

The Education Change Model as a vehicle for reform: Shifting Year 7 and implementing Junior Secondary in Queensland

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Abstract

Queensland schools are engaged in change as they shift Year 7 from primary to high school settings from the start of 2015 and implement Junior Secondary in all public schools in Years 7, 8, and 9. This agenda signals one of the most significant reforms undertaken in Queensland education and is accompanied by a systemic policy commitment, including resource allocation, to ensure it is supported both at the individual school level and in the wider schooling system. In this paper, we outline the Leading Change Development Program undertaken in 2014 which was designed to enable school leaders to facilitate these reforms in their unique school contexts. The program - conceptualised around the Education Change Model - is outlined and data are presented which indicate school leaders' assessment of the stage of reform their school was located, according to the reform model.

Keywords: educational change, middle years, Junior Secondary, reform

The context

In Queensland, where this project is based, a progressive approach has been taken to reforming the middle years with the shift from 2015 of Year 7 from primary to secondary setting across all sectors. Prior to this, Year 7 was typically located in primary schools. This shift occurred, in part, because of the introduction of a voluntary Preparatory year in 2007 followed by a lift in the entry age of schooling in 2008. The Year 1 entry age was raised by six months with the cut-off moving from the end of the calendar year to the middle of the year, thus aligning Queensland with other states across Australia. The overall effect of lifting the school commencing age is that students – on average – are 6 months older in each year level. The first cohort who experienced this change is undertaking Year 7 in 2015 and hence the timing of the shift to secondary school.

The implications of this major change in school education are significant. Most students will complete 7 years in primary and 6 years in secondary school settings, adding a net extra year of schooling. Students will be six months older when they complete each year level from 2015 and half will turn 18 during their final year of school. Many will also have experienced

the shift in government schools to a Junior Secondary model for Years 7-9, which demands a more defined approach to teaching and learning for young people.

Importantly, national analyses that compare year level data will – for the first time from 2015 onwards – be of students at the same age as well as year level across the nation. In the past this has not been the case for Queensland students in high stakes data analyses of student performance, such as the National Assessment Program: Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), which is an annual assessment for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. NAPLAN is comprised of tests in the four domains of: reading, writing, language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation), and numeracy (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2013). Until 2015, the average age of students in Queensland compared to other jurisdictions in Australia was approximately 6 months younger, an explanation confirmed by researchers to be an influence on student scores (Daraganova, Edwards, & Siphthorp, 2013).

Indeed, an early indicator of the possible benefits of the major reforms is the 2015 NAPLAN results for Queensland. In a press release announcing the state as the most improved nationally with leaps in Years 3, 5 and 7 scores, the Minister for Education credited the introduction of the preparatory year; older school starting age; and the shift of Year 7 to secondary for the best ever results in reading, spelling and numeracy - all experienced by these year levels for the first time with Year 7s at the vanguard (Wordsworth, 2015). In addition, Year 5 students were reported as third in the nation in reading and numeracy and Year 3 third for grammar, punctuation and numeracy. This is a dramatic shift from the usual tail end placing of Queensland in many of these domains.

Junior Secondary

Concomitant with the shift of Year 7, from 2015 Queensland public schools must ensure alignment to new guidelines for the delivery of Years 7, 8 and 9; the approach being known as Junior Secondary (Department of Education and Training [DET], 2012). Based on much of the middle years’ literature over recent decades, this approach involves intentional structural arrangements and a philosophical commitment that aim to provide optimal learning opportunities for young adolescents. The focus on young adolescent experiences of schooling and the role teachers play is critical because it locates educational policy and practice in ways that move beyond taken-for-granted notions of adolescents and adolescence (Vagle, 2012).

The introduction of the new Junior Secondary phase of education in Queensland is based on the six ‘Guiding Principles’ developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER, 2012) as described in Table 1. These principles are intended to provide challenging educational offerings that engage young adolescents, while at the same time giving them a sense of belonging and support during the changes they face.

Table 1: Junior Secondary Guiding Principles

Guiding Principle	Explanation
Distinct identity	Junior Secondary students will be encouraged and supported to develop their own group identity within the wider high school. This can involve dedicated school areas and events.

Quality teaching	Teachers working with students in the Junior Secondary years will be given the skills they need through additional professional development, so they can support young teens through these crucial early high school years.
Student wellbeing	We will meet the social and emotional needs of Junior Secondary students with a strong focus on pastoral care. For example, schools could provide a home room to support students as they adjust to new routines and greater academic demands.
Parent and community involvement	We want parents to stay connected with their students' learning when they enter high school. Parent involvement in assemblies, special events, award ceremonies and leadership presentations will be welcomed.
Leadership	Schools will be encouraged to create leadership roles for students in Years 7, 8 and 9. Dedicated teachers experienced with teaching young adolescents will lead Junior Secondary supported by the principal and administration team.
Local decision-making	The needs of each school community will influence how Junior Secondary is implemented in each school.

(ACER, 2012)

While there is some contestation of the appropriateness of these Guiding Principles and indeed a challenge that there is a negligible evidence base of the effectiveness of specific approaches to teaching and learning for young adolescents (Dinham & Rowe, 2007), the purpose of this paper is not to explore this consideration but to focus on the implementation of the Leading Change Development Program underpinned by the Education Change Model. The reform was supported by a systemic policy commitment, including resource allocation, ensuring it is supported both at the individual school level and in the wider schooling system, thus providing optimal conditions for effective reform.

It is evident that when taken together, the shift of Year 7 to secondary and the implementation of Junior Secondary Guiding Principles represent one of the most significant reforms undertaken in Queensland education. In fact, all 259 unique public schools with Year 7 in 2015 have been engaged in reforming their middle years. These schools have been familiarised with the Guiding Principles since their release in 2012, and for 20 pilot schools, Year 7 moved to the secondary setting in 2013. Importantly, some schools are configured as P-10 or P-12, and hence Year 7 has always been co-located. For the vast majority of schools however, Year 7 students shifted to secondary school settings from the beginning of the 2015 school year and, for the first time, the Junior Secondary model became fully operational. The question then is how do schools implement such a reform, remain mindful of their unique contexts, and ensure consistency and alignment to the core expectations of the Junior Secondary Guiding Principles?

In 2014, all 259 public high school leadership teams, represented by 3 people from each school including the Principal, participated in a program known as the *Leading Change Development Program* (Pendergast et al., 2014) (hereafter referred to as the Program). This Program aimed to build school leadership capacity to direct effective change processes in schools, specifically in preparation for the transition of Year 7 and the consolidation of the intentional approach to teaching Years 7-9 through the full implementation of the Junior Secondary model. The role of leadership teams in guiding school communities through this

reform required a planned and deliberate approach to enabling change that reflected the needs of each school context, thus there was no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. The Program was developed by a team of academics from Griffith University, along with a number of external partners, and in consultation with various officers of the state education authority. It was conceptually built around a distinct model known as the Education Change Model (ECM), which is detailed later in this paper. Importantly, it was informed by the education reform literature, to which this paper now turns.

Reforming schools and school systems

There is a growing field of knowledge about the effectiveness of change processes, especially in the context of reforming education systems, which have at their core the imperative to improve student learning outcomes (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2015). The complexity of educational change is further exacerbated by a range of national, state, and local reform agendas with schools often attempting to implement a number of reforms simultaneously and from different starting points, with leaders having to face multiple choices and combinations of decisions along the reform path (Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber, 2010), as was certainly the case in this reform moment.

In Australia, education systems are undergoing rapid change in education policy and practice. For many Australian schools, the overarching framework guiding this change is *The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2008), which is connected to this project in that it identifies enhancing middle years teaching and learning practices as a priority. The need for attention to a middle years’ policy recognises that early adolescence and the transition to high school is “a time when students are at the greatest risk of disengagement from learning. Student motivation and engagement in these years is critical, and can be influenced by tailoring approaches to teaching” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 10). Along with this focus on teacher practice for young adolescents, the recently released *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers* (Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group [TEMAG], 2014) sets out 39 recommendations which seek to improve teacher readiness for classroom work. The current focus on teacher effectiveness is also affirmed by Dinham and Rowe (2007) and Hattie (2003) who argued that this is one of the most important factors influencing student learning outcomes, particularly in the middle years.

In their analysis of twenty education systems around the world, Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber (2010) revealed there are eight predictable elements that contribute to reform improvements, ranging from understanding where the system is situated in regard to a range of features, to specific leadership, classroom, and structural factors. Importantly, they note that a ‘spark’ is often required to trigger major change and that a “system can make significant gains from wherever it starts and a timeline of 6 years or less is achievable” (p. 14). This spark can be the result of a crisis or a major reform initiative. They also note that for reform to be sustained over the long term, improvements must be integrated into the “very fabric of the system pedagogy” (Mourshed et al., 2010, p. 71).

The initial ‘spark’ for the reform in Queensland was clear evidence of relatively mediocre teaching quality (Goos et al., 2008; Luke et al., 2003; Masters, 2009) over several years, along with growing evidence that certain pedagogical approaches appeared to be more suited to young adolescent learners (Middle Years of Schooling Association [MYSA], 2008;

Pendergast et al., 2005). Concerns had also been raised around Queensland students' literacy and numeracy scores against national and international benchmarks (Luke et al., 2003; Masters, 2009). This spark eventually led to the development of the ACER theoretical framework underpinning the reform entitled *Junior Secondary – Theory and Practice* (ACER, 2012). This framework specifies both a structural arrangement of the incorporation of the final year of primary school into the lower years of secondary school, and a philosophical approach involving the use of age-appropriate pedagogies and approaches in response to the identified needs of early adolescence. In relation to the Queensland reform, three key features to success: (1) the teacher as an active agent, (2) an intermediary between the school and the system, and (3) strong leadership, should be considered (Mourshed et al., 2010).

The concept of a teacher as an active agent of school reform and development is central to educational practices and policies. Teachers must be active and effective agents of the intended change. In fact, teachers then act as both the subjects, who need to change individual practices, and agents, who implement reform, of this change (Main, 2013). Providing opportunities for individuals to work together and have collective responsibility to improve practice is a positive, whereas a lack of agency has been recognised as a problem in school development. The importance of enabling collaborative practices to properly develop and become established is highlighted by Hattie (2003) in his synthesis of over 50,000 studies and 800 meta-analyses of student achievement, when he drew the major conclusion that “the remarkable feature of the evidence is that the biggest effects on student learning occur when teachers become learners of their own teaching” (Hattie, 2003, p. 86). In order to achieve collaborative practices teachers need time to reach a common understanding and hence establish a shared commitment, thereby setting up the conditions for embedding a shift in the fabric of the teaching and learning in a school or system (Fullan, 2001). In the context of the Junior Secondary reform in Queensland, a focus to move from the student to the teacher as the subject and agent of implementing the reform is necessary (ACER, 2012).

Developing a middle layer between the school and the system is also critical for effective reform. The form that this middle layer takes can vary and depends on the context and type of reform being implemented. In Mourshed et al.'s (2010) work, for example, the role of this mediating layer typically performed three tasks, namely: (1) providing targeted support to schools, (2) interpreting and communicating the improvement objectives, and (3) facilitating and encouraging the collaboration between schools. The inclusion of a research team to drive the Leading Change Program in this scenario served as a middle layer, mediating between the schools and the systems in which they operate.

In order for reform to be sustained in the longer term, the shaping of leadership is the third imperative (Mourshed et al., 2010). For Junior Secondary reform in Queensland, the leaders and teachers were identified as both the subjects and agents of change (ACER, 2012). In order for this change to be sustainable the leaders needed to be provided with opportunities for professional learning and to enable others to take risks. The National Middle School Association (NMSA) argued that leaders must be “committed to and knowledgeable about this age group, education research and best practice” and be “courageous and collaborative” (2001, p. 28). Being courageous as a leader embarking on a Junior Secondary reform means being willing to break down strongly held historical traditions pertaining to education for adolescents. The sustainability of such reforms requires leaders who support teachers within their school by providing explicit training in the necessary pedagogies associated with the reform and ensuring that continuity for those practices is then implicit within the school context.

Within these various layers of education reform, the need to identify a model that would be useful for this particular Program was crucial. This paper now turns to a description of the model selected.

The Education Change Model

At the core of the Program is the Education Change Model (ECM) which was developed originally for reform processes in Australian middle schooling (Pendergast et al., 2005; Pendergast, 2006) and later used to facilitate state-wide reform of the early childhood sector in Victoria (Garvis et al., 2013). The model has been derived from an educational scenario, however, the principles underpinning the reform model are equally applicable to business, industry and community reform settings. The ECM has value for an individual, a site or setting, and the systemic level. At the individual level it can be used to assist people to determine the stage of reform they are operating at by reflecting on their own understandings and practices. Similarly, in a specific site, the phase of reform can be determined by auditing the evidence presented across the site. At the systemic level the components of the phases outlined in the ECM support further progress in implementation. Hence, the adoption of the ECM is applicable to the innovative change in school reform in this project.

The ECM proposes that programs of reform are typically established in three phases, gradually introducing particular core component changes, and typically spanning seven years, depending upon circumstances. These phases are: the Initiation phase, the Development phase and the Consolidation phase. Both the ECM and the relevant literature recognise that educational reform often takes longer than expected or typically allowed for in reform schedules. The three broad phases can be mapped onto any major reform initiative, and feature indications of time taken to achieve each phase. The Initiation phase typically occupies the first year or two, the Development phase typically consumes the next two to five years, and the Consolidation phase can last over a further five to ten years. The time periods associated with each of the three phases are indicative only and can be accelerated through the alignment of enablers. Similarly, inhibitors can lead to dips in the progress of the reform program, thus adding extra time to the overall reform process. It is important to note the duration of the reform journey is consistent with the six year duration that Mourshed et al. (2010) indicated. The core components for each phase are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Core Components of Education Change Model for Junior Secondary

Initiation Phase	Development Phase	Consolidation Phase
1-2 years	2-5 years	5-10 years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing new language and philosophy • Focus on transition • Establish Quality Teaching model – structures, protocols & practices • Establish leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement and refine Junior Secondary Quality Teaching model • Encourage emerging leadership • Plan and implement, revise and renew • Facilitate learning communities for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine Quality Teaching practice • Lead and support others • Build capacity, ownership and sustainable practices

<p>model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan and establish evidence principles • Develop knowledge base around Junior Secondary Learners 	<p>teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use and extend evidence sources • Develop support structures to enable sustainability of reform 	
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Where these core components are not satisfactorily achieved within a particular phase, there may be a dip in the pace and rate of progress being made. Enablers to reform include: clarity of vision and philosophy; existence of a risk taking culture; leadership at systemic, school and teacher levels of operation; encouraging a collaborative culture with an emphasis on teachers as members of a learning community; provision of support for teacher professional development; and resource commitment, including time and finances. Inhibitors to reform leading to downward dips in progress include: lack of leadership, lack of funding, lack of vision and philosophy, poor evidence base, and lack of commitment (Pendergast, 2006).

With reference to the three key features necessary for reform – establishing collaborative practices, developing a mediating layer between the schools and the centre, and architecting tomorrow’s leadership (Mourshed et al., 2010) – the ECM was utilised as the overarching frame to ensure these elements were achieved. The changes associated with the implementation of Junior Secondary, through the relocation of Year 7 into secondary schools and the establishment of Junior Secondary, are profound and will significantly change the schooling of young adolescents in Queensland. The change will take several years to be normalised within the system and, by utilising the ECM, it is apparent that sustaining change will be achieved only in the final phase of reform, that is, at the phase of Consolidation. Hence, the core components within the Initiation and Development phases of reform should be successfully achieved before a strong focus on building capacity, ownership and sustainable practices is embedded into the system and genuine Consolidation is able to be achieved. Table 3 provides a mapping tool for school communities consisting of the six Junior Secondary Guiding Principles within the context of the three phases of the ECM, thus closely linking the two for the purposes of reflecting on each phase of Junior Secondary reform.

Table 3: Tool for mapping Education Change Model phases and the Junior Secondary Guiding Principles

Educational Change Model Phases and Core Components	Junior Secondary Guiding Principles					
	Distinct identity	Quality teaching	Student wellbeing	Parent and community	Leadership	Local decision-
Initiation						
Introducing new language, philosophy						
Focus on transition						

Establish leadership model						
Develop knowledge base around Junior Secondary learners						
Establish quality teaching model – structures, protocols and practices						
Plan and establish evidence principles						
Development						
Implement and refine Junior Secondary Quality teaching model						
Encourage emerging leadership						
Facilitate learning communities for teachers						
Use and extend evidence sources						
Develop support structures to enable sustainability of reform						
Plan and implement, revise and renew						
Consolidation						
Refine quality teaching practice						
Lead and support others						
Build capacity, ownership and sustainable practices						

Key	Commencing	Working towards increased complexity	Achieved at complex level
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Importantly, the ECM was applied in a context where the Junior Secondary framework had first been introduced in 2012, with variable uptake by 2014, when the Leading Change Program was underway. Hence, it was expected that the 259 schools would be at varied stages within the ECM. The tool, therefore, became useful to identify which of the core components had been addressed and which required more attention in order to ensure a smooth transition to the next stage. This information was relevant at a school level initially, then for the regions, and finally more widely at the system level in order to determine the overall progress of the reform and to predict and plan what was needed to achieve sustainable reform.

The Leading Change Development Program

The Program was designed for schools just commencing this journey as well as for other purpose-designed schools, including those that had been pilot schools. In this way the Program aimed to work with all schools to further progress the development of their Junior Secondary program. The Educational Change Model, as outlined earlier in this paper, was utilised as the underpinning framework. The Program involved three stages, as presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Leading Change Development Program project stages

Stage	Activity	Timeline (2014)
1	Two-day professional learning conference for school leaders	April-June
2	Implementation with coaching support, including development and/or further refinement of Action Plan	May-September
3	One-day workshop for school leaders	September-October

Stage 1

In Stage 1, school leaders engaged in intensive professional learning where they were asked to determine their school’s current phase of reform. Integral to this process was engaging with the resources to assist them to move forward through the change process. Central to this stage was the ECM (Pendergast et al., 2005) which was used in conjunction with John Kotter’s (1996) *8 step Leading Change Model* and strongly guided by the principles garnered from the report, *How the world’s most improved school systems keep getting better* (Mourshed et al., 2010). Two hundred and fifty-nine (259) schools were involved in the two-day conferences held in the seven regions around the state.

For the purpose of the two-day conferences, the delivery team developed a comprehensive suite of resources that were made available to all schools via provision of a loaded USB device for each school and access to a purpose-built interactive website. Resources provided theoretical information and evidence-based research related to adolescent learners, the six Guiding Principles, the ECM and quality teaching strategies. Information, PowerPoint presentations, and activities were developed for twenty-eight topics ranging from effective practices for adolescent learners to building teams within schools. Leadership teams were informed that they were able to use or adapt these resources to best suit their contexts. During the two-day conference, evaluation tools were administered to gather evidence regarding: each leadership team’s perceptions of (a) the efficacy of their teachers to teach in Junior Secondary, (b) their school’s stage of reform based on the ECM, and (c) the effectiveness of the conference program itself as a form of professional learning.

Stage 2

Stage 2 involved a coaching program individualised around clusters of schools to provide ongoing support over a period of months for each school leadership team. Each school had the opportunity to participate in a coaching process, though the original design was mandatory participation. All 259 schools were placed in 22 clusters that were negotiated with regional representatives. Each cluster included approximately 10 schools and was allocated two professional coaches. For 3-4 months the coaches were available for direct support to assist schools with their Junior Secondary ‘Action Plans’ as well as providing feedback and advice on three structured milestones. These documents were designed around an action learning model focused on a reflection tool for schools to consider progress to date, revisit goals and responsibilities, and seek feedback. The ECM data collected in Stage 1 enabled the development of school action plans. These plans were aimed to target areas that had the potential to inhibit reform.

Once schools uploaded their documents to the Leading Change website, coaches evaluated the documents and provided written feedback which included comments, recommendations for future direction, or provided additional resources. Of the 259 schools, 114 (44%) engaged in Milestone 1 (developing an action plan); 71 (25%) in Milestone 2 (refining the plan); and 60 (23%) in Milestone 3 (reflecting on the outcomes). Regional engagement ranged widely, from 71% to 10% for various milestones. In addition to the coaching process, four webinars were presented on topics that were most frequently requested by school leaders during the two-day conferences. The overall satisfaction for the coaching from participants who completed the survey administered at the one-day workshops (88 responses) was an overall mean of 7.2 out of 10 and mode of 8 out of 10. This indicates that the most common response for overall satisfaction was 8 out of 10, indicating that most participants were very satisfied with the coaching program (Pendergast et al., 2014).

Stage 3

Stage 3 provided an opportunity for the school leadership teams to reflect on and share their Action Plan achievements and their readiness for the change in 2015. The one-day workshop delivered in seven regions constituted the final phase of the Program. The one-day workshops were structured around the concept of best practice, with a focus on three key themes: Transition, Quality Teaching, and Evidence-based Practice. Sessions throughout the day were structured around Best Practice for the themes, followed by presentations from selected schools in each region to share effective practice on the themes. Following school presentations, school leadership teams engaged in activities that provided them with the structure and tools to reflect on different aspects of their school's progress in each area and to consider other strategies that could further support or enhance their Junior Secondary program. Schools were given opportunities to network and to share their successes in their program implementation efforts.

During the one-day workshops, evaluation tools used in the two-day conferences were utilised again to develop longitudinal understandings of: (a) each leadership team's perceptions of the efficacy of their teachers to teach in Junior Secondary; (b) their stage of reform based on the ECM, and (c) the effectiveness of the conference program itself as a form of professional learning. Underpinning the Program design was clear evidence that "purposeful professional learning for teachers and school leaders is one of the most effective strategies for improving student outcomes in our schools" (Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2012, p. 6). In the case of this project, continuing and targeted professional development was at the core of the strategy. This approach had a clear focus on the school leaders with the objective of enabling them to ensure that all high schools were ready to accept Year 7 students into their Junior Secondary structure. It also aimed to enhance and improve pre-existing Junior Secondary models with sound philosophical and educational practices in place. This readiness was to be inclusive of preparing teachers for this significant shift, enabling them to be self-efficacious and thereby better positioned to improve student learning in general.

Using the Education Change Model as an evaluation tool

During the Program, evaluation tools were utilised to gather evidence from school leaders about: (a) the efficacy of their teachers to teach in Junior Secondary, (b) their school’s stage of reform based on the ECM, and (c) the effectiveness of the conference program itself as a form of professional learning. This paper now discusses how the ECM was employed at the end of the three stages of the Program as a reflection tool for school leaders.

The participants

Each school had up to three school leaders present. A total of 247 of 259 school teams from seven regions across the state completed a survey which asked schools to consider the ECM core elements and hence map their stage of reform.

The survey instrument

The survey instrument was an electronic or paper based list of the 15 core components for each stage of the ECM. Respondents were invited to indicate the degree to which the component was in place, working through a discussion process to reach agreement on each item to determine their response on a 1-5 point Likert scale for each of the 15 core components in each of the three stages of the ECM. Participants were also asked to indicate their assessment of where they believed their school was located according to the stages of the ECM.

Findings

Table 5 shows the number of respondents’ assessment of their school’s stage overall, combined for all regions. While the ECM has three defined phases, respondents indicated on a Likert scale and hence many indicated being part way between stages, as indicated by the numbers in the second and fourth columns (titled Cusp) of the ECM Stage portion.

Table 5: Perceived Educational Change Model phase for school population

Educational Change Model phase					TOTAL
Initiation		Development		Consolidation	
Mid	Cusp	Mid	Cusp		
39	15	115	37	41	247

As can be seen in Table 5, 54 schools indicated they were in the Initiation phase, 152 in the Development phase, and 41 in the Consolidation phase at the time the survey was administered. For each school, the process provided the opportunity to identify areas of strength and weakness for each of the 15 core components, thereby enabling a focus on these

components at the appropriate stage of reform. In this way, plans to address possible inhibitors and dips in the reform process could be initiated by the leadership team.

The respondents were also asked why they chose the phase as indicated. Figure 1 presents the resultant concept map generated through the use of Leximancer (Smith, 2006) of a content analysis of the 46 responses explaining how they determined their school’s ECM phase. The visual representation indicates there are two main themes, each represented by a circle with the size of the circle indicating the number of comments related to the theme.

The comments have been analysed according to the associated phase: Initiation, Development or Consolidation – shown in red. The two themes that emerged from the data were: *developing in some areas* (100% connectivity) being common of the comments from respondents identifying being in the Initiation and Development phases; while the theme of *awaiting Year 7s* being common to respondents identifying being in the Initiation and Consolidation stages. In other words, the respondents indicated they are in this phase because Year 7s had not yet joined the school.

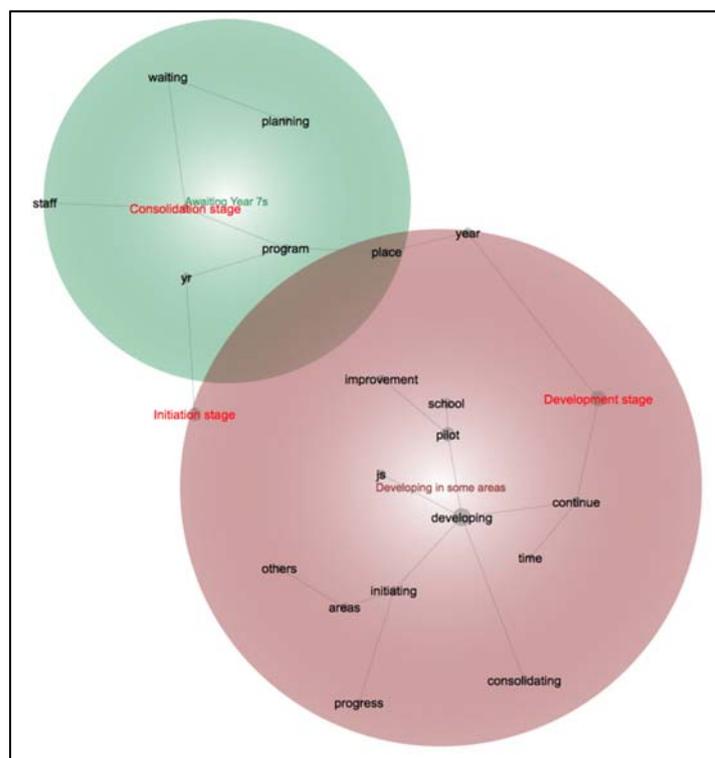


Figure 1 Thematic analysis of responses explaining stage of the Educational Change Model

With respect to the larger node *developing in some areas*, respondents indicated that they had achieved some of the core components but on balance, were in the second stage of the ECM, that is, some components were still developing. Also in this node were respondents who assessed themselves to be in the initiating stage. Comments typically related to being *involved in the pilot*, which applied to 20 of the schools, *the nature of the school*, along with *improvement*, *continue*, *developing*, *time* and *progress* – all themes that captured the notion of continuing on the journey of reform.

For the second node *awaiting Year 7s*, there was a strong connection with leadership teams who assessed their school as being in the final Consolidation phase of reform. Terms such as

waiting and *planning* were typically used by respondents. While this group was smaller (41 of 247 schools), it was noteworthy that these respondents generally considered their school to be at consolidation, hence focussing on sustaining the reforms. This is somewhat ironic as in general these schools were absent of Year 7 students, so their reforms were more likely to be around Year 8 and Year 9 changes of practice.

Final thoughts

The *Leading Change Development Program* played an important role in this major reform agenda in Queensland schools. It was informed by the international school reform literature and a broadening understanding around adolescent development and state and national education agendas focused on young adolescents. Mourshed et al. (2010) observed that major improvements in education systems often have their impetus grounded in a spark, typically being either a crisis or a major reform agenda, as in this case. Concerns had been raised around Queensland students' literacy and numeracy scores against national and international benchmarks for more than a decade, along with a national focus on the middle years of learning and state reform centred on the creation of Junior Secondary in Queensland government high schools. Notable about this project is the resource investment into ensuring congruence between the implementation of the reform and the willingness of leadership teams to drive it in a sustainable and consistent way across the state. The use of the ECM as the underpinning platform of the Program provided a framework that had emerged out of an evidence-based project (Pendergast et al, 2005) and informed by the literature in the field.

Looking ahead to the future, it is pertinent to consider the insights from a recent report presented by the OECD (2015) entitled *Education Policy Outlook 2015: Making reforms happen*. The authors reveal the scale and scope of education reforms being undertaken in the 34 OECD member countries and details more than 450 separate initiatives in the past seven years. One of the most important observations of this collection is:

[O]nce new policies are adopted, there is little follow-up. Only 10% of the policies considered in this dataset have been evaluated for their impact. Measuring policy impact more rigorously and consistently will not only be cost effective in the long run, it is also essential for developing the most useful, practicable and successful education policy options (OECD 2015, p. 20).

A key recommendation following this major change in Queensland state education, hence, is the need for an appropriate evaluation of the reform, the timing of which should be informed by the ECM which indicates a suitable timeline for evaluation is after most schools have located themselves in the Consolidation Phase, that is, 3-5 years after the major reform in 2018-2020.

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