

RETHINKING SCALE: MOVING BEYOND NUMBERS TO DEEP AND LASTING CHANGE

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August/September 2003, Vol. 32, No. 6, pp. 3-12

OVERVIEW

- ♦ Four interrelated dimensions of scale: *depth, sustainability, spread and transfer of ownership* are filters through which leaders should view change. The goal is not simply change, but lasting change.
 1. Depth: Nature of change
 - Does the change go deep into the organization's beliefs?
 - Individual beliefs?
 - Does the change have an impact on the classroom or is it simply a surface change?
 - Who is responsible for the change?
 2. Sustainability: Endurance over time
 - How long will the change endure?
 - What strategies are in place to assure sustainability of the change?
 3. Spread: Norms, principles, beliefs understood by greater numbers of people
 - How widespread is the change?
 - Who is involved in the change?
 - Who should be involved?
 - Who will benefit from the change?
 4. Ownership: Shifts in reform ownership (knowledge and authority) to implementers
 - Who "owns" the process?

APPLICATION OF *RETHINKING SCALE* TO EDUCATION REFORM EFFORTS TO CHANGE CLASSROOM PRACTICES

♦ **Depth**

Deep change...change that goes beyond surface structures or procedures (such as changes in materials, classroom organization...) to alter teachers' beliefs, norms of social interaction, and pedagogical principles as enacted in the curriculum. By teachers' beliefs (we mean) underlying assumptions about how students learn, the nature of subject matter, expectations for students, or what constitutes effective instruction. Capturing depth may require in-depth interviewing and classroom observation, refocused on such indicators as the nature of instructional tasks, discourse patterns in the classroom, and teachers' conceptions of knowledge and learning...systematic collection of student work samples...use of teacher logs.

♦ **Sustainability**

The concept of scale has meaning over time. The distribution and adoption of an innovation are only significant if its use can be sustained in original and even subsequent schools. Schools that successfully implement reforms find it difficult to sustain them in the face of competing priorities, changing demands, and teacher and administrator turnover. Externally-developed school reforms may be especially vulnerable to this problem because implementation typically involves a short-term influx of resources, professional development, and other forms of assistance to facilitate implementation that dissipates over time as external developers turn their attention to other sites. (We need) strategies for providing schools with the tools they will need to sustain the reform, especially after the initial influx of resources dissipates. Because classrooms are situated in and inextricably linked to the broader school and system, teachers are better able to sustain change when there are mechanisms in place at multiple levels of the system to support their efforts. We know a lot about challenges to sustainability in the early year of reform. But how do these challenges differ as reforms mature and initial energy, personnel, and funding dissipate?

Spread (Breadth)

Spreading of reform to greater numbers of classrooms and schools...must involve the spread of underlying beliefs, norms and principles. Spread at the school level not only involves the reform moving to more and more classrooms, but also reform principles or norms of social interaction becoming embedded in school policy and routines. This type of spread may be especially important for reforms that challenge conventional or institutionalized approaches to teaching and learning in significant ways. Recasting spread to include spread of norms and principles within suggests that the district's role may be important beyond the support it provides to schools...the district may be a strategic site for spread itself...creating knowledgeable leaders who can influence policy, procedures, professional development and values.

♦ **Ownership**

...*buy-in* or acceptance (is different from) a shift in knowledge of and authority for the reform. If the leader is the only one who owns the change, it is unlikely that it will be sustained past the leader's tenure. It is the old notion that people will support what they help to create. As the change process progresses, it is important that ownership for the change transfer to those who must implement it. With the shift in ownership, analysis of the change process would also shift to the implementers of change. One of the key components of taking a reform to scale, then, is *creating conditions* to shift authority and knowledge of the reform from external actors to teachers, schools, and districts.

Development of the capacity to provide reform-related professional development or other structures for ongoing teacher and administrator learning may be a central feature for shifting authority and ownership for the reform. Shift in reform ownership also requires transferring substantive and strategic decision-making from the reform organization to district and school leaders. This shift requires that reformers cultivate deep, reform-centered knowledge among key leadership and model ways to draw upon that knowledge in ongoing decision-making. Shift in ownership may require that schools and districts develop

the capacity to generate continued funding for reforms. Shift in reform ownership may be a central element in sustaining and spreading reform in the face of shifting priorities, changes in funding, and challenges to policy coherence. Placing reform ownership as a central element of scale raises the priority for directing reform attention and resources to strategies that have the potential for enabling schools and districts to assume ownership for the reform over time. The more challenging a reform is to a teachers' existing beliefs and practices, or the more aspects of classroom practice or levels of the system it engages, the more it may need well-elaborated materials and sustained, ongoing professional development to achieve depth. Reforms of this nature may require more effort on the part of reformers to work with multiple levels of the system to encourage normative coherence and sustainability. The more ambitious the reform, the more challenging it may be to simultaneously achieve spread, sustainability and depth.