CfEM

Whole College Approach

Self-Assessment Task 4:

Analysing the Problem

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Large organisations such as FE colleges operate as complex systems, and issues that surface are not isolated but connected to other parts of the system. It is important to capture a holistic view of the issues with mathematics provision and identify the underlying causes before attempting to address a specific problem because of the effect on other parts of the system or culture.

In this task, the team works together to capture a holistic view by using their own different perspectives and working collaboratively. This leads to a summary of the problem they intend to address, which may not be the one they first started with, and the identification of connected issues, affordances and constraints that need to be considered as they develop an action plan for Whole College Approach (WCA).

Aims

The main aims of this activity for WCA teams are to:

- develop a shared understanding of the problem or area for improvement identified by the college, including any related issues
- develop a detailed analysis of the problem or area for improvement, including any connected issues
- recognise the affordances and constraints of their college's systems and culture that may affect the planning and implementation of an intervention to address the problem.

As a result of the activity, WCA teams should be able to:

- accurately define the problem they are aiming to address
- identify the key elements, connections, contextual, and cultural factors related to the problem and any additional issues that need to be considered
- begin to develop plans for an intervention that addresses all the necessary interconnected elements.

The activity is built on key principles for problem solving and change management in large organisations identified from a range of literature. Key principles have been adapted from these contexts and applied to FE, taking account of recent research on maths in FE.

Task

Self-Assessment Task 4 (SAT4) involves a collaborative mapping activity, which the WCA team will use to analyse their identified problem or area for improvement. The team will work together to produce a diagram showing a college system related to the problem or area for improvement and how different elements of the system are connected.

Secondly, the team should consider how the system (e.g., attendance monitoring) is used and add elements to show how people and culture interact with the system and shape outcomes. The team should discuss the diagram as they construct it to ensure multiple perspectives are represented and take time to explore any issues that arise.

Finally, the team should use the outcomes of all their self-assessment tasks to try to redefine the problem they aim to address. They should complete table (Table 2) and identify any connected issues, affordances,

constraints, or possible unintended consequences that will need considering as they develop an action plan for WCA.

Resources

- One or two sheets of flipchart paper and pens
- A copy of Table 2 in a shared space that everyone can access (e.g., Google doc)
- Copies of the examples (electronic or paper)

Discussion guide (for the meeting chair)

Part 1

Ask the team to work together (on a large sheet of paper or a single screen) and try to develop a representation of the college **structures and processes** relevant to the problem or area for improvement that they have identified. For example, if improving student attendance is a key area for improvement, the team might try to represent the current processes visually with a flow diagram. There is no set format for the representation and the process of developing this collaboratively is more important than the form of the final version. It may be useful to look briefly at the two examples provided below, since they show contrasting approaches and also illustrate how messy the process may become.

One person might take the lead and do the actual drawing, but each team member should contribute ideas and issues should be discussed as they arise.

The development of the diagram may take some time and it may be helpful to tackle it in two stages, as follows:

- Develop a representation of the systems and processes, including any connecting lines.
- In a different colour add any aspects concerning people and culture that are relevant.

This diagram should produce a more holistic view of the problem and interconnected issues that need considering in planning and implementation.

Part 2

Ask the team to think about the problem they now feel is the priority to address and state this as clearly as possible on a blank copy of Table 2.

Then ask them to discuss the questions below and add their agreed responses to the table.

- What are the connected issues and processes that you need to address in your action plan?
- Are there connected issues or processes for which change is not possible or desirable?
- Are there other affordances and constraints (e.g., context, culture, timescale) that will affect your action plan?
- What are the possible unintended consequences (e.g., effects on other parts of the college) that might need considering in your action plan?

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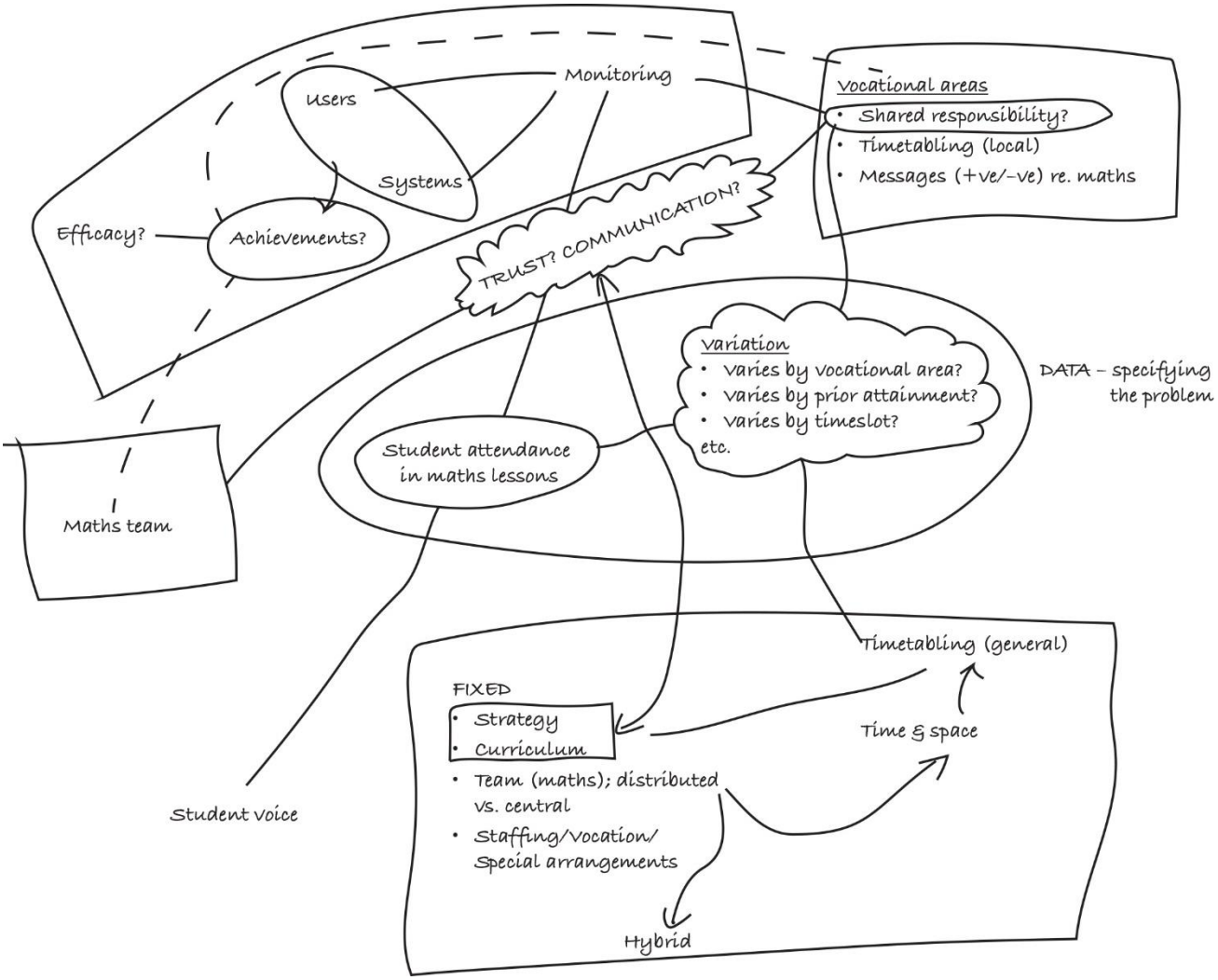
Next steps

The WCA team has now completed all the self-assessment tasks and should be ready to move from the discovery phase to the action planning phase. The next step will be to agree on how you will use the analysis to improve your mathematics provision and develop an action plan to address the issues that have emerged as priorities. Table 2 will be a useful summary to use as starting point for your action plan.

Example 1



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Example 2

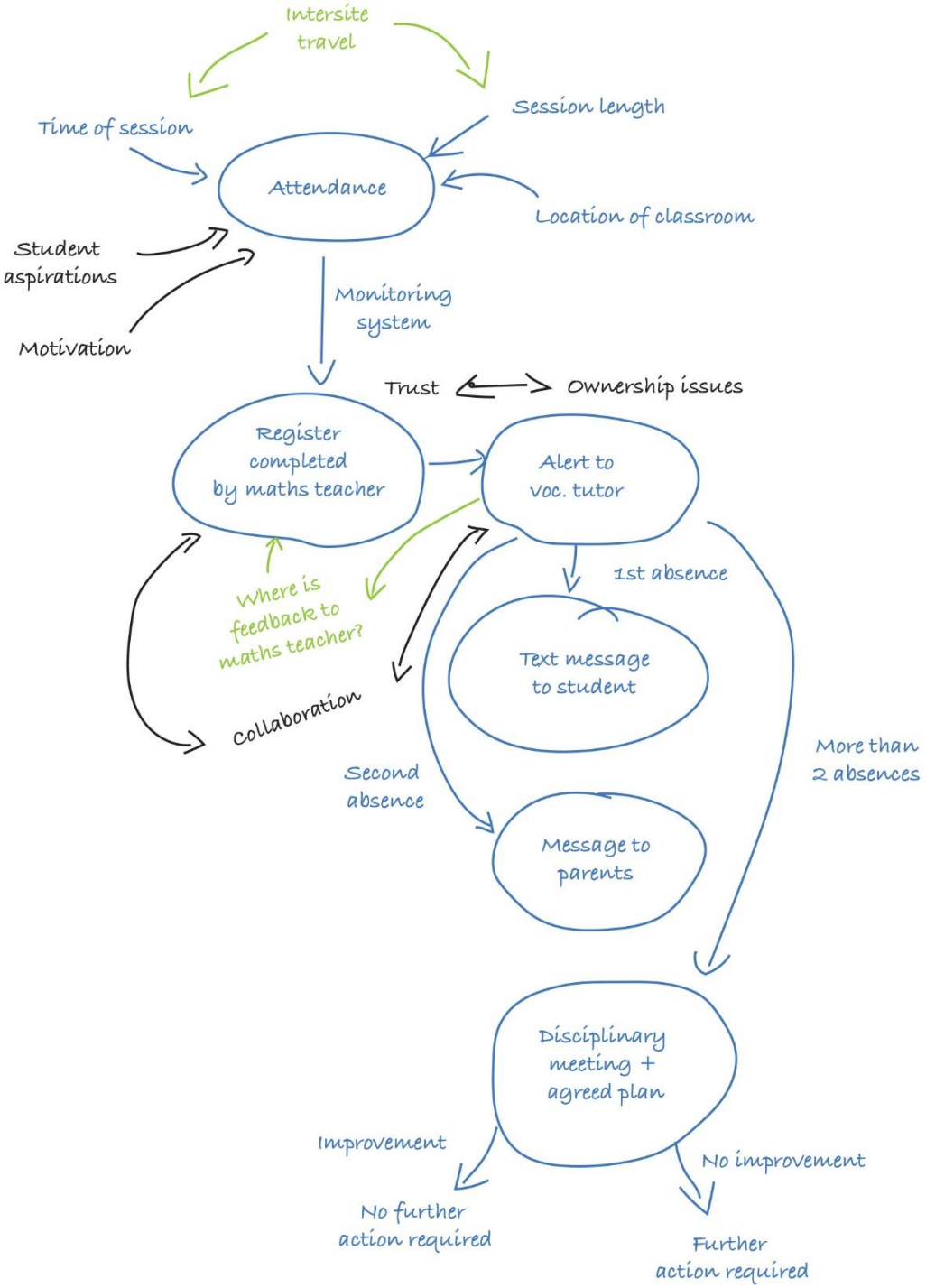

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Table 2

WCA Analysis of Problem				
Contextual	**Holistic**	**Interconnected**	**Multidimensional**	**Evaluative**
Statement of the problem you aim to address				
Connected issues				
Other affordances and constraints				
Possible unintended consequences				
Any other observations or comments				

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