

The Power and Authority System

For those who study life in organizations, *power*, *influence*, and *authority* are important concepts. There is, however, little agreement on how these terms should be defined. In the more popular literature they are often used as synonyms. In the more technical literature they are usually more distinct, but one must know the author and the intellectual tradition from which he or she proceeds to know precisely what each term means.

Over the nearly forty years I have concerned myself with the study of life in schools, I have developed some definitions and conventions that I have found useful in my quest for understanding the way schools operate and the effects of these operations on what teachers and students do and learn in classrooms. These definitions and conventions, discussed in the following sections, are used in this chapter.

Power and Influence

Both *power* and *influence* have to do with the ability to induce, encourage, or compel others to engage in activities and to support actions that the person exercising the power or influence wants them to engage in or support. The difference between power and influence is that power is related to the position one occupies in a group or organization, whereas influence is related to the personal qualities and personal relationships of individuals in the group. Power, on the one hand, derives from the fact that persons who occupy different positions in an organization have access to different types of organizational resources and are in a position to deploy

their resources in support of actions they wish to have supported. Influence, on the other hand, has to do with the way individuals react and respond to each other, the social bonds and social obligations that accrue as a result of these interactions, the persuasiveness of individual men and women, and the willingness of those who are the targets of persuasion to submit to suggestions and direction without the pressure of some organizationally controlled sanction. Persons who possess power in an organization do not necessarily have influence, and influential persons do not always possess power. However, power and influence do interact. Persons of demonstrated influence tend to accrue power, and people who have power tend to generate influence by virtue of the way they exercise the power they are authorized to exercise.

Authority

Authority has to do with legitimacy. To say that a person or office has authority is to say that the person, group of people, or occupant of a designated position has the recognized right to exercise power, which is to say the right to deploy organizational resources in support of actions he or she decides to support. The way individuals exercise authority goes far to determine the amount of influence they will develop in the organization, just as the influence a person generates goes far to determine how much authority (legitimized power) he or she will eventually gain in the organization. With an understanding of the interactions among power, influence, and authority, we can gain useful insights into what is going on in classrooms, schools, school districts, and boardrooms.

A Dynamic Interaction

Systemic change almost always affects the authority system because systemic change almost always affects the way that key resources (time, people, space, knowledge, and technology) are used and deployed. When resources are affected, power is affected, and when power is affected, the authority system is inherently involved. This is one of the reasons that persons who have authority are so critical to systemic change. It is also the reason they so often resist change. *Indeed, it is usually the case that resistance to disruptive inno-*

vations (which require systemic change) is most likely to occur among those persons whose authority in the present system is least secure or most problematic and among those whose position in the authority system seems most likely to be threatened by the required changes.

Consider the case of curriculum supervisors in large urban school districts. I have often found this group to be highly resistant to systemic changes, especially when the changes are initiated by sources outside the group's control and threaten to directly affect the control of resources that these supervisors presently have the authority to assign or deploy. Typically, the authority of the curriculum supervisor derives from assumed or perceived expertise (what some sociologists call *expert authority*). This expert authority is translated into position-related power in the form of control over budgets, personnel, office space, and so on, so further authority accrues to the position occupied by the supervisor. In the day-to-day operation of schools, persons who gain power in this way often also become highly influential in the district. This influence develops for several reasons.

First, the knowledge possessed by these specialists is often in limited supply in the district, and those with access to it gain advantages. Thus there are great opportunities for social bartering, and this bartering tends to generate what some sociologists call *social exchange influence*.¹

Second, the bulk of the resources available in schools are inflexible. School budgets tend to be categorical, highly specified, and predominantly associated with salary and wages. Furthermore, most of the flexible portions, like grant dollars, staff development funds, and so on, tend to be controlled by a person who holds his or her office because of real or perceived expertise in the area of concern to those providing the grant.²

¹ See, for example, P. Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life* (Piscataway, N.J.: Transaction, 1986).

² This observation derives primarily from my analysis of data collected between 1979 and 1984 in a large-scale field study of the organization and management of staff development in an urban school district. A cadre of graduate students conducted this study, funded by the National Institute for Education. It resulted in several dissertations and official reports, but no other publications.

Classroom teachers, for example, usually cannot be assigned to nonclassroom duties without a great deal of trouble, and when they are, someone, someplace, must come up with money to support a reasonable substitute. Staff development money is often used for this purpose, and the person who controls this more flexible budget is likely to be a curriculum director or staff development person who is administering a grant for the school district. Providing this money gives this member of the central office personnel an opportunity to generate a great deal of social exchange influence among principals.

A third, and perhaps the most important, point is that much of the flexible money available in school districts is really not flexible at all, at least from the perspective of the uninformed. Grants almost always stipulate how funds may be expended. Federal grants in particular typically operate under complex sets of regulations and guidelines. Understanding the conditions under which these funds can be expended and ensuring that expenditures meet guidelines can become nearly a full-time occupation, and the person who is so occupied is likely to hold the title of director or coordinator in a central office.

The upshot of this is that curriculum specialists and staff development specialists at the central office level, precisely because they have control over often small but flexible resources, often generate levels of influence—both upward and downward—that far exceed the authority assigned to their position. Furthermore, these resources can, within limits, be deployed at the discretion of the supervisor.

This condition presents a complex situation for school reformers. First, because the control of flexible resources is so critical to any development effort, central office supervisors are sometimes uniquely situated to determine the fate of a systemic reform effort. Not only do they typically control most of the existing flexible budgets but they are also often among the most knowledgeable about ways to access outside resources like grants and Title 1 funds and the ways these resources can be used. The axiom that “knowledge is power” has few clearer manifestations than this one.

Second, because the persons who occupy central office positions often have generated a great deal of influence, they are also in a unique position to resist efforts to redeploy the resources they

control. Therefore change leaders must be concerned with ensuring that these middle-level persons are committed to the direction being set, and when they are not, the superintendent must make it clear that such commitment is a condition of the supervisor's retaining control over certain resources. This means of course that, generally speaking, systemic change cannot and will not occur unless the superintendent is prepared to give the effort the full and unqualified support of the office he or she occupies. As I have said elsewhere, superintendents can delegate every kind of authority bestowed upon the office of superintendent except for one—moral authority.³ And without the moral authority of the office of the superintendent behind the change, it is unlikely that persons in the middle will voluntarily support systemic change initiatives, especially when the change requires them to deploy resources they control in ways at variance with what they perceive to be their own short-term power and influence concerns.

Another reason that curriculum specialists and staff development specialists in the central office present a special challenge to those who would bring about systemic change is that, because of their special knowledge and control of flexible resources, central office specialists—or those who supervise them—often become highly influential with the superintendent. Indeed, it is not uncommon for the superintendent to develop a view of what is going on in the school district that is highly distorted by the values and interests of persons whose expertise and areas of concern almost ensure that they will have a narrow rather than a broad view of the world of schools and schooling. This is one of the reasons that I argue elsewhere that the superintendent should do everything in his or her power to ensure direct, routine, and nonsupervisory interactions with building principals.⁴

Fourth, because central office supervisors or directors with flexible budgets usually gain significant expertise in all the ways their allocated funds can and cannot be expended, they effectively

³ See P. C. Schlechty, *Schools for the 21st Century: Leadership Imperatives for Educational Reform* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990).

⁴ See P. C. Schlechty, *Working on the Work: An Action Plan for Teachers, Principals, and Superintendents* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002).

become the interpreters of these rules, and teachers and administrators up and down in the organization are dependent on these supervisors to keep them out of trouble while helping them do what needs to be done.

Fifth, and finally, because the most pressing needs of the schoolhouse are not always consistent with the intentions of the funding sources, building principals are inspired to “shop around” for a person to put in charge of a funding source who will permit the principal to do what he or she believes needs to be done. For the imaginative and entrepreneurial principal who knows where he or she is going, such an arrangement has its advantages; for the central office director who enjoys the status that accrues from being associated with such principals, it is also useful. But as a device for supporting and sustaining systemic change or for supporting the introduction of disruptive innovations, this arrangement leaves much to be desired.

More often the consequences are less happy ones. Usually, if the central office person is prone to narrow and conservative interpretations of the rules, he or she will come to be viewed by those at the building level as an inflexible and nonresponsive bureaucrat. When most of the central office personnel operate in this manner, the stage is set for serious arguments about the need for decentralization (as discussed later in this chapter). If the central office person is more imaginative and gives local principals and faculties more latitude in the hope that more creative solutions will emerge, he or she is likely to develop considerable influence. Such persons can become important gatekeepers in any effort to generate support for systemwide reform efforts. More often, what happens is that whatever flexibility exists is used to divert resources intended to support developmental activity to the support of the district’s maintenance needs, thus ensuring that the resources assigned to support improvement efforts will almost certainly not have their intended effects.

For example, in one of the large school districts where I conducted some of my early research on the organization and management of staff development, it was very clear that the director of staff development had a great deal of influence with high school principals. Furthermore, it was clear that many of those who had direct line authority over the high school principals (in this case, area superintendents), saw the director of staff development as a

threat to their own authority, and all felt they could do a better job if the staff development budgets were assigned to their offices. Through interviews and observations it became clear that the director of staff development had generated a lot of goodwill and personal loyalty from high school principals by making it possible for them to co-opt developmental resources under her control to fund compelling maintenance activities. For example, regional accreditation required a great deal of administrative effort on the part of teachers. They needed to attend numerous meetings, fill out forms, prepare reports, and so on. The principals had no resources to support such activity. One way the director of staff development helped the principals with such problems was to make in-service credit available to teachers who worked on regional accreditation teams. Another way she helped was by providing substitute teachers so building-level teachers could be released to engage in necessary accreditation work and by assigning members of her staff—who were officially supposed to be providing training for teachers—to carry out various unscheduled functions associated with the preparations necessary to a successful regional accreditation visit.

This is but one illustration of the kind of activity that can transform limited power into increased influence. It is also an illustration of the power of unintended consequences. I am confident that the director of staff development did not provide these services with the intent of increasing her influence with principals, and I am even more certain she did not recognize the effects of what she did. In her mind she had rationalized the activities she supported as “developmental,” and the loyalty she developed from principals as simply an effect of the fact that she was a likable person who understood them and cared about them. She *was* a likable person, but the fact is that *the resources she deployed for such activities had little prospect of improving the skills of teachers or the insights teachers had regarding their jobs—which was her official task*. Her willingness to permit the principals to use these resources as they did removed a burden from principals, and it did make the principals’ lives a bit easier. At the same time, in the view of the area superintendents, it made her office, which had no official authority over the principals, a competitive source of direction for the principals, primarily because the influence she had developed made a simple request from her a

command to some principals; a command they responded to sometimes in direct contravention to commands from their official superordinates, who had relatively few flexible resources at their disposal. Indeed, these area superintendents too were dependent on the director of staff development for such resources, which rankled even more.

There are of course many curriculum supervisors and many central office situations that do not conform to this example. However, the pattern is sufficiently common that I am prepared to argue that one of the first tasks of a leader of systemic reform, especially in a large urban school, is to get a clear picture of the way central office personnel operate, the persons and causes to which they are loyal, and the persons and interests that are loyal to them.

Successful leaders of systemic change understand that enlisting the support of those who control flexible resources is essential and that if successfully recruited these persons can become powerful allies. If they are not recruited, however, they can become equally powerful sources of resistance and sabotage. Knowing who these people are and what they value can assist in the recruitment process. It can also help change leaders to understand when the power and influence of these persons must be offset, neutralized, and in extreme cases, destroyed.

The Additive Strategy

When persons who control existing flexible budgets cannot be recruited, it is commonplace for leaders to attempt to generate additional flexible budgets (outside grants, for example) and to assign authority over these grants to a person or department that is favorably disposed toward the change. There are, however, at least three problems with this approach.

- Because the funding is new it is also likely to be seen as temporary and may not generate the commitments needed to sustain the change over time. Furthermore, the resources generated are likely to be quickly co-opted by the ongoing programs in the departments to which the funding is assigned.
- New funding is much less available in times of economic retrenchment than in more plush times, but it is in such diffi-

cult times that the needs for systemic change are most likely to become widely apparent.

- New funding accompanied by the creation of new positions inside the existing authority system often introduces even more competition among those who are already competing for authority, thereby introducing even more static into the directional system.

A case can be made that these three propositions describe the history of many federally funded programs in schools, as well as many programs mandated—and sometimes funded—by state legislators. These propositions can also help leaders understand what might be going on when the director of staff development seems to be sabotaging the implementation of a particularly disruptive innovation, the source of which is outside the control of that director or of existing curriculum specialists.

Decentralization, Teacher Empowerment, Parent Involvement, and Site-Based Management

Decentralization, teacher empowerment, parent involvement, and site-based management have become key ideas in most efforts at school reform. Recognizing that the bureaucratic, hierarchical arrangements that typify many school districts create lack of commitment on the part of teachers and lack of responsiveness to the needs of parents and students, reformers generally agree that for school reform to work, teachers must be empowered, parents must be invited into greater levels of involvement, and the school site, rather than the central office, must become the locus of much of the decision-making authority of the school district.

Beginning in the late 1970s, union leaders and school district officials in places like Hammond, Indiana; Miami-Dade, Florida; Toledo, Ohio; and Rochester, New York began negotiating contracts intended to move decision-making authority to the building level and to empower teachers. Over time it became apparent that the need for greater parent involvement and commitment was as important as the need for greater teacher involvement and commitment. The result was that state legislatures, following the lead provided by the Kentucky Education Reform Act, began to mandate or strongly

urge the creation of school site councils made up of parents, teachers, and building administrators who were empowered to make many of the decisions once made at the central office.

Most school reformers agree that moving the decision-making authority down the system, as well as moving the authority to enforce those decisions down the system, results in greater commitment to and passion for the decisions that are made. This is not surprising. After all, most people like their own decisions better than they like decisions made by others. Indeed, one of the reasons bureaucracies are so intractable is that those who are empowered by the bureaucracy to make decisions like the decisions they make better than they like the decisions that might be made by those below them. What is often lacking in discussions of site-based management, however, is serious consideration of the quality of the decisions that are made, regardless of where they are made or by whom. Bad decisions are bad decisions, whether made by a far-removed board of education or an up-close-and-personal school site council.

What, then, are bad decisions and what are good decisions? The answer depends in large measure on how authority is distributed in the system.⁵ If authority is highly centralized, then a good decision is a decision that satisfies central authority. If authority is decentralized, then a good decision is a decision that satisfies the culturally embedded standards and norms that bind the group together and that define the social identity of the group.

Unfortunately, common programs and common rules more than common values or a common culture hold most school districts together. Therefore, when decentralization is intended, the first step should be to build enough consensus around beliefs and standards to sustain the effort. Leaders who attempt decentralization without attending to building common beliefs and values are

⁵ In a moral or technical sense, a decision that is good within the context of a given authority system may be objectively bad. In the real world of organizations, however, what is good and what is bad is defined in the context of the authority system. That is why the moral leadership issue is so important. See, for example, M. Fullan, *The Moral Imperative of School Leadership* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin Press, 2003).

almost certain to have bad results. Lacking common commitments and a common set of standards, decentralization is likely to become divestiture, making each school site independent from any but the narrowest slice of the community. When this happens, good decisions are decisions that satisfy the needs of a small group of parents and teachers and give little or no attention to the needs of the larger community that is asked to support the schools (for example, nonparent taxpayers) or to the long-term welfare of the school community itself.

To try to counter this tendency, policymakers resort to various forms of accountability measures, which reintroduce centralized bureaucratic authority in even more powerful ways. Thus schools and school site councils are held *accountable* for ensuring improvement in test scores. If a school does not improve, it is subject to a takeover by the state, and the decision-making authority that has been delegated will be taken away. *In effect, decentralization may result in recentralization at a higher and even more remote level than the central office of the local school district. Centralization at the state or national level, regardless of the name given to it, is still centralization.*

In a bureaucracy, assuming it is well managed, people know the rules—they understand where authority is located, and they understand generally what is expected of them and what they can expect of others. Issues of direction are largely issues of concern to those higher up in the organization. Those higher up in the organization also promulgate the rules by which those lower in the organization are to maintain control, and those lower in the organization are, in theory at least, delegated the authority needed to support these rules. The problems of bureaucracy arise when the rules do not fit reality or reality does not fit the rules. The subtleties of human interaction are such that rules must always be subject to modification and interpretation. Who, then, is to be the interpreter? Who is empowered to authorize a modification or an exception? Bureaucracies handle these problems by passing problems up and expecting solutions to come down—which they may or may not do. This is one of the reasons bureaucracies seem slow and cumbersome.

The idea behind site-based management is that those who are in a position to see the problems will be empowered to develop the

rules by which the problems will be solved, thereby making the organization more flexible and responsive. This thinking is fine insofar as it goes, but it does not go far enough. Unless the values that will guide decisions are clear and unless the commitments these values demand are understood and shared, sad consequences can result. For example, there are many students who present a potential problem to the typical school. One way to handle this problem is to set admission standards that ensure such students do not get into the school. This solves the problem for the local school unit, but it does not solve the problem for the district generally. The opposite response is to bureaucratically mandate that all schools must be open to all children and to insist that inclusion is of greater value than academic excellence. Neither solution is in fact a solution. Rather, each purported solution is simply a way of dislocating or masking the problem.

What is needed is a system of shared values, beliefs, and meanings as well as a shared understanding of the business of schools. Given these shared beliefs, self-control and informal control rather than control by rules, procedures, and formal sanctions would be commonplace. Such a development is not likely, however, unless top-level leaders develop and convey a clear understanding of the primary business of schools and the standards by which that business is to be conducted and assessed. Without such an understanding, site-based management does not hold many prospects for substantial improvement in the performance of our schools. Furthermore, satisfying the needs of a few newly empowered people to make whatever decisions they feel good about may relieve enough of the pressure for reform to make life tolerable for a few influential parents but probably does so at the price of further erosion in the confidence most Americans have in their schools.

Despite these concerns I am not suggesting that teacher empowerment, parental involvement, and site-based management are bad ideas. Indeed, I was advocating these things long before it became popular to do so. What I am suggesting is that unless such changes in the power and authority system are accompanied by changes in other systems as well, there are likely to be unanticipated and unwanted consequences that will overwhelm the good that the changes are intended to produce. Consider the following examples:

- Local newspaper editors generally strongly support open meeting laws and are adamant that public organizations should hold open meetings. In urban communities, editors typically assign a reporter to watch and report diligently on the activities of the board of education and central office personnel. As real power devolves to the school level (for example, as charter schools become widespread), will the press be able to keep up with what is going on in each little governing unit, or will it be necessary to wait for whistleblowers to reveal problems, as is now the case in the health care industry?
- It is commonplace to complain about the factionalism and special interest orientation in local boards of education. (I have complained often and loudly myself.) Is it really reasonable to expect that governing structures that include only parents, teachers, and other school personnel will be any less oriented toward special interests? The difference may be only that it will be the special interests of teachers and of activist parents that are brought to the table as opposed to the special interests of land developers, nonparent taxpayers (who make up the majority of taxpayers in many communities), the local chamber of commerce, and community-based groups like the NAACP, the Urban League, and so on. Representing the interests of teachers and activist parents may be better than the alternative of not having these interests represented at all (as often occurs under present arrangements), but it still does not solve the problem of getting the schools to focus on their primary business, which is providing quality experiences for *all* children.
- If the schools of a community are to serve the interests of the community, how can those interests be served if each faculty and each group of parents can pick and choose whose interests will be served and if much of this picking and choosing can be done outside the light of public scrutiny?
- It is commonly observed that one of the greatest barriers to school improvement is the lack of persistence in direction. Is it really reasonable to assume that schools will be any less fickle in terms of fads adopted and directions taken than is now the case when school governance is under the control of persons

who have only a short-term interest in the school (as is typical of most parents) and a special interest as well (the interest of their own child or children)? When this is compounded by the fact that in some instances these parent-teacher councils are empowered to exercise the ultimate in remunerative power (dismiss the principal), is it not likely that traumatic palace coups will occur and short-term wants will overwhelm long-term needs?

None of the outcomes anticipated in these queries is inherent in teacher empowerment, parent involvement, and site-based management. Furthermore, there is no question that the idea of having teachers, parents, and others more directly involved in shaping the decisions that affect their lives is sound, both ideologically and operationally. In the modern world, whether in schools or in industry, old top-down management styles are giving way to more responsive styles of leadership. This does not mean, however, that there is no longer a need for a centralized source of *direction*. What it does mean is that centralized *control* is no longer seen as either necessary or desirable. *The ability to maintain direction from the center while devolving control to those who must carry that direction forward is the key to effective decentralization.* The choice is whether to manage by rules or to lead by values, beliefs, and commitments. This is why it is so important that leaders have a clear understanding of the business of schools and a clear, compelling, and well-articulated vision of how that business is best conducted in the environment in which the schools are located.

To move from a system of external control based on adherence to common rules, procedures, and practices to a system based on self-control and control by small groups requires that direction be maintained by a commitment to common values and standards. Such commitments do not just happen; they are caused to happen. The ability of school leaders to cause these commitments to happen will determine whether or not teacher empowerment, parent empowerment, and site-based management actually deliver what they have the potential to deliver. More than that, it will also go far to determine how adept schools will be at bringing about the kind of systemic changes that will be required if the American system of public education is to survive and thrive.

Sanctions and Rewards

One of the first matters of concern in the effort to lead change should be the nature of the rewards available to support coordinated action that moves in the direction indicated by the change. These rewards come in a variety of forms. For some persons the act of participating in a change effort is its own reward. These persons, whom I refer to elsewhere as *trailblazers* and *pioneers*, are often motivated to change precisely because they find change invigorating and the taking of risk exciting.⁶ The primary problem such individuals present to the change leader is ensuring that the passion they have for change and innovation moves in directions supportive of the school's business. Ancillary rewards such as status, access to power and privilege, and collegial affiliations are also important. Change, especially when it has major effects on the power and authority system, always introduces a great deal of uncertainty regarding the kinds of rewards that will be available and the ways they will be distributed as the change takes place.

It is important, therefore, to know whom the present power and authority system rewards and for what reasons. It is equally important to know the basis on which rewards (including access to authority) are awarded and by whom they are awarded. Finally, it is important to understand what parts of the existing social systems (for example, the evaluation system or the induction system) are maintained by the present system of rewards, so that the effort to reallocate rewards to support change does not destroy parts of the system that need to be maintained.

In public organizations, unlike in private ones, the use of monetary incentives to support change is limited. For example, it is not unusual for private organizations to offer small monetary bonuses, trips, and other rewards that offer some lifestyle enhancement to people who suggest changes that result in improved performance. Private corporations also have considerably more flexibility in the way they distribute more substantial rewards like profit sharing, which actually affect standard of living.

⁶ See Schlechty, *Schools for the 21st Century*.

The use of monetary rewards is more problematic in schools than in business for at least two reasons. First, as discussed earlier, flexible dollars are much more difficult to come by and more narrowly accounted for in schools. The superintendent or principal who gives a teacher a paid vacation for a high-quality idea in a suggestion box is risking more than the executive who takes a comparable action in the private sector.

A second reason that the use of monetary rewards to support change is more problematic in schools than it is in the private sector is found in the preachments that surround the role money should play in decisions made by teachers. Both the general public and sometimes teachers themselves place high value on the belief that teachers are, or should be, committed primarily to the welfare and benefit of students. In this view teaching is a calling rather than an occupation. The upshot is that the too-obvious use of bonuses, pay differentials based on performance, and incentives for change presents a major challenge to some of the most sacred preachments that define what teaching is supposed to be. Teachers are supposed to be dedicated, self-sacrificing, and willing to do whatever it takes to make life better for students. For teachers to respond enthusiastically to monetary incentives, to compete with each other for these incentives, and to endorse the use of such incentives, they would have to abandon these preachments that have a long tradition in education. To introduce money into the equation is to call into question the service-oriented preachments that for many define the teaching occupation. It suggests that teachers, like many others, are in practice motivated more by money than commitment and that they would be willing to compete with their colleagues for money. Many teachers and many others reject the notion that those who teach do so only for the money or even primarily for the money. This is not to say that teachers are not just as concerned about salary issues and welfare issues as are other occupational groups. The difference is that the public, and sometimes teachers themselves, find the notion that they would teach better if they were paid more disquieting, just as I would find it disquieting if I thought the pilot in the front of the plane I am on as I am writing these words would fly better if he were given a bonus for doing so. Those who would use monetary incentives to

encourage support of change initiatives need to be extremely sensitive to matters such as these.

Norms of Continuous Improvement

Change-adept schools (like all other change-adept organizations) embrace change as a positive good rather than a necessary evil. Leaders place high value on seeking alternative solutions to problems, and they find ways to reward and recognize those who provide such solutions. Indeed, leaders in change-adept schools often point to the most change-responsive persons in the school as models and exemplars, and they make it very clear that what they are modeling is an *attitude* toward change as well as the willingness to develop or create the technical skills needed to bring the change about.

Because of this commitment, leaders in change-adept schools read widely, and they encourage those around them to read widely as well. They are especially attuned to literature that has the potential for illuminating ways of doing the business of the school better. Rationalized rules and procedures, although important to daily operations, are understood to be conventions created to increase efficiency rather than commandments passed down as standards to judge effectiveness. Local customs and traditions, although valued, celebrated, and understood, are more likely to be stated as general principles than as narrow and specific commands for action. An example of the former is, "We treat students with respect around here, and we expect to be treated with respect in return." An example of the latter is, "Touching students is not permitted, and talking back to the teacher is a suspension offense." These are very different statements.

In change-adept schools the operational norms are widely known in the school and are enforced not only by designated officials but also by nearly all members of the school. Indeed, most participants even understand that there are some specialty norms that apply only to some groups or individuals but that must be upheld by all. For example, it might be understood that those teachers who are leading a particularly arduous change effort or those schools that are piloting a new program may well receive special attention and special resources, for "they are working on behalf of all of us."

Unfortunately, this is not a common occurrence in America's system of education. Far more common is the complaint that those who are teaching in pilot programs are receiving unfair advantages and that the resources used to support innovations would be better spent to help maintain present programs. I sometimes wonder if those who would introduce more competition into schools know how much harm competition is doing in our schools even now.

Key Questions

Leaders should ask these key questions when trying to understand the power, authority, and norm enforcement systems in their schools.

- *How many authority levels presently exist, and how many are needed?*
Moral authority can be shared, but it cannot be delegated. To the extent that moral authority is required to support norms or changes in norms, excellent communication between the source of the moral authority and those who must support the change is critical. The more profound the change, the flatter the organization must be that supports that change. Systems with many levels of authority may be quite good at managing routine tasks, but they are not good at encouraging and supporting inventiveness.
- *Which persons or offices have control over the resources that provide the bases of power (for example, who can hire and fire, bestow status, or confirm reputations), and how diffused or centralized is this control?*
Centralized organizations are less adept in encouraging systemic changes than are organizations where authority for decisions is diffuse and where authority is shared rather than delegated.
- *To what extent do those who are called on to act on decisions feel that their views are taken into account in the decision-making process?*
Making decisions is quite different from implementing them. Those who are called on to implement decisions are more likely to be committed to the decision when they know that decision makers have taken their views and concerns into account.

- *To what extent is feedback from those called on to implement decisions sought and taken into account when leaders consider modifying decisions?* The best sources of information regarding the impact of decisions are those who are called on to implement them. Ensuring communication and dialogue between decision makers and those who must act on or who are affected by decisions is essential to creating a shared leadership framework.
- *How independent are the decision makers? For example, do they depend on others for resources and approval of actions?* Persons called on to act on decisions must have ready access to the resources they need to support their actions, and those who are in positions of authority are obliged to assign these resources or the authority to command such resources to them.
- *Who are the persons of influence among those whose support will be needed to initiate and sustain the proposed change?* Influence persuades. Power controls. Systemic change requires an adequate supply of influential leaders who are favorably disposed toward the proposed change. Influential leaders who are not favorably disposed are likely to become saboteurs.
- *What rewards are available to support the change effort?* Trailblazers and pioneers often find participation in a change effort intrinsically rewarding, and they get a great deal of personal satisfaction out of being among the first and being recognized as risk takers and leaders. For them the gain is the psychic reward. For others, especially those less prone to risk taking, ancillary rewards such as opportunities to work intensively with colleagues, to attend conferences, and to enjoy other lifestyle rewards may have more meaning.
- *How are the current rewards linked to the maintenance of the current system for setting direction and maintaining coordination?* For systemic change to occur, those who are responsible for leading the change must ensure that the rewards for supporting the change are at least as great as the rewards gained by supporting the present system.
- *If these linkages were altered, what effect might the changes have on direction and coordination efforts?* Short-term confusion and

uncertainty almost always accompany significant change efforts. Rosabeth Moss Kanter has observed that most changes appear to be failures in the middle stages. Michael Fullan refers to this stage as the *implementation dip*.⁷ Leaders need to anticipate these problems so that they do not panic in the face of them and alter direction when the school should be staying the course. As Robert Herriot and Neal Gross have observed, “school officials who ignore the potential organizational and human costs of a major change effort, and treat the highly complex task of instituting fundamental changes . . . simply as routine matters are engaging in irresponsible administrative performance.”⁸

- *What, if any, monetary awards are available to support change, and how flexible are they in the uses to which they may be put?* Systemic change requires flexible resources. An accurate assessment of the availability of such resources is critical for leaders of change.⁹
- *Who controls the flexible resources that are available, and how are these persons presently using these resources?* For reasons outlined earlier, persons who control flexible resources are in a unique position to generate influence. An understanding of the manifest and latent ends currently served by flexible resources is critical information for change leaders.
- *How do teachers feel about differential rewards, and what is the basis of that feeling?* Generally, teachers are more favorably disposed toward differential pay and support for teachers who fulfill difficult assignments than they are toward differential pay based on some assessment of results. This has important implications for those who would design reward systems that support sys-

⁷ R. M. Kanter, *Rosabeth Moss Kanter on the Frontiers of Management* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1997), p. 129; M. Fullan, *Leading in a Culture of Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001).

⁸ R. E. Herriot and N. Gross (eds.), *The Dynamics of Planned Educational Change* (Berkeley, Calif.: McCutchan, 1979), p. 363.

⁹ Herriot and Gross, *The Dynamics of Planned Educational Change*, present five case studies that clearly illustrate this point.

temic change efforts. Systemic change requires effort well beyond the effort usually expended in introducing sustaining innovations in environments that are well understood.

- *How do teachers and students feel about the rules that govern action in the district and the school? More specifically, do they see the rules as legitimate (that is, rightful and correct), or do they see them as nonlegitimate (that is, based on values other than those that officially guide the schools)?* Teachers and students can be involved in a school in at least three ways. They can be morally involved, in which case they will have considerable confidence in the school and its leaders and will be prone toward a great deal of volunteerism. They can be calculatively involved, in which case they are unlikely to act unless they perceive some relatively immediate personal benefit attached. They are also likely to be skeptical about the motives of leaders and to assume that these leaders, like themselves, are calculatively oriented. Finally, participants can be alienated. If their loyalties can be transformed from negative agendas to positive ones, they can serve as power resources for systemic change. If, however, their loyalties cannot be transformed, alienated individuals can be a source of major difficulties for change leaders.
- *How consistent is the pattern of enforcement of key norms related to change, and how visible is that enforcement? For example, are persons who make unusual contributions to change efforts routinely identified as exemplars and presented in ways that produce positive regard for them and their efforts, or are such identifications sporadic and ritualized (for example, made during the annual school board mass recognition night)?* Recognition, involvement, assured support, and opportunities for collegial interactions are key determinants of the likelihood that a change initiative will be supported. Linking access to these values in a way that is both public and meaningful is among the more important actions change leaders can take.
- *When the requirements of a change endeavor require that some persons or organizational subunits receive differentiated or special treatment, is this difference understood and supported by those who might be adversely affected by the action?* Too often, change initiatives become associated with a special project or special school that is viewed by others in the school district as receiving special

resources at the expense of ongoing operations. Care must be taken to link changes to benefits for those in charge of present programs and to enlist their support for the new initiative, even when the short-term benefit for their own unit is minimal and even when that initiative requires some sacrifice. Open and honest communication about such matters is essential.