



Australian Government

**Quality Teacher
Programme**



Secondary case four

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

Setting the scene

You are a newly appointed head teacher to the school. You are an unknown quantity to the faculty. The faculty teachers are experienced and older than you.

A situation arises where one classroom teacher disagrees with your decision about the management of an assessment task (developing marking guidelines, criteria etc) and then later disputes the allocation of classes and the allocation of faculty marking.

Division develops within the faculty. Some members support you, and others the classroom teacher.

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 BOS, DET and school expectations regarding assessment?
2. How can you articulate an educational philosophy without sounding heavy handed or patronising? What if this philosophy is different to the shared beliefs of faculty members?
3. How can you demonstrate your educational leadership vision?
4. What similarities and differences can you identify between your vision and the vision shared by members of your faculty?
5. How can these similarities and differences be used to generate professional dialogue about teaching and learning?

Organisational

1. How are opportunities provided for open and transparent communication and decisions about teaching, learning, and faculty policies and procedures? What strategies could be used in these meetings to gain understanding and agreement?
2. What resources will be needed?
3. What is the implication for whole faculty organisation and understanding of structures already in existence? What needs to change? How will this be implemented?
4. What plans or schedules need to be drafted to accommodate any changes?

Strategic

1. How will you develop a shared faculty vision and set of values?
2. How can teachers be inspired and motivated to improve their teaching practice in line with DET and BOS requirements?
3. How can a convivial, collegial and professional learning environment be achieved for all faculty members?

Personal

1. How do you establish credibility with all members of the faculty?
2. How do you approach the difficult conversations about clarification of professional ethics?
3. What beliefs do you have about the teaching staff and student learning that are influencing their behaviour?
4. How do you build consensus in the faculty?

Interpersonal

1. How is communication improved, especially with the dissenting member of staff?
2. How do you build trust?

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

- Discussions can be held and professional learning activities can be designed to research and devise a plan to develop new teaching and learning strategies and to develop a shared vision and philosophy.
- Use 'Jigsaw' or 'The Last Word' professional reading and discussion strategies. (Refer to 'A Facilitator's Handbook').
<http://www.curriculumsupport.nsw.edu.au/teacherProfLearning/index.cf>

Organisational

- Negotiate faculty responsibilities as a strategy for developing staff. This would clarify the head teacher's role from his/her perspective compared to the staff's perception.
- Use the Deputy Principal or Principal or other outsiders as a 'critical friend' or mediator or mentor to the faculty.
- Clarify processes and systems within the faculty organisation. This takes time and needs to be revisited periodically.
- Collegiality is not collaboration and change takes time.

Strategic

- Do team-building exercises to reaffirm faculty values and ethics. ('What are we here for?' 'How will this affect the students?' etc.)
- Consider the faculty image and promotion within the school.
- The head teacher needs to be aware of BOS and DET requirements and ensure that these are being implemented with integrity.

Personal

- Are you the person who needs to change?
- What skills and strategies will you use to build a collaborative staff environment?
- What is your leadership style and is it successfully resolving the situation?

Interpersonal

- After the initial disagreement the head teacher should take the initiative to repair the relationship.
- Find opportunities to acknowledge quality teaching and individual contribution to faculty achievement.
- Both parties should actively listen to the concerns of the others and discuss the issue privately.
- A report with an explanation of agreed solutions could be given to the whole faculty.
- Ensure that effective communication takes place and that all decisions made at faculty meetings are reiterated and everyone agrees to adhere to the decisions. When discussing the rationale behind choices or decisions there should be an opportunity for teachers to discuss issues with the head teacher and with each other.

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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