Transforming schools: All of the design, all of the time, all of the way through…

The Implementation of Big Picture Education in Five Schools

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Acknowledgements

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Acronyms

- Big Picture Education Australia (BPEA)

- Big Picture Learning International Network (BPILN)

- Big Picture Education (BPE)

- Big Picture (BP)

- Big Picture Academy (BPA)

- The Big Picture Academy Project (BPA Project)

- Research Circle (RC)

1.1 Introduction

School transformation takes time, perseverance and courage as old practices are replaced with alternative school cultures, pedagogies and structures. The Big Picture Education (BPE) design[1] for schooling endeavours to provide a personalised, engaging experience for students and teachers and in the process, to rediscover the joy of learning. These aspirations require enormous amounts of belief, focus, commitment and hard work by those involved. Importantly, as we shall see throughout this report, it is essential that schools build alignment, coherence, leadership and sustainability into their design processes[2].

The BPE design is both a process and a product that describes the what, the why and the how, all at once (Thomson, 2007[3]). A design is not a recipe. The context will influence what is possible yet create constraints. The interaction between the context and the design produces innovation. These are powerful reasons for having a design, and for identifying and understanding it. The BPE design connects the deeper purposes of school with the structures and daily practices of the school. This is a compelling reason to implement 'all of the design, all of the time, all of the way through'. So, there is work to do in creating not just applying. The implementation of this transformative design requires changes to practice, changes to structures and changes to culture. It takes time, persistence and focus to implement.

The BPE design for schooling provides a more personalised approach to student learning and school design. It requires persistence, reflection, and school wide commitment. Unsettling traditional ways of doing school is not for the faint hearted. Those seeking school transformation are taking on over 150 years of deeply entrenched beliefs, values, routines and habits about the ways in which schooling and learning are organised. Doing things in the same old way is deeply embedded in our DNA and when challenged it is easy to fall back on what we already know well.

This report identifies the key findings from research into the initial years of the implementation of the BPE design for learning and school. The aim was to better understand the processes and consequences of establishing the BPE approach in five quite different schools. In three traditional large high schools a small Academy was introduced and in two smaller high schools a whole school design was implemented. Our original key research question being:

> How do school communities effectively implement a Big Picture Academy or Big Picture Education orientation within an established school?

The findings that follow are developed from an analysis of interviews with Advisory Teachers and School Leaders, school visits and a Research Circle (RC) with School Leaders, Advisory Teachers and coaches from the five schools who commenced in the Big Picture Academies project (2012 – 2015).

The research was part of a larger project called the Big Picture Academy (BPA) Project[4]. This in turn was part of the Murdoch Aspiration and Pathways for University (MAP4U) project funded by the federal government. As the name suggests, the MAP4U project sought to "develop sustainable programs that will grow the number of eligible, willing and able students to attend university." [5] That is, to increase the numbers of students moving into tertiary education from low socio-economic communities. In this context, the research attempted to better understand how student engagement for learning and aspirations develop in a Big Picture context. These findings[6] have been extensively reported in a Key Findings Summary Report, a series of Research Briefs and Combined Reports and two papers. A summary list of findings can be found on page 9 of this report.

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[1] See Appendix ONE of this report

[2] See for example, Marzolf, E.A. with Lambert, B.B., (2005) *Reading the Water: Coaching School Through their Improvement Efforts*, Small Schools Project, Seattle. p, 10.

[3] Thomson, P (2007) *Whole School Change, Review of the Literature*. Creative Partnerships Arts Council England.

[4] See Appendix TWO of this report in order to differentiate the different layers of Projects named in this introduction.

[5] Taken from MAP4U Project Overview Flyer

[6] See copies of these at https://www.bigpicture.org.au/big-picture-academy-bpa-project-map4u-murdoch-university

While the focus of this project is on the implementation of BPE we believe there are lessons to be learnt that are applicable to any school attempting to implement a transformative design for learning – whether in an academy or school wide.

1.2   The Five Schools

The research focused on the introduction of three BPAs in three large traditional Year 7 - 12 high schools and a whole-school Big Picture orientation in two small high schools – one catering for Year 10 – 12 and the other Year 7 – 12. Two additional schools involved with the implementation of the Big Picture approach provided a support role. These two low socio-economic schools were outside of the identified funding region but they provided opportunities for school visits and workshops; participation in workshops and research circles; as well as providing school coaches; and collegial leadership.

Differences between school contexts

As evidenced by the short overview of each school on pages 7- 9 the five schools were quite different and different in a number of ways:

- Purpose for engaging with BPE;
- Ethos and structure of their school/academy;
- Academic background of students;
- Method of selection of students;
- Level of intention around fidelity to the BPE design; and
- Extent to which the BPE design had been implemented.

The three large high schools responded to the offer of starting a BPA within their school. Each school started with one year 10 Advisory and a plan to roll out further Advisories in years 10 – 12 over three years with a minimum of one Advisory for each year group.

While student selection was seen as a school-based issue there was an expectation that students be invited to apply for their place in the BPA and that students' express interest through an enrolment process involving their family (and not just be allocated to the group). There were some suggested target groups of students:

- Students streamed out of academic subjects but showing an interest in learning;
- Students who were 'failing' in top streamed class but not wanting to give up their dream of an academic pathway;
- Any student bored with school and not working; and
- Any student who - with their family - just want to 'work this way'.

Both small high schools operated outside the government system so they had their own enrolment process. Both had already engaged with Big Picture Education Australia (BPEA) having identified BPE as a desirable design to inspire the work in their respective schools.

Through the BPA Project the schools were given support for professional learning and participation in the network and the research but they had to self-fund the staffing and school-based resource costs for the initiative, that is, to be self-sustaining.

1.2.1   Schools with a Big Picture Academy

Granville College

Granville College is a large Government (public) high school. From 2012 to 2015 it grew rapidly from 742 to 1247 students. It had an Index of Community Socio- Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of about 975[7]. The school accepted the offer from the BPA Project to start an academy and they moved from one Advisory (year 10) in 2013 to three advisories (years 10 – 12) by 2015. In 2016 a fourth (vertical 9-12) Advisory was added.

Granville College took a strategic and deliberative approach to the implementation of the BPA. Strategies to ensure sustainability of the BPA were investigated, and planned for, prior to implementation in 2013, throughout the life of the project and thereafter. Members of the senior leadership team participated in the BPE Foundation Program along with the Advisory Teachers. They worked with them to provide support and develop strategies with the intention of using the BPE design to influence the whole of school change .

> *I see Big Picture not only as a self-contained academy but also as a bit of a role model in terms of how to engage and best practice in schooling.* School Leader

The BPA at Granville College remains a vibrant site. It now has 2 year 8, and 1 each of year 9, 10, 11 and 12 Advisories. It is a strong demonstration of the BPE design at work. As the BPA grew the school appointed a BP Coordinator to support the work.

Warner College

Warner College is an independent (private) school that enrols students from pre-primary through to year 12. Throughout the life of the project Warner College had an ICSEA of about 1060 and a student population of over 1000. Warner College participated in the BPA Project from inception and introduced the initiative as an Academy for an opt-in class of year 9 students in 2014.

The Academy was introduced in response to the educational reflections, philosophies and passions of key senior leaders (the Principal and Deputy) who believed that an alternative school design would eventually replace traditional schooling. A School Leader (Deputy) undertook the foundation training the year before uptake in the College. Once engaged the Advisory Teacher along with other key people in the college also did the foundation program. A BP Coordinator was appointed. Like other schools involved in the BPA Project Warner College experienced a change in leadership (Principal) at the beginning of the academy's implementation.

> *I thought Big Picture was an opportunity for a well-resourced school like ours to take a [powerful] philosophy and… put the two together.* Deputy Principal

Despite initial enthusiasm for the BPA Project, a new college leadership team commenced an alternative school wide approach to curriculum and assessment and as such a hold was put on the expansion of the BPA. The year 9 Advisory was able to move through to do year 10. This Advisory group was a powerful example of the BPE design. Despite this initial success both the College and BPEA agreed to end the relationship given the size and impact of other school-wide reform initiatives in the College.

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[7] The national average ICSEA is 1000.

Malloy College

Malloy College is a Government suburban senior high school and for the duration of the project had over 1000 students. The school ICSEA was around 960. In 2012 the school principal expressed an interest in opening a BPA and in 2013 two teachers and one team leader undertook the Big Picture Foundation course. The Academy was absorbed into a pre-existing VET and Engagement unit within the school and the BPA commenced in 2014. The Coordinator of this unit was also the BPA coordinator. At the commencement of the BPA there was a change of leadership (Principal) and although a further three teachers attended the foundation training no School Leaders ever completed the BPEA Foundation Program.

> *I think we need to sit down with the new principal and clarify…the longevity of the project and what it looks like.* Associate Principal

The BPA commenced in 2013 with a mixed year 9/10 Advisory. This resulted in a small number of year 11s in the second year and meant that this cohort were absorbed into the wider unit rather than continuing as a separate Advisory as intended. By year 3 it was restructured again - this time as a re-engagement strategy for students alienated from mainstream schooling. The constant reboot of structures, practices and purposes resulted in the academy struggling to 'get to' the BPE design. In 2016 BPEA suggested to the school that the academy close down if the School Leadership wasn't willing to embrace the BPE design fully. There was mutual agreement to close the program.

1.2.2 The Two Small Schools

Malone College

Malone College is a small independent school with a focus on an alternative learning pedagogy. The Primary Campus of the school was established in the 1980's and the High School Program commenced in 2012 - with the support of key community partners including BPEA. Malone College is a small school with an ICSEA of around 1050. The school has established philosophies and values that had strong alignment with the BPE Distinguishers.

> *It just, it fitted what we were actually looking for and it gave me a tool to be able to promote the school, and take to parents, prospective parents about what the school is going to look like.* Principal

The year 7 to 12 group grew from 12 students in 2011 to 49 by 2016. Today it has about 90 students. It continues to be a school influenced by the BPE design.

Falconer College

Falconer College is an independent re-engagement school. The students who attend Falconer are referred to the college by high schools in the region. Typically, they are seeking to divert students who have behaviour management concerns (e.g. poor attendance, suspension or expulsion). Falconer College had the lowest average student attendance (66%) of all schools in the BPA project which reflects the complex lives of many students. Through this period, the school experienced ongoing staff instability in both leadership and teaching. It set up as a year 10 – 12 college with two advisories in each year group the target. By year 5 of its operation it had added two Year 9 advisories.

The school's in its 5th year, I'm its 6th Principal and effectively there was 6 months of somebody who was a Deputy somewhere but otherwise I'm the first (experienced) school educational leader. School Principal

BPEA and Falconer had already been working with each other during 2011 - prior to the start of the BPA project which provided an opportunity for extra support in the implementation process. The appointment of a new College leader made a significant difference to the uptake of both BPE and to student learning and wellbeing. Through 2015/16 the Principal explicitly wove the BPE design into the college's approach to learning. Although there was another change of Principal post the BPA Project the college continued to integrate BPE into their work. However there continued to be some tension between a traditional vocational education and training model as provided by the host organisation and the BPE approach to learning. When the college introduced other campuses with older students it was decided that their training courses would be the dominant focus. There was mutual agreement to cease the partnership.

1.3   The Research

In addition to our exploration of implementation of the BPE design in schools the research also explored a parallel question.

How does student engagement, learning and aspirations develop in a Big Picture Academy or school?

1.3.1   Research Approach

The research with the students was informed by a strong commitment to social justice by maximising the possibilities for young people from disadvantaged school communities.

To the extent possible, the research participants were seen as research partners with important knowledge, concerns and insight into not only the process of implementation of the BPE Academy but also the research process itself.

1.3.2 Student learning during the BPA Project[8]

In addressing the research question a parallel study was conducted to find out what students thought about learning in a BPE context. We also interviewed their parent(s) and their Advisory Teachers. This study found that students were either looking for an education experience that would allow them to pursue their interests or they felt they had been pushed out of mainstream schooling. Over the two years most students found their hopes and expectations for a different kind of education were being realised. They were successfully engaging in a more personalised approach to learning with the guidance and support of an Advisory Teacher[9] who knew them well. They were:

- Learning to relate differently to each other and to their Advisory Teacher;
- Much happier and had much stronger self-worth and self-efficacy;
- Developing independence;
- Learning to reflect on their learning and on others' learning; and
- Enjoying the opportunity to go deeper into their area of interest.

These outcomes were across all five schools. They were more robust in the schools that had strongest fidelity with the BPE design but importantly, there was evidence of them in all schools.

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[8] See copies of these at https://www.bigpicture.org.au/big-picture-academy-bpa-project-map4u-murdoch-university
[9] Each student is in a group called an Advisory and each Advisory has an Advisory Teacher.

1.3.3 Methodology

The research outlined in this report was a multi-sited case study of five schools involved in the implementation of BPE. The aim was to investigate how these schools engaged with and experienced processes of structural, cultural and pedagogical change over time and from the point of view of Advisory Teachers and School Leaders to identify those practices that enable and constrain school transformation. The research team intentionally adopted a qualitative approach based on the accounts of participants in order to generate rich descriptions of the daily practices and dynamics of school life.

Research questions

In pursuing the question - *How do schools effectively implement a Big Picture Academy or Big Picture Education orientation within an established mainstream school?* - the research team set out to answer the following sub questions:

- What helps or hinders the implementation of the BPE design in an academy and/or school?
- What practices support school transformation?
- How can sustainability be built into transformational processes?

We wanted to learn from the point of view of the participants what is involved in the processes of school transformation. We were interested in how participants understand, experience and respond to educational innovation and based on these experiences identify the kinds of conditions that need to be brought into existence to support schools, School Leaders, Advisory Teachers and coaches.

1.3.4 Data collection

To assist in this task, the research team gathered a range of data including:

Interview data

Researchers attended the five schools on three occasions for several days at a time. The research team interviewed[10] selected students; Advisory Teachers; School Leaders; Big Picture Coaches; and parents and mentors of the selected students. These occurred in three rounds of data collection over the two years:

- Term 1, 2014
- Term 4, 2014; and
- Term 3, 2015

Field Observations

Researchers were also able to observe and document the daily activities of the BPA within the school or the school itself and also the workshop settings. When required these were followed up with Advisory Teachers and students for clarification, further evidence and confirmation.

Research Circle[11]

When schools implement the BPE design leaders and teachers are constantly making decisions, taking-action and learning from them. However, this learning is often left unsaid and undocumented. The Research Circle (RC) adopted an action research model to explore the learning of staff. Through the RC participants were able to describe their practice and their learning, to share and to give and get feedback from the group. Essentially the same group of teachers and leaders met on a regular basis over time.

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[10] See Appendix Three: Interview Questions
[11] See Appendix Four: The Research Circle

There were a series of two-day workshops that commenced in term 3 in 2014. They ran each term until the final workshop towards the end of 2015. It culminated in the group contributing to a presentation to the Australian Association for Educational Research (AARE) Pre-Conference One Day Workshop in December 2015 at Notre Dame University called *'Starting new schools, supporting school change, and influencing the education conversation'.*

1.3.5 Data analysis

Data analysis involved a process of emergent thematic analysis based on the interviews, field observations and the RC. As we read through the interview transcripts, field notes and reflections produced by RC participants we searched for patterns and commonalities as well as differences in experiences. This process of sifting and sorting of data lead to a series of five dominant themes around which this report is organised (e.g., Theme 1 Engaging with BPE and BPEA). Within each of these dominant themes we drilled down a little further to identify a series of sub themes to help us explain what was happening in more detail (e.g., 2.1 Recognising that school isn't working for many students)

Layered over this process of emergent thematic analysis we also examined the data through the lens of three different frameworks[12]: (i) school change; (ii) student learning; and (iii) stages of school development. This process enabled us to identify both internal and external factors that either helped and/or hindered the process of school transformation. We were interested in finding out what leaders and teachers tried, their experience of it and the kinds of conditions that support and enhance the implementation of the BPE design.

1.4 This report is organised around five themes

This report is organised around five themes. The first three themes relate to three phases of school transformation:

Theme 1:   Engaging

This is the phase where the School Leaders find out about the BPE design, begin to explore the ideas, start to engage with the ideas and connect with BPEA as an organisation and network. This phase ends as the school commits to implementing the BPE design over a multi-year period appropriate to the size and complexity of the context.

Theme 2:   Getting Started

Once committed to implementing the BPE design the school staff begin to make key decisions and concrete plans. Information is made available, students are enrolled and teacher planning starts. This period of involvement ends as the first school term with students begins.

Theme 3:   Implementing

This period starts as the first group of students begin. This phase will last at least until the first group of students graduate and only then as long as staff, students and the school community are able to describe the what, the how and the why.

The remaining two themes examine the factors that hinder and help:

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[12] See Appendix Five: Frameworks for Analysis of the Case Studies

Theme 4:   Navigating the Push/Pull Forces

These are issues that all of the project schools faced – in one way or another. These 'push/pull' forces represent any resistance to change or desire to return to 'how things were' or to fit the system as it works already. The 'push/pull back' can be from within the school and/or external to the school. It can be personal and exist within each and every person. 'Push/pull back' can be unconscious and/or unintended and/or deliberate.

Theme 5:   Using External Support

Finally, we look at what all schools found to be crucial, important and/or useful in terms of the external support they received from BPEA and the BPA Project activities.

Section 2: Engaging

This is the phase where the School Leaders find out about the BPE design, begin to explore the ideas, start to engage with the ideas and connect with BPEA as an organisation and network. This phase ends as the school commits to implementing the BPE design over a multi-year period appropriate to the size and complexity of the context.

Extensive engagement with the BPE design is a key early action to successful transformative implementation of the design framework. If schools comprehensively explore the design and connect it to their specific contexts, they are more likely to start well, maintain development over time, deal with adversity and to continue to evolve and mature.

2.1 Recognising that school isn't working for many students

School leaders in all of the research schools acknowledged that traditional schooling approaches were not working well and for some of their students were not working at all.

> *Our schooling system is outdated…and it runs on paradigms that really should have changed years ago…It's [BPE design]…a conduit to change. It's about seeing best practice teaching and using that as a tool to encourage other people to re-engage because at the end of the day if we don't improve what's happening in the classroom we're not going to improve the outcomes for our kids.* Principal

> *I've had a feeling for quite a while that schools aren't really doing what schools should be doing. They're not helping students learn. They're indoctrinating them into set boxes and students aren't naturally learning so for me it was really exciting to get involved.* School Leader

2.2 Clarifying a vision for student learning

School leaders who harboured a deep desire for change saw that the BPE design mirrored their educational reflections, philosophies and passions about student learning. They believed that the BPE design provided a vehicle for school wide change practices. Further, some believed that the design afforded opportunities to improve practice beyond an academy and into wider school networks.

> *…[BPE design] just connected on so many different levels we [Principal and Deputy] were keen to look at the opportunity to get it into the school…hopefully perhaps piggyback and build on some of those principles into the school as a whole.* School Leader

> *It is contagious … when I spoke to [the principal] I said "I really think this could be a real driver in the school of change." We have an interesting school make up in the sense that we have to almost permeate change.* School Leader

2.3 Staying connected and aware

The search for an alternative to ineffective school paradigms or in the case of one school, looking for something that matched their own alternative philosophy, led to three of the school Principals being aware of – and staying connected to - BPE some years prior to this project. Their interest in being involved had been simmering for some time.

> *So a number of years back…I became something like an associate member of Big Picture and watch this space… we were curious…Eventually, it must have been 2012 I said that I would like to investigate this a little further.* School Leader

We looked a little bit more into what Big Picture was and realised that it was going to fit our needs to establish the school. Principal

2.4   Exploring the design and assessing readiness

Exploration is a key component of engagement. Firstly, to learn as much as possible about the BPE design. Secondly, as it provides schools with an opportunity to assess both their own readiness for change and whether the design complements their school context.

During this phase School Leaders found out as much as possible about the design by attending BPEA workshops; seminars; and conferences. They participated in visits to BPE schools/academies. Equally important, they read the literature. Finding out as much as possible about the design and talking about how it might be implemented in their school helped leaders to proactively prepare for implementation.

> *I had heard a lot about [BPE] in the past and I went along to a meeting with [members of the research team] …and found out a little bit more…and did some online research around it as well…went to the induction days; visited Hobart, Launceston and Newcastle and worked with a team of teachers…who were quite passionate as well about doing things a bit differently…* School Leader

> *…some of the management group who'd already been the previous year…to Tasmania to have a look at some Big Picture Schools…So quite a few of the management spoke about "this is a great opportunity, it would be good for our school to have this".* School Leader

> *I just, it fitted what we were actually looking for and it gave me a tool to promote the school and talk to parents…it really legitimised what we were trying to do otherwise it would have just been an airy-fairy concept.* Principal

2.5   Feeling supported

It is important to note here too that School Leaders thought that participating in the BPA Project would provide them with the necessary support through the process of implementation and change. BPEA and the BPA Project provided a safety net of support, professional learning, resources and a network of like-minded educators.

> *…if you're going to have conversations… you need to know what it is you're talking about and build those skills up and you need to have some guiding documents…the really smart thing we did from the get-go is all go over for a week over (for the Foundation Program)…in the sense that it gave us a week to really think about what we were going to do and how it was going to start up properly. And so those girls started that academy the right way. And so I think that's really important.* School Leader

2.6   Restricting views at the start limits implementation

At one school the BPE design was viewed as suitable for an add-on (or yet another alternative 'program') within existing mainstream structures. While another school believed it was adding value to what they did already. They kept what they already did 'in place' and then tried to 'add in' elements of the BPE design.

And/or their motivation was as a reactive response to behaviour management concerns.

> *The selection process was similar to what we used for our other programs…we have a stigma in this area anyway…it is still equated with not as good. We often get lots of the challenging kids, the kids that have built up a bad reputation in mainstream…and that's not just coming from kids it's coming from staff as well. So, they have to fight even harder with the Big Picture stuff because we've got to break that barrier down as well, so it's not ideal.* School Leader

Consequently, there was little time to reflect on current practices, consider school context or adequately explore the design.

> *I haven't engaged with it as much as I would have liked…with Big Picture.* Principal

> *We're all still trying to get our heads around what that means, how that works.* School Leader

> *In hindsight it all looks so obvious – why didn't we have a plan? Why didn't we do this?* Advisory Teacher

2.7   Conclusion

Schools that spent a long time exploring, that is, taking time to learn or understand the design; aligning school context and philosophy to the design; and using the design to develop processes, resources and staffing for implementation had a smoother transition when they implemented the design. The three schools in this study that did this - did better with more fidelity to the design - both at the start and over the first three years and beyond.

2.8   Recommendations for Engaging

The following recommendations are crucial stages of engagement prior to the introduction of a transformational design of schooling.

1. Review current school practices, rethink and then reimagine schooling and learning.

2. Understand, and be able to explain your reasons for change.

3. Fully explore the design – find out as much as possible by researching; attending workshops, conferences and professional learning; and make visits to schools where the design is already in place.

4. Recognise that with a design, context will – and must - influence its look and feel.

5. Understand – even as you start – that the implementation of transformational designs is a 'long haul' process. It takes up to five years for an academy – and longer for a school – to confidently be able to claim that the design is 'integrated into everything we do, say and how we act.'

Once committed to implementing the BPE design the school staff begin to make key decisions and concrete plans. Information is made available, students are enrolled and teacher planning starts. This period of involvement ends as the first school term with students begins.

We speak about change; we read about change; and we introduce strategies to 'improve' schools regularly. However, improvement often implies a tweak to existing structures, practices and/or culture. A new priority, an additional strategy, a new approach to an aspect of the curriculum, or the implementation of a school wide set of teaching skills, behaviour management strategies and so on.

Implementing the BPE design is a change to practice, culture and structures. This is hard work where the changes are on all things and all fronts. This sort of transformation includes the notion of improvement – especially as schools get along the road towards integration - but it also assumes that School Leaders and teachers mature and expand to become more effective at generating new ways of working and developing new outcomes that are evident and open for all to see.

> *Change is a journey, not a blueprint (Change is non-linear, dynamic and loaded with uncertainty and excitement, and sometimes perverse).'*[13] (Fullan,1993, p. 21)

The schools that viewed the BPE design as transformative were fully committed to using *all of the design, all of the time, all of the way through*. They were determined to go deep and prior to implementation had factored in issues such as sustainability, shared leadership, and the need for the development of a cohesive and contextualised implementation plan. The following factors[14] were evident in such schools.

3.1   Selecting staff and getting it right

Selecting key staff into leadership roles to design and implement BPE and the right staff to work as Advisory Teachers was a strategy that supported the successful implementation and sustainability of the design. There was a synergy between school leaders and teachers who wanted to work in the BP way.

> *At the get go, so initially, we put out a bit of information about Big Picture and asked for staff expression of interest. No sorry I'll take that back we selected the staff that we wanted to be part of the program and offered them the opportunity because you can't run this with any kind of teacher so we shortlisted all of our connected – the best teachers basically that we thought might be interested.* School Leader

3.2   Training in BPE design principles and practices

Schools who successfully implemented the design identified the 5-day BPEA Foundation Course as pivotal and had staff complete the course prior to starting their work as an Advisory Teacher.

> *I would have still done my best anyway, but I don't think I was prepared until I'd done the training course…I was sold on it from that five-day training course when you learn enough about it.* Advisory Teacher

These same schools continued to train their BPE staff – and other staff – with BPE workshops, a range of school visits, and by working in teams.

> *So did some work around it; went to the induction days; visited Hobart, Launceston and Newcastle and worked with a team of teachers…who were quite passionate as well about doing things a bit differently and we came up with our model.* School Leader/Advisory Teacher.

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[13] Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces: Probing the depth of educational reform.* London: The Falmer Press.

[14] These factors didn't necessarily occur in the order outlined here. Some overlapped during this 'getting started' period.

3.3   Planning for transformation

The intention to go deep and to use all of the design, all of the time and all of the way through was considered a key factor for success. Successful implementation relies on all of the people connected to the Academy or small school being involved in the planning and development of a context specific implementation strategy. The planning was for the immediate work just ahead (in the classroom) and for down the track over time (to deal with system requirements).

> *Everyone else was at home buying Christmas presents and we were still in Newcastle but that was great for just getting our heads around what was required…we sort of had all that in sync, so we got that all done.* Advisory Teacher

> *…the really smart thing we did from the get-go is all go over for a week with Viv before we began…it's quite an emotional week…powerful in the sense that it gave us a week to really think about what we were going to do and how it was going to start up properly.* School Leader

> *I'd looked at the matrix – [our] Big Picture matrix with the five different Learning Goals and thought that's well and good but there still needs to be some accountability with the Australian Curriculum…to align it in a general sense… so that's the matrix that has worked well for us.* Principal

> *I keep coming back to one student at a time in a community of learners. That's been the main sort of tag I've stuck to…it's actually more the Australian Curriculum's intent than teachers currently apply in the Australian Curriculum. I think teachers are applying it from a content perspective…it's about where the students are going and where they've come from. I think they're going to do a lot more.* School Leader/Advisory Teacher

3.4   Naming and explaining deeper purpose

The implementation of the BPE design seems to be easier when School Leaders proactively introduce the initiative as a transformative change practice rather than as a reactive tweak or improvement to pre-existing initiatives or problems. These schools understood the nature of the journey ahead and their exploration of the design led them to contextualise the design for their schools prior to implementation.

> *…I guess the next bit was to bring the staff on the journey with me…I didn't want this to be about me I wanted it to come from underneath.* School Leader

> *I knew what I wanted the school to be like and Big Picture was there…it actually blends really nicely together.* Principal

In these same schools change wasn't happening just to a select group but rather it was being driven by leaders and Advisory Teachers who were passionate about Big Picture. These people became influential in driving school wide change practice.

> *It [Big Picture] fits in with my pedagogical philosophies; ties in a lot with my understanding of psychology…I've had a feeling for quite a while that schools aren't really doing what schools should be doing…so for me it was really exciting to get involved.* School Leader/Advisory Teacher

3.5   Using the whole school as a resource

The development of an implementation plan by the schools starting an academy included considering the whole school as a resource. Structural, personal and physical supports were identified and incorporated into the plans for implementation. For example: students being able to go to subject areas on the whole school grid to pursue passions/interests (e.g. Human Biology), students being able to identify areas of the school

where they might pursue their project work (e.g. Art), teachers across the school who might take a mentor role for a student senior project, engaging the VET co-ordinator to support internship placement etc.

> *I also know that if I need time out to do something that I've got a whole group of people around me that can pick up and do things.* School Leader/Advisory Teacher

> *Having the career advisor being so involved in this program…when it comes to organising them [internships] for the students to do we'll be helping them.* School Leader/Advisory Teacher

3.6   Recruiting and enrolling students

Several schools recruited students via well prepared information evenings and materials, an invitation to apply, an application process, an interview and finally, a family meeting. However, others selected students based on disengagement or poor academic performance.

> *We were very cognisant to have a cross-section of students that represented the population. Many people were involved in the selection process.* School Leader

> *We then went out to students to let them know that we were doing this project and we got a lot of interest.* Advisory Teacher

> *Bringing them in [families] and doing a long interview with each of them was how we ended up doing that, so people apply, we gave lots of information prior to that, they decided they wanted to come and explore it further, lots of discussions and talks, and then finally some interviews…we had double the amount of applicants as available positions.* Advisory Teacher

> *…it gave me a tool to be able to promote the school, and take to parents, perspective parents about what the school is going to look like.* Principal

Where schools adopted a more comprehensive and thoughtful recruitment process, there is evidence of greater success with implementation.

3.7   Choosing physical space

Effective implementation planning incorporated a deliberate consideration of the needs of the Advisory Teacher and students in their physical space. On the one hand, the location of the academy within the larger school.

> *I had to be very strategic because we're in the middle of a building program… and I needed a space where I could allow a little bit more flex where sometimes [Advisory Teacher] is there with both advisories, do you know what I mean? To give us that flex to be able to manage it with a minimal cost to the school. So …through a lot of strategic planning we managed to get the media room for the Big Picture room.* School Leader

On the other hand, Advisory rooms need to be fit for purpose. They need to be places where the students and the Advisory Teacher like to come to work and learn. They need to be places where learning is encouraged and supported. So Advisory Teachers thought about things like:

- a place for the Advisory to meet,
- personal spaces for students to work,
- comfortable furnishing,
- a dedicated reading area,

- places for art and artefacts,
- a place to sit and tinker, plants,
- places for student work to be displayed, calendars, timetables and posters, storage and so on.

Where Advisory Teachers gave these different dimensions thought, including discussion with their Advisory, the room was just a better place to live and learn.

> *If you're going to live and work in a space, it's like your own office isn't it? You've got to set it up for you, and shouldn't that be the same for the kids… I would hang on to that, and I would go as far as the kids ordering the furniture for the next phase, yeah.* School Leader

3.8   Conditions that hinder

Where we look at schools that were less successful in implementing school change the above conditions were in the main absent for a variety of internal and external reasons. Staff at two of the schools expressed regret that they did not spend enough time developing the processes and structures required for a successful transition into the BPA. This included not having taken the time to reflect on current practices to fully explore the design, to consider the way the design was best suited for the school's context, or to develop an implementation plan as opposed to an implementation timeline. Consequently, Advisory Teachers were learning on the run.

> *The piece I haven't yet done is to say okay if Big Picture is fully implemented what does this look like, feel like, sound like or whatever…That sort of work that Eric's [school coach] actually been pushing us to that I haven't a lot of time – just lack of time.* Principal

> *Week one of term one I was learning what Big Picture was as well…reading the resources on Big Picture has definitely helped me gain more information and knowledge as well.* Advisory Teacher

> *We haven't had the time to sit down and process and plan in the way that we needed to, because our timetables don't allow it.* Advisory Teacher

3.9   Conclusion

There is much to do in this period of 'getting started' – selecting and training staff, enrolling students, selecting and setting up learning spaces, and then planning for transformation. Schools need to develop a long-term (5 year) implementation plan that uses the BPE design to plot out the curriculum, pedagogy, resources, staffing, culture and physical space. And then they need to prepare for year one, term one, week one and day one. Getting a good start is crucial.

Schools that approach the planning work with a clean slate create what they want and then integrate the things that they value locally back into the design do better than schools that try to leave 'what they do now' in place and then try to insert the BPE design into the gaps. Effective implementation requires that schools have an intention to go deep and use all of the design, all of the time, all of the way through. We explore more on this in the next section. But the intention comes first.

3.10   Recommendations for Getting Started

The following recommendations should be undertaken prior to or simultaneously with students commencing learning within the transformational design.

1. Schools introducing a transformational design, like BPE, should plan with the intent to use all of the design, all of the time and all of the way through.

2. The BPEA Foundation Program should be undertaken by all School Leaders, Advisory Teachers and support staff, concurrently with, developing an implementation plan and before implementation starts.

3. The school creates a collaborative and well thought out implementation plan that outlines the steps to be taken to progress towards integration of the transformational BPE design.

    i.   The plan should include a realistic timeline for the work, demonstrate an understanding of what is changing around culture, structure and pedagogical practice.

    ii. The plan should describe the roles and responsibilities of School Leaders, Advisory Teachers and support staff.

4. Staff should be asked to apply for key positions based on the realisation of the implementation plan and accurate descriptions of the work.

5. An enrolment process for students needs to include an interview with the family, the Advisory Teacher and the student.

Section 4: Implementing

Implementation begins as the first group of students commence in the inaugural Advisory classes. We have a view that this phase continues until this first group of students graduate. It is a period in which staff, students and the school community are striving to describe what they do, how they do it and why. At the commencement of the research the schools were at different stages of implementation. The research project reviewed two years of the participating schools' implementation.

4.1   Encouraging fidelity to the design

The schools that successfully implement the BPE design - with the most fidelity - were focused, enthusiastic and determined to maintain a persistent approach to implementing all of the BPE design distinguishers, all of the time and all of the way through. They continued to stay connected to the vision and demonstrated a willingness to implement the design as fully as possible.

We see evidence of this commitment in multiple ways, like:

- The school/academy was open to any and all interested students;
- Students were enrolled with the family and in conversation with the new Advisory Teacher too;
- Students worked in an Advisory with the one Advisory Teacher for a considerable chunk of each week;
- Students were expected to find and follow their interests;
- They were taught about, and used key pedagogical tools/strategies such as: Learning Plans; Learning Goals; Shadow Days; Internships based on interests; Internship Projects; Personal Narratives; and Exhibitions each term as well as independent work time through the week and collaboration and support with their peers; and
- Advisory Teachers worked with unconditional kind regard with all students, they sought for students to know they mattered, they worked hard to notice student interests and capabilities and to connect students to these interests, and to enable students to fit and really matter.

And as a school/academy it also involved:

- Leaders and Advisory Teachers working to build a culture of trust, respect and care;
- Encouraging family involvement in each event along the way;
- The support of the Advisory Teachers in their own learning community;
- The invitation for other teachers in the school (for an academy) to visit, participate and contribute; and
- Partnerships with the community to help engage students in what they needed at that moment.

…it is contagious…I really think this could be a driver for school change…To do it in a small way is fine but then to try and embed that is the harder thing…to build a viable model I think is really important in terms of what it can do…Starting and then doing a little bit here and a little bit there is nowhere near as powerful as having it all done beforehand. School Leader

4.2   Understanding BPE as a design

Seeking to implement BPE with fidelity requires an appreciation that it is a design and not just a recipe or 'quick fix'. No school is exactly the same as another. No two schools have precisely the same reasons why they engage with the BPE design in the first place. No two students live exactly the same lives as each other. No two communities are precisely alike. So not only does the context influence the design - it is expected to influence the design. Key to implementing the design well is having it and the context work together in new and interesting ways. Schools that understood this did much more work in the getting started phase. Trying to plan and integrate their work in a wholistic way. This said, the same staff understood that challenges and issues would still arise and when they did occur they turned to the BPE design to think and plan their way through. They pushed on rather than pulling back or out.

> …the benefit of Big Picture is that it is adaptable, and it is a design and it's not an invention – a product you must apply. It is more a set of principles that you adapt… Advisory Teacher

Implementation that results in more successful and sustainable processes and outcomes requires Academies and schools to develop a conversational and reflective approach to building the culture, structures and practices required to support the design over time. In this way the schools use the design to answer questions, address concerns and review practice and thus pre-emptively address issues.

> We've put a lot of energy and a lot of resources into developing…the Big Picture Academy. We have to continually train up other people because if we put all our eggs in one basket of having two teachers teaching the Big Picture forever then we don't get a transferability of skills …if we want to make this a sustainable process and we want to bring more kids and more teachers under the umbrella of Big Picture then the teachers who are teaching now who own the knowledge of Big Picture…have to get out and share it more effectively. Principal

Some of the schools used the design to resolve issues as they arose.

> I just keep coming back to one student at a time in a community of learners. That's been the main sort of tag that I've stuck too…there's an open invite to all staff members to just drop in at any time…they're getting to learn more and more about it…staff are coming around...so the initial challenges have dissipated a little bit. School Leader/Advisory Teacher

4.3   Creating a staff Advisory

Schools that deliberately introduced an 'Advisory for Advisors' – a collegial space for the staff involved to come together, work together and to review practice – did better and got closer to fidelity to the design.

> …one of the things that I took back [from the Foundation course] was that my role was to basically run an Advisory for my Advisory Teachers so every week I would meet with them. I'd often take them…to learn away offsite…[to] find out what were the burning issues for them, what were the things that they were concerned about or worried about. School Leader

These Advisory learning communities set in motion a pattern of reflection that mirrored the BPE design and set up a pattern of action/reflection/planning/action. Staff in these schools set out to review, adapt and modify their practice. The design was used to understand, monitor, assess and review progress in light of experience.

I think the biggest thing is – and it's the trickiest part – is time and space for conversations with the adults so that they are taken along further, that shortcuts aren't made, so that we don't just make assumptions that we're all approaching something from the same perspective but with enough scope for individuality and initiative. Advisory Teacher

Relationships are at the heart of BPE and these schools saw it as important that the teachers and leaders could meet together in an environment with a high level of trust, respect and care. It gave teachers breathing space and immersed them in the design in the same way that they asked of their students. This seemed to create momentum for their implementation work.

I think that was a really important thing to talk them through their worries and their concerns…to support them at point of need in terms of what was burning and where they required support. I think if anyone's doing a change of alignment in their thinking to have someone just backstopping them is a really important thing to…[prevent] self-doubt. School Leader

This 'Advisory for Advisors' became a place to share concerns; provide support; celebrate successes; to build coherence; de/re/construct best practice and; to collaboratively work through any design issues.

…worked with a team of teachers…who were quite passionate about doing things a bit differently…I also know that if I need time out to do something that I've got a whole group of people around me that can pick up and do things. Advisory Teacher

4.4 Ongoing involvement of passionate School Leaders

When all is said and done, the biggest driver for sustained school change is passionate and supportive high-level leaders who stay closely connected and involved in the work.

I certainly want to see Big Picture grow, not only within the school but within the state so I want more people to see the value of it for our kids, for our future in terms of getting more people actually working areas that they're passionate and interested in. School Leader

Yeah, [School Leader] is our support from management, she's brilliant. As far as the documentation goes for, you know, your Internships and Curriculum planning and stuff, it's been great. [Principal] is very supportive as well, our Principal, which has been lovely. [The School Leader] is always looking for new Professional Development opportunities for us to go to. Advisory Teacher

These leaders have a collaborative, reflective approach and this is demonstrated through moral, practical and educative support for the implementation of the BPEA design.

Without top down support…all of this falls to pieces completely because when professionals say we need something… we don't ask for things without thinking it through and if we say we need some time to plan then we really mean it… Without the support from up there, it doesn't happen. Advisory Teacher

Further, they consciously build shared leadership and proactively bring others on board.

Well I always sort of have a philosophy that you water the roses and not the rocks. So you identify the staff who are already playing around with project based learning but would need some mentoring and some guidance. However, they might develop that a bit further and [refocus] a curriculum-centric organisation to a teaching centred organisation. Identifying those people who we believe fit the bill and what you end up doing is taking those good people out of the classroom to be the mentor for those that are in the classroom. Principal

4.5   Using the design to influence whole of school change

Schools with a successful BPA use it to demonstrate school wide change. They set out to build understanding of the BPE design in the wider school and community. These schools send other staff to workshops, school visits, foundation programs and so on. Invitations are extended to visit the academy and attend exhibitions.

> …it goes back to how we promote and sell Big Picture to the community and to the board so they have an active role in seeing what's going on in those classrooms and we did that when Big Picture first came on the scene for us. We traipsed the board members through the Big Picture room…to look at the exhibitions that the kids were doing so we did all our PR work…we encouraged community members, we promoted to primary schools to anyone who wanted to listen. Principal

> …see Big Picture not only as a self-contained academy but also as a bit of a role model in terms of how to engage and best practice in schooling. School Leader

> ….how do we find ways of growing everyone else's capacity and getting them to come not necessarily fully on board… and most educators would resonate…you know good educators that are here for the right reasons which is about the kids will see and take something from it. School Leader

> We consciously wanted to introduce the rest of the staff to what Big Picture was all about. So we did some presentations at staff development days…to introduce them to this is what Big Picture looks like. School Leader

Sustainability was at the forefront; subject specialist teachers were expected to support students with their independent learning projects. BPE design ideas naturally filtered into the mainstream. They set out to both promote the pedagogical practices of the academy and educate others about this work.

> We invite the doubters in. The ones who've come in and seen or been linked with one of our students like you know, … he helps her – he's the Head of Science… and they've made some kind of connection… I say if there is a teacher you had from mainstream last year that you really want to come…invite them to an exhibition. Advisory Teacher

> it is contagious … when I spoke to [the principal] I said "I really think this could be a real driver in the school of change." We have an interesting school make up in the sense that we have to almost permeate change through… School Leader

They chose to celebrate successes with the wider school community and galvanised wider support.

> …we had a very much an open environment to encourage teachers to go into the classrooms and observe what was happening. To have a look at the concepts of Big Picture and particularly get involved in exhibitions and some staff were really keen to support the kids in terms of their internship and helping them with their projects. Principal

Further, they sought to implement elements of the BPE design into the wider school.

> [Introducing] Some blended learning opportunities. So teacher having them [students] for more time and flexing that project based learning around interests those sorts of things which to me is a perfect fit…some Big Picture flow throughs…Big Picture could work for the low ability kid as well. School Leader

> So to try and see big Picture not only as a self-contained academy but also as a bit of a role model in terms of how to engage and best practice in schooling. School Leader

4.6 Changing Principals

In the life of this project there were changes to the Principal in four of the five schools. The effect of changing principals is more nuanced than one might assume.

In one school the Principal took up the job just as the BPA started its implementation phase. The academy was just a small part of a large school and understandably this did not become the number one priority for a new School Leader of a complex school.

In another school the Principal changed towards the end of the first year of implementation of the Academy. Fortunately, the new Principal had been central to the implementation of the BPA in their previous role in the same school. She was involved in the initial engagement with BPEA as well as the 'getting started' phase. As a consequence, the BPA remained a strong focus for the new Principal.

One school had already started implementing the BPE design across the whole school prior to joining the project. Due to the complexities surrounding the establishment of the school's start up - especially the complex nature of the student cohort – implementation of the BPE design was put on the 'backburner'. Nonetheless, some staff continued with the BPE design in their classrooms, although this was not strongly supported by the School Leadership. The School Leadership focus was on management, creating a calm and considered approach and getting students to participate in the set curriculum. After the first year of this project a new Principal was appointed. This person was committed to BPE, an experienced educator and Principal. This change of Principal saw the implementation of the BPE design develop strength and some momentum moving from 'an afterthought', 'fitting it in' and considerable 'confusion' to 'weaving it into the practice, culture and structures' of the school.

A fourth school – with an academy – also had a change of Principal just prior to the implementation phase of the academy. He was enthusiastic in his support of 21st Century learning and initially – albeit with a superficial understanding – saw the BPE design as an example of it. However, it soon became apparent that he was attempting to introduce a new external curriculum to the college. The school's new strategic priorities, resourcing and design overwhelmed the small start-up BPA. Changes to staffing, structures, and curriculum were quickly introduced. While the single Advisory group continued to flourish the school did not support the introduction of a new Advisory in its second year. By the end of the second year it was agreed to remove the BPE design from the school once those students had graduated from year 10.

Summing up, it can be seen from these different experiences and contexts that changing Principals makes a difference. We have noted the crucial role School Leaders play by their direct involvement in the BPE work. But we don't know until the person is in situ what impact they will have. Albeit making the work part of the selection process helps. Choosing school principals empathetic to the BPE design helps. Choosing someone who has a 'bigger picture' view of education is crucial to successful implementation. Choosing someone who is relationally strong and engaged also helps. As does a deep understanding of school change and teachers' learning.

As we can see from the above scenarios, when School Leadership changes it can sometimes be positive but in other contexts it led to a loss of focus and/or support for the BPE design. This can be dependent on the inclinations and priorities of the new incumbent.

4.7   The number of advisories in an academy in a large school

We think that that the numbers of advisories in an academy in a large school is an important variable when considering the sustainability of the academy over the long haul.

The strongest in terms of sustainability had four advisories[15]. It set out to build to at least three. It moved to a fourth when the waiting list of students wanting to do BPE grew. It became a significant group of students and staff in the school – a small faculty.

The school with just one Advisory was too small in the event that the Principal decided to bring in school wide curriculum and assessment change. This despite the work within that Advisory being a great example of the BPE design at work. The conversation about the future of the academy might have been different if it had more people involved. The reasons for its existence remained the same. It just felt too hard to have the conversations.

The third academy school started with one Advisory and stayed at one the second year although it was a different group. When it did expand the academy by then had a new purpose within the school – to work with strongly disengaged students. The ongoing changes to advisories, teaching staff along with small number of advisories led to it closing (as BPE).

[15] It now has 6 advisories

4.8 Conclusion

We concluded the getting started section with the advice to approach planning with the idea of implementing 'all of the design, all the time and all of the way through'. Having explored what happens in schools in the first few years of implementation this advice becomes the key advice for this phase of the work too. Keep the BPE design at front of mind – use it to review, use it to plan, and use it to inform action.

The BPE design is about how school's conduct their work not just what goes on in a classroom. Our research suggests that the Advisory Teachers and Leaders need to establish a learning community – an Advisory - for themselves. This group should meet regularly, use the BPE design to inform how they meet and what they talk about, and have a focus on student work and student learning.

In a large school an Academy needs to be 'big enough' to create a learning community for the staff, a support network for the students and a resource base to support the work.

Significant resources (internal and external) need to be applied to the work to maximise the chances of successful implementation. Advisory Teachers and School Leaders should be allocated time to develop the strategies; protocols; curriculum; and guidelines that support the BPE design and better attend to systems pressures and other roadblocks that emerge along the way.

4.9   Recommendations for Implementing

The following recommendations are key during implementation as they support schools to maintain fidelity – all of the design, all of the time and all of the way through.

1. The design distinguishers are evident in the planning for and implementation of the BPE.
2. The key elements of the design are able to be described and explained at any point by students, teachers and leaders.
3. Review implementation progress over time using the distinguishers, implementation plan and key elements to assess the extent and quality to which the design is in place.
    i. Leaders, teachers and support staff establish a learning community and use the design to plan for and resolve issues and problems as they arise.
    ii. This group meets regularly and uses the design to inform how they meet and what they talk about; and has a focus on student work and student learning.
4. Continue to train and develop interested staff ahead of future staffing needs.
5. Across the school there should always be unconditional kind regard and generosity of spirit towards everyone – difference is valued.
6. The design should be used to influence the wider education community.

Section 5: Navigating the Push/Pull Forces

No matter how well led, how committed the team, how well an academy team/school staff functions, how good the Advisory Teachers are and how well the students are engaging and learning things happen that get in the way. They either push or pull the academy/school away from the innovation and back to the familiar. What Tyack & Cuban[16] refer to as the conventional 'grammar of schooling'. These forces can be external, internal and/or personal. We outline the forces that were apparent in this research.

Schools are complex, complicated contexts. We need to acknowledge that when schools are looking to substantially change the culture, practices and structures they are likely to struggle to cope with the myriad of systems pressures and demands. It is easy to judge the fumbles, hesitancy, timidity, or messiness as a negative or deficit thing- as lack of skill, as inadequate, or as failure. It is easy for the outsider to think that they would know what to do. Solutions are not always obvious, and problems are often difficult to resolve. Good management and strong leadership help but often aren't enough. The push and pull forces happen no matter what. Leaders of innovation need to know this and learn to work with them. Towards the end of this section we outline briefly what some schools did to manage these forces, diminish them and/or neutralise them, and sometimes 'win them over'.

5.1 External Issues

External systemic pressures impacted the implementation of the BPE design in all of the schools. Issues of concern for School Leaders and Advisory Teachers alike included curriculum alignment to regulatory frameworks; standardised testing; graduation requirements; post schooling options, systemic cost cutting to schools; and systems 'silence'.

5.1.1 Curriculum

School leaders from both government and non-government schools felt a tension between state mandated curriculum expectations and the BPE design. The BPE design and curriculum focuses on 'one student in a community of learners'. This places the emphasis on student learning via their passions and interest areas rather than on covering a mandated curriculum. These things are not mutually exclusive but do require some management.

> …what curriculum do we follow? For marking purposes…you have to have some sort of certification. We align the students with the courses of study, the national courses of study now. We believe that they are a lot more flexible to be able to continue with the Big Picture approach… School Leader

5.1.2 Graduation and standardised testing

Advisory Teachers and School Leaders were hypervigilant to the sensitivities that surrounded changes that were introduced to the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) and graduation, including the introduction of a mandatory Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (OLNA).

> I'm saying now well there's a new system and I'm actually not sure that Big Picture fits that new system, in fact I'm pretty sure it doesn't actually tick all the boxes for the new … graduation. Let's put you in this engaging program and build up your self-esteem in your child and help them develop great skills and lifelong learning skills, but actually they're not going to graduate. Principal

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[16] Tyack, D. & Cuban, L. (1995). *Tinkering towards utopia: A century of public school reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

5.1.3 Post schooling options

The project schools did not want to disadvantage their students. Staff struggled to come to terms with the ways in which their students could access post-schooling options such as university entry.

> *We don't use it as a carrot, it's not about that but it's about the next step, uni entry, they need to have something behind them.* School Leader

The fear of what might/might not happen can be overwhelming. The comments by School Leaders and teachers represent their thoughts, assumptions and feelings at the time of their interview. But they are not necessarily accurate in their claims about the BPE design and graduation (students can and did graduate) nor BPE and university entrance (students could and did get entry to university by Portfolio and by various other means already available to any student).

> *If they had status in an ATAR program – if they had not gone into Big Picture but gone into an ATAR program they would have got into university more than likely. Staying in Big Picture hasn't opened any more doors than would normally be available that I can see…not without a lot of work from the teachers and the school in trying to find out who's the right person to contact because when you put an application into university you put an application in with everyone else. So the concept of their portfolio entrance hasn't emerged and certainly the credit for the work that they do in Big Picture hasn't.* School Leader

> *I know that 'X and Y' keep saying you don't have to have the ATAR courses, you don't have to be offering those and so on, but you can't advertise it without that…* School Principal

5.1.4 Department of Education cost cutting

In 2013 there was a reduction in funding and support for government schools, cuts to staffing in 2014 followed by the introduction of a new funding model for Western Australian State Schools. This negatively impacted on government schools. As a consequence, the BPAs were also subject to financial constraints, particularly in the context of class sizes. The change in the context had an impact on the staff.

> *the resourcing situation was quite different [when the BP Academy was given the go ahead] to what it is right now and I can't imagine it getting any better, I can see it getting worse.* School Leader

> *I almost can't justify it under the new funding model that is going to be in place for next year…It's an expensive decision and we are not resourced for it in any way, shape or form.* Principal

> *And I don't know whether or not the Big Picture is able to be flexible but I think every state school that's running the project is going to be looking at the 16 [class sizes] and saying oh my God how are we going to manage that because it will be half of what we're funded for… and the days of having resources to play around with to support extra programs they're well over.* School Leader

> *Well because we're working on a one-line budget; we have not very much flexibility at all… you have competing needs like do we divest ourselves of some support in student services in order to budget this?* School Leader

5.1.5 Education Department or Host Organisation Silence

There was concern that the BPE design approach to learning and school would not be recognised nor acknowledged by the Department of Education. This feeling was not helped by the fact that the Department

of Education stayed silent about this work in the schools. While systemic silence allowed for the exploration of the design it was also experienced as a fear in some schools – staff were concerned that the BPE design would not be recognised or sanctioned as a legitimate pedagogical approach to student learning.

> *I think the other challenge will be defined curriculum versus the openness of Big Picture, it will be an issue. I mean that may sort itself out because if the Federal and State Government kind of don't sort out the Australian Curriculum maybe that will deal with some of it itself but that's going to be a conflict.* School Leader

Likewise, the organisations that led the non-government schools remained disconnected from the relationship between the school and BPEA. In retrospect this relationship to a School Board or the host organisation needs to be made concrete with commitment and support explicitly sought.

5.2 School Issues

However, the push/pull back was not just from the wider context of the 'system'. The school itself can exert these forces on an academy/school. A school is a contested space where change can be seen as threat, there is competition for available resources and people hold to their preferred ways of working thus seeing anything new as a challenge or threat to their professional standing.

5.2.1 The school

In one way or another all of the schools experienced push/pull back. The BPA schools dealt with some cynicism from the wider school community. Many teachers and leaders were unable to drop their mainstream expectations and were either not supportive and/or actively obstructive.

> *So I think that's a big challenge with being in a traditional school – an academy particularly when you've got a hybrid model such as we have.* Advisory Teacher

> *It's not that they don't care about what happens in Big Picture – it's just not their number 1 focus. So decisions are being made where [School Leaders] are going in to fight for what they need, but not one of them has come to me and go what do you need for Big Picture?* Advisory Teacher

> *I've already had – my head of middle school come and be concerned about that [kids not doing work in year level common assessments] …But we've always said, "This is about making an individual pathway for every student".* School Leader

This often led to the wider school community seeking to move away from the student centred BPE approach towards a more traditional didactic approach to curriculum delivery. In some cases, traditional mainstream structures were prioritised, required of the BPA students too and so the aspirations of the BPA were diminished.

> *The other aspect though is that we were required by the school to put in more traditional structures, so they were required to be in science and humanities.* Advisory Teacher

> *It has definitely evolved from what I intended it to have been at the beginning of the year and that's based on pragmatics – having certain requirements placed on midway such as having to do examinations; reporting differently has changed the way we've had to focus things.* Advisory Teacher

Even in the small schools implementing the BPE design across the whole school there was still pushback towards mainstream expectations by some teachers.

I think some of it might not actually be… teachable. I think it's philosophical… I think that you can theoretically agree with the idea of things being student led and student orientated and like small community schooling. Yeah, you can think you agree with that all in theory but then when it comes to the practice, if you as the adult, as the facilitator, if your own personal ego isn't that secure, then it's hard to let go of that – what's seen as control. Advisory Teacher

Both teachers I thought would really connect with it - with the program. But what they found as they've gone on is that their expectations of what the student should be doing - they keep falling back on their traditional methods. And so, it becomes very, very highly structured, they must finish this … these workshop sessions and if they don't it then becomes a behavioural issue, and they go down that line. Principal

Advisory Teachers and School Leaders responsible for the BPAs often felt compelled to defend the initiative from traditional mainstream educators, including members of senior management. They felt as though the wider school community would not differentiate the Academy from traditional mainstream schooling.

There is an executive member who is trying to close us down. He thinks we're double dipping and not friendly to the timetable…From a child centered point of view it's [the BPE design] great but my line manager says we don't have the results to show. He concedes we do well with reengaging, but he thinks it's not worth it. Advisory Teacher

Nevertheless, even schools that implemented with a view to using 'all of the design, all of the time and all of the way through', reflected the relationship between wider school community support and successful implementation.

I was in hindsight I was too careful of treading on peoples toes when I set it up on the timetable and a couple of people threw spanners in the works and instead of me standing firm and saying "No its going to be this way"… I should have stuck my heels I think in hindsight to – which would have given me more flex next year and would have given…some larger chunks of time. School Leader

5.2.2 Structure

Structural pressures such as timetables, internal restructuring, curriculum courses, discrete subjects, budgets and staffing impacted the implementation of the design in all of the schools.

Balancing the demands of the mainstream timetable and staffing requirements led to some BPA schools having a less than ideal implementation environment to support the design framework.

It's a shared Advisory… we haven't had time to sit down and process and plan in the way that we needed, because our timetables don't allow it… that's the major issue for us but I think it will be next year too because we're just so tight with staff, there's no sort of breathing space. Advisory Teacher

I was forced [by admin] to collapse a class and this was for the second year in a row. School Leader

Admin fill our timetable as to what contract signed. If our timetable is seen to have gaps they'll be filled with other classes [not allowing for learning plan interviews or internship visits]. Advisory Teacher

At times, structural pressures were acute in the small school contexts. There were fewer staff, it was difficult to access professional learning and in one school staff turnover was high.

There's two senior school groups and two middle school groups and I am an advisor to one of the senior school groups, but the other advisor only works one day a week, but she will take over my Advisory students when I go on leave… So yeah I have my Advisory but…it is also the case I guess that I am the only one who is fully trained…trying to best train up. Advisory Teacher

…and even though they're quite compatible I really haven't had a chance to reflect and go how can we go to integrate things better…I don't know, it would be, I don't know, ten percent? Advisory Teacher

Internal restructuring profoundly impacted the implementation of the BPA in a number of project schools.

I was the coordinator of Big Picture until the start of term 4 when the school restructured their leadership structures… and so a lot of the times Big Picture just sat floating because we don't belong to a department or a learning area…it subsumes under the Dean of year 10s…he's going to have everything else to do and Big Picture will just be one of his classes…I end up being the coordinator anyway. Advisory Teacher

They keep shifting things making it difficult for the Academy to develop…I was forced to collapse a class, and this was for the second year in a row…Putting the BPA students back into mainstream this has put a lot of pressure on them. It's been quite a negative experience for them…I have zero control as to what they look like [internships]. I have no confidence in Admin to make any changes in this area. Advisory Teacher

5.2.3   Change of leaders

As outlined previously in 4 schools, structural change was directly precipitated by a change of Principal[17]. In two schools the new principals began their tenures in the year that the Academies commenced. This resulted in a shift in priorities. Rather than integrating and embedding new practice the Academy staff found themselves trying to defend the design and space against being absorbed back into the mainstream school.

I think we've dropped the ball big time…that's where we've fallen short…some of the politics…change management shifted the priority.' School Leader

I think like probably our context has shifted this year because of having a new principal. We went from the previous who was very much about learning and student to…saying that things will change at the school…his first opening speech that he said to the staff within about 10 minutes why is Big Picture just for 17 students? It should be more…it's also saying that things are going to change. Advisory Teacher

I think politically at this school that's been the biggest challenge… staff were constantly invited to come in and talk but due to the culture of the school this year we are maybe not being as enthusiastic as such. They don't really take us up on that offer.' Advisory Teacher

In one of the schools exams were introduced, the timetable altered along more traditional lines and the role of Big Picture Coordinator rescinded. Ultimately, the program was dismantled and did not continue into 2016.

Many… think it's a bit of a disgrace because they like the Big Picture idea…there is a good number of them that are angry and annoyed that it's stopped because they were seeing these kids explore and learn. Advisory Teacher

It's really hard for me to answer that question because I actually came on board through the process. So, lots of things were already in trained and in place. I possibly wouldn't have set it up how it had been set up initially…I've been playing catch up from there to now… I think I would have tried to have developed earlier…the transference of that wonderful knowledge and philosophy and pedagogy and training that goes into teachers who take on board Big Picture into the wide-open school community much earlier…. So it is about circumstance. Principal

Perhaps I wouldn't have taken it on until there was all those circumstances in alignment. So that I could make the most benefit I think we haven't necessarily felt the entire benefits of the Big Picture program in the school…Future Links with ready and it was very pertinent to their group of students…but the rest of the school wasn't ready. Principal

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[17] See pages 24 - 25

But it's the fight or flight it's new, it's they don't understand fully what's involved and some teachers never will and so I think it's going to take time for us to build and grow that acceptance of what Big Picture is. School Leader

5.2.4   Resourcing

In all five schools the senior management team recognised that existing resourcing protocols would change if implementation of the BPE design was to be successful. Renegotiating finances, Advisory student/teacher ratio, classroom setup, and professional development became an ongoing debate in all schools. It appears that many of these conversations about resources were generated by opinion (about the way schools should operate) rather than any accurate cost-benefit analysis informed by evidence. Comments like those below were indicative of the discussions. None of the schools involved in this project generated a detailed analysis of the resources required to run the BPE design versus a traditional structure. It seems that many decisions about resourcing where made without deeper thought about the potential cost-benefit of the change, for example, the use of teacher time during 2 days per week of internships and significant periods of independent work time for students during the week.

As is the case with many change management initiatives, competing agendas and a desire to 'win over' sceptics often resulted in an erosion of the BPE design.

I guess I have serious concerns about resourcing… we've got some pretty considerable tensions about resourcing. School Leader

But it's really important that we get the other deputies understanding the intent… it's very resource intense compared to a mainstream program, and when we make decisions about resources it needs more than one person to be supportive of it. School Leader

Leaders and Advisory Teachers shared frustrations around finances.

One of the worst frustrations was dealing with the administration around finances, they hadn't ordered stuff and they were worried about the money and we were arguing over where the money was going to – all that sort nonsense that gets in the way. School Leader

But then there's times where I just don't have the resources to do that [what the children need] so it's compromised. Advisory Teacher

Tensions arose over the provision of adequate facilities, such as classrooms.

The bigger challenges of negotiating the use of the space because it's within the science building. We had to be moved to fit in with the other existing timetables. Advisory Teacher

Further, accessing finance from the administration proved difficult and teachers found themselves scrabbling for resources at implementation with one teacher going to IKEA and getting the classroom furniture himself.

Not facilitating the acquisition of necessary furniture at the beginning of the year – being difficult with money – Finance area not facilitating – forcing [Advisory Teacher] into going to IKEA and getting it himself.' Researcher

Often, the demands of the school timetable were prioritised over the needs of the BP Academy and the innovation itself.

I grapple often in terms of resourcing of how to actually have that sit side by side in what would be considered a mainstream senior high school, with all of the constraints that that brings and the changing nature of those constraints…I grappled with being able to justify having such a program… Principal

5.2.5 Dual roles for Advisory Teachers

When adequate time is not provided to Advisory Teachers it hinders the effective implementation of the BPE design.

> *I still teach...(two subjects)..., plus being the Big Picture coordinator with primary responsibilities being the main advisor. Pedagogically I feel like one of the magicians…with darts being thrown at me so sometimes I don't know where I'm at.* School Leader/Advisory Teacher

For instance, being timetabled into primary 'subject' areas was constraining and this dual role made it tough for the Advisory Teachers. It impacted on the integrity of the model because they couldn't find enough time to adequately plan or implement initiatives such as the Learning Plan Meetings or Internships.

> *The Advisory Teachers are struggling with the constraints placed on them with regards to the timetable. [He]…has 8 – 10 periods of (Subject 1) and (Subject 2) sessions he's teaching outside of Big Picture. The teachers have managed to find 30 minutes per week to work with each student but no time with each other.* Researcher

> *So [next year] I have a 0.4 load teaching (Subject 3), 0.2 teaching (Subject 4); 0.2 teaching Big Picture and 0.2 to coordinate Big 'Picturey' things such as internships.* Advisory Teacher

> *…don't have the extra DOTT time, um so we're busier…I didn't have time to push those [internships] or follow up.* Advisory Teacher

Advisory Teachers expressed concern that this dual role eroded the relationship that they had with their Advisory Students.

> *And it's a bit confronting because…the staffing thing, if you're in there all day, every day which is perfect you would know exactly where kids are but when you walk in and you check, which we do, you find yourself reverting to the mainstream…it's a bit of a panic and I don't think that will ever go away because we're always going to have shared classes.* Advisory Teacher

> *So if I could, if I could not teach Math's at all and be in here for a whole day with these guys I would feel like I'm giving them everything that I could.* Advisory Teacher

Further, they felt their students should have been able to stay in their Advisory full time if this is what they desired.

> *I'd also feel like they're getting everything that they could as far as you know I can choose to stay here and work on my project work or go out on an Internship without worrying about…going out to the mainstream…I see that if they want to be in here a hundred percent of their day that that's where they should be.* Advisory Teacher

Interestingly, in two of the schools where implementation was strong the Advisory Teachers keeping a 'foot in their subject discipline camp' was seen as a positive and a supportive gesture by their leaders for them taking up the new Advisory role. The teachers liked that they kept their connection even as they fell in love with their new Advisory Teacher role.

> *… splitting the role in the first year so that they still had…two of my first picks to say yes alright they were happy to do it on that basis.* School Leader

Inadequate provision of both in class and planning time for Advisory Teachers lead to an erosion of BPE design as Advisory Teachers are unable to effectively prioritise the design and key elements began to fall to the wayside.

I like to consider myself pretty organised and efficient, but the booking of exhibitions and the getting out on internships, just time. I feel that there are some points where I probably don't give enough to my Advisory because there are things that need to go on for my mainstream classes, and I'd say that's probably part of the most challenging aspect of this. Advisory Teacher

5.2.6 Change in Advisory Teachers

Staff-turnover is an issue that all schools contend with and the schools in the research project were not immune. During the life of the project Advisory Teachers had babies, took on promotional roles, moved schools and some moved back to mainstream classrooms or transferred to other schools.

Although staff-turnover is often detrimental it was acutely felt in the smaller project schools. The loss of Big Picture 'Champions' left School Leaders lamenting the loss of key staff.

[He was] our Big Picture Trojan and he's gone to another Big Picture school. So that kind of put a real dent in our progress. We had to kind of reset – press the reset button and start with new staff…being the Big Picture champions on the campus. Principal

The staff member who left was a first-year teacher and not only came into our college with all of the enthusiasm of a first year graduate, with great organisational skills…got thrown into the deep end of okay you're up for the Big Picture workshops and all of that and by the middle of the year was just a complete and utter convert for the whole ethos and now she's gone. So that just kind of rips a lot of effort… It just blows your plans away and you've got to start again. Principal

In one school the main Advisory Teacher went on extended maternity leave and this had a disruptive impact on the BP Academy cohort, magnified perhaps, by the small campus size. During her absence there was a pull back to traditional mainstream teaching practices.

… the Advisory Teacher was not really 100% on what her role was… So it really is making sure that the Advisory role is really clear. Principal

I think it's been a really tough year and I think part of that is that I went on maternity leave. And I think that ideally you don't want the fact that a staff member goes on leave to have such an impact. But maybe because we are such an emerging school it's had a greater impact than it would have. I mean it always has impact when a staff goes on leave obviously, but it's had a bigger impact than it would've had if we were more established. Advisory Teacher

In one of the Academy schools four Big Picture trained Advisory Teachers moved on to different positions (both external and internal) during the life of the research project. Advisory Teachers in this school identified the lack of wider school support; inadequate resourcing; the dual role of Advisory Teachers and the pushback towards a more traditional mainstream approach as significant stressors and as a reason for feeling unsupported in their role. It is likely that these operating conditions contributed to them moving on to different positions during the life of the research project.

I guess just I would have loved to have been a part of one that had all the resources to run it. Advisory Teacher

However, staff turnover was not universally seen as negative, but as an opportunity to turn over staff who had not embraced BPE design.

And some of our teachers do that better than others. We've got a couple of teachers that are moving on, and they're the ones that have really felt that it's not what they see as schooling - it's not fitting their needs. Principal

5.3   It is personal too

Some of the reluctance to 'push in' to the BPE design was reticence by some of the Advisory Teachers for a range of reasons mentioned earlier, like: fear of the system, changing staff, lack of engaged leaders, continual moving of the structures, trying to fit the BPE design into what is already being done rather than redesign from the ground up. Some of this 'push back' came through because of a lack of clarity about the BPE design and the new work. But for some there was then a 'pull back' to what was more familiar, comfortable, and straightforward. And this even when it was apparent even to the Advisory Teacher 'the same old way' wasn't working. We believe the way we've always done things is deeply in our DNA. When we are challenged (or stressed) doing new things can be disruptive, hence it is often easier to go back to what we know well. The way we have always done things just feels better.

> I think that you can theoretically agree with the idea of things being student led and student orientated and like small community schooling…but then when it comes to the practice, if you as the adult, as the facilitator, if your own personal ego isn't that secure, then it's hard to let go of that – what is seen as control. Advisory Teacher

On page 28 of this report leadership fears about what 'might happen' or what might 'not happen' were strong enough to impact on their views and for one, in the way the BPA program was structured. This despite the fact that they had assurance from the university that the promise of portfolio entry would be honoured – and it was.

5.4   Dealing with push/pull forces

When schools know that an integral component of change practice is the push/pull back to what was then they are more likely to effectively implement change practice initiatives. By acknowledging these forces, they are better able to develop plans that work from within and challenge current paradigms to support sustainable change.

> The advantages (of BPE) for our future would be huge but I understand that we've got a 200 plus year paradigm in place and it's very difficult to change mindsets so I understand that how we go about doing that is difficult and it's not going to be overnight and it's going to have to be slow and strategic and targeted. School Leader

> To do it in a small way is fine but then to try and embed that is the harder thing…to build a viable model I think is really important in terms of what it can do. So my journey has probably been around the change management and how you change mindsets. School Leader

5.4.1   Searching for creative options

Part of working with push/pull back involved the search for creative solutions particularly in the BP Academy Schools which had committed to implementing all of the design, all of the time and all of the way through.

> Starting and then doing a little bit here and a little bit there is nowhere near as powerful as having it all done beforehand. School Leader

5.4.2   Building a viable model

Schools have the capacity to be creative, stay nimble, agile and responsive to context specific requirements.

> It [maintaining small Advisory numbers] can be done with staffing formulas I think that's a challenge, but I think there are ways to perhaps think out of the box to address that challenge. School Leader

The design is robust and flexible and when an accurate cost-benefit analysis is undertaken solutions such as independent worktime, collapsed classes, twice weekly internship days and masterclasses emerge as an alternative to a traditional timetable.

5.4.3   Digging in for the long haul – sustainability

Implementation was made easier for schools who predicted, devised strategies and planned for the inevitable pushback.

> *We've put a lot of energy and a lot of resources into developing…the Big Picture academy. We have to continually train up other people because if we put all our eggs in one basket of having 2 teachers teaching Big Picture forever then we don't get a transferability of skills…if we want to make this a sustainable process…the teachers who own the knowledge of Big Picture have to either get out and share it more effectively or actually have to leave Big Picture and practise the elements of Big Picture in a traditional classroom environment.* Principal

The schools that had decided to implement all of the design, all of the time and all of the way through used the design framework to factor in sustainability from the outset.

> *It's about achieving those measurable targets and I think then it goes back to how we promote and sell Big Picture to the community and to the board so they have an active role in seeing what's going on in those classrooms and we did that when Big Picture first came on the scene for us – board members we traipsed them through the Big Picture room to look at the new furniture, to look at the exhibitions that the kids were doing so we did all our PR work.* Principal

5.4.4   Maintaining a spirit of optimism

The systems pressures experienced by leaders and Advisory Teachers at successful schools was similar to other schools; however, there was a strong commitment from leaders to find solutions to obstacles no matter how creative they had to be. This optimistic commitment to the work at hand provided both an effective antidote to the push/pull factors described earlier and greater likelihood of sustainability and fidelity to the innovation.

> *Teachers and schools are resistant to change – we still have our factory model of subjects and transmission of subject matter. We need to engage our students.'* Advisory Teacher

> *While the majority of the executive staff were really supportive of the project there were some executive members that were hesitant because it kind of flew in the face of their experiences and expectations of what school is.* School Leader

Successful schools planned for sustainability and worked with traditional structures such as the School Board to consolidate the BPA.

> *That was the one where I had to get a clear indication of is Big Picture going to continue beyond this year, beyond the funding? And the board had given it the huge thumbs up and said yes, we actually want it to expand, not just continue. We want it to grow bigger… The board was very impressed and wants it to continue. I said, "Now you need to tell me what you think." [management team] …there was no nay speakers. No one said we did not want it to continue. That was very positive and for us that was our now we can move forward.* Principal

5.4.5   Re-booting and re-invigorating the design

It is never too late for a 'do-over' or a 're-boot'. Schools who have not successfully embedded the BPE design can go backwards to move forwards. It is possible to return to the engagement, getting started and implementation phases to improve practice. Schools can move forwards to embrace all of the design, all of the time and all of the way through.

> *It gave me the opportunity to do quite a lot of thinking and writing. So I feel in my mind quite confident about the curriculum and model moving forward…I can remember John talking about Big Picture being a design and not a program and that was really a breakthrough moment for me and that's been really important as I have started to talk to teachers about it and start to implement it and embed it in the life of the school…I want to show teachers/staff how we can incorporate the full Big Picture approach within [the school].* Principal

> *Yes, I actually thought we would have got rid of Big Picture, I thought we would have moved on, but it's actually really integral to what we are doing now.* Principal

5.6 Conclusion

Forces that push/pull us back to our well-known practices and structures will emerge for every academy/school – whether exemplary or struggling. By this we mean any resistance to change or any desire to return to 'how things used to be'. It is crucial for all involved in this work to understand that issues will arise – one way or another. These forces will be external to the school, internal from within the school and personal – it is within all of us. They can be unconscious and/or unintended and/or deliberate.

Be aware the systems in which a school operates exist to maintain it. The BPE approach to learning and school is trying to transform school 'as we know it'. Schools need to demonstrate the success of their BPE work to generate the support BUT pay attention to the elements of the system that 'aren't for changing' and show how these things are being attended to in the BPE context. Ensure that any 'fears' about what the 'system' will do are real. Work with everyone to generate the changes in the system that are required to best support the work in the school.

Changes to staff – including leaders, teachers and support – are not always something that can be controlled. Strong transition processes need to be built in including how staff are employed, the induction processes they require, and experiences they will need to understand BPE, where the school/academy 'is at' with regard to implementation and therefore the work they have to do as a consequence. As much as staff change is seen as a negative it can also act as a strong positive. Clearly there is a tipping point.

Implementation of the BPE design in a school is best undertaken during periods of stability within senior School Leadership.

Significant resources (internal and external) need to be applied to the work to maximise the chances of successful implementation of such an all-encompassing change to our work with students.

5.7 Recommendations for Navigating the Push/Pull Forces

Transformational practice always creates forces that 'push and pull' back to 'what was'. These recommendations support schools to counteract roadblocks and maintain fidelity to the design.

1. Anticipate the pull towards traditionalist modes of teaching, adequately prepare for, and resource strategies that use the transformational design to counteract the pushback to traditional practices.
    i. Provide adequate resources (internal and external) to prevent or overcome roadblocks.
    ii. Leaders and teachers should be allocated adequate time to develop the structural, cultural and pedagogical practices that support the design.
2. Schools must develop strong staff transition processes for employment, induction and professional learning, particularly in the context of progressing their implementation plan.
3. Schools need to display the successes of their transformative practice and identify how they are tending to external systems requirements within the design and their specific contexts.
4. Schools collaborate with external supports and internal stakeholders to generate system changes that best support the school to implement the BPE design.

Section 6: Using External support

Schools involved in the project were provided with multiple layers of external support. The schools were partially – but significantly – subsidised for their participation. This additional support enabled the participating schools to engage with the change in ways that may not have been possible. Importantly, these resources – intellectual, financial and moral – allowed the Advisory Teachers and School Leaders involved to withstand some of the challenges involved in school change.

These resources included:

- the BPEA national network;
- the BPEA Foundation Program;
- access to all BPEA materials;
- professional learning experiences including topic specific workshops, school visits and seminars;
- a BPEA School Coach;
- the National Conference in NZ and the US Big Picture Learning (BPL) School Study Tour in 2013 and 2014 and the US BPL Conference in 2015.
- Murdoch University Portfolio Entry using the BPE Graduation Portfolio;
- professional learning Research Circle (RC) (described on page 9 and within Appendix FIVE); and
- MAP4U's project resources including professional learning and conferences.

Advisory Teachers and School Leaders frequently discussed the profound positive effect that these external support mechanisms had on their practice and their sense of wellbeing.

6.1   International and national network

BPEA is part of the wider network of BP schools internationally called the Big Picture Learning International Network (BPLIN). Being part of this network played a significant role in teachers' knowing they were part of something 'bigger' and that people like them were doing similar work with similar motivations around the world. The network acts to support leaders and teachers to learn more about what works and how. The opportunities to connect, share, question and learn from each other helped to create and sustain a sense of vibrancy, collegiality and inquiry.

I've got someone…coming down to work with me next week, which I'm looking forward to learning a lot from. Advisory Teacher

…coming away from the US study tour…I believe what will help me as an Advisory Teacher is maybe once a month, once every six weeks; twice a term – whatever it is that we get together over coffee or whatever and just talk about what we're doing and what our challenges are because I'm finding that a lot of the challenges aren't just me and I think at the moment I feel a bit isolated in my school. Advisory Teacher

I made informal connections with the schools on the east coast so I could send an email off to someone at Launceston or Newcastle and get some information and [participating school] has invited me to come down as well. So, there's been lots of benefits to the program.' Advisory Teacher

…if you can go to other schools do it; if you can go to other countries that are doing it; if you can go to the conferences do it. Just get involved in the community…and don't be an island…you've got to make your own natural connections. Advisory Teacher

6.2   BPE Foundation Program and other Professional Learning

BPEA runs a five-day (or 3 x 2-day) Foundation Program. It is required that all those in a school that will be working in the school/academy complete this program and preferably to do so during the engagement phase prior to implementation. The purpose of the program is to explore key elements of the design and to do so by experiencing them - not just talking about them. This includes the setting up of the participants as an Advisory group in much the same way as the school Advisory. BPEA also periodically offer other professional learning opportunities including workshops (e.g. Leaving to Learn), host school visits, study tours, seminars. conferences, and international speakers.

Participants identified BP professional learning, including the BPE Foundation Program as an essential component of the successful implementation of the BPE design framework.

> *I'd have done my best anyway, but I don't think I was prepared until I'd done the training course.* Advisory Teacher

> *I came back from those five days of training feeling pretty, you know, enthusiastic about it, yep I want to get in, want to do it.* Advisory Teacher

> *I was sold on it from that five-day training course when you know enough about it.* Advisory Teacher

School Principals and leaders incorporated the Foundation Program and professional learning into their sustainability and succession planning.

> *I've done the Foundation Course this year…my learning around Big Picture has increased enormously. I couldn't understand what the school was doing with it when I first arrived.* Principal

> *We need to increase the number of staff attending at least the base level information sessions…last year there were two teachers who were just the standard two who attended all the time. But it's really balancing Big Picture professional development with a whole bunch of others that teachers want to do because they see a need and they feel a need.* Principal

> *We've already identified our next teachers…We've already got the principal on board with that process…they're off to the conference, so we're already planning for the succession and the carry on.* School Leader

> *I knew what I wanted the school to be like, and Big Picture was there, and it had all the materials that I needed.* School Leader

6.3   The BPEA School Coach

Implementing the BPE design for learning in schools, takes time. It involves deep change to thinking and practice for leaders, teachers and those that work with schools. These changes to thinking and practice need to be supported by changes to structure and culture. To assist each school with the implementation process BPEA appoints a School Coach.

The Big Picture School Coach works as a 'critical friend,' facilitating reflection on new ideas as they are put into practice. They help draw connections between and amongst structure, new teaching practices and school culture. The Coach assists the school to develop processes for monitoring progress. Where appropriate, the Coach identifies other experts to work with the school around particular issues and ideas.

Each school had a different coach. Enthusiastic, experienced and expert BPE Advisory Teachers and School Leaders from other BPE schools - outside the project - were invited to act as a coach for one of the project schools. Their role was to visit and work with each school at least two days per term for the life of the project.

The Big Picture School Coach proved invaluable to the schools. Having another person from outside of the school visit assisted in building capacity. It provided welcome support for Advisory teachers, particularly in schools where there was a significant pushback to more traditional mainstream schooling modes.

> *I'm sure if I called "x" and said alright this is where I'm at, I know that I'm going to get sage advice…I think that's invaluable.* Advisory Teacher

> *I've spoken to "Y" quite a lot about that because obviously he's been doing it a lot longer and he still gets that it's just that dilemma…You can't know everything and like you said you're not expected to. Advisory Teacher Yeah he's [BP coach] been really valuable…had the meetings in the classroom because of time constraints, but he spends a lot of time and knows a lot of the kids quite well.* Advisory Teacher

> *So, we had a look at that and [it]…came in and that was brilliant. And he also talked me through… the similarities in what we're doing…he talked about the Advisory plans that they've had for each year group so that's something I've taken on board. They're not perfect but it gives us that structure.* Advisory Teacher

Two schools initially chose to have their BP Coach working one-on-one with students. However, this proved less effective than building the capacity of the teachers. The Advisory Teachers felt that it was of greater benefit to have the BP Coach working with them and just occasionally with the students too.

> *One thing we did was, [BP Coach]… met with the students on a weekly basis…we set them up and then she would come back the next week and what we found is, they [the students] didn't necessarily follow through on what they said they would…what I learned is that [trying to have the coach as] a short cut [for student learning] …. it can't be like that…she [the coach] didn't have the day to day contact…I wouldn't even necessarily know… what I needed to do [with the students]…I guess I've [now] taken real ownership of it [Advisory] having progressed around the different areas [worked with the coach to improve their own practice].* Advisory Teacher

The school coaches proved especially helpful as they shared their own experience and knowledge as mentors and guides about the work and support for individual students.

> *He's a lovely bloke and he doesn't come with any agenda…I think he's been really helpful for [the Advisory Teachers] … I've been really grateful for the way in which he writes up each meeting. His feedback is great. It's what our teachers have got to get better at doing, putting it in the context of [our school] …getting into the context of what we do here…* Principal

> *I don't believe I'm perfect and I've got a lot of faults that I need to work on and I think part of that solution is working closely with "X" my school coach…I've had that idea since New Zealand and I mentioned it to 'Principal' and she kept prodding me to do it.* Advisory Teacher

6.4 The Research Circle

Five 2-day workshops were held over the life of the research project – as part of the research project but also as part of the BPA Project. The RC followed an action research cycle. Participants met together to learn from

and support one another through the implementation of the BPE design. Participants planned together; made observations on implementation; reflected and made revised plans to implement in their schools.

> *It's allowed me to go in when I have needed to be reflective of what I need to do or give me the time to work on something around Big Picture that I might not get the time to do [in school]…it has been good and to be almost like a one hour where we can just chat…I'm with other people in a similar situation that I can debrief what's going on and support them as well, that connectedness.* Advisory Teacher

> *…just touch base with people. For me thinking about things it really helped because it was really removed from here so creating that space.* Advisory Teacher

Advisory Teachers and School Leaders contributed their experience to the research process in ways that they didn't normally find time for.

> *Yeah in this sort of reflective way because often the conversations that I do have…[are] very task orientated. Advisory Teacher Reflection time is something that I totally struggle with so it's actually – it's really useful having this conversation because it is, it's getting me to reflect. So if we could just catch up every week? No?* Advisory Teacher

The RC culminated in the group putting together a presentation and 1-day Pre-conference workshop on BPE design at the AARE Conference in 2015 in Fremantle.

The general consensus was that the RC was invaluable and supported the change practices required to successfully implement the BPE design.

6.5   The Big Picture Education Graduation Portfolio[18]

Schools that participated in the research project were apprehensive about long-term post-school options for students who were enrolled in the BPAs and BP schools. Despite the assurance of a portfolio pathway to university by the project hosting university some still had reservations. These sentiments were expressed before any students had got to the point of getting to year 12 let alone graduating. For example,

> *…at the beginning of year 10 we promoted Big Picture as an alternative pathway for students to access university. It's actually not proving to be an alternative pathway. It's proving to be the same pathway as every other child has access to because when kids to apply there is no streamlined link to university.* Principal

Conversely, they were supportive of the development of the Big Picture Education Graduation Portfolio with a view to their students being able to attend university.

> *…one of the outcomes should be what does a portfolio look like that is driven by…that's relevant to tertiary institutions?* School Leader

> *… and I have had conversations around where it's leading in terms of opportunities towards university entrance, I'm not 100% convinced that it is going to lead to university entrance in its current form, but that it's still being explored and I'm happy for that exploration, I want to push for that exploration to still occur.* Principal

In due course the university honoured its agreement with BPEA and they accepted entry of the first BPE graduating student using portfolio only. Since then more students have been accepted by Murdoch University in this way. Since 2016 BPEA has led a National BP Graduation Portfolio Project and currently has MOUs with 14 universities nationwide. Increasingly, BPEA has more students using their portfolio of work to

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[18] See appendix 2 for brief description of this project

enter training and work. The national project has provided encouragement and confidence to School Leaders and Advisory Teachers in BPE schools and academies to go deeper with the BPE design.

6.6   MAP4U

Murdoch University's MAP4U initiative – that included the BPA Project – provided financial support to participate in courses, conferences, study tours and professional learning opportunities and of equal significance an opportunity to participate in this research.

> *I think this school's involvement with Murdoch University was also integral…it provided the opportunity and…provided a good springboard for the program.* Advisory Teacher

> *This kind of research and reporting I think is really critical, and I think the third thing that strikes me as being absolutely a bag of gold dust is in 18 months' time we have to sit down for another audit and another registration as a small independent school and having this kind of external assessment and research based on appropriate academic research practice that we can present I think is very powerful.* Principal

> *So that's a kind of validation of our intellectual and emotional investment. I think that for some our governance challenges, getting the board to understand what staff members do. I can talk about it and they can get little anecdotes but getting an externally researched assessment of the relationships and the productive elements of our work here together as a community we couldn't do that ourselves. So to have this MAP4U project doing that is just so valuable. It talks to the board members.* Principal

6.7　Conclusion

Given the extent and depth of this transformational design for learning and school it is important for school staff to seek the support provided by the national and international network of BPE. In this research leaders and teachers describe this support by way of training, professional learning, coaching, conferences, materials, etc as valuable. Given the extent and power of the forces that were at play – outlined in the previous section – they describe the support of BPEA and the power of the larger network as essential. Staff feel assured that BPEA works nationally on innovation with other sectors and providers on behalf of all involved. In particular the school staff were keen for BPEA to develop a Graduate Certificate for students awarded by way of a BPE Portfolio.

6.8　Recommendations for Using External Support

Schools should actively seek external support to explore, learn, adapt and integrate the transformational design to their individual school contexts.

1. School leaders and teachers should be active participants of national and international networks of teachers who are utilising the design.
   i. Academies and schools should connect with a local network of schools (or online) to undertake school visits; share resources; share ideas and to connect with others who are undertaking the work.
2. School leaders and teachers should attend school visits, study tours, conferences, workshops, professional learning and network development days.
   i. The BPE Foundation Program should be completed by all associated staff prior to implementation of the design and all staff employed 'down the track' should also complete it.
3. Coaches be made available to work with leaders, teachers and the wider school community to help explore, plan, adapt and integrate the design over time.
4. Use the action learning and reflective practice cycles – as utilised in the Research Circle – to scaffold learning via teacher Advisory learning communities.

Section 7: Concluding Remarks

This report provides an analysis of the processes involved in transforming schools through the experience of Advisory Teachers and School Leaders engaged in the implementation of the BPE design for schooling. It extends on a number of earlier reports which identified, described and explained the experiences of students and parents attending BPE academies and schools[19].

This rich body of empirical data advances our understanding of how various participants themselves perceive and experience new ways of doing school. The BPE approach to a more relational pedagogy challenges traditional mainstream approaches to schooling, therefore, it requires a willingness to engage in some difficult conversations about the way things are in order to imagine alternative possibilities.

Drawing on the stories of teachers and School Leaders this report identifies the approaches to the implementation of BPE that worked but also describes the obstacles and interferences to school transformation. In the process, it identifies a set of key understandings and strategies to support educators interested in pursuing a more meaningful, engaging and authentic education for the students and families they serve.

The field of school transformation is awash with all kinds of advice, tips, tactics, and checklists about what needs to happen. While well intentioned, much of this work has failed to shift the ways in which schools operate. David Tyack and Larry Cuban explain this problem nicely in their adeptly titled book *Tinkering towards utopia* (1995)[20]. In short, school reform efforts have come and gone over the decades with little fundamental change to the assumptions, beliefs, behaviours and rituals underpinning the ways in which schools organise teaching and learning.

Schools are often besieged by short-term programs and interventions to provide 'quick fix' solutions to all manner of educational problems. While some of these initiatives offer useful strategies to engage students, they are usually dependent on the vagaries of funding and largely non-sustainable. We argue that these kinds of ad hoc responses to complex social and educational problems are unlikely to challenge the key logics underpinning traditional schooling which is failing far too many young people.

There is mounting evidence that something is awry with the experience of schooling as we know it. Whether as disengagement from learning[21] or the way we do school – even for high achievers[22]. Despite the best efforts of dedicated teachers and education systems to alleviate the persistent and protracted problems of student (dis)engagement, the processes of schooling remain stubbornly resistant to change.

So, to draw on the experiences of real teachers, in real schools and in real communities to map some of the major elements of school transformation – where it worked, worked for a while but not sustained or landed somewhere in-between – is a valuable contribution to those thinking about 'transforming school'. The report stepped through three phases of a school taking up the BPE design from: engaging with BPE and BPEA in order to assess, review, and explore; then once decided through a phase of getting started; and once students started, the phase of implementation. At the conclusion of each of these phases we framed a set of conclusions and recommendations for School Leaders and teachers. These are repeated on pages 49 – 53 following and assumed as part of this discussion but won't be necessarily restated in the text.

We have created a framework of emergent ideas represented in Figure 1: pages 54-55. **TRANSFORMING A SCHOOL: FROM IDEA TO REALITY**. In it we summarise three interrelated sites of thinking and action around school transformation, that is, structure, culture and practice. These categories are hardly new or even

[19] Summarised in Down, B., Choules, K., Hogan, J., with Carr, D., and Stone, H. (2018) *Promising Practices: What students, parents and teachers say about learning in a Big Picture context.* Key Findings of the The Big Picture Academy Research Project, Murdoch University. https://www.bigpicture.org.au/big-picture-academy-bpa-project-map4u-murdoch-university

[20] Tyack, D. & Cuban, L. (1995). *Tinkering toward utopia.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[21] For example, Goss, P. & Sonnemann, J. (2017) *Engaging Students, Creating classrooms that improve learning.* Grattan Institute, p.3.

[22] O'Connell, M., Milligan, S., & Bentley, T. (2019) *Beyond ATAR: A Proposal For Change.* Koshland Innovation Fund: Melbourne, Victoria.

surprising in the school change literature. Based on the findings in this report, we can reassert with some confidence that any transformational project must attend to all three elements, one without the other is doomed to fail.

Changing *practice* refers to the ways in which the vision and conception of the design is embedded and deepened around, for example, student interests, self-reflection, internships, student projects, autobiographies, portfolios and post-school plans.

Culture refers to the broader sets of values, beliefs and relationships that need to be created among teachers, students, families and the wider community. Within this school culture everyone is a leader; everyone matters, everyone is listened to, and everyone is accountable. Trust, respect and care define the environment. The school becomes a culturally responsive school responding to the interests, needs and requirements of the community and the students.

Structure refers to the ways in which schools intentionally create spaces, places and time for the key elements of the desired practices to occur and the culture to be manifest. For example, for student advisories – as the cornerstones of learning, engagement and well-being. These advisories require teachers who are committed, well prepared and carefully selected for the kinds of intensely relational work required. Also, time for internships. If internships are to happen time needs to be made available for them to happen. Students then are either on one or working to get one. For example, the time, space and ability for learning plan meetings with family and again later in the term for exhibitions with family.

Successful implementation of the design whether as an academy in a large school or integrated into an existing whole school requires the leaders and teachers to grapple and define as best they can these practices, the culture and the required structures prior to implementation. However, vigilance is required. Implementation is always imperfect. Built into BPE is a process and practices for action learning and a reflective practice. It follows that when the design is put in place this constant cycle of action, reflection, re-planning, action, reflecting, re-planning etc. improve the chances of the academy/school remaining focused, vigilant, observant, and persistent. Fidelity to the design will be stronger. A robust integration with the school context will be stronger.

In Figure 1 we can also see how these transformations require time and persistence to galvanise thinking and action over time. Having a set of robust design principles, values and practices provides the foundations on which to tackle the inherent obstacles, interferences and barriers to school transformation that inevitably occur along the way. As we outlined in section 4 of the report there are many ways to be pulled back to the way things have 'always been'. The context that bounds the school (and resides in the school and within every person) has a powerful impact on those in the school. It can be overwhelming (e.g. a new principal implements a competing philosophy across the whole school). It can 'push back' (e.g. the literacy and numeracy testing regime in the system can force compliance). It can 'pull back' (e.g. we resort to dealing with difficult behaviour of a student using our well-known traditional behaviour management processes rather than through the BPE design). It can reduce possibility (e.g. a government can reduce funding to a school(s)). It can be stopped 'in its tracks' (e.g. by different stakeholders having different understandings of what it takes, how long it takes and the complexity of the journey to implement a transformative design).

However, our research shows two key elements that support school staff to deal with these things in hopeful ways.

One is leadership. The implementation of the BPE design is everyone's business. School leaders need to lead. They need to believe in the design. They need to know and understand it. They need to understand the process of change as outlined in Diagram 1. They need to know and understand that this work requires focus, persistence and a generosity of spirit. They need to enable the practices by paying attention to the structures necessary to enact the practices. They need to help the Advisory Teachers by building the culture and creating the environment necessary to support the change. They need to be interested in the students and their learning plans too. And over time they need to share leadership with both teachers, students and family.

The second key element is the need for staff to be in a learning community (i.e. an Advisory for Advisory Teachers). Our research supports the notion put by Sarason(1996)[23] that

> It is virtually impossible to create and sustain over time conditions for productive learning for students when they do not exist for teachers.

The Advisory Teachers need time each week to meet, share, review, plan and to get and give feedback on each other's work. More than that they need time to participate in the wider network of schools doing similar work.

> Clearly there is a deep understanding of the ways in which teachers learn and improve upon their own practice e.g. networking, collaboration, control and ownership, self-direction, student participation, conversation and grounded theorising. Researcher

We have identified various stages of transformation - emerging, implementing and realising – to reflect how different kinds of emphasis and work are required at different points of time. This developmental approach enables schools to appreciate the complexity of transformational projects and the need to stay the course, hence the title of this report 'all of the design, all of the time and all of the way through'. Hopefully this provides a sense of what it looks and feels like as both a process and product leading to stronger coherence.

While our research documented the early years of the implementation of the BPE design in schools we continued to stay connected with all five schools and for some we are still. Furthermore, in two cases, the schools had already begun to implement BPE. This enabled us to notice the strong probability of a crisis point[24] within the first five years. And therefore, to show how schools can evolve, mature and develop into a BPE Academy/School over time. While the failure of deep change in schools and the system is evidence that such crisis moments exist we checked our frame against over 40 other schools who have implemented BPE across their school or as an Academy and found that it resonated. It indeed takes time for most to build a robust sustainable example of the BPE design. A few 'fall away' returning to the 'way things used to be' resulting in a lack of clarity and a lack of fidelity that can end the effort to implement. Others use the crisis to revisit the BPE design to inform their move to go deeper and do better.

Having a map of change – like Figure 1 – offers a more complex, sophisticated and coherent approach to school transformation. It highlights the kinds of ideas, strategies and outcomes that need to be brought into existence and more widely sustained over time. Importantly, this kind of representation provides a coherent way of opening up a different set of conversations within school communities and education systems about school transformation and where a school 'is at' in relation to it. It offers a constellation of ideas to challenge the status quo and imagine alternative possibilities.

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[23] Sarason, S (1990) *The predictable failure of educational reform: Can we change course before it's too late?* San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

[24] The crisis – in some cases - can be 'complacency', 'overconfidence', or 'BP LITE' rather than 'incoherence' and 'failure'.

Finally, and not least, is the need for everyone connected to the academy/school to have a deep appreciation best expressed by Pace-Marshal (1999)[25]:

> *The understanding that real learning comes slowly, through the construction of meaning, the recognition of patterns and the creation of relationships.*

In short, school transformation is never a walk in the park. It requires attention to school design, self-reflection, purposes, values, ethics, commitment, collaboration, resourcing, learning, interests and passion, families, communities and leadership. Seen in this way we can appreciate that transformation is always incomplete and unfinished business. Knowing this improves our chances of innovation and liveliness emerging from the work. It improves our chances of staying the course.

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[25] Pace Marshall, S (1999) *A possible new story for learning and schooling – Enabling a new mind for the new millennium.* The School Administrator, December 1999, AASA.

Engaging

Schools that spent a long time exploring, that is, taking time to learn or understand the design; aligning school context and philosophy to the design; and using the design to develop processes, resources and staffing for implementation had a smoother transition when they implemented the design. The three schools in this study that did this – did better with more fidelity to the design – both at the start and over the first three years and beyond.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are crucial stages of engagement prior to the introduction of a transformational design of schooling.

1. Review current school practices, rethink and then reimagine schooling and learning.

2. Understand, and be able to explain your reasons for change.

3. Fully explore the design – find out as much as possible by researching; attending workshops, conferences and professional learning; and make visits to schools where the design is already in place.

4. Recognise that with a design, context will – and must – influence its look and feel.

5. Understand – even as you start - that the implementation of transformational designs is a 'long haul' process. It takes up to five years for an academy – and longer for a school – to confidently be able to claim that the design is 'integrated into everything we do, say and how we act.'

Getting Started

There is much to do in this period of 'getting started' – selecting and training staff, enrolling students, selecting and setting up learning spaces, and then planning for transformation. Schools need to develop a long-term (5 year) implementation plan that uses the BPE design to plot out the curriculum, pedagogy, resources, staffing, culture and physical space. And then they need to prepare for year one, term one, week one and day one. Getting a good start is crucial.

Schools that approach the planning work with a clean slate create what they want and then integrate the things that they value locally back into the design do better than schools that try to leave 'what they do now' in place and then try to insert the BPE design into the gaps. Effective implementation requires that schools have an intention to go deep and use all of the design, all of the time, all of the way. We explore more on this in the next section. But the intention comes first.

Recommendations

The following recommendations should be undertaken prior to or simultaneously with students commencing learning within the transformational design.

1. Schools introducing a transformational design, like BPE, should plan with the intent to use all of the design, all of the time and all of the way through.

2. The BPEA Foundation Program should be undertaken by all School Leaders, Advisory Teachers and support staff, concurrently with, developing an implementation plan and before implementation starts.

3. The school creates a collaborative and well thought out implementation plan that outlines the steps to be taken to progress towards integration of the transformational BPE design.

    i.   The plan should include a realistic timeline for the work, demonstrate an understanding of what is changing around culture, structure and pedagogical practice.

    ii. The plan should describe the roles and responsibilities of School Leaders, Advisory Teachers and support staff.

4. Staff should be asked to apply for key positions based on the realisation of the implementation plan and accurate descriptions of the work. An enrolment process for students needs to include an interview with the family, the Advisory Teacher and the student.

Implementing

We concluded the getting started section with the advice to approach planning with the idea of implementing 'all of the design, all the way through all of the time'. Having explored what happens in schools in the first few years of implementation this advice becomes the key advice for this phase of the work too. Keep the BPE design at front of mind - use it to review, use it to plan, and use it to inform action.

The BPE design is about how school's conduct their work not just what goes on in a classroom. Our research suggests that the Advisory Teachers and Leaders need to establish a learning community – an Advisory - for themselves. This group should meet regularly, uses the BPE design to inform how they meet and what they talk about, and have a focus on student work and student learning.

In a large school an Academy needs to be 'big enough' to create a learning community for the staff, a support network for the students and a resource base to support the work.

Significant resources (internal and external) need to be applied to the work to maximise the chances of successful implementation. Advisory Teachers and School Leaders should be allocated time to develop the strategies; protocols; curriculum; and guidelines that support the BPE design and better attend to systems pressures and other roadblocks that emerge along the way.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are key during implementation as they support schools to maintain fidelity – all of the design, all of the time and all of the way through.

1. The design distinguishers are evident in the planning for and implementation of the BPE.
2. The key elements of the design are able to be described and explained at any point by students, teachers and leaders.
3. Review implementation progress over time using the distinguishers, implementation plan and key elements to assess the extent and quality to which the design is in place.
    i. Leaders, teachers and support staff establish a learning community and uses the design to plan for and resolve issues and problems as they arise.
    ii. This group meets regularly and uses the design to inform how they meet and what they talk about; and has a focus on student work and student learning.
4. Continue to train and develop interested staff ahead of future staffing needs.
5. Across the school there should always be unconditional kind regard and generosity of spirit towards everyone – difference is valued.
6. The design should be used to influence the wider education community.

Navigating the Push/Pull Forces

Forces that push/pull us back to our well-known practices and structures will emerge for every academy/school – whether exemplary or struggling. By this we mean any resistance to change or any desire to return to 'how things use to be'. It is crucial for all involved in this work to understand that issues will arise – one way or another. These forces will be external to the school, internal from within the school and personal – it is within all of us. They can be unconscious and/or unintended and/or deliberate.

Be aware the systems in which a school operates exist to maintain it. The BPE approach to learning and school is trying to transform school 'as we know it'. Schools need to demonstrate the success of their BPE work to generate the support BUT pay attention to the elements of the system that 'aren't for changing' and show how these things are being attended to in the BPE context. Ensure that any 'fears' about what the 'system' will do are real. Work with everyone to generate the changes in the system that are required to best support the work in the school.

Changes to staff – including leaders, teachers and support – are not always something that can be controlled. Strong transition processes need to be built in including how staff are employed, the induction processes they require, and experiences they will need to understand BPE, where the school/academy 'is at' with regard to implementation and therefore the work they have to do as a consequence. As much as staff change is seen as a negative it can also act as a strong positive. Clearly there is a tipping point.

Implementation of the BPE design in a school is best undertaken during periods of stability within senior school leadership.

Significant resources (internal and external) need to be applied to the work to maximise the chances of successful implementation of such an all-encompassing change to our work with students.

Recommendations

Transformational practice always creates forces that 'push and pull' back to 'what was'. These recommendations support schools to counteract roadblocks and maintain fidelity to the design.

1. Anticipate the pull towards traditionalist modes of teaching and adequately resource strategies that use the transformational design to counteract the pushback to traditional practices.
    i. Provide adequate resources (internal and external) to prevent or overcome roadblocks.
    ii. Leaders and teachers should be allocated adequate time to develop the structural, cultural and pedagogical practices that support the design.
2. Schools must develop strong staff transition processes for employment, induction and professional learning, particularly in the context of progressing their implementation plan.
3. Schools need to display the successes of their transformative practice and identify how they are tending to external systems requirements within the design and their specific contexts.
4. Schools collaborate with external supports and internal stakeholders to generate system changes that best support the school to implement the BPE design.

Using External Support

Given the extent and depth of this transformational design for learning and school it is important for school staff to seek the support provided by the national and international network of BPE. In this research leaders and teachers describe this support by way of training, professional learning, coaching, conferences, materials, etc as valuable. Given the extent and power of the forces that were at play – outlined in the previous section – they describe the support of BPEA and the power of the larger network as essential. Staff feel assured that BPEA works nationally on innovation with other sectors and providers on behalf of all involved. In particular the school staff were keen for BPEA to develop a Graduate Certificate for students awarded by way of a BPE Portfolio.

Recommendations

Schools should actively seek external support to explore, learn, adapt and integrate the transformational design to their individual school contexts.

1. School leaders and teachers should be active participants of national and international networks of teachers who are utilising the design.

    i. Academies and schools should connect with a local network of schools (or online) to undertake school visits; share resources; share ideas and to connect with others who are undertaking the work.

2. School leaders and teachers should attend school visits, study tours, conferences, workshops, professional learning and network development days.

    i. The BPE Foundation Program should be completed by all associated staff prior to implementation of the design and all staff employed 'down the track' should also complete it.

3. Coaches be made available to work with leaders, teachers and the wider school community to help explore, plan, adapt and integrate the design over time.

4. Use the action learning and reflective practice cycles – as utilised in the Research Circle – to scaffold learning via teacher Advisory learning communities.

STUDENT LEARNING

Early Indicators

Student interest identified
Students understand Learning Goals
Can use Personal Learning Plans
Family Learning Plan meetings
Exhibitions - family in too!
Self-reflective Journals and Narratives
Portfolios in development

BPE DISTINGUISHERS	DESIGN DECISIONS	EMERGING
1. Academic Rigour (Head Heart Hand) 2. Leaving to Learn: Learning through Internships 3. Personalisation: One student at a time	**CHANGES TO PRACTICE**	Student interest a focus In-depth learning in the interest Reflective practices being established
4. Authentic Assessment 5. Collaboration for learning 6. Learning in Advisory 7. Trust, respect and care 8. Everyone's a leader 9. Families are enrolled too	**CHANGES TO STRUCTURE**	Advisories Advisory Teachers Leaving to Learn and Internships timetabled Family Learning Plan meetings structured into timetable Family involvement in exhibitions enabled
10. Creating futures 11. Teachers and leaders are learners too. 12. Diverse and enduring partnerships	**CHANGES TO CULTURE**	Family involved in Learning Plan and Exhibition and listened to. Every student matters and know they matter. They are known well by an adult in the school. They participate in creating their learning plan and advisory. Community is involved in school activity and as mentors

	EXPLORING	IMPLEMENTING	
IMPLEMENTATION PHASES	ENGAGING STARTING		BY THE MIDWAY CRISIS OR ZONE O...
CYCLES OF ACTION	REVIEW DESCRIBE & EXPLAIN EXPLORE DESIGN PLAN AS A CYCLE	DESCRIBE REVIEW ACTION REPLAN / DESCRIBE ACTION REVIEW REPLA...	
WHOLE SCHOOL ADOPTING BPE	YEAR ONE		YEAR TWO
BPE ACADEMY IN A LARGE SCHOOL	YEAR ONE		YEAR TWO
GREENFIELD BPE SCHOOL	YEAR ONE		YEAR TWO

OL: FROM IDEA TO REALITY

Along the way	Achievement Standards	INTERNATIONAL BIG PICTURE LEARNING CREDENTIAL
Assessing Learning Goals Assessing level of engagement Assessing level of independence Quality of work improving Evidence of student change that everyone notices	Learning Goal Standards Depth in at least one interest Personal learning goals Readiness for Post-school life Certificates/Courses completed Graduate Portfolio	
IMPLEMENTING	**REALISED**	
Leaving to learn Internships Assess against learning goals Narratives	Senior Project Autobiography Post-school Project Portfolio	**COHERENT**
Staff advisory time Community participation sought and enabled Creating new partnerships to enhance student learning possibilities Emerging student leadership activities	Staff selection Staff induction Staff support Staff, student, family and community decision making	**FIDELITY** **SUSTAINABLE** **SHARED LEADERSHIP**
Advisory culture maturing. Student voice key to creating school culture. Family involved and engaged Staff is a learning community Everyone has experience of leadership Culture of trust respect and care Community is engaged in and with the school	Developed people in a developed accountable school Mature advisory Mature advisory teacher Mature school Mature leadership Community learning and changing too.	**INNOVATION EMERGING**
POINT POSSIBLE F COMPLACENCY REFINING	**INTEGRATING** EMBEDDING INNOVATING	
DESCRIBE REVIEW REPLAN ACTION DESCRIBE REVIEW REPLAN ACTION	**PREPARE FOR ACCREDITATION**	**A BIG PICTURE SCHOOL**
TO SEVEN	**YEAR EIGHT TO TEN**	
TO FOUR	**YEAR FIVE TO SIX**	**A BIG PICTURE ACADEMY**
TO FOUR	**YEAR FIVE TO SIX**	**A BIG PICTURE SCHOOL**

the Water: Coaching School Through their Improvement Efforts, Small Schools Project, Seattle. p, 10.

Appendix ONE: BPEA and BPE

The Big Picture Education Distinguishers Summary.

Further detail about the design can be found at www.bigpicture.org.au

Important note

This summary is not intended as a 'commercial' for BPE. The research sought to report on what happened, what people think, and issues and solutions as they see them in the context of implementing a significant innovation in learning and school.

What is BPEA?

Big Picture Education Australia is a not-for-profit network of educators implementing a distinctive design for schools in a range of different community settings. Our purpose is to influence vital changes in education. Our motivation is that too many of our young people are not achieving their potential. Many are not engaged in school learning and some do not complete school. BPEA is supported by philanthropy, government, project partnerships, network membership and payment for services.

We don't own or manage schools. We work with education systems and schools to adapt the innovative BPE design to fit various contexts. Across Australia there are over 50 sites exploring and implementing the BPE design. These are new schools, existing schools converting to BPE, Big Picture Academies within schools, and other places trying to improve learning.

BPEA was founded by Viv White and John Hogan with the support of a committed and experienced team of innovators. Their interest in, and focus on, whole school change around a set of design distinguishers arose out of the deficiencies of previous sporadic and often piecemeal interventions. They drew on the success of Big Picture Learning (BPL) in the United States, especially through the work of Elliot Washor and Dennis Littky. White and Hogan have reshaped the distinguishers of BPL to further emphasise academic rigour. They also developed an implementation process to reflect their own experience of successful school innovation. Big Picture schools in several countries maintain close contact through the Big Picture Learning International Network (BPLIN).

What is the BPE design for learning and school?

Big Picture schools educate one student at a time, within a community of learners. They are living proof that all young people, and especially our under-served students, can succeed in school. This happens by adhering to four basic principles:

1. Learning must be based on each student's interests and needs.
2. Curriculum must be relevant to the students and allow them to do real work outside of school.
3. Students must connect to adult mentors outside school who share their interests and support their learning.
4. Students' development and abilities must be measured by the quality of their work and how this work changes them.

Every day we strive to form deep ties that connect students, teachers, families, mentors and the entire community. We devote extra time and energy to helping our students succeed in high school and go beyond, into further learning or work. This is why Big Picture Education works.

BPE students learn together in small groups, called advisories, with an advisory teacher who guides the same group for a number of years. A parent or adult advocate of each student is also enlisted as an active resource for the school community. All students help create their own curriculum, a personal one, that reflects and expands their own interests and aspirations. The school days include off-campus internships generated from each student's interests. This real-life training could be in a law office, an art studio, a research laboratory, a hospital, or a national park - it could be anywhere.

BPE students also take on further education including courses in various certificates and at TAFE and university. Each term they exhibit their work to their advisory teacher, peers, parents, mentors and others in the community. Students help each other to reinforce their individual passions for work in the real world. The result is a self-teaching community of learners where no one feels left out. BPE students learn how to enhance their self-determination and become intrinsically motivated learners.

There are a number of design elements that, in combination, distinguish BPE from other designs of schooling. These elements or 'distinguishers' influence everything that advisory teachers, leaders, students and families do in a Big Picture school or program - and this extends to the way the school is structured, managed and operated. Educators will recognise all the distinguishers. Indeed, some have characterised innovative practice for years. But it is every single one of the distinguishers, in combination, which creates a breakthrough strategy.

The 12 distinguishers

1. **Academic rigour: head, heart and hand**
Big Picture schools have a strong intellectual purpose for each and every student. Students are continually challenged to deepen their learning and improve their performance across five learning goals: quantitative reasoning, empirical reasoning, social reasoning, communication skills and personal qualities. A high standard of academic work is expected of all students.

2. **Leaving to learn: learning through internships**
Students work two days a week in an interest-based internship with a mentor from the community on an intellectually rigorous real-world project that is connected to their learning goals.

3. **Personalisation: one student at a time**
With the help of the advisory teacher and parents, each student develops a learning plan that explores their interests and passions, and identifies personal learning goals, authentic project work and wider curriculum requirements. This plan is reviewed and updated regularly.

4. **Authentic assessment**
Each term the students exhibit their portfolios of work to a panel made up of the advisory teacher, family, peers, the mentor, and others from the community. They provide evidence of progress against their learning goals and they reflect on the process of their learning.

5. **Collaboration for learning**
Students work in one-on-one or small group learning environments around their interests both inside and outside the school. Through internships, the community plays an integral role in the education of the students.

6. **Learning in advisory**
Students are in an advisory group of no more than 17 students and an advisory teacher. They stay in the same advisory for much of their secondary education. The advisory teacher manages each student's learning plan and ensures that all learning goals and the National Curriculum are covered.

7. **Trust, respect and care**
One of the striking things about Big Picture schools is the ease with which students interact with adults in both the school and the wider community. A culture of trust, respect and care is shared between students and adults, as well as among students themselves.

8. **Everyone's a leader**
In Big Picture Schools, leadership is shared among the principal, staff, students, family, and community partners. Opportunities for leadership are created for everyone.

9. **Families are enrolled too**
Big Picture schools aim for real family engagement. Parents or carers are regarded as essential members of the learning team, beginning with the application process and progressing through to learning plan development, exhibitions and graduation.

10. **Creating futures**
All students are expected to graduate from school to further learning. They are prepared for, and connected to, opportunities for learning at university and/or other further education.

11. **Teachers and leaders are learners too**
New ideas constantly emerge as part of the learning cycle process. Teachers and leaders in Big Picture schools and programs regularly attend to new ideas and learn new ways of working. They develop reflective practice and find ways of sharing this learning with others.

12. **Diverse and enduring partnerships**
A Big Picture School has a strong focus on building and creating external partnerships. These include partnerships with: the family, mentors, local councils, businesses, universities, TAFE colleges and other training providers. These partnerships give students the opportunities to pursue their learning and achieve their goals.

The Map4U Project

A federal government called "MAP4U" or Murdoch's Aspiration and Pathways for University project. The MAP4U project sought to "develop sustainable programs that will grow the number of eligible, willing and able students to attend university."[26] That is, to increase the numbers of students moving into tertiary education from a low socio-economic communities in outer metropolitan Perth, Western Australia.

The Big Picture Academy (BPA) Project

The Big Picture Academy (BPA) Project was part of the MAP4U project

In the BPA Project Big Picture Academies were introduced and supported in three schools. A whole-school Big Picture orientation was supported in two other small schools. Two additional schools, from another low socio-economic region, that had been following a Big Picture approach for a number of years were also engaged through this project to take a leadership role in the work.

Each of the five project schools implemented the Big Picture design to different degrees around the key BPE practices. Fidelity to the design varied between them. None of the academies/schools were fully Big Picture in terms of all distinguishers and all key elements.

The Research

The research the implementation of the BPA project in the project five schools. The Research Questions included:

1. What are the processes and consequences of establishing a Big Picture Academy within existing school structures or implementing it across a small school?
2. How do student engagement, learning and aspirations develop in a Big Picture Academy?
3. How does the Big Picture Academy influence teacher learning?

Previous publications

https://www.bigpicture.org.au/big-picture-academy-bpa-project-map4u-murdoch-university

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[26] http://www.map4u.com.au accessed 26th October 17

Appendix THREE: Interview Questions

Round 1 Term 1 2014

SCHOOL LEADERS

Indicative Interview Questions

1. Why did you decide to establish a Big Picture Academy/approach in your school?
2. What have been some of the challenges in this process?
3. How is the experience affecting the culture of the broader school?
4. What does the Big Picture Academy/approach offer students, the broader school community, teachers, parents etc?
5. What are you learning through the experience of establishing a Big Picture Academy?

ADVISORY TEACHERS

Indicative Interview Questions

1. How did you come to be appointed an advisor in Big Picture Education?
2. Is your role different in a Big Picture Education environment?
3. Compare learning and teaching in a Big Picture school to other schools you have experienced.
4. What are you learning about teaching through Big Picture Education?
5. What are you learning about student learning through Big Picture Education?
6. How do the students respond to the Big Picture approach?
7. What is challenging?

BPE School COACHES

Indicative Interview Questions

1. What are common issues that teachers are grappling with?
2. What are the ways teachers are finding to respond?
3. How do teachers' understandings of their role as Advisory Teacher develop?
4. How do teachers' relationships with students develop in the BPE approach?

Round 2, Term 4 2014

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Indicative Interview Questions

1. Why did you decide to establish a Big Picture Academy/approach in your school?
2. Adapt questions for two Principal who came in after the decision was made.
3. What have been some of the challenges in this process?
4. How is the experience affecting the culture of the broader school?
5. What does the Big Picture Academy/approach offer students, the broader school community, teachers, parents etc?
6. What are you learning through the experience of establishing a Big Picture Academy?
7. What key decisions have you made about the Big Picture Academy/approach in 2014?
8. How were those decisions reached?
9. What is the thinking behind those decisions?

SCHOOL LEADERS

Indicative Interview Questions

1. When we spoke at the beginning of the year – you told us something about the history of the Big Picture Academy/approach in your school and the reasons why it was implemented. How has the BP program developed this year?
2. What have been some of the challenges this year for Big Picture?
3. How is the Big Picture Academy/approach affecting the culture of the broader school?
4. What does the Big Picture Academy/approach offer students, the broader school community, teachers, parents etc?
5. What are you learning through the experience of establishing a Big Picture Academy/approach?

ADVISORY TEACHERS

Indicative Interview Questions

1. When we spoke at the beginning of the year – you told us something about your involvement with the Big Picture Academy/approach in your school and how you came to be involved. How has BPE developed this year?
2. How is your role as a Big Picture Advisory Teacher developing? (Prompt: relationships with students; relationships with parents; relationships with colleagues; learning and teaching in Big Picture ...)
3. What are you learning about teaching through Big Picture Education?
4. What are you learning about student learning through Big Picture Education?
5. How do the students respond to the Big Picture approach?
6. What is challenging?

BPEA School COACHES

Indicative Interview Questions

1. What are common issues that teachers are grappling with?
2. What are the ways teachers are finding to respond?
3. How do teachers' understandings of their role as Advisor develop?
4. How do teachers' relationships with students develop in the BPA/approach?

Round 3, Late Term 3/Early Term 4 2015

Interview Questions

1. It's been a while since you were interviewed for that portrait… How have things been going since then?
2. How are you feeling now about the choice to join the Big Picture Academy or this school?
3. What have you been studying this year?
4. (Prompts: How well have you learnt that? … why? Can you assess the level of your knowledge in the things you've been studying? … what is the basis of that assessment?)
5. What have you learnt about yourself since we saw you last?
6. (Prompt: What have you learnt about yourself as a student/ a learner?)
7. How has your relationship with your Advisory Teacher developed over this time?
8. How has your relationship with other students developed over this time?
9. How has your relationship with your family developed over this time?
10. How have your exhibitions been? (Prompt – what did you talk about? Who was present? What have you learned through this having to do exhibitions?)
11. Have you been able to take any steps for your future careers/study/ life? (Prompt – research; shadow days; internship? Prompt – what have you learned through these processes?)

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Indicative Interview Questions

1. You've now had BP Academy/orientation for X years, how has the experience been for the school? (Prompt: what have you learnt from the experience?)
2. If you were starting out now, with the knowledge that you have, what would you not do/do differently and what would you do the same/more of? (Prompt: What have been some of the challenges in this process?)
3. How is the experience affecting the culture of the broader school? (Prompt: What does the Big Picture Academy/approach offer the broader school community, teachers, parents etc?)
4. What key decisions have you made about the Big Picture Academy/approach in 2015?
5. (Prompt: How were those decisions reached? What is the thinking behind those decisions?)
6. If you were advising another Principal who was thinking of starting up a BP Academy/approach what would you say

SCHOOL LEADERS

Interviewer preparation

Take a copy of the 12 BP Distinguishers for them to have a look at in the interview.

Indicative Interview Questions

1. When we spoke last year – you told us something about the history of the Big Picture Academy/ approach in your school and the reasons why it was implemented. How has the BP program developed since our last interview?
2. What have been some of the challenges this year (2015) for Big Picture?
3. How is the Big Picture Academy/approach affecting the culture of the broader school?
4. (Prompt: What does the Big Picture Academy/approach offer students, the broader school community, teachers, parents etc?
5. What are you learning through the experience of establishing a Big Picture Academy/approach?
6. How has your school engaged with the 12 Big Picture distinguishers? (Prompt: have you focused on some and not others? How close are you to the design?)
7. If you were starting out now, with the knowledge that you have, what would you not do/do differently and what would you do the same/more of?
8. If you were advising another School Leader who was thinking of starting up a BP Academy/approach what would you say?

ADVISORY TEACHERS

Interviewer preparation

Take a copy of the 12 BP Distinguishers for them to have a look at in the interview.

Indicative Interview Questions

1. When we spoke last year – you told us about being an Advisory Teacher and how you came to be involved. How has the BP Academy/orientation developed this year (2015)?
2. How is your role as a Big Picture Advisory Teacher developing? (Prompt: relationships with students; relationships with parents; relationships with colleagues; learning and teaching in Big Picture ...)
3. What are you learning about teaching through Big Picture Education?
4. What are you learning about student learning through Big Picture Education?
5. How do the students respond to the Big Picture approach?
6. What have been the challenges to being an Advisory Teacher? (Prompt: structural – school level; classroom level; families/community)
7. What has supported you as an Advisory Teacher?
8. How has your school engaged with the 12 Big Picture distinguishers? (Prompt: have you focused on some and not others? How close are you to the design?)
9. If a teacher comes to you for advice about being an Advisory Teacher what would you say?

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RESEARCH BRIEF No. 3
Frameworks for Analysis of the Case Studies

Introduction

As outlined in Research Brief 1, Ethnographic case studies are to be developed for each of the five schools. They will document the steps and the experience of the implementation of a Big Picture academy (or the integration of the BPE design) in a school. To develop these case studies members of the research team will spend a few days in schools twice this year and in 2015. They will interview selected students, parents, staff, mentors and relevant school leaders involved in the Big Picture academy or program. This information will be supplemented by observations and samples of student, teacher and leader work associated with the daily activities of the Big Picture academy or program.

This will provide us with a substantial picture of how the BPE academies are progressing. We will gain insight into the early phases of implementation and a stronger understanding of what helps, hinders and works. We need some different frameworks to look at; ones that help us sift, sort and understand how Big Picture academies work in schools. We describe three of these frameworks below. All three can be used to guide development as much as they can be used to explore progress and understand action. As such, we thought you might find them useful in guiding your work. They will help the research team better notice, describe and understand what is happening in your school and further explain the outcomes.
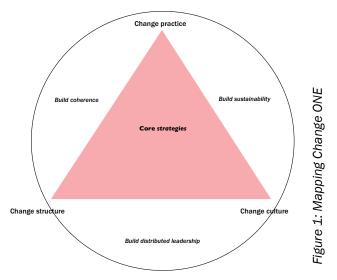
Framework ONE[1]: School Change Framework

Undertaking a change of design for schooling is not just a matter of changing practices in the classroom. It involves changing practices in the school. Some of these practices are not possible if the school structures aren't altered to enable the change. Change is not sustainable without a culture in the school to support, encourage and critique the attempts to make changes to practice.

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1. Marzolf, E.A. with Lambert, B.B., (2005) *Reading the Water: Coaching School Through their Improvement Efforts*, Small Schools Project, Seattle. p, 10.

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School Change Framework

Figure 1: Mapping Change ONE

The framework illustrated here is similar to a number of 'whole school change' frameworks that have evolved over the past 30 years, particularly in middle years schooling and high school generally[2].

One small example: for internships to be part of the practice of the academy/school requires a structure (timetable) that allows students to be out of the school for up to two days per week. Further, the structure has to enable the advisory teacher to make regular visits to the internship placements to meet with student and mentor.

Change is messy and complex. It takes time, particularly when the changes relate to 'a way of working' rather than just a technique. This framework reminds us of the importance of finding coherence, seeking sustainability and building leadership within and through the school. There are many ways of doing this and they don't happen just because we try to attend to them.

We can seek to identify what is changing for each of the key elements of practice, structure and culture. We can explore the relationships in and between these elements. We can do that for each advisory, for each academy and for each school. We can notice how the work in an academy is influencing, or not, work in other parts of the school. We can notice how these things move and flow over time from planning to transition to implementation and finally to integration – or not.

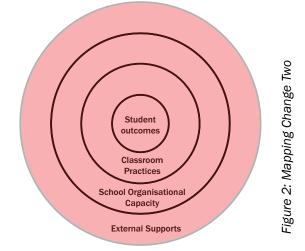## Framework 2[3]: Student learning at the heart and taking account of external forces

Another way 'in' to the data puts student learning at the heart or our work and moves from student, to classroom, to school, and to the external supports (or forces). This framework for school was developed by Newmann and Wehlage. It later formed the basis of an influential Australian study – the Queensland School Restructuring Longitudinal Study[4] that formed key planks of the New Basics Project[5] in Queensland and Quality Teaching[6] in NSW and the ACT school systems.

This model contends that the core activities of the school – including curriculum, instruction, assessment, timetabling, teacher development, leadership development, employment of staff, and engagement with parents – all have student learning as the aim. The authors showed that students learn more when they are involved in the construction of knowledge and engage with disciplined inquiry and where student work has value beyond the school.

As with the previous framework, this model requires pedagogy and organisational capacity to be not only aligned to the student learning vision in mind but also in action. The first frame focuses on these.

Context is crucial in any change process. We need to pay attention to it. 'External Supports' in this frame includes: family, local community, education systems, and government policy (local, state and federal). We are interested in the extent to which these expectations, forces, supports and constraints are helping implement and develop the work in the school. We are interested in what is helping or not helping and why.

Key Factors for school restructuring

Figure 2: Mapping Change Two

2 For example, see also Harradine, J. (1996) *What research tells us about school reform*, National Schools Network Newsletter, 2 (2), pp. 4-5, Connell, R and White, V (1989) *Child poverty and educational action*, in Edgar, D et al (Eds) Child Poverty, Sydney, Allen and Unwin and Smyth, J et al (2003) *Tackling Leaving at its Source: a case of reform in the middle years of schooling*. British Journal of Sociology of Education, Vol. 24, No 2. 2003

3 Newmann, F.M and Wehlage, G.G (1995) *Successful School Restructuring A report to the Public and Educators*. Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, Wisconsin Center for Education Research.

4 Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Sutdy (2001) *The Queensland school reform longitudinal study final report* (QSRLS). Education Queensland, Brisbane.

5 Education Queensland (2000*) New Basics Project*. Technical Paper. Education Queensland.

6 Ladwig, J et al (2003) *Quality teaching in NSW public schools*. NSW Department of Education and Training.

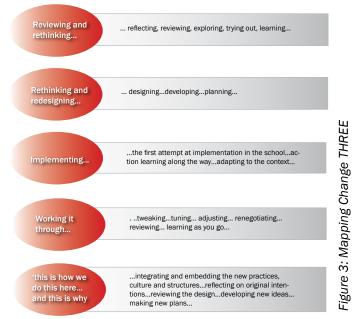## Framework 3[7]: A Long Term View of Development

Michael Fullan[8] once wrote: 'Change is a journey not a blueprint. Change is non-linear, dynamic and loaded with uncertainty and excitement, sometimes travelling through unexpected places'. It may seem ironic that the third frame – see below – appears to assume that change is rational, linear and predictable. On closer inspection you can see that:

- the design - and its interpretation - are not assumed or defined from the start.
- trying out ideas starts early even before everything is sorted in theory.
- action learning and reflective practice are assumed in every step. Learning from our actions assumes that things change along the way too.
- each new development and each new iteration of action learning can influence the next steps and the next stage – the what, the why, the how.
- different aspects of your work may be at different stages of development.
- different parts of the school may be at different stages of development.
- different elements of the above frameworks may be at different stages of development.

But the framework can help the designer, the planner and the leader map out what might be needed to get through one stage into the next. The framework can help the researchers make sense of what has happened, where things are up to and what has and hasn't helped get to the stage of development.

So what are we looking for?

We set out to notice. We do this by describing what we see rather than judging what we see. We then start to look for patterns, connections, changes and differences. We look to see what evidence we have to support our conclusions.

For each case:

- Does it flow over time?
- Does it have fidelity with the BPE Design?
- What is changing?
- What is emerging?
- Is there innovation and development of the BPE design?
- What are we learning? (about teacher change, school change, academy change, school leadership, and student learning.)

Across cases:
- Are there patterns?
- Are there differences?
- What are we learning? (about teacher change, school change, academy change, school leadership, and student learning.)

And our big question for this part of the research project is:

How do school communities effectively implement a BPE academy or BPE orientation within an established school?

A long term view of change

Reviewing and rethinking…	… reflecting, reviewing, exploring, trying out, learning…
Rethinking and redesigning…	… designing…developing…planning…
Implementing…	…the first attempt at implementation in the school…action learning along the way…adapting to the context…
Working it through…	. ..tweaking…tuning… adjusting… renegotiating… reviewing… learning as you go…
'this is how we do this here… and this is why	…integrating and embedding the new practices, culture and structures…reflecting on original intentions…reviewing the design…developing new ideas… making new plans…

Figure 3: Mapping Change THREE

7 This framework previously outlined in ANSN (2007) R*eviewing, Rethinking, and Redesigning School*, Australian National Schools Network.
   It is informed by the following work:
   Fullan, M. (1982). *The meaning of educational change*. New York: Teachers College Press.
   Fullan, M., & Stiegelbauer, S. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change*. 2nd ed. New York: Teachers College Press.
   Harvey, G *A Developmental Model for Change*, Social Ecology Associates NSW & The Australian National Schools Network.
   Hogan, J (2001) *Finding a way through…*, Redgum Consulting Pty Ltd.
   Hogan, J., Norris, L., Norris, N. and Norris, N. (2000). *The LOTE Planning Framework*: *in NALSAS*, Using the LOTE Planning Framework, Canberra: DETYA.
   Norris, N and Goddard, D (2005) *The Strategic Action Framework*, Collaborative Systemic Change Pty Ltd.
8 Fullan, M (1993) *Change Forces* London The Falmer Press.

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RESEARCH BRIEF No. 4
The Research Circle

Introduction

The research circle is our third methodological approach – along with ethnographic case studies and surveys - to our research in the Big Picture Academies Project.

The voices and knowledge of teachers are integral to school based research processes. Teachers are a vital source of data about student learning, classroom practices, school development, and how their own learning is evolving and how that is transforming them; leaders too. So the research circle brings together the same group of teachers and leaders - on a regular basis over time - and supports them to describe, and document, their practice and learning.

A second purpose of this 'coming together' is to give the members of the group an opportunity to share their stories with each other, and to give and receive feedback from each other.

Thirdly, the group acts as a learning space where people can work on individual and shared dilemmas and problems. Teachers and leaders work with each other to enrich their understanding of the context and where possible to develop strategies to try out in practice. The research circle gives them the opportunity to report back on how it went in action.

Fourthly, the research circle will enable participants to notice and understand each other's perspectives and interpretations of ideas and events. We set out to establish a learning community that allows people to speak for themselves 'without fear or favour' where institutional hierarchy and system constraints have less influence. Indeed, they can even be discussed.

Finally then, by working like this together over time, the group participants will begin to create shared understandings and build new knowledge together; not with a view to agreeing on everything but developing a coherent understanding of their learning.

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The Research Questions

We have identified four key research questions that will continue to guide our work together in the research circle.

A.   How do school communities effectively implement a Big Picture academy or Big Picture Education orientation within an established school?

B.   How does the Big Picture Education design influence student engagement and learning?

C.   How does the experience of being in a Big Picture academy or Big Picture Education inspired school influence student aspirations and capacity to undertake further education?

D.   What are the teachers learning?

Participants will hone in on aspects and questions of interest to them to enable the work to be manageable and get to depth.

The Structure of a Research Circle

The research circle will consist of at least one advisory teacher and one leader (associated with the Big Picture academy) from each site. Where possible the membership stays the same for the duration of the life of the research circle. Other participants will include the research associates from the research project, and the Big Picture school coaches from the Big Picture Academy Project. The BPA Research team will facilitate the research circle in collaboration with the whole group.

The research circle will consist of 2-day workshops in each of Terms 3 and 4 this year and Terms 1 and 4 next year. There will be 1-day workshops in each of Terms 2 and 3 in 2015.

The initial day will involve sharing people's journeys to this point; identifying issues, ideas and questions of interest to them; exploring approaches to writing, doing action research and using the Big Picture reflective practices already built into the design.

Day two will involve doing some initial writing, critique and multiple drafts. Time will be given to exploring some issues together, making plans for 'what next' and to also noticing and documenting what the group is learning from doing this work together.

The Typical Research Circle Day
Once under way, each research circle develops its own unique 'look and feel'. No two groups are ever the same. Things evolve, develop and mature. Typically the group participants come together to share their stories (along with various examples and artefacts) of what has happened since the last meeting. People document this while it is fresh in their mind. Good ideas, issues and questions emerge; some of which are worked on by the group. Occasional workshops, on topics agreed to by the group, are made (for example an aspect of the Big Picture Education design, an approach to doing research or an issue that has emerged from the research.)

The second two-day workshop in 2015

These two days focus on bringing our work together to an end. Each participant works on their case with the help of the group. The whole group undertakes to identify the key ideas, issues and learning that they want to document and works together to find the best way of doing that. Agreements are made about 'what next'.

Agreements for working together in the group
As indicated above, this work requires a respectful and safe, yet challenging, space. It is imperative that participants feel safe, valued and equal. However it is also crucial for people to participate fully, listen for understanding, co-operate in good faith, and appreciate, and respect difference. And yet, the group has to find ways to challenge assumptions, give and get feedback, and engage in critical conversations[2]. No group can work perfectly with such a list but participants can make agreements to try hard to work at it.

The Key Principles of a Research Circle[2]

The process of the research circle is intentionally interactive, exploratory and action learning. The following set of principles has underpinned the work of the Australian National Schools Network (ANSN) in research circles over two decades:

1.   Engage in an on-going program examination of the work and learning.

2.   Engage in inquiry which is informed by principles of social justice and which is directed towards improving learning outcomes for all students.

3.   Engage in collaborative and democratic processes both in the development of the school based strategies and the interpretation of the data.

4.   Commit to principles that give precedence to the questions generated in the school setting.

5.   Ownership of the results of the inquiry is jointly negotiated by the research circle.

6.   The results being published only with the approval of the participants and with due acknowledgment of the contribution of all members and with respect for confidentiality where appropriate.

1. See also the ANSN norms as outlined in Stewart, G with Hogan, J (2003) *The Reflective Teacher*, p, 73, Australian National Schools Network and DETWA.
2. White, V et al (2001) *The Heart of Teaching, How can we use student work to strengthen our professional practice?* , p.45, Australian National Schools Network in partnership with the Coalition of Essential Schools (USA).

A final word on 'the group' – three levels of intention, action and impact[3]

Evaluation of training and development tends to focus on the individual and his or her response to a particular day, content, and/or leader. In the research circle we are very conscious of working as individuals but in a group and for the benefit of the wider community in which we live and work. We are not just 'there' for our own benefit.

1. Individual participation – participants learn from their own experiences. Teachers and leaders research their own work. The learning is directed by the individual. Individuals work and learn to describe existing theories and to develop new theories underpinning the actions enhancing their personal practical knowledge.

2. Working with a group – participants do this work with others for support and challenge for their learning but also to provide support and challenge for others in the group. Further working as a group creates new learning that individuals can adopt, adapt and try out.

3. For the benefit of community – sharing learning with wider community (school, system, profession) and for the new actions to help a community (school, system, profession) achieve better outcomes for more people.

Action Research[4]

So our approach to the work of the Research Circle is very much in the tradition of action research. The Action Research Model, as described by Kemmis et al is shown in the figure below as a series of spirals which include planning, acting and observing,

reflecting and revising the plan. The process is then repeated with the new insights and learning helping to shape the next phase. This process is likely to occur many times during a project. Identifying where you are in the cycle at a particular time is helpful in order to keep the project in perspective and focus.

Action research as applied to the Research Circle method is participatory, social, working with people (not ON people), practical, and includes exploring the structures, contexts and the cultures that shape and constrain our work in schools.
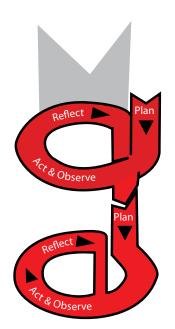
Reflective Practice[5]

A key feature of our work in the research circle is a reflective practice. We work hard at slowing down; to look at, think about and understand 'moments' from our work to help us explain our work. School leaders and teachers are constantly 'reflecting' even as they do their work. Here we are talking about the practice of deliberate slowing down to explore, examine and focus. Rogers (2002) (who based her work on John Dewey) illustrates this process in the diagram below. The research circle provides us with the time and space to practice this approach. The Reflective Practice Cycle helps remind us to continually notice and describe the activity around us, and to push ourselves to seek and find multiple interpretations and explanations for what happens. Finally it
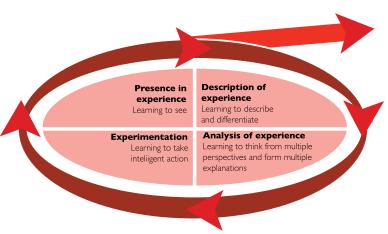
The Reflective Practice Cycle

Taking action

In our own work places

At each day (or two days) of the research circle process, participants will make plans to take action 'back in their workplace' from their reflections and also make plans to research and document what happens; teachers, leaders, researchers, school coaches, project leaders...everyone.

3. John Hogan, 2001. Adapted from notes presented at ANSN QTP District Leaders Action Learning Workshop, Perth.
4. Kemmis, S & McTaggart, R. (1988) *The Action Research Planner*, Deakin University
5. Rodgers, C (2002). *Voices Inside Schools. Seeing Student Learning: Teacher Change and the Role of Reflection*. Harvard Educational Review, Vol. 72, No. 2 Summer 2002.

Writing our story

One way the research circle 'takes action' is for participants to develop products – as individuals, interest groups and as a whole group. Over time the participants will write about their work and learning. This may result in an array of products: individual cases, stories within schools, the journey of the research circle itself, illustrations of particular issues and insights, examples of Big Picture pedagogy at work in the classroom, etc.

As a project

A key element will be for the research circle to make a contribution to the Big Picture Academy Project. There is an assumption that the work will include explorations and explanations in relation to the project research questions.

The group might also have ideas about how to help other groups of teachers and leaders embark on working together 'like this', and/or ideas for learning about Big Picture Education, and/or ideas for taking political and community action about student learning.

Leadership of the research circle

There are inevitable tensions in the work of the group in a research circle. Some of them are outlined below.

We try to 'create' time for people to come to together to share and think about their work and learning. But in reality we don't have a lot of time. We maximise this time by having leaders prepare and conduct the research circle.

We seek to be democratic but we don't have time to 'make it up as we go'. We give leaders the responsibility of taking responsibility for preparation and delivery of the research circle.

We seek to be equal but we still have different knowledge and expertise around the work. Decisions have to be made about what is to happen; how, when and to whom.

We try to create a learning community but as we get to know each other our differences become more apparent. We won't always be working at the same rates nor in the same way. Tensions arise when this happens. Not everyone has their immediate needs met.

Our work is complex and complicated. It isn't always clear about what to do and how to do it. We don't always fully understand things as we are learning about them. We still need to work even when this happens. It gets hard to do this sometimes.

To help the group through these and other issues the research circle has a leader(s). The leaders prepare for the sessions, and they make decisions about content, process and activities. The leaders identify experts who might work with and help the group as they do their work. The leaders take responsibility through the days to create a 'safe space' for the work to happen and the people to be in. Throughout, they stay conscious of where the group 'is at' (albeit, that is hard to know at times) and make decisions about what to do. The leaders will choose protocols and processes to get feedback from the group on agendas, on activities and on learning. Where they can, the leaders take their lead from the group.

The Research Team

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