

Leadership of Change: Fullan's Model Applied to President Obama's Inaugural Address

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Introduction

Effectively creating change in an organization is a challenging task that must be accomplished strategically. Fullan (2001) developed a model for a leader to effectively implement change in an organization. According to Fullan's model, a leader can successfully implement change by having a moral purpose, being able to understand the process of change, building and improving relationships, facilitating the creation and building of knowledge, and implementing coherence making strategies. The model also suggests that the leader have the personality characteristics of hope, energy, and enthusiasm. Using this model to implement change will increase the commitment to change of the organization's members. The commitment to change by the members will benefit the organization (Fullan, 2001). President Barak Obama delivered an inaugural address that outlined the goals of his presidency. These goals included facilitating global peace, ending bipartisan conflict, developing environmentally friendly energy solutions, ending global warming healing, cultural differences, and fixing the national economy. This paper will use Fullan's model to analyze President Obama's inaugural address in terms of the manner in which he presents the goals of his presidency.

Analysis

Fullan's model requires that a leader have moral purpose when implementing change that benefits the organization and society. The moral purpose will inspire people to support the changes being proposed (Fullan, 2001). President Obama stated his moral purpose as president throughout the speech. At the global level, he discussed America's responsibility to help less developed nations, developing energy solutions that will not deplete the world's natural resources, and preventing global warming. On a national scale, the moral purpose is to stabilize

the economy so that every citizen has the opportunity for financial success. He cited the current conditions as being a result of a market that was unfair to the majority of the population.

Comment [pme1]: Stock market?

President Obama presented the nation's ability to accomplish this moral purpose by describing the accomplishments and ingenuity of America's forefathers. He described the obstacles the country has overcome and used them as examples of perseverance in the ability to accomplish large goals. He referred to the moral purpose of the population throughout history as the cause for their efforts and success. Stating the moral purpose allowed President Obama to provide context to the changes he was proposing to help inspire people to follow his lead. The inspiration of his moral purpose possessed the personality characteristics of energy and enthusiasm.

Comment [pme2]: US?

To lead a group through the process of change successfully, Fullan's model requires a leader to work on developing and nurturing relationships. Relationships amongst different people must be positive and constantly improving (Fullan, 2001). President Obama presented this concept in two different ways in the inaugural address. The first was the manner that he tried to end bipartisan conflict. He began the speech by praising his predecessor and expressing his gratitude for help during the transition. Later in the speech, he reached out to Congress and asked for them to work together as opposed to along party lines. The context of this request was to move work together to improve the quality of life in the nation. By attempting to improve his relationship with his adversaries, President Obama was trying to unify the nation to work towards his moral purpose. The second area where President Obama attempted to facilitate relationships occurred towards the end of the speech. He reached out to the Muslim world and extended a hand of friendship. He expressed that some of the leaders of the Middle Eastern countries are abusing their power and acting in a manner that is not beneficial to their

populations. Rather than condemning them he offered to assist these leaders if they were willing to collaborate with America. Developing relationships with nations that blame America for their problems will help resolve our differences and will also help support President Obama's moral purpose of global peace.

Fullan's model included understanding how to appropriately implement change. The concept of understanding change is to implement it at a moderate pace without introducing too many innovations at once. A leader should anticipate that things might get a little worse right after the implementation of change. A leader should also listen to people who resist change as they may provide useful information on how to improve the quality of the change (Fullan, 2001). President Obama's entire inaugural address was laden with this theme as he focused on realistic solutions to current problems. Rather than promising the perfect society, he presented global ideas that will improve the overall quality of life. He offered steps along the way towards the framework he anticipates for the nation. For example, rather than stating there will be global peace, he offered dialogue with countries with which we do not have good relationships to settle our differences. Instead of presenting a checklist of things he plans to accomplish, he discussed progress on a continuum towards his moral purpose. By presenting his ideas in this manner, he was able to introduce change as a slow and subtle process to which people will easily adapt.

Knowledge building and sharing are parts of Fullan's model that encourage an organization to bring people together to facilitate the sharing of individual knowledge. He argues that the sharing of individual knowledge will enhance the collective knowledge of the entire organization. This process involves taking the explicit knowledge of facts and data and turning it into tacit knowledge, which can be applied to the operating practice of the organization (Fullan, 2001). The concept of building knowledge applied to President Obama's speech in three

different ways. The first is the overall theme throughout the speech where he presented the problems the nation faces but and outlined the solutions to those problems. The approach he used to propose the solutions provided the process for which the solution will be implemented. Sharing knowledge in this format allowed him to translate the explicit knowledge of problems and solutions into tacit knowledge of the implementation of those solutions. The second is that President Obama introduced the idea of knowledge building by describing the vast cultural diversity of the nation and the common history we have experienced. As a melting pot of many cultures we can share the knowledge that is inherent in each of our cultures to move towards the overall moral purpose. By evaluating our experiences throughout history, we can draw on the knowledge we have gained and apply it to the present challenges. The third is that President Obama proposed to build knowledge is by reaching out to both less developed nations and adversaries. He offered to work together to help less developed nations improve their quality of life by sharing the innovations we have developed in America. He also extended an invitation to work together with adversarial nations to improve the overall global knowledge as he works towards the moral purpose of global peace.

To effectively implement change, Fullan's model requires that a leader to generate disturbance amongst an organization to create disequilibrium. The disturbance exists as a difficult problem that demands to be solved. Through resolving the problems created by the disturbance, people are able to develop coherence of the changes they are experiencing (Fullan, 2001). President Obama opened his inaugural address by discussing the disturbances the nation was experiencing at that time. The disturbance was presented through the issues of the war against terrorism, the state of the economy, and the cost of healthcare. As the speech progressed, he presented solutions to all of these issues, which would stabilize the disequilibrium

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experienced at the beginning of the speech. The personality characteristic of hope is a very strong theme of the speech as the president's speech moves from the current disequilibrium of the nation to a country where we experience global peace, have a thriving economy, and a cleaner environment. The disturbances he presented created the context for the moral purpose he presented throughout the speech. Presenting the disequilibrium created by the disturbances and then resolving it facilitated the population's ability to make coherence and understand the purpose of the changes proposed by President Obama.

Overall, President Obama's inaugural address fits very well with Fullan's leadership model for change. The speech has a strong moral purpose in defining the goals of his presidency. The changes being proposed are presented as a subtle process as opposed to immediate drastic changes, which allows the nation to slowly adjust and adapt to the changes that will occur. Developing relationships with political opponents and international adversaries will help move the nation towards the moral purpose. Sharing the collective knowledge of history and cultural diversity will allow the nation to be strong both in overcoming the current domestic problems and in healing international conflicts. He states the current challenges to the nation is experiencing to create disequilibrium and inspires hope as he discusses his solutions to restore balance. If President Obama is able to continue adhering to Fullan's model for change then he should be able to accomplish his goals and fulfill the moral purpose outlined in his speech. Following Fullan's model will increase the level of commitment by the American citizens to the changes President Obama proposed to implement.

[Very nice analysis, in particular how you link the concepts in Fullan's model with one another and the President's speech. 20 points.](#)

References

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Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a Culture of Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.