SITE Proposal 2005: Leading Change in Education

Change is inevitable. Educational agencies, whether individual K-12 schools, entire districts, or Institutes of Higher Education, will need to evolve and change to keep pace with today’s students, technology, and federal mandates. The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of various organizational change processes on faculty implementation of a technology innovation, specifically electronic portfolios. There are numerous models for implementing change, investigating every facet of the change process including why an organization changes, what changes within an organization, and how change occurs. Yet, these change models are focused predominately on the business environment and have base assumptions outside the control of administrators and leaders in educational environments. This study investigated how school leaders implemented change and how faculty reacted and evolved their practice with the implementation of an electronic portfolio. Results of the study describe lessons learned regarding organizational change associated with a program wide technology-related initiative in a teacher preparation program.

This research study focused on Kotter’s (1996) model for organizational change, presented in Leading Change, as a framework to determine what elements of the change process were present during the adoption of an electronic portfolio assessment system. He identifies eight steps as a guideline for organized and planned change. Although each step can be identified and view independently and may overlap, according to Kotter (1996), each step must occur sequentially. This research explored these eight steps as the framework for the change process.

In addition to organizational change, researchers propose that effective change occurs within the context of the culture of the organization. Bolman and Deal (1991) identify four organizational “frames” that represent different leadership approaches for viewing the culture of various organizations internal mechanisms; structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. Organizations have many different layers that make up the culture of that organization, adding an additional level of complexity to the change process.

Change is inevitable yet resistance to change is high. Faculty, teachers, and staff resist changing their practice in numerous ways, both passive and aggressive, for numerous reasons. Expected results of this research are that although all the elements of Kotter’s (1996) organizational change model were present or necessary for successful change were present during the research project, these steps weren’t implemented in a linear fashion and more invasive techniques for overcoming resistance were necessary. Specifically the results will offer a model and lessons learned regarding implementing technology involved change in educational environments. Furthermore, it is expected that culture played a role in the change process, yet the final impact will be determined from the data.

This information might be of value to Principals, Superintendents, faculty, deans, and directors considering how to implement change within their schools, programs, or departments.
References
