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Strategic Planning in a Higher Education Context

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Abstract

This organizational improvement plan (OIP) stems from the need for a clearly defined plan to guide initiatives to be implemented in the School of X. Strategic planning is instrumental in higher education (HE) settings and is critical in framing the values, missions, and goals of postsecondary institutions. Engaging stakeholders in meaningful and purposeful ways will help to create a clear direction for the School of X. Exploring the organization's readiness for change and examining solutions for the identified problem of practice (PoP) frames the basis of the OIP. To evaluate the best strategy for the change process and to achieve the goals of the OIP, multiple approaches to address the PoP are evaluated and discussed. Relational and distributed leadership are integrated throughout the OIP with Kotter's (1996) model of change supporting the process. The underpinnings of a humanistic approach to change permeates all portions of the OIP, which complements the relational and distributed leadership styles also integrated throughout the plan. Intertwining a systems theory approach to the overall process is important because the School of X is an integral part of the college. The framework integrated in the OIP is Nadler and Tushman's (1980) congruence model, which complements Kotter's (1996) model for leading change. When the OIP is implemented in the HE setting, it is anticipated that the faculty and staff of the School of X and community partners will collectively work on the identified initiatives, which will contribute to successful outcomes for students and the academic HEI.

Key words: strategic planning, higher education, relational leadership, distributed leadership, stakeholders, engagement

Executive Summary

Vast improvements need to be made to postsecondary institutions' strategic planning processes given that relatively little attention has been paid to this sector (Cooke & Lang, 2008). This highlights the importance of further exploration in the strategic planning process in a higher education (HE) context to enhance the content of plans as they pertain to the academic environment. HE plays an important role in preparing people to engage in the strategic planning process in meaningful ways (Siemens et al., 2018). This is especially important in the process of strategic planning since it involves a variety of stakeholders both internal and external to the HE setting. Internal stakeholders include faculty, support staff, management, directors, and operations managers. External stakeholders are community partners who work directly with internal stakeholders in College X.

Chapter 1 of this organizational improvement plan (OIP) presents the organizational background of College X, a large community college in Ontario, focusing on the political, economic, social, and cultural aspects of the institution. The college's mission, values, and priorities will define the institution's goals in its current and future states. The problem of practice (PoP) focuses on engaging internal and external stakeholders in the strategic planning process for the college to formulate initiatives for the newly formed School of X. The leadership position and lens, leadership PoP, framing the PoP, guiding questions that arise from the PoP, leadership-focused vision for change, and organizational change preparation are also discussed. In order to understand the framework of the college, the history of the organization is explored and an analysis of the current and future state of the academic institution is also presented. Consideration of the organization's readiness for change and an assessment of internal and

external forces that shape change follow. In order to understand the magnitude of the PoP, analysis of the aforementioned areas is instrumental for the change process.

Chapter 2 examines leadership approaches to change, a structure for leading the change process, a critical overview of the organization, potential solutions to the PoP, and leadership ethics involved in organizational change. Relational and distributed leadership frames the PoP and complements the intent of the OIP, which is to focus on and enhance the internal and external partnerships within the college community. Kotter's (1996) model for change is introduced and is integrated throughout Chapters 2 and 3 of the OIP. Nadler and Tushman's (1980) congruence model supports the premise of the integration of the systems theory throughout the plan. An introduction of the sustainability strategic planning and management (SSPM) methodology is also presented as a framework to implement the strategic planning process in the School of X. Chapter 2 presents possible solutions for the PoP, including the resources, strengths, and weaknesses of each suggestion.

The final chapter focuses on monitoring the change process and my role as a leader in the observation, evaluation, and communication of the OIP. An explanation of my agency as a change leader and ways I will work collectively with others are also presented. The final chapter also discusses how the SSPM will be integrated into the implementation process. Short-, medium- and long-term goals are explored and strategies to work toward these goals are reviewed. Limitations of the OIP and potential solutions for barriers are also considered. The plan-do-study-act model (Deming, 1993) is integrated into Kotter's (1996) approach for change to work toward solutions for the PoP. Multiple strategies are reviewed in terms of the monitoring and evaluating the OIP, and a detailed communication plan as well as strategies highlight the process for implementing change in the School of X. The impact of the current pandemic is also

threaded throughout the OIP, since it presents several challenges with implementing strategies with the barriers that evolved from the pandemic. Chapter 3 concludes with next steps and future considerations to build on the work for other potential strategic planning processes in HE settings.

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List of Acronyms

ACCC (Association of Community Colleges of Canada)

AD (Associate Dean)

BOG (Board of Governors)

CA (Collective Agreement)

COO (Chief Operating Officer)

COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019)

CT (Complexity Theory)

HE (Higher Education)

HEI (Higher Education Institution)

HR (Human Resources)

LMS (Learning Management System)

LMX (Leader Member Exchange)

MCU (Ministry of Colleges and Universities)

MEG (Management Executive Group)

MHFA (Mental Health First Aid)

OIP (Organizational Improvement Plan)

OM (Operations Manager)

PAC (Program Advisory Committee)

PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act)

PESTE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, and Environmental)

PLC (Professional Learning Communities)

PoP (Problem of Practice)

POS (Program of Study)

PSE (Postsecondary Education)

PSI (Postsecondary Institutions)

SLT (Senior Leadership Team)

SMA (Strategic Mandate Agreement)

SMART (Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant Timely)

SSPM (Sustainability Strategic Planning Management)

SWF (Standard Workload Formula)

VP (Vice President)

Definitions

Engagement – Johnston and Taylor (2018) defined engagement as “conceptualized as an iterative, dynamic process, where participation, experience, and shared action emerge as central components” (p. 3).

Higher education institution – A postsecondary academic environment that facilitates learning to students in a variety of different program areas.

Meaningful – Work that encourages and strengthens individuals’ sense of self and professional life (Breen, 2019).

Purposeful – Yeager and Bundick (2009) defined purposeful “as any reason that people have for their actions, regardless of who benefits from them” (p. 5).

Stakeholders – Internal and external participants in strategic planning.

Strategic – Decisions made on topics such as the organization’s future (Al-Turki, 2011).

Chapter 1: Introduction and Problem

This chapter of the organizational improvement plan (OIP) focuses on the organizational context of a higher education institution (HEI), with a concentration on political, economic, social, and cultural aspects. The vision, mission, values, and goals of the community college setting will identify the aspirations of the institution both in its current and future state. The leadership position or lens, leadership problem of practice (PoP), framing the PoP, guiding questions that emerge from the PoP, leadership-focused vision for change, and the organizational change readiness are also explored throughout this chapter.

Organizational Context

This section provides clarity on the overall functioning of the academic institution and assists in understanding the organization and its leadership styles and approaches within the higher education (HE) setting. Organizational cultures are often characterized as assumed beliefs and principles about how the world works and how people should collaborate to achieve their common goals within it (Schein, 1985). This OIP involves a large community college in Ontario, one HEI among 24 within the province. From this point forward, the anonymized academic institution is identified as College X and the school of interest within it is referred to as School of X to maintain the confidentiality of the HEI throughout the OIP. College X offers 173 programs ranging from business, social services, engineering, policing, health, and apprenticeship programs. With approximately 30,000 students in full-time, part-time, and apprenticeship programs, the college has three different campuses, all of which are located in the same geographical area. College X has one main campus and two satellite campuses, one focusing on apprenticeship and skilled trades and the other encompasses health-related programs. The academic institution also has approximately 1,200 international students from over 50 countries.

College X is known for health and technology programs as well as being a popular training institution for apprenticeship students.

Organizational Structure and Established Leadership Approaches

College X is governed by a board of governors (BOG), which includes a variety of internal and external stakeholders. The BOG approves the strategic direction of the college, including new programs and various initiatives within the HE setting. College X is a fully accredited academic institution, funded by the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU), and is a member of the Association of Community Colleges of Canada (ACCC). The Management Executive Group (MEG) includes the college president, chief operating officer (COO), general counsellor, vice presidents (VPs), and several directors. College X also has a senior leadership team (SLT), which includes deans, chief officers, directors, general counsellor, VPs, the registrar, and the internal auditor.

College X has four schools: business, media and entertainment, health and community services, skills trades and apprenticeship as well as engineering technology. Each school has a variety of departments led by an associate dean (AD). Within each department part-time and full-time support staff and faculty are the front-line employees. Support staff and faculty are unionized employees within the organization. The AD positions are considered middle management within the HEI. Each department also has an operations manager (OM) who assists with financial management and operational functions. The structure of College X aligns with a distributed leadership approach. Within the hierarchical structure of the organization, a distribution of leadership tasks occurs at all levels. A shared distribution of leadership tasks encompasses this style, in particular sharing influence within the team (Northouse, 2016).

Vision, Mission, Values, Purpose, and Goals

The vision of College X is to prepare learners for their future careers in their chosen field of study and to foster the value of lifelong learning. The college's mission is to prepare highly skilled graduates for success, while fostering their engagement both locally and globally. The academic institution values students, community, inclusion, innovation, and culture. College X seeks to demonstrate its values in all activities and initiatives within the HE setting. This aligns with the work of Manning (2018), who noted assumptions and values provide a shared focus and guidelines for everyday experiences within strategic planning. The college's strategic plan integrates the vision, mission, values, and goals within the HE setting and must align with the overall strategic direction of the institution. The purpose of the strategic direction of College X is to guide employees in all aspects of their various roles to meet the needs of learners within the system. The strategic planning process is widely shared in the organization by providing employees with a copy of the plan to support them in their day-to-day work.

History of the Organization

An organization's history reveals which patterns and dynamics must be maintained and those that should be changed (Warrick, 2017). Gaining a historical perspective of College X assists in understanding the current and future functioning as it pertains to the institution's overall strategic direction. College X was established in 1967. The name of the institution has cultural history that is meaningful to the college community, and the college recently celebrated its 50th year in postsecondary education. The BOG has guided and approved the strategic plans for College X since its inception. This governance model and strategic planning process is evident in both the historical and present state of the organization. Throughout the history of the organization, the college has been focused on applied, hands-on learning, which is still evident

today in its variety of programs with field placements, cooperative learning, experiential learning, and skills trades programs.

Political Context

Political pressures are caused by issues involving power, leverage, and resource allocation (Westover, 2010). The political components of the academic institution intertwine with the cultural aspects of the setting, which have the power to influence behaviour and direction within the environment. Distinguishing between the distinct cultural aspects that underpin behaviours allows for a clearer image and deeper understanding of the interrelationships between the specific levels of organizational culture that influence desired behaviours (Hogan & Coote, 2014). Gaining a deep understanding of these relationships and behaviours within the culture is an important factor for consideration in my OIP. Organizational politics may have both positive and negative consequences for strategic planning and the HE setting (Delprino, 2013). Positive aspects related to the college's governance model include the MEG and SLT leadership teams who partake in major decision-making. Conversely, negative areas of concern involve the restrictions of the corridor funding imposed by the MCU and stakeholders who resist change.

Both internal and external stakeholders who hold a variety of roles contribute to the overall political organizational state of College X. Due to the complex and continuing democratic process involving many stakeholders, governance structures and rules of conduct are continually changing (Cooke & Lang, 2008). These changes influence a variety of aspects in the college, such as the strategic planning processes. The political framework that guides and approves the overall direction of College X is a BOG, which consists of 15 directors. This governing body includes both internal and external stakeholders, including the college president, COO, Vice President of Academic, faculty, support staff, and community representatives. Board

members meet frequently throughout the year to ensure the overall strategic direction of the college is on target and it is an opportunity to provide updates pertaining to the initiatives within the postsecondary institution (PSI).

College X adheres to the strategic mandate agreement (SMA), which guides the initiatives within the HE setting and the corridor-funding model. The SMA agreement between Ontario Colleges and the MCU outlines the role the college plays in the provincial postsecondary education system and how they build on strengths to fulfill their mandate and support system-wide and government objectives (MCU Staff Member, personal communication, November 26, 2020).

The corridor-funding model for the SMA is based on the success of the identified initiatives outlined by the MCU and encompasses weighted funding units (MCU Staff Member, personal communication, November 26, 2020). This funding model provides revenue for the college based on performance pertaining to enrolments and other identified areas. The identified areas of focus for the SMA include the student experience, innovation in teaching and learning excellence, access and equity, applied research excellence and impact, innovation, economic development, and community engagement (Staff Member, personal communication, January 11, 2020). The previously stated strategic priorities are also policy drivers within the HEI.

Another political aspect are the local agreements of faculty and support staff within the college, as the majority of College X staff are members of local unions. The collective agreement (CA) protects the members within the work environment, while defining for employees and management the agreed-upon articles within the document. The limitations within the CA, especially in relation to the faculty standard workload formula (SWF), need to be examined for

the OIP. The SWF outlines the teaching responsibilities and complementary functions up to 44 hours per week for each faculty member working in the academic areas of the college.

Economic Context

College X, like every HEI in Ontario, relies on both MCU funds and the economy to meet its operational needs. As previously mentioned, determination of the funding model for the college system stems from the corridor funding outlined in the SMA. Financial barriers will have a direct impact on HEIs (Dennis, 2020). Due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the HE setting is experiencing lower than predicted enrolments with both domestic and international students, which created some financial barriers in the college system. Consequently, College X generated business continuity plans that critically analyzed the overall budget and formulated significant cost savings across the institution. This resulted in job losses, employee lay-offs and restructuring in several departments as well as significant limitations on the current budget. These implications must be taken into consideration for the proposed OIP.

Social and Cultural Aspects

Students' access to education is one of College X's goal areas. Even if benefits outweigh the costs, some prospective students will be unable to attend PSIs due to financial constraints (Finnie, 2012). College X has several initiatives for students who require social support for issues such as poverty and mental health challenges. One of the college's initiatives to address this is a mobile classroom in a transport truck, which brings the education to the learner to alleviate transportation barriers they would otherwise encounter. These initiatives will align with proposed future goals to be encompassed in the strategic direction of the School of X.

College X strives to provide opportunities for everyone, inclusive of all diverse backgrounds. An institutional culture that values inclusivity of perspectives and accountability of

process must be capable of adjusting to the changing environment in positive and differentiated ways (Trotter & Mitchell, 2018). The College X President recently made a commitment to provide support to diverse populations and to gain a better understanding of how the college can take action in support of the Black Lives Matter social justice movement. Ethnic diversity and multiculturalism are popular topics of conversation and ethical discourse in today's social climate (Blummer et al., 2018). College X has made a commitment to learn more about social justice issues such as diversity and inclusion to better support staff, faculty, and students.

This section presented an overview of the organizational context for College X, including the organizational structure and established leadership approaches; the college's vision, mission values, purpose, and goals; the history of the organization, as well as the political, economic, and social aspects. The next section explores my leadership position and provides a lens statement.

Leadership Position and Lens Statement

As associate dean (AD) for the School of X, I am a middle manager leader within my organization. I report to the Dean of the School of X, who has four other ADs who report to her. In my department, I have 65 employees including faculty and support staff who report directly to me. The programs in my portfolio relate to the helping professions, with a focus on mental health and supporting individuals with varying disabilities. I oversee the curriculum in all programs in my portfolio, generate SWFs for faculty, approve human resources tasks such as vacation times, oversee the budget, create development performance management plans, complete teaching observations, chair academic appeals, support my staff, and so on. During my 17-year career at College X, I have worked in a variety of roles including professor, program coordinator, and AD in four different areas in the college.

As a leader in an HE setting, it is important to align my leadership style with the college's current culture. Managers who understand the meaning of symbols and know how to invoke spirit and soul can form more integrated and successful organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2017). It will be imperative in my leadership role to explore the cultural challenges in order to consider an effective change process. The leadership approaches I will integrate in my organization will be both relational and distributed. The interpersonal relationship between the leader and the follower will be the focus of a relationship-based approach (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Conversely, a distributed leadership is viewed as the result of interactions between leaders, followers, and their circumstance (Spillane, 2005). I provide opportunities for shared leadership experiences to allow staff to focus on ways they can contribute to the college in productive and meaningful ways. Distributed leadership also consists of a process spread across the institution involving systems, relationships, initiatives, and practices, rather than characteristics of leaders in leadership roles (Bolden et al., 2008). These leadership approaches align with the proposed plan and seek to provide internal and external stakeholders opportunities to learn and grow while engaging them in the strategic direction of the new School of X.

My leadership philosophy directly aligns with relational practices, with a focus on formulating trusting relationships, respect and transparent communication. Creating an environment that supports a sense of belonging and inclusion will engage stakeholders in the formation of the plan and its eventual implementation. Hosking and Bouwen (2000) explained the importance of this environment as "a relational constructionist perspective that offers new and rich possibilities for interests in learning processes, relations, and social interactions" (p. 130). My leadership philosophy prompts me to explore the capacity I have as a leader for learning about social interactions in the change process. In particular, the skills, strengths, and

experience I have will assist me in leading the change process. Exploring what I value as a leader and how this intertwines with the change process will enable me to frame effective strategies to support internal and external stakeholders.

My leadership philosophy also focuses on providing opportunities for engagement, collaboration, and inclusion. Inclusion in HE can foster feelings of acceptance, worth, belonging and community connection (Hall, 2010). Valuing relationships and sharing the common goal of meeting the needs of learners are instrumental in the current state of the organization. I also value the unique strengths, skills, and abilities stakeholders bring to the change process. Providing staff with opportunities for growth and learning is also an important aspect of my leadership philosophy. Having a broad understanding of relationships and communication is also essential. The key is to acquire a wide range of interpersonal skills and techniques as well as an understanding when to utilize these skills when engaging with others (Dyer, 2001).

I view the world in a humanistic way, and I integrate this lens into my leadership style and all aspects of my AD role. This approach stems from Carl Rogers's (1980) humanistic theoretical groundwork including the focus of trust, genuineness, unconditional positive regard, and being respectful in relationships. This is the underpinning of my leadership lens, which focuses on ethical and relational leadership. In addition to Rogers, my leadership lens is inspired by newer theorists such as Uhl-Bien (2006), who also shared similar views on ethical and humanistic leadership.

Relational and distributed leadership are the two leadership approaches that are most authentic for me as an administrator. A relational leader views individuals as human beings who establish relationships within a professional environment (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). The distributed approach focuses on informal emergent leaders and purposeful formal leadership

positions (Lumby, 2019). These opportunities support the premise of the PoP, which is to engage stakeholders in meaningful ways to support the strategic planning process. In order to integrate my leadership philosophy in my OIP, I need to incorporate leadership theory into the proposed plan. In supporting others in the change process, relational leadership will assist me in my role to both guide and partake in the process. Relational leadership encompasses being mindful of the complex network of inter- and intrarelationships that affects academic organizations (Dyer, 2001). Having preestablished relationships that include trust, open communication, and a supportive environment will assist me in my leadership role to meet the outlined goals for the OIP. Creating a supportive environment for internal and external stakeholders will encourage participation in the new strategic direction of the School of X. In leadership, having a positive, supportive approach shapes a culture of engagement, which will assist with the change process. This style of leadership provides less emphasis on hierarchy, with more on the relational components of collaboration and ongoing supportive communication (Murrell, 1997).

Relational practice also aligns with a distributed leadership approach by utilizing the relationship in a way that provides opportunities for shared engagement. Relational leaders place a strong emphasis on creating positive relationships with their followers as well as knowledge sharing and accommodation (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Distributed leadership seeks to provide individuals with opportunities to learn and grow as professionals, while contributing to common organizational goals. Some people use the term distributed leadership to describe different leaders in educational environments, while others suggest leadership is an organizational quality compared to an individual trait (Spillane, 2005). Within the context of my OIP, multiple leaders will need to participate in the plan for successful outcomes. During a change process, I must draw on my leadership strengths, which include building relationships, dealing with conflict,

interpersonal communication, decision-making, and negotiation skills. A relational leader sees people as human beings in connection with themselves (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). My own self-awareness pertaining to my leadership approach and connecting this in my relationships with stakeholders will be crucial throughout all stages of my OIP.

In addition to formal leaders, the plan will also provide opportunities for both internal and external stakeholders to participate in meaningful and strategic ways. Relational leadership emphasizes that relating is the vehicle by which organizational learning is built (Huysman, 2000). In my role, I support the leadership development and learning of others and influence their opportunities to grow as professionals. This will provide the opportunity for emergent leaders, such as program coordinators, and leaders in the community to participate in initiatives within the School of X.

Distributed leadership involves the interactions of people with a common task or goal. Spillane (2005) suggested, “A distributed perspective frames leadership practice in a particular way; leadership practice is viewed as a product of the interactions of school leaders, followers, and their situation” (p. 144). Providing emergent leaders the opportunity to participate in the strategic direction of the school will assist in engaging them in the process. An example of this would be providing informal leadership opportunities for individuals to chair committees or working groups pertaining to initiatives within the plan. Gronn (2002) described distributed leadership as “understood as fluid and emergent, rather than as a fixed, phenomenon” (p. 324). This aligns with the fluid nature of the proposed plan. Distributed leadership is also viewed as holistic involving multiple participants instead of focusing on individuals (Gronn, 2002). By providing a plethora of opportunities for stakeholders to participate, it will seek to encourage

engagement in the OIP. This type of leadership is also a shared approach, providing a variety of individuals the opportunity for leadership roles (Bolden, 2011).

One of the main concepts to consider is how these leadership approaches align in my HE setting in the formulation of my OIP. In order to do this, I need to explore the current culture and leadership styles implemented in College X. Value systems surface in HE settings based on the consistency in leadership and shared conclusions emerge as a result of mutual learning (Schein, 1990). In many instances, relational leadership approaches are entrenched in current leadership styles of management in the academic setting. The relational aspects of this approach have fostered and shaped an overall culture of respect and trust within the college environment. In addition, a distributed approach has also been implemented in multiple initiatives within the academic setting, by providing opportunities for a variety of internal stakeholders to take on both formal and informal leadership roles.

Other theories I contemplated included shared, transformational, and behavioural leadership. Although shared leadership is similar to distributed leadership, I did not select it because it did not align with the premise of my PoP. I did not select transformational leadership because I felt the environment would transform naturally by providing distributed leadership opportunities. Behavioural leadership is a style I am familiar with, but it was not a good fit for the OIP because I am not seeking to change staff and faculty members' behaviour within the School of X.

This section explored my leadership position and provides a lens statement. In the next section I discuss the leadership PoP.

Leadership Problem of Practice

To successfully implement an institution's mission, stakeholders must be given the opportunity to participate in developing the plan during the early stages (Falqueto et al., 2020). Often the challenges that surface with these plans typically involve communication (Cowburn, 2005). My OIP explores the issues and barriers in formulating a strategic direction for the new School of X at College X. The PoP focuses on how to best engage key stakeholders in meaningful and strategic ways in order to develop clearly defined implementation goals for the new School of X in an HE context. The opportunity to formulate goals and work toward them with direct purpose is at the forefront of strategic planning (Dooris et al., 2004). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the HE system is in a constant state of flux with the majority of employees now working from home. Since the environment has changed drastically, having a clear direction in a strategic plan will assist in stabilizing the academic environment. Frequent change was evident prior to the pandemic, but has intensified since the inception of COVID-19.

It is critical to define the terms meaningful, purposeful, strategic, and engagement as it pertains to the PoP because they are of vital importance to the nature of the work that will occur in the OIP. The definition of meaningful is work that encourages and strengthens our sense of self and professional life (Breen, 2019). Yeager and Bundick (2009) defined purposeful "as any reason that people have for their actions, regardless of who benefits from them" (p. 5). Ensuring interactions of stakeholders is intentional will allow educational leaders to accomplish the goal of meaningful, purposeful engagement in the development of the plan for the School of X because topics of discussion will align with the goals of participants involved in the process. Strategic is defined as decisions that are made on topics such as the organization's future existence (Al-Turki, 2011). This relates to the PoP since meaningful and strategic actions are the

premise for the engagement in the strategic planning process and the formation of the short- and long-term goals for the School of X. Johnston and Taylor (2018) defined engagement as “a dynamic multidimensional relational concept featuring psychological and behavioral attributes of connection, interaction, participation, and involvement, designed to achieve or elicit an outcome at individual, organization, or social levels” (p. 4).

Current gaps in the PoP encompass lack of engagement from internal and external stakeholders due to the demands of their jobs. The limitations in their current situations were evident prior to the pandemic and magnified with the world being in a constant state of flux. Challenges for internal stakeholders include the shift to working from home, work–life balance, faculty shifting to online learning, and the lack of time faculty have to contribute to the plan because of their day-to-day duties. Challenges for external stakeholders include being overwhelmed with their roles within their agencies, and lack of time to contribute to activities outside their regular duties. HE plays an important role in preparing people to engage in meaningful ways (Siemens et al., 2018). This is especially important in the process of strategic planning since it involves a variety of stakeholders both internal and external to the HE setting.

The breadth and rapid change in HE indicate that status quo is no longer an option, resulting in teaching, studying, and leadership that must all be approached in completely different ways (Siemens et al., 2018). This creates a complex organizational problem since the formation and implementation of the OIP will need to be a collaborative process involving a variety of internal and external stakeholders. A clear structure for managing change is created through sense-making activities and a strong emphasis on stakeholder participation (Thiry, 2014). Internal stakeholders in the School of X include faculty, support staff, managers, ADs, deans, OMs, and students. External stakeholders from the community include the program

advisory committee (PAC), community partners, field placement supervisors, and alumni. In addition, engagement from several departments outside of the School of X will need to be included in the plan. With all areas of the college currently experiencing the stressors and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, the shift in the organizational state will need monitoring. It could take several years for HE institutions to recover from the financial implications from COVID-19 (Dennis, 2020). Consequently, budgetary considerations will also need to be encompassed in the future planning stages of the OIP.

Complexities in HE exist and need consideration for the OIP. Complexity science involves networks, emergence, self-organization and social coordination, feedback and sensitivity, and agility (Siemens et al., 2018). The social networks in the strategic planning process involve the employees of College X and community partners. Leadership also has the potential to influence change in a variety of ways. Despite discourse about the benefits of change, leaders tend to resist it, particularly when it affects them or their organization in ways they do not like (Lowell & Yancey, 2016). As a change leader, advocacy for the need for change and my leadership role are instrumental in moving forward change in meaningful ways. The need for leadership to be involved in emerging conflicts that occur between the organizational desire for continuity and those that require innovation and change creates tension between administrative and adaptive functions in the HE setting (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Increasing an awareness of these complexities assists in leading the change process. The interconnected nature of these relationships will result in emergence, which is a system function (Siemens et al., 2018). Understanding the HE setting as a system and ways I will support the change process in my leadership role is imperative in the stages of strategic planning.

Self-organization and social coordination involves participants generating a plan to work on the common goals for the strategic plan for the School of X. Acquiring feedback by engaging stakeholders and asking their perspectives in a sensitive manner will provide support to participants involved in meaningful dialogue as it pertains to the planning process. Leadership with an agility mindset can prepare and deploy strategies that form an organization's culture to accept complexity, recognize ambiguity, and treat unexpected outcomes as a starting point for agile responses (Siemens et al., 2018).

The rationale for the PoP is the need for a clearly defined plan due to the vast changes that have recently happened due to the amalgamation of the new School of X. It will be important for all departments within the School of X to generate plans that align with the programs in their areas and that support the overall direction of College X. Since several new departments have been added to the School of X, the similarities and differences of each area and the overall vision need to be explored as part of the solution for the PoP. One of the first items to focus on in strategic planning is generating and forming a vision for the future, which is accomplished by starting with a mission statement (Conway et al., 1994). Some main areas to incorporate in the new strategic direction for the School of X include mental health, inclusivity, diversity, and experiential learning, to name a few. These initiatives would involve various internal and external stakeholders that will generate engagement in a variety of ways. Mental health initiatives may involve professional development planning. Inclusivity and diversity may require adjusted policies and hiring practices. Experiential learning may require a critical look at program planning and nurturing community partnerships.

Current State of the Higher Education Setting

In examining the current state of the HEI, it is important that the culture and stakeholders be carefully considered in regard to their participation in the OIP. Reflecting on the culture of the HEI will assist in seeing the big picture of the features, categories, and groups of people with whom stakeholders interact on a frequent basis (Lumby & Foskett, 2011). It is also important for leaders to understand the groups they are engaging, as it will assist in working toward the solution for the PoP. The current state of the HEI is in a constant state of change with new leaders, new support staff, and changes in internal processes. In addition, it is also important to determine the impact on external stakeholders to assist in mitigating potential issues. HEIs must engage their stakeholders in activities within the organization in order for them to be invested in the planning (Vos, 2003).

Future State of the Higher Education Setting

The optimal state of the HE setting is one that embraces the new strategic direction of the School of X evident in both internal and external stakeholders engagement in initiatives associated with the proposed OIP. After the pandemic ends, the academic environment will be in a more secure state to engage in the initiatives that will be determined by the strategic planning process. Experts predict it could be years for postsecondary organizations to recover financially from the impact of COVID-19 (Dennis, 2020). The pandemic will leave lasting effects that will impact inequalities in HE systems for the long term (Blundell et al., 2020). Although timelines are difficult to determine, and the long-term implications of the pandemic on HE settings is unknown, this will need close monitoring in relation to the OIP. The enormity of the plan could also easily become overwhelming for all internal and external stakeholders involved, so formulating clearly defined goals will be instrumental when creating the new direction for the

school. For example, during previous strategic plans, the goals were so enormous, they were not realistic to achieve, resulting in several initiatives not occurring for various reasons during the implementation stages.

Other considerations such as changes to curriculum delivery are also important to explore to ensure resources are in place to support this activity. Faculty's professional disposition and the academic department structures standardized approach have restricted faculty and administrators' ability to rapidly respond to market-driven curriculum changes and student needs (Manning, 2018). The larger institutional plan is currently focusing on innovative ways to deliver curriculum to meet various learner needs. Some examples of this are micro credentials and expanding the use of technology.

In this section I reviewed the leadership PoP, current and future states of the HE setting. In the next section I discuss framing the PoP.

Framing the Problem of Practice

To frame the PoP as it pertains to my HEI, I have utilized a systems theory approach that encompasses all aspects of the academic setting in the formation and implementation of the plan. According to the systems perspective, a leader cannot fully understand a problem by breaking it down into basic parts and then changing it; instead, the leader must use a shared presence to highlight its functioning (Mele et al., 2010). This shared presence is the learning stakeholders experience together when working through the strategic planning process for the School of X. Viewing the college as a system with its interdependent parts, all areas of the HE setting could potentially be involved in the new strategic direction of College X. This would include various departments working collaboratively to assist in the strategic direction for the new School of X. Complexity science reframes leadership by reflecting on all individuals dynamic experiences and

demonstrating how certain interactions will create emergent outcomes under some conditions (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009). Having an awareness of the environment and how to include all participants in the OIP will be crucial for successful outcomes.

In addition to internal stakeholders, external community partners would also be involved in some of the initiatives encompassed in the OIP. Ramosaj and Berisha (2014) suggested, “Systems theory has the ability to show the complex web of relationships in operation as a system moves toward its goals” (p. 63). Understanding the relationships in the college system will assist in working toward common goals related to the strategic direction of the School of X and focus on ways to engage stakeholders in the process. Complexity theory (CT) also aligns with the systems theory approach. CT is described as a collection of strong communication-enhanced social networks that aid in amplifying changes that emerge within many different social situations (Lichtenstein & Plowman, 2009). This is also evident in a systems approach since all departments, schools, and the college as a whole are interconnected, in multiple ways, and the relational aspects of the interactions are a meaningful and purposeful part of the process.

The college has recently experienced significant changes within its structure, including several departments merging in a variety of different schools within the organization. This is not a problem per se but an opportunity for new initiatives and collaborations within the School of X as a whole. As previously noted, two departments, including the one I lead, merged with the existing School of X with programs that are diverse and do not fall under any singular discipline. Change management ensures the goals are aligned with the organization’s ability to accomplish them (Thiry, 2014). The new School of X currently has five different departments, which comprise the overall unit. Although all departments are independent, the goal of the School of X

will be to work collectively and collaboratively on the outlined goals of the HEI to ensure they encompass the strategic direction of the college.

In dynamic organizations such as HE settings, relationships are the primary organizing factors in complex systems (Lowell & Yancey, 2016). In addition to understanding relationships, it is important to consider that departments have different ways of doing things. Lack of consistency within each department could create tensions and barriers within the School of X, which could directly affect the current state of the organization in terms of change readiness.

HE is increasingly changing as a result of shifting economic structures, the proliferation and development of entrepreneurship, declining enrolment, new student profiles, and a greater focus on addressing equality (Siemens et al., 2018). Exploring relationships with each other during the strategic planning process, particularly in relation to trust and honestly unpacking initiatives so we can do better as an organization in the aforementioned areas, will be pivotal in the change process.

Historical Overview of the Problem of Practice

In order to explore the direction for the future state of the PoP, it is important to consider the historical view. Historically, College X creates a 5-year strategic plan to guide the overall goals of the academic institution, ensuring the values and mission encompass the overall plan. Without a strategic direction initiatives within the system could lack purpose. Dooris et al. (2004) noted themes that surfaced in their research on the strategic planning process: “developing strategic plans with various perspectives such as cultural, environmental, and political, leaders need to challenge assumptions to change the structures that currently exist and focus on formulation instead of implementation” (p. 7). Thematically, this historical research still applies to the current strategic planning process.

Reflecting on the last decade in the HE setting the strategic planning process has evolved in meaningful and purposeful ways. Specifically, goals in the areas of, community partnerships, collaborations, diversity, inclusion, Indigenous studies, and student engagement have been focal points for the HEI. One of the main current focus areas for College X is related to diversity and inclusion. There must be a willingness to address diversity within the strategy and develop priorities to demonstrate a genuine commitment to incorporate initiatives in the plan with measurable results (Wilson, 2015).

Contextual Forces that Influence the Problem of Practice

Bolman and Deal (2017) presented a four-frame model to understand organizations, which includes the structural, human resources, political, and symbolic frames. Regarding the structural frame the authors suggested, “Structure provides the architecture for pursuing an organization’s strategic goals. It is a blueprint for expectations and exchanges among internal players and external constituencies” (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 51). The structural frame will provide insight into the development of the strategic plan, goals of the HE setting and the role of both internal and external stakeholders. This will entail critically analyzing the structure within the environment and taking into account how this influences the proposed OIP.

According to Bolman and Deal (2017), “the human resource frame centers on what organizations and people do for one another” (p. 113). This is an important consideration for the PoP since it will involve stakeholders collaborating and engaging in the strategic planning process to achieve successful outcomes. This particular frame aligns with the systems and complexity theories, which are the underpinnings for my OIP. Both theories focus on the interconnectedness of the college system and communication as it relates to the planning process.

In considering the political aspect of the four frames, Bolman and Deal (2017) suggested, “Politics is the realistic process of making decisions and allocating resources in a context of scarcity and divergent interests. This view puts politics at the heart of decision-making” (p. 179). This frame encompasses a combination of politics and power, which needs some thought in addressing my PoP. Strategic planning is susceptible to political issues because of the variety of stakeholders involved in this activity (Strike, 2018). Exploring how these could affect the PoP will be instrumental in critically analyzing the barriers and generating solutions for the proposed plan.

Bolman and Deal (2017) offered the following understanding of symbolic frames: “Symbols are the basic materials of the meaning systems, or cultures we inhabit. Many contemporary leaders highlight the critical role culture plays in organizations” (p. 236). An exploration of the culture of the college is critical to understand the PoP with a more global lens. The consideration of all aspects of the system, specifically the role of people within the culture, will be pivotal to the proposed OIP. In terms of my leadership, the structural frame aligns with my managerial style, which is relational in nature. Middle managers need to communicate honestly in order to create a culture grounded in respect and mutual trust (Branson et al., 2015). According to Bolman and Deal (2017), “structural leaders do their homework, focus on implementation and rethink the relationship of structure, strategy and environment” (p. 348). The structural approach is proactive and solution focused, which will be beneficial throughout both the planning and implementation stages of the plan.

Utilizing a political, economic, social, technological, and environmental (PESTE) analysis (Deszca et al., 2020) will offer an important consideration for the context of the proposed OIP. The analysis provides a way of considering a variety of factors that could affect

the eventual implementation of the OIP. As previously mentioned the political aspects of the PoP have the potential to impede successful outcomes. Gaining an understanding of power and the influence on culture will provide clarity and a critical analysis of factors for the OIP. The politics entrenched in this culture will need to be considered with plans moving forward taking into consideration that the college is a complex system (Schein, 1990). Specifically, systematic barriers, such as groups of individuals who resist the change process.

The economic considerations include analyzing the current budget implications for the proposed OIP. The college is experiencing significant financial implications due to low enrolments and other factors associated with COVID-19, which affect the system as a whole. Institutions continually encounter change as they try to stay afloat and compete in a competitive and globalized economy (Westover, 2010). Exploring this from a proactive lens will be instrumental in formulating any plans pertaining to the OIP.

The PoP's social considerations include the internal and external stakeholders that will be involved in initiatives associated with the new strategic direction of the school. Communication and supporting all stakeholders will be imperative for successful outcomes. All communication in strategic planning should be clear and consistent (Strike, 2018). Internal and external stakeholder relationships must be nurtured during strategic planning with a collaborative leadership approach (Marshall, 2019).

An examination of integrating technological aspects in the plan and supports necessary to facilitate this will engage various stakeholders. The current state of the organization at the time of implementation will determine the technology needs. For example, if College X is imposed with restrictions due to COVID-19, technology such as Zoom will be required in order to facilitate meetings encompassed in the plan.

Finally, environmental factors must be considered in the proposed OIP. The current climate related to the pandemic has the potential for both positive and negative implications. The positive aspects are the opportunities the shifting environment has presented for the HE system. For example the use of technology such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams to facilitate meetings. Higher attendance for meetings may be a positive result of facilitating virtual meetings; however, individuals turning their cameras off and not being engaged may be a negative factor. The negative aspects also include faculty being overwhelmed with having to transition to an online learning environment due to the pandemic and being resistant to change. Environmental factors encompass the culture within the HE setting and formulating supportive approaches will need consideration to influence a positive climate.

This section presented the framing of the PoP, including a historical overview of the PoP and contextual forces that influence the PoP. The following section explores guiding questions emerging from the PoP.

Guiding Questions Emerging from the Problem of Practice

The PoP focuses on how to best engage key stakeholders in meaningful and strategic ways to develop clearly defined implementation goals for the new School of X in an HE context. The following emerging questions for my PoP require examination to view them through a more strategic and global lens:

1. What is the role of internal and external stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the strategic plan for the School of X?
2. What is the viability of the plan based on the current climate due to COVID-19, in particular related to budget?
3. What does recovery and innovation mean for the strategic plan of the School of X?

4. What are the barriers in the PoP, and how could the identified barriers affect my PoP?

Question 1: What is the Role of Internal and External Stakeholders in the Planning and Implementation of the Strategic Plan for the School of X?

In Question 1, I will need to consider the role of internal stakeholders in the plan and reflect on how I will support them during the OIP. Several internal stakeholders from various departments could be engaged in the plan on initiatives with equity imperatives, such as mental health, internationalization, access to education, experiential learning opportunities, or research. A critical analysis offers information necessary for proactive problem solving as well as limitations of stakeholder participation, which must be considered in order to formulate a plan for successful outcomes. Internal stakeholders determine their priorities based on the needs of their current role; I will include deep conversations and active facilitation to support this process.

Question 2: What is the Viability of the Plan Based on the Current Climate due to COVID-19, in Particular Related to Budget?

Question 2 pertains to the viability of the OIP based on the current climate in the HE setting, especially the impact of COVID-19 on College X. The budget implications in particular, need consideration, since the majority of initiatives that evolve from the plan will require finances to support the activities associated with the OIP. The OM also needs to be included in any initiatives that require a budget to ensure we meet the contribution margin for the department.

Question 3: What does Recovery and Innovation Mean for the Strategic Plan of the School of X?

Question 3 focuses on the meaning of recovery and innovation. The new strategic plan for College X includes two major themes of recovery and innovation. The direction for the

School of X will need to align with the strategic vision of the college, so these themes will be integrated in the OIP. Consequently, a portion of the proposed plan will include the recovery and future innovations determined as the new overall priorities for the academic setting. The goal of recovery is to analyze what we have learned since the pandemic and how this experience will change practices in the HE setting moving forward. The recovery aspects of the plan will likely encompass strategies that will provide solutions to budgeting concerns. Concomitantly, the current budget limitations will also need to be at the forefront of any decision-making pertaining to the OIP. Innovation will stem from our experiences due to the drastic change in HE since the pandemic as stakeholders explore ways to encompass creative changes to meet the needs of learners with varying academic goals. Innovative initiatives within the plan will cost money, and we are currently very limited in terms of financial resources. It will be meaningful to help stakeholders with a process to prioritize and to consider the sequence of priorities in terms of time and resources. Further exploring innovative ways to meet the changing demands of HEIs needs to be included in the planning stages of strategic initiatives.

Question 4: What are the Barriers in the PoP, and How Could the Identified Barriers Affect my PoP?

The final question pertains to some of the barriers of the PoP. In developing the plan, the leadership team will need to consider the capacity departments have for engagement due to their current workloads, resistance of stakeholders, and so on. External stakeholder involvement will also come with complexities in terms of their availability and resources that will contribute to the plan. They will have competing priorities from their own agencies, even more so since COVID-19. A discussion of barriers in viewing the overall plan and the implications needs to occur in order to gain a better understanding of ways to overcome these challenges. Proactively reflecting

on the barriers will assist in finding solutions to potential problems in the planning stages of the OIP.

In this section, I reviewed the guiding questions emerging from the PoP. The next section discusses the leadership-focused vision for change.

Leadership-Focused Vision for Change

Applying systems theory and complexity theory lenses, I will explore the gap between the current and desired future state of the HE setting to critically frame the leadership-focused vision for change. These theories are interconnected with a focus on systems, communication, and formulating common goals in organizations. As previously mentioned, the current state is in a constant flux; viewing the organization through a systems lens involves perceiving the college as a whole with interconnected parts, which affect the overall strategic direction of the HE setting. Deszca et al. (2020) noted, “Open systems analysis helps practitioners to develop a rich appreciation of the current condition of an organization and plausible alternative and action that could improve it” (p. 71). This perspective considers the current state of the college to implement strategies to improve the overall system.

Ramosaj and Berisha (2014) described a systems theory approach as “prompting administration to increase their awareness of the environment and consider how this affects the organization” (p. 63). As a leader seeking to facilitate change, it will be imperative to understand the system as a whole and all the parts within the HEI. Gaining an understanding of the structure of College X and the behaviour of internal stakeholders as it pertains to the overall planning process will highlight the current state of the organization and the areas of need for the desired future state. In considering these disciplines, the systems theory approach aligns with the organizational context of College X.

CT has the potential to be intertwined with a systems theory approach as a change readiness framework. Northouse (2016) asserted, “Complexity leadership theory focuses on the strategies and behaviours that encourage learning, creativity and adaption in complex organizational systems” (p. 260). The behavioural aspect pertaining to the stakeholders involved in the planning process will inevitably influence the overall direction of the OIP. Both systems theory and complexity theory involve behaviours and interactions of people within organizations.

Subsystems are composed of larger and more complex systems (Gallo, 2013). Within the strategic planning for the School of X, several internal and external groups will be involved in this process to have meaningful discussions related to strategic goals to meet the needs of learners in the HE setting. A framework for continuous improvement for organizations consists of people, processes, and tools for implementation in complex systems (Siemens et al., 2018). The people involved in the OIP are staff, faculty, administration, and community partners and the processes within the system are the policies and procedures that guide our work in the HE context. The tools for implementation will involve the strategies that are integrated within the planning stages of the OIP. These tools are highlighted in Chapters 2 and 3.

The Gap Between the Present and Envisioned Future

Since the HE setting is in a constant state of flux due to recent changes to the academic environment from COVID-19, the gap between the present and the intended future needs to be considered and explored in order to implement plans for a desired future state for the organization. The optimal state of the organization is one that promotes and supports inclusivity in all initiatives. The problem is that while diversity and multicultural content and process are still taught in HE, multicultural issues within programs are often overlooked (Blummer et al.,

2018). Identifying gaps such as budgetary restrictions, resources for initiatives within the plan, and time needed from stakeholders to participate will be incorporated in the OIP.

Gaps identified directly impact students, faculty, and staff within the college system. A desired future state will focus on these gaps to meet the needs of students. Cooke and Lang (2008) suggested, “Strategic planning is too often seen as an end in itself rather than as an instrument for thinking systematically about these influencers and to make decisions about their future” (p. 624). Both internal and external stakeholders have the potential to influence the future state of the organization. Organizing a strategic planning process so all key stakeholders are involved at the right time can be both inclusive and effective (Testy, 2015). The ideal strategic planning vision is aligned with approaches that allow for more voices to be heard and more interaction from all participants involved in the process. Preferred strategic planning processes involve engagement, inclusivity, risk taking, and shared experiences with a distributed leadership approach. The sustainability strategic planning and management (SSPM) methodology that will guide the work for the OIP will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Priorities for Change

In the context of the OIP, the focus will include the influence of culture, importance of communication, support, resources, and the inclusion of stakeholders in the change process. Northhouse (2017) and Warrick (2017) characterized culture as the beliefs, values, traditions, and behaviours that are typical of a community of people. Organizational culture is a broad term used by researchers to describe the culture of an organization or group of people working together within an institution (Warrick, 2017). When it comes to organizational culture, reasons for differences in environment and norms are expected, and it is this need that leads us to broader concepts like culture (Schein, 1990). To influence culture in my leadership role, celebrating

accomplishments through praise and encouragement will assist with the overall objectives of the plan. It is also important to consider the impact of COVID-19, which offers researchers a unique opportunity to investigate a significant shift in society and how those organizational cultures could change (Spicer, 2020).

Transparent communication fosters trust and open dialogue among stakeholders. Trust can be gained through building rapport, open communication, and honesty (Awan, 2014). Strong communication will keep participants informed of all aspects of the strategic direction as well as provide opportunities for engagement. The types of behaviours that are respected and undervalued have a profound impact on how an organization's culture is formed (Warrick, 2017). Modelling ongoing support by being available and involved in all aspects of the process will foster an environment of openness and generate opportunities for feedback.

Change Drivers

Implementing a relational and distributed approach throughout the OIP will influence the change in culture by integrating these leadership styles in all aspects of the plan. These leadership approaches will focus on the preestablished relationships I have with internal and external stakeholders, while integrating opportunities for participants to engage in the proposed strategic direction in meaningful and purposeful ways. Once established, the vision for the organization will become a driver for change (Whelan-Berry & Somerville, 2010).

It is important to provide opportunities for existing champions and emergent leaders to take on roles that challenge their professional goals. Several faculty wish to attain management positions and engaging them in informal leadership roles in the OIP will assist them in striving for this desired outcome. This aligns with the philosophy of a distributed leadership approach as it provides opportunities for shared leadership roles (Youngs, 2017).

The opportunity to collaborate is another enabling factor that will encourage engagement throughout the process. Providing opportunities to engage in group collectivism will increase the likelihood of teamwork (Kirsch et al., 2011). Group collectivism focuses on cohesion in working groups, which supports the PoP by providing opportunities for engagement for all stakeholders involved in the OIP. Providing feedback on an ongoing basis will also foster an inclusive environment and promote engagement.

The ultimate goal for change drivers is that enabling forces will offset the restraining forces that are clearly apparent when considering the overall plan. Consideration for restraining forces that affect the change process include budgetary implications, resistors, the provincial funding model, and the current capacity for stakeholders to embark in the strategic direction of the school.

Resistors, those who refuse to participate or question the change process (Gaubatz & Ensminger, 2017), are prevalent in HE settings and the rationale for this is evident for a variety of reasons. Understandably, faculty have expressed they are overwhelmed with the shift to online deliveries and navigating a new learning management system (LMS) instigated by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, faculty may be reluctant to participate in the new strategic direction of the college. Providing clear communication for faculty to increase their understanding that the change is to establish goals and strategies for the implementation of the OIP. Faculty may also resist change because they feel strategic planning is the responsibility of administration. In order to engage internal stakeholders in the planning, a multitude of resources will need to be in place to support them and increase their understanding of the rationale for the change. This could decrease the likelihood of resistance to the proposed changes for the OIP.

The provincial funding model is instrumental in the financial stability of the academic environment and directly affects the initiatives within College X. This will require discussion throughout the OIP, focusing on the overall implications for the organization. An additional issue could be differing philosophical ideals about the vision of the school, since five different ADs will be engaged in the process. This will require several collaborative discussions to ensure stakeholders' goals and visions align with the overall objectives of the institution.

In this section I reviewed the leadership-focused vision for change, including the gap between the present and envisioned future, priorities for change, and change drivers. In the next section I discuss the organization's change readiness.

Organizational Change Readiness

My PoP focuses on engaging internal and external stakeholders in meaningful and purposeful ways to define a clear direction for the School of X in order to develop clearly defined implementation goals for the new School of X. Change will occur once the formation of the goals for strategic planning are identified. A critical analysis of the PoP and exploring the current and future states of the HE setting is necessary to determine the readiness of the organization. These considerations will be ongoing and will likely shift based on the current state of College X. Proactively exploring this will assist in the overall process as it pertains to the engagement of stakeholders for the new direction of the School of X. Such an approach could include direct communication with internal and external stakeholders to learn their perspective on the need for change. Communication with all stakeholders can be in the form of email, surveys, focus groups, one-on-one conversations, Zoom calls, or small group meetings to obtain valuable input from those involved in the OIP.

Assessment of Change Readiness

A systems theory is a theoretical viewpoint that examines a process as a whole rather than as the sum of its component parts (Mele et al., 2010). Applying the systems theory to my OIP, the whole encompasses all stakeholders who would be involved in the process. It is imperative to the process that as a leader I understand the need for change, identify the current and future state of the organization, and have a sound understanding of my role. Initiating any change requires a team; for this OIP, all parts of the college are interconnected, with each role within the team affecting others. A critical analysis of the college's readiness for change must be completed to actively implement the OIP. In considering organizational change, the following are important to consider: previous experience of individuals in College X, the ability for the environment to be flexible and adaptable, receptiveness of change, dedication, confidence of individuals in the organization, and individuals perception of leadership (Deszca et al., 2020). Prior experience of internal and external stakeholders could either impede their readiness in the change process or embrace it. Flexibility and the ability to adapt, especially in the current state of constant flux that College X is experiencing will be imperative. All participants involved will need to be dedicated and confident that change needs to occur and the School of X is ready to embark on this journey.

People seek stability, direction, and a sense they are on a clear road to move the organization forward. Individuals' behaviours pertaining to change readiness can be classified as either resistance or support for the process (Armenakis et al., 1993). This is important information for leaders to be aware of when assessing the readiness for change in the organization. If resistance is evident prior to the change, it is questionable whether the organization is equipped for the desired change. In addition, change readiness also involves individuals' beliefs and perceptions of the need for change and the capacity of the organization to

facilitate it (Armenakis et al., 1993). Gaining an understanding of stakeholders' perceptions will be beneficial in the change process. Stakeholders will not be invested in the OIP if they do not believe the School of X needs to change.

An assessment tool to determine an organization's position for the implementation of new initiatives is the readiness for change rating scale developed by Holt (2002). The rating scale includes areas such as experience with previous change, managerial support, leadership and change champions, openness for change, incentives for change, and accountability related to the change (Holt, 2002). I completed this survey for College X and it received a score of 42 points out of a maximum score of 74, which meets the requirements for change readiness. An organization that scores below 10 points is considered to be not ready for change (Holt, 2002). These results demonstrate that College X is open to change and utilizes good measures of change, such as internal data to inform decision making in the organization (Deszca et al., 2020).

A review of affective readiness related to individuals' thoughts and feelings pertaining to the change is relevant and important for leaders to be aware of throughout the process. Consideration for both individuals' and groups' effective readiness should be considered and is an important component of change readiness (Armenakis et al., 2013). It is paramount that both the affective readiness for internal and external stakeholders and the required supports to address this PoP be examined prior to finalizing the OIP. Exploring change readiness from a variety of viewpoints assists in potential areas to focus on for the HE setting. Judge and Douglas (2009) created an eight dimensional model for change readiness that highlighted the following: leaders who are trustworthy, trustworthy followers, capable champions, active and engaged middle managers, a creative culture, accountability in the culture, wide communication in the organization, and a systematic way of thinking (Judge & Douglas, 2009). This model highlights

areas for concentration for the change process. Gaining a sound understanding of the culture and accountability within the organization will assist in fostering readiness within College X.

Competing Internal and External Forces that Shape Change

Change agents must show that the need for change is genuine and important (Deszca et al., 2020). Once stakeholders understand the vision, mission, and goals of the plan and the alignment with the strategic direction of the college, it will frame the need for change throughout the plan. The HE environment in the change process provides support for internal forces that influence change. Meso considerations within College X encompass the lack of control the department has on the recent budget limitation due to the impact of COVID-19. This internal force will directly affect the implementation of the OIP, specifically the initiatives within the plan. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, College X recently announced that the new strategic direction focuses on recovery and innovation. Since the strategic direction of the school needs to align with the overall goals of the college, this calls for an examination of the planning process. In particular, the role of innovation, the definition of recovery, and the alignment of both dimensions as it pertains to the overall strategic direction of the academic institution must be examined. Finally, the implications of the corridor-funding model at the department level will need some thought to analyze the implications of this on the college as a whole, especially in relation to the impact on the future direction of the School of X.

Internal forces affecting my department also need attention in terms of the change process. Some internal forces include an awareness of how faculty are coping with all the recent changes including a new LMS and the change to a fully online delivery for their courses (Manning, 2018). An analysis of the supports faculty require throughout the change process for online delivery and a concrete plan will need to be facilitated by the leadership team. This plan

will ensure faculty have the supports they need to move content to online delivery and to navigate the new LMS for their courses. Changes in leadership within the school is another internal factor affecting change readiness (Manning, 2018). After identifying the internal forces that could impede the change process, a plan to support stakeholders to overcome these challenges will need to be implemented.

External forces that influence change, the culture, and change readiness need to be viewed through a macro lens. Ontario colleges are all experiencing the same financial restrictions due to low enrolment and other factors, which need exploration when considering the future state of the organization. Competitiveness amongst HE organizations is becoming increasingly prevalent (Manning, 2018). This is evident especially since several colleges are offering courses fully online, which removes the barrier of geographical location for potential applicants. Consequently, this could have an impact on enrolments since students might select another college for their education. A global shift in initiatives encompassed in corridor funding will need to be taken into consideration throughout the plan.

In this section I discussed the organizational change readiness, including an assessment of change readiness and competing internal and external forces that shape change.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced College X and the PoP, including a discussion of the organizational context, leadership position and lens statement, leadership PoP, framing the PoP, guiding questions emerging from the PoP, the leadership-focused vision for change, and organizational change readiness. The next chapter will build on the concepts outlined above and begin to integrate change planning into the OIP.

Chapter 2: Planning and Development

This chapter focuses on leadership approaches to change, a framework for leading the change process, a critical analysis of the organization, possible solutions to my PoP, and leadership ethics in organizational change. The information presented will further frame the PoP in order to develop the planning and development stages for my OIP. Critically viewing the leadership approaches and generating possible solutions for my PoP seek to shape the pathway for solutions in Chapter 3 of the OIP.

Leadership Approaches to Change

A humanistic leadership framework of relational and distributed leadership underpins this OIP. Aligned with this framework of leadership are the systems and complexity theories that I have integrated into my work. In exploring change in my academic organization, it is important to align my leadership approaches to the identified PoP. Fostering collegiality, collaboration, and cooperation is the essence of relational leadership (Branson et al., 2015). Integrating this approach will enable me to predict barriers and generate potential solutions that support the premise of my OIP. As a middle manager in an AD role, I need to have the agency to implement change in my current leadership role. This is an important factor because a lack of ability to create change would be a significant barrier in the overall process. Throughout this change process, I will be working directly with other ADs, OMs, and the dean of the School of X. I do have the capacity to suggest and implement changes within both my department and the School of X. A collaborative approach amongst leaders supports a united front and demonstrates the commitment leaders have to both the School of X and the college as a whole. There is a consistent need for change in organizational settings, especially in relation to the application of tactics, structure, and culture in the change process (Armenakis et al., 1993). Strategic planning

transforms the HE setting by integrating strategies that support the culture and structure of the School of X. The objective for the strategic direction is to meet the outcomes generated by stakeholders involved in the planning stages of the OIP and create a culture that is supportive, creative, and takes risks. The challenge for today's leaders is to learn how to successfully handle change (Westover, 2010). In my manager role, I will employ tactics and strategies that align with my leadership style throughout the change process.

Relational Leadership

The emphasis of relational leadership theory is on togetherness; it emphasizes the differences between agency and involvement, individually as well as collectively (Sklaveniti, 2016). Self-awareness is critical for the managers who will be involved in the creation of the strategic direction for the School of X. On an interpersonal level, individuals' self-concepts, interactions with others, and relationships with significant others influence how they perceive themselves in relationships (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). Acknowledging my own values and beliefs as they pertain to relational leadership and articulating these to stakeholders will create an environment that is more transparent, inclusive, and relational. Leaders' views of themselves in relation to followers as well as how followers perceive their leaders are important aspects of the leader–follower relationship (Hollander, 1995). The way stakeholders perceive my leadership approaches will determine whether they accept or reject the leadership strategies I employ in the change process. If participants are receptive to my approaches, they are more likely to be engaged in the proposed OIP. It will be my behaviour as a leader and my interactions with others that model a relational approach throughout the change process.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the underpinnings of a humanistic, relational approach will be influential to support stakeholders in the academic environment during the various stages of

the change. The relational aspects involved in this process seek to integrate ethical decision making in the context of the overall plan, while maintaining professional relationships with internal and external stakeholders. Leadership is complex, evolving over time, and it is cocreated in social relationships between individuals (Uhl-Bien & Ospina, 2012). Professional relationships change all the time, especially in relation to the trust formed in the leader–follower relationship. The formation of this professional relationship is two way, with both parties utilizing interpersonal communication to work on common goals (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The development of the professional relationship with both internal and external stakeholders will establish an environment that is engaging, trustworthy, and creates a sense of inclusion. At the organizational level, trust in organizations affects overall outcomes (Tan & Lim, 2009).

Relational leadership theory can be used to propel change in a variety of ways to shape the organizational state in order to create a clear, concrete direction for the School of X. Relational leadership is one of the approaches I will employ to support the change process. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) suggested, “[The] focus [is] on identifying characteristics of dyadic relationships (e.g., trust, respect, mutual obligation) [and] evaluating reciprocal influence between leaders and followers” (p. 223). Integrating this leadership style into the structure of the change process within my OIP will enable me to support internal and external stakeholders in the creation of the goals for the School of X. The emphasis of relational leadership is on the social influence that leads to new approaches and change (Uhl-Bien, 2006). A relational leadership approach will strengthen the development of social influence with stakeholders involved in strategic planning, which will support the change process.

Stakeholder engagement is instrumental to generate innovative ideas for the School of X and assisting stakeholders in understanding the importance of their role as participants. There is a

connection between interdependence in the workplace and social engagement in terms of how the work environment is viewed (K. K. Klein et al., 2001). The way stakeholders perceive the environment and work within the School of X will contribute to their meaningful engagement throughout the process. Institutional leadership principles within the organization are important factors to integrate in the OIP. I seek to generate a plan that meets both the college's strategic vision as well as the needs of community partners who will be engaged in the planning stages of the new direction of the School of X. These leadership principles align with the overall mission, values, and goals of the HEI, which directly support the intention of the PoP, which is to engage many voices in the planning processes within the OIP.

Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) suggested, "The leader member exchange (LMX) contains mutual respect, anticipation of deepening reciprocal trust and the expectation that interacting obligation will grow over time as career-oriented social exchanges blossom into partnerships" (p. 237). Respect and trust in the change process are important at both the individual and institutional levels. To facilitate change, establishing trusting relationships is essential to strengthen the preexisting rapport of both internal and external stakeholders. Trust will enhance relationships, resulting in a productive and collaborative environment (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). These collaborations will contribute to the success of the plan and the formation of initiatives for engagement for all stakeholders involved in the process. Tan and Lim (2009) defined trust in organizations "as an employee's willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of the organization, whose behaviour and actions he or she cannot control" (p. 46). Trust is established with stakeholders by following through on tasks, transparent communication, asking for feedback, and acting on feedback accordingly. Relational approaches identify that organizational phenomena occur in interdependent partnerships and interpretative context by embracing a relational mindset

(Uhl-Bien, 2006). This relational mindset enables leaders to utilize relationships to reach common goals during the strategic planning process. Viewing individuals as human beings in the process and not as objects will support a leadership approach (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). This type of leadership will seek to motivate participants to engage in meaningful ways.

Although relational leadership has many strengths, a challenge of this approach should also be considered. Relationship leadership does not work well in situations in which highly structured authoritarian leadership styles are needed (Ferch & Mitchell, 2001). Since participation in my OIP is voluntary, I do not anticipate the need for authoritarian leadership, but in other situations this may be an issue with a relational leadership style.

Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership is beneficial because it disperses leadership within the organization and empowers stakeholders to develop as leaders (Bush, 2018). This provides opportunities at the organizational level for participants to engage in informal leadership roles, which supports the premise for the PoP. Lumby (2019) noted, “The unique selling point of distributed leadership appears to be its embrace of the possibilities and potentialities of emergent spontaneous leadership, alongside the deliberative leadership of those in formal and informal roles” (p. 10). This encompasses both the individual and institutional levels within the HE context by providing opportunities for meaningful and strategic engagement. At the individual level, all participants involved in the planning process will partake in both informal and formal leadership roles, providing a sense of empowerment for those participating in a leadership capacity. Whether their role is leading discussions or participating actively in dialogue pertaining to the strategic direction for the School of X, the possibilities for participation to form the new strategic direction are broad.

Distribution of tasks are a natural part of the activities that surface during the planning stages of the OIP. Distributed leadership occurs frequently at the institutional level within the College. This is demonstrated in the formation of various working groups to collaborate on specific tasks throughout the organization. This collective approach to distributed leadership disperses opportunities throughout the organization, instead of relying on one leader in the change process (Jones & Harvey, 2017). Distributed leadership will propel change by providing opportunities for stakeholders to be involved in a variety of tasks and by taking on various informal and formal leadership roles throughout the planning stages. Several studies supported the influence of distributed leadership on organizational change (Spillane & Camburn, 2006; Harris, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2009; Mayorwetz, 2008). Bolden (2011) described a strength of distributed leadership “as a means for enhancing the effectiveness of, and engagement with, leadership process” (p. 256). One of the main disadvantages of distributed leadership is loss of power for the formal leader (Lumby, 2019). I do not view this as a concern given that the premise of the OIP is to provide shared leadership experiences to enhance engagement in the strategic planning process.

In this section, I reviewed relational and distributed leadership approaches to change. In the next section, I discuss the framework for leading the change process.

Framework for Leading the Change Process

I considered Lewin’s (1951) change model, Deszca and Ingols’s (2016) change path model, and Kotter’s (1996) eight stages of change for integration in my OIP. Lewin’s model is basic in nature, outdated, and lacks depth and prescriptiveness for the requirements and complexities of my PoP. Although the simplistic nature of this model is somewhat applicable to my OIP, greater depth and breadth are required to generate the desired change. The simplicity of

Lewin's model is appealing as a leader in the change process, but the oversimplification risks losing the multilayered ideals of developing a strategic direction for the school while maintaining a relational leadership style in the process.

Deszca and Ingols's (2016) change path model is appealing and applicable, but lacks the substance of Kotter's (1996) model and the connectedness to my OIP. The awakening stage in this change path model appears cumbersome in nature and not applicable for my PoP. In this stage, change leaders need to be constantly aware of the environmental factors, both internally and externally, that affect the organization (Deszca et al., 2020). This aspect of the model requires continual monitoring of the organization in order to grasp barriers to the change process. Although this component is important, and will naturally occur in change models, the eight stages of Kotter's (1996) model are all encompassing in consolidating a variety of components in more depth. Kotter's (1996) model is both proactive and complementary to relational and distributed leadership. To support organizational change in an HE setting, a structured and detailed implementation plan integrated in my OIP will seek to achieve the desired results that necessitate positive outcomes for success.

To lead the change process and align with the desired strategic direction for the School of X, I strive to integrate Kotter's (1996) eight-stage process into the OIP. This particular framework supports my PoP and the overall purpose of the plan, which is to create coalitions through communication and empower stakeholders to develop a vision for the School of X. The high degree of structure in Kotter's eight-stage process and the step-by-step procedures will guide the change process in a clearly defined manner for all parties involved in the strategic planning. During the implementation of my OIP, it is imperative that each step of Kotter's

process is followed in sequential order to ensure successful outcomes. This supports Deszca et al.'s (2020) view regarding the importance of sequence in improvement work.

León-Soriano et al.'s (2010) SSPM methodology will guide the planning process for the OIP and will be integrated in Kotter's (1996) eight-stage process. The SSPM methodology calls on stakeholders to generate a mission statement, implement a stakeholder analysis, identify strategies, integrate strategies, establish goals, validate, implement changes, and monitor progress (León-Soriano et al., 2010). The integration of these models provides a structured plan for implementation to support the change process to assist in solving my PoP. The following information explains how these two models align with each other for change in the strategic planning process.

Included in the first step of Kotter's (1996) eight-stage process is the importance of a sense of urgency for the desired change within the organization. To reduce complacency in the institution, leaders need to articulate the need for change (Deszca et al., 2020). Stakeholders will need to comprehend the importance of the plan and the necessity of their participation in both the development and implementation of the strategic vision. Encompassed in the strategic plan will be clearly defined goals, initiatives to focus on, values, resources, and participants who will be engaged in the process. HEIs are encouraged to engage in long-term preparation to develop operational priorities and assess the most efficient ways to distribute resources to achieve these goals (He & Oxendine, 2019). To create a sense of urgency, the rationale for the plan, the degree of stakeholder involvement, and expected overall outcomes should be clear to everyone involved. To align Kotter's (1996) model to León-Soriano et al.'s (2010) SSPM, the sense of urgency will be communicated to stakeholders during the planning stages in the creation of the mission statement, when defining strategies and during the creation of goals.

The second stage of Kotter's (1996) model involves creating coalitions. Since a variety of stakeholders will be engaged in the strategic direction, creating coalitions both internally at the college and with community partners with individuals who have the respect of colleagues (Deszca et al., 2020) will aim to generate the interest of all parties involved. The creation of a clear strategic direction that aligns with the vision and values of the HEI will ensure clarity and transparency in the overall proceedings of the OIP. The ways individuals engage with each other and the environment have a significant impact on stakeholders' sense of self and highlight the intricacies of creating coalitions (Wenger, 2000). The creation of coalitions will be both strategic and intentional to meet the objectives of the strategic plan, while building on new and existing partnerships. The connection with León-Soriano et al.'s (2010) SSPM model involves creating coalitions during the stakeholder analysis stage of the model. This will be accomplished by strategically aligning stakeholders to collaborate during the strategic planning process.

The third stage in Kotter's (1996) model is developing a vision and strategy that assists with the clear direction needed for any strategic planning procedure. Mazo and Macpherson (2017) explained, "Strategies describe in relatively general terms the course of action to be undertaken in pursuit of that objective ... [and] *tactics* are the steps taken to realize each strategy" (p. 336). Once the vision is established, additional plans for implementation can be considered (Deszca et al., 2020). Applying León-Soriano et al.'s (2010) SSPM model, this would be implemented during the formation of the mission statement stage. Creating the vision for the plan aids in providing clear direction to all participants who will be engaged in the process.

The fourth stage of Kotter's (1996) model focuses on communication. Clear and ongoing communication is imperative during each portion of the development and implementation stages of the plan. Communication is a critical component of effective change initiatives, according to

most experts (Beatty, 2015). Frequent check-ins with participants will enhance communication, while simultaneously collecting feedback from internal and external stakeholders.

Communication should occur in several different ways through a variety of channels on an ongoing basis (Deszca et al., 2020). Sharing feedback with stakeholders is an important part of the process to keep them engaged in the OIP. Communication will be integrated in all stages of León-Soriano et al.'s (2010) SSPM model.

The fifth stage of Kotter's (1996) model involves empowering stakeholders such as faculty, staff, community partners, and managers who will take part in the change process. A wide range of participants need to engage in the process to facilitate this change (Deszca et al., 2020). Stakeholders will be empowered by getting opportunities to take on informal leadership roles, which aligns with a distributed leadership approach. This will create a sense of belonging and enhance engagement by all parties involved in all areas of the planning. Providing voluntary opportunities for participation will give participants choice in all aspects of their engagement. León-Soriano et al.'s (2010) SSPM model will be integrated in Kotter's model during the planning and implementation of the plan since stakeholders will be participants in ongoing activities throughout the process.

The sixth stage of Kotter's (1996) model, generating short-term wins, will create a supportive environment through relational leadership practices. Highlighting gains in the process will keep stakeholders motivated and engaged (Deszca et al., 2020). Regular and timely feedback or check-ins are important to keep stakeholder motivation and engagement high. León-Soriano et al.'s (2010) SSPM model will be integrated in Kotter's (1996) model during the design of indicators and goals stage of the plan.

The seventh stage of Kotter's (1996) model, consolidation of change, should be monitored on a consistent basis in order to critically analyze what is working and identify areas for improvement. Applying León-Soriano et al.'s (2010) SSPM model to Kotter's (1996) stage of consolidating and generating change will occur during the implementation and monitoring of the plan.

Table 1

Alignment of Kotter's Model to León-Soriano et al.'s SSPM Model

Kotter's Model	SSPM	Alignment of Kotter's Model to SSPM
Sense of urgency	Planning of the strategic plan	A sense of urgency will be communicated to stakeholders during the planning stages, in the creation of the mission statement, when defining strategies, and during the creation of goals.
Creating coalitions	Mission statement	Coalitions will be created during the stakeholder analysis.
Develop a vision and strategy	Stakeholder analysis	Developing a vision will occur during the formation of the mission statement.
Communication	Defining strategies	Communication will be ongoing and occur during every stage of the SSPM.
Empower stakeholders	Strategy implementation and execution	Stakeholders will be empowered during the planning and implementation of the plan.
Generating short-term wins	Design of indicators and goals	Short-term wins will be identified during the validation stage.
Consolidate gains and generate more change	Validation	Consolidating and generating change will occur during the implementation and monitoring of the plan.
Anchoring new approaches	Implementation & monitoring	Anchoring new approaches will occur during the validation, implementation and monitoring stages.

Note. SSPM = Sustainability Strategic Planning and Management.

Adapted from Kotter's (1996) model and León-Soriano et al.'s (2010) SSPM.

The final stage of Kotter's (1996) model is anchoring new approaches. In this stage of the model, it is important to ensure the change is entrenched in the organizational culture and values of the HEI (Deszca et al., 2020). This can be accomplished by providing ongoing communication to stakeholders and ensuring I am aware of all aspects of the current state of the organization during the change process. The alignment of León-Soriano et al.'s (2010) SSPM model in this final stage anchoring new approaches will occur during the validation, implementation, and monitoring stages. Table 1 highlights the alignment of Kotter's (1996) model and León-Soriano et al.'s (2010) SSPM model. Kotter's change model will be further integrated in more detail in the implementation, monitoring, and communication sections of Chapter 3.

This section presented information on the alignment of Kotter's (1996) stages of change and Leon-Soriano et al.'s (2010) SSPM model. The next section explores the changes needed based on the change readiness, organizational analysis, and relevant research.

Critical Organizational Analysis

The current state of College X and the organizational needs will determine the change readiness of the organization, which affects all individuals participating in the OIP. An awareness of participants' readiness for the change process is a noteworthy aspect, as it will enable me to align my leadership style with the needs of stakeholders. Deszca et al. (2020) noted, "Organizational change readiness is determined by previous change experiences of its members; the flexibility and adaptability of the organizational culture; the openness, commitment, and involvement of leadership in organizational change, and member confidence in the leadership" (p. 111). Flexibility and adaptability in any change process will contribute to successful outcomes. Nadler and Tushman (1980) stated, "This ability of executive teams to build in learning and flexibility into the process of managing large system organizational change is a

touchstone for proactively managing re-orientations” (p. 98). In order to incorporate flexibility into the overall plan, voluntary engagement will allow participants to take part in activities that are meaningful to them in their various roles as stakeholders.

As a change leader, I will need to be aware of the organizational culture during all stages of the process and support all participants involved in the various strategic planning phases of the SSPM methodology previously discussed. In addition, having honest conversations with stakeholders will assist in supporting participants to feel more confident in the manner in which change priorities will be established. It is important for managers to gain an understanding of how stakeholders will perceive the change and their responses to it (Westover, 2010).

The change needed as it pertains to my PoP is defining and implementing a clear direction for the School of X by setting goals and engaging stakeholders in the planning in meaningful and strategic ways. This change is necessary to guide the current and future direction of the school, while ensuring the outlined goals align with the overall strategic direction of the college. I will utilize Nadler and Tushman’s (1980) congruence model for critical organizational analysis, as it complements Kotter’s (1996) model for leading change and enhances the probability for successful outcomes with the desired goals for the School of X. The predicted success is based on the structure and depth of the model that will support the management team who will be facilitating the plan. Deszca et al. (2020) described the congruence model as follows: “The model links the environmental input factors to the organization’s components and outputs. It provides a useful classification of internal organizational components and shows the interaction among them” (p. 72). This model encompasses both the environment and the organizational factors that will contribute to the formation of the strategic plan.

Nadler and Tushman's (1980) congruence model also aligns with the integration of the systems theory in my OIP, which I discussed in Chapter 1. Nadler and Tushman (1980) suggested, "A systems, organizations display a number of basic systems characteristics including; internal interdependence, capacity for feedback, equilibrium, equifinality and adaptation" (p. 38). Internal interdependence takes into consideration the component parts of the college system and how departments are connected to each other in terms of day-to-day tasks and other functions.

According to Cooper (2012), "human beings are most likely to achieve a state of well-being when their goals are synergistically related: determined both by the internal configuration of goals and external resources" (p. 153). The right course of action for the strategic planning process means the school has clearly defined goals, specific initiatives, and stakeholders are actively engaged in all aspects of the plan. The overarching goals of College X focus on inclusion, diversity, experiential learning, interprofessional practice, and graduates who are future ready. The goals of each department also focus on the overall objectives of the college, and working groups are often enlisted to achieve the objectives. The goals for both College X and the School of X are determined during the strategic planning process. To ensure balance in the system, ongoing communication is needed to check if the plan is on track and tasks are not cumbersome for the stakeholders involved in the planning stages. Equifinality focuses on the openness of the system and how multiple paths can easily lead to the same results (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). In formulating plans to create the strategic direction for the School of X, multiple suggestions and solutions will be presented by the stakeholders involved, so it will be important to be open to a variety of ways to work on the identified goal areas.

Finally, being flexible and adaptable will necessitate open minds, creativity, and risk taking in the strategic planning process. Nadler and Tushman (1980) suggested, “Systems theory provides a way of thinking about the organization in more complex and dynamic terms” (p. 38). The complexities of College X, especially in the current state of flux due to COVID-19, might affect the strategic planning process in multiple ways. Strategic planning is complex, as a result, issues with the implementation of the plan typically result from the actual formulation of the plan (Cowburn, 2005). This demonstrates the importance of the planning stages as it pertains to my OIP. Integrating a proactive approach that encompasses the complexities of the HE system allows for the possibility of alternative plans to support the overall objectives of the college.

The congruence model focuses on the change process, in particular the interdependence of the model, the connection of the components within the system, and interactions among individuals involved in the process (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). This statement also supports the systems theory that is integrated in my OIP, since it highlights the importance of interdependence and the component parts of the system, which in this case is the college, School of X, stakeholders, and community. Critically exploring the connection of all parts of the strategic planning process will assist in predicting complexities in the plan in order to generate possible solutions for any problems that might occur.

Inputs

The congruence model focuses on four specific inputs as it pertains to organizations. The inputs highlighted in this model include the environment, resources, organization’s history, and strategy (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). When applying these concepts to the strategic planning process, a clear understanding of the environment within each department, the School of X, and the college as whole need examination in order to generate possible solutions for the PoP. The

college environment encompasses budgetary limitations imposed by the funding model initiated by the government, the board governance model, and policies. As a leader, I need a clear understanding of what is happening in the environment, including possible barriers and potential opportunities for growth and development. This can be accomplished by gathering information pertaining to shared values, ethics, priorities, and commonalities from different areas of the college.

The second input in the congruence model is the contemplation of necessary resources required for the strategic planning process. Resources include stakeholders, time for individuals to be involved, space (in person or virtual), technology, and tangibles to facilitate meetings. The climate of the organization is also an environmental factor contributing to the process (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). In order to integrate a successful strategic planning process, a positive climate within the organization is crucial to meet the outlined goals and objectives of the plan. If the climate is negative in nature, it will inevitably generate barriers for the OIP. These barriers directly affect the results of the proposed plan and impede the process. Leadership strategies employed throughout the planning and implementation stages aim to shape a positive culture to promote an inclusive and supportive climate for the organization.

The third input in the congruence model is the organization's history pertaining to the change process. Events from the past can positively or negatively shape the environment and can directly enhance or impede the change process. It is beneficial for leaders to gain an understanding of an institution's growth, previous experiences, the impact of these experiences, previous crises, management styles, and change of the mission and values of the setting (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). In Chapter 1, the history of the college was discussed to gain a better understanding of the direct correlation from past to present events. For future innovative

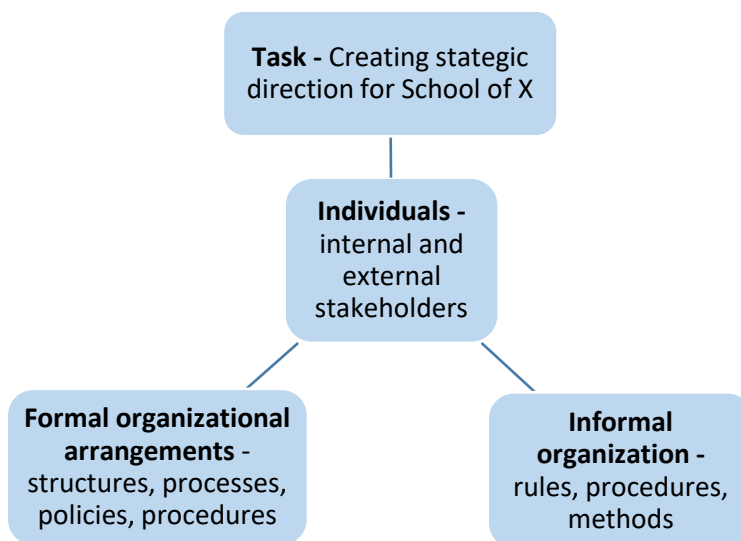
planning, both learning initiatives that have worked and those that did not should also be considered. The manner in which organizations respond to crises also contributes to the change process. Historical actions of how leaders problem solve during these situations directly affects the future direction of planning in the organization. A recent example are the crises that surfaced due to the pandemic. The organization did an excellent job of dealing with the crises and quickly learned to be proactive rather than reactive, which led to successful outcomes. Finally, the past experiences of stakeholders in strategic planning processes also needs consideration as an input as it pertains to the congruence model. To date, College X has encouraged inclusive participation of internal and external stakeholders in strategic planning. This active engagement contributes to developing the core values of the organization and generating specific goals within the HE setting.

The fourth input in the congruence model is strategy. Strategy involves decision making, distribution of resources, barriers, and opportunities (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). Strategies integrated in the plan need to align with the available resources in the School of X and utilize them to achieve the proposed goals of the college. This portion of the model focuses on the overall mission of the academic setting and the function of strategies within the HE environment. It also highlights the supports required to achieve the overall strategic direction of the organization. The final point related to strategy is the performance that occurs in the strategic planning process. The performance entails the specific initiatives formulated during the strategic planning sessions that will be discussed further in the possible solutions section of this chapter. Potential initiatives with the strategic plan encompass inclusivity, mental health, microcredentialing, and research related to experiential learning.

Outputs

Nadler and Tushman (1980) also discussed outputs in the congruence model, which “are what the organization produces, how it performs and how effective it is. Three factors contribute to the outputs including, goal attainment, resource utilization, and adaptability” (p. 43). In regard to my PoP, producing a strategic plan for the School of X, evaluating its effectiveness to determine if goals are achievable, and formulating a flexible plan that utilizes the resources available to reach goals is prudent for the success of my OIP. The adaptability of the plan must ensure the goals align with the current state of the environment within the organization. If modifications are needed for successful outcomes, they should be integrated into the goals during the initial planning stages of the strategic direction for the school.

As a manager it is imperative I remain aware of the environment to ensure my approach supports the overall outlined goals for the School of X. When determining the most appropriate solution for my PoP, I will consider the inputs in the process with the goal of generating outputs that meet the needs of the organization. This will transform the environment in meaningful and purposeful ways as it pertains to the strategic direction for the School of X. In addition, integrating my leadership style within the plan, further supports the output of productive results during the planning, implementation and assessment of the OIP. The ultimate goal is the transition of visioning the plan to implementation.

Figure 1*Organizational Components*

Note. Adapted from Nadler and Tushman (1980).

Nadler and Tushman (1980) described four major organizational components: (1) the task, (2) the individuals, (3) the formal organizational arrangements, and (4) the informal organization” (p. 43). As indicated in Figure 1, the task in this instance is generating the strategic direction of the School of X. This will involve a variety of stakeholders who will take part in formulating ideas to assist with the planning of the vision, goals, and mission for the college. Throughout the strategic planning stages, the needs of all stakeholders will be taken into consideration. Also noted in Figure 1 is the formal organizational arrangements that include the structures, processes, policies, and procedures within the college. The informal organization in this instance includes the adherence to rules and methods during the strategic visionary sessions (Nadler & Tushman, 1980).

Congruence

Nadler and Tushman (1980) described congruence as it pertains to their framework:

This view includes the fit between the organization and its larger environment, that an organization is most effective when its strategy is consistent with its environment and when the organizational components are congruent with the task necessary to implement that strategy. (p. 45)

This portion of the model focuses on aligning strategies to ensure outcomes are congruent with the optimal goals of the achieved state of the HEI. Ultimately, the overall goals of the college should align with the strategic direction of the School of X. In order to ensure congruence in my OIP, I must employ ongoing communication with the entire college system. Additionally, the goals formed must support the policies, procedures, and governance model of the academic institution. The strategy needs to assess the environment accurately and align with the capabilities of the organization (Deszca et al., 2020). As a change leader, I need an awareness of all the practices occurring at the college and must assess the environment on a continual basis to ensure I am meeting the overall needs of the organization. In the next section, I present possible solutions to address the PoP.

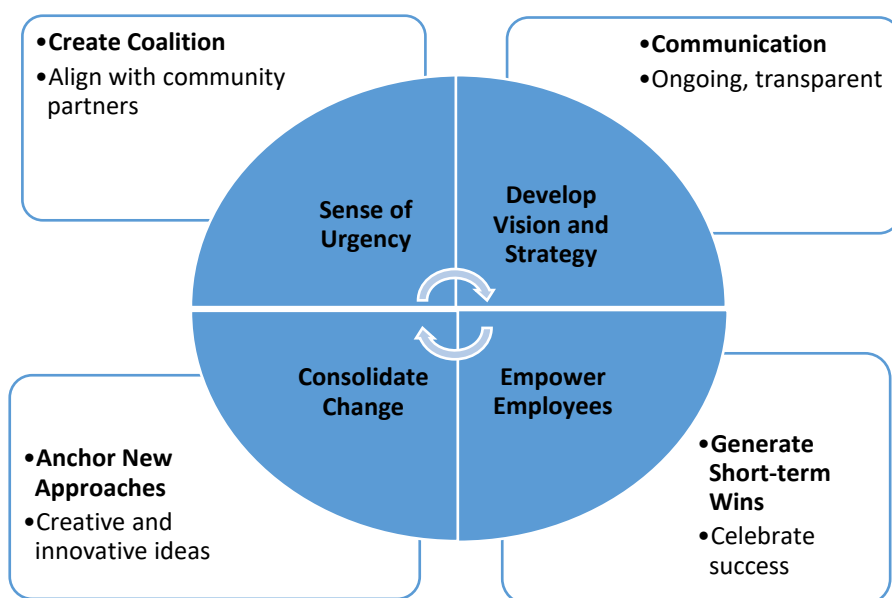
Possible Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice

In order to engage internal and external stakeholders in the development of the strategic plan for the school, a variety of solutions will be discussed to determine the best approach to address this PoP. I selected the identified problem because the new School of X needs a clear direction that aligns with the vision and goals of the college. In this process, we need to engage both internal and external stakeholders in meaningful ways. The importance of their participation stems from the need for their engagement in a variety of initiatives that will surface once the strategic direction for the school gains approval at the senior management level. Some of the generated solutions from stakeholder engagement could overlap and complement each other as

part of the planning process. The solutions presented include large group feedback sessions, small group sessions, hiring an external facilitator, and a hybrid approach combining several approaches. An analysis of these approaches, including benefits and barriers will be discussed in order to determine the best outcome for the change process. Kotter's (1996) process for change model, depicted in Figure 2, will be integrated in some of the possible solutions presented.

Figure 2

Integration of Kotter's (1996) Eight-Stage Process for Change



Note. Adapted from *Leading Change*, by J. P. Kotter, 1996, Harvard School Business Press.

Large Group Feedback Sessions to Begin the Change Process

One consideration to address my PoP is to host stakeholder sessions in a large group format such as a town hall (Strike, 2018). This would provide stakeholders with the opportunity to engage in meaningful ways by providing suggestions for goals for the strategic plan for the school. The dean and/or the ADs from the various departments from the School of X would lead the large group discussion and orientation. The internal stakeholders who would be participating in the large group sessions would include faculty and support staff from all of the departments

within the School of X. External stakeholders would include community partners who support the activity within the various departments. Examples of these stakeholders are staff from a variety of agencies who support activity within the school. These agencies provide field placement experiences for students within their program of study (POS). The total number of people who could be attending would include several hundred full and part-time faculty, staff, and community partners. According to Kotter's (1996) model, enlisting stakeholders to participate in the planning occurs in the stage where coalitions are built to assist in enhancing engagement (Figure 2). A relational leadership approach also supports this stage, since leaders are relying on prior relationships to generate coalitions with community partners. León-Soriano et al. (2010) suggested, "The stakeholder perspective collects all the objectives regarding stakeholders' interests" (p. 258). The college has created and maintained excellent community partnerships over the years. Engaging these partners in the OIP provides an opportunity for them to express their ideas regarding shared partnerships and innovative solutions to community issues.

The dean and ADs facilitating the event would need to meet prior to the session to organize the agenda and to form strategies for engagement. Educational leaders would also need to pinpoint the desired information for collection during the meeting. Prior to the event, an agenda would be distributed to all stakeholders. Included in the agenda would be points of discussion and areas to brainstorm prior to the meeting so stakeholders can come to the session with ideas for the discussion. The prior information for stakeholders should also include a reminder of the overall strategic direction of College X and the importance of aligning this with the future direction of the School of X. In addition, generating a survey prior to the session to collect ideas could also help guide the process. This could narrow down goals for the strategic

direction of the school and assist in generating more ideas during the large group discussion. Creating the goals following the specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely (SMART) method (Doran, 1981) will ensure the plan is concise. Research conducted by León-Soriano et al. (2010) confirmed a systematic approach to strategic planning benefits all stakeholders to ensure they are clear on the direction for the plan and vision of the organization (p. 266).

Several resources are needed to facilitate a large group discussion/orientation for staff, faculty, and community partners. Large group meetings such as town halls provide the opportunity for stakeholders to ask questions and offer feedback (Beatty, 2015). In order to acquire the required information needed, stakeholders would need several hours to meet as a large group. The timing of the large group session would need to align with the availability of the faculty who are teaching, so meetings would be scheduled during break week to accommodate their class times. A large room would need to be booked in order to accommodate the size of the group attending the session. In addition, event organizers would need to implement RSVPs for the large group session to ensure the room could accommodate those who will be attending. Although several hundred professionals will be invited, it is unlikely all of them would be able to attend. When booking the room it will be important to ensure it has the required technology and is equipped with a projector in order to share information on the large screen. Alternately, the meeting could be scheduled virtually on a platform such as Zoom. This would benefit participants because for some it might be more convenient. One of the negative aspects of this solution is that participants could find it less engaging due to the lack of face-to-face interaction, especially if their cameras are turned off. In terms of the financial resources required, a small budget for food and beverages could be included since the event would span several hours. Given that community partners would be attending, parking needs to be arranged prior to the

event, which would also be an additional cost to consider. According to Bolden (2011), “The notion of distributed leadership may be invoked by senior managers to encourage engagement and participation in organizational activities while masking substantial imbalances in resources and sources of power” (p. 260). Any budgetary requirements need consideration prior to the event and approval is required at the management level. Support staff within the department would assist in making the above-mentioned arrangements and they would require time during their daily workload to complete these tasks. The event would be recorded for individuals who are unable to attend and an opportunity to forward their suggestions would be provided so they can contribute to the strategic planning process. A clear plan of next steps would also be presented at the session so stakeholders are aware of how they can contribute further to the strategic direction of the school.

The benefit to a large group approach is that it would engage a vast number of internal and external stakeholders at one time to share ideas and suggestions (Delprino, 2013). Providing the opportunity to host a large group session would also demonstrate the commitment of management to obtain information from a variety of stakeholders to assist in planning the strategic direction for the school. Inclusion in these sessions demonstrates an appreciation for alternate perspectives from a variety of people (Johnston & Taylor, 2018). Ideally, stakeholders would also feel included in the process, which would encourage engagement from everyone involved. Conversely, one consequence of a large group approach is that it may limit engagement, as it may not provide opportunity for everyone to share their suggestions in meaningful ways, thereby limiting ideas and suggestions.

Small Working Groups

A second option for consideration is small working groups for discussion about the strategic direction of the school. Small working groups might be more beneficial than large groups when seeking to encourage active engagement from a variety of stakeholders (Strike, 2018). Managers as well as internal and external stakeholders could participate in these groups, representing a variety of departments within the school. Specifically, stakeholders participating could be ADs, OMs, faculty, support staff, and community partners. To form the small groups each department could ask for volunteers, so stakeholders would not feel obligated to participate. I suggest forming two to three different groups to collectively work on goal areas for the strategic direction of the school. The optimal number of participants for each group would be approximately 15 to 20 people. It would be important for group members to have roles in order to ensure tasks are organized and the groups have clearly defined goals. Individual tasks in each small group would be the leader or facilitator, notetaker, spokesperson, timekeeper, and taskmaster. This approach supports Kotter's (1996) eight-stage model by empowering employees in the process (Figure 2). The task of each group would be to generate ideas for goals for the School of X and present these to the entire school for their consideration. Each small group could present their information in a face-to-face meeting, email, or a Doodle link to obtain feedback from the entire school. As indicated in Kotter's model for change, anchoring new approaches by creating innovative and creative solutions is one of the goals for this possible solution to my PoP. Obtaining feedback in a variety of ways seeks to meet this objective, since the more information acquired, the better the potential outcomes for the plan. Prior to meeting in their small groups, participants would be provided a copy of the new strategic direction for the college and an agenda so they are prepared for their session.

One of the main resources that would be required is time for participants to engage in the small group sessions. The challenge will be in aligning participants' schedules. The small groups could meet in person or be facilitated virtually on platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Meeting online may be a convenient option for stakeholders and would eliminate the need for space and parking at the college. There are several benefits for this option allowing for increased direct communication and engagement, which allows for more authentic voices to be heard in decision making. According to Powell (2008), "The decision-making process is largely one of consultation and consensus building, thereby providing stakeholders the opportunity to exert influence" (p. 393). In comparison to the large group meeting, gathering in smaller groups provides opportunities for more engagement since there would be fewer participants. This solution provides opportunities to collect information from the groups in the moment, which allows for immediate feedback. It would be both easier to collect the information and to elaborate on the concepts presented in the group discussions. If meetings are in person, it will be easier to find space for small meeting rooms. One of the stages in Kotter's (1996) model is generating short-term wins (Figure 2). In this stage, leadership will want to celebrate success during the planning stages. This is easy to facilitate by providing immediate feedback and praise for stakeholders' participation in the process.

Although hosting focus groups with stakeholders to determine issues assists in addressing areas of concern (Beatty, 2015), several consequences could surface with a small group approach. One of the issues I predict would be that the majority of people might not feel included in the process. If only a select number of participants contribute in the small group discussions, the majority of stakeholders might perceive this as having a hidden agenda, depending on the participants who contribute during the session. In addition, those participating might not be an

adequate representation of the entire school. If participants feel this way, resistance could surface from stakeholders.

External Facilitator

The third option is an external facilitator. Many schools within the college setting have hired an external facilitator to guide the strategic planning process. Usage of qualified and professional consultants who can convert the organization's needs into a strategy and action plan will assist in strategic planning (León-Soriano et al., 2010). The research León-Soriano et al. (2010) conducted validates the success of this particular solution to my PoP. This strategy would involve the dean hiring the facilitator to work directly with the School of X to formulate the goals that align with the strategic direction of the college. Prior to hiring the facilitator, the dean would need to follow the college's procurement policy. This entails obtaining three different quotes to determine the best cost estimate for the job. Once the facilitator is hired, multiple meetings would need to be scheduled to begin formulating the strategic plan for the school. The initial conference calls would involve the facilitator collecting information regarding the previous goals of the college and more specifically for the School of X. The information gathered would likely focus on an overview of the departments within the school. Initially, the meetings with the facilitator would likely include the dean, ADs, OMs, and coordinators of the various programs within the school. The initial meetings would also focus on a plan of action for the formation of the strategic direction and defining everyone's roles throughout the process. Strategies would need to be determined in terms of how to correlate the information from stakeholders and mapping out a step-by-step plan of action to formulate the plan.

The specific guidance requested from the facilitator would include how to facilitate the process, areas of focus, initial steps, and a clear plan of action. To engage additional stakeholders

in the planning stages, the management team would follow the guidance of the external facilitator, as external facilitators assist in balancing stakeholder voices, allowing everyone involved in planning to contribute in meetings (Hinton, 2012). It is also important to include participants who are supportive of the goals of the college's strategic plan in the planning process. The additional participants would likely include coordinators, faculty, support staff, and other managers within the school. It is important to have representatives from each of the five departments so all areas have a voice in the strategic direction.

Once the working groups with representation from all areas are established, the next step is to have several meetings for brainstorming sessions led by the external facilitator. One or two sessions would occur to gather specific information on areas the school should focus on for the next several years. After data are collected, the facilitator would compose a final report to present to the small working group for feedback. The group would then meet with the facilitator to revise the plan before presenting it to the school in its entirety. Once feedback is obtained from the entire school, the plan will be finalized.

Hiring an external person to facilitate the process would have a significant cost value to the organization. Due to the current budgetary restrictions, the senior leaders of the organization would not likely support this solution. The impacts of financial resources is a significant source of leverage in the decision-making processes of institutions (Powell, 2008). Another required resource includes the room and technology required to facilitate the meetings. Given the space limitations at the college, this could be problematic. If restrictions due to the pandemic remain in place, face-to-face meetings would be replaced by virtual ones to facilitate the process.

This solution has similar components to the small and large group meeting options with the same pros and cons. The benefits to this approach is the bulk of the work is completed by the

external facilitator hired by the School of X. This would save participants a significant amount of time in the development stages. The facilitator would generate the report by categorizing all of the information collected during the small group sessions. Another benefit is the experience the facilitator brings to the process. They would have experience in developing strategic plans and their guidance would assist the school in focusing on key areas in a concrete and specific way (Hinton, 2012).

While benefits do exist to this possible solution, consequences of this approach are also evident. One of the consequences of this approach is the significant cost associated with hiring a facilitator, including their time, accommodations, and food. Resources need to be available to hire an external facilitator (Hinton, 2012). The pandemic has created significant financial limitations; as such, the probability of gaining approval for this is low. Another consequence is participants could be reluctant to engage in the process because they might not trust having someone external guide the planning. They could perceive this as management having a hidden agenda, which would discourage participation due to the lack of trust in the process.

Hybrid Model

For the final possible solution, I will consider a hybrid model that consists of large and small group sessions that comprise an eclectic strategy using components from a couple of the possible outcomes. Integrating both small and large group approaches while using the suggestions outlined above would generate a solution that would meet the needs of more of the participants. According to Johnston and Taylor (2018), “Engagement is operationalized through organizational resources and decision-making conducive to synthesizing meaning and value that evolves from dialogue, interaction, and connection with diverse stakeholder perspectives” (p. 27). For this approach, I will hold a large group feedback session; once information is

compiled, small group sessions would be facilitated. The resources already stated above would be similar, with budgetary restrictions being at the forefront of any decision making. I will not incorporate any ideas discussed in hiring an external facilitator, since this solution is not cost effective or practical in nature.

Obvious similarities exist since the approach integrates ideas from a couple of the possible solutions previously discussed in this section. Analyzing these similarities is what prompted me to consider a hybrid model. The benefits of this solution is it meets a variety of stakeholder needs by providing several methods to obtain feedback, both in a small and large group setting. Through stakeholder consultation participants can be engaged as main informants throughout the strategic planning process (Gibson et al., 2004). In addition, the hybrid model is more cost-effective, given that an external facilitator will not be needed. I also feel a hybrid model is more inclusive and will engage a greater number of participants. The consequences of considering a hybrid model is the need for multiple strategies, which could appear cumbersome for some participants because of both the small and large group meetings and individuals could feel overwhelmed with the process.

Another consideration is the perception of employees that strategic planning is widely driven by administration. According to one college president, the administration is responsible for the college's corporate and strategic plans as well as the implementation of policy reforms that promote the institution's mission (Powell, 2008). Although the administration leads the work, employee contributions are essential to the strategic planning for the School of X.

In terms of the plan-do-study-act (PDSA) model (Deming, 1993), goals will be clearly identified and communicated so all participants will know what the plan entails. The facilitation of the plan is the do phase of Deming's (1993) PDSA model, which will involve participation

from stakeholders in a variety of activities. The study phase in the PDSA model (Deming, 1993) involves reviewing data and closely monitoring solutions for the PoP to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed solutions. The final step of the PDSA model, the act phase (Deming, 1993), is the further facilitation of strategies and necessary modifications in the strategic planning process. The PDSA model will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

After considering all possible generated solutions, I will be integrating a hybrid solution to the PoP because it best aligns with all stakeholder needs. In Chapter 3, I will create a more in-depth view of the selected specified solution to the PoP and integrate details focusing on how the selected solution meets the overall premise of my OIP. This solution will seek to solve my PoP, which will shape the future direction of the School of X and my own department by having obtained a clear direction that will support students, faculty, and community partners.

This section presented possible solutions to the PoP, a discussion on potential barriers, and concluded with identifying the selected solution for change. The next section explores the chosen leadership approaches, ethical considerations, and challenges as they apply to the overall change process.

Leadership Ethics and Organizational Change

Ethical leadership as it pertains to this organizational change focuses on creating a trusting environment in which stakeholders feel safe to articulate their opinions while contributing to the strategic direction in meaningful and purposeful ways. Leaders who care for each other's well-being are more likely to foster an environment of collaboration and trust, which leads to the increased engagement of stakeholders (Salas-Vallina & Fernandez, 2017). In my leadership role, I will support an inclusive environment that is both meaningful and engaging to participants in the strategic planning process.

Brown et al. (2005) defined ethical leadership as “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making” (p. 120). Creating a sense of caring and compassion in leadership roles is instrumental when implementing organizational change. If stakeholders feel comfortable in the environment, they will be more confident to take risks and grow as professionals. Ethical considerations such as ensuring decision making aligns with the values and mission of the college will be instrumental in the change process and demonstrate to participants the integrity of the OIP (Strike, 2018). Stakeholders acting as leaders in the strategic planning process will seek to reinforce an environment that exhibits open communication, positive attitudes, and ethical decision-making.

A relational leadership approach aligns with ethical practices in an HE context and will be integrated in the planning and implementation of my OIP. My role as a leader is an integral component of the leader–follower relationship. Ethical leaders treat everyone with dignity, use fairness as a guiding principle in their actions, include stakeholders in decision-making processes, share successes and mistakes, and never compromise when it comes to justice and rights (Güngör, 2018). During the strategic planning process for the School of X, I will ensure participants are included in the decision making by asking for their input, making decisions in an ethical manner, and demonstrating transparent communication as a facilitator.

The responsibilities of the HE setting require decisions be made in an ethical manner while maintaining the interests of students and the organization as the top priority. Ethical leadership is the ability to make ethical decisions, integrate ethical principles into the system’s framework, and develop this structure within the organization (Güngör, 2018). Making the right

decisions for students and the organization is my ultimate goal as a change leader. Since multiple leaders will be engaged in the OIP, ensuring all stakeholders share common goals and beliefs regarding the leadership approach is an integral part of the engagement strategy.

Additional ethical responsibilities in my leadership role include ensuring the process is respectful and honest and communication is transparent. Following the college's policies, exhibiting professional behaviour, and ensuring decision-making supports the mission, values, and goals of the organization is imperative for an ethical leadership approach. The success of the organization is linked to quality, effectiveness, and ethical attitude and to the approach of the organization's leader (Sharma et al., 2019).

As change leaders, stakeholders must practice due diligence and display ethical leadership practices in their interactions with all parties involved. Ethical leaders can empathize with stakeholders, communicate openly, and take a leadership role that benefits the organization's culture (Chan et al., 2011). It is also important for stakeholders to share the same ethical beliefs and practices during their engagement in strategic planning initiatives. As leaders, stakeholders have the responsibility to maintain an environment that is psychologically safe and physically respectful and adheres to the professional expectations of the college. If issues surface during the OIP, they need to be addressed in a timely fashion. Solutions to such issues would involve having direct and supportive conversations to ensure everyone shares the common goals of the organization and acts in a professional manner while contributing to the success of the outlined plan.

Barriers to the decision-making process could potentially surface, especially in relation to any initiatives that require monetary funding. Lack of funding causes instability in college settings, making certain stakeholders, especially faculty, feel helpless and powerless (Powell,

2008). Managers comprehend the financial constraints of the current environment, but it is sometimes hard for faculty to understand broader organizational issues. This is not in the scope of their role, and they often do not have the same information shared at the management level. The faculty want what is best for students, and they often advocate for services that cannot be supported due to financial barriers. Some transparency in the budgetary restrictions would be helpful for faculty to understand the decision-making managers are responsible for and how this can affect the strategic direction of the school.

In exploring the proposed hybrid solution, several ethical considerations surface. One in particular is to ensure leaders are consulting with all stakeholders in the process so everyone feels included in the plan. Leaders who successfully use employee consultation have the ability to construct a supportive work climate, with several other positive effects (Chan et al., 2011). Consulting with stakeholders supports a positive environment and generates opportunities for additional involvement in planning processes. Another ethical consideration is to ensure the process is inclusive, allowing all stakeholders the opportunity to participate in various roles. Marshall (2019) suggested, “An aid to inclusivity is having a project team to provide the openness, teamwork and support to allow for the ‘tentacles’ of the change to reach into all areas, and for communication to be more personalized” (p. 33). College X strives to foster an environment that is inclusive and respectful, and aligning my OIP with these concepts will assist in achieving this goal.

One study conducted suggested one of the most difficult challenges facing today’s leaders is establishing trust and creating reliable relationships at work (Sharma et al., 2019). As a leader in the change, process building trusting relationships with stakeholders is important to me. I will aim to build trust by being consistent, following through with expectations, providing honest

feedback, and supporting a trusting environment. This approach supports relational leadership since trust, honesty, and the importance of building relationships is encompassed in this managerial approach.

Finally, an important ethical consideration is integrating elements of equity, diversity, and inclusion in my OIP. It is beneficial to change the learning environment to accommodate culturally diverse student needs (Blummer et al., 2018). In my leadership role, I seek to shape an inclusive culture that promotes equal opportunities for all participants in my department and foster initiatives that support learners in the academic environment. Ensuring the school has diverse representation in culture and gender also provides different perspectives from individuals with varying backgrounds and beliefs. This is important to build a culture of acceptance, respect, and inclusivity.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented more in-depth information of my leadership approach, Kotter's (1996) change model, Nadler and Tushman's (1980) congruence model, generated possible solutions for my PoP and discussed leadership ethics as it pertains to organizational change. León-Soriano et al.'s (2010) SSPM methodology was also introduced in this chapter and aligned with Kotter's eight-stage process. This methodology provides a structured framework for the implementation of strategic planning. After critically analyzing all possible generated solutions, I chose to create a hybrid strategy, which includes concepts from the four proposed solutions. This solution will better meet the needs of all stakeholders involved and seeks to provide a sustainable solution for my PoP. Chapter 3 will focus on implementing, monitoring, evaluating, and formulating a communication plan of the change process.

Chapter 3: Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication

This chapter focuses on the change implementation plan, monitoring and evaluation of the change process, the plan to communicate the need for change, and next steps and future considerations. This chapter also discusses stakeholder reactions to change, resources, identification of issues and strategies to address them, and short-, medium-, and long-term goals are also discussed. The change implementation plan integrates Kotter's (1996) eight-stage process and Nadler and Tushman's (1980) congruence model.

Change is inevitable in HE settings, especially in the current state of constant flux academic organizations are experiencing due to the pandemic. Consequently, College X, similar to other academic institutions, will be in a state of change due to variables associated with COVID-19. Adult education continues to be affected worldwide by the restrictive measures necessary to decrease the spread of COVID-19 (Käpplinger & Lichte, 2020). Prior to the pandemic, HEIs experienced change for a variety of reasons. Marshall (2019) described change in HE as “unprecedented . . . with institutions facing uncharted challenges that include: widening access and new forms of tertiary education, daily technological advances, and constant sustainability issues” (p. 4). Due to unpredictable environments, organizations constantly need to implement changes in structure, initiatives, and the working culture (Armenakis et al., 1993). These changes necessitate an implementation plan to incorporate initiatives in the formation of the goals for the School of X.

Change Implementation Plan

Since environments are continually changing, strategic planning is an ongoing process in many organizations (León-Soriano et al., 2010). The congruence model of Nadler and Tushman (1980) is incorporated in the OIP in Chapter 2, which aligns with Kotter's (1996) model of

change. These frameworks align with the methodology of the systems theory approach, which is also integrated throughout my OIP. A systems theory is a theoretical perspective that examines a phenomenon as a whole, rather than as the sum of its parts, with an emphasis on interactions and relationships between components (Mele et al., 2010). Viewing this change as an interconnected process that involves the larger system of the college helps to align the goals with the overall mission and values of the postsecondary setting. In this section, I integrate Nadler and Tushman's (1980) change management process to Kotter's (1996) eight-stage process to assist with the formation of the strategic direction for the School of X. In Chapter 2, I introduced the SSPM methodology and the alignment with Kotter's (1996) change process, which will also be interspersed in this section. My PoP focuses on engaging internal and external stakeholders in meaningful and purposeful ways to define a clear direction for the School of X. As noted in Chapter 1, the definition of meaningful is work that encourages and strengthens individuals' sense of self and their professional lives (Breen, 2019). Yeager and Bundick (2009) defined purposeful "as any reason that people have for their actions, regardless of who benefits from them" (p. 5). This section coordinates the use of these models to implement the chosen solution in this OIP.

Implementation of Solution

As noted in Chapter 2, a hybrid approach of large and small group sessions is the solution I selected to mobilize my PoP. This hybrid approach is a means to develop a concrete starting point for the future direction of the School of X. During the small and large group sessions, themes will be identified and data will be analyzed to assist in the planning process. Historically, staff and faculty at College X have found strategic plans to be overwhelming. Strategic plans break down for several reasons, but one of the main reasons is creating overly ambitious goals

(Sanaghan, 2009). To ensure the plan is not too cumbersome, by the end of the stakeholder sessions, one or two concrete initiatives will be identified for the School of X.

To provide clarity for the change process, I incorporated a chart in the Appendix outlining a breakdown of Kotter's (1996) eight-step process, which includes strategies and timelines for completion. Kotter's process is *the how* in leading organization change and Nadler and Tushman's (1980) congruence model is *what* in the institution that needs to change. Nadler and Tushman's construct is considered an open systems model that focuses on the institution and the relationship to the external environment, which in this OIP encompasses the community partners who will be engaged in the process (Deszca et al., 2020).

The first fundamental element in Nadler and Tushman's (1980) model are the tasks for the plan, which for this OIP involves the creation of the strategic plan for the School of X utilizing the hybrid solution of large and small group sessions. Integrating Kotter's (1996) stages, during the initial large group session in the first month of the plan, I will work to create a sense of urgency by articulating the need for a clear direction for the School of X. Both internal and external stakeholders will be invited to attend the initial large group meeting to review the new overall goals of College X and provide feedback on potential initiatives of shared interest for engagement for the School of X.

The second fundamental element in Nadler and Tushman's (1980) model involves the people within the strategic planning process, who in this instance are the stakeholders. According to Strike (2018), "Strategic conversations must be purposeful and managed, with care given to both fostering the preconditions and shaping the activity itself" (p. 75). During the second month of the plan, small group sessions will occur to have concentrated conversations to generate ideas for initiatives stakeholders can engage in for the plan. In Step 2 of Kotter's (1996) model, this

supports creating coalitions by identifying a shared interest for change among internal and external stakeholders, such as a mental health program that benefits all participants.

Nadler and Tushman's (1980) third fundamental element is the formal organization, which in this instance is College X. As mentioned, these fundamental elements are an open system and stakeholders within the system may view the goals of the School of X in different ways. Despite these varied perspectives, the goals are interconnected and interdependent parts of a system that is complex (Deszca et al., 2020). This aligns with the third step of Kotter's (1996) model, developing a vision and strategy, which involves participants engaging in the aforementioned large and small group sessions. As previously noted, this will occur in the first 2 months of the plan to generate solutions for change. Guidance for resource generation and distribution should be provided by an efficient strategic plan (Jasti et al., 2019). Resources needed for these three steps of Kotter's (1996) model include time for participants to attend, a space in the HE setting for stakeholders to meet, a notetaker to compile information, and the budget and technology needed to facilitate the meeting.

Nadler and Tushman's (1980) fourth fundamental element is the informal organization, specifically the culture of the HEI. Open and transparent communication supports a strong culture with the organization (Strike, 2018). This aligns with the fourth step of Kotter's (1996) model, which is communication. Communicating the progress of the plan, goals, shared interests, and any identified changes is instrumental throughout this process. Identifying the most appropriate communication mechanisms within an HE organization necessitates ongoing collaboration with all stakeholders (Mazo & Macpherson, 2017). Communication can be facilitated through email, small group sessions, and during professional learning communities (PLCs). The PLCs are meetings that involve internal and external stakeholders with a focus on

strategic planning. These meetings will take place within small group sessions as an opportunity for collaboration in a professional learning community. Integrating the tactic of PLCs as a change agent will support the overall premise of the plan by providing opportunities for engagement for all participants during small group sessions. The work of PLCs can ascertain the best way to implement suggested improvements, while attempting to create changes in the community involving shared interests (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). This common interest of engagement in the strategic planning process allows PLCs to strive for the desired contribution from both internal and external stakeholders. Supportive and shared leadership, shared principles and vision, collaborative learning and implementation of learning, and supportive conditions must all be included in the design of PLCs (Connell et al., 2012).

The more aligned Nadler and Tushman's (1980) fundamental elements are, the greater the likelihood for successful outcomes in the change process (Deszca et al., 2020). The fifth stage of Kotter's (1996) stages, empowering stakeholders to actively participate in the OIP, provides opportunities for emergent leaders, such as faculty and community partners, to engage in distributed leadership roles during the large and small group sessions. This allows for meaningful and intentional collaborations with both internal and external stakeholders. The roles for emergent leaders consist of acting as the spokesperson for the group, leading subcommittees, and taking the lead on specific initiatives. This stage of Kotter's (1996) model focuses on shared interests and engagement for participants while working toward common goals for the academic institution.

In Nadler and Tushman's (1980) congruence model, consideration of the strategies employed by organizations by incorporating strengths and weaknesses is pivotal in the change process. An example of this is allocations of resources to create change (Deszca et al., 2020). The

sixth stage of Kotter's (1996) model is generating short-term wins, which can occur by allocating budget toward initiatives that arise from the planning process. By the third month of the implementation plan, the School of X can begin considering initiatives of shared interest with both internal and external stakeholders. An example initiative such as mental health training for staff, students, and community partners would be of value for all participants. The organizational and external stakeholders' needs support this type of mental health training, as it would add value for staff, students, and community members. Resources needed to facilitate this include the trainer for mental health first aid (MHFA), time for participants' training, and a location to deliver the training. It is also important during this stage of the model to celebrate success and highlight accomplishments achieved with the strategic planning process.

The seventh stage of Kotter's (1996) model focuses on the evolution of change and addressing organizational needs in order to consolidate and generate further change initiatives. To prevent the process from losing integrity, decision making should be as transparent as possible (Strike, 2018). Change leaders must provide information to all participants regarding any decisions that are made, including a clear explanation of how it supports the overall strategic plan. Future initiatives for the OIP could include themes such as diversity, inclusion, interprofessional practice, and simulated learning. The bulk of this work includes all stakeholders and will occur in the small group sessions during a 3-month timeframe. Resources that will be needed include allotted time, stakeholders, space for the sessions, and technology. As noted in Chapter 1 in the PESTE analysis (Deszca et al., 2020), technology is needed to implement the OIP. Technology will be incorporated into the plan to communicate via email with stakeholders or, if the current social restrictions due to COVID-19 continue, it might be appropriate to use Zoom to facilitate the meetings.

The final stage of Kotter's (1996) model is anchoring new approaches, which would be implemented during the final months of the plan. The strategic planning process solicits input from stakeholders on its project scope and usefulness on a regular basis, and is able to flex, change, and adjust the approach and function (Strike, 2018). Implementing frequent checkpoints with stakeholders through email and face-to-face conversations will generate feedback on initiatives that are working and areas for change.

In Chapter 2, León-Soriano et al.'s (2010) model outlined the SSPM methodology for the proposed change and the alignment to Kotter's (1996) stages of change. The steps outlined in this methodology align with the implementation for my OIP. This methodology includes a framework to structure the OIP as it pertains to strategic planning in HE settings. As shown in Chapter 2, aligning with the SSPM model will further structure the change process and will benefit all stakeholders in the strategic planning process. This methodology also supports the historical implementation of strategic planning at College X, which brings familiarity for the stakeholders embarking on this journey. This methodology focuses on developing a strategic plan that aligns with the academic institution's mission, involving stakeholders, identifying priorities, establishing an implementation strategy, and monitoring progress during the change process (León-Soriano et al., 2010).

Stakeholders in the Change Process

As a middle manager leader, I will work collaboratively with other ADs on the change process. Academic leaders involved in strategic planning identify that the purpose of the process is not to establish a plan but rather to make changes (Dooris et al., 2004). In addition to academic leaders, HEIs include the internal and external stakeholders who have the ability to enforce and affect strategic planning implementation (Falqueto et al., 2020). Strategic planning is the

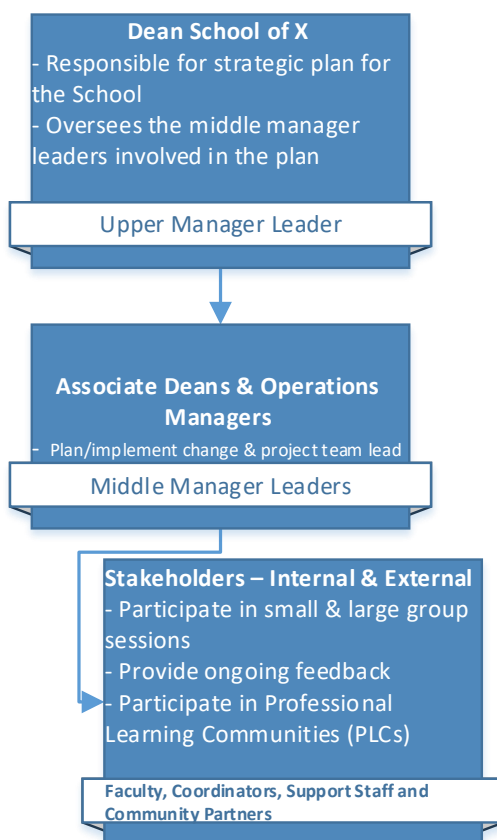
mechanism by which organizations derive a plan to enable them to anticipate and adapt to the evolving complex world in which they work (León-Soriano et al., 2010). This plan will generate a strategy for change and improvements for the HEI's future direction by aligning initiatives with the current state of the organization. Variety, abundance, and open-endedness are characteristics of organizational culture (Hatch & Zilber, 2012). The culture within the HEI contributes to the overall plan, especially the involvement of internal and external stakeholders. The proposed implementation plan will occur during a 12-month period with the objectives for change being identified in collaboration with internal and external participants. Successful strategic leaders place a much higher value on a shared vision and values as a guiding pillar and underpinning for the overall narrative (Marshall, 2019). The leadership, guidance, support, and direction from the Dean of the School of X is instrumental in the change process.

Although strategic planning is grounded in the mission statement of the organization, the execution of a plan involves the creation of a more specific set of targets and metrics that are gradually broken down to the department level (León-Soriano et al., 2010). Once priorities for the School of X are established, initiatives for my department will also need to be identified, ensuring they align with the college's overall direction. Each college leader who holds a position of authority and power will need to focus on the possibilities of integrative and collaborative strategic decision making (Morrill, 2013). Several middle manager leaders will be actively engaged in the strategic planning process, as shown in Figure 3, and the Dean of the School of X will oversee the entire planning process. Although the Dean oversees the process, my role as a change leader is an active participant who will be at the forefront of the proposed plan. In my AD role, I have the agency to mobilize collaborative processes with the other middle managers involved in the planning throughout the OIP. The necessary approvals must be received to ensure

that the dean supports the direction of the change model. Support from management is important for the implementation of strategic planning for HE settings to support change and transformation initiatives in accordance with the mission of the organization (Zainun et al., 2018). Middle manager leaders need to acknowledge their agency within the change process and work collaboratively with the dean as the leader of the change process. This coordination aligns with a distributed leadership approach since it provides opportunities for leaders and all stakeholders to take part in the change process.

Figure 3

Organizational Chart of School of X



Recovery and Innovation

College X is currently working on a new strategic direction for the academic institution focusing on recovery and innovation. The postsecondary setting will need to recover from the effects of COVID-19, as it has changed the landscape of how education is delivered. This change resulted in curriculum that directly affected some students more so than others (Käpplinger & Lichte, 2020). Innovative strategies have been employed in every aspect of delivery over the last academic year to support students with virtual learning. Given that the overall focus of the college is recovery and innovation, this will need to be incorporated in the defined plan throughout the change process. Strategic planning is increasingly about learning and innovation, realizing that HE leaders need to question expectations and consider altering current structures (Dooris et al., 2004). During the pandemic, faculty generated multiple innovative ways to deliver curriculum and provided supplementary initiatives for students to complete the field placement components of the learning objectives for the POS. The need for this change in the academic organization contributed to the state of flux the HE setting experienced. These changes inevitably can affect the strategic direction of the college, as educators need to ensure they are meeting students' needs, which contributes to the recovery of the HEI.

The plan leads to an improved situation for internal and external stakeholders as both the college and community members are influenced by the school's strategic path. If the work is meaningful to stakeholders, it encourages and strengthens individuals' professional experience (Breen, 2019). This leads to feeling invested in the decision making for the organization's future (Al-Turki, 2011). Decision makers in organizations are aware of the variety of stakeholders and make differential decisions on how they should be handled (Lewis, 2011). The involvement of

stakeholders in the strategic planning process is pivotal in the change process, since these relationships with key participants foster partnerships with the organization.

Stakeholder Potential Reactions to Change

Strategic planning in HE falls short of its potential for one key reason: internal stakeholders have no emotional attachment to the plan and, therefore, are not committed to its execution (Sanaghan, 2009). Involving stakeholders in small and large group sessions seeks to generate a sense of belonging and inclusivity. During the implementation process, plans will be adjusted to address the concerns of stakeholders. These issues can be identified throughout the monitoring of the change process by hosting small group sessions to address any concerns from either internal or external stakeholders. As a change leader, the incorporation of a relational approach will help support them through the change process by both listening and addressing employees' concerns. Relational leaders view meetings as places where people sort out meanings and decisions in daily back-and-forth conversation (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). Integrating distributed leadership seeks to shape a culture of inclusion, which fosters a sense of belonging for all participants. Distributed leadership provides opportunities to share leadership throughout the organization (Bush, 2018). This distribution of leadership fosters an environment of opportunities, inclusion, and professional growth.

Potential Implementation Issues

Potential issues in the strategic planning process could be lack of engagement from stakeholders due to limitations on their time, concerns or uncertainty resulting in resistance to change, and budgetary issues. Engagement strategies during small and large group sessions and integrating incentives such as positive verbal feedback and rewards will seek to engage stakeholders during brainstorming sessions. Lack of engagement in the implementation for

change could create resistance among participants. Long and Spurlock (2008) identified a number of factors that increase resistance to change: “lack of trust, belief that change is not necessary or feasible, economic threat, potential expense, fear of personal failure, loss of personal status or power, values and ideals are threatened, and interference is resented” (p. 29). Having an awareness of these issues will assist me as a leader to integrate support for stakeholders. Utilizing a distributed leadership approach will enhance trust as it provides stakeholders the opportunity to take on leadership roles.

Budgetary considerations have financial costs that need to be planned for during the initial stages of the process. Due to the effect of COVID-19, experts predict changes for the priorities of funding in higher education settings (Käpplinger & Lichte, 2020). An awareness of these changes is crucial in my leadership role. The role of proactive leaders in the change process is to play the part of coaches and champions of transformation, instead of a reactionary approach of monitoring for resistance (Armenakis et al., 1993). This approach to leadership aims to facilitate change in a constructive and proactive way, aligning with the relational style embedded throughout the plan.

Goals

Through a strategic planning process, it is critical to identify effective strategies for change (León-Soriano et al., 2010). A priority for planned change is setting clear goals to ensure they support the overall direction of the college. A further goal is to include stakeholders in substantive and deliberate ways in the strategic planning process. The implementation of the hybrid solution within the organization is necessary to guide the current and future direction of the School of X. Successful implementation is the key measure of any plan (Morrill, 2013). Breaking it down to specific goals will ensure the starting point is realistic for the School of X.

Goals that can be achieved in the short and long term should be included in the strategy for strategic planning (Jasti et al., 2019). To build momentum, short-, medium-, and long-term goals need to be defined to ensure a clear direction moving forward. Intentionality in goal setting assists in proceeding with specific intent in the strategic planning process (Dooris et al., 2004). Involving all participants in the goal-planning process ensures stakeholders feel empowered and engaged in the overall plan. Acquiring consensus from stakeholders on goals will assist in generating the strategic path that links the cause-and-effect connections to the overall objectives of the plan (León-Soriano et al., 2010). One short-term goal will be to host the large group sessions to collect required data. A medium goal is to determine one or two specific initiatives to work on from the data collected to discuss further in small group sessions. The longer term goal would be to incorporate more initiatives into the plan to focus on for the future direction of the School of X. Ensuring goals are SMART provides stakeholders a clear understanding of the strategic goals for the School of X (Doran, 1981). Strategic plans should encompass a minimum of three clearly defined goals for each strategy (Jasti et al., 2019). Identifying goals provides participants a direction to guide the process and gain an understanding of the steps necessary to achieve them.

Limitations

Understanding and addressing limitations will assist in formulating strategies for successful outcomes (Delprino, 2013). One of the limitations of the plan may involve additional impacts of COVID-19, such as having to shift the overall strategic direction of the college's objectives due to a change in the ministry funding model, particularly in the outlined metrics of the SMA. According to Strike (2018), "The purpose of resource allocation is to ensure costs are covered and to provide a basis for decision making on investment in the activities of greatest

strategic importance to the institution as established by its strategic planning” (p. 165). Further limitations could be lack of resources, again, due to the impact of COVID-19 and overall budget constraints within HE organizations. Many community partners are also facing numerous restrictions on their own resources, which may impair their ability to participate in the process of strategic planning.

Another limitation is the availability of internal stakeholders to participate in the small and large group sessions. Several staff will be required to assist in the facilitation of meetings, so arranging convenient times for participants to attend and ensuring the availability of space for meetings within the college will avoid limitations with time and space. Important consideration of the School of X is the requirements of stakeholders including the organization’s demands on them (Strike, 2018). Ensuring these staff can accommodate this collective effort within their current workloads is important to consider during the implementation stage. In addition, the limitation of faculty time due to their schedules is also a potential barrier for contemplation. Planning small and large group meetings during nonteaching time such as reading week will ensure faculty’s availability during this timeframe.

The potential issue of social dynamics, both internally and externally, could be influential during the implementation plan. The theory of social relationships indicates individuals’ responses to an attempt to influence will depend on the network of relationships they have; as such, opinion leaders may have sway over stakeholders’ readiness for change (Armenakis et al., 1993). This readiness to change and the potential impact of social relationships on the implementation plan could have a significant effect on successful outcomes. As noted in Chapter 1, results of the change rating scale developed by Holt (2002) indicated that College X is demonstrating readiness for change to implement the OIP. In particular, the OIP includes support

from leaders, change champions will be supported by integrating a distributed leadership approach, and stakeholders demonstrate an openness to change (Holt, 2002). Integrating a relational leadership style and addressing any barriers in the plan will assist in supporting opinion leaders throughout the process.

In this section the change implementation plan was presented including the solution for change, stakeholders in the process, an explanation of recovery and innovation, potential reactions from stakeholders, potential implementation issues, goals, and limitations of the plan. The next section explores how the PDSA model and the relational and distributed leadership approaches intersect, as well as the tools needed to measure the change progress.

Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation

In the change process, it is important to have a concrete plan for the monitoring and evaluation of the OIP. Markiewicz and Patrick (2016) suggested, “The predominant focus of monitoring is on tracking program implementation and progress, including program activities and processes, outputs produced, and initial outcomes achieved” (p. 12). Monitoring is crucial in the change process and aids in evaluating the outcomes of the implementation plan. Markiewicz and Patrick suggested, “Evaluations predominant orientation is on forming judgments about program performance and is concerned with identifying a deeper understanding of change” (p. 12). Monitoring is ongoing throughout the implementation process, while evaluation is strategic in nature with clearly defined objectives. This PoP focuses on how to best engage key stakeholders in meaningful and strategic ways in order to develop clearly defined implementation goals for the School of X. Both monitoring and evaluation are pivotal in the change process and throughout the implementation plan, especially in relation to accommodating alternate approaches that may require changes in both the internal and external environment

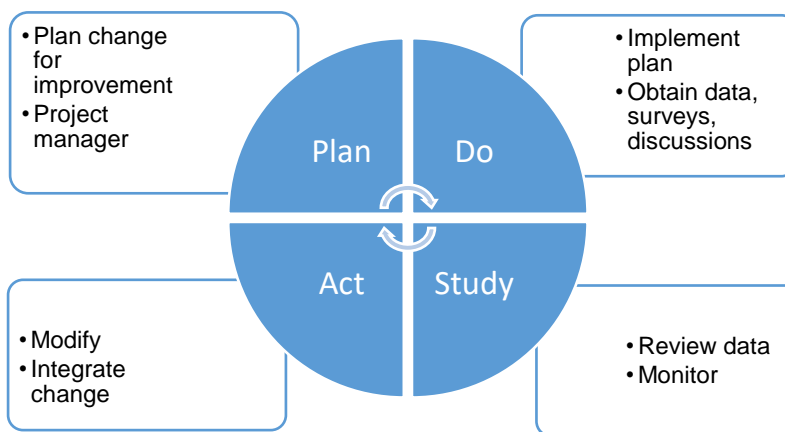
(Marshall, 2019). Monitoring and evaluating the goals of the implementation plan throughout the process also assists with identifying areas of growth and the need for improvement. To accurately measure the achievement of each strategy or goal, a strategic plan must include a sufficient number of observable metrics (Jasti et al., 2019). Observable metrics for my OIP include anecdotal notes to determine themes, survey results, and direct feedback obtained during the monitoring stage of the implementation plan.

Working under the direction of the Dean of X and in collaboration with my AD colleagues, collaborative efforts seek to achieve a solution for the PoP. As a middle manager leader in my academic institution, I will integrate a relational and distributed leadership approach in both the monitoring and evaluation of the change process. The relational leadership approach focuses on the establishment of trusting relationships that will enhance the quality of feedback obtained throughout the process. Trust is crucial for organizational effectiveness (Gómez & Rosen 2001). Since it is anticipated that internal and external stakeholders will be comfortable sharing due to a strong degree of trust, the feedback provided should be meaningful and purposeful for the planning process. This feedback will assist in monitoring outcomes in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the goals outlined in the “Implementation of Solution” section. I will rely on preestablished relationships and the participation of stakeholders to provide concrete feedback during large and small group sessions to generate possible ideas that will contribute to the strategic direction of the School of X. Proposed tools are needed to identify and observe results during monitoring and evaluation (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Tracking change in order to monitor progress and assess successful outcomes helps to evaluate if refinements need to be incorporated in the strategic planning process.

The PDSA model (Deming, 1993) will be an integral part of the change process (see Figure 4). The cycle of the PDSA model focuses on the results of change and measurement to assess the impact of an intervention on process and outcomes (Taylor et al., 2014). The PDSA cycle is sequential, outlining a step-by-step process for monitoring and evaluation for the OIP. The model also includes checks and balances to ensure monitoring and evaluation is moving in the right direction. For example, after surveys are completed, ensure the data are analyzed and that any changes that result are incorporated into the plan. The monitoring and evaluation of the OIP will encompass the following: results, management, accountability, learning, plan improvements, and decision making (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Closely monitoring the results of surveys and feedback from large and small group sessions will assist in the management and accountability of the plan. Learning by analyzing the feedback aims to make improvements within the plan, which assists with decision making.

Figure 4

PDSA Cycle



Note. PDSA model adapted from Deming, (1993).

Plan

The plan portion of the PDSA model, as shown in Figure 4, will be instrumental to ensure the direction is clear for all stakeholders involved in the monitoring of the strategic planning

process. In the beginning stages, tools and strategies are needed to clarify for all involved who complete identified tasks during the monitoring of the OIP. Deszca et al. (2020) presented several action planning tools to assist in the change process. Identifying a project planning manager will assist in identifying tasks, timelines, resources, and highlight areas for change (Deszca et al., 2020). Consistently monitoring and evaluating the plan throughout the PDSA cycle assists to focus on goals throughout the duration of the plan.

As a middle manager leader, I will take on the role of project manager during the plan stage of the cycle to assist in articulating a clear direction for monitoring and evaluation from the inception of the OIP. The project manager takes on the shared role of risk management in the strategic planning process (Strike, 2018). As project manager, I am responsible for overseeing the organizational tasks of the plan such as adhering to timelines and staying task focused throughout the process. Although a project manager is identified, a distributed leadership approach will be applied throughout all aspects of the plan. This will provide opportunities for engagement for a variety of stakeholders. An example of an informal leadership role is having a stakeholder take on the task of collecting information for the PLC they are working with during small group sessions. Responsibility charting is a more comprehensive approach that clearly identifies tasks, who will complete the task, and a timeframe for completion (Cawsey et al., 2016). The use of this tool will create a sense of responsibility for team members involved in the strategic plan for the School of X, which assists in the monitoring of when tasks are complete. According to Deming's (1993) PDSA model, during the plan stage, methods of monitoring are identified and are carried out in the next stage of the model.

Do

As identified in Figure 4 of Deming's (1993) PDSA model, do is the second stage of the cycle. In this stage, the focus is on the implementation of the monitoring plan with the purpose of gathering information to ensure the change process is effective and meeting desired outcomes. This will be accomplished by gathering information during stakeholder large and group sessions through surveys and anecdotal notes compiled for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation. The initial large group approach for collecting information provides an abundance of opportunity for feedback, while the smaller group sessions seek to hone in on specific initiatives for the strategic plan. The inclusion of multiple perspectives are necessary elements in strategic planning (Jasti et al., 2019). This provides opportunities to obtain a plethora of information from stakeholders that will assist in determining the validity of the plan.

The focus for data collection of the surveys previously mentioned is to ensure it aligns with the academic institution's policies, strategies, and trends, while incorporating tactical and strategic development to analyze system level opportunities (Strike, 2018). Some of the questions to focus on involve information the School of X seeks to obtain during the data collection for the monitoring of the plan. The focus for questions for internal stakeholders include priorities for the strategic plan, potential initiatives, challenges, and strategies to overcome these challenges. Questions for external stakeholders could include topics such as potential collaborations to integrate in the strategic plan, needs of their community organization, and initiatives to overcome these challenges. Further questions will be generated based on the information collected, which will assist in seeking clarity on initiatives discussed in the sessions for decision making (Strike, 2018). Generating surveys prior to the large and small group

sessions assists in guiding the conversation and prepares stakeholders to gather information for monitoring the plan prior to the meetings.

The change leader will use surveys to obtain feedback throughout the monitoring of the OIP by collating information that identifies areas for improvement and highlights any adjustments required for the tasks. The data acquired from surveys is shared with stakeholders and will be used to make recommendations in the formation of the plan (Lofstrom & Nevgi, 2007). The purpose of surveys is to obtain feedback from internal and external stakeholders to ensure the strategic planning is on the right track and outlined goals are met (Cawsey et al., 2016). Identifying the feedback to be obtained and then formulating plans to implement any required changes is crucial for successful outcomes. As a follow up after the meetings, surveys can be distributed to obtain additional information and to provide anyone who was unable to attend the opportunity to participate. Collecting evidence-based data will be crucial to developing concrete measurable outcomes to determine the success of the strategies employed. HE settings have evolved in their understanding and data use to make informed decisions in strategic planning (Strike, 2018). Acquiring qualitative information from stakeholders through direct feedback will assist in meeting the outlined goals and as a means to measure if the college is obtaining the desired results. Storing data in a centralized location that is easily accessible to stakeholders (e.g., on a shared drive) will provide the opportunity to add information to the database and to access information on an ongoing basis.

Acquiring feedback throughout Deming's (1993) PDSA cycle assists in monitoring and evaluating successful outcomes and identifies areas necessary to modify in the plan. A strategic plan is viewed as an ongoing plan that can be changed based on the needs of the organization so that proactive assessments of the plan and any modifications can be facilitated in a timely

fashion (Jasti et al., 2019). Monitoring and evaluating goals will identify any changes necessary for the strategic direction of the college. It is also imperative the management team has ongoing communication in the do stage of the PDSA cycle and that leaders connect frequently either face to face or via email to ensure their strategies are aligned. This ongoing collaboration will ensure leaders' communication to stakeholders is accurate and consistent and that stakeholders feel included in the process. The final stage of León-Soriano et al.'s (2010) SSPM methodology is monitoring, which also aligns with the do stage of the PDSA cycle (Deming, 1993).

My relational leadership approach will ensure all participants feel a sense of belonging and are comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings related to the plan. The management team presenting as a cohesive unit will ensure participants that leaders are confident in the plan and leadership strategies will demonstrate this. Given that a variety of middle managers will be involved in the strategic planning process, it is important to recognize members of the management team have varying leadership styles. These styles will either align or create barriers for desired outcomes. Frequent check-ins with each other and labelling any discrepancies in leadership strategies will be explored to ensure the management team develops a collaborative approach to the strategic planning process. Opportunities for distributed leadership for stakeholders by taking on varying roles will further engage leadership in the process.

Study

The next stage in Deming's (1993) PDSA model is study, which entails drawing conclusions from the data collected and generating evidence to be able to evaluate the monitoring plan. After the large and small group sessions, leaders can analyze the data collected from stakeholders to identify initiatives they feel are prevalent for the strategic plan for the School of X. The evidence collected will be analyzed by the management team and potentially

other identified individuals within the organization. A variety of methods will be implemented to generate themes from the data, such as surveys and anecdotal notes from group discussions, which will guide the direction and goals for the School of X. Tasks will need to be assigned so everyone is aware of their role in the process and the work is distributed in an equitable manner. Distributed leadership is a shared approach to leadership that provides opportunities for engagement (Harris et al., 2007). Utilizing a distributed leadership approach, leaders could ask for volunteers to adopt informal leadership roles and middle manager leaders can be tasked with compiling the data. This way, no single stakeholder is responsible for collecting all of the information. Issues associated with distributed leadership can result in conflicting priorities, timelines, and goals (Harris et al., 2007). Clearly defined tasks will be outlined so everyone is aware of their roles and responsibilities in relation to the strategic planning process. The implementation strategy can be refined by reviewing the plan on a frequent basis, asking for feedback from both internal and external stakeholders, and reevaluating goals and strategies to ensure they are meeting the desired needs of the initial plan.

When evaluating the data collected during the study stage of Deming's (1993) PDSA, quantitative data can be compiled by counting the number of times themes arise in the information collected. For example, if mental health initiatives are identified multiple times, this can be collated in the form of quantitative data. Coding this information will identify themes to focus on for the strategic plan. Result-based management integrates planning, monitoring, and evaluation focusing on the interdependence between them (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). This aligns with the systems theory approach integrated throughout my OIP. Focusing on the interdependence of monitoring and evaluation demonstrates a systematic approach to the strategic planning process.

Monitoring results can be compiled into progress reports for both internal and external stakeholders (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). This provides evidence-based information that can be utilized to monitor success in the plan and to identify areas for further development. Strategic plans are revised regularly (i.e., monthly, quarterly) depending on the organizational level (i.e., operational, tactical, strategic), giving rise to a continuous learning mechanism accomplished by readjusting the metrics or by taking action to fulfill the proposed objectives (León-Soriano et al., 2010). Continuous review of the implementation plan helps to ensure that any appropriate improvements can be implemented into the plan proactively. A caution for leaders to be aware of during this stage is evaluation can provide too much information and be applied too late to improve decision making (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Consequently, managers should prioritize monitoring over evaluation in the strategic planning process. Concomitantly, this will provide opportunities to make any necessary changes in the OIP during this phase of implementation.

Act

According to Deming's (1993) PDSA cycle (see Figure 4), the final step is the act stage, which involves determining whether the change is working. During this step of the cycle, information has already been evaluated through qualitative and quantitative evidence compiled in the previous stage of the PDSA cycle. After analyzing the data, leaders can hone in on themes and identified initiatives that will encompass the goals for the new strategic direction of the School of X. Once the Dean of the School of X approves the plan, leaders can proceed with finalizing the draft plans and distribute these to all individuals within the school. During each stage of the PDSA cycle, the management team will obtain feedback, and at this point, leaders will implement any further modifications identified in the data collected. By this stage of the

cycle, the management team will have a draft document to present to stakeholders, which encompasses all of the information generated from the large and small group sessions. When the draft is sent, leaders will ask for any feedback from stakeholders to ensure they captured the information accurately. Any further feedback obtained will be integrated into the document and the final product will be re-sent to stakeholders so they have the most recent version of the plan. In this final stage, if desired results are not achieved, a possible solution would be to go through the entire PDSA cycle again to acquire a better outcome (Deming, 1986). Once the plan is formulated, communicating this to all participants will ensure everyone involved has a clear understanding of the initiatives for the strategic plan. As the change initiatives are monitored and evaluated, the information acquired will provide anecdotal data on new approaches to further integrate in the HEI.

Summary

Table 2 highlights a summary of strategies in the monitoring and evaluation of the strategic plan for the School of X. Including specific details for the monitoring and evaluation of my OIP. My objective in providing this summary is to structure the monitoring and evaluation in concrete ways to ensure all of the desired outcomes of the plan are accomplished. Strategies are integrated in the monitoring and evaluation of the plan to ensure successful outcomes are achieved.

Table 2*Summary of Strategies for Monitoring and Evaluation*

Monitoring	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLCs, to acquire data to determine themes to be incorporated in the strategic plan • Responsibility charting – identified tasks for stakeholders • Frequent check ins - via meetings and emails to obtain feedback from stakeholders • Surveys – to obtain information prior to the large and small group sessions, with the goal of generating themes for the strategic direction of the School • Anecdotal notes – from feedback obtained during stakeholder sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative data – review coding of themes to determine initiatives for the plan • Qualitative data – review themes in anecdotal notes to determine initiatives for the strategic plan

This section focused on integrating the monitoring and evaluation of the OIP in Deming's (1993) PDSA cycle. The next section details the communication plan for the OIP.

Communication Plan

It is important to consider communicating with specific individuals, associations, and organizations at all stages of the implementation plan for the OIP (Strike, 2018). Communication is paramount in every component of the change process. Ongoing, transparent, and genuine communication will be instrumental to ensure all stakeholders are aware of the goals and direction for the School of X. Integrating Kotter's (1996) change model into the communication plan assists in framing the implementation of my OIP. By aligning my leadership framework, I will ensure communication is relational in nature and supportive throughout the change process. Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) suggested, "Relational leaders see communication not as an expression of something pre-conceived, but as emerging and open, as a way of working out what is meaningful and possible" (p. 1434). As a change leader, I will ensure open communication and provide opportunities for meaningful and purposeful problem solving to meet the goals of my

PoP. The communication strategy should provide ongoing coordination of plans and progress toward achieving strategic objectives with all relevant stakeholders (Jasti et al., 2019). With the direct involvement of multiple internal and external stakeholders, communicating in a variety of ways assists in aligning the goals of the plan with the implementation of change within the HE organization.

College X has a communications advisor who would be an outstanding consultant regarding the communication strategy for the OIP. This individual will be an excellent resource to gain a more global understanding of multiple ways to communicate effectively throughout the change process.

Building Awareness of Change

A consistent communication strategy will be incorporated into the implementation of the plan in order to raise awareness of change in the School of X. The need for change to support the strategic vision for the school with one or two specific goals to concentrate on by the end of the plan provides a starting point for the academic environment's objectives. According to S. M. Klein (1996), "by the time the change is dispersed throughout the organization, many organizational participants have developed attitudes different from those which management intended. When the attitudes are negative the success of the change may be affected adversely" (p. 32). Communication must be ongoing and proactive to ensure all participants have up-to-date information. In addition, framing communication in a positive way seeks to shape a culture that is both engaging and goal oriented. Cawsey et al. (2016) noted, "The purpose of the communication plan for change focuses on four major goals: (1) infuse the need for change throughout the organization, (2) enable understanding of the impact, (3) communicate any

structural changes and (3) keep people informed” (p. 349). The more information participants have in relation to the change, the more invested they will be with the strategic planning process.

The focus of formulating goals will be framed in such a way that stakeholders can easily understand the vision of the school and the purpose of the plan. All aspects of communication will be instrumental in the change process given that communication is instrumental in fostering the change process (Lewis, 2019). The communication of each stage of the process will be an integral component of the plan in order for stakeholders to be engaged in the process. Providing communication in multiple ways, such as electronically via email, prerecorded messages, face to face, and in small and large group sessions, will integrate an abundance of venues to articulate the plans for engagement. Communication delivered in multiple ways will also increase the effectiveness of providing information to participants throughout the communication plan (S. M. Klein, 1996). In addition, messaging must be meaningful and purposeful for all stakeholders involved.

Communication with internal and external stakeholders will differ based on their roles within the HE organization. As noted in Chapter 1, within the context of the PESTE model (Deszca et al., 2020), the social considerations for the communication plan need to be explored. Ensuring all participants understand the rationale for the plan and are actively engaged throughout every stage of the process will solidify the premise of the strategic planning journey. Lewis (2011) noted formal communication “involves use of official channels: declarations and policy set down by organizational leaders; implementers’ instructions about the rate, timing, and details of change; formal responses of leaders to other stakeholders’ challenges and questions about change” (p. 53). Formal communication with internal stakeholders will involve clearly articulating the need for change and the benefits for the academic institution during the initial

large group meeting. Communication with external stakeholders will focus on how the implementation plan directly affects their organization within the community. Partnerships with community organizations will be important to consider for both the plan and future initiatives within the community.

A variety of questions from stakeholders will likely involve their role in the strategic planning process and their contributions to the process. Internal stakeholders will be more concerned about how the plan directly affects their day-to-day work. All stakeholders will likely inquire about the benefits of the plan for the academic institution and particularly for students. Another question for consideration will likely involve an inquiry about the steps to achieve the outlined goals for the strategic planning process. According to Lewis (2011), during change, informal communication “includes the spontaneous interactions of stakeholders with each other, with implementers, and with non-stakeholders” (p. 53). This communication will occur during the small group sessions to ensure participants have the opportunity to share ideas, ask any questions about the plan, and, as noted in the previous section, further refine monitoring the implementation plan. Providing a clear communication and a visible plan that is accessible to everyone will contribute to clarity and ensure all participants have an understanding of expectations for every step of the work.

If information is not clear, it can lead to miscommunication about the strategic direction for the School of X. Inaccurate information and rumours often occur when a change process is implemented in organizations (Cawsey et al., 2016). It is imperative communication is proactive, ongoing, and transparent throughout the change process. Communication networks that provide transparency, encouragement, and guidance may strengthen the commitment to change among employees in the context of organizational change, despite the considerable stress that occurs

during this stage of change (Zainun et al., 2018). The more communication is integrated across all stages of the process of change, the more participants will feel supported. Consequently, this will decrease stress of participants since they will feel informed about the process.

Communication Plan for Stakeholders

Table 3 outlines the communication plan for the strategic planning process for the School of X. In the execution of the plan, a clearly defined approach to connect to all stakeholders involved will be instrumental. Internal participants may have a variety of ways they perceive change. In several situations, change creates uncertainty, resulting in employees experiencing stress due to needing to adapt to new environments (Zainun et al., 2018). This emphasizes the significance of communication in the implementation of change and the importance of supporting employees with their feelings related to the shift in the strategic direction for the school. Integrating a relational leadership style in the communication plan will further assist in supporting stakeholders. This relational approach will consist of being supportive, genuine, and transparent in all aspects of communication. The communication plan will also provide opportunities to integrate a distributed leadership approach by having participants take on various roles in the communication plan. Communication will need to come from multiple sources during the implementation of change, including both formal and informal leaders.

Table 3*Summary of Communication Plan*

Communication Plan for Strategic Planning
Consult with the Communication Officer within the college prior to sending messaging
Email stakeholders a prerecorded video announcing the strategic planning process, including the rationale and invite them to an upcoming strategic planning large group session
Send a survey prior to large group session to collect information and agenda to inform them of points of discussion for the meeting
Large group session (face-to-face)
Session will be recorded for stakeholders who are unable to attend
Email a summary of information collected at large group session and invite stakeholders to small group sessions (separate sessions for internal and external stakeholders)
Small group sessions (face-to-face)
Email a summary of information from small group sessions and include an invitation for large group session to share goals for the strategic plan
Large group session (face-to-face) to share the final plan and next steps
Session will be recorded for stakeholders who are unable to attend
Share the final plan with internal and external stakeholders
Communicate updates to stakeholders during the first 12–18 months via email and one large group session

According to Cawsey et al. (2016), a communication plan involves the following phases: (a) prechange approval, (b) developing the need for change, (c) midstream change and milestone communication, and (d) confirming and celebrating the change success. These phases will be integrated into my communication plan for my OIP. In the first stage of the model prechange phase, it is imperative the Dean of the School of X accepts the proposed change within the first stage of the communication plan, as she will be the main leader in the process. The second phase of the communication plan is articulating the need for change, which will occur at the beginning of the implementation plan at the initial large group session. The third phase of the

communication plan occurs during the monitoring stage of planning milestone communication; this must occur to ensure all participants have ongoing updates as it pertains to the plan. The final stage outlined by Cawsey et al. (2016) is celebrating the change success, which can occur during the end stages of the OIP. Celebrating success also aligns with Kotter's (1996) generating short-term wins stage of the change model, since it also focuses on commemorating results. Incorporating incentive-based strategies into the implementation plan provides rewards for participation in activities associated with the planning.

The method of persuasive communication provides meaningful information regarding the dedication to prioritization and urgency of the need for change (Armenakis et al., 1993). During the communication plan for the OIP, persuasive communication will be used during small and large group sessions. Persuasive communication aligns with Kotter's (1996) first stage of the change model, which is creating a sense of urgency for the upcoming initiatives with the strategic planning for the School of X. This communication will be presented in a supportive manner, which aligns with relational leadership, while stating the purpose of the proposed change for the school. This approach demonstrates the commitment leaders have in the change process since they are providing opportunities for meaningful engagement. Persuasive communication will also be implemented in written format in the form of email updates throughout the change process. This demonstrates the importance of the change initiative and the commitment leaders have to the process. In addition to creating a sense of urgency in the initial phase of the implementation plan, the methods of communication also need consideration. Face-to-face communication personalizes interactions, provides a multitude of ways to obtain information, and supplies opportunities for immediate feedback. Alternatively, written communication is more impersonal, which may limit opportunities for feedback (Armenakis et

al., 1993). In the implementation phase, it is important to establish the most effective way to communicate to all stakeholders engaged in the strategic planning process.

Meaningful communication in institutions influences stakeholders and provides clarity for the change process (Zainun et al., 2018). The initial communication in the strategic planning process is important to set the stage for all future correspondence throughout the implementation of the plan. As shown in Table 3, the initial communication for the strategic planning process will be in electronic format by emailing internal and external stakeholders a prerecorded video to inform them of the intent to embark on the change process. The content of the video will include the purpose of the strategic plan, their role in the process and goals will be articulated to all participants in the planning. During the initial communication, a survey to obtain information prior to the large group session will be included in the correspondence. The rationale for the survey is to collate information to generate the discussion prior to the large group session. Prior to the meeting, an agenda will also be distributed to both internal and external participants. Consideration of the current state of the HE organization needs to be included in the planning. If restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic continue, a meeting facilitated virtually will need to be considered. During the initial communication plan, Kotter's (1996) second stage of the change model, creating coalitions with both internal and external stakeholders, will assist in generating participants to be actively engaged throughout the proposed plan.

A member of the management team will facilitate the large group session. It is essential for management to have transparent and adequate details for internal stakeholders on a constant basis regarding changes that may arise within organizations (Zainun et al., 2018). The more details that can be provided to all stakeholders, the more transparent and engaging the process will be for all participants. This session will be face-to-face to offer opportunities for discussion,

responsiveness to questions, and ensure communication is open and transparent. For participants who are unable to attend, the large group session will be recorded for their future reference. If the meeting is unable to take place due to COVID-19 restrictions, then it can be facilitated electronically via a platform such as Zoom. During the meeting, a minute taker will collate the information to obtain anecdotal data. After the meeting, information obtained will be shared via email with participants so they have a record of the discussion points. Communication that is simple, precise, clear, and congruent can be facilitated via newsletters or electronically by email (Armenakis et al., 1993). Since the correspondence will encompass information already discussed, this is an effective way to communicate to stakeholders. Once this information is shared, small group sessions will be organized to further develop the plans for the strategic direction for the School of X.

As shown in Table 3, several small group sessions will occur after the information is shared from the large group sessions. This information shared will clearly identify a breakdown of themes in the data, so during the small group sessions we can focus on selecting one initiative to work on during the first 12 months of the strategic plan for the school. Two different sessions will occur, one for internal stakeholders and one for external stakeholders. This way the focus of the groups will be more meaningful and purposeful for the participants involved. Dooris et al. (2004) explained, “Strategic planning can be a powerful tool to help an academic organization listen to its constituencies, encourage emergence of good ideas from all levels, recognize opportunities, make decisions supported by evidence and strive toward shared mission, actualizing the vision” (p. 10). Small group sessions will be face-to-face to encourage active communication and engagement. After the meeting, a summary email will be distributed to participants to ensure they have acquired all the information needed from the session. As noted

earlier in this section, Cawsey et al.'s, (2016) final stage of the communication model is the midstream change phase and milestone communication phase. During this stage check-ins via email or face to face with stakeholders will occur to ensure the plan is progressing and momentum continues until the final portions of the strategic planning are determined.

After information is collated and themes are identified another large group session will occur to share the data collected and articulate the first initiative to focus on for the first 12–18 months of the plan. The management team will lead the large group session to share the information. Communication is instrumental during the implementation of change processes in HEIs mainly due to the problems that arise with miscommunication (Lewis, 2019). Providing time for questions and answers during the session provides participants the opportunity to share feedback and ensure they understand the plan. Once the preliminary initiative is determined for the School of X, it will be communicated to both internal and external stakeholders. The determined plan will be shared internally at the college by providing the final document outlining the goals for the school and projected timeframes for completion. After the plan is established, communication will be ongoing with both internal and external stakeholders via email and by hosting one large group session to provide updates.

The success of the communication plan depends strongly on the leadership in the change process. Armenakis et al. (1993) explained, “Attributes, such as credibility, trustworthiness, sincerity and expertise of the change agent are gleaned from what people know about the agent’s general reputation” (p. 690). These attributes align with the relational leadership approach that will be integrated into all aspects of the strategic planning initiatives. Most middle manager leaders in the School of X, portray a relational leadership lens in their interactions within their departments, which will foster relationships with all stakeholders involved in the communication

strategies. Refer to Table 3 for a summary of the communication plan and the steps to be taken within the plan.

This section presented the communication plan that detailed the communication process. The following section presents next steps and future considerations.

Next Steps and Future Considerations

The future direction of the HE setting will be dependent on a variety of factors as it pertains to the strategic planning process. Depending on its current state, the academic institution will determine the future goals and objectives for the School of X. Kotter's (1996) change model focuses on consolidating change and making more change, which can be the focus for future application for additional initiatives for the plan. One of the main considerations will be alternate initiatives to be identified and the alignment with the overall direction of the school and the college as a whole. Integrating a mental health initiative is an example of a priority that may emerge from the strategic plan for the School of X.

An important future consideration is to align strategies with the current needs of the HE organization. Themes to focus on for the future direction of the strategic plan need to align with the values, mission, and goals of College X. Thematically, initiatives surface based on what is occurring in academic institutions. Some of the data collected during the implementation plan can guide some of the initiatives for the School of X. Future initiatives also need to consider the shift in online learning, due to the current situation with COVID-19. The pandemic has introduced significant changes to education in postsecondary institutions (Käpplinger & Lichte, 2020). These changes in academic delivery will require considerable modifications for future learning for students in HE institutions. Creative and innovative solutions to support online learning will be an ongoing focus for postsecondary institutions.

The future state of the HE setting due to the impact of COVID-19 is also something to consider for the long-term direction of the college. Multiple HE settings are experiencing financial implications from the pandemic, which might have lasting implications for the future direction of the college system. K  pplinger and Lichte (2020) suggested, “Experts expect even more challenges ahead, problems with financing concerning the future. Experts state the worst is yet to come” (p. 787). These predictions by experts are important to consider when planning for the future in postsecondary education. Although the college system experienced significant changes to delivery, these modifications provided opportunities that could change the direction of the academic setting moving forward. The strategic direction of the college aligns with the goals of the school, and integrating some of the changes that arose from COVID-19 could further strengthen the goals of various departments and the academic system as a whole.

In considering the future, it is also important to analyze how the HE setting either embraced or rejected the change process. This determination will seek to guide the future direction of the system and provide opportunities for further engagement in strategic planning and innovation solutions generated from this planning process. Strategic planning is something that academic institutions will partake in for years to come and will be pivotal in the future directions of academic settings in higher education institutions. Change is inevitable, and will continue to be integrated in HE settings, so being prepared for the future will strengthen college initiatives as it pertains to the strategic planning process. This OIP has outlined a leadership approach to include various stakeholders and to create the strategic direction for the School of X. With every change comes opportunities and experiences that will shape the minds of learners, which will strengthen the services the college provides to support them during their academic journeys. Being mindful of where we are as a college system now and our goals for the future

will ensure we continue to enhance and provide opportunities for the learners of today, tomorrow, and for generations.

Conclusion

The OIP explored the need for a strategic plan for the School of X and considered various solutions to address the PoP. The PoP focused on how to best engage key stakeholders in meaningful and strategic ways in order to develop clearly defined implementation goals for the new School of X in an HE context. Change will occur once the formation of the goals for strategic planning are identified. Analyzing the academic environment by considering the current and future state assisted in gaining a better understanding of the organization and the best ways to meet the needs of the HE setting. A detailed implementation plan is provided to guide the nature of the work moving forward. Information is also presented outlining a communication plan to provide stakeholders information on the need for change for the School of X. The relational and distributed leadership theories were integrated throughout the plan to assist in guiding me in the strategies I will employ in my AD role. A monitoring and evaluation plan is also included to ensure decision making is evidence based and to incorporate any necessary changes needed for the plan. It is anticipated the OIP will assist in guiding the future direction of the School of X by integrating the strategic priorities that are identified after the implementation stage of the process.

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The Appendix: Implementation Plan Kotter's (1996) Change Model

Strategy (ies)– the what	Kotter's 8 Stage Model	Tactics – the how	Resources	Timeline Based on 12 months (Sep 2021 – Sep 2022)
Large group session (hybrid model integrating large and small group sessions)	Step 1 – Sense of urgency	<p>Identifying the need for a clear strategic direction for the School of X during the large group session.</p> <p>Identifying a shared interest such as mental health training.</p> <p>The ultimate goal is to choose an area for shared work & engagement.</p>	<p>Space for meeting</p> <p>Zoom meeting if needed</p> <p>Internal and external stakeholders</p> <p>Technology – slideshow presentations for visuals during the meeting</p> <p>Support staff to take notes</p>	<p>First month of plan – Sep 2021</p> <p>Host 1-hour session</p>
Small group sessions	Step 2 - Creating coalitions	<p>Providing opportunities for internal (faculty) and external (community partners) stakeholders to engage in meaningful dialogue in a common area such as mental health that would be purposeful in all departments.</p> <p>Opportunities for engagement will be during small group sessions.</p>	<p>Space to hold sessions</p> <p>Internal and external stakeholders to participate</p> <p>Time to hold stakeholder sessions</p>	<p>Second month of plan (Oct 2021)</p> <p>Meetings 1–2 hours</p>
Large and small group sessions	Step 3 – Develop a vision and strategy	During the initial large group session articulate the purpose of the process and have	Room for the meeting	Sep–Oct 2021

Strategy (ies)– the what	Kotter’s 8 Stage Model	Tactics – the how	Resources	Timeline Based on 12 months (Sep 2021 – Sep 2022)
		<p>participants engaged in identifying this.</p> <p>Develop a vision in the small group sessions collectively so all participants feel included in the process and understand the goal of the plan.</p>	<p>Time for stakeholders to participate</p> <p>Technology available within the meeting space</p> <p>Survey to compile data</p>	
Large and small group sessions	Step 4 – Communication	<p>Ongoing throughout the process, consistent, transparent, meaningful and purposeful.</p> <p>Communicate the progress of the plan, goals, shared interests and any identified changes.</p> <p>Communication will be provided to all stakeholders</p> <p>Professional learning communities</p> <p>Face to face</p> <p>Via email – send updates throughout the process</p>	<p>Email for information sharing</p> <p>Space for meetings</p> <p>Time for stakeholders to engage</p>	Sep 2021–2022 (ongoing)
Large and small group sessions (hybrid approach)	Step 5 – Empowering faculty	<p>Provide opportunities for emergent leaders (faculty, community partners) to take on informal leadership roles during small group sessions and working groups.</p> <p>Empowering faculty to actively participate in the initiatives.</p>	Time, room, participants	Sep 2021–Jun 2022 (ongoing)

Strategy (ies)– the what	Kotter’s 8 Stage Model	Tactics – the how	Resources	Timeline Based on 12 months (Sep 2021 – Sep 2022)
Small group sessions	Step 6 – Generating short term wins	<p>Create a plan for mental health strategy within each department of the school.</p> <p>Provide positive feedback on the success of the plan.</p> <p>Short-term wins are created to keep participants engaged in the plan</p>	<p>Trainer for MHFA</p> <p>Space, time, technology, participants</p>	Nov–Dec 2021 (2 months)
Small group sessions	Step 7 – Consolidate change and create more change	<p>During small group sessions identify areas of change and implement changes.</p> <p>Identify future initiatives other than mental health that can be included in the plan (ex, inclusion, diversity)</p> <p>Evaluated by assessing the success of the initiatives implemented.</p>	Participants, space, time, technology	Jan–Mar 2022 (3 months)
Small group sessions	Step 8 – Anchor new approaches	<p>Example: a mental health initiative such as mental health first aid training and other initiatives for the future direction of the plan.</p>	Participants, space, time, technology	Apr–Sep 2022 (5 months)