

The Three R's of the Success Case Model - Recruitment, Response, Rigour

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Session Content

- The debate surrounding Success Case Methodology (SCM) and our experience
- SCM described
- Traditional SCM steps and core questions
- An alternative design developed by the authors



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The Argument Against SCM

- It is argued that the SCM promotes optimistic and potentially uncritical findings
- We advance examples of the authors' experiences to disconfirm the latter in terms of recruitment, response and rigour (including an openness of respondents about unsuccessful elements)



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Traditional SCM

- SCM is generally conducted with the intent of assessing how well an organisational intervention is working (primarily in for-profit contexts) typically to estimate organisational business goals such as return on investment (ROI).
- Brinkerhoff (2003) – SCM traditionally involves locating potential success cases and establishing the nature of the successful and unsuccessful elements against predetermined specific criteria (usually outlined in a 'matrix')
- Recently, SCM has been proposed as an alternative approach for examining causal associations when more scientifically rigorous, sophisticated, and elegant designs are unethical, impractical, too costly, or simply not feasible (Coryn et al., 2009; Scriven, 2006)
- Observation, interviews and documentary analysis are commonly employed as methods of data collection for each case



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Five Steps in the Traditional, Brinkerhoff, Design of SCM

1. Focus and plan the Success Case Study (SCS)
2. Create an 'impact model' that defines what success should look like
3. Design and implement a survey to search for best and worst cases
4. Interview and document success and non-success cases
5. Communicate findings, conclusions and recommendations.



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Core Questions of the traditional SCM Approach

- What is really happening?
- What results are being achieved?
- What is the value (ROI) of the results?
- How can it be improved?

(Bailey et al.,2006)



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An Alternative Design

- The traditional SCM design emphasises examining both successful and unsuccessful features in the case studies
- Our approach has adapted Brinkerhoff traditional steps at points three and four
- We deliberately selected only success cases, rather than the inclusion of unsuccessful cases, in order to ease access to a resistant sector and to ensure that we could complete the research in a limited time frame
- Our modifications to the SCM enabled us to define success in a context which, whilst grounded in organisational settings, did not specifically have observable, measurable ROI's.



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An adapted model of the success case method

(Piggot-Irvine, Marshall, Aitken)

Initial Results

Data gathered from survey or focus group and current literature used to form a matrix of desired or 'ideal' elements from which questions are derived for the success case study data collection



Key personnel and previous data examined to select diversely located 'success' cases

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Initial Results

Data Collection

Data gathered from survey or focus group and current literature used to form a matrix of desired or 'ideal' elements from which questions are derived for the success case study data collection

Conducted case studies (focus groups, interviews, observations, documentary analysis) with sample 'success' groups

Key personnel and previous data examined to select diversely located 'success' cases

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Initial Results

Data Collection

Immediate Outcomes

Data gathered from survey or focus group and current literature used to form a matrix of desired or 'ideal' elements from which questions are derived for the success case study data collection

Conducted case studies (focus groups, interviews, observations, documentary analysis) with sample 'success' groups

Reports of documented success cases collated

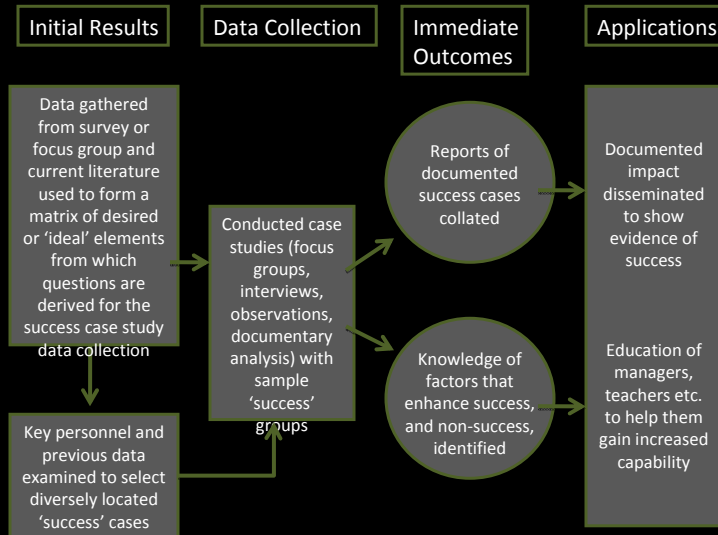
Knowledge of factors that enhance success, and non-success, identified

Key personnel and previous data examined to select diversely located 'success' cases

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An adapted model of the success case method

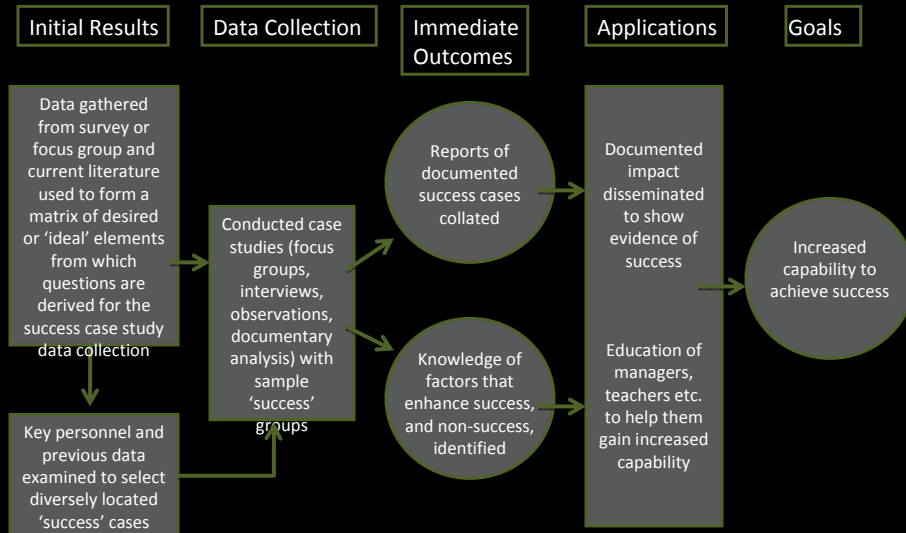
(Piggot-Irvine, Marshall, Aitken)



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An adapted model of the success case method

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Three Examples Utilising the Alternative Design

- Teacher Induction
- Evaluation of a Development Programme for Special Education Teachers
- Effective Change Leadership

All examples are reported upon under 'recruitment, response, rigour' headings



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Teacher Induction - *Learning to Teach: Success case studies of teacher induction in Aotearoa New Zealand*

- 3rd and final phase of research designed to investigate the nature and quality of induction.
- Goal of the research was to provide an evidence base for the development of induction practices and advice across for educational sectors: ECE, Primary, Secondary, Māori Medium
- Research was designed to identify:
 - Issues that support good induction practice (including contextual supports)
 - Exemplars of good induction practices and ways of dealing with problematic situations
 - Indicators of how Provisionally registered teachers (PRTs) develop their learning to a level where they can be awarded full teacher registration status
- 20 success cases selected in total – 5 in each sector. Phase 1 & 2 used to inform and establish criteria for success. – success matrix. Recommendations came from local educational advisors.



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Recruitment, Response, Rigour

- **Recruitment**– Majority of sites positive about invitation to be involved . Focus was on depth rather than breadth (captured in phase 1 & 2). – Some challenges in ECE & Māori sectors – related to history and induction practices and prior research experiences.
- **Response** - Data collection methods – focus groups, individual interview & documentary analysis of induction materials/records. All participants provided information enthusiastically – focus group particularly. Observation method not able to be obtained in most situations.
- **Rigour**– indications of ‘a family of support’ as a common, feature associated with induction success across contexts. Demonstrated explicit improvement outcomes for PRTs and mentor teachers. Participants open to revealing practices that did not work and responses to challenges and barriers in induction. (Aitken et al., 2008)



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Evaluation of a Development Programme for Special Education Teachers

- Programme aim – to develop teacher knowledge and share ideas on how to support learners who require significant adaptation to the curriculum content
- Development employed either action research or action learning approaches
- For third phase of evaluation, four success cases selected from 49 programme schools (Ministry of Ed., programme facilitator, previous phases of research aided selection) using ‘success matrix’



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Recruitment, Response, Rigour

- **Recruitment** – schools exceptionally positive about invitation to be involved (strong contrast with Phases 1 & 2)
- **Response** - all participants promptly and enthusiastically provided documentation/data. Compare with 30% response to Phase 1; Phase 2, four out of the eight focus group schools were either continually hesitant or strongly resistant to contributing and, despite over 100 students impacted by the development programme, only two students were encouraged by their teachers to participate in the focus groups.
- **Rigour** – indications of 'evidence-based, decision-making' as an over-riding, common, feature associated with success cases that distinguished this small proportion of schools from others. They also demonstrated explicit improvement outcomes for students. Participants were open about identifying about 'unsuccessful' features of the development. (Piggot-Irvine, 2008)



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Effective Change Leadership

- Programme aim – to determine the value that success focussed change initiatives were capable of producing, and whether they could be leveraged to a wider constituency to assist in improved and sustained success in similar settings
- Matrix of success capability was constructed using a Delphi-style panel of successful change leaders
- Semi-structured interviews explored in depth the core capabilities employed by seven 'successful' change leaders
- The key factors that seem to be associated with successful applications of middle leaders as change agents were identified and compared and contrasted to those where the factors seemed to impede success



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Recruitment, Response, Rigour

- **Recruitment** – a perceived opportunity to expand success oriented knowledge offered by this project contributed to the overwhelming enthusiasm to participate of those approached
- **Response** – each was engaged in a unique change action and contributed thoughts on being responsible for leading change in a candid and open way. They provided examples of the complex relationship between themselves and their client groups, and the change action itself which did not always focus on success. There was an *openness* to discuss personal feelings as well as actions that did not work or only partially worked
- **Rigour**- the study did not seek to learn about the ‘average’ or modal participant in leading change. It intentionally sought out the very best examples, to help determine if the methodologies being used were worthwhile, and could therefore be leveraged to a greater number of participants

No two experiences were exactly alike. Both the flexibility of this research approach and the emphasis on the individual experience enabled the researcher to interpret the similarities and differences of the personal experiences as they added to a collective understanding of ‘successful’ change methodologies (Marshall, 2008).



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Conclusions

- **Recruitment** – in each case it was easy to recruit sites in situations where traditionally it is difficult to gain entry for research
- **Response** – enthusiastic provision of documentation and data was the norm in all case studies. Response rates were high in each site.

The SCSs appeared to have offered teachers a sense of researching ‘with’, almost a form of self evaluation and review alongside an external recorder and observer.

- **Rigour** – clear indicators of both enablers and barriers to success were evident in all cases. Exceptional openness from participants was the norm.



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