



# Policy Reform Through Project Management

**ISEC 2005**

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## **POLICY REFORM THROUGH PROJECT MANAGEMENT 2005**

### ***Introduction***

Policy reform means changes to the status quo and achieving selected and negotiated objectives. (Bridges & Davis 2000)

Policy processes help policy makers clarify those objectives and coordinate outcomes so that unintended surprises don't undermine other well developed policy matters.

Effective change in educational practices requires more than positive hopes and aspirations (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard & Henry 1997). These authors suggest that cultural, social, economic and political considerations must be taken into account when developing policy. I believe that policy makers need to be aware of local 'levers of change', major waves of reform that provide policy opportunities, the role of leadership and the practicalities of implementing change to sustain long term progressive improvement with/for all stakeholders.

Fullan (1996) wants us to develop a way of "experiencing and thinking about educational change processes as an overlapping series of dynamically complex phenomena."

The excitement of policy development lies in identification of issues for change and improvement and then delving deeply into the evidence of the data, the literature and the innovative practice of individual teachers and service providers.

Bridgman & Davis (2000) suggest that the Australian experience of a policy cycle has to do the following tasks;

- Identify issues
  - Policy analysis
  - Policy instruments
  - Consultation
  - Coordination
  - Decision
  - Implementation
- and
- Evaluation

In my experience a clear information strategy needs to overlay that cycle to ensure collaborative effort and shared understanding of the tasks and the planned outcomes. With open access to this information the policy cycle can take into consideration partnerships with related reforms, which can be catalysts for greater change than first thought possible.

Fullan makes clear that there should be a vision for reform but suggests that it should be open ended. This enables lessons learnt from inquiry, external partners and practitioners to be used for the development of a shared and more exciting vision.

The concept of tri level change was canvassed in Fullan's Spring workshops (Australian 2004) where he urged educators to understand the interrelationships of school, district and system level policy development and implementation. He noted there was a need to build

capacity in individuals and groups at all those levels to ensure long term improvement to programs, services and policies.

The education of children/students with disabilities is often systemically located within historical and complex structures, which require the sensitive management of policy reform to ensure change at local, district, state-wide and national levels.

When Collins (2001) speaks of reform he insists that if you give people freedom and responsibility within a framework of a system where disciplined people, thought and action occur there is going to be results.

### ***A South Australian experience***

In 1999 our team wanted to build its capacity to implement the many and related reforms that were required in the education of children/students with disabilities. We had used some frameworks for reform and models of action plans but none kept a comprehensive view of the 'big picture' and we often found ourselves distracted by process, interesting data or research, political static, lobbyists, timelines and budgets. Project management was agreed upon as a good option worth exploring but it needed to suit social policy rather than civil engineering.

Our scattered experiences and some reading showed that project management was a way of initiating significant social policy reform in a complex area such as the education of children/students with disabilities/learning difficulties. We believed that a project had goals, a specific timeline and a matching budget which was unique in some way from past policies and practices. We thought that a project plan was composed of connected and interrelated activities that was based on many assumptions and had measurable results. We hoped to find a model that would increase the speed and reduce the costs and risks of achieving reform.

One of our team researched a number of project management tools, some of the available software and a range of training programs. A local consultant, Margaret Hypatia, seemed to have a model which assisted in the management of uncertainty, could manage constant change and complexity whilst keeping us open to shared visions. This model was based on the tool called the 'Logical Framework'.

### ***Capacity Building***

We embarked upon a mutually beneficial relationship with the consultant, Margaret Hypatia, in 2000 and we still work with her today as a trainer, 'critical friend' and a coach. Training for policy advisors in the disability area was negotiated to meet the needs of the staff and the nature of the policy due for reform. The consultant assisted us to learn the theory of the tool but also rolled up her sleeves to help us with the practical implementation of the model of working.

Our project management training emphasized The Logical Framework, a methodology popularised in the 80's by the international aid community, and now increasingly used in government, health and education planning in Australia. It summarizes what a project/plan intends to do and how, what the key assumptions are, and how outputs and results will be monitored and evaluated. While project management is the overall approach, the Logical Framework is an aid to thinking. It is a framework for a rigorous thought process which is particularly useful for designing projects and organisational plans. It enables staff to take





intellectual concepts and turn them into practical plans. We adopted the Logical Framework as our primary planning and project design tool because it provided the discipline for thought and action that we required.

We introduced project management in general and the Logical Framework in particular, through a combination of training and facilitated practical application. During and after the initial training, staff were required to apply their new skills to existing work on projects and to group planning. The necessary skills and techniques were developed through group training, through individual and small group coaching and through facilitated planning/training sessions. The training and associated materials were continuously adapted to our needs as we integrated the new skills into our day-to-day work over 18 months. Now we're functioning at a much higher level, and the only training needed is for new staff at the time of induction.

### **The Logical Framework**

The framework always records a vision and a super goal and then shows a hierarchy of objectives as can be seen below.

Creating Smarter Projects

<b>Logical Framework Template</b>			
<b>Hierarchy of Objectives</b> What objectives feed into higher-order objectives to produce a result?	<b>Indicators of Success</b> How will you measure your success? What visible evidence will you use? Quantity? Quality? Time?	<b>Means of Verification</b> Where will a record of achievement be found?	<b>Assumptions</b> What assumptions are you making about external factors that that could influence your results?
<b>Goal</b> What is the higher level objective, eg from your organisation's strategic plan, that this project will <b>contribute to</b> ?			(Goal to Supergoal)  What important external factors are necessary to sustain the higher-level objective to which your Goal contributes?
<b>Purpose of the Project</b> What is the specific purpose of this project in helping achieve the Goal?			(Purpose to Goal)  Important external factors that must exist to attain the GOAL
<b>Deliverables</b> What visible deliverables will this project produce? 1 2 3			(Deliverable to Purpose)  Important external factors needed to attain the PURPOSE
<b>Activities Deliverable 1</b> What major clusters of activities are required to achieve Deliverable 1? List clusters of activities for each deliverable. 1 2 3			(Activity to Deliverable)  Important external factors that must exist to accomplish the DELIVERABLES

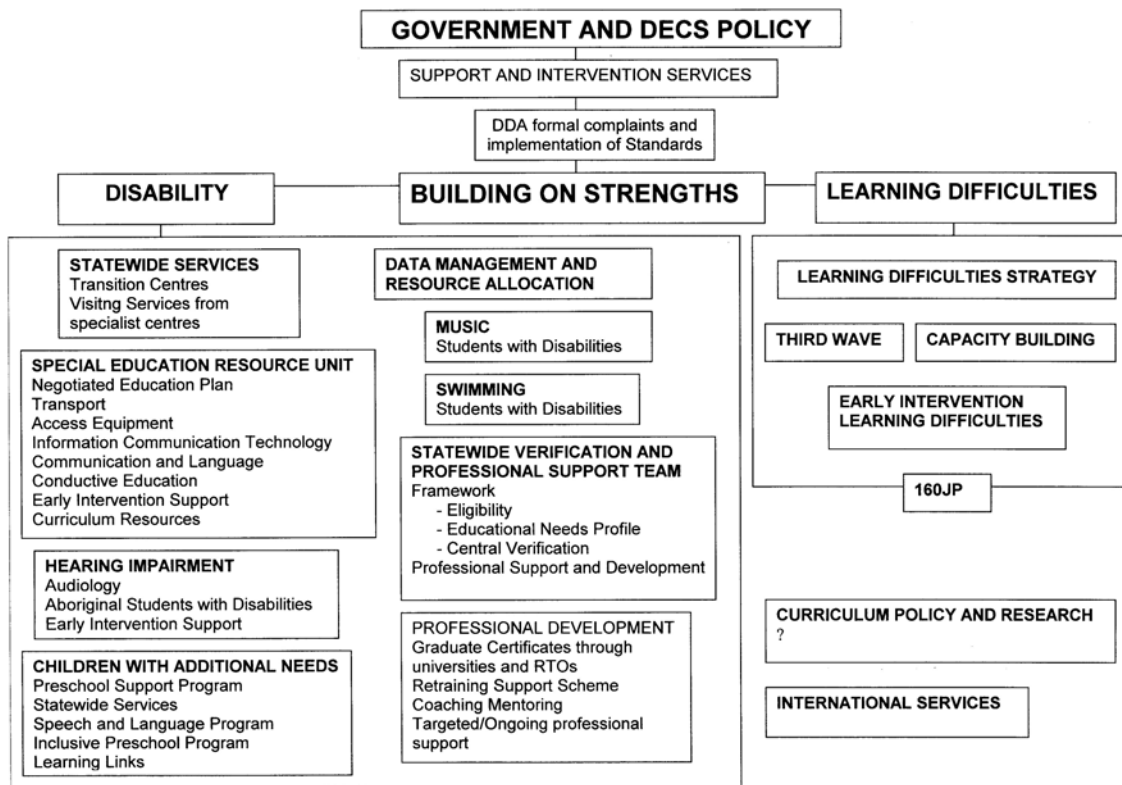
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### **The “big picture”**

The project management approach and the Logical Framework tool have allowed us to tackle major change, while keeping track of precisely what we're doing and how.

For example, we use it to create a big picture map of our objectives. We have called these maps “Windchimes”. We locate all of our work—both projects and processes—onto the map, giving us a clear picture of our work and our connections with each other at a given time.



The “Windchimes” include all projects plus some dreams too. This allows us to make changes when the opportunity arise so we can more closely align what we do every day—and how we spend our money—to what we’re trying to achieve. From this ‘big picture’ I can construct, with my staff, a performance management plan for my work and that of the unit. All the team has related performance plans and we share leadership roles for and within projects.

In our training we emphasise that the more we research, design, plan and monitor and adjust implementation the greater the success at the time of the “launch” of the reform. Whilst we acknowledge that when we establish the hierarchy of objectives on a cause and effect model we also include a list of assumptions that acknowledge risks related to the project. Most importantly as the journey progresses there are times to adjust the project that leaves us open to learning. Our strategic intent is to make reform irresistible.

**Project Management: examples of reform**

I will show you 3 very different project plans

- the first is a peer teaching model for pre schoolers that has won a national prize.
- the second is a sensitive program that required an injection of funds and improvement in program management.
- the third is the development of an electronic curriculum planning tool for children/students with disabilities that is now being used widely by/for many other students.

## **1. Inclusive Pre School Program**

- The first slides (a) & (b) shows the overall vision and purpose of the Inclusive Pre School Program.
- The second slide shows an example of an output.
- The third slide shows some of the activities that needed to take place in order for the tasks' progress
- The fourth slide brings us to the present.

Throughout the life of this policy project we have attracted government funding for this initiative, created a model of peer teaching from a centre of expertise, won a national prize for innovation, caused policy to change for the building and refurbishing of pre schools, met the complex needs of 36 children in their local preschools and developed many inclusive teaching strategies at those sites.

**Inclusive Preschools Project: Logical Framework  
Revised 14/04/04**

<p><b>Vision:</b> The principles of social inclusion are reflected in departmental policies 35</p> <p><b>40</b></p> <p><b>and programs for children and students with disabilities.</b></p>			
<p><b>Supergoal:</b> Children with disabilities achieve learning outcomes through the provision of engaging curriculum in supportive and inclusive learning environments.</p>			
<i>Hierarchy of Objectives</i>	<i>Indicators of Success</i>	<i>Measurement Tools</i>	<i>Assumptions</i>
<p><b>Goal</b> DECS provides additional community-based preschool options for children with disabilities with high support needs that reflect a commitment to most promising practice in education and professional development.</p>	<p>New preschool options are available for the education of children with disabilities with high support needs.</p> <p>A state-wide model of professional development for educators of children with disabilities with high support needs is developed and implemented.</p>	<p>Project data base</p> <p>Project data base</p>	<p>Preschool teams and the community are committed to inclusion of children with disabilities.</p> <p>Parents want further options for their child's preschool education.</p> <p>That the community is aware of and accepting of increasing numbers of children with Autism in the community.</p>
<p><b>Purpose</b> The establishment of six portable programs for children with disabilities with high support needs within six community preschools.</p>	<p>Programs for children with disabilities with high support needs are operating in six preschools by term 1 2005</p>	<p>Project data base</p>	<p>That preschool leaders and educators are committed to "most promising practice" in preschool education for children with disabilities. Preschool sites with available and suitable additional space are found in areas of high need.</p> <p>That the preschool community supports the concept of portable programs.</p>

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Slide 1(b) Vision and Purpose

<b><i>Hierarchy of Objectives</i></b>	<b><i>Indicators of Success</i></b>	<b><i>Measurement Tools</i></b>	<b><i>Assumptions</i></b>
<p>The establishment of a state-wide model supporting "most promising practice" in preschool education for children with disabilities with high support needs based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships and connections between specialist sites and services and community preschools</li> <li>• Centres with expertise</li> <li>• Peer based training and mentoring strategies</li> <li>• Educator initiated learning and professional development</li> </ul> <p>To develop a model/formula for the ongoing allocation of staffing and operational grants to preschools for children with disabilities with high support needs.</p>	<p>A state-wide model supporting "most promising practice" for inclusion of children with disabilities, in community preschools and specialist settings, is developed and implemented in partnership with The Briars Special Early Learning Centre by the end of term 1 2005.</p> <p>A proposal for a new model is put forward for the Minister's consideration for a state budget bid by October 2005 for the 2006 – 2007 budget bid.</p> <p>All new and refurbished preschool facilities are planned to ensure appropriate and accessible provision for children with disabilities by term 1 2005.</p>	<p>Project data base The Briars Special Early Learning Centre Annual Report</p> <p>Briefing</p> <p>Audit of all new and refurbished preschool facilities plans.</p>	<p>Recent and relevant research on most promising practice is gathered, interpreted and disseminated.</p> <p>All children, including those with severe and multiple disabilities, should have access to 4 sessions of preschool.</p> <p>The high support needs of children with severe and multiple disabilities are not taken into account in the current preschool resource allocation model.</p> <p>The intentions of the Disability Discrimination Act are understood and acted upon.</p>

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<b><i>Hierarchy of Objectives</i></b>	<b><i>Indicators of Success</i></b>	<b><i>Measurement Tools</i></b>	<b><i>Assumptions</i></b>
<p><b>Outputs</b> A detailed project plan is developed and implemented.</p> <p>A state-wide demographic mapping process, of data on children with disabilities with high support needs by preschool, is designed and developed as a basis for selection and review of preschool sites.</p>	<p>The project plan is approved by the end of term 3 2003 and the project plan is implemented according to specified timelines.</p> <p>A demographic map is produced by the end of term 3 2003. A process is in place to ensure annual update of data by December 2003.</p>	<p>Project planning documents Project report</p> <p>Demographic map Project report</p> <p>Briefing endorsing selection</p>	<p>Documentation is approved</p> <p>That available data is current, accurate and useful.</p> <p>That processes can be identified and personnel are available to annually update data.</p>
<p><b>Activities</b></p> <p><b>A detailed project plan is developed and implemented.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An issues paper is produced.</li> <li>• A logical framework is produced.</li> </ul>	<p><b>The project plan is approved by the end, term 3 2003 and the project plan is implemented according to specified timelines.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An issues paper, logical framework, budget and staffing proposal and “Proposal for New Initiative” is produced and approved by term 4 2003.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Project planning documents. Project report.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues paper, logical framework, budget and “Proposal for New Initiative” documents and approved briefing</li> </ul>	<p><b>Documentation is approved.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All project partners and participants are committed to the project outcomes</li> </ul>

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<i>Hierarchy of Objectives</i>	<i>Indicators of Success</i>	<i>Measurement Tools</i>	<i>Assumptions</i>
<p><b>Activities</b></p> <p><b>The six preschools with programs for children with disabilities with high support needs are developed as centres with "most promising practice" and progressively provide peer based training and mentoring to local preschools.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All six sites adopt and develop a strategy including core practices consistent across sites.</li> <li>• Sites delivered peer based mentoring and training to the local network of preschools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All sites have developed a strategy as part of their ongoing work by the end of term 2 2005.</li> <li>• Participating early childhood educators report increased knowledge and skill in working with children with disabilities, progressively.</li> </ul> <p><b>Briefing to the Minister by October 2005</b></p>		<p><b>Staff of the six programs are skilled and able to take on the peer based training and mentoring role.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All sites accept this role as part of their core business.</li> <li>• The six preschools promote and advertise this service.</li> <li>• Peer-based mentoring and training is effective in supporting development of preschool staff, confidence, skill and expertise.</li> </ul>

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## 2. Transport for students with disability

- Slide 4 shows Output 1 of this Logical Framework which is explicit about reducing costs whilst at the same time increasing student independence.

Throughout the life of this project we have contained costs, increased the number of students transported, shortened the distance of travel for most students, trained many students to use public transport and had new money injected into the budget to cover increased costs of taxi travel.

Slide 4

## TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE FOR CHILDREN & STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

<p><b>Output 1</b> Identify specific strategies to reduce expenditure in relation to the use of taxis/buses to transport approved children/students to and from school.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information will be published for dissemination to relevant sites on the availability of the car reimbursement option and transport training hours.</li> <li>2. A joint project between Transport Services/ SERU will be undertaken to look at costs on taxi/bus runs. Transport Services will provide information on costs in relation to specific students for follow up.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There will be an increase in the number of parents claiming the car reimbursement allowance instead of utilising bus/taxi transport. Schools will receive this information and promote it in their school communities. There will be an increase in the number of students accessing public transport.</li> <li>2. Transport services and Project Officer/Manager SERU will review the transport arrangements for individuals which are costly and may be outside the guidelines.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parents will view this favourably as a viable option.. Funding will continue to be available for car reimbursement and transport training.</li> <li>2. Recommendations will be made, as a result of the review, of expensive runs/ and/or individual arrangements by the Project Officer/ Manager which will reduce costs</li> </ol>
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Bill Nicholls/Angela Roadhouse  
SERU: Special Education Resource Unit

### 3. The Negotiated Education Plan (NEP)

The Logical framework for the development of an electronic personalised education plan called the Negotiated Education Plan was a very early example of our use of this model of working.

Hierarchy of objectives	Indicators of success	Measurement tools	Assumptions
<b>Output 1</b> Any recommended changes to practice are identified	1.1 NCP changes reflect 80% of feedback	1.1.1 relevant recommendations to inform the revised NCP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>interpretation of the feedback is correct</li> </ul>
<b>Activities</b> 1. Write briefing to Director, Student and Professional Services to gain permission to begin	1.1 permission given	1.1.1 signed briefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the director signs the briefing</li> </ul>
2. review current national and international literature	1.1 a comprehensive literature review is completed using information from at least four countries and five Australian states	1.1.1 literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>literature review complements the review process</li> </ul>
3. develop discussion paper	1.1 discussion paper complete	1.1.1 discussion paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discussion paper assists the information process</li> </ul>
4. Design focus questions and information data sheets prepared	1.1 at least 5 focus questions designed and information data sheets prepared for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students</li> <li>all other groups</li> </ul>	1.1.1 completed information forms 1.1.2 questions recorded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>questions will elicit useful data</li> </ul>
5. stakeholders targeted	1.1 appropriate stakeholder groups covered	1.1.1 printed list of stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>all stakeholders covered</li> </ul>
6. dates, times and venues organised	1.1 Gantt chart prepared 1.1.2 venues organised 1.1.3 times set	1.1.1 Gantt chart accurate 1.1.2 venues finalised 1.1.3 times appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>key stakeholders can attend the venues at the allocated times</li> </ul>
7. advertisement sent out	1.1 registration at all sessions of at least 10 people	1.1.1 list of participants registered with secretary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>people register with the secretary</li> </ul>
10. arrangements made for country travel	1.1 90% of dates and venues fit with needs	1.1.1 motel, car, airfare, per diem organised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>all arrangements work out</li> </ul>
11. TRT release organised	1.1 letters written to all principals	1.1.1 letters signed by finance officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the amount of TRT release is adequate</li> </ul>
12. focus groups conducted	1.2 100% of focus groups conducted as planned	1.2.1 focus group evaluation 1.1.2 issues identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evaluation shows stakeholders were able to express their opinions</li> </ul>

This slide shows you the unsophisticated beginning which later became at least 4 major policy projects managed by Dr Liz Horrocks.

The outcome can be seen on a web site [web.seru.sa.edu.au](http://web.seru.sa.edu.au) and is now ready for revision. However the Negotiated Education Plan has provided a foundation for the current work on individualised planning for ALL students in South Australia, as well as a very explicit transition plan for all students in year 8.

The Negotiated Education Plan is an integral part of the SA Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework (birth to year 12) and the Plan “rode the wave” of that significant reform and achieved many inclusive curriculum outcomes we didn’t dare to think would have been possible.

## **The 'ripple effect'**

Throughout any policy project and at the conclusion of tasks, connections across all our work are explored.

Such connections with our work and other teams in the department can be seen in the state-wide students with disabilities Data Management project.

A further example is provided in the Early Intervention Service for children with hearing impairment. There is often a need to work closely with other service providers and also other agencies and advocacy groups. (Slide 6)

Our experience is that if we use a project management tool that is explicit about connections we can influence and provide leadership for related projects for more inclusive outcomes for children and students with disabilities.

Slide 6

**Last Updated: 26 March 2004**  
**State-wide Students with Disabilities Data Management**

<b>Output 1</b>	<b>Indicators of Success</b>	<b>Resources/Timelines</b>	<b>Assumptions</b>
1-3 year plan for the management of data relating to students with disabilities.	Plan written.	Dec 04	Planning able to be undertaken and completed in current environment of change.
Investigate options for the integration of the State-wide Disability Database(SDD) with other relevant departmental systems. Seek departmental commitment to integrate SDD needs into any future departmental Data Warehouse.	Options paper developed by IT Services, providing advice on future directions for the SDD in relation to departmental data management plans.	Student Census System (SCS), Support Services Data Management System, DECS Data Warehouse, EDSAS or "central EDSAS"	IT Services supports the integration of the systems. Resources available (eg technical staff) to develop options paper proposing technical solutions.

Dean Sincock

**Early Intervention Service – Hearing Impaired**

<p><b>Activities</b>  <b>Output 2</b>                      1. meet and rationalise service delivery with the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Kilparrin Teaching and Assessment Unit</li> <li>▪ District Coordinators Hearing Impairment (Southern Sea and Vines)</li> <li>▪ Port Lincoln District Office</li> </ul>	<p>1. Liaison with community service providers as appropriate and rationalisation of service delivery.</p>	<p>1. on going collaboration occurs with these service providers</p>	<p>1. Willingness on the part of other providers to work with EIS-HI                      2. Time is available to make and develop these connections</p>
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Bill Nicholls

**Connections:** PHISA (Parents of Hearing Impaired South Australia), Child and Youth Health, Townsend House Cando4kids program, District Coordinators Hearing Impairment (Southern Sea and Vines), Country Districts Coordinators hearing Impairment, Kilparrin Teaching and Assessment Unit

**Significant Changes:** State wide Brief, increasing complexity in the type of requests made of the team, 4<sup>th</sup> team member to start in Term 2 2005.

In using this disciplined approach to project management we have built in an accountability mechanism of fortnightly peer reporting and biannual performance management to line managers.

During the fortnightly policy project meetings each project leader reports to their peers on activities completed, barriers, connections, new risks, staffing, budget and time line issues.

A gantt chart model is also used to depict progress across the life of a project.

## Conclusion

The disciplined management of the policy reform process is essential because policy is developed within the political and budgetary environment of an education system, which has a range of policies, programs and practices all of which are interrelated. If reform is to be managed in a constructive way then every effort should be made to give staff the freedom and the responsibility to ensure projects are connected without duplication/overlap and that all stakeholders are consulted during the process.

Project management documents the agreed objectives of the reform. This includes managing people, time, quality, costs and risks. It is not a static process but a dynamic one, which can be constantly adjusted and re-designed to meet un-anticipated circumstance, an opportunity and/or emergent trends. It is a public way of identifying organisational directions and answers the questions (where are we going, how are we going to get there and what will it look like when we arrive?) This same tool can be used by opportunists to develop bright ideas!

Policy makers in the area in South Australia are using a project management tool called the Logical Framework that enables community values, the logic of practice and research from the literature to be taken into account whilst planning and implementing reform. We have become a professional learning community that is committed to irresistible change.

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(with acknowledgement to the Support and Intervention Services team and Margaret Hypatia)

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Training in project management and in the Logical Framework is provided for us by  
Margaret Hypatia, of Working Smarter Pty Ltd, [www.workingsmarter.com.au](http://www.workingsmarter.com.au).

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