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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the failure of a professional development school (PDS) initiative undertaken by a university department of education by using eight points from John P. Kotter's book "Leading Change," which describes conditions in business that prevent change and points to some necessary conditions for change to occur. The eight points and their lessons are: (1) complacency (the need for a sense of urgency to reform); (2) knowing who is in charge (change in the college must have the support of the dean and the department chair); (3) articulating the mission and vision (both must be shared by the college and the PDS); (4) communicating the vision and mission to supporters and doubters (in this case, the vision was under-communicated to colleagues and administration); (5) permitting obstacles to block the new vision (active discussion of disagreements will build a shared vision); (6) failing to cite short-term victories (the PDS needs to be showcased often during the initial years of operation); (7) declaring victory too soon (significant changes take from 3 to 10 years to sink down deeply into the culture); and (8) neglecting to anchor changes firmly in the corporate culture (this PDS did not survive long enough to be anchored in the college culture). (SM)

Walking the Walk: School/University Collaboration in Teacher Education

Curt Hayes, Valerie Camilli, Jenny Piazza

"The invention of 21st century schools that can educate all children well rests, first and foremost, upon the development of a highly qualified and committed teaching force" (1996,p.5).

Linda Darling-Hammond, 1996

Change is difficult -- and that statement is particularly true for educational institutions. Robert Barr and William Parrett 919, in their book *Hope at Last for At-Risk Youth,* cite researchers who

> have known for more than 20 years that it is all but impossible to change an existing institution. All institutions are resistant to change, but this is even more true for schools.

Today the criticism of public schools and calls for change continue to escalate. The dissatisfied may be moved to seek alternative educational opportunities. Witness the growth of charter schools, the increase in the number of private schools, and the large number of parents who currently choose to home school their children. The variety of educational environments represents a dilemma for colleges of education concerning how to prepare students for the varied situations in which they may be teaching: where will they be teaching; whom will they be teaching; and what will they be teaching? We maintain that colleges of education, and the schools that the colleges prepare teachers for, can be renewed (and reformed) to meet the needs of today's students while at the

same time addressing the concerns of society. Change is evolutionary; it is usually slow, but as Norman Augustine, from the business world, reminds us, "There are only two kinds of companies -- those that are changing and those that are going out of business." (p. 85)

We submit that colleges of education should be leaders in the educational reform movement, initiating and supporting changes in public schools in their preparation of new teachers and through the continuing education of veteran teachers. One such change -- which has already been occurring in recent years and whose momentum continues -- demonstrates that colleges of education can indeed redirect themselves and public schools, reforming themselves in the process. These are the professional development schools (PDS), in which education professors and exemplary teachers conjointly prepare new teachers, *in situ.* However, It is our experience that colleges of education may often be more of a problem than a solution because they are even more resistant to such change than public schools.

We were recruited and charged by the College of Education to inaugurate professional development schools (PDS) and partnerships with the public schools. One receptive elementary school was designated as a professional development school "in the making." It was to be a prototype designed to bring the college of education and the school together into a mutually beneficial program-development partnership. The partnership would provide a real school where the Department could prepare a portion of its preservice teachers. The on-site teachers would benefit in two ways: the presence of the pre-service teachers would provide extra help in working with students and, in addition, by working with and observing the preservice teachers, the inservice teachers would be exposed to new ideas in the teaching of mathematics and language arts in an integrated, multidisciplinary approach. It was a heady experience to be in the forefront of positive change, where teachers, pre-service teachers, and professors cooperated to hammer out improvements and changes in the elementary school and to better pre-service teacher induction and preparation.

We would like to report here the glowing success of the PDS initiative and the benefits derived by students, professors, teachers, and

administrators, but, instead, the initiative was apparently doomed to failure -- it was withdrawn and dismantled the following year, before it could even be fine tuned. Consequently, several involved education faculty moved to other institutions while those who remained were discouraged from working in the schools. The department chair, who had been newly hired and charged with creating the PDS partnerships, was fired. Although the PDS was an unqualified success at the elementary school site, the College was split in its support of the PDS concept; and the faculty remains divided to this day. George Bernard Shaw wrote, "Progress is impossible without change; and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything."

Our experience is not uncommon because change efforts do frequently fail. We believe that the events leading to the demise of the PDS were shaped by resistance to change in the way teachers are prepared, and that ultimately this resistance resulted in the College's return to conditions existing prior to the PDS effort. While the rhetoric of change lingers on, overt actions to institute it at the College level are missing. The PDS now exists only on paper, appearing in the goals of the Department and, ironically, in the report prepared for the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE].

Let us look at the PDS initiative to determine what lessons we can learn from its failure and what pitfalls we might avoid in future endeavors. What were the barriers, and how could we have overcome them? In seeking insight into the change process, we look to business for our cue and guidance because business has been forced to change significantly in order to meet the conditions, demands, and vagaries of the modern marketplace. We draw particularly from two business experts, Norman Augustine, who was a leader in the massive downsizing of the defense industry, and John P. Kotter, who in his book *Leading Change*, described the conditions which prevent it and in doing so points to some necessary conditions for change to occur.

We refer to Kotter's eight points to accommodate and explain our experiences in attempting to reform and renew education. We will analyze and describe the failure of the PDS initiative and our subsequent insights into the change process. Just why these points readers may ask: they

provide a guide for our analysis of the failure of the PDS initiative. If we had applied these points earlier, the PDS might have remained in existence -- and more importantly the College would be on its way to actively accommodating change into its vision and mission, with more PDSs being established in the region as well as additional innovations in the teaching-learning process within the department.

Point 1. **Complacency:** Education is open to many of the same pitfalls facing businesses seeking to change. Kotter says

> by far the biggest mistake people make when trying to change organizations is to plunge ahead without establishing a high enough sense of urgency in fellow managers and employees. This error is fatal because transformations always fail to achieve their objectives when complacency levels are high. (4)

The College did not share a sense of urgency to reform or to address the concerns of those who criticize education -- but why should it?. The College continues to admit more students than classes can accommodate. The pressure to increase class size each semester is taken to be one of the indications that "we must be doing something right. Just look at the enrollments!" These factors contribute to the perception that the "product" is good; it's selling after all -- and these realities obviated the College from implementing or even considering alternatives to its teacher-preparation programs. Prospective teachers continue to be taught as their teachers were taught in the past.

Kotter cautions us not to confuse urgency with anxiety as anxiety will "push people even deeper into the foxholes and create even more resistance to change." Anxiety, not urgency, increased in the College because of the forthcoming NCATE committee visit and evaluation of the College and its programs. The previous NCATE visit and analysis resulted in a less than stellar report. The college was found to be weak on thirteen "standards" and was in the midst of addressing those weaknesses in preparing its report. Exhibits were marshalled and stored, vitae were brought up to date, and meetings of College administrators were held weekly -- and daily as the visit approached -- to prepare the response to NCATE. However, these efforts, while successful for the NCATE

evaluation, failed to prompt a penetrating analysis of what the College was doing and why it was doing it -- and resulted only in surface alterations to bring the College into compliance. The mission of the College was reactive -- not proactive -- the mood one of "complacency " until the impending NCATE visit led to increasingly high levels of anxiety: to prepare a successful response so that life could then return to normal.

Despite the strong pull of the status quo, some changes were evident -- propelled by forces outside the college. The previous NCATE evaluation found there was "no assurance that all candidates [had] field experiences with culturally diverse students." In an effort to address this concern, the Director of Field Experiences was charged by the College to pursue additional placements for student teachers in classrooms with culturally diverse students. A survey of former students resulted in a beefed up set of classroom management courses. Increased focus on technology prompted the State to award a large grant to the College to increase its technology offerings. (The "scent" of money and outside pressure can propel change.) However, in this instance, changes occurred within the same paradigm, resulting in adding courses to the program, not in altering what and how the program was delivered. The attempt to change the paradigm, to move the college and its faculty into the community of schools, with a different and more collaborative focus, was not seriously considered despite the fact that the PDS initiative was mentioned in the NCATE report. In retrospect, we were of two minds in the College, one for change, the other for little or no change.

The lesson learned *is that we had failed to establish a sense of urgency to move to the new paradigm of collaboration between the schools and the college. The sense of "urgency" was felt only by those who already held the collaborative paradigm.*

Point 2. ***Who's in Charge?*** *Do we dare lose sight of who is in charge? Therein can lie a major obstacle to change. Change in the college must have the support of the dean as well as the chair of the department.*

Just as public school teachers can experience difficulty in attempting to change their schools, so too can professors who wish to change how teachers are educated and affirmed in their craft -- hence, the

importance of coalition and leadership for any initiative. The change in the College went as far as it did because of the leadership of the chair of elementary education -- but progressed no further because of lack of support from other levels of College administration. The PDS collaborative, which included college faculty, doctoral graduate students, associate superintendent, principal, and site-based teachers was sizable but lacked sufficient positional power to sustain the effort of the PDS, and efforts to institutionalize the PDS at the College level made no headway. We neither had a sufficient number of college faculty supporting the effort nor key administrators. In fact, those not in the coalition were extremely resistant to our mission and vision. Our experience is parallel to Kotter's, who points out

> efforts that lack a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition can make apparent progress for a while. But sooner or later, countervailing forces undermine the initiatives. In the behind-the-scenes struggle among a executive or a weak committee and traditional short term self-interest, the latter almost always win. (p.?)

Lack of administrative support for the PDS initiative resulted in a mixed message to the faculty: those who supported the PDS heard encouragement from the chair; those who preferred the status quo heard a different message in the silence of the administrators. It is not enough to say that the College should be involved in change (the urgency exists), that the College must be the locus for change efforts and that it must, as the preparer of teachers, be in the forefront of that change. It doesn't always work that way; it is not that simple. The organization is made up of people, and their individual behavior can resist and therefore prevent change.

The lesson learned *is that we did not confront the administration with the charge they had given us, and we were not able to usher its unified support, learning in the process that "major change is often said to be impossible unless the head of the organization is an active supporter."6*

Point 3. **Where is the Mission and Vision? (we had one but we were among the few who knew it):**

All successful revolutions have a vision. Unfortunately, we assumed that the College supported our vision since the charge had been given to the new chair to create the PDS. Therefore, our most intensive efforts were concentrated on transmitting the vision and mission at the public school site and in meeting with teachers and administrators who wanted to be involved. We met with the teachers weekly before school and went over the specifics of how curriculum and teaching would be impacted by the PDS partnership. The vision, we believe, was articulated well at the public school level, but we had neglected to match the intensity of these efforts within our own College.

The lesson learned *is that even if the vision and mission have been articulated, continued efforts to ensure that the vision and mission are shared by both the College and the school are necessary for successful change.*

Point 4. **We convinced the Convinced, and under communicated the Vision and Mission to the Unconvinced**

When the new chair of Elementary Education took office, he immediately sought to put into effect his vision of educational reform and renewal in teacher preparation, which he had shared at the time of his interview and indicated would be his agenda should he be hired. In faculty meetings after his appointment, he briefed personnel from the College on the concept of the professional development school as an alternative to the teacher-preparation program currently in place. One of the first steps was to bring in teams from universities that already were engaged in PDS partnerships. College faculty and school personnel were asked to attend three all-day seminars presented by university teams engaged in collaborative teacher education so that they could hear first hand how these institutions planned and implemented their own PDSs. Faculty and students who responded enthusiastically to the presentations were those who already shared the vision of the collaborative paradigm. For those who did not share the paradigm of collaborative teacher preparation, the presentations represented more change -- read "threat!" -- than they were willing to accept.

The PDS is an iconoclastic entity -- encompassing a fundamental shift in the way that students, teachers, and university faculty interact and function in schools. Some College faculty may have believed that the chair and supporters of the PDS were attempting to force it, despite the fact that participation in the PDS was an option and not a requirement. The lack of a shared vision exacerbated the division within the College and raised anxiety levels among those who did not share the vision of a PDS.

The lesson learned: *We had "under communicated" the mission and vision to colleagues and administration. It is perplexing that reasonable and well-educated practitioners can disagree on the merits of a proposal for educational reform; but they do. Communication is everything!*

Point 5. **Permitting obstacles to block the new vision**

A major obstacle to the vision and mission of the PDS was the existence of a competing unspoken agenda to maintain the status quo. Proposed changes engendered resistance from those who saw a new program competing for scant resources. Some faculty saw the Professional Development School initiative as sapping money and human resources from a teacher-preparation program that they saw no urgency to change (they perhaps may have thought, "If it ain't broke don't fix it!"). It is difficult to encourage faculty to leave their "comfort zones." Because teaching is a solitary activity, those faculty who disagreed simply shut their doors and continued what they had been doing for years. Discussion occurred behind closed office doors but disagreements were never shared in open meetings. The phenomenon is not unique to education. Kotter observes that "Sensing the difficulty in producing change, some people try to manipulate events quietly behind the scenes and purposefully avoid any public discussion of future direction." 8

The lesson learned *is that passive resistance, although seldom visible, creates a barrier to change and undermines the new vision. Active discussion of disagreements is necessary to encourage faculty to recognize and overcome these barriers. A shared vision is built as people work through disagreements.*

Point 6. **Failing to cite Short-term wins**

We are happy to report that we did celebrate our successes and met the three conditions that Kotter defines as critical to a short-term win: "A good short-term win," Kotter says, "has at least these three characteristics":

1. It's visible: large numbers of people can see for themselves whether the result is real or just hype.
2. It's unambiguous; there can be little argument over the call.
3. It's clearly related to the change effort.

At the end of the first year of the PDS initiative, we held an open-house forum at the school to familiarize the community, College, and school district with the PDS's accomplishments. Those in attendance included college faculty and administration, school district parents, administrators, and teachers, representatives from the state department of education, and members and officials of state and local teacher associations. These visitors were able to observe children interacting with pre-service teachers and to speak with College and school faculty about the innovations in the site's curriculum and instruction. In discussions with a College administrator, a fourth grade teacher explained that despite her initial skepticism about the PDS concept, she could now see an extraordinary benefit for her students as a result of the pre-service teachers' and College faculty participation at the school.

Feedback was positive; subsequent discussion included extending the PDS to other schools within the district.

The lesson learned *is that we shouldn't have waited until the end of the year to "showcase" the PDS -- because the open house dramatically increased visibility of what a PDS was and how it performed to bridge the gap between the College and the school.*

Point 7. **Declaring victory too soon**

The success of the Open House gave us a false sense of security. We

continued to hear positive comments from those who had seen first hand the PDS in operation. We declared victory too soon and assumed that the PDS would continue the following fall. The result was that those who did not support it (or share the vision) became more apprehensive and increased their efforts to impede the PDS

The lesson learned *was that while basking in the euphoria following the Open House, we were blinded to the significance of the absence of key faculty and administrators. As Kotter's insight reveals:*

> *While celebrating a win is fine, any suggestion that the job is mostly done is generally a terrible mistake. Until changes sink down deeply into the culture, which for an entire company can take three to ten years, new approaches are fragile and subject to regression. (p.?)*

Point 8. **Neglecting to anchor changes firmly in the corporate culture.**

The PDS did not survive long enough to become anchored in the culture of the College. Ensuing resistance and loss of the chair and participating faculty blocked an effort to make the PDS an integral part of the teacher preparation process -- although the illusion, rhetoric, and facade of change remains. As a token acknowledgement, the PDS appears in official reports.

The very organization of the Department into five sub-areas which operated as "cartels" (Special Education, Bilingual Education, Early Childhood Education, Literacy, and Elementary Education), each with its own "coordinator" and agenda, blunted efforts to bring the Department together to consider and discuss change. The coordinators and faculty of these areas had the power to veto decisions of the chair, e.g., to hire faculty to teach in their area. In two cases, personnel who were qualified to teach were vetoed by the respective coordinators and faculty. Loyalties of faculty were to the coordinators rather than to the chair and the department as a whole, with an adversarial spirit prevailing rather than a spirit of cooperation. There was a slowing down of the PDS

initiative, resistance, frustrating faculty with endless discussion, resulting in an impasses and the ultimate breakdown of attempts at change.

The Lesson learned *(rather,* ***lessons learned!****) is that institutions reflect the attitudes, the prejudices, the good-will, and the values of those who resist change as well as those who welcome it. In our mission to initiate change, and in the difficulties we experienced, we were reminded of President John Kennedy, who met with his advisers to consider a difficult question-- a change in policy -- affecting the direction the government should take on a complex problem. Having reached his decision, he asked his advisors "How are we going to get the government to do it?"*

Our question is also "how." We made errors along the way, some reparable, some not, but ultimately the PDS was lost. While we attempted to move and change the College and the Department, key faculty resisted. It is natural and comfortable to hang on to the past, and we often times hold on to it with the determination of a bulldog -- we don't want to let go. The changes we advocated were too "radical" for some of the faculty who had a stake in the old paradigm. Change was a threat. But if public education is to remain as a viable institution, initiating the young to the values and responsibilities inherent to the survival of the Republic then we should, at the very least, consider it, debate it, and suggest alternatives to the "proposal on the floor", to evaluate and critique our institution of education as well as preserve it and to choose judiciously, with thought and reason, keeping in mind the fact that education can change as well as preserve.

While we failed to institute the PDS initiative, we still "keep the faith" by working with administrators and teachers in the schools, in their classrooms. Our research stems from our practices based on our theories, and we look to the future with optimism, that schools will endure, and at the same time will change and become better, that all children can and will learn, and will profit by their presence in them.

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