#5 LEADING CHANGE PROCESSES

Loes van Wessum, Rieneke Pruis and Warner Immink

Practical questions for which this card offers SUGGESTIONS:

- How do I help teachers participate in making changes in the educational system?
- What does it require in my role of school leader to make successful changes?

Complexity of change processes

Change does not happen overnight. If you want to make changes, you need to be aware of different processes. There are organizational processes (e.g., planning, organizational structures and finance) and there are human, cultural processes (e.g., inspiring, mobilizing, motivating, learning, human interactions). Both are important if you wish to influence the success of change.

Several studies show that when change fails, it is largely because of the human aspect. For a long time, change management was used to make people change. Teachers were seen as objects which could be manufactured into better teachers. Using this approach led to teachers not feeling involved or being mistakenly regarded as resistant to change. This approach taught us that its worthwhile to use a planned approach, and that it needs to see teachers as subjects of change. Successful change is related to what teachers do and think within the context they work in. The leadership question is no longer: ''how do I get them aboard?" but "what makes them tick?" Check out HEADstart#2 for further information.

What is needed to realize changes?

If you want to realize changes, it is important that you know how to connect people. This is about understanding the other. Where do you strike a chord? What is in it for them? How do you create a sense of urgency? It is important that you can create a safe environment in which teachers feel free to speak what is on their minds and hearts. You must be able to interpret and investigate without judgment which is necessary for connecting with each other.

Acquire sufficient knowledge of change processes. Find out what this entails and what everyone's role can be. To determine the desired change, you must have a good idea of the current situation.

Step 1) Determine the desired change

The choice for the desired change subject should be based on the analysis of where you are now. What is the current situation, what would we like to enhance and what would we like to change or develop? If you want teachers to work to the desired outcomes of the change, it is important to start with the WHY question. Why do we want or need to change this? How will it contribute to the improvement of the learning of all our students? Everyone needs to understand why they think and feel this change is important and what it means for everyone to start the journey of change. Ask teachers why the desired change is important to them and inspire them to work out together where they want or should be. Let them define success and let them make clear what they are trying to achieve. Let them define how they can enlarge their impact. Let them define what is expected from them realizing the desired change. What are the possible solutions? What is the evidence these solutions will work? What do teachers need to grow professionally?

You can begin with a small group of teachers and let them ignite others. Find out if and why teachers do not commit to the desired change and what is causing this. Listen with an open heart and mind to them. What do they need to start participating in the change?

Step 2) Determine your change strategies

Think in advance on how you want to organize the change process. How do we get where we want to be? There are different perspectives on change processes. Do you see change primarily as a functional process, a project with a clearly executable plan, with goals to be achieved between goals and an end goal (for example: improving teaching methodology in Maths)? Or do you prefer an incremental approach? You may also see change as a continuous process. It is wise to consider to what extent these perspectives are also relevant to the desired change you have chosen. It is also wise to find out what your own preference is for a change approach and whether your preferred style suits this change or whether a different approach is needed. Use the appropriate change strategies (e.g., instructing, structuring, rewarding, activating, connecting, supporting) and the corresponding approach (e.g., top-down or participatory) consciously.

It is best to deploy a rich palette of change process strategies. Work together with others – preferably your team members – on a detailed change plan in which multiple strategies are used. Although the desired change outcome might already be determined, it is wise to check whether sufficient account has been taken of everyone involved in the change. Have everyone's interests, opinions, convictions, knowledge, and skills been sufficiently considered?

Think about your own role as a school leader. Give teachers many responsibilities by addressing their talents and offering them the opportunity to develop and learn together at work. (See HEADstart#1). How will you consciously inspire, mobilize and value the teachers?

Step 3) Work with a change plan

Facilitate time and create space for collaboration. Does the change process require organizational adjustments? Think of concrete actions for the various change strategies and create a timeline, preferably together with your team.

In addition to substantive, organizational and financial goals, also describe the human and cultural aspects of the change process. Determine who participates in the change and what each person is responsible for. What is expected of teachers exactly? Communicate clearly and identify what teachers need to do and learn to meet those expectations.

Provide good information and clear communication and check their effects on your team members.

Step 4) Monitor the change

Keep the focus on the ambition, the desired goal and result. Work systematically on the change and reflect on the progress, the process and the ambitions set. Monitor the created space. Check out what went well and what did not go well and what is needed to continue.

If you wish to learn more, check out:

14 do's and don'ts for mastering change in your organisation | **Esade – Do Better**
https://qr.page/g/1aHpkoP0oqb

Thinking in Colors by Léon de Caluwé and Hans Vermaak
https://qr.page/g/47kVq4X5myZ

Evidence-based change management by Denise M. Rousseau, Steven ten Have
https://qr.page/g/1klaUgtDPSP