Elizabeth Eppel and Amanda Wolf

Implementing Better Public Services

In March 2012 the prime minister announced a set of ten goals or result challenges, and named the ministers who are to be held politically responsible for achievement of each of the the results and the specific public sector chief executives with management accountability. This 'to-do list' (Key, 2012) was accompanied by the release of the report from a group of four senior public officials and three private sector people known as the Better Public Services Advisory Group, which had provided advice to government in late 2011 on how the public sector should be reconfigured to improve the 'system's efficiency and effectiveness – in short to do more and better with less'. The report says that it is the 'starting point for an ongoing programme of reform over the next five years. The objective is better services for New Zealanders, of a type and at a scale that enables our society and economy to flourish' (Better Public Services Advisory Group [BPSAG], 2011, pp.5, 3). The ministers responsible said the advisory group's report 'provides an appropriate platform for an on-going programme of state services performance improvement' (Offices of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State Services, 2012). Two other decisions – to lower the cap on the number of public servants and to create a new business-facing ministry by merging four existing government agencies – were also announced as part of what has been collectively called the government's 'Better Public Services' reform programme. The deputy prime minister and minister of state services have jointly signalled their intention to amend the Public Finance and State Sector acts to 'give public sector leaders more flexibility to operate in different ways' to achieve better results, and to retain the advisory group to 'ensure the next phases of the reform programme produce real and demonstrable change on the ground – and within the desired timeframes' (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State Services, 2012).

New Zealand is not alone in its goal to change the paradigm of its public services:

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the United States, England, Scotland, Singapore and Australia, to name a few, have similar aspirations. The prime minister positioned the Better Public Services reform as one of four priorities for the government, alongside financial management, economic growth and rebuilding Christchurch. If the level of international activity aimed at improving public services and the priority and importance given to Better Public Services in New Zealand are indicators, then the implementation of New Zealand's Better Public Services programme demands attention at home and will be of interest further afield. While it is early days, it is likely that the outcome of Better Public Services reform will be different from what people have so far named, planned for or even considered. Why this is likely to be so and why this matters for achieving the outcomes intended by the reform is the subject of this article. New Zealand could again be an exemplary case of public sector reform which generates international interest, not just for the boldness of its changes but also for its effectiveness in achieving better public services. The outcome of the Better Public Services programme will depend on a large number of contingencies – currently unknowns and unknowables – and the implementation approach needs to make allowance for this. This article draws upon the complex implementation literature to examine what is being implemented in the Better Public Service reform programme, what makes this a complex implementation, and the implications for those leading and participating in the reform programme.

What is being implemented?

Surveying the information about Better Public Services in the public domain at the time of writing reveals some of the complexity of what is being implemented. The January Cabinet paper outlining the reform programme contains an 'indicative change implementation roadmap 2012–2014' with seven strands of work, one of which is the focus on 'results'. Achievement of the government's ten result areas alone is a significant, challenging and complex implementation task. It is a complex implementation because the precise nature of the changes required to achieve the results is not currently known. They could not be known, even with an exhaustive amount of analysis, simply because government does not have all the information it needs to do such an analysis, and also because achieving the result requires the actions of many actors whom government and its agencies cannot directly control or predictably influence. According to the prime minister, achieving these results requires a change in the culture of the public sector. We agree on that point, but leadership of the results-focused complex implementation task envisioned by the prime minister is only one part of the implementation road map.

The advisory group report and its prescriptions for change are primarily about *achieving the capability to achieve results systemically* rather than *achieving the results per se.*

The announcement that the State Services Commissioner will 'lead the overall reform programme, supported by an Implementation Advisory Group', the membership of which contains most of the non-public service members of original Better Public Services Advisory Group (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State Services, 2012), introduces another initiator of change alongside the ministers and chief executives named by the prime minister. This work is supported by the Department of Customs chief executive, who has been 'asked by the State Services Commissioner to lead the implementation work programme'. The relationship between these arrangements and the chief executives charged with delivering the 'results' named by the prime minister is unclear, since the same Cabinet paper says, 'other chief executives *may* [our emphasis] also attend meetings of the Advisory Group from time to time' (Offices of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State Services, 2012, p.2). Leadership of change appears to be split between the ministers and chief executives charged with delivering the nominated results, and the broader enabling processes led by the state services commissioner. An important question, therefore, is how to ensure that the implementation tasks led by the state services commissioner fit with and support achievement of the prime minister's results-focused agenda. While the stated objective of the Better Public Services report is 'a public service and state sector that is achieving value-for-money, is innovative, provides high-quality services and manages change effectively' (BPSAG, 2011, p.3), it goes further than end points and principles/touchstones and begins to specify instrumental means.

The framework announced by the prime minister is primarily about goals, aspirations and directions of change in particular sectors and is silent about the means for getting the results. The advisory group report and its prescriptions for change are primarily about *achieving the capability to achieve results* systemically rather than *achieving the results per se*. This is a subtle but important difference. The advisory group report details what should happen to have the public sector perform more effectively as a whole to achieve results: clearer, stronger leadership, less clutter of decision points, and more motivation to continuously innovate and improve value for money from public expenditure. 'The first significant change proposed … is to reconfigure the system much more directly around those results or outcomes that matter most to New Zealanders'. Now that government has clearly stated its priorities, state services should be a 'proactive mobiliser of people and resources to deliver the priorities set by the government' (p.6). Although these two sets of implementation tasks may appear superficially aligned and complementary, the social complexity of

their implementation makes it doubtful that they will remain so.

Under the arrangements that have been created it is likely that implementation will focus on the 'easier' structural and administrative changes, which are the domain of the technical experts leading the process, with only a marginal impact on the existing public service-centric culture, and in lieu of the harder but much-needed deeper systemic change towards a citizen-centric and results-orientated culture of improved performance. As strands of work identified on the implementation road map, these structural and instrumental changes are elevated in importance to the same level as the results, and, unfortunately, because they take the prime focus away from the achievement of the prime minister's results, might in the end be the only 'results' achieved. Without a primary focus on outcomes there are likely to be so many changes emerging from the work streams overseen by the state services commissioner that some much-wanted changes will be cancelled out by other changes, and opportunities for innovation will be lost. Unless, that is, there is a deliberate focus on learning and adapting plans at each step in the change process. If achievement of better services outcomes is the government's priority, then there is a strong argument for leadership of change to come from the named ministers and chief executives expected to deliver the specific nominated results. They have their reputations on the line and the most to lose in the short term from any failure. Implementation of the advisory group's report could then support and enable but not lead the change process. A deterministic focus on a centrally-prescribed set of instrumental changes by the state services commissioner, and the closed intra-government process pursued to date, will limit the learning and un-thought-about innovation and change that might be possible through pursuit of the better service results.

What do we know about complex implementation?

If we temporarily leave aside the potential for conflict between the pursuit of results *per se*, and the implementation of a prescriptive set of instrumental changes expected to enable the achievement of the results, we can nevertheless be sure that both are complex implementations (Eppel, Turner and Wolf, 2011). That is, in spite of the beguiling simplicity of the way some of the goals and means are expressed, all need to engage the hearts and minds of multiple actors across government and its agencies, and, more importantly, people and organisations in the community as well. For example, the skills and employment goal of 85% of 18-year-olds with NCEA level 2 equivalent or better needs a focus not only on the students and teaching and other practices in schools but also on a multitude of other factors, such as support from peers, family and whānau, which research says influence educational achievement. Failure to engage with all the actors who need to be part of the solution and have some of the knowledge required to find sustainable solutions is one of the reasons complex implementations fail (Klijn, Steijn and Edelenbos, 2010).

The Better Public Services background documents portray thinking about the design and implementation of these reforms as merely complicated, not as complex, by failing to recognise all of the actors involved and how they will influence each other and the outcomes ...

A complex implementation requires the active engagement of people and organisations which have some of the information and resources necessary to solve the problem (e.g. Kickert et al., 1997; Sanderson, 2009). There is no sign at this stage of these Better Public Services implementations going beyond the boundaries of core government agencies and engaging in a process of hypothesis testing and learning that will ultimately bring about both the culture change and the outcomes sought. The Better Public Services background documents portray thinking about the design and implementation of these reforms as merely complicated, not as complex, by failing to recognise all of the actors involved and how they will influence each other and the outcomes (Secretariat for State Sector Reform, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d; Evans, Guthrie and Quigley, 2012). To elaborate on the distinction: 'complicated' is about many bits to the puzzle and only some people having sufficient technical understanding to put the puzzle together in a way that works; it could be safe to assume that technical knowledge of public management structures, processes and accountability alone is sufficient, that there is only one best way for the puzzle to be solved, and that the bits of the puzzle are static and will act predictably. 'Complex', on the other hand, while also allowing that there are multiple bits to the puzzle, acknowledges that these bits are also mercurial in their nature, defying attempts to pin them down because they are continually undergoing changes in response to each other and their environment. The knowledge and expertise needed to solve a complex puzzle is highly distributed and takes many forms, not just technical knowledge of structures, systems and processes of government. As a result of this dynamism, solutions require assumptions of unknowability and unpredictability, and that technical knowledge is not sufficient to understand these dynamics (Boonstra and de Caluwe, 2007; Butler and Allen, 2008; Innes and Booher, 2010). Further, there is no one best solution, but rather a number of possible solutions that will come about through interaction and mutual accommodation between particular sets of actors, their local

context, and perceptions of the desired results and how progress towards those results might be achieved. This implies that better public services solutions could differ in different regions and sectors.

Developments in the scholarly literature on public management in recent decades have been moving towards an understanding of policy processes as complex non-linear interactions between actors, although the scholars differ in their explanations of the causal mechanisms at work: for example, the bounded rationality of actors (e.g. Lindblom, 1979; March and Olsen, 1984); non-linear transfer from policy design to implementation because of the interdependent actions of 'street-level bureaucrats' during the implementation process (Lipsky, 1980; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973); serendipitous combinations of problems and solutions (Kingdon, 1995); disproportionate information processing, leading to periods of stability interrupted by dramatic policy shifts (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005); formation of advocacy coalitions (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993); or horizontal inter-organisational relations between networks of actors (Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan, 1997). Complexity concepts have been used to elucidate aspects of policy processes, such as 'complex adaptive system' and 'coevolution' in decision making (e.g. Gerrits, 2010; Rhodes, 2008; Rhodes and Murray, 2007); 'adaptive systems' and 'self-organisation' applied to implementation (e.g. Butler and Allen, 2008); and self-organisation and 'emergence' in the management of administrative networks (Meek, De Ladurantey and Newell, 2007). Teisman and colleagues have proposed a complexity-informed approach to understanding and managing complex governance processes (Teisman, van Buuren and Gerrits, 2009), while Sanderson (2009) proposed complexity theory and pragmatism as the pillars appropriate for designing and managing complex policy processes. These processes, Sanderson says, are best treated as experiments based on hypotheses, and they should be informed by active individual and organisational learning as implementation progresses.

An assumption of social complexity is needed in the implementation of Better Public Services because there are many independent decision makers (organisations and individuals) inside and outside government involved in the delivery of these services. Existing processes and relationships between these actors, such as accountability processes set up through the existing legislative and procedural processes of public administration and service delivery, create a set of dynamics that are difficult to observe, and nobody could possibly have full knowledge of the detail of all of these interactions. Therefore, implementation planning needs to be sufficiently flexible to enable learning to occur as part of the implementation process (Sanderson, 2009). Furthermore, as changes are made under the Better Public Services reform programme, individuals and organisations will react according to perceptions of what is happening and might happen next. Complexity theory would view these individuals and organisations as parts of a complex adaptive system and their actions will affect the outcome. If those closely involved in the design and implementation of the Better Public Services reform treat it as complicated and needing the intense application of public management expertise, rather than complex and requiring learning from doing and input from diverse forms of expertise, and perspectives from public service users as well as public service designers, they risk missing out on the transformational end goals of the reform. The implications of social complexity discussed in this section are summarised in the first column of Table 1.

Complexity in the context of the implementation of Better Public Services means that the many individuals ... involved in the delivery and use of public services need to be involved in designing how these services might be improved.

Many of the interactions between parts of the public sector system and parts of New Zealand society have achieved an apparent stability which belies the extent of non-linear, reflexive dynamism between the elements. A focus on particular solutions, which attempt to change one apparent macro-pattern of the public service for another without consideration of social complexity, risks blindness to important information which could call into question the basic underlying assumptions about those solutions, and can lead to disastrous outcomes (Gieve and Provost, 2012). The ongoing iterations of positive and negative feedback loops within the public service itself, and between public services and citizens, will produce self-organisation and the emergence of new patterns of behaviour which were not thought of or known about at the outset. In the next section we outline how the implementation of the Better Public Services work programme might best be managed in terms of its leadership, ways of working and processes, taking into account the implications of social complexity so that the desired outcomes can be achieved.

Implications for managing the implementation of Better Public Services

Complexity in the context of the implementation of Better Public Services means that the many individuals (public servants and private citizens who use public services) and organisations (government and community) involved in the delivery and use of public services need to be involved in designing how these services might be improved. Sorensen and Torfing (2011) name this type of collaboration as the unrecognised source of public sector innovation. At this stage there are many inside the public service, and most of the population beyond, for whom Better Public Services is unknown as a programme.

Table 1

Characteristics of the public management systems in which Better Public Services will be implemented	Implication for the Implementation of Better Public Services	Some steps towards complexity-friendly implementation of Better Public Services
Interactions between individual and organisation actors make up a system whole	There are many independent decision makers (organisations and individuals) inside and outside of government involved in the delivery of public services.	Ongoing forum(s) for sensemaking which value and involve all the actors (inside and outside of government) who might have some of the information or resources needed to build better public services, using e.g. Web 2.0 technologies.
Nested and interacting, interdependent systems	Individuals and organisations involved in the delivery of public services and interlinked and a complex matrix of interdependent systems.	Sectoral focus on outcomes led by chief executives and processes at chief executive level to identify undermining as well as reinforcing changes, encouraging aligned changes and disrupting unwanted changes.
Feedback is constantly occurring between interacting systems	Individuals and organisations involved in the delivery of public services influence and are influenced by the actions taken by others in a series of ongoing reflexive processes.	Limit the initiation of changes to that necessary to achieve the outcomes sought. Ministers and Chief Executives lead change to achieve outcomes. State Services Commissioner limits changes to removal of blockages or the construction of pan-system enablers identified by the former.
As a result of feedback, there will be adaptation and coevolution between the interacting systems	The ongoing reflexive patterns of influence and counter-influence between individuals and organisation involved in the delivery of public services leads to adaptive changes and co-evolution between the individuals, the organisation and the policies they are implementing.	Establish means to detect variance from the expected and take deliberate steps to understand different perspectives on why this is occurring. Non-compliance might be a case of conflicting priorities, misinterpreted signals, accidental happen stance or any number of other causes.
Self-organisation and emergence will occur within the systems	Individuals and organisations involved in the delivery of public services will self-organise according to their own sensemaking about what is happening and what they think might happen next. The results of this self-organisation will be the emergence of new associations and coalitions between individuals and organisations and previously unknown behaviour patterns.	Treat all implementation actions as experiments and establish a deliberate two-loop learning process which allows planned actions to be modified, and also informs future thinking and planning.
The systems have socially constructed boundaries and are open to members and information.	The boundaries between government organisations and individuals and organisations outside government are socially constructed through the processes of interaction between them and can be reframed.	Focus on the boundaries that have been constructed and how easy or hard it is for perspectives to transcend these boundaries. Look for ways to reframe the boundaries so as to maximise the different perspectives and information available for problem solving.
Stability is not equilibrium: the systems are far from equilibrium and will undergo sudden and unpredictable changes disproportionate to the size of the stimulus	Influence patterns between individuals and organisations involved in the delivery of public services create familiar patterns and an image of stability which can be mistaken for equilibrium, when in fact the system occupies a far-from-equilibrium state which might suddenly undergo unpredictable change out of all proportion to the change stimulus.	Develop sensitivity to small changes at all levels of the system and adopt leadership and management processes that make it safe to identify patterns which do not fit. New patterns can be encouraged where helpful to overall direction of change and disrupted where not.
The system's history and starting point has a continuing effect on the dynamics of the system	The history of previous changes such as the 1988-89 public sector reforms and the 2000-3 Review of the Centre will continue to influence behaviour of individuals and organisation long after the change stimulus.	Implementation leaders need to recognise that the effects of previous public sector reform processes continue to influence behaviour of individuals and organisations. Therefore implementation leaders need to be explicit about the areas where they are reinforcing previously implemented changes and also explicit about where a different trajectory and outcome is intended and make sure this is widely understood.

Any knowledge of or wish for 'better public services' that individuals have will be filtered through an individual's or an organisation's prior experiences and will vary accordingly. A most important, and currently missing, part of Better Public Services implementation is initiation of an ongoing, purposeful conversation between a wide range of public service 'users' and providers about the outcomes sought and the actions that are individually and collectively needed to achieve them. This would not be a talkfest; it is a necessary and ongoing sense-making process which tests assumptions and creates processes of ongoing learning, as both a precursor to, and a stimulator of, service innovation (Weick, 1995; Ryan et al., 2008; Sorensen and Torfing, 2011). The implications of each of the characteristics of complexity discussed in this section and steps towards their mitigation are summarised in columns two and three of Table 1.

Implementation needs to be tight on outcomes but loose on means or pathways (e.g. Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007), and should treat implementation as an ongoing experiment from which there will be continuous learning to inform future actions (Sanderson, 2009). Better Public Services is a complex implementation which seeks to achieve goals which are broadly stated and understood, but also where the implementer has neither sufficient information nor understanding about the problems standing in the way of achievement of the goals and the means by which these might be overcome. That is, at the very least there are many unknowns, and many different understandings and interpretations of what is 'known'. Currently the implementation road map shows legislation amendment as a necessary task to be undertaken in 2012. However, if this is seen as a solution to be pursued on a fixed timeline, without any consideration of what is learnt as preparations proceed, then the actual legislative change might well be achieved without any of the behavioural changes intended. That is, many actors capable of taking independent actions based on their own information and understanding will adapt their behaviour, not out of any conscious desire to undermine intentions, but because their perceptions of the situation differ from those of the people leading the implementation. Thus, messy, risky and uncontrollable as it may seem, implementation needs to involve an experimental and tentative mindset that is tight on outcomes but loose on means and open to 'fast-fail' when this is needed. For example, a process of engagement and dialogue between those in a position to influence a student's NCEA achievement – service users (young people, parents and employers) and providers at sector level – should aim to achieve ownership of the goal, identify and initiate collective and individual actions necessary to achieve it, learn from what is working and what is not, and monitor and be accountable for progress.

Traditional implementation monitoring focuses on the collection of information which confirms an assumed pattern of responses, ... notwithstanding evidence that the contrary might also be occurring.

Weick and Sutcliffe's work on highly reliable organisations suggests ways of managing the kind of uncertainty inherent in complex implementation. They suggest that unpredictability and uncertainty are best anticipated by 'having a sense of susceptibility to the unexpected' (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007, p.87). Thus informed, implementation monitoring would focus less on the achievement of preordained milestones and artefacts, such as legislation, and more on subtle signs of patterns which do not fit the desired direction of change. According to Weick and Sutcliffe, all actors need an orientation and attitude which they call mindfulness of small variances from the expected. Mindfulness, they say, is the deliberate cultivation of a rich awareness of discriminatory detail. Deliberate policy changes such as the implementation of Better Public Services are based on assumptions about how the world is currently behaving, and will behave in response to planned changes. Weick and Sutcliffe suggest that these assumptions must be treated as tentative, and that the dominant orientation should be towards falsification. As a result, all actors would be chronically concerned about what does not fit, try to create a climate where it is safe to question assumptions and report problems candidly, and help all actors expand the number of undesirable consequences they envision so that they expand the number of precautions taken, contributing to a climate where people are wary of success and suspicious of quiet periods and stability. Weick and Sutcliffe also suggest that such situational awareness comes from sensitivity to micro-changes in information, gathered from day-to-day operations, which allows actors to make continuous adjustments that prevent errors from accumulating and enlarging. They talk about deference downwards and respect for expertise, not experts. Thus, expertise in many instances of public service delivery is located at the front line and outside the public sector organisation. In the case of the NCEA result, this might include the students and their parents.

Traditional implementation monitoring focuses on the collection of information which confirms an assumed pattern of responses, however superficial and non-embedded these responses might be, and notwithstanding evidence that the contrary might also be occurring. When working with complex systems and many interdependent actors, public managers require consciousness that things will not proceed in a predictable and orderly fashion and be able to recognise the problems this creates for monitoring and accountability. Therefore, the implementation road map should not be followed rigidly. It needs to be subject to ongoing revision, based on continuously updated knowledge from a wide range of perspectives, and to allow

for learning and 'fast-fail'. Monitoring also needs to allow that signs of desired and undesirable change might be difficult to detect in the early stages, which indicates a need for attention to weak signals and the qualitative features of the processes under way.

A sense-making approach is needed to uncover the multiple perceptions of cause and effect that are influencing behaviour of both users of government services and providers (Snowden, 2005; Weick, 1995; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007). Leadership also needs to take a form that is consistent with complexity (e.g. Snowden and Boone, 2007), which means that leaders will be constantly probing for different perspectives and adapting their plans as needed while not losing sight of the end goals established by government. Implementation leaders need to recognise that changes will occur without any deliberate action from them. The ongoing reflexive patterns of influence and counter-influence between individuals and organisations involved in the delivery of public services will bring about adaptive changes and co-evolution between the individuals, the organisation and the policies they are implementing. Furthermore, these individuals and organisations will self-organise in accordance with their own sense making about what is happening and what they think might happen next. As a result of this self-organisation, new associations and coalitions between individuals and organisations and previously unknown behaviour patterns will emerge without any deliberate intent for them to do so. The implementation leader cannot possibly understand the entire workings of the system they are trying to change, but can lead by asking the right questions, involving the full range of actors with part of the solution, and enabling action.

Leadership and management of complex implementation also needs to think differently about risk and see it as something to be managed proactively, as both a source of potential desirable innovation and a possible derailer. Self-organisation and emergence should be expected and can lead to changes which, while perhaps not planned, are the source of step-change innovations in the system and can be allowed to grow. Other emergent phenomena will be unhelpful for the desired trajectory and need to be disrupted. Allowance needs to be made for this in the way implementation is monitored, so that the variance from what is expected receives more attention, with learning and a preparedness for failures playing a part. Implementation planning that is closed to the concepts of emergence and learning as you go is likely to ignore both types of emergent phenomena, and might only recognise unhelpful emergent phenomena when they have become too widespread and self-reinforcing to be quashed easily. At times progress might look messy, all process and no outcomes. Consistent with a pragmatic approach, Klijn et al. (2010) have suggested that we need to consider both process and content outcomes and identify a variety of dimensions for attention, not only those in the minds of the designers and implementers at the outset of the implementation process. Monitoring needs to allow for the fact that the effects of previous policy changes will still be influencing public service behaviour, and identify where these might be creating dynamics which will undermine the desired change if their influence is ignored.

The Better Public Services Advisory Group has made recommendations about changes to make the system more responsive and innovative based on its understanding of how the system currently works. However, as changes begin to be made, the system will adapt in ways that are currently unknowable and could maintain the status quo or take the system in some unintended direction. There is a tendency for the public sector and individuals who work in it to be risk averse. If the benefits of emergence, as the source of innovation, are to be captured, then there is a need for ongoing monitoring of risk based on diverse perspectives, for the purposes of risk management and learning not risk avoidance (Eppel, 2012a; and see also Forbes and Cumming, this issue).

Conclusion

The critical question is whether New Zealand's public management system will be driven by a focus on achieving higher-value results (starting with the ten the government has identified) in collaboration with citizens, or whether, in reality, it will be driven by limited perceptions will be from within government agencies about what might need to change to achieve the results, with little or no reference to those beyond the people who use public services. This is not a chicken-and-egg matter; it is more than perspective. Leading change through the pursuit of outcomes, which also includes processes of learning and co-construction of higher-value (better) public services with the users of those services, will ensure that the priority and order of changes will serve the achievement of those outcomes. Leading change through a multi-stranded programme of instrumental changes, however much they might be needed, is a recipe for competition between competing objectives and a lack of clarity about how this competition is best managed. Unintended outcomes and surprise results should be expected. Whether these unintended effects are used to reinforce the trajectory of change and speed up the achievement of results, or end up undoing change which is heading in the right direction and creating confusion among individual and organisational actors, depends on whether the implementation leaders take adequate cognisance of complexity and adopt a pragmatic stance towards achieving the goals of the reform.

For public servants involved in the delivery of services, and especially for those involved in leadership of the implementation of Better Public Services, the achievement of the direction of change signalled by the prime minister's results focus requires an unequivocal focus on the outcome sought (better public service results for New Zealanders from the perspective of government, taxpayers and end-users); learning and co-designing with service users; flexibility about the means; and a risk-management rather that a risk-aversion approach and continuous learning from diverse perspectives as it goes along.

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