Abstract

My philosophy of change is discussed from the viewpoint of a mathematics educator. I believe change is not a process, but occurs over a period of time. I also discuss how for one to appreciate change they must understand its benefits and should not dwell in the past. Change is inevitable and how we deal with it determines success or failure.

*Keywords:* change, transformation, educator
“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” Reinhold Niebuhr wrote this prayer for use in a sermon in the early 1930’s. It has commonly become known as the Serenity Prayer (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2011). As I have been developing and growing as an educator for the last eleven years, this prayer has given me much guidance and comfort along with William Glasser’s idea of choice theory or also known as reality therapy. Many people start feeling uneasy at the thought of something changing, especially if what is being changed is something familiar and comfortable to them. I believe that in order for change to be successful, one must not dwell on the past (Glasser, 1998), it must be a process that occurs over time, and one must understand the benefits of change in order to fully appreciate it.

Yes, it is vital to be knowledgeable of what occurred in the past, but we must not dwell on the past (Glasser, 1998). We must move forward, learn from our mistakes, and make improvements. We can only control what is happening in the present and prepare for the future. I cannot change the fact that our American educational system is comparing our students’ assessments to those in foreign countries, which in return has made my entire teaching career based on giving the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP). Due to meeting the rigorous standards of this test, I have made the following changes through the years: redevelop a pacing guide for eighth grade mathematics, adopt an updated textbook, teach higher order problems to eighth graders, teach with a graphing calculator, teach with a Promethean board, and attend numerous professional development meetings dealing with interpreting data. Whether any of these changes were good or bad, I have grown as a mathematics teacher. I have learned that the better the attitude I have as I endeavor new ideas or programs, the greater my return is from the change.

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines change as, “an act, process or result of changing as an alteration, transformation, or substitution.” I would like to think of change as more of a transformation due to the processes involved for it to be effective. I have heard many wise people say that it takes twenty-one days to form a habit, but I was unable to find significant research supporting the validity of this statement. Just like the development of a
habit, one has to try several times when pursuing change and this requires time. Change is a process, not an event (Hall, Wallace, & Dossett, 1973). Several teachers and I in my school have recently had Promethean boards installed in our classrooms. I had an attitude of eagerness and excitement while some teachers were quite anxious on how they were going to adapt to this change. My optimism was due to the fact that I had seen and used my co-workers boards before. I had also been taught by the use of a Promethean board in several of my graduate classes. For the other teachers, this was a foreign piece of equipment that had been placed in their classroom and was taking up their chalkboard or whiteboard space. After we attended two different trainings, their anxiety decreased. We decided last week to start meeting once a week in each other’s classrooms to discuss questions or teaching ideas pertaining to this new technology. In order for our school to continue this venue of change, we will need to have ongoing discussions/meetings where we can make improvements to this change. In Implementing Change, Hall and Hord refer to Frances Fuller’s (1969) four levels of concern: Unrelated, Self, Task, and Impact (2011). I feel as though I am beginning the Impact stage, in which I am concerned about how my use of the Promethean board is affecting my students’ learning. The other teachers seem to be in the Self phase where they are solely trying to learn more about it.

Maybe change is not always good or bad, but it could be looked at as something to help one grow as a person. Change is a necessary way of life. It is all around people: in the seasons, in their social environment, and in their own biological processes. Beginning with the first few moments of life, a person learns to meet change by being adaptive. A person’s very first breath depends on ability to adapt from one environment to another. Since human beings are adaptive and familiar with change, how is it that they often resist change in their work environment? We are afraid of uncertainty. We are also creatures of habit, meaning we sometimes do not want to change things and want to leave them the way they are. Doing the same thing every day is easy, but it is also quite boring and soon becomes ineffective. After teaching eighth grade mathematics for a couple of years, I had to try different teaching techniques, along with different strategies. I have implemented more changes in the last three years than I have in my entire career. Due to these changes I feel stronger as an educator,
making me even more appreciative of my profession. Jefferson County School System is a prime example of what can happen when change is not implemented. For the past fifteen years or so, no new schools have been built. The current high school, which is the second largest in the state, is in shambles. Our county’s reputation is declining in the education community as well as community member’s views of our educational system. If our local political leaders could only look beyond the past and understand the benefits of what a little change would do for our county’s educational system, we would see progress.

Change is inevitable. Change is necessary. Whether we like it or not, everything around us goes through changes and one must adapt. In order for change to be successful, one must not dwell on the past (Glasser, 1998), it must be a process that occurs over time, and one must understand the benefits of change in order to fully appreciate it.
References


http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/change?show=1&t=1297375925


