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Stakeholder Communication in Proposing Change

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This paper proposes a model for the understanding and management of curriculum change in the academy. The model links Ruben's five stages in the planning and management of change with his five crucial stages in the change process to provide a way to understand and manage the curriculum change process. Additionally, Ruben's framework is linked to Lewis' Stakeholder Communication Model which is particularly sensitive to stakeholders' perceptions and assessments of each other. It helps to further explain and direct the efforts necessary to manage the proposal and process of change. In essence, this model integrates theory into practical matters.

By exploring the interpersonal relationships between stakeholders in the change phenomenon, it is possible to frame a plan for successfully proposing change in the academy. Key factors in any change are the persons affected by that change and their mindsets, which are embedded in the cultures of the groups to which they belong. The power of paying attention to these cultural norms cannot be underestimated in communicating about change. The buy-in of these key stakeholders and the ripple effect of their acceptance or rejection of a proposal on others in their academic networks are clearly critical at each step in the change process and need to be incorporated when proposing change.

Managing change, perhaps because it involves managing people, may sometimes seem like an impossible task. Yet, managing change is an integral part of the workplace because organizational change is "pervasive" and "ubiquitous" (Bennis, 1997, p. 193). Also, the high failure rates of most organizational change initiatives or mergers, as reported in surveys of organizational leaders, are indicative of a lack of understanding of how the change process can produce viable outcomes (Wheatley, 1997). It makes sense to study how this process of managing works, or doesn't work, and evaluate any gaps in our understanding so that they can be filled in, in order to improve both the process and the outcomes.

Specifically, this paper addresses the management of curriculum change in the academy. As an organization, the post-secondary scholastic system presents a unique situation. The motivational challenges faced in a typical business environment are intensified within the academic system because there are different (Birnbaum, 2011; Clark, 2011) and fewer incentives available that encourage action (Trompe & Ruben, 2004). The academy also has its own culture: academic organizations often are comprised of faculty who are very individualistic and critical thinkers (Bennis, 1997). Therefore it is especially useful to develop an understanding of the nuances of how to proceed in this special domain.

Faculty are used to having the power to decide on curricula and expect to have a fair amount of input into the decision making process (Clark, 2011). These are individuals who

believe in participative, rather than top-down, decision making (Ruben, 2013). However, the faculty members may be described as a “multitude of academic tribes and territories,” each with its own view of what is important (Clark, 2011). It is as though a departmental culture develops and even within one department there may be a plethora of outlooks or “cultures.”

Each group or culture needs to be attended to in order to successfully propose a change initiative. Group Dynamics, established by Kurt Lewin helps explain “how social groups are formed, motivated and maintained” (Burnes, 2004, p. 978) or as Lewin succinctly put it, “what makes a work team tick” (1951, p. 194). The essential concept is one of mutual involvement and dependence between group and individual behaviors (Lewin, 1951). Therefore, to change an individual, it is necessary to change the group because the individual is bound by the norms of the group, according to Burnes. This approach may be applied to academic groups. This is a point that needs to be taken into account in planning and managing change so that the needs of all disciplines or areas are considered and so that group norms are included in assessment, since the structure of the academy results in having many stakeholders involved in the final decision and its ramifications.

One way to make sense of much of this is to consider the academy from a systems theory perspective. General Systems Theory (GST) is a meta-theory, derived from the thinking of Ludwig von Bertalanffy. He identified similar patterns occurring across scientific disciplines, such as biology and physics, and concluded that by looking at these various theories in an integrated fashion, an overarching theory could be developed (von Bertalanffy, 1972).

Lee Thayer extends von Bertalanffy’s thinking to communication, both in and outside of organizations. In particular, Thayer notes that organizations are a type of system, a “living system” and one critical activity of such a system is the exchange of data with its surroundings so that the organization’s existence is reliant on the “communication which occurs between the organization and its environment” (Thayer, 1968, p. 102). The overall system may also be divided into smaller parts, which communicate among themselves as well as with their “mother” system (Thayer, 1968). Therefore we may consider the academy as a type of living system, in communication with its environment and its external stakeholders.

For our purposes, a system is “defined by a boundary that contains many subsystems and that also separate the system from its environment” (McLean, 2006, p. 65). In agreement with Thayer, in any given system, there is feedback, or a circular path of information coming into the system, followed by processing the information and resulting in other information being dispersed, which then feeds back into the first step of the process, making the entire process iterative (McLean, 2006). We will consider the academy as a type of living system in which there is interaction between components and which involves feedback.

According to von Bertalanffy’s “dynamic morphology,” living systems exist in a constant state of change so that even though it may not seem obvious that the system is changing overall, its subsystems or components are changing, which means that there is systemic change nonetheless (1950). In looking at organizational change in the academy, the

concept of dynamic morphology may be useful in understanding the change process because we are about to explore the many parts and processes in the academic system and some of these may be more salient than others. It is therefore important to understand that interaction among the components affects the system overall.

Applying GST to the academy more specifically, any particular department or school within the university is a sub-system, and in some ways a sub-culture, and the overall university is a suprasystem in which the school or department exists (Dainton & Zelle, 2011). The basic ideas of systems theory are that: synergy evolves via interaction with others on whom one depends, the system as a whole is greater than the sum of its parts, systems strive for stability during change, and that there is more than a single solution to any given problem (Dainton & Zelle, 2011). Among these, it is important to remember that synergy is created by interactions when planning and managing change, and that co-operating sub-groups in the various disciplines may develop better ideas than one group would on its own.

Systems theory also presupposes that communication is how systems are born and survive (Monge, as cited in Dainton & Zelle, 2011, p. 78). Therefore, because communication is a critical feature of any system, it is important to encourage individuals and groups to talk with each other with respect to changes in the academy. While communication in leadership and change management is critical (Dainton & Zelle, 2011), there are supporting factors involved in this change process that should also be considered.

Stakeholder research acknowledges that organizational leaders realize that there are different constituencies which need to be addressed and that leaders will treat some groups differently than others in light of the differences (Lewis, 2007). Linked to this is the thought that there needs to be an awareness of the cultural difference between faculty, administrative and staff cultures when communicating about an issue (Ruben, 2009). Pressure to conform to group norms needs to be accounted for in planning for discussions of potential change.

The staff culture is more like a corporate culture in that their positions are subject to termination, while tenure usually protects faculty against that possibility. This may operate to create timidity and fear within the staff culture to a greater degree than in the faculty culture. Therefore the staff may not be quite as open and free with their communications as the faculty might be.

In addition, when communicating with the staff and faculty, addressing the staff may require more finessing than addressing the faculty in order to allay their fears. Staff, as the less privileged group may also feel some slight resentment, which needs to be taken into account in communicating with both groups. If change is to occur it may affect and involve administrators and staff as well as faculty and all must be considered based on their unique perspectives as well as the perspectives of the groups with which they are affiliated.

Sometimes, the same person may fulfill both administrative and faculty roles, as in the case of an assistant dean who also teaches and does research, and this may create

conflicting feelings within the individual because he or she may be caught between two different cultures. Estimating the reaction of such individuals may be a complicated task.

Generally, it is believed that managing the academic culture is more difficult than managing the corporate culture (Birnbaum, 2011). Given the complex nature of the academy and its faculty, it seems appropriate to address change through organizational education, development and training because there are so many challenges in coordinating and managing change in such an environment. In addition, the academy is typically considered to be responsible for training the next generation of leaders, therefore it is important that the educators be educated, particularly if America aims to maintain its role as a global leader in post-secondary education.

Framework and Model

One successful way to structure the planning and management of change is to divide it into stages: Attention, Engagement, Commitment, Action and Integration (Ruben, 2009). In Attention, an important step is to clarify the need for the change and, in Engagement, the degree and type of stakeholder participation should be determined (Ruben, 2009). Commitment includes finding barriers and areas of consensus and addressing both, while Action involves making the outcomes clear and actually making the change happen, according to Ruben's rubric. The final stage, Integration, is a time for recognition of contributions as well as a time for review and for using that review to do some informed "tweaking" (Ruben, 2009). Culture may impact all of these stages, and probably has a particularly strong role in the commitment stage.

Superimposed over these five stages are five crucial factors: Planning, Leadership, Communication, Culture, and Assessment (Ruben, 2009). According to Ruben, Planning is delineating the change, while Leadership encompasses several factors, such as encouraging participation and ushering people through the change process. Communication includes both receiving and sending messages about the change, the plan, and the impressions of the stakeholders. In communicating, it is very important to grab the group's attention and perhaps shock them a bit, but not frighten them so much that they are immobilized with fear, which creates a roadblock to future communication (Bain & Company, 2009; Ruben, 2009). As noted above, fear may be more intense among staff than among faculty, so it is important to evaluate this when communicating with the staff in particular. Culture involves understanding and accommodating the normative structures and rules of the particular stakeholder groups involved, according to Ruben. An example of a cultural norm is the use of certain words and the avoidance of certain other words (Ruben, 2009). For instance, a commonly used business term such as "customer service" does not resonate with the academic faculty and most of the administration because students are thought of as "learners" rather than as "customers" (Ruben, 2009, p. 24; Ruben, 2013). The Assessment factor is somewhat similar to the Integration stage in that it involves measuring and keeping track of progress toward goals (Ruben, 2009).

Using these ideas, a model linking the five stages to the five factors to is proposed as a way of thinking about change and understanding how to manage the curriculum change process. This model is based on the overarching tenets of Systems Theory. Stakeholder Theory is a focal point because it relates to all stages in the change process and is

particularly sensitive to stakeholders' perceptions and assessments of each other. It helps explain and direct the efforts necessary to manage the proposal and process of change. Lewis describes the potential importance of her perspective:

...this model posits that an implementer's recognition of stakeholders, identification of their relative stakes, and strategic adjustment to identified stakes are key predictors in accounting for outcomes of planned change implementation communication. *It is further posited that the negotiation of stakes among various stakeholder groups as they communicate with implementers and other stakeholders exerts a powerful force on change outcomes* [italics added]." (2007, p. 179)

The diagrams below comprise the proposed model. The ring on the left in the first diagram is an interpretation of the five stages in Ruben's framework. The ring on the right represents the five factors that cut across every stage. Together they demonstrate how Ruben's stages are related to the cross-cutting factors. Additionally, both rings are linked to Lewis' Stakeholder Communication Model.

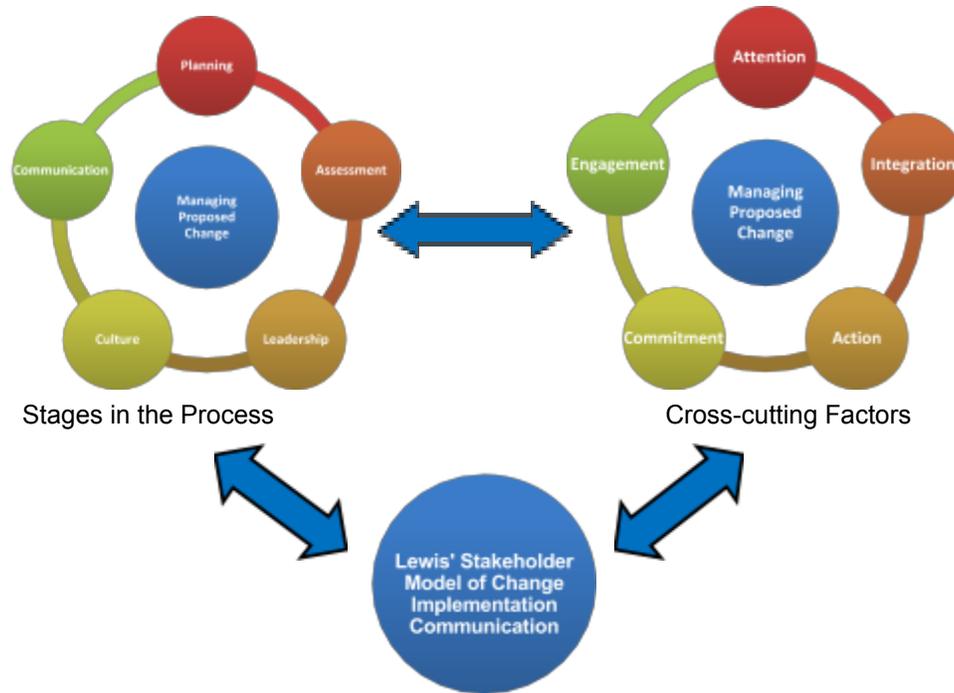
In essence, this overall model integrates theory into practical matters. To illustrate, there is a red circle in the left-most diagram, representing Attention. In the Attention stage, it is important to get the major players' attention, but in order to do that, an understanding of who the different stakeholders are and the unique perspectives that each stakeholder group has is needed, which involves the Assessment and Culture factors.

Stakeholder Theory helps foster the understanding required to embrace the cultural factors in focusing attention on the proposed change. The main discussion revolves around stakeholders, contextualizing and demonstrating their importance and ubiquity in the overall process. For the stages, the model below portrays an essentially circular process, going in a counter-clockwise direction, starting with Attention at the top of the clock. However, relationships may occasionally exist in other directions between and among the units.

Stakeholder Theory and the Lewis Model

The stages and factors relate directly on the stakeholder aspect of the change process. Stakeholder theory provides a structural perspective for looking at organizations in relation to their constituencies or "stakeholders", particularly the communicative and cultural aspects of the change process (Lewis, 2007, p.178). It is interaction-based. It is also particularly useful in "managing potential conflict stemming from divergent interests" (Frooman, 1999, p.193). Lewis' complex and extensive stakeholder model of change implementation communication views organizations as part of a system, so her theory also aligns with the overall premise of this paper that the change affects the entire system (Systems Theory).

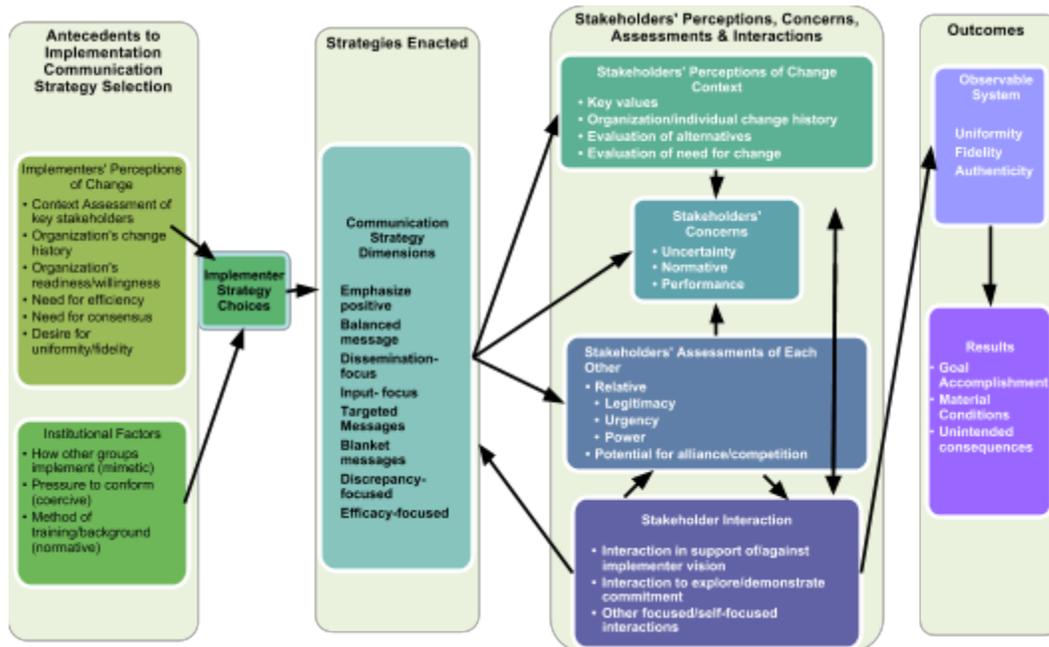
Figure 1. *Stakeholder Theory and Lewis Model*



According to traditional Stakeholder Theory, constituencies are evaluated on how much power they have, how legitimate their concerns are and how pressing their needs are (Agle, Mitchell, & Sonnenfeld, 1997). In the Stakeholder Model proposed by Lewis (2007), important aspects of implementing change are identifying key constituencies and their stakes in the change.

Lewis looks at the choices that change implementers make and the ways in which communication among stakeholders affects the outcomes of the change initiative. Her model examines how “fidelity” (closeness to the original objective), “uniformity” (how extensively the change is embraced) and “authenticity” (showing one’s true feelings about the change) are related to change implementer’s communication and also to constituencies’ “perceptions, concerns, assessments and interactions” including key values, normative concerns and the degree of other-directedness in their interactions (Lewis, 2007, p. 176). These are essentially a combination of individual and cultural traits. The Lewis Model is displayed below.

Figure 2. A model of implementation communication strategy selection, stakeholder concerns, assessment interactions and outcomes (Lewis, 2007, p. 181).



This model applies to most aspects of the change process because the stakeholders are present and involved throughout. Also, the definition that Lewis borrows from Tornatzky and Johnson of implementation as “the translation of any tool or technique, process, or method of doing, from knowledge to practice” (cited in Lewis, 2007) allows us to see implementation as involving numerous phases throughout the change process rather than only certain discrete moments. The key to the model is communication, acknowledging stakeholder differences, and their relationships to outcomes of the change process.

There are four main parts to this model. The first part targets what happens prior to choosing an implementation communication strategy, which may include benchmarking, SWOT analysis and group meetings among key stakeholders in leadership positions, all of which relate to assessing the context and the audience. It also relates to the Attention stage of Ruben’s model.

The second part examines the actual choice and use of the strategy, which includes additional group meetings with key stakeholders in leadership and administration as well as large, general meetings of other key stakeholders. How messages are communicated and via which media is an important part of this section of the model, which examines leadership and communication and relates to the Engagement stage of Ruben’s models.

Part three concentrates on stakeholders’ reactions to the strategy, and may involve surveys and retreats, as well as updating SWOT analysis. This part relates to the planning, culture, communication and leadership areas and to the Commitment stage of Ruben’s model.

The fourth part concerns the systemic, observable effects once the implementation strategy is enacted and relates to Assessment and Communication factors and the Action and Integration stages of Ruben's model.

Within each of these four main categories, Lewis has sub-categories. Part 1 consists of institutional factors, (mimetic, coercive and normative) and perceptions of context (including history, key stakeholder evaluation, needs for consensus, efficiency, uniformity and fidelity). Of particular importance here are the normative forces, which are the result of acculturation and internalization of specific attitudes toward change resulting in perceptions of certain behaviors as acceptable and normal for that particular group. Lewis sums this up:

These powerful socializing forces of training, combined with the socialization garnered upon entry into a specific industry or organizational culture, provide a normative force that encourages certain strategy choices (e.g., give everyone a chance to have their say) and discourages others (e.g. allowing any resistance to be voiced). (2007, p.186)

The normative dimension of reacting to possible change is less about how one feels about the change individually and more about how one feels about the change as it relates to their status as part of a particular social group or organization (Lewis, 2007). An individual may therefore be resistant to change because it conflicts with their group or cultural norms (Lewis, 2007).

In Part 1 of the Lewis model, implementers are deciding which stakeholders to attend to most, who has the most power and who is more likely to be willing to accept change, all of which requires analysis of, and attention to, stakeholder cultures. This is done to determine their communication strategy in Part 2. Empirical data on how messages to stakeholders are crafted is rare, therefore this section is somewhat theoretical, but there is data supporting the contention that including stakeholder's voices in the process is beneficial in effecting change (Lewis, 2007).

Part 2 describes the various types of messages (targeted vs. blanket, positive vs. balanced, participatory vs. top-down, as well as the difference between conveying a sense of urgency to motivate change and projecting an impression that the change is do-able). For instance, there are times when speed of communication trumps the need to get all aboard for the change. Logically, this would seem to be the case in times of crisis. Lewis posits that implementers of change usually have to take the situation into account when creating their communication strategy. Lewis also goes on to explain that expectations of perfect compliance and total buy-in are both unrealistic and unnecessary in many cases (2007).

Part 3 is similar to Part 1 in that it focuses on the change context. However, it looks at the context from the stakeholders' viewpoint instead of from the implementer's perspective (what are their values, do they see the change as necessary, how do they see the change in terms of past history of change in the organization, etc.). Stakeholders' concerns develop out of these contextual issues as well as out of stakeholders' interactions with each other and their evaluations of each other. Concerns could relate to uncertainty about

how information will be used, shifts in group norms, and personal performance in the face of change. Network density and centrality may come into play, so that the less centralized and denser the stakeholders are, the more flexible the implementer needs to be in order to bring about change (Rowley as cited in Lewis, 2007). How stakeholders cope with change is based on whether their interactions with each other are positive or negative, how strongly entrenched the stakeholders' feelings about the change are, and whether they are looking out for only themselves or for the group (individualistic versus collectivistic). Part 3 is about judgments of the stakes in terms of "power, legitimacy and urgency of those stakes, and the potential for alliances or competitive relationships with other stakeholders (implementers included)" (Lewis, 2007, p. 194), and the way these judgments shape stakeholder thinking and communication. Clearly, group affiliations and group cultures are a significant aspect of this.

The fourth and final section of the model relates to the end results in terms of three observable characteristics: uniformity, fidelity (also noted in Part 1) and authenticity. Part 4 is both the beginning and the end of the process. It is the culmination of anxieties and interactions, choices of strategies, and communication about those strategies and assessments of others involved in and omitted from the change process. According to Lewis, it describes a relationship existing between interactions and change, which is measurable in terms of three observables: the degree of compliance with the change initiative, fidelity to the original change planned and authenticity of support for the plan.

Lewis' model accounts for the types of relationships between stakeholders. She explains that relationships in which there is either a strong allegiance or a rivalry among stakeholders may have different impacts on accepting change and this must be considered when deciding how to communicate about change (2007). It also accounts for that the kind of social network in which individuals are situated as having a bearing on their receptivity to communication about change. Members of dense networks in which norms are highly internalized by members will present more of a united front in opposing or accepting change (Lewis, 2007). Additionally, high centrality networks pose a different challenge to change because it becomes critical to achieve the buy-in of brokers who connect and persuade the others in their networks (Lewis, 2007). All of this needs to be considered when thinking about how to communicate possible change.

Recommendations for Applying the Theory

The Lewis model may be used as a template for seeing where interventions may be useful in proposing change in the academy. As an illustration, the theoretical analysis is applied to a generic scenario in which alterations to a doctoral program are the issue. The recommendations proposed here are designed for the academic sector and may be used by any university with a doctoral program in any discipline or any university that operates a school in a particular discipline or professional area that offers a doctoral degree. They may also be adapted to serve masters and undergraduate curricula.

Who may find these recommendations useful?

This plan is intended for high level administrators, such as the executive vice president for academic affairs, the dean of the graduate program or school, the dean of the graduate

school, the assistant deans, doctoral program director and the tenured and tenure-track faculty. In addition, if curricular changes involve creation of new programs or partnerships, in some universities, that may require approval of the overall graduate school of the university, which may include the entire faculty of the graduate school, both tenured and tenure-track. In that case, those persons may need to be developed in some less intensive ways. Also, there may be some limited involvement of the student stakeholder group in the plan due to their lack of experience with curriculum development.

Assessing the level of expertise and experience of these individuals is another necessary step in this process. For instance, the dean of any particular program may or may not have extensive experience as a professor or administrator. That dean also may or may not have been at the school for very long and therefore may or may not know the faculty very well. For any of these reasons the dean may not be acclimated to the school's culture(s). If there are assistant deans of the school, they may or may not be involved in the administration of the doctoral program and they may or may not have extensive experience in administration. In some disciplines there may be separate area coordinators who have varying degrees of professorial and administrative experience. All of this needs to be taken into account in stakeholder assessments.

One additional concern is the issue of tenure. If any of the professors are untenured or on the cusp of becoming tenured, there is a power differential which may keep such individuals from pursuing objectives and advocating for something that is politically charged. Sensitivity to that possibility is advocated.

So, essentially all of these individuals' levels of experience in curriculum development, leadership and change management may vary. Additionally, the level of motivation may be different for different stakeholder groups. For instance, the dean of the graduate school may be very motivated to change the curriculum, while the faculty may be more reluctant, or vice versa.

Reflecting again on the issue of experience, within the faculty there may be some professors with theoretical background in change management and group communication, and it would seem logical to ask those persons to engage very fully in this process. There may also be experts in organizational development and training who come to the table with extensive experience. It is recommended that these individuals be asked to assume a prominent role in the assessment process and discussions about change in order to leverage their expertise in change management and their inside knowledge of the system, the culture(s) and the stakeholders.

Other additional persons to include might be the financial administrators of the school, who may or may not be assistant deans and whose experience in teaching and in administration may also vary. They may also exist as members of two cultures, administrative and faculty.

One more point needs to be considered. If the dean is new or is about to be promoted and replaced by an acting dean, it may create an aura of uncertainty as to the direction the school will be taking and add another layer of complexity to the situation. Similarly, any

other administrators who are new to the school or the university may have a similar and perhaps unanticipated impact on the change process.

Stepping Stones to Success

The first issue to be considered is whether change is appropriate. Assessment of the current and desired future situations is necessary and important to ensure that the change initiative is justifiable based on the extant data. Part of that assessment includes relevance to the institution's mission and the institutional culture. Any initiative needs to ensure that the doctoral program is closely aligned with the mission and goals of the university, the graduate school and the disciplinary unit or professional school within the university. In addition, it is very important that all goals and missions are clear and explicit. If anything is missing or vague, clarification and statement/re-statement are recommended. Cultural factors may include whether or not the university's power structure is hierarchical, which impacts how negotiable a proposal to change may be.

If it is unclear that change is needed, then a discussion with key stakeholders needs to be initiated. This involves deciding who the stakeholders are, therefore identification of the relevant constituents is one important goal. Another is determining which of the stakeholders need to be involved in the educational phases of the change process and which parts of that process correspond or are appropriate to their particular levels of experience and expertise.

If there is a substantial power differential between the parties involved, that should also be acknowledged as an issue to be addressed. Furthermore, if there are sub-units within the doctoral program, such as would be the case for the experimental and theoretical branches of physics or the applied and experimental areas of psychology, those units need to become acquainted or reacquainted so that they may understand and respect each other's needs and visions. Therefore, a forum for dialog where those involved feel safe and are able to listen to the other stakeholders would be another goal.

Returning to the issue of identifying stakeholders, one of the first questions to ask is: who are the people affected by a change? Once this is determined, an analysis of those constituencies is needed. In the academy, this includes the following six types of stakeholders: 1) current students (those who utilize the school or university's offerings), 2) those who the school or university needs in order to exist (administration, faculty, staff, government backers if it is a public institution and industry backers), 3) potential students (i.e., those who have the option of attending the school or university), 4) those who possess expertise that the school or university needs, such as teachers and researchers 5) those who pay for university offerings (students and corporations) 6) financial and moral supporters (donors, friends) (Ruben, 2010 - examples added).

Context and Audience

There are several options for assessing the context and the audience. First, it is important to understand the purpose of the change. If the purpose is not clear, it needs to be made clear. Tied to this is the premise that there should be a good reason for making a change and that it needs to be defined and explored. One possibility is to explore the missions and

goals of the doctoral program, the graduate school, and the university, looking for alignment and gaps, as well as to try to understand the reasons for any proposed change initiative. If there is a misalignment or mission statements are lacking, then work needs to be done to create mission statements for the particular department or school that complement or match the missions of the graduate school and the university. Lack of symmetry among the missions and goals may create confusion and conflicting objectives, resulting in difficulty in achieving change. Also, if the proposed program change does not align with the goals and missions of the graduate school and the university, perhaps the change is unwarranted or unnecessary. In that case, a misuse of resources may be prevented by recognizing that the change does not apply well to the situation and should not be pursued.

In this part of the process, the assessment of key stakeholders occurs and the current doctoral program is compared to programs at other universities. As noted previously, to begin a change process, the first thing to assess is whether or not the change is necessary. One specific best practices technique used to determine if there is a need for the change is a Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats (SWOT) Analysis.

SWOT Analysis is designed to determine the viability and utility of the proposed change. It could be employed to look at the various aspects and implications of the change. To evaluate strengths, the questions to ask are: (1) what does the doctoral program currently do well? (2) What unique resources can the doctoral program access? (3) What do others see as the doctoral program's strengths? For weaknesses, ask: (1) what could be improved in the doctoral program? (2) What resources are lacking in the doctoral program? (3) What do others perceive as program weaknesses? In terms of opportunities, find out (1) what opportunities are available? (2) What can you leverage or take advantage of? (3) How can you make the doctoral program's strengths into opportunities? Lastly, to assess threats, find out: (1) What could undermine the doctoral program? (2) What are other, similar doctoral programs offering? (3) Where are the doctoral program's vulnerabilities? (MindTools, 2013; Ruben, 2013).

Assuming the change needs to occur, a stakeholder analysis would be helpful in determining the context and the audience for this initiative. This is where Lewis' Stakeholder Model's "Antecedents to Implementation Communication Strategy Selection" section applies because it examines the institutional and the interpersonal aspects of the change. Stakeholder analysis specifies who the intervention affects. Hypothetically, it could include everyone from the newest, least senior faculty on the tenure track all the way up to the dean of the graduate school. Once the key stakeholders are determined, the Lewis Model can be used to form a pathway for guiding them through the change process.

Key stakeholders are those people who the change will affect directly, yet other stakeholders who may be indirectly affected should not be completely ignored. (Ruben, 2013). How does one decide who is a key stakeholder? One method is to brainstorm all the possible stakeholders and then prioritize them according to the combination of how much power and interest they have in the change (MindTools, 2013). Those with the greatest interest and power are the key stakeholders and those with high power but low interest need to be kept abreast of the situation, but are less integral than the key

stakeholders (MindTools, 2013). Keeping the lines of communication open with those who have low power and high interest is important, to ensure that they do not have issues with the change (MindTools, 2013). Low power, uninterested individuals can also be kept in the loop, but in a more minimal way (MindTools, 2013). To illustrate some of these points, using the example of a doctoral program, key stakeholders would include: faculty (tenured, tenure track), administrative staff in the discipline (financial, operational, and executive), the administration of the graduate school and university administration. Low power, highly interested people may include some or all of the current students (full-time and part-time; funded and unfunded), as well as prospective students (accepted and rejected; full-time and part-time; funded and unfunded), part-time faculty and secretarial staff.

In a school or discipline that is divided into areas, it may be important to assess each area's culture and norms in case they conflict. For instance, in any particular school there may be several areas and each of these may have a different mindset with respect to curriculum change. One way to determine whether or not their perspectives differ is to observe them and to talk to them. A leader in the change process may also create a questionnaire asking about norms, assumptions, values and priorities and distribute it to all the areas. This idea is an adaptation of the best practices "Values Clarification Worksheet" used by McLean, (2006, p. 157). Another option is to conduct a variation on a Fishbowl discussion (McLean, 2006) in which one area of the school gathers in the center of the room and is allowed to speak about their ideas while the other groups form a circle around them and do not speak, but only listen to what the inner circle is saying. In this way, all are able to express their thoughts and be heard. Then, a different area becomes the center of the circle and the other areas listen to what that area has to say. This is a possible way to build understanding of the norms and cultures of each area, and perhaps find areas of common ground. This may be accomplished by requiring the outer rings to give only positive feedback to the inner rings. It is part of the Engagement Stage in the change process and in addition to building engagement in the process, it encourages positive and constructive discussion.

Alternatives to the previously discussed options would be to use online training, simulations, readings and case studies to assist in education, training and development with respect to the change process. These are more individually-oriented methods, but could be used in an auxiliary manner in case someone is interested in learning about change in more depth. It may also be useful if a large or geographically dispersed constituency (such as the full faculty of an institution with locations in several countries on different continents) desires or needs educating at a low cost.

Assessment

Both the first and last steps in the process involve assessments. These include "interviews, focus groups, surveys, formal benchmarking, organizational self-studies, organizational audits or performance measurement systems" (Trompe & Ruben, 2004, p. 8). The point of doing assessments is to gauge the difference between "what is" and "what is desired." This is critical in developing and monitoring the change process as well as in evaluating the end result, according to Trompe & Ruben. It is therefore easy to see why it is an important aspect of change. For a doctoral program change, surveys of key stakeholders and measurements of performance against benchmarks, such as time to

degree completion, are recommended. The necessity for and effectiveness of the current and any proposed curriculum change initiative needs to be assessed at numerous points in the process.

At each major juncture in the change process, assessments of effectiveness and satisfaction could be taken with current students and faculty, as well as new graduates of the program. Faculty workload issues (and any related health issues) may be measured and school finances may be tracked. Semester-by semester reviews of the program may be instituted. Reviews would cover finances, goals and missions, morale and program metrics.

Outcomes

By following the theory-based recommendations outlined here, either of two desirable outcomes may be achieved by the organization: 1) an unwarranted and unpopular change is avoided, or 2) a plan for change that aligns with the mission of the school may be developed in which interpersonal and intergroup relations are solidified and enhanced, resulting in high levels of commitment and participation in the change initiative and a successful change, as measured at various intervals during and after implementation.

By the time that the recommended educational initiative outlined here is complete, the following important take-aways regarding managing change should be understood.

1. Leaders will have a greater sense of how to achieve involvement and buy-in from their stakeholders.
2. Leaders will more thoroughly understand how to act to create an environment in which there is commitment to listening to and respecting other's opinions and ideas.
3. Stakeholders will understand how to engage in and sustain an environment in which there is a commitment to respecting other's opinions and ideas.
4. Leaders will understand when and how to negotiate mandates and determine if, and how much, flexibility exists with respect to them.
5. Leaders and other stakeholders will be better prepared to clarify problems and issues.
6. Leaders will understand and be able to motivate stakeholders to engage in the change process.
7. Establishing or re-examining and aligning mission, vision and goals across units within a school, schools within a university, the overall graduate programs and the university as a whole will become second-nature when altering or developing programs.

8. Leaders will have a framework for determining which constituencies need to be included in educational and developmental programs.
9. Assigning priorities with respect to the initiative will be facilitated.
10. Techniques for encouraging useful and productive dialogue will be learned and internalized.
11. Leaders will understand the importance of assessment and how to use feedback to improve the change process, as well as to determine the plan's effectiveness during and after implementation.

Conclusion

By applying Systems Theory, the Lewis Stakeholder model and Ruben's factors and stages, all of which explore the interpersonal relationships between stakeholders in the change phenomenon, it is possible to frame a plan for successfully proposing change in the academy. Key factors in any change are the persons affected by that change and their mindsets, which are embedded in the cultures of the groups to which they belong. The power of paying attention to these cultural norms cannot be underestimated in communicating about change. Key stakeholders, once identified, need to be assessed in terms of their group affiliations and communicated with in words and ways that are conducive both to generating interest in the proposal and obtaining their authentic input into its potential utility and appropriateness. The buy-in of these key stakeholders and the ripple effect of their acceptance or rejection of a proposal on others in their academic networks are clearly critical at each step in the change process and need to be incorporated when proposing change.

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