

Readiness for Professional Learning Communities: A Review of Literature

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Abstract: Exploring how and why organizational change and development is one the great themes in social science. This review explores the reason of change readiness, the definition of change readiness, instruments to measure change readiness and how to create change readiness for PLC. Change readiness is a precursor to the successful implementation of school improvement. There was no consensus on the definition of change readiness. However, leading scholars have similar views on the change readiness elements. We reviewed an instrument of individual readiness and two instruments of organizational readiness. We also found a useful strategy from leading scholars to create readiness. This literature review suggests directions for future research.

Keywords: change readiness, individual readiness for change, organizational readiness for change, creating change readiness.

Exploring how and why organizational change and development is one the great themes in social science (Pettigrew, Woodman, and Cameron, 2001, p. 697; Van de Ven and Poole, 1995, p. 510). Interest in this topic continues to grow as organization struggle to cope with fast-changing and complex world in order to survive (Rafferty, Jimmieson, and Armenakis, 2013, p. 11). For example, many countries are struggling to transform their education system to enhance their international league tables of performance (Harris, 2011, p. 624). Such changes are often targeted at enhancing teacher development and improving an organization's effectiveness and capability (Choi and Ruona, 2011, p. 48) so that schools generate value, having basic goal of enabling an organization and its functions cope with a challenging environment (Blackman, O'Flynn, and Ugyel, 2013, p. 2).

The past experience tells us that organizational change is difficult because it involves painful unlearning and relearning (Schein, 1995, p. 1ff) as organization members attempt to restructure their thoughts, feelings and behaviors with regard to the change at hand. It can lead to chaotic and can be dramatic for both the individual and the organization (Desplaces, 2005, p. 1). It is widely accepted that the majority of change initiatives are unsuccessful with failure rates more

than 70 percent (Beer and Nohria, 2000, p. 1; Werkman, 2009, p. 664). The failure rates seem stable over decade. As Harris (2011, p. 625) notes “after a couple of decades of being energetically reformed, most schools, especially the bottom tier schools, and most school systems seem to be pretty much same kind of organization that they were at the beginning”. Many change efforts do not foster sustained change (Choi and Ruona, 2010, p. 47).

In response to the high rate of change failure, practitioners and scholars have found factors that may increase the likelihood of successfully implementing organisational changes (Raferty, Jimmieson, and Armenakis, 2013, p. 111; Blackman, O’Flynn, and Ugyel, 2013, p. 3; Choi and Ruona, 2010, p. 46). The cause of many schools failed to be learning communities is most often considered as inability at the process of implementation (Harris, 2011, p. 625; Fullan, 2011, p. 16). In particular, the failures are often attributed to the organization’s inability to provide for an effective unfreezing process (Lewin, 1947, p. 34) which includes readiness to change.

This paper has several questions to be answered about both organizational and individual readiness to develop professional learning communities (PLC). The first question is why readiness for PLC? The second question is what is definition of organizational and individual readiness to change? The third question is how to measure readiness, both organizational and individual level for developing a PLC in a school? The fourth question is how to create organizational readiness for developing a PLC in a school?

1. Literature Selection and Review Process

Literature was selected in three steps. First, search used internet using keywords readiness to change. Second, researcher selected relevant articles, books, and book chapters referenced in the studies from initial internet searches. Third, we included book chapter from our personal collections.

Literatures were divided into empirical and case studies, program and personal description, and literature reviews and position papers. Researcher selected the literature for further review on the basis of whether it addressed issues on change readiness, individual and organizational readiness, readiness for PLC assessment, and create readiness for change.

The literatures fell into four categories based on the purpose of this paper. The first group of studies discussed about the need for readiness for PLC. The second group described about the definition of both organizational and individual readiness to change. The third group explored detailed about how to measure readiness for PLC. The fourth group explored detailed about strategies to create readiness for change which focus on organizational culture.

Researcher used all of those categories to organize the body of this review. Researcher used all of the literatures as a basis to develop conceptions, identify assumptions, make comments, offer implications, and point to future directions of research.

2. Why readiness for PLC?

Change readiness is considered a critical precursor to the successful implementation of organizational change (Weiner, 2009, p. 68; Holt et al., 2007: p. 3). As Weiner (2009, p.68) notes “... failure to establish sufficient change readiness accounts for one-half of all unsuccessful, large-scale organizational change efforts”. Yet, data from both organization level and individual level are used to make statements about change readiness (Raferty, Jimmieson, and Armenakis, 2013, p. 112). Many researchers focus on conducting research about change readiness or resistance to change. Therefore, readiness becomes a central position in change management theory (Van der Voet, 2013, p. 4).

Readiness is the most prevalent positive attitude of organization members toward change initiatives (Raferty, Jimmieson, and Armenakis, 2013, p. 111). Organization members attitude is generally observable at the outset of a change initiative (Helfrich et al., 2011, p. 2) and can be changed dramatically (Cameron and Quinn, 2006, p. 147). Since PLC need all school members to work together in a culture of collaboration (DuFour, 2004, p. 6), readiness for change are important and must be considered (Cameron and Quinn, 2006, p. 45; Fullan, 1985, p. 418). For example, one of most common problem in readiness are leaders do not understand how to create an environment of readiness for organizational change. It will lead to failure. Therefore, “... leaders should focus on understanding of the organization is ready and able to change” (Blackman, O’Flynn, and Ugyel, 2013, p. 3). Understanding the conditions conducive to both individual readiness and organizational readiness to change can be useful for designing and implementing effective intervention (Choi and Ruona, 2010, p. 46).

A crucial step in transforming school, improving student achievement and sustainable reform is by improving professional learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009, p. 3) and the most supportive context and promising strategy of the learning of professional is the PLC (Hord, 2009, p. 40; DuFour and Eaker, 1998, p. xi). “Professional identity and readiness to join in the collective learning ... is important for sustaining the community” (McLaughlin and Talbert, 2006, p. 25). System must assess their readiness for leadership practice, staff’s willingness, and identification and availability of school members to exercise leadership (Knapp et al., 2010, p. 29ff), and creating it (Holt et al., 2007, p. 233) in order to the success of school improvement. “If more was understood about change-ready schools, strategies could be initiated, implemented and sustained for pursuing continuous school improvement” (Hipp et al., 2003, p. 13).

3. What is definition of organizational and individual readiness to change? The term change readiness has its roots in the Lewin’s (1947) three stage model of change – unfreezing, moving, and refreezing; and is connected to unfreezing process. The concept of change readiness was first introduced by Jacobson in 1957 (Holt et al., 2007, p. 233). Change process do goes through a series of phase requiring time (Kotter, 1995, p. 59) and organizations may ‘back to the future’ of the work of Kurt Lewin in order to do so (Burnes, 2004, p. 321). Most organizational change models acknowledge the importance of unfreezing step, including phase such as building

momentum, warm-up or defrosting activities, or gaining buy-in to the change effort (Kotter, 1995, p. 59; Blackman, O'Flynn, and Ugyel, 2013, p. 3; Choi and Ruona, 2010, p. 47). Based on this idea, researchers have prescribed various strategies to create readiness, include highlighting the discrepancy between current and desired performance levels, fomenting dissatisfaction with the status quo, creating an appealing vision of a future state of affairs, and fostering confidence that this future state can be achieved (Weiner, 2009, p. 68).

3.1. Definition of Individual Readiness for Change

The most widespread and accepted definition of change readiness was provided by Armenakis et al. (1993) (Raferty, Jimmieson, and Armenakis, 2013, p. 113). They identify change readiness as “beliefs, attitudes, and intentions regarding the extent to which changes are needed and the organization’s capacity to successfully undertake those changes” (p. 682). They argue that what employees feel, think and how they behave is not always congruent, therefore, organization members’ response to change through the dimensions of attitudes, beliefs and intentions. Some researchers have developed definition of change readiness that largely derived from Armenakis et al. definition (Raferty, Jimmieson, and Armenakis, 2013, p. 114). Eby et al. (2000, p. 422) defined “readiness is conceptualized in term of an individual’s perception of a specific facet of his or her work environment – the extent to which the organization is perceived to be ready to take on large-scale change”. They also emphasized on an individual’s unique interpretive reality of the organization.

Holt et al., (2007, p. 231) extended the definition of change readiness by adding the extent to which employees think that change would have positive effects for themselves and organization itself. Cunningham et al. (2002, p. 377) stated that readiness for change as “a sense of one’s ability to successfully accomplish change (self-efficacy) and an opportunity to participate in the change process contribute to readiness for organizational change”. However, both of them do not change the implication of the concept offered by Armenakis et al. (1993).

Raferty, Jimmieson, and Armenakis (2013, p. 114) argue that Armenakis et al.’s definition (1993) does not examine the affective component, but only emphasizes beliefs component of change readiness. Affect consists of discrete, qualitatively different emotions such as love, hate, delight, sadness, happiness, annoyance, calmness, excitement, boredom, relaxation, anger, acceptance, disgust, joy, and sorrow; and is an important component of change readiness construct. They also propose that change readiness is not appropriate to include intentions as its component because intentions are concerned with the motivational factors. They propose that individual readiness for change is influenced by (1) “the individual’s beliefs (a) that change is needed, (b) that he or she has the capacity to successfully undertake change, and (c) that change will have positive outcomes for his or her job/role and by (2) the individual’s current and future-oriented positive affective emotional responses to a specific change event” (p. 116).

3.2. Definition of Organization Readiness for Change

Organizational readiness for change is a multifaceted construct. Weiner (2009) defined organizational readiness based on the term of 'readiness' which mean a state of being both psychologically and behaviorally prepared to take action. "Organizational readiness refers to organizational members' change commitment and change efficacy to implement organizational change" (p. 68). It was rooted in Bandura's (1997) notion of goal commitment and collective efficacy. But, Raferty, Jimmieson, and Armenakis (2013, p. 116) have different view point as they agree with Whelan-Barry, Gordon, and Hinings (2003, p. 187) that change process at organizational level inherently involves change processess at both group level and individual level. That means organization readiness for change attitude emerge from the cognitions and affects of individuals. They propose "organization's change readiness is influenced by (1) shared cognitive beliefs among work group or organizational members (a) that change is needed, (b) that the work group or organization has the capability to successfully undertake change, (c) that change will have positive outcomes for the work group or organization and by (2) the occurrence to an organizational emotional responses to an organizational change (p. 116)".

Recently, a multilevel perspective of change readiness has emerged in the literature for defining the concept of change readiness. Weiner (2009, p. 68) and Raferty, Jimmieson, and Armenakis (2013, p. 112) propose to look at change readiness at three different levels: individual, group, and organization level. Using individual data solely to make statements about an organization's readiness for change will lead to bias because it could be stronger or weaker at group or organization level of analysis, thus change readiness should be analyzed at all level (Raferty, Jimmieson, and Armenakis, 2013, p. 112). Some of the authors do not differentiate between organizational change readiness and group change readiness as they both represent collective readiness for change. Often group readiness for change is analyzed along with individual readiness for change as organization members identify themselves within the group of people they are working with (Raferty, Jimmieson, and Armenakis, 2013, p. 121). In this paper, we explored the definition both organizational and individual readiness to change.

4. How to measure readiness for developing a PLC in a school?

Many instruments exist to measure change readiness, both qualitative (e.g. observation and interview techniques) and quantitative methods (individual self-rating) (Holt et al., 2007, p. 233; Holt et al., 2010). Qualitative methods provide rich change-specific information, while quantitative methods are more efficient to garner change-related information in large organization (Holt et al., 2007, p. 233). Selecting among instruments is not simply a matter of choosing the best validated instrument because most instruments to assess change readiness for specific initiative – narrowly focus on specific psychological factors (Holt et al., 2007, p. 235; Holt et al., 2010).

In this section we reported summarizes the characteristics of instruments that measure change readiness for PLC at both individual level and organization level, providing information on the range of instruments available. It is not a technical review of the quality of these measures.

4.1. Individual level assessment

Despite the interest in focusing on readiness to change, no single model has emerged as the standard for approaching its study, some of them focus on cognitive beliefs and some of them have developed measurement for specific of change readiness (Raferty, Jimmieson, and Armenakis, 2013, p. 112). Here, we explored two instruments to measure individual change readiness: (1) Holt et al. Individual Change Readiness Assessment and (2) The Transtheoretical Model. This review explores the latter model. The Transtheoretical Model, a comprehensive stage-based model developed to explain clinical model of change readiness, recently has been applied to behavioral change in organizational area (Cunningham et al., 2002, p. 378; Prochaska et al., 2001, p. 248; Holt et al., 2007, p. 235).

The Transtheoretical Model (TTM) to changing organization is proposed by Prochaska, Prochaska, and Levesque (2001) by moving individuals across five stages. The first stage is pre-contemplation: where the need for change is not acknowledged, individuals are uninformed or under-informed about change, deny they have a problem, are may have tried to change but failed, are demoralized about their ability to change, are resistant to change, are unaware of the consequences of their behavior, and thus are not intending to take action within the next six months (Prochaska, Redding, and Ever, 2008, p. 100; Cunningham, 2002, p. 378; Prochaska, Prochaska, and Levesque, 2001, p. 249; Desplaces, 2005, p. 23). The second stage is contemplation stage: individuals consider but do not initiate change, recognize more of the pros and benefit of change, remain the same as they overestimate the cost of change, are profound ambivalence and keep them stuck in contemplation for long periods of time, and are intending to take action within the next six months (Prochaska, Redding, and Ever, 2008, p. 100; Cunningham, 2002, p. 378; Prochaska, Prochaska, and Levesque, 2001, p. 249; Desplaces, 2005, p. 23).

The third stage is preparation: planning for change occurs, individuals decided to take action within the next 30 days and have already taken some steps toward their goals (Cunningham, 2002, p. 378; Prochaska, Prochaska, and Levesque, 2001, p. 249; Desplaces, 2005, p. 23). The fourth stage is action: individuals engaged in the process of behavioral change, are made overt change more than six months ago.

The last stage is maintenance: individuals have applied the new behaviors, are actively preventing relapse into the old ways of doing things, are attempting to sustain changes, are made overt change more than six months ago (Cunningham, 2002, p. 378; Prochaska, Prochaska, and Levesque, 2001, p. 249; Desplaces, 2005, p. 23). If 20% of organization members are prepared to take action, it should come as no surprise that a majority of action fail because people in the below stage are likely to see change as impose and can become resistant. In this condition, organizations

need to do intervention to move more people to be ready to take action (Prochaska, Prochaska, and Levesque, 2001, p. 249).

4.2. Organization level assessment

We identified two instruments to measure organization level change readiness. School culture affects readiness for change (Bolam et al., 2005, p.16), thus, it could be used to assess school change readiness. Stoll and Fink (1996) have developed a typology of culture to help teachers consider different facets of their school's culture. It describes and labels different idealized type of school that have been created on two dimensions, effectiveness – ineffectiveness, and improving – declining (Stoll, 2000, p. 11). The first type of school culture is moving: effective and improving school. Organization members are actively and effectively working together to respond to their changing context and to keep improving schools. They know where they are going and have policies, determination and understanding of the processes needed to get there. They are also boosting pupils' progress and development (Townsend, 2010; Stoll, 2000, p. 11).

The second type of school culture is cruising schools: effective but declining. Cruising schools are usually in more affluent areas and look like an effective school but success may be due to the higher socio-economic status of their students. Cruising schools are often marking time, not seeking to prepare their pupils for the changing world, and possess powerful norms that inhibit change (Townsend, 2010; Stoll, 2000, p. 11). The third type of school culture is strolling: neither effective nor ineffective, not going anywhere. They are moving with inadequate rate to cope with pace of change, have ill-defined and sometimes conflicting aims that inhibit improvement efforts and are meandering into future to pupils' detriment. The schools in this type of culture need stimulation to bring about change, e.g. a new principal as change leadership (Townsend, 2010; Stoll, 2000, p. 11).

The fourth type of school culture is struggling schools: not effective but getting better. Struggling schools know that they are ineffective and expend considerable energy trying to decide the what and how of change process and there is a willingness to try anything that will make a difference. They are often identified as failing and, thus, demotivational. These schools will succeed because they have the will, but incapable to implement change. Change agents can have an impact on because the school staff recognizes that the school is ineffective and that change is necessary (Townsend, 2010; Stoll, 2000, p. 11). The last type of school culture is sinking schools: not effective and getting worse. The staffs in these schools are out of apathy or ignorance, not prepared or able to change. The schools display many characteristics of ineffectiveness, such as isolation, self-reliance, blame and loss of faith, which further inhibit improvement. The schools in this type of culture need dramatic action and significant support (Townsend, 2010; Stoll, 2000, p. 11).

Professional learning community assessment revisited (PLCA-R) has developed by Oliver, Hipp, and Hauffman in 2009 (Oliver, 2009), to diagnose change readiness in a school. It gauges the level at which schools function along the continuum of PLC's: initiating, implementing, and

institutionalizing. PLC-R is a 52-item self administered survey using Likert scale with regard to five dimensions of PLC: shared and supportive leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application, shared personal practice, and supportive conditions. The scholars also provide The Professional Learning Community Organizer (PLCO) – illustrates practices that promote school effort under each of five dimensions and phase of change; and The Professional Learning Community Developmental Rubric (PLCDR) as a tool for dialogue. School is considered to be at a low readiness level if a climate of distrust, disrespect, or disengagement exists; and principal cannot support shared leadership and decision making, do not communicate belief in the power of a professional learning community infrastructure (Morrisey, 2000, p. 29).

5. How to create organizational readiness for developing a PLC in a school?

In this section, we review theoretical and empirical research examining the creation of change readiness. Weiner (2009, p. 70) identifies five possible contextual factors as antecedents of organizational readiness for change: organizational culture, policies and procedures, past experience, organizational resources and organizational structure. We focus briefly on school culture and at the school level. We believe that this review is useful for school leader to plane intervention of change readiness at the school. Creating change readiness is about change organization climate. School climate's essence has been described as "patterns of people's experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practice, and organizational structure" (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 182). Furthermore, they argue that school climate can be measured or change from all angles and elements of a school (p. 188) and are used to generated positive school improvement change (p. 196). The climate of the organization is the place wherein the individual shapes his or her perceptions towards the organizational readiness to change (Eby et al., 2000).

Kotter (1995) explains readiness by explaining the necessity for creating vision with urgency that everyone in the organization understands. It can be fostered by identifying the future state, both its advantages and disadvantages related to change; reveal the gaps between current performance and future preferred performance (Cameron and Kim, 2006, p. 100). This is what Schein explains about disconfirmation – a primary driving force (1995, p.3). Dissatisfaction or frustration can be generated from data that disconfirm on expectation, e.g. outcomes of student achievement. Disconfirming information is not enough if it does not become motivated to change. It is used to build survival guilt.

6. Summary and Discussion

Organizations have to change in order to survive. School change is difficult and most schools seem to be as same as kind of organization that they were at the beginning (Harris, 2011, p. 625). PISA and TIMSS result reveal that educational reform in some countries is demonstrated

change in opposite directions than intended. Most of the failure is associated with incapable to provide change readiness.

Change readiness is a critical precursor and must be considered for PLC development. There was no consensus on the definition of change readiness. Recently, Raftery, Jimmieson, and Armenakis (2013, p. 114) propose a definition of change readiness that includes beliefs and affective elements. They also contend that intentions are motivational factors. Yet, readiness for change is not only a multilevel construct but also multifaceted construct. Schools, as the sub system, have to analyze readiness for change in order to successful of culture change, both at individual level and organizational level. Readiness refers to “unfreezing” of Lewin’s basic change model which a profound psychological dynamic process – thoughts, perception, feelings, and attitudes - that involved painful learning (Schein, 1995, p. 2).

We found two instruments to measure individual level readiness and two instruments to measure organizational level readiness. Instruments and methods to measure readiness for change have serious drawbacks regarding their validity and reliability (Holt et al., 2010). Thus, we suggest for test the validity of these instruments and the need for more comprehensive measurements, particularly readiness for PLC development.

Leading scholars propose a useful strategy to create readiness for change. We need to put it into action in order to know the nature of change readiness.

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