CHANGE MANAGEMENT FOR SCHOOL LEADERS:

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING CHANGE IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

by

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Change Management for School Leaders:

Strategies for Implementing Change in School Settings

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Abstract

Change frequently occurs in education, creating an environment where school leaders need to be skilled in the art of change management. To many, such as Crum and Sherman (2008), "Change is . . . an innate component of education . . . and something that principals must contend with as they work with their staff" (p. 575). Alberta Education (2020) outlined criteria required for visionary and instructional leadership, including "enabling positive change and fostering commitment to continuous improvement" (p. 3) with the goal of "[ensuring] every student has access to quality teaching and optimum learning experiences" (p. 4). O'Donnell and White (2005) outlined that the primary responsibility for school leaders "[was] to facilitate effective teaching and learning with the overall mission of enhancing student achievement" (p. 56). O'Donnell and White (2005) elaborated students often achieved higher grades and more academic success when the principal delivered instructional leadership. Research demonstrates that school leaders that consider the impact of a change and the reason behind the change while encouraging input from stakeholders and thinking about the well-being of stakeholders most impacted by change seem to establish a more impactful change initiative. Consequently, the process and methodology of change directly impact the well-being of both staff and students in the system.

When starting the change process, school leaders, skilled in the art of change management, ask questions such as, "Why is the change necessary; How much change needs to occur; Where should the change occur; [and] Who will participate in the change process" (Frontier & Rickabaugh, 2015, p. 1). The models of change examined in this capstone study include DuFour and DuFour's (2006) *Professional Learning Communities at Work*, Fullan's (2006) *Change Theory*, Kotter's (1995) *Eight-Step Change Model*, Baird and Clark's (2018)

Look-Ahead Professional Development Model, and Shannon and Bylsma's (2007) *Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools*. Each change model provides a framework that school leaders can use in various settings to initiate change in a more organized, thoughtful, and deliberate manner.

An extensive literature review outlines promising models of change and practices when implementing institutional change. To answer questions concerning which change model to choose when implementing change and how to measure its impact, Chapter 2 outlines five different change models and provides information about how leaders measure change to determine its effects. Chapter 3 includes the implications of this capstone study and three recommendations concerning how Principals and senior education administration can approach change in a meaningful, long-lasting manner, with the goals of trust, developing leadership capacity, and creating sustainable change.

Keywords

Alberta Leadership Quality Standard, Alberta Teaching Quality Standard, change management, instructional leadership, professional learning community, school culture,

Table of Contents

Strategies for Change in School Settings

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background Information

Teachers experience change of all kinds throughout their careers. These changes include changes in teaching assignments, new teaching partners, physically moving to different classrooms, or moving to other schools. This capstone study will focus upon curriculum changes and complementary changes in associated curricular resources.

Throughout the last 116 years, various changes implemented in Albertan schools have resulted in impacts perceived as both positive and negative. One excellent example of change educators generally perceived as positive was that which took place with the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI). Parsons and Hewson (2014) stated: "that the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) [was] the best curriculum reform and redesign that Alberta's educational system has engaged in" (para. 1). During AISI, teachers from across the province identified areas of need and created projects that addressed localized goals for student improvement. Specialists, in some cases, were brought in for two to three-year periods to work with teachers to understand the resources or teaching methods required to help fulfill the localized goals identified by school districts and schools. AISI allowed time for modelling, teacher collaboration, peer mentorship, development of teacher confidence, and ongoing improvement. Data needed to be collected, and as a result, "books and articles were written, graduate-level research was completed, and school networks were developed to disseminate what we learned" (Parsons & Hewson, 2014, para. 2). AISI provided opportunities for teachers to plan collaboratively, work with experts to improve pedagogy and better understand learning objectives, and fostered the importance of reflecting on formative and summative assessment.

The process of change involved with AISI initiatives incorporated similar stages presented in the five models of change analyzed in this capstone study.

Models of change such as DuFour's (2006) *Professional Learning Communities at Work*, Fullan's (2006) *Change Theory*, Baird and Clark's (2018) *Look-Ahead Professional Development Model*, Kotter's *8-Step Change Model* (1995), and Shannon and Bylsma's (2007) *Nine Characteristics of High-Performing School*s outlined that most successful curriculum or resource implementation usually involved multiple factors. Among these factors were the following: a clear and shared focus, inclusive discussions with a variety of stakeholders, identified specific needs within a school or district, and hiring quality specialists to work directly with teachers, all elements that were present in the AISI model. The change models emphasized that teachers required time to develop new strategies to enhance student achievement through collaboration, discussion, and reflection for ongoing improvement and mastery. Conversely, curriculum and resource implementation seem to be introduced rapidly with little time for the outlined strategies.

Statement of the Problem

Changes in education frequently occur, which can lead to several different problems. Teachers identified work overload as the primary causal influence of job dissatisfaction (Alkahtani, 2017). According to a teacher workload study performed by the Alberta Teachers' Association (2015), teacher mental health deteriorated across Alberta due to increased microtasks, planning for instruction, and preparation for complex classes. Factors that contributed, "imposed and centralized accountability, lack of professional autonomy, relentlessly imposed changes . . . [and] reduced resources" (Alkahtani, 2017, p. 210). Research supported teacher workload has continually increased over the years, and teacher autonomy has eroded. The educational leader's responsibility was to ensure that the staff understood why initiatives

occurred and establish a shared vision. The Leadership Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 2020) stated that "a leader [collaborated] with the school community to create and implement a shared vision for student success, engagement, and well-being" (p. 3). School leaders were responsible for embodying visionary leadership (Alberta Education, 2020). School leaders need to consider all aspects of reform when school districts and schools require a change and strategies for improved student success.

Purpose of the Study

This capstone study provides specific strategies for school leaders to create a shared vision to bring support and success to teachers and students. This capstone study looks to assist in implementing curriculum reform, new initiatives, and new resources to ensure collaboration. Simultaneously, it would be ideal for maintaining a favourable school district or school culture conducive to supporting staff and students. School districts and schools could easily apply the change models when planning to implement significant changes to the curriculum or classroom resources.

Research Questions

The research questions for this capstone study are:

1. What models of change can school leaders utilize to implement change in school?

2. How can change be measured to determine the impact on school culture and student achievement?

Significance of the Study

Any change in a school district or school can impact the whole learning community. Research suggests that a unique structure develops when school leaders use a change

management model. This structure enables collaboration, encourages a clear shared vision, leads stakeholders to feel valued and heard, and helps maintain a positive work and learning environment throughout the change, all factors identified by researchers as significant issues (Kotter, 1995; DuFour, 2006; Fullan, 2006; Shannon & Bylsma, 2007; Alkahtani, 2017; Baird and Clark, 2018). While emphasizing the impact of change and how to manage change, this capstone study provides meaningful recommendations for school leaders to consider before implementing significant changes in their learning environments.

Scope of the Study

This capstone study examined research concerning change management, program implementation in school districts and schools, and how to measure impact when implementing changes in programs. The study narrowed the focus to analyze five models of change considered more relevant to educational settings and intended to provide school leaders with a guide to improved implementation of change initiatives in educational settings. A review of literature that addressed the successful use of change models helped identify factors that measured the impact of change on students and stakeholders.

Summary

When academic staff embraced and implemented various types of change, the result was often a significant impact on student academic success (Scott & Bagaka, 2004). Fullan (2006) asked, "what theories of action really get results in education reform?" (p. 3) and "why, once identified, such successful theories are not embraced more widely?" (p. 3). Chapter 1 in this capstone study identified the need for school leaders to consider using change management models. Using models of change helped maintain a shared focus among staff and

stakeholders, developed strong pedagogy among school staff, maintained positive school culture, and ensured the learning needs of all children were addressed and met.

Outline of the Remainder of the Paper

This capstone study examines the importance of change management strategies and identifies school leaders' planning tools when implementing significant changes in school districts and schools. Chapter 2 is an extensive literature review about change management as it applies to school districts and schools upon introducing new initiatives. Research on change management for school leaders provides strategies and practices for implementation. Chapter 2 addresses the impact of change management models. Chapter 3 provides recommendations on how school leaders can lead and manage change initiatives to ensure student success while maintaining a professional and positive school culture for all. It will also include suggestions about how school leaders can measure the success of change management initiatives.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

A wide array of academic literature has been written in the 21st century that focused, either directly or indirectly, on the influence of various strategies for change within a school district or school setting. Friedman and Berkovich (2020) defined first-order change as "made within the existing framework, without changing the basic assumptions which [were] often considered to be natural in a given setting" (p. 328). This capstone study focuses on the more transformational change as defined by Friedman and Berkovich (2020) as second-order change that aims at "transforming multiple deeply rooted aspects [that] requires the adoption of new assumptions and values" (p. 328). Marzano et al. (2005) stated that one of the characteristics of second-order change is that the change "may be resisted because only those who have a broad perspective of the school see the innovations as necessary" (p. 113). However, Marzano et al. (2005) also stated that "some staff members will experience the initiative as first-order change and others will experience it as second-order change" (pp. 112-113) depending on "knowledge, experience, values, and flexibility of the individual or group" (p. 112).

"Change is an innate component of education, as with all organizations that involve people" (Crum & Sherman, 2008, p. 575). Despite the realization that change frequently occurs in education, researchers outlined reasons why teachers may have feelings of negativity towards change, specifically with curriculum reform due to a lack of time, insufficient professional development, and the existent culture of the system (Park & Sung, 2013; Alkahtani, 2017). Park and Sung (2013) further added that teachers felt "resentment [towards] curriculum developers, who are not acquainted with classroom situations" (p. 24). Kotter (2012) identified that trust is also a necessary component for effective change to occur. He said, "when trust is present, you

will usually be able to create teamwork. When it is missing, you won't" (p. 63). Trust was an essential consideration to bond leaders to followers. Without that bond, a manager or educational leader could impose minimum obedience with contract conditions, but that would not encourage a team of educators to achieve distinction (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). School leaders have a responsibility to ensure they are "providing learning opportunities, based on research-informed principles of effective teaching, learning and leadership, to support building the capacity of all school community members to fulfill their educational roles" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 4).

This extensive literature review focuses on different change management models for school leaders to apply when approaching significant change in their educational setting. Through these models, school leaders can better understand their staff, boost employee morale, and empower the staff within the school to embrace change (Crum & Sherman, 2008).

Definition of Terms

Change Management: a complex process and requires serious attention and involvement from the management and people from all levels to achieve a meaningful or progressive transformation across various levels (Juneja, n.d.).

Instructional Leadership: instructional leaders understand the importance of learning and the impact of teaching by conducting classroom observations, using assessment as feedback, ensuring professional development that enhances student learning, communicating high academic standards, understanding the importance of listening to students and teachers, and ensuring that all school environments are conducive to learning (Hattie, 2015).

Leadership Quality Standard: provides a framework to support the professional growth, supervision and evaluation of all principals and school jurisdiction leaders (Alberta Education, 2020).

Professional Learning Community: an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve (Dufour et al., 2006).

Quality Professional Development: high-quality professional development leads teachers to gain and refine knowledge of both content and pedagogy; it reflects best practices in teacher and learning; and it has a positive impact on the classroom in terms of teacher effectiveness and student learning (Strickland, 2009).

School Culture: a collaborative environment where teachers are trusted, empowered, and have access to leadership roles that are facilitated and distributed (Balkar, 2015).

Teaching Quality Standard: provides a framework for the preparation, professional growth, supervision and evaluation of all teachers (Alberta Education, 2020).

Models of Change

DuFour's Professional Learning Communities at Work Model

DuFour introduced the Professional Learning Communities at Work model in 1985. DuFour felt "outrage on behalf of students over the lack of uniform school policies toward grading, assessment, tutoring, and parent communication" (McLester, 2012, p. 62). DuFour replaced his school's remedial program with one that offered "several layers of intervention support" (McLester, 2012, p. 62). The core belief of the Professional Learning Communities at Work model was "all students should have access to the most rigorous curriculum and that all students should learn" (McLester, 2012, p. 61). Hord (2008) emphasized, "the professional learning community [supported] the school's purpose – high quality student learning" (p. 13). During the first implementation of this model, DuFour was able to transform the school by guaranteeing students received "a study hall each day, a faculty advisor, an upperclassman

mentor, a weekly check with their counselor, and progress reports or grades every three weeks"
(McLester, 2012, p. 62). Teachers and mentors provided students that continued to experience
difficulty with many layers of intervention, despite the individualized supports already in place
(McLester, 2012, p. 62). According to McLester (2012), as a result of the Professional Learning
Communities at Work model, DuFour's district saw increased student scores, and the district
became a "model of successful school reform" (McLester, 2012, p. 65) by the United States
Department of Education.

DuFours' Professional Learning Communities at Work model included three guiding
principles: 1. Ensure all students learn at high levels, 2. Establish a culture of collaboration, and
3. Create a results orientation (Dufour & DuFour, 2011; McLester, 2012; Mattos et al., 2016).
Rick DuFour and Becky DuFour believed that the Professional Learning Communities at Work
model "[distinguished] itself from other PLCs primarily through the deep degree of efficacy in
implementation it requires of individual teachers" (McLester, 2012, p. 66). A simple shift
occurred when establishing a Professional Learning Community at Work from a concentration
on teaching to an emphasis on learning (DuFour, 2005).

Upon the adoption of the Professional Learning Communities at Work model, school
districts and schools needed to build shared knowledge to create a fundamental purpose that
revolved around "[ensuring] high levels of learning for all students" (DuFour & DuFour, 2011, p.
10). School leaders were therefore responsible for a series of preparations to establish
Professional Learning Communities at Work. These included developing actionable steps to
accomplish the vision, establishing a timeline including guidelines for monitoring each step,
implementing intervention strategies for staff that experienced difficulty, providing benchmarks

to track improvement, and creating SMART goals for every collaborative team (DuFour &
DuFour, 2011).

School leaders began by exploring the Professional Learning Communities at Work
processes at the district level during the initial stages. The superintendents worked with
principals to help them understand the process. The school leaders then built guiding coalitions
"of leaders who understood the process and outcomes" (Smith, 2012, p. 25) that provided
essential tools to train staff at individual schools. All schools were expected to build a common
language and maintained specific conditions related to the Professional Learning Communities at
Work model and the district vision (DuFour, 2012).

Establishing a culture of collaboration involved school divisions examining personnel
and timetables. In some cases, personnel may have been dismissed or reassigned to utilize
resources most efficiently and effectively (McLester, 2012). Timetables were adjusted to ensure
teachers had time embedded in the school day to collaborate, plan, and reflect (DuFour et al.,
2005; McLester, 2012; Mattos et al., 2016). DuFour and DuFour provided examples of how
schools approached embedded collaboration time. These included: providing common
preparation periods for grade teams; the utilization of specialist teachers to cover grade teams
during parallel scheduling; adjusted start and end times of the contractual day; buddying up
classes where one team provided coverage for another team; providing group activities where
students required supervision rather than instruction; allocated time during in-service or faculty
meeting days (DuFour & DuFour, 2012). Teams must develop norms or protocols to clarify
expectations regarding roles, responsibilities, and relationships among team members (DuFour et
al., 2005). Schools that failed to establish norms for their Professional Learning Communities at

Work tended to struggle "with team members who resisted participation or dominated meetings" (Smith, 2012, p. 26).

According to DuFour and DuFour (2011), school districts and schools "[focused] on achieving a few specific, measurable goals that [reflected] the fundamental purpose of the organization. They [established] a process to monitor progress toward the goals on an ongoing basis" (p. 51). McLester (2012) described a focus on results as, "data analysis [focused] on the progress of each individual student, looking at specific percentage improvements and sharing strategies around how to maximize strengths and overcome weaknesses" (p. 66). DuFour et al. (2005) stated, "Educators must begin to embrace data as a useful indicator of progress. Educators must stop disregarding or excusing unfavorable data and honestly confront the sometimes-brutal facts" (p. 41). DuFour and DuFour (2011) explained,

> A principal who hopes to lead a learning community must ensure this collective analysis becomes part of the school's routine practice and that the results are used to respond to the needs of individual students and to inform and improve the professional practice of educators. (p. 56)

DuFour provided many examples of school districts that achieved dramatic results in increased student academic performance when using the Professional Learning Communities at Work model. (Dufour & DuFour, 2011; McLester, 2012; Smith, 2012; Mattos et al., 2016). McLester (2012) described that following DuFour's 1985 implementation of Professional Learning Communities at Work, "students receiving D's and F's dropped from 36 percent to 6 percent, and those earning A's and B's increased from 48 percent to 75 percent" (p. 62). Becky DuFour's first experience with Professional Learning Communities at Work in 2000 resulted in increased student achievement and an elevated sense of efficacy for teachers (McLester, 2012).

After seven years of implementation of Professional Learning Communities at Work, Richard Smith recognized that his schools demonstrated continued improvement by following the steps of this model (Smith, 2012). Those initially reluctant to the process came to appreciate that professional learning communities became embedded in their district's culture (Smith, 2012).

DuFour's Professional Learning Communities at Work existed in some form in models of change designed by other researchers. Baird and Clark (2017) described "professional learning communities [included]: shared beliefs, values and mission; shared and supported leadership; supportive conditions; caring and respect among members; and collective learning with an intentional, sustained focus on student needs" (p. 327). Professional learning communities existed in numerous models of change, primarily through shared leadership, a culture of collaboration, and the response to student needs through analyzed data.

Fullan's Change Theory

Fullan (2006) analyzed standards-based district-wide reform initiatives, professional learning communities, and qualification frameworks to develop and retain quality leaders. Through his research to identify which theories had the most significant impact on teaching and learning, Fullan (2006) identified various flaws. Such flaws included: a lack of clarity concerning the change, a disconnect between the instructional practice and classroom teaching and learning, professional learning communities that worked well in individual schools but eschewed working with other schools, and a lack of simultaneous development of strong leaders and strong culture (Fullan, 2006). Fullan (2006) argued, "We must use our change knowledge in order to identify weak elements in the approach . . . . The basic purpose . . . is to change the culture of school systems, not to produce a series of atomistic schools" (p. 7).

Fullan (2006) created Change Theory based on seven core premises: "1. A focus on motivation; 2. Capacity building, with a focus on results; 3. Learning in context; 4. Changing context; 5. A bias for reflective action; 6. Tri-level engagement; 7. Persistence and flexibility in staying the course" (Fullan, 2006, p. 8). These seven core premises encouraged self-reflective and group-reflective habits to improve teaching practice and increase student achievement.

A focus on motivation included a combination of aspects, including "moral purpose; capacity; resources; peer and leadership support; identity" (Fullan, 2006, p. 8) with the goal of increased and sustainable motivation over time. Capacity building with a focus on results meant "knowledge and competencies; resources; and motivation" (Fullan, 2006, p. 9) with the goal of excellent performance when compared to schools of a similar demographic. Learning in context ensured that the improvement was designed for the individual to "[learn] to do the right things in the settings where you work" (Fullan, 2006, p. 9). Changing context encouraged lateral capacity building where school leaders interacted with other leaders to understand the larger context better, creating more robust ideas and motivation. "School principals became almost as concerned about the success of other schools in the district . . . a direct result of being engaged in a larger purpose . . . [through] lateral capacity-building strategies" (DuFour et al., 2005, p. 218).

Fullan (2006) summarized bias for reflective action as "people learn best through doing, reflection, inquiry, evidence, more doing" (p. 10). Tri-level engagement, or "tri-level solution" (DuFour et al., 2005, p. 210; Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p. 13), in an educational setting involved the school and community, the district, and the province. Fullan (2006) used the term "permeable connectivity" (p. 11), which meant that change should encourage "mutual interaction and influence within and across all three levels" (Fullan, 2006, p. 11). Finally, persistence and

flexibility in staying the course highlighted that because systematic change occurred over long periods, resilience was required to remain focused despite barriers that got in the way.

Baird and Clark's Look-Ahead Professional Development Model

Baird and Clark's (2017) "Look-Ahead" Professional Development Model is a combination of professional learning communities (DuFour et al., 2008; Hord, 2008), backwards design (McTighe & Wiggins, 2005), and Guskey's Five Levels of Professional Development Evaluation (Guskey, 2005). Baird and Clark (2017) designed The Look-Ahead Professional Development Model to implement a new curriculum focusing on instructional strategies. The Look-Ahead Professional Development Model helped to create a method of solid professional development by strengthening teacher autonomy through the "[involvement of] teachers in the planning and implementing of the professional development activities" (Baird & Clark, 2017, p. 327) "within the school day" (Baird & Clark, 2017, p. 336). It used look-ahead sessions where teachers met together, discussed upcoming units and assessments, and created lessons and assessments according to curriculum standards and achievement gaps using backward design (McTighe & Wiggins, 2005). According to Baird and Clark (2017), teachers met as professional learning communities for approximately 30 hours throughout the school year in two-hour sessions focusing on goals identified by school leaders. The schools involved maintained the structure of the look-ahead model for a few years. During the sessions, teachers received:

> a refresher for the content and/or instructional strategies from the last session; direct instruction in a new student discourse and/or reasoning strategy; and examination of instructional materials for the teachers to use in implementing the strategies and lessons with their students. (Baird & Clark, 2017, p. 330)

Teachers were "guided through a collaborative reflection on the impacts of their instruction and outcomes for students" (Baird & Clark, 2017, p. 337). With any remaining time in each session, teachers would collaborate, plan lessons and develop assessments that incorporated the new strategies learned in the sessions.

Baird and Clark's (2017) studied the look-ahead model over three years but identified this period as "not long enough to impact student-learning gains" (p. 336). However, the school leaders allowed the teachers one full year of practice before implementing classroom observations, resulting in a higher percentage of teachers implementing the new strategies in their classrooms. Using Guskey's Five Levels of Professional Development Evaluation (Guskey, 2005), the teacher observations in this study allowed for a continuous feedback loop academic leaders could use for continuous school improvement. It also "[raised] the level of accountability of the professional development model and improve results" (Baird & Clark, 2017, p. 335).

Using a combination of models including: Professional Learning Communities at Work, Backward Design, and Guskey's Five Levels of Professional Development Evaluation (Guskey, 2005), the Look-Ahead Professional Development Model provided school leaders and teachers with a strong foundation for "career-long professional learning and ongoing critical reflection to improve teaching and learning" (Alberta Education, 2020). Leaders organized educational staff to engage in purposeful, collegial learning that supported the school's purpose of high-quality student learning (Hord, 2008). It also "positively impacted the learning environment for students and . . . student outcomes on standard and non-standard measures of achievement" (Baird & Clark, 2017, p. 337). Success when using the look-ahead professional development model involved: teachers building autonomy through the direct involvement in the planning, execution, and reflection of professional development (Baird & Clark, 2017); a significant increase in the

percentage of teachers implementing the new strategies (Baird & Clark, 2017); ongoing evaluation about the change including planning, formative, and summative assessments; and a marked improvement of student learning based on cognitive assessment tools, affective measures, and psychomotor outcomes (Guskey, 2005).

Kotter's Eight-Stage Change Process

Kotter (2012) analyzed many significant change initiatives in organizations to develop the eight-stage change framework. Kotter (2007) believed that change occurred in stages built upon each other over time. Skipped stages seldom fashioned a satisfying result (Kotter, 2007). The eight stages in Kotter's model included:

i) Establishing a sense of urgency; ii) Build a guiding coalition; iii) Form a strategic vision and strategy; iv) Communicate the change vision and enlist a volunteer army; v) Enable action by removing barriers; vi) Generating short-term wins; vii) Consolidate gains and producing more change, sustain acceleration; viii) Anchoring new approaches in the culture and institute change. (Kotter, 2007, p. 1; Kotter, 2012, p. 23; Kotter, 2018, p. 9)

In the first stage, establishing a sense of urgency involved assessing reasons for complacency in the organization, such as too many resources, the absence of crisis, a lack of performance feedback, or "too much happy talk from senior management" (Kotter, 2012, p. 42). It was about finding windows of opportunity that "[appealed] to the individuals' heads and hearts" (Kotter, 2018, p. 10). In schools, principals used credible data easily interpreted by staff and aligned with established district goals to provide a baseline for the required change (Thornton et al., 2019).

In the second stage, building a guiding coalition involved forming a team, ideally consisting of members from multiple levels of the school district or school hierarchy with a diverse skillset. The coalition would resemble a professional learning community in schools with a shared vision, values, and beliefs (DuFour et al., 2005; Hord, 2008). "It [provided] the structure and environment to challenge existing shared assumptions, values, and beliefs held by stakeholders, which [reflected] the existing culture of the school" (Thornton et al., 2019, p. 133).

The third stage, forming a strategic vision and strategy, moved beyond data and facts and "[motivated] people to take action" (Kotter, 2018, p. 18). It was where the why was presented, and clarified "the general direction for change . . ., it [motivated] people to take action in the right direction . . ., it [helped] coordinate the actions of different people" (Kotter, 2012, p. 71). The vision was easily communicated, ideally in five minutes or less, with clear understanding and fostered interest from stakeholders (Kotter, 1995).

In the fourth stage, communicating the change vision involved frequent, "effective, and purposeful communication" (Thornton et al., 2019, p. 134). The professional learning communities in schools needed to work to maintain "positive relationships with all stakeholder groups" (Thornton et al., 2019, p. 135). All activities and professional development planned needed to communicate the strategic vision. To maintain communication with the school community, Thornton et al. (2019) suggested: "positive stories posted on the school website, online training activities related to use of data, illustrations of applications, and ongoing communications with community groups" (p. 135).

In the fifth stage, the leadership and stakeholders experienced transformation. During enabling action by removing barriers, leaders needed to confront and remove any obstacles that blocked the vision, including "structures, skills, systems, and supervisors" (Kotter, 2007, p. 106)

or educators unwilling to adopt change. "Common barriers [included]: silos, parochialism, pressure to hit numbers, complacency, legacy rules or procedures, and limited access to stakeholders and leaders" (Kotter, 2018, p. 24). Kotter (2007) suggested that to empower people to affect change, leaders needed: continual communication to maintain the shared vision, aligned structures compatible with the vision, necessary training provided to employees, and personnel systems aligned with the vision. In cases where personnel were the obstacle, they needed to be confronted and possibly reassigned or dismissed. At this stage, teachers needed to take ownership of the vision and develop a strong sense of autonomy (Thornton et al., 2019), which schools districts or schools acquired by providing "time, often professional development, and a sense of involvement" (Thornton et al., 2019, p. 135), as well as through moral obligation. According to Crooks et al. (2013), "Teachers [were] more likely to maintain implementation momentum if they [had] support from their peers and administrators" (p. 128) while also receiving frequent reminders of the vision. Members that were leading the professional learning community required specific professional development opportunities in coaching, data management, and content knowledge related to the change initiative "to develop a clear understanding of the change to all stakeholder groups" (Thornton et al., 2019, p. 135).

In stage six, school leaders generated short-term wins, so employees maintained a solid commitment to the shared vision. The purposes of the short-term win included: providing evidence the change initiative was worth it; building morale and motivation; providing data to make adjustments to the vision; dissuading resisters; giving proof to the leadership that the shared vision is worth the effort, time, and money; and to build on any momentum the vision had to turn reluctant participants into active helpers (Kotter, 2007). The wins were intrinsically motivated, but they also involved small celebrations (Thornton et al., 2019).

The seventh stage involved consolidating gains and producing more change. Maintaining the sense of urgency created in stage one was crucial while actively expanding the volunteers' willingness to participate in the strategic vision (Kotter, 2018). Kouzes and Posner (2012) described, "The difference between an exemplary leader and an individual risk-taker is that leaders [were] able to create the conditions where people [wanted] to join with them in the struggle" (p. 188). Once a leader established credibility for the vision, Kotter (2012) described this stage as creating more change, potentially even more significant change. In this stage, leaders recruited more team members to assist with the changes and new projects. Leadership worked to maintain clarity of the strategic vision and the sense of urgency. Shared leadership, or distributive leadership (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007; Grice, 2019), permeated the organization with new opportunities arising through expanded changes and projects.

During the eighth and final stage, anchoring new approaches in culture, structures to "ensure leadership development and succession" (Kotter, 2012, p. 23) needed to be in place. Had the strategic vision not been reinforced and shared leadership and succession not been well-established, efforts from the previous seven steps would have unravelled (Kotter, 2012). "Culture changes only after you have successfully altered people's actions . . . and after people see the connection between the new actions and the performance improvement. Thus, the most cultural change [happened] in stage 8, not stage 1" (Kotter, 2012, pp. 164-165). Kotter (2012) described anchoring change in culture as mostly occurring at the end of the change process. He said the new approaches would only be accepted once proven and were superior to the old ways. Leaders and educators may have replaced key individuals to maintain the unique culture. New leaders were prepared to fulfill the consistent messaging about the strategic vision and were ready for succession upon the existing leadership's departure.

Kotter's Eight-Stage Change Process (Kotter, 2007; Kotter, 2012; Kotter, 2018) provided school leaders with "a comprehensive roadmap with practical guiding principles" (Thornton et al., 2019, p. 137) to guide them through the change process carefully and thoroughly. Kotter's change model had the potential to change the culture in an educational setting while creating shared leadership opportunities to build additional capacity in a school, allowing it to "make true systematic change aligned with meaningful goals" (Thornton et al., 2019, p. 137).

Shannon and Bylsma's Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools Model

Shannon and Bylsma (2007) researched numerous studies where students in certain schools achieved higher levels than students in different schools with a similar demographic. Shannon and Bylsma (2007) identified patterns and trends that demonstrated excellence and created high-performing schools. Shannon and Bylsma (2007) identified nine characteristics that were predictors of high-performing schools:

i) Clear and shared focus; ii) High standards and expectations for all students; iii) Effective school leadership; iv) High levels of collaboration and communication; v) Curriculum, instruction, and assessments aligned with standards; vi) Frequent monitoring of learning and teaching; vii) Focused professional development; viii) Supportive learning environment; and ix) High levels of family and community involvement. (p. 24)

Shannon and Bylsma (2007) discovered that most schools already had five or more of the characteristics and that "no single characteristic that accounted for the success" (p. 1). These characteristics were designed to work together, not necessarily in order, and used "a continuous cycle of action that systematically attends to all nine" (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p. 2). Shannon and Bylsma (2007) demonstrated that when school leaders addressed all nine characteristics, the result was meaningful change and a positive impact on student learning. Shannon and Bylsma

(2007) emphasized that second-order change, such as "changing philosophy, values, attitudes, beliefs, and instructional practices" (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p. 19), needed to occur at a deep level to be effective and long-lasting.

Clear and shared focus. According to Shannon and Bylsma (2007), a clear and shared focus was necessary when deciding on changes in an educational setting. Everyone in the organization knew the desired goals and recognized the school required change. A clear and shared focus was achieved: through the use of data to determine areas of improvement; by identifying activities and changes to achieve the agreed-upon goal; by prioritizing needs for curriculum, instruction, and assessment; by using a process of evaluation that determined the level of success; and by creating a plan for the next steps in the change process (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007). Shannon and Bylsma (2007) stated that "effective systems with strong program coherence . . . [were] more likely to impact student achievement positively than fragmented uncoordinated systems" (p. 27).

High standards and expectations for all students. Maintaining high standards and expectations for all students was the second of the nine characteristics. Standards referred to the fulfillment of curriculum objectives and various performance standards. Shannon and Bylsma (2007) referred to effort-based ability, which Saphier (2005) explained as the "belief that all students can do rigorous academic work at high standards, even if they are far behind academically" (DuFour et al., 2005, p. 86). Teachers needed to maintain high standards for their students. Students conformed to current expectations, and high expectations tended to lead to higher achievement.

In contrast, students with lower expectations demonstrated less significant achievement (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007). Shannon and Bylsma (2007) discussed the importance of

recognizing personal bias when teachers set standards for students. Research showed that school districts and schools typically held students of colour and lower socioeconomic status to lower standards than their Caucasian and affluent counterparts. Shelley Moore (2021) had a similar observation about students with disabilities being defined by presumed competence. Moore (2021) described presumed competence as an understanding that there was more than one way to know, and educators needed to stop designing for the deficit. Presumed competence meant students did not need to demonstrate when they were ready to learn something new. Educators needed to build on the strengths of all students and allow students to share thinking in a variety of ways.

Effective school leadership. Shannon and Bylsma (2007) emphasized the importance of sustainable leadership, tied in with lateral capacity building (Fullan, 2005, 2006) and distributive leadership (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007) practices that ensured strategic visions were cohesive and sustainable. Sanzo et al. (2011) examined the best leadership practices of school principals where they emphasized: "the importance of facilitating professional development with their staff members and developing the people within their organization" (p. 41). The Alberta Leadership Quality Standard (2020) defined a leader as "accomplished teachers able to create the conditions within which quality teaching and optimum learning [occurred] and [was] sustained" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 3). Collins (2001) defined executive leaders as leaders who "[built] enduring greatness through a paradoxical combination of personal humility plus professional will" (p. 4).

Accompanying effective school leadership is relational trust. Shannon and Bylsma (2007) emphasized the importance of trust when implementing change. Their research summarized relational trust as: "a catalyst for innovation; [it facilitated] public problem solving; [it helped] coordinate meaningful collective action; [it constituted] a moral resource for school

improvement as participants [focused] on the best interests of children and [developed] mutual

obligations with one another" (p. 45). Shannon and Bylsma (2007) offered suggestions for how

leaders can foster trust within their community, including, "leaders should be consistent with

their messages and standards, handle incompetence forthrightly, provide honest feedback,

confront issues and rumors, demonstrate trust in others by delegating, listen with genuine

interest, and if trust is lost, start over to re-build trust" (p. 46).

High levels of collaboration and communication. The Teaching Quality Standard

(Alberta Education, 2020) also identified the importance of teacher collaboration and outlined

the importance of collaborating with teachers, actively seeking feedback, and using educational

research to improve teaching practice. da Ponte (2012) highlighted that when several people

collaborated, they tended to "have more ideas, more energy, and more capacity to overcome

obstacles than an individual working alone" (p. 320). Shannon and Bylsma (2007) discussed the

importance of teachers collaborating through discussions about teaching, observing each other

and offering feedback, as well as continually focusing on the teaching practice by "planning,

designing, researching, and evaluating curriculum" (p. 54). The act of collaboration and

communication are essential components of professional learning communities (DuFour et al.,

2008; Hord, 2008). According to Shannon and Bylsma (2007), "Professional learning

communities [required] a clear, relentless focus on student learning and joint work to improve

student learning" (p. 55).

Curriculum, instruction, and assessments aligned with standards. Shannon and

Bylsma (2007) explained that to be aligned with the standards meant a combination of "what is

to be learned, what is actually taught, and what and how it is tested" (p. 63). Shannon and

Bylsma (2007) also identified a correlation between the alignment of curriculum and assessments

that provided more equity for poor students and students of colour (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007). Schools ensured that the curriculum objectives matched the content to succeed in curriculum alignment, instruction, and assessments. High levels of instruction complemented the cognitive demand required of the students. School leaders considered context (instructional conditions and tasks required of students) when aligning classrooms and schools (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007).

 Frequent monitoring of learning and teaching. Learning was monitored primarily by classroom teachers through "test scores, student developed products, performances, and other evidence of learning" (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p. 86). Teaching was monitored by school leaders, particularly those responsible for teacher evaluation, and also teachers themselves through self-assessment, reflection, and professional collaboration. According to Shannon and Bylsma (2007), "effective monitoring [was] non-threatening and [occurred] frequently" (p. 86). Feedback was designed to improve teaching and student learning, not for punitive reasons. Student achievement was monitored "through effective grading and reporting practices" (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p. 86). Teachers provided detailed feedback regarding students' performance to create opportunities for self-assessment, deepen their understanding of learning objectives, and encourage them to take responsibility for their learning. In Alberta, the Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 2020) provided standards concerning student assessment and evaluation practices requirements and the necessity for teachers to seek feedback to enhance their teaching practice. The Leadership Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 2020) provided a framework for school leaders to guide the evaluation of teachers and their ability to meet the standards provided in the Teaching Quality Standard.

 Focused professional development. According to Baird and Clark (2017), professional development was essential for creating a culture of continuous school improvement to maximize

student learning. Through their research, Shannon and Bylsma (2007) discovered that the conventional model of teachers seeking out their professional development became less effective than job-embedded professional development opportunities. The emphasis on collaboration and communication in the Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007) demonstrated the importance of involving teachers when planning for embedded professional development. Shannon and Bylsma (2007) outlined common themes that emerged when reflecting on professional development using evidence from their research. Shannon and Bylsma (2007) included:

> [the] importance of explicitly connecting teacher and student learning; supporting professional collaboration and collegial accountability with time and space for conversation, joint action, and critique; coupling teaching and assessment practices; encouraging the development of a common language through oral and written communication; developing and using structured tools and protocols to guide discussion; using the real-life events of teaching as the source of professional development. (pp. 97-98)

Supporting the common themes outlined by Shannon and Bylsma (2007), Hawley's work in 2007 gave credit to Judith Little in 1993: "Little [1993] reminded us that implementation of a new idea does not come simply from a given program; it takes root when a professional community of teachers talk about it, debate it, try it out, and invent new solutions within the context of their own departments, grade levels, teaching teams, or schools" (p. 104).

Supportive learning environment. Shannon and Bylsma (2007) defined a supportive learning environment as a school that had "reasonable expectations for behavior, consistent and fair application of rules and regulation, and caring responsive relationships among adults and

students" (p. 107). Other aspects of a supportive learning environment included comfortable classrooms where students took risks during engaging and meaningful learning activities aligned with curriculum objectives. Students, parents, staff, and other stakeholders felt welcome, and the school valued diversity and equity for all.

High levels of family and community involvement. Schools were more than students and school staff. The whole community shared the responsibility of educating students. The school community consisted of students, parents, teachers, school staff, school leaders, "businesses, social service agencies, early learning programs, community colleges and universities, and other training programs" (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007, p. 119). According to Shannon and Bylsma (2007), strong connections between families and schools resulted in "higher GPAs, enrollment in more challenging classes, better attendance, improved behavior, and better social skills" (p. 119).

Family involvement went beyond parent/teacher conferences and the attendance of special events. High-performing schools included opportunities to build collaborative relationships with teachers, parents, and stakeholders in their school improvement plan (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007). Shannon and Bylsma (2007) summarized a framework for comprehensive partnerships developed by Joyce Epstein. Epstein (1992) explained the responsibilities for all stakeholders, including the primary obligations for parents and schools and the different types of involvement schools requested from their parents and community, including homework, volunteering, getting involved in decision-making and governance, and collaboration with community organizations. Shannon and Bylsma (2007) noted: "the responsibility for initiating partnerships [lays] primarily with the staffs of schools and districts" (p. 120). School leaders had the responsibility of ensuring staff knew how to engage families and communities. Allocating

resources for professional development, events, materials, or outreach programs was required. Shannon and Bylsma (2007) discussed the importance of an annual review for accountability to measure progress. This review provided data for needs assessments to plan family and community involvement in subsequent school years.

Determining Impact

O'Keefe et al. (2014) summarized success following the change initiative that involved practicum students as "staff reported more positive attitudes towards students and a greater sense of inclusion" (p. 4). O'Keefe et al. (2014) described "greater team cohesion . . . [and] workflow changes delivered efficiencies in practice and enhanced relationships among team members" (p. 7). Leithwood et al. (2006) researched effective school leadership and identified four essential common core leadership practices: 1. Setting directions; 2. Developing People; 3. Redesigning the Organization; and 4. Managing the Instructional (Teaching and Learning) Program. Improvement in student learning was the key indicator of success following change. McLester (2012) described DuFour's experience implementing Professional Learning Communities at Work, which increased student improvement by 30 percent. McLester (2012) included Becky DuFour's first experience with this same model in a district with "high-poverty students [that] were in the bottom 10 percent of the state in per-pupil expenditures" (p. 65). Within one year of "sustained growth in student achievement" (p. 65), the district received the Governor's Awards of Excellence. Leithwood (2013) conducted an extensive study involving 45 school districts using a method similar to that of the Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools (Shannon & Bylsma, 2007) and reported significant improvements in all areas, including "increases in the percentage of students achieving level 3 or above across all EQAO [Education Quality and Accountability Office] tests" (p. 32).

Errida and Lofti (2021) analyzed 37 organizational models of change and condensed the sub-factors into 12 common categories (p. 5). These included:

1. Clear and shared vision and strategy of change; 2. Change readiness and capacity for change; 3. Change team performance; 4. Activities for managing change management; 5. Resistance management; 6. Effective communication; 7. Motivation of employees and change agents; 8. Stakeholder engagement; 9. Leadership and sponsorship; 10. Reinforcement and sustainment of change; 11. Approach and planning for change; and 12. Monitoring/measurement. (pp. 5-7)

Errida and Lofti (2021) conducted case studies utilizing organizational change initiatives that identified areas of success and failure. "The five factors that . . . obtained the highest scores [were]: leadership and sponsorship, effective and constant communication, stakeholder engagement, activities for managing change, and motivation of employees and change agents" (p. 9). Interviewees agreed that the change manager was a strong influence on the success of change implementation and "the change manager [established] a clear vision and roadmap on how to implement [change]" (p. 9). Through distributive leadership, change agents maintained constant communication with employees. This "contributed to overcoming the reluctance and resistance to change observed in the early phases" (p. 9). Training sessions and mentorship offered resulted in "[increased] motivation and full commitment" (p. 9). Stakeholders aware of the necessary change demonstrated their commitment by providing "all the necessary resources for successful implementation" (p. 10). Motivation was influenced profoundly by the change leader who "[considered] the needs of change agents and employees by preparing them, tracking their progress in adopting the [change], and creating an open dialogue with them through regular meetings" (p. 10). Gibson and Brooks (2011) emphasized,

to change practice teacher learning opportunities must be: ongoing, sustained, intensive and supported by modeling and coaching; allow educators to see and share their work reflectively and collaboratively; be embedded in the curriculum, classroom and school; and foster a supportive and inspiring learning environment for testing new teaching ideas. (p. 21)

Conversely, Errida and Lofti (2021) exposed areas that led to change implementation failure through their case studies. Areas identified by Errida and Lofti included: i) absence of a clear vision, ii) insufficient leadership skills, iii) low stakeholder engagement; and iv) poor communication (Errida & Lofti, 2021). Gibson and Brooks (2011) noted that competing initiatives also be considered when implementing change. Gibson and Brooks (2011) suggested, "Attention [needed] to be paid by district-level and ministry-level people to how much change is being demanded of teachers at the classroom level on an ongoing basis" (p. 20). Crum and Sherman (2008) outlined that "failure to communicate equated to a breakdown in the system and a lack of focus on . . . teaching and learning" (p. 576).

Fullan (2006) expressed, "Large-scale successful reform [occurred] in a thousand small ways during the journey. Don't go on this journey without being equipped with an active and open-ended grasp of change knowledge" (p. 14). Errida and Lofti (2021) included:

the results [allowed] managers to focus efforts and resources on essential issues necessary to ensure the success of organizational change management. Therefore, managers [increased] the success of organizational change initiatives and [used] the study findings to develop better strategies to improve change management maturity within their organizations. (p. 11)

Summary

This capstone study reviewed five different models of change with similar qualities and quantifiable impact, evidenced in numerous research studies to answer what models of change school leaders can implement in school. School leaders used connections with staff, students, and stakeholders, surveys, and assessment data to measure the impact of change initiatives.

Too often, schools and districts fail to successfully improve students learning (Frontier & Rickabaugh, 2015). Research demonstrated that school leaders had numerous tools available to them to support change management. Thornton et al. (2019) believed, "Highly effective principals continuously increase the capacities of teachers and systems" (p. 131). Scott and Bagaka (2004) stated that for effective change to occur, it was "of paramount importance that teachers . . . play a leading role in any school reform effort" (p. 71). The recurring themes of the five systems reviewed in this capstone study included establishing the change, capacity building, shared leadership, and working to sustain change (McTighe & Wiggins, 2005; Fullan, 2006; Kotter, 2007; Shannon & Bylsma, 2007). Sacks (2017) concluded that "with high levels of change expected, schools must set up structures that help teachers share their best thinking and manage change effectively" (p. 41).

Outline of the Remainder of the Paper

The research examined in Chapter 2 outlined various change management systems available to school leaders and provided criteria to determine success. Chapter 3 summarizes research focused on how school leaders manage change initiatives while ensuring continued teacher growth and student success. Chapter 3 also includes implications, recommendations, and future considerations.

Chapter 3: Summary, Recommendations and Conclusion

Summary

The purpose of this capstone study is to analyze models of change to determine strategies available to school leaders when implementing significant change in school settings, changes explicitly related to curriculum reform and associated resources.

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the purpose, significance, and scope of this capstone study. Chapter 2 reviewed five models of change available to school leaders to implement change initiatives within school settings effectively. The five models discussed included DuFour's *Professional Learning Communities at Work*, Fullan's *Change Theory*, Baird and Clark's *Look-Ahead Professional Development Model*, Kotter's *Eight-Stage Change Process*, and Shannon and Bylsma's *Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools*. Each of these models includes step-by-step criteria required to implement change successfully. There were common characteristics among these five models. Such elements include establishing the change, capacity building, shared leadership, and sustaining change (DuFour et al., 2005; McTighe & Wiggins, 2005; Fullan, 2006; Kotter, 2007; Shannon & Bylsma, 2007; Baird & Clark, 2018).

Multiple scholars have found that change occurs in stages that build on each other over time (Fullan, 2006; Kotter, 2007). This building upon each other can inhibit growth when neglecting steps. Academics have also argued that omitting stages rarely produce satisfactory results (Fullan, 2006; Kotter, 2007). This literature review found that missing steps, or diminished effort on individual measures, often leads to change implementation falling short (Fullan, 2006; Kotter, 2007; Shannon & Bylsma, 2007; Baird & Clark, 2018).

Effective leadership is crucial to change management success. Shannon & Bylsma (2007) state that "effective instructional and administrative leadership is required to implement change processes" (p. 24). The use of distributed leadership is encouraged as performing the complex tasks required in school leadership would be difficult without distributing the responsibility (Elmore, 2000). Juneja (n.d.) defines, "change management is a complex process . . . [that involves] management and people from all levels, to achieve a meaningful or progressive transformation" (para. 2). Fullan et al. (2004) state, "When leaders implement these components rigorously, they can build school capacity and improve student learning" (p. 42). School leaders are encouraged to utilize one or a combination of the models of change available, follow the stages as outlined in the chosen change model, and successfully implement change reform.

Implications

Three implications were present in the research in this capstone study. These three implications included the number of models of change available to school leaders, the amount of time required for sustainable change to occur, and the importance of maintaining a clear vision.

The research identified extensive change management models that provided a framework to guide the implementation of change in educational institutions. This capstone study analyzed five change management models, including the most promising models for school leaders. Errida and Lofti's (2021) study attempted to narrow the focus by examining 37 different organizational change models with 74 sub-factors, eventually paring it down to 12 main categories. Errida and Lofti (2021) explained, "The models analyzed [included] many similarities" (p. 5). Echoed in this capstone study were similar categories identified by Errida and Lofti (2021). Errida and Lofti (2021) recommended

the use of a single model or few models [was] not sufficient to cover various change

situations and certain factors may [have been] omitted or neglected, which could [have

resulted] in failure if the model [was] inappropriate to the change context. (p. 2)

This recommendation suggested school leaders were required to be knowledgeable of various

models of change and adjust to the type of change needed. Errida and Lofti's (2021) study

reinforced the compulsory nature of including all steps prescribed in the change models, as

overlooking one or some could impact sustainable change. Fullan (2000) suggested, "To some

extent, each group must build its own model and develop local ownership through its own

process" (p. 3). Based on the experience of the educational leader and the type of change

initiative, it is best to choose one change model and follow the stages carefully to ensure

sustainable change. A recommendation for further research could include following a leader who

has chosen a model and reflecting on their experience throughout the change process.

Sustainable change requires time to become embedded in school culture. Fullan (2000)

observed that successfully implemented change, on average, needed three years in elementary

schools and six years in secondary schools. Due to the extended timelines required for successful

implementation, the ministry and school district and school leaders need to be aware of

competing initiatives or "how much change is being demanded of teachers at the classroom level

on an ongoing basis" (Gibson & Brooks, 2012, p. 20). Park and Sung (2013) noted that "teachers'

workload . . . made it difficult for them to achieve a clear sense of the vision and goals proposed

by the reforms" (p. 22). Fullan (2000) described that collaborative schools limited the number of

innovations they were involved in at one time. He included that these schools were selective

when choosing innovation and worked carefully to incorporate the change into staff

development, reflection, and application of what they learned. School district and school leaders

need to be prepared for change initiatives to take time and be aware of the number of changes teachers and school staff must implement at any given time.

The most powerful impact occurred when all stakeholders were clear on the vision and understood what was required, including all necessary resources for successful implementation. Fullan and Hargreaves (2009) state the change initiative "will need funding, reallocation of resources, and the time and expertise of those involved" (p. 280). Fullan and Hargreaves (2009) discuss the importance of tri-level reform that involves the government, the district, and the school community. Fullan and Hargreaves (2009) emphasize government involvement "should not result in new layers of bureaucracy, but rather it should involve reconfiguring and adding to existing resources" (p. 285). Errida and Lofti (2021) emphasize that when stakeholder engagement is high, and the leadership demonstrates active support for the vision, there is an increased chance of success. The educational and political leadership need to provide all the necessary resources, including "funding for training [and] consultancy and certification" (p. 10). Park and Sung (2013) suggest that "policy-makers listen to teachers, who derive their intimate knowledge from the local context of implementation, from their knowledge of students, available resources, and the practicalities of their work" (p. 30). Through ongoing communication, distributive leadership, and the removal of barriers such as required resources, school leaders can communicate and foster a clear vision.

Recommendations

School leaders are accountable for "fostering collaboration, engagement and empowerment of all partners in the education system" (Alberta Education, 2020, p. 1). The Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) (Alberta Education, 2020) summarizes quality leadership occurs when quality teaching and optimum learning occur in schools due to the leader's analysis

and decision-making. Recommendations included in Chapter 3 suggest school leaders utilize the steps provided through a change model. Based on the literature review in Chapter 2, the proposal is that school leaders should focus on increasing their skills and understanding in the following areas: building trust, developing leadership capacity, and creating sustainable change.

Building Trust

      Sustainable change in academic settings requires trust. School leaders need to build and sustain trust with stakeholders. Tschannen-Moran (2014) defines trust as "one's willingness to be vulnerable to another based on the confidence that the other is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent" (p. 17). Hargreaves and Fink (2012) assert that "trust is an indispensable resource for improvement" (p. 212). According to Tschannen-Moran (2014), "There is no way to lead schools successfully without building, establishing, and maintaining trust within and across the many and varied constituencies [school leaders] serve" (p. ix). Fullan et al. (2004) explained, "Low trust cultures do not have the capacity to engage in the great effort and difficult work of improvement" (p. 45). O'Donnell and White (2005) stated, "Effective instructional leaders must create environments where trust is felt and taking a risk can occur with high levels of comfort" (p. 68).

      Utilizing a tool such as Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2012) can provide school leaders perspective on which areas they require improvement for exemplary leadership. The five practices include modelling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart. Included in each of the five practices are aspects of building trust. According to Kouzes and Posner (2012), "Leaders make trust and teamwork high priorities" (p. 218). Fostering effective relationships is the first descriptor of an educational leader in Alberta. According to the LQS (Alberta Education,

2020), leaders maintain positive relationships with open dialogue while demonstrating genuine caring for others.

According to Crum and Sherman (2008), "while principals were fully aware of change processes, strategies to counter resistance, and the importance of gaining stakeholder buy-in, they were also sentient of the fact that, without trust, little else matters" (p. 576). Once school leaders establish trust, successfully following a change model and entrenching the change as part of the school's culture can be accomplished.

Developing Leadership Capacity

Fullan (2000) refers to capacity building as an investment in "policies, training, professional development, ongoing support, and so on" (p. 6). Fullan (2000) states that

> Capacity-building activities include such things as providing training for school team and local school councils, redesigning initial teacher education, and adopting the panoply of new activities that are needed to prepare teachers, principals, parents, and others to function as members of professional learning communities inside and outside the school. (p. 6)

Fullan et al. (2004) identify "leaders need to focus on both achievement and the development of future leaders" (p. 44). Crum and Sherman (2008) emphasize: "the need for principals to understand their staff, encourage them, and empower the individuals within the school" (p. 576). Sanzo et al. (2011) express principals need "to be able to empower staff members to make their decisions and to work with them in a cooperative, collegial manner" (p. 41). Sacks (2017) explains, "To survive, schools create structures that position everyone – especially teachers – to respond thoughtfully, purposefully, and quickly to difficult situations" (p. 41).

Shannon and Bylsma (2007) outline that "Leadership needs to be distributed throughout a school organization based on individual predispositions, interests, knowledge, skills, and roles" (p. 44). Alkahtani (2017) describes a bottom-up movement where "Lower-level members are encouraged, and sometimes trained, to advocate for the change, hold meetings, circulate flyers, and talk to fellow teachers or workers" (p. 212). Fullan and Hargreaves (2009) describe the bottom-up movement as "a democratic and sustainable path to improvement that builds from the bottom and steers from the top" (p. 40). As described in DuFour's Professional Learning Communities at Work, leaders are encouraged to build a guiding coalition utilizing specialized skills and dispersing leadership responsibilities, building capacity for implementation. According to Fullan and Hargreaves (2009), "Distributive leadership draws change out of staff, rather than driving reforms through them" (p. 35). Fullan and Hargreaves (2009) describe lateral capacity building as the most powerful tool as educators learn from each other. O'Donnell and White (2005) explain that when school leaders fail to engage others in leadership, they quickly realize that there is not enough time to complete the tasks related to the principalship. School districts and schools use "deliberate strategies designed to help peers learn from each other – within schools, across schools, and across districts" (p. 283). According to Fullan and Hargreaves (2009), leaders use "the 'wisdom of the crowd' to spread and assess [the initiative's] worth and impact" (p. 283). School leaders need to develop distributive leadership within their schools to utilize and share individuals' expertise while creating a system of sustainable leadership to avoid interruptions to the change process.

Creating Sustainable Change

Hargreaves and Fink (2012) state, "Change in education is easy to propose, hard to implement, and extraordinarily difficult to sustain" (p. 1). Fullan and Hargreaves (2009) express

that "Leaders at all levels are expected to have an inquiring disposition: Are we implementing the strategy effectively? Is it working? Are there any surprises? What are we learning?" (p. 288). Sustainable change requires a continuous search for effective practices and ongoing assessment to determine its impact (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2009). Errida and Lofti (2021) identify that "change progress must be continuously monitored, tracked, and measured" (p. 7).

da Ponte (2012) describes that professional development led by experienced teachers supported by the Ministry of Education results in more sustainable change. da Ponte (2012) identifies factors including: "combining an orientation towards teachers' practices, focus on students' learning, collaboration, teachers' research, and change of the professional culture, combined with wide opportunities for professional discussion framed along innovative curriculum ideas" (p. 326) that contribute to sustainable change. Park and Sung (2013) state that "changes are best achieved when teachers voluntarily participate in the curricular reforms that they perceive as being meaningful and important for children" (p. 30). Thornton et al. (2019) expresses that

> Tangible indicators of the change need to become a component of the culture of the school. For example, professional development, meetings, teacher evaluations instill and reinforced the changes in the school. Resources allocations aligned with the change process and school-wide systems should support continuous improvement. (pp. 136-137)

Teachers informed Crooks et al. (2013) that they require continually updated materials, continually updated technological advances, ongoing professional development for new teachers and refreshers for experienced teachers for improved sustainability. Fullan et al. (2004) state, "We need stronger approaches, such as supporting collaborative cultures with more resources, investing in leadership, and improving teaching conditions" (p. 46). Fullan et al. (2004) find that

initial gains in student achievement often reach a plateau. When policymakers reviewed the progress of schools, they concluded that schools were "failing to improve, when in reality they simply [needed] more time and more-robust strategies" (Fullan et al., 2004, p. 46).

Shannon and Bylsma (2007) emphasize, "Sustained school change and improvement requires on-going effort; this includes planning for turnover and succession in leadership" (p. 8). According to Shannon and Bylsma (2007), the "Identification and selection of new leaders, superintendents and principals in particular, can make or break reform efforts. Careful attention to hiring new leaders can help maintain and increase momentum for school improvement" (p. 44). Hargreaves and Fink (2012) identify strategies for attracting and retaining high-quality teachers for sustainable change, including:

> developing and applying clear systems of professional standards; supporting strong
> school-based professional learning communities in which teachers improve together by
> examining data and evidence about successful practice; and creating professional
> networks in which schools learn from and support one another in their efforts to improve.
> (p. 10)

In this same article, Hargreaves and Fink (2012) declare that: "Change in education is easy to propose, hard to implement, and extraordinarily difficult to sustain" (p. 1).

School leaders need to consider their skills and understanding when building trust, developing leadership capacity and creating sustainable change. School leaders use a variety of change management models, including: DuFour and DuFour's (2006) *Professional Learning Communities at Work*; Fullan's (2006) *Change Theory*; Kotter's (1995) *Eight-Step Change Model*; Baird and Clark's (2018) *Look-Ahead Professional Development Model*; and Shannon and Bylsma's (2007) *Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools* to guide their

implementation and achieve the more significant impact of their initiative. Based on the findings in the literature review in Chapter 2, choosing a change model that includes an aspect of professional learning communities in an educational setting provides a more significant impact.

Conclusion

This capstone study focused on answering the questions about what models of change school leaders can utilize to implement changes in school and how school leaders can measure change to determine impact. The research identified many change management models, narrowed to the most promising five applicable to school leaders. As a result of this capstone study, three recommendations were identified for school leaders to increase the impact of change reform: build trust, develop leadership capacity, and create sustainable change.

There is some hesitancy when approaching large-scale change in education. Research indicates that many teachers are fatigued with curriculum reform changes, which adds to the stress of daily teaching (Park & Sung, 2013; Alkahtani, 2017). These issues, as well as those identified in this capstone study—a lack of time, competing initiatives, poor communication, a deficiency of collaboration and reflection, low-level stakeholder engagement, a lack of distributive leadership, and a poorly presented vision—led to a literature review analyzing models of change available for school leaders to implement change and how to measure the impact of change in educational settings. The literature review exposes commonalities among the chosen models of change and emphasizes professional learning communities.

School leaders must determine the impact of their change model. There are several key indicators of successful implementation that can assist school leaders when determining impact. Common indicators include strong leadership committed to the change and establishes a shared vision, effective and frequent communication, stakeholders providing necessary resources and

removing barriers, and motivation spearheaded by the change leader through enthusiasm and a willingness to learn (Errida & Lofti, (2021). The fundamentals of successful change management are readily available when researching various models of change. It is evident that by prudently applying the stages of a change model, that school leaders experience increased student achievement. Teacher collaboration and reflection result in high-quality instruction that supports rigour for all students, and distributive leadership results in empowerment and sustainable change (McLester, 2012). This capstone study provided reassurance that when utilized thoroughly, models of change can provide a secure framework to guide the change process, inspire and encourage stakeholders to embrace the change, and provide students with the high-quality instruction they deserve to be successful.

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