

A Conceptual Model in Dealing with the Challenges of Education

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Abstract: *The leap of education from classrooms to homes on a large scale and in a rush posed immense human and technological challenges (for example, developing, maintaining, and enhancing distance learning or measuring and validating learning) (UNESCO, 2020). Other factors such as (1) poor internet connectivity, (2) unavailability of gadgets, (3) poor digital and ICT skills have left other teachers and students to struggle in this modern learning environment (UNSDG, 2020). Therefore, it is normal for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to evolve and change in such unprecedented and difficult circumstances. Educational leaders and managers, specifically, Deans of Philippine Colleges of Nursing, are poised to respond to the call of time that education must not stop despite the ill effects of the pandemic. As such, this paper will examine the three stages of Lewin's model: unfreezing, movement, and refreezing, as well as the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Model to implement change in the organization and to have a leader that will guide those resistant to change.*

Keywords: nursing education, Lewin's model, Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership model, educational challenges, pandemic

1. Introduction

The pandemic has caused the most significant disruption to education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion students across more than 190 countries in every continent (UNSDG, 2020). As a result, several countries have mandated community lockdowns and community quarantines regarding public safety, which resulted in students and teachers studying and working from home (Crawford et al., 2020). Philippines was no exception, as the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) suspended classes in all universities in late March 2020. Alternatively, they endorsed the transition of traditional classes to remote learning and online platforms in a concerted effort to provide educational services (CHED, 2020).

The leap of education from classrooms to homes on a large scale and in a rush posed immense human and technological challenges (for example, developing, maintaining, and enhancing distance learning or measuring and validating learning) (UNESCO, 2020). Other factors such as (1) poor internet connectivity, (2) unavailability of gadgets, (3) poor digital and ICT skills have left other teachers and students to struggle in this modern learning environment (UNSDG, 2020). Therefore, it is normal for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to evolve and change in such unprecedented and difficult circumstances. Educational leaders and managers, specifically, Deans of Philippine Colleges of Nursing, are poised to respond to the call of time that education must not stop despite the illeffects of the pandemic. As such, this paper will examine the three stages of Lewin's model: unfreezing, movement, and refreezing, as well as the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Model to implement change in the organization and to have a leader that will guide those resistant to change.

2. Description of the various models of Leadership

a) Lewin's Change Model

Kurt Lewin is widely regarded as a pioneer of social psychology. He emigrated to the United States from

Germany in the 1930s and is the creator of Lewin's three-stage change management model. According to Cummings et al. (2016), Kurt Lewin's three-stage change model compares the transitions required by people affected by a change to the freezing and unfreezing of water. Kurt proposed that to initiate a successful change within an organization, people must be jolted out of their current state of being to transition to the new state of being, which is the desired state. While this may initially cause people to resist change and show resistance to moving away from the current status quo, the Kurt Lewin three-step model is designed to move an organization's team past that initial resistance. Kurt Lewin's Force Field Analysis is a component of the Kurt Lewin change management model designed to gauge the force against change and the force for change. Lewin's stages of change assist organizations in understanding how to create a more significant force for change, which will eventually successfully move everyone to the new change.

According to Burnes (2020), the world has changed since the theory was initially presented in 1947. However, the Kurt Lewin model is still highly relevant and an inspiration for many other modern change models today (Bartunek & Woodman, 2015). The following stages are discussed briefly below.

Stage 1: Unfreezing

When confronted with change, the Unfreezing stage is probably one of the more essential stages to comprehend. This stage is all about preparing for change. It entails accepting that change is necessary and preparing to leave our current comfort zone (moving from traditional face-to-face to online learning). This first stage involves preparing ourselves or others for the change and, ideally, creating a situation in which the change is desired. Unfreezing and becoming motivated for change entail weighing the pros and cons and determining whether the pros outnumber the cons before taking any action. This is the foundation of what Kurt Lewin referred to as the Force Field Analysis. According to Force Field Analysis, there are numerous factors (forces) for and against change that we must be aware of (analysis). If

the factors favoring change outweigh the factors opposing change, then changes will occur. If not, there is a lack of motivation to change. If changes are suddenly thrust upon the organization, expect resistance to change.

Stage 2: Change

Kurt Lewin recognized that change is a process rather than an event. The inner movement or journey made in response to a change is referred to as transition. This second stage occurs as we implement the necessary changes. People are unfreezing and transitioning to a new way of being. This is a difficult time because people are learning about the changes and need time to understand and adapt to them. Transition is a process that each of us goes through without a set time limit because everyone is unique. Support is critical at this stage and can take the form of training, coaching, and accepting mistakes as apart of the process. The use of role models and allowing people to develop their own solutions will help the change process. It is essential to preserve a clear picture of the desired change and the benefits so that people do not lose sight of where they are heading.

Stage 3: Refreezing

This stage is referred to as freezing by Kurt Lewin, but many people refer to it as refreezing. As the name implies, this stage is concerned with restoring stability after the changes have been implemented. The changes have been accepted and have become the new normal. As a result, people form new relationships and get used to their routines. At this time, Lewin is concerned with reinforcing the change and ensuring that the desired change is accepted and sustained in the future. In the absence of this, people tend to revert to their old habits. By freezing, Kurt Lewin meant to support the desired change in order for it to continue and not be lost.

b) Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Model

In a study done by Ghazzawi et al. (2017), a situational leadership model concludes that no unique leadership style is one size fits all. Situational Leadership is a flexible, adaptable leadership style that determines whether a leader is more directive or supportive based on the individualized needs of the employees. This is because leaders must meet employees' needs and wants to ensure their satisfaction, as increased job satisfaction and leaders' interest in fulfilling their subordinates' interests and wants have been shown to positively affect employee productivity.

Leaders must also stay current on their employees' development as his knowledge of his work develops, his commitment to completing tasks increases, and his ability to perform tasks is enhanced (Walls, 2019). Ultimately, the Situational Leadership Model suggests that leaders adapt

their style based on the level of readiness and development of their employees. Hersey went on to say that situational leaders must be adaptable, know how to direct and coach, and encourage teams to participate in decision-making when their readiness is high.

The Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Model includes four different leadership styles that are paired with four levels of an employee's Performance Readiness. The leadership styles are listed in chronological order, from least ready (requiring the most direction and support) to most ready (requiring the least amount of direction and support).

Telling (S1)

Employees with the lowest level of Performance Readiness require the most attention. This leadership style, for example, is typically used when someone is new to their role, is not a self-starter, or is failing to meet standards. When an employee is unable to make decisions for themselves, a decisive leader steps in. They establish clearly defined goals and deadlines, as well as check in on their progress on a regular basis.

Selling (S2)

Selling leaders act as an influential and supportive figures for those who want to learn how to do a good job. This leadership style is used when motivating others and establishing trust. In essence, a selling leader demonstrates that they are capable of leading their team members.

Participating (S3)

A participating leader fosters a collaborative, encouraging environment in which everyone's ideas are valued. While the employee in question may be more experienced and capable than those who require the telling or selling styles, they still require assistance. When using this style, hands-on leaders let team members make decisions while providing assistance as needed.

Delegating (S4)

This leadership style is used when dealing with experienced, competent, and motivated employees. The employees have proven their ability to successfully direct themselves and have been granted the highest level of autonomy. Managers and leaders can be more hands-off with this type of person while still providing support as needed.

3. Conceptual Framework

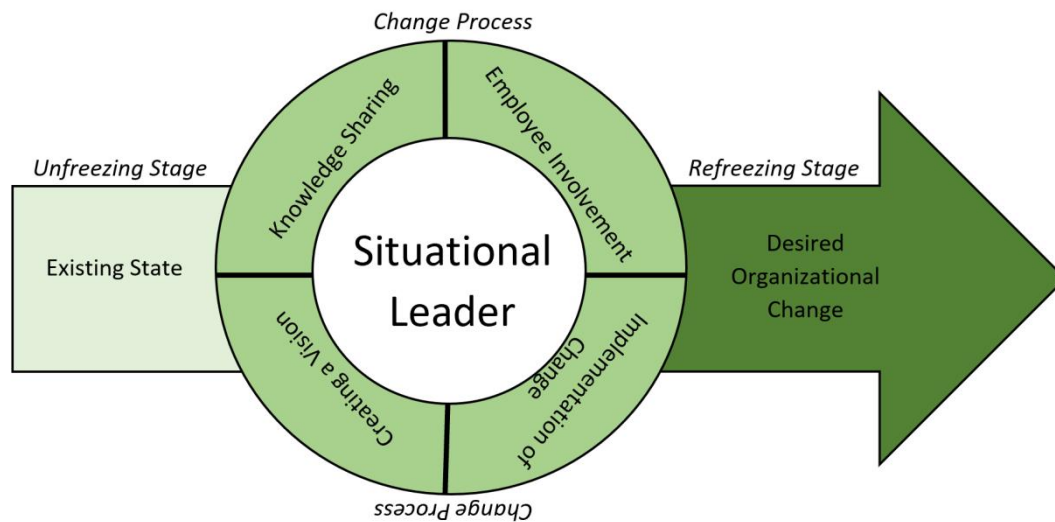


Figure 1: Leadership Model to create Organizational Change

The leadership model used in this paper aims to examine the organizational change process through a series of events that focus on creating a vision, knowledge sharing, employee involvement, and implementation for change. The model is divided into three parts: leadership, management, and organization. This process is being initiated through the three-step change model, which denotes the step-by-step phases of unfreezing, change process, and refreezing, so employees are being involved and instructed by leaders regarding the issues related to the change process. It is critical to emphasize that the Leadership is in the middle of the unfreezing and freezing stages because they are the influencing force in the change process. Seeing as Situational Leadership is a leadership style, it is best defined by how it is put into action. As an example: A dean of the College of Nursing can make it applicable in their institution by doing the following:

- 1) Analyzing: A dean can concentrate on identifying and analyzing performance readiness factors in employees, which allows them to adjust their leadership style.
- 2) Adapting: A dean can easily switch between the four influencing behaviors (telling, selling, participating, delegating). Even if they are dealing with multiple people at once, they can still transition seamlessly based on the needs of the situation.
- 3) Influencing: Rather than using authority, a dean who practices situational leadership gains influence by fostering trust and a safe work environment.
- 4) Serving: A dean can serve others by being adaptable to what employees require from the person who guides them.
- 5) Developing: A situational leader's primary goal is the development of their followers. According to this logic, a dean frequently serves as a coach, guiding their employees through learning experiences and opportunities.

Situational leaders effectively guide their organizations by strategically deploying their leadership qualities rather than leading from a one-dimensional perspective. As a result, they produce better results by modifying themselves in order

to positively influence employees (Henkel & Bourdeau, 2018).

Unfreezing Stage

The unfreezing stage shows the current state of the organization that is being considered for change. Every step of the model requires the leader to play an essential role in unfreezing the organization. The organizational change process is influenced by the situational leadership style. In this leadership style, the leader coordinates with employees, shares their knowledge and gives them the opportunity to make decisions at the organizational level.

Change Process

During the change process, the situational leader must employ the four management skills in order to implement the desired organizational change. The four management skills are:

a) Creating a vision

A compelling vision is frequently the motivator for change, even when there is considerable uncertainty about how best to carry out the change (Heckelman, 2017). To drive organizational change, the leader must create a compelling vision for the future. Deep and large-scale changes are impossible to achieve without a solid vision to guide and drive them. When a clear vision is defined within an organization, it serves as a focal point or point of common interest, making everyone feel like they are part of a larger whole. This not only adds meaning to the work, but it also helps to unite everyone into a team that is focused, organized, and working cohesively to achieve the vision.

b) Knowledge sharing

It is critical for the leader to encourage knowledge sharing in the organization. Employees should share knowledge about task assignments, customer service, performance outcomes and decision making, information flow from multiple levels, new technology equipments, work methods, organizational improvement ideas, share skill and expertise, share development programs, and contribute to problem-solving (Dumas & Beinecke, 2018). Sharing knowledge in organizational resources is critical for competitiveness,

sustainability, and a dynamic economy (Wulf & Butel, 2017). As a result, organizations rely not only on training, staffing, and management systems but also on knowledgeable individuals who share beliefs, experiences, skills, competencies, and abilities.

c) Employee involvement

Employee involvement aims to increase members' input into decisions that affect organizational performance and employee well-being in order to effect change (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). Employee involvement is the most antiquated and effective strategy for overcoming resistance to organizational change in formulating and implementing change. Participation will drive high-quality change and overcome resistance during the implementation stage. A wide range of information and ideas can be generated as a result of this, which may contribute to effective and appropriate innovations for change. After breaking free from the status quo, leaders must encourage employee participation in order to accelerate organizational change. Employees must be informed about the change in order to stimulate the process, and leaders must educate, communicate, participate, involve, provide emotional support and incentives (Sung & Kim, 2021).

d) Implementation for change

The implementation of change entails changing the current state of the organization into the desired state, but this will not happen quickly but rather simultaneously. According to Aslam et al. (2018), Beckhard and Harris (1987) identified three activities for change implementation: activity plan, commitment plan, and change management structures. The activity plan creates a road map for organizational change, indicating which events and specific activities must occur first in order for the change to be successful. The commitment plan identifies the individuals and groups whose commitment is required for organizational change in order to formulate and gain their support, and the change management structure identifies the direction and structure for managing the change process. This includes resources to promote change, the existing leadership structure, and interpersonal and political skills to launch the change process.

Refreezing Stage

The refreezing stage is when the desired organizational change has come to fruition. This is when the leader restores stability, and the new changes become the new normal. People form new relationships and get used to their routines.

Application of the framework in terms of the following challenges:

For all the following challenges below, the academic leader or dean must first confront existing issues (unfreezing stage) that have come about because of the COVID 19 pandemic. Making improvements to the curriculum, delivery of instruction, and the learning environment must be based on regular student feedback, data collection, faculty feedback, and guidance from local, regional, and national authorities.

1) Instructional delivery and assessment/evaluation of the course content in the BSN program

In the Philippines, CHED has allowed theoretical instruction to be replaced with distance learning, requiring nursing academics to adapt to a completely virtual approach to teaching. Aside from the challenges of changing instructional delivery, online learning has exacerbated pre-existing issues. The assessment and evaluation of course content via tests, quizzes, and examinations is perhaps the most major challenge (Strielkowski, 2020). Assessments are frequently administered online, where instructors are limited in their oversight of students, making it impossible to monitor and control cheating. As a situational leader, the dean must consult (employee involvement) with faculty to determine what types of testing formats are appropriate for their instructional delivery, whether they are performance-based formats or constructed-response (sentence completion, short answer, matching type, and true or false). To solve this dilemma, the dean must evaluate both faculty and students, as well as best practices (knowledge sharing) at other colleges and universities. For those who are resistant to change or are experiencing difficulties as a result of the change, it is the dean's responsibility as a situational leader to influence, serve, and develop their faculty to achieve their common goals and implement change.

2) Faculty preparedness

As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, many accredited nursing programs were forced to shift from face-to-face delivery to some form of distance education. Some programs made use of synchronous video conferencing, while others made use of online courses or a combination of delivery methods. Programs needed to make these changes quickly in order to allow students to finish the academic term and continue to provide the nursing program throughout the pandemic. With the transition, some nursing faculty members required additional professional development in order to develop courses, teach in an online environment, and learn new software products. Institutions responded to faculty needs by providing information technology support to implement the changes, as well as professional development/in-services to faculty who required it. As a situational leader, the dean will adjust their approach based on the level of readiness and development of their faculty. They are adaptable, knowing when to direct and when to coach, as well as how to encourage team members to participate in decision making when they are capable. In order to achieve their vision and implement change, they can also involve other faculty in sharing their knowledge and best practices.

3) Addressing Possible Concerns of Students, Staff, and Parents

Students, staff, and parents may be experiencing fear, uncertainty, and anxiety as a response to the COVID-19 outbreak. It is the role of the dean to enlist communication, cooperation, coordination, and collaboration with all three. As an academic leader, the dean must analyze the situation or problem, adapt to readily available resources, influence others to follow school or national policy, serve those in need, and develop a plan that will allow the continuation of remote learning for students and faculty. Sharing their knowledge and incorporating involvement from students,

staff, and parents will implement change to achieve the college's mission, vision, goals, and objectives.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, a good leader has been defined by Beltran (2021) as someone who is able to create the vision, to be able to articulate it before communicating it. He is not on the path of optimization; he seeks to transform; he is resolutely oriented towards the future and is able to get out of the myopia of the past. A situational leader allows for flexibility and knowing when to use one of four task-based styles at any given moment. As the pandemic appears to be slowing and life is returning to a new state of normal, nursing programs are beginning to transition back to the delivery modality/modalities previously used, which in many cases was face-to-face delivery. Change is hard work. Now is the time for academic leaders and faculty to consider the changes that were made and make some intentional decisions (refreezing stage) regarding which of these changes, if any, will be retained.

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