

Organizational Change in Schools

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Kadir Beycioglu 

Dokuz Eylül University

Yasar Kondakci

Middle East Technical University

Abstract

Purpose: This review aims to discuss the meaning of organizational change, change dynamics, and the current state of debates on organizational change in schools. The core purpose of this review is not only to restate the literature on organizational change in schools but also to challenge the current theoretical understanding of change in schools by rising the new perspectives on change in schools.

Design/Approach/Methods: As part of this effort, we discuss the dominant perspectives of change, forces of change, and illustrate the interventions adopted by different school systems to deal with the need of change.

Findings: The literature on change in schools suggests that, parallel to the change intervention in other organizational settings, largely fail. Falling short of intended goals in change interventions is not a simple methodological problem but rather an ontological issue of how we perceive change and organization. Parallel to the arguments in the literature, continuous change has been indicated as an alternative perspective to planned change. Finally, leadership has been indicated as a key driver of organizational change.

Originality/Value: The review discusses applicability of continuous change and elaborate on alternative leadership approaches to guide continuous change in schools.

Corresponding author*:

Kadir Beycioglu, Department of Educational Sciences, Dokuz Eylül University, Alsancak, No: 144 35210, Cumhuriyet Blv, 35220 Konak, Turkey.

Email: beycioglu@gmail.com



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Keywords

Continuous change, educational change leadership, organizational change, schools

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Introduction

Organizations—including schools—are under constant pressure from their internal and external environments. Social and demographic developments, new patterns of employment, developments in technology, and globalization are some of the forces pushing schools to initiate change interventions. Healthy change and development of schools is essential for survival of the schools as an organization and accomplishing progressive social change in the society (Rosenblatt, 2004). Aslan et al. (2008) indicated that despite the different labels given to the change interventions such as reform, innovation, planned change, or improvement, it is “more than a simple rise in a school’s test scores” (Waite, 2002, p. 161). The practices of organizational change in general, and educational change in particular, may differ from one context to another. Because of the various dynamics of the context in which change is practiced, cultural differences and ambiguities in meanings ascribed to the term can vary dramatically across cultures.

In this review, we first discuss the meaning of organizational change, change dynamics, and the current state of debates on organizational change in schools. As part of this effort, we discuss the dominant forces of change and illustrate the interventions adopted by different school systems to deal with change need. However, the core purpose of this review is not simply restating the literature on organizational change in schools. Rather, our core purpose is to challenge the current theoretical understanding of change in schools and the practice of change guided by this theoretical understanding. We specifically argue that the frequent change interventions in schools fail to accomplish their purposes, resulting in a loss of valued resources (Clegg & Walsh, 2004; Zayim & Kondakci, 2015). There are different reasons behind the high failure rate of change interventions in schools. The human factor and the resistance associated with this factor are the most commonly cited reasons behind failure of change interventions. However, we argue that the way we conceptualize change and development in schools is one of the primary causes for the high failure rate of change in schools (Beycioglu & Kondakci, 2014; Kondakci et al., 2019). Planned change interventions are still valid in initiating change in schools. Planned change is a kind of change initiative managed from the top of an organization and spread over it to create an effective organization through planned interventions. In education, planned change, perceived as an idea of top-down issue in the school system (Berkovich, 2017), is generally arranged (or worse, manipulated) by policymakers and provides part of the picture of change in schools because it still characterizes change as a top-down, repressive, and extraordinary organizational practice in

some contexts. More importantly, planned change ignores the capacity of different school constituencies to improvise, experiment, and alter their own organizational processes. As a result, successfully dealing with the constant pressure of different forces of change is closely related to the school capacity to relate two types of change, that is, top-down planned interventions and bottom-up unplanned change. This means, for the proponents of emergent change perspectives, that “change is a continuous, dynamic and contested process that emerges in an unpredictable and unplanned fashion” and “even when changes are operational, they will need to be constantly refined and developed in order to maintain their relevance” (Burnes, 2012, p. 135). We elaborate on the distinction between planned change and unplanned, bottom-up, and emergent change subsequently.

Interpretation of organizational change: Meanings and perspectives

The meaning of organizational change

Collins (1998) portrays organizations as social phenomena. In this “*phenomenal settings*” of organizations, change is an established concept and viewed as “a necessary evil” (Lawler & Worley, 2006). For Louis et al. (1999), the concept of change is very close to notions of restructuring, developing, improving, or reforming the organization. Change theorists who explore how and why organizations change use the term “change” as closely related to organizational development (Burke, 2017; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995; Weick & Quinn, 1999). That there have been controversial issues in theorizing and practicing (effective) change ensures a rich theoretical background of concepts, labels, and models in the organizational change literature (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015; Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Hargreaves, 2002; Langley et al., 2013; Palumbo & Manna, 2019).

The literature also offers us some *generic definitions* of organizational change (Kezar, 2001), but not *generic recipes* (Weick, 1995) for *how to change*. This means that it could be easy to differentiate any change initiative in any type of organization, but it may be difficult to find a general method for making organizational aspects ready for this change and its management or to attain the desired end because of the uniqueness of each organization. Burnes (2009), for example, suggested that organizational change is the procedure of altering an organization among individuals, groups, and the entire organization. For Porras and Robertson (1992), change is “the alteration of organizational members’ on-the-job behaviors,” “improving organizational performance,” and “enhancing individual development” via “a set of behavioral science-based theories, values, strategies, and techniques” aiming at “the planned change of the organizational work setting” (p. 723). Similarly, Poole and Van de Ven (2004) defined organizational change as a difference in entities of an organization such as an individual’s job, a work group, an organizational subunit, the overall organization, and larger communities of organizations. Barnett and Carroll (1995)

conceptualize organizational change “in terms of both its process and its content. Process refers to how change occurs. Content describes what actually changes in the organization . . . to explain why organizations change as well as what the consequences are of change” (p. 217). “At its simplest,” for Dawson (2003), “organizational change can be defined as new ways of organizing and working” (p. 11). In addition to putting change-related terms into a clear light, this literature on change identifies a wide array of factors impacting the effectiveness of change interventions, including content, context, process, readiness, adoption, and institutionalization, among other factors (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Armenakis et al., 1993; Holt et al., 2007; Specht et al., 2018; Zayim Kurtay & Kondakci, 2020).

Nonetheless, the meaning of organizational change and how to study remains a controversial issue (Van de Ven & Poole, 2005). The main reason behind this may be the high failure rate of change interventions and the high human and financial cost that comes along with the failure of change (Beer & Nohria, 2000). Thus, while most of the research agreed that change interventions are common and very popular in organizations, unfortunately, the majority of these interventions end up with limited or no success (e.g., Cheng & Walker, 2008; Demers, 2007) and result in various organizational pathologies (Dahl, 2011; Jansson, 2013).

Organizational change perspectives

The literature on change and organizational change has provided us different change theories (Kezar, 2001). For example, Demers (2007) reviews the literature of organizational change with the intent of creating a better understanding toward the evolution of the field and denotes that, prior to the 1980s, organizational change was conceived in terms of growth adaptations. This perspective encompasses a rational adaptation approach viewing organizations as an instrument controlled by managers who alter structures and systems in response to internal and external pressures, an organic adaptation approach viewing change as the emergent result of processes, a life-cycle approach viewing organizations as living organisms that transition between predetermined stages of change, a population ecology approach viewing change as disruptive and hazardous for organizations as well as difficult to achieve, and a new institutionalism approach viewing organizations as adopting change for symbolic purposes (Boujos, 2017). In the era after the 1980s, change was viewed as a form of adaptation with two dominant viewpoints: (1) a managerial-functionalist view that embraced the idea of portraying change as an episode initiated by top management and ending with a return to equilibrium and (2) an organizational-interpretive view that portrayed change as reciprocal due to its top-down and bottom-up process of all actors within an organization contributing to change and change process as more incremental and emergent. Then, the next era demonstrated an interest in increasing an organization’s capacity for change. This era caused a shift from viewing change as emergent to viewing it as a long-term process of renewal with two

approaches: (1) natural evolution viewing change as behavioral learning, evolving, and emerging and (2) social dynamics that preferred a subjective stance in that organizational change considers all agencies and that human beings are purposeful and reflexive (Boujos, 2017).

According to Kezar (2001), there are six main categories of change theories: (1) evolutionary, (2) teleological, (3) life cycle, (4) dialectical, (5) social cognition, and (6) cultural (p. iv). Those categories have different assumptions about why, how, and when change occurs and the duration and the outcomes of change. Evolutionary change is a response to external circumstances, situational variables, and the environment faced by each organization. Teleological theories, known as planned change models, posit the belief that organizations are purposeful (often rational) and adaptive. Change is needed because leaders, change agents, and others think that change is necessary. Evolving from child development theories, life-cycle change theories focus on stages of growth, organizational maturity, and organizational decline. In other words, change is a natural part of human and organizational development. Dialectical change models, also known as political models, emphasize that change is the result of clashing ideology and belief systems. Social cognition models highlight the ways that individuals and organizations learn and describe change as being tied to learning and mental processes such as sensemaking. According to this model, change occurs because individuals see a need to grow, learn, and change their behavior. Cultural change model proposes that change occurs naturally as a response to alterations in the environment, values, rituals, as a result, and cultures are always changing (Kezar, 2001; Kezar & Eckel, 2002).

The above frameworks by Demers (2007) and Kezar (2001) include a lot of change theories proposed by leading scholars such as Lewin (three-stage theory of change), Kotter (eight-step process of change), Roger (diffusion theory), and Argyris and Schön (organizational learning theory). These theories have a foundational influence on conceptualizing organizational change processes.

Change in schools

In this era of tremendous change, educational organizations, school systems, and/or schools are under change pressures. A school, which is generally accepted as an open system, has a more fragile structure and is subject to inescapable internal and external change pressures (Beycioglu & Aslan, 2010; Fink, 2003; Fullan, 1993; Hallinger, 2004; Hargreaves, 2004; Harris, 2006). Similar to other organizations, organizational change in schools is any alteration, betterment, improvement, restructuring, or adjustment in the processes or contents of education in schools (Dimmock, 1996). Hargreaves et al. (2005) highlight that educational change processes and initiatives intend to alter learning and teaching in our schools. However, altering in school organization, for Hoy and

Sweetland (2001), is not to try to eliminate all the difficulties that schools have but to plan to innovate considering internal and external change pressures.

In the next section, we are moving to analyze the critical debates on organizational change in schools.

Debates on organizational change in schools

Organizational change scholars have introduced varied definitions of change, coupled with perspectives on initiating and implementing change process (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995), as noted earlier. In addition to theoretical plurality, there are many change models aiming at guiding change implementation at schools (Armenakis et al., 1999; Garvin, 2000; Kotter, 1995; Mento et al., 2002; Whelan-Berry et al., 2003). These models propose structured step-by-step processes in implementing change to facilitate the job of change agents in organizations. These models argue that change can be accomplished by stage-based implementation approach. However, the plurality of change implementation models indicate their limited effectiveness so that different settings call for competitive models.

The same theoretical plurality is valid for the literature about educational change as well (Fullan, 1992, 2001; Hargreaves et al., 2010; Harris, 2011). Despite the abundance of conceptual frameworks and practice models, change interventions fall short of their predefined objectives. Although some scholars approach the issue of high failure with caution (e.g., Hughes, 2011), several scholars document the phenomenon of “change failure” with empirical evidence (Clegg & Walsh, 2004). The concern over the high failure rate has been expressed by several educational change scholars as well (Cheng & Walker, 2008; Nir et al., 2017).

The core questions right now change scholars and practitioners are trying to answer is “Why do change initiatives fail given the richness in theory and practice of organizational change?” Traditional analyses on the reasons behind high failure rate of change interventions yielded again traditional explanations for high failure rate. Lacking the necessary managerial skills and organizational capacity, including the deficit in organizational resources, is highlighted as the main reason behind the failure of change interventions (Kim et al., 2011). Additionally, other explanations for high failure rates were identified with the “human factor” as the prime reason impeding the success of change interventions (Beycioglu & Kondakci, 2014; Coyle-Shapiro, 1999). Some of the most commonly articulated reasons of employees’ negative attitudes toward change include beliefs that changes are introduced in a top-down manner, organizational members do not participate, the change agency does not document the need for change, the change agency does not inform those affected about the progress of change, and organizational members’ status is threatened by the outcomes.

These explanations for the problems in change implementation in schools reflect the traditional understanding of organizational change. These explanations are typically made from a planned change perspective. The more the change initiatives fail, the higher the number of change models are proposed by change scholars. However, these models and theories seem to be generated by the same mindset. Many scholars have recently started to articulate that the real problem is actually related to the way we conceptualize change or what we mean by change in organization but not the change theory or model we use to guide change per se. In other words, when it comes to documenting the problems in change implementation, stakeholders report these problems from the traditional change perspectives. According to Lawrence (2015), the traditional perspective to change (e.g., planned change) approaches reflecting the early industrial age thinking about organizations does not meet the needs of change for current organization. Hence, we need a new mindset guiding our thinking about and practice change. Holding a significantly different understanding about the scale, pace, and origin of change, several scholars identified totally different sets of flaws in the way we think and practice change in organizations.

First of all, a static conception of the organization and prioritizing static state in the organization have been indicated as one of the core issues in our thinking about change (Feldman, 2000; Orlikowski, 1996; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). In fact, the moment the organization starts to think about a change agenda in response to an internal and/or external development, the environment poses a new challenge to the organization. As Wolf (2011) implied, the change approaches and terminology has been developed for an industrial age rather than the age characterized with a fast pace of change in information, technology, markets, and people. The traditional episodic approach to change is based on the assumption of a stable and predictable organizational context. In this perspective, the environment of the organization is limited to its close environment and ignores the fact the whole globe is actually affecting the organization in the Internet age. In a flattened world, change and developments in any context have immediate and direct impact on organization.

Second, the concept of the scale of change in traditional change perspectives has been commonly criticized. The obstinate tendency to perceive and conceive change as a large-scale and dramatic shift typically ignores the enduring but small alterations in organizations (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). In relation, introducing change as an extraordinary event in organizational life (Barnes et al., 2010) is linked as the problem in the traditional understanding of change. According to Tsoukas and Chia (2002), change is not independent of the ordinary daily activity in organizations. In that sense, they argued that there is no difference between ordinary organizational membership and change agency. Håkonsson et al. (2012) argued that change in the environment distorts the balance between the organization and its environment. The attempt to close the gap decreases organizational performance. Relying on the arguments of continuous change scholars,

Håkonsson et al. (2012) argued that the paradox between international and external fit by viewing change as frequent, continuous, and dissipative, which capture endogenous change.

A third problem in the dominant thinking about change, associated with the second problem, is related to the origin of change. The constant attempt to introduce change based on top-down managerial abstraction and divorcing change plan from its local context is one of the basic problems in the dominant thinking about change (Weick & Quinn, 1999). As stated above, the common top-down practice of change is the main reason behind human problems in change interventions. Hatum et al. (2010) rightfully argued that the view of organizational change as a phenomenon resulting from the coexistence of managerial choice and environmental influence is a reductionist one and ignores deterministic and voluntarist approaches to organizational adaptation. The authors maintained that the dominant theories of organizational adaptation focus on exogenous factors in organizational adaptation and ignore endogenous dynamism helping the organization cope with a fluid organizational environment. Particular internal organizational capabilities have the potential to transform the adaption capability of the organization in volatile environments.

A fourth criticism of the traditional change perspective is related to the aftermath of change. Traditional change approaches encounter sustainability problem (Brännmark & Benn, 2012; Hargreaves, 2002). In planned change, the resulting organizational configuration faces the challenge of becoming a normal part of daily practice and being internalized by organizational members (Brännmark & Benn, 2012). Even if change interventions are successful in bringing about the conceived organizational state, the resulting organizational state is not effective in responding to emergent developments in internal and external environments (Brännmark & Benn, 2012).

Similar criticisms have increasingly been articulated by educational change scholars. These criticisms reflect dissatisfaction with the way change is conceptualized and practiced in schools (Gallucci, 2008). As a result, most educational change interventions reflecting the common or traditional understanding of change do not result in significant improvements in structural and functional characteristics of schools (Hargreaves, 2002; Nir et al., 2017). Some educational change scholars maintain that the traditional change practice detach teachers and, in some cases, principals from the change process, which results in limited ownership of the process (Castelijns et al., 2013). Planned change interventions are still the most common ways of initiating change in organizations, including schools. However, planned change provides part of the picture of change in schools because it characterizes change as a top-down, repressive, and extraordinary organizational practice. More importantly, planned change ignores the capacity of different school constituencies to improvise, experiment, and alter their own organizational processes. As a result, successfully dealing with constant pressure of different forces of change is closely related to the school

leadership capacity for making change and development as part of daily practices of school constituencies and capitalizing on small-scale modifications and alterations.

These discussions on the flaws in the dominant approaches to change indicate the need for a new perspective for change. This need is equally valid for the broader field of organization science as well as educational organization. Wolf (2011) argued that “planned change may no longer be sufficient to address the needs of today’s organizations” (p. 20). The author maintained that the existing view of change represents first-generation management thinking, which is no longer suitable to respond to the needs of current organizations that are challenged by new technologies, markets, people, and customers. These new developments challenged the definition of change and development as well, which brings a new ontology of change and development.

A new perspective

Conceptual bases of continuous change

The brief discussion around the flaws surrounding traditional thinking about change stated the need for a new understanding of change. The criticisms of pace, scale, and origin of change in traditional change approaches open the way toward a new perspective on organizational change. Although different scholars propose various perspectives, most of these perspectives entail appreciation for the dynamics of continuous change. Continuous change is ongoing, small scale, and embedded in daily practices of organizations (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002).

Several scholars highlight the need for a new ontological perspective on change and the organization (Langley et al., 2013; Michel, 2014; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Tsoukas and Chia (2002), among the first scholars to articulate the need for a new ontology of change and organizations, suggested a process ontology, rather than an “ontology of things,” for capturing the essence of continuous change. According to these scholars, process ontology, on the other hand, enables the perception of a constant state of change and development in organizations. In this perspective, change prioritizes the organization. In other words, a constant state of flux makes and remakes the organization. To highlight the ontology of process, the authors suggest the term of “organizational becoming.” Langley et al. (2013) continued the discussion of process ontology. These authors argued that organizations are constantly modified, which eliminates the possibility of seeing the organization as a given object. The organization is not a collection of static objects and structures. Rather, these objects and structures are modified, altered, and extended on an ongoing basis (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Orlikowski (1996) argued that the small but frequent changes go almost invisible to organizational members. Feldman (2000) argued that even organizational routines, what we know as the most static organizational structures, are constantly modified on an ongoing basis.

Michel (2014) extended the discussion around a new ontology of organizations. The authors argued that episodic change is related to epistemology, whereas continuous change is related to ontology. According to Michel, epistemology (episodic change) is well-known, however, ontology (continuous change) is less known. The new ontology of organizations first invites the analyzers to identify the organizational member, rather than top management, as the real “owner” of organizational practices. Continuous change invites us to focus on process rather than entities, requiring us to probe how diverse organizational elements keep forming each other. Common terms associated with continuous change include improvisation, performativity, structuration, and becoming. Michel (2014) argued that a state of flux reflects the true nature of the organization. Michel stated that “Personal and structural attributes interrelate and keep forming each other . . . a duality, constructing persons and context as a mutually constituted cognitive resource system, which means that the attributes of the one depends on the engagement with the other” (p. 1083). In that sense, participants’ alertness to their work enables them to change whole or part of their work.

Although there are a limited number of studies on continuous change, some analyses imply that changing the ontology of organization from an ontology of things to an ontology of process contributes to organizational performance. According to Håkansson et al. (2012), adapting the thinking of continuous change, though viewing change as a constant and endemic process to the organization rather than a particular mode or state of organizing, contributes to organizational performance. In a similar way, Hatum et al. (2010) in their analysis identified the advantage of following continuous change.

The functioning of continuous change

The above discussion on the philosophical bases of continuous change does not intend to imply that debates have led to a robust and unified theory of change. Scholars of continuous change have adopted different concepts and theories to explain the operating mechanisms of continuous change. Weick and Quinn (1999), in their seminal work on the comparison between episodic and continuous change, declared sensemaking, learning, and improvisation as the three key metaphors to explain the operating mechanisms of continuous change. “Sensemaking” refers to the cognitive processes through which organizational members interpret organizational categories (process and structures) and how they extend these categories on the basis of this interpretation (Weick, 2000). Sensemaking helps organizational members develop shared meaning around organizational practices or work categories (Lawrence, 2015). “Improvisation” suggests that organizational members have the tendency to produce new products, outcomes, or categories in the absence of a pre-existing plan or program (Orlikowski, 1996). “Learning” is the process of knowledge acquisition and interpretation, which gives way to extension of given work categories (Weick & Quinn, 1999). Flores et al. (2012) argued that organizational learning is a key capability for continuous change.

Learning includes retaining and sharing knowledge, which gives the learning a social aspect. In that sense, communities of practices are also a relevant concept in explaining the bases of continuous change (Brown & Duguid, 1991). Recently, Kondakci et al. (2016) added “self-organizing” as another conceptual tool for explaining the operating mechanisms in continuous change through mutual accommodation and interdependence within and between systems in a dynamic and interdependent environment. Like in the case of learning, self-organizing accommodates travels between and/or within the system.

It is important to state that these conceptual tools highlight the role of the social construction of continuous change (Wolf, 2011). As stated by Brown and Duguid (1991), any modification in the work practice repertoire made by an individual member is shared with other members, typically in an informal setting. The arguments of Ford and Ford (1995) deepened our understanding of social construction of change in organizational context. They argued that change is generated and conveyed in interactions and conversations. As a result, we create new meanings that facilitate change and development. Social construction of language and creation of public meaning enables transformation in the organization. Continuous change offers new ways of understanding the nature of change.

Another commonality across these conceptual tools is related to the interplay between given and emergent organizational categories. Conceptualizations of continuous change noted above explain how continuous change emanates from a given structure or a work category. The conceptual tools described above indicate that each reactivation of work categories leads to extension of the categories in an effort to meet local needs, respond to emergent situations or address an unenvisioned situation (Feldman, 2000; Feldman & Pentland, 2003). Continuous change is concealed in interactions and sweeps through these interactions to make an impact on organizational practices (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). As a result, change is not an unusual or discrete practice; rather, it is a constellation of ongoing, pervasive, and constant activities that diffuse through the interactions and practices of organizational members. Hence, according to continuous change, change is not a distinct or unusual practice in organizations. It is integral to daily practice and is embedded in the daily work of organizational members. As a result, contrary to the top-down nature of planned change, continuous change is a bottom-up process.

Finally, both process ontology and the conceptual tools promoting continuous change suggest that approaches to continuous change address the human factor. It can be argued that in traditional change perspectives, the human factor is always an issue in change implementation because of the way change is conceived and implemented, detaching the owner of the process (top management) and the implementers (ordinary practitioners). Human behavioral issues are always evident in such change interventions because, from the practitioner’s perspective, the design is usually alien to their local reality, and the change plan reflects the perception and conception of the top

management. In traditional approaches to change, the change process and organizing processes are separate phases. Change agents' core problems are developing positive behaviors and attitudes toward change on the part of the organizational members. Participation in the change process, communication about change, and persuading organizational members about the need of change are common practices in creating positive change behaviors, such as in the form of openness, readiness, and/or commitment, on the part of organizational members.

Kim et al. (2011) distinguished between traditional managerial interventions for accomplishing change through inculcating supportive psychological states and the kinds of adaptive behaviors essential in continuous change processes, such as responding to change by adjusting to and dealing with stress, uncertainty, and new demands, coping with change, adaptive performance, compliance and cooperation, and proactive change support behaviors. Kim et al. (2011) illustrated these by supportive behaviors in an unplanned change context with "voice, taking charge, taking personal initiative, proactivity, strategy-supportive behaviors" (p. 1668). In continuous change mode, rather than resisting, this serves the best interests of organizational members (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002) because it is the way to successfully accomplish the work, progress on the work, and gain professional satisfaction as the owner of the work practice.

Leadership for continuous change

Claiming that change is embedded in the daily practices of ordinary organizational members does not devalue leadership. Leadership is still very critical in bringing about continuous change in that leaders have a critical role, first, in creating a culture nurturing continuous change and, second, in capitalizing on small-scale changes to make these parts of emerging repertoires of practice. These two leadership tasks are essential to eliminate the risk of failing to capture small changes that are essential to sustaining change over time. In that sense, the question is not whether we need leadership; rather, it is which type of leadership is needed for capitalizing on small-scale and bottom-up innovations and enabling continuous change in organizations. Although continuous change has been discussed extensively by several scholars, these discussions handle the issue of leadership in continuous change only incidentally. Some of the analyses focus on leadership for creating a culture serving continuous change. In that sense, conceptual discussions of leadership in continuous change is a twofold issue: first, identifying the leadership type facilitating continuous change, and second, identifying the role of such leadership.

As to identifying the type of leadership serving continuous change, Kondakci et al. (2016) discussed the potential of distributed leadership as the most appropriate leadership style serving continuous change both theoretically and practically. Similarly, Seashore (2009) stated that "articulating the merits of a non-linear approach to change management is compatible with the continuous improvement and distributed leadership perspectives" (p. 134). Building on the new

ontology of continuous change, Kondakci et al. (2016) argued that both distributed leadership and continuous change go beyond traditional frameworks in their respective domains. As indicated above, continuous change attributes merit to the informal side of organizing practice. A similar emphasis is evident in different arguments about distributed leadership. Moreover, continuous change attributes the role of leading change to ordinary organizational members, while distributed leadership invites ordinary members to undertake leadership roles. Spillane and Zuberi (2009) argue about the attributes of ordinary members' leadership roles. Parallel to the socially constructed nature of continuous change, Gronn (2002) argued that leadership is a collective property of the organization, and each individual member has the potential of contributing to leadership processes in the organization. Although the perspective over formal distribution is more dominant (e.g., Gronn, 2002; Harris et al., 2007; Spillane, 2006), there are arguments opening space for spontaneous collaboration and intuitive working relationships, which indicate unstructured distribution patterns and recognizing distribution to nonformal positions as well.

As to the second task in continuous change leadership—identifying the leadership practices supporting continuous change—again there are limited arguments. Kim et al. (2011) argued that leaders need to ensure the quality of the employment relationship. Given the properties of continuous change, control over one's own work practices, empowerment, and social interaction seems to be key variables contributing to the quality of employment relationships. Kondakci et al. (2016) extended the discussion on the role of leadership in constructing and maintaining a culture of continuous change. Part of enhancing the quality of employment relationships is ensuring that trust, facilitating knowledge sharing, and giving organizational members power over their practice contribute to creating a culture of continuous change in organizations (Kondakci et al., 2016).

Lawrence (2015) reported that leadership has the role of articulating a clear message to external stakeholders to create a necessary dialogue of change. Through communication, leaders pioneer collective meaning making for change. In that sense, leaders need to understand others' perspectives. This is essential for creating a temporal and physical space for organizational members to engage in change and undertake their role in change in their own way. Håkonsson et al. (2012) argued leaders need to deviate from the traditional perception of change over their role and function in the organizations so that they can facilitate continuous change in organizations. According to the authors, leaders face two fundamental tasks in ensuring continuous change. One is ensuring the structural elements that are necessary to achieve and sustain change and the other is identifying the processes involved in building and destroying inertia. According to Håkonsson et al. (2012), leaders should not see themselves as initiators of change intervention, but they should be creators of the structures leading to continuous change in the organizations. The authors recommended that leaders should invest in continuous, rather than episodic, change and should emphasize continuous, sustainable change for better performance. As a result, leadership practices toward thinking of

change efforts are essential qualities of leadership contributing to organizational performance. Incremental leadership moves supporting higher levels of adaptation over time, accompanied by learning and coaching initiatives that can help sustain change in organizations. Finally, Hargreaves et al. (2014) argued that leaders' job is "not to be smarter than teachers at their jobs, but to get them to collaborate more effectively and capitalize on their skills collectively" (p. 30). Although they did not do an analysis of continuous change, we believe these statements perfectly illustrate one of the leadership practices facilitating continuous change culture.

If the core arguments of continuous change are clear, then it should be clear that the intervention theory of continuous change is largely related to creating a culture facilitating this type of change rather than approaching the organization and individuals with a predesigned plan to deal with change. A vital issue to consider for realizing continuous change is creating a culture and context that enables key process factors, such as participation, communication, and coordination. These process factors are essential because each component in continuous change interacts with other components. Cultivating informed stakeholders is essential for the success of change. Naturally, creating such a culture is only possible in collaboration with organizational members and leadership.

Conclusion

This review seeks to undertake two missions. The first is to document the state of organizational change debates. The second is to pioneer alternative way of thinking about change in organizations, including schools. We believe the first mission has commonly been undertaken by many scholars. Nevertheless, the educational change field needs to embrace the mission boldly and consider alternative ways of thinking about change in educational context.

Despite the fact that organizational change has been one of the most commonly investigated topics in the organization and educational science fields, conceptualizing and practicing change in organizations is still controversial because most organizational change initiatives fail, and each failure brings financial and psychological cost to the organization. It is difficult to claim that change scholars and practitioners possess the sure solution to this high failure rate. The discussion on the continuous change perspective suggests one key insight, that is, the current planned change perspective is not enough to respond to the change needs of organizations in today's highly volatile environment. Considering change as a break from normal functioning of the organization is a key issue in the current change practices (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). This approach requires a total alteration of our understanding of change and organizations. Conceptualizing change as a matter of normal times, attributing the role of change agency to ordinary organizational members, and opening up possibilities for bottom-up interventions in organizational practices provide remedies not only for dealing with the pathologies related to change implementations but also for ensuring continuous development of work categories, routines, and practices. Continuous change alters the

compartmentalized and discontinuous understanding of planned change in which change era and normal era in organizations are separate. Fullan (2016) indicated lack of holistic perspective of change practice. Continuous change eliminates this shortcoming of planned change by creating a bottom-up mechanism available for every organizational member to change their work categories without a top-down imperative to do so.

This understanding of change provides a clear insight on the relationships between planned change and continuous change. Continuous change does not nullify the formal side of the organization; as a result, the planned change approach. However, like any other organizational practices, success of formally defined, planned, or constructed practices largely depends on recognizing and managing the informal side as well. Continuous change operates not only in planned change practices but also in other daily organizational practices. As a result, bottom-up, small-scale, and ongoing iterations fill in the gaps in formally defined, planned, and constructed practices, including planned change interventions.

Continuous change requires a culture inhabiting this type of change practice in educational organizations. Although continuous change is in its infancy, the conceptual and empirical work on the concept suggest several practices for realizing continuous change in organizations. These studies suggest that process and content variables such as trust, social interaction, networking, communication, and knowledge sharing directly contribute continuous change behavior on the part of the teachers (Kondakci et al., 2016, 2019). Empirical support indicates that these processes and context variables play a critical role in creating an organizational climate conducive for continuous change because these variables provide knowledge that is essential for ongoing experimentation of organizational members on organizational categories including routines as well as change plans. Secondly, the change agency needs to be altered from an elite, top-level group into attributing the role of change agency to every organizational member (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Continuous change approach emancipates change as a concept and practice from a narrow understanding and locate in a more general perspective regarding management practices in organizations. As a result, change agency is not an elite group designing and imposing change plans, rather change agency is a typical implementer of work categories. Finally, distributing leadership practice across the organization is needed to capture small-scale changes and making these changes as part of the formal practice in schools.

The insights proposed by continuous change need, first, to be located in a theoretical framework and, second, to be tested further as factors leading to continuous change. In that sense, the process philosophy and applicability of key concepts serving continuous change such as improvisation, sensemaking, learning, translation (Weick & Quinn, 1999), and self-organizing (Kondakci et al., 2016) need more theoretical elaboration. More importantly, empirical investigations are also needed to test core premises of continuous change on the scale, pace, and origin of change.

*Editors' Note

ECNU Review of Education Editorial Office hereby extends our deep condolences and profound appreciation for Professor Kadir Beycioglu, who passed away in August 2021. Hopefully this article will contribute to his legacy. Please contact Professor Yasar Kondakci, the second author, for any issues concerning this article. Professor Kondakci's contact information is as follows: Department of Educational Administration and Planning, Middle East Technical University, Dumlupinar Blv. No 1, 06800 Cankaya, Ankara, Turkey. Email: kyasar@metu.edu.tr

Contributorship

This study is a conceptual work, and the two authors undertook equal roles in building the idea and structuring the article. Nevertheless, the two authors undertook the responsibility of reviewing the literature and writing up different parts of the paper. Kadir Beycioglu wrote and finalized the "Introduction," "Change in schools," and "Debates on organizational change in schools" parts, while Yasar Kondakci wrote and finalized the "Abstract," "Interpretation of organizational change: Meanings and perspectives," and "A new perspective" sections. The "Conclusion" part is the joint work of the two authors.


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ORCID iD

Kadir Beycioglu  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0385-3087>

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