



NIRN

NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION
RESEARCH NETWORK

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL



How Do We Solve Complex Problems During MTSS Implementation?

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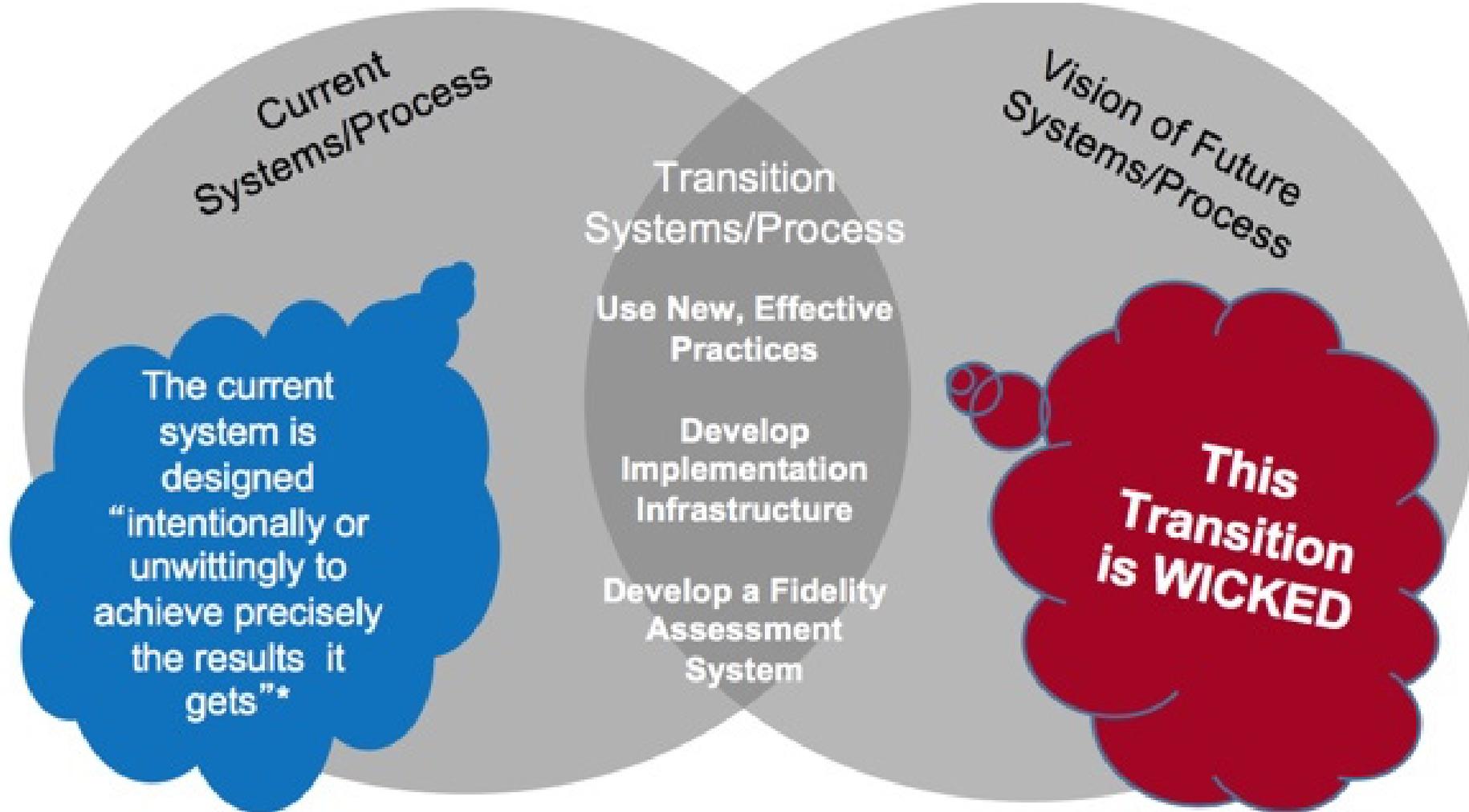
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Learning Objectives

- Identify an Adaptive Challenge from a Technical Challenge in MTSS implementation.
- Provide a rationale for not using technical strategies to address adaptive challenges in MTSS implementation.
- Further develop knowledge of adaptive strategies and which Active Implementation Framework tools assist to use to address adaptive strategies

MTSS Implementation



Change Challenges

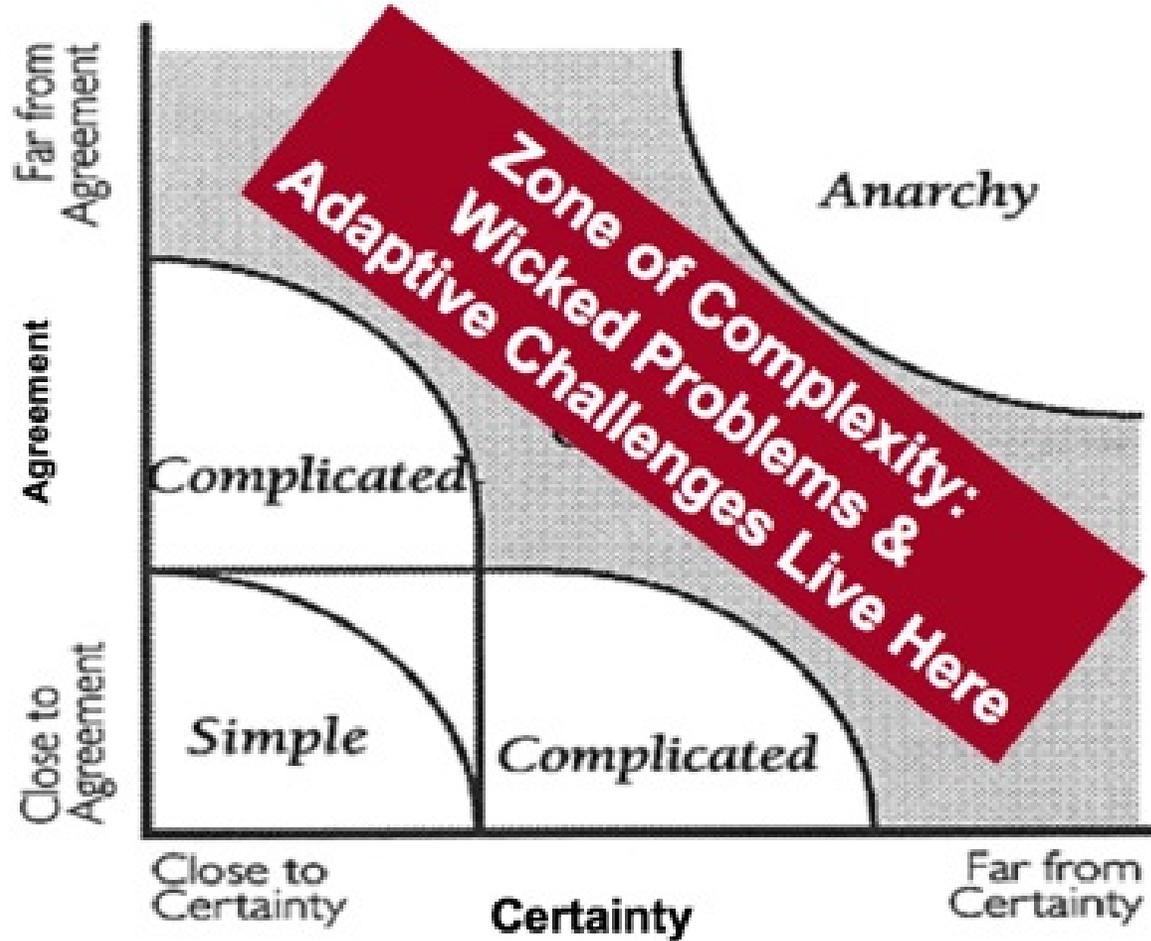
Technical (i.e., Tame) Problems:

- Often complicated (e.g., safety of nuclear generators, air traffic control, adopt a new data system)

Adaptive (i.e. Wicked) Problems:

- They are messy, devious, and fight back when you try to “solve” them.

The Change Landscape



Activity 1.0 Part 1

- **Take a moment to name a current challenge you are facing in your MTSS implementation.**
- **Share your challenge with a partner.**

Complexity....



Activity 1.0 Part 2

- **After observing the video, reflect for a moment on your MTSS implementation challenge.**
 - **Is your challenge tame (complicated) or wicked (complex)?**
 - **What are some of linkages (e.g., linked to mixed messages from state) or contextual issues (e.g., reconfiguring grade levels in building) adding to its complexity?**
 - **What lessons from the video are applicable to our work in MTSS implementation?**
- **Share thoughts with a partner.**

Defining Challenges

Technical Challenges

- Perspectives are aligned (views, values)
- Definition of the problem is clear
- Solution and implementation of the solution is relatively clear
- There is reasonable confidence that if the solution is implemented there will be resolution
- There can be a “primary” locus of responsibility for organizing the work

Adaptive Challenges

- Legitimate, yet competing, perspectives emerge
- Definition of the problem is unclear
- There are different perspectives on the “issue” at hand
- Solution and implementation are unclear and require learning
- Primary locus of responsibility is not a single entity or person

Activity 2.0

Here is a list of common challenges encountered in MTSS implementation:

- 1. No substitutes for MTSS Training Days**
- 2. Selected reading practices don't align with districts philosophy for teaching reading**
- 3. Secondary teachers don't believe in using reinforcement system for good behavior**
- 4. Student Information System can't produce reports needed for data reviews**
- 5. Implementation team meetings are not running efficiently**

Are these challenges adaptive or technical? Why

Share responses with a partner.

Addressing Different Challenges

Different challenges call for different strategies

- **Technical Strategies**
- **Adaptive Strategies**

According to Ron Heifetz and his colleagues at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, one of the biggest mistakes "leaders" make is to incorrectly identify the type of challenge they are facing

Activity 3.0

- **Can you think of a time where an adaptive challenge was addressed as if it was a technical issue?**
- **What happened? Was some progress made? Where did things go wrong? What would have been helpful?**
- **Share your thoughts with a partner.**

Role of Leaders & Implementation Team

- Respond appropriately:
 - Recognize adaptive from technical challenges and applying appropriate, effective strategies to address those challenges
- Promote Active Implementation:
 - Communicate importance of effective implementation methods
- Support Learning:
 - Encourage learning from success and failure
- Sustain Attention & Resources:
 - Keep goals in focus and resourced

Example Technical Strategies

- Use established norms/goals
- Define problems
- Provide or access proven solutions
- Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Assign tasks
- Manage conflict
- Maintain order and organization

Example Adaptive Leadership Strategies

1. Get on the Balcony
2. Identify the Adaptive Challenge
3. Regulate Distress
4. Maintain Disciplined Attention
5. Give the Work Back to the People
6. Protect All Voices

R. Heifetz and D. Laurie: The Work of Leadership. Harvard Business Review, 1998.

Get on the Balcony

“This requires stepping up onto the metaphorical balcony to survey the broader context and relevant history, the patterns, data, emerging themes and processes.

This ability to be both involved in the work and observing it more broadly is viewed as a pre-requisite for the remaining strategies.

The danger is becoming mired solely in the day-to-day efforts and unable to identify broader leverage points for change as well as the adaptive challenges.”

Blase, Fixsen, Sims, & Ward (in press) *Implementation Science – Changing Hearts, Minds, Behavior, and Systems to Improve Educational Outcomes*, Wing Institute, Oakland, CA

Identify the Adaptive Challenges

“This requires diagnosing, identifying, and naming the adaptive challenge(s).

This work occurs through gathering information, identifying points of conflict that may be proxies for differing norms and values, and leadership understanding that they, too, are contributing to the adaptive challenge.”

Blase, Fixsen, Sims, & Ward (in press) *Implementation Science – Changing Hearts, Minds, Behavior, and Systems to Improve Educational Outcomes*, Wing Institute, Oakland, CA

Regulate Distress

“In short, regulating distress requires attending to pacing and sequencing the change and setting priorities. There needs to be a continuing sense of urgency that does not overwhelm those doing the work.”

Blase, Fixsen, Sims, & Ward (in press) *Implementation Science – Changing Hearts, Minds, Behavior, and Systems to Improve Educational Outcomes*, Wing Institute, Oakland, CA

Maintain Disciplined Attention

“In many ways this is a corollary to regulating distress. One way of avoiding tension is to return to comfortable ways of work, even when those ways of work are not resulting in desired outcomes.

Key to forward progress is recognizing ‘work avoidance’ and redirecting energies back to the difficult work at hand.”

Blase, Fixsen, Sims, & Ward (in press) *Implementation Science – Changing Hearts, Minds, Behavior, and Systems to Improve Educational Outcomes*, Wing Institute, Oakland, CA

Give the Work Back to the People

“This involves creating conditions to let groups and individuals take the initiative in addressing challenges.

This is a shift away from a hierarchical system of leaders leading and others taking direction and following.

This means rewarding risk-taking, engaging in ‘trial and learning’, and encouraging meaningful participation in defining challenges and proposing solutions.”

Blase, Fixsen, Sims, & Ward (in press) *Implementation Science – Changing Hearts, Minds, Behavior, and Systems to Improve Educational Outcomes*, Wing Institute, Oakland, CA

Protect All Voices

“Sometimes the most insightful perspectives are provided in discomfoting ways. When people are mustering the courage to speak their truth and perhaps offer critical insights, they may not always choose the right time and place to do so. Or they may cover their anxiety by speaking so fervently that *how* they are communicating gets in the way of *what* they are trying to say.

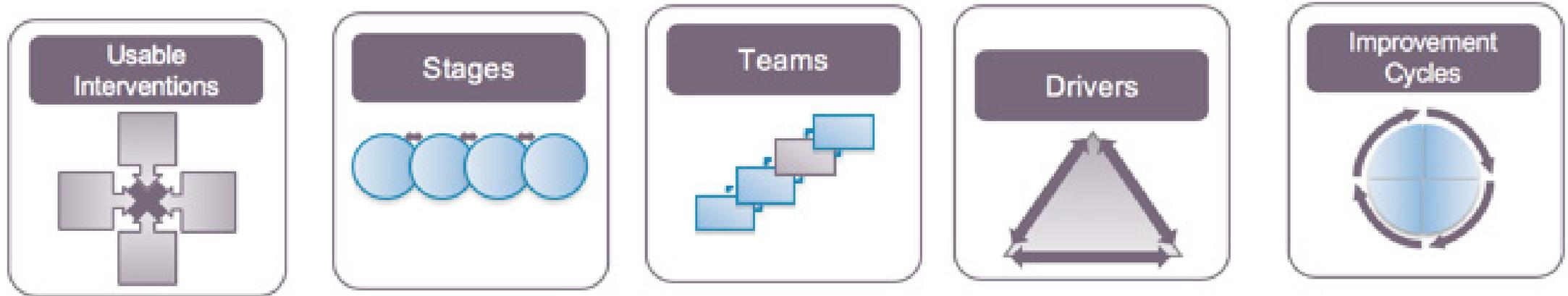
There is a need to hear all voices and continue to focus on what is being said while helping to regulate how issues are being communicated.”

Blase, Fixsen, Sims, & Ward (in press) *Implementation Science – Changing Hearts, Minds, Behavior, and Systems to Improve Educational Outcomes*, Wing Institute, Oakland, CA

Activity 4.0

- **Review adaptive challenge scenarios in MTSS implementation.**
- **Work with a partner, identify what adaptive strategy(ies) would you want to employ? Why?**
- **Be prepared to share your thoughts when review as a whole group.**

Active Implementation Frameworks



How Might Active Implementation Frameworks, Components, Tools or Processes Help Operationalize These Six Adaptive Strategies?

AIF Tool & Processes & Adaptive Strategies

- Hexagon Tool (Selection & Alignment Process)
- Initiative Inventory
- Practice Profiles
- District Capacity Assessment
- Terms of Reference (District/Building Implementation Team Operating Procedures)
- Linking Communication Protocols/Communication Plan
- Coaching System
- Get on the Balcony
- Identify the Adaptive Challenge(s)
- Regulate Distress
- Maintain Disciplined Attention
- Give the Work Back to the People
- Protect All Voices

How Competency Implementation Drivers Help to Regulate Distress and Maintain Disciplined Attention

Reduces feelings of loss and incompetence

- Ensures that confidence and competence are developed, supported, increased over time.
- Integrated, so that more coherence occurs for the teacher
- Compensatory, recognizing that professional growth is different for each teacher or staff – non-linear, not lock step.
- The Competency Drivers are ‘accountable’ for fidelity not the teachers or staff in isolation.



Activity 5.0

- **Think about use of an Active Implementation Framework practice or tool.**
- **Did the tool help to address a technical or adaptive strategy?**
- **If yes, how so? If not, what would you do differently?**
- **Share your reflections with a partner.**

Summary

Different challenges call for different strategies

- **Technical Strategies**
- **Adaptive Strategies**

Use of Active Implementation Frameworks practices and tools can help teams address different types of challenges.