

Values, Interests, and the Capacity to Act

Understanding Professionals' Responses to Market-Based Improvement Initiatives in Highly Institutionalized Organizations

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This article uses a longitudinal, multimethod, comparative case study of teachers' behavioral and cognitive reactions to the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in two U.S. high schools to explore professionals' reactions to change in a highly institutionalized environment. Detailed analyses using the metathemes of teachers' values, personal interests, and capacity for change revealed that teachers held positive views about most aspects of the change initiative but that personal interests and capacity issues limited their implementation. The findings also suggest that in neither school have changes become cognitively institutionalized, or self-sustaining, despite different levels of coercion coming from multiple levels of the schools' complex institutional environments and different patterns of actual practice change across the schools. The results contribute to a variety of literatures interested in explaining stability and change in highly institutionalized settings (e.g., neoinstitutional, professions, identity).

Keywords: *organizational change; institutional theory; professions; values; identity*

Teachers are tired of paying for [the need for accountability], tired of testing, and it is running people out of the profession, which is bad. It's running good people out.

—Teacher, School B

A fundamental question that has attracted attention from a number of different perspectives is how to effectively implement change in highly institutionalized environments, especially those dominated by professionals (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Scott, Ruef, Mendel, & Caronna, 2000; Townley, 2002; Zilber, 2002). This question has grown in importance over the past two decades amid stinging criticism and widespread demand for quantifiable improvement in the vast array of organizations providing education, health care, and other public services in the United States. In various ways and from various stakeholders, these sectors have been accused of being inefficient, nonresponsive to customer needs, or unable to provide high-quality services (Leicht & Fennell, 2001).

A dominant response to this criticism and discontent has been to suggest or implement programs grounded in the logic of the market because, it is argued, these sectors will only become better by becoming more accessible and accountable to external stakeholders (Boyd, 2004; Hafferty & Light, 1995). Such programs have often been characterized as engendering fierce resistance by the professionals whose behaviors they aim to change because they represent a “contest for control,” that is, a struggle to determine which party(ies) has the right to judge the legitimacy and success of organizational arrangements (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Although change is nearly always contested by some individuals and their representative groups, the struggle for control is likely to be especially acute when the core “technical” workers have strong occupational or professional identities rooted in autonomy over the process and outcomes of work (Freidson, 2001; Van Maanen & Barley, 1984). Given the sheer size and the supporting role that these public or quasipublic sectors play in the economy as a whole, it is imperative that researchers develop an understanding of change processes in these environments.

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Although a substantial literature has amassed attempting to understand the bases of resistance to change by professionals, scholars in this area have focused alternately on either the threats these changes pose to individuals' professional values or identity (e.g., Kerr, Von Glinow, & Schriesheim, 1977; Townley, 2002) or to their power and interests (e.g., Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 2001). The literature on organizational change (e.g., Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1992; Mohrman, Ledford, & Mohrman, 1989) has focused to a greater extent on how the availability of training, resources, and leadership influence the ability of organizations to successfully implement change, but has not considered as explicitly how these "capacity" issues relate to concerns rooted in values and interests. Thus, little research has considered the relationship among these three factors and the extent to which core workers' reactions to poor implementation may be misconstrued as resistance based on their values and/or personal interests. In addition, there has been limited research exploring in detail how and why particular aspects of a change initiative generate significant resistance and reluctance on the part of professionals whereas other change components are well received and implemented.

This article presents a longitudinal, multimethod, comparative case study of two U.S. high schools attempting to improve student learning and stakeholder satisfaction via Total Quality Management (TQM), a set of principles and practices developed in the business sector. The results lead to several insights for the change and professions literatures. First, we suggest that implementing changes intended to increase accountability in professional environments is about more than just value-based identity resistance or naked self-interest. Indeed, in our research context, most aspects of "market-based" improvement programs such as TQM are not inconsistent with teachers' values *a priori*. We argue that to understand the fate of change initiatives it is important to document the extent to which one is observing resistance based on values or a reaction driven by concerns over personal interests and/or a lack of capacity to implement the change. This is important because all significant changes contain multiple components, each of which may be differentially related to workers' values, interests, or capacity.

Second, we question the notion that behavioral change among core professional workers resulting from coercive administrative or external institutional forces actually reflects cognitive acceptance, or institutionalization, as has often been suggested in prior institutional work. We offer an alternative perspective suggesting coercion not only inhibits cognitive institutionalization of the desired behaviors but also the ability to even engage in some of the desired behaviors.

Third, prior research on professionals has tended to treat them as a unitary group with the same values and perceptions (for a recent exception, see Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006). We demonstrate that groups of professionals often assumed to hold a single, common identity can be more splintered and that different subgroups within a profession may be more or less amenable to specific dimensions of a proposed change (Leicht & Fennell, 2001).

Finally, much research on change is conducted by surveying and interviewing the top managers promoting the change (e.g., Staw & Epstein, 2000; Westphal, Gulati, & Shortell, 1997) or by looking for externally observable changes in structure or espoused strategy (e.g., Scott et al., 2000); less extant work explores the change

process from the perspective of the core workers asked to implement the change. This presents significant limitations to our understanding because, as the quote that opens this article indicates, the views of accountability-enhancing program proponents and the professionals that must implement them can be vastly different. We move beyond managerial notions of “resistance to change” that are implicitly biased toward seeing core workers as the primary problem and explore in detail teachers’ own accounts of their reality. In doing so, we are better able to comment on the often conflated perspectives that attribute professionals’ behavior to either their own self-interest or their professional identity as committed public servants. By focusing our attention on core workers we gain a clearer understanding of how these individuals interpret and react to different aspects of change initiatives. The resulting view is admittedly more complex, but hopefully it is also an accurate and useful description of change at the core in one highly institutionalized field.

PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY, COERCION, AND CHANGE—A BRIEF REVIEW

As in most grounded, inductive research that seeks to build and enrich theory, much of what we found and report in this article was not anticipated at the beginning of our 4-year study. Therefore, we present here only a brief review of the literatures that guided the early stages of our research.

Professional Identity

Members of professions are socialized to hold a distinct set of codes, or “values, norms, and perspectives” about how work is and should be organized, conducted, and evaluated (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984). Primary among the shared beliefs of professionals is “autonomy of practice,” the belief that work should be controlled and evaluated from within the professional community (Freidson, 2001). This privileged position of the professions allows members to “work out and maintain a distinctive identity” (Selznick, 1957, p. 120) based on shared values and beliefs among members who are widely dispersed geographically and in organizational affiliation (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984). In such environments, the members of the profession (rather than consumers or managers) can control how work is done and evaluated because regulative and normative mechanisms have led societal members to trust that professionals will act “right” in a fundamental or moral sense (Abbott, 1988).

Viewed in this light, resistance to change (the most commonly noted response) is the natural outcome of professional identity threats that would require a shift in norms and values regarding what is proper and right and/or that may lead to a reduction in professional autonomy (Ashforth & Mael, 1998; DiMaggio, 1997; Rao, Monin, & Durand, 2003; Van Maanen & Barley, 1984). In contrast to the guiding tenets of professional identities, accountability-enhancing change programs involve some degree of standardization, formalization, and outsider or managerial control and evaluation. These features represent dominant aspects of market and managerial perspectives and as such, are viewed as inimical to holders of professional identities (Freidson, 2001;

Raelin, 1986). This leads to a power struggle between program proponents and the professionals who must implement it (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Rao et al., 2003; Townley, 2002). This process may be complicated by an array of competing regulative pressures (e.g., the state promoting a change through certain regulation yet protecting professional status through other regulation) and normative claims (e.g., that of the professional community vs. that of other stakeholder groups).

There are two competing perspectives on the fundamental nature of professional behavior. From a values perspective, professionalism represents a positive state wherein highly trained and committed individuals serve a public good within well-defined ethical bounds (e.g., Kerr et al., 1977). In this view, professionalism comprises shared values and norms about work (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984) and professionals are esteemed and given broad latitude for self-control and evaluation because of their steadfast commitment to addressing key social needs. However, these underlying values about the nature of professionals' work can provide a powerful source of resistance to change. Townley (2002), for example, noted the "clash of value spheres" engendered by the introduction of a strategic performance management system into an art museum. Opposition arose because the professional staff did not accept the fundamental premises of the change, including ideas about what can be meaningfully quantified and reported. These arguments are consistent with the organizational change literature more broadly (Kanter et al., 1992; Mohrman et al., 1989) and are consistent with the school reform literature specifically, where failure is often attributed to reformers' lack of understanding of key stakeholders' fundamental beliefs about "real schooling" (Metz, 1990; Tyack, 1995).

The interests-based view, in contrast, argues that professionalism is largely about the pursuit of monopoly power such that service delivery and evaluation can be conducted in a largely self-serving manner (e.g., Freidson, 2001; M. Lieberman, 1997). The interests-based view downplays the notion of other-oriented service and focuses on the benefit of work arrangements to the professional himself or herself. Hence, autonomy is highly prized precisely because it allows for control over both work content and process—the professional can focus time and energy on what one likes doing best, choose one's own performance measures, and be one's own judge as to whether he or she has been successful. In this view, proposed or enacted changes are evaluated by the professional according to personal utility. Changes that seem likely to enhance one's status, sense of competence, or extrinsic rewards are welcomed, whereas those that seem likely to make work harder or less interesting or to decrease personal status will be resisted (Crano, 1995). Furthermore, Gaertner (1989) demonstrated that "winners" in strategic changes base their support on positive career implications and expectations whereas "losers" show concern for the procedural and distributive justice of the change process; neither group was for or against the change on the basis of values.

Although professionals' motivations for resisting change are generally attributed to values or interests, the terms used to describe professionalism often conflate these viewpoints. For example, the term *autonomy* may accurately describe the desired state of most groups considered professionals, but the basis for autonomy claims is difficult to evaluate without detailed investigation of professionals' schemas. After

all, a professional can seek autonomy based on a strong belief that it truly provides the best means of providing a public good or simply because it serves his or her self-interest to be shielded from external control or evaluation. And whereas most research has considered professionals' values or interests as barriers to change, little research has examined how these values and interests might also facilitate change.

Coercion and Change

It has long been assumed that once particular practices become legitimated and taken for granted some form of coercive pressure will be required to unfreeze actors and overcome inertia when changes in the external environment create the need for internal adjustments (Lewin, 1951; Selznick, 1949). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggested that these coercive forces arise from "both formal and informal pressures on organizations upon which they are dependent and by cultural expectations in the society within which organizations function" (p. 150). These bearers of coercive pressure include governmental agencies and bodies, customers, and other important stakeholders. Once actors are forced to change their behaviors in ways that are perceived as legitimate by their institutional environments, they may also eventually come to accept these changes as they receive the benefits associated with their newfound (or regained) legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Poole, Gioia, & Gray, 1989). Conversely, professionals may continue to resist changes thrust on them if they see them as irrational or having little likelihood of enhancing organizational operating efficiency (Mintrop, 1999; Van Maanen & Barley, 1984). Such resistance is natural given there are often unintended consequences associated with change efforts and that changes are implemented with varying degrees of forethought and skill (Hackman & Wageman, 1995; Zbaracki, 1998).

Unfortunately, the majority of studies that focus on worker reactions to mandated, coerced changes consider only single-case situations, thereby making it difficult to gain a clear understanding of the role of coercion in professionals' cognitive and behavioral reactions (e.g., Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Townley, 2002; Zilber, 2002). Our goal was therefore to explore the reaction of core workers facing a similar change effort in organizations that were vastly different in regard to external and administrative pressures for compliance.

TQM IN TWO U.S. HIGH SCHOOLS

TQM, a systematic continuous improvement program based on the principles of customer focus, data-driven decision making, collaboration, and process management (Aguayo, 1990), began making inroads into educational circles in the late 1980s in response to ongoing criticism of the U.S. K-12 education system. At this time, education scholars began publishing translations of TQM into more educator-friendly parlance. For example, California school superintendent Lee Jenkins's (1997) book provides numerous accounts of teachers using TQM tools to improve student learning. By the late 1990s several hundred school districts were self-reporting the adoption of some type of TQM program. The fate of TQM in schools is intriguing because on

the surface it seems to reflect much of what educational researchers have described as key to successful school reform: increased teacher knowledge through professional development and the fostering of professional learning communities (Darling-Hammond, 1993; A. Lieberman, 1995), participative leadership that models desired behaviors and offers appropriate structural and material supports (Fullan, 1991; Sizer, 1996), and systemic, stakeholder-inclusive approaches (Louis & Miles, 1990; Steinberg, 1996). Conversely, TQM's attention to external customer needs, standardization, and explicit measurement present potential for teacher resistance based on strong beliefs about teacher control and autonomy in the technical core of schools (Lortie, 1975; Van Maanen & Barley, 1984). These latter factors made it likely that attempted TQM implementation would involve powerful cognitive and affective reactions among teachers because when viewed from teachers' perspectives, the imposition of TQM clearly involves a contest for power and control over work (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). This set the stage for a study that would carefully attend to the conflict that ensues when the interests, values, and logic represented by a new initiative collide with those in the minds of professional workers.

In preliminary phone interviews, we learned that many districts claiming to have adopted TQM had taken the program no further than administrative areas (e.g., janitorial or food service). Given our goal—to understand in detail what happens and why in the core of schools during attempted implementation of a market-based change—we therefore selected for intensive study just two high schools where the program champion (the district superintendent in both cases) seemed genuinely interested in driving TQM to the classroom level (as evidenced by ongoing investments in teacher training and other resource and structural supports).

Our two focal schools, which we hereafter refer to as Schools A and B, were similar in many regards: Both were in rural areas serving primarily Caucasian students, were relatively small (less than 700 students), and had graduation rates above 90%. However, because each was embedded in a distinct state-level institutional and school-level leadership context, the approaches to TQM implementation differed across the schools. School A is located in a state with a traditionally "hands-off" board of education, enjoyed a satisfied community, and had a long-standing principal who was not prone to confront teachers about the need for change. In light of this, School A's superintendent tried to "implement TQM without calling it TQM." TQM was introduced to teachers under the umbrella of "effective schools research," and the components of TQM were taught without the TQM labels. Led by an external teacher-turned-consultant, staff development efforts were focused for 1 year on "quality learning concepts." This included intensive off-site sessions for four teachers, who were then designated as resource persons and facilitators. Teachers were asked to work on "spokes" of an improvement wheel rather than on "continuous improvement teams" and were asked to "find ways to measure success" rather than to make "data-based decisions." Many reported using specific tools in their classrooms (e.g., flow charts, fishbone diagrams) without knowing that these were associated with "TQM." Given this, we designed our interview protocols and survey instrument (described in the Research Design and Method section) to comprehensively cover the components of TQM using educator-friendly language and examples.

School B on the other hand is subject to an interventionist state board, including publicly reported, graduation-linked testing across subjects. Teachers in School B are also affected more by the demands and desires of local stakeholders, including parents and the general community who were generally dissatisfied with the school (national test scores were low, and less than 50% of students went to college) at the start of the superintendent's tenure. Against this backdrop, the new superintendent began introducing the concept of TQM by holding focus groups with more than 25,000 community members and forming the district's six overarching objectives based on the data gathered regarding customers' aspirations and expectations. TQM was first taught to the district's leadership council and then rolled out to all teachers in four "quality boot camps" that introduced the essence of TQM philosophy and tools over 3 days. Follow-up training over the next 2 years involved two consultants (also former teachers) working specifically on helping teachers use specific TQM tools in their classrooms. As part of these TQM implementation efforts, the principal of School B (who was new to the role and more willing to be forceful about change) instituted a number of programs that required teacher collaboration and use of data in pursuing the district vision of satisfying external customers. For example, teachers were expected to meet periodically with a district specialist to discuss test scores or satisfaction data and how such results might be improved (via plan-do-check-act learning processes). It should be noted though that in neither School A nor School B was extensive training provided on all aspects of TQM and in neither school were all components given equal implementation attention by the principal or superintendent.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

Research Design Overview

Figure 1 illustrates the multiphase process used to study TQM implementation in Schools A and B over nearly 4 years. In Phase 1, a cross-disciplinary team of business and education researchers collected interview and focus group data to begin understanding how TQM was being implemented, the level of actual practice changes being made, and the meanings and feelings teachers were attaching to the introduction of TQM. These initial interviews were used in Phase 2 to design a survey intended to quantify more systematically actual TQM-consistent practice levels and teachers' beliefs about the desirability of these practices. In the third phase, a final round of interviews was conducted with teachers and administrators at each school to further probe the bases of success and failure in implementing improvement initiatives. This study reports a detailed analysis of the Phase 3 data; partial results of the first two phases of the study are summarized in this section as background on the logic that guided the Phase 3 data collection and analysis.

In total, 61 individual interviews and two focus groups comprised of 9 teachers total were conducted at School A, and 42 individual interviews and three focus groups comprised of 13 teachers total were conducted at School B. By the end of the study, almost every teacher in both schools had been interviewed, thus eliminating

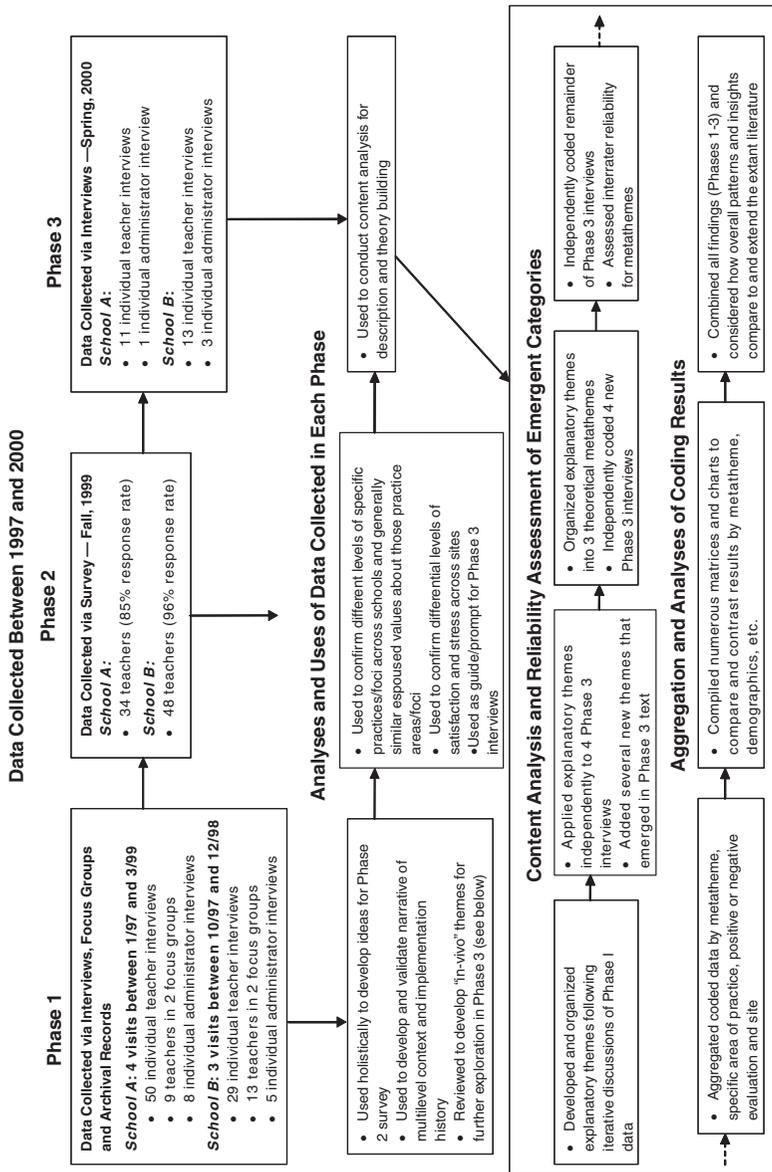


FIGURE 1: Collection and Analysis Process Across Data Types and Research Phases
 NOTE: Although the specific steps outlined in Figure 1 differ in multiple ways, the organizing template is modeled on Druskat and Wheeler (2003).

the potential that specific informants' viewpoints were overrepresented. Interviews and focus groups were taped and transcribed verbatim, except in four instances where tape recording was denied. In these cases, detailed notes were taken and transcribed immediately. The remainder of this section provides detail on the sites, data, and analyses used in our comparative case study.

Data Acquisition Methods

Interview data—Years 1 and 2. To develop a preliminary understanding of the beliefs and behaviors of teachers and the culture of each school, two rounds of semi-structured interviews were conducted at A and B in 1997 and 1998. Interviewing was always focused on teachers, who were selected from the schools' master schedules, attempting at first to purposefully maximize coverage across all department/subject areas and gender and later to avoid reinterviewing any respondent until all teachers had been interviewed once (Stake, 2000). Beyond these criteria, selections were random. To develop a well-rounded view of the history, goals, and progress of the TQM initiatives, interviews were also conducted with school and district leaders.

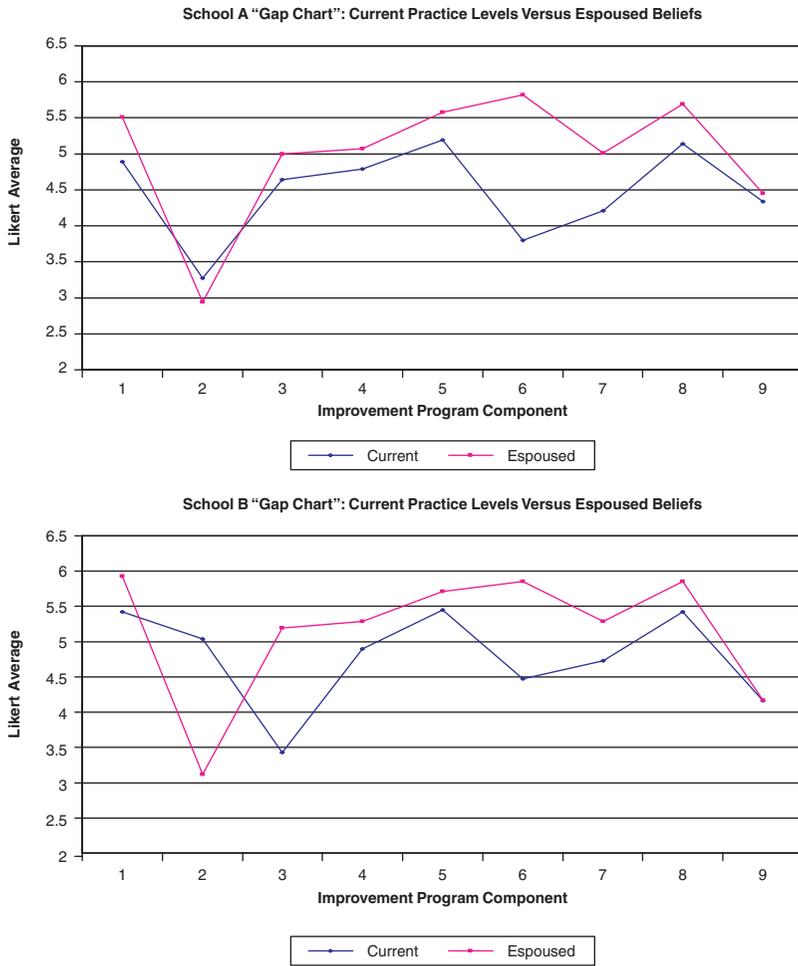
The first round of interviewing used both individual interviews and focus groups to uncover the "general culture" of each school, using open-ended questions culled from a variety of past culture research (e.g., Lortie, 1975; Schein, 1992). Questioning during the 2nd year of interviewing addressed whether the values undergirding the culture in each school were conducive to TQM. Questions were designed to elicit statements about practices, values, or beliefs that are either consistent or inconsistent with the principles of TQM. For example, on the assumption that answers would reveal practices and beliefs related to external customer focus and data-based decision making, teachers were asked, "How do you go about deciding what to teach, how to grade, or how much work to assign? From whom do you get input on these matters?" Questions and probing pushed respondents beyond espoused ideals or vague statements to descriptions and interpretations of behaviors and events (Argyris & Schon, 1974). In particular, respondents were pushed to describe not only an observable practice but their beliefs about what should be (i.e., values) and core assumptions motivating the practice (Schein, 1992).

Survey and findings. Following the second round of interviews a survey was conducted in the fall of 1999 to empirically test our emerging sense that there was some variation in TQM practice implementation across the schools but less variation in how teachers felt about TQM. We used the 31-item School Quality Management Culture Survey (SQMCS) to measure both practices and beliefs associated with TQM in high schools. This survey was developed using the literature on educational translations of TQM, an expert panel, and early interview research. Respondents rank how nine TQM-related components are practiced at their school as well as how they should be practiced (see Detert, Schroeder, & Cudeck, 2003, for a detailed discussion of the survey and validation of its measures). For example, one item tapping collaboration reads, "I frequently have conversations about my teaching practices with teachers

from other subject areas/departments”; another item assessing customer focus stated, “Curriculum is determined with significant input from people outside the school.” We also assessed job satisfaction using 5 items from Brayfield and Rothe’s (1951) index ($\alpha = .84$); commitment to the school using 9 items from Mowday, Steers, and Porter’s (1979) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire ($\alpha = .87$); and burnout using 7 items from Maslach and Jackson’s (1981) emotional exhaustion scale ($\alpha = .83$). Except for the burnout scale, which was measured on a 7-point frequency scale, all other items were rated on a 7-point *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* scale. Teachers from both schools completed the 52-item survey at staff meetings with one of the researchers during the fall of 1999, with response rates of 85% for School A and 96% for School B. For each school, a “gap chart” was constructed to display the pattern of are versus should be mean scores by TQM component.

Figure 2 illustrates the patterns within Schools A and B on the SQMCS survey; Figure 3 illustrates the patterns across schools. Three findings stand out. First, in both schools, for all but one of the principles (having an external customer focus) the espoused values (i.e., how things should be) exceeded the reported level of TQM-consistent behaviors (i.e., how things are), suggesting most of the principles were not inconsistent with teachers’ values (see Figure 2). Second, examination of the bottom panel in Figure 3 reveals that teachers in both schools reported virtually identical views of how things should be at their school. Third, the two schools varied significantly in teachers’ perceptions of how things are on a variety of dimensions; specifically, teachers at A reported lower levels of external customer focus, collaboration, and data-based decision making but higher long-term focus than their counterparts at B. MANOVA results, including post hoc univariate tests, confirm the visual interpretation of significant differences in the overall *are* patterns (driven by the specific components as noted) and no difference in the *should be* pattern.

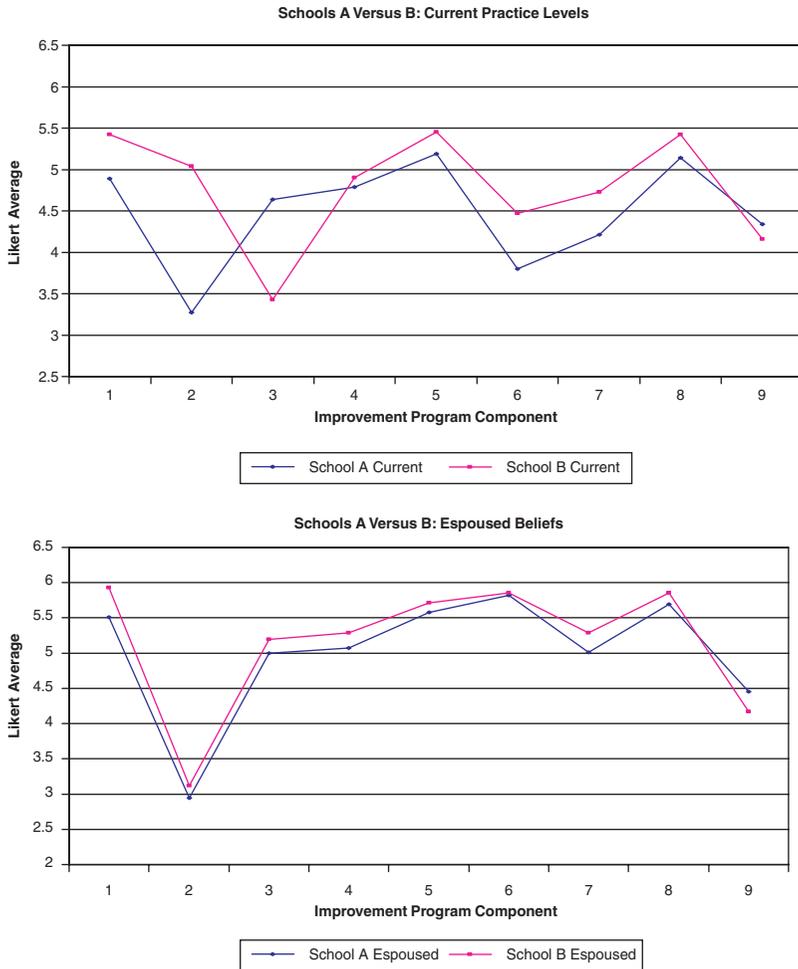
Interview data—Year 3. In the final set of interviews, conducted in the spring of 2000, 11 teachers from School A and 13 teachers from School B were presented with their school’s survey results from the previous fall. Respondents were asked to explain both the actual level reported for that area in their school, the average desired level reported by their own staff, and the reasons for any gaps. The goals of this round were to triangulate aspects of the survey findings and to go beyond them by exploring with teachers the patterns and paradoxes of the findings. We focused questioning on three areas where the schools exhibited significant differences in current practices: external customer focus, collaboration, and data-based decision making. (Phase I and II data indicated that the significant difference in long-term focus was readily explained by the leadership stability at A vs. high leadership turnover at B.) As measured in the survey and discussed subsequently with teachers, *external customer focus* refers broadly to getting and using input about teaching content and processes from stakeholders outside the school, *collaboration* refers to interdisciplinary discussions and activities, and *data-based decision making* refers to teachers’ systematic collection and analysis of data as a key input to decisions.



Improvement Program Components

- 1: Sharing a Unified Vision
- 2: Having External Customer Focus
- 3: Having a Long-Term Focus
- 4: Engaging in Continuous Improvement/Learning Actions
- 5: Sharing Responsibility for School Outcomes
- 6: Collaborating Across Departmental and School Boundaries
- 7: Using Data to Make Decisions
- 8: Engaging in Systems Thinking to Solve Problems
- 9: Making Improvements Without Additional Resources

FIGURE 2: Within-School Gap Charts—Current Practices Versus Espoused Beliefs (Phase 2 Results)



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FIGURE 3: School Contrasts of Current Practices and Espoused Beliefs About Improvement (Phase 2 Results)

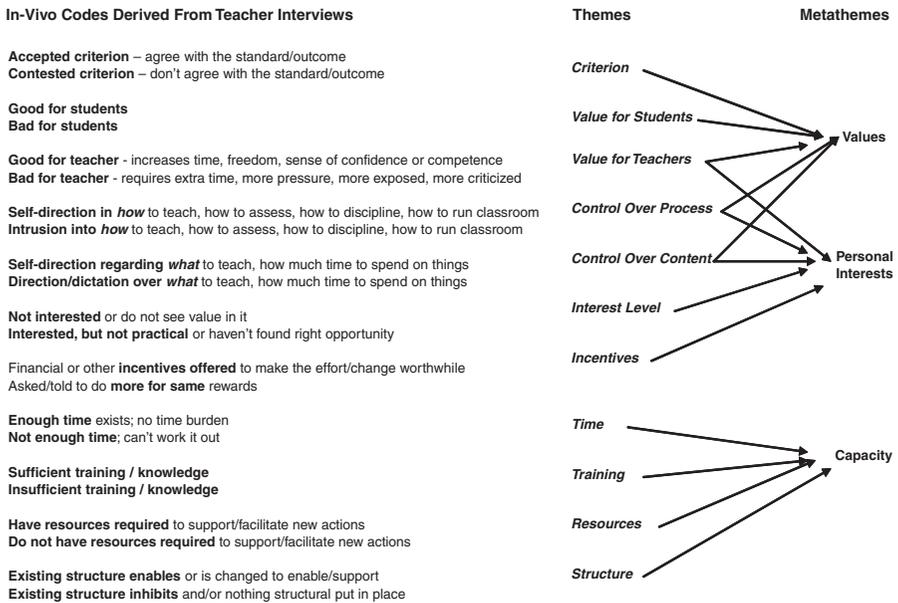


FIGURE 4: Organization of Inductive Codes Into Deductive Themes and Metathemes
NOTE: Figure 4 is based on the example provided in Corley and Gioia (2004).

Content Analysis of Phase 3 Data

The bottom portion of Figure 1 summarizes our approach to the analysis of the data from the final round of interviews. The content analysis proceeded as follows. First, both authors re-read the Phase 1 interview transcripts from both schools and jointly developed an initial set of “in-vivo” codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) that captured the range of evaluative explanations offered by the teachers regarding the use or nonuse of TQM-consistent practices at their school. Each author then independently evaluated two Phase 3 interviews from each school attempting to apply these inductive codes and searching for other themes. Based on subsequent discussion, we refined our list of 22 first-order codes into 11 second-order themes, which combined and named the sets of in-vivo statements that were similar except for the speaker’s evaluation (e.g., “accept” vs. “reject” X, “too much” vs. “not enough” of Y). Finally, we grouped the second-order themes into three aggregate theoretical metathemes. The first two—values and personal interests—were expected based on our a priori understanding of change in professional environments. The third metatheme that emerged was capacity, a theme discussed less in the professions literature but noted commonly in the change literature (e.g., Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Figure 4 displays the organization of the inductively derived codes into theoretical themes and metathemes. As shown in Figure 4, some of the second-order themes were

considered a reflection of just one metatheme, whereas others cut across two underlying metathemes. For example, a teacher's statement that "I hate standardized tests—they measure the wrong things and are bad for students" was coded as reflecting the contested criterion and bad for students' themes, both of which were coded as negative/opposed on the metatheme of teachers' values. Conversely, the statement "I'm the expert here so I don't want parental involvement in how I discipline or grade students—it's bad for students and I don't like it" was coded as teacher opposition on the basis of two metathemes, values and personal interests.

After comparing and discussing results from a second round of independent coding on four more transcripts, we then coded all remaining interviews separately. In addition to coding for these metacategories and the evaluative direction of the comment (e.g., "consistent with values," "lack of capacity"), we also noted the improvement component being discussed (e.g., customer focus) and the tenure, subject area, and school of each interviewee. Interrater agreement levels for values, interests, and capacity statements were then computed, where agreement indicated both coders had independently assigned the same metacategory and evaluative direction (e.g., "interests," "consistent with") to a given block of text. Excluding eight text units that were initially coded by only one of the authors, interrater agreement was 92.3% for values, 88.5% for personal interests, and 80.8% for capacity. We then jointly resolved all differences in our coding before proceeding with analyses.

The coded data were then organized and compared and contrasted by school, teacher type (college prep or non-college prep courses), and years of experience as a teacher (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As there were no substantive differences in results based on experience, in the following we present our findings on the relative frequency of positive and negative values, interests, and capacity statements about each improvement plan component subdivided by school and type of courses taught.

COGNITIVE AND BEHAVIORAL RESPONSES TO CHANGE

Consistent with the interview and survey data from earlier phases, the findings from the Phase 3 data analysis suggest that teachers expressed significant resistance to only one of the change components—external customer focus—on the basis of shared professional values. Explanations for lack of further integration of other improvement program components in both schools were primarily based in personal interests and lack of capacity. Furthermore, we did not find evidence that greater institutional or administrative coercion in School B led to higher cognitive acceptance of changes actually made. In the following section we discuss the results of our Phase 3 analysis, focusing first on teachers' reactions to each improvement program component and then how such reactions appear related to the differential institutional environments of teachers in Schools A and B. We also draw on evidence from earlier interviews and the Phase 2 survey data on teachers' attitudes to provide a more comprehensive picture of how the intended changes were received at the core of each school.

Values-, Interest-, and Capacity-Based Reactions to Change

Values. There was significant use of values-based explanations by teachers at both schools, and the pattern of the value statements' valences offers insights that are not consistent with an expectation of uniform professional resistance to market-based initiatives. There were a substantial number of positive values statements made at both schools (35 total), and the number of positive value statements substantially exceeded the number of negative value statements for two of the three improvement components. From a values perspective, teachers were overwhelmingly positive about collaboration and data-based decision making, findings consistent with research on teachers' views of professional development and learning communities in schools (Louis, Kruse, & Raywid, 1996). Only for changes involving external customer focus did teachers report a high degree of value inconsistency (19 negative to 9 positive). Also noteworthy is that all of the positive statements about external focus were made by non-college prep teachers across the schools. Unlike their college prep colleagues, who noted nothing positive about increased external customer focus, a number of non-college prep teachers saw the involvement of outsiders as key to adequately preparing their students. For example, one teacher at School A noted,

We go into great detail with our advisory committee. Go over the syllabus and the curriculum. Show what the students are doing. Ask for input about, "Is this what they should be learning?" We're preparing them to go into industry, so we want to be up-to-date on what their thinking is.

A business education teacher at School B similarly noted, "Certainly I would like some input in my area from the business world, and we have had to go out and do that by meeting in the summer with some of the businesses and asking them what they'd like." In most instances positive value statements focused on what was perceived to be best for the students or allowed the teachers to improve delivery of course materials.

At the same time, external customer focus received the most negative values-related comments, many of which involved intrusions by outsiders into classroom-based decision making about content and process. The following comment from a teacher at School A captures the sentiments offered by many teachers:

I strongly feel that I should be the one to decide what goes on in my room. I'm there. . . . It's not like I'm going to go down the hall and tell a doctor how to treat his patients. . . . I think we have good rapport in our community, but I think overall people think of teachers as pretty much public servants that are supposed to do what they say because they pay taxes, and they pay our salaries.

Stakeholder intrusion into process autonomy evoked negative reactions at both schools, especially around the area of discipline. Curriculum issues were of more concern at School B, where state and district guidelines and testing mandates played a greater role in determining what teachers covered and how it was assessed. For example, a teacher at School B stated,

I think there's too much emphasis put on the test scores, I really do, because I'm not sure that one test is an indication of a child's progress or lack of progress. I think there's a lot of money wasted on that.

Others echoed this sentiment with comments such as "That [curriculum] comes from people who aren't in the classroom and don't really know" and "Curriculum would basically come from the testing. . . . We almost totally have to teach the test and that's all we teach."

Overall, values-based resistance did not appear to be systemic. Teachers seem to be supportive of those components of market-based improvement initiatives they see as yielding clear benefits for students while at the same time not threatening their ability to engage in their core work. Even for the most contentious aspect of the change (customer focus), some types of teachers saw values-based reasons to support new practices aimed at increasing accountability.

Personal interests. For all three improvement components, negative comments reflecting personal interests outnumbered positive ones, and this pattern held for both college prep and non-college prep teachers. In short, teachers across the schools saw many more reasons why increasing external customer focus, collaborating more, and engaging in more data analysis were detrimental to rather than supportive of their personal interests. Teachers saw proposed or enacted changes in these areas as increasing the possibility of being criticized or looking bad (with little corresponding likelihood of being praised or appearing highly expert) or primarily adding to their workload (rather than representing an even trade-off) and thereby interfering with other life roles. For example, in discussing increased customer focus, one teacher at School B commented, "It's always presented as good for the student, but it's not—I don't think that it's ever used that way, I think it's used to grade the teachers." A teacher at School A provided a blunt example of prioritizing other life interests above learning to use data for decision making:

We can always put more time in to be effective, but by the same token you only have so many hours in a day and you can only be so effective. Could I be better? No question. But am I willing to? No. Not at this point.

These findings, along with the many positive values-based evaluations, suggest that teachers do not have identity-based opposition to many aspects of the current school reform agenda. Rather, it often seemed that insufficient incentive structures were put in place to motivate the desired behavioral changes. Indeed, teachers frequently said they saw value in collaboration but then proceeded to explain that they didn't engage in it as much as they should because it would have to be on their "own time" (evenings, weekends, summer) for no extra compensation. The incentives to change do not have to be financial, however. As one teacher at School B commented, "Why should I work myself to death? I mean intrinsic, fine. I'm going to get the same pay. I operate a lot on pats on the back. I work a lot harder for that." Thus, it appears that teachers may be more willing to engage in new behaviors if they are rewarded, either with money or public recognition and appreciation of their efforts.

Capacity. The third factor that loomed large in teachers' statements was the issue of capacity to implement new practices. Capacity issues fell into two broad categories: (a) having time, resources, and training and (b) the effectiveness of leaders in helping facilitate the behavior. Whereas capacity issues were not a particular problem with regards to external customer focus, the issue was raised with great regularity regarding collaboration and to a lesser extent when discussing data-based decision making. The most common refrain heard at both schools was that the teachers simply did not have enough time to engage in collaborative behaviors. Indeed, virtually every teacher at School B cited lack of time as a major barrier, generally due to the imposition of curricular requirements by the district and state. Commented one teacher, "With these end-of-course tests there's no time to deviate." Said another, "I think collaboration benefits everyone, but I don't see it happening any-more simply because time prohibits it." Structural issues were another frequently noted capacity-related issue. Several teachers said that they did not have common planning periods with likely collaborators, which made it impossible for them to coordinate during the day. A third issue that surfaced was lack of sufficient training, especially with regard to data-based decision making. When one math teacher at School A was asked about his use of different tools he explained,

I think we got a little booklet and we went through it, but shoot, it was an eight hour long session and it's just like students I have, if you just blurt something out at them they're not going to remember it.

Teachers in B similarly noted that their specific training in TQM was insufficient to result in reflexive use or even the belief that TQM tools would somehow make their job easier. Our interviews with administrators in both districts confirmed that TQM-related training in both districts had been limited to a few hours per year since the initial flurry of training several years earlier.

Teachers at both schools often attributed capacity limitations to leadership. Many complaints, especially at School B, centered on overly directive leadership, a lack of consistency in leadership, and failure to understand the real issues teachers face in the classroom. The following comment was typical:

They're telling us how high to jump but they're not asking us, "How can we jump higher?" It's "We're going to jump higher." They want us to improve everything but there's not any more money, there's not any more support—physical, emotional, anything. There's not any support here.

Conversely, numerous teachers at School A noted the lack of directive leadership from their principal as a capacity barrier. Said one, "I really think that sometimes you need district-wide guidance to accomplish something."

Taken together, these results suggest that teachers viewed many aspects of market-based continuous improvement programs positively. There were widespread expressions of support for data-based decision making and collaboration across all types of teachers at both schools and some support for external customer focus. So, values-based resistance does not seem to be the prime factor inhibiting greater adoption of these practices. Rather, our analysis suggests that implementation-related issues

create greater barriers to broader use and cognitive acceptance of these components. Teachers clearly exhibited inertia based on personal interests, but our findings also suggest that with adequate structural opportunities, incentives, and supportive, consistent leadership the new practices might be more widely adopted. That they were not speaks less to teachers' "professional identity" than to their desire not to do additional things for which, in their eyes, they were neither appropriately prepared nor rewarded.

The Effects of Coercion

The improvement program undertaken in School A during the 1990s occurred in what might be called a "benevolent institutional environment" from the perspective of those at the technical core. Teachers at School A repeatedly described the "hands-off" approach of nearly all stakeholder groups: a state with no curriculum or testing programs, limited parental and local business intrusion, and an apolitical, non-demanding school board. Combined with high graduation rates and matriculation to 4-year colleges, it is not surprising teachers in School A consistently reported pride in their school and a general sense of satisfaction with their work.

In contrast, teachers at School B are embedded in a "demanding institutional environment." The superintendent and school board overseeing School B avidly support the state testing requirements and often initiate changes that exceed current requirements in anticipation of future mandates (e.g., setting end-of-year testing performance levels that are higher than state minimums). However, the teachers at School B are also offered some financial incentive. If students' year-end test scores improve sufficiently, teachers receive a \$1,500 bonus from the state. (We discuss in the following section why this reward did not appear to have the intended effect on teachers' behaviors and acceptance level, despite our prior discussion of insufficient rewards being provided to stimulate change.) Teachers at B also face significantly greater local involvement than teachers at A. Each year, School B's improvement plan must identify specific actions that will be taken to address community concerns as indicated on a biennial survey of all stakeholders. Furthermore, the district has initiated parent-student-teacher accountability contracts that must be signed by all. Teachers in B therefore noted throughout our study the intense scrutiny they feel from multiple levels of the institutional environment.

Whereas the coercive pressures at School B have resulted in a somewhat higher level of adoption of improvement program components, the bottom panel of Figure 3 shows that differential coercion to engage in new behaviors led to no significant differences in teachers' cognitive beliefs across the schools. In fact, in the final interviews teachers at B made nearly twice as many negative comments about the involvement of external customers as their counterparts at A, suggesting that several years of greater forced exposure to external constituents had not increased acceptance of this practice.

Paradoxically, the high levels of pressure placed on teachers at B to change their behavior in ways that would produce immediately quantifiable results seemed to actually inhibit the real learning required by the components of the TQM paradigm.

Despite seeing the potential benefits of collaboration and data-based decision-making tools, teachers at B noted that “teaching to the test,” which they saw as the reality created by the state’s accountability plan, left no time and little incentive to learn or engage in these new behaviors. Almost every teacher indicated that increasing collaboration was against their interests—it increased their total work hours and led to potential embarrassment if time spent collaborating took time away from focusing on single subject area performance. Thus, although teachers at B symbolically acceded (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) to the principal’s requirement that they meet regularly for joint professional development, the practice was widely disliked. The following response was typical:

We are mandated to meet every first and third Tuesday for half our planning period to have a group session on this particular aspect. And I think although in theory it’s good, I think twice a month—it doesn’t sound like a lot, but when you have to prepare for it. . . . I think it’s a wonderful idea in theory. [But] I don’t like it.

Similarly, teachers at B saw the help from a district specialist in interpreting statistical feedback on student performance on state tests and community satisfaction with the school as an aid in “looking better to outsiders” rather than in becoming more expert in their craft. Thus, even though the superintendent of B saw the tools and philosophy of TQM as the route to meeting external stakeholder requirements, the reality for teachers was that the latter drove out interest in the former. Finally, the incentives offered were ultimately counterproductive to creating real learning or cognitive acceptance of the changes. The bonuses offered to teachers were tied to improvements in students’ test scores, not demonstration of TQM-related practices. As a result, they stimulated “production-” but not “learning-” oriented behavior. More than half of those interviewed in B said they would give back their \$1,500 bonus if it meant less pressure.

In District A, by contrast, the superintendent lacked a crisis to motivate change and therefore appealed to teachers’ innate desire to better serve students. As already noted, he introduced the tools and philosophy of TQM without labeling them as such and made sure that training and support structures were tailored to appear “educator friendly”—that is, consistent with teachers’ values and interests. Thus, although teachers at School A still noted the time it took to participate in new initiatives, the less coercive, less pressure-packed approach to implementation left them feeling more positive about the possibilities of various improvement tools.

In sum, our data suggest that higher levels of external and administrative coercion were leading to greater teacher exhaustion and frustration, not to greater cognitive acceptance of changes made or proposed. The biggest difference in teachers across Schools A and B seemed to be that in B teachers were significantly more “burned out” than their counterparts in A as a result of changes made during the 1990s. The survey results from Phase II triangulate these findings: Teachers in B reported being less committed to their school ($t = 2.3, p < .02$), less satisfied with their jobs overall ($t = 2.2, p < .03$), and more emotionally exhausted ($t = 2.6, p < .01$). Teachers at B noted that each successive program initiated was simply added to the list of current

responsibilities, with nothing modified or taken away in exchange. For example, the expectations to learn and use quality tools did not eliminate the need to keep up with rapid changes in technology (e.g., widely available Internet access) or increasing student diversity. Furthermore, teachers faced the administrative and external demands for these new behaviors and accountability amid turbulence in school leadership (e.g., four different principals in 3 years).

DISCUSSION

In this article, we have focused on actors in one profession operating at the core level of a highly complex, multileveled institutional environment. Our analysis illustrates how the cognitive and behavioral responses to changes initiated at higher levels of the K-12 educational system by those who must implement them are grounded in consistencies and inconsistencies with the values, interests, and capacities of teachers. Our focus on teachers' reactions to the initiation of practices intended to improve outcomes and increase accountability represents an attempt to understand the "micropolitics" of change—that is, "those strategies and tactics that organizational actors use in negotiating the alignments of logics of action" (Bacharach, Bamberger, & Sonnenstuhl, 1996, p. 479)—at the very core of a many-layered institutional realms. The micropolitical view directly acknowledges the interests of both the proponents and targets of change, including recognition that a fundamental shift in orientation toward external stakeholders has different costs, benefits, and meanings for each party (Sproull & Hofmeister, 1986; Zilber, 2002). Prior research on the fate of TQM and other change programs speaks mostly to the "rhetoric"—that is, the sensemaking or influence attempts—of top managers and program champions (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Zbaracki, 1998) while ignoring or providing only sketchy details on the perceived "reality" of those who must implement the changes.

Change viewed through a micropolitical lens reveals that all parties to a change—top managers and core workers alike—use rhetorical strategies to present themselves in self-interested ways. Thus, in contrast to the literature on "resistance to change," which often sides implicitly with the view of higher level actors in describing subordinate resistance as irrational, self-serving, or counterproductive (Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Piderit, 2000), or the professions literature, which tends to downplay the potential self-interest inherent in professionals' reflexive defense of values grounded in autonomy and control (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984), the micropolitical lens strategy grants a priori legitimacy to all perspectives. We believe this is critical to the development of increased understanding because in reality, the value of a proposed change is nearly always subject to multiple legitimate interpretations. For example, high levels of teacher autonomy can be defended on the basis of professional expertise and the motivation associated with increased control (Hackman & Oldham, 1980), whereas lower levels are consistent with the demonstrated benefits of TQM's variance reduction and process control focus.

Implications for Theory

The findings of this study contribute to a number of literatures concerned with stability and change in institutionalized environments. First, though it is commonly assumed that the identity of professionals leads to a “logic conflict” or “conflict of rationality” when market-based programs are introduced (Freidson, 2001; Townley, 2002), our study reveals a more complex picture. Although excessive stakeholder violation of process or content autonomy were resisted by many teachers, all other components of TQM were seen by teachers in both schools as consistent with their fundamental professional goal of serving children (their “customers”) well. It is unnecessary to judge the “objective” merit or legitimacy of teachers’ claims about inappropriate incentives or lack of support to conclude that neither the personal interest nor capacity explanations they provided represent what is traditionally labeled *professional identity-based conflict* or *resistance to change*. Beliefs such as “I don’t know how” or “I won’t work any harder” are not the type of shared beliefs usually posited as the reasons for widespread inertia, especially among professionals (cf. DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Van Maanen & Barley, 1984).

More specifically, our findings of broad, values-based support for every aspect of TQM practice studied except external customer focus suggests a refinement to discussions of transparency and accountability for professionals. Teachers in this study did not resist the principle of accountability—many welcomed it as a chance to get the credit they feel they deserve and as a possible means of actually reducing the criticism and cynicism they face. For teachers therefore, the issue was not about whether to accept increasing demands for accountability but rather to raise what they saw as important questions about the nature of accountability, such as accountability “for what?” and “to whom?” This suggests teachers’ concern for autonomy extends beyond operational issues to broader strategic concerns (Raelin, 2003). When teachers felt that collaboration or data analysis, or even gathering input from stakeholders, would make a contribution to increased performance on measures they found meaningful for their customers—the students—they were more than willing to accept these tools and to be held accountable for performance based on associated measures. This interpretation is consistent with recent theorizing by Adler and Borys (1996) that the same work flow formalization can be perceived as positive or negative depending on whether workers see it as enabling or obstructive in accomplishing their work. Thus, paying greater attention to “contested” versus “accepted” criteria for establishing accountability and evaluating performance may prove a fruitful avenue for future research on professionals’ reactions to changes.

Our analyses also revealed the importance of questioning assumptions about homogeneity in values and outlook among members of a professional group (Abbott, 1988; Sproull & Hofmeister, 1986). Consistent with recent theorizing about disciplinary specialization and socialization in education (Rowan & Miskel, 1999), we found the most contentious aspect of the changes in each school—external customer focus—to be significantly more acceptable to teachers of non-college preparatory courses than those teaching primarily college preparatory courses. This finding was also consistent with our previous point because our data revealed greater acceptance among non-college preparatory teachers of the validity and utility of outsider

involvement precisely because they see the standards as defined by the business community as legitimate. Future research and theorizing should continue to explore and refine the subclassifications within the professions and acknowledge the diversity that exists within each professional group (Leicht & Fennell, 2001).

We also explored the effectiveness of coercion in creating desired changes among core workers. We found external institutional coercion and administrative mandate to be successful at stimulating behavioral changes, especially in School B, but little evidence that coercion had any effect on cognitive acceptance of the changes (cf. Poole et al., 1989). In fact, in an ironic twist, the heavy coercion in School B seemed to actually inhibit some of the practices it was intended to promote and appeared to decrease the likelihood that the new behaviors teachers were engaging in would become self-sustaining. Teachers who wanted to collaborate more or learn about using data to be more effective reported having no time because the pressure to show short-term accountability based on externally developed and mandated tests crowded out efforts at real learning with longer term payback periods. Furthermore, endless requirements for immediate accountability meant that behavioral changes were not accompanied by the mental processing necessary to create enduring attitude changes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). These findings suggest that future research on the role and effectiveness of coercion in implementing change needs to consider the behaviors that are not being engaged in as well as the new behaviors observed when gauging the effectiveness of the change effort.

Finally, this study challenges some neoinstitutional claims about change as well as the methodologies used to derive these claims. Despite institutional theory's emphasis on cognition and meaning, empirical research in this area has primarily focused on the structural aspects of institutions or espoused practices and adoption reported by one or a few executive informants (e.g., Staw & Epstein, 2000; Westphal et al., 1997). These strategies have limited utility for empirically grounding assertions or speculations about shared cognition throughout an organization (Holm, 1995; Zilber, 2002). As shown in this study, neoinstitutional contentions that programmatic change is rejected from within due to cognitive incompatibility or, conversely, that changes coerced by market or legal/regulative institutional forces are actually accepted by core workers (cf. Scott et al., 2000) both appear to substantially misstate the level and nature of change at the core of the profession we studied.

Thus, if we are to take seriously the calls for more attention to "agency" in institutional theorizing (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Oliver, 1991), such attention must extend to the agency exerted at the technical core as workers there react and adapt to imposed changes (Bacharach et al., 1996). Neoinstitutionalists have begun to challenge overly strong assumptions about homogeneity and isomorphism in institutional practices at the organization level (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Greve & Taylor, 2000; Lounsbury, 2001), but even these works stop short of providing empirical evidence showing that the changes noted are "cognitively institutionalized"—that is, self-sustaining and "infused with value" (Selznick, 1957, p. 17) by workers throughout the organization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Zucker, 1991). Distinguishing between the behavioral and cognitive elements of change is particularly important in occupational arenas where workers have both individual and collective bases for cognitive

resistance to changes that threaten their values or interests. In these situations, even years of internal and external coercion may fail to translate into cognitive acceptance (Firestone, Fitz, & Broadfoot, 1999).

Like Townley (2002) and Zilber (2002), this study has attempted to understand what the targets of institutional change think and feel about new practices. However, whereas these authors described the lack of cognitive institutionalization among professionals as largely driven by conflicting “logics” or “rationalities” (e.g., market vs. profession), we found personal interests and capacity constraints to be equally important explanations. Both the professions and institutional literatures have paid limited attention to capacity as an explanation for the success or failure of change, even though the organizational change literature has long noted the importance of appropriate training, structural supports, incentives, and other resources for the real learning that underpins self-sustaining change (e.g., Kanter et al., 1992; Mohrman et al., 1989). Professionals use skills honed via extensive training and repeated exposure to similar circumstances and conduct their work according to well-established routines. It is therefore natural that without the skills to perform a requested new behavior, professionals are likely to have difficulty seeing how the new behavior has practical value for dealing with their daily reality (Zbaracki, 1998) and are therefore more likely to see the competence-threatening aspects of a change outweighing the potential benefits (Tichy, 1983). Even where individuals targeted for changes support the new behaviors in principle, they may be simply unable or unwilling to overcome the structural, temporal, and resource barriers that can prevent adoption (Fullan, 1991; Kotter, 1995).

Managerial Implications

In addition to their theoretical contributions, our findings may also be of use to managers attempting to implement change programs. Our research suggests leaders’ beliefs may be likely to diverge from those of the core workers tasked with implementing the change, especially with regard to estimation of the core workers’ capacity to enact the changes and the extent to which proposed changes are seen as valuable enough to outweigh their value- or personal interest-based concerns (Sproull & Hofmeister, 1986). Where such discrepancies are uncovered, leaders can work to enroll core workers on the basis of conversation rather than coercion (Piderit, 2000) and by using incentives and enabling supports to increase personal motivation to change (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Furthermore, our research suggests it is important for leaders to determine which targets are displaying which types of reaction as not all core workers are likely to respond to changes in the same ways or for the same reasons. The identification of such intraprofession schisms could provide critical allies for leaders who need “insiders” to promote the desired changes (Kanter et al., 1992; Tichy, 1983).

Although the issue of capacity is often neglected in discussions of change in professional environments, it is critical because if core workers lack the wherewithal to change, debates about identity- and interest-based resistance seem largely moot. Resisting or failing to engage in new behaviors that may make one feel less competent or less in control due to insufficient training or structural support is a natural ego

response, not a mark of occupation-specific identity conflict. For example, in this study teachers did not demonstrate “resistance” to data analysis tools—they often simply indicated they had received such little training that they could not use them or that they did not even recognize opportunities to use them until they were pointed out by others. Furthermore, if the adoption of new practices intended to increase transparency or performance consistently adds to one’s workload without some concomitant reduction in responsibilities, then the threat of burnout becomes increasingly likely and the unwillingness to do more will again be a common response.

Finally, our results suggest that change agents may be well served by carefully considering the language they use, downplaying the name and nature of change initiatives as a whole (e.g., “TQM”), especially when such initiatives are of the “not-invented-here” variety, and instead focusing on the individual components of such changes. Such a strategy has two potential benefits. First, it may reduce the likelihood of the immediate negative labeling (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1997) that often accompanies imposed changes. In School A, the program champion stated his belief that by focusing on implementation of components (e.g., “improvement goals with measurement”) rather than the program as a whole, he had “teachers doing TQM without even realizing it.” Second, a component strategy allows leaders to begin with those aspects of change that are most value consistent, thereby creating the “small wins” that provide support for changes more likely to cause identity-based resistance. Although such approaches are at odds with the “full immersion” tactics often recommended for radical, mandated change, they seem more likely to result in success if the goal is cognitive acceptance and bottom-up momentum for change (Jansen, 2004) rather than mere compliance.

Limitations and Extensions

Although multiple steps were taken to enhance the descriptive and interpretive validity of the findings as well as the theoretical validity of the proposed explanations (Maxwell, 1992), the intensive case study approach used here is necessarily limited in regard to generalizability (Stake, 2000). But, the No Child Left Behind national testing program (which is rooted in notions of transparency and accountability) now applies to all U.S. public school districts, making it likely that many of the external institutional pressures identified at School B are now widespread (Boyd, 2004). Reports that teachers see this national program as an “unfunded mandate” suggest the validity of our findings that interests and capacity matters are critical to how teachers view the imposition of accountability-based initiatives. The findings and arguments presented here may also extend to other occupational communities, such as the medical profession, where core workers who have traditionally enjoyed a significant degree of autonomy and self-evaluation have seen conditions eroded by changes enacted at higher levels of the institutional environment. As in education, pressures for increased efficiency and customer focus have risen tremendously in recent decades in the medical field (Scott et al., 2000), and doctors, like teachers, have reportedly resisted the notion that managerially or market-based strategies for organizing and evaluating their work are appropriate (Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 2001). However, such

claims are also based on little actual research on individual doctors (rather than hospital administrators or the “medical profession” as a supposedly unified political bloc) and their actual core work (Hafferty & Light, 1995). Most documentation speaks to institutional changes and administrative actions and viewpoints rather than to the interests, values, and capacities of doctors (Blumenthal & Kilo, 1998).

Because our findings emerged inductively via content analysis of a relatively small interview data set, their validity must be further assessed using refined measures in multiple institutional environments. Perhaps moderate levels of adoption and lack of cognitive institutionalization of recent market-based changes are indeed fundamentally about the values that constitute the social identities of the professionals who must live with such changes, but we welcome additional research that concomitantly explores the roles of interests and capacities in creating self-sustaining change among core workers.

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