
Theory of Action Tuning Protocol

Purpose of the Tool

SHARING WORK

Diagramming a Theory of Action can be a powerful exercise to get you started on implementing an innovation in your school. But inevitably your rationale for innovation will not go exactly as planned—and you’d be missing out on a lot if you never looked at your Theory of Action diagram again after first creating it. The Theory of Action Tuning Protocol can be used to revisit the rationale behind your school innovation and to consider the ways in which your innovation is playing out as planned—or not!

Suggested Time Commitment



Set aside at least an hour to use this protocol. You’ll likely want to return to the questions in the protocol as often as once a month throughout the implementation of your innovation project.

When & How

This conversation protocol should be used to revisit a Theory of Action diagram that was previously created using the Theory of Action tool from this Toolkit. You’ll probably find it most helpful if you use this tool when you’re at least a month into trying out the rationale framed in your Theory of Action. Gather together the group of people who developed the Theory of Action diagram, and leave at least an hour for conversation.

Steps

1. Tune up the basics

Start by checking in on some of the elements that articulate the basic premise of your Theory of Action. Discuss these questions as a group:

- Has your group’s inquiry focus changed at all?
- Has your desired outcome changed at all? Are you still going toward the long-term goal that you outlined?
- Have you tried out one or more of the innovation projects outlined in your diagram?
 - If you’ve gone in a new direction and have not pursued one of the innovation projects on your Theory of Action diagram, map out the rationale (if this, then that...) behind the other innovation projects you’ve been pursuing.

2. How’s it going?

If you’ve tried out one or more of the innovation projects, do a check-in on the rationale (“if this, then that...”) statements you outlined for your project(s):

- Has your rationale played out as expected? What information have you collected (including at least some

student work or documentation) to help you decide how it's working?

- Pinpoint the places where your rationale has not played out as expected. Engage in a conversation about why things might not have gone as anticipated.

3. Where do you go from here?

Think about implications and next steps:

- What have you learned through implementing your innovation project so far? Maybe you've learned things about the project you're trying out, about your school, about innovation in general, etc.
- What are your next steps in moving your project forward? How will you amend your Theory of Action diagram to either keep you on track towards your school innovation goals, or to chart a new path?