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Educational Leaders' and Teachers' Opinions About Changes in the Turkish Education System: A Qualitative Case Study

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Keywords
educational change, reasons of success, reasons of failure, teacher, principal, opinion

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Introduction

Change has been a matter of organizational policy in the driving force of internal dynamics of organizations, as well as external factors in the 21st century (Pryor, Taneja, Humphreys, Anderson, & Singleton, 2008). These factors have been well documented in the change literature and emerged mostly as a result of the need to remain competitive, environmental demands and changes, the increase in information production, technological developments, globalization, systematic research, and development endeavors and state policies (Balay, 2004; Reio, 2005; Liu & Perrewé, 2005; Van Dam, Oreg, & Schyns, 2008). According to Balay (2004), individuals and societies are experiencing an historic turning point due to the speed and scope of the changes in social, political, economic, and cultural spheres. With the world being viewed as a “global village” (Stoll, Bolam, & Collarbone, 2002), change has become a reality that is faced by all organizations.

The aforementioned factors profoundly affect educational organizations, as well as other organizations. Fullan (2007) argued that educational organizations are loosely coupled, overloaded, and fragmented structures. Their structural features cause institutional inertia, which can be affected by change. James (2011) viewed change as a means of communication that facilitates information on the needs of the wider environment. Schools, as social and open systems, can survive if they strive to meet the expectations of society.

Harris (2011) suggested, although a great deal is spent on education, numerous reforms, initiatives, strategies, and interventions, that have been initiated and implemented, little or sometimes no difference has been made in the performance of schools and the life changes of the youth. This is the case for the reform initiatives

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Abstract

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Keywords
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Factors Related to Success/Failure of Educational Change

Some factors have contributed to the reasons for failure of educational reform/change initiatives. Most probably, the reasons stem from the planning process, lack of a change philosophy, the change model that is utilized, overlooking “the software of the system,” the nature of the change (e.g., top-down), lack of a holistic approach and implementation without pilot studies, lack of a supportive school culture, professional development, and time and leadership (Fullan 2007; Harris, 2009; Harris, 2011; Kotter & Rathgeber, 2005; Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2010). One of the most significant strategic errors that is often overlooked and hinders the implementation of change initiatives in education is the way in which the organizational culture, structure, and norms will respond to change. If reforms are to be successful, existing cultural features/elements must be taken into consideration in the planning and implementation processes (Brummelhuis, 1995; Fullan, 2007; Kotter & Rathgeber, 2005).

An additional reason behind the repeated failures of the educational change effort is that many approaches to reform and change have been top-down, imposed by the top leadership. Also, it is thought that successful programs or strategies in one country can simply be adapted and adopted in another (Harris, 2011), particularly in countries such as Turkey, which has a highly centralized education system. School cultures usually are very resistant to top-down reform efforts (Aypay & Sezer Kalayci, 2008).

Government attitudes may be a reason for the failure of change. According to Harris (2009), unrealistic goals and timetables are at times made by governments, expecting immediate results and to observe the impacts of the policies within a short time frame. Fullan (2007) proposed that change cannot be accomplished overnight, which is a point that is vastly overlooked. Harris (2009) supported Akşit’s argument on the nature of reforms in the Turkish educational system as well. Akşit noted that the dynamics of the Turkish educational system have been modified several times. However, the expected, substantial effects have not been achieved, as the modifications were superficial, fragmented, or political and did not consider the basic systems in Turkey. Şimşek and Yıldırım (2010) stated that specific components of the Turkish educational system, including organization and governance, curriculum, teaching and learning methods, pre-service and in-service teacher training, and textbooks, must be changed in order to achieve more tangible and substantial results.

Despite the problems leading to failure in reform initiatives, it may be unjust to claim that all of the reform initiatives implemented in Turkey are useless. However, due to some deficiencies in the reform process, many valuable reform initiatives do not bring about favorable outcomes and, ultimately, fail. These failures may occur due to a lack of careful consideration of the big picture (i.e., basics of the system as a whole), the omission of a preliminary/pilot investigation prior to full implementation, and political interventions (Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2010). Two additional issues underpin the failures in educational reforms. One issue is associated with the structure of the reforms, which are too broad, vague, overly ambitious, and poorly designed (Van Veen & Sleegers, 2009). Little (1993) noted that ambitious reforms are accompanied by complexity and ambiguity, which cause uneven progress and are difficult to detect.

The manner in which educational reforms are planned, initiated, and implemented directly affects change recipients. Their attitudes toward change play a key role in its success. In educational settings, teachers and administrators are delegated to implement change that is planned by top management. Datnow and Castellano (2000) emphasized the teachers’ role in the change process and regarded them as the centerpiece of reform initiatives. Teachers’ actions, feelings, and thoughts offer significant implications about their attitudes toward change (Cross & Hong, 2009; Fullan, 2007; Van Veen & Sleegers, 2009; Reio, 2011). When teachers feel that their beliefs, goals, concerns, and identities have not been addressed, they are more likely to resist change (Akşit, 2007).

Devoting more attention to some critical factors in the change process may help to accomplish better results. According to Cuban (1990), it is important to collect data on particular reforms. He suggested tracing the life history in particular classrooms, schools, districts, and regions. Similarly, Hargreaves and Goodson (2006) emphasized the importance of an historical perspective on educational change, which is likely to result in sustainable achievements, rather than matters of only transient interest. This should improve the aspects that yielded poor results in the past, provide an opportunity to learn from mistakes, and make use of working aspects in the former processes.
Harris (2012) viewed change from a philosophical perspective and emphasized the need for a clear theory of change, which should explain how goals will be achieved and detail the necessary steps and changes in practice to achieve them. This is required for alignment, mutual understanding, and flexibility. Lodge and Reed (2003) argued that a good contextual analysis of the existing situation lies at the heart of the school’s capacity to change.

Last, the planning phase is of utmost significance. Planning is a means of assessing the current state of the organization relative to its environment or a desired future state. Therefore, any issue that is not fully considered will endanger the future of change (Pasmore, 2011).

**A Brief Look at Educational Reforms in the Last Two Decades: Delving into Retrospect and Prospect**

Several reforms and modifications have been implemented in the Turkish education system in the last two decades. The scope and purpose of these reforms have ranged from technological innovations to system-wide modifications. The major reform initiatives were related to Basic Education Law, curriculum reform, MEBBIS, e-okul, the FATIH project, girls’ schooling campaigns, a 4+4+4 education system, promotion of literacy, and student clothing. An introduction of each reform follows.

In an attempt to bring the educational level of the country’s population closer to that of European Union norms, the Turkish parliament initiated the Basic Education Reform of 1997. With this law, compulsory basic education was increased from five to eight years, and it paved the way for closure of the middle school sections of religious schools. The remaining high school sections of these schools gained the status as vocational high schools. With the revision of the calculation of the university entrance exam by the Council of Higher Education, vocational high school graduates had less opportunity to enter university departments that were unrelated to their high school specialization (Bulut, 2007; Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2010). The new law that extends compulsory education from 8 to 12 years is currently in effect, rather than the Basic Education Law.

With the purpose of constructing “a student-centered education,” the Turkish Board of Education adopted a “constructivist” approach to curriculum development, dependent upon constructivism and multiple intelligence theory (Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2010; Zeybekoğlu Calıskan & Tabancalı, 2007). The curriculum development effort began at the elementary school level in 2004. In 2006, it was extended to the 6th and 8th grades, and later to the high school. Upon preliminary implementations and revisions, the new curriculum was introduced nationwide at grades 1 through 5 in 2005, at grades 6 through 8 in 2006, and in high school in 2007 and 2008. This curriculum reform was large scale, as it affected all main subject areas (e.g., Turkish, mathematics, etc.) simultaneously (Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2010; Yapıci & Leblebicier, 2007). The purpose of the comprehensive curriculum reform movement was to improve the content and quality of education (Aydagül, 2009).

As a part of the Public Management Reform, the e-Transformation Turkey Project was launched in 2003 to support and coordinate the activities of the information society. Within the scope of e-Transformation, many public institutions developed a number of projects. The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) is one of the institutions that initiated the MEBBİS project (Ministry of National Education Information Systems), which is a framework connecting the central and local education institutions via information technology systems (Bağlıbel, Samancıoğlu, & Summak, 2010).

E-okul is web-based software and was initiated within the context of the MEBBİS project. It is used to systematically store information on schools and students. The project was begun in 2007 as the “E-okul Management Information System” and included information on all levels of the learning process, such as student enrollments, student files, school transitions, improvement reports, and student grades. In addition, course schedules, exam schedules, and teachers’ personal notes are presented in the e-okul system. This system allowed easy access to information about students and their education. The software presents accurate and timely information about school processes and has helped to decrease the amount of paper used for official correspondence (Bağlıbel et al., 2010; Günbayi & Turan, 2013; Sarıtaş, Yıldız, & Duruşoy, 2013).

The FATIH Project is the most significant program among those designed to widen ICT literacy and e-Transformation of individuals in terms of its budget and targets. The project proposes to equip 620,000 classes with projectors and laptops. Touch-screen smart boards, a multi-purpose copier/printer, a camera, a projector, a laptop, and an internet connection will be supplied for each school. This project is funded and supported by the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Transport Maritime Affairs and Communications.
Completion is planned in three years, and approximately $1.4 billion will be spent for the entire project, which constitutes the largest resource allocation to education in the history of modern Turkey (Karakaya Polat, 2012; Kurt, Kuzu, Dursun, Gülüpınar, & Gültekin, 2013; Uluyol, 2013). Kayaduman, Sirakaya, and Seferoglu (2011) reported that the FATIH project is one of the latest to have been launched, with the purpose of increasing student achievement through effective use of technology in classrooms.

In the last decade, Turkey has made many strides in order to increase schooling ratios and eliminate gender disparities among girls and boys at schools through international projects such as “Education for All” and others at the national level. Some of the most significant campaigns, such as Haydi Kızlar Okula! (Girls, Let’s Go to School!); Kardelenler (Snowdrops); and Baba Beni Okula Gönder! (Daddy, Send Me to School!), were initiated by public and private sectors (Gümüş & Gümüş, 2013). As a result of the girls’ education campaign, 62,000 females enrolled at primary schools in 2005 (Commission of the European Communities, 2006). Mercan (2010) indicated that these campaigns and projects attempted to decrease school dropouts and to arrange education programs for girls and women.

The Turkish education system was changed through system-wide reform in 2012, widely known as the 4+4+4 education system, which brought about changes such as fragmented school levels (elementary, middle, and secondary schools); 12-year compulsory education; early schooling; and right to choose elective courses beginning in middle school (Gür, Özçoğlu, Coşkun, & Görmez, 2012). The Ministry of National Education launched this reform initiative in line with advances in technology and information. These advancements altered the expectations from the Turkish education system and required the initiation and implementation of changes in order to equip individuals with the required skills and knowledge of the Information Age. This reform was a multifarious change covering many key aspects, one of which was elective courses. Elective courses were introduced on religion, such as the life of Prophet Muhammad; various native languages, such as Kurdish and Laz language; and subject areas such as drama, music, and reading (Çelik & Gür, 2013; MoNE, 2012).

Another hotly debated aspect is on student clothing. With the new regulation adopted by the government in 2012, students are free to wear whatever they choose at school under MoNE. It is not compulsory to wear uniforms. This issue was controversial among the educators. The new regulation put an end to this controversy (Akbaba & Konak, 2014) and was declared in the Official Gazette and began implementation with the 2013-2014 academic year. MoNE recently tied it to the consent of parents (Gür, Çelik, Coşkun, & Görmez, 2014; Kahraman & Karacan, 2013).

The final initiative is related to the national examination held for transition from middle to secondary schools. Based on scores from the exam, middle school students (8th graders) are placed in Science high schools, Anatolian high schools, and some vocational high schools. SBS (Placement Test or Level Determination Exam) was used for many years for school transitions. In September 2013, SBS was replaced with a new exam entitled TEOG (Transition from Basic Education to Secondary Education Exam). TEOG includes 12 exams that are centrally held in the 8th grades of middle schools; 70% of students’ placement score is taken from the central exams. The remaining 30% is dependent upon students’ school achievement (Gür et al., 2014; MoNE, 2013).

Many attempts have been made since the establishment of the republic to increase the level of literacy across Turkey. Increasing the rate of literacy has become a part of legislation and government regulations. In addition, this issue has been a part of the agenda in the national development plans. Within the context of increasing literacy, campaigns and projects have been launched. One of the most comprehensive projects was the Support for National Education Campaign, with the purpose of increasing literacy, supporting and broadening the scope of other educational activities, and reaching greater masses. Another was the Ana-Kız Okuldayız (We, as mother and daughter, are at school) campaign, which was begun in 2008 to eliminate illiteracy, particularly for females, and concluded in 2012. As a result of this campaign, over 2 million illiterate women received their certificates of literacy. At Public Education Centers, literacy courses are open for those desiring to learn to read and write. The courses are free of charge for anyone intending to attend (MoNE, 2014; Yıldız, Ateş, Yıldırım, & Rasinski, 2011).

A substantive body of change literature is available that has attempted to delineate the processes utilized by schools when involved in whole school change. Some are based in empirical research, and others extrapolate from theories of change in other fields. Growing recognition exists that a great deal more empirical work is required in order to develop more nuanced understandings of successful change (Thomson, 2010).
The authors attempted to determine the opinions of primary school teachers and principals regarding the recent changes in the Turkish education system. To this end, an examination was conducted on changes/reforms that were successful or failed and the reasons for the success or failure.

**Methodology**

A qualitative case study was conducted involving 12 principals and 10 teachers working at primary schools in a large southeastern city in Turkey in the 2012-2013 academic year. Data were gathered via a semi-structured interview form, including questions developed by the researchers based on a literature review and views of field specialists. The opinions of the participants were categorized under four main themes: successful changes, reasons for successful changes, failed changes, and reasons for failed changes.

**Successful Changes**

Opinions of the participants regarding the changes deemed successful in the Turkish education system are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Successful Changes in the Turkish Education System**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Theme Categories</th>
<th>f</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-year compulsory education</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum reform of 2005</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-okul</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FATIH project</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls’ education/schooling</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEBBIS</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion of literacy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student clothing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in the examination system</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-year compulsory education</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fragmented 12-year compulsory education was regarded as the most successful change. A few comments from participants follow:

- 4+4+4 education system is partly successful.
- I think it is successful at a rate of 50-60%.
- Division of primary and middle school facilities is the most successful aspect of the recent change. This is because, in the previous system, 7th and 8th graders were behaving like little kids. Division of the school facilities will facilitate students’ transition to adolescence.

The recent 4+4+4 education system will benefit children in terms of their education in general.

The change implemented in the national curriculum five or six years ago can be regarded as a successful reform. The previous system depended on memorization, but the new one being used depends on practice. This reform has paved the way for students’ active participation in learning processes, and through this reform, instruction has become second to education. Education comes first.

A few individuals thought that none of the changes were successful or achieved their goals.

**Reasons for Success**

Table 2 represents participant opinions on reasons that the changes were successful.

**Table 2. Participant Opinions Regarding the Reasons for Successful Changes in the Turkish Education System**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Theme Categories</th>
<th>f</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for Successful Changes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependence on felt needs</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological developments</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involving implementers in decision making</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementors’ efforts</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducting research</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A few comments follow:

The reason underlying the successful reforms is that these reforms were implemented to meet needs of the society. They aimed to remove problems faced in practice; therefore, they got both educators’ and society’s support.

The most important factor influencing the success of the reforms is technological developments.

In 2007, we were in a commission of Provincial Directorate of National Education, and the Ministry of Education wanted us to do something:
revealing the problematic and positive aspects of the curriculum reform. We got evaluation reports from the directorate. We collected all the reports from the directorates and summed them up in one report. This was a kind of feedback. In this sense, for example, there are expansive reading texts in the books now, and this was my own suggestion. After each unit, we requested them to include a reading text. They listened to us. I am thankful to them. To me, reform is an interaction between the affecting and the affected parts. Reforms can attain their goals and targets if managed in this way.

Failed Changes

Table 3 illustrates the participant opinions regarding the changes that failed or were considered unsuccessful in the Turkish education system.

**Table 3. Participant Opinions Regarding the Failed Changes in the Turkish Education System**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Theme</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>f</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Failed Changes</td>
<td>12-year compulsory education</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum reform of 2005</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changes in the examination system</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elective courses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examination system</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant comments follow.

One of the aspects I criticize most is the extension of compulsory education from 8 to 12 years. The thing we call apprenticeship starts in childhood to learn a new profession. A person studying 12 years cannot be an apprentice or learn how to work in a profession.

. . . There are some failed aspects in the curriculum reform apart from the successful ones. For instance, we have learned through teachers’ feedback that the new curriculum is more student-centered in terms of innovation and visual aids, but time is not considered well in the preparation period compared to the previous system because we cannot teach all the subjects on time. It is good that the curriculum is student-centered but we get many complaints about not having enough time to teach all of the subjects in a course.

**Reasons for Failure**

Table 4 represents participant opinions on reasons that the changes failed.

**Table 4. Participant Opinions Regarding the Reasons for Failed Changes in Turkish Education System**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Theme</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>f</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementors’ failure to implement change</td>
<td>Insufficient infrastructure</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not involving implementers in decision making</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not including experts in change process</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inconsistent practices</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of detailed research</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continuous change</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Revolutionary changes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simply adapting international developments</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ideological goals</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of dependence on felt needs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant comments follow.

Initiating a reform without aligning the required infrastructural components is a main reason resulting in failure of educational change.

Reforms are implemented without provision of sufficient infrastructure, which hinders success and persistence of the reform initiatives.

Upon making a new arrangement, The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) does not appeal to students, teachers and parents’ views nor discusses them with them. MoNE puts it into practice in line with its ideological thoughts. This causes problems afterwards.

I think if teachers and school principals are allowed to voice their thoughts, reforms could be more successful. Authorities enact laws; others at the local level obey them. Giving more responsibilities to the implementers could ameliorate most of the problems.

To give an example, those in the top management of the Ministry of Health were appointed to
others positions, the new principals are from a medical background; they come from the medical kitchen. However, even though the same thing happened in the MoNE, the new managers are not of education background. The minister must be someone from an education background. Our country could have had many opportunities if that had happened. He is a professor of business administration; to me, this is not right. Someone from an education background could have seen the problems easily. Then reforms could have been more successful.

Conclusion and Discussion

The results of the study were somewhat interesting and controversial. Technology-focused changes such as E-okul, the FATIH project, and MEBBIS were perceived as positive and successful changes in general. Changes such as girls’ schooling, the unfragmented 8-year compulsory education, and promotion of literacy, which broaden the boundaries and scope of education and instruction, were regarded as positive reform initiatives. Last, the changes in the regulation concerning student clothing were regarded as successful by the educators, although this regulation caused serious debate among the educators and the public. A few individuals believed that none of the reform initiatives had been successful. Other than those changes regarded as successful, some, such as the new elective courses, were among the failed changes.

Participants were ambivalent regarding some radical changes, such as the fragmented 12-year compulsory education, the curriculum change of 2005, and the changes in the examination system, which profoundly influenced the education system. They were perceived as both positive and negative reform initiatives. No agreement was noted relative to the success of these changes. This may have been due to the fact that these changes were multifarious and comprehensive, and their components were evaluated differently by the participants. Obviously, while the participants believed the fragmented 12-year compulsory education brought about three school levels, which was favorable in terms of students’ developmental characteristics, they felt the new system had some unfavorable aspects, such as causing delays in obtaining a position.

The curriculum reform of 2005 also was a controversial issue. When compared to the previous one, the new curriculum was successful, as it eliminated memorization, included more practice and active student participation in the learning process, was up to date in terms of its content, and contained visually rich materials. However, it also was unsuccessful due to the lack of time to teach all subjects and difficulties faced in practice. The differences among the opinions may stem from the complexity of the educational changes.

According to Fullan (1991), educational changes are multidimensional, similar to changes in new materials and technologies, new teaching approaches, and beliefs about teaching. Changes implemented within the boundary of one of these dimensions (e.g., new textbooks that do not require changes in teaching strategies) are considered to be small scale, whereas, the changes covering all of these dimensions are “complex.” The previously mentioned changes are large scale and complex. In order for these changes to be successful, actions and modifications must be planned on the basis of these three dimensions.

These controversial results indicated that some factors affect success of the changes. The researchers attempted to explore educators’ opinions about the factors affecting success of the changes. Change must be based on felt needs or elimination of a negative aspect in the system. In addition, it must ensure effective use of technological innovations, implementors must participate in the change process, and their opinions and concerns must be considered. In other words, the affecting party must be in a dialogue with the affected party. Cross and Hong (2009) proposed that teachers’ beliefs, goals, and identities are important in times of reform, as they adopt change and translate it into their classroom goals based on their existing beliefs, standards, and experiences. Teachers’ emotions subsequently influence their learning and development and, ultimately, their performance (Reio, 2011). In addition, in order for changes to achieve the anticipated goals, implementors must initiate active efforts, and an effective contextual analysis must be conducted prior to full implementation of change across the country.

Similarly, an insufficient infrastructure, a lack of involvement of the implementors in decision making, a lack of a change expert and his/her support in the change process, inconsistencies in changes, a lack of dependence upon felt needs, a lack of a well documented analysis, and ideological goals are among the reasons that negatively affect success of the changes. Moreover, change occurs frequently, rather than on an evolutionary basis, and changes are revolutionary in the Turkish
education system. The structure of the education system and cultural values are not taken into consideration. Change recipients are not trained on implementing change. Overall, these may be some of the factors that negatively affect the success of the changes.

The participants stated that change must emerge from the felt needs or an endeavor to eliminate an existing negative aspect in the system, if it is to reach its goals. Those that are not needed are likely to fail. Brummelhuis ten (1995) argued that, if change is to be successful and persistent, it must be revealed clearly that the change is a required and emergent need. In addition, Ely (1990, 1999) proposed that organizational members’ dissatisfaction with the existing situation, due to inefficiency, is a factor that facilitates acceptance of change.

The participants noted that the inability to construct the required infrastructure has caused changes to fail. Fullan (2007) suggested that infrastructure and resources are necessary to initiate a major change in education, and these are critical factors that affect successful implementation of educational change. Likewise, Ely (1990, 1999) argued that infrastructure and resources are two basic facilitators of organizational change.

According to the participants’ opinions, ignoring the structure of the education system and the cultural characteristics is one of the reasons that change initiatives have become unsuccessful. The way in which the organizational culture, structure, and norms will respond to change is vastly ignored in the implementation of change initiatives in education (Fullan, 2007). The conclusion was reached that some factors that played a significant role in the success of the changes were associated with the change recipients. In the change process, the implementors must participate in the decision-making process, and their views must be considered. They also must be supported in the implementation period.

Fullan (1991) proposed that a prediction may not be possible as to whether change will be successful without appealing to the opinions of those who are to implement the change. One of the most basic reasons for failure of change is that the individuals who plan and manage change are not aware of the situations facing those on the receiving end. This causes change leaders to experience difficulties in predicting the recipients’ responses to the change.

The involvement of teachers in the decision-making process will yield better results and increase the possibility of persistency of the results, as participation in decision making prompts diffusion of an “ownership feeling” among the teachers (Berman & McLaughlin, 1977). Stakeholders also must perceive decision making as involvement in the process, which has a facilitating role in the success of change (Ely, 1990,1999). In order to successfully manage the change process, pressure, support, and continuous negotiations are needed, which results in concurrent effect from both top to bottom and bottom to top (Fullan, 1993).

Educational change initiatives often fail because they are too frequent and the initiatives are not incremental. The rationale behind this may be that, when organizations change too frequently, they may not be effective and cannot improve their performance. They also may need routine activities in order to improve their personnel effectiveness and their performance (Rieley & Clarkson, 2001). In fact, change is now inevitable and a necessity; therefore, it is believed that those who are open to change, and able to keep up with it, are thought to be vital for organizations (Burnes, 2004). Teachers who internalize change and accept that it is an imperative, and those who are open to change, are urgently needed in education.

**Implications**

Some implications of this study can be drawn for those who make decisions regarding educational change, who manage change, and who create policies about change on all levels. Multidimensional and consistent activities must be aligned by addressing difficulties in successful implementation of complex changes. Change must meet the existing needs and offer a solution to the problems in practice. Change recipients must be involved and supported in all levels of educational change, primarily the decision-making process.

Technological innovations must be effectively utilized while planning and implementing change. Change must depend upon sound contextual analyses, with the provision of a required infrastructure. The support of change experts must be utilized in the process, which must be initiated incrementally. More important, cultural characteristics of the current educational system must be considered in terms of incoming and ongoing changes. Measures must be taken to assist teachers in embracing change as a critical component of their routine work.

In addition to the previously mentioned implications, further research is suggested. The changes perceived
by the participants as successful and failed must be examined in detail, and the reasons must be delineated. Furthermore, this study treated change as a general concept. Further research must focus on rich and context specific factors that influence the success of change initiatives.

References


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