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Running head: Leadership to Educational Systems

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Instructional Designers Can Bring Leadership to Educational Systems

Leadership for Instructional Design

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Abstract

      Instructional designers can embrace leadership skills to shape the culture in educational entities toward a "living" institute (Senge, 2000, p. 54). Assessment and measurability set the direction toward the design of plan, implementation and strategy to organization. Paradigm shifts must take place in education.

Table of Contents

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNERS CAN BRING LEADERSHIP TO EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

The Dilemma

"Time magazine polled 1,000 Americans 18 and older (discovering) 67% surveyed think schools in this country are in crisis. 30% believe mentoring by more experienced teachers (is needed) for improved teacher effectiveness and 30% (declare) a need for better training in universities. In 2009, 69% of eighth-grade students scored below proficient in reading, 68% of eighth-grade students scored below proficient in math" (Ripley, September 20, 2010, p. 35, 40). By the time these students reach college level, their preparedness in math and reading are dismal.

Waiting for Superman, a film to be released in 2010 documents defunct schools in America's largest cities and parents desperate to get them into any other system that works, namely charter schools by lottery (Ripley, September 20, 2010). Exhibited are "teachers who read the newspaper in class," an illustration how the level of care and professionalism in some of our nation's schools are ill-trained and non-professional at best (Ripley, September 20, 2010, p. 34). Despite the fact that educational "spending has increased by 123% since 1971," American education "lags" in comparison to other developed countries (Ripley, September 20, 2010, p. 35). So desperate for change has the system become that a cash-for-grades program was developed for scientific research to measure student performance and motivation to learn (Ripley, April 19, 2010, p. 40-47). "As of August 5, 2010, over $89 billion in ED Recovery Act grants have been awarded in hopes to aid the "lowest performing schools in the nation" (Ed.gov, n.d., Recovery Act).

Discovery of a "7-year database" reveals "6,000 teachers" performing below par in regards to teacher "effectiveness" and "student improvement" (Ripley, September 20, 2010, p. 36). Yet, assessment and feedback on teacher performance measures remain low. The American educational system does standardized testing on student performance but does not do

standardized testing on teacher performance. This needs to change on all fronts for primary, secondary schools, colleges and universities! Such devices as teacher unions and tenure are keeping in some of the "lowest performers" in education (Cloud, 2010, p. 48). The state of urgency to create paradigm shifts to the learning culture in education is NOW! Instructional designers can aid in leading the way to organizational systems change.

Being a Change Agent

In order to change company culture, leaders need to "show people how the new approaches, behaviors and attitudes will help improve performance (Kotter, 2010, p. 80-81). More importantly, it is crucial to enlighten defunct organizations that their current strategy IS NOT working (Garvin and Roberto, 2009). Therefore, changes HAVE to be made.

Communication and transparency are critical in restructuring any organization as change is uncomfortable for most (Garvin and Roberto, 2009). Leaders of change are most successful when the design for change is inclusive (Garvin and Roberto, 2009). All personnel should be included with organizational facts and invited to make suggestions (Garvin and Roberto, 2009). This can be successful when it is clear how valid their input could be (Garvin and Roberto, 2009).

Defining Leadership as an Instructional Designer

Instructional designers in an educational institute provide faculty training to organizational skills, methodology, classroom techniques and technology. Leading faculty is very different from managing them administratively. "Leaders create and change culture; managers and administrators act within it" (Shein, 2008, p. 362). Today's leaders work toward a purpose thus a mission (Glen, 2008). They set guiding principles through a vision and actively

implement institutional goals (Glen, 2008). Shared vision and values guide faculty to, creating unity within their departments.

There is a unique opportunity for instructional designers to be change agents within their organization. A "charismatic leader is an enthusiastic, self-confident transformational leader able to clearly communicate his (or her) vision of how good things could be. Their vision usually entails dramatic improvements…of the organizations structure, culture, strategy and decision making..." (Jones and George, 2009, p. 514). This means, leaders of organizations today must be willing to create new ideas for innovation that empowers their staff within a forward-thinking model (Schein, 2008). Instructional designers, as "servant leaders," motivate faculty to self-direct toward organizational achievement (Jones and George, 2009, p. 497).

Characteristics of a Leader

An instructional designer who leads their organization's faculty must be "organizationally intuitive, decisive and action-oriented" (Franklin University, 2005, p. Competency Card Sort). They are responsible for building networks and collaboration among faculty through "mentoring and coaching skills" (Franklin University, 2005, p. Competency Card Sort). Most importantly, an instructional designer who leads their team faculty must facilitate a quality educational environment. They need to provide their faculty feedback so that the instructors can make improvements and grow within their teaching abilities (Franklin University, 2005). The behavior of a leader would empower the individual instructor to work their strengths as well as help build up weaknesses. Providing structure on how "to get work done effectively and efficiently" is the actual art to empowering the individual instructor (Jones and George, 2009, p.506). The responsibility is raising the level of professionalism amongst the teaching staff.

What Leadership Is Not

Leadership is rarely dominating or delegating; rather, it is an act of leading by example and collaborating with others. Many people mistake being a leader with power. While leading can have a component of power, it is rarely the kind of power people seek. Legitimate leadership power is described as "expert and referent powers" (Jones and George, 2009, p. 500-503). Expert power is the individual having specialized "knowledge, skills and expertise" for the job (Jones and George, 2009, p. 502). Referent power comes from "earning coworker respect, admiration and loyalty" (Jones and George, 2009, p. 503). Instructional designers can win the respect of team-faculty members by being approachable and willing to share expertise.

Directing Tomorrow's Team- Faculty

The view of tomorrow's team faculty must be an inclusive one. Kouzes and Posner declare "The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership" as "model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart" (2007, p. 14). The action steps used in "modeling the way" is described as "act with respect, be a good example, clarify values, stand up for beliefs and act on behalf of others" (Kouzes and Posner 2007, p. 15). To "inspire a shared vision" is to harness the "dream, passion and enthusiasm" of a better tomorrow for the organization (Kouzes and Posner 2007, p. 17, 18). Leaders must "challenge the process" in order to promote growth and a continuum of learning (Kouzes and Posner 2007, p. 18). The order would be to inspire innovation toward new "ideas, products, processes, services and systems" (Kouzes and Posner 2007, p. 19). To "challenge the process" is to bring a value-added perspective to the educational institute by eliminating stagnation (Kouzes and Posner 2007, p. 18). Instructional designers as leaders for tomorrow's team-faculty must "enable others to act" by empowering the capabilities and strengths of instructors (Kouzes and Posner

2007, p. 20). To implement "encourage(ing) the heart" of the professional staff, instructional designers would do well to know their faculty members, build relationships with them and recognize performance (Kouzes and Posner 2007, p. 21-23).

Identifying Tomorrow's Team- Faculty

In order for instructional designers to appeal to the upcoming generations, they need to research and distribute information concerning what is important to the next generation---current and cutting-edge market trends (Trendwatching.com, 2010 and Trendsetters.com. 2010). There is room to figure out what trends are current in each respected field so that departments remain "relevant" (Glen, 2008, p. 247). Training needs to be based on effective, efficient quality output (Time, 2009). Harness the talent to utilize their expertise.

Training Strategy

When leading the educational elite, such as professional faculty, instructional designers must first respect the intelligence at hand. All persons within their respected departments need to be recognized as subject matter experts with a special set of skills in their field (Glen, 2008). An instructional designer would do well to work WITH the individuals, not OVER them. The best way to motivate people to work is assist them to do well at what they are good at. This means an instructional designer's leadership-focus would be to aid in "structure and procedures" by setting the vision, goals and classroom management skills in alignment with the departments mission statement (Shein, 2008, p. 367). Strategy needs to include establishing a learning environment that encourages collaboration in and outside of the educational organization.

Leading subject matter experts means providing them with the space, tools, technology and projects to do what they love to do---their job (Glen, 2008, p. 244-254). It is the leader's

opportunity to develop, sustain and grow new ideas to extend the products and services value of the organization.

Instructional designers, as leaders, would do well to recognize individual faculty participation, as this creates a "sense of belongingness" (Kouzes and Posner, 2007, p. 122). Therefore, pride and celebration becomes part of the organization's culture by design. A "sense of belongingness" occurs when the individual faculty member is raised "to a higher level of motivation and morality" (Kouzes and Posner, 2007, p. 122). This can be achieved by empowering faculty with ownership to input within their departments. Therefore, organizational culture change can be owned by everyone who has input, thus creating a collective think-tank.

The Green Revolution

The "product life cycle" of any organization has a pendulum swing of highs, plateaus and lows (Kotler, 2003, p. 328). Regardless of what culture is at the time one enters as a leader within an organization---need for change is inevitable in order to stay fresh in the market place. All business needs constant renovation to stay current in the market; and, education is not different. This is necessary for long-term viability.

"In order to transform (culture) to cope with the Flat World and create a flexible labor force, societies must be able to do three basic things: develop the infrastructure to connect with the flat-world platform, educate more of their people to be more innovative and to tap into the platform, and possess leaders with the ability to manage and reap the benefits of the global platform" (Sen and Metzger, 2010, p. 81).

The coined phrase "flattened world" comes from a book entitled *The World is Flat* (Friedman, 2006). The publication is a Who's-Who play-book on the movers-and-shakers in the world of large corporation and the paradigm shift of globalization (Friedman, 2006). However,

the question it poses most is now that globalization is here, what is to be done (Friedman, 2006)? The globalized world is a world that runs very fast paced. One has to get on the train or get off the track---and, what does that mean?

The follow-up publication, *Hot, Flat, and Crowded* is full of ideas that seem to be working for other countries---that of the "Green Revolution" (Friedman, 2008). Suggestions imply a need for American businesses to grasp hold of green technology. Yet, not only has American business been slow-to-adopt, many businesses have resisted culture change. As a result, we see America in one of the worst recessions ever, having negative effect on economies of the world, economies of the state and personal economies.

So, instructional designers can take on the responsibility to bridges gaps to networks concerning training for a Green Revolution. This bold step forces "proactive problem solving" (Sen and Metzger, 2010, p. 77). What is the problem with business in America today? THERE IS A LACK OF JOBS!

It is no longer acceptable to just go to work and do a job---not as a leader---not as an instructional designer who is leading academic experts. Instructional designers have to go outside the comfort zone and build networks and collaboration with organizations that have green technologies. Training faculty, for tomorrow, means needing to adopt the idea of creating jobs on a grassroots level. Departments need to build that support for training, perhaps from scratch.

Is it that green technologies are better? This is inconclusive. This is about the fact that the Industrial Revolution is over! It isn't coming back and neither are the industrial jobs. The newer generations are fewer in people and not buying all the materialistic goods of prior generations (Trendwatching.com, 2010 and Trendsetters.com. 2010). Globalization is here to

stay and growing at an insurmountable rate of speed! Educational systems must form partnerships with business in order to continue training for tomorrow.

Math and Science Skills

"There is a growing concern that the United States is not preparing a sufficient number of students, teachers, and practitioners in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)" (Kuenzi, 2008, Summary). According to the *CRS Report to Congress* "the U.S. ranked 28th in math literacy and 24th in science literacy. Moreover, the U.S. ranks 20th among all nations in the proportion of 24-year olds who earn degrees in natural science or engineering" (Kuenzi, 2008, Summary). Of the nations "1.4 million public secondary school teachers, 13.7% reported math as their main teaching assignment and 11.4% reported science as their main teaching assignment (Kuenzi, 2008, p. 10).

Leaders in instructional design must help cultivate, promote and sustain support in these fields. How? The Government Accountability Office identifies organizations that received funding to develop STEM (Kuenzi, 2008, p. 19). These organizations include the "National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Department of Education and the Environmental Protection Agency" (Kuenzi, 2008, p. 19). These organization's purpose is to support other individuals and institutes in the growth of STEM, specifically to provide "financial support for students and scholars, institutional support to improve educational quality, support for teacher and faculty development, and institutional physical infrastructure support" (Kuenzi, 2008, p. 20). This is, yet, another example of how crucial it is to network with outside organizations and design success through collaborative efforts.

Creating a Living Culture, Altering the Machine

There is a need to adopt "living" culture in educational systems (Senge, 2000, p. 54). The educational system would be a stark contrast to its current state, if system changes were put into reality. The education system of yesterday set its sights to educate the masses a common menu of information. Today, one size cannot fit all. If "conformity" was a symptom of the Industrial Revolution than perhaps uniqueness could be celebrated in the Information Age (Senge, 2000, p. 54). A "living system" would be represented by growth and constant change, learning through osmosis in natural settings that provide facilitated supplies, equipment and opportunity for learning through discovery (Senge, 2000, p. 54). The future of education can be a system based on "new ways of thinking and interacting that enables deep, collective learning" (Senge, 2000, p. 52). "A living system keeps recreating itself (Senge, 2000, p. 54). Instructional designers leading such training would stress discovery learning, critical thinking and concrete output to benefit local society (Senge, 2000, p. 54-55). "Knowledge is about the capacity to do something" (Senge, 2000, p. 54). By reaching beyond the classroom walls through networking and collaboration, the "living system" continually replenishes itself (Senge, 2000). Overall, real education and leading the future is not about knowing the answers; rather, it is about knowing to ask questions. It is about learning to learn (Senge, 2000). Leading faculty in training sessions needs to concentrate on creating a perpetual world of continuum that is in a constant growth state to innovation.

The Design Process

Instructional designers need to create, support and innovate organizational culture changes for a continuum of growth and value-added education as a living organism. While

characteristics of transformational modern business principles apply; there are more detailed

steps towards actually making these kinds of synergies occur (Sen and Metzger, 2010).

In order to create original, creative solutions to problems instructional designers must,

first, identify "problem definition" (Meggs, 1992, p. 153). This means identifying the "target

demographics" in education concerning instructor methodologies and an approach to a student-

centered structure (Meggs, 1992, p. 153). As goals are defined, "budget and schedule constraints

as well as production limitations must be recognized (Meggs, 1992). The approach to problem

definition that Meggs addresses concerns how art-designers approach solution seeking for

clients. However, these organic principles can be applied to leadership skills as instructional

designers. Organizational culture will always need changed in order for survival in the market

place to occur. This is a continual problem to the "product life cycle" of any organization

(Kotler, 2003, p. 328).

The second step Meggs discusses is "information gathering" (1992, p. 154). This means

gathering market research toward what business needs in order to prepare students for the job

market. In turn, it is finding out what the client/student needs in order to be successful,

contributing members of society. This process means identifying organizational strengths and

weaknesses in how it separates its organizational culture (Kotler, 2003). How does the

educational facility differentiate itself from other colleges or universities concerning how it

serves its students? Instructional designers must set a clear mission, vision and objectives for

each department (Kouzes and Posner, 2007, p. 8).

The third step to the design process is "idea finding" (Meggs, 1992, p. 154). As

instructional designers serving educational entities, this means assessment and feedback.

Collaborative efforts can include "brainstorming" solutions within a department (Meggs, 1992,

p. 157). Collaboration may mean networking with outside entities in business and technology; creating partnerships. Solutions may come by way of "vertical thinking---obvious, traditional output" or by way of "lateral thinking"---an innovative solution (Meggs, 1992, p. 154-155). Solutions may even be suggested by the students themselves.

The most extreme suggestions to the design process include the idea of "synthesis and ocular reconnaissance" (Meggs, 1992, p. 154). An example of synthesis is "combining diverse and contradictory influences such as having opposing or multiple departments work together (Meggs, 1992, p. 158). "Ocular reconnaissance is …surveying, inspecting," or researching for solutions (Meggs, 1992, p. 158). Problem solving may come by way of recognizing patterns to cause (Meggs, 1992, p. 158).

"Notation" is artistically described as "creating thumbnails" and storyboarding solutions for the client (Meggs, 1992, p. 157). This offers a visual and very organic point of view to the design process. As instructional designers this process would refer the actual design for strategy. This step is the planning process of helping department heads and their subject matter experts meet, attain and exceed their goals. The fourth step to the design process is "solution finding---establishing criteria and validating the best choice" (Meggs, 1992, p. 159). Best choices would be to create educational programming that engages and motivates student-centered life-long learning?

Lastly, "implementation" is the final step to the design process (Meggs, 1992, p. 160). This is the presentation of solutions to delivery. Instructional designers may be concerned with whether a course is face-to-face, web-enhanced or a full online course. Tutoring and other support services would need to be put in place. Technical or design failures would need addressed immediately.

These ideas to the design process are based on the organic approach of artistic principles but can be applied to the design issues that instructional designers have as they look for creative solutions to building organizational culture, sustain systems and be responsible for a continuum of organizational changes for growth and market leadership.

A Model to Consider

How can instructional designers create a "living" culture, specifically? *Orbiting the Giant Hairball, a Corporate Fool's Guide to Surviving with Grace* by Gordon MacKenzie offers a business model demonstrating success tested in the corporate world (1996). Much like the slow-moving bureaucracy of education systems, the corporate pyramid is not the most creative setting. MacKenzie started by, first, changing the physical aesthetics to cater to creative exchange. The processes of design lead to innovative solutions for culture change within the organization.

An analogy of the "organizational model" is compared to a "living plum tree" (MacKenzie, 1996, p. 177-185). Branches depict supervisors to "exist to support the producers" (MacKenzie, 1996, p. 177-185). Top management is depicted as the tree trunk with a description for "enduring support," while the roots of the tree represent "cash flow" to the organization (MacKenzie, 1996, p. 177-185). The fruit of the tree are the "producers" or creative teams (MacKenzie, 1996, p. 177-185). This organizational model depicts a bottom-up style of business organization. Managers serve as support providing the environment, supplies and equipment for motivation to create.

The model is described as a living entity, organized into "groups verses divisions" or "persons who act as a unit" verses those in "state of being divided" (MacKenzie, 1996, p. 180). Rather than organizing people into "departments," creative teams were organized and given

"power of effective action" (MacKenzie, 1996, p. 181). To apply this analogy to instructional design, designers would empowering a teaching staff.

The model is further described as "holistic---emphasizing the organic or functional relationships between parts and wholes" verses "administrative---of or relating to the managing of execution or conduct" (MacKenzie, 1996, p. 182). The "holistic organization" is described as "of the same continuum and remain integrated in a single ecology rather than a hunkering down in separate departments" (MacKenzie, 1996, p. 184). This results in an organic dynamism and enhancement of collaboration" (MacKenzie, 1996, p. 184).

The model further differentiates an organic sense to culture structure as "going to the center source or foundation of something" (MacKenzie, 1996, p. 185). The model creates a culture for creative teams to collaborate, cooperate and work with one another as a centric force for inspiration and innovation (MacKenzie, 1996). The model is about restructuring an environment and nurturing the right people.

Learning Agility

Five characteristics to learning agility are "environmental context, learning mindset, learning behavior, learning technology and organizational support" (Clark and Gottfredson, 2008, p. 5). Instructional designers can shift organizational paradigms by leading faculty to be equipped for tomorrow with these agilities (Clark and Gottfredson, 2008). As the right team-faculty organizes, the tone for organizational aesthetics can be set.

Environmental context is to consider "market conditions…and opportunities for sustained profitability… (such as,) patterns, trends …and dislocations" (Clark and Gottfredson, 2008, p. 5). Again, instructional designers need to be aware of the current market. Social networking sites have made self-publishing possible with information exchange at a faster rate and broader scope

than ever (Clark and Gottfredson, 2008, p. 16). This indicates a need to train for flexibility within a faster-paced environment, such that globalization brings.

Learning mindset is described as "assumptions about how people learn (Clark and Gottfredson, 2008, p. 5). For the instructional designer leading faculty teams, this would mean concern for learning styles---pedagogies and methodologies. Clark and Gottfredson describe learning mindsets of the future to be "continuous, adaptive and collaborative learning at the moment of need" (Clark and Gottfredson, 2008, p. 24). Instructional designers leading faculty teams would design "co-creation activities" with "peer production" (Clark and Gottfredson, 2008, p. 16). Collaboration must be at the forefront of training.

Learning behavior themes are predicted to be "developmental, transparent, (and) challenging convention" (Clark and Gottfredson, 2008, p. 24). Furthermore, the learning agility includes being "receptive to both people and ideas" (Clark and Gottfredson, 2008, p. 17). "The key to sustainable growth is the cultivation and retention of knowledge workers" and "their ability to learn and adapt" (Clark and Gottfredson, 2008, p. 16, 18). Faculty training could include "extending the vision of the entire organization" through "exploration and monitoring" (Clark and Gottfredson, 2008, p. 18).

Learning technology is described to use "integrated systems aligned with business process and dynamic requirements" (Clark and Gottfredson, 2008, p. 24). This indicates a "need for better content management" (Clark and Gottfredson, 2008, p. 24).

"High agility" to organizational support is to "be able to learn quickly and apply effectively the collective knowledge and skills" at the "five moments of need" (Clark and Gottfredson, 2008, p. 22-23). The "five moments of need" are 1) "learning to do something for the first time;" 2) "learning more based on prior learning experience;" 3) learning at the point of

application;" 4) "learning when things change in order to adapt to new ways of doing things;" and, 5) "learning when things go wrong in order to solve a problem" (Clark and Gottfredson, 2008, p. 23). These are each teachable moments to consider for training faculty that clearly require assessment and feedback of the process to assure applicable improvements.

Collaboration and technology are identified as forerunning issues for the future (Clark and Gottfredson, 2008). The goal for the instructional designer is to create a training environment towards "high performance" and quality information to "retain workers" who can self-direct (Clark and Gottfredson, 2008, p. 25). The environment would "diagnose problems, prescribe solutions, give feedback, coach and enable" (Clark and Gottfredson, 2008, p. 31). Assessment and feedback are crucial! Success to organizational planning, implementation and strategy are based on, first, identifying the problems. Changes to improved outcomes and culture shift toward growth as a "living" organization can be designed by utilizing measurement tools (Senge, 2000, p. 54).

What Happens to Society if Nothing Changes?

If education in the United States continues to plummet statistically, the gap between the "have's" and "have not's" will widen (Castells, 1999, p.10). Embracing change cannot be just for the sake of change; rather it must be part of the proactive vision that moves the organization toward market productivity (Nanus, 2008, p. 311-12). Reframing and restructuring of an organization can be incredibly exciting as it sets the breeding ground toward new ideas and innovation (Burns, 2008, p. 309). Vision statements can often seem 'idealistic" (Nanus, 2008, p. 314). However, it is the dreams of today that build the futures of tomorrow. Clear communication, enthusiasm for the field, and "clarity of purpose" bring forth revitalization (Nanus, 2008, p. 316).

Instructional designers can be leaders in their field by aiding the process of culture change within educational institutes. Collaboration within the institute and, more importantly networking with outside resources contribute to a "living organization (Senge, 2000, p. 54). Instructional designers can inclusively invite team-faculty to embrace change and aid in the shaping of what education looks like tomorrow. A constant review at assessment and measurability results provide direction for what decisions need to be made to implement change toward growth. If changes and the continuum of growth stop within schools, colleges and universities; education would no longer be the entity where learning takes place.

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