Providing Feedback During Programme Effectiveness Research: Evidence of Efficacy

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Content

• Context of the evaluation research
• Overcoming the formative – summative divide in reporting results
• Approach to intensive formative feedback with one site
• Outcomes
• Questions

Context

Evaluation of an 18 month National Aspiring Principal Pilot (NAPP) development programme

The programme included elements of:

• residential seminar sessions
• on-line learning
• professional learning groups (PLGs)
• mentoring
• individual ‘inquiry’ projects
Research Context

• Three key research questions guided the research:

1. Is the NAPP programme effective professional development for aspirant principals?
2. At the conclusion of the programme are the aspirants confident and do they have the skills and knowledge required for first time principalship?
3. At the conclusion of the programme are the aspirants prepared for recruitment?

Context cont.

The research was concerned with examination of a wide range of variables:
• programme quality
• design and delivery
• recruitment and retention
• programme outcomes

.... and a wide range of stakeholders:
• funders (national Ministry of Education)
• designers (6 regional governing steering committees and regional co-ordinators)
• facilitators in six regions across NZ
• participants (175 aspirants)
• aspirants’ principals

Methodology

A mixed method (MM) design was adopted to meet the diverse demands of the research. MM:
- is increasingly used (Russ-Eft & Preskill, 2009), particularly as alternative to generalised quantitative surveys and large scale syntheses of professional development literature (Guskey, 2000);
- often requires large teams for wide range of research skills (Rallis & Rosaman, 2003);
- is in the middle of the postpositivist to constructivist paradigm continuum (Leech, Dellinger, Brannagan & Tanaka, 2008) and is an eclectically orientated paradigm (Mutch, 2009); and
- requires that quantitative (Qn) and qualitative (Ql) data should complement each other, allowing for more robust analysis (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).
Type of Feedback Provided

All sites were provided with generalised (non-intensive) formative feedback as well as summative reporting.

One site received action science based (intensive), formative feedback (a case study) as well as end-point, summative, reporting.

Why This Was Distinctive

The inclusion of intensive formative feedback differs markedly from the more traditional provision of research feedback as a solely summative activity which is usually perceived to be less time-consuming, less threatening and more ‘objective’ by researchers.

The change in approach to breaking down the formative-summative divide in research was new for national Ministry of Education programme effectiveness research in New Zealand and is also rare in mainstream research.

Approach Adopted for Feedback

Action science involves an open, non-defensive, bilateral (two-way), ‘dialogue’ with stakeholders about data.
Dialogue Values

• Non-avoiding – issues addressed
• Non-controlling – bilateral, or two-sided

NON-DEFENSIVE!
OPEN
HONEST

Dialogue Strategies

• Advocacy
  ➢ Stating your position, being open, by disclosing concerns/views, backed by evidence, and revealing reasoning behind views
  ➢ Inviting challenge of position, views, facts
• Inquiry
  ➢ Checking to see if views have been understood and what views others hold
  ➢ Receiving other’s views non-defensively
  ➢ Summarising mutual understanding of issues
• Gaining Internal Commitment and Monitoring
  ➢ Seeking bilateral solutions
  ➢ Taking joint responsibility for planning, implementation and monitoring

Multiple positive outcomes were noted that might be directly or indirectly attributable to the intensive formative feedback.

These outcomes signal that the causal links between such a feedback approach and improved programme outcomes is, at the very least, worthy of further investigation.
Outcomes

Evidence that the approach may have strengthened the programme.

Specifically, in the intensive feedback case study region compared to other regions, outcomes included:

- lowering of defensiveness and increasing demand for feedback with some facilitators;
- increased aspirant ratings for the programme;
- enhanced aspirant confidence in applying for principalships;
- a greater number of aspirants gaining principalships; and
- higher response rates to questionnaires in the research.

### Table 5: Questionnaire Respondents per Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of questionnaire aspirant respondents</th>
<th>Total number of aspirants in region</th>
<th>Percentage who participated in the questionnaires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q1 Mid July</td>
<td>Q1 End Nov</td>
<td>Q2 Mar</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
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<td><strong>105</strong></td>
<td><strong>71</strong></td>
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References