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Perception In Leading Change: The Role Of Academic Leaders as Change Agents

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ABSTRACT

Too often organizational change is seen as a negative force. This perception of the specific change as bad causes tremendous disruption and misunderstanding among faculty and academic leaders. This study contends that the more relevant issue is whether academic leaders communicate the vision and strategy for change effectively. Furthermore, the crux of the matter is not whether high-quality, rich communication exists but depends more heavily on the perception of faculty undergoing change. In this article, the authors will compare nine faculty members' responses to a perceptual survey dealing with organizational change, interviews with questions created using the survey as a basis, and archival data showing the availability and opportunity for involvement in the change process. This comparison will allow similarities and discrepancies to be examined between faculty perceptions of leaders, while also taking the institutional context into account.

Keywords: organizational change, involvement, perception, faculty, academic leadership

INTRODUCTION

Anticipating the need for change requires understanding organizational needs as well as individual and group perceptions (Bouckenooghe, Devos, & Broeck, 2009). One example was examined by Finn III (2017) in the context of faculty perceptions during a Learning Management System (LMS) transition at an urban midwestern university. Leading change can be simultaneously inspiring, frustrating, visionary, exhilarating, and fear-inducing (Black & Gregersen, 2008; Kotter, 1990, 1996; Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Kotter & Rathgeber, 2005). Although change is often framed as negative (Bolman & Gallos, 2011), it is about more than just adapting to adversity or overcoming obstacles. Leading change is about setting a visionary tone and seeing an alternate future, even when the present is by all analysis successful (Black & Gregersen, 2008). This reality that the need for change is elusive, and lying beneath the surface of success, is difficult to conceptualize. How can leaders effectively deal with current challenges, while also foreseeing future realities that require new and innovative solutions?

The widespread and rapid pace of technological change has led to an ever-evolving landscape that can be both disorienting and frustrating to faculty members caught in the middle of this important process (Finn III, 2017). Change causes ripples throughout the entire educational system, including large research universities, small liberal arts colleges, community colleges, technical colleges, and K-12 systems. With the widespread organizational adoption of the Learning Management System (LMS) in educational institutions, it is a logical place to begin this discussion in those environments (Black, Beck, Dawson, Jinks, & DiPietro, 2007; DeMaine & Finn III, 2013; Finn III, 2017; Kruse, Phan Tan, Koesling, & Krüger, 2012; Mott, 2010). A comprehensive theoretical framework was developed for purposes of this study. Focusing on individual change (Black & Gregersen, 2008) and large-scale group approaches to organizational change (Kotter, 1996).

This article will examine the perceptions of faculty as they were encountering an LMS transition and the role administrative leaders, other faculty members, and department chairs played in the change process. A study by Finn III (2017) focused primarily on the qualitative observations relayed by nine faculty members who observed the LMS transition in real time. This study will examine the change process more deeply by comparing survey responses with interviews and archival data (Finn III, 2017).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Institutions of higher learning within the United States and abroad are under increasing pressure to address and manage technological change, impacting teaching and learning while providing expanding technological services to students and faculty (Black et al., 2007; Chow, 2013; Jaffee, 2003; Marshall, 2011; McLoughlin, Wang, & Beasley, 2008; Sembi, 2012; Sosulski, 2008). Leading change, specifically related to technology, can be fraught with frustration or thwarted if individual motivations and group dynamics are not fully considered throughout the process (Black et al., 2007; Black & Gregersen, 2008; Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991; Finn III, 2012, 2013, 2017; Kotter, 1998). Studies have shown faculty are often hesitant to embrace

and introduce innovative technologies into the classroom if they are uncertain about their own mastery of the technology, time constraints, lack of existing support structures, or lack professional development opportunities (Black et al., 2007; Finn III, 2017; Gautreau, 2011).

While many components contribute the to the lack of adoption, the lack of vision, support, and professional development are often the primary drivers (Black et al., 2007; Black & Gregersen, 1997, 2008; Finn III, 2017; Kotter & Cohen, 2002). A primary reason for this is the inability of academic leaders to anticipate and address individual and group perceptions (Finn III, 2017). Deeper understanding of these perceptions can be gained by combining multiple change theories (Black & Gregersen, 2008; Finn III, 2017; Kotter & Cohen, 2002).

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Leadership is a rapidly evolving field, and has been for many years. However, one could argue that organizational change is a constant thread that runs throughout the rest of leadership theory. Whether is it is understanding the interplay between global teams (Black et al., 1991; Finn III, 2013), identifying new technological challenges in higher education (Black et al., 2007; Finn III, 2017; Finnegan, 2006), or confronting innovation in the business world (Black & Gregersen, 2008; Kotter, 2008), change is the catalyst by which leadership rises or falls.

When initially conducting the research for this study, the authors had no idea the scale or scope of the Corona Virus Pandemic. However, as the landscape and science continually evolve, educational institutions are having to change rapidly. While the focus of this study relates directly to technological change, the implications of understanding individual and group perceptions has broader connotations and, even without replication, many of the guiding principles of leading organizational change may help institutions push through these difficult times. Adding to this is the interdisciplinary nature of leadership as a field of study (Bass & Bass, 2008; Goethals & Sorenson, 2006; Northouse, 2010).

RESEARCH METHODS

A case study protocol includes the development of a theoretical framework from which to explore the phenomenon, considering organizational change theories and a structured process for collecting and analyzing various streams of data (Finn III, 2017; Yin, 2009). In taking the time to develop and implement the case study protocol, a more holistic view of the topic can be explored. The analysis portion of the protocol and sources of data are outlined here:

I. Research Question:
How do faculty perceptions of leading a Learning Management System (LMS) transition inform faculty acceptance and adoption of the LMS transition?

a. Sub Question: What is the perceived impact of leading an LMS transition with an emphasis on the organization and various subgroups on faculty acceptance and adoption of the LMS transition?
b. Sub Question: What is the perceived impact of leading an LMS transition with an emphasis on the individual on faculty acceptance and adoption of the LMS transition?

II. Other questions and sources of information

a. How do faculty perceive the ability of leaders?
    i. Interviews, Questionnaire
b. How do faculty perceive their peers?
    i. Interviews, Questionnaire
c. How do faculty perceive support structures?
    i. Interviews, Questionnaire
d. How do faculty perceive the LMS and other educational technologies?
    i. Interviews, Questionnaire, and Archival Data
e. How useful do faculty perceive technology is to teaching?
    i. Interviews, Questionnaire, and Archival Data

For this analysis, the individual and group change scales developed by Bouckenooghe et al. (2009) were used as a coordinating model for individual and group change approaches (Black & Gregersen, 2008; Kotter, 1996). The separate dimensions of departmental and organizational change outlined by Bouckenooghe (2013) are combined under the umbrella of group change. A deep analysis of the individual questions, author descriptions of each scale, and the categorization as individual or group level measurement allowed a close link to be established (Finn III, 2017). Based on this approach, eleven areas of essential information were developed for each of the interview questions (Finn III, 2017). A summary of these scales, sub-scales, and essential information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Essential information identified using the research framework and the Organizational Change Questionnaire: Climate, Process, Readinesss (OCQ-CPR) (Bouckenooghe, 2013; Bouckenooghe et al., 2009).

OCQ-CPR Scale Item	Interview Essential Information
General Support by Supervisors	Explore the perceived level at which supervisors encourage and support feedback and reactions from subordinates concerning LMS acceptance.
Trust in Leadership	Explore the perceived level of communication and participation that is encouraged by campus leadership in the acceptance of the institution provided LMS.
Cohesion	Explore the perceived level of support and teamwork among colleagues in LMS acceptance.
Participatory Management	Explore the perceived level of participation encouraged by academic leaders in the decision-making process regarding LMS acceptance.
Politicking	Explore the perceived political environment surrounding LMS acceptance.
Ability of Academic Leaders to Lead Change	Explore the perceived level of competence and ability of leaders to effectively lead change in LMS acceptance.
Attitude of Top Academic Leaders Toward Change	Explore the perceived level of support by campus leaders regarding LMS acceptance.
Intentional Readiness for Change	Explore individual commitment and willingness to engage in the acceptance of the institution provided LMS.
Cognitive Readiness for Change	Explore individual perceptions of the possibility of success with acceptance of the LMS.
Emotional Readiness for Change	Explore individual readiness and attitudes toward LMS acceptance and organizational change.
Involvement in the Change Process	Explore the perceived level of involvement by multiple stakeholder groups in LMS acceptance.

Recognizing that organizational change is not exclusively individual, or group oriented allowed the authors to have a deeper examination of motivations and perceptions (Bouckenooghe et al., 2009; Finn III, 2017). Additionally, although theories differ whether the focus of change should be on the group (Kotter, 1996) or the individual (Black & Gregersen, 2008), common threads such as vision, trust, and communication are woven throughout these processes. Nine faculty members completed both the survey and interviews, self-reporting their departments or programs, roles, education, years of service, gender, and race. Demographic data is presented in Table 2.

Survey responses were used to make comparisons between participants based on the answers to questions related to both demographics and perceptions of change. Additionally, comparisons were made by examining the corresponding questions for each change scale (Bouckenooghe, 2013; Bouckenooghe et al., 2009) and interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) based on those same scales. Careful attention was taken to look for consistency in answers to the survey with statements made during the interviews. This allowed for a more holistic view of participants' thoughts and perceptions surrounding leadership during the LMS transition.

Prior to selecting the new LMS, multiple platforms were tested by faculty and students with follow-up surveys and interviews conducted of faculty as well as surveys and focus groups for students (A.C., Personal Communication, February 3, 2017). Data were first assessed for authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning (Bryman, 2008; Scott, 1990) and examined using textual analysis (Punch, 2005) to explore relationships to emergent themes and gain a deeper understanding of the organizational context and communication structures surrounding change (Finn III, 2017).

Demographic responses, interview questions, and the corresponding survey question responses were integrated into the participant pages. Survey questions were then coded as positive or negative and the corresponding

Table 2. Participant demographics as reported on the OCQ-CPR.

Participant	Department/ Program	Role	Education (Degree)	Service (Years)	Gender (M/F)	Age	Race
1	Social Work/ Sub-Department	Associate Professor	Terminal	6-10	F	Over 45	White
2	Social Work	Professor	Terminal	More than 10	M	Over 45	White
3	Sociology	Professor	Terminal	More than 10	F	Over 45	White
4	English	Adjunct Faculty	Masters	1-5	F	35-45	White
5	Spanish	Visiting Faculty	Masters	1-5	F	25-34	White
6	Geography	Associate Professor	Terminal	NR	M	Over 45	Asian/Indian Subcontinent
7	Museum Studies	Associate Professor	Terminal	6-10	F	35-45	White
8	Religious Studies	Clinical Faculty	Terminal	More than 10	M	Over 45	White
9	Communication Studies	Associate Professor	Terminal	More than 10	F	Over 45	White

responses marked as such. A column was also created for the overall sentiment of each participant. After coding the questionnaire responses as positive or negative, the responses were compared with the corresponding interview transcripts. This analysis allowed for a deeper exploration of participant intent when answering specific questions, including identification of discrepancies. For example, some participants were neutral in their answers on the questionnaire, but more willing to share experiences and opinions during the interview.

Although the OCQ-CPR is a valid and reliable instrument, the questionnaire was used to explore the perceptions of interview participants and not as a quantitative instrument (Finn III, 2017). The theoretical framework outlined earlier was used to connect the questionnaire to the interview questions. Finally, archival data from a pilot study provided further context for the overall exploration of the topic, including opportunities for participation, feedback, and professional development.

ANALYSIS

As discussed in the methodology for the study, multiple streams of data were important to gain the proper context. The surveys and interviews combined to delve more deeply into individual experiences and their perceptions of leaders at various organizational levels. Archival data in the form of previous institutional research revealed both consistencies and differences in the organizational environment. Taken together, these streams of data helped to provide a more holistic understanding of the organization.

Survey and Interview Results

Survey and interview questions were coordinated to explore organizational change at the group and individual level. Additionally, some questions deliberately blurred these lines to assess the involvement of faculty members in the change process. Participants were determined to have responded negatively or positively based on answers given most. Finally, each participant's answers were compared for alignment between the data collection methods. Although nine participants were included in the study group, all nine were not always in alignment, nor did they always provide fully relevant answers to individual questions.

Six participant responses aligned regarding supervisor encouragement and support. However, two participants described an environment where IT was leading the effort with no support or communication from supervisors. In both cases, supervisors were rated favorably in the context of the survey. One participant provided mostly neutral responses but during the interview described a lack of support and contact with academic leaders. Additionally, although four participant responses aligned regarding supervisor communication and faculty participation, five participants agreed that the primary communication and outreach for participation came from the Teaching and Learning Center (TLC). Only one participant described active communication and outreach for participation by departmental supervisors.

Eight participant responses aligned related to teamwork and support among colleagues. Seven participants, including those who responded neutral to the survey, noted positive relations

among faculty, regardless of feeling positive or negative about accepting the LMS. Only two participants noted strong faculty resistance to the LMS and a lack of camaraderie among faculty members. Four participant responses aligned regarding the political environment in departments. Although some participants noted favoritism existed, this was not seen as related to the acceptance by faculty of the LMS. One participant noted that there may be tangential favoritism in allocation of resources regarding the level of adoption, but it was not overt.

Four participant responses aligned regarding faculty participation in the decision-making process. Seven participants related that no faculty consultations were conducted to their knowledge. Additionally, many of those who responded positively to survey questions still noted a top down decision-making process. Two participants observed a lack of awareness may be at work instead of lack of opportunity. One participant also perceived that participation was limited to innovators and early adopters. Along with being involved was the perceived ability of administrators to lead. Four participant responses aligned regarding this topic. Three participants responded positively during the survey but reported a structure that was negative or where all decision-making was delegated to central IT or the TLC. Two participants responded as neutral but also reported direct academic supervisors were not perceived as leaders or seemed lethargic in responses.

Finally, three participant responses aligned regarding overall campus leader support. One participant did not provide an answer to this interview question. Five participants responded neutrally to the survey but reported a distinct point of view during the interviews. One participant believed administrators were just out to save money. Two participants described a lack of vision, communication, support, and leadership. Another participant reported some support, but poor communication. Additionally, one participant described support in name only and delegation of all communication.

Six participant responses aligned regarding individual commitment and their willingness to change. One participant reported not being very interested in changing unless necessary due to lack of interest and being busy as a teaching director. Another participant responded negatively to all survey questions on this topic but expressed a fervent desire to use technology in the interview. Still another participant responded neutrally but was far more positive with the caveat that pedagogy should be the driving force. In conjunction with willingness to change, all participant responses aligned regarding the potential for success regarding change. However, two participants were concerned with the pedagogical impact of transitioning to the new LMS, or even using any LMS platform. One participant also expressed concern about students being able to use the system effectively and recommended enhanced support.

Five participant responses aligned related to their readiness and attitudes toward change. One participant responded neutrally to the survey, but expressed concern about support, proactive leadership, and oversight. Another participant responded positively to the survey but expressed concern that faculty will not adopt the new LMS without proper support. Finally, another participant responded neutrally to the survey but was positive about support for adoption during the interview. It is important to note that groups are constructed of individuals and are therefore concerned with both internal and external pressures. Six participant responses aligned between the survey and the interviews. Four participants responded neutrally to the survey but provided more detail during the interview process, describing an environment devoid of involvement by either full or part time faculty. One participant noted uncertainty about the possibility of faculty being allowed to provide feedback in the future. A summary of all participants by sentiment is presented in Table 3.

Archival Data: Previous Institutional Research

Prior to the study presented here, institutional research was conducted to assess faculty and student engagement during the LMS pilot. As part of the selection process, the institution's central IT piloted the new LMS in 35 courses. Of this, 22 faculty members participated in surveys and interviews surrounding the usability and effectiveness of the new LMS in their teaching. Nine faculty members were from the campus in the case, representing 41 percent of the total. Additionally, a total of 129 students participated in surveys and focus groups surrounding their experience with the new LMS. Of this total, 72 students (56 percent) were from the campus represented in the case (A.C., Personal Communication, February 13, 2017). While student responses are outside the current scope, this information does relate to multiple stakeholder involvement.

Table 3. Sentiment analysis summary based on essential interview items.

Essential Information Items	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Explore the perceived level at which supervisors encourage and support feedback and reactions from subordinates concerning LMS acceptance.	6	2	1
Explore the perceived level of communication and participation that is encouraged by campus leadership in the acceptance of the institution provided LMS.	2	2	5
Explore the perceived level of support and teamwork among colleagues in LMS acceptance.	5	2	2
Explore the perceived level of participation encouraged by academic leaders in the decision-making process regarding LMS acceptance.	5	3	1
Explore the perceived political environment surrounding LMS acceptance.	2	2	5
Explore the perceived level of competence and ability of leaders to effectively lead change in LMS acceptance.	5	2	2
Explore the perceived level of support by campus leaders regarding LMS acceptance.	3	1	5
Explore individual commitment and willingness to engage in the acceptance of the institution provided LMS.	6	2	1
Explore individual perceptions of the possibility of success with acceptance of the LMS.	6	1	2
Explore individual readiness and attitudes toward LMS acceptance and organizational change.	5	0	4
Explore the perceived level of involvement by multiple stakeholder groups in LMS acceptance.	1	4	4

The stated purpose of the evaluation was "to provide formative feedback to guide the use of new technologies in teaching and learning" (A.C., Personal Communication, February 13, 2017). The evaluation asked faculty what tools they used in the new LMS and for their evaluation of the effectiveness of those tools. Faculty assessment of the teaching platform is directly related to pedagogy. A few examples of different tools include (a) using peer review assignments, (b) annotating assignments, (c) providing audio or video feedback, (d) using grading rubrics, (e) conducting synchronous meetings (A.C., Personal Communication, February 13, 2017). In addition to types of tools, the survey asked faculty to agree or disagree with statements related to the way they thought about teaching in the new LMS. While some of these were focused on administrative tasks, others provided insight into faculty perceptions of pedagogy.

The data from the institutional evaluation of the new LMS provides a stark contrast to the perceptions provided by faculty in the current study regarding involvement in the change process as well as various pedagogical concerns. Participants repeatedly described a top down approach to selecting a new LMS and lack of faculty involvement and engagement. Some even described the transition as strictly a cost saving measure. Regardless, it appears they were unaware of institutional evaluations to which faculty and students contributed, although it was made available to all faculty in the organization (A.C., Personal Communication, February 13, 2017).

During the period of the case, the Fall 2014 academic term, the TLC conducted a total of 74 synchronous workshops. Of these 36 (49 percent) were directly related to the new LMS. Most of the workshops (26, 72 percent) were function driven including a platform overview, how to migrate data between the legacy and new LMS, and how to communicate using the platform. The remaining workshops (10, 28 percent) focused on how to use specific tools in teaching, including using rubrics, groups, assessments, quizzes, assignments, and grading (A.C., Personal Communication, February 17, 2017).

The data concerning available workshops at the TLC intersects with several views expressed by

participants during the interviews and surveys. First, the role of the TLC was clear from participant statements. Some participants even described the TLC as leading the change process. Other participants did note that some of the support offered by the TLC was more rudimentary and did not rise to the level of what faculty considered professional development.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

An LMS transition creates a magnification of the change process and allows for deeper exploration of the various forces at play surrounding leadership. The research question sought to ascertain how faculty perceptions of leading an LMS transition informed their level of acceptance and adoption of the LMS. The data illustrate that perceptions of leadership do provide insight into the level of acceptance and adoption by faculty.

The findings in this article illuminate faculty perceptions of academic leaders in the context of an LMS adoption, reinforcing the earlier work by Finn III (2017). Participants overall believed that change, more specifically technological change regarding the LMS, was an unavoidable consequence of innovation in higher education. For some, this change is welcome, necessary, and positive. For others, the increased use of technology undermines the teaching and learning process and serves to diminish the relationship between faculty and students, perhaps even leading to the outsourcing of instruction (Finn III, 2017).

FINDING 1: Creating and Communicating a Compelling Vision

This finding relates directly to the communication by leaders surrounding the LMS transition and specific reasons for faculty to adopt an LMS. Regardless of focus on group dynamics or individual experiences, change theorists agree that defining and communicating a compelling vision are crucial to effective change (Black & Gregersen, 2008; Finn III, 2017; Kotter, 1996, 2008; Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Kotter & Rathgeber, 2005). On the individual level, lack of clarity on vision can lead to reticence, inability to revise pre-conceived notions, or even a reversion to a previous mental maps (Black & Gregersen, 2008). This confusion can spread at the group level, reinforcing a culture of complacency and lack of urgency in search of safety and what feels comfortable (Black & Gregersen, 2008; Kotter, 1996, 2008; Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Kotter & Rathgeber, 2005).

There were diverse opinions among participants as to what the vision was for the LMS transition. In part, this was a result of perceived poor communication from academic leaders. Participants viewed the incorporation of the LMS as either a natural progression of higher education, a powerful pedagogical tool, a way to increase efficiency, way to supplant the role of the teacher, or a way to remove the ability of faculty to customize courses. However, in all cases, the way the vision was perceived to have been communicated informed these views.

One participant saw the vision for using the LMS as primarily a cost savings measure, but also personally believed that this was inevitable. They noted a lack of communication at the department level. Another participant who served a dual role as a faculty member and director saw communication as primarily coming in the form of email or other online materials, with little direct involvement on an interpersonal level. They did note that part of the issue was a perception on the part of the dean that faculty were highly resistant to the topic. They finished by describing a highly bureaucratic organizational structure that did not allow faculty to be able to see the entire picture unless they were members of specific committees or looking at specific areas.

The vision was further obscured according one participant when the department chair engaged in complaining about the LMS and talk of outsourcing the faculty role. They continued reinforcing the belief of two other participants that the organization was bureaucratic, increasing the possibility of faculty not being adequately informed. Still another participant felt the need to communicate information to colleagues concerning the transition because academic leaders directed inquiries back to the TLC instead of engaging faculty. The data confirm seven participants reported a lack of communication to the faculty from academic leaders, with one remaining neutral, and one describing active department leadership. It should be noted that while conducting the interviews participants repeatedly referred to communication of the transition as being in the domain of the TLC.

Responses surrounding the perceived involvement of academic leaders in the change, inability to provide a positive vision, and lack of support for the process reinforce the perceived disconnectedness from the vision. Data revealed six participants saw academic leaders as just out to save money, unclear on the vision, unknowledgeable surrounding

technology, lacking in direct communication, or delegating communication. The remaining three participants were positive in survey responses with only two elaborating during the interviews. In this case, both faculty members reported academic leaders active support of the LMS transition.

Although there was a general perception that academic leaders did not effectively communicate the vision, participants noted an overwhelming positive or neutral personal orientation toward accepting and adopting the LMS. In this instance, survey responses and interviews aligned with six participants seeing the change having a positive effect on students, the transition successfully being completed, and solving organizational problems. Two participants were neutral to acceptance and adoption of the LMS, seeing some benefits, but were concerned with student access and pedagogy surrounding the use of technology. One participant viewed technology as a hindrance to teaching and learning. Pedagogical concerns were present even among participants viewing the change positively.

Archival data provide support, and a possible contradiction to faculty perceptions. Participants noted the availability of information online and via email but saw this primarily as passive communication not actively promoted by academic leaders. All archival data examined, including reports on the process and framework for selecting the new LMS were available to faculty members. Additionally, the perception of faculty was that either the TLC or central IT was responsible for communication and leading the process. However, archival data includes information from these sources and institutional research conducted on faculty experiences with selecting the new LMS (A.C., Personal Communication, February 13, 2017).

FINDING 2: Involving Faculty in the Decision-Making Process

Although it may appear to dovetail with communicating a vision, this finding concerns faculty perceptions of information provided as the change was happening, and feedback sought in both the construction and administration of the process. Specifically, perception of involvement creates a feeling of ownership, and by extension a sense of community. Faculty can contribute on many individual levels, but the complementarity of the group consciousness can exponentially increase the impact of individual contributions. Most participants viewed the role of faculty in making decisions to be minimal if present at all. Additionally, faculty saw decisions as primarily driven from the top levels of the institution, with limited involvement of leaders at the campus or department level.

One participant compared lack of involvement in the LMS transition to the movement of their department to online delivery, recognizing that faculty had genuine concerns about pedagogy and the effectiveness of using technology. They went on to state that while they were not involved in the surveys, focus groups, or other forms of input regarding the LMS transition, they saw these attempts at involvement as largely symbolic and having minimal impact. However, they did believe that the campus was beginning to be more inclusive regarding technology in general and reported being invited to several collaborative online groups. Another participant echoed these perceptions, although adding that they were unaware of any attempts to involve faculty in decision making. They related that all decisions were made centrally and mandated, regardless of impact on faculty, students, and pedagogy. They described a lack of involvement in integrating tools and features, initiating upgrades, and assessing the pedagogical viability of tools and features.

In the dual role as a teaching director, another participant described a culture of faculty involvement in decision making, but also conceded that faculty may not be aware of such efforts due to the various silos that exist on campus. They felt this awareness gap could be filled by encouraging more faculty members to be involved in committee work related to technology. They felt this was important to the overall future of the campus, and higher education more broadly.

One participant reported that adjunct faculty were not consulted either but noted an upcoming change where part-time faculty could serve on various committees. While another participant concurred about the lack of involvement by faculty, they were newly promoted to full-time status and admitted that there may be opportunities not available to adjunct faculty. Additionally, a participant expressed a lack of awareness regarding faculty involvement but admitted that there may have been communications but did not see them as memorable enough to recall.

One participant noted change as being driven more by administrative pressures than pedagogical concerns. They further believed

any involvement tended to target only those who would be considered early adopters or innovators. This had the effect of narrowing the lens and eliminating the possibility of critiques surrounding the transition to the new LMS. Another participant also believed that decision-making responsibilities resided at the top and opinions were not sought from departments or individual faculty members.

One participant stated they were unaware of how to access feedback channels. They appeared to reinforce an earlier participant's point of view that there may have been emails requesting feedback, but that it was not something they remembered. However, they did note that the new LMS does allow faculty to participate in question and answer communities to help shape the use of the platform. They concluded by saying these sorts of opportunities may have existed earlier, but they were not aware of them.

When asked questions concerning the involvement of various stakeholder groups in defining the vision or promoting the acceptance and use of the LMS, seven participants felt that faculty were not involved in determining or conducting the change process. One participant, who serves as a dual role teaching director, was the notable exception to this feeling, believing there truly was a give and take with feedback. However, they admitted a large part of this view was due to having served on various committees. Another participant was also a notable exception as they were newly promoted to a full-time position but saw online communities related to the new LMS as a positive step to encourage faculty feedback. Importantly, three participants noted the availability of information, but that direct involvement was not necessarily encouraged.

Eight participants described lack of involvement in the change process but noted a willingness to be more involved. When asked questions surrounding personal commitment, seven participants expressed a willingness to devote a significant amount of time and energy to the acceptance and adoption of the LMS. One participant noted an unwillingness to increase use because of not seeing the value of the technology for teaching or students. It should be noted that two participants did not have survey and interview responses that aligned. One participant, although answering the survey positively, noted that they were only motivated to adopt what was necessary. Another participant, although answering the survey negatively, was far more open to accepting and using the new LMS during the interview.

Archival data appear to contradict the perceptions of faculty related to involvement in the process of transitioning to the new LMS. The stated purpose of the institutional research conducted surrounding the selection process was to "provide formative feedback to guide the use of new technologies in teaching and learning" (A.C., Personal Communication, February 13, 2017). Although there was involvement, this does not address the issue raised of targeting specifically early adopters and innovators, which may have provided an incomplete lens in conducting the research by the institution.

FINDING 3: Providing Encouragement, Support, and Continuing Education

While it is true that individual perceptions impact group dynamics, the activities and relationships outlined here are inherently personal and serve to continuously redefine individual mental maps. The examples provided also build on the other findings to create a supportive and encouraging environment, including professional development opportunities. A distinction should be made between support and professional development. Support can be in the form of professional development, but also includes functional aspects of using various technologies. For this reason, they have been separated. Participants tended to make this distinction as well.

One participant noted a lack of encouragement on the part of departmental leaders, stating that it was up to the individual to identify and participate in workshops. Although seeking these opportunities out, they noted that it was primarily to enhance skills and not to necessarily become a better instructor. Another participant seemed to equate sharing of information to encouragement by reinforcing the availability of resources regarding the LMS transition on websites, emails, and in departmental and campus newsletters. However, they also noted the importance of professional development opportunities, citing a recent conference exploring online curriculum development.

One participant described support coming from academic leaders to be primarily concerning a topic of interest or bringing in vendors for specific products or tools. However, the bulk of support came from the TLC. They noted that there were various levels of support including (a) self-help tutorials, (b) workshops, and (c) personal consultations. They also noted

that the TLC provided summer funding for faculty to engage in new activities to increase learning. Another participant stated that their department chair provided encouragement and spent considerable time in one on one consultations. Additionally, they described a resource room where adjunct faculty signed up and were available for peer consultations. They also reinforced the key role of the TLC. They noted that in addition to other stated resources, there were also recorded webinars faculty could access off site and that emails were returned within 24 hours.

One participant noted no direct encouragement from academic leaders but saw this as a function of the support provided by the TLC and central IT. They noted being asked by academic leaders to provide a class during the last department meeting to their peers. They went on to say that they did not often use the services of the TLC, preferring to explore new systems (specifically the new LMS) themselves. They also mentioned the expertise provided by the TLC to redesign new courses. Although they had not used this service, they thought it might be helpful in the future.

Participant perceptions surrounding this finding are illuminated further when examining survey responses in the context of the interviews. When asked about encouragement and direct support from departmental academic leaders, six participant survey responses were primarily positive. However, taking the interviews into account, this shifts to just one participant seeing active involvement by departmental leaders. The other participants described departmental leaders as either ambivalent or disengaged from the process, instead pointing to the TLC or central IT as the primary means of encouragement and support.

When asked about support from colleagues at the department level, six participants noted good relations. However, positive relations did not necessarily translate into encouragement surrounding the transition to the new LMS. For example, several participants noted support largely revolved around resistance to the technology. Two participants noted severe resistance by other faculty members and a feeling a lack of camaraderie as a result. One participant noted no real interaction with other faculty due to the departmental structure. Although some participants noted politics playing a role in their departments, there was no perceived connection regarding the transition to the new LMS.

Archival data appears to partially confirm the perceptions of participants. For example, the availability of multiple training sessions, various workshops, and a 24-hour help desk reinforces the support structure described by faculty (A.C., Personal Communication, February 13, 2017). This information does not, however, speak to the internal communications and structures within the department, so no direct comparison can be made.

While participants all actively used the LMS, most perceived a lack of involvement and participation regarding the selection and implementation of innovative technologies. Furthermore, most participants noted an over-reliance on technical support structures and an abdication by academic leaders when it came to offering encouragement and support. Finally, there was a perceived lack of professional development that encouraged faculty to reimagine their courses, as opposed to just being technically fluent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although participants had strong individual visions related to the LMS transition, acceptance, and use, they did not express a common vision. There was a perception that using technology, and accepting the transition to the new LMS, was predetermined and expected. This, combined with the perception that support must be sought out instead of provided and encouraged, led some participants to conclude that faculty would resist adopting and using the LMS. Finn III (2017) proposed eight recommendations for academic leaders implementing a new LMS. However, considering additional data examined by the authors of this study suggests the following two additional recommendations for academic leaders and faculty going through an LMS, or perhaps a similar technological, change:

Recognize and Address Perception as Reality

The data highlight the deep importance placed on understanding group and individual context in leading organizational change (Black & Gregersen, 2008; Finn III, 2012, 2013; Kotter, 1996; Kotter & Cohen, 2002; Kotter & Rathgeber, 2005). Regardless of the data illustrating opportunities for faculty to participate in the piloting and selections process, provide feedback, and engage in various professional development opportunities (A.C., Personal Communication, February 13, 2017), individual faculty members still perceived a complete

lack of involvement and opportunity existed. Academic leaders and faculty need to recognize the disconnect and work to align individual perceptions with organizational opportunities and communications. Addressing this issue at the individual level will also serve to create advocates in group settings and reinforce a culture of inclusion.

Perception is Elusive: Ask More Questions

Building on the importance of perception is the creation of an environment that allows faculty members to freely express their opinions and beliefs. Comparisons between survey and interview data show a predilection of some faculty members to answer neutral on charged questions regarding the behaviors of others. Additionally, there were instances where the survey question was perhaps misinterpreted or answered with a different group in mind. For example, many participants saw the TLC as playing the dominant leadership role in the change process. This was confirmed by the explanations given during the interviews. These examples, among others presented in the reported data, illustrate the importance of asking not only the right questions, but using various question types as well. Due to the interpersonal nature of change, one mode of interaction does not allow a complete understanding of faculty perceptions.

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