

THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL
AS A CHANGE FACILITATOR
IN SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

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Table of Contents

1. Principals' Face Difficulties in Developing Change Roles
2. Roles Connected with School Development
3. Change is a Team Effort
4. Establishing a Collegial, Collaborative Environment
5. Elements of School Climate
6. Factors Facilitating School Development
7. Role of the Principal in a School Development Model
8. Research Skills Needed as a Change Facilitator
9. Interpersonal Skills Needed as a Change Facilitator
10. Conclusion

1. PRINCIPALS' FACE DIFFICULTIES IN DEVELOPING CHANGE ROLES.

Research (McCurdy, 1983) continues to reveal the importance of principals in fostering the development of effective schools through their leadership roles. Roles are "the recognized patterns of behaviour demonstrated by principals within acceptable boundaries in determined situations" (O'Gorman, 1978).

The traditional roles of principals have been as managers who oversee the school operation, personnel, budgeting, and communications (Ubben, 1987). Many principals find it difficult to expand these roles to include techniques for changing school practices to increase efficiency (Lortie, 1978). Principals may be resistant to change for a number of reasons.

Some absorb conservative teacher norms prior to their promotion to principal. Others lack a diversity of life and career experiences, and are promoted on the basis of their congeniality and management skills rather than for their skills as innovators. Principals usually work within a system stressing standardization and are often evaluated on the basis of meeting the conservative expectations of parents, teachers and the central administration. Principals understandably may fear to take risks which might undermine their staff and community trust. Lastly, vice or deputy principals absorb traditional practices of their predecessors prior to their promotion to principals as part of their apprenticeship.

2. ROLES CONNECTED WITH SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

Nevertheless, with district pressures and funding arrangements based on school-improvement processes, principals now frequently have roles involved with starting change. New roles include those of analyzers, team facilitators and leaders. Principals act as links with district external change agents and are accomplishers in scrutinizing, organizing, implementing, and evaluating change processes.

Research into the roles of principals of schools which are unusually effective, have identified the performance of a number of roles. These are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1

The Role of the Principal in Developing an Effective School			
Principal			
Development of a Collegial Climate	Role as a change facilitator and leader of school development	Development of a clear and under- stood school mission with an academic emphasis and orderly safe environment	Instructional leadership by teacher super- vision and evaluation:
:			
:	:		:
:	:		:
:	:		:
:	:	:	:
:	:	:	:
:	:	:	:
:	:	:	:
:	:	:	:
	-----	Parent/Community Involvement	-----

3. CHANGE IS A TEAM EFFORT.

Effective schools are characterized by collegial atmospheres and on-going processes of school evaluation and improvement (Robinson, 1985). Effective principals establish democratic, participative and collegial school climates and provide leadership and support for school improvement processes. These processes are assigned a high priority (Cox, 1983).

Effective principals, although crucial to leading change (Hall, 1988), do not lead change single-handedly. They normally work with change facilitators and change teams. They are only one of several players who can create leadership for improvement (Cox, 1987).

The secret of an effective principal in facilitating school development is in co-leadership and facilitating an effective team. This team has many players; teachers, resource staff, district staff, superintendents and parents. The leadership of change with a principal's support may be the vice-principal, a teacher or an external facilitator. There must be at least one knowledgeable person to promote collegial relations, to guide the school through the development process and to give the constant support and attention for change that is necessary for success.

In small schools, this person is most probably the principal. However, Cox (1987) has found that the collaboration of many actors enhances the chance of success of change by mobilizing many people to do the extra work and by serving to maintain change after individuals move on.

4. ESTABLISHING A COLLEGIAL COLLABORATIVE CLIMATE

Numerous effective school studies (Edmonds, 1979) have consistently asserted the importance of the principal's leadership role in developing a positive school climate and tone as a basis for school development. Such a climate has been linked to increased productivity and satisfaction of staff. This causes better student performance and behaviour and improved student and staff morale (O'Neal, 1987).

Although the area of school climatic research is a complex and progressive one, many educators are familiar with the early Organisational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ) for developing school profiles of administrative leadership developed by Halpin and Likert (Kasten, 1979). Principals were categorised by these researchers as explorative authoritarian, benevolent authoritarian, consultative or participative. These profiles were based on perceptions by teachers of such factors as teachers' disengagement, hindrance, esprit and intimacy and on their perception of the principal's aloofness, production emphasis, thrust and consideration.

Researchers (Wempelberg, 1986) have found a general reliance by principals on more authoritarian, bureaucratic procedures, externally defined purposes and sensitivity to adult political processes in less effective schools. In contrast, more effective schools relied on participative processes with broadly internally defined expressions of purposes and a student-client orientation.

Schools do not tend to be rational hierarchical institutions

responsive to 'top-down' leadership. Change cannot be regularly coerced using power or authority or mandated by the principal in the belief that it will be carried out by the teachers. Theorists see schools as "loosely coupled" organizational elements (Astulo, 1984) with weak links between the principal and somewhat insulated and autonomous teachers and classrooms (Purkey, 1982).

Schools are homeostatic organizations with norms, or customarily accepted patterns for doing things, which resist change (Keely, 1982). Teachers are generally unsupervised in their classrooms and may effectively inhibit change by exercising informal sanctions on their peers to resist innovation. Teachers may disparage, gossip and socially isolate those who attempt new practices (Hersh, 1985).

Since power is relatively ineffective in changing norms, principals are left with less direct techniques associated with creating a collegial climate and promoting change. They may use personal influence, model desired behaviours, provide incentives through the provision of time and resources, or develop a cooperative problem-solving approach to self-motivate the staff. The last two methods are most effective in bringing about school improvement.

5. ELEMENTS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE

Schools which demonstrate positive climates share the coalescence of a number of norms which synergetically work together to create a participative environment.

Firstly, there is a collaborative and participative approach to planning, implementing and evaluating change in the school. Decision-making is at the school level and is democratic.

Secondly, the school climate demonstrates an atmosphere of order and discipline. There is a positive, purposeful discipline policy which is communicated and understood by staff and the students. The policy is created by a participatory approach with the principal and his or her staff developing common goals. New staff are trained in the operation of the policy (Purkey, 1983). There is a problem-solving approach focused on the problems rather than on the symptoms. These are a variety of creative strategies used to deal with discipline problems with the solutions adapted to fit the problems (Fosley, 1982; Hoge, 1983).

Thirdly, an ideology of shared goals and values is held by all the school's participants (Rossman, 1985). Such values include the belief that all students can learn, and the existence of high expectations for success. There is a stress on academic mastery of basic skills, and a consensus on school mission and goals as a means to channel staff energy. The principal provides leadership in the development of clear goals and maintains high expectations for implementation of these goals.

Fourthly, teachers possess a knowledge base concerning curriculum and teaching methods which is research-based, explorative and sensitive to students' needs (Rossman, 1985).

Fifthly, there is a sense of community amongst staff, administration, students and parents marked by a 'we' emphasis. There is a sense of unity, caring, sharing, trust, respect and

tolerance. The alienation level is low. Teachers work as teams with the administration and work to reduce barriers between grades and departments. There is high concept felt by all participants.

Sixthly, there is an action orientation by the administration and staff. Personnel are willing to risk failure and, using action-research, to try new ideas.

Lastly, community and parent involvement is encouraged both as support for students in the home and to assist in the school. TV watching is regulated, homework is supervised, and parents ensure good attendance and discipline. Parents are trained to act as tutors at home and to encourage and extend their children's learning.

In the school, the parents are encouraged to assist teachers in the classroom, to help prepare teaching resources, and to serve on committees (McCormick, 1982; Parent, 1985).

A positive school climate is based on naturalistic systems theory which suggests a needs hierarchy. Teachers are psychologically oriented towards their survival, preserving their health and their social interests before their professional desire to teach (Purkey, 1982). When basic needs are being met, teachers will concentrate on the higher level needs associated with classroom teaching.

Herzberg (DuFour, 1985) has found that employees' motivation depended primarily on their sense of the significance of their work, achievement, recognition of accomplishment, and

responsibility and advancement opportunity. The "best run" American companies achieve their results by motivating average employees to extraordinary dedication and performance. Principals must motivate their teachers by providing responsibility, empowerment, open communications, and participative problem-solving and decision-making processes backed by adequate resources.

For the principal, this process is a political one involving building teams and coalitions of support for change, and bargaining with them in a cooperative manner. In return, the principal obtains from teachers their cooperation, motivation, commitment and ownership of change.

6. FACTORS FACILITATING SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT.

The success of school development programmes are related to a number of factors under the control of the principal. With regards to the scope of change, whole school projects involving all the staff are more effective than small projects with a grade level or subject orientation (Marsh, 1984). Projects that lack any integration with the school, or do not fit with larger school reforms are the least successful.

Secondly, a process orientation to improve curriculum, instruction or management has more success than imposed projects, or those undertaken to obtain funds or those which focus on a grade level or department (Marsh, 1984). The greater the centrality of school development to school problems the greater

the school improvement (Degener, 1983). Principals' management styles also influence the outcomes of school development. Principals who are the least successful are passive, uninvolved or excessively authoritarian. Hall (1988) has found that the way that principals lead their change efforts makes a major difference in terms of the success of that teachers have in implementing new programmes. More effective in school improvement are 'initiator' principals who develop long range policies, hold high expectations, are actively involved in the change process, provide administrative support and work collegially. Less effective are principals who are managers or responders and who merely react to teachers or provide basic administrative support (Hall, 1988).

7. ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL IN A SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT MODEL.

Examination of a school development model in an effective school frequently illustrates advanced planning and the leadership style of the principal as an initiator who is always one step in advance of his staff (Tiphani, 1983).

7.1 The Principal Is Visionary

Initially, the principal as leader is visionary. He sees the need for change, is familiar with the change process, and develops the game-plan, or overall strategies for implementing change. In the game-plan the principal may be considering answers to such questions as these. What characteristics will

the school survey? How? What will be the level of participation? What are the desired outcomes? Who will support the change plan? What will be their level of commitment? How can it be increased? Who will coordinate the process? What will be the committee's representative membership? What will be a possible timeline? What public relations will be needed? (Illinois, 1984)

The principal expresses a strong goal emphasis to his staff to commence a school development process. Staff at this time are engaged in routine teaching duties.

7.2 Initiation

The principal continues his goal emphasis style by initiating a school development project, perhaps by holding a meeting to acquaint his staff with the correlates of effective schools and a school development model. A vote to proceed may be taken. Volunteers may be called for on a representative basis to serve on a school improvement committee. The principal supports the committee with his expertise, and makes available space, time, and resources. Organizationally, he schedules weekly meetings to enable the committee to conduct surveys by questionnaires and/or interviews. These surveys collect information on the degree of implementation of the elements of effective schools. He may also wish to see data shown graphically from a school-wide measurement of school performance on standardised tests and analysed by classes and grades against district norms. Finally, he may also require other indicators of school health. Such information may include attendance, drop-out

rates, transition, discipline infractions, and so on. A decision must be made whether to involve the entire school in a process of organizational review as the basis for effective change or to focus the improvement on a grade, department, programme or innovation. Such changes are cost-effective, but are piece-meal and narrow. They are said to have less impact on the school (Fullan, 1985).

Any data collection and analysis approach requires the committee to ascertain school needs, and to order them by consensus in priority order as areas for school development.

7.3 Planning For Implementation

Step three involves the principal in considering organizational arrangements for the implementation of change while involving his staff broadly with a participatory leadership style in planning for implementation.

Task groups may be established, perhaps one for each need areas. Two to four need areas might be considered for attention depending on the school context and needs.

Each task force would examine alternative solutions, by exploring what is occurring in other schools, what is recommended by research studies or what is offered by district experts. Principals need to guide task forces in their search for solutions so that the task forces avoid common pitfalls (Renihan, 1986). These include over-ambition or a choice of too difficult or too complex changes which might require an over-extended budget, excessive time or energy, and lead to teacher exhaustion (Grimmet, 1987). Committees must avoid "re-inventing the wheel"

through inadequate research.

Task forces must avoid jumping to universal "canned" answers which may not fit the school context or rely too heavily on external aid which may be withdrawn. The focus must not be overly short term. Finally, members must not jump to solutions without defining the problems since such solutions may only deal with symptoms. Task forces would select solutions which meet the context and needs of their school based on criteria which they develop.

Planning for implementation of solutions is crucial since good intentions and goals are not enough to bring about change (McDonnell, 1983). Specific organizational details must be determined. These may include planning by determining the improvement's goals and objectives, strategies for implementing each objective, a timeline, necessary resources and a method for evaluating objectives to determine achievement.

An action plan for implementing the planned innovations is also necessary. Such a plan lists tasks to be completed, completion dates, task coordinators, people to support the coordinators, and materials needed. Action plans may be posted on staff room walls in large print for ready reference and for monitoring progress.

The role of the principal is critical in providing support to ensure the success of planning. The principal or his or her designated leader would help schedule and attend regular meetings of all the committees to permit joint-planning. When possible,

meetings should occur in school time. The principal would provide expertise, clerical support and teacher release time. Schedules would be adjusted to permit common meetings. The principal would ensure that other meetings in the school and with the community would be used to broaden the participation base for planning.

Regular recognition, praise and expressions of the importance and high value of the completed work should be given to all participating members in meetings, and on a personal basis. Exemptions from additional duties such as relief supervisions are useful incentives. Where possible, the availability of outside relief teachers should be made available as incentives to complete planning activities or to visit and investigate activities in other schools (Foster, 1980; Odden, 1986).

7.4 Routine Leadership

Step four involves routine leadership by the principal with a supportive style. The staff would be involved in implementing action plans.

This is a critical period for the success of the school development project since teachers are challenged by many obstacles. These may include increased workload, anxiety over learning new skills, insecurity over altered social relationships, concerns over changing attitudes or practices and a possible reduction in the effectiveness of the principal due to increased demands on his or her time (Gaynor, 1983).

An effective principal usually organizes a team approach (Cox, 1983), brings in trainers or sends his staff to inservices

for the skills and knowledge required to implement new practices (Lewis, 1988; Paush, 1983). Instructional leadership would be exercised by the principal in conjunction with local trainers through technical assistance in new skills using the demonstration, practice, observation and feedback approach. Coaching, conferencing, establishing peer assistance networks, and review are other useful ways for teachers to share expertise, knowledge and experiences. Teachers must talk about teaching practices together in order to create a sense of pressure for staff to implement new skills because of peer interaction and positive peer norms (Fullan, 1983; McDonnell, 1983). The amount, duration and quality of assistance is critical to the successful implementation of new teaching styles (Young, 1986; Springfield, 1987). Inservice must not be 'once off.' Long term, and regular follow-up in the school is important.

The principal should also ensure the completion of all tasks listed on the action plan. It is important that the principal consult regularly with teachers, and reinforce the change process by addressing teachers' concerns, by pushing the use of innovations and by information sharing and problem-solving (Hord, 1982; Fullan, 1983) Recognition and support of teachers' efforts continue to be important through the provision of time and access to small incentive grants for resources.

Fullan (1985) stresses that the implementation process is not simply a rational one since there are multitudinous variables to juggle simultaneously. Organizations are "sailed, not driven". The principal must possess a feeling for the

improvement process, inject a guiding values system and promote continuous interaction and collaborative planning. Teacher resistance is most often caused by uninvolvement in planning, unclear purposes, poor communications, unexplored concerns, excessive work or inattention to job security issues (Walker, 1987).

7.5 Refinement

Step five is the time when the principal would look at opportunities for refining or improving innovations by emphasizing a renewed goals orientation while continuing with a high degree of support.

Staff are involved with the routine implementation of the programme.

7.6 Continuation

During step six, the principal is planning the continuation, institutionalization or renewal of the programme by ensuring continued staffing, training and budgetary support (Louchs, 1983). The staff at this time are concerned with refining and improving the routine operation of the programme.

7.7 Evaluation

In step seven, the principal is considering evaluation, by considering processes for collecting, analyzing and processing information on the success of the innovation.

On completion, the information would be reported back to the staff and disseminated to the district office and to other schools (Hord, 1982). The capacity of the school to sustain further change efforts should also be reviewed (Fullan, 1983).

This improvement model suggests that the principal is always

slightly ahead of the staff. The leadership style of the principal alternates as school development proceeds from a task and goals emphasis to concerns about relationships, participation, and support. This approach fits with path-goal and situational leadership theories. In these theories leaders vary their consideration or concern for their followers with their initiation or task emphasis, according to the maturity and progress of their groups (Rutherford, 1983).

8. RESEARCH SKILLS NEEDED AS A CHANGE FACILITATOR.

In acting as a leader for school improvement, the principal must have access to a change facilitator either as co-leader or demonstrate these skills himself. A change facilitator requires both knowledge of research skills and interpersonal and management skills for handling small groups of teachers.

Assumptions associated with change include the belief that change is a slow process that begins with individual teachers and involves their development and personal growth of feelings, knowledge and skills. Teachers move through a series of stages from anxiety to confidence. Consequently, principals must be aware of the individual progress of teachers through the adoption of an innovation in order to intervene and to provide the appropriate support (Hord, 1984; Murphy 1982; Fullan 1983).

Since the change process requires that the evolving concerns of teachers be addressed regularly, principals or their designated leaders should have knowledge of the use of the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Hord, 1984). This model

permits principals to analyze seven levels of concerns of teachers as they proceed from non-awareness, awareness and informational stages through management to concerns with consequences on students, collaboration with other teachers and refocusing on newer innovations.

Another essential tool for the principal as a change facilitator is the Levels of Use (LoU) technique. This approach describes how a principal can interview teachers to determine their degree of proficiency in implementing an innovation. Teachers' skills are graded on an eight-point scale including non-use to mechanical and routine use, refinement, integration and renewal.

Hall (1984) has found that the progress of a teacher in learning a new instructional technique, even with regular professional assistance requires one to two years to reach mechanical usage. Special help is required to move teachers from routine usage to refinement. This movement will only occur after full implementation of the innovation.

The levels of use technique enables the collection of information concerning the rate and degree of change and permits the appropriate supportive intervention.

A third technique, innovations configuration theory allows the principal to compare the operational form of an innovation as put into use in the classroom with a checklist describing the characteristics of an idealized, acceptable version. This information allows the principal to know if the teacher has reached their goals and to articulate his expectations to his

staff.

9. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS OF A CHANGE FACILITATOR.

The principal as a change facilitator is continuously involved in committee meetings with teachers. Skills are essential in the facilitation of effective meetings. If the principal decides to accept the role as group facilitator, he/she must accept equal status with group members and remain neutral as he/she guides the group through a process of problem-solving and decision-making. Management skills required by the principal as group facilitator includes the correct preparation of informational agendas which explain and prioritize agenda items. Agendas should cover questions related to who, what, when, and where as well as topics, times allotted, and intended decision-making processes. Ensuring group record-keeping, preferably on the wall in full view of the group, is another management function. Management functions also involve skill in encouraging open communications by summarizing discussion, paraphrasing, reflecting feelings, clarifying ideas, suggesting alternative ideas and pacing group discussion. Other skills involve accurate and active listening and the ability to resolve conflict by acknowledging anger, summarizing reasons for its cause and encouraging everyone's involvement in problem-solving.

Task skills facing the group facilitator involve keeping the group on task and utilizing problem-solving processes. Task functions must be balanced with group maintenance functions

according to group maturity to ensure the presence of such affective components as: positive expectations, morale, cooperation and motivation of committee members. Group maintenance functions require giving recognition, respect and praise to group members. The leader must encourage pride in accomplishments, a sense of belonging, and a sense of responsibility. Acknowledgment of success is also necessary (Avis, 1984).

Group decision-making functions involve knowledge and skill in using techniques to solve problems. Problems should be stated as questions. Brainstorming the perceptions and causes of a problem without preliminary assessment of the ideas is an important first step. The relative importance of problems is assessed by a ranking technique leading to a consensus on the priority of problems.

Problems may be solved effectively by the use of the improved nominal group technique (INGT) (Fox, 1988). Research should first occur into the range of solutions available. INGT involves brainstorming solutions on cards, individually, and anonymously, pinning up the cards on a bulletin board, clarifying card meanings, clustering the ideas on cards around concepts, labeling the concepts, and prioritizing concepts by ranking processes.

Then members may choose and develop "solutions". Another problem-solving technique is force field analysis. This method adds the additional components of identifying pressures that

be weakened or strengthened (Avis, 1984).

It is essential that the change facilitator avoid bias or advocacy while guiding group processes, and encourage group ownership of problems and their solutions to permit commitment and likelihood of implementation.

Widespread group participation increases group understanding and commitment and the likelihood of good solutions since groups produce better solutions than an isolated person. There is more effective implementation, an understanding of "whys" as well as "whats", team spirit, and self respect (Fox, 1988).

Schwartz (1976), writes, "Through collaborative participation in decision-making, an increased sense of psychological ownership can be developed within a team, making it likely, that action plans, once decided upon, will be fully implemented by team members."

Effective schools are characterized by energetic and committed people sitting down together, looking at problems, ascertaining solutions and ways to implement them and following through with implementation and evaluation (Duttweiler, 1987).

Effective change facilitators are committed to the group and are an essential part in building the task and maintenance functions of such groups.

10. CONCLUSION.

Effective schools require effective principals. Such principals as part of a team, provide or delegate leadership for developing effective school characteristics. These include a clear school mission, instructional supervision, a collegial climate and a school development process guided by a skilled facilitator.

Factors associated with development of a collegial climate include the principal's use of influence, modeling and problem-solving techniques rather than power. There is participative democratic decision-making, use of research based instructional techniques, a safe and orderly environment, a sense of community, a bias towards action and community, school involvement.

Successful implementation of the change process is part of an effective school's characteristic. Factors influencing the success of change include a whole school orientation, an integrated process type of change, the solution's centrality to school problems and the presence of involved initiating leadership.

In the change process, the principal remains one step ahead of the staff in demonstrating vision, initiation, organization for implementation, implementation, refinement, continuation and evaluation.

The principal exercises a goal orientation, establishes a participative structure and provides regular and substantial

administrative and organizational support. As a change facilitator, the principal requires knowledge of research based techniques for analyzing teachers' concerns, assessing levels of use and determining the innovations.

Interpersonal skills as a neutral group facilitator include communication and management abilities, appropriate task and group maintenance understandings, and use of participatory nominal group techniques.

Many principals, because of their background and training, may be somewhat resistant to change. State and district pressures, financial incentive grants, and the changing nature of education are pressuring schools to become more effective. Development of a collegial team-oriented change process may provide the key to obtaining this efficiency.