

Resistance to Change: A Speed Bump on the Road to School Improvement?

David Dolph

University of Dayton

Abstract

The need for reform and improvement in P-12 school systems is an ongoing topic of debate among legislators, business leaders, parents, educational leaders, and teachers. It can be argued that interest in reforming educational opportunities for students is more prevalent and critical today than at any other time of American educational history.

Scholars indicate that people are often resistant to change for a variety of reasons including fear, lack of information, and lack of appropriate skills. Nevertheless, one of the chief responsibilities of school leaders is to facilitate change strategies that will improve organizational output. This article will discuss various approaches to how leaders can successfully facilitate organizational change and overcome resistance to new ideas.

Key Words: Change, Resistance, Leadership, Management

David Dolph, Ph.D., is a former school principal and superintendent. He is currently an Assistant Professor and Department Chair in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Dayton. His research interests have focused on school leadership, organizational management, managing organizational change, and effective decision-making.

Introduction

The need for school improvement through reform efforts in P-12 educational systems represents an ongoing debate between and among legislators, business leaders, parents, educational leaders, and teachers. It can be argued that interest in reforming and improving school systems and educational opportunities for students is more prevalent today than at any other time of American educational history. At the same time, educational leaders and teachers are realizing that continual change is necessary for education as the demand for change and improvement is pervasive not only in school systems but in all organizations. Changes happen continuously and rapidly.

Changes, or demands for changes, are often high stakes for organizations and their staffs. As continuous as the change process is in school systems, it offers possibilities for opportunity and improvement or danger and decline. Organizations with leaders who do not recognize the need for change eventually become noncompetitive. Given the high levels of expectations and accountability in education, it is imperative for school leaders to embrace ongoing change, reform, and improvement.

Unfortunately, resistance to reform and change is often observable in most organizations, including schools. Resistance to change, which can strongly impact the chances for success of reform initiatives (Choi & Ruona, 2011), is often inevitable because of people in all organizations, including school systems, have tendencies to defend the status quo if they believe their security or status is under attack

(Bolognese, 2002). Due to the need for improvements through changes, coupled with the attendant and natural reaction to resist changes, educational leaders must consider how to make successful alterations in their school systems without creating problems or wreaking havoc. In the case of school systems, management and leadership, as discussed in this article, focuses on superintendents, principals, and other positional leaders.

The school reform and improvement movement suggests the need for changes in policies, practices, procedures, and sometimes, personnel. In other words, schools, teachers, and administrators must modify how they practice their craft and what procedures they employ if improvements are to occur. The need for change can be driven by external factors such as demographics, modifications in social or political climates, mandated calls for reform by higher authorities including legislative actions, and/or top-down programs driven by the need for reorganization such as realigning school district boundaries (Adrienn, 2016).

Amid calls for reform, unfortunately, the success rates of achieving meaningful changes in organizations generally was dismal at best (Beer & Nohria, 2000). Etschmaier (2011) took a more positive view, suggesting approximately 50% of change efforts met with success. Regardless of the estimate, achieving meaningful change in school systems is an arduous task. Yet, in order to remain competitive, especially in light of the recent emphasis on school choice, school systems must become adept at change.

Against this introductory background, it is important to note that one of the chief responsibilities of educational leaders is to facilitate change strategies designed to improve organizational output regarding student learning. Consequently, this article, based on a review of literature rather than empirical data, discusses various approaches related to organizational change and how best to facilitate this process in an efficient and effective manner.

Specifically, the article first reveals what resistance to change looks like and how it manifests itself in individual behaviors when changes occur. Second, the article examines issues associated with why people in organizations are often changing resistant. The third section of the article reviews different approaches to school leadership as it relates to change facilitation. Fourth, the article presents a variety of models for change. The article then offers recommendations and strategies for school leaders to employ when leading or facilitating changes within their schools before ending with a brief conclusion.

Resistance to Change: What It Looks Like

Dent and Goldberg (1999) reported that resistance to change is a behavior designed to shield individuals from the impact of either real or perceived change. Piderit (2000) suggested that resistance to change may take three different avenues; cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. When leaders facilitate changes in their organizations, they should be aware that although there may be overlaps in the manifestations of resistance to change, behaviors can stem from a combination of behaviors, emotions, or beliefs (Bolognese, 2002). Hultman (2003) posited that resistance to change reflects unwillingness or lack of receptivity to alter the way one thinks and behaves. Simply stated, resistance to change is demonstrated through activities opposed to or struggling with changes, that threaten the status quo of individuals or organizations (Heathfield, 2017). Thus, change simply means doing things differently, which may be good or bad depending on one's perspective.

Hultman (2003) provided numerous examples of what resistance to change looks like in organizations as revealed through individual behaviors of participants. He divided types of resistance into two categories: active and passive. Examples of active resistance include being critical, fault-finding, ridiculing, appealing to fear, using facts selectively, sabotaging, intimidating and threatening,

manipulating, distorting facts, blocking, undermining, spreading rumors, arguing, and raising objections. Passive resistance includes verbally agreeing to do something but not following through, failing to implement changes, foot-dragging, feigning ignorance and withholding information.

Illustrations of resistance are fairly typical when people working in organizations face the need to change. For instance, when teachers and administrators are asked to make curricular changes to meet state mandates, they are often resistant because they view doing so as intrusions into their professional expertise. Consequently, the change makes people uncomfortable based on behavioral modifications required within change programs (Hultman, 2003).

There are times when resistance is a problem. Paradoxically, at other times resistance is valuable and necessary for the success of people and organizations. Moreover, employees can discover problems with proposed reform agendas while initiation is in progress through demonstrated resistance. Resistance in the form of problem identification and process modification is beneficial to overall success. Consequently, leaders must be able to distinguish between merit-based resistance and resistance that is completely negative.

Teachers who resist simply because they do not agree with mandates such as curricular changes or approaches to teaching pedagogy can impede progress. On the other hand, if resistance by teachers points out legitimate problems with mandates, it can lead to formative data to help improve net outcomes. Successful educational leaders can interpret the difference and adjust accordingly. Part of this awareness of why people resist change and when it may be helpful is needed for leaders to understand how to manage change and resistance. As such, the article now examines why people resist change.

Why People Are Resistant To Change

Writers such as Fullan (2007) noted that teachers and administrators are often resistant to change for a variety of reasons including fear, lack of information, and/or lack of appropriate skills. Allan (n.d) suggested that other reasons for employee resistance to change include beliefs that changes are only temporary, their leaders are incompetent, their sense of change overload, their lack of trust in leadership, and their feelings that organizations did not deserve or were not entitled to the extra time and/or effort in order to implement changes.

Similarly, Quast (2012) identified five primary reasons why people resist both personal as well as organizational changes, including, fear of the unknown, mistrust, loss of job security and control, poor timing for changes, and negative employee predispositions toward change. Resistance may be demonstrated not only by individuals but if not dealt with, by group resistance such as teacher union activity. Resistance to change may result from combinations of various factors discussed above, thereby complicating the task of successful leaders to understand, motivate, manage and implement necessary changes in their organizations.

Manifestations of resistance people demonstrate towards attempts at organizational changes in their schools include denial, anger, depression, and sabotage (Fullan, 2007). Further, employees may attempt to discredit, delay, or outright prevent the implementation of whatever organizational changes are being suggested (Sundaram, 2015). Resistance can lead to teacher cynicism due to the often-overwhelming requirements needed to implement organizational changes, leading to poor acceptance and implementation of new ideas (Reeves, 2009).

School personnel is often resistant to changes in how they or their schools are supposed to function. The reasons can vary from disagreement over related facts to deep-seated individual psychological beliefs people hold dear (Allan, n.d). Erwin (2009) reported

employees, including some at leadership levels, lack sufficient experience or motivation to recognize and appreciate the need and significance of required changes within their organizations. In addition, employees may become concerned and anxious regarding job stability and security; this may lead to resistance as people attempt to delay what may be inevitable.

Zander (1950) offered six key reasons why people resist change. First, if the nature of the change is not carefully explained, resistance would be a natural outgrowth due to fear of the unknown. Second, multiple interpretations of changes can lead to resistance. Third, strong competing forces such as deterring people from changing can result in resistance. Fourth, resistance occurs when a top-down approach is employed, thus inhibiting participant buy-in and ownership. Fifth, resistance occurs if changes are made based on personal reasons of leadership. Finally, changes violating established norms in organizations may lead to challenges.

Following Zander's research, numerous authors developed lists of reasons why people are change resistant. Among those whose ideas best fit for schools, Bolognese (2002) noted one of the primary reasons for resistance is fear of the unknown. Learning new skills and behaviors can strike fear within employees and this naturally leads to some form of resistance. Another reason for resistance is employee tolerance for change. Some people have low thresholds to tolerate any kind of changes in their lives; this may lead to resistance. Folger and Skarlicki (1999) suggested that some resistance can be a direct result of how people believe they are being treated as changes are explained and implemented. Strebel (1996) indicated that a major reason for resistance stems from employee perceptions of broken agreements struck between organizations and employees. Changes imply these arrangements are somehow different, a situation that can lead to employee disillusionment.

Henry (1993) explained that people resist change for various reasons such as when modifications are not made clear, affected individuals see no reason for altering behaviors, individuals are not involved in planning, poor communication throughout change processes, and rewards for doing things differently are not valued. Henry (1993) added that if important aspects of jobs are altered, or employees are cynical due to failures of previous change projects, resistance may occur. Finally, fear, lack of respect for leadership, and the perceived incongruence between organizational objectives and personal goals of people affected can all be reasons for resistance. Other primary causes for resistance to change can include concern for the loss of employment, a past history of change effort failures, alterations in requirements for individual jobs, and lack of awareness or knowledge of why changes are being required.

Regardless of the reasons for resistance, school leaders must have knowledge and ability to recognize various forms of resistance and to respond appropriately in order to facilitate needed organizational changes. Illustrations of resistance in schools can appear when programmatic, curricular, or scheduling changes are required. Teachers, and sometimes administrators, are reluctant to embrace new ways of working due to comfort with the status quo.

Effective change management is an essential skill for principals and central office leaders to master in order to lead continually improving, successful schools. As such, the article now explores a number of approaches to leadership, and how it affects change efforts in schools.

Leadership and Change

In the case of school systems, management and leadership focus on superintendents, principals, and other positional leaders such as directors, department chairs, and school business officials. Leadership and

management are two areas that when successfully accomplished, have the potential to add great competitive advantage to organizations. As positional leaders, meaning they are identified as individuals whose positions of power, that by job description and role expectations, are designated and required to exert leadership.

Hersey et al (2008) defined management as a process of working with individuals to accomplish organizational goals. They define leadership as activities whereby one person attempts to influence the behavior of others, regardless of the reason. Hersey and Blanchard also suggest that leadership has three primary competencies; diagnosing, adapting, and communicating. Management, on the other hand, has three different components: planning, organizing, and motivating. Working synergistically, Hersey et. al view the skills and functions of leadership and management as having the capacity to determine and actualize organizational goals.

A variety of theories and concepts related to the practice of leadership and management offer guidance and strategies for success. Three theories built on each other, theory X, theory Y, and situational leadership, are noteworthy because they identify attitudes and beliefs of leaders and tactics they use based on those attitudes.

Theory X and theory Y, concepts developed by McGregor (1960), offer leaders a framework from which they can base their approaches to dealing with people in organizations. Theory X maintains that people like and need to have direction from leaders rather than accepting personal responsibility for their actions. This theory assumes that for most people, work is inherently distasteful, that they have little ambition or capacity to solve problems related to organizations and work, and that they need careful direction. Under this theory, people do not like work, attempt to avoid it when possible, and require close supervision, direction, threats, and potential

punishment in order to get work accomplished. In addition, theory X suggests that people lack ambition, are only interested in basic security including money, and preferred direction rather than seeking responsibility.

Theory Y, on the other hand, presents a more optimistic view of people, identifying most as engaged, and satisfied by their work, as well as motivated, creative, and self-directed. In addition, theory Y suggests that people are accepting of, or in pursuit of responsibility but that in many cases, their potential is untapped by most organizations.

The assumptions behind the two theories can lead to very different approaches to organizational structures and styles of leadership and management. Organizations and leaders espousing theory X believe and function as if it is necessary to have closely supervised, tightly structured, restrictive environments. These leaders believe that they must be highly directive and transactional in their approach to employee interactions.

Organizations and leaders functioning from theory Y perspectives focus more on building trusting relationships while empowering and encouraging employees to assume responsibility for their activities aimed at accomplishing organizational goals. Advocates of theory Y believe insofar as people possess a potential for creativity, and self-direction, employees' desire autonomy, and accountability while seeking opportunities for responsibility in the workplace if given the opportunity.

Owens (1987) described ramifications of the two approaches as a two-dimensional theory of leadership. The basic tenets of this approach consider three aspects of leadership. The first is how leaders behave, the second is how followers behave, and the third is the situational context. Consequently, leaders with predispositions toward theory X more than likely exhibit fairly directive and controlling approaches to leadership behaviors while those

inclined to theory Y take more participatory approaches, allowing and encouraging employees to become empowered and responsible.

Examining the differences in leader behaviors, Likert (1961) suggested that leaders have either an employee-orientation or a job-centered orientation. Similarly, Blake and Mouton (1985) theorized that leaders could exhibit either concern for their followers or for getting tasks completed.

Simply stated, leaders have choices between a range of leadership styles and attendant organizational structures based on the behaviors they exhibit. The style of leadership that leaders use and the organizational structures they develop may range on a continuum from very directive to more participatory. Further, leaders may be more concerned about getting tasks accomplished than they are about caring for the people in organizations. This creates a real anomaly in schools because they are usually people-centered.

Understanding these basic assumptions is helpful when considering models of contingency or situational leadership. Three prominent models related to contingency theories include Fielder's (1967) model, House's (1971) goal-path model, and Hersey and Blanchard's (1977) situational leadership model. Fielder's theory differentiates between leadership style and behavior, with the former referring to personality traits, and the latter explaining leader actions. House's model focuses on how leaders work with subordinates regarding work goals, personal goals, and paths to attain each. Situational leadership, as espoused by Hersey and Blanchard, depicts relationships between effective styles of leadership and levels of maturity of followers. These researchers recognize that leaders may exhibit different approaches to leadership based on the context of situations they face, but still meet with successful accomplishment of organizational tasks.

Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson's model of situational leadership (2008) argues there is no single best way to influence and in effect, lead people. Rather, they espouse the position that approaches leaders take depends on two factors: first the willingness of followers to engage in the task; second, follower abilities and skills at completing tasks. In this theory, in its simplest form, followers who lack skills require more directive behavior on the leader's part. On the other hand, followers who have skill but are not necessarily willing to engage in the task require more relational behaviors focused on communication.

Due to the need for varying approaches contingent on situations, Hersey and Blanchard (1977) identified four main styles of leadership. The first is directive wherein leaders tell people what to do. The second is selling, an approach suggesting that leaders should convince followers to accept and endorse their ideas. The third is a participatory approach that encourages followers to become involved in decision-making. The final style is delegating wherein, leaders take hands off approaches, allowing followers to make the majority of the decisions related to the tasks at hand.

Each of these styles certainly requires different behaviors by leaders. The initial job for leaders is determining the willingness and ability of followers, and then having the flexibility and skill to employ the approach to leadership best suited to result in the successful accomplishment of required tasks. This speaks to the idea that there is no single approach to leadership; rather leaders must understand situations they are in and followers they are dealing with and then apply the most appropriate leadership strategies to maximize chances of success.

In addition to varying approaches to leadership, it is essential for school leaders to possess technical skills providing them with in-depth knowledge of various change models. Just as situations may call for different approaches to leadership styles, similarly, different contexts

may be better suited to one model of change than another. As a result, the article turns to a variety of models related to change.

Change Models

Change is difficult for individuals as well as organizations. Consequently, chances for school success are improved if educational leaders especially, principals and superintendents, have clear understandings of how to facilitate change so positive outcomes may accrue. Change models take into account tools, approaches, and theories geared toward maximizing opportunities for successful changes either for individuals or organizations. Some of these models are fairly simple while others are more complex. It is helpful for leaders to be knowledgeable about a variety of approaches to match their organizations with models best increasing chances for success. This is in keeping with basic tenets of contingency and situational leadership. The article now briefly reviews three models of change from among many insofar as they are best suited to school systems.

Because Lewin's model for change is one of the first and simplest to grasp, it is still used today (Lewin, 1951). Lewin's model is considered a foundational approach for change researchers because of its simplicity and ease to understand. Connelly (2016) suggests that the model is still relevant.

The second approach, Kotter's model for change, is a mainstay of change management according to the Construction Financial Management Association (2017). Kotter's model provides an explicit description of various stages associated with change (Kotter, 1996). The third approach to organizational change is the McKinsey 7 S Model of change management (Juerevicius, 2013). This model is important because it stresses the interrelatedness of various organizational factors as well as how they interact throughout change processes.

Lewin's (1951) model is relatively simple and straightforward because it uses an analogy referring to changing the shape of a cube of ice as a way to explain change management. The first stage, unfreezing, includes changing attitudes of people involved, and helping them recognize the need for change. This step usually includes identifying issues, communicating with employees, and gathering relevant data related to the change. The focus of this phase is to modify current attitudes and lay a framework for change. This stage attempts to help people get ready for changes by helping them understand the importance of, and the need to change the status quo. An important aspect of unfreezing, according to Lewin, is the idea of force field analysis (Connelly, 2016).

Force field analysis, a significant aspect of Lewin's first stage, is a process whereby leaders assess and identify factors affecting change; in schools, these factors include support from central office administrators, incentive programs for employees, and/or union resistance. Once factors are named, leaders must decide how many of them favor the change and how many are against the change. If there are more factors in favor of the change, then the chances of success are improved. However, if more factors are opposed to change, then leaders must figure out how to motivate people so they are more receptive to proposed ideas, thus increasing factors favorable to change.

Lewin (1951) called the second phase of his model change or moving. This phase includes ongoing communication and assisting people with embracing new ways and structures related to changes. This phase of Lewin's model involves diagnosing problems, planning strategies, and implementing planned changes. The change or transition stage is often the most challenging because it requires having people learning and doing new things (Connelly, 2016). Further, this stage requires attempts at making various aspects of change stable within organizations (NHS North West Leadership Academy, n.d). Examples of fostering stability

of changes may include additional resources, training, incentives, or changes in policy.

The final stage of Lewin's (1951) model is called freezing. Freezing, which entails completion of change processes, is marked by a return to stable environments incorporating new changes. This phase might result in new organizational structures, policies, procedures, and/or organizational norms supporting changes. In essence, once re-freezing has occurred, the behaviors related to change become new organizational norms. This step also requires continual assessment because organizations must retain flexibility and nimbleness. The pace of progress demands that organizations do not remain static, but rather that their leaders understand and embrace the realization that ongoing change is a journey, not a destination.

The second model is Kotter's (1996) eight-step approach which identifies the actions necessary in order to facilitate change. Kotter's first step is to create a sense of urgency around the need for change through ongoing communications. In order for changes to be successful under this theory, a critical mass of people within organizations must agree that they can lead to improvement. This is often accomplished through a process known as Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat (SWOT) analysis activities or strategic planning. Using this approach, it is helpful to inform people about potential threats of remaining static and refusing to change, while encouraging discussion about better ways to get organizational tasks successfully accomplished. This is an essential step because Kotter believes that in order for organizational changes to be successful, approximately 75% of employees must be on board with the change (The Mind Tools Editorial Team, n.d).

The second step in Kotter's (1996) model of change consists of forming a guiding or powerful coalition of influential people within organizations in support of the need and importance of change. It is essential to identify

all leaders, not only those who hold positions on organizational flow charts but also informal or peer group leaders who are respected within organizations. By building a team approach with these types of people, leaders can develop support groups to encourage others about the importance of organizational changes.

The third stage of Kotter's (1996) model is developing a vision for change, generally defined as a desired future outcome. A clear vision is important for people to help understand where organizations need to go and why it is important for them to get there. Vision statements should be concise and precise, reduced to short summaries allowing people to see and understand the future of their organization (The Mind Tools Editorial Team, n.d).

Once leaders develop visions, the fourth stage is communicating it to people within organizations in order to explain, address concerns about, and promote all aspects of changes. This activity must be ongoing and two-way. For example, a principal's merely making announcements at faculty meetings or sending emails to teachers and other staff is not sufficient. It is essential for leaders such as principals to take face-to-face, frequent, formal, and informal opportunities to share and communicate visions while gaining buy-in from all constituents. Leaders should not only speak about visions, they should also model new behaviors by being part of and participating in required changes of behavior. Communication in word and deed helps to reinforce new ways of doing business.

The fifth step of this model involves removing obstacles to intended changes. Examples of possible obstacles may include current job descriptions, procedures, personnel, and policies to name a few. One helpful strategy aimed at removal of obstacles is to provide information explaining the importance of changes not only to organizations but also to employees. A second helpful strategy is to reward and recognize early attempts at change,

thus reinforcing hoped for changes (Kotter, 1996).

After leaders deal with obstacles, the sixth step in Kotter's (1996) model of change focuses on creating short-term wins, or successes, related to planned change projects. Success breeds more success, and by seeking and identifying steps in desired changes that do not face daunting challenges or opposition, opportunities for success are enhanced. Leaders should be cautious during this phase; they should look for easy wins such as providing necessary training identified by employees because early failures can have lasting damage on newly initiated change programs. The last point related to the sixth phase is to make sure people who participated in aspects of successful ventures are recognized and rewarded because this increases the motivation of others to become more engaged and less critical.

Kotter's (1996) seventh step relates to building on successful aspects of changes already made. Leaders must realize that each success offers opportunities and challenges to build on while continuing to grow and improve. It is also helpful at this point to try to engage new people in change processes in order to increase coalitions of interested individuals. New blood in organizations instills fresh ideas and enthusiasm. Consequently, involving new teachers in school change efforts after initial successes help overcome organizational inertia.

The eighth and final step is to anchor changes in organizational cultures. It is imperative for leaders to ensure that new ways of doing business become organizational norms. Leaders can make great progress in this final phase by emphasizing relationships between changes made and improvements in organizational outputs. In the case of education, this may mean improved test scores, higher graduation rates, or new and exciting curricula. Regardless of obtained objectives, it is essential for leaders to link success to change.

The third approach, McKinsey's 7 S Model, was developed by the McKinsey Company in the 1980s (Juerevicius, 2013). This model which focuses on the coordination of various organizational factors as they relate to change includes seven interrelated factors present in organizations, namely strategy, structure, systems, shared values, style, staff, and skills (Juerevicius, 2013). Strategy refers to the plan of action to be accomplished. Structure focuses on how organizations are organized. Systems deal with actions and procedures within the functioning of organizations. Values relate to organizational core beliefs as manifested in climate and culture. The approach toward leadership defines and refers to leadership styles in the model. Staff refer to employees, while skills refers to competencies of employees within organizations.

The strength of the 7 S Model is that it assists leaders to recognize the interrelatedness of multiple factors at play within organizations and how these elements function in concert, either positively or negatively. The model can be helpful to identify current situations accurately, desired future outcomes, and gaps between the two. By thinking in these terms, leaders can better understand how to align and fine-tune various elements of change processes in order to enhance chances for success.

The model considers the importance of the role of coordination and interrelatedness of the seven factors as they pertain to organizations and organizational change. The object of this model is to align the factors in such a way designed to improve chances for success. The model points out the issue of systemic change, stressing that when one area is altered, others must be modified in order to retain successful alignment (Juerevicius, 2013). Cawsey (2012) suggested that none of the seven factors identified in the model should be ignored. Rather, all should be considered and attended to if success is to occur. The article now examines suggestions and recommendations to help

leaders facilitate change and effectively deal with resistance.

Strategies for Change Leaders to Avoid “Bumps” in Road to School Improvement

Insofar as a great variety of change models exist, there is an equally expansive number of recommendations, suggestions, and factors to be aware of when leading efforts geared toward organizational changes. The article reviews five leading authors who stand out as often cited and which may provide the most helpful information to school leaders as they facilitate change. Fullan (1993) in focusing on change within educational systems, provided specific guidance on change related to schools and school personnel. Baker (1989), Lucas (1974), Armstrong (2011), and Alsher (2013), on the other hand, addressed change and organizations globally, thereby providing an overall perspective of an organizational change. Nevertheless, all five authors offer viable suggestions to educational leaders and others regarding change management and facilitation.

The first strategy, reported by Fullan (1993), suggests eight ideas associated with organizational change in school systems that can serve as potential guides for educational leaders when changes are required. Fullan’s initial recommendation is recognizing that important, systemic organizational changes cannot be mandated to teachers. When complex changes are required, people cannot simply be told they have to comply. Much more is involved in order to implement changes successfully. Unfortunately, legislatively mandated requirements forcing changes are common and present ongoing problems for educational leaders. However, in order to counteract this problem, leaders must solicit and provide opportunities for involvement on the part of teachers and staff. Developing teacher buy-in on changes is essential as it helps them cultivate ownership of change strategies.

The second important point Fullan (1993) stressed was that change is a journey, not

necessarily a roadmap or blueprint. Moreover, for Fullan, change is messy and cannot be predictably predetermined. Consequently, leaders must expect the unexpected. In other words, difficulties and challenges, both anticipated and unanticipated, are likely to arise as changes are implemented. School leaders must thereby plan for problems they expect such as union resistance and be sufficiently flexible when unknown issues such as a sudden reduction of resources, arise in order to gain resolution. Fullan’s (1993) closely related third suggestion is that educational leaders need to be aware they will encounter problems along the journey of change. His point is that such problems have to be expected and dealt with in order to grow and improve. Recognizing and successfully managing problems becomes easier when leaders involve others. Leaders who consult and work with followers affected by changes will often find solutions rather than more problems.

The fourth point Fullan (1993) made was that overall vision and grand strategies usually came later in change processes rather than on the front end. He based this position on the belief that the need for changes came first and the best way to have a shared vision was for people within organizations to be interacting and develop the vision collaboratively. Fullan, emphasizing that this all takes time, relates this to the idea that change is a journey, not a destination. Consequently, Fullan is not an advocate of complicated strategic plans in the beginning stages of improvement projects. Rather, he favors getting started and letting the plan evolve organically. To this end he uses the phrase “ready, fire, aim” as opposed to the more commonly used “ready, aim, fire.”

Fifth, Fullan (1993) maintained that successful change occurred when people were able to interact and collaborate without having activity and thought reduced to groupthink. He suggested individual teachers, as well as groups of teachers, must both be recognized as

possessing power during change processes and be empowered to act.

Fullan's sixth point (1993) was that changes in school systems could not be mandated solely from the top of organizational charts, nor could they be completely driven from the bottom up. Rather, there should be a combination of the two approaches. This requires different ways of thinking regarding organizational structures and leadership already mentioned, related to Theory Y assumptions. In other words, all changes cannot be administratively driven, nor should they be solely driven by teachers alone. Instead, the process should incorporate leadership from both the top and the bottom.

The seventh strategy Fullan (1993) suggested is for school systems to be connected with their wider environments. Instead of being isolated, schools should be connected, engaged, and active within communities where they exist. For school leaders, this means making sure their boards have an active community relations programs featuring ongoing, two-way communication methodologies providing both information to community stakeholders as well as listening to them.

Fullan's (1993) last point was that in order for schools to be successful and growing, all stakeholders must be involved in change and recognized as change agents. This idea embodies shared leadership speaking to the importance of professional learning communities, shared leadership, and collaborative leadership.

Another change management theorist, Baker (1989) suggested additional strategies related to change management. First, she suggested that it is essential for leaders to provide timely information to those employees and stakeholders affected by changes as early and as often as possible. Second, in a related strategy, leaders should carefully explain the reasons for changes to help everyone involved better understand the need for change. Third,

leaders should promptly address questions from those affected in order to allay their fears and suspicions. Baker further suggested that leaders should offer employees time to reflect on proposed changes. The effect of Baker's advice is that if employees have accurate information, early enough in order to be able to question and better understand what is being asked of them, they will be less resistant to changes within their organization.

In addition to timely and accurate information, Baker (1989) stressed the need to make employees comfortable and aware that when new skills were required, leadership would provide sufficient training. Along with frequent communication, and timely, meaningful training, Baker highlighted the importance of involving employees with opportunities to participate in change processes.

In concert with Baker's (1989) ideas, a third change theorist, Lucas (1974) suggested involving employees in change processes as a way to increase their awareness and knowledge about proposed changes, thereby potentially reducing employee fears related to changes. Second, he posited that participation helps employees feel good about themselves and their organization. Further, Lucas explained that participation can be self-satisfying and help with employee's self-actualization. Lastly, Lucas emphasized that employee participation gives them a sense of having control over changes, an essential element of reducing anxiety.

At the same time, a fourth change theorist, Armstrong (2011), suggested that resistance must be actively addressed and that leaders cannot pretend that it will not or is not occurring. Second, Armstrong noted that leaders must build trust through open, ongoing, two-way communications before, during, and after organizational changes occur. This type of communication helps develop positive organizational climates and cultures conducive to successful change.

The next point Armstrong (2011) made was that leaders must focus on vibrant and consistent approaches to implementation by providing high levels of ongoing communication, professional development, necessary resources, and appropriate materials to make changes successful. He suggested that insofar as change is often resourced hungry in terms of necessary equipment, materials, and training, embarking on change when these items are scarce is fool hardy. Another important point was to use data when establishing the need for change. However, when data are used, it should not be used in a negative manner to find fault or point out weaknesses. Accurate data, delivered in a professional and non-accusatory manner, will assist when validating reasons for the change.

Finally, Armstrong (2011) suggested that leaders must continue to provide active support with follow-through on training and recognition of those employees who model behaviors related to changes. This last step is essential in order to deal effectively with inevitable problems associated with change.

A fifth change management theorist, Alsher (2013), offered ideas for leaders to ponder as they facilitate organizational changes. She posited that determining explicit reasons why change is being resisted is critical. Explanations for resistance may be based on past history, lack of trust, fear, or how it will affect individuals. Identifying reasons for resistance and then actively addressing them is essential. Alsher's next recommendation was to establish a personal rapport with peer leaders as well as change resisters. This should lead to enhanced levels of communication. Clearly ongoing, two-way communication is an essential ingredient for successful change and organizational improvement. It is important to clarify that change is going to happen, it cannot be avoided. Nevertheless, this type of information is better received if employees are involved and informed in a humanistic manner. Leaders who explain changes by including

information about what they mean to individuals personally allays fears and concerns. When employees have better understandings of how changes directly affect their lives, it often reduces stress and anxiety.

In successful school systems, principals and superintendents have learned to overcome resistance to change and capitalize on challenges, viewing them as opportunities rather than problems. They have established cultures where employees feel safe and have provided opportunities for growth and support through training, trust building, and ongoing communication.

Recommendations

Summarizing findings from the authors and models described above, educational leaders facilitating changes in their school's systems should consider the following recommendations:

1. Determine what needs to be changed and why by performing a S.W.O.T. analysis of your organization. This step is essential for successful change. Without knowing what needs to be improved, leaders often grasp at straws in order to facilitate change and make improvements within their schools.
2. Be clear on the changes or improvements in need of being implemented. Once needs are identified, leaders must determine appropriate strategies aimed at creating improvement.
3. Educational leaders should consider the skill and willingness of employees as they embark on changes in schools.
4. Decide which model of change is to be used through S.W.O.T. analysis and consideration of staff and teachers involved. Matching models to organizations is critical for success.
5. Develop a cadre of supporters for change. Leaders must encourage groups of employees who are in favor of plans for change.
6. Communicate frequently by informing teachers, staff, and parents as to reasons for change; utilizing data when possible to prove the need for changes. This step is critical and must be present throughout all phases of

change. Leaders must listen to teacher and staff concerns to clarify questions, including those about how the change will affect them personally.

7. Actively involve employees throughout change processes. The more sense of ownership teachers and staff have, the more supportive they will be of changes.
8. Reduce anxiety through ongoing professional development. If changes require new skills and knowledge on the part of employees, it is essential to provide them with needed training and professional development.
9. Make sure sufficient resources are available to support changes. Leaders who attempt changes when lacking adequate resources to support doing so are doomed to failure.
10. Reward early adopters of changes. Rewards such as employee recognition programs, recognition in school newsletters, or cash bonuses can be helpful.
10. Be flexible. Leaders must understand that change is not a linear process that there will be starts and stops along the way. Leaders must be aware of this and be willing to adapt and modify when needed.
11. Leaders should take their time as they move through all steps of change processes. The old axiom about measuring twice and cutting once applies.
12. Stay calm. Teachers and staff look to leaders in times of stress. Change often creates stress. Therefore, if leaders remain calm and focused, employees are apt to do the same.

Conclusion

Organizational change in school systems is inevitable and ongoing. In order for their schools to survive, educational leaders must be willing to grow in terms of providing students with quality learning experiences. Schools are often viewed as change resistant organizations due to the relative lack of competition and long-standing cultures of stability. Fortunately or otherwise, depending on one's point of view, change is here to stay. Therefore, educational leaders and their school

communities must learn to be flexible, innovative, and change-adept.

The article has identified various models of organizational change and has provided a variety of tips to assist leaders when using the models. The article also offered suggestions about approaches to leadership including, and emphasizing, contingency or situational approaches.

Regardless of the change model leaders select, or the leadership strategy they employ, they must address a variety of factors in the process of managing change. These management practices and procedures must include communication strategies, employee involvement, professional development, resistance management, rewards and recognition, and ongoing coaching. Leaders who attend to these areas of change management are likely to enhance the ability of their organizations to negotiate change and not crash on one of the many potential speed bumps on the road to change and organizational improvement.

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