ED464521 2001-00-00 Organizational Culture and Institutional Transformation. ERIC Digest.

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ERIC Identifier: ED464521
Publication Date: 2001-00-00
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Source: ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education Washington DC.

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During the past two decades higher education in America has attempted a number of reforms. Reform efforts are predicated on the assumption that proactive, intentional change efforts in colleges and universities can succeed despite the predilection for tradition and maintaining the existing culture. Culture proves to be a critical component

in understanding the process of planned change and transformation in colleges and universities today. The significance of organizational culture becomes particularly clear as we operationalize institutional transformation. The concept of transformation described borrows from the work of Eckel, Hill & Green (1998), who make reference to organizational culture as one of four primary elements of planned change. They state that institutional transformation: "1) alters the culture of the institution by changing select underlying assumptions and institutional behaviors, processes, and products; 2) is deep and pervasive, affecting the whole institution; 3) is intentional; and 4) occurs over time" (p. 3, underline added).

The purpose of this digest is to review the research on institutional transformation as it is relates to organizational culture. The discussion of organizational culture's importance in institutional transformation will be organized around three primary aspects of the change process: 1) readiness for, and responsiveness to, institutional transformation, 2) resistance to planned change, and 3) the results of the transformation process.

READINESS & RESPONSIVENESS

An organization's culture can be understood as the sum total of the assumptions, beliefs, and values that its members' share and is expressed through "what is done, how it is done, and who is doing it" (Farmer, 1990, p. 8). However, members of an organization often take its culture for granted and do not truly evaluate its impact on decisions, behaviors, and communication or consider the symbolic and structural boundaries of organizational culture until external forces test it. Therefore, when initiating transformation efforts it becomes critical to understand and explicate the values and personal meanings that define organizational culture. According to Farmer, "failure to understand the way in which an organization's culture will interact with various contemplated change strategies thus may mean the failure of the strategies themselves" (p. 8). Case studies of corporations undergoing change (Wilms, 1996; Zell 1997) and institutions engaging in transformation efforts (Kezar & Eckel, 2000) reveal that organizational culture can either facilitate or inhibit institutional transformation, depending on the fit between existing culture and the proposed change.

Other research (Kabanoff, Waldersee & Cohen, 1995) found that the type of institutional culture (e.g., elite, meritocratic, leadership, or collegial) predicted perceptions of change in the organization. Similar to Farmer, Kabanoff, Waldersee & Cohen emphasize the importance of understanding organizational culture in change initiatives. In their study of organizational values and institutional change, they found that organizations characterized by collegial values (i.e., teamwork, participation, commitment, and high levels of affiliation) looked at change enthusiastically and in positive terms as opposed to organizations characterized by elite, meritocratic, or leadership-style value structures, which were more likely to view change negatively. Although characteristics of all four value structures can be found in educational environments, the researchers found that the majority of colleges and universities included in their study were classified as

collegial organizations and, therefore, perhaps surprisingly, viewed change positively.

While culture clearly affects how the members of the organization perceive change, the elements of culture are usually unspoken tenets that are often taken for granted. Therefore, in order to gain a better understanding of culture within the organization and as a component of the transformation process, the question becomes, how can we talk about that which is unspoken? Further, if culture is to be considered in strategic planning and/or institutional transformation, which aspects of the culture are most conducive to change, and which aspects of culture are themselves in need of change?

According to Kashner (1990), "readying an institution to reply to the conditions that call for change or to innovate on the institution's own initiative requires a clear understanding of its corporate culture and how to modify that culture in a desired direction" (p. 20). The W.K. Kellogg Foundation provides some insight into how to gain a clearer understanding of culture through assessment in their Evaluation Handbook (1998). Context assessment, particularly in the form of organizational assessment, provides the most information regarding organizational culture and proves to be a useful tool for institutional transformation. Organizational assessment includes questions regarding the characteristics of institutional leadership, resource allocation, institutional structure, the flow of decision-making, and ties to external organizations. When conducted prior to transformation efforts, such an exercise provides rich information about the environment, the fit between the change initiative and existing organizational culture, and institutional readiness for change. Therefore, assessment represents one of the primary means to develop readiness. Two other ways to develop institutional readiness for transformation efforts are: 1) developing a culture of trust, and 2) open, participative planning strategies, which will be discussed next.

Research on institutional transformation indicates that an important cultural condition for change is the existence of trust among the various members of the campus community. While trust is most readily achieved through open communication between individuals and groups on campus, trust is also enhanced when there is a history of "making decisions in a way that reflects a clear and sensitive understanding of the culture of a campus" (Farmer, 1990, p. 10). A second condition that is necessary for an effective change environment is the use of planning strategies that are open, participative, aligned with campus culture and goals, and long-term. Strategies characterized by these values also facilitate the development of trust, can help develop institutional "buy-in," and reflect the proper scope for innovative and transformational change efforts (Farmer, 1990; Rowley, Lujan & Dolence, 1997; Steeples, 1990).

RESISTANCE

Resistance is an important cultural component of institutional transformation that is often overlooked. It is especially relevant to colleges and universities in light of their longstanding tradition of criticism and a wide variety of sub- or counter-cultures.

Sub-cultures--based on organizational role, institutional position, or disciplinary affiliation--often flourish within the university environment, supporting their own set of customs, beliefs, and practices that are frequently incongruent with the larger university culture, not to mention the goals of most transformation efforts (Clark, 1984). Sub-cultures can also create symbolic "spheres of ownership" (i.e., feelings of ownership regarding symbolic territories or "turf") on campus that create serious stumbling blocks to change, especially when the proposed innovation appears to threaten these rights of possession (Kashner, 1990).

It is the conflicting priorities and values among sub-cultures that most often contribute to resistance toward change efforts. Historically, the greatest clash has occurred between administrators--often the initiators and leaders of campus transformation efforts--and the faculty--the body frequently charged with implementing educational changes (Kashner, 1990; Swenk, 1999). Because faculty members' average tenure with a university far outlasts that of most presidents and administrators, faculty are often the gatekeepers of culture and traditions on the campus. When long held cultural beliefs are challenged by change efforts, faculty naturally perceive the change initiative as threatening. Thus, unless these cultural elements are directly addressed, resistance will be the usual response to any transformation effort.

While conflict can be disruptive within any campus environment, resistance is not always negative. In many ways, resistance is an inevitable part of institutional transformation. Even planned change in an environment that has been properly prepared results in a certain amount of disequilibrium, such as initial cost increases or a short-term decrease in efficiency as individuals break old habits and become familiar with new processes and structures. According to the definition of institutional transformation adopted for this paper, change must be "both deep and pervasive" (Eckel, Hill & Green, 1998, p. 3). Therefore, resistance can be perceived as an indicator that the change effort has permeated the outer layers of the institution and is moving beyond a state of adjustment or isolated change to alter the cultural and structural elements of the institution on the collective level.

Resistance to change is such a pervasive occurrence in attempts at planned change that researchers have begun to include resistance, crisis, conflict, and/or politics as key elements in models of institutional transformation (Reynolds, 1994; Rowley, Lujan, & Dolence, 1997; Simsek & Louis, 1994; Steeples, 1990). One example is Reynolds' model for change in the workplace, which includes four stages of change: denial, resistance, exploration, and commitment. During the first two stages, employees exhibit anger and tension and experience greater feelings of chaos at work. As a means of moving beyond resistance, Reynolds suggests readying the environment for change, including encouraging open communication, emphasizing the big-picture vision, and maintaining trust among the employees and management. It appears that institutional readiness for change is inversely related to the resistance experienced during the transformation effort. Reynolds also points out that once individuals move beyond the denial and resistance phases, there is usually a great burst of energy and activity

among institutional members.

RESULTS

If resistance indicates that the innovation has reached the cultural level of the institution, a significant cultural shift truly verifies that transformation has occurred. The more an innovation is integrated into the culture of the organization, the more likely we will be to see changes in the rewards structure and in decision-making strategies and the more likely the transformation effect will be sustained (Farmer, 1990).

In his work on the success and failure of innovations in higher education, Levine (1980) pinpoints incompatibility and lack of profitability as the two primary barriers to positive transformation results and, therefore, the main reasons that innovations (i.e., transformation efforts) fail. "Compatibility" refers to the degree of congruence between the innovation and the "norms, values, and goals of the institution"--all aspects of institutional culture (Levine, 1980, p. 19). "Profitability" is defined as "the measure of the effectiveness of an innovation in satisfying the adopter's needs" (p. 19). Because needs are an outgrowth of cultural aspects of an institution, such as the purpose and mission, profitability can also be interpreted as a cultural element. Levine states that planned changes in colleges and universities may avoid failure by maximizing profitability and congruence. This is achieved by expanding the cultural boundaries of the institution to include the innovation or by completely absorbing the innovation so that the boundaries of the innovation are enveloped by the cultural boundaries of the institution. Therefore, the outcomes and results of innovation and change are embedded in the culture of organizations.

Simsek & Louis (1994) present a model of transformation that builds upon Levine's notion that the results of innovation and planed change efforts are related to organizational culture. In their "paradigm-shift" model, the outcome of successful transformation is an alteration of organizational culture in the direction of desired change. In order to utilize the idea of organizational change as a paradigm shift, Simsek & Louis present a dynamic model of transformation including five phases of change: normalcy, confronting anomalies, crisis, selection, and renewed normalcy. Similar to Levine, Simsek & Louis acknowledge the importance of organizational culture and institutional values, myths, metaphors, and symbolic boundaries throughout the process of organizational change. The researchers conclude that this model of the change process is a good fit for institutions of higher education because it acknowledges aspects of the old paradigm (i.e., prevailing culture) while incorporating it into the newly adopted world view rather than undergoing a revolutionary cultural change.

CONCLUSION

An understanding of organizational culture is clearly important to the study of institutional transformation, given that transformation "alters the culture of the institution

by changing select underlying assumptions and institutional behaviors, processes, and products" (Eckel, Hill & Green, 1998, p. 3). At the same time, organizational culture and cultural change can be used as a means of preparing an environment for transformation, a yardstick for assessing whether or not a transformational change has actually taken place, and a means of achieving the desired results of an innovation. Finally, the success of any transformational effort may well depend on the extent to which practitioners are able to address issues of institutional culture in their strategic planning.

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