Scaling Transformative Change

transformative change

Leadership

Adoption and Adaptation

Evidence

Storytelling

Networks

Dissemination

Technology

Spread and Endurance

Transformative Change Initiative Overview

The Transformative Change Initiative (TCI) is dedicated to assisting community colleges to scale-up innovations that improve student outcomes and program, organization, and system performance.

Guiding Principle for Networks: Scaling of transformative change will occur when individuals engage in networks to gain access to expertise, professional development, and other vital resources.

Networks are an important part of the transformative change process. They connect people with different perspectives and areas of expertise, creating an opportunity for new insights and breakthroughs that can facilitate and accelerate transformation. Effective networks encourage peer relationships, provide an environment for leadership, and involve all key stakeholders in creating and scaling innovation. Networks provide the diversity and flexibility needed in tackling complex problems that require innovation, experimentation, and processes for scaling success (Holley, 2012). Holley provides eight ways that networks can support the change process. Effective networks

- improve information flow;
- increase communication and awareness of relationships;
- open new resources;
- expand and support leadership;
- encourage collaboration, innovation, and learning for breakthroughs;
- increase inclusion and bridge divides;
- result in better outcomes; and
- facilitate scale and impact. (Holley, 2012, p. 58)

Most individuals are a part of myriad professional and personal networks. Networks are everywhere. What might not be so apparent is how they contribute to spreading innovation. Scaling an innovation works best "when local settings are connected to a network of other individuals and groups involved in projects to scale reform" (Kezar, 2011, p. 240). Networks can allow access to experts and other forms of professional development, providing leaders with needed information for making changes and scaling the innovation. Additionally, they can provide moral support, helping individuals to feel less isolated during the change process and addressing challenges related to engagement, implementation, and scaling. Networks can also create coalitions to support change efforts, facilitate communications to implement change, connect people to the initiative to help it to be sustained and endure, and provide access to expertise and vital resources (Kezar, 2011).

To engage in transformative change means attending not only to formal structures and sound evidence, but also to the informal social bonds that comprise the network through which transformative vision, influence, and knowledge are distributed.

The strategic use of networks and purposeful collaboration contributes to two interrelated powerful change forces: (a) knowledge of ideas or practices, and (b) identity or allegiance (Fullan, 2011). Networks work best when the group's members have a common understanding of core ideas and are committed to getting things done collectively. Greater depth of understanding and effective practice are the result of this shared knowledge and shared identity.

Three features of networks that promote transformative change follow:

- There is a high-level of transparency in the sharing of practitioners' knowledge and expertise within their networks (Baker-Doyle & Yoon, 2010). Collaborative projects and interpersonal interactions that span disciplines, and divisions facilitate transparency.

- There is a shared vision and sense of collective responsibility for improving student achievement (Fullan, 2011). Strong identification with the organization that is undergoing reform and motivation to embrace innovation and align resources and actions with goals promotes shared vision and responsibility (Pernual, Frank, & Krause, 2010).

- Social capital, referring to interpersonal or intergroup trust that allows leaders and practitioners to influence and be influenced to use their resources (financial, time, or human) for a common purpose, is needed (Daly, 2010). Social capital is built on interpersonal and intergroup relationships, trust in colleagues' and leaders' expertise, intentions, and belief in a shared purpose.
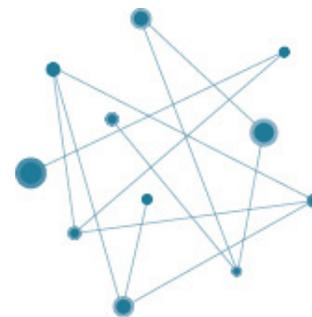
Education leaders often expect the change processes to diffuse rationally—that is, if leaders provide evidence from an expert as to how a change or reform should take place, then educators will engage in that change. However, in practice, evidence-based innovations often fail to spread and endure, becoming "yet another layer of sediment in the sea of change" (Daly, 2010, p. 2). The rational perspective does not take into account the powerful role of network infrastructures—intra- and inter-organizational relationships, trust among colleagues, and a shared vision for student success—on the successful diffusion of change. To engage in transformative change means attending not only to formal structures and sound evidence, but also to the informal social bonds that comprise the network through which transformative vision, influence, and knowledge are distributed. Change initiatives need to engage a diversity of leaders who know and understand how networks work, and they need to use networks to cultivate support among influential individuals in different groups (Frank, Kim, & Belman, 2010) and to embed strategies within the change process that utilize networks.

Improving community colleges is complex, with many inter-related variables, competing initiatives and stakeholders scattered across institutions, communities, states, and beyond. As long as research and action remain siloed and local, innovation and solutions will most likely also remain siloed and local. However, using networks can foster the collaborative and collective efforts needed to solve complex problems and create environments that are conducive to innovation and the scaling of transformative change so that all learners can achieve their full potential.

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