Andrews University

School of Education

MY BELIEFS ABOUT CHANGE
LEADERSHIP REFLECTION PAPER

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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October 2011

Contents

Introduction

In this reflection paper, I will demonstrate how my experience with being *A Dynamic Change Agent* integrates with competencies in being an effective organizer and a reflective researcher with skills in technology**.** Below are the specific competencies featured in this paper.

Competency 2: A dynamic change agent with . . .
a. Skills in planning and implementing change
b. Skills in developing human resources

Competency 3: An effective organizer with . . .
a. Skills in organizational development, management, and allocating resources

Competency 5: A reflective researcher with . . .
a. Skills in reading and evaluating research

Competency 6: A competent scholar with a . . .
f. Working knowledge of technology and its application

Section 1 of this paper provides a Venn diagram for three major components of change and their interrelatedness. My beliefs about change, what the experts say, and some applications for facilitating change are in a table that includes with my corresponding Leadership Competencies. In Sections 2 and 3, I share two of my experiences; developing study group models and my dissertation research project, highlighting the issues dealing with change. The last section is a brief summary of this reflection paper.

## I.   Change: My Beliefs, My Competencies, and the Experts

Overview

Change has always fascinated me, and I have usually embraced it as the part of life that brings on something new and better. Even as a child, I found myself engaging in change with anticipatory expectations for something even better. When I looked up the meaning of change, I

found thirteen meanings for the verb form and five meanings for change as a noun. In this paper, I am referring to change as a noun that means "the act or fact of changing; fact of being changed" (Dictionay.com, 2011).

When studying change, I found many ideas and theories on how to manage change. Most of the ideas contained similar ideas such as having a clear vision, and strategies for managing change (Collins & Porras, 2002; Hamel, 2007; Kotter, 1996) . Recently, more discussion is occurring regarding working with the individual on a personal level through the emotional and personal side of change (Buckingham, 2009; Maxwell, 2011; Robinson, 2009; Tucker, 2009). There is also discussion about learning organizations in the work place (Senge, 2006). Regardless of the change theory, I believe the companies most successful will include understanding mind styles and incorporate strategies for effective learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2006; Joyce, Weil, & Calhoun, 2011; Zull, 2002) since change inevitably involves the learning process.

In reflecting on my experiences with change, especially in developing study group models and conducting my research for my Ph.D., I have grappled with the different issues and the concepts promoted by others as necessary components for change. I have come to view the change process like spirals within spirals that depict the interconnectedness of the many components. **Figure 1** below is my conceptual view of change. Each component overlaps, connecting and affecting the other in some way.
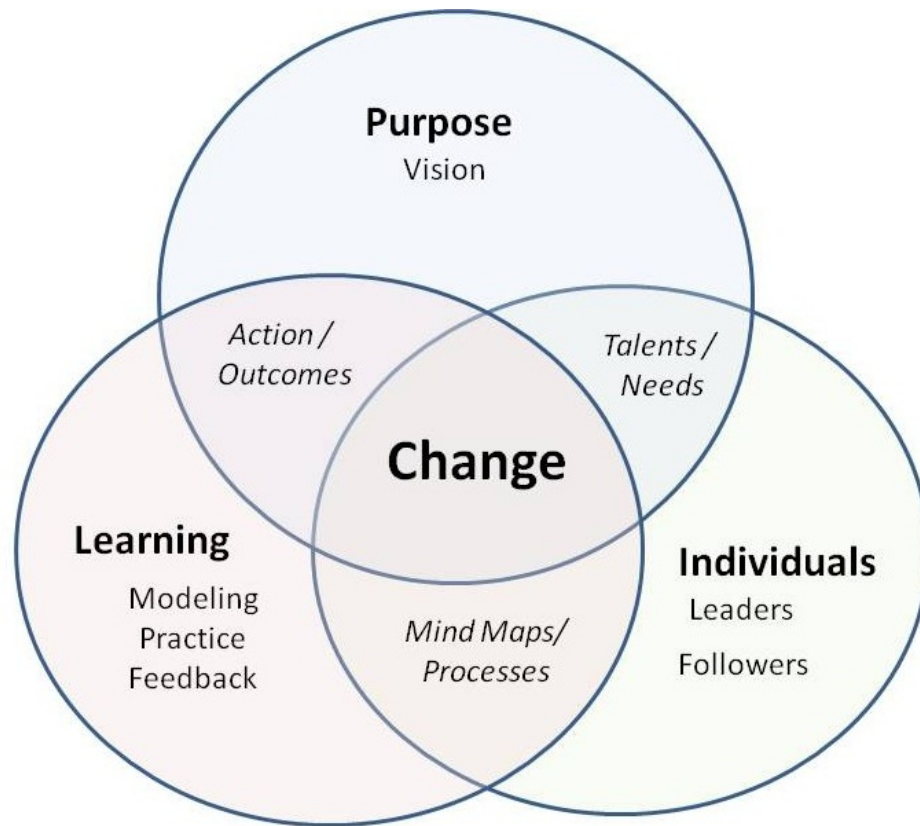
Figure 1: Overlapping Components of Change – Purpose, Individuals, and Learning

I believe there are three major concepts that are critical in effecting change; understanding, communicating, and action. The concepts of understanding, communicating, and action apply to each component of purpose, individuals, and learning in the Venn diagram above. In **Table 1**, I have outlined my beliefs about change along with some names of theorists and authorities that support that belief. In the last column, I have provided the competency numbers that correlate with and each belief affects. The competencies in bold represent the core competencies presented in this paper. The competencies in parenthesis are inferred in this reflection and will receive more attention in another paper. The next sections are my reflections on the change process when I developed the virtual study group model and conducted my research project. You will see how the concepts of understanding, communicating, and action interact with the components of purpose, individuals, and learning.

My Beliefs about Change	Theorists / Authorities	Applications	Competencies
Understanding: • Is a Process not an event • Has brain barriers • Is personal, then organizational • Involves emotions • Should focus on strengths • Involves conflict	**Hord** – Change is a process **Black & Gregersen** – brain barriers, mind maps **Quinn** – change is personal, then organizational **Maxwell** – change your thinking to change your life **Zull** – the art of changing the brain **Robison, Buckingham, Tucker** – Work from your strengths **Rath & Conchie** –Strengths-based Leadership **McCarthy** – Mind styles and performance	• CBAM • Brainstorming • Discussions • StrengthsFinder 2.0 • StrongLife Test • 4MAT Mind style Assessments	**5a** (3b, 4a, 4b, 4c 6a)
Communication: • Ask & Answer the right questions. • Be Collaborative • Have a shared vision	**Kotter** – Eight-stage process **Collins** – Right people in the right place **Kouzes/Posner** **Hamel** – Creating community purpose **Fleming & Asplund** – asking the right questions	• Listening Skills • Problem Solving Skills • Brainstorming • Discussions	**2a, 2b** (2c, 4a)
Action: • Modeling • Incentives • Skills • Resources • Plan • Accountability • Levels of Implementation • Work from individual strengths	**Ambrose** – managing complex change **Kouzes/Posner** – working with the whole person (body, mind, and spirit) **Gladwell** – Tipping point **Burns** – Followers as Leaders/Leaders as Followers **National Training Laboratory** – The Learning Pyramid **Johnson & Johnson** – Social Learning **Hord** – Levels of Use **Reid** – Model, Prompt, Practice, & Feedback **Robison, Buckingham, Tucker** – Work from your strengths **Kolb & Zull** – Experiential learning, Natural cycle of learning	• Study Group models • Cooperative Learning Methods • Meeting all mind styles • Model, Prompt, Practice, & Feedback	**2a, 2b, 3a, 6f** (1a, 2b, 2c, 4a, 4b, 4c 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d, 6e)

* Items in italics can be located in the online portfolio.

Table 1: My Beliefs about Change, the Experts, and My Competencies

II. Developing Study Group Models

Overview

When the existing study group model (Henriquez-Roark, 1995) of meeting in geographical locations became a time and financial challenge, the teachers and I began to discuss other alternatives to solve the problem. I was able to get a line item in the budget with a designated amount for expenses. This budget line was increased each year until it reached an adequate amount for study group expenses in the Carolina Conference. The biggest challenge came in determining how to reduce travel for the teachers and still have study groups. The teachers were scattered all over North and South Carolina and some had to travel ninety minutes one way to get to a meeting.

I knew if we were going to make major change, I would have to have the teachers buy-in or it would never work. I began to talk to teachers I felt were key to helping this happen (Collins & Porras, 2002) and we begin to form the idea of having study group meetings over the Internet. GoToMeeting was hardly known and had not really hit the market, but I presented the idea to these leaders. We had questions and debated back and forth about how it might work or might not work and we discussed how we thought the other teachers might react. Some were afraid of the radical idea and some were willing to try. By explaining and simplifying the process, I was able to convince this core group that it would be worth trying and we all agreed to present the idea as a pilot project to everyone at the next teachers' meeting.

That teachers' meeting was most interesting. The idea of not having to travel appealed to everyone with no problem. However, when presenting the technology idea as the solution to less travel, I sensed a lot of uncertainty and fear. Realizing that change is a process, not an event (Hord, Rutherford, Huling, & Hall, 2006), I begin to break the concept down into chunks of

information I thought they could handle. First, this would be a pilot program and we would discuss the success and challenges of the new model at the end of the year. They wanted to know what they would do. I told them that all they needed to know was how to call an 800 number and be at a computer with high-speed Internet access. I could see the thought on their faces, "I can do that." We voted to pilot the program for one year and then re-look at it to see where we wanted to go next.

The groups continued after that first year and still continue today. What stands out in my mind about the process of changing the study group model to a new one are two things; the brain-barrier (Black & Gregersen, 2002) that many struggled with, and the critical role I played in breaking the skills needed for the task into baby steps they felt they could manage providing them with the needed tools for success (Ambrose, 1987).

Even though there were a few exceptions, the brain-barrier phenomena seemed to confine itself to certain age groups. The concept of working on technology within another technology was inconceivable for one group (all over fifty-five) to grasp. Most were brave enough to accept the process, make the phone call and then be "walked " verbally through what to do next. After a time or two the majority caught on and did remarkably well. The over fifty-five group never did figure it out well enough to be productive and I regrouped them the next year, which took care of the problem. Baby steps became my motto for them and my definition of success for each team was any progress forward, no matter how small, would be success. That seemed to comfort and encourage them to keep going.

The Technology

In leading the teacher study groups to become virtual study groups, choosing the appropriate technology. Originally, when I wrote my Individual Development Plan for the Leadership in 2000, I have envisioned using video conferencing to connect teachers and schools

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across distance. High speed Internet was just becoming an accepted part of technology for the schools, and high speed band width still "bottlenecked" when too many were on at one time. Video conferencing was expensive and bandwidth made it impractical for most places. With Skype™ (Skype Limited, 2011) was coming available for public use, it seemed a plausible and more practical tool for communication. With Skype™ we could use other software application at the same time and work together from our computers. We just could not see each other's computers.

The first technologies for the study group meetings were the phone lines, high speed Internet, Skype™, Word or WordPerfct, and LiveText (2011). We used the LiveText applications for 3 years and then began transitioning to software application for 4MAT. GoToMeeting™ became available about that time and we transitioned GoToMeeting™ as the primary tool for communication. GoToMeeting™ allowed us to view each other's desk tops from a distance and work together in real time. At first, the 4MAT software was not web-based like LiveText, but it soon transitioned to what is now a very sophisticated web-based software that provides a collaborative workplace for developing instruction according to the natural cycle of learning, has tutorials, provides ideas and guidance for every step, has a great assessment piece, and includes a bank of 4MAT lessons teachers can use to expedite their lesson planning process. Today the Carolina Virtual Study Groups use GoToMeeting™ and a version of the 4MAT software called 4MATION web. They are both very power technologies and work well together.

My Personal Reflection

As I think back on the whole experience, it almost scares me! While I could envision the end result, teachers working collaboratively in small groups in real time over the Internet, I only had vague ideas about how I would get there with no idea about how the specifics worked. I figured out how to overcome each obstacle as they arose. While I had no more knowledge than

most of the teachers, it never occurred to me to be unsure. It did not occur to the others that I really did not know anymore than they knew. However, what I did have that they did not have, was blissful unawareness of any impossibilities. The thought never crossed my mind that I would not figure out a way to make this work. So I became the change I wanted them to follow (Maxwell, 2011).
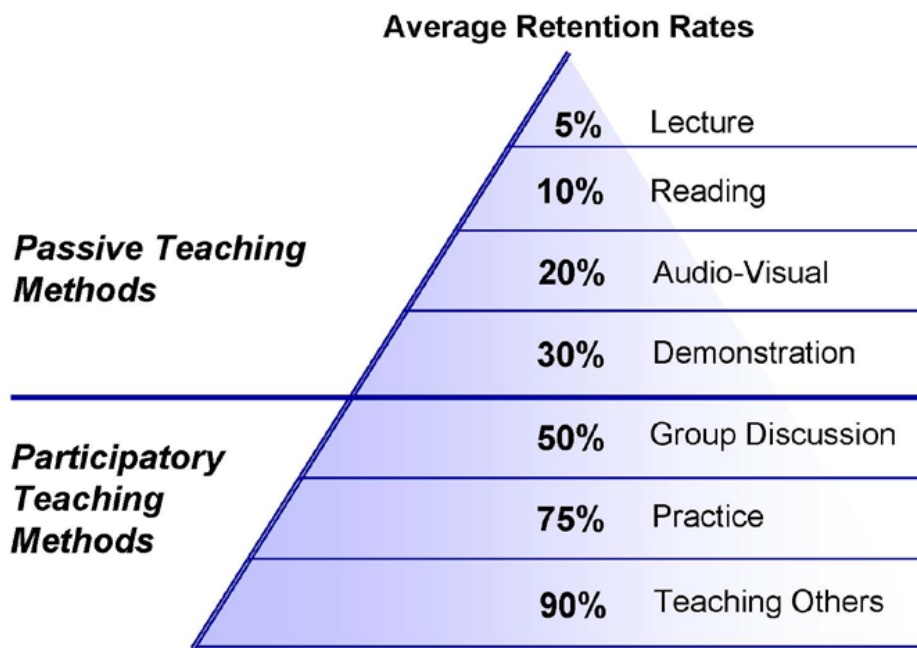
Why I Think This Worked

There are several reasons why I think this study group model worked. First, there was a clear reason why we needed the change, financial and travel time. Second, I understood that change is a process, not an event, and so began the move forward with "baby steps" as I called them. I knew this could end up quite stressful for some because of their inability to change their mind map at the beginning (Black & Gregersen, 2002). Therefore, I took the necessary precautions to be sure all the pieces outlined by Ambrose (Ambrose, 1987) were in place for every individual. Getting the right technology was only 10 percent of the solution. The other 90 percent was getting the people trained to use the technology (Fisher & Fisher, 2001).

Since the previous structure of study groups incorporated the different levels of attention rates outlined in **Figure 3**, the system was predisposed for success. What is interesting to note is that the time for training seemed to be in the same proportions as the retention rates. By that I mean, that 90% of the study group time was spent on teaching each other the new model, and 75% practicing the new model, and so forth, for the first year. It would be interesting to do a study to determine if there is any type of relationship between the two.

The virtual study group model has been working quite well since it began in 2000. It has saved the conference thousands of dollar in travel expenses. The teachers' time has been optimized in the study groups, and while many of them say they miss the face to face every

month, no one wants to go back to the travel necessary for that kind of interaction. Instead, we

meet face to face at the beginning of the school year, and then face to face at the end. While

virtual groups have definitely improved the time and cost involved with teacher study groups, I

do not believe we will ever get away from the need to meet face-to-face for social interaction

(Fisher & Fisher, 2001).

The Learning Pyramid*

Average Retention Rates

Passive Teaching Methods	5%	Lecture
	10%	Reading
	20%	Audio-Visual
	30%	Demonstration
Participatory Teaching Methods	50%	Group Discussion
	75%	Practice
	90%	Teaching Others

*Adapted from National Training Laboratories. Bethel, Maine

Figure 3: The Learning Pyramid

<center>**III.   Research and Change**</center>

<center>Overview</center>

There are two groups of research, quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research results involve the collection data and presentation of results in numbers or quantities (Patten, 2000). Qualitative research collects narrative data for the purpose of gaining insight or developing a hypotheses (Gay, 1996). While the terms quantitative and qualitative suggests opposites, qualitative can involve quantification in the study. The basic difference between quantitative and qualitative research is that one addresses qualities and the other addresses quantities (Eisner, 1998).

<center>Reading and Evaluating Research</center>

When reading and evaluating research there are four specific categories of information I investigate. I begin with the title and abstract, and then I read the introduction of the problem and the literature review. I check to see how they did their sampling, what instrument they used, and the methodology used in conducting the study.

Title and Abstract

A title should be specific, saying exactly what the study researched and what the characteristics are of the group involved. The more specific the title, the easier a reader can determine if the work has possible value for their setting. For example, consider the title of *Whole Language Teaching as Practiced by Kindergarten Teachers.* Adding the specific geographical area(s) in which the study was conducted might provide additional information to help me determine the value for another setting, especially if the geographical area was the same or similar to my location or setting.

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The abstract should clearly outline the purpose of the study. A highlight of the methodology should be included with an overview of the results. Sometimes the abstract does not accurately reflect the research conducted. This could be because the abstract was written as part of a proposal process. The proposal could have been refined and the purpose of the study even refocused before approval, but the abstract was not updated. In any case, a well-written abstract that clearly outlines the study, provides a highlight of the methodology, with an overview of the results which will always help the reader to determine the value in reading the study. I might still read a study with no abstract or a poor abstract, especially if the title is clear. The other issues are more critical to consider when reading and evaluating for good or appropriate research.

Introduction of the Problem and Literature Review

In the introduction, the purpose of the study is best stated in the first sentence or two and summarized again at the end. Well written research establishes the importance of the problem. It moves logically through the introduction and includes a basis for statements made to establish the purpose of the paper.

The literature review should contain information that is recent or current and may include older literature as is appropriate. There should be discussion of the strengths and weakness of the literature in relationship to the study. Differences between theory, research, and opinion should be clear. An effective literature review establishes the purpose of the study. It can provide a strong argument for the study by providing information that supports the need to explore the researcher's topic.

Sampling, Instrumentation, Methodology

When reading and evaluating research, it is critical to understand what kind of sampling the researcher used and how it was obtained. Was an informed consent form obtained from the

subjects? Was the sample random or non-random? Was it a stratified or clustered sample? How large was the sample? What was the quality of the sample, and so forth? Understanding the answers to questions about the types of sample or samples helps me to know two basic things: one is the sample representative of the application in the study; two, could the sample be representative of another population to which I might generalize the results of the study?

In a good study, the researcher cites references to establish the appropriateness of the use of the chosen process or instrument. The responsibilities of each of the participants are described in detail. If the instrument is new or developed for the study, what was done to help establish empirical validity of the instrument? It is helpful when the actual instruments are included in the report.

Methodology is critical for establishing quality research. Was the study quantitative or qualitative? Was the collection of data from surveys or interviews? Data collected by many participants can be highly subjective. Did adequate and appropriate care and effort accompany the setting up and educating of the participants for the study? Was the study in a natural setting? Were activities continually monitored for proper treatment, and so forth?

The study should adequately establish its credibility. In quantitative studies, how likely is a similar study to receive the same results? Can the study be duplicated? In qualitative studies, the researcher must establish the credibility of the study as valid, reliable, and conducted in an ethical manner. The findings should match reality. Coherence, consensus, and instrument utility are features that add to relevancy. Coherency means the result is a "good fit", it is logical, and it makes sense. Consensus means there was agreement regarding how much concurrence there must be before reaching a decision. Instrument utility refers to the study providing an empirical tool.

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In qualitative studies, I also look for how the researcher uses three techniques of investigator's position, triangulation, and an audit trail to ensure dependable results. The investigator's position presents an explanation about assumptions and theory behind the study, and includes his or her position regarding the group studied and the basis for selecting the informants. Triangulation uses multiple methods of collecting the data to strengthen the results. To authenticate the results of the study, I also look for enough description and detail of the collection and compiling of the data process so I can follow the trail, which is called an audit trail.

Results and Discussion

A brief summary of the purpose of the study is reiterated again at this point. The researcher should discuss the limitations and bias of the study such as limitations of the sample and the time period. Does the study discuss any unexpected outcomes? Suggestions for future studies should be included. Figures are very helpful in understanding exactly the results. Findings should be reported in very specific and understandable terms. If applicable, are the statistical results statistically significant? Does the discussion refer back to the hypotheses? Are tables used to display the statistical results? Are the statistic's important aspects briefly discussed in the essay?

Being skilled in reading and evaluating research is critical for effective change, skillful leadership, and successful education. When a competent leader uses appropriate research to design learning experiences, either in the classroom or workplace, change occurs. Real learning drives change, and leadership focuses the change on productive outcomes.

My Dissertation

My research was comprised of developing an Innovation Configuration (Hord, Stiegelbauer, Hall, & George, 2006) for the Adventist EDGE initiative in the Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. An Innovation Configuration is an operational definition that identifies an initiative's core components and describes behaviors for each component ranging from ideal to unacceptable. In its earlier stages, the Adventist EDGE, a comprehensive school reform movement in the Southern Union, had a challenge determining which schools to recognize as EDGE schools. This was because there was no clear definition of the EDGE initiative. When you try to measure something that has not been clearly defined, difficulties with perceptions arise (Hord, Rutherford, et al., 2006).

My Personal Reflections

My research project was to facilitate the Southern Union in a collaborative process called Concerns-Based Adoption Model (Hord, Rutherford, et al., 2006)in defining the Adventist EDGE initiative. This project taught me first-hand about change. First, the brain-barrier (Black & Gregersen, 2002) and the mental maps of individuals slowed my research, and one point, almost stopped it completely. Because there was a published Adventist EDGE Handbook (Southern Union, 2006) the opinion was the EDGE was defined. When I tried to explain the need for further clarification, they could not understand why. There was no objection to my study, however, they had not made a connection with how my study would benefit them in recognizing Adventist EDGE Schools. There was a huge blind spot for those who had developed the program. Now, a new dilemma developed for me to resolve before my study could emerge. How would I help them understand the real reason for my study? I was trying to break through a brain barrier (Black & Gregersen, 2002) and not doing a very good job of it.

Then, something happened that shifted everyone's paradigm allowing the barrier of understanding to crumble. The Southern Union decided to visit a school with the intent of recognizing them as the first Adventist EDGE school of Excellence. I told about this process earlier in this paper. When the data collection got to this point, it seemed that I could step back and become an observer of the process watching for opportunities to influence the outcome as they arose. Two points I want to make. One, it is critical to work with the perceptions of individuals. Two, allow events and time to be advantages in working for you in the change process if you are alert to them. It is like pushing the snowball **down** the hill instead of **up** the hill to make it bigger.

In my experience, being an influential player was both empowering and disempowering at the same time in my study. I knew I had a lead role in the study, but I had no control over the events, which go on with or without you. I could control my function in the study, but I could only react to the events that happened. By reacting to those events as opportunities to further understanding, I was able to use those events to work in favor of my study. In the future, I believe I will remember this process and it will help me temper and pace the change I might seek.

IV. Summary

Change involves the concepts of understanding, communicating, and action. These concepts interact with the components of purpose, individuals, and learning. My experiences with implementing a virtual study group model and conducting research to develop an Innovation Configuration illustrate how these concepts and components work together. From these experiences, I have personally grown in a deeper understanding of the importance of working **with** perceptions and circumstances instead of working **despite** perceptions and

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circumstances. It is always easier to help guide the path of a growing snowball going downhill than trying to build it going uphill. Then, some snowballs will always be out of my control or influence, so it is best to let them roll! The same with change, you can work with the perceptions and situations or you can fight against them. In the end, there will always be perceptions and situations I cannot change or influence. Moving on to a place where I can make a difference for the better will always be the better choice.

My beliefs about change, my beliefs about learning, and my beliefs about leadership cannot be totally separate because each affects the other. For change to take place there must be learning and leadership. The reflection papers on my beliefs about learning and my beliefs about leadership provide additional insights to my interrelated connections.

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