

Chapter 10

Change Process

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ABSTRACT

Change occurs at several levels within any system: the individual, a group, and the system as a whole. At each level, internal or external factors can drive change (although internal factors are usually responses to outside factors). Change can be viewed in terms of the changer and the entity being changed. The theories of change can be approached in several ways: change theory (defining change), the change in terms of the process itself (what occurs), change agency (catalyst for change), and change management. This chapter provides representative studies on the change process as it relates to leadership in education and counseling.

INTRODUCTION

“The only constant is change.” Heraclitus, 500 BC

Change is a constant variable in today’s lives. It is inevitable, so it makes sense to face changing issues and deal with them explicitly and effectively rather than respond to them in an unplanned manner. While it can be said that some change is cyclical, the focus of most educational change theory is on evolutionary change. In the fields of adult education and counseling, change is a

central concept and necessity for personal and professional development, and undergirds organizational improvement.

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BACKGROUND

Schwartz and Ewald, 1968 defined change as “a never ending process of readjustment and readaptation, as man responds behaviorally to ever changing circumstances” (p. 454). They further asserted that change may be internal, within a culture, or external, originating from outside a culture.

Hohn (1998) posted four types of changes:

1. *Exception*: a specific change that is an exception to the rule of one’s knowledge or belief system
2. *Incremental*: change that happens so gradually that the individual is not aware of it
3. *Pendulum*: change to results in extreme exchanges of view points
4. *Paradigm*: fundamental rethinking of premises and assumptions.

Change is usually precipitated by the action of a change agent, followed by a reaction by the targeted population. If change occurs, it is integrated. Several factors are instrumental in change. At its most basic level, as one encounters information that conflicts with one’s existing knowledge base, the potential for change exists. As the environment changes, one needs to adapt and change either oneself or that environment. On a social level, conflict between different groups often lead to change, be they institutionally-based, community-based, or more broadly construed. On a societal level, certainly economic and technological change drives social change.

Bennis, Benne and Chin (1985) asserted that people change based on self interest. When change is communicated rationally, and supported through incentives, people are more likely to change. People are also social beings who follow cultural expectations, so when change is based on reinterpreting existing cultural norms and values to achieve superordinate goals, people are more likely to commit to the new forms of that culture. Cultural change levers include communication, demonstration, degree of consistency, structural flexibility, people orientation, and empowerment. People are also apt to change under the exercise of authority or coercion, although they may revert to their prior behavior once such power wanes.

Ely (1999) focused on the conditions that should exist or be created in the environment in order to facilitate change. Those catalysts include:

1. Dissatisfaction with the status quo
2. Sufficient knowledge and skills in order to accomplish the change
3. Availability of resources
4. Availability of time
5. Rewards or incentives to engage people to change
6. Participation in decision-making
7. Commitment to change
8. Leadership of expectations, commitment, and support.

In counterpoint, resistance to change is also a reality. Leaders and other educators need to identify possible negative reactions so they can know how to deal with them. Furthermore, resistance to change may be an indicator that the change effort is off course. When resistance is encountered, that occasion may be considered a learning opportunity to rethink the reasons for change and the strategies being used to affect change, and to root out the reasons for resistance (Ellsworth, 2000). Zaltman and Duncan (1977) provided the most thorough examination of resistance factors.

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