

# **Supporting the Development of Schools for All**

## **Workshop Materials, Laos**

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## **Introduction**

If we are to be effective in teaching all children we will need to develop the practice of teachers and the organisation of schools. These workshop materials should be used by teachers in a school, and those who work with them, to develop the skills needed for reviewing and improving practice and organisation. The aim is to create schools where people work together effectively in order to provide better learning conditions and to overcome barriers to participation.

The materials involve six activities. Each of these has a series of steps. These need not be followed rigidly. Where necessary they should be modified to suit particular circumstances.

The activities are intended to help participants in a workshop to use existing practice as a basis for further development. The approach is essentially one of helping colleagues within a school to "grow". Experience in a number of countries suggests that this approach to development is much more effective than approaches that rely solely on external technical assistance or training courses.

In summary, then, these workshop materials are based upon six principles for developing schools that are effective in teaching all students successfully. These are

- 1 . Start with existing practice within the school.
2. Build on positive attitudes and experience.
3. Examine barriers to participation in order to find ways of encouraging learning.
4. Use available resources to support learning, particularly the resources of the students themselves.
5. Develop a language that can be used to talk about practice.
6. Encourage growth through co-operation and creativity.

### **Note:**

These materials should be seen as a supplement to the Guidelines on the Management of the Integrated Education Programme published by the Ministry of Education in April 1997, with support from Save The Children (UK).

## **Activity 1      Barriers to participation**

In any classroom some students will experience barriers to participation that limit their learning. In order to improve practice it is necessary to examine what barriers exist. This information can then be used in order to create the conditions that will help to overcome such barriers.

Barriers can take many form. Some arise because of circumstances that are outside the control of teachers. For example, poor material resources or very large classes can create barriers. Also, some children arrive at school feeling tired or upset because of experiences in their homes. However, many barriers result from the way schools and classrooms are organised. Examples of possible barriers to participation include:

- A curriculum that does not relate to children's experiences.
- Lessons that are poorly prepared.
- Use of an unfamiliar language.
- Teachers who reject some children because of certain of their characteristics

Some barriers are major and may inhibit the participation of many student; others are minor and may only inhibit one or two students.

The aim of this activity in to help you and your colleagues to focus on classroom factors that may hinder children's participation in lessons.

### ***Step 1***

Work with a small group of colleagues ( three or four ) to generate a list of possible barriers to children's participation in learning. For each item on the list make some notes as to how teachers can take actions to overcome these barriers. Produce a poster that summarises your ideas.

### ***Step 2***

Fasten the posters to the wall around the room. Form new groups, each of which has one member from the working groups in step 1. The new groups now move from posters to poster discussing the ideas that are presented.

### ***Step 3***

Write a short memo to yourself that completes the following sentence:

“From these discussions I have learnt that...”. Discuss your ideas with your colleagues.

## **Activity 2      Reviewing classroom practice**

As we have seen, examining barriers to participation can help us to recognise ways of helping children to be involved in our lessons. This second activity is aimed at identifying the feature of lessons that will encourage the participation and learning of all students.

In order to develop your ideas you will be asked to observe colleagues as they teach their lessons. Your observation will need to focus on the details of their practice. For example:

- The materials they use.
- The ways in which they introduce the lesson.
- Their use of questioning.
- Their encouragement of children's talk.
- Use of small group activities.
- How children are praised for their efforts and achievements.
- The ways in which children are helped to record and review their learning.
- The social climate of the classroom.
- The support given to students who experience some difficulty.

The activity will also help you to develop your skills in observing practice and talking to colleagues about your work.

### **Step 1**

Working alone, make a list of features you would expect to see in an effective lesson. After a few minutes join a colleague and share your ideas. Each of you must listen carefully so that you can report on what your colleagues has said.

### **Step 2**

With your partner form a working group with two other pairs. Each person takes it in turn to provide a short summary of what their colleague has said. The group then work together to develop a small number (i.e. five or six) of " indicators ". These are descriptive statements of what we expect to see during an effective lesson. Examples might be :

- Question are used to help students connect the topic of the lesson to their experiences.
- The teacher praises children's efforts and achievements.
- Children are encouraged to talk to one another about their work.
- A variety of teaching methods are used.

Notice that each indicator refers to one feature only and is written in the present tense. It is a clear statement of what we want to see happening.

### **Step 3**

In your working group plan how a lesson might be observed in order to collect information about each indicator. What kind of information in needed? How can it be

recorded ? (If possible, you might practice observation using a video recording of a lesson).

#### **Step 4**

Working in pairs, each person has a chance to observe their partner, using the indicators as a guide. Remember, this observation is not a form of evaluation. It is a way of helping you both to think about your teaching and how it might be developed.

#### **Step 5**

After the observation you should meet together, in private, to talk about what happened in the lesson. The observer starts the conversation by giving feedback. The feedback should be positive and constructive.

Helpful phrases for giving positive feedback are:

- I liked the way you .....
- I noticed that you .....
- Why did you .....
- Have you thought of .....
- Some teachers find it helpful to .....
- Thank you for letting me watch your lesson. I enjoyed it!

At the end of the discussion agree some targets - things that you each want to improve about your classroom practice.

## Activity 3      Reviewing school organisation

The work of individual teachers is much influenced by the overall organisation of a school. Where the school is well managed by leaders who support the staff it is much easier for teachers to do their best work. The overall atmosphere of the school is particularly important. Schools that are more successful are places where teachers, students and parents have good relationships and share common goals. It is important, therefore, to review existing school arrangements in order to decide upon areas that should be improved.

This activity will help you and your colleagues to review your school's organisation. It will focus on areas such as:

- Relationships between staff, students and parents.
- Use of available resources to support learning.
- The ways in which difficulties are addressed.
- Policies for guiding practice.
- Staff development.

### **Step 1**

Working with a group of colleagues (e.g. five or six people), discuss the attached diagram. It summarises research from other countries about the features of effective schools. It suggests three overall features of schools that are successful in teaching all children. Around the outside of the diagram is a summary of the evidence that points towards these features.

As you discuss the diagram you should consider the following questions:

- Are these the features of an effective school in our country ?
- Are there any elements that are missing from the diagram ?

### **Step 2**

In the same groups you should now review your own school in relation to the ideas you have discussed. In particular: what are the strengths of this school ? What areas of the school need to be developed further ?

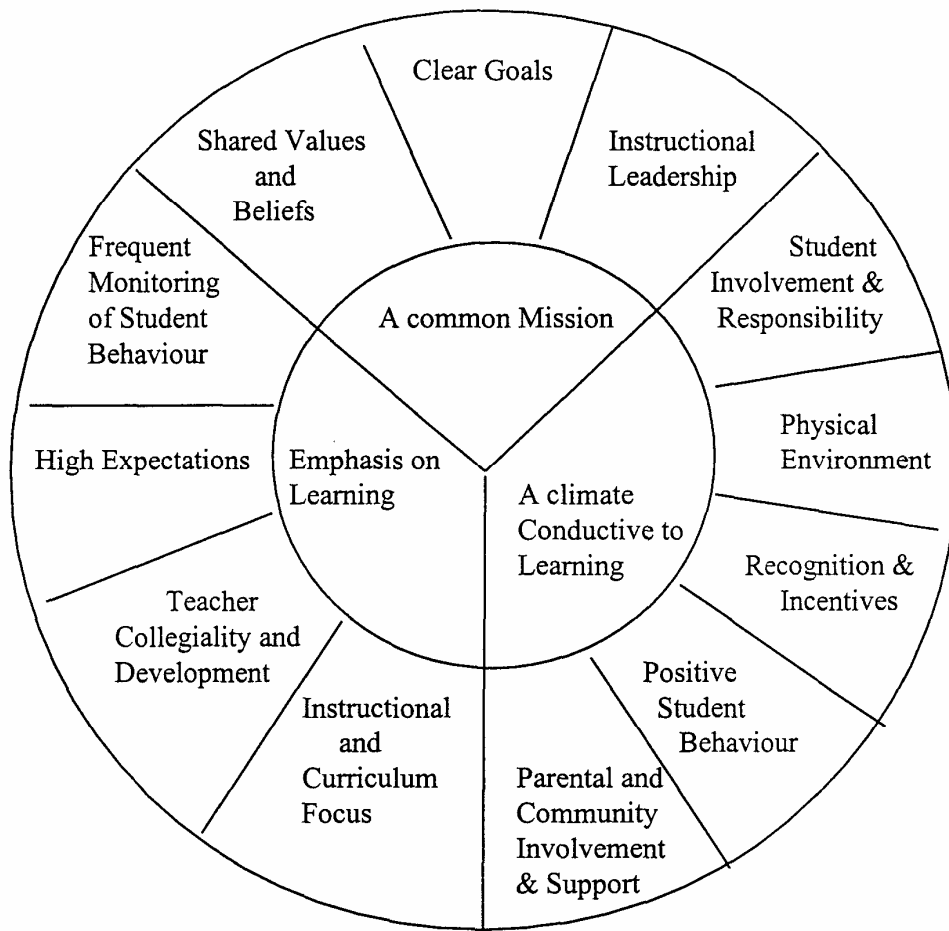
### **Step 3**

Design an action plan for developing the school. It should include:

1. *Targets*  
The changes we want to make over the next year.
2. *Strategies*  
The methods we will use in order to bring about these changes.
3. *Success criteria*  
The means by which the implementation of the action plan will be evaluated.

### **Step 4**

Each group should present its action plan to the rest of the staff. These should be discussed in order to agree a way forward that makes good use of all of the suggestions.



**The characteristics of effective schools**

## **Activity 4      Managing change**

Having reviewed aspects of classroom practice and school organisation you will have decided upon some areas that need to change. Unfortunately changing arrangements and practices in schools is often difficult, not least because everybody is so busy with their existing work. This means that you and your colleagues will have to be smart in handling change.

This activity will help you to think about what is involved in change. It will focus on:

- Planning strategies
- Facing difficulties
- Supporting everybody involved
- Monitoring progress

### **Step 1**

Read the notes in the Appendix called " Handling change successfully " (These are taken from the UNESCO Resource Pack). Now write some notes about a change that you experienced in your work. It might be a change in organisation (e.g. A new timetable); a change in the curriculum(e.g. New text books); or a change in teaching style (e.g. The use of group work). It might have been a successful or an unsuccessful or change. Try to answer the following questions:

- Who proposed the change ?
- What was the intention ?
- What actually happened ?

### **Step 2**

Form groups of four or five and tell the stories you have written about. Then prepare a group report listing advice you would make to teachers wishing to change or develop some aspects of their practice.

### **Step 3**

Report to the rest of your colleagues and discuss the implications together.



## Activity 5      Organising workshops

Teachers in many countries have found it helpful to organise workshop in the school where all members of staff can help each other to develop practice. The UNESCO Teacher Education Resource Pack 'Special Needs in the Classroom' provides lots of materials and ideas for organising such workshops.

The aims of school - based workshops are as follows:

- 1) To help you to develop a detailed language of practice;
- 2) To encourage you to share ideas with your colleagues; and
- 3) To learn new teaching techniques that you can use in your classroom.

It is important that all participants in a workshop are prepared to listen to colleagues, even when they make suggestions that seem strange or unrealistic. Discussion of unusual ideas can help you to be much more creative in your work.

The example below is of a workshop session based on Unit 3.4 from the UNESCO Teacher Education Resource Pack. It looks at factors in classrooms that can help children to participate in the lesson activities.

### **Step 1**

How do you teach the whole class and at the same time make each student feel welcomed and valued ? This is a central question faced by any teacher. Look at the attached diagram. It includes some suggestions as to the ways teachers do this. Spend a few moments thinking about your own teaching style. Can you add any more suggestions to the diagram ?

### **Step 2**

Put stars against *three* ideas - ones that you think are most important. Make groups of four or five and take turns to explain your three choices. Listen carefully to your colleagues and, at the end, together choose one theme for detailed attention.

### **Step 3**

Use " brainstorming " to list ideas. The aim is to produce a long list of suggestions. One person acts as a scribe and writes down on a large sheet all the ideas that are suggested. Group members take turns to speak. The rules of brainstorming are:

- All ideas are valued
- Aim for a long list
- No discussion

**Classroom strategies chart**

Setting individual tasks		
	Giving pupils choice	
Getting to know parents	Varied materials	Small group work
	Listening to individuals	Recording progress

### **Step 4**

After five minutes normal discussion takes place. The group should use the ideas listed to develop a series of practical suggestions regarding the theme of the discussion. Each person makes their own copy of these suggestions in preparation for the rest step.

### **Step 5**

New groups are formed with one member of each of the old group. Each person has three minutes to explain the ideas they have worked on.

### **Step 6**

Write a note to yourself about what aspects of your teaching you want to work on as a result of this activity. Bear in mind:

- Topics that have been discussed
- The group learning process used in the session.

Share your thoughts with colleagues and think about how you can support one another in experimenting in the classroom.

## **Activity 6      The skills of co-ordination**

This activity will be particularly relevant to those inside and outside of schools who have the task of co-ordinating development activities. It will help you to consider the skills that are needed in order to support school development effectively.

The approach that is described is based upon research from other countries that points to how “outsiders” can help schools to improve the quality of their work. This approach attempts to build on existing practice within a school, using staff co-operation as a means of developing new responses. It is, therefore, an approach to development that emphasises the idea of "growth with outsiders seeing themselves as "gardeners" who are seeking to assist the process.

All of them means that outsiders have to be skilful in encouraging involvement, co-operation and creativity.

### **Step 1**

Work alone to complete the attached questionnaire. It requires you to think about your own experience of co-ordinating development in schools write about your skills.

### **Step 2**

Compare your ideas with two other colleagues. Each person should explain what they have written. The colleagues should listen carefully and actively. They should only interrupt to ask questions that might help the individual to clarify their ideas. No advice should be given. The aim is to support each member of the trio to develop their own ideas.

### **Step 3**

Each of you should now develop an action plan that can be used to guide you in acquiring further skills. The action plan should address the following questions:

1. What skills do I need to develop ?
2. How can I develop these skills ?
3. Who can support me in this work ?

Research suggests that the following skills seem to be important to success in co-ordinating groups of adults in the development of practice. Make some notes about your own skills in these areas.

### **SKILLS OF THE COORDINATOR**

1. Developing a clear purpose for activities
2. Establishing rapport with colleagues
3. Leading meetings and other group activities
4. Maintaining interest and enthusiasm

5. Solving problems including difficulties over relationships

6. Encouraging collaboration

7. Providing support

8, Keeping people informed

## **Appendix**

### ***Handling changes successfully***

It may have come as a surprise to some readers to find that our concern with special needs is focused as much on teachers as on pupils. Yet it seems obvious that the morale and skills of teachers must have a significant bearing on the learning of children. In the traditional approach to special needs, however, the assumption was that problems belonged to pupils and this led to a rather narrow focus that did not include consideration of the needs of teachers. In seeking ways of helping teachers to learn how to improve their practice, we assume that meeting teachers' individual needs will support them in meeting the needs of their pupils.

Some teachers are more aware of the importance of their own professional development than others. They approach their work with a questioning frame of mind, seeking to explore new possibilities and find ways of teaching that will be an improvement on their current practice. Equally, some schools are better than others at creating an atmosphere for professional development.

In considering ways of development practice, therefore, the existing attitudes of individuals and the pervading atmosphere within a school are important factors. In this discussion material we examine these issues in some detail in order to help you understand more about what is involved in personal change and, as well, the implications of attempting innovation in collaboration with colleagues. To do this we will be drawing on our own experience in order to explain something of the nature of change in education, the conditions that appear to deter and facilitate it, and some strategies that you may find useful.

### ***The nature of change***

In order to better understand the nature of change it is helpful to reflect on your own experience. Think about some attempt to introduce a new way of working into your classroom. How did it go? Did it work? How long did it take? Were there some aspects that were more successful than others? Then think about your response to a change suggested (or imposed) by somebody else. How did that go? How did you react? How did you feel?

As we reflect on our experience of attempts to introduce new ideas or ways of working into schools, a number of thoughts come to mind:

- change is really about learning
- change is a process not an event
- change takes time
- change can be confusing
- change can hurt

Let us consider these points in some detail:

## **Change is really about learning**

Change is essentially about learning new ways of thinking and behaving. If you accept that argument, it opens up a very helpful avenue of enquiry. It suggests that in seeking to understand how to handle change, alone or with colleagues, we can get some useful ideas from considering what we already know about learning. What are the circumstances that help people to learn? Whatever them in some detail later, they are likely to be helpful in schools when teachers attempt to improve their practice.

Accepting that change is really about learning has a further significant implication. It means that schools should be places where teachers learn from experience in the same way as they intend that their pupils should learn from the tasks and activities in which they are engaged. Indeed, we would go further and suggest that teachers who regard themselves as learners in the classroom are likely to be more successful in facilitating the learning of their pupils. The sensitivity they acquire as a result of reflecting upon their own attempts to learn new ideas or new ways of working is influential in terms of the way they deal with the children in their classes. So, as you consider areas of teaching that you may wish to develop, or new approaches that you may like to try, remember that you are also a learner. Seek to provide yourself with the conditions for success in learning that you aim to improve for you can pupils and not only will you be a more successful teacher but you will find that you can derive great personal satisfaction from the process. Furthermore, if you are enthusiastic and motivated this will communicate itself to your pupils.

## **Change is a process not an event**

If we are talking about the introduction of significant changes, involving the adoption of new ways of thinking and different ways of operating in the classroom, it is important to recognize that this is usually a process rather than an event. Fundamental ideas do not change at a moment in time, nor are new approaches implemented at the blinking of an eye. What happens is that a sequence of changes or operations is undergone.

Once again, it can be helpful to reflect on a change in which you have taken part. No doubt you can recall particular events, perhaps an introductory meeting to discuss what was to happen, or your first attempt to use some new materials in the class. In order to fully understand the nature of the new approach and to become proficient in its use, however, you are likely to have gone through a period of trial and error, possible confusion, difficulty and occasional elation. Gradually, if the change is successful, the process leads to feelings of greater confidence and personal acceptance. In time the practice and its principles eventually become your own, linked to, and integrated with, other aspects of your thinking and practice.



## **Change takes time**

Accepting that significant changes in teaching occur as a process takes us on to the next point. Because it is a process, change takes place over time. Consequently, in attempting to handle change successfully we need to be aware of the importance of time, particularly in terms of.

- the need for time be available to learn about new ideas and practice new skills.
- the need to recognize that the process of personalizing new ways of working will take time.

Too often in schools teachers are expected to make changes overnight. 'As from Monday we will start using the new maths scheme' or 'In September classes will be of mixed ages'. The pressure of unrealistic time scales can create stress, anxiety and negative reactions to what is proposed. It can also mean that little or no opportunity exists to learn more about how to implement the proposed innovation.

Evidence from social psychologists suggests that for complex organizations, such as schools, fully to adopt a new way of working can take from three to five years. Yet so often in schools the time scale for the introduction of innovations is much shorter. We also tend to make things worse by requiring teachers to deal with a number of new initiatives at the same time.

## **Change can be confusing**

Textbooks about management in schools sometimes give the impression that change is a rational business, a series of boxes to be followed along a logical flowchart. Establish what you want to do, how you are going to do it, and so on. It all sounds rather appealing and, indeed, some form of framework for planning can be helpful.

What we must not lose sight of, however, is the realization that the time-consuming process of learning that we call change is, in practice, often confusing. As individuals seek to relate new ideas and ways of working to their own unique range of personal experiences, preferences and prejudices, they can become distorted, adapted or, indeed, totally converted into a form that is more acceptable. Consequently the original purpose, despite having been presented in a logical and rational form, may come to mean something quite different as a result of its adoption by other people.

## **Change can hurt**

The final point we wish to make in our account of the nature of change in schools is to do with its effects on people. Human beings in general prefer to stay as they are. Making changes requires risk taking, so why bother if it can be avoided; it is so much safer to stay as you are. Also if adopt something new then you often have to reject something else, and this can be painful. Asking people to alter their ideas, possibly requiring them to reject aspects of their past practice, has the potential to cause considerable damage.

## **Barriers to change**

In order to adopt a new way of working it is necessary to have a reasonable understanding, commitment is likely to be limited and attempts are going to be at best tentative and, more frequently, flawed. Teachers have a capacity to pretend that they are doing something when, in fact, they are not. Furthermore, it takes a certain amount of professional courage to admit before your colleagues that you don't really understand. So, for example, the deputy head explains a proposal at a staff meeting. This is what I am suggesting, this is why, and so on. Does everybody understand? Is everybody clear? At this point some teachers may find it difficult to express their concerns or explain their lack of understanding. As a result the initiative proceeds with some colleagues, at least, far from clear about what it really entails. Those in a school who are leading or co-ordinating developments may, as a result of their own enthusiasm, inadvertently make this problem of lack of understanding worse. If they have spent a lot of time thinking about, planning and trying out a new idea themselves and wish to share it with their colleagues, they may impose a schedule that allows little opportunity for understanding to occur. Their enthusiasm may lead them to be insensitive to the needs of their colleagues as learners.

### **Lack of necessary skills**

It may be, of course, that you understand what needs to change but feel that you do not have the competence to carry it out. Indeed, your feelings may be correct - you may not have the necessary skills.

Once again, the enthusiasm and commitment of others can cause difficulties and possible stress. It may be very uncomfortable for you to feel that some of your colleagues are able to do things that you know are beyond your current competence. This discomfort will be made worse if, in their desire to get on, they commit themselves (and you) to a time scale for implementation that allows no opportunity for you to develop your skills.

This is a particular problem in schools where there is no tradition of talking about techniques of teaching and no facility for teachers to work collaboratively as they attempt to introduce new ways of working. Regrettably it is the case that many teachers go through their careers without having opportunities to observe how others organize things in their classrooms. Their models of teaching evolved from their own experience as pupils at school and as a result of their own trial-and-error efforts over the years. Whilst we would not wish to underestimate the value of learning by trial and error (indeed part of our rationale is to encourage teachers to learn from their own experience), we also know how much can be learned by watching others teaching and working collaboratively alongside colleagues.

### **Existing attitudes**

We also have to recognize that sometimes the most significant barriers to improvement are those that are erected in our own minds. Sometimes, on courses, we ask people to fill in blocks on a drawing of a stone wall that appear to be interfering with progress towards their professional goals. Often people have extensive lists of reasons outside of themselves, particularly reasons that relate to the attitudes and behaviour of their own colleagues. We press them to consider what obstacles they create as a result of their own attitudes and behaviour and this quite often leads people to recognize some blocks in the wall that can be removed.

Having said that, it is clear that education takes place within a complex social environment and that other people do intrude as we attempt to develop our work as teachers. A common mistake in this respect is to personalize difficulties, suggesting that some individual (or group of individuals) is the resister who is preventing change. We urge that you avoid the temptation to adopt this view. Once somebody is seen as 'the problem' it becomes very difficult to enrol their support and involvement. It is likely that your attitude to them will become apparent, perhaps through your use of language or mode of expression towards them. As a result, their negative view of what is proposed will become reinforced and the chances of a change of mind become even less.

It is better to view colleagues who are resisting what is being proposed as serving an appropriate professional role in examining and questioning its value. Indeed, given that education has been somewhat subject to bandwagon ideas, it is important that teachers all show some willingness to resist. This being the case, the colleague who is expressing reservations can be seen as helping others to understand and evaluate what is proposed. This also has the added 'tactical' advantage that everybody involved, including those who are sceptical, retains the right to adjust their views, this is particularly since there are few absolute truths in education.

### **Limited resources**

At a more practical level, attempts to innovate can easily be frustrated if the necessary resources are unavailable. This can take a variety of forms.

It may, for example, be that the introduction of some new scheme is inhibited because there are not enough copies of the materials available. If teachers have to continually send children searching around the school for the resources box or a set of books, they may eventually come to the view that it is easier to use something else.

Lack of resources may also have to do with human resources. As we have seen, change often requires time to try out new ideas and discuss their use with colleagues. When a teacher has a full timetable this may become something of a deterrent.

### **Inappropriate organization**

Related to the use of resources is the issue of organization. Sometimes when a proposal gets into difficulty it is because the overall organization of the school, or the organizational pattern within particular classes, prevents the new way of working from being implemented.

This list of five possible barriers to change is potentially rather depressing. Thinking about it leaves us wondering if change is actually possible given the complexities and pressures of day-to-day life in schools. Yet clearly it is possible, particularly as each of these barriers can be avoided. Indeed, recognizing their existence is the first stage in a strategy for avoiding them.

As we move on to consider ways of facilitating professional development, encouraging teachers to see themselves as learners alongside their pupils, we want you to keep in mind the points we have made about the nature of change in schools and to look for ways of avoiding the difficulties that can occur.

## **Conditions for successful change**

In this section we consider some general factors that seem to be helpful to teachers as they attempt to develop their practice and adopt new ways of working. Together they are factors that lead to an atmosphere that is conducive to change. They are:

- clarity of purpose
- realistic goals
- motivation
- support
- resources
- evaluation

### **Clarity of purpose**

As we have seen, an understanding of what is intended by a proposed change is essential to its successful implementation. It is important to note that a proposal can mean different things to different people. Reality is something that each of us constructs in our minds as a result of our previous experience. Consequently when we talk about finding ways of helping colleagues to understand the purpose and nature of what is intended we must accept that this may change as a result of the process of discussion and collaboration. The important feature is that time should be found to allow individuals to gain a sense of personal meaning about what is to happen, in order that they can become comfortable with, and commitment to, what is proposed.

### **Realistic goals**

Given the existence of an agreed purpose, the next stage must be to formulate some plan to make it happen. Once again, time becomes a critical issue and it is important

that realistic priorities are set, taking into account other demands and the need to allow people space and opportunity to learn any new skills that may be necessary in order to implement what is being proposed. It makes sense, therefore to set goals - for example. 'This is what we will try to achieve by the Summer'. These provide a common sense of purpose and should help to encourage participation, particularly of the goals can be achieved.

## **Motivation**

In order to encourage involvement and effort there has to be a desire to change that is the result of either internal or external pressures. Pressure can take many forms, and if it is appropriate or excessive may have negative effect on attitudes. Often the most beneficial type of pressure arises from the desire of individuals to improve their own professional competence (i.e. personal pressure) or from participation in some form of co-operative venture (i.e. peer pressure).

## **Support**

It also helps to have a strong sense of support. Making changes in the way you teach requires you to take risks with your professional credibility. All the evidence suggests that most of us are more likely to take risks if we are with others who provide encouragement and help. At the implementation stage, in particular, it is helpful to have the advice and comments of respected and trusted colleagues. There is therefore, a need to create an atmosphere of support within a school that encourage individual members of staff to try new ways of working.

## **Evaluation**

Finally it is important that the introduction of any new ways of working is carefully monitored. In particular we need to know:

- Are we getting anywhere ?
- Could things be improved ? If so, how ?
- How do the people involved feel ?

In this sense, evaluation is not a set of scientific principles and complex procedures but simply an attitude of mind. It is about setting aside time (yes, more time) to reflect on what is happening, in order to make changes as necessary. It seems so straightforward when expressed in this common-sense way but frankly it is something that is often overlooked. In their enthusiasm to bring about improvements, head teachers in particular can set off towards their goals, allowing no opportunity for what is happening to be examined and improved in the light of experience.