

Implementing Strategic Change: ten lessons from research and experience in HE

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What is a strategy?

- the **principles** that underpin activity –values
- the **purpose** of the activity – the ends
- the **policy** frameworks in which to work
- the **plans** for change
- the **priorities** – now/later – within those plans
- the **processes** of decision making
- the **people** who have to make things work

Lesson 1

Do not create an implementation gap.

Do not separate stages in the process and allocate to discrete/different decision makers.

Integrate, integrate, integrate in to a whole and pursue several iterations among those involved.

In pursuing strategic change

- Leaders make it wanted
- Managers make it happen
- The rest of us make it work [or not]

So, collective commitment and shared ownership are essential.

Lesson 2

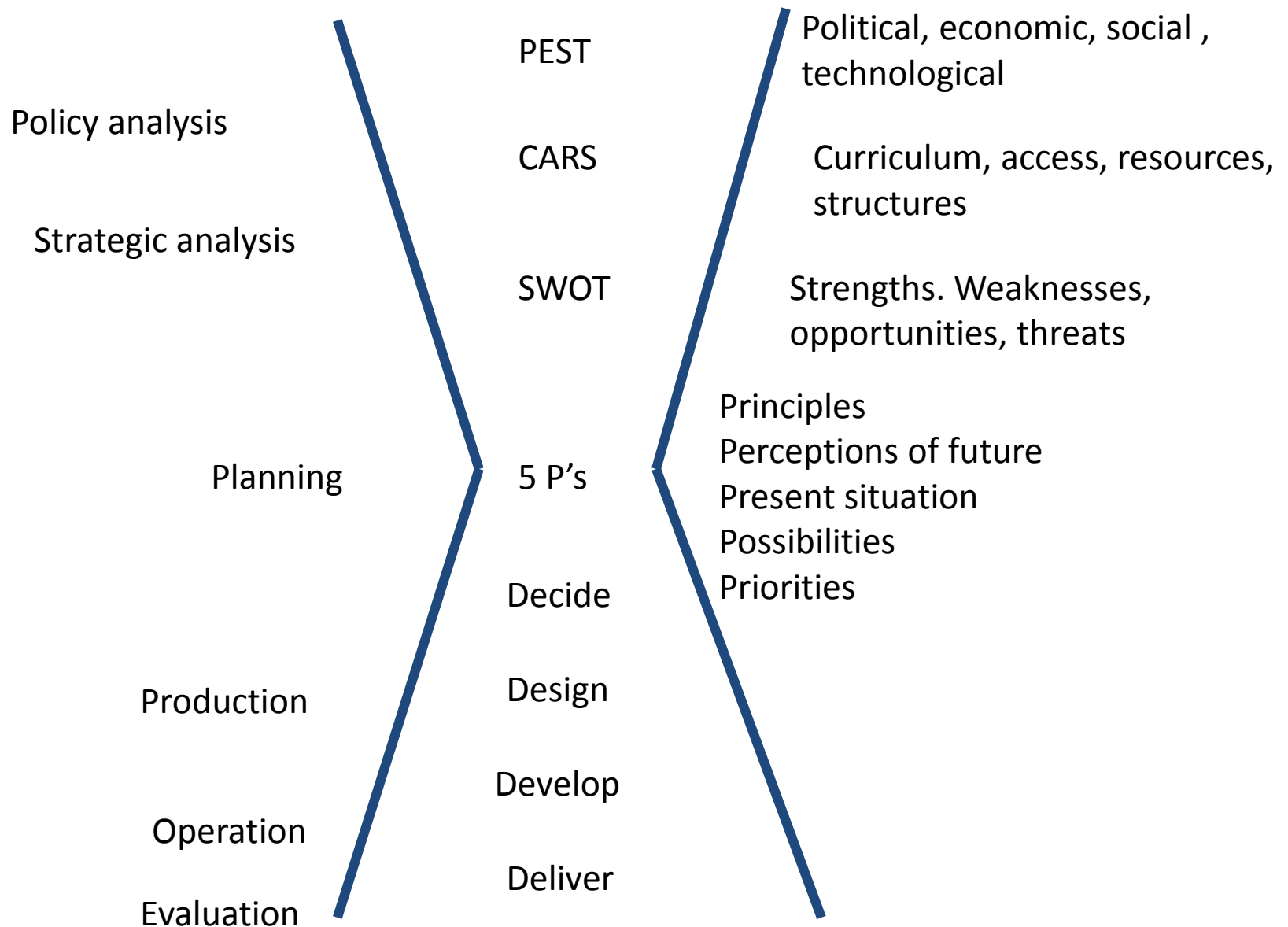
- ***Balance continuity and change, external and internal pressures***

Case studies of failure constantly feature change overload or change fatigue. People need security as a base for change. The Pareto principle of 80:20 is a good rule of thumb

The conditioning contexts

- My work has shown that leaders need to be boundary spanners, linking the external turbulence and the need for change with the internal inheritance and the need for continuity, identity and security. There is a need for a narrative, a story, which carries conviction by interpretation of the external context and relating it to internal conditions.
- It also shows that the best results come from setting a strategic framework and organisation context where others are free to develop their own ideas and to self manage, and the leader's role is to support, to offer suggestions and to sing their praises when justified, and create confidence and trust so that criticism is taken note of.
- The following slides pick upon some issues.

Strategic activity planning in Higher Education



Lesson 3

Balance analysis and action

Analysis without application and action is sterile; action without analysis and arguing through alternatives may be futile; they need integrating, or iteration between the two.

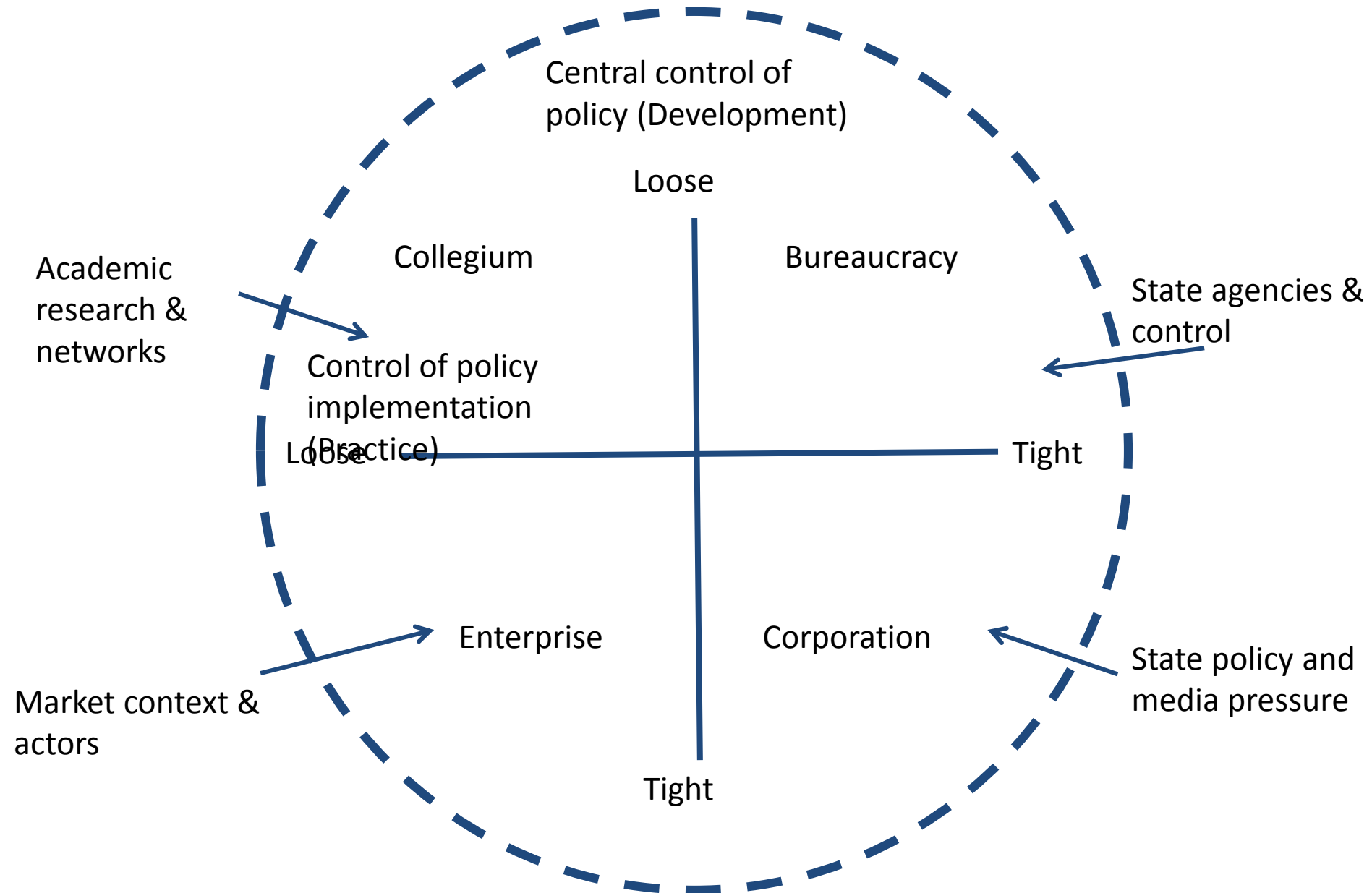
Lesson 4

Keep a strong sense of identity, values and mission; use it to filter out irrelevant pressures and to set priorities

Lesson 5

Get the cultural balance right in the organisation

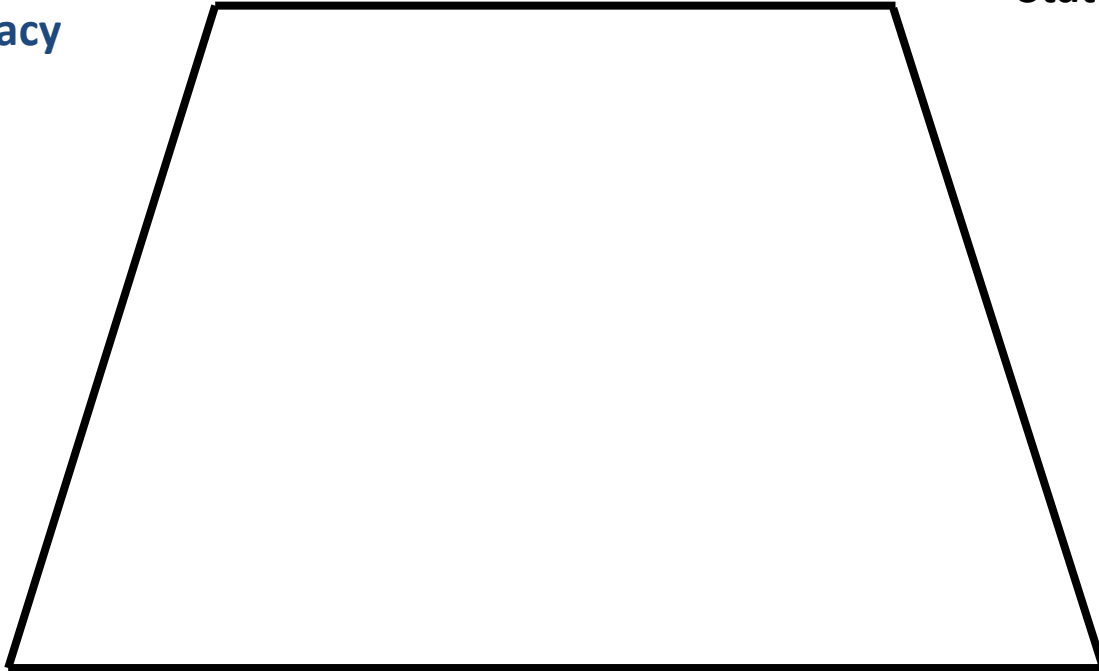
Institutional cultures



Clark's triangle adapted

State
bureaucracy

State policy



Academic
institutions
and their
staff

Market for:
▪ students
▪ graduate
employees
▪ staff
▪ project funding

Lesson 6

Have a leadership/management approach which is 'fit for purpose'

Concepts of leaders and leadership

- Great man belief [the best player becomes captain]
- Contingency – matching the leader to the situation [so creative leaders may not be good at the implementation and maintenance stages].
- Behavioural – create the context for initiative by others and offer support
- Transactional – social exchange, so contact by ‘walking about’ and listening
- Transformational – back to the great leader concept: charisma used to change culture. But...Bensimon’s study of university presidents showed the leader needed to last out resisters and change staff to recruit supporters, or the change would reverse when they left.

What does recent research say?

Franco-Santos *et al* [2014] classify performance management approaches in UK HE in to:

- *Stewardship* approaches which focus on long-term outcomes through people's knowledge and values, autonomy and shared leadership within a high trust environment
- *Agency* approaches which focus on short-term results or outputs through greater monitoring and control.

They found that

- stewardship approaches are associated with high levels of staff well-being, which is associated with higher research excellence, student satisfaction, student employability and better financial results.
- Most people in professional, administrative and support roles find agency performance management mechanisms helpful, as they provide greater clarity and focus

Kallio and Kallio [2014], studying performance management in Finnish universities, showed that
'it is based on quantitative rather than qualitative measures, and the current management-by-results system has a negative effect on work motivation among experts. The motivation to engage in creative, knowledge-intensive work...is typically intrinsic' [p574]

Leadership as social identity management

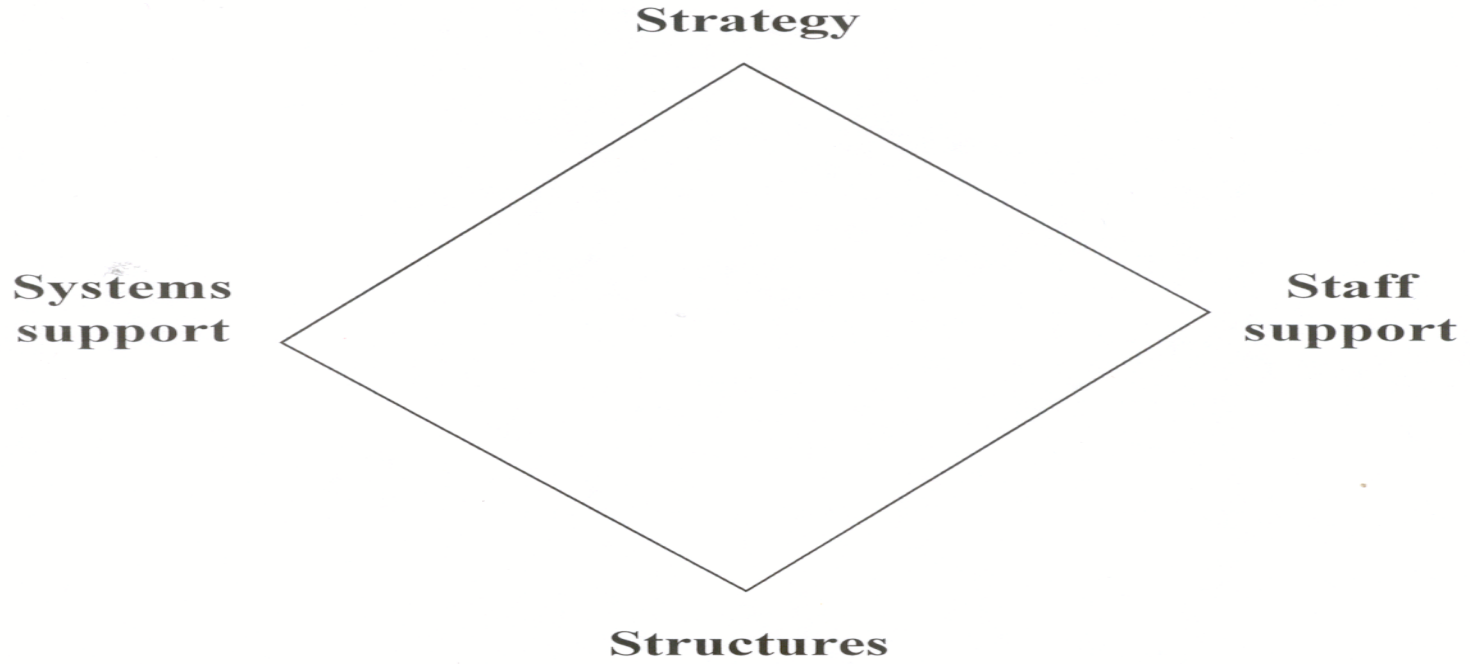
- According to Bolden *et al* [2012] in a report for the leadership Foundation for Higher Education, this has four elements:
 - Being ‘one of us’
 - Doing it for us [not to us, and preferably with us]
 - Crafting a sense of us
 - Making us matter

Lesson 7

Better to be slow and good than hasty and bad.

***Change needs time to get everything lined up
to adapt.***

Managing Change



Key elements in change

Lesson 8

Be[come] a learning organisation.

Universities may be teaching organisations; my work has shown they are poor at being learning organisations and having a learning culture permeating the whole institution.

Necessary conditions for a learning organisation

[adapted from Megginson and Pedler, 1992]

- 1. A corporate learning strategy
- 2. Participative policy-making
- 3. Information technology harnessed to:
 - Inform people
 - Empower people to ask questions and
 - Take decisions based on available data
- 4. Formative accounting – i.e. systems designed to assist learning from decisions and their consequences
- 5. Internal exchange of information on, e.g., good practice

Necessary conditions for a learning organisation

[adapted from Megginson and Pedler, 1992]

6. Reward for flexibility

7. Expectation that 'front-line' workers are used as scanners of changing environment

8. Learning shared across organisations with which the university works

9. Climate created that supports learning and a process to help people identify/exploit learning opportunities

10. Self/staff-development is for ALL members of the organisation

Lesson 9

- ***Get the right people aligned and active***

Planning change: who are the key people?

In the boxes below, locate individuals, groups and organisations with influence over curriculum decisions. This can help identify priorities for your next steps in creating a positive climate for change.

Attitude to Objectives	+
-	+ Power to influence achievement -

Implementing change: who will be useful/helpful, or not?

You cannot do everything yourself. Who will you call on to help get things done once you have approval to do something? Those in the top right may help overcome obstacles; those in the bottom left may *be* obstacles!

+	
-	+

Ready to change

Able to Change

Lesson 10

Learn from others – their experience and research analysis: that is what this has been about!

Why do change projects fail?

This list comes from a previous European project and from reports in assignments by my MBA students, who are experienced mid-career professionals in universities.

The implementation gap – why?

- In the haste to get to action, poor analysis leads to a poor plan that fails to command support, especially if there was poor involvement of those affected
- Strategy took so long to develop, it was out of time by the implementation phase
- Implementation is seen as a separate and subsequent activity
- Change overload and fatigue – need to balance continuity/security and change
- Complexity of the organisation makes commonality difficult: the planners prescribe the means as well as the ends. Need for a compass, not a map, and NOT a satnav!
- Staff are seen as ‘resources’ – assets or liabilities, not as people: they need to ‘fit’ and feel comfortable – be ‘all in it together’, and see leaders/champions as ‘one of us’. They need praise as a minimum feedback and motivation. Amazingly, it seems to be in short supply.

continued

- Implementation is delegated: leaders disengage and no 'change champions' are designated to support the process through. It is seen as a less prestigious activity.
- The change process and the new delivery are under-resourced
- Inappropriate models are imported from the private sector
- Professional autonomy provokes resistance
- There is a lack of monitoring of progress [or not] and of honest feedback from those with less power/prestige than the planners.
- Short term projects displace time needed for more profound change, including cultural change, which takes time and transactional skill
- Poor communication – people are not clear about who does what

Envoi

- Implementing strategy is not easy. 'It requires discipline, commitment, creativity, leadership and superior thinking and execution skills. In other words, all it takes is genius!'
Freedman, M. [2003] 'The genius is in the implementation',
Journal of Business Strategy 26 [p31]

- So...

be realistic

be resourceful

be resilient

But...don't be surprised at how things go. I wish you well.