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Leadership in Times of Change

Petra Düren
Prof. Dr.
Hamburg University of Applied Sciences HAW Hamburg
Faculty Design, Media & Information Department
Information
Hamburg, Germany
E-mail: petra.dueren@haw-hamburg.de

Abstract:

Academic as well as public libraries nowadays have to face constant change. This paper gives an overview about leadership competences needed to succeed with deliberate large-scale changes in libraries. Most of the needed competences can already be imparted during undergraduate studies toward a bachelor's degree "Library and Information Science", as can be seen in the example of the University of Applied Sciences Hamburg. The critical success factors of every change project are information, communication and participation. Two qualitative studies concerning leadership in academic libraries and leadership in academic and public libraries in times of change as well as a quantitative study in an academic library concerning the influence of a transformational and a transactional leadership style of the top management on the middle management as well as on team members including the influence of the organisational culture, emphasise the importance of these success factors, especially the communication competence of leaders in times of change.

1. Need of Competences in Change Management and Leadership for Current and Upcoming Deliberate Large-scale Changes in Libraries

There always have been changes in libraries, but in the last years the rate of change as well as its speed and complexity did increase[1] and is still growing. Continuing change is already and will be the norm in libraries, but this paper concentrates on major, deliberate large-scale changes with a high complexity and the involvement of many members of staff.

After a profound look at the three phases of change by Lewin[2] it is clear that deliberate large-scale changes in organisations need planning and organising as well as certain leadership competences.

Phase 1 – Unfreezing:
After the top management has recognised the need to change something in their library or in his or her department, had a vision about the future demands of users as well as sponsors, the upcoming deliberate large-scale change needs to be announced in the library and especially the reason for the alterations should be known and made clear for everyone affected. Deliberate large-scale changes in libraries, such as the implementation of a Library RFID (Radio Frequency IDentification) Management System or the introduction of team work or of performance-based pay, cannot be understood and accepted without explanations.

Phase 2 – Changing / Moving:
Also throughout the entire change process information needs to be given about the alteration itself as well as its progress. Moreover it is important in this phase to give those who are affected by this major change the possibility to participate in this process and to bring in own ideas about the inevitable alterations. This is the phase where change managers and promoters of the change are needed as well as volunteers for pilot projects.

Phase 3 – Refreezing:
After the official ending of the change project there needs to be time given to learn the new processes and to work in them for a while before these new processes as well as the change project need to be evaluated. If some aspects of the alterations need to be changed again, the process begins afresh with Phase 1 – Unfreezing.

During change processes everybody involved should be seen as an individual with certain concerns and fears as well as an expert in his or her own working field. This already shows that some aspects of leadership are needed to handle a deliberate large-scale change in the library.

In the following Table 1 competences are listed that might help leaders as well as promoters to fulfil their tasks during change projects.

Phase 1 – Unfreezing	Phase 2 – Changing / Moving	Phase 3 – Refreezing
Communication	Communication	Communication
Strategic Planning	Leadership Styles	Controlling
Project Management	Management by Delegation and by Objectives	Research
	Motivation	
	Performance Appraisal	
	Teamwork	
	Selection of Personnel	
	Employee Representation	

Table 1 Helpful Competences in Times of Change

To already prepare students to be able to cope with deliberate large-scale changes in their career, the following subjects are integrated in the curriculum of the undergraduate studies toward a bachelor's degree "Library and Information Science" at the University of Applied Sciences Hamburg.

    Management of Library and Information Services (compulsory subject)
    Information Controlling (compulsory subject)
    Media and User Research (compulsory subject)
    Statistics and Data Analysis for Business (compulsory subject)
    Communication Training (compulsory subject)
    Human Resource Management (compulsory optional subject)
    Libraries in Times of Change – Change Management (compulsory optional subject)

Also in the curriculum of the studies toward a master's degree "Information Science and Services" at the University of Applied Sciences Hamburg there are compulsory optional subjects which provide the students with further knowledge which can be helpful in times of change, such as "Learning Organisation" and "Project Management".

## 2.	Critical Success Factors: Information, Communication, and Participation

During change processes team members often ask three questions:[3]

Why are we changing?
What are the goals of this change project?
What does this change project means for me personally?

Information and Communication:
A change process may stall if there isn't a regular and consistent exchange of clear and for everyone understandable information about the purpose as well as the change project's strategies and benefits. This information should be given as accurately as known at the given time.[4] For this – depending on the phase of the change project –, leaders should ask themselves the questions illustrated in Figure 1.

Communication – of vision, strategies and action – which is transparent, can open the door to an understanding and sharing.[5]
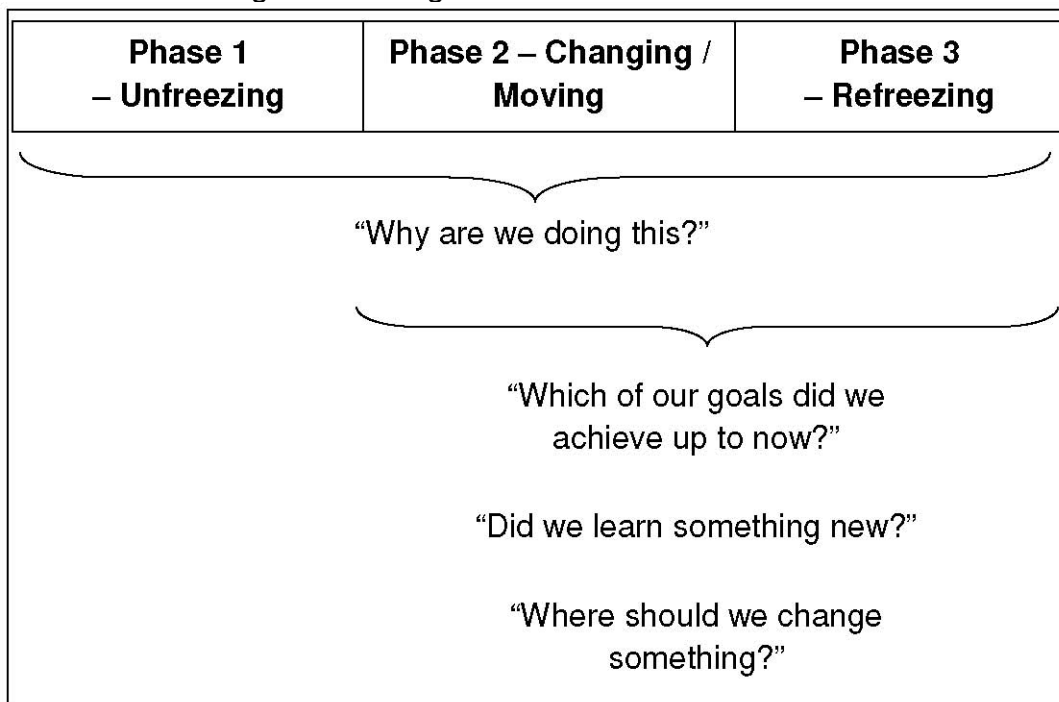
Phase 1 – Unfreezing	Phase 2 – Changing / Moving	Phase 3 – Refreezing

"Why are we doing this?"

"Which of our goals did we achieve up to now?"

"Did we learn something new?"

"Where should we change something?"

Figure 1 Important Questions during the Phases of a Change Project[6]

Participation:
Participation should meet the requirements of the group, of the team members affected by a deliberate large-scale change, as well as satisfy the individual team member. For

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this a two-way-communication should be established, which enables, listens and responds to the team members' communication.[7]

Especially the questions (s. Figure 1) asked in the second phase ("Changing / Moving") and in the third phase ("Refreezing") should be discussed with the members of staff involved in the change project and team members affected by the major change.

3. Leadership in Libraries

Leadership in libraries has been analysed by a student of "Library and Information Science" at the University of Applied Sciences Hamburg for her bachelor thesis. For this she accomplished four expert interviews with leaders of academic libraries to find out what characterises their leadership style.[8]

Three of the four interviewed leaders said of themselves that they prefer and use the cooperative leadership style; only one tends to a more authoritarian leadership style. Interesting is that this leader is the one who would prefer the implementation of Management by Objectives in their library as she thinks that this allows more participation. This shows that sometimes determining factors lead to a leadership style that isn't truly the one wanted by the leaders themselves.

Those who lead in a more cooperative style see their team members as experts in their working fields and for this let them participate in decisions. Furthermore they delegate tasks to these team members independent of their individual hierarchical status. They see themselves more as coordinators with many conceptual tasks. One said that the authoritarian leadership style is especially for someone who is new in the position of leader of an already existing team not enforceable, as he or she is confronted with a team that is working together for a while and with this very experienced. One exception sees this leader if team members are without any education or someone who isn't socialised through his or her childhood home. But all in all there should be a liability in the leadership style to give the team members a certain degree of reliance.

All leaders want their team members to work independently. They use a lot of their working time for communication. One points out the importance of the personal dialogue with his team members instead of using e-mail for communication. Also this one gives everybody access to his online calendar so that his team members can calendar their appointments directly. With this his team members have a great influence on the organisation of his daily routine as a leader.

Some leaders work together with their team members on a regular basis, for example at

the information desk. This gives them the chance to talk to his or her team members and to know what their tasks are.

Management by Objectives is only implemented in one of the examined libraries, although this is a participative method and three of the four leaders think that this is a reasonable management method, even if it is very time consuming.

In another research project for a dissertation – amongst others – the influence especially of the leadership style of the top management on the middle management as well as the team members was explored. For this a written survey was carried out with leaders and members of the staff of an academic library that participated directly or indirectly in the development of the library's strategy or which were affected by the resulting measures.[9]

Transformational as well as transactional leadership (s. Table 2 for detailed information about these leadership styles) of the top management has a positive influence on a trust-based organisational culture (s. Table 3 for details of the trust-based organisational culture). And a trust-based organisational culture leads to a high own initiative and great flexibility of the middle management as well as the team members.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP	TRANSACTIONAL LEADERSHIP
Identifying and articulating a Vision **Providing an Appropriate Model** **Fostering the Acceptance of Group Goals** **High Performance Expectations** **Providing Individualized Support** **Intellectual Stimulation**	**Contingent Reward Behavior**

Table 2 Transformational and Transactional Leadership Style[10]

TRUST-BASED ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Trust Information Participation Minor Density of Regulation

Table 3 Trust-based Organisational Culture[11]

Transformational leadership therefore is suitable to handle major changes in libraries. Transactional leadership which is based on contingent reward behavior correlates with transformational leadership[12] , which means that leaders should display both transformational and transactional leadership.

4. Leadership during Change Processes

In this chapter some interesting findings of a research project at the University of Applied Sciences Hamburg about leadership aspects during the time of deliberate large-scale changes in libraries can be found.[13] For this expert interviews with middle management leaders of academic and public libraries as well as change managers in libraries have been accomplished.

The idea of this research project was to find out what leaders thought throughout their change projects, if they recognised and how they reacted to the anxieties, worries and fears of their team members, how they communicated during the change process and if they thought afterwards that they could or should have done anything better. This of course doesn't say if a change project was done well, but it shows that leaders nowadays are able to reflect what they have done, that a lot of them did change their behaviour throughout a change process and that all of them had to cope with new leadership aspects.
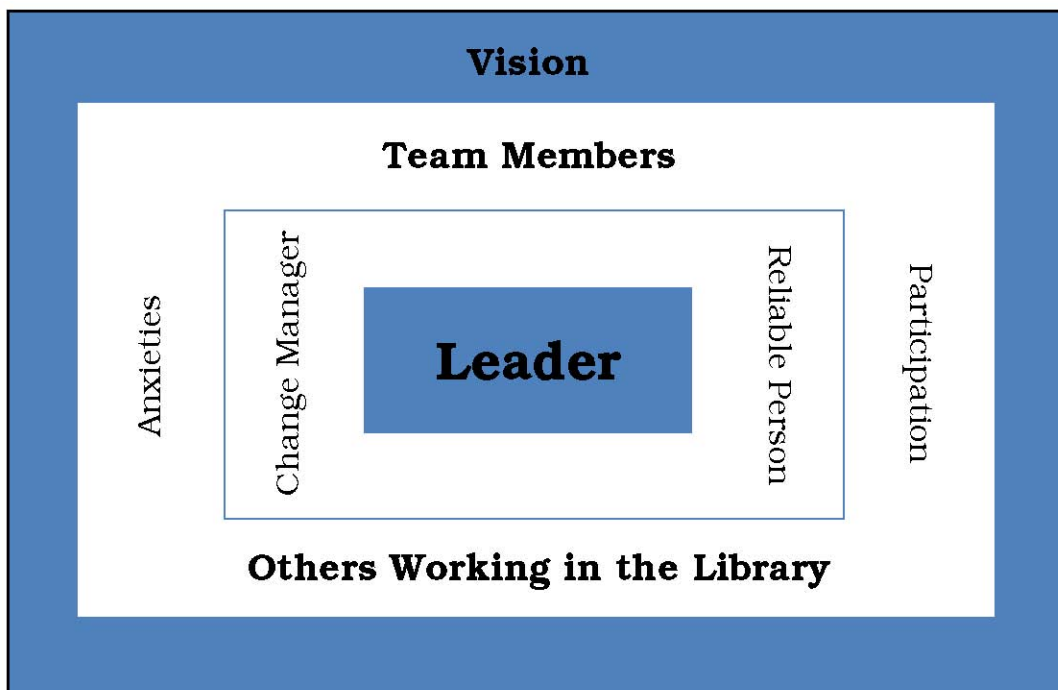

Figure 2 New Aspects of Leadership[14]

How new aspects of leadership – as can be seen in Figure 2 – can help to master a deliberate large-scale change in a library show the following examples:[15]

Leaders and their Vision:
To introduce a deliberate large-scale change in a library, leaders should be able to discover trends and new challenges and act proactively instead of only reacting to changes and external pressure. They are in the role of innovators and forerunners.

Leaders need to be reliable:
During a merger of an academic library with an information service provider the leaders working for the information service provider questioned the rightness of the evaluation results which led to their integration in the academic library and communicated this to their team members. At the same time these leaders communicated to the director of the academic library their willingness to cooperate. All in all the team members of the information service provider were communicated inconsistent information and decisions. This unclear and unreliable leadership resulted in unwillingness of the team members of the information service provider to work together with their leaders and stand behind them any longer. They told them this in one of their regular status meetings, which led to the leaders' resignations.

Leaders as Change Managers:
Leaders should be Change Managers themselves and for this need to know the different tools and methods of change management such as the different phases of a change process as well as the phases of the staffs reaction to change[16] and what this means for their leadership style. One leader recognised in the course of his change project a short intermediate phase of euphoria, which was followed by a deep valley of uncertainties, worries and anger, before the phase of acceptance followed, and had to deal with it.

Team members and others working in the library:
Their anxieties need to be recognised and those who are directly affected by a deliberate large-scale change should be given a chance to participate in the change project.

One of the most important aspects for the success of a change project is the communication process. Leaders have to communicate much more than before to reduce their team members' anxieties and concerns regarding the change project. This doesn't necessarily mean to change the communication tools, but they should raise the frequency of the providing of information. During one change project a leader learned that some information needs to be given twice or even more times and that it is essential to communicate the repeated information with the same enthusiasm and conviction as at the first time.

The communication process includes the other managers of the library, especially the leader's own superior. Here it is important to take the time to talk with them – even if the change project is running short of time. One leader has seen in retrospective that it would have been better to have a personal discussion with her superior than just on the telephone, as it happened regarding a very important issue, or – even worse – via e-mail.

Leaders interviewed for this research project in general emphasised how important it was to listen to that what their team members had to say. In extreme situations, such as deliberate large-scale changes, that affect everybody of the team a leader cannot act single-handedly. For this there always should be a personal dialogue between the leader and his or her team members.

5. Conclusion

Leaders in times of change need special competences to handle major changes in their library. They need not only to know and react to their users' needs and whishes and it's not enough to be able to anticipate the future of information services and with this of their library. Besides their potential to create a vision and a strategy for their library, leaders have to deal carefully with their team members anxieties. Change projects might raise concerns and fears with employees that need to be understood and taken care of.

For this students of library and information sciences should be prepared for their (potential) future leadership role in leadership and management aspects as well as change management.

Top management as well as middle management leaders operating on the basis of the transformational leadership style – in combination with the transactional leadership style[17] – in a trust-based organisational culture might be able to handle deliberate large-scale changes better than others, especially than those with a more authoritarian leadership style.

All in all leaders should have a vision, be reliable, act as Change Managers, recognise their team members' anxieties and give those team members and others working in the library who are directly affected by a deliberate large-scale change a chance to participate in the change project. Management by Objectives as a participative method can support the handling of major changes.

The most important aspect of leadership in times of change is to communicate with everybody as often as possible!

Further research should include the question if modern methods of communication, such as wiki, blog or twitter, can support the communication process. The research project at the University of Applied Sciences Hamburg about leadership aspects during the time of major changes in libraries[18] didn't show a significance to employ of these modern communication tools. Also it might be interesting to find out how leaders can be prepared to communicate better and especially not only to inform their team members but install a communication process which includes a regular dialogue in change projects.

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