding of what it is!!
People think the voting procedure is a serious math exercise instead of their perceptions	The figures ie colum II - III etc can be confusing to "some" teachers	Not enough emphasis, "time", planning in <u>many</u> schools for the process	Costly to run particularly in of school hours
			Rushed - inadequate time
	Lack of understanding of Needs Validation.	Attitude of schools after selection of focus areas appears to be - "that's the Needs Assessment"	
Query - actual wording of focus question.	<u>In practice</u> - percieved needs may not be real needs (Educational)	Validating often treated too casually by schools	some staff are confused and/or dislike voting/ranking procedure.
Unsuitability of ? asked "What do we want etc.	N/A needs to be extended to include another step after clustering.	Tendency for schools to regard NI session as a NA	
		Do we need processes for whole group validating.	
	Requires skilled facilitators - but so does any structured process		Focus needs to be stressed.
Sometimes creates disharmony among staff (especially final discussion time)	Are we relying too heavily on the process?	Lack of preparation to research goals and rank needs	To the community being represented
Can be thought of as "the only method"			For small schools it appears contrived.
	Those outside PSP use the process incorrectly.		

WHAT DO YOU IDENTIFY AS THE STRENGTHS OF OUR CURRENT N/A PROCESS?

well established	It is a structured meeting which achieves results	Democratic creates commitment	Focusses collective attention very effectively
Promotes 'ownership' of emergent programmes	easy to follow process	Participation of whole staff in decision making	Everyone has a say
Relatively quick and painless	Expendient	Allows perceptions of all staff, comm., etc to be taken into consideration	effective input from those involved
Allows decisions to be made within a manageable time frame	Structured - know where you are going	Ownership hence commitment	Develops staff cohesion.
flexible	Comes across as a very objective method of dealing with a subjective area!	Gives ownership	gives opportunity for all to participate
It's comfortable (us & them)	If PPP for the process is given it is an excellent guideline	A democratic process non-threatening	Involves all staff members
Encourages thought in an area ie, [Needs] that is often forgotten.		Encourages teachers to focus on specific needs of their school community	democratic
A non-threatening process		democratic	Everyone feels that they have had a say
			A chance for all staff to be involved
It is the PSP Way (beware of change for)			Sc Profile - important as starting point especially for new staff
		Creates Teacher awareness particularly subject areas	
		Professional Development of Teachers spin-off	
Fits constraints	no one person gets to dominate during "focus areas" session.		Seems to work well
allows time for staff to assess their needs, children, parents.		It works (better than cargo cult)	Impressive results - it works!
		we have a professional Central in-service	

REFLECTION BOARD

Compare 'Validating info: with original cluster cards' (Help bring goal and objective closer together?)	? full understanding of a continuous/ developing process to be used as a planning 'tool', implementation 'tool', monitoring 'tool', evaluating 'tool'.	Should we obtain of the present achievement at all responses?	Do we <u>really</u> get a <u>full range/cover</u> of goals?	We need to pay more attention to the time line element - eg <u>time</u> for validating, establishing baselines. ie not <u>rushing</u> the process as we have done.	Is the inadequate time a fault of the process or the use of it?	Are futurologists more important than teachers, students and parents in the generation of goals?	Goals - Objectives there is concern.
I like the idea of providing guidelines for teachers before an identification of focus areas session	Is the 'goal' merely a title.	We must be careful not to confuse weaknesses of the process (4 steps) with the <u>use</u> of it.	Importance of goals. Not identified "enough" using the 'process'.	How can we encourage schools/show them the importance of validating?	I think that the diagnosis of <u>why</u> a need exists is important.	At times we need to work hard getting consensus between groups!	
Delphi study - is getting the 'average' decision the best way to go. (innovative?)			Conflict between:- prescriptive goals, objective and even strategies set by Department, and schools setting goals.		Do we need to develop our skills in facilitating validation of Needs?		
Look at new developments in <u>existing</u> area.	We are fully covering NA steps in OUR planning - schools?	Would 'guided recall' alter our focus question?	Time involved in wide-spread information gathering.				
Validating Info and Gathering	Are the schools generating initial solutions and not a PLAN...?	A lot of the weaknesses are our problem - our promotion of the process - time ok	In which areas will they collect the information? All??				
Goal translation points very relevant for us. ie for Nancy's gap.	School admin. does not take the <u>results</u> (perceived-actual) and use as a jigsaw piece as part of	Are we becoming too SLICK?	How will they determine in which areas to collect information?				
Generating goals sheet could be very useful to us.	Lobbying will happen no matter what process is used.	I prefer the Seductive method	Need all members behind aims. no dominate persons pushing their own ideas. How can we effectively attain general ideas/aims from everyone?				
Is what we've seen as a "strength" the weakness 'Expedient'.	Are schools giving <u>LIP</u> service to N/A and leaping into planning/implem and not analysing the progress and preparing a brief.	Input sources could be expanded and nauseum to unworkable proportions. An obvious need to limit.	If schools can select the method of generating goals, don't we run the risk of schools reverting to the "one" method again.				

TEXT The needs assessment requires examination.

CONTEXT We work with diverse groups in a variety of situations and needs assessment is an important part of our process.

SUB-TEXT We think it's OK but we have a concern that we are becoming too static and a few other people are questioning our method.

DILEMMA Being forced to work in a situation which you cannot accept, but

CONFLICT We cannot work effectively under these structures.

Dilemma - I know this area - ie Reading - needs Info Gathering and Validating, but

The Staff
 . don't see the need . are not aware of the . think they know
 . importance of using already.
 . existing data.

. as a facilitator I . I've indicated this
 haven't prepared will be quick and
 the process properly easy.

We think schools need to validate their needs but

We lack skills in facilitating the validation of needs. We have not communicated this aspect of the NA process to schools effectively. There is a danger of over-emphasizing objective rather than subjective methods of N/V.

There is a danger of turning schools off. We need to find simple and effective methods of needs validation.

The process of the N/A is effective but

They don't understand the process... They don't see the benefits of the N/A process. It is identified as 'extra' work.

Planning the programme in 'detail' is not a daily affair (planning of the N/A)

We need to set school based goals to meet the PSP aims, but

The purpose of PSP can be lost in our process orientation. School staff lose sight of the aims of the programme. The process can steer a schools direction away from PSP aims.

We need to make adjustments to our process but

Is it the process or our use of it/presentation? How do we define these?
 Where do we trial? We mustn't take the use/presentation of it for granted.

We feel comfortable with the process but

We need to make refinements. Changes may not work for all groups.

We may not have enough time to expand the process. We may feel insecure with change.

The process appears to work for most groups but

We need to make refinements. It may not work smoothly for all groups.

WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS?

- How we go about getting people generating goals.
Inadequate/unsuitable question.
- Our presentation takes too much for granted.
- Our use of the process does not take 'time' into consideration adequately.
- Lack of preparation by participants for the session.
- Lack of concensus between goal and objective
(Nancy's gap)
- Presenation of a 'sealed' packaged.
- Staff/principal's role - require leadership/cohension.
- Too much 'perception' is hard data, - where necessary/
- The principal accepts too much responsiblity.
- * ● Too little community participation.
- * ● Too little student participation.
- Lack of time allocation for N/A as submission preparation.

**Submission
related to
classroom
progs and
practices**

WHO IS AFFECTED/INVOLVED?

The Team

The schools - project directors, staff,
principals, parents, students

Community

Supers

Education Department - eg MSDs (Regional), Research Branch,
Schools Commission.

FIRST IDEAS FOR SOLUTIONS?

Our presentation

Audience

More consideration given to 'groupings'

Careful selection of who will attend

invite principals and other to central

Ensure representation Community & students

Do away with stock grouping when cot/material.

Awareness Raising

Some form of articles to go to participants

Awareness raising session

Realizing the different levels of knowledge, experience of participants.

Present lists of innovative solutions

create greater awareness

Give school data in advance
 . Future
 . Society Trends

Present list of typical goal (comprehensive)

Give assignments in advance of Needs Assessment.

Separate booklet

give full explanations as well as alternatives at central.

Alternatives

Look at consensus techniques in process

Group discussion be integral part of session.

Facilitators have more central role instead of "lead speakers".

provide several methods to use and demonstrate

Timelining

Build in more awareness of time factor

Less 'structure', 'slickness', and Rev more time

Look to more time to explain process give more to Val emphasize the time-line aspect continually

2 day course

realism

emphasize that these are only strategies - not the panacea

highlight importance of each step "actions & timeline"

Do Maths Process Graphically via Metaplan.

give variety of strategies throughout the presentation

present alternative strategies at each stage.

Guided Recall as one technique prior to brainstorming Goals.

Management

Presentation book for key

"point to consider"

Return course emphasis to teaching the strategies.

Internal school processes strategies

Validation

Emphasize base-line/ validation and time to do it.

validation strategies

New q
 Devise a 'new' question.

session to test new questions.

Support Schools in collecting/ analysing baseline data

Have survey school could use with Parents.

FIRST IDEAS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The Implementation

Introductory session with whole staff.

Look at drawing in staff prior to knowledge in new ways. Steve's Quiz.

Finding means of changing the basic view that PSP = \$

Flexible Implementation

Actively be flexible with schools

- alternative methods
- alternative steps/plans

Cater for design of implementation plan specific to each school
IA's; I; II

implementation booklet
for use at school

Variety

Use the Review Results as the NA (if appropriate)

Don't expect the schools to do a focus areas session every year.

Introductory Awareness

Involvement from the outset of project conception in schools

give clear message to Principals what Needs Assessment really is - How??

A session prior to focus areas session for staff to "tune in".

Explain that focus areas or whatever MAY take more than one session.

Awareness raising strategies prior to focus areas session.

Closer working relationships with schools.

Provide material prior to NF for staff to read.

Validation

Place more emphasis on validation in the school

Focus areas identification earlier in the year - more time for validation.

Help schools validate Needs

Profile

Prepare school profile in more depth ie make sure summary of old data is available.

A Linking Step

Practise session to develop Nancy's Gap.

Including a 'generating solutions' after focus areas and before project directors have been selected.

change focus question

Action Plan and Timelines

more emphasis on Action Plan

more prep on action and timelines ... at school

Help schools diagnose reasons for Needs

practical...

Allow for expansion before validation.

