
Principles of Leading Change: an inductive analysis from post-Katrina New Orleans

BRIAN R. BEABOUT

University of New Orleans, USA

ABSTRACT Despite over forty years of research on theories of educational change, little is known of the change theories-in-use of school-based administrators, often tasked with implementing externally imposed reform mandates. Capitalizing on the unique case of post-Katrina schooling, this qualitative study examines the ways in which ten principals spoke about leading change in their schools. In a city where the district has been almost wholly decentralized, these principals are not implementing changes decided upon by superiors, but have significant autonomy in their choice of change goals and change processes. Despite rarely finding unitary theories of change in the words of New Orleans' school leaders, six *principles* of leading change were identified: *collaboration*, *community connections*, *generating public support*, *meeting student needs*, *setting goals and meeting them*, and *improving instruction*. Conclusions are drawn about leading change at the school-site level, and implications for leader preparation and support are also included.

Introduction

While many theories of educational change certainly exist in print (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Ellsworth, 2000; Squire & Reigeluth, 2000; Fullan, 2001; Cuban & Usdan, 2002; Carr-Chellman, 2006; Miles, 2005; Reigeluth et al, 2006; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009), it is less clear whether these theories are aligned with practitioners' beliefs and actions regarding change. To borrow from Argyris and Schön's (1974) well-used concept of *theory-in-use*, we might ask about the level of similarity between theories of educational change espoused by the research community and the theories-in-use used by reformers on the ground. While most educational leaders have likely had some exposure to formalized change theories, assuming that they are making calculated selections among multiple change theories would be problematic. Regardless of training or espoused beliefs, reformers (whether working inside or outside schools) undoubtedly operate based on *implicit theories* of change that are created from an amalgam of life experiences, personal philosophies, exposure to research and other factors (Rudman, 2004). Formalized theories from the research community are an important *input* into an individual's implicit theory of change, but are simply one among many inputs. As Hargreaves (2008) notes:

All attempts to bring about change are driven by an implicit or explicit theory-of-action: a set of tacit assumptions or explicit theoretical guidelines concerning the need for change, the solutions required, and the means for achieving them in terms of knowledge, attitudes, skills, learning processes, incentives, rewards, sanctions, human motivation, leadership, resources, timescales, structures, participation, and stakeholder investment – to name just a few ... Theories of action are driven not only by assumptions and ideas about which of these elements are most important, but also about how they are interconnected and the causal relationships among them. (p. 19)

Reformers' work is guided, often unconsciously, by their implicit theories of change, which are often overlapping, incomplete and contradictory. The research–practice gap has been described by educational researchers for many years (Moll & Diaz, 1987), and this study examines the question,

what are the similarities and differences between change theories espoused by the research literature and the change theories-in-use of school leaders? Semi-structured, iterative interviews with ten school leaders working in the rapidly decentralizing New Orleans public schools were conducted. Analysis of these data shows that individual leaders indeed hold multiple implicit theories of change and that these theories tend to be defined by their *outcome* rather than by any meta-level *process* by which change happens. Change is discussed in terms of *what* will be achieved, rather than *how* it will be achieved. This suggests a lack of explicit theories of change on the part of these urban principals.

Rationale and Purpose

This study is based on a premise that reformers who can make their assumptions about change explicit and engage in critique and analysis can further refine their implicit theories, leading to improved performance in meeting change objectives. If we are to move towards the day when reformers possess a facility in describing and critiquing their implicit theories of change, then a logical first step would seem to be unearthing the implicit theories of change held by school reformers in real schools facing real circumstances and change problems. These implicit change theories, once made explicit, can serve as a framework for others to begin the process of identifying and interrogating their own implicit theories of change. This process of changing mental models is described by Senge (1990):

The discipline of working with mental models starts with turning the mirror inward: learning to unearth our internal pictures of the world, to bring them to the surface, and hold them to rigorous scrutiny. (p. 9)

The descriptive work presented here will help facilitate future change research exploring the relationships between research-based change theories, implicit change theories held by practitioners, and observable changes that occur in schools and classrooms, the elusive *gold standard* of most educational change efforts (Eisner, 1992; Olsen & Kirtman, 2002). With a greater understanding of the implicit theories of change held by such individuals, reformers, researchers, policymakers and leadership preparation programs stand in a better position to actively help urban schools succeed in change. Generating these theories, anchoring them with practice-imbued data from leaders, and making comparisons with the change theories espoused in the research literature is precisely the goal of this study.

A neglect of the views and experiences of practitioners has been a well-documented weakness in the research base (McLaughlin, 1990; Eisner, 1992; Fullan, 2001; McLaughlin & Mitra, 2001; Fink, 2003; Orr et al, 2005), and this study aims to address this void by examining the implicit theories of change held by school principals in one urban district during a time of massive structural change. While the particularities of this research site are unique, the theories held by the participants have resonated with various theories of change currently in existence, including: *changes in instructional practice*, *fostering collaboration*, *connecting the school to its community* and *identifying and meeting student needs*. A full description of the implicit theories of change identified by the ten participants in this study is included in the findings section below.

Rationale for this Sample of New Orleans Principals

Selecting principals as a group of important change agents is supported by decades of research on educational change that has shown the notable influence of leadership on the change process (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Sammons, 1999; McLaughlin & Mitra, 2001; Olsen & Kirtman, 2002; Borko et al, 2003; Goldenburg, 2003; Tearle, 2003; Fishman et al, 2004; Lai & Pratt, 2004). When it comes to change, *school leadership matters*. It therefore stands to reason that what school leaders *believe* about educational change also matters, even if this is only one influence on the change practices utilized in the workplace. Additional studies eliciting implicit change theories of district-level leadership, state-level leadership and reformers in the research community are necessary.

As for the specific selection of principals in New Orleans, Hurricane Katrina created the unique context of an urban district facing such institutional turbulence (Gross, 1998) and uncertainty that any form of official change doctrine, supported by district bureaucracy, was

rendered moot. As charter schools and the state began to run the majority of public schools and the school board was pushed to the margins, schools at the time of data collection were operating more and more on their own (Perry & Schwam-Baird, 2010). School principals, for better or worse, had little bureaucratic guidance on change initiatives. This makes their implicit theories of change all the more important. This exploratory study of urban public school principals' implicit theories of educational change describes the diversity of change theories held by ten individuals in the context of one urban district's experience with rapid, unplanned structural change. Despite a reform history in the USA dominated by reforms generated outside of schools (Tyack & Cuban, 1995; McLaughlin & Mitra, 2001), and despite recent trends towards centralization (Wong et al, 2007), the US educational system remains largely a loosely coupled one (Weick, 1976; Fusarelli, 2002) allowing for significant local control. Particularly in the case of the rapidly decentralized school system in post-Katrina New Orleans, the theories of change that principals bring to their schools are likely to strongly influence principals' approaches to change, since there is little in the way of bureaucratic mandates that would cause an individual leader to compromise on their personally held theory of change.

A Review of the Literature

A number of scholars have noted the importance of educators' implicit theories in shaping their practice and their approach to change. Olsen and Kirtman (2002) identify childhood experiences in school, prior career experiences and family life as individual characteristics that influence teachers' responses to school-wide reform. While they do not specifically address the topic of implicit theories of change in their study, they identify useful influences on an individual's way of viewing his or her work in a school.

From a policy-implementation perspective, Spillane (2002) identifies three categories of approaches to change emerging from interviews with 40 district officials engaged in standards-based reform: behaviorist, situated and cognitive. Based on interviews and accompanying classroom observations, Spillane concludes that the predominance of a behaviorist perspective among district officials (85% of their sample) may inhibit teacher implementation of proposed reforms. While the present study does not categorize theories of change similarly, I take note of Spillane's finding that a leader's overly behaviorist view might be a potential liability in the collaborative work of educational change. This supports the inductive design used here, one that includes discussion of leaders' change-related behaviors, but is not limited to them.

Both Hammerness (2001) and Fink (2003) identify the centrality of individuals' personal beliefs about education in their support or abandonment of proposed reforms. While externally created policies, programs and reward structures certainly influence the change process (French & Raven, 1959; Elmore & Burney, 1997; Hubbard et al, 2006), these more recent studies insist that we also pay attention to the individuals charged with implementing reforms and the paths they envision towards improvement. As Fink (2003) notes,

external change agents need to listen to the voices of the people charged with the implementation of change. For researchers it reinforces the need for educational research to be more sensitive to the work and lives of 'real' people in 'real' schools and to address the non-rational as sources of insight into educational change. (p. 106)

The implicit theories studied here are a direct product of the 'work and lives' of these urban principals as they make sense of their professional experience in very personal ways. While those who train and support school leaders are tempted to manage the change process in a linear, rational manner, these aforementioned studies direct our attention also to the implicit, non-verbal and emotion-laden influences on one's view of change.

Existing Theories of Change

This study examines the implicit theories of change held by practitioners in the post-Katrina New Orleans Public Schools. The base of research on change theories described above serves as an important foundation for the data reported below. An important foundation for the study of educational change is Rogers' (2003) *Diffusion of Innovations*. His five perceived attributes of a

successful innovation (relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability) form an important framework in understanding the barriers to adoption of a specific change. Of course, this model takes as its starting point a pre-selected innovation – a practice that has led to much grief in schools suffering from ‘innovation overload’ (Fullan, 2001), and that is somewhat misaligned with the emergent change practices described by my participants.

Lewin’s (1989) freeze-unfreeze model of organizational change points to the organizational milieu as an important facet of any change effort, as it focuses attention on the adopters and implementers, not solely on the innovation, as Rogers proposes. Despite this advance, his theory is somewhat paternalistic in that leadership is seen as having sole responsibility for determining the new make-up of the re-frozen organization, and little room for collaboration exists. Another weakness is that in the current educational culture of constant, rapid change, it is difficult to envision a school ever reaching a ‘frozen’ state in which no change is happening at all.

Reigeluth et al (2006) compare several extant theories of educational change and weigh their strengths and weaknesses in particular contexts. Their comparison of idealized design (Ackoff, 1974; Banathy, 1991) with leveraged emergent design (Reigeluth, 2006) identifies the tensions between the need to use the change process to envision an idealized future school system that generates stakeholder investment (as described in idealized design) and the need to motivate participants with short-term successes and to iteratively design aspects of the new system (as described in leveraged emergent design). This text also compares broad stakeholder participation with a reliance on a smaller number of leaders in the change process, as well as considering the various levels at which educational change has been attempted (school, district, state).

Relatively recent developments in change theory that draw from complexity science (Wheatley, 1999; Fullan, 2001; Morrison, 2002; McQuillan, 2008; Beabout, 2012) propose a complexity-influenced theory of change that relies on radically decentralized organizations that constantly engage in change by experimenting collaboratively to solve the important problems of practice as envisioned by practitioners. The role of the leader under such a guiding theory emphasizes support, collaboration, communication and relationships rather than goal setting and implementation policing.

This brief examination of existing theories of organizational change serves several purposes in this study. First, it gives the reader an overview of potential *explicit* theories that may have been incorporated into participants’ *implicit* theories as described below. Second, these existing theories were used as a secondary basis for analyzing the interview data collected from the participants. That is, while the data were analyzed for emergent theories, once a relatively stable set of theories was identified, comparisons between these implicit theories and the established change theories from the literature were made. A more detailed explanation of the research methods follows.

Methods and Data Sources

As part of a larger phenomenological study examining principals’ experiences with the change process in post-Katrina New Orleans, ten principals were each interviewed three times. Interviews, which lasted between 35 minutes and 1 hour and 45 minutes, were recorded, transcribed and coded using a constant comparative approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These interviews were supplemented by extensive analysis of press reports of school reforms in post-Katrina New Orleans as well as half-day on-site observations at the schools of seven of the ten principals (three principals had taken other jobs by the time observations were scheduled). One of the categories that became immediately prominent during the analysis was the diverse views of educational change that were held by the relatively small number of participants.

It should be noted that principals were not asked, directly, what their theory of change was. As they were all highly educated and articulate individuals, asking this question ran the risk of eliciting a contrived, textbook reply instead of embedding their words in the context of everyday practice. Participants were asked, among other things, what they had *learned* about change in their experience of opening up a school in post-Katrina New Orleans.

A particular strength of this research setting is that there was no ‘official’ district-sponsored reform activity that principals might have felt obliged to support. Given the massively decentralized state of schooling in New Orleans during data collection, principals appeared to be

free to discuss (and implement) educational change in personally relevant ways. This freedom makes the data somewhat more valid than data collected in studies conducted under pre-existing reform regimes. It also makes the findings more significant in that most participants were relatively free to implement change in ways that resonated with them, making the job of principal more influential than it might have been under a mandated district-wide approach.

Findings

Six principles of change were identified as being exhibited by the ten principals in this study, and they are discussed and elaborated below. All of these six general principles had different priorities and slightly different from one participant to the next, but each showed up so regularly that this classification seems appropriate for a first-level analysis. A few principals fit squarely into one or two categories and seemed to have an internally consistent theory of change. Most, however, espoused pieces of many, or even all, of the principles discussed below

Principle 1: Collaboration

When principals spoke about collaboration, they recognized the establishment of a collaborative culture at the school as the linchpin of educational change. This theory was characterized by a belief that strong relationships between educators were necessary for a healthy school. One gained a sense that proponents felt that with these relationships would come the change goals and change process that schools needed. One principal invoked the collaborative nature of change as he talked about what he needed to do to improve in his second year on the job:

I have to listen more. And pay attention more, than I even did before, and I thought I did a whole lot of that before, but there is obviously something I missed – I felt that way. (RSD principal)

The emphasis for this principal was on true collaboration, not the contrived consensus discussed often in school-reform literature (Hargreaves, 1994; Fullan, 2001). The ability to recognize the views of others and to work together towards a shared future was seen as central. To this principal, collaboration involved paying attention to his school environment and listening more effectively to his staff. And while fostering this type of meaningful collaboration is described above as an *individual* characteristic of the school leader, another principal commented on the structural requirements for meaningful collaboration:

I can truly say there were very few times [in] the school year that I had the opportunity to sit around the table to plan with staff members. It was – and to me that’s where real school reform can occur. When you talk through all the issues, you look at what’s not working, and you make plans and ... There were very few opportunities for that. (RSD principal)

This principal cited the rushed pace of faculty hiring, preparing the school building for students, and a district-mandated curriculum that made the important work of collaborating with teachers to solve problems of instructional practice a challenging endeavor. While collaboration on instructional matters didn’t happen in this principal’s first year, he proudly describes the collaborative process of developing a school mission statement:

it took us a week to write a mission statement. Which I think is not necessarily a bad thing, but it shows how strong and opinionated people [are] – there was a lot of give-and-take in the writing of that statement. People wanted certain things in, people didn’t think certain things were *apropós*. So it took meetings for five days ... in a row to get a mission statement. And I think we can all live with the one that we finally drafted.

When asked what he had learned about the process of school change, he identified ‘new staff and new students and forming a community again’ as a central challenge. Another RSD principal described his plans for bringing about change during his second year on the job, noting he would like to ‘create a school plan collaboratively over the summer and leave some room in it for departments to “grow from it”’.

This principle of collaboration is well established in existing theories of educational change. The emphasis on *trust* as an important ingredient for reform (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Forsyth et al, 2011) is implicated here as well as the large body of work emphasizing professional learning communities as a key lever for change (Senge, 1990; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Wenger, 1999). Of course the obvious shortcoming of a change theory centering on collaboration is that groupthink and a lack of internal capacity can undermine the process (Payne, 2010). If the micro politics of the school serve to marginalize the voices of a large enough segment of the faculty, then collaboration turns into an oligarchy led by the politically powerful who have an unfortunate tendency to use this power to maintain their privileged role rather than make the school more effective for its students. A capacity problem exists if a school's faculty collaborates effectively but no one possesses sufficient understanding of the processes of teaching and learning, of school change, or of the relationship between the school and its socio-political environment. Given either of these scenarios, it is unlikely that a school would be able to navigate the waters of change successfully. Participants who spoke of collaborative change did so in a post-Katrina context of rapidly opened schools, constant staff and student turnover, and the significant tension between the inevitably slow process of group development and the need to open schools immediately so that families could return. School leaders also faced a tension between accountability for immediate test results, and a need to address the immense academic and non-academic needs of students in the aftermath of trauma. These are challenges that, taken together, far exceed the ability of any one leader to solve. They require help from both inside the school and outside the school (Fullan, 2000), and require years, not weeks, of trust building and collaboration. These participants did not have the luxury of time, and so it is somewhat unsurprising that they described successful change in this way.

Principle 2: Community Connections

This theory of school change focuses on connecting the school to the community and acknowledges that, at least in post-Katrina New Orleans, principals saw an *essential*, not merely *important*, role for parents, religious organizations, community health groups and post-secondary institutions in the functioning of a strong urban school. This principle was often invoked when our discussions turned to the perception that the 'official' authority in school matters seems to be migrating to the state and federal governments, and away from the school and district. While the portfolio-model reforms enacted in New Orleans (Bulkley et al, 2010) certainly shifted power away from the local district, this wasn't mourned significantly by these participants. The school board had been a source of frustration and embarrassment for many (Ferris, 2012). But the infusion of charter schools with many out-of-state staff and the loss of many pre-existing community relationships in the Katrina diaspora led principals to express a significant role for community leadership (Beabout, 2013) in the change process. In the already disenfranchised communities they served, principals saw a difficult-to-manage, but ultimately symbiotic, relationship between communities and schools. After being reassigned to a central office position after one year as a school leader, one principal stated:

if I had to do that leadership mode again, it would be to first get a handle of the community. Bring those influential individuals – and maybe some ... that were not so influential – to come in and be a part of the principal's 'cabinet', so to speak. And through them I think that I probably would have gotten a lot more done, so I would use them as my weapon for political issues, as opposed to me. (RSD principal)

This principal had a very practical reason for emphasizing community connections in that he felt a great deal of influence from various political factions in his school and, as a new principal, lacked the social and political capital to counter some of their effects. He saw community connections as a way to ally himself with community members and give himself some of the capital he lacked. This is in line with others who have advocated for an expressly political role for successful urban principals (Khalifa, 2012).

Another principal saw a partnership with a local university as a way to get both practical support and a public relations boost for her school:

I think the [university] connection has been incredible. Just the underlying message that this school is good enough for [them] to hook up with. We are training all of their student teachers right now. We have two methods classes that meet here. We have their field experience, we have their PE methods classes wanting to come out now, that's the third group that's just called me. So we're – we are developing that relationship together. (Charter principal)

In a city where the reputation of public education had been assaulted by poor performance and scandal, it seems understandable why creating school–community connections would be a popular change principle. These outside groups can provide technical expertise, as well as provide some stability from the rapidly shifting tides of reform in a district where superintendents had come and gone come and go with the seasons (Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003).

The involvement of parents in the school was another avenue by which principals emphasized this principle of creating community connections. There was a clear distinction in levels of involvement between schools with small numbers of poor students and those with large numbers of poor students. A principal of a predominantly middle-class public school talked about the importance of parents:

my children were at some of the better schools in the city so I knew, you know, what the PTO should look like and they had a fantastic – and they still do – cooperative PTO. Parents are very highly involved, which is really I think the foundation for a school's success. (Charter principal)

At the same time, a principal in a high-poverty school was boxed in by the typical middle-class expectations and voiced challenges in getting even nominal parent participation in school-based activities:

If I had 35 parents on a report card [sign-in sheet], when my staff said, 'Shit, that's great!' I said, 'What, we have six hundred-some-odd kids, you talkin' about great?' She said, 'That's about the best you can get.' And they were right.

In both cases, principals described parental involvement in the school as an important element in the success of a school. Worrisome was the sense of disparagement expressed by the second principal who seemed to think that there was no way to generate more than minimal parental participation in the school. This raises the question of whether this school was reaching out to parents for genuine partnership, or if the school was only willing to establish parent relationships on its own terms (at school in the evenings, etc.). School–community connections, while shifting and being rebuilt like the rest of the city, are likely only to be sustained if schools are willing to engage as equal partners with external groups, opening themselves to critique and accountability for any additional partnership expectations (Warren, 2005).

A final aspect of change in the form of community connections was the use of external groups to further the school's educational activities. One principal describes a well-attended literacy training that the school offered to students' families:

We are starting our [Success for All] morning trainings where we invite the parents to come in for the reading class to see how the lesson is taught, to learn how to best help their student. Especially when it comes to that roots and the early reading.... What they can do to best use their time at home. So we're doing a lot of outreach. (Charter principal)

When principals espouse community connections as a principle of change, this emphasizes the role of the outside environment in the education of their students. This is well aligned with systems-theoretical perspectives on school reform which have existed for some time (Banthy, 1991; Jenlink et al, 1998; Peck & Carr, 1997). The emphasis on feedback from the environment and the inclusion of a diversity of stakeholders in the change process is also reminiscent of complexity-based theories of change that favor a decentralized, locally driven change process that seeks to match local practice with perceived local needs (Noguera, 1996; Morrison, 2002), rather than nationally accepted *best practices* that have worked somewhere else.

Principle 3: Generating Public Support

Of the ideas discussed here, the principle of generating public support is perhaps the theory espoused by participants that is most influenced by the local history of public schooling in New

Orleans, and at the same time, the most generalizable to other urban school systems. Prior to the storm, the district had been led by eight superintendents over seven years (Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives, 2008). Additionally, a number of investigations into in-district corruption (Russell, 2006) clearly damaged public support for the schools. Except for the small number of (mostly magnet) schools that served middle-class populations, community support for the public schools in New Orleans remained abysmally low both at the time of Katrina and in the immediate aftermath. Public support differs from the previously described theory of community connections in that public support is more ethereal and less focused on tangible benefits. Examples of community connections that principals gave were K–12/university partnerships and parental input into school affairs, whereas public support was described as a general sense of trust between schools and the community at large. This includes trust that tax dollars are being reasonably spent, trust that students are safe, and trust that students from all backgrounds can get an education comparable to what is offered in surrounding public school districts. While most students in the district remain poor, when principals invoked this theory of educational change, they prioritized the need for the public schools to win back the trust of New Orleans' middle class (both black and white) who had turned their backs on the district long before Katrina struck. Several principals couldn't envision a successful district without the political and financial support of a wider segment of the citizenry – beyond their mostly poor clientele.

As evidence of the uneven public support for the New Orleans Public Schools, one principal talked about his idea of bringing in families to protest about the slow post-Katrina repairs at his school. He quickly dropped the idea, however, since neither the participation of his local community nor the interest of the city at large was perceived as being likely.

One high school principal emphasized the need for his school to successfully compete for talented students who traditionally earn seats in private schools or public magnet schools:

when a couple of kids do take a chance to come here, they [need to] have positive things to bring back home and into their social communities. That, 'yeah, I'm getting a great education at [the public school]'. (RSD principal)

This need to rebuild trust with public school families is seen as a priority here. On the national level, one charter school principal saw the post-Katrina moment as a window of opportunity for New Orleans Public Schools to regain the respectability it once had as the premier public education system in the South (DeVore & Logsdon, 1991):

more than anything now I think there's actually a bigger window of opportunity to effect broader change with schools that we try to build. Um, you know before I think we would have just been one middle school ... up in mid-city that could get kind of looked over ... But now in a city that's become a charter *city* in a lot of ways, I think it's given us an opportunity to affect more than our kids ... because there will be many charters and that's the direction [we] have gone, I think that what we will do will be considered maybe more valid to some degree.

To some principals, generating public support for their schools meant engaging the public in a process of fundamental mindset change. One principal talked about his conversations with education elites in New Orleans in which they scoffed at his goals of getting 100% of his 8th-grade students to pass the state's high-stakes exams in math and English. By comparison, approximately 25% of New Orleans 8th graders passed these two tests during the spring pre-Katrina. In this principal's eyes, public support would have to be won back through performance, not begged back with promises about good intentions. Winning back public support would begin with the schools themselves proving that they could get poor minority students to perform well on these tests. After that, the reasoning goes, the public would be forced to discard its theory that poor minority students can't learn, and raise its expectations and levels of support for the rest of the public schools.

While some principals approached generating public support as a process of starting with small successes and proving what was possible with urban schools, other groups acknowledged the importance of public support through somewhat different means. The RSD fired principals at most of its high schools after the 2007-08 school year, Superintendent Paul Vallas choosing to put his own leaders in these schools. One of the removed principals described this action

... in terms of reform. A superintendent coming into a new location has to do something that says, FIRE, and whatever else causes excitement. Since the curriculum was already on track, he couldn't do much with that. So he says – so he says while let's do something with um, high school reform. And let's go ahead and remove all these other guys because they did not – their students did not perform where they should be.

Significant here is that this participant viewed Vallas' leadership changes as a wishful attempt at public relations, rather than as a sound improvement strategy. Given the challenges in attracting experienced principals to the highly unstable post-Katrina RSD, there probably was little guarantee that replacement principals would outperform current ones.

Despite the range of approaches different individuals took to enacting this implicit theory of change, the principals in this study certainly acknowledged the importance of community support. While any public school district relies heavily on public support for financing, usually in the form of property taxes, the role of the broader community is complicated somewhat in the case of New Orleans. In a city where large sections of the middle and upper classes have pulled out of the public school system altogether (estimates put the private-school attendance rate at 25-30%), the public school system has continued to operate as a de facto segregated public institution serving primarily the poor African-American residents of the city. Without strong connections to the political and policy elites, the public school system, and the largely poor families it serves, get little more than the minimum financial resources allocated to it according to state law. A massive influx of outside ideas and money (Paul Vallas, Gates Foundation, Aspen Institute, Walton Foundation, Arnold Foundation, Teach for America) may be part of the larger project to re-engage the population at large with the problems of schooling in New Orleans. Building foundation support for a segregated public school system, even a higher-performing one, is certainly different from building grassroots support for a true public school system that serves both the wealthy and the poor. One is dependent on the largesse of private donors, while the other is able to guarantee continued while the other is able to guarantee continued financial support through local support at the ballot box.

Principle 4: Meeting Student Needs

The principle of focusing reform on meeting students' needs is both a natural outgrowth of the human-centered nature of the education profession and also likely a direct function of the financial and emotional hardships principals saw in their students during the immediate aftermath of Katrina. While these conditions were exacerbated by the storm, they certainly existed in the city prior to 2005, as they do in most other high-poverty school districts. This principle identifies several non-academic functions for schools (health and nutrition, job preparedness, social skills, etc.) and insists that meeting these goals is part and parcel of any successful school improvement effort. Just as Reynolds (2007) discusses addressing the non-academic needs of students in public schools, so principals in this study emphasized the basic needs of students that need to be met before academic success is likely. Given the number of students who lost possessions, pets, homes – even friends and family members – in the storm, it should come as no surprise that principals touted meeting psychological needs of students as an important bedrock to the change process:

[My] biggest frustrations were [our inability] to truly address the social and emotional needs of these children. I think that if we could help these children deal with the impact of the storm in their lives, that we will be able to have more responsive, respectful, cooperative students. Because a lot of it is PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder]. If you don't deal with it, the problem doesn't just go away, it gets worse. So we've got to deal with it ... we are going to be working in that direction. (RSD principal)

In addition to meeting the individual trauma-related needs of students, principals also emphasized the need for students to regain their sense of belonging. Students were often attending new schools far from home, and living in new neighborhoods away from friends and relatives for the first time. A charter school principal noted the importance of re-creating this sense of belonging in his school:

I think the number one thing that ... we've done is we've created a culture within our school where kids just feel safe, kids feel like it's a community that they want to be a part of and that they can't imagine not being a part of. So they take a lot of pride and I think [in] them coming

here they have gained a lot of pride in who they are, and what it means to them to be college prep, and to be leaders, and that sense of kind of team and unity and purpose.

For children to be a part of a true school community and have pro-academic peer pressure was seen as a major success in this principal's self-assessment of his school. Even beyond social needs, other principals addressed the lack of food and shelter experienced by students, long after the floodwaters had receded.

I don't think we will see true – true progress in our school system until kids have a base of where they're going to live at and how they're going to live ... everything else is just survival mode. And you can't – when you're only on survival – you only get average outcomes because you're not looking and being creative, you're not looking at finding the next big thing, you're just talking about where can I get my next plate of red beans from?

In a classic Maslowian sense, work on low-level needs has to occur before sufficient attention can be given to cognitive demands that are the subject of most educational reform research. The work of Anyon (1997, 2005) fleshes out the relationships between public policy, poverty and school reform in a way that would resonate with the two study participants quoted above.

The sub-standard schooling students had received in most New Orleans public schools prior to Katrina, coupled with the disruptions to schooling caused by the storm itself, meant that meeting student needs often included instructional practices that were outside the norm. One veteran New Orleans Public School teacher recalled a conversation with district administrators in the immediate aftermath of the storm:

you ought to start to plan many schools for low-income children. It means that you better start thinking about putting your class sizes 10 to 15, and making your schools smaller ... population-wise. And my thought about the population was, with the teachers. Then, have an effective program Have a respected, honorable, interaction with the child. Materials, teachers, and time. That's what you need. I mean if you've got 10 to 15 kids in the class, the teacher can devote more time, and I said to put an aid in every classroom. And both, you see you put your money closest to the kid.

Meeting individual academic needs would certainly be greatly facilitated in such an environment. While this approach certainly would be more expensive than the traditional 25-student class size, we have an abundance of evidence showing that large class sizes and large schools did not produce equitable results. When combined with the emphasis on school change through winning community support, we begin to see the interactions of these implicit theories and how they come together at certain times in the words of the participants. For example, principals can identify students who appear to be hungry, or who lack sleep, or who have attendance problems. These non-academic needs all have family- and community-based roots, and their solution was perceived to be a combination of community partnerships and the generation of public support to provide necessary resources. New Orleans Public Schools primarily served a population of students who were only fifty years from the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and only forty years from the Voting Rights Act. Such recent admission into something resembling full American citizenship. The fact that participants saw educational change in relationship to these broad social changes should not be a surprise. It does, however, contrast with a popular political narrative advocating a schools-alone approach to poverty elimination (Beabout & Jakiel, 2011).

Principle 5: Setting (Short-term) Goals and Meeting Them

All principals at some point acknowledged the managerialist/structural notion of change as defined by setting goals and organizing people to accomplish them. There was a large diversity of approaches to this goal-centered approach to change, from principals who had a clear vision for the school prior to the hiring of staff, to those who engaged teachers in the process of building school goals, to principals who operated without an overarching vision but dealt with small goals and small issues in response to the changing environment. One RSD principal bluntly expressed a dislike for worrying about theoretical approaches to change, preferring instead to take concrete steps and then analyze the results. This iterative, tinkering approach to change echoes previously

published work by Tyack and Cuban (1995) and Reigeluth (2006). Another principal, this time in a high-performing charter school, echoed a similar anti-theoretical sentiment:

We have to be the best we can be now with the children that we have now and I think it's going to work. Like, I told – you know – and I'm sure I said this to you before – I have my three-hour plan (laughs), my three days, my three months, my three year. And so tomorrow is the beginning of another three days. So we are going to get there ...

The fact that principals in both a high-performing school and a low-performing school repeated this idea of focusing on ongoing events rather than adhering to an externally created reform theory may be significant. These individuals, awash in the hundreds of daily interactions that characterize the life of a school principal (Wolcott, 1973), emphasize the need to be flexible to changing conditions in the school. Making experimental probes into the future (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997) with short-term plans and evaluating the results seems to be a popular approach.

In the history of urban school reform, many have talked about the ill effects of too many reforms (Bryk et al, 1998; Fullan, 2001; Berends et al, 2002). In a district with a history of failed reforms as extensive as this one, it should not be a surprise that setting reasonable goals and building momentum with early successes would be a popular approach. As one RSD principal noted, 'faculty can only work on 2-3 things at once – not the huge list that the RSD was demanding at the [professional development] sessions'. This same principal later commented on the potential risks of excessive reforms: 'when you start doing more than three things, then you start ... getting frustrated and the more [teachers] are frustrated the more that frustration jumps on children'. By setting goals locally (when possible), and adjusting the course of change as needed, principals seemed to be pursuing reform while simultaneously addressing the alienation commonly felt by teachers when unwanted or misunderstood reforms are imposed from the outside (Evans, 1996; Fink, 2003).

This structural notion of change as a process of setting goals and then pursuing them is predicated on a school's ability to set some goals that are broadly supported and can be achieved over time. In the rapidly changing post-Katrina environment, both community support and sufficient time were far from givens. One principal commented on the firings of a number of RSD principals after the 2006-07 school year:

second year people [have an advantage]. Because they have gotten a chance to get a vision together – because you are running so much on day to day [in the first year] – operating on your pocket, you know, your briefcase. Just trying to get things done. You have a little time over the summer to collect yourself with a vision – with a true vision.

Another RSD principal commented on the value of staff retention and time in utilizing this goals-based approach to change.

now we've got some stability. So I know which teachers will be more inclined to try some things. So, we'll pick, and we'll put it if you do things in place here and there, and then hopefully [it] will be contagious, and in, I'm giving myself three to five years, two to four more years, to have this place being very different from what it is – was this year. I think it can be done too, but, more work.

Significant here is that the ability to make progress on locally determined goals is seen as an end unto itself, regardless of what the goals are. Readers should not quickly dismiss this approach as pure relativism, unlikely to lead to sustained, measurable progress in a particular direction. Certainly some readers will see low standards for teachers and limited expectations for change in the above statement. And depending on the goals sought, this could very well be the case. Equally important, however, is the stated need for 'stability' and for new ideas to become 'contagious' in a teaching environment like that of New Orleans, crippled by decades of failed reforms and de-professionalization of teaching. The importance of defining change in human terms – of building on positive results and working on the toxic cultures that exist in many high-poverty urban schools – should not be minimized (Payne, 2010).

Principle 6: Improving Instruction

Finally, all principals also acknowledged the importance to successful school change of improving instructional practice. Indeed, it is hard to imagine any of the above theories being useful if classroom practice were to remain unchanged. Approaches to improving teacher practice ranged from teacher-led professional development, to setting school-wide professional development agendas, to setting a small number of district-wide goals each year. The challenges of improving instruction were stated clearly by one charter school principal:

So, coming in – it's like, how do I start to shore up, number one, the financial end of the organization, and then 2, how do we start to shore up the academic portion of it. So, while it was relatively easy to do the first – the first – the second one is a work in progress.

Despite the recognized challenges, principals still emphasized improvements to curriculum and instruction as primary drivers of reform:

Well there was already an established curriculum for our school. However ... it doesn't necessarily represent what our teachers feel is best ... So now we're saying how can we put something in writing so that ... it still has substance to it that we can – so that no matter who is in place, you know, will always be able to walk in and say, 'This is our curriculum.'

This description of curriculum reform being a predecessor to instructional reform is intuitive, and points again to the relative ease of changing a paper document compared with altering instructional practice. The particular circumstances of post-storm New Orleans provided extra challenges to instructional improvement as principals were adapting to new faculty, new buildings and new relationships with the external environment. These created extra demands that often pulled principals away from what they saw as essential work in developing instructional capacity in their schools. This RSD principal expressed regret at his lack of emphasis on instruction:

the school principal is the instructional leader in the building, but ... I'll be honest, it has been so overwhelming, that has been the part I had to pass on to other people. [Next year] I'm definitely going to spend more time in classrooms, doing walk-throughs ... working closely with teachers.

Another RSD principal shared these sentiments, but had clear expectations for himself in the second year of post-Katrina operations:

the focus this coming year is curriculum, curriculum, curriculum Every single day, I will have at least two hours ... in instructional observation.

Unfortunately, the removal of this principal prior to his second year prevents us from knowing if this ambitious plan would have been put into effect. Of course, the literature is replete with reports of administrators like Anthony Alvarado who have dedicated themselves to this mission of instructional improvement (Hess, 1995; Elmore & Burney, 1997; Hubbard et al, 2006). Such an instructional focus has led to student achievement gains, with mixed results in terms of organizational health (Ravitch, 2010).

Principals discussed the role of external professional development providers, but tended to focus on in-house projects involving collaboration between teachers and critical examinations of teaching practice. One charter school principal explains her rationale for dedicating her time and energy to the instructional improvement process:

where we're doing a lot of teacher observation, we're giving them proper feedback. ... If we're all working on this let's work on it the right way so we get ... the most bang for our buck and the best results for our students.

Another participant talked about his plans to increase teacher development days in his second year:

the professional development days that we had, we used really well, and each time we had one it really furthered our school and helped us in I think huge ways ... I'll probably put in more of those (laughs) so that we can do that and be a real, kind of – reflective professional community I thought they were all pretty effective – in terms of addressing serious issues that our school needed to have addressed ... I would consider doubling that number to six of them. And not even necessarily outside people coming in and doing much with us, but just having the time to sit down and say, 'Where are we at?'

This focus on instruction above all else is hard to argue with as an approach to change in schools – where the core practices are teaching and learning. This approach emphasizes improving teaching practice as the central operation of a school (Hubbard et al, 2006). Leaders in such environments are likely to undertake some of the activities outlined by Newmann and Wehlage (1995) that include making student success a shared responsibility among faculty, emphasizing the intellectual mission of the school, and providing constant constructive feedback on teaching and assessment.

Conclusions

While a diversity of principal-held principles of change was expected at the outset of this study, what was surprising was that individual participants had multiple and shifting views throughout the course of our conversations. Some held theories of change that made change unlikely in their own school context. One principal, for example, referred to the necessity of involving community members in the school to support change, but in another instance recognized the futility of this approach in a high-poverty community with a history of poor school–community relations. Another principal insisted on the importance of site-based management, but recognized that many schools in the district didn't have the local personnel capacity to be successful with this approach.

Additionally, the interconnections between these theories, and the variations within them, are vital to a deeper understanding of the change process. For example, many have argued that creating a collaborative culture is essential for improving teaching and learning (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995), so principle 1 (collaboration) and principle 6 (improving instruction) might seem redundant to some. But some participants saw improving teacher practice as a knowledge-dissemination activity that didn't require much in the way of collaboration at all. For these principals, these theories are contradictory instead of overlapping. Future research involving a more diverse set of district, school and student contexts is necessary to examine the diversity within and interconnections between the broad categories I have outlined here.

The essential lesson to be learned from this exploratory study is that, just as principals utilize a variety of leadership styles (Goleman, 2000), so they also utilize a mix of change principles. Change researchers, those who train principals, and those who provide in-service support to principals would be wise to focus attention not on a single 'right' way to go about educational change, but on this process of bringing our deeply held, but often flawed understandings of change to the surface. School leaders must identify (or make explicit) their implicit theories of change if they are to engage in a collaborative critique that interrogates and fine-tunes these beliefs. A more nuanced conversation about the reasons for employing different change theories may lead to many useful theories that are better suited to addressing the contradictions inherent in the change of social systems. It is when leaders can sit around a table and press each other to explain and defend their theories of change that we will develop theories of change that more closely mirror the complex lived realities of change in schools.

References

- Ackoff, R.L. (1974) *Redesigning the Future*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Anyon, J. (1997) *Ghetto Schooling: a political economy of urban educational reform*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Anyon, J. (2005) *Radical Possibilities: public policy, urban education, and a new social movement*. New York: Routledge.
- Argyris, C. & Schön, D. (1974) *Theory in Practice: increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Banathy, B.H. (1991) *Systems Design of Education: a journey to create the future*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.
- Beabout, B.R. (2012) Turbulence, Perturbance, and Educational Change, *Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity and Education*, 9(2), 23-37.
- Beabout, B.R. (2013) Community Leadership: seeking social justice while re-creating public schools in post-Katrina New Orleans, in I. Bogotch & C. Shields (Eds) *International Handbook of Educational Leadership and Social (In)justice*, pp. 543-570. Dordrecht: Springer.

- Beabout, B.R. & Jakiel, L.B. (2011) Family Engagement in Charter Schools, in S. Redding, M. Murphy & P. Sheley (Eds) *Handbook on Family and Community Engagement*, pp. 147-151). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Berends, M., Chun, J., Schuyler, G., Stockly, S. & Briggs, R.J. (2002) *Challenges of Conflicting School Reforms*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand.
- Borko, H., Wolf, S.A., Simone, G. & Uchiyama, K.P. (2003) Schools in Transition: reform efforts and school capacity in Washington State, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 25(2), 171-201.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/01623737025002171>
- Brown, S.L. & Eisenhardt, K.M. (1997) The Art of Continuous Change: linking complexity theory and time-paced evolution in relentlessly shifting organizations, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 42, 1-34.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2393807>
- Bryk, A.S. & Schneider, B. (2003) Trust in Schools: a core resource for reform, *Educational Leadership*, 60(6), 40-44.
- Bryk, A.S., Sebring, P.B., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S. & Easton, J.Q. (2010) *Organizing Schools for Improvement: lessons from Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bryk, A.S., Sebring, P.A., Kerbow, D., Rollow, S.G. & Easton, J.Q. (1998) *Charting Chicago School Reform*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Bulkley, K.E., Henig, J.R. & Levin, H.M. (2010) *Between Public and Private: politics, governance, and the new portfolio models for urban school reform*. Boston: Harvard Education Press.
- Carr-Chellman, A.A. (2006) *User Design*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Corcoran, T. & Lawrence, N. (2003) *Changing District Culture and Capacity: the impact of the Merck Institute for Science Education Partnership*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives (2008) *State of Public Education in New Orleans: 2008 report*. New Orleans: Cowen Institute for Public Education Initiatives.
- Cuban, L. & Usdan, M. (2002) *Powerful Reforms with Shallow Roots: improving America's urban schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- DeVore, D.E. & Logsdon, J. (1991) *Crescent City Schools: public education in New Orleans 1841-1991*. Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana.
- Eisner, E.W. (1992) Educational Reform and the Ecology of Schooling, *Teachers College Record*, 93(4), 610-627.
- Ellsworth, J.B. (2000) *Surviving Change: a survey of educational change models*. Syracuse, NY: ERIC Clearinghouse on Information & Technology.
- Elmore, R.F. & Burney, D. (1997) *Investing in Teacher Learning: staff development and instructional improvement in Community District 2*. Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education & National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.
- Evans, R. (1996) *The Human Side of School Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ferris, R.M. (2012) *Flood of Conflict: the story of the New Orleans Free School*. Roslyn Heights, NY: Alternative Education Resource Organization.
- Fink, D. (2003) The Law of Unintended Consequences: the 'real' cost of top-down reform, *Journal of Educational Change*, 4(2), 105-128. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1024783324566>
- Fishman, B., Marx, R.W., Blumenfeld, P., Krajcik, J. & Soloway, E. (2004) Creating a Framework for Research on Systemic Technology Innovations, *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 13(1), 43-76.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15327809jls1301_3
- Forsyth, P.B., Adams, C.M. & Hoy, W.K. (2011) *Collective Trust: why schools can't improve without it*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- French, J.R.P. & Raven, B.H. (1959) The Bases of Social Power, in D. Cartwright (Ed.) *Studies in Social Power*, pp. 150-167. Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research.
- Fullan, M. (2000) The Three Stories of Education Reform, *Phi Delta Kappan*, 81(8), 581-584.
- Fullan, M. (2001) *Leading in a Culture of Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fusarelli, L.D. (2002) Tightly Coupled Policy in Loosely Coupled Systems: institutional capacity and organizational change, *Journal of Educational Administration*, 40(6), 561-575.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09578230210446045>
- Glaser, B.G. & Strauss, A.L. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Goldenberg, C. (2003) Settings for School Improvement, *International Journal of Disability, Development, and Education*, 50(1), 7-16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1034912032000053304>

- Goleman, D. (2000) Leadership that Gets Results, *Harvard Business Review*, March–April, 78-90.
- Gross, S.J. (1998) *Staying Centered: curriculum leadership in turbulent times*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Hammerness, K. (2001) Teachers' Visions: the role of personal ideals in school reform, *Journal of Educational Change*, 2(2), 143-163. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1017961615264>
- Hargreaves, A. (1994) *Changing Teachers, Changing Times: teachers' work and culture in the post-modern age*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hargreaves, A. (2008) The Coming of Post-standardization: three weddings and a funeral, in C. Sugrue (Ed.) *The Future of Educational Change: international perspectives*, pp. 15-34. London: Routledge.
- Hargreaves, A. & Shirley, D. (2009) *The Fourth Way: the inspiring future for educational change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Hess, F. (Ed.) (1995) *Urban School Reform: lessons from San Diego*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Hubbard, L., Mehan, H. & Stein, M.K. (2006) *Reform as Learning: school reform, organizational culture, and community politics in San Diego*. New York: Routledge.
- Jenlink, P.M., Reigeluth, C.M., Carr, A.A. & Nelson, L.M. (1998) Guidelines for Facilitating Systemic Change in School Districts, *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 15, 217-233. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-1743\(199805/06\)15:3%3C217::AID-SRES223%3E3.0.CO;2-N](http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1743(199805/06)15:3%3C217::AID-SRES223%3E3.0.CO;2-N)
- Khalifa, M. (2012) A Re-new-ed Paradigm in Successful Urban School Leadership: principal as community leader, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48, 387-423. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0013161X11432922>
- Lai, K.-W. & Pratt, K. (2004) Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Secondary Schools: the role of the computer coordinator, *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 35(4), 461-475. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.0007-1013.2004.00404.x>
- Lewin, K. (1989) Changing as Three Steps: unfreezing, moving, and freezing of group standards, in W.L. French, C.H. Bell & R.A. Zawacki (Eds) *Organizational Development: theory, practice and research*, 3rd edn. Homewood, IL: Irwin.
- McLaughlin, M. (1990) The Rand Change Agent Study Revisited: macro perspectives and micro realities, *Educational Researcher*, 19(9), 11-16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0013189X019009011>
- McLaughlin, M.W. & Mitra, D. (2001) Theory-based Change and Change-based Theory: going deeper, going broader, *Journal of Educational Change*, 2(4), 301-323. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1014616908334>
- McQuillan, P.J. (2008) Small-school Reform through the Lens of Complexity Theory: it's 'good to think with', *Teachers College Record*, 110(9), 1772-1801.
- Miles, M. (2005) Finding Keys to School Change: a 40-year odyssey, in A. Lieberman (Ed.) *The Roots of Educational Change*, pp. 25-57. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Moll, L.C. & Diaz, S. (1987) Change as the Goal of Educational Research, *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 18, 300-311. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1525/aeq.1987.18.4.04x0021u>
- Morrison, K. (2002) *School Leadership and Complexity Theory*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Newmann, F.M. & Wehlage, G.G. (1995) *Successful School Restructuring*. Madison, WI: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools.
- Noguera, P.A. (1996) Confronting the Urban in Urban School Reform, *Urban Review*, 28(1), 1-19. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF02354375>
- Olsen, B. & Kirtman, L. (2002) Teacher as Mediator of School Reform: an examination of teacher practice in 36 California restructuring schools, *Teachers College Record*, 104(2), 301-324. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1467-9620.00164>
- Orr, M.T., Byrne-Jimenez, M. McFarlane, P. & Brown, B. (2005) Leading out from Low Performing Schools: the urban principal experience, *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 4(1), 23-54. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15700760590924609>
- Payne, C.M. (2010) *So Much Reform, So Little Change: the persistence of failure in urban schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Peck, K.L. & Carr, A.A. (1997) Restoring Public Confidence in Schools through Systems Thinking, *International Journal of Educational Reform*, 6(3), 316-323.
- Perry, A.M. & Schwam-Baird, M.M. (2010) *School by School: the transformation of New Orleans public education*. Washington, DC/New Orleans: Brookings Institution & Greater New Orleans Community Data Center.
- Ravitch, D. (2010) *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: how testing and choice are undermining education*. New York: Basic Books.

- Reigeluth, C.M. (2006) A Leveraged Emergent Approach to Systemic Transformation, *Tech Trends*, 50(2), 46-47.
- Reigeluth, C.M., Carr-Chellman, A., Beabout, B.R. & Watson, W. (2006) Creating Shared Visions of the Future of K-12 Education: a systemic transformation process for a Learner-centered paradigm, *Journal of Educational Alternatives*, 3(1), 34-66.
- Reynolds, P.R. (2007) The 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed': the necessity of dealing with problems in students' lives, *Educational Horizons*, 86(1), 53-60.
- Rogers, E.M. (2003) *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5th edn. New York: Free Press.
- Rudman, L.A. (2004) Sources of Implicit Attitudes, *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 13(2), 79-82. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.0963-7214.2004.00279.x>
- Russell, G. (2006) Guilty Pleas Expected in Bribe Case, *The Times-Picayune*. <http://www.nola.com/education> (accessed 7 December 2006).
- Sammons, P. (1999) *School Effectiveness*. Lisse: Swets & Zeitlinger.
- Senge, P.M. (1990) *The Fifth Discipline: the art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Doubleday.
- Spillane, J.P. (2002) Local Theories of Teacher Change: the pedagogy of district policies and programs, *Teachers College Record*, 104(3), 377-420. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1467-9620.00167>
- Squire, K.D. & Reigeluth, C.M. (2000) The Many Faces of Systemic Change, *Educational Horizons*, 78(3), 143-152.
- Tearle, P. (2003) ICT Implementation: what makes the difference?, *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 34(5), 567-583. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1046/j.0007-1013.2003.00351.x>
- Tyack, D. & Cuban, L. (1995) *Tinkering towards Utopia: a century of public school reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Warren, M.R. (2005) Communities and Schools: a new view of urban education reform, *Harvard Educational Review*, 75(2), 133-173.
- Weick, K.E. (1976) Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21, 1-19. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2391875>
- Wenger, E. (1999) *Communities of Practice: learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wheatley, M.J. (1999) *Leadership and the New Science: discovering order in a chaotic world*, 2nd edn. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Wolcott, H. (1973) *The Man in the Principal's Office: an ethnography*. New York: Holt, Reinhart & Winston.
- Wong, K., Shen, F.X., Anagnostopoulos, D. & Rutledge, S. (2007) *The Education Mayor: improving America's schools*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

BRIAN R. BEABOUT is the RosaMary Endowed Professor of School Effectiveness and Improvement at the University of New Orleans, USA. His research focuses on charter schools, school–community engagement, and urban school leadership. He is a founding board member of the Morris Jeff Community School in New Orleans and is an advisor to the National Coalition of Diverse Charter Schools. His work has been published in the *Journal of Educational Change*, *The School–Community Journal*, the *Journal of School Choice*, and the *International Journal of Educational Reform*. Correspondence: bbeabout@uno.edu