



Spread and sustainability research theme: co-creating a theory of large-scale, sustained change

Introduction

Our rapid evidence reviews have shown that evidence about how to implement sustained, large-scale change is lacking, typically focussing on the initiation of change with only short-term follow up rather than understanding how improvements last. To ensure the spread and longevity of future improvement initiatives – both within and outside SISCC - we collaborated with three improvement organisations to co-create a theory that explains the individual, organisational and contextual factors for achieving sustainability and scale.

Description of the work

During 2015-16 we held workshops with three improvement organisations (Unicef UK, NHS Highland and Healthcare Improvement Scotland) that work in health, social care, and education, to co-create a framework that explains the critical processes and attributes for successful large scale, sustained change. The aim of this work was twofold: i) to learn from individuals and organisations experienced in creating and sustaining large scale improvement and ii) to provide structured time for organisations to engage in self-reflection about how to improve their current practice.

We facilitated full day workshops with each of the organisations, involving 10-15 participants each, ranging from practitioner to senior executive. In a series of progressively focused small group discussions, workshop participants were asked to co-create a framework that captured the core activities involved in setting up, rolling out and sustaining improvements. This involved three stages: i) identifying ‘what works’ in implementing and sustaining individual initiatives, ii) identifying similarities and differences in ‘what works’ across different initiatives, iii) critical comparison of existing theories, models and frameworks of improvement leading to new understandings of what works at scale. Participants recorded their discussions on flipchart paper, field notes were taken by the researchers, and data were analysed using a grounded theory approach.

The theory of *Motivating Change* that emerged describes the aim of the change organisations as creating self-proliferating improvement that is driven by staff with the intrinsic motivation for change, and the capacity and capability to act upon these motivations. The role of the successful change organisation is to narrow the gap between staff’s perceived need and desire for change, and the extrinsic motivators for change (a combination of a sense of bigger purpose, government mandate, societal pressure, customer voice and research evidence). This is achieved through turning evidence of change into a motivator for improvement, and creating a

flow of trust within organisations that capitalises on positive peer pressure and suppresses infectious negativity.

A report has been prepared for each of the organisations. We are considering an event to bring the organisations together to debate and develop the findings further, continuing the process of co-creation.

Lessons learned

Understanding the necessary characteristics of sustained change at scale is essential if we are to identify and utilise the most effective ways of maintaining consistent change across a large number of settings and organisations. The theory developed here will directly inform our future improvement projects within both work streams, by providing a guiding framework to help plan, identify and monitor the necessary conditions for successfully sustaining change at a scale. The work has also been informed by, and will in turn directly inform, the context, behaviour and capacity and capability research themes in particular. The theory adds to and extends our existing understanding of the role of motivation in achieving behaviour change and, in combination with the framework arising from the context research theme, enables a more robust understanding of how to implement and sustain change within the context of a human system. The theory of *Motivating Change* is also being used to directly inform the analysis of the qualitative data in the capacity and capability research theme and we are now purposefully including a focus on motivation in our data analysis (something we had not initially anticipated) as being key to transforming students and ECPs into self-improving agents of change.

Next steps

The first step is to finalise the model through engagement with the workshop participants. Depending on their availability, this will either be through written feedback, or, ideally, through running a further workshop in which they work together on the final model. This will then be submitted for publication in a peer reviewed journal as well as widely being disseminated through existing networks such as the Improvement Hub. The theory of *Motivating Change* adds to the improvement science literature base in a way that promotes the voices of those individuals actively doing improvement work on the ground, and celebrates the expertise of organisations with successful track records in achieving and sustaining change at scale. This work exemplifies the SISCC core principles of co-creation and building on existing work.