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A JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION: THE KOTTER MODEL'S ROLE IN SHAPING A KINESIOLOGY DEPARTMENT INTO A SCHOOL

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Abstract
This paper describes the transformation of the Kinesiology program at Tarleton State University from a single departmental unit to a school with two departments. The change initiative was led by Dr. Kayla Peak, an Associate Dean in the College of Education. The key factors that contributed to the success of the change initiative were: (1) strong leadership from Dr. Peak; (2) a clear vision for the future of the Kinesiology program; (3) effective communication with stakeholders; and (4) a commitment to continuous improvement.

Keywords: Kinesiology, Change management, Change agent, Leadership, Communication, Continuous improvement

Introduction

As an academic concentration, Kinesiology is one of the fastest growing and expanding majors in higher education (Morrow & Thomas, 2010; Thomas, 2014). Adjusting to the influx of students, administrators have implemented program changes such as shuffling departmental organization, redesigning curriculum, and modifying academic functions (Young, 2018). This was the case at Tarleton State University, a mid-sized public institution located in Texas. For over 90 years, Tarleton State University Kinesiology program consisted of a single departmental unit. Like so many other Kinesiology programs, the internal student enrollment in Tarleton State University‟s Department of Kinesiology experienced inflation over the past decade. In connection to rising student enrollment, Kinesiology professors faced challenges in addressing student needs such as advising, course availability, and academic support. In the fall 2018 semester, Tarleton State University established the School of Kinesiology, which currently houses two units – the Department of Health & Human Performance and the Department of Sport Science.

To complete the department-to-school transformation, administrators and faculty in Tarleton State University‟s Kinesiology program took part in a complex, tedious change initiative process. The steps taken successfully yielded new administrative units, academic restructuring, and faculty reform. This initiative required an effective leader at the ground level, also referred to as a change agent (Weick & Quinn, 1999).

In the case with the department-to-school Kinesiology program transformation at Tarleton State University, Dr. Kayla Peak, an Associate Dean in the College of Education, acted as the change agent.

In fact, the department-to school change initiative itself was her idea. She led the movement from the initiative‟s origins in 2013 to the School of Kinesiology‟s official opening in 2018.

As students in a doctoral educational leadership program, two of the investigators were curious about the real-world application of leadership principles. We heard about the transition of a large academic unit (Kinesiology) and contacted the leader of the transition to investigate. As a result, to gain insight into how such a successful change process within the higher education setting occurred, an interview with change agent (Peak) was scheduled and completed. The original purpose of this study was to narratively document the department-to-school transformation. However, after conducting the interview and learning about the process behind the department-to-school transformation, the investigators realized that the steps taken during the department-to-school transformation actually followed John Kotter‟s (1996) Eight Stage Process for Creating a Major Change. Due to this revelation, the authors adjusted the study‟s original purpose and methodology to critically examine how the change agent intuitively followed Kotter‟s change model. Therefore, this qualitative case study examined how a change agent intuitively followed Kotter‟s (1996) Eight Stage Process of Creating a Major Change and completed the academic unit transformation of Tarleton State University‟s Kinesiology program.

1.1 Kotter's Eight Stage Process of Creating Major Change

Literature on organizational change management reveals that there are an array of existing models (see Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). A change management model acts as guidance for organizational leaders and teams to follow during change implication and mitigation. One of the most popular change management models, in terms of scholarly attention and practical adoption, is Kotter‟s (1996) Eight Stage Process. Kotter first introduced his model in a 1995 *Harvard Business Review* article. Kottergained national acclaim after the model was published in the 1996 bestselling book *Leading Change*. According to his model, Kotter (1996)believes that leaders can transform their organizations by completing the following eight stages (p. 21):

1. Establish a Sense of Urgency
2. Create a Guiding Coalition
3. Develop a Vision and Strategy
4. Communicate the Change Vision
5. Empower Employees for Action
6. Generate Short-Term Wins
7. Consolidate Gains and Produce More Change
8. Anchor New Culture

Kotter (1996) argued that the stages needed to be followed in sequence, as completing non-sequentially “almost always creates problems” (p. 24). Several case-studies have found Kotter‟s model yielded successful organizational change in business sectors (Cowan-Sahadath, 2010; Pollack & Pollack, 2015), health professions (Small, Gist, Souza, Dalton, Magny-Normilus, & David, 2016; Mørk, Krupp, Hankwitz, & Malec, 2018), K-12 public education reforms (Barcelona, 2014), and even in the higher education setting (Calegari, Sibley, & Turner, 2015; Eddy, 2003; Hackman, 2017; Sidorko, 2008). It is

important to understand that despite research efforts concluding Kotter‟s process was effective towards implementing organizational change, no change management model guarantees success. Theoretical in nature, these management models are instead to be viewed as practical guidance. As Sidorko (2008) eloquently posited, “no single model can provide a one-size-fits-all solution to organizational change” (p. 316). This statement also applies to Kotter‟s model. While some scholars claim that Kotter‟s model offered a practical structure (Hackman, 2017), others have critiqued and exposed the model for limitations (Appelbaum, Habashy, Malo, & Shafiq, 2012).

A review of the literature concluded that little to no research has examined the intuitiveness of Kotter‟s model. Before continuing, it is important to briefly disclose how the authors defined intuition. Congruent with Francisco and Burnett (2008), this study relied on a logical definition of the term. The generally accepted school of thought on intuition defines intuition as a “synthesis of prior knowledge - defined as a blend of logic, experience and subconscious information that is stored in your mind and recalled when needed” (Robinson, 2006, p. 4). Bringing the conversation back to Kotter‟s change process, Appelbaum et al. (2012) stated that “the model is intuitive and relatively easy to accept since it is based on Kotter‟s real-life experiences” (p. 776).

However, Appelbaum and colleagues (2012) declared that the intuitiveness had been assumed valid, as scholarship had not yet properly “tested and supported” the intuitiveness of the model itself (p. 776).

1.2 Purpose of Study

There were two purposes for this study. First, it aimed to detail the steps taken to accomplish the department-to-school transformation at the research site, while at the same time revealing how the academic unit‟s transition followed Kotter‟s change model. The authors also sought to use the case-study as a practical guidance to administrators thinking about change initiatives within their own academic programs.

2. Methods

2.1 Setting & Participants

Tarleton State University officially established the School of Kinesiology during the fall 2018 semester. Generally, a school is established by merging two or more pre-existing, like-minded departments. As previously mentioned, the School of Kinesiology was created by splitting one large, single department into two separate academic units. To complete such a task required patience, perseverance, and strong leadership built on a solid change foundation. There were two active participants in this qualitative study. The interviewer was a student in Tarleton State University‟s doctorate in education program. A Tarleton State University employee of over fifteen years, the interviewee served as Department chair of Kinesiology from 2013 to 2015 and from 2017-2018. At the time of the study, the interviewee was the Associate Dean of the College of Education at Tarleton State University.

2.2 Data Collection – The Walking Interview

For the purpose of this study, a walking interview was conducted. Also referred to as a go-along (Thompson & Reynolds, 2019) or a mobile interview (Brown & Durrheim, 2009), a walking interview is defined as when “the researcher walks alongside the participant during an interview” (Kinney, 2017, p. 1). There are advantages associated with the walking interview arrangement (Brown & Durrheim,

2009; Bulter & Derrett, 2014; Carpiano, 2009; Kinney, 2017). Unlike traditional sit-down interview procedures, walking side-by-side democratizes the power balance between researcher and interviewee, structuring the interview process similar to a partnership (Brown & Durrheim, 2009; Kinney, 2017). Participants feel more comfortable answering questions while detached from their "politicized" or general work-space (Anderson, 2004; Hein, Evans, & Jones, 2008; Trell & Van Hoven, 2010). Lastly, walking interviews allow for the participants to use "dialogue as discovery" (Denzin, 2003, p. 153). Adding to a limited research line (Harris, 2016), this study incorporated the walking interview to gain insight into the higher education setting.

While several formats exist (Anderson, 2004; Carpiano, 2009; Clark and Emmel, 2010; Kusenbach, 2003), there are two overarching walking interview designs – geographical and organic. Within the geographical design, participants utilizespace and place as a research road-map. In this framework, it is common for the participants to predetermine a route to be followed (Chang, 2017; Clark & Emmel, 2010; Evans & Jones, 2011). The interview can take place in the participant‟s occupational or personal environment, such as completing an everyday task or habit (Kusenbach, 2003). However, the interview route can occur outside of everyday routine. Many times a walking interview occurs in a physical location, such as a particular neighborhood, aiming to prompt discussions on a certain topic, add to the interviewee‟s biography, or gain further knowledge about a specific area. On the other hand, the route taken can be organic in nature if the geographical location itself holds no-to-little value (Anderson, 2004; Moles, 2008). When the interview takes place on an undetermined path, space and place are not intertwined with interview questions as the interviewer is more concerned with creating a fluid conversation (Kinney, 2017).

The walking interview used within the current study followed the latter format. The equipment used during the interview included a hand-held Olympus recording device and a lapel microphone worn by the interviewee. While general questions were scripted, both interview participants understood ad hoc questions would possibly arise due to the interview‟s conversational nature (Carpiano, 2009). The interview took place on the institution‟s campus; however, as previously mentioned, a route was not pre-determined.

2.3 Data Analysis

After transcribing the interview verbatim, member-checking validated the transcription for accuracy (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The authors analyzed the interview transcription through deductive coding, using Kotter‟s eight stages as overarching themes. According to Richards & Hemphill (2018), scholars using deductive coding reference pre-existing frameworks for theme guidance. Also referred to as predetermined coding, deductive coding "may be based on a previous coding dictionary from another researcher or key concepts in a theoretical construct" (Stuckey, 2015,p. 8). Incorporating the deductive coding analysis framework, Kotter‟s sequential stages were used as predetermined overarching themes. Subthemes were also drawn from Kotter‟s model.

2.4 Organizational History & Culture

While this section may seem misplaced or even unconventional, the authors believe that Peak‟s understanding of the Department of Kinesiology‟s culture played a major role in the department-to-

school transformation success. Despite being absent in Kotter‟s (1996) change model, several scholars charge that organizational leaders must learn and understand an organization‟s culture prior to implementing changes (Galpin, 1996; Jaskyte, 2004;Owens & Valesky, 2015).

Peak had a deep rooted appreciation for Kinesiology‟s rich history at Tarleton State University. Several times during the interview she mentioned former faculty members associated with the program‟s rich history. A statement from Peak indicated that she believed the program‟s continued success and prosperity stemmed from these individuals and their positive impact on the program‟s culture. She stated:

I am a big believer in understanding and acknowledging the history of a program in order to move forward. Upon researching the roots of the Kinesiology program, which was 92 years old at the time, I came to realize that our program was built upon the shoulders of giants. Faculty and leaders who worked diligently to make sure that „physical training‟ (the name of the Department in 1921) did not take a back seat to other academic disciplines. The leaders in 1921 were revolutionaries in education – they believed that „physical training‟ which eventually became „physical education‟ was a sacred academic discipline that deserved its rightful place in academia. These men and women made sure that they established high standards, held people to those standards, and were always pushing the envelope …so for me, it was important to respect the rich history of the department as it evolved from the 1920s to the 1970s and into the massive growth era of the 2010s. I understood that honoring the history would be paramount to our future success.

She provided further detail on this concept:

Here‟s an example of our rich history – the first African-American student to receive a degree from Tarleton State University was a physical education major. Powerful! The first African-American hired as a full-time employee at Tarleton State University was a physical education instructor and coach. But, before that, all the way back in 1921, Kathleen Blackshear was hired as the coordinator of women‟s athletics. Trailblazers! Where did they come from? The Kinesiology Department! And I love that … I really think that we need to remember, honor, and promote the bold leaders and trailblazers of the past.

Established in 1921, the Kinesiology program is one of the oldest academic units at the university. Peak took time to conduct research on the Kinesiology program and also brought a cultural understanding associated with her tenure as an undergraduate student within the program itself. Peak transferred to Tarleton State University during her junior year. Shortly after enrolling in the Department of Kinesiology as a student, she realized “no matter when I went to the office almost everybody [faculty] was there and the door was open.” Later on in the interview she elaborated on how the culture directly impacted her as an undergraduate student:

I will never forget the first day in class Monday morning at 8 o‟clock. I‟ll just never forget it. I had Dr. Joe Gillespie and he called me by name three times in an 8am class. First day. And I thought about the fact that I had been at Texas A&M for two years and no one had ever called me by name [laughter], you know I am number 36 or number 102 or whatever it is … But at Tarleton State, I was a valued member of the team – even as a young student – so I immediately became a Kinesiology major.

2.5 Structure of Paper

It is now appropriate to detail the paper‟s organizational structure. Similar to previous studies (Pollack & Pollack, 2015; Hackman, 2017), this paper follows Kotter‟s process.

In sequential fashion, the major principles of each stage are introduced in the section‟s outset. Following the brief introduction, excerpts gathered from the walking interview places the actions taken during the department-toschool transformation within the stage.

3. Stage 1: Establish a Sense of Urgency

Kotter‟s (1996) argued that the first step a leader must take in the change initiative is to establish a sense of urgency. Without a shared sense of urgency amongst organizational stakeholders “the momentum for change will probably die far short of the finish line” (Kotter, 1996, p. 36).

According to Kotter, there are several effective methods leaders can use in order to raise urgency surrounding a change initiative, including setting high expectations, utilizing eye-opening data, and taking bold actions. As political, economic, social, and symbolic forces drive an organization (Bolman & Deal, 2013), leaders/change agents must recognize the type of action required within their environment to effectively spread urgency.

3.1 Gathering Data

3.1.1 Empirical Data.

According to institutional data on student enrollment, the number of students earning a degree housed in the Tarleton State University‟s Department of Kinesiology had gradually increased each year during a five year span (2012-2017). In fact, over 1,000 students declared Kinesiology as their major (13% of total student population) during the 2017 academic year, making the academic concentration the largest undergraduate majors at Tarleton State University. Peak commented “As a Department with over 1,000 students and just under twenty faculty, we had limited resources. We also had a limited budget and limited facilities.”Peak determined that a departmental administrative unit could not effectively sustain a continuously enlarging internal student enrollment without financial and administrative support. See Table 1 for student population growth within the Department of Kinesiology.

Table 1.Student population growth within the Department of Kinesiology, 2012 - 2017

Year	Undergraduate Students	Graduate Students	Total
2012	655	52	707
2013	687	52	739
2014	732	58	790
2015	853	70	923
2016	903	79	982
2017	930	80	1010

3.1.2 Anecdotal Data.

In addition, Peak noted several anecdotal rationales behind the change initiative. According to Peak, as an academic field Kinesiology had experiencedlimited respect in the higher education setting. In her mind, becoming a school would allow Kinesiologyadministrators to have a representative voice in aspects of budgeting and campus politics. Peak said:

For many years, Kinesiology has been a neglected discipline in terms of prestige. But, in fact, we are a major part of the STEM disciplines. The science, technology, and even engineering (think about biomechanics and the development of sports equipment) are prevalent in the Kinesiology curriculum. So I wanted the opportunity to get a seat at the table and perhaps change the perception of Kinesiology and shine a bright light on the science and business of Kinesiology – let people see it and understand it.

She echoed the *why* behind the change initiative later in the interview:

And, it‟s probably not the right way to say it, but just to get more credibility on campus. Anyone who has been in Kinesiology understands that sometimes people assume that you‟re an old-school traditional roll-outthe-ball type academic discipline and that‟s NOT who we are. Elevating to a School-level provides a new platform to promote an academic discipline that is at the forefront of science, technology, allied heath, sport, and business.

Speaking from personal experiences as a former chairperson in the Department of Kinesiology, Peak claimed that the individual serving as department chair oftenstruggles to progressively lead the organization forward. The Department of Kinesiology had one administrator overseeing the educational unit‟s daily operations. Tasked with overseeing the needs of 20 full-faculty members, 27 adjunct instructors, 15 graduate assistants, and over 1,000 students, the department chair commonly approaches work with the overwhelmed mindset to, according to Peak, “manage what you have, put out fires and you just keep the ship upright and moving forward.”

3.2 Bold Action

Peak needed to spread urgency amongst Kinesiology faculty, staff, as well as university administrators. Recognizing her lack of professional longevity when compared to senior faculty within the department, Peak feared others would view her change initiative as a threat to the existing culture. She commented “the last thing you want to do is say „we are going to come in here and change the program.‟” Peak reached out to senior faculty members about the need for the transformation, hoping if senior faculty were on-board with the change initiative gaining buy-in from others within the organization would most likely increase. Peak described her interaction with senior faculty:

So I reached out to the senior faculty and we talked about the possibilities – „What do you think? What might this look like? Should we do it? Should we not do it? What are the negatives? How could this destroy the culture that has existed for the past 92 years?‟ Starting with the senior faculty allowed the concept to bubble up from the faculty level and move upward instead of a top-down approach.

4. Stage 2: Create a Guiding Coalition

Despite how powerful, productive, persuasive, or even efficient an individual leader is, a successful change initiative requires a team. “Individuals alone, no matter how competent or charismatic, never

have all the assets needed to overcome tradition and inertia" (Kotter, 1996, p. 6). As a result, the second stage in Kotter"s model calls for change agents to assemble a guiding coalition. Regarding the guiding coalition composition, Kotter (1996) recommended change agents recruit organizational key players, or individuals from outside of the organization (i.e. hiring new employees), that possessed decision making ability, knowledge, experience, and leadership skills. It is the change agent"s responsibility to assemble the guiding coalition. Furthermore, the guiding coalition must work as a team, including placing trust in each other to accomplish the tasks associated with the change initiative.

4.1 Senior Faculty Members

The initial guiding coalition for the School of Kinesiology consisted of Peak and two senior faculty members.

Both of the senior faculty had a combined 70 years of administrative and teaching experienceat Tarleton State University. When approached with the department-to-school transformation idea, Peak paraphrased their collected response: what they both said, and I am paraphrasing here, was „look if this gives us a seat at the table, if this gives us an opportunity and it doesn't really change who we are as a unit, then what's the harm? Why don't we try it? Great things could come out of the move."

As previously mentioned, gaining support from two respected senior faculty members within the organization was critical in getting others on board with the change initiative.

4.2 Hiring New Faculty

Peak recognized that the guiding coalition needed to be larger than three members. She also noted that it was a necessity to hire effective chairpersons for the two new departments. As a result, search committees were tasked to find individuals with previous leadership experience to fill the chairperson positions. The individuals hired as chairs both held administrative positions at other institutions. One of the new hires served as a former athletic director and the other had previously acted as a department chair at a Carnegie R-1 research institution. Overall, their experiences in higher education leadership allowed them to positively contribute as members of the guiding coalition as they helped increase urgency, momentum and progression regarding the department-to-school transformation.

5. Stage 3: Develop a Vision

Once a guiding coalition has been established, a clear, concise change initiative vision needs to be established. According to Kotter (1996), a vision provides direction for change, justifies the direction with compelling reasons, and motivates actions from others. Leaders often fail at inspiring change because their visions are either too brief or too bogged down with jargon. Kotter argued effective visions are focused and simple, yet at the same time also attention grabbing and convincing.

5.1 Official Vision

When it came time to creating a vision for the School of Kinesiology, Peak did not reinvent the wheel. Instead, she understood the power behind the university"s vision statement (Tarleton State University, 2019):

Tarleton State University will be the premier student-focused university in Texas and beyond. We will transform generations by inspiring discovery, leadership and service through exceptional teaching and research in vibrant learning communities.

Kinesiology faculty and staff supported the institution‟s vision statement. Therefore, when it came time to create an official vision statement for the School of Kinesiology, Peak used the institution‟s vision served as the inspiration. The vision of the School of Kinesiology is:

The School of Kinesiology will provide tomorrow‟s leaders with purpose-driven educational experiences that will enhance their knowledge, skills, and confidence related to their chosen career field. We will be the premier builder of fearless champions within the Kinesiology discipline.

Using similar verbiage and sentence structure placed the School of Kinesiology‟s vision in line with the Institution's vision, potentially helping gain support from stakeholders.

6. Stage 4: Communicate the Vision

Properly communicating the vision is key to the change initiative‟s success. According to Kotter (1996), "communication seems to work best when it is so direct and so simple that it has a sort of elegance" (p. 89). Effectively and efficiently broadcasting the vision to stakeholders drives the initiative forward. While a well-defined vision benefits an organization, the "real power" occurs when stakeholders support the vision direction. Kotter (1996) offered leaders useful tips to succeed at this fourth stage such as: a) rely on simplistic language; b) use metaphors, analogies, and examples; c) broadcast the vision in multiple venues; d) constantly repeat the vision; and e) keep a twoway communication between yourself and others (p. 90).

Peak had to communicate the vision to two main stakeholders – faculty and executive administration. She scheduled an informational session to propose the change initiative idea to faculty members. Instead of using the meeting as an authoritative declaration, Peak approached faculty in a democratic nature. She described the meeting as: We had a faculty meeting the following December 2015 and our Dean [name retracted] came over to broached the idea of a School with the faculty at that meeting. Most of the faculty, much like our senior faculty, asked „is there a downside?‟ There was free-flowing discussion and, in the end, most faculty couldn‟t find a downside to it.

After gaining faculty support, Peak had to get executive administrators [i.e. deans, provosts, presidents] to recognize the urgency behind the department-to-school initiative. As a reminder, Peak acted as the Kinesiology department chair during the change initiative‟s early stages. As department chair, she had the opportunity to talk with university echelons at institutional-wide meetings.

7. Stage 5: Empower for Action

In the fifth stage leaders must ensure organizational members feel empowered and relevant regarding the change implementation. Often times, leaders fail to "make structures compatible with the vision" (Kotter, 1996, p. 115). Change agents must remove obstacles hindering stakeholders' ability to contribute to the overall change process. Many leaders allow silos to exist within the organizational structure, ultimately hindering the change initiative. In addition to draining independent authority, silos cause individuals to feel frustrated and useless within the overall change initiative process.

7.1 Preventing Silos.

As previously noted, the department-to-school transformation involved splitting a single department into two divisions. Peak noticed a natural split already existed within the department based on student major concentrations. Based on organizational data, she realized that approximately half of Kinesiology

students were pursuing a degree focused on Allied Health and fitness-based career fields while the other half were earning a degree in order to advance as professionals in teaching, coaching, and athletic administration. While it was fortunate for this natural division to exist in the department, creating two individual departments had the potential to disrupt the pre-existing culture. A pressing concerns prior to dividing the department, Peak feared the change initiative would create silos amongst faculty, administrators, and even students. She mentioned:

We are only going to win…we are only going to grow…we are only going to stay strong IF we stay together as a team. We can‟t let one department try to spin-off, try to step on top of the other, in order to get ahead.

We‟ve got to keep an eye on the team culture that has provide the firm foundation for our current success. We must stand together and be supportive of everyone.

Peak continued on this concept: the three of us [members of guiding coalition] as well as our faculty, have had many conversations about the danger of silos. Everybody understands that one department is not more important than the other. Yes, one department maybe larger, or produce more research, or provide more hours of community and professional service, or even secure more money in grant funding – but it doesn‟t matter. We MUST remain ONE cohesive team; we have pledged to never lose sight of that.

Peak and the guiding coalition were determined to“stay away from those traditional [organizational] structures because again we weren‟t two departments that merged together – the traditional route for creating a School.”They viewed the traditional top-down hierarchical chart as an intentional forecasting of becoming siloed. After researching organizational structure, Peak and her the team determined that an organizational chart which was “circular in nature”was ideal. In fact, they found that the circular organizational structure was commonly used by successful and innovative think tank companies such as Apple and Google.

At the center of the organization‟s chart lies the program‟s culture. Peak claimed the cultural core acts as “a constant reminder of what, at the very heart of who we are, it‟s about people and it‟s about that „team‟ culture.”Next, the departments make up the second layer, followed by academic concentrations offered. The fourth layer includes auxiliary areas such as labs, institutions, and research efforts. The chart‟s outermost layer consists of the word *assessment*, which Peak referred to as “our Box Score,” functions as a source of organizational accountability.

8. Stage 6: Generate Short-Term Wins

According to Kotter (1996), effective short-term wins are “visible, unambiguous, and clearly related to the change effort” (pp. 121-122). Leaders must deliberately plan out short-term wins along the change initiative path. In addition to rewarding artificial accomplishments, short-term wins justify sacrifices made by the stakeholders, impair efforts from critics or resistors, and stimulate change momentum. It is essential for leaders to manage short-term wins regarding complacency build-up because “whenever you let up before the job is done, critical momentum can be lost and regression may follow” (Kotter, 1996, p. 133).

By utilizing Kotter‟s change model, the celebration of short-term milestones helped sustain the vision‟s endgoal. For example, shortly following the informational meeting (See Stage 4), faculty came together again to discuss setting the potential academic structures in further detail. Throughout the 2014-2015 academic year, scheduled faculty meetings accomplished short-term wins such as determining departmental names, major concentrations offered in each department, and core Kinesiology classes.

9. Stage 7: Consolidate Gains and Produce More Change

As previously mentioned, short-term wins are small factors within the interdependency of changing organizational structures. To explain organizational interdependence,Kotter (1996) provided a metaphorical example of a work-place office. At the center of the office sits a chair needing to be moved (i.e. the vision). Ropes, rubber bands, and cables connect the chair to various objects in the office space, thus making the moving process complex. A leader/guiding coalition must put time, energy, and personnel to address the forces keeping the chair in place.

Reiterating the challenges of producing more change in light of short-term wins and complacency, Kotter wrote (1996) “changing highly interdependent settings is extremely difficult because, ultimately, you have to change nearly everything” (p. 136). Therefore, while short-term wins need to be celebrated, change agents should also encourage others towards producing more change.

9.1 Interdependence

During the change initiative, the guiding coalition had to overcome challenges associated with web-like interdependency. In order to address interdependency, Peak detailed “we did a lot of this work simultaneously.” Once faculty decided on new department names, concentrations offered within each department, and core undergraduate Kinesiology courses, Peak and the guiding coalition used short-term wins to springboard onto a much larger project - an official 5-Year Strategic Plan. The goal of the strategic plan was to address the ropes, rubber bands, and cables within the change initiative. According to the plan, faculty and staff in the School of Kinesiology would establish inhouse academic journals, create clinical labs, plan study abroad trips, and increase applied learning experience opportunities. The strategic plan also noted to recruit new students, promote student success, engage with external partners, and elevate research efforts. Peak described the complex process behind creating a strategic plan during the walking interview:

Every faculty member had input and then it went forward for Departmental discussions and finally moved to the School level. The Executive Leadership team (School Head and the two department heads) created a 5-Year Strategic Plan based on faculty feedback. Once the plan was constructed, we pushed it back down to the faculty. They made edits. They pushed it back up to us. We made revisions and pushed it back down for another review. The 5year Strategic Plan for became a comprehensive, aggressive, forward-thinking vision that was built and approved by the entire team.

9.2 Produce More Change

During the interview, Peak organically offered advice for educational leaders to follow to avoid complacency build-up from short-term wins. She claimed that educational leaders “can‟t sit back and assume that things will come to you. You have to create a strategic plan that pushes the envelope and embraces the excitement of what‟s next.”

10. Stage 8: Anchoring New Culture

The last stage in Kotter‟s (1996) model is to embed changes within the organization‟s behavioral norms and shared values. To become rooted within an organization‟s culture, new changes must receive continued support from stakeholders. In addition to being the hardest stage for change agents to accomplish (Kotter, 1996; Hackman, 2017), the eight stage is also the most difficult to evaluate (Appelbaum et al., 2012). Evaluating the success of anchoring cultural change depends on the initiative‟s overall results.

It is important to emphasis that Peak did not intend on changing the core culture. She claimed:

We had a really great culture that was established by faculty and students dating back to 1921 … that culture was one which valued hard work, innovative teaching, and commitment to the profession, engaged scholars, and, most importantly, was student-centered. In short, our culture was centered on the team concept – every member (faculty or student) played a vital role in the ultimate success of the program. In this instance she was talking about positive attributes such as student-centered, teaching oriented, and family atmosphere.Therefore, her goal was to implement the department-to-school transformation while keeping the positive culture present amongst faculty, administrators, and students themselves.

While the department-to-school initiative was completed at Tarleton State University, the implications are not yet mature enough to evaluate. The School of Kinesiology has only been officially “opened” for one year; thus, infancy makes Kotter‟s last stage difficult to analyze. Today, Kinesiology faculty and administration progressively lead the program forward. A follow-up study is needed to determine if this progressive culture has in fact taken root.

11. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper relied on findings from a walking interview to detail the steps taken to transform a Department of Kinesiology into a School of Kinesiology. As evident by the qualitative data gathered, the departmentto-school transformation was tedious, culture centered, and required a team effort. Unlike previous studies (Calegari, Sibley, & Turner, 2015;Hackman, 2017; Pollack & Pollack, 2015), the change agent highlighted in this study did not rely on Kotter‟s *Leading Change* for guidance or change management. Instead, the authors placed the steps taken during the department-to-school process within Kotter‟s Eight Stage Process for Creating a Major Change. In no way does this study detail all the undertakings associated with the six-year long change initiative. Recognized as a limitation, the findings presented in this study do not comprehensively represent the contributions from and challenges faced by the guiding coalition and/or the contributing faculty and staff.

A popular critique regarding Kotter‟s model is “not many studies set out to validate the full eight stages” (Appelbaum et al., 2012, p.776). While outside the original purpose, this study‟s findings revealed that Kotter‟s model is intuitive. Prior to partaking on the department-to-school transformation, the change agent was unaware of *Leading Change* and the eight sequential stages. Rather than following “a road map” or change management guide, the change agent, guiding coalition, associated faculty, and administrators in this case study successfully completed the initiative by simply doing what felt right.

Only after analyzing the steps taken post-initiative completion was it revealed that the actions that "felt right" matched up with Kotter‟s sequential model for organizational change. This validation does not stem from theoretical or even conceptual concepts found in academia, but instead in the case-study framework of a single practitioner. It is important to note that while the generalizability of this research is non-existent, the potential impact on the understanding of Kotter‟s model is significant. Future studies to verify the intuitiveness of Kotter‟s change model are needed.

In all, the authors acknowledge that the rapid increase in internal student enrollment is causing Kinesiology academic units within higher education to experience, or start planning to implement, changes within their organizations. It would be naïve to believe that the department-to-school transformation detailed at this study‟s research site is commonplace within Kinesiology. However, the authors encourage Kinesiology leaders and change agents to look at change management models, such as Kotter‟s Eight Stage Process, as a theoretical and practical guidance during organizational changes.

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