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ADAPTIVE CLASSROOM LEARNING: AND
CONVERSELY, AFFECTING POSITIVE CHANGE
WITHIN THE CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION
THROUGH ENGAGEMENT



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Adaptive Classroom Learning: And Conversely, Affecting Positive Change within the Classroom Organization through Engagement

Synopsis:

Change within any company, firm, or business is necessary for any organization to adapt, thrive, and prosper. Like any agile and adaptable business, classrooms and educational institutions also need to adjust to shifting landscapes in order to engage students and promote individual learning. Collectively, these alterations in normal teaching practices are sometimes referred to as the “adaptable classroom.” The adaptable classroom can have positive affects upon a classroom and its students, but also upon its instructor. Yet, resistance to change can be a collateral side-effect of the change itself.

Application Paper

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Adaptive Classroom Learning:
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Abstract

Change within any company, firm, or business is necessary for any organization to adapt, thrive, and prosper. Likewise, these concepts and business practices can be applied to other organizational structures, even those outside traditional business enterprises. Extrapolating these concepts, both broad and diminutive, to the traditional classroom may broaden the opportunities for both teacher and student. Ironically, as students change in conjunction with generational morays, teachers and the academic institution typically hold steadfast to traditional and often archaic modes of learning. Like any agile and adaptable business, classrooms and educational institutions also need to adjust to shifting landscapes in order to engage students and promote individual learning. Collectively, these alterations in normal teaching practices are sometimes referred to as the “adaptable classroom.” The adaptable classroom can positively affect a classroom and its students, as well as its instructor. Resistance to change is a collateral side-effect of the change itself. Distractions and disengagement by “encroaching technology” of smart phones, social media applications and other readily accessible transportable media may find its way into the classroom, consequently deterring learning and circumventing teaching. This study explores how specific organizational changes, particularly by incorporating technology, can increase student engagement and promote learning. Additionally, this study details methods employed by successful academic institutions to allay both student and administrative resistance to change. Finally, the study quantifies and measures the effectiveness of adaptable classroom practices. Comprehensively, this application paper considers factors including pace of change, methods of initiating change, and leadership directives to promote change.

Adaptable Classroom

Studies indicate that both learning and engagement can be sustained during periods of noteworthy transformation in a classroom. In fact, a review by the University of Alberta states that, “The good news is the youth of today are ready, willing, and able to learn how to learn; they are interested in tools and in topics – as long as they are relevant to their goals. They have changed and are open to more change” (Parsons & Taylor, 2011. p. 35). An assessment of this is enabled through the investigation of “learning conflict” and organizational opposition to change. These restrictions may be familiar and thus inactivated through adaptable classroom systems and creative adaptable classroom approaches as defined by an “adaptable classroom” needs analysis, a definition of adaptable classroom concepts, an assertion of purpose for the adaptable classroom and an organized examination of the procedure to launch adaptable classroom practices to promote learning and engagement within a classroom.

The concept of the “adaptable classroom” implies a shift or modification in the way teaching is “taught down” by administration policies, approved and practiced curriculums and lecture style direction. “Adaptable approaches to teaching developed by Rafe Sagarin at Duke University and at University of Arizona rely on the same ‘decentralized’ adaptability that an octopus uses to increase student participation in class and broaden the source materials for class to include primary literature, new media and the personal experiences of the students themselves” (Institute of the Environment, 2012). The Institute of the Environment also states that “Classrooms inspired by adaptable processes in nature can support greater autonomy of students over their learning outcomes and make their learning experience a recursive and linked process of growth rather than an isolated exercise” (2011).

The South Carolina Assistive Technology Program calls their approach “assistive technology” (2012). “Assistive technology can provide a teacher more options to use in addressing different learning styles for individual students using visual, auditory and tactile approaches. By making a student more independent, assistive technology allows teachers to spend more time on group activities and to give students more one-on-one attention” (2012).

Bearing these two viewpoints in mind, these principles of adaptive or ‘assistive’ education illustrate concepts and praxes of the resultant effect upon adoption and implementation of change within a classroom. Thus, the intention of this subsequent inquiry is to then scrutinize how efficiency and student learning can be sustained in classrooms.

Requisites for Adaptive Learning Analyses

Academic intuitions, schools and other structured learning environments repeatedly battle with how to inspire students to engage in learning, boost participation and dissuade opposition to learning to stimulate acquisition of knowledge. To illustrate this Pahl-Wostl contends that the “Absence of change results in the inability to adapt to changing circumstances triggered by internal and external events and trends. Complete absence of permanence and predictability results in the inability of actors to develop expectations, coordinate collective action and improve routines and practices” (2009). Simply put, students who know what to expect, cannot be expected to change.

Theories of Organizational Influences

Analyzing theories of organizational influences relating to adaptive classroom practices and techniques will prove effective in minimizing resistance to change from within the classroom and by students.

1. How can “structure” be used to satisfy basic learning needs?
2. How can student “culture” be instituted within an academic institution to increase learning and promote positive engagement?
3. How can adaptive classroom principles “change” resistance within a classroom by its students?

Adaptive Learning as a Means to Structure and Satisfy Basic Learning Needs

Marsden and Friedkin recognize that “Change implementation within an organization can thus be conceptualized as an exercise in social influence, defined as the alteration of an attitude or behavior by one actor in response to another actor’s actions” (2003). Alternatively, applying structure must be thought of as a way to encourage students’ outlooks towards one another.

Accordingly, if a teacher approaches structure with this mentality, he or she will forestall swaying influences and use them to goad preferred actions and achieve alteration from his or her students. Under the auspices of “Needs Theories,” Benson (2008) asserts that student needs can be addressed by being mindful of psychological needs. Specifically, he cites “Maslow’s hierarchy of needs,” where there are five levels of psychological needs, “... physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, self-esteem needs, and self-actualization.” Benson affirms “Organizational leaders should concentrate on where...needs fit within the hierarchy” (2008. p. 2).

If this theory holds true, then the cognizant teacher can address these most basic student needs as a means to minimize conflict and promote engagement and learning by their students. “Learning styles that balanced experiencing and conceptualizing showed greater adaptive flexibility in responding to experiencing and conceptualizing learning contexts” (Mainemelis, Boyatzis, and Kolb, 2002).

“Technology has now reached a point where we have the opportunity to capitalize on these effects to the benefit of learners” (Shute and Towle, 2003). In essence, what Shulte and Towle describe here is the unique advantage that technology affords the learner.

Instituting Adaptive Classroom Concepts within an Academic Environment

Instituting adaptive classroom concepts within an academic institution or structured learning environment can pose challenges. The U.S. Army Research Institute suggests going beyond classroom training through the use of field exercises and simulations. Using this model, teachers as well could institute local change in their respective classrooms, cloaking these practices as assignments or classroom exercises. “In the context of adaptability training, field scenarios should be tied to relevant adaptive performance dimensions” (2009, p. 5-2).

Elementally, these core pillars of academic change can determine the efficacy of adaptive classroom practices. To illustrate this Kwek asserts “To meet 21st century expectations, educators therefore need to depart from the ideas and pedagogies of yesterday and become bold advocates to develop the sorts of learning dispositions needed for our learners and their work futures. This means spending less time explaining through instruction and investing more time in experimental and error-tolerant modes of engagement” (2011. p. 3).

Using the example of Enterprise Systems Implementation and “The Shakedown Phase,” Bala and Venkatesh demonstrate how the duration of change can affect change management in relation to productivity and morale. Examining things like the pace of change, frequency of change, and the rhythm of change, Klarner and Raisch identify the “Change-Stability Paradox” (2013). They caution against fast-paced change which they warn “can lead to information overload and time compression diseconomies, which may harm firm performance” (Dierickx & Cool, 1989; Hambrick, Finkelstein, & Mooney, 2005). In their view, this can lead to “ineffective

strategic responses, which may affect firm performance negatively” (1989). To combat this, Klarner and Raisch advise that “A regular change rhythm is associated with higher long-term firm performance than an irregular change rhythm” (2013. p. 164). In their study, they show that “a regular change rhythm is a way to manage the change-stability paradox by ‘loading’ repeated change in periods of similar length, which are ‘balanced’ with stability periods of similar length” (Klarner and Raisch, 2013. p. 175). Additional insights put forward that “a regular rhythm reduces both the risks of excessive stability” and the “loss of change routines” and “excessive change” and “information overload” (p. 176). Consequentially, “stability periods’ initially positive effect on subsequent change gradually turns negative the longer the stability period lasts” and that “a similar effect occurs with regard to change periods’ initially positive effect on stability, which gradually turns negative the longer the change period lasts” (Klarner and Raisch, 2013. p. 176).

Assessing these differing but related viewpoints concludes that timing and leadership style are the driving factors behind successful and sustaining organizational change management praxes. Yet, simply affirming that charismatic leadership style is a requisite for organizational change fails to identify exactly how to emulate, initiate, and practice “charismatic” leadership by a manager who may not be blessed with those endowed traits. As such an examination of “management principles” may generate those identifiers.

Management Principles as a Means to Deter Employee Resistance within an Organization

“Affirming that a tendency to manage in a *participative* way increases the possibility that change will be accepted” (Pardo-del-Val, Marinez-Fuentes and Roig-Dobon, 2012) by creating transformation in the average daily work of individuals produces established and institutional change (Smets, Morris, and Greenwood, 2012). In the “Integration of project-based management

and change management,” Parker, Charlton, Ribeiro and Pathak outline specific methodologies for change management using a “project-based” intervention approach. Enabling this “project based approach” accounts for organizational framework which in turn allows for objective based parameters. Measurable outcomes are then enabled through delegated responsibility, staged approach to project management, risk management and final performance analysis (2012. p. 541). “The ‘project management’ methodologies largely avoid many of the softer issues related to projects: such as the human, political and organizational change implications” (Parker, Charlton, Ribeiro and Pathak, 2012. p. 541).

Conclusion

Analyzing the data brought forth in this study qualifies it to support the premise of the change management practices in mitigating and quelling resistance to change. The substantiating data and findings support the original topic of change management success in relation to restricting disruptions due to change within the classroom organization. This change can come in the form of new pedagogical practices, or a shift in curricular direction and instructional teaching strategies. Failure to change directions when faced with stagnation or obstacles can spell doom for any academic organization and quickly put an end to educational growth and didactic prosperity.

Measured data and sample sets support this main idea set forth that principles and protocols of change management promote the efficacy and success of enterprise level change implementation and result analysis. Thus, change management techniques promote the interpersonal measures relating to mitigation of resistance to change.

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