



Australian Government

Quality Teacher Programme

Secondary case one

This case is open-ended and is designed to generate rich discussion about leadership issues affecting all head teachers.

Setting the scene

Your faculty has assessment tasks that show little variety in style or format. There are no criteria indicating the outcomes that are being assessed. The staff is also resisting the development of marking guidelines and there is no common understanding of good assessment practice.

Issues around assessment are becoming critical and divisive.

Teacher A teaches explicitly to each task. Students from teacher B's class regularly complain to you that teacher A's class knows what is going to be in the test before the test is given. They even believe that the class has actually worked on the answers in class.

Another group of students from teacher C's class has also complained that they never have any idea about task requirements. These students feel that they have covered the topics in a general way but often find that they feel under prepared for the tasks.

During the year students often complain about inconsistencies in the actual delivery of the specific tasks. Sometimes students perceive that other classes have been given extra time.

The deputy principal indicates recent HSC results show that the faculty value adding data is inconsistent when compared to other faculties.

You attempt to hold a faculty meeting to discuss these issues but the discussion becomes heated and polarised. You feel you have lost ground. The meeting disintegrates with no decisions being reached.

Individual reflections

1. What are the key issues?
2. As head teacher, what do you do?

Leadership issues

Educational	pedagogy, programs, assessment, reporting, learning styles, learning environment, learning community
Organisational	timelines, resources, management, systems, accountability
Strategic	planning, vision, values, culture
Personal	social skills, ethics, commitment, personal vision
Interpersonal	relationships, team building, conflict resolution, communication

Focus questions

Educational

1. What are the educational implications in the short and long term for the faculty?
2. What are the teaching and learning styles being used in classrooms?
3. What do individual members of staff believe about student learning?
4. How do faculty programs and classroom lessons reflect the Quality Teaching in NSW public schools document?
5. To what extent will you use HSC/SC/ELLA/SNAP data to inform the change process?

Organisational

1. What resources will be needed to ensure an effective discussion and outcome?

Strategic

1. What philosophical issues need to be discussed? Who will facilitate your discussions? What long range plans and philosophies need to be agreed upon?

Personal

1. What are the personal philosophies of each faculty member and what are they passionate about in their teaching?
2. What are their individual strengths?
3. What skills will be needed by you, as head teacher, to ensure an effective discussion and outcome?

Interpersonal

1. What approach do you need to take to take to keep everyone focused and non-confrontational?
2. What can you do to inspire and motivate and find 'the genius' (Senge) in each individual?

Considerations

Notes to facilitators: It is the process of analysing the case and the issues that is important in using the cases as a professional development tool. A selection of DET policy documents made available for quick referencing by participants will support informed decision making.

If participants are from the same school, they may identify with key issues in the case and become snared in a discussion of school-specific problems. Sensitive intervention and guidance back to the case may be required.

Using the considerations or sample solutions too early may defeat the purpose and value of head teachers reflecting on the issues and their own practice. It should be remembered that a single issue case is in fact highly complex. If limited time is available, groups could analyse different leadership domains or focus on just a few issues.

Educational

- Do school and faculty assessment policies align?
- Consider what resources you need to use, such as, DET, BOS materials on assessment; syllabuses; examples of 'good practices' from other schools; materials/resources on quality assessment?
- Consider the issue of evaluating current assessment practice. For example what are we assessing? How? Why?
- Do the tasks cater for different learning styles?
- Do they assess different aspects of the syllabus?
- Do they differentiate between levels of thinking?

Organisational

- As a faculty, discuss the requirement of 'acceptable classroom preparation' for an assessment task and set a new task with clear processes. For example, issue a common model answer to all classes; allocate a teacher who isn't teaching the course to set the task, specify agreed outcomes.
- How can you provide enough time for meaningful discussions?
- Consider the following suggestions: draw up a timeline that might include time for faculty members to visit other schools to see other examples of 'good practice', organise teams to create some effective assessment tasks to be trialled, evaluate and refined for a faculty assessment resource folder; review the process when necessary.

Strategic

1. Consider an integrated, long term faculty professional development program. What might this look like?

Personal

- If initial consensus cannot be reached, how can each assessment task be conducted so that students in all classes are able to attempt the task in a fair and equitable manner?
- Consider: Having a teacher who isn't teaching the course, set the task.
- What can you do if the situation deteriorates?
- Consider: Negotiate that each faculty member takes on the role of an assessment task leader for a specific topic. Each member is to present his/her solutions/ideas to the next meeting.
- What personal skills do you need to handle this situation?
- What other professional skills/tools do you need?
- Consider Australian National Schools Network Protocols Training or consensus techniques.

Interpersonal

- What communication skills do you use to keep everyone working to achieve the best outcome for the students?
- Do you need to attend any training or read about change management or conflict resolution?

Disclaimer

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training.

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