CHANGE FORCES:

IMPLEMENTING CHANGE IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL

FOR THE COMMON GOOD

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In this article, we investigate the change forces that act on administrators, subject department chairpersons and teachers as they seek to implement a change in a Canadian secondary school. Using a case study methodology, our analysis of the data uses Sergiovanni's (1998) six change forces: bureaucratic, personal, market, professional, cultural, and democratic forces. Our interpretation supports the importance of the principal and administrators, working together with teachers, in implementing change. The analysis points to the chairperson of subject departments having a crucial, but often overlooked, role in the implementation of change. Three key co-requisites that allow chairpersons to play this critical role are: the existence of a school-level democratic commitment to the common good that guides the work of professional learning; the location of professional learning within departments to operationalise the common good; and, the capacity of the chairperson to fulfil their role as an instructional leader in the fullest sense of the term.

Introduction

The education reforms of the past two decades, in Canada and elsewhere, have seen

increasing emphases being placed on accountability, student learning, the curriculum and

teacher quality (Björk, Kowalski, & Young, 2005). Accompanying these changes have been

shifts within education administration to consider the site-based management of schools. These

changes make for an interesting tension: schools tend to be characterised by a "dominant culture

of stabilizing reform" (Quartz, 1995, p. 240). Educational reforms are liable to be dampened and

absorbed, resulting in negligible changes to the underlying structures and beliefs of schools. These structures and beliefs are important, as they provide a sense of meaning for teachers, and it is this sense that informs teachers' identities and practices. To effect change in schools, therefore, it is necessary to change the meanings that are held both individually, and corporately, within a school. The work of educational leaders during a period of change is thus twofold: to help teachers move beyond the current meanings while concurrently constructing conditions that promote the learning of new meanings (Fullan, 2002).

Educational reformers come to their task with a range of strategies and views about how people respond to change. These strategies, which can view schools as organisations, markets or communities, possess different strengths, depending on the purpose(s) of the reform. Viewing schools as organisations or markets allows for rapid, short-term change; conversely, a view of schools as communities holds potential for deeper, long-term change (Sergiovanni, 1998). Drawing on these strategies, Sergiovanni (p. 579) has proposed six change forces, which rely on different change practices, which can be deployed to effect change:

- Bureaucratic forces rely on rules, mandates and requirements to provide direct supervision, standardized work processes and or standardized outcomes to prescribe change.

- Personal forces rely on personality, leadership style and interpersonal skills of change agents to motivate change.

- Market forces rely on competition, incentives and individual choice to motivate change.

- Professional forces rely on standards of expertise, codes of conduct, collegiality, felt obligations and other professional norms to build professional com- munity.

- Cultural forces rely on shared values, goals and ideas about pedagogy, relationships and politics to build covenantal community.

- Democratic forces rely on democratic social contracts and shared commitments to the common good to build democratic community.

It is the purpose of this article to examine the change forces that act on school administrators, subject department chairpersons and teachers within one Ontario secondary school as they planned, implemented, monitored, and maintained a change that involved an all boys single-sex mathematics class in grade nine. Drawing from this purpose, our research question is to ask how change forces act on individuals at different levels of responsibility for an educational change.

Theoretical Perspective: Change Forces, Schools and Departments

The implementation of change within schools is complex, and the literature is scattered with innumerable initiatives that failed to deliver the expected outcomes. The difficulties of implementing change have been well researched, and include:

> Ambiguous, unclear, and inconsistent policies ... the agendas of the implementing agency and agents, community attitudes, resources, time ... recalcitrant, unsupervised, and change-adverse bureaucrats ... Policies that fit local agendas are embraced, whereas those that do not are opposed, modified, or circumvented (Spillane, 2010, p. 145-6).

Those who wish to reform schools often have noble aims, but tend to focus their efforts on the "what" of change, ignoring the "how" of change (Rogan & Aldous, 2005). Ineffective implementation leads, in turn, to teachers growing tired and cynical of change efforts "always changing and yet staying the same" (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999, p. 100). This dismal history of implementation has lead to questions being asked as to the relationship that exists between change forces and the nature of schools. The perspectives that reformers, administrators, teachers, or researchers hold towards the nature of schools will have a profound influence on how they believe change occurs, and the nature of change forces that operate, within schools. One result of this questioning has been a greater acknowledgement of the human dimension of

change that exists in schools: in particular, the understanding that schools can be simultaneously conceptualised as both organisations and communities (Paule, 1989; Sergiovanni, 1998). Paule argued that contemporary work is structured vertically in organisations, as well as structured horizontally by communities. Applying this vertical and horizontal structure to schools presents them as organisations composed of multiple occupational communities. Secondary teachers can simultaneously belong to multiple communities, but the most influential community in terms of teaching and learning is the subject department (Siskin, 1994).

In adjusting our focus to the subject department, we are of the opinion that departments are capable of being seen as simultaneously communities and organisations (see Melville & Wallace, 2007). The particular cultural strength of departments as communities is their identification with the subject (Siskin, 1994). This identification is crucial, as continual improvement that "stimulates real and lasting gains in student achievement depends on teachers being able to work together in strong professional communities" (Hargreaves, 2002, p. 404). Concomitantly, as organisations, departments have the capacity to organise and provide opportunities for teachers to work together, an important cultural precursor to educational reform (Melville & Wallace, 2007). Departments, as communities and organisations, have a crucial position in relation to teacher professional learning and teacher leadership, for they can influence three key reform areas identified by Talbert (2002): to provide leadership in the promotion of teaching and learning, to develop learning opportunities, and establish a capacity for reform. In each of these areas, the personal traits of the chairperson are paramount in optimizing the capacity of the department for undertaking change (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008).

When seeking to implement and maintain changes, departments are subject to the same six change forces that Sergiovanni (1998) has described for schools. The six change forces that

may act in schools at any one time are: Bureaucratic forces that rely on rules, mandates and requirements to prescribe change; personal forces that rely on change agents to motivate change; market forces that rely on competition and incentives; professional forces that rely on standards of expertise and collegiality; cultural forces that rely on shared values; and, democratic forces that seek a shared commitment to a "common good." The notion of the common good has a long history from the writings of Plato and Aristotle, and centres on the development and maintenance of social systems and institutions that work for the benefit of all members of society. Relating this understanding to education, Fullan (2003) argues that schools, as institutions that foster civil, prosperous and democratic societies, should address the social and cognitive needs of all children, with a particular emphasis on those that have been marginalised in the past. It is this understanding of the common good that we are using in this article. The democratic forces that would support the common good, argues Mulford (2010), would include a respect for individuals and their cultures; a commitment to inquiry and critique; a recognition and valuing of the interdependence needed to achieve the common good; and the responsibilities of the individual in working for the common good. Sergiovanni (1998) argues that the perception of a school as an organisation, market or community will produce very different beliefs as to the type and efficacy of the change forces that act in the school. A perception of the school, or department, as an organisation, or market, will lead to the deployment of bureaucratic, personal or market change forces. These forces are efficient in changing school structures over the short term, but will not promote fundamental changes in teaching and learning. A perception of the school, or department, as a community will lead to the deployment of professional, cultural, and democratic change forces. These forces require more time to realise their potential, but are effective at making lasting changes to the school's culture. If schools are conceptualised as simultaneously

organisations and communities, then all six change forces are potentially in play, often in contradictory ways.

Context of the Change

The context for this study is a public secondary school in a residential area of a provincial Ontario city. It has approximately eleven hundred students from grades 9 to 12, and serves a wide range of socio-economic groups, including a rapidly growing First Nations population. The school's organisation is based on subject departments, and all students are streamed from grade nine. There is also a student services department that is responsible for working with teachers to develop specific strategies for raising student achievement. This department is chaired by the student success lead. Within the mathematics department a full range of mathematics courses are offered to cater to students' different abilities and needs: International Baccalaureate, university, college and career pathways are all catered for. The level of enrolment in the college and career pathways has been steadily increasing in recent years.

Formal planning for the single-sex class commenced in May 2009, with the actual class beginning in September 2009. The class ran for one semester until January 2010. The move to a single-sex class was a deliberate policy change based on three years of discussions around the mathematical success of grade nine boys. The first discussions began in 2007 and involved the head of the school's student services department (Janet), the chairpersons of science (Dan) and chairperson of math (Anthea) and the school principal at the time. The current principal (Milton) took up his position in 2009, and has been an active participant in the discussions. Starting in 2008, the discussions moved to a consideration of the available data on student success such as the provincially administered Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) testing

regime (see http://www.eqao.com/) and published research on single-sex classes. The discussions culminated in a decision being made to implement a single-sex class, of 23 grade nine boys, in the 2009 school year.

An important part of the implementation that was directly linked to the reading of the research literature was the recognition that some pedagogical strategies had been shown to be more effective in single-sex classes (Younger & Warrington, 2002). These strategies became the focus of professional learning opportunities within the mathematics department. By the end of the first year of the implementation, there was general agreement at the school level that the change had produced positive outcomes. The EQAO results for the first year showed every student in the single-sex class had reached the provincially mandated standard, a dramatic improvement on previous evaluations when a third of the students had not reached the standard. The result for the single-sex class was part of a general improving trend for all grade nine students. Other potential indicators of success included class attendance being in the 90–95% range, compared with typical values for males in mixed classes of 70%, fewer referrals to the front office for discipline related issues, and a more positive attitude to mathematics that was highlighted in journals that the students kept through the year. In the 2010 school year, the single-sex class was retained into grade 10, for both mathematics and science, and a new single-sex class was formed in grade nine with another teacher. The continuation into a second year indicates that the implementation of the change has been successful.

Methodology and Method

Drawing from Sergiovanni's (1998) discussion of change forces, we are focussing on the change forces that act on individuals at different levels of responsibility for an educational change. Consequently, we have adopted a case study approach, as the change that we are

investigating is bounded in both time and activity (Cresswell, 2003). In developing our case

study, we have relied on a number of data sources. Three sources provided background data as to

the genesis and planning of the change: audio recordings of the three planning meetings

conducted in early 2009, brief conversations with the main participants which were recorded via

field notes, and a consideration of the evidence of boys' mathematics achievement in the

previous year and their attendance records.

Four semi-structured interviews were used as our major data source. The use of semi-

structured interviews provided us with a strategy for understanding the teachers' responses to the

change, both "personal—reflecting a person's life history [and] social—reflecting the milieu, the

contexts in which teachers live" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 2). In May 2010, we

interviewed the four participants in the change about how they believed the implementation year

had progressed, and the change forces that they believed had acted on them. The questions were

developed from the work of Rogan and Aldous (2005). The questions were supplied to each

participant before the interviews to give them time to consider their responses, with each

interview lasting approximately 40 minutes. All interviews were completed at the school. The

completed transcripts were returned to the participants for member checking, clarification as

necessary, and their approval. Initial analysis of the interview data was conducted by two of the

authors independently comparing the interview transcripts to the change practices which are

linked to the six change forces discussed in Sergiovanni (1998). The draft findings were then

compared in order to check for consistency in the analysis. These initial analyses were then

compared to the transcripts of the planning meetings and the researchers' field notes to check for

consistency and anomalies. The second stage of the analysis utilised grounded theory (Strauss &

Corbin, 1990) to identify themes that fitted the data. The completed analyses were then provided

to the individuals for member checking. By these processes, we believe we have met the four

criteria that have been proposed to establish trust and confidence in the conclusions of qualitative

research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Analysis

Our research question inquires into how Sergiovanni's change forces act on individuals at

different levels of responsibility for an educational change. It should be noted here that market

forces were never raised as a driver of the change, and as such will not be discussed further. Our

analysis appears to indicate that the impact of change forces varies at different administrative

levels within the school, with the exception of democratic change forces. In presenting our

analysis under each of the change forces, we are not suggesting that the change forces can be

considered discretely.

Bureaucratic Forces: Rules, Mandates and Requirements

Neither Clark, the classroom teacher, or Anthea, the chairperson, referred specifically to

bureaucratic forces as having any influence on how they conceptualised or operationalized the

change. As the student success lead, Janet was primarily concerned for the school's commitment

to the student success, and the bureaucratic organisation needed to support the change:

> *I was interested in seeing a class focused on boys and working with their strengths*
> *and interests. I was thinking of boys and literacy, Dan (the science chairperson)*
> *was thinking science, and Anthea was open to anything ... Math took place because*
> *it worked into the timetable really well. So, did it have to be math? Math just*
> *happened because we were able to manipulate timetables.*

It is within Janet's administrative capacity to make critical decisions, in consultation with

departmental chairpersons, about the implementation of the change. Her experience highlights

the role that chance may play in implementing change. Janet considered literacy, science and mathematics in relation to student success; mathematics was the most readily timetabled from a bureaucratic stance. Milton's bureaucratic concern with the change was principally political. He was responsible for general oversight of the department as an administrative unit within the school, and, as such, made it clear that he retained the power to act if necessary:

> *If it looks like things aren't working, or politics are getting in the way, ultimately it would be the principal's responsibility to consult with staff and senior administration to call a halt, or to alter things dramatically, if that needed to be done.*

In terms of pursuing the common good, bureaucratic forces clearly hold potential as a source of tension between the administrative role of the principal and democratic forces that stress interdependence and individual responsibility. In this particular case, Janet is given the authority, in consultation with Anthea, to operationalise the change in pursuit of the common good. This observation stands in contrast to the finding of Friedman (2011, p. 300) that chairpersons respond as "reactive managers" to the bureaucratic force exerted by principals.

Personal Forces: Change Agents

Clark was explicit in his understanding, and appreciation, of the role that Anthea played in developing a departmental culture that permitted the successful implementation of the change:

> *We are very much a department, as opposed to some other departments where you'd be more on your own ... the willingness to try has been very important ... never once was I really worried that if it turned into a disaster was it going to be my head on a platter. It was understood that we are trying this no matter what happens. We'll take a look at the results. We'll see what worked, what didn't, and we're going to move forward with it. I always felt that I didn't have to knock it out of the park this first time otherwise the program was going to fail. That was very liberating.*

> *Interviewer: So Anthea basically gave you the freedom to fail, but if it does fall over, then she's going to take the responsibility for it?*

I think, yes, I think we're going to share the responsibility.

In addition to providing leadership to her department, a key part of Anthea's work has been the cultivation of strong relationships across the wider school community:

> *The administration has been very supportive, but they need to be kept in the loop. It's difficult to have busy people involved, but they really need to be kept informed, because if something arises, we hope that they will back us up and that they will have the knowledge to do so. The one thing that I've learnt is that you never allow for surprises for administration and board level superintendents. We're not doing anything so out there that it is going to be a detriment to our students. As long as we can show that this is good for kids, then I believe that we will have their support.*

The quality of Anthea's personal relationships is reflected in the decision that Janet made in having the confidence to implement the change in the mathematics department. In making her decision, Janet relied on her understanding of, and confidence in, Anthea's interpersonal and leadership skills:

> *I think Anthea is outstanding, she's very professional and when she commits to something, she really commits to it. Clark is the key factor of the student's success right now. He works closely with Anthea, and is willing to share what's working and what's not working with other people. I think it's huge. I don't know how many teachers would feel as comfortable as Clark obviously feels with public teaching. It's just now that you see Anthea and Clark in action, I'm really glad that it's Anthea and Clark.*

Milton has a high level of trust in his chairpersons and teachers, and sees the administration as having a supporting role in developing leadership within the school: "our ethos is to trust teachers and specifically chairpersons that they are ready for [change], and that we may not have all of the answers along the way." He also clearly indicated that he sees the mathematics department operating as an organisation and community in which the common good is being negotiated and used to shape and improve classroom practice:

> *They function at as a professional group, as opposed to independent professionals … where they're already innovative and committed to several initiatives of changing and shaping practice to improve student learning.*

The importance of personal forces in change are not to be underestimated. Our analysis here indicates that the personality, leadership and interpersonal skills of the chairperson are crucial in developing the conditions in which a change can be successfully implemented and sustained. This supports the view of Brundrett and Terrell (2004), who argue that it is department chairs who translate the school commitment to a common good into classroom practice. Leithwood et al. (2008) also comment on the importance of leaders' influence on teaching and learning through their capacity to motivate teachers, foster commitment and shape positive working conditions. Personal qualities also impinge greatly on the capacity of leaders to shape and direct the professional forces that leverage change.

Professional Forces: Standards of Expertise and Collegiality

From Clark's perspective, the mathematics department acts as community through which teaching practices are refined. A key feature of this refining process appears to be the presence of very strong professional change forces. Professional change forces rely heavily on values of competence, continuous learning and altruism. Clark has a realistic confidence in himself as a teacher:

> *I enjoy teaching math, I'm very proud of the work I've done, and we've had some good results in the grade nine classes. I'm pretty good at being cocky, but I'm always questioning and examining my practice, which is a good thing.*

This confidence appears to be a well-spring for Clark's competence and continuous learning, which is exemplified by his evidence-based changes to practice:

> *There's not much right now that I'd change, but I'd want to see the results at the end [before] we start reviewing.*

According to Clark, the department has a sense of collegiality and commitment to professional learning:

> *Everybody's constantly sharing ideas and resources, and we also use a share drive on the network. Having discussions on what we're trying in class, what works and what hasn't, and our EQAO prep for grade nine is really a team effort. Grade nine teachers meet with grade seven and eight teachers from our feeder schools and we have other teachers come into our classes.*

For Anthea, professional forces were focussed through the teaching and learning of mathematics in a professional community. Working with the students' elementary teachers and from her own observations, it was clear that boys were struggling in mathematics, and that those struggles were already evident in elementary school:

> *... there are challenges in our applied grade nine math classes. When you walked into an applied math class it wasn't pretty. I was looking for help, looking for a way that we could actually find out how these kids learn, and what we could do ... anything that was going to be of benefit. I've worked with Janet to give Clark more support and information on particular students. I've also worked with the elementary teachers and talk about what's happening in our classrooms. We have often visited the classrooms, we have provided instruction, we have watched them in action and then debriefed, and just looked at what the kids were doing and what we need to do for the kids.*

That neither Janet nor Milton commented on professional forces appears somewhat surprising until one considers the wider context in which the school operates. Ontario's Leading Student Achievement initiative stresses, in part, that principals support teacher-learning groups (such as Anthea's department and work with elementary teachers) in their efforts to improve both instructional practice and student achievement. According to Leithwood and Massey (2010), this has led many principals to feel increasingly aware of the teaching and learning challenges that they face in their schools. As a new principal, Milton appears to have recognized that the mathematics department was functioning well, and that he needed to concentrate his efforts on other departments:

> *This department is very well established as a high-functioning department— cohesive, articulate, committed—and that would be every member of the department. The ethos is there where we are all doing this for the right reasons, and we're all willing to engage in the dialogue of what's happening and why.*

> *There are other departments, and I would say other schools, at this point that would not be ready to stride forward into this level of engagement and this level of [professional] discomfort.*

Cultural Forces: Values, Goals and Ideas

Clark was adamant that the culture of the department promoted honest discussion of teaching and learning:

> *When we have meetings about practice, we sit back and look at it neutrally. You can't take it personally; you have to look at it and say, okay, what worked? What do you think worked well and what could you have done differently? If it was a complete disaster, it's not that I didn't have any part in it, but when we did the post-mortem, it wasn't going to be the blame game. It wasn't going to be pointing fingers. It was along the lines of "how can we move forward from this?" What have we learnt from it?*

This sense of shared values extended to the school administration: for Anthea, the relationship with Janet has been crucial to the implementation of the change:

> *We have an open-ended relationship, and Janet has been very good at following up with these kids, and placing them properly. If we have a concern she'll find a way to support us, and the student. And that's always helpful, having a little more background on the kids that are causing an issue, or having a concern, that you're not aware of.*

Finally, Milton indicated that the culture of the department aligned with the ethos of the school, and consequently the work of the administration was to support the department. This decision appears to be based on the virtue of trust. That trust was earned, and relied on the department continuing to focus on the common good:

> *From an administrative perspective, we have to be ready to ask the big questions and also engage in this long process and keep in mind what our role is in it. That role is supporting our department chairpersons and supporting our teachers to support our kids and we're willing to move forward with that even if we're not sure where it leads to or what the answers might be.*

Democratic Forces: A Shared Commitment to a Common Good

For Clark, the need to help his students is an important change force. He expressed this in terms of the school's commitment to the common good of student success: "I'll answer for us as a school ... everybody's constantly looking for ways to reach kids at different levels ... to help those kids succeed where normally they wouldn't." This identification with a school-wide commitment to the common good is unsurprising as it is a well-entrenched feature of the school. Clark has been at the school for four years, and the commitment has been consistently reinforced over that time:

> *It's always been our ethos to do what's best for the students and student success. Over and over, it's been "what can we do to improve student success and help these students not only succeed in their classes, succeed at getting a credit, but succeed in life in general."*

Clark has internalised the common good as a powerful democratic change force, while also recognising that the change has only been possible because of the willingness of the mathematics department to be innovative. In this regard, there is reciprocity between Clark and the department in terms of the professional and cultural forces that are at play in implementing the change. Anthea's democratic concern for the common good comes across strongly as the most influential change force:

> *The students are the most important people here. It's their success that I am always interested in, they're the ones that are going to drive what we do ... how we're going to change instruction or have a better understanding of how a grade nine math student operates in a classroom setting.*

Janet's perspective on the common good is wider than Clark or Anthea's, for it encompasses students across all subjects. Consequently, success in one subject area triggers questions as to changes that need to be made in other subject areas:

> *The success of students is first, and I know they are being successful. There are 18 boys in our class, and the credit counselling shows that they are, with two*

exceptions, being successful in all of their classes, and all of them are successful in math. One boy failed two classes but in math he's passing: so what is it about math, and not his other two classes?

Principals have a great deal of influence on their schools by virtue of the values that they espouse and promote. Milton was explicit in stating what he believes in, and it was a strong commitment to the common good:

> *In the end the role of the principal is to ensure that students are getting every opportunity to succeed and the best opportunities to succeed ... To articulate where this [the change] fits into what we do as a school and to put it in the context of benefiting students first and foremost and shaping instructional practice secondarily. That's a very important message that is demanded of the role of the principal and that needs to be a consistent message.*

Clark's statement that he could "answer for us as a school" indicates how well the focus on the common good has been internalised by teachers. Milton's responses indicate a sophisticated understanding of the particular role of departments as communities within secondary schools. This understanding is best expressed as the building of "interdependence by relying on connecting people to shared values and beliefs and relying on emergent norms that ... promote commitment to the common good" (Sergiovanni, 1998, p. 578).

Discussion

Implementing change in schools is fraught with challenges. The ability of a school to implement and sustain change appears to explicitly link to a school ethos of learning and shared commitment to a common good (Sergiovanni, 1998). Our analysis of the data supports the importance of the principal and administrators, working together with teachers, in implementing change. Rogan and Grayson (2003) suggest that it is teachers and principals who are instrumental in developing this ethos and commitment, and this emphasis on the situated nature of school-based learning and change is well supported in the literature (c.f. Spillane, Reiser, &

16

Reimer, 2003). Leithwood and Louis (1998) define three levels of learning with schools: individual learning by teachers or school leaders within the context of the school; learning in small groups or teams of teachers; and learning that occurs across the school organisation as a whole. We would argue that the departmental chairperson has a crucial role in the implementation of change, by linking these three levels of learning. That role calls for the department chairperson to articulate, model, and promote a subject-specific commitment to the common good. Further, our analysis of the data indicates three key co-requisites that allow chairpersons to play this critical role: the existence of a school-level democratic commitment to the common good that guides the work of professional learning; the location of professional learning within departments to operationalise the common good; and, the capacity of the chairperson to fulfil their role as an instructional leader in the fullest sense of the term.

School-Level Democratic Commitment to the Common Good

The overarching change force for all of participants was a school-level democratic concern for the common good, expressed as the notion of student success. The commitment to the common good is a testament to the culture of the school, the role of both Milton and his predecessor in institutionalising the notion, and the work of the student success lead in operationalising the notion. Clark stated that it had "always been our ethos" and that he could "answer for the school." A school-level commitment to the common good is foundational to implementing, and sustaining, change. As Ingvarson (2002, p. 13) articulates:

> Organisations that improve do so because they create agreement on what is worth achieving, and they set in motion internal processes by which people progressively learn how to do what they need to do in order to achieve what is worthwhile.

Schools administrators clearly have a role in leading the discussions about the common good, and Milton was explicit as to what the common good looked like at the school-level. In this, he was well supported by Janet, who was responsible for implementing many of the bureaucratic changes needed to support the common good. Milton and Janet were equally clear as to where Ingvarson's internal processes should be located—subject departments. This administrative recognition of the potential of the department to operationalise the common good is rare in the literature. As Brundrett and Terrell (2004, p. 41) state: "the leap from interest in the whole school to interest in classroom level effectiveness has missed a whole level ... what happens in a department." School administrators tend to be ambivalent about the efficacy of professional and cultural forces to deliver change in departments (Sergiovanni, 1998). Consequently, administrative strategies for departmental change tend to be bureaucratic, personal or market driven (Gray, Hopkins, Reynolds, Wilcox, Farrell, & Jesson, 1999). These change forces "overlook the importance of helping teachers to develop new understandings" (Sergiovanni, 1998, p. 582), and are thus generally unsuccessful. The net result is that administrators tend to retain "rather pessimistic views about what it was possible and appropriate to do at departmental level" (Gray et al., 1999, p. 121).

Operationalising the Common Good Within the Department

Operationalising the common good into the work of teachers requires "deep changes in relationships, teaching practices and student learning" (Sergiovanni, 1998, p. 582). To achieve these deep changes requires professional, cultural, and democratic changes forces, and these, we would argue, can operate effectively at the level of the department. Departments derive power from the nature of their teachers' subject-specific work. Teachers share amongst themselves

"occupational practices, values, vocabularies and identities" (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984), and there is a supposition that only members of the department possess the "proper skills, knowledge and orientations necessary to make decisions as to how the work is to be performed and evaluated" (p. 308). It is this subject specificity that must be melded with the notion of the common good.

By itself, the notion of the common good is worthless; to be valuable it must be "learned and believed in, [and] embodied in teaching practices as well. Embodiment in practice, in turn, presumes that teachers learn the new understandings and skill to practice differently" (Sergiovanni, 1998, p. 582). Our data suggests that it is in subject departments, with their subject specialists, that the capacity, and potential, for this level of professional learning exists. As Cohen (1995, p. 15) states: "without technical capacity, all the professional values in the world would be useless, but without these norms all the professional knowledge and skill would be impotent." For the operationalisation of the common good to occur within departments, however, requires a high level of trust. This virtue underpins professional accountability, which in turn is a cornerstone of departments as communities. As the Ontario College of Teachers' "Ethical Standards for the teaching profession" (1999) states, "the ethical standard of Trust embodies fairness, openness and honesty. Members' professional relationships with students, colleagues, parents, guardians and the public are based on trust." Rosenholtz (1989) has argued that teachers who believed they were trusted, and consequently supported, in their teaching and learning were more committed and effective than those who did not feel the same level of professional support. All four participants explicitly noted their trust in both their colleagues and in the commitment to the common good. This level of trust is critical for two reasons. The first is that a concern for the common good is an important consideration of teacher communities (Borko, Elliott, &

Uchiyama, 2002; Talbert 2002). Second, teachers who trust the judgment and abilities of their colleagues are also prepared to learn from each other. Trust opens opportunities for teachers to access other's knowledge about content and pedagogy (Talbert, 2002). When teachers take advantage of these opportunities, the department as community is in a position to shape what it believes is important in terms of content, pedagogy and understanding of the common good. Through these opportunities, the department engages with, shapes, and is shaped by, professional, cultural, and democratic change forces. Such a department (as organisation) is also in position to exercise its political power ensuring that teachers are clear about what they are to teach, and how they are to teach. It was this political power that Milton referred to when he described the mathematics department as high-functioning, and allowed Janet to have some confidence in taking a risk with the implementation of the change.

Harris, Bennett, and Preedy (1997, p. 153) believe that such high-functioning departments do not require prescriptive details regarding pedagogy, for with the proper support structures "all departmental members could work to their individual capacities and strengths." A strong community, therefore, can effectively realise an organisational consensus as to the meanings that attach to the common good for their subject. Developing a consensus is important for ongoing professional learning, as it allows for the establishment of clear goals for student learning (Talbert, 2002). Developing a consensus and concomitant goals for learning do not occur by chance: it is role that we see the chairperson facilitating. Our analysis supports the notion of West, Jackson, Harris, and Hopkins (2000) that deep change in school is achieved through distributed leadership built around values. These tightly held values focus on the common good while simultaneously allowing change initiatives to be developed at a number of levels. In this article, we have considered a change proposal that originated with the student

success lead, but was brought to fruition in the Mathematics department. Certainly, there was a

bureaucratic decision to proceed with the change in mathematics because of the relative ease of

timetabling, but a range of other forces was in play that permitted successful implementation.

And those forces were acting through the fulcrum of the chairperson, balanced between the

administration and the classroom teacher.

The Chairperson as an Instructional Leader

Anthea's actions were firmly grounded in an understanding that the boys in grade nine

classes were not achieving, and that changes needed to be made. This understanding was based

on evidence from a range of sources and her search for alternative strategies. In seeking evidence

and critically examining alternatives, Anthea demonstrates many of the change practices

associated with professional and cultural change forces: competence, continuous learning,

responsibility and the building of relationships. That this understanding was developed *before*

implementation supports the notion that the leadership of a department, at its very core, requires

the development of a critical moral view of education. As Brundrett and Terrell (2004, p. 17)

state:

> This process is a moral and a political one because it involves the creating,
> organising, managing, monitoring and resolving of value conflicts, where values are
> defined as concepts of the desirable ... and power is used to implement some values
> rather than others.

The power needed to implement some values rather than others is crucial to the functioning of

chairpersons as leaders. Power can be designated to chairpersons by virtue of their position, but

Anthea appears to have moved beyond this source of power. Anthea's influence on the

department is based on her experience as both a math teacher and chairperson: experience being

"the currency of credibility" (Coulter & Orme, 2000, p. 6). More importantly, in terms of the

curriculum reform, Anthea was recognised as: "being a credible source for advice on instructional matters wherein one's expertise is acknowledged ... and thus, the person finds themselves in a leadership role" (Judson & Lawson, 2007, p. 501).

As an instructional leader, Anthea melded the concern for the common good with the departmental-level professional learning needed to operationalise that common good in mathematics. Clark spoke of the individual mentoring that he had received, the level of the conversations around practice that he had participated in, and his confidence to be part of the single-sex class implementation knowing that Anthea would take the final responsibility for the implementation. Janet spoke of Anthea's commitment and professionalism, while also demonstrating those same qualities in her own work. Milton specifically identified the conversations around practice, the willingness to actively critique practice and the preparedness to move beyond comfort zones as indicative of a high-functioning department. In recognising the achievement of Anthea, and her department, in operationalising the common good, Milton is also acknowledging that administrators:

> ... may set the agenda for school development but this can only be enacted successfully if those who work with children on a day-to-day, minute-by-minute basis are informed, consulted and empowered to do so. The subject leader is frequently the figure who interprets, negotiates and enacts the policy and may, indeed, write the relevant policy document for the initiative for their subject or subjects. In this way middle managers are the glue that holds together schools since they are frequently the ones to turn policy into action (Brundrett & Terrell, 2004, p. 10).

Implications

There are a number of implications for schools wishing to implement change. These implications can be summarised as an understanding of the role of change forces at different levels within schools, the conditions that allow departments to be the site of operationalising the

common good, and the need for the school to have a clear conception of the common good. The analysis shows that bureaucratic and personal change forces played only a peripheral role in implementing the change, while market forces played no part at all. The successful implementation was based solidly on professional, cultural, and democratic change forces. For administrators who seek to implement reforms, this is an important understanding for two reasons. The first is that reforms cannot be rushed, or forced, into narrow bureaucratic timelines. The development of the level of community that can effectively utilise the power of these change forces is a time consuming, and labour intensive, process. The second reason is that the *process* of developing a community that is capable of taking implementation risks is also the process by which teachers learn how to change and are given the capacity to change.

If departments are best placed to operationalise the common good, then the conditions that support their work must be developed within schools. These include trust at all levels of the school and recognising that chairpersons are best placed to balance the press for reform with the unique cultural requirements of their department in terms of professional learning. Such recognition has serious implications for the selection processes that schools and education authorities put in place for the selection, mentoring, and support of chairpersons.

Finally, it is beholden of principals to shape, and clearly enunciate a school-wide sense of the common good, for it appears to be this that binds the work of teachers together and shapes teacher professional learning. Having shaped the idea of the common good, it is then necessary for principals to trust and support the work of their chairpersons and departments in the important task of translating the common good into improved teaching and learning.

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