BEST PRACTICES IN CHANGE MANAGEMENT:

CRITICAL PROCESS VARIABLES

Jackson Kytle, Ph.D.

Kurt Lewin …

There is nothing so practical as a good theory.

1. Introduction … our topics

1. Varieties of planned change
2. Case for change in higher education
3. Planned change needs a theory of change
4. Colleges are different
5. Types of resistance to change
6. What to do? Two alternatives
7. Changing assumptions about people and organizations
8. Ten critical process variables
9. Suggestions for better practice and new theory
10. References and resources

Learning objectives …

1. Review *contemporary challenges* to colleges and universities

2. Understand the argument that self study *process* is more important than *content*

3. Understand that a self study needs a *theory of change* and what this adds

4. Review *critical process variables* when managing self study and planned change

My research question …

- What do we know about *planned change* in colleges and universities, especially change introduced by a searching self study?

  - We'll treat *planned change* and *self study* as roughly equivalent terms because a good self study drives many levels of planned change.

  - We'll discuss current research on planned change in education and business as well as new developments in organizational theory.

Most important take away …

- *Self study process is more important than its content!* How campus teams go about self study and planned change—the *process variables*—are more important than specific goals, or even the depth of the change.

2. The case for change in higher education

Some concerns are shared but the threat list varies by sector.

We'll look, first, at challenges in common and, second, the challenges of one sector, public research universities.

Some common threats …

- Slow, uncertain path out of a deep global recession
- Reduced state and federal support as well as reduced family resources
- Uneven completion rates and diminishing access
- Growing cost of college and doubts that leaders have the vision and will to control cost by restructuring
- Ever-new information technologies that prove "disruptive" and threaten traditional curricula
- Recent studies that college learning outcomes are uneven
- Increasing worries about return on investment
- Weakening support by political leaders and the voting public

Let's hear from Robert Zemsky about one sector, public research universities …

Title of his 2012 talk at UVM says it all …

"Between a New Rock and Bad Hard Place:

Public Research Universities at Risk"

The "bad hard space" has three threats …

1. Research universities appear ungovernable because, in part, of poor board engagement.
2. Turnover in college leaders is too high, reflecting the stress *and* causing more stress.
3. Power of sports is too dominant in campus decisions (and I'd add the disproportionate power of a professional school of law or medicine).

Zemsky's "new rock" defined …

- Major shifts in higher education, largely external as well as off shore, responding to global economic challenges:
  - 70% of higher education will be narrow-cast, technology-close, vocational preparation in community colleges using standardized curricula, an approach we might emulate from Germany or Switzerland
  - Increasing competition from aggressive and nimble for profits who know how to market themselves
  - Universities need to reduce unit cost
  - Too many institutions for all to survive

Zemsky adds other challenges to quality …

- ☐ Weak General Education requirements
- ☐ Departmental competition for course time and visibility that adds to inefficiency
- ☐ Too little communication among faculty members about what they teach and why
- ☐ Shared governance becomes a smokescreen for lack of shared responsibility

What is to be done?

- "Muddle through" as Guskin and Marcy put it?

    - Piecemeal changes protect the status quo and slowly erode quality
    - Reduced new investment in quality of student learning as well as innovation
    - Slow downward spiral

OR

- Restructure to reduce cost while also increasing quality of teaching and learning?

  - Bold leadership toward a new and shared vision
  - Hard as it will be, zero-based budgeting to reduce cost
  - Improve quality of work life of faculty
  - Better integrate staff in support of learning while reducing inefficiency
  - Use technology to stimulate and document learning regardless of time or place

  Guskin and Marcy (2003)

3. Colleges *are* different!

"loosely coupled" organizations (Weick,1982)

less responsive to command and control authority (Kezar, 2001; Burke, 2011)

Hard to steer or turn this ship
in bad weather …

Colleges are unique cultures ...

- A values-driven academic culture where words matter
- Distributed leadership structure
- Ideal of shared governance, however imperfect
- Low turnover of core stakeholders like faculty
- Different constituencies have disparate goals not easily yoked together

Adrianna Kezar (2009)

- Idealistic values, flexible work, long employment, and a touch of dissonance reduction for all the personal sacrifice—

  all combine to lead long-term staff and faculty to deep emotional attachment.

4. Resistance to change

A good theory of change surfaces and challenges various types of resistance to change.

Types of resistance …

- Psychological
- Cultural
- Political
- Simple not understanding
- Expecting and managing resistance

5. Self study needs a *Theory* of Change

An education system resists change like a sponge returning to its boxy shape just as soon as we stop leaning on it, or poking it.

Robert Zemsky (2008)

Planned change needs a *theory* of change …

Better for it to be explicit and testable than implicit and full of surprises.

Kezar's (2009) definition of "theory of change" …

- "a predictive assumption about the relationship between desired changes and the actions that may produce those changes - If I do x, then I expect y to occur, and for these reasons."

- A theory of change, usually implicit, underlies any policy or program change (as well as daily existence)

- Theories of change in the social sciences are highly context dependent

Six major theories of change by Kezar …

1. Evolutionary

2. Lifecycle

3. Teleological or management science

4. Political

5. Social cognition

6. Cultural

Planned change, self study & politics …

Planned change is neither value free nor without conflict!

Managing change means managing the politics from the subcommittee to the final narrative and what gets included and what gets dropped.

6. Changing assumptions about …

Real people in

Flesh and blood colleges

Changing assumptions about people …

- Self study should structure and reward active meaning making, what Anna Neumann calls "mindwork."

- People prefer to be involved in the decisions that affect their lives.

- To change attitudes in conjunction with self study, don't attack frontally. Rather, try to *change behavior first* and let the mind then justify the investment of time and energy.

- Self study might think about the *demand environs* we create for all actors because this is where attitude change begins and plays itself out.   Especially, change the peer group.

- Self study should expect hard work and praise the sacrifices people make.

- Planned change needs rational arguments, but also active attention to emotional and unconscious feelings.

Haidt's elephant …
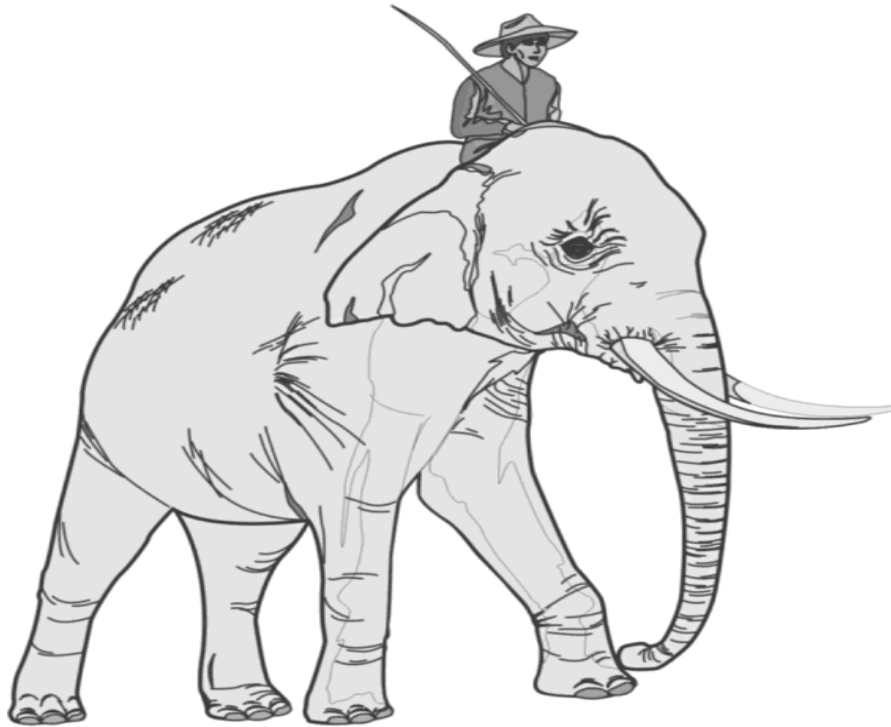
- Self study should use small groups with effective facilitation.

- Self study should frame its evaluations and feedback in positive more than negative terms (a ratio of 8 to 2?).

Changing assumptions about organizations …

- Dominant metaphor of the latter half of the last century for understanding organizations and organizational change was the "open systems" model from the life sciences.

- Focus on transactions of energy and information between the organization and its environment, often using systems language of inputs, throughputs, and outputs.

Organizational theorists of the last twenty years … Burke's list:

- absorbing concepts from other disciplines to capture nonlinear events like:
  - chaos theory from mathematics,
  - Stephen Jay Gould's notion of punctuated equilibrium from anthropology,
  - deep ecology and living systems from Fritjof Capra
  - Gladwell's influential thinking about tipping point and counter-intuitive change in organizations (major gain from small events).

7. Ten critical process variables

Two immodest assertions:

1. Self study *process* is more important than *content*!

2. If we monitor the right process variables, we can improve change outcomes!

Ten process variables to monitor …

1. How is the *case for change and its evidence assembled?*

2. How is the *new vision* constructed?

3. How is *sensemaking* given explicit, sustained focus?

4. How are *campus staff, students and faculty involved?*

5. How are *self-study leaders* distributed vertically and horizontally?

6. How are people leading self-study teams *educated about managing change?*

7. How do *self-study leaders communicate* with people not close to the process?

8. How is *formative evaluation* used to improve process?

9. How are evaluation outcomes used to feed the *next cycle of self study and change?*

10. How is *change momentum* built and sustained?

8. Final thoughts …

Suggestions for theory building and research about planned change

Practical suggestions for self study coordinators and campus leaders

Right now is a great time for improved practice ....

- Plan for process over the lifespan of the change effort.
- Ask: What is *your theory* of change?
- Don't go at a local culture head on—respect what colleagues have worked hard for.
  - Plan for the rational and the emotional, conscious and unconscious, bold vision and broad inclusion.
- Plan for resistance and conflict that accompany planned change.
  - Behavior changes faster than attitudes or values.
- Provide many opportunities for sensemaking and rehearsal.

- Think about change momentum and tempo.

- Worry about spikey change, work on continuous improvement.

- Train team leaders in change skills and managing conflict like (Kezar):
  - running meetings,
  - using agendas and minutes, and
  - holding people accountable.

    THIS IS BIG!

- Emphasize the positive but know how and when to introduce criticism (Cameron).

- Consider a risk assessment analysis as part of a self-study or change process.

- Who evaluates the evaluation?

- Teams need to respect team reports that are honest about change and conflict on campus.

And as change agents …

Have fun, do good, and worry less about the in-laws coming to visit!

Right now is a great time for new theory …

- Think about colleges and universities as learning organizations more than abstract systems.

- Think more about change over time connected to daily life, less about discrete events.

- Less attention to hierarchy and systems, more to the nature of the work and how people make sense of change.
  - How teams get the real work done!

- Less use of linear A>B logic, more to interactions among variables, surprises, unintended consequences.

- Expect complexity and nuance, mystery and paradox.

We have time for comments and questions …

7. Select references

- *On Change Management: HBR's Ten Must Reads*. Boston: Harvard Review Press, 2011. Available online as a 200 page PDF.

- Michael N. Bastedo, ed. *The Organization of Higher Education: Managing Colleges for a New Era*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012.

- W. Warner Burke, *Organization Change: Theory and Practice*. third edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2011.

- Alan E. Guskin and Mary B. Marcy, "Dealing with the Future Now: Principles for Creating a Vital Campus in a Climate of Restricted Resources," *Change* July/August 2003, 10-21.

- Adrianna Kezar, *Understanding and Facilitating Organizational Change in Higher Education in the 21st Century*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001.

- ----- "Synthesis of Scholarship on Change in Higher Education." Paper presented at the conference entitled Mobilizing STEM Education for a Sustainable Future, Emory College, Atlanta, GA, 2009. Available online.

- Jackson Kytle, *To Want to Learn.* 2nd edition. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

- Anna Neumann, "Organizational Cognition in Higher Education." In Bastedo (2012), *The Organization of Higher Education,* 304-331. See also Neumann (1991) "The Thinking Team: Toward a Cognitive Model of Administration Teamwork in Higher Education." *Journal of Higher Education*, 62(5), 485-513.

- Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. 4th Edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010.

- Robert Zemsky, "Will Higher Education Ever Change as It Should?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education* August 3, 2009.

- ----- *Making Reform Work: The Case for Transforming American Higher Education*, Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers Press, 2009.

Thank you!

- For an updated version of my CHE presentation and the paper I'm writing with full references and spiffy graphics,

  please contact me at:

  - My website: //jacksonkytle.com

  - My email: jackson.kytle@gmail.com