Unlocking the culture for quality schools: reengineering

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Successful school reform requires a paradigm shift which begins with unlocking the school's existing culture before attempts are made to integrate reform variables. Reengineering, and rethinking and radical redesign of internal processes calls for discarding current practices and reinventing better ways to supply products and services. Holistic thinking, cross-sectional infrastructures, proactive behavior patterns, reward for innovation and creativity, and the demise of traditional infrastructures are essential for facilitating fluid social, economic and political trends into the 21st century. Educators must think differently about the purpose of schools and their delivery and redesign infrastructures which are built on shared values and beliefs, multiple interacting linkages and teamwork. School leaders are the catalysts for change and, working with the school's power agents and modeling expected behaviors, motivate teachers to replace the old culture with new processes of schooling. Shared ownership of case values, realistic and achievable goals and collaboration places the responsibility for creating a reengineered delivery system on teachers themselves.

The international educational reform movement of the 1990s emphasizes school reform and restructuring. This movement's conceptual framework calls for school leaders to make a paradigm shift in their view of school governance by rethinking, reconfiguring, and reassessing the nature of schooling. Many school leaders, however, have failed in their efforts to restructure and reform the educational process and, dissatisfied, blame the method of change they selected to accomplish the tasks. Weller and Hartley (1994), Weller (1996a), and English (1994) note, for example, that the implementation of quality management (QTM), and the effective schools model on the part of some educators in the USA, Canada, UK and Australia who have attempted to reform their schools with one or more of the above catalysts for change and have failed in their efforts. Yet, the literature is replete with schools and school systems which have adopted these reform models and have enjoyed success (Murgatroyd and Morgan, 1993; Schmoker and Wilson, 1993; Short and Greer, 1997; Squires et al., 1984; Weller, 1996b; Weller and Hartley, 1994). The success rate for paradigm shifts far exceeds the failure rate of the positive outcomes of these change models is to improve student achievement on standardized achievement tests, increased student self-esteem, and increased teacher morale and self-confidence. The question is why some schools succeed at school reform and others do not. The primary answer lies in the commitment of the school's leader to unlock the school's existing culture before making the attempt to introduce a new one. Understanding why this is important and how it can be accomplished can be found in the business concept of reengineering.

Reengineering is a conceptual framework which can help us rethink the context in which we work, how work is done, and how outputs are shaped by inputs. As defined by Hammer and Stanton (1995), "Reengineering is the fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business processes to bring about dramatic improvements in performance" (p. 3). This definition points to major performance improvements resulting in a dramatic breakthrough in achieving predetermined outcomes. The term radical calls for the reidentification and eradication of root problems rather than the indiscriminate attack on symptoms; it means discarding the current way of doing business and reinventing a new and better way to produce products and services. Process is the best result of the reengineering venture, the redesign of how work is done, which takes into account the value work has for the employee; the roles and types of employees needed in the new work process; the attitudes, beliefs, and cultural norms needed to support the process; and the kinds of evaluation measures used to assess performance outcomes. Therefore, reengineering is more than a restructuring of the current structure in an organization; it is more than rearranging hierarchical management and the specialization of employee jobs—it is the way work is performed and the values, attitudes, and set of beliefs that drive the performance of those producing the work (Chaplin, 1996). In essence, the process becomes the catalyst to revolutionize the production of the products and services the organization provides to its customers. As Hammer and Stanton (1995) state: Reengineering is not about improving what already exists. Rather, it is about throwing it away and starting over; beginning with the proverbial clean slate and reinventing how you do your work. (It is) a process of related tasks that together create value for a customer (p. 4).

For educators, reengineering has real value and high potential as we enter the 21st century. Reengineering, as a conceptual framework, forces educators to rethink, to reassess the current educational delivery system and adjust this thinking to the demands of the global economy with its increasingly competitive markets for quality products and its pressures for cooperation and interdependence. The knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in this environment are central to the mission of schooling. Davis and Ellison (1997) maintain that schools today are experiencing a widening gap between what should be and what is provided in schools to meet the projected demands of the 21st century.
Moreover, they state that the essential knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in these futuristic competitive markets and the educational delivery system necessary to adequately prepare students for this environment rest with educational leadership. To adequately prepare for the future, leaders must make decisions from three perspectives. These perspectives are the needs and expectations of a global economy, the design of an organizational structure or process to deliver these requirements, and the individual’s role within the context of the organization’s delivery system. The latter perspective has two major components: those involved in the delivery system and those receiving the products of the system itself.

Conley (1993) relates that for organizations to survive in the future they will have to be fluid, environmentally responsive bodies which can adapt quickly to changing globalized demands. The constant is “constant change” with success and survival depending on the organization’s response time and the need to adapt successfully to these constant changes. Shifting economic, social, and political trends and their emerging complex interrelatedness will be compounded by an increasing dependency on technology and the ability to respond quickly to its rapid innovations. These projected shifts and accelerated changes call for a labor force with new skills and knowledge, a new working environment, and a new way to process products. Incremental thinking with highly departmentalized work structures will be replaced by holistic thinking and cross-sectional configurations which emphasize teamwork and unity of vision, mission, and purpose.

The second perspective, the organization’s delivery system, will have to be flexible enough to adequately respond to these volatile external trends. Establishing proactive patterns of behavior; thinking in broad, contextual frameworks; and preparing the workforce for innovations yet to come are but a few of the skills leaders of the future will have to possess. Perhaps the most pressing demand on future leaders will be the ability to adapt to new ways of thinking and working so as “to prepare the organization for that which has yet to be created; to make sense of future realities for the members of their organizations” (Davies and Ellison, 1997, p. 12).

The third perspective, that of the individual, calls for leaders to rethink the role of the producer and the consumer of their products. The real challenge here lies in identifying the “core customer” and then developing a delivery process which is directly responsive to core customers’ needs and expectations. Champy (1995) notes the importance of such identification since competition among organizations in the future will increase both to maintain and attract a greater market share through higher quality products and services. Hammer and Champy (1993) note that global competition has already introduced customers to higher quality products at lower prices and customers are now expecting this as standard output. High quality-producing organizations, with the lowest prices and best service, will survive and expand their customer bases while competitors producing only adequate or good products will disappear as the standards of customer expectations rise. One index of this future trend already exists in new organizations which are using advanced technology to design their corporate infrastructures from the ground up with no “traditional baggage” of pre-existing structures and costs. Another index of the future is the growing trend of “niche targeting” which calls for a careful and clear identification of specific target populations and the products and services needed and expected by these populations.

Core customers are quickly emerging from their own self-selection process. Davies and Ellison (1997) contribute this to better information about available products and services which allows customers to choose those products and services with quality reputations; the expanding legal rights of customers through consumer rights groups and favorable litigation decisions for customer plaintiffs; and the knowledge that products are in plentiful supply and that the customer can be more selective. The issue of identifying the core customer for the future becomes a matter of economic survival for any organization producing any product or service. An organization seeking to survive in the future’s competitive marketplace will have to redesign or reengineer its delivery system to increase its quality outputs and reduce its product cost to sustain and increase its core customer population.

For education, these three perspectives have direct implications. The global marketplace with its high emphasis on competition, advanced technology, teamwork, and innovation will call for schools emphasizing critical and high quality thinking skills, the use of and instruction in the latest technology, the use of teams and cooperative learning strategies to solve problems and make decisions, and the ability to adapt and work in fluid, changing environments. Schools, themselves, will have to develop delivery processes which can adjust to the changing demands of the customer and the fluid social, economic, and political trends and pressures of the future. New skills and knowledge will have to be
taught and delivered by a system the focus of which is holistic, not centered around incremental teaching and learning stages. School leaders will have to be creative engineers of the curriculum and instructional delivery process, be proactive, use broad-based thinking, and involve the school's constituents in its governance procedures and policy-making efforts. And, finally, the core consumer will have to be identified and the reengineering process structured in such a way as to provide the core customer with products and services to meet their specific needs and expectations. For educators, the core customer can be no other population than that of the student. The providers of the products and services are the teachers who work through a new delivery process which is supported, modelled, and facilitated by the principal. In the final analysis, the core customer represents what schools are for: educating students, not employing teachers and administrators.

In this context, educators have to think differently about the purpose of schools and the kind of delivery system that will meet the needs and expectations of the core customer. Reengineering in education is about developing a delivery process which is coherent and progressive in scope in order to maximize the learning experiences of students. Since reengineering focuses on coherent processes, not structures, it negates the perpetuation of typical educational structures, such as departments in high schools, and focuses more on sequential, progressive learning through the rearrangement of the curriculum and instruction to address the goals of cohesion and progression. In essence, process follows the strategy for the reengineering of schooling. Hammer and Champy (1993) relate that reengineered businesses plan their process strategy first, tear down their existing organizational structures, and then implement their processes with many processes crossing many organizational boundaries. Boundaries, as opposed to structures, are flexible units that allow for give and take, interdependency, interrelatedness and integration. In reengineered corporations, the emphasis is on process continuity which is driven by holistic thinking and planning.

In education, the boundary concept can best be illustrated by the American middle school which emphasizes the team approach to instruction and curriculum development either across or within grades six through eight. Interdisciplinary teacher teams of both core and elective subjects develop thematic units which are sequenced and taught by each teacher team member. For example, a theme such as the "age of exploration" would dominate instruction in the core courses of language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science and the elective courses students take such as music, art, and physical education. While knowledge and skills are taught within each of these content areas, they are directly related to the respective themes within the curriculum. In this way, learning is holistic, cohesive, sequenced, and meaningful since students can see and experience connections between and across content areas. Block scheduling, allowing for larger blocks of time for instruction, is arranged by teacher teams and accommodates both small and large group instruction. This flexible scheduling configuration is process-oriented and facilitates coherence in student learning provided by the thematic curriculum.

"Breakthrough thinking," new, daring, radical thinking, allows for the complete transformation of the organization and is at the heart of the reengineering process since the act of reengineering negates the incremental changes fostered by incremental thinking and leads to a reshaping of the existing structure. Performance improvement and restructuring do not lend themselves to the concept of reengineering since these efforts lack cross-functional, results-oriented processes and possess pre-existing hierarchal structures such as departments. Task-oriented thinking must be replaced by thinking which is geared toward final outcomes or goals. Hammer and Stanton (1995) relate that leaders have the primary responsibility of creating an environment where non-traditional thinking becomes the norm, where brainstorming is a daily activity, and where people feel safe in "dreaming," in thinking the new and expressing non-traditional thoughts. This environment can best be developed by leaders who model this behavior themselves and constantly encourage and take part in "think tank" sessions with and among employees. Since each organization has its own "underground culture" whose population has progressive and new ideas, environments which encourage and support this kind of thinking allow these ideas to be brought into the open. New and creative ideas are essential since reengineering does not begin with detailed specifications or a predetermined plan for organizational transformation. Reengineering means starting over, beginning with a clean slate. It is about rejecting conventional wisdom and assumptions of the past and searching for new models for organizing work. The new process, in essence, must provide a "best fit" situation for both management and the workforce and must be based on the values and beliefs management wants to instill. Reengineering's primary intent is to reorganize the structure.
and change or modify the culture within the organization. This calls for creative, broad-based thinking from everyone engaged in the reengineering process. Champy (1995) emphasizes the importance of management's role in reshaping the organization's culture. In successful, reengineered organizations, teamwork and employee decision making are highly valued. This is based on the idea that employees will assume ownership in their work and have a vested interest in the organization's success when they share in the problem-solving and decision-making process. The values and beliefs most commonly held in reengineered corporations shift the role of the employee from narrow, task-oriented functions to multidimensional job functions. Hammer and Champy (1993) and Champy (1995) point out that certain values and beliefs prevail among successfully reengineered corporations. They emphasize that a change in organizational values must exist prior to successful reengineering and that management must discard the traditional role of the authoritarian, the expert in all areas, and become leaders who facilitate the work process and strive to add value to the work of others. They argue that leaders, not managers, know that quality output depend more on the employees' attitudes, values, and knowledge/skills, and less on policies, procedures, and prescribed ways of performing work. Leaders are those who can influence behavior and reinforce employee values by their own words and deeds. Values and beliefs central to successful corporations are as follows:

- Teamwork with team members who are empowered to solve problems and make decisions and who are free of management's tight, restrictive policies and prescribed directives.
- Teams which can function across organizational boundaries and be collectively responsible for the quality of products and services provided.
- Rewards based on achievement and not the amount of time spent on narrowly defined tasks. New and increased responsibilities are based on ability and overall contributions to the organization.
- Employees and leaders who are customer-centered and work to satisfy the customer since customer satisfaction achieves the goals of the organization.
- Continuous training for employees to keep up with advancements in their job-related knowledge and skills area. Reengineered organizations reward individual initiative to improve the quality of work and contribute to the overall efficiency of the organization.

When new values and attitudes compete with existing behaviors, conflict arises both within the organization and individuals themselves. Weller (1996b) relates that when new ideas or patterns of behavior are required, and the old accepted ways of doing things are not fully discarded, traditional practices often win out. Fear of the unknown, threats to individual power and influence, insecurity about learning new skills, and the need to perform tasks differently with different standards threaten their comfort zones—the security people derive from work routine. Regardless of the degree of their dissatisfaction with their current job or the way the organization functions, change is seen as a threat. Hammer and Stanton (1995) state that "when new process values compete with old process values, the result is [employee] frustration, confusion, cynicism, and cognitive dissonance" (p. 158). Chaplin (1996) notes that when reengineering fails, it is usually the result of a lack of alignment between the values and beliefs held by management and those of the worker and management's inability to move the workforce to accept these new values and attitudes. When reengineering fails, little if any residue of the change process will survive. The values and attitudes of the old process will become even more embedded and future attempts at change more difficult.

For management to be successful in instilling a new culture, two phenomena associated with change have to be understood. First, every organization consists of employees engaged in multiple interacting linkages which, when taken together, comprise the total workforce of the organization. Second, the dynamics of change are basically dichotomous: one force is driving for change while the other forces is resisting change (Lewin, 1951). Lewin's force-field theory holds that prior to change a state of equilibrium exists which balances the driving forces and resisting forces. Change agents, to be successful, must assess the degree of power among these two forces and promote change by increasing the driving forces, reducing the resisting forces, and/or developing new driving forces, all within the context of the existing multiple interacting linkages. Argyris (1993) maintains that the first step to lasting change is the identification of those "power agents" existing within the informal power group network among the workforce. These informal leaders exert power and influence over their peer groups through competence and knowledge, personality, interpersonal skills, rewards and favors, or cohesion. By working with and through these informal power agents, managers have a greater probability
of achieving their desired outcomes—reducing resistance to change among the workforce. Replacing the existing culture is part of reengineering since the new values and expected patterns of behavior will require new organizational structures, policies, and group norms.

Next, to have the workforce internalize the new values and attitudes desired by management, a program of information-giving is necessary. Communicating in clear and concise terms why the old values and behaviors are no longer acceptable is essential to convincing employees that change is needed. Facts, based on research, become the most powerful persuasive tool, especially when these facts indicate the organization’s fiscal decline. Communication must be comprehensive and emphasize the positive outcomes of change, the specific reasons for change, and exactly how change will impact and benefit employees. To further reduce change anxiety, wide participation is needed in planning, designing, and implementing change. During this stage, participants build ownership and commitment by expressing ideas and incorporating them into the change process. Employees will be more tolerant of the new process when they have a vested interest in its success. When a new process is holistically assimilated, the job of management becomes easier since the workforce helps plan, design, and implement the process, values and behaviors desired by management which have become those desired by employees. Hammer and Stanton (1995) caution against the use of coercion in the reengineering process since this implies threats or reprisals and causes undue frustration, fear, and alienation among the workforce. Resistance caused by coercion can result in revenge, poor performance, high turnover rates, and covert activities.

The question for those progressive schools which anticipate meeting the demands and challenges of the 21st century becomes one of either reengineering or restructuring. As previously stated, restructuring means many things to many people and “the term is as notable for its ambiguity as for its meaning” (Conley, 1993, p. 7). Usually, Conley adds, restructuring is a rapid adaptation of fragmented programs or practices to maintain or regain competitiveness. Often, what is called restructuring is actually school renewal or reform with important distinctions between the two: “Renewal focuses on activities that help the organization to do better and/or more efficiently that which it is already doing” (Conley, 1993, p. 7), while reform “attempts to alter existing procedures, rules and requirements to allow the organization to adapt the way it functions to new circumstances or requirements” (Conley, 1993, p. 8). Neither of these processes addresses the fundamental assumptions of schooling, nor do they place emphasis on the primary existence for schools—to promote and demonstrate student learning. Neither process addresses the future, that is, being proactive in design. Both are highly reactive to current pressures for change which primarily come from external sources rather than from internal discontent with the status quo. The basic problems with school restructuring, says Conley (1993, p. 9), are “the lack of a clear and generally accepted definition of what restructuring really is, the unwillingness or inability to examine the underlying assumption, values, beliefs, practices, and relationships of quality-producing schools, and the abstract and unclear goals that permeate education.”

Senge (1990) believes the problems facing true school transformation lie in the current process of schooling itself and the historical artifacts of the past. Among the most detrimental inhibitors of school transformation are the isolation of teachers in self-contained classrooms, grade levels, or departments: the incremental mental models that dominate our ways of thinking; the targeting of symptoms rather than root causes for reform and research; the search for “quick fixes” and the modification of existing programs; and disenchantment with new reform programs which offer panaceas but, like their predecessors, fail to make good on their promises and leave teachers frustrated and leery of any reform movement.

Total quality management (TQM) is process thinking; it is systems thinking with a holistic mental model based on shared and jointly developed vision, mission, and goals which are future-oriented. TQM emphasizes teamwork, commitment to the pur pose of meeting customer needs and expectations, and
internal flexibility and process revision with an emphasis on continuous improvement across organizational boundaries (Weller, 1996a). Bonnstingl (1992) notes the importance of the ethos kaizen, a system-wide (process) covenant of individuals helping one another to pursue excellence on a daily basis. According to Bonnstingl (1992), “Were schools to adopt this process, they would transform” their schools into new images and new structures with quality products and services specifically addressing student needs and expectations. Bonnstingl agrees with Senge (1990) on the importance of a systems approach to school transformation (Senge’s fifth discipline) and notes that a holistic process, a new system which is built from the ground up, is essential to meet the challenges and demands of the future. In essence, both Bonnstingl and Senge call for reengineered schools, schools starting with a clean slate, and TQM provides the essential ingredients necessary for complete school transformation.

Schools which have adopted the TQM principles of Deming (1986) have undergone more than a paradigm shift: they have transformed the method of schooling (English, 1994). Davies (1994) points out that in TQM schools, teachers’ mindsets and their thinking and work have undergone a fundamental change and it is this change that is the first, the most necessary, step needed to change the school’s culture. English (1994) and Davies (1994) stress the importance of principals in initiating school change, but stress that teacher buy-in is essential for cultural change, a true school transformation. Monk (1993), Murgatroyd and Morgan (1993), Schmoker and Wilson (1993), and Weller and Hartley (1994) document the positive outcomes of TQM as a school transformational process. These include student gains on tests of achievement, improved student self-esteem and increased teacher morale. These schools have vision, a mission, and empowered teacher teams who participate in school governance. Their constancy of purpose is to improve continuously and they take pride in their work as they strive to achieve quality performance for themselves and their students.

How then do schools reengineer themselves into quality-oriented and quality-producing schools? The leader (principal) must make the first decision – the school needs to be transformed through a new set of values and beliefs, a new process to produce quality products and services. Next, and again central to both reengineering and TQM, is the need for strong leaders to embrace the values and beliefs they want implemented by modeling these behaviors. Third is the destruction of the school’s current culture, the current process of doing things. Reengineering, remarks Champy (1995), necessitates the “tearing down” of the existing culture, discarding the old process and mindsets, and embracing a new way of thinking, a new way of behaving in the context of work and work outcomes. Change, in the TQM process, requires a new way of thinking, and new way of valuing, and a new work ethic. Like engineering, TQM cannot be accomplished quickly, simply, or painlessly. Both are transformational processes.

Dislodging old beliefs and work patterns and infusing new values is not easy. Each organization has its own culture consisting of myths, ceremonies, rituals, and tacit assumptions and beliefs about the purpose and nature of work. Hoy and Miskel (1996) emphasize that organizational values incorporate these cultural components which comprise desirable and acceptable behavior patterns within the organization. In fact, Ouchi (1981) found that the culture of an organization relates directly to its success and that successful organizations share the values of trust, cooperation, teamwork, and egalitarianism. When values are shared, when employees work cooperatively toward the same goals, when employees are customer-oriented and free to innovate, when they have decision-making autonomy, the organization has a process that promotes efficient and effective products. Deal and Kennedy (1984) found similar values and cultural practices in high-achieving schools and relate that values, customs, tacit assumptions, and myths drive the process of schooling. The role of the principal, they maintain, in creating new values and cultural artifacts precludes the infusion of the new process which will be used to transform the outcomes of schooling. Deal and Kennedy (1984) also found that successful culture change is a systematic, not a segmented, process. Change must be planned and well-organized if it is to be effective in replacing core values in schools.

In changing an organizational culture, the importance of the leader cannot be overemphasized. Both Hammer and Stanton (1995) and Champy (1995) emphasize leader modeling as the primary, most crucial behavior for cultural change. Because transformed organizations depend on new process infusion and new processes depend on employees embracing and practicing new values and beliefs, the modeling of expected behaviors by the leader becomes all-important. These writers maintain that employees must be convinced that the new process, and the consequences of this process, are attainable and realistic, and something they themselves can value and practice. Schein (1985), who did
Informal leaders who gain the trust and confidence of their followers, thereby reducing the level of personal benefits or rewards to their following. Principals who gain the trust and confidence of their followers and who respect as a result of their knowledge, skills, personalities, and the rewards they can provide. Peers follow these leaders by choice, free of coercion, because they believe that consent will yield personal gain for them within the school. Many schools have several informal groups which have their own “group leader” and whose influence over their peers is given by group consensus. These group leaders are power agents in schools and their actions speak for their group membership. They retain power as long as they act in accordance with the norms and values held by their following and they can provide personal benefits or rewards to their following. Principals who gain the trust and confidence of these influencers find the path to change easier and more successful since the informal leader’s willingness to try new process(es) or innovative programs will be made known to their followers, thereby reducing the level of cognitive dissonance.

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research on principals and changing a school’s culture, found that successful school leaders have a systematic plan for cultural change and that their modeling of desired values and behaviors is essential in shaping the culture of the future. Strong principals dedicated to change realize that a school’s culture provides the school with its own unique image which conveys to the students and the external public what the school represents, what its mission is. Conley (1993) adds that the culture of a school determines what and how students learn, how they behave, and what they believe and value. Because teachers deliver the curriculum and, in some schools, develop the curriculum, what the curriculum comprises and how the curriculum is taught directly reflects the beliefs, values, and behaviors of the teaching-learning process. Shein (1985) refers to the culture of a school as its “hidden curriculum” and suggests that what is learned by and expected of students on a daily basis are far more accurate reflections of the school’s curriculum than any measure assessing instructional content. Conley notes that because culture is such a powerful influence on learning, transformed schools must take care to rid themselves of any vestiges of the old culture so as not to have competing ideas and loyalties over the core values which guide expectations and behaviors.

Lunenburg and Ornstein (1996) note the importance of modeling by leaders to change processes in schools, but add that winning the approval and support of informal power agents within the school’s culture is equally important to successful change. These informal leaders have peer loyalty, trust, and respect as a result of their knowledge, skills, personalities, and the rewards they can provide. Peers follow these leaders by choice, free of coercion, because they believe that consent will yield personal gain for them within the school. Many schools have several informal groups which have their own “group leader” and whose influence over their peers is given by group consensus. These group leaders are power agents in schools and their actions speak for their group membership. They retain power as long as they act in accordance with the norms and values held by their following and they can provide personal benefits or rewards to their following. Principals who gain the trust and confidence of these influencers find the path to change easier and more successful since the informal leader’s willingness to try new process(es) or innovative programs will be made known to their followers, thereby reducing the level of cognitive dissonance.

Information which is accurate and fact-based is a powerful and persuasive tool to initiate cultural change. Data which are easy to read and understandable (generally free of complicated research design and statistics) plant seeds of doubt about the existing way of doing things and challenge employees to think beyond the current production processes (Champy, 1995). Literature about successful reengineered schools and their success with TQM sparks interest and triggers questions. Here, the principal becomes a resource person, a supplier of additional information, and local expert. Pointing to their own modeling behaviors, these principals note that their behavior or patterns coincide with the new process they want to infuse into their schools. As a result, teachers will begin to question the benefits of the existing culture and to analyze the positive and negative aspects of change. Not all teachers, however, will question the values, myths, and norms of the school’s culture. Some will look at change as a threat to the security of their job functions, their relationships among peers, and their work patterns. Peer leaders who are respected may challenge those who are reluctant to change to look at the data objectively and to replace moral judgments with objective analysis. Some teachers will reject these appeals for open-mindedness and will refuse to be persuaded by the principal, their peers, or the literature, while others will attempt to be intellectually honest. For reluctant teachers, the TQM practice of benchmarking becomes an important part in the cultural change process.

Benchmarking, the practice of allowing employees to view first-hand exemplary programs and practices, lessens cognitive dissonance and resistance to change by allowing teachers to see tangible consequences of reengineering. Moreover, in education, nothing has more validity for a teacher than the word of another teacher. Allowing all teachers, those both eager and reluctant, to explore the positive and negative effects of TQM as a process for school transformation further reduces resistance to change and answers many practical questions not addressed in the literature. Care should be taken to explore both the process and the results of the process, not just the individual practices themselves. Benchmarking’s real value lies in its ability to provide a model to critique, a stimulus for new ideas, not a structure for direct infusion. The primary role of the principal is to select those schools which best exemplify the process design most likely to yield the outcomes targeted for the school.

Focus groups provide the next step in this systematic change process. Large and small
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Group work provides a platform to express discontent and concerns as teachers explore the positive and negative aspects of change. Here, the principal’s role becomes one of a facilitator who keeps teachers’ attention on building a new school yielding quality products and services. Since reengineering is about process design, principals emphasize creative thinking and dreaming, and challenge teachers to develop a delivery system that promotes quality teaching and results in quality learning. The principal promotes a “can do” attitude among teachers and serves as a motivator and stimulator to build self-confidence among the staff to undertake cultural change. In essence, these focus groups go about tearing down the old culture and replacing it with the new value and beliefs that will support and permeate the new process of schooling. This rests primarily on the following conditions: first, that many of the teachers see a need for change and are willing to explore new and better ways to improve teaching and learning; second, that teachers, for the most part, have the self-confidence and desire to initiate change; and, third, that teachers believe that the new process (TQM) provides viable, realistic, and achievable outcomes.

Large group sessions, well planned with specific topics, greatly facilitate the changing of teachers’ perspectives and attitudes. Large group topics focus on images of the future, process design, and the TQM philosophy and management principles. In each session, the principal’s role in this reengineering exercise is that of catalyst and resource person. Images of the future will focus on what teachers believe to be the ideal school, an educational utopia where their dreams can be realized. This session becomes a brainstorming exercise where ideas are generated and free thinking dominates. This stimulates dialogue among teachers and allows for the cross-pollination of ideas. Some teachers, however, will hold on to some of the existing values, norms, and customs. Old habits, assumptions, and behavior patterns are deeply ingrained, and, for some, provide a sense of security in the process of change. Moreover, some aspects of the existing culture may be compatible with the emerging images of the future and their inclusion will help bridge the gap for those teachers who are most reluctant to change.

When brainstorming is completed, small focus groups are formed to allow teachers time to reflect and further explore their feelings and to add to the components of the ideal school. Teachers are free to determine which current practices are compatible with the images of the future and to discuss their merits. For some, small group interaction is less threatening and they feel more comfortable in expressing their deepest feelings and opinions. The principal circulates among the small groups, acting as a resource person to provide knowledge and information to address teacher questions and concerns as each group further develops the images of the ideal school and examines the values and norms of the existing culture. The principal must remember that some teachers will want to hold on to certain aspects of the current culture and will express strong feelings for their inclusion. When these behaviors and values conflict with future images, the principal’s task becomes one of persuader and individual catalyst. The principal addresses each teacher’s concern(s) with fact-based information and, if needed, allows teachers to benchmark additional schools. This process takes time, but it is convincing, and such determined commitment to change is a characteristic of effective leadership.

Building vision and mission statements and determining the school’s core values is the next step in the transformation process. Vision comes from agreed upon core values, desired patterns of behavior, and commonly held attitudes and aspirations. Vision is a futuristic statement which clearly projects the organization’s direction for at least 30 years (Drucker, 1974). A school’s vision embodies beliefs about schooling and its purpose for the future. Mission statements also come from core values and attitudes. A mission statement provides a specific image of the future, is broad in scope, and allows for dreaming, but paints a realistic, attainable future. Goals come from the school’s core values and state specifically what the school intends to accomplish. Long range in nature, they are action statements that reflect the vision and mission of the school. Few in number, goals are specific enough to provide the foundation for strategic planning and tangible enough to provide indices to measure the school’s progress.

At this critical stage of school transformation, principals must emphasize the importance of consensus in identifying the core value and beliefs that will drive the vision and mission of the school. Moreover, the emphasis on shared ownership must be stressed and permeate the entire process since teachers are now laying the essential foundation upon which the reengineered process will be built. By jointly agreeing upon core values, mission, and vision, teachers and administrators will have a vested interest in making the transformation process a success through a personal commitment to the school’s new culture.
Large and small group sessions will be used throughout this process to achieve maximum teacher input and promote consensus building. Since core values are the moral and philosophical fabric from which goals are developed, small focus groups follow a large group session where a list of core values are presented and discussed. Small groups promote close examination of issues and the sharing of intrinsic feelings necessary to open and honest communication among teachers. When these groups have identified their core values, they are discussed and consensus is reached in a large group session. The development of mission and vision statements is conducted in the same format.

The third phase of the transformation process is the identification of the process that completes the task of reengineering. TQM provides a holistic, empowered, bottom-up approach to transforming schools, and many of the quality management principles are utilized throughout this reengineering process. Here, principals call on teachers from transformed schools using TQM as its process to help teachers see how the school’s goals, mission, and vision can be applied to their professional responsibilities and their classroom instruction. Teachers from TQM schools have the necessary credibility essential for teacher training to be effective. These teachers have gone through the a similar process and can answer many of practical questions teachers may have. They are able to relate personal experiences that add credibility to the effectiveness of TQM as a transformational process. Moreover, teachers realize that if their peers can adopt TQM as a transformational process and achieve its intended results, they can, too. This results in greater self-confidence and further motivates the staff to embrace the tenets of TQM’s management principles.

In reengineering, Champy (1995) maintains that employee satisfaction with the new process precedes quality products and services. Teachers must have ownership of the new process and be satisfied that the goals of schooling are compatible with their own values and attitudes. When teachers’ needs are met, they can then concentrate on meeting the needs of their students and on quality outcomes. Because teachers themselves reengineered the delivery system, the issue of accountability is moot. Producing quality products now rests squarely on their shoulders. And because they developed the goals of schooling, they know the evaluation standards and criteria for performance.

In TQM schools, teachers become the decision makers and problem solvers and have the ability, within teams, to cross interdisciplinary boundaries as they work toward implementing the process of schooling—the TQM principles and management philosophy. When these teams function within and across grade levels or departments, they implement a process that transcends structures and boundaries and makes the curriculum and the instructional delivery system a holistic process devoid of the structural barriers found in traditional schools. Equally important is the ability of these teams to adjust rapidly to the external needs and forces brought to bear on schools. Their empowered base allows for flexibility in the instructional system in order to address the concerns and needs of their primary customer—the student.

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