Leadership, organizational learning, and selected factors relating to the institutionalization of school improvement initiatives

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ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

A distinction needs to be drawn between learning organizations and the processes of organizational learning. In her study of organizational learning in an elementary school, [Mitchell] (1995) reviewed the literature according to psychological, sociological, organizational, and combined perspectives. According to the psychological perspective, personal attributes and propensities tend to shape the patterns of learning in an organization. The sociological perspective focuses on the importance of social constructions, interactions, and influences relative to collective processes. The organizational perspective attends to the influence of rules, roles, patterns, values, and practices whereby people make collective decisions about change and stability. Finally, Mitchell pointed to an integrated perspective resulting from the combination of "personal cognitions, organizational structures, and group norms; all of which contribute to a set of shared understandings about how information will be handled and how decisions will be made" (p. 26). This integrative perspective on organizational learning, she argued, is instrumental in studying situationally nested subjects.

The Dynamics Schools Project Questionnaire was developed to collect empirical data for the pilot study. The final form of the questionnaire, refined after a pilot with several teachers and administrators, requested information on demographics, areas of focus for improvement, factors affecting initial planning, groups and factors that influenced the development of SSIP, the impact of SSIP, common problems encountered in the implementation of SSIP, sources of assistance, the outcomes of SSIP, measures of teacher efficacy and orientation, leadership, organizational learning, and current uses of SSIP. Participants were invited to make written comments, and a number of outcome measures were also used.

Teachers' sense of self-efficacy has received considerable attention in education (Ashton &Webb, 1986; Gibson &Dembo, 1984; [Hajnal], 1991; Midgley, Feldlaufer, &Eccles, 1990; Woolfolk &Hoy, 1990) and particular interest has extended to its effect on student outcomes. Recently interest has turned to the effects of teacher self-efficacy on professional community (Louis, Marks, &Kruse, 1996) and teachers' desire to participate in decisionmaking ([Taylor, D.L.], Tashakkori, &Hardwick, 1996). In this study we examined the relationship between teacher self-efficacy, organizational learning, implementation of school improvement plans, and overall success of the school.

FULL TEXT

Institutionalization of school improvement initiatives was examined using information gathered from 93 schools involved in school improvement projects. Teachers and administrators assessed their efforts at institutionalization of the initiatives and the overall effectiveness of their school. During the initiation period personal knowledge of successful experiences at other schools was associated with increased success in institutionalizing changes, whereas pressure from system personnel was less likely to be positive. The nature and quality of leadership behavior, the extent of collaboration, the alignment with school mission and division goals, and the degree of staff involvement were strong determinants of institutionalization and school effectiveness.

L'institutionnalisation des initiatives pour l'amelioration des ecoles a ete examinee selon l'information tiree de 93

ecoles qui participaient a des projets d'amelioration scolaire. Des enseignants, des enseignantes, des administrateurs, et des administratrices ont evalue leurs efforts pour assurer l'institutionnalisation de certaines initiatives ainsi que l'efficacite generale de leurs ecoles respectives. Pendant la periode d'initiation, on associait la connaissance personnelle de telles experiences reussies dans d'autres ecoles avec un succes accru de l'institutionnalisation des nouveaux changements. Cependant, les forces provenant du personnel au niveau du district scolaire avaient une allure moins positive. La nature et la qualite du comportement du leadership, l'etendue de la collaboration, l'alignement avec la mission de l'ecole et avec des objectifs du systeme scolaire et le degre d'engagement du corps professionnet determinaient fortement le degre d'institutionnalisation et l'efficacite des ecoles.

During the past two decades many school improvement initiatives have been informed by the effective schools research. Much of this literature, however (Scheerens, 1990, 1993; Scheerens &Creemers, 1989), is critical both of our understanding of how schools improve and of the stability of the improvements. The research on which this article is based was designed to address some of these issues. Our purpose here is to examine why and how schools become involved in improvement programs, as well as to explore the notions of relationships between organizational learning and leadership, and their relationship to successful institutionalization of school improvements.

In a previous article we addressed such issues as the reasons for a school's becoming involved in an improvement program, the nature and focus of the planning activities, the factors that influenced implementation of the initiatives, the key players and their roles, and some of the factors that contributed to institutionalization (Sackney, Walker, &Hajnal, 1995). In this article we briefly summarize our results and explore further the issues of leadership and organizational learning as they affect institutionalization.

We begin with a brief discussion of institutionalization, organizational learning, and leadership. The conceptual framework and research design are then outlined, with a description of the Saskatchewan School Improvement Program (SSIP), followed by a discussion of our findings and conclusions.

Educational Change and Institutionalization

Change is a complex process, and not easily understood (Fullan, 1993). Cuban (1992) referred to incremental and fundamental change. Fullan and Miles (1992) and Fullan (1993) spoke of first- and second-order change, whereas Louis and Miles (1990) distinguished between change in and change of an organization, with the latter involving cognitive, behavioral, and value transformations (Sackhey et al., 1995). What Fullan referred to as "tinkering," or first-level change, does not alter the fundamental norms of the organizational culture. Second-level change, on the other hand, involves a radical transformation in which deep-seated values and norms undergo a paradigm shift (Kuhn, 1962).

Holly, Wideen, Menlo, and Bollen (1987) suggested that change is a cultural phenomenon, and that the successful conclusion of the process of change is the restabilization of the organizational culture. Corbett, Firestone, and Rossman (1987) examined the role of "sacred norms" in teacher resistance to change and concluded that they give meaning to the teacher's work. A challenge to these norms, therefore, requires a traumatic integration of new meanings. In essence, the old culture has to give way to the new.

Another view is that change is a dynamic process that has no definite conclusion and no absolutely predictable results (Dixon, 1994; Fullan, 1993; Fullan &Miles, 1992). For organizations, then, institutionalization is characterized by the capacity for continuous change. Similarly, Louis (1994) contends that "research on how to change schools falls into a paradigm that might best be called managed change" (p. 4). She observed that most change is messy, uncertain, and circular; in many instances action precedes planning, vision follows activity, and leaders tend to be preoccupied with "minding the store" (pp. 4-5). This view is in keeping with the notions of chaos theory and postmodern thinking (Mitchell, Sackhey, &Walker, 1994). Change and institutionalization, it would appear, are messier than researchers previously thought.

Change comes in four phases: initiation, implementation, continuation, and outcome (Fullan, 1991). All are embedded in each other, and although institutionalization may be the result, it has its beginnings in the initiation

phase.

Institutionalization as a construct has at least three meanings. Yin (1981) used the term routinization to describe what happens at the end of the process: the appearance of new practices to displace the old. Miles (1983) saw institutionalization as an organizational process with a critical number of committed users necessary for it to occur; the individual is a key factor in successful institutionalization (Fullan, 1993). A third perspective views change from the vantage point of the individual user (Hord &Hall, 1986). When three user-related vectors -- teachers' feelings about the innovation, teachers' behavior relative to the innovation, and the shape the innovation takes in practice -- reach a critical level, institutionalization is said to have occurred.

Fullan (1991) concluded that the reasons for unsuccessful institutionalization were largely the same as those for unsuccessful implementation. Eastwood and Louis (1992) concurred, noting that there is a tendency for initiatives to stall in mid-implementation because of increasing resistance on the part of individual users. There appears to be a threshold that must be crossed during implementation before institutionalization can occur.

In a previous article we proposed that an "outcomes" subprocess be added to the construct (Hajnal, Sackney, &Walker, 1994), one that views change from a spiral rather than a linear perspective. Institutionalization can then be viewed as a continuous cycle of renewal and growth, a dynamic learning process manifested in an increased capacity for ambiguity and change (Sackney et al., 1995). What becomes institutionalized, then, is not change so much as the attitude toward change (Shakotko, 1995). Both the organization and the individual are enabled to think and work within new paradigms and are continually transformed as a result of their experiences.

The Learning Organization Perspective

Recent literature on change emphasizes the evolutionary and the dynamic nature of the change process (Fullan, 1991) as well as the importance of continuous learning and adaptation (Dalin, 1989; Louis &Miles, 1990; Senge, 1990). Between the primary user and the organization there exists a complex interrelationship of reciprocal influence (Sackney et al., 1995). Senge (1990) viewed change as an ongoing, dynamic process in which the learning capacities of the participants combine synergistically to create an increased capacity for growth. Increasingly, attention is being given to understanding school change through the notions of "learning organizations" and "communities of learners." Garvin (1993) characterized the literature on learning organizations as "murky, confused, and difficult to penetrate" (pp. 78-79), and pointed to the utopian imputations and the near-mystical terminology of some scholars as being at least partly responsible. A well-conceived and actionable definition of the learning organization, he argued, would make the topic more accessible. Garvin himself defined the learning organization as one that is "skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insight" (p. 80). Learning organizations are adept at five management activities: "systematic problem solving, experimentation with new approaches, learning from their own experience and past history, learning from the experiences and best practices of others, and transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organization" (p. 81).

Kofman and Senge (1993) described learning organizations as "spaces for generative conversations and concerted action," where "people can talk from their hearts and connect with one another in the spirit of dialogue ... [to create] a field of alignment that produces tremendous power to invent new realities... and to bring about these new realities in action" (p. 16). Like Garvin (1993), they argue that the concept of a learning organization can be both empowering and tranquilizing, and that a "learning organization must be grounded in three foundations: a culture based on transcendent human values of love, wonder, humility, and compassion; a set of practices for generative conversation and coordinated action; and a capacity to see and work with the flow of life as a system" (Kofman &Senge, 1993, p. 11).

A distinction needs to be drawn between learning organizations and the processes of organizational learning. In her study of organizational learning in an elementary school, Mitchell (1995) reviewed the literature according to psychological, sociological, organizational, and combined perspectives. According to the psychological perspective, personal attributes and propensities tend to shape the patterns of learning in an organization. The sociological perspective focuses on the importance of social constructions, interactions, and influences relative to

collective processes. The organizational perspective attends to the influence of rules, roles, patterns, values, and practices whereby people make collective decisions about change and stability. Finally, Mitchell pointed to an integrated perspective resulting from the combination of "personal cognitions, organizational structures, and group norms; all of which contribute to a set of shared understandings about how information will be handled and how decisions will be made" (p. 26). This integrative perspective on organizational learning, she argued, is instrumental in studying situationally nested subjects.

In his work on organizational learning, Cousins (1994) considered the learning capacity of organizations as influenced and conditioned by nonrecursive environmental and organizational factors. Educational research, he argued, should make sense of, and learn from, the metamorphosis that occurs in organizations that "are extraordinarily open and forthcoming, thrive on experimentation and risk, tolerate ambiguity while at the same time are able to construct consensus interpretations and are driven to surface and eliminate hidden barriers to collective learning" (p. 37).

Dodgson (1993), like Mitchell (1995), held that interdisciplinary approaches and perspectives hold the most promise for deepening our understanding of diffused and shared learning in schools. "While there are areas of agreement," he wrote, "there remains a great disparity in the fundamental underlying assumptions of the different approaches, such as the differing focuses on outcomes and processes" (p. 390).

Kim (1993) characterized organizational learning as "dependent on individuals improving their mental models" (p. 44). In other words, we must learn to make our view of the world explicit and relevant to a given context. Individual frameworks then become embedded in the world view of the organization.

To the research of others we would add from our own work the following behaviors as measures or indicators of extant organizational learning: engagement in professional learning and growth activities; critical examination of current practices; experimentation with new practices; sharing information openly and honesty; valuing the diversity of opinions; engaging in dialogue regarding teaching and learning; developing a shared vision; engaging in collaborative processes; engaging in self-reflection; learning from past experiences; sharing professional expertise among colleagues; asking for help when necessary; striking a balance between too much and too little change; and aligning the school's activities to its mission and the goals of the district.

The Roles of Leadership

An increasing emphasis on the individual as the unit of change constitutes a significant shift from the previous focus on the organization (Sackney et al., 1995). The role of the principal and central office administrators has received considerable attention. Schein (1992), for example, observed that "organizational learning is not possible unless some learning first takes place in the executive subculture" (p. 50). Rallis and Goldring (1994) noted that, whereas previously principals were responsible for program administration, they "are now charged with facilitating, enabling, motivating, and coordinating the empowered professionals in their building" (p. 3) -- this in addition to working with parents and community groups.

If school improvement is to be achieved, principals and central office administrators must encourage teachers to participate in school governance (Sackney, in press). Block (1987) argued that empowering others is a state of mind. The trouble is, many administrators are reluctant to share power (Sackhey, in press) and do not see the advantages of empowering those below them. Giola and Sims (1986) posited that "cognition is strongly implicated in organizational change. Adaptation to change can be seen, first and foremost, as a cognitive challenge ... developing adaptive capacity suggests the need for a more complete understanding of the nature of organizational cognition" (p. 351).

The more effective schools appear to be characterized by a culture that promotes teacher involvement. Both Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) and Sackney and Dibski (1994) employed the notion of collaborative cultures to describe schools where joint planning and decision-making existed. Smylie (1992) found that teachers were more willing to participate if their relationship with administrators was open, collaborative, and supportive, and less willing if their relationship was closed, exclusionary, and controlling. Senge (1990) argued that in a learning organization leaders are designers, stewards, and teachers. Sergiovanni (1992), on the other hand, talked about

"substitutes for leadership," where every teacher is a leader. Leithwood (1992) used the term transformational leadership to characterize the type of administration required in the development of a collaborative culture, whereas Fullan (1992) suggested that principals must establish norms of continuous improvement as well as norms of collegiality that respect individuality. School-based administrators must foster conflict resolution skills, teacher development that emphasizes inquiry and reflection, and improved communication systems; they "must learn to influence and coordinate non-linear, dynamically complex change processes" (Fullan, 1993, pp. 74-75). The recent literature views leadership as a means of bringing purpose and relevance to the relationship between individuals and the larger entity -- a notion similar to Bolman and Deal's (1991) idea of symbolic leadership. Sergiovanni (1994) noted that a school may need strong and direct leadership when it is in trouble, but the need would lessen as the problems subsided. Thereafter, the need for community leadership would increase. Duke (1994), taking a somewhat different approach, examined leadership in terms of "organizational drift" (vs. mission attainment) and "teacher detachment" (vs. commitment). When a school is perceived to lack direction and coherence, the need for leadership increases. Similarly, when individuals withdraw psychologically while remaining physically present, the need for leadership increases. However, when commitment is high and drift is low minimal or no leadership may be required.

Taken together, the recent literature points to a more humanistic leadership style that is symbolic, transformational, and facilitative. Proponents of change have consistently argued for a greater dispersion of leadership opportunities and functions among stakeholders (Sergiovanni, 1994). Darling-Hammond, Cobb, and Bullmaster (1995) examined reform efforts that resulted in professional development schools (PDSs): schools that are said to "create communities of learners" while presuming that "student and teacher learning are interrelated" (p. 2). Shakotko (1995), focusing on change in a rural system, found that the most active elements of change agency were "a sense of purpose, an internal locus of control, a willingness to take risks, confidence, professional competence, and engagement in collaborative efforts" (p. 123). Where administrators were perceived to be coercive, cautious, or ambivalent toward change, teachers tended to exhibit uncertainty, resistance, passivity, and resignation. On the other hand, where administrators offered "optimism, enthusiastic support, and an empowerment of educators to risk and take an active role in the decision-making process" (p. 118), the change agency status of teachers was supported and confidently pursued.

Appreciating the roles of leadership in bringing about the successful institutionalization of school improvement initiatives, we developed a number of practices related to leadership. These included: helping staff members identify and articulate a vision; encouraging shared values, beliefs, and attitudes related to reaching and learning; sharing leadership among the staff; working toward school improvement; encouraging regular evaluations of progress; leading by doing rather than by telling; modeling problem-solving; stimulating people to focus on activities as they relate to students; encouraging high performance and professional development goals; treating each staff member as an individual with unique needs and expertise; helping staff think about the personal ramifications of school change; ensuring adequate involvement; linking school goals and system goals; and encouraging dialogue on the teachinglearning process.

Although the overall conceptualization of the study incorporated many variables, the emphasis in this article is on organizational learning and leadership.

Conceptual Framework

The influences that initiate and sustain the change process, and hence the learning organization, can be understood by examining the technical, political, and cultural forces that operate in an individual school (Tichy, 1992). The technical perspective emphasizes the rational approach and deals with the skills, competences, and task orientation of the teachers, as well as the human and financial resources of the school. The political perspective deals with the conflicts and compromises that are inevitably part of the process. The cultural perspective focuses on the importance of shared norms, beliefs, and values among school personnel and the symbolic meanings they attach to their everyday work. A fourth perspective in this study addressed the opportunities that existed for organizational learning such as systems thinking, team learning, shared vision,

mental models, and personal mastery (Senge, 1990).

We judged that these four perspectives would be evident during the various phases of the program; that is, initiation, implementation, institutionalization, and visible outcomes. This judgment was supported in part by Shakotko (1995), who found that technical influences were seen to be essential during the initiation phase, whereas political forces were important during the implementation phase. We contended in addition that the cultural perspective would necessarily come to dominate if institutionalization were to occur. Finally, the internal and external support structures and the human aspects of the process are important in understanding the institutionalization of change.

Research Design

This article reports on one aspect of a larger project the purpose of which was to identify successful school improvement initiatives and indicators of institutionalization. The project was based on the Saskatchewan School Improvement Program (SSIP). As the SSIP has been described elsewhere (Hajnal et al., 1994; Sackney et al., 1995), only a cursory overview of the program and research design are presented here.

The Context

The SSIP was a provincially initiated inservice program based on the effective schools research (Austin, 1979; Brookover &Lezotte, 1979; Brophy &Good, 1987; Coleman et al., 1966; Edmonds, 1979; Mortimore, Sammons, Stoll, Lewis, &Ecob, 1988; Murphy &Hallinger, 1985; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, &Ouston, 1979). Its purpose was to build a capacity for group planning and problem-solving at the school level in order to foster high levels of student learning and success (Hajnal et al., 1994). It was developed on the premise that the school is the basic unit of change; hence a school-by-school design was adopted. It focused on nine characteristics of effective schools: competent leadership; a shared vision; a caring climate; quality instruction; a planned curriculum; staff development; systematic monitoring and evaluation; parent and community involvement; and collaborative problem-solving. The program further delineated those factors that make a school effective and how people in effective schools work together.

Thirteen schools were involved in the pilot study in 1986. The program was eventually expanded to include some 140 schools throughout Saskatchewan (of a possible 825), including a variety of sites (urban and rural) and organizational structures (e.g., K-12, K-8, 9-12). In order to participate, each school had to identify an SSIP team -- the principal, a teacher, and a central office person-which was responsible for facilitating the process. The various SSIP teams met three times during the year to report on their progress, to help one another solve problems, and to learn new strategies and processes to further their work. Provincial consultants provided additional support.

Survey Design

The Dynamics Schools Project Questionnaire was developed to collect empirical data for the pilot study. The final form of the questionnaire, refined after a pilot with several teachers and administrators, requested information on demographics, areas of focus for improvement, factors affecting initial planning, groups and factors that influenced the development of SSIP, the impact of SSIP, common problems encountered in the implementation of SSIP, sources of assistance, the outcomes of SSIP, measures of teacher efficacy and orientation, leadership, organizational learning, and current uses of SSIP. Participants were invited to make written comments, and a number of outcome measures were also used.

Using the mail distribution services of the school divisions, the questionnaires were distributed to the teachers and principals of the 140 schools. Questionnaires in envelopes were not directed to specific individuals. Two follow-up letters were mailed to the schools in an attempt to improve the response rate. Follow-up telephone calls indicated that those schools who chose not to respond had dropped SSIP. Owing to the distribution process, we cannot specifically report the response rate.

Data Analyses

Means, standard deviations, and frequency counts, cross-tabulations, t-tests, and regression analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Principal component analysis of a number of scales was undertaken to discover the underlying constructs. Global measures were used to determine the overall

effectiveness and success of implementation (Hajnal et al., 1994). A probability less than .05 was used to determine a statistically significant relationship.

Findings

Exploring leadership and organizational learning factors, our overall purpose was to outline some of the indicators of institutionalization as ascertained by the program.

Context

In total 377 responses were received from 93 schools. The number of respondents per school ranged from 1 to 17, with an average of 4 respondents per school. Men and women were represented equally. Respondents were experienced teachers having worked an average of 11 years at their current school and 17 years in the profession. Ninety-three percent worked full time, 7% part time.

The program identified 16 areas of focus eight at the classroom level and eight at the school level -- with educators able to select as many areas of focus in their schools as was realistic. Respondents were asked which areas were a major focus, a minor focus, or not a focus at all for their school. At the classroom level, high expectations for student learning was identified as a major focus by 54% of the respondents, followed by productive learning environment (47%), and a variety of instructional strategies (46%). At the school level, two areas of major focus -- caring climate (88%) and shared vision (75%) -- were identified most often, followed by quality instruction (53%), collaborative problem-solving (47%), and staff development program (45%). Other areas of focus at the classroom and school level were identified by fewer than 45% of respondents. Overall, schools paid more attention to school level as opposed to classroom level attributes. Initially for many schools, cosmetic changes were the first areas to be considered. Only after they had had some experience with SSIP did some schools work on instructional strategies.

Outcome Measures of SSIP Implementation

Using a 10-point scale, teachers were asked to rate their school on its overall effectiveness (OE) and on the success of the school's implementation (SOI) of the SSIP model. Although effectiveness (m = 7.32, sigma = 1.56) was rated higher than implementation (m = 6.14, sigma = 2.47), there was greater variability in the rating of implementation. In addition, one outcome variable reported the quality of school administrative leadership (AL).

Leadership

Underscoring leadership as a critical element in school improvement, we examined its influence in the SSIP processes and on the school. The administrator's efforts to visit classrooms for supervision purposes, the influence of district-wide programs, and the quality of school leadership were also examined.

Classroom visits. Teachers were asked how many times an in-school administrator had visited their classrooms for the purpose of formal supervision during the current school year. Fully 46% of respondents reported that they had had no visits, whereas 44% reported one or more. Respondents were split into two groups according to the two categories -- no visits, and one or more visits -- and t-tests were employed to determine if there were differences. Teachers who were visited by their principal for purposes of supervision reported significantly higher means for OE, SOI, and AL.

Clearly a principal's classroom visits are important to the school in a variety of ways. Teachers whose principals visited their classroom for the purpose of supervision evaluated the quality of school leadership higher than those whose principals did not. They reported that their schools were more effective, and they experienced more success implementing the program.

System-level leadership. Several researchers (Louis &Miles, 1990; Rosenholtz, 1989) have suggested that there must be an optimum level of pressure and support from central office for successful change to occur. To examine this issue we asked whether the school's improvement program was part of a coordinated, system-wide effort and why the school had become involved with SSIP. Responses to the first question revealed that 51% of the schools involved were part of a system-wide effort.

The two groups -- those who were part of a system-wide effort and those who were not -- reported somewhat different areas of focus. Cross-tabulations and chi-square analyses were conducted for each focus. If the school

was part of a system-wide effort, it was likely that it would have more focus on instructional strategies; carefully planned and delivered lessons; the alignment of curriculum, teaching, and testing; clear instructional goals; systematic curriculum planning; and quality instruction.

Teachers who were part of a system-wide effort rated their schools lower in overall effectiveness than those who were not, but significantly higher (Ms = 6.4, 5.8; t = 2.13; p = .03) on the success of the school's implementation of the SSIP model. Consequently, it is clear that a system-wide effort had an effect both on the success of the implementation and on the areas of focus selected for SSIP.

In an attempt to understand the process better, we tried to determine which reasons for becoming involved with SSIP would explain the success of implementation or the lack of it. Using SOI as the dependent variable and the 10 reasons for becoming involved in the program, a regression analysis was conducted (see Table 1). Only 10% of the variance was explained. "Successful experiences of another school" was associated with increased success, whereas "Pressure from the director of education" was associated with decreased success in implementation. Although it is the prerogative of central office to initiate involvement with SSIP, pressure from the director at the initiation stage was viewed negatively. This may indicate that there are more and less appropriate times in the change process for pressure and support.

Variance in the quality of school leadership. Using AL as the dependent variable, a regression was conducted with the 18 leadership tasks as independent variables (see Table 2). Altogether, 69% of the variance in the perceptions of quality of leadership was explained. Because the beta coefficients are based on standardized scores, the magnitude of the coefficients can be compared directly. "Leads by 'doing' rather than simply by 'telling'" was the most important task that predicted teachers' perceptions of the quality of administration followed by "Is appropriate for our school goals" and "Works toward school improvement." "Encourages teachers to do work collaboratively" was the fourth most important predictor, although its significance level was .06.

To determine the underlying structure of leadership, a principal component analysis was conducted on the 18 leadership questions. Using a Varimax rotation, two factors were determined that accounted for 73% of the variance. The first included items that dealt with leadership aspects in the school (LSCH); the second consisted of items primarily concerned with the principal's personal relationship with the teacher (LTEA). Factor loadings and eigenvalues are presented in Table 2. Factor scores were determined by adding the responses to the questions that displayed factor loadings greater than or equal to .60. Rather than using the individual leadership functions in further analyses, the two factors LSCH and LTEA were used. Given the variety and quantity (18) of leadership functions we examined, the existence of only two underlying dimensions was interesting. Successful leadership is evidenced in both a general strengthening of the school culture and in a nurturing of the individual. The general concern for the school included such functions as developing a vision; sharing values, beliefs, and attitudes; and leading by example. Nurturing of the individual is apparent in the acknowledgment of the teacher as a person with unique needs, expertise, concerns, and personal reactions.

Reasons for Involvement Percent[*] Correlation
----
with SSIP

Successful experiences of another school 11.6 .13

Pressure from director of education 19.9 -.22

Initiative of central office 27.5 .08

Initiative of the principal 34.5 -.01

Initiative of a group of teachers 15.1 .13

Need for a vehicle of change 18.3 .07

Pressure from the community 2.2 -.02

Have always been an innovative school 10.5 .12

Desire to be a more effective school 42.0 .14

Were experiencing conflicts 10.8 -.02

Reasons for Involvement Regression Information

----

with SSIP [Symbol Not Transcribed] p

Successful experiences of another school .11 .04		
--		
Pressure from director of education -.21 .00		
--		
Initiative of central office .09 .10		
--		
Initiative of the principal -.07 .21		
--		
Initiative of a group of teachers .10 .06		
--		
Need for a vehicle of change .01 .91		
--		
Pressure from the community -.05 .32		
--		
Have always been an innovative school .09 .08		
--		
Desire to be a more effective school .07 .26		
--		
Were experiencing conflicts -.03 .54		

Note. Regression information and correlation coefficients in boldface indicate $p < .05$.

[*] Percent of teachers who selected each reason. As teachers were able to select as many reasons as they wished, the total exceeds 100%.

Organizational Learning

We examined 15 behavior items as measures or indications of extant organizational learning. A six-point scale was employed; means and standard deviations are presented in Table 3. To understand the role played by these indicators, a regression analysis was conducted using SOI as the dependent variable and the 15 behaviors as the independent variables. Thirty-eight percent of the variance in implementation was explained by the variables and

four were significant (see Table 3). "Engage in collaborative processes" was the most important predictor followed by "Align the activities to the school's missions" and "Align the activities to the district's goals." Although having a positive correlation with SOI, "Engage in dialogue regarding teaching and learning" displayed a negative effect beta in this regression equation. Apparently this variable acted as a suppressor variable in the regression equation. The explanation for this is not apparent. However, it is possible that the necessity of engaging in dialogue to reach agreements may have caused a kind of paralysis, resulting in a lack of action and a less effective implementation or that the negative beta is purely an artifact of the regression process.

To determine the underlying structure of organizational learning, a principal component analysis was conducted on the 15 behaviors. Using a Varimax rotation, three factors explained 74% of the variance. The first factor, COLLAB, described engaging in collaborative processes such as sharing professional expertise among colleagues. The second factor, INDLEARN, was more individually focused, representing a willingness to engage in professional learning and growth and to reflect on and experiment with ongoing practices. The third factor, SCMIGO, pertained to aligning activities to school and school system goals. Factor loadings and eigenvalues are presented in Table 3. Factor scores were determined by adding the responses to the questions that displayed factor loadings greater than or equal to .60. Rather than using the individual organizational behavior questions, the three factors COLLAB, INDLEARN, and SCMIGO were used in further regression analyses.

Leadership Behaviors M SD Factor

1[*]

LSCH

Helps the staff to identify and articulate
----
a vision 4.15 1.36 .82

Encourages shared values, beliefs,
----
and attitudes 4.24 1.30 .81

Shares leadership broadly among the
--.73
staff 3.98 1.47 .69

Works toward school improvement 4.50 1.36 .83

Encourages us to regularly evaluate
----
our progress toward our goals 3.97 1.42 .78

Leads by 'doing' rather than simply by

'telling' 4.07 1.58 .75

Models problem-solving techniques 3.74 1.42 .73

Is appropriate for our school goals and
----
priorities 4.12 1.38 .75

Stimulates me to think about what I am
----
doing for my students 3.94 1.39 .73

Encourages only the best performance
----
from us 4.10 1.34 .68

Encourages teachers to work
----
collaboratively 4.22 1.40 .64

Frequently acknowledges my good
----
performance 3.75 1.54 .34

Encourages me to pursue personal
----
professional development goals 4.03 1.45 .38

Encourages me to think about some of
----
the personal ramifications of
----
changes in the school 3.74 1.39 .42

Treats me as an individual with unique
----
needs and expertise 4.17 1.57 .34

Ensures adequate involvement in
----
decisionmaking 3.92 1.48 .42

Links school goals to
----
division goals 4.05 1.32 .33

Encourages dialogue on the
----
teaching-learning process 3.93 1.30 .54

Eigenvalue 6-pt scale 12.14

Reliability coefficients .97
Leadership Behaviors Factor Regression

2[*] Information

LTEA [Symbol Not Transcribed] p

Helps the staff to identify and articulate
----
a vision .35 .00 .98

Encourages shared values, beliefs,
----
and attitudes .39 -.06 .38

Shares leadership broadly among the
----
staff .45 .04 .53

Works toward school improvement .31 .15 .03

Encourages us to regularly evaluate
----
our progress toward our goals .37 -.02 .80

Leads by 'doing' rather than simply by

'telling' .42 .27 .00

Models problem-solving techniques .48 -.02 .77

Is appropriate for our school goals and

----

priorities .45 .19 .01

Stimulates me to think about what I am

----

doing for my students .47 .08 .23

Encourages only the best performance

----

from us .51 .08 .21

Encourages teachers to work

----

collaboratively .57 .12 .06

Frequently acknowledges my good

----

performance .77 -.04 .49

Encourages me to pursue personal

----

professional development goals .74 .07 .26

Encourages me to think about some of

----

the personal ramifications of

----

changes in the school .72 -.02 .68

Treats me as an individual with unique

----

needs and expertise .81 .07 .29

Ensures adequate involvement in

----

decisionmaking .76 .00 .98

Links school goals to division goals .63 .00 .96

Encourages dialogue on the

----

teaching-learning process .67 .03 .62

Eigenvalue 1.01

Reliability coefficients .93

Note. Regression information and correlation coefficients in boldface indicate $p < .05$.

[*] Factor loadings in boldface indicate which questions were added together to produce the factor scores.

Organizational M SD Factor Factor

Learning 1[*] 2[*]

Behaviors collab indlearn

Engage in professional
----
learning and growth 4.56 1.11 .26 .83

Critically examine
----
current practices 4.33 1.22 .32 .80

Experiment with new
----

practices 4.30 1.12 .29 .81

Share information
----
openly and honestly 4.39 1.29 .78 .37

Value diversity of opinions 4.06 1.29 .74 .29

Engage in dialogue regarding
----
teaching and learning 4.45 1.19 .59 .48

Develop a shared vision 4.32 1.25 .52 .42

Engage in collaborative
----
processes 4.33 1.22 .66 .42

Engage in self-reflection 3.91 1.22 .44 .39

Learn from past experiences 4.37 1.13 .60 .39

Share professional expertise

----

among colleagues 4.59 1.17 .78 .23

Ask for help when required 4.25 1.27 .82 .14

Strike the right balance

----

between too much and too

----

little change 4.09 1.20 .65 .26

Align activities to the

----

school's mission 3.95 1.27 .31 .21

Align activities to the

----

division's goals 3.78 1.26 .19 .21

Eigenvalues 8.98 1.06

Reliability coefficients .93 .88

Organizational Factor r Regression

Learning 3[*] Information				

Behaviors scmigo [Symbol Not Transcribed] p				

Engage in professional				
---				
learning and growth	.23	.25	.01	.91

Critically examine				
---				
current practices	.23	.27	-.06	.48

Experiment with new				
---				
practices	.21	.23	-.08	.25

Share information				
---				
openly and honestly	.13	.29	.01	.88

Value diversity of opinions	.22	.31	-.01	.88

Engage in dialogue regarding

----

teaching and learning .32 .26 -.20 .01

Develop a shared vision .48 .44 .03 .75

Engage in collaborative

----

processes .36 .44 .31 .00

Engage in self-reflection .54 .39 .05 .52

Learn from past experiences .38 .34 .02 .81

Share professional expertise

----

among colleagues .23 .33 .05 .48

Ask for help when required .20 .26 -.11 .13

Strike the right balance

----

between too much and too				
--				
little change	.39	.38	.09	.20
--				
Align activities to the				
--				
school's mission	.86	.56	.28	.00
--				
Align activities to the				
--				
division's goals	.89	.52	.23	.01
--				
Eigenvalues	1.00			
--				
Reliability coefficients	.90			

Note. Regression information and correlation coefficients in boldface indicate p <.05.

[*] Factor loadings in boldface indicate which questions were added together to produce the factor scores.

Implementation Success and Overall Effectiveness

In assessing whether the school improvement program was implemented as planned or whether some changes occurred during implementation, 76% of respondents reported only minor changes, 7% reported that things went exactly as planned, and 17% reported major changes. Seventy-five percent of respondents reported that the school staff engaged in school improvement planning on at least a yearly basis, and 65% reported that staff evaluated those plans on at least a yearly basis.

Two regression analyses were conducted, the first using SOI, the second using OE as the dependent variables. The independent variables included the two leadership factors, the three organizational learning factors, plus "Systemwide effort," "Engage in planning at least on a yearly basis," and "Evaluate plans at least on a yearly basis." Sixty-one percent of the variance in the implementation of SSIP was explained by the nine variables used (see Table 4). The four most important predictors included the willingness to align activities to school mission and district goals, to engage in school improvement planning on a yearly basis, to treat teachers as individuals with unique needs, and to evaluate plans on at least a yearly basis. Schools that made major changes in the program during implementation were less likely to be successful in their implementation. This was the only variable with a

negative coefficient that was significant.

Forty-six percent of the variance in the overall effectiveness of the school was explained by the 10 independent variables that included SOI. Table 4 indicates that school leadership had the largest beta value, .43. The collaboration factor derived from the organizational learning questions and SOI had similar predictive ability. Although positively correlated with the overall effectiveness of schools, participation in a system-wide effort and alignment with mission and goals displayed negative beta values when combined with the other variables in the regression equation.

Leadership in a school, particularly leadership that strengthened the school culture, was a strong predictor of the implementation of SSIP and the overall effectiveness of the school; however, it was administering to the teachers that helped predict the success of implementation. The importance of leadership in the school was reinforced by these analyses.

Organizational learning, represented by the factors "Collaboration," "Individual learning," and "School mission and district goals," was positively correlated with the implementation of SSIP and the overall effectiveness of the school. Collaboration, although not affecting the implementation of SSIP, was a predictor of the overall effectiveness of the school. Taking the other variables into account, the willingness of teachers to align their activities with the mission of the school and the goals of the system helped to predicted the success of SSIP implementation.

Variables Implementation of SSIP
----
model (SOI)
----
r [Symbol Not Transcribed] p

Leadership of the school .58 .12 .15

Leadership of the teachers .53 .19 .01

Collaboration .40 -.00 .95

Individual learning .28 -.06 .27

Alignment with school mission and			
--			
division goals	.52	.34	.00
--			
Part of divisionwide effort	.12	.02	.63
--			
Changes in implementation of plan	-.22	-.14	.00
--			
Engage in school improvement			
--			
planning on at least a yearly basis	.57	.27	.00
--			
Evaluate school improvement plans			
--			
at least on a yearly basis	.51	.14	.02
--			
Success of your school's			
--			
implementation of SSIP			
Variables Overall effectiveness			
--			
of the school (OE)			
--			

r [Symbol Not Transcribed] p			

Leadership of the school .60 .43 .00

Leadership of the teachers .55 .01 .95

Collaboration .43 .23 .00

Individual learning .33 .11 .11

Alignment with school mission and

----

division goals .25 -.21 .00

Part of divisionwide effort -.09 -.13 .01

Changes in implementation of plan -.17 -.06 .26

Engage in school improvement

----

planning on at least a yearly basis .24 .08 .28

Evaluate school improvement plans
----
at least on a yearly basis .17 -.11 .13

Success of your school's
----
implementation of SSIP .47 .21 .01

Note. Regression information and correlation coefficients in boldface indicate p <.05.

Individual concerns, represented by the individual learning component of the organizational learning construct, was neither a predictor of the implementation of SSIP nor of the effectiveness of the school. Although attention to this concern might well result in more satisfied teachers, it appears to have had little effect on the two outcomes we examined.

Teachers' sense of self-efficacy has received considerable attention in education (Ashton &Webb, 1986; Gibson &Dembo, 1984; Hajnal, 1991; Midgley, Feldlaufer, &Eccles, 1990; Woolfolk &Hoy, 1990) and particular interest has extended to its effect on student outcomes. Recently interest has turned to the effects of teacher self-efficacy on professional community (Louis, Marks, &Kruse, 1996) and teachers' desire to participate in decisionmaking (Taylor, Tashakkori, &Hardwick, 1996). In this study we examined the relationship between teacher self-efficacy, organizational learning, implementation of school improvement plans, and overall success of the school.

Five questions were used to examine teacher efficacy. Using the mean for the five questions, teachers were divided into two groups, high and low teacher efficacy. T-tests were used to determine that there were differences between these two groups of respondents in their perceptions of organizational learning and in success of implementation. However, no significant differences existed between the high and low teacher efficacy groups on their perception of the overall effectiveness of their school.

Discussion and Conclusions

Initial attempts at school improvement for the schools in our study focused on cosmetic changes rather than teaching and learning. Most efforts in the early stages concentrated on improving the school climate (88%) and on developing a mission (75%). The shift in focus to instructional concerns generally occurred only after the schools had had some experience with SSIP. Those schools that did focus on instructional initiatives were more effective and tended to have more central office involvement, in their change efforts. Educators expressed early preferences for improvement initiatives that did not impinge on their classroom settings, indicating that individuals and organizations prefer to develop an increased capacity for change before such close-to-home initiatives are undertaken (Louis &Miles, 1990). Those aspects of change that are at the core of schooling may require a deeper cognitive, behavioral, and value transformation (Sackney et al., 1995).

Leadership is critical to initiating, sustaining, and institutionalizing school change (Railis &Goldring, 1994; Schein, 1992). Louis and Miles (1990) found that no matter how talented a staff might be collectively, schools with ineffective principals were likely to be unexciting places. Similarly, Rosenholtz (1989) found that superintendents and principals who were "stuck" tended to have schools that were "stuck." As well, Johnson and Pajares (1996) found the support of the principal enhanced shared decisionmaking. In this study the leadership exhibited by the administrators in the school and the leadership exhibited by teachers had the greatest effect on both the success of school improvement initiatives and the overall effectiveness of the school.

Our data support the contentions that the institutionalization of change is not easily accomplished and that change is messy. Miles (1983) found that pressure and support from central office were necessary if change was to occur. Louis and Miles (1990) concurred to the extent that pressure and support were necessary initially, but thereafter the ownership of change had to shift to the staff. Our study found that in the initiation phase, pressure from the director of education was viewed negatively. However, schools that were part of a division-wide effort were more successful with their school improvement programs, but not necessarily with their overall effectiveness. If the improvement effort was system-wide, more attention tended to be paid to classroom skills, curriculum, systematic planning, and quality instruction.

Several basic tenets of administration were supported by this study. In those schools where classroom supervision was emphasized, SSIP was more successfully implemented. As well, SSIP was more successfully implemented in schools where the teachers reported that they engaged in planning and evaluating school improvement plans at least on a yearly basis.

Teachers who reported the school improvement plan was implemented exactly as planned or with minor changes reported greater success with implementation, greater overall effectiveness of their school, and a superior quality of school administrative leadership. When teachers reported major changes in implementation of the school improvement plan, these changes produced a negative effect on the implementation. This finding supports Fullan's (1992) observation that poorly designed change efforts were usually doomed to failure and suggests that although flexibility is required in the change process, adequate initial planning continues to be an important element in the change process. Another conclusion is that the quality of the school administrative leadership has an influence on how the change process moves forward, and better leadership ensures that the change process does not become derailed and require major changes.

Our study concluded that the quality of leadership was important for the institutionalization of SSIP. To engage in successful school improvement efforts required an empowering leadership that focused on a shared vision, such that staff took ownership of the initiatives. Where the emphasis was on facilitating, on support and encouragement, staff involvement and the chances of success were greater than where the focus was on telling. Our data further supported the conclusion that schools that were pressured into becoming involved in SSIP by system personnel or the principal were less likely to be successful in institutionalizing changes.

Principal component analysis of our leadership scale identified two underlying dimensions: school-level effort and personal attention. Leaders who want to implement change will have to pay attention to both school and personal factors. School-level factors included attending to a shared vision, providing resources, and establishing a climate supportive of change. Personal factors included paying attention to individual differences, facilitating and empowering, encouraging collaboration, and building a climate of trust and caring that, in turn, encourages change; the principal must know when to back off and when to step in. Regression analysis indicated that in successful school improvement programs the leaders "led by doing rather than telling," and teachers were encouraged to work collaboratively in achieving school goals and setting appropriate priorities. We also found that encouraged teachers were more resilient in the face of change.

Another aspect of the conceptual framework was to focus on the degree of organizational learning that occurred. In this respect practices that enunciated a clear mission for the school and practices that supported collaboration were important. Teacher comments indicated, further, that if organizational learning was to be part of the school culture, there must be sufficient opportunity for meaningful dialogue, and this dialogue must occur in a climate of trust.

Conducting principal component analysis of the organizational learning behavior scale pointed to three underlying dimensions: collaboration, individual learning, and a sense of vision. Louis (1994) and Cousins (1994) similarly contended that collaboration and a sense of purpose were requisite for organizational learning to occur. Furthermore, organizational learning was closely aligned to individual cognition and reflection. Kofman and Senge (1993) described effective organizational learning environments as "spaces for generative conversations and concerted action" where "people can talk from their hearts and connect with one another in the spirit of dialogue"

(p. 16). Garvin (1993) contended that a learning organization can be both empowering and tranquilizing. Teachers' sense of efficacy played an underlying supporting role for the enhancement of professional community and organizational learning. Teachers who were more efficacious were more willing to participate in all aspects of organizational learning -- collaboration, individual learning, and a sense of vision -- and they believed that their schools were more successful with SSIP. When teachers believe that they can make a difference and are interdependent, they work toward common goals. Consequently, implementation of school improvement initiatives is more likely to succeed.

The importance of teacher self-efficacy is clear from this study and others. Lee and Smith (1996) reported a strong positive link between teachers' sense of efficacy and valued student outcomes. Examining teachers' desire for participation in decision-making, Taylor et al. (1996) reported that sense of efficacy was the variable in their study that was most likely to discriminate between teachers. As well, teachers with the lowest self-efficacy reported less collegiality and communication with their colleagues.

Based on regression analyses, we concluded that the nature and quality of leadership behavior, the extent of collaboration, and the degree of staff involvement were strong determinants of the institutionalization of SSIP and school effectiveness. An environment that fosters collaborative cultures and teachers' collective engagement in sustained efforts to improve schools will be more successful in institutionalizing change.

Although we have images of excellence for schools, we do not have clear models of institutionalization. How can we transform ordinary schools into schools where excellence is institutionalized: places where renewal, growth, and reflection are integral to the culture? Why are some schools more effective in building a capacity for change than others? These are questions that continue to provoke the researchers' imagination.

We conclude that leadership and organizational learning are critical to school improvement. To lead school change successfully requires attention both to organizational goals and to professional relationships. The schools in this study that were most successful in institutionalizing change were those with dynamic, facilitative leadership and a professional community. The teachers and administrators in these schools were able to foster a collaborative culture for organizational learning where the climate for renewal was promoted from within. Organizational learning is both personal and grouporiented and operates most successfully where a shared vision and processes are in place to facilitate the realization of that vision.

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DETAILS

Subject:	Innovations; Demography; Educational administration; Institutionalization; Collaboration; Educational psychology; Educational leadership; Corporate culture; Classroom communication; Questionnaires; Self concept; Educational research; Student teacher relationship; Postmodernism; Teachers; Learning; School effectiveness
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