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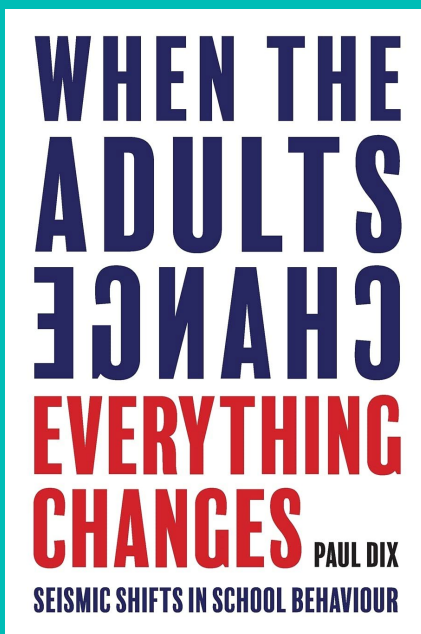
Promoting a communicative staff culture

Simon Armitage, Deputy Head (International Schools & Projects)
The Perse School Cambridge

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After a staff meeting...

“Yes we must all be more consistent”
then everyone leaves with their own idea
of what consistency means!



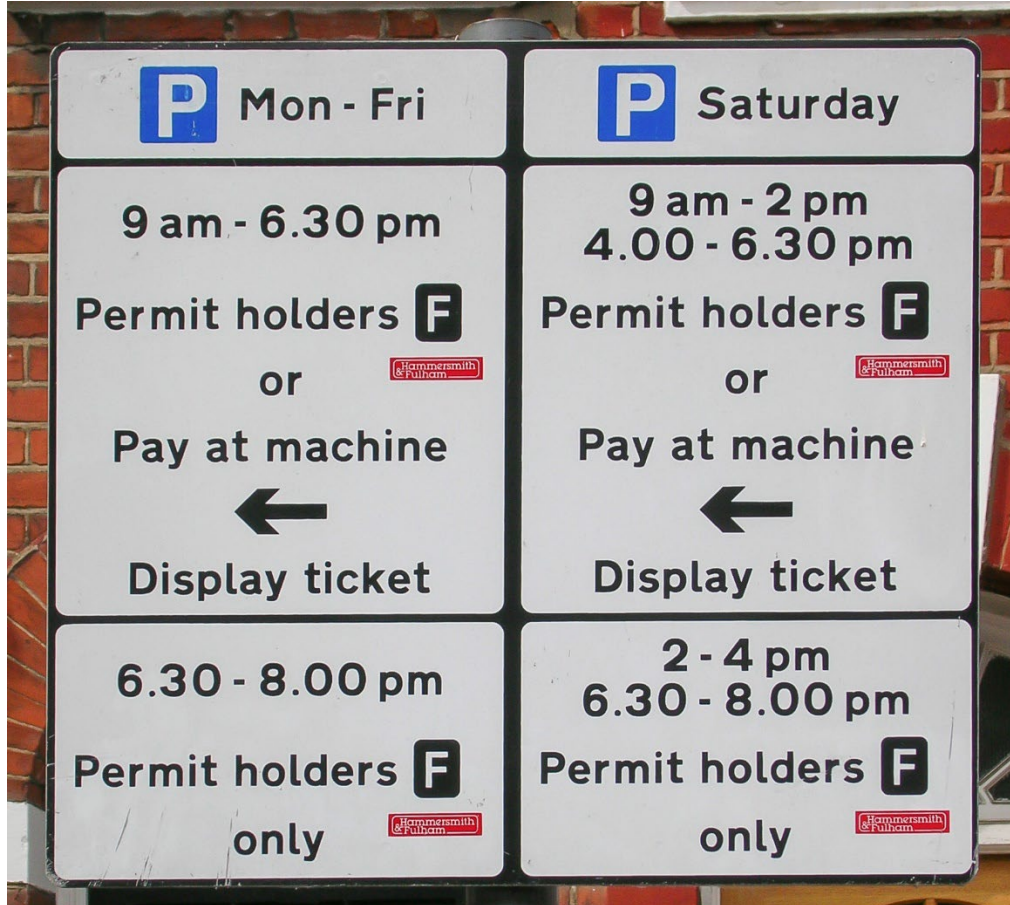
Paul Dix, *When the Adults Change Everything Changes*, 2017

Great communication – what does this look like?

- Think of a time when you felt you were in receipt of great communication – what was it like?
- How much information?
- How much context?
- How directive?
- How understanding of your personal circumstance?
- How expert / technical was the information?



Information is NOT communication



Why is communication a challenge?

1. Time!
2. Technology overload
3. Hierarchies – help and hinder
4. Individuals' goals
5. Island empires (the classroom, the department)
6. Culture challenges
7. Others



Key themes:

1. **Understanding:** relationships matter
2. **Context and Purpose** of the communication
3. **How** we communicate
4. More questions than answers in this session – this is personal!



Think ...

Would your colleagues give the same responses as you to the questions we consider today?

Do you KNOW your staff?

How do you know this?

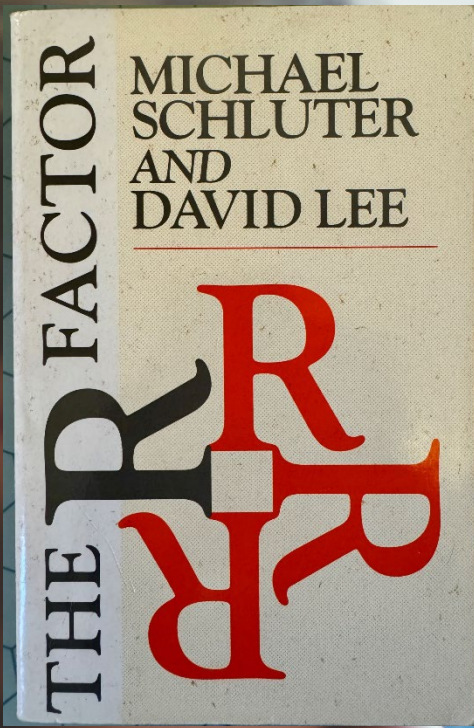
Or ...

do you just THINK you know them?

A photograph of a classroom. In the foreground, two female students in school uniforms are smiling broadly. Behind them, several other students are also smiling. In the background, a male teacher in a suit is smiling. The classroom has a bulletin board with colorful papers and a whiteboard.

1. Understanding – relationships matter

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RELATIONSHIPS A Dialectical Perspective

Robert A. Hinde

A relationship is a series of encounters that both draw on the past but also enable the anticipation of encounters in the future. The more you enjoy meeting someone, and communicating with them, the more you want to do it in the future.

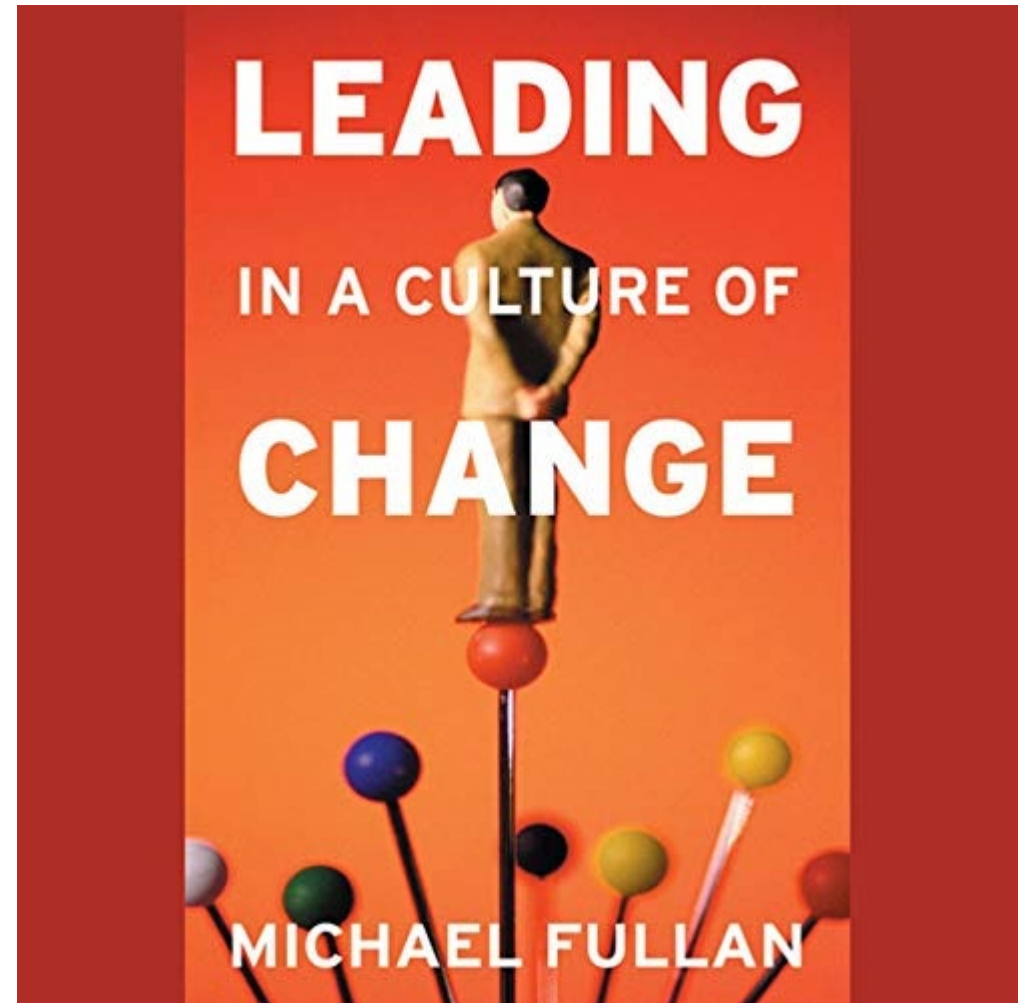
It's the people?... Not quite...

“In the past, if you asked someone in a successful enterprise what caused the success, the answer was ‘It's the people’.

But that's only partially true:

it is actually the relationships that make the difference”

Fullan (2001) p.51



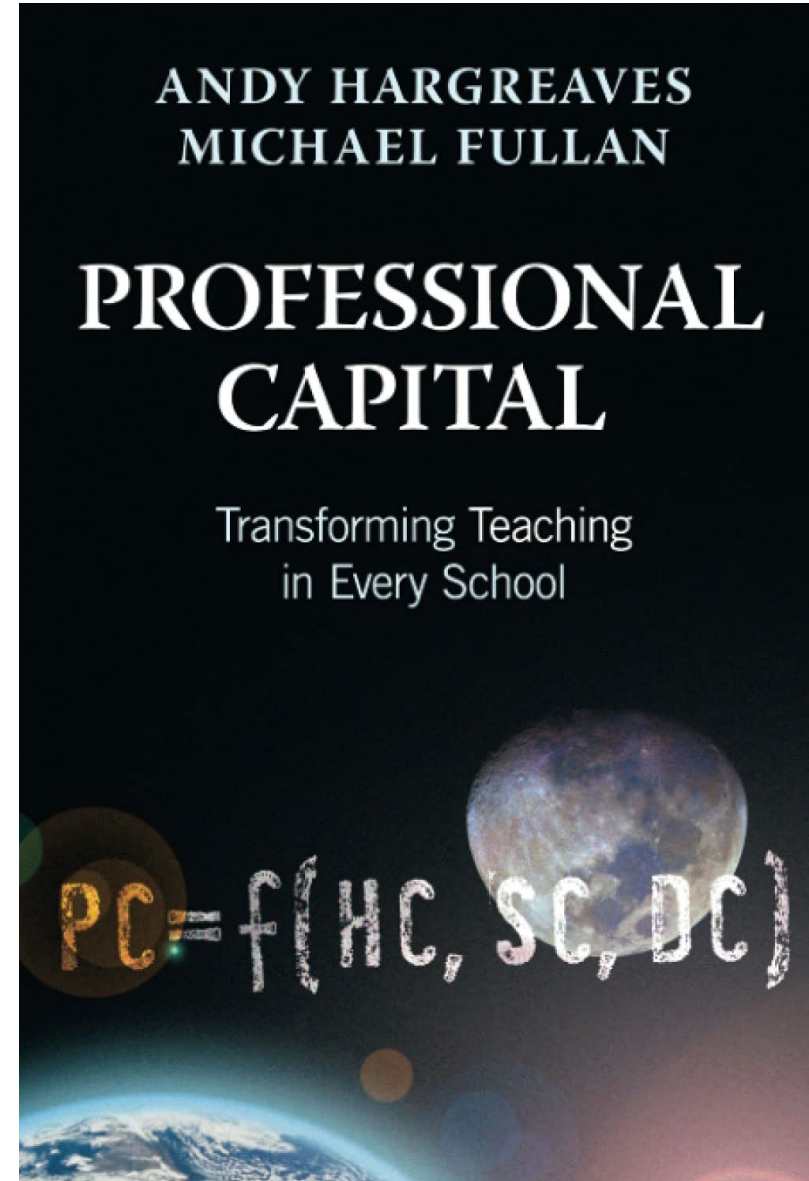
“... genuine relationships (are) based on authenticity and care”



Lewin & Regine in Fullan, 2001; p.52

Communication – give it time.

- The more we collaborate, the **more effective** we become both **individually** and **collectively**.
- Communication leads to **efficacy**
 - i.e. **being effective**
- *“collaborative cultures don’t evolve quickly, they can be unattractive for administrators seeking swift solutions”* (Hargreaves & Fullan, page 117)



Relationships, not interactions

Commonality: the condition involving a relationship with a common purpose

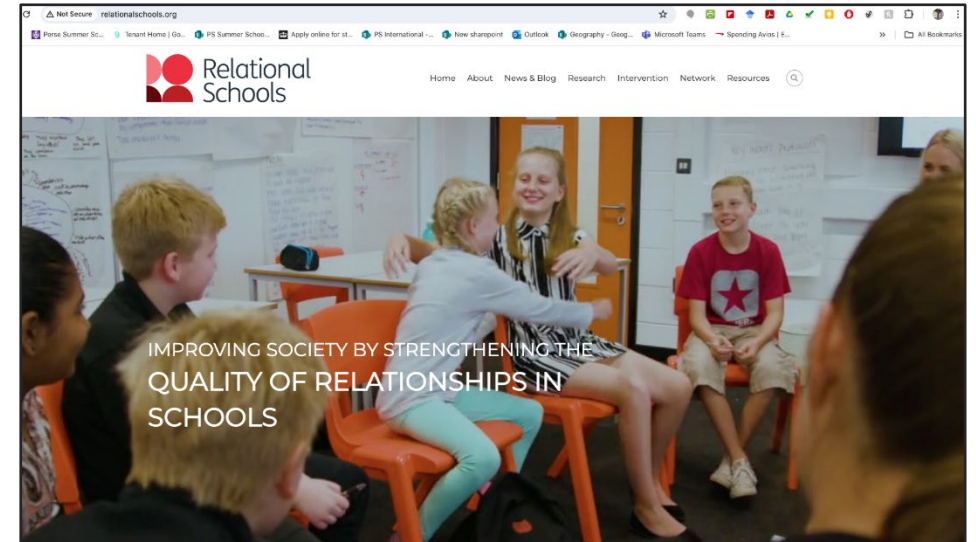
- Divergent goals and priorities create strains in relationships

Multiplexity: the condition in a relationship involving contact in more than one context or role

Continuity of story: the way the present encounter is shaped by the experience of previous interactions

Follow up:

- Schluter & Lee, The R Factor (1993)
- <https://relationalschools.org/>



A photograph of a classroom. A male teacher in a dark suit stands in the background, smiling. Several female students in school uniforms are seated at desks in the foreground, also smiling. The classroom walls are decorated with colorful posters and notices. A purple semi-transparent banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text '2. Context and Purpose of the Communication'.

2. Context and Purpose of the Communication

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Are we on the same page?

Do staff know:

A) the purpose of the communication?

B) the context?

Do they have to know these things?



How clear are your values?

We value Intellectual Curiosity and Scholarship

Which means we:

- Love learning, thinking deeply and being creative
- Welcome reasoned debate

So we:

- Develop a lifelong love of learning, acquiring the qualities and skills needed for successful study
- Go beyond the curriculum and exam specifications
- Celebrate original thought, research and creativity
- Learn to communicate well both orally and in writing
- Invite challenge; listen to and value other perspectives
- Reflect on our learning to become more effective learners



The context of your school – size matters

- Big school challenges / opportunities?
- Small school opportunities / challenges?

- How do you subdivide your staff?
- How do you create a TEAM?



Communication: size matters

Small school challenges?



Big school challenges?



A photograph of a classroom. In the foreground, two female students in school uniforms are smiling broadly. Behind them, other students and a male teacher in a suit are also smiling. The classroom has a bulletin board with colorful papers and a whiteboard in the background.

3. How we Communicate

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Do we understand each other? - style

We are implementing a change to the budgeting systems in the school. I have asked you to attend this 30-minute meeting to explain the changes.

The plan for the meeting is:

- why this change is required (10 minutes)
- the way we have gone about deciding the issues to change (10 minutes)
- the details of the change and the impact on you (8 minutes)
- questions (2 minutes)

How do you feel about this meeting?

Is the agenda helpful?

What might this agenda suggest about the approach to communication being shown?

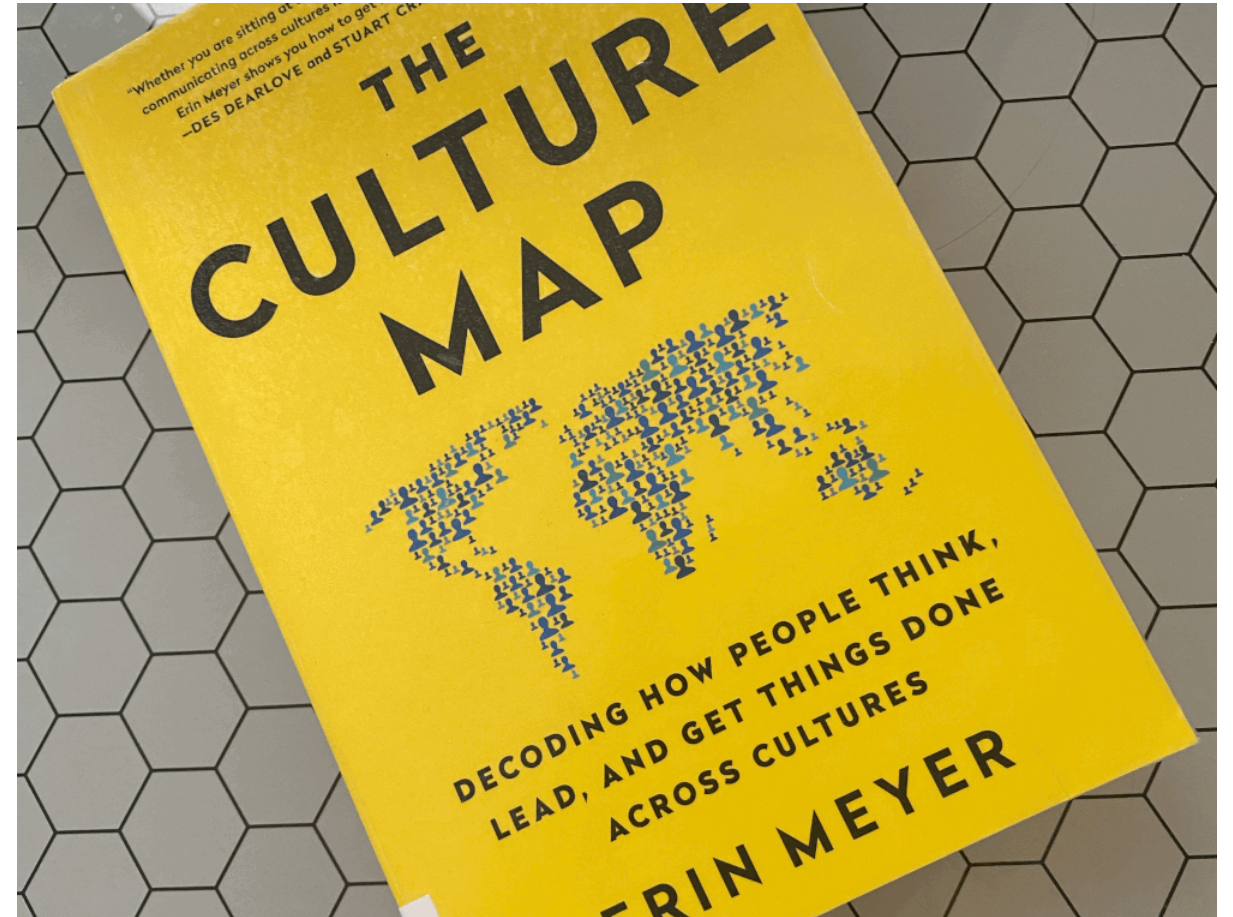
Do we understand each other? - language

What might the following questions raise in terms of communication challenges within your staff?

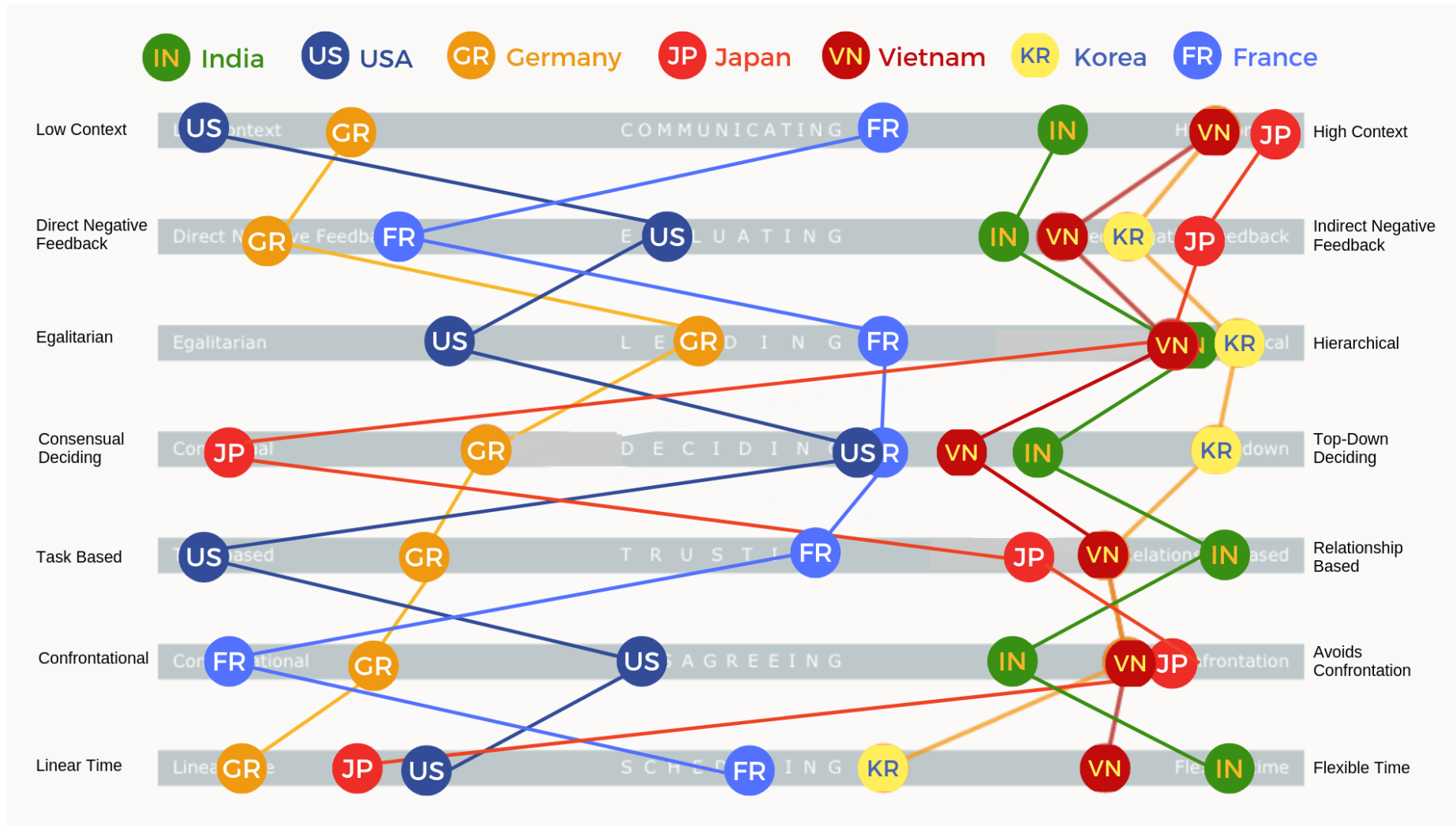
- How are you doing?
 - *“Not too bad, thanks”*
- How’s lunch?
 - *“Quite good”*
 - *“We need to employ assistants for our teachers”*
- We plan to introduce a new system to change the way that reports are written and distributed. It will require us to bring forward the new information system and widen the scope of the remit.
 - *“Thanks for the briefing. Very interesting. It’s an ambitious plan”*
- In an email from a senior teacher to the Principal: “We have been working on the report all over weekend and will send you the draft on Monday.”
 - *Reply: “by mid morning please.”*

Do we understand each other? - **example**

- **Communicating Low Context:** effective communication must be simple, clear, explicit in order to effectively pass the message” p.34
 - Say what you mean and mean what you say
 - Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you have told them
- **But ... this won't work in a High Context communication culture!**



Be informed: know your audience



Practical tips

1

All agreed?

Is your school's purpose and objective both defined and owned by the staff?



2

Who's who?

Staff booklets – names / photos / roles – for ALL staff (not just teaching).

Welcome board – staff names



3

Another meeting?

What happens if you halve the length of ALL your meetings?



4

Defeat the isolation

Consider ways to break open the classroom 'cells' to promote genuine collegiality

Practical tips

5

What's off limits?

Do you present or do you listen?



6

What do you measure?

Do you measure and VALUE communication quality?

Parents

Students

Staff



7

Individuals vs team?

Do you appraise individuals and/or teams?

How do you know what your team needs?



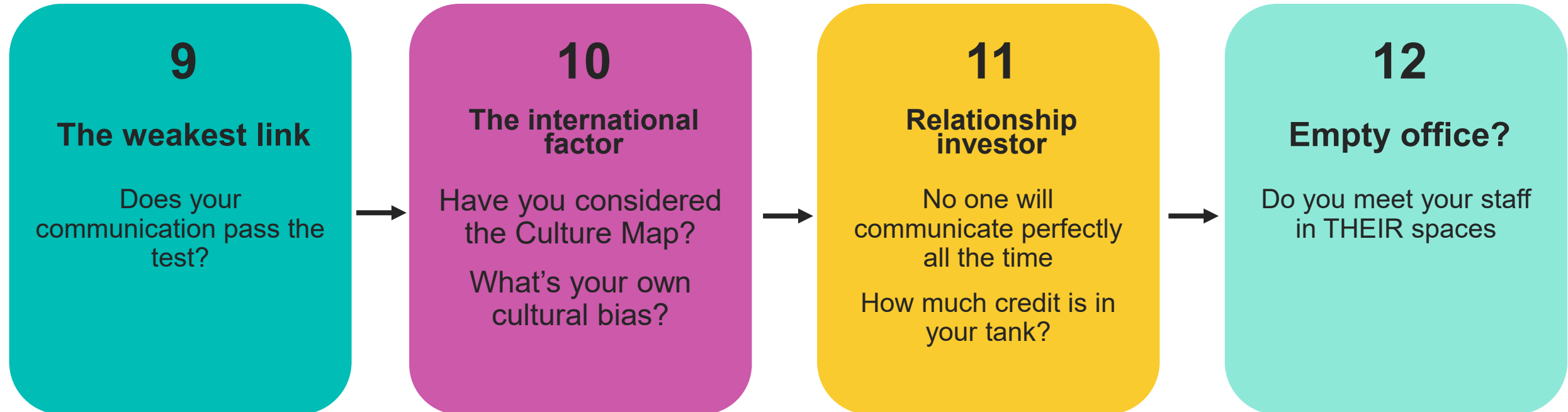
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How's your hierarchy?

Who do leaders listen to?

How many in your Middle Management team?

Practical tips



Genuine Collegiality

Do:

- Communicate!
- Create space and time and climate for the culture of collaboration.
- Allow relationships to cement a culture of trust, respect and reciprocity that creates a thriving learning environment.
- Involve teachers in school decision making.

Don't:

- Lump teachers together once a month and expect them to create a great plan.
- Share resource by email or off-load behavioural horror stories ...



Trust will be key: How trusting is your school?

- Is your school structure a structure that empowers and trusts or does it assess and judge?
- How do you create a staff culture that is empowered – trusted – enabled and will therefore communicate clearly?
- Would your colleagues / staff give the same answer as you?





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Any questions?

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Thank you!

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Your feedback

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