



Stakeholders together adapting ideas to readjust
local systems to promote inclusive education

CHANGE MANAGEMENT TOOLKIT

Tool No. 1

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TOOLS FOR CHANGE IN EDUCATION

Tool #1. Applying Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) to Change Management

Target group (who can use it)

Any agent of change in education

Short description

„[National Adaptation Plans](#)” (NAP) foresee change in education, while presenting recommendations to several stakeholders in an education system to deepen social inclusion in their respective contexts. According to Viennet and Pont (2017), agents of change must realise that any change in education occurs within a system. So, we believe that to be able of thinking systematically while considering change in education is necessary. And Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) has been adopted to manage change since the 1970s. Being a well-tested methodology, it is not able to solve all the problems, no one is, but we believe it may be successfully applicable along the endeavours ahead.

SSM proposes to follow a set of stages in a way of securing commitment and considering a variety of interests always involved in a change process within a system. Along that way, namely in stage 1, Tools 2 and 3 will be used; in stage 2 and 3, Tool 3 is still used. So, for applying SSM, read carefully the „Detailed description of the tool and required material, attachments” bellow and follow the steps.

Detailed description of the tool and required material, attachments

Any educational context is a 'human activity system' (people working together to achieve something), i.e., an open system wherein materials, energy and information with the environment are exchanged. For that to be understood, systems thinking suggests that issues, events, forces, and incidents should not be viewed as isolated phenomena but seen as interconnected, interdependent components of a complex entity.

Thus, whenever change is at stake, several problems arise:

- organisation goals are matters of controversy; (organisational goals, set by top leaders, are assumed to be embraced by all members of the organisation, but this is not usually the case).
- formal methods usually begin with a problem statement, which may hide more basic problems; (for instance, the option to adopt inclusive practices in education maybe be neglecting the issue of poor-quality teaching practices).
- the adopted method (inclusive good practice) itself restricted what could be found out.

SSM propose to overcome those problems based on the following principles (JISC, 2012):

- problems do not have an existence that is independent of the people who perceive them.
- solutions are what people perceive to be solutions.
- people perceive problems or solutions differently because they have different beliefs about what the situation is and what it should be.
- problems are often linked to 'messes'.
- the analyst, researcher, consultant, or manager trying to solve the problem is an integral part of it.

Thus, according to SSM, to manage change, 7 stages should be followed initially:

1. Problem expression. In the development of the STAIRS' project, partners will face a problem: the implementation of „National Adaptation Plans” (NAP). Possible agents of change in the respective national contexts must be acquainted with and convinced that the NAPs recommendations apply and will solve issues of inclusion they are facing, which constitute a **problem** that needs to be expressed and addressed by whom that will be leading the change process. To collect the problem expression, two things must be done: one, to disseminate the NAP's content in order that can be known and later appropriate by the implementers; and two, to collect the implementers perceptions of the NAP. For the first, a “Communication Plan” must be drawn and implemented (Tool 2); for the second, an “Empathy Map” (Tool 3) must be filled in by everyone involved.

2. The situation analysed. Filling in Empathy Maps (EM) will provide a picture to understand all the elements that people think are involved in the problem, such as purposes, desires, fears and so on... EMs show how and whose interests agree or conflict. When analysed, issues and key tasks emerge.

3. Relevant systems and root definitions. The issues and key tasks, which emerges from the EMs, become the basis for defining relevant systems. From the analysis of the EMs, people involved can agree on has to stand out. The root definition, i.e., what is agreed, and what is still up for discussion, and that many important (but not yet agreed) things might not be mentioned. Achieving a truly agreed root definition (at least for the time being) is probably the most beneficial part of SSM.

4. Conceptual model. At this stage, those involved model 'their' ideal system to do the work. The project team will draw the project (see in the introduction to this CMT the difference between “project”, focused on work tasks, and “change”, focused on people). Criteria for choosing the best one is suggested by SSM – the five Es – efficacy (will it work at all), efficiency (will it work with minimum resources), effectiveness (does it contribute to the enterprise), ethicality (is it moral) and elegance (is it beautiful).

5. Comparison of steps 2 and 4. The conceptual model is then used for comparison with the current system. What is stopping us to do things the „ideal” way? Why do we do things the way we do them? How do we measure up to the five E's criteria? Did the results confirm our intuition? Using the knowledge gained there, to map the effects of the proposed changes on stakeholders, and add those to the project as goals/objectives to be achieved.

6. Debate of feasible and desirable changes. Building on step 5, through debate, an agenda, comprising of feasible and desirable changes can be put together, and opinions about the root problems can be changed, and finalise the project.

7. Action. Finally, the agreed changes need to be implemented developing the project (Tool 5) that was drawn, for which a project management plan must be drawn and a respective team to be appointed. It is time now for the „Change Plan” to be drawn as well (Tools 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10).

It is unlikely that the outcome will match the agreed change exactly. The hope is that some of the issues agreed in the early stages will not surface. SSM is a way of securing commitment and considering a variety of interests.

Users' guide, equipment

Equipment	Quantity
Communication plan (Tool 2)	1
Empathy Map (Tool 3)	Depending on the option (1,2 or 3) for the implementation of his tool

Project plan (Tool 5)	1
Change plan (Tools 6-10)	1

Level of difficulty (easy, medium, advanced)

Advanced

Tags

Securing commitment; Getting involvement