

THE ONLY THING WE HAVE TO CHANGE IS—CHANGE ITSELF

IT SHOULD COME AS no surprise to anyone that change is rampant in higher education today. One of the most widely read magazines about postsecondary learning is simply called *Change*. If you enter a bookstore (anywhere that bookstores still exist), you'll find book after book in the higher education section that has the word *change* in its title. Witness the following.

- *Change.edu: Rebooting for the New Talent Economy* (2013) by Andrew S. Rosen
- *Checklist for Change: Making American Higher Education a Sustainable Enterprise* (2013) by Robert Zemsky
- *Women, Universities, and Change: Gender Equality in the European Union and the United States* (2012) by Mary Ann Danowitz Sagaria
- *The Innovative University: Changing the DNA of Higher Education from the Inside Out* (2011) by Clayton M. Christensen and Henry J. Eyring
- *Community College Leadership: A Multidimensional Model for Leading Change* (2010) by Pamela Lynn Eddy and George R. Boggs
- *Driving Change through Diversity and Globalization: Transformative Leadership in the Academy* (2008) by James A. Anderson
- *Sustaining Change in Universities* (2007) by Burton R. Clark
- *Transformational Change in Higher Education: Positioning Colleges and Universities for Future Success* (2007) by Madeleine B. D'Ambrosio and Ronald G. Ehrenberg
- *Reclaiming the Ivory Tower: Organizing Adjuncts to Change Higher Education* (2005) by Joe Berry

- *Public Funding of Higher Education: Changing Contexts and New Rationales* (2004) by Edward P. St. John and Michael D. Parsons
- *Strategic Change in Colleges and Universities: Planning to Survive and Prosper* (2001) by Daniel James Rowley, Herman D. Lujan, and Michael G. Dolence
- *From Strategy to Change: Implementing the Plan in Higher Education* (2001) by Daniel James Rowley and Herbert Sherman
- *Understanding and Facilitating Organizational Change in the 21st Century: Recent Research and Conceptualizations* (2001) by Adrianna Kezar

And those are just the works published since the turn of the century. Moreover, if you go to workshops and conferences on higher education, you'll almost always find a panel or even an entire day devoted to the topic of strategic change. Then consider all the articles on the need for change in higher education, how we ought to change higher education, or what we can do to respond to all the changes in higher education that regularly appear in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Insight Higher Ed*, *Faculty Focus*, *Academe*, and the *Journal of Higher Education*. There's even a website with *change* in it: www.changinghighereducation.com. The topic is almost inescapable.

So in light of all the attention that's been paid to change in higher education, I have to ask a rather uncomfortable question: *Why do those of us who devote our lives to teaching and research handle change so poorly?*

If you've been involved in higher education for any time at all, you know exactly what I mean: visionary strategic plans that somehow never get realized; curricular reforms that stall halfway through; changes in institutional direction that are deemed absolutely essential by the administration but then are blocked by the faculty at every turn. It's both frustrating and confusing. Why is it that in a field of endeavor that prides itself on new ideas and cutting-edge innovations, we so frequently resist, undermine, or obstruct change? It's not the case, of course, that colleges and universities are the only entities we know that seem averse to change.

All organizations resist change. After all, that's their job. The whole purpose of any organization is to act in ways that are regular, consistent, and predictable. And regularity, consistency, and predictability are natural enemies of change.

Yet despite how often change is resisted in the world at large, colleges and universities seem particularly resistant to even modest change. In a

comment attributed to various figures, including former governor Zell Miller of Georgia, chancellor of the University System of Georgia Stephen Portch, and the headmaster of Ohio's Lawrence School Lou Salza, "It's easier to change the course of history than it is to change a history course." But does it have to be that way?

In order for us to answer these questions, it may be helpful to begin with a look at three common models of change and a discussion of why these models aren't particularly helpful when it comes to higher education. Although there are many more change models we could consider (I introduce several in later chapters), the three that I'll examine here provide a good, general introduction to the way in which change is often perceived. Besides, these three models are particularly easy to remember because they all begin with the letter *K*.

The Kübler-Ross Model of Change Management

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross introduced what's become known as the five-step model of change in her 1969 book, *On Death and Dying*. As that title implies, her focus in the book was the five-step process many people go through when they learn that they have a terminal illness:

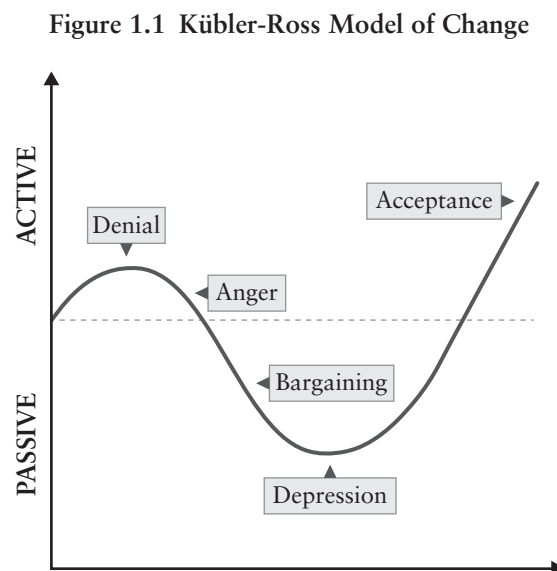
1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

In most cases, a dying person progresses through these steps in the exact order listed, although exceptions certainly occur. Some people regress temporarily from a later to an earlier stage, and others skip certain stages entirely. Grief counselors can assist people as they move through this process, but the steps themselves are regarded as natural and almost inevitable. It does little good to try to reason with someone in the denial stage when a person's reaction is almost entirely emotional, and it's futile to try to cheer someone up in the depression stage when he or she is yielding temporarily to grief. Kübler-Ross's process is simply the way in which most people adjust to the idea of their own mortality. While some people spend more time at one step than another, these steps all appear to be vital components that have an important role to play in comprehending and acknowledging the finality of death.

It wasn't long after Kübler-Ross first presented her five-step model that organizational theorists began to realize that death isn't the only event that can trigger this type of progression. P. David Elrod and Donald Tippett (2002) outlined how Kübler-Ross's basic concept ultimately developed—through such intermediaries as Walter Menninger's change curve model, John D. Adams's theory of transition, and Dottie Perlman and George Takacs's ten stages of change—into Thomas Harvey's recognition that responses to change mimic almost precisely those that people have when faced with the loss of a loved one or their own impending death: "It is crucial to remember that for every change proposed or achieved, someone loses something" (Harvey and Wehmeyer, 1990, 6).

Many of the change models based on Kübler-Ross's five stages of grief represent the process graphically as a series of active and passive responses over time. (See figure 1.1.) Because of the shape of this curve, the five-step model is sometimes also called the *rollercoaster model of change*. By understanding this natural progression, it is argued, effective change managers can respond in an appropriate way to what those experiencing the change are feeling.

- During the denial stage, change managers can keep their message consistent, emphasizing why the change is both necessary and desirable.



- During the anger stage, they can remember not to take resistance and rejection personally, calming stakeholders with a positive, forward-looking message.
- During the bargaining stage, they can resist the urge to make concessions that may initially seem minor but ultimately will be detrimental to their overall vision.
- During the depression stage, they can emphasize improvements and accomplishments that are already being made along the way, thus helping people see that what they have lost is more than compensated for by what they have gained.
- During the acceptance stage, they can use the energy of those who have come to support the change vision to begin making more rapid progress and moving more systematically toward their ultimate goal.

Perhaps the most important contribution of the Kübler-Ross model to the field of change management is its theory of why people so often resist change: they perceive each break with the past as like a little death. Leaders who attempt to ignore the need for healing that must occur during every change process thus run the risk of deepening resistance to the new vision and undermining the entire process.

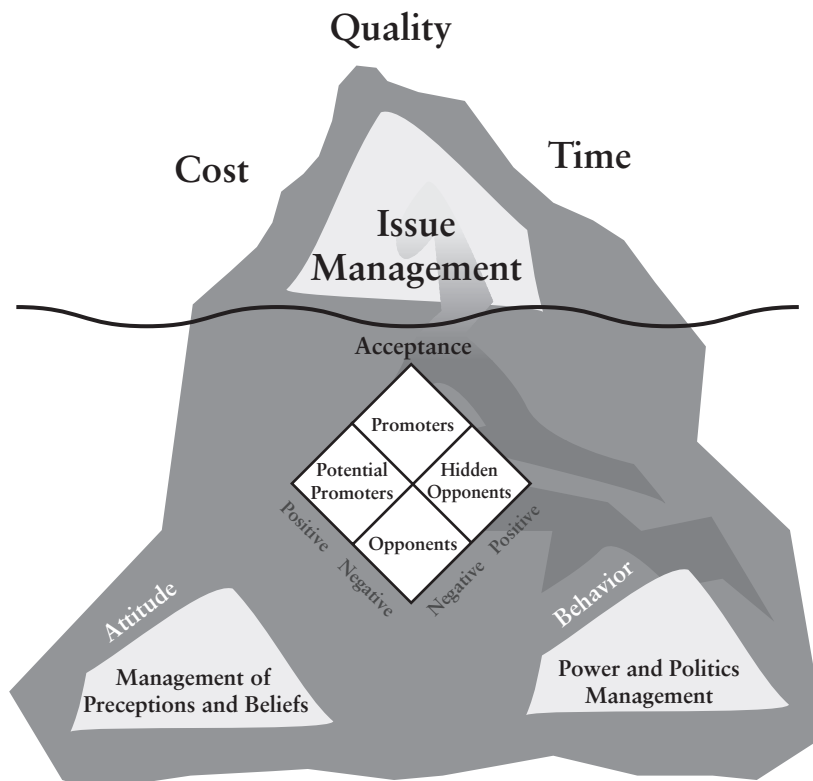
The Krüger Model of Change Management

Until his retirement in 2008, Wilfried Krüger served as a professor of management and organization at Justus Liebig University in Giessen, Germany. In articles like “Implementation: The Core Task of Change Management” (1996) and essays like those appearing in *Excellence in Change*, Krüger posited a theory of change that has become commonly known as the iceberg model. His idea was that change, like an iceberg, is a phenomenon for which most of the danger lies below the surface. Krüger believed that most people involved in organizational change tend to engage only in issues management—the facts and figures that result from the process. They devote their time to such factors as cost, the time that will be required to complete the change, input and output metrics, and the desire to improve quality. But these issues are rarely what cause the real problems for a change process. More frequently difficulties arise because of less immediately visible factors, like power relationships, politics, beliefs, biases, and perceptions. The successful change manager, Krüger argued, is the person who takes time to address these hidden

elements of any organization, which he believed could constitute as much as 90 percent of an initiative's success or failure (figure 1.2).

Change managers deal with these invisible factors by making sure that the human element of the process isn't overlooked in their desire to get matters of cost, time, and quality right. They know their organizations well enough to understand who is likely to oppose the change and whether that opposition will probably be due to a resistance to all change or just a distaste for this particular change. They also know who the opportunists are who might outwardly support the process in order to curry favor with their supervisors, while passive-aggressively working to make sure that the change never actually takes place. But it's not just awareness of where opposition will arise that's important. Change managers also need to know who their likely supporters are going to be. They thus spend time persuading those with open minds to become advocates for the new

Figure 1.2 Krüger Model of Change



initiative and to rally others to the cause. They balance their task orientation (getting the job done) with a people orientation (getting everyone onboard), recognizing that changes succeed or fail because of what stakeholders believe, accept, and trust.

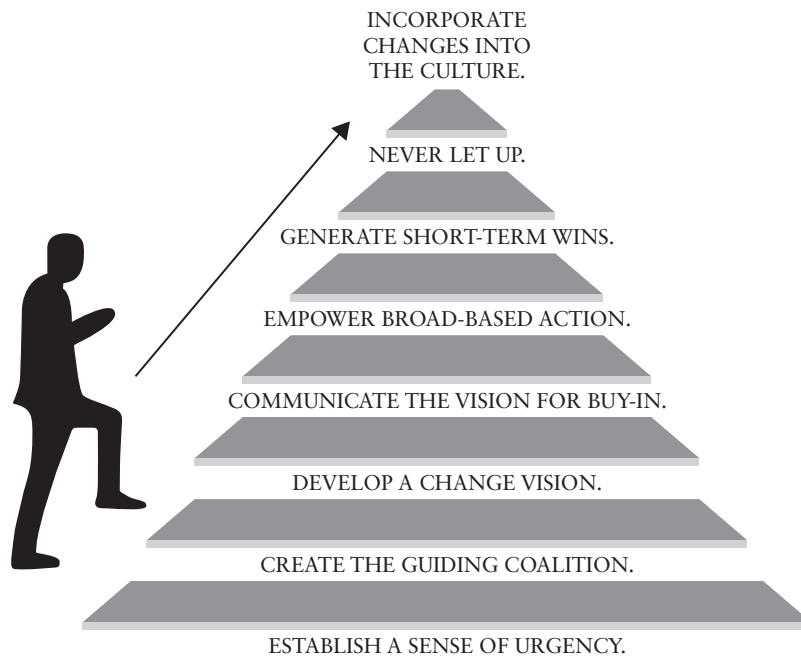
The Krüger model implies that effective change management requires leaders to adopt a systems approach. That is, those in charge of the process have to understand the political environment and power dynamics of the organization in which they work. In addition to those who openly support or oppose the initiative, there may be others whose actions are more covert: potential supporters who are afraid to speak their minds because they believe that those opposed to the change will retaliate against them and secret critics of the change who pretend to support the idea in public but then do nothing to advance or undermine it (at least in any open manner). By pursuing strategies that cause potential supporters to become active advocates, change managers counter the threat posed by the opportunists and passive-aggressive opponents. Failing to address these often invisible aspects of perceptions, beliefs, office politics, and power relationships can sometimes produce a change that initially appears to be successful but is actually superficial and unlikely to be truly transformative. We might think of these managers as people who are so fixated on the surface issues of cost, time, and quality that their change processes run aground or capsize once they strike the unseen elements of the Krüger iceberg.

The Kotter Model of Change Management

Perhaps the most influential approach to change management today was developed by John P. Kotter, the Konosuke Matsushita Emeritus Professor of Leadership at Harvard and founder of his own consulting firm that assists corporations with issues of change. In such books as *Leading Change* (2012), *A Sense of Urgency* (2008), and (coincidentally in light of the Krüger model) *Our Iceberg Is Melting* (Kotter and Rathgeber, 2006), Kotter describes successful change processes as having eight significant steps (and is thus sometimes also known as the eight-step model of change management; see figure 1.3):

1. *Establish a sense of urgency.* Change processes fail, Kotter argues, when members of an organization don't fully comprehend the need for the change and thus don't buy into it. The basic rule of thumb is this: until the pain of doing nothing becomes greater than the pain of doing something, most people will continue to do nothing. Inertia resists change.

Figure 1.3 Kotter Model of Change



It therefore becomes important for managers to identify the threats that the organization faces and communicate these dangers to stakeholders in a compelling enough manner that a consensus in favor of change begins to emerge.

2. *Create the guiding coalition.* Managers can't guide a successful change process by themselves. They must rely on the help, advice, and support they receive from their leadership team. In addition to those whose authority is a function of the positions they hold—what Peter Northouse (2012), professor of communication in the School of Communication at Western Michigan University, calls assigned leadership—this guiding coalition should be expanded to include early adopters, opinion leaders, and those whose authority stems from the respect they receive from their peers—what Northouse calls emergent leadership. The best type of guiding coalition is one that includes wide representation from stakeholders both vertically (from different levels of the institutional hierarchy) and horizontally (from different departments or specialties on the organizational chart).

3. *Develop a change vision.* The manager should next develop a clear and easily remembered mental image of the desired end state after the

change. He or she should ask how the threat described in step 1 will be avoided and how the organization's stakeholders will be better off after the change has occurred. In this way, the change manager's vision becomes rather similar to Stephen Covey's second habit of highly effective people: "Begin with the end in mind" (Covey, 1989). In other terms, the change vision is the destination at which the organization will arrive after its journey through the change process. Although it's not essential for every aspect of this future state to be specified in advance, the goal should be clear enough for it to be quickly comprehended by as many people as possible and desirable enough to make the inevitable setbacks along the way seem endurable.

4. *Communicate the vision for buy-in.* Once the desired change has been identified, it needs to be described to larger and larger circles of stakeholders in a manner that will cause them to embrace it. Managers should explain to others why the new vision benefits them and why current practices are no longer acceptable. These explanations should occur often, maintain a consistent focus, and be supported by the data that were used to generate the vision in the first place. For example, if a competing institution is planning to launch a new program with scholarships and travel opportunities far beyond what you're able to offer, describe what you know about this potential competitor and indicate how your vision can counter that threat. Discuss the vision whenever you get a chance. Run the risk of sounding like a broken record. It's this repeated, consistent type of communication that increases awareness that change is truly inevitable and that you have a clear idea of where the organization is going. If people have concerns, address them openly and candidly, but don't let the inevitable complaining about the discomfort of change interfere with the progress of the project. Enlist the support of early adopters to help you overcome the resistance of those opposed to the idea.

5. *Empower broad-based action.* As you enter the implementation phase of the change process, you'll inevitably encounter barriers along the way. Additional funding may be needed. Staff training may be required. Procedures may have to be updated. By empowering others to accomplish these tasks, you achieve two goals simultaneously. First, you reduce your own workload by delegating key responsibilities to others. Second, you encourage even more buy-in by expanding yet again the circle of those directly participating in the change process. As an added benefit, opponents of the change may see obstacles that they regarded as insurmountable effectively cleared away and thus come to accept the change that you're implementing.

6. *Generate short-term wins.* Any truly transformational change requires a great deal of time. Along the way, some supporters may

lose interest, while others may become disillusioned by the inevitable frustrations and setbacks that occur. To maintain momentum, change managers make a priority of celebrating small victories as they occur. Rather than waiting to see whether a major grant proposal is funded, for example, they celebrate each phase of the proposal's completion. Rather than waiting for enrollment to increase dramatically, they celebrate when rates of attrition decline, retention holds steady, and even a slight rise in applications occurs. People become more enthusiastic about a change if they begin to see tangible, positive results, and effective change managers identify these short-term gains as a way of keeping stakeholders engaged in the process.

7. *Never let up.* Taking time to celebrate these minor victories doesn't mean that managers mistake milestones for the ultimate goal. They redouble their efforts and use each small success as a basis for further achievement. The way in which faculty members are hired, developed, and evaluated may need to change. For example, if the proposed change involves shifting the institution's priority from teaching alone to a combination of teaching and research, search announcements may need to be written in such a way that they attract candidates who are highly productive in research. Criteria for promotion and tenure may need to be revised. The center for teaching and learning may need to be paired with a new center for research development. Although the ultimate aim may already be in sight, effective managers don't change their rhetoric, and they don't move on to the next big idea before the current big idea has come to fruition.

8. *Incorporate changes into the culture.* The biggest mistake change managers make is assuming that once a new initiative is well under way, they don't need to attend to it anymore. In fact, they need to incorporate the change into the institution's culture by making it part of the orientation for new employees and, if appropriate, including references to it in the mission statement of the institution or unit. Kotter notes that truly substantial changes may lead to the loss of some personnel who can't adjust to the new initiative. But these departures are a useful component of developing a new institutional culture since it leaves the organization with a more solid base of employees who will support the endeavor. In time, people will stop regarding the initiative as a change and start seeing it as "the new normal." But that process can't be rushed, and managers shouldn't assume that it will simply occur on its own.

The goal of the Kotter change model is thus to provide a consistent level of emphasis on the process regardless of how long it takes. Unlike other models that deal only with the implementation of the change itself, the Kotter model includes the vital steps that need to occur before the process is launched and the equally vital steps that must occur after the process is complete in order to make the change permanent. (For a similar model, but somewhat expanded to include twelve steps instead of eight, see Mento, Jones, and Dimdorfer, 2002.)

The Role of Organizational Culture in Change Processes

All three of these change management approaches provide significant insights for college administrators. I'll repeatedly use the lessons learned from the three models just explored, as well as other attempts to describe organizational change processes, in examining how change tends to occur in higher education. But it's also important to realize at the beginning of this study that in order to incorporate change into the culture in the way that Kotter recommends, we first have to understand what that culture is. And when we do, what we discover is that change models that were designed to describe other environments, such as corporate change or general changes in a person's life, have only limited applicability to higher education. Here's why.

We can think of an organization as a structured system in which individuals come together as a group in order to achieve a common goal. As a structured system, organizations develop ways of assigning power, authority, and responsibility for the sake of making decisions. If they didn't, no decision would ever be final: no person or subgroup would be authorized to render a final judgment. But not every organization is structured the same way. The different ways in which decisions are made and power, authority, and responsibility are allocated affect more than just the shape of the organizational chart. They also affect what Edgar Schein, emeritus professor of management at MIT, calls the group's organizational culture. The type of culture that Schein has in mind is somewhat different from the type of culture that anthropologists and sociologists are talking about when they define culture as the beliefs, artifacts, symbols, and practices that distinguish one group of human beings from others:

The culture of a group can ... be defined as a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (Schein, 2010, 18)

In other words, organizational culture embodies what the members of an organization:

- Take for granted—their *assumptions*
- Use to solve problems—their *strategies*
- Rely on to understand their place in the organization—their *roles*
- Pass on to new members of the organization—their *legacy*

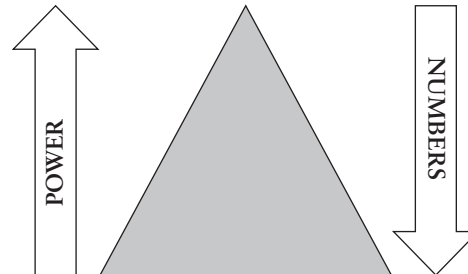
With this definition of organizational culture in mind, let's consider the three most familiar ways in which groups might structure themselves in order to allocate decision-making power.

Hierarchical Organizations

Allocating power hierarchically is probably the most common, as well as the oldest, way of structuring an organization. Hierarchical organizations can be pictured as a social pyramid in which power rises at each level as you go up the organizational structure and in which numbers of employees increase at each level as you go down the structure (figure 1.4). It's the same type of organizational structure we find in ancient Mesopotamia, Shang dynasty China, medieval Europe, armies throughout all of human history—and most modern corporations. Hierarchical organizations have certain advantages. They can respond to situations quickly because decisions can be made at the highest level without necessarily consulting (or even informing) lower levels. Responsibilities and expectations are clear at every level in the hierarchy. If you're a warrior, merchant, liege lord, or vice president of marketing, you have a predetermined "job description" from which you and everyone else in the social pyramid know exactly where your responsibilities begin and where they end. As Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn note in *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture* (2011), hierarchical organizations are

characterized by a formalized and structured place to work. Procedures govern what people do. Effective leaders are good coordinators and organizers. Maintaining a smoothly running organization is important. The long-term concerns of the organization are stability, predictability, and efficiency. Formal rules and policies hold the organization together ... Large organizations and government agencies are generally dominated by a hierarchy culture, as evidenced by large numbers of standardized procedures, multiple hierarchical levels (Ford has seventeen levels of management), and an emphasis on rule reinforcement. (42)

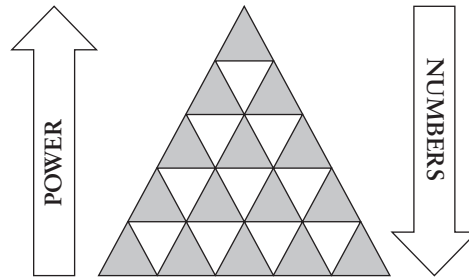
Figure 1.4 Hierarchical Organizations



But social pyramids also have several disadvantages. Since lower levels of the structure aren't always consulted about major decisions and not expected to have much insight into the big picture, their talents aren't fully used, and the upper levels of the structure don't receive the full benefit of their knowledge and experience. In addition, members of the organization can feel as though they're locked in their current status. In certain societies, that feeling derives from a rigid caste system that actually prevents upward mobility. In rigidly hierarchical societies and in much of the corporate and military worlds, promotion to another level may be possible, but a certain us-versus-them identity at each stage in the hierarchy sometimes prevents people from even trying to rise in the organization. For example, it may technically be possible for a mail clerk one day to become president of the company, but low-level employees often begin to see themselves as culturally different from "the people on the tenth floor" and thus never pursue opportunities beyond their immediate sphere. The anthropologist Chie Nakane (1967) uses the term *tate shakai* (vertical society) to refer to this type of social hierarchy in which each rank or level has its own habits and protocols for dealing with all other ranks or levels and where styles of dress, manners of speech, and forms of recreation cue insiders as to each person's place in the pecking order. *Tate shakai* sacrifices social equality for order, speed in making decisions, and clear lines of authority.

Moreover, even when promotion from within the social pyramid does occur, members of the organization soon encounter another reality of the hierarchical structure: each social pyramid isn't a single, monolithic pyramid but rather a triangle-shaped scaffolding that consists of many smaller pyramids (figure 1.5). In other words, if employees think, "If only I become a manager, I can finally make decisions by myself," they're deluding themselves. Being at the top of the employee pyramid

Figure 1.5 Hierarchical Organizations,
Detailed Configuration



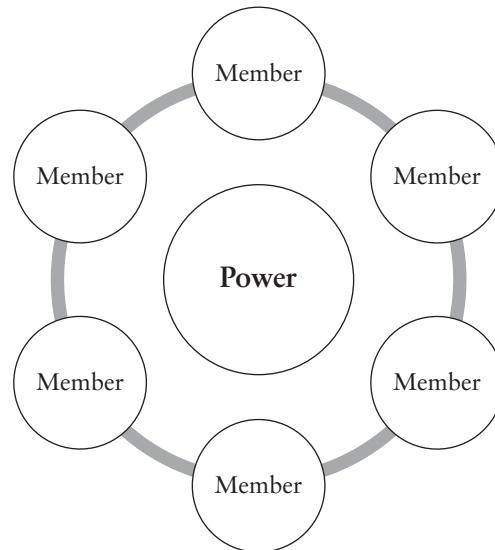
is essentially the same as being at the bottom of the manager pyramid. Likewise, managers who climb to the top of the manager pyramid suddenly find themselves at the bottom of the vice president pyramid. That pattern is repeated throughout the entire hierarchy, so it's not merely that lower levels of the organization have less decision-making authority than do the upper levels; it's also that their decision-making process is more prolonged and tentative. Anything decided at a low level can be countermanded at an upper level, and so there's an actual disincentive for those who are at the bottom of the organizational chart to be innovative when it comes to promoting substantive change. Proposals are too easy to be vetoed as they go up the hierarchy, and the employee's initiative may backfire ("I pay you to work. I don't pay you to think. Who asked you to come up with this lame-brained idea?"). As a result, change processes tend to be initiated by a relatively small number of stakeholders. In the most extreme situation, they can begin in the mind of only one person: the king or CEO.

Decentralized Organizations

At the opposite end of the organizational spectrum, there are what we might call *decentralized organizations*. The operating principle of this type of structure is democracy, or one-person, one-vote decision making. In this type of hierarchy, every member of the organization is equidistant from power (figure 1.6). No one is authorized to make a final decision alone. Instead, decisions can be made only in clusters: by consensus, majority rule, or some other system that assigns equal weight to the view of each individual.

In the academic world, we're most familiar with decentralized organizations when we work on committees. And if you've ever worked on a

Figure 1.6 Decentralized Organizations



committee, you immediately recognize both the strengths and weaknesses of decentralized decision making. On the one hand, they're extremely fair. No one's opinion counts more than anyone else's. A multitude of views is regularly expressed, and members of the organization have perfect freedom to be persuaded by whichever case they find most convincing. On the other hand, decentralized groups can take an incredibly long time to make decisions. Even then, decisions may not be "final" because those who are on the losing side of the debate have the right to argue that their case wasn't given a fair hearing or that relevant issues remain to be discussed. So if the advantage of the decentralized organization is that every voice gets to be heard, the disadvantage is that *every* voice gets to be heard—even if people become tired of hearing it.

For this reason, both hierarchical and decentralized organizations have a valid place in decision making. For issues where sufficient time is available, decentralized organizations provide an opportunity for groups to get a broader perspective, anticipate possible deficiencies in an idea, and build buy-in for the change. For issues where a crisis is pending, hierarchical organizations provide a clear understanding of who's in charge and allow a swifter response to the problem at hand. Most university faculties wouldn't tolerate having the curriculum dictated to them by a president, provost, or dean, but at the same time, university faculties don't expect

people to wait for the recommendation of the fire evacuation task force when the building is burning down. The choice of which type of organizational structure groups adopt frequently comes down to which of two factors is more desirable in a given situation: broad-based consensus or speed.

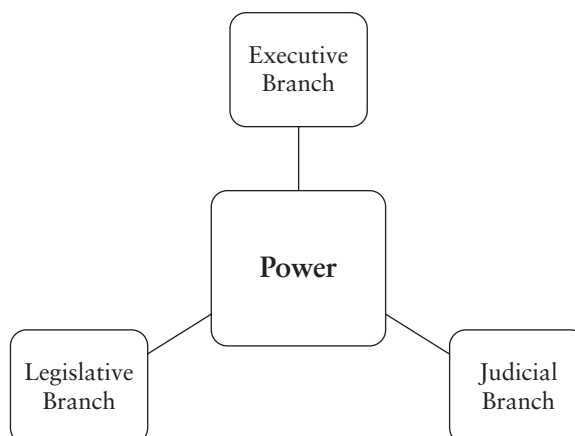
Distributed Organizations

Distributed organizations occur when power is shared among various individuals or groups within the organization. Unlike hierarchical organizations, it's not the case that higher ranks in the institution possess all the power of the ranks below them plus additional powers resulting from additional responsibilities. Unlike decentralized organizations, it's not the case that each member of the institution possesses power equal to that of every other member. Distributed organizations retain at least some sort of loose or honorary hierarchical structure, but decision making is shared through the twin processes of delegation (the assignment of responsibility to others) and empowerment (the assignment of authority to others). In many cases, upper ranks preserve the right to veto the decisions made by lower or parallel ranks, but not to initiate or modify the actions of those ranks when it comes to matters that have been entrusted to them.

Perhaps the best way of understanding how distributed organizations work is to examine the balance of power established by the US Constitution for the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government (figure 1.7). The legislative branch makes the laws, the judicial branch interprets the laws, and the executive branch enforces the laws. The executive branch can veto decisions of the legislative branch, and the judicial branch can declare them unconstitutional, but while presidents may recommend new laws, neither they nor the judiciary can create them. That power has been entirely delegated to Congress. Moreover, even though the executive branch is traditionally thought of as the highest of the three branches because of its role in national defense and foreign policy, there actually are distinct spheres of influence among the three branches, and none of them can truly be said to outrank the other two.

While most people think of higher education as composed of hierarchical organizations—and organization charts are usually constructed to depict them that way—colleges and universities share many features with distributed organizations. For example, the concept of shared governance is essential to the way in which most Western universities work. The governing board retains fiduciary responsibility and sets basic policies. The administration implements those policies and is responsible for the

Figure 1.7 The US Constitution as an Example of a Distributed Organization



day-to-day operation of the institution. The faculty is responsible for the curriculum of the school, the provost is responsible for academic personnel, and the students are responsible for the allocation of student activity funds. (That distribution is merely an example; there's a great variety in how institutions allocate power and responsibility.) Adriana Kezar (2014) describes this type of culture:

Higher education is a professional bureaucracy, a unique type of institution with a distinctive structure and culture that is different than what is found in businesses or government. Professional bureaucracies are characterized by dual power and authority systems. Professionals (e.g. faculty and sometimes staff) are considered to be autonomous workers who are involved in their own evaluation, develop policies governing their working conditions, and plan and coordinate much of their work on their own. They are given a high degree of authority and autonomy with the understanding that they will be accountable to one another and will engage in self-policing and peer review. (93)

Furthermore, the concept of academic freedom has both a legal and a traditional meaning in higher education. As a legal term, it relates to the right of colleges and universities to set their own curricula, standards, and policies without external interference. In this sense, the courts sometimes speak of institutional academic freedom. But as the term *academic freedom* is used traditionally by those who work

in higher education, it refers to the rights of faculty members, as professionals in their academic areas, to teach their approved syllabi in the manner they deem most appropriate. In this context, the expression *individual academic freedom* is sometimes used. (For example, see www.aaup.org/report/1940-statement-principles-academic-freedom-and-tenure.) For this reason, administrators and faculty members in higher education retain a great deal of autonomy within their own spheres of influence, thus producing an organizational structure in which power is widely distributed and collegiality among constituents is highly prized.

The IKEA Effect

Because colleges and universities are structured as distributed organizations, most approaches to change management aren't particularly effective for them. And it should come as no surprise why: those strategies were developed for corporations, the military, and other types of hierarchical organizations. In a culture of shared governance, faculty members don't view change just as an issue affecting the university; they view it as an issue affecting *them*. In fact, they often view it as an *indictment* of them. In hierarchical cultures, most people can distinguish between themselves and the organization. Workaholics and William Whyte's Organization Man, the archetype of the employee whose life is dedicated entirely to "the company," are notable precisely because they're viewed as aberrations. For the vast majority of employees, a job is what they do; it isn't who they are. Even though it's common for Americans to define themselves largely in terms of their jobs—"Good to meet you. I'm Taylor, an accountant with Wilder and Roundtree"—they still usually view their jobs as a means to an end, not an end in itself. When they win the lottery or receive a large inheritance, few people have any compunction about walking away from their jobs. Even in the military where identification with one's own squad, platoon, or company tends to be strong, soldiers often joke with one another about the absurdities of "the Army" as though it were something foreign to themselves and not an integral part of who they are.

In a distributed culture like a university, it's much more difficult to say, "Don't ask me. I just work here," because the faculty members often are the very people who developed the policies or designed the program. For this reason, change management in higher education runs counter to a phenomenon known as the *IKEA effect*. As conceived and validated by Michael Norton, Daniel Mochon, and Dan Ariely (2012), the IKEA effect states that we tend to overvalue products that we ourselves participate in creating when compared to similar prefabricated items.

In other words, most people place a higher dollar value on a table they themselves assembled out of an IKEA kit, a toy they themselves designed at a Build-a-Bear Workshop, or strawberries they themselves picked at a local farm over identical (or even superior) items they played no part in creating. In addition to their own controlled experiments, Norton, Mochon, and Ariely cite earlier findings—such as the discovery in the 1950s that consumers preferred cake mixes to which they had to add an egg over those to which they just added water and Leon Festinger's 1957 discovery that people value an activity more when they have to put more effort into it—suggesting a strong correlation between personal engagement and assigned value. Labor leads to love, they conclude, and the more of ourselves we put into something, the more perfect we regard it as being. Some social psychologists call this tendency *effort justification* (see Alessandri, Darcheville, and Zentall, 2008; Singer and Zentall, 2011; Lydall, Gilmour, and Dwyer, 2010), and it's a tendency that's rampant in higher education because of the type of institutional culture it involves.

In distributed organizations, many of the policies and procedures that govern the way in which an institution operates were developed by the members themselves. Declaring that change is necessary is tantamount to concluding that the members of the organization “got it wrong” when they first set those policies and procedures. At a university, for example, when an administrator states that the general education program needs to be revised, his or her audience is likely to include many people who designed that program in the first place. Because they helped build it, they overvalue its quality. Moreover, they interpret the claim that it needs to be changed as an accusation that they're stupid, incompetent, or short-sighted for not getting that initiative right the first time. While members of all organizations tend to resist change because it promises uncertainty and discomfort (at least temporarily), members of distributed organizations tend to resist change most strongly because they view what's being discarded as a part of themselves. It's no wonder that so many faculty members take proposals for change personally. They view the status quo as a key ingredient in their own identities in a way that people who “just work here” never do.

Why Change Must Change

If changes need to occur in higher education because we see important shifts in our academic and economic environments, then it's clear we can't rely on traditional change management models and approaches to effect

those innovations. For one thing, as active participants in a distributed organization, faculty members at a university don't really see themselves as employees who are subject to being "managed" by administrators, many of whom are far less qualified in the faculty members' areas of specialty than are the faculty members themselves. They view themselves as independent contractors, subject perhaps to the ultimate approval of their chairs and deans, but preserving a great deal of autonomy over their research, the way they teach their courses, and their opinions about how the institution is being run. The reason that so many academic leaders describe their jobs as "herding cats" is due to this degree of independence that is integral to the nature of faculty work. Professors, it may be said, are literally unmanageable because they actively resist the types of management that traditionally succeed in more hierarchical environments.

Viewing higher education through the lens of organizational behavior makes it clear why so many approaches to change management have been ineffective in higher education:

○ *They relied on a dichotomy between decision makers and decision implementers that doesn't really apply to the role faculty members have.* For example, the Kübler-Ross or rollercoaster model of change management implies the existence of an outside observer, or "control agent," that is utterly alien to how higher education works. It suggests that someone is present to observe and respond to the onset of denial, anger, bargaining, and so on, adjusting his or her responses to the emotional responses of the employees. But in a distributed organization, the manager and the managed are often the same. Or perhaps, to put it more accurately, the very concept of management doesn't apply to an environment where shared governance means that faculty members are empowered to make their own decisions in certain spheres of their responsibilities. Moreover, the metaphor on which the Kübler-Ross change model relies is singularly unfortunate in a system where people identify so closely with the organization. Specifically, in an environment where faculty members are accustomed to saying things like, "We *are* the university," presenting change as akin to a type of death and the universal reaction to change as a type of mourning is likely to cause faculty members to become apoplectic. If you view yourself as intimately related to the entity that's being changed, you're more likely to respond positively if the process is envisioned as a type of growth and renewal, not as a form of hospice care or as a funeral director's well-intentioned effort to comfort the survivors.

○ *By suggesting that change is being imposed from the outside rather than growing organically from within, they produced a type of learning*

anxiety that's antithetical to smooth transitions. In the Krüger or iceberg model of change management, for instance, there's an assumption that managers need to be aware of a vast number of hidden factors that employees are unlikely to see. Edgar Schein (2010) posits that change frequently results in five types of learning anxiety that can make the smooth transition to a new paradigm far more difficult:

1. *Fear of loss of power or position.* As the frequently cited witticism states, "Turf wars are particularly intense in higher education because the stakes are so small." Curricular changes could result in "my course" no longer being required as part of the major. Structural changes could result in "my committee" no longer being relevant. If a proposed change appears to threaten the perceived basis of faculty status or power, it's likely to be met with strong resistance.
2. *Fear of temporary incompetence.* Schein (2010) cites the common phenomenon of people who resist buying a new computer, adopting a new program, or switching to a new operating system—even if the change will bring many advantages with it—because they don't want to deal with the learning curve required. In higher education, faculty members often see a direct connection between their level of knowledge and the amount of control they have over their environment. If an externally mandated change occurs, they will enter a situation in which they are temporarily at a loss because they don't know the ground rules. As a result, they will see the change as a threat to their self-image and thus resist it.
3. *Fear of punishment for incompetence.* Despite all the changes occurring in higher education, it's still a publish-or-perish world. If adapting to a change will be time intensive, it could reduce the amount of time faculty members have for refereed publications, writing and submitting grant proposals, updating courses, and maintaining currency in the discipline. Since promotions and merit raises are frequently based on productivity in these areas, any activity that's seen as a distraction from them will meet with strong opposition.
4. *Fear of loss of personal identity.* We've already seen that college faculty members often have an image of themselves as singularly well-educated and competent people. Any change that disrupts that sense of self, even temporarily, is likely to be regarded as a significant threat. But there are also other ways in which change can threaten personal identity. As Schein (2010) says, "We may not want to be the kind of people that the new way of working would require us to be" (304). For example, a president who proposes that a campus

become more “student friendly” may expect faculty members to assist students when they move into the residence halls each fall. If a faculty member’s personal identity is that he or she is a scholar and expert who maintains a lofty distance from students and would never think of filling this type of “servant’s role,” the proposed change may appear to be a severe threat that needs to be resisted.

5. *Fear of loss of group membership.* Since, as we’ve seen, cultures distinguish themselves from other cultures through their assumptions, strategies, roles, and legacy, anything that’s viewed as altering those distinctive features can be interpreted as a hostile act. For example, if a faculty defines itself as distinctly different from staff, a governing board that proposes eliminating that distinction will be seen as a threat. Even worse, if the proposal includes the abolition of tenure, then anyone whose self-image is that of “a tenured faculty member” will oppose this change for all five of Schein’s reasons.

While these problems may arise in any type of change, they’re particularly troublesome in the context of higher education where stakeholders regard themselves as competent, well educated, and quick to master new information. Any change process that challenges this self-image is likely to meet with strong resistance. Any change process that conveys the impression that a great deal of information is being concealed from them (since it is “below the surface”) is likely to be dismissed as a lack of transparency. Moreover, Kruger’s metaphor of the organization (in our case, the college or university) as a ship headed for an iceberg is only slightly less fortunate than the Kübler-Ross image of change as death.

- *They described the change process in a manner that most faculty members would have regarded as manipulative.* For example, in the Kotter or eight-step model of change management, the order in which processes occur runs strongly counter to a system of shared governance. Communication of the process outside the guiding coalition and the empowerment of major constituencies don’t even occur until halfway through the process. The entire model begins with the change manager’s manufacturing a sense of urgency long before major stakeholders are even given their first opportunity to weigh in on whether the situation is truly as urgent as it is presented. The vision for change is expected to derive from the manager, an occurrence that may work well in hierarchical organizations but runs counter to the culture of decentralized or distributed organizations. In short, change management, as it commonly occurs in higher education, feeds the faculty’s suspicion that the initiative has been undertaken more to build an administrator’s résumé than to

address a genuine need. And in that suspicion, faculty members have too often been right.

For all these reasons, it's clear that if change is to occur successfully throughout higher education, it must be undertaken in a manner different from what we see in traditional change management models. In short, it must proceed in a manner that fits the organizational culture of the modern college or university.

What about Other Stakeholders?

So far in this discussion of academic change, I've been assuming that the change manager is an administrator or member of the governing board and the group of constituents who either embrace or resist the change consists of the faculty. It's a fair question to ask whether that's an accurate assessment of university life today. What about the other stakeholders who are affected by major changes at a college or university? And what about change processes that begin elsewhere than among the administration?

Certainly it's true that other segments of a university population may be concerned about what happened when an institution they care deeply about seems to be undergoing a radical transformation. Alumni may be worried that they soon won't be able to recognize "their" school anymore. Current students (and their parents) may wonder whether proposed changes could delay their progress toward their degrees. Staff could be anxious as to whether their jobs might be in jeopardy or their workload might increase. Donors may keep a watchful eye on whether their investment might be compromised. In other words, change processes in higher education are never simply about the faculty and administration. Other constituencies can play a part and even end up on opposite sides of an issue. Parents of current students might applaud a radical reduction in staffing if they think it will keep personnel costs under control, while members of the faculty and staff may resist these cuts as hitting a bit too close to home. Yet as we'll see in some of the actual cases of significant change that we'll encounter in later chapters, while other stakeholders may play a role in change processes, the key players are almost always the faculty, administration, and governing board. They're the ones who possess genuine decision-making authority in the shared governance of most universities. Students, staff, alumni, donors, parents, and members of the community may raise their voices to support or scuttle an innovation—and are able to affect policy indirectly by withholding financial support or moving to another institution—but they usually don't have sufficient power to initiate or forestall a change themselves. They work

instead by trying to influence one or more of the groups that actually do possess decision-making responsibility.

The second major issue we haven't yet addressed, changes that are initiated by the faculty and opposed by the administration or governing board (or both), are also outliers in higher education. While friction among these groups is not uncommon, the changes that capture the attention of the national and global press aren't usually those that involve issues of most concern to the faculty: compensation, reward structures, working conditions, class size, and the like. Even issues like academic freedom and tenure that are more visible to the public tend not to occur because faculty members are attempting to initiate a change. Rather, these matters become noticed by the national media because faculty members are usually trying to preserve a right they feel they have, not bring about a change in the institution that most people would regard as truly transformative. Certainly there are exceptions to this general rule, but the fact remains that the type of change that causes the greatest turmoil at colleges and universities is that which originates from the administration or governing board but is resisted by the faculty. Those are the change processes that require the most careful handling and the greatest amount of care.

Conclusion

The way in which change is approached at an institution is significantly affected by organizational culture. In a distributed organization like a college or university, many strategies of change management that are effective in corporate or military environments have only limited application in higher education. In fact, the very concept of *change management* is a misnomer when it comes to a college or university.

Change isn't something that academic leaders manage. It's something that they lead, initiate, guide, and occasionally capture.

If we're to deal with the degree of change that most people agree is occurring in higher education today, we need to find more successful ways to initiate, guide, and capture that change. In order to be truly transformative in our approach, we must change our entire way of thinking about change and move from trying to manage it to leading it. It's to that process that we turn in the next several chapters.

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