Coherence
Text reflections and study guide

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Introduction

Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn wrote "*Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems*" as an action-oriented guide for state education agency leaders to make changes within their organization that will position their agency to support school districts and, ultimately, improve student achievement.

The role of state education agencies has changed drastically over the decade. Shifting expectations now require such agencies to actively drive improvement in student achievement in their states (Rhim, Hassel & Redding, 2007). However, many state education agencies are still structured to accommodate the more traditional role of ensuring compliance and distributing state and federal funding to districts (Jochim & Murphy, 2013). To meet the shifting expectations, state education agencies must rethink their operating mindset, resources, and structure to move from a compliance-driven approach to a support-driven model. To ensure improvements in student achievement in the future, a state education agency will need to be an effective capacity builder to leverage the collective capacity of districts and their leaders.

This study guide can be used by individual leaders for personal reflection, as well as by a leadership team or in a leadership workshop for collective planning. The guide contains reflection questions that are meant to move leadership teams toward taking the necessary actions to make their organization a more efficient, coherent support-based agency. Each question within the document is designed to encourage systematic reflection by state education agency leaders and to encourage teams to discuss the main points of the reading and develop action steps together.

By using the professional learning and reflection time to explore the changes necessary to build coherence at an organizational level, state education agency leaders can start moving their agency toward a more coherent, support-driven organization that will better support the schools and districts they serve.

References

Jochim, A., & Murphy, P. (2013). *The capacity challenge: What it takes for state education agencies to support school improvement.* Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education. Retrieved from https://www.crpe.org/sites/default/files/pub_capacity%20challenge_dec13_0.pdf

Rhim, L. M., Hassel, B., & Redding, S. (2007). State role in supporting school improvement. In S. Redding & H. J. Walberg (Eds), *Handbook on Statewide Systems of Support* (pp. 21–56). Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation and Improvement. Retrieved from http://www.centerii.org/survey/downloads/Handbook%2010%2018%2007.pdf#page=21

Study guide

Coherence by Fullan and Quinn, Chapter 1
Reflections on the Text

Reading Guidance	Reflections
Review the Coherence Framework graphic and reflect on these questions.	In which component of the framework do you think your organization is strongest?
	On which component do you believe your organization needs to improve?
	After reading Chapter 1, where do you believe your organization should begin to bring more coherence to the day-to-day work?
Review the "right" and "wrong" drivers of coherence and reflect on these questions.	Which "right" driver(s) do you feel is (are) present in your organization?
	Which "wrong" driver(s) do you believe is (are) also present in your organization?

	From what you have read thus far about coherence in an organization, on what "next steps" do you think your organization should focus to improve organizational coherence?

Coherence by Fullan and Quinn, Chapter 2
Reflections on the Text

Reading Guidance	Reflections
Describe the four-step process to overcoming "initiativitis."	
Figure 2.2 lists the four quadrants of "Change Quality."	Which quadrant is most desirable for an organization to exist in? Why?
	Which is the least desirable? Why?
In your own words, describe how good leaders use the concept of "Balance of Push and Pull Strategies."	

Coherence by Fullan and Quinn, Chapter 3
Reflections on the Text

Reading Guidance	Reflections
On page 50, the author said one school where he worked brought in someone from outside the district to "fix" the school. This sent a strong message to the staff that they were not valued and were actually the problem.	What ramification does this have for state education agency leadership teams?
There are three keys to a capacity-building approach.	List the three keys and share your reflections on which one might be the greatest challenge for your organization.
The New Hampshire Department of Education had a goal of moving from a compliance-driven culture to a support-driven organization.	What were the lessons learned from the first 6 months of the New Hampshire agency's change strategy?
	Reflect on whether your agency has a compliance-driven culture or a support-driven culture. To what degree of each culture would you say that your organization reflects?

Coherence by Fullan and Quinn, Chapter 4
Reflections on the Text

Reading Guidance	Reflections
There are three key learnings from Chapter 4 and their connection to prior learning. Identify the relationship between each component of Chapter 4 and key components from previous chapters as indicated. Write two to three sentences describing the relationship between the Chapter 4 component and the preceding chapter's component.	"Clarity of Goals" and in Chapter 2, "Focusing Direction"
	"Precision in Pedagogy" and in Chapter 1, "Coherence Making"
	"Shift Practices Through Capacity Building" and in Chapter 3, "Cultivating Collaborative Cultures"
Consider how these two passages relate to deeper learning within a state education agency and the implications from the agency's perspective.	*"Districts and schools that get results have clarity about the elements of their instructional system. They build knowledge from the research combined with best practices in their context and then ensure that everyone has the skills and resources to apply them appropriately."* (page 91) Implications for state education agencies:
	"In all cases, it is essential to build clarity of the learning goals, build precision in the pedagogical practices and to foster collective capacity building to mobilize a consistent shift in practices." (page 81) Implications for state education agencies:

Coherence by Fullan and Quinn, Chapter 5
Reflections on the Text

Reading Guidance	Reflections
Pages 110–111 provide a description of the relationship between internal and external accountability.	What is the relationship between internal and external accountability?
	Which form of accountability do you believe that your organization should be focused on?
At least two conditions are necessary for <u>internal accountability</u> to exist.	What are the top two essential conditions for internal accountability within a system? 1. 2.
	What role does a leader play in creating or sustaining these conditions?
At least two conditions are necessary for <u>external accountability</u> to exist.	What are the top two essential conditions for external accountability within a system? 1. 2.
How does your organization demonstrate internal and external accountability on a daily basis?	Describe a demonstration of internal and external accountability in your organization.
	What does your organization need to do to improve upon either form of accountability?

***Coherence* by Fullan and Quinn, Chapter 6**
Reflections on the Text

Reading Guidance	Reflections
At the bottom of page 129 and the top of page 130, the author speaks to the importance of developing a plan to ensure coherence within a system. The text also provides four ways for leaders to proceed with the development of a coherence improvement plan using the Coherence Framework.	List the four ways leaders can proceed in the development of a coherence plan: 1. 2. 3. 4.
	Write down your thoughts on your role as a leader to support or enhance the development of an organizational coherence plan.
On page 128, the author state that the main threat to coherence is turnover at the top of an organization when new leaders come in.	Imagine (or maybe you don't need to imagine it) if the leader of your organization or a member of the executive leadership team was new to the position. What steps would you suggest the leadership team take to ensure that the implementation of its coherence plan will continue without interruption?
	What responsibility does the new leader have in sustaining organizational coherence?

Reading Guidance	Reflections
Review the Coherence Assessment Tool on pages 131–132 through the lens of your organization.	What sections of the tool do you feel are most important for an organization to pay attention to in creating / maintaining coherence?
	From your experience, which component(s) do you feel that your organization struggles with the most?
	Which component(s) do you feel that your organization does well with?
Developing leaders: Review Figure 6.3 (Leadership Competencies for Whole System Change) on page 133.	Complete the mapping of the leadership competencies in relation to the Coherence Frameworks as explained on page 133. *Challenging the status quo*
	Building trust through clear communication
	Creating a commonly owned plan
	Focusing on the team
	Having a sense of urgency for results
	Committing to continuous improvement
	Building external networks and partnerships are

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