

University of Alberta

**From Change to Challenge: The Intersection of Leadership, Educational
Reform, and Teacher Burnout**

By

Shimasadat Ghasemi

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Dr. Heather Kanuka

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Abstract

This study examines the intersection of educational change, teacher burnout and the role of leadership in mitigating the negative impacts of changes in post-secondary educational institutions. Drawing from multiple theoretical frameworks such as job-demand model (Demerouti et al., 2001) and transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985), it argues that effective leadership has a significant role to play in mitigating teacher burnout and other negative impacts of educational change and contributes significantly to instructors' mental and physical well-being. Instructors in higher education often struggle with heavy workloads, administrative tasks, research and instruction burdens, and other factors influencing their job satisfaction, such as job insecurity. Therefore, understanding how leadership can mitigate or exacerbate burnout in post-secondary education through the lens of an effective framework has significant implications for instructors, leaders, and policymakers in post-secondary institutions.

Keywords: educational change, teacher burnout, educational leadership, higher education, post-secondary institutions, policy implications, mental health

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Introduction

Higher education and post-secondary institutions have experienced significant reforms in recent decades, which are influenced by multiple sources of changes, including policy change, technology advancements, and new pedagogical approaches. There have been many changes in the realm of post-secondary institutions, such as shift to digital learning platforms, the rise of hybrid teaching models, and the increased expectations for faculty research and administrative duties (Gleason & Greenhow, 2017; Houston et al., 2006). These changes have transformed the nature of professional careers and responsibilities of the instructors in post-secondary institutions. Although these changes were all intended to improve educational and institutional efficiency, they contributed to increasing stress levels among educators. The rapid adoption of new technologies in particular, and educational changes in general, requires significant time and effort from educators. When coupled with rising administrative burdens and job demands, these challenges will lead to teacher burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Despite the growing focus on teacher burnout in the literature, many articles and existing research are primarily focused on K-12 educators, which leaves a critical gap in understanding the unique challenges faced by post-secondary instructors (Watts & Robertson, 2011). Unlike K-12 teachers who often deal with standardized systems in teaching and assessment, post-secondary instructors are frequently tasked with a wider range of responsibilities, including research, student advising, adult education, assessment, and involvement in policy-making procedures and leadership. This multifaceted role, together with the demanding and changing nature of the educational landscape nowadays, calls for an investigation of how these specific challenges contribute to burnout among instructors in universities and colleges. Therefore, the significance of this capping project lies in the fact that the current literature on the intersection of

teacher burnout, educational changes, and the role of leadership is very limited at the post-secondary level.

In this capping project, I aim to address this gap by exploring the relationship between educational changes, teacher burnout, and the role of leadership among post-secondary educators through a comprehensive critical literature review. In this review, I will focus exclusively on the post-secondary context in order to provide a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by the instructors, and then offer practical insights into the leadership strategies that seem to play an important role in mitigating teacher burnout and promoting their mental and physical well-being within educational institutions. In other words, the purpose of this critical literature review is to examine how educational and organizational changes are linked to burnout in post-secondary educators, and also to explore how leadership styles within institutions can influence the extent to which burnout is experienced by the teachers. In fact, effective leadership can play a key role in balancing these changes with the well-being of educators. Through my M.Ed. program in educational policy studies, specializing in educational leadership, I have learned about various styles of leadership and their implications in creating organizational cultures with a significant impact on teachers' well-being as well as their academic achievement and learning outcomes. Therefore, through careful analysis of various factors and the possible role of leadership in mitigating teacher burnout, some practical recommendations for multiple stakeholders within the educational system will be offered in order to improve education quality. The following questions guided the critical literature review on this topic:

1. What are the key factors contributing to teacher burnout in higher education during periods of institutional change?

2. What role do leadership style and strategies play in mitigating or exacerbating the negative impacts of educational change on instructors' well-being?
3. What effective practices from existing literature can be recommended for educational leaders, policymakers, and instructors to reduce burnout and enhance job satisfaction?

Methodology

Research design

This capping project employs a critical literature review approach with the purpose of synthesizing and analyzing existing research on the intersection of educational change, teacher burnout, and the role of leadership in post-secondary education to offer practical insights for policymakers, leaders, and instructors. Given the structured academic format as the layout of the study, the review process begins with systematically identifying and examining peer-reviewed journal articles and books from reputable journals and sources mostly in education, psychology, and organizational leadership. This paper begins with an introduction, followed by an overview of research gaps, significance, and purpose of the study. Then, through a comprehensive literature review, some of the most important certain noteworthy theoretical frameworks focusing on the concepts of burnout, educational change, and leadership are selected and reviewed. Through this capping exercise, I aim to identify recurring themes and theoretical connections across the selected literature.

In this review, a large number of studies and relevant frameworks for post-secondary educators, excluding K-12 contexts, are examined, and existing gaps, patterns, and practical implications for instructors in higher education are further highlighted. By integrating multiple theoretical frameworks, I will examine how leadership influences instructors' experiences during educational change. The concluding comments highlight effective leadership strategies that

support teachers' psychological and physical well-being, address challenges linked to burnout and change, and offer recommendations for various stakeholders within higher education.

Data Sources and Selection Criteria

As mentioned earlier, a large number of studies were selected and reviewed based on a systematic search among peer-reviewed journal articles and books. Many of these academic articles were located using a combination of databases accessed through Google Scholar and the University of Alberta Library, including APA PsycINFO, ERIC, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, SAGE Journals, Wiley Online Library, and Taylor & Francis Online. In addition, Open access articles were directly retrieved from platforms like MDPI, PLOS ONE, and Frontiers.

The selection criteria prioritized studies focusing on the causes, symptoms, and effects of burnout as well as the role of educational change and leadership in mitigating or exacerbating negative experiences of instructors. According to Boote and Beile (2005), a critical literature review moves beyond summarizing studies, it is more like analyzing theoretical perspectives, identifying research gaps, and offering practical solutions based on the existing literature.

To find and identify relevant studies, I have used specific keywords and search terms to locate articles and books related to teacher burnout, educational change, and leadership in post-secondary education. Key search terms included: "Teacher burnout in higher education", "Teacher burnout in post-secondary institutions", "Educational policy changes and instructors' stress", "Leadership styles and teacher well-being", and "leadership and teacher burnout".

Furthermore, I have used Boolean operators including "Teacher burnout AND higher education", "Teacher burnout AND higher education", "Educational change OR policy reform

AND faculty stress”, and “Leadership styles AND burnout prevention” for finding more precise searches, and more relevant articles for my critical literature review.

The scope of this review is limited to post-secondary institutions and contexts to focus only on instructors in various programs within colleges and universities. There were a larger number of studies in the K-12 contexts, but they are almost excluded from this review to find out more about the unique characteristics and challenges faced by post-secondary instructors.

Data Collection and Analysis

The first stage of this review involved reviewing and categorizing studies based on their relevance to three key concepts of the research: teacher burnout, educational change, and leadership styles. In this stage, each study was examined for its applied theoretical frameworks, methodology, common themes, and key findings to build a comprehensive understanding of the topic. In the next stage, after selecting the most relevant theoretical frameworks for the intersection of burnout, change, and leadership, I started reviewing and then synthesizing the theoretical frameworks discussed in the literature review section, to draw concluding remarks, provide a structured lens on the intersection of these three concepts, and offer insights and implications in the final stage.

Limitations

The most significant limitation of the critical literature review approach is the fact that it does not include primary data collection, and it may lead to limitations in the depth and breadth of analysis and synthesis on the intersection of burnout, change, and leadership. Furthermore, differences in institutional context and educational policies across different countries, regions, and socio-cultural contexts may affect the generalizability of the concluding remarks and proposed solutions and implications.

Literature Review

Teacher burnout has been an increasingly serious issue in higher education. While Maslach and Leiter (2016) outline the contributing factors to teacher burnout, McCarthy et al. (2016) highlight the importance of balancing job demands with available resources and supports in educational settings. On the other hand, educational changes have always been an inevitable and defining feature of the educational system. Research has shown that institutional demands, organizational stressors, and educational changes have a significant impact on instructors' physical and mental well-being and this may lead to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced professional efficacy (Maslach et al., 2001; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Although the goal of such changes is to enhance teaching and learning, they frequently put a great deal of pressure on educators, who must adjust to new roles, duties, and expectations. Teachers who experience this process may develop teacher burnout, a psychological syndrome marked by depersonalization, psychological exhaustion, and a diminished sense of personal success (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

Therefore, in this section, I reviewed and synthesized some of the most significant and relevant literature on the intersection of teacher burnout, educational change, and the potential role of leadership styles in mitigating the negative feelings and experiences of instructors at the post-secondary level. This review of literature examined how educational and institutional changes contribute to teachers' burnout, what are the long-term effects on teachers' mental and physical well-being, and what can be done to help mitigate the problem.

Teacher burnout

Freudenberger (1974) first introduced the concept of teacher burnout in the realm of educational settings and Maslach and Jackson (1981, 1993) later refined the term through their

studies by creating a multifaceted model of burnout that includes depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and decreased personal accomplishment which is still widely used in studies on teacher burnout. The study of teacher burnout has received attention from various scholars especially in recent decades because it has been shown to have negative impacts on teachers' job satisfaction (Robinson et al., 2019), physical health (Hakanen et al., 2006), mental health (Schonfeld & Bianchi, 2016), and their job performance (Klusmann et al., 2008). It also negatively affects student outcomes (Herman et al., 2018). Research has identified several factors that contribute to teacher burnout. These include organizational and job-related factors such as time pressure (Hakanen et al., 2006; Kyriacou, 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), relationships with colleagues (Hakanen et al., 2006; Leung & Lee, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), availability of support (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011), quality of social interactions (Fernet et al., 2012) and ultimately, teacher and student characteristics (Engelbrecht et al., 2003; Klusmann et al., 2008; Kokkinos, 2007). Therefore, understanding the underlying reasons and factors contributing to teacher burnout in the context of higher education is highly significant, and addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach.

More specifically, post-secondary instructors are more vulnerable to experiencing burnout due to the complex interplay of teaching, research, and administrative duties (Safari, 2020). In order to assess burnout levels among instructors in higher education and post-secondary institutions, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) as a popular tool can be used. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is a widely recognized tool for assessing teacher burnout in higher education (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). According to Watts and Robertson (2011) who examined the key dimensions of teacher burnout originally described by Maslach and Jackson

(1981), there are three key dimensions of teacher burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal achievement.

Emotional Exhaustion

One of the core dimensions of teacher burnout is emotional exhaustion which is characterized by continuous mental and physical fatigue due to prolonged stress and excessive work demands (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Watts & Robertson, 2011). Instructors in post-secondary institutions often struggle with emotional exhaustion, which is caused by large class sizes, heavy teaching and grading duties, and rising administrative tasks (Watts & Robertson, 2011). Thus, burnout and mental pressure are more likely and intense for precariously employed academics who have unstable employment conditions and receive minimal institutional support (Allmer, 2018). Some other studies in Latin America have shown that burnout levels vary by country, for example, faculty members in Mexico and Colombia reported higher emotional exhaustion than their counterparts in Ecuador and Peru (Navarrete Naevaez et al., 2024).

Depersonalization

Another key dimension in teacher burnout is depersonalization, which occurs when instructors feel detached and develop a cynical attitude toward their students, colleagues, or the institution itself (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Watts & Robertson, 2011). In this case, educators may disengage from their students and colleagues, which may lead to a reduction in their efficiency in the classroom (Safari, 2020). There is also evidence from research done in Mexico and Pakistan which has shown that vague institutional policies and lack of structure (Treviño-Reyes & Lopez-Perez, 2023) and job insecurity (Mdyusoff & Khan, 2013) exacerbate the burnout issue and further fuel the feelings of detachment and frustration.

Reduced Personal Accomplishment

The last key component of burnout is reduced personal accomplishment among instructors, which is defined as experiencing ineffectiveness and lack of fulfillment in their role as an educator (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Watts & Robertson, 2011). For instance, those faculty members in the university who always struggle to keep up with research expectations or modify their teaching methods, syllabus, and curriculum due to the ever-changing nature of education, students' needs, and institutional policies, may begin to get frustrated or feel that their efforts are not seen and appreciated by the institution. Research also demonstrates that instructors who work in institutions with limited ergonomic and psychosocial support and resources, combined with demanding workloads, are more likely to experience a decreasing sense of accomplishment and symptoms of burnout (Farias & Ferreira, 2024).

Factors Contributing to Teacher Burnout in Higher Education

After recognizing and acknowledging this term and its key dimension, we must recognize the contributing factors to teacher burnout in higher education in order to better understand the concept of burnout.

Increased Workload and Administrative Demands

As higher education continues to expand in programs and availability globally, post-secondary instructors encounter wider and more complex duties and responsibilities. Research by Teles et al. (2020) indicates that workload pressure and time constraints are the key predictors of teacher burnout. Likewise, instructors' heavy workload and administrative duties, have been found to significantly lead to burnout and negatively impact their well-being (Magtalas, 2024). Similarly, researchers in Pakistan also found that excessive workloads, work-life conflicts, and emotional demands strongly contribute to teacher burnout (Hashmi, 2021).

The Role of Educational Change

Changes in educational models, increasing institutional expectations, and heavier emotional demands can all have considerable effects on instructor well-being. Zhang and Zhu (2008) found that emotional labor plays a significant role in university instructors' burnout, especially when institutional demands need ongoing emotional regulation and adaptation. This is especially true at times of rapid transformation. For example, Sokal et al. (2020) found that the sudden change to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated stress and burnout symptoms among post-secondary educators. Similarly, Farias and Ferreira (2024) stated that when higher education institutions implement changes without sufficient ergonomic and institutional support, the risk of instructor burnout increases, particularly in high-demand teaching contexts.

Student-Related Stressors

Burnout is always more experienced in occupations that deal with interacting with other people (Cunningham, 1983) including students and communicating with students is the core component of the instructors' role, but as mentioned before, growing class sizes and increasing expectations for emotional support add to teachers stress (Watts & Robertson, 2011). Research has shown that emotional burden in teaching, such as managing student-related stressors, contributes significantly to burnout. Teachers who frequently deal with demotivated or struggling students often experience higher emotional exhaustion (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011, 2017). Likewise, another study found that the emotional burden which is placed on teachers by students can lead to prolonged stress and burnout (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In higher education, Teles et al. (2020) highlighted that stress caused by student interactions is a key factor in burnout, while Weißenfels et al. (2022) found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the era in

which teachers witnessed a shift to online learning and students' challenges, exacerbated burnout among educators.

Employment Conditions and Job Security

Another contributing factor is job insecurity, meaning that instructors in temporary or contract-based positions are more likely to experience higher levels of burnout than their permanently employed or more secure colleagues (Treviño-Reyes & Lopez-Perez, 2023). Research in Portugal proved that burnout was more common in teachers with short-term or casual contracts who often struggle with job uncertainty and life stability (Teles et al., 2020). Evidence from the Gulf region highlights high levels of faculty burnout in higher education, which has implications for workplace relationships and instructors' stress (Alzahmi et al., 2022). Murray (2013) in Japan also found that contract faculty members and instructors in post-secondary institutions experience higher levels of stress which is linked to career instability.

Consequences of Burnout in Higher Education

Until now, I have explored the concept of teacher burnout, its key dimensions, and its contributing factors. The next section reports on the negative impacts and consequences in detail. Teacher burnout is a critical issue in higher education since it not only negatively affects the educators and their physical and mental well-being, but also affects the educational institutions they serve and the overall learning outcome in post-secondary students. In other words, symptoms of burnout are both organizational and personal (Farber & Miller, 1981).

Decline in Teaching Quality and Student Outcomes

When instructors experience negative feelings of burnout, they are less motivated to engage students in classroom activities and deliver high-quality instruction (Safari, 2020). Since they are suffering from emotional exhaustion, it is very difficult for them to bring energy,

creativity, and attentiveness into the classroom and this negatively affects student learning and outcomes (Watts & Robertson, 2011). Research in Brazil has shown that high burnout levels in educators reduce their motivation and job satisfaction, and this results in diminishing the overall teaching experience and quality of education (Montoya et al., 2021).

Deterioration in Faculty Well-Being

In addition to the quality of teaching and learning, higher burnout levels in educators have serious negative consequences on both their physical and mental health, which can contribute to some conditions such as anxiety, chronic stress, depression, and even cardiovascular problems (Huang et al., 2015; Schonfeld & Bianchi, 2016). Furthermore, emotional exhaustion and detachment can negatively affect professional relationships which can lead to weakened interactions and social tension within academic departments (Farias & Ferreira, 2024). As stated in research, job insecurity and excessive workloads can add to this tension and negatively impact educators' mental well-being (Mdyusoff & Khan, 2013).

Faculty Turnover and Institutional Instability

When educators undergo a lot of pressure, they ultimately have to leave their positions and consequently, institutions face major challenges such as disrupted academic programs and increased recruitment costs (Treviño-Reyes & Lopez-Perez, 2023). It becomes more difficult to maintain program quality when experienced teachers leave, and losing them jeopardizes institutional knowledge and consistency. Research conducted by Navarrete Naevaez et al., (2024) also confirms this by highlighting how burnout can contribute to long-term instability of the programs and affects the institutions' overall success and sustainability.

Educational change

After exploring the concept of teacher burnout, its dimensions, and contributing factors, this review now turns to the second key concept, which is educational change. According to Fullan (2007), educational change is a complex and dynamic process affected by several factors such as policy shifts, technological advancements, and evolving social needs. It consists of both pedagogical and structural transformations to improve instruction and learning outcomes as well as adapt to existing challenges (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006).

The rapid evolution of technological and digital platforms such as hybrid teaching methods has significantly changed the landscape of higher education (Gleason & Greenhow, 2017). However, implementing educational changes can be emotionally demanding for instructors and needs a kind of leadership that supports open dialogue, trust, and relational engagement (Vanlommel & van den Boom-Muilenburg, 2024). Research also suggests that successful educational change needs strong leadership, shared decision-making, and continuous professional development (Hall & Hord, 2021). Without considering these elements, change initiatives may lead to exacerbate burnout among teachers (Sokal et al., 2020).

Leadership and Its Role in Burnout

The third key concept in this review examines the role of leadership in either mitigating or exacerbating burnout among educators in the context of educational change. Prior literature indicates that leadership strategies and styles play an important role in shaping the workplace culture, especially in educational institutions such as universities and colleges, where instructors often encounter heavy workloads, policy changes, and some other systemic reforms. Therefore, effective and successful leadership can function as a protection against teacher burnout by encouraging a collaborative and supportive culture among the instructors and staff. On the other

hand, an ineffective leader who imposes excessive demands and fails to provide sufficient support is directly linked to increased stress and burnout among teachers. In the following paragraphs, I will explore how different leadership styles in the reviewed literature, including transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire, influence teacher burnout and underscore the most successful strategies and approaches to foster instructors' well-being.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership which is characterized by vision-driven, intellectual, and individualized support, can increase teacher engagement, motivation, and job satisfaction by developing a sense of purpose and professional growth (Diebig et al., 2017). In this way, transformational leaders can mitigate the emotional burden of continuous institutional changes (Boamah, 2022).

Other studies have also proved the effectiveness of transformational leadership which can reduce burnout symptoms among instructors (Leithwood et al., 1996). This particular style of leadership can provide a wide range of professional development opportunities, foster collaboration, and ensure teachers' involvement in the change process (Hallinger, 2003).

However, transformational leadership has its own risks. For example, Seltzer et al. (1989) warned that this style of leadership has the possibility of leading to emotional exhaustion when expectations are not realistic from the followers. According to Shimony et al. (2022), when teachers are often pushed towards more innovation in teaching and handling tasks without adequate support, resources, or time to adapt, they are more likely to experience stress and burnout. Therefore, this highlights the need for striking a balance between a leader's inspiration and the provided support and resources.

Transactional Leadership

Another well-known leadership style is transactional leadership which highlights structured expectations, rewards, and performance-based evaluation (Bass, 1990). This style of leadership is sometimes beneficial as it provides stability in those institutions under frequent policy changes. Leaders who set clear goals, offer support and feedback, and ensure a fair distribution of tasks and duties can help mitigate burnout and role ambiguity as contributors to burnout symptoms (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

However, since transactional leaders prioritize performance over teachers' mental and physical well-being, they may neglect the emotional and psychological needs of instructors and as a result, it leads to more stress and disengagement. Research suggests controlling or outcome-focused leadership styles, especially when they limit teachers' autonomy and intrinsic motivation, are directly linked to higher levels of anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and burnout (Van den Broeck et al., 2014).

Laissez-Faire Leadership

Laissez-faire leadership which is characterized by minimal guidance, absence of involvement, and passive decision-making, has always been connected to negative impacts in educational contexts. Teachers with Laissez-faire leaders often have problems with uncertainty, lack of direction, and inadequate support (Kelloway et al., 2005). Therefore, the passive or avoidant leadership styles, such as laissez-faire leadership leave instructors isolated, detached, and overwhelmed, and can lead to increased stress and burnout among them (Hetland et al., 2007). Kelloway et al. (2005) also highlight that when leaders fail to engage teachers effectively, they are more likely to experience higher levels of stress, demotivation, and difficulty adapting to change. Therefore, instructors may lack the required resources and self-esteem to navigate

institutional challenges, and this further exacerbates their job dissatisfaction and emotional exhaustion.

Theoretical Frameworks: Connecting Burnout, Educational Change, and Leadership

In this section, I reviewed the most significant and relevant theoretical frameworks and models that explain the relationship and intersection of three key concepts in this review: teacher burnout, educational changes, and the role of leadership in mitigating or exacerbating the negative feelings and experiences of the instructors. The review of theoretical frameworks provides a structured lens through which we can further analyze, synthesize, and propose solutions to address the identified gaps in the existing literature.

Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model

Demerouti et al. (2001) proposed the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model which is a valuable framework to understand teacher burnout in both K-12 and higher education. Based on this model, job requirements and demands such as workload, administrative responsibilities, and curriculum changes contribute significantly to teachers' stress and burnout, while job resources such as professional development opportunities, leadership guidance, and institutional support can mitigate the negative effects (Bakker et al., 2005). As a result, when there is an imbalance between job demands and resources, teachers experience exhaustion and disengagement, which leads to burnout over time (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Hakanen et al., 2006). Research also suggests that constantly imposed changes in the education system, including changes in policies, teaching methods, and administrative tasks can cause a lot of stress on teachers, especially when they are imposed rapidly or without adequate support (Huberman & Vandenberghe, 1999). In this case, teachers feel pressured to meet the standards and deadlines, and they struggle with uncertainty about their abilities, all of which lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout (Maslach

& Leiter, 1997). Recent studies (Weißenfels et al., 2022) also found that teachers during the rapid and sudden changes during COVID-19 faced significant structural changes and challenges, which led to higher levels of depersonalization and a decreased sense of personal accomplishment, two key dimensions of burnout.

Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed the transactional model of stress and coping to offer additional insights into how teachers respond to causes of stress brought by changes in the education system. Based on this model, the risk of burnout is highly dependent on how instructors perceive and treat changes, whether they view it as a challenge to be handled or a threat to their professional career and identity. In other words, if they perceive reforms as unmanageable and overwhelming, they are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion and disengagement, as key dimensions of burnout. Therefore, support mechanisms and leadership strategies play a significant role in preventing such perceptions and developing coping and adapting strategies in teachers in order to enable them to navigate change more effectively.

Transformational Leadership Theory

As leadership plays a key role in supporting teachers, mitigating burnout, and managing change, transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985) was proposed to suggest that educational leaders should inspire and motivate teachers through a vision-based, intellectual, and individualized support approach. Research has consistently connected transformational leadership, as one of the best and most successful leadership styles, to higher job satisfaction and reduced burnout among employees and teachers (Diebig et al., 2017). However, excessive use of transformational leadership can lead to emotional exhaustion, especially with unrealistic

expectations (Seltzer et al., 1989). Therefore, striking a balance with realistic workload expectations is important in preventing teacher burnout (Khan et al., 2020).

Change Theory

Apart from leadership practices, systemic factors also play a significant role in how teachers experience educational change. Fullan (2007) in the change theory highlights the importance of collaboration, capacity-building, and addressing the emotional impact of institutional changes among teachers. Fullan (2007) argues that policymakers and leaders should avoid top-down changes in institutions and instead attempt to incorporate their perspectives and experiences into the change process. According to this model, when teachers are not well-prepared and supported to experience reforms, resistance to change and burnout are more likely to take place.

Social-Cognitive Perspective on Burnout

Another useful framework to help explain the intersection of burnout, change, and leadership, is the social-cognitive perspective on burnout (Schwarzer & Greenglass, 1999). This perspective explains how teachers who experience self-doubt and uncertainty about their abilities to adapt and cope with the change and its associated challenges, experience more emotional exhaustion, job dissatisfaction, and burnout. Other studies also suggest that resistance to change is often related to feelings of vulnerability and a lack of control over decision-making (Sokal et al., 2020). As Fullan (2001) emphasizes, when teachers are excluded from planning and implementing changes in the education system, they are more likely to become frustrated and resistant to reforms.

Systems perspective framework

Finally, a broader framework that is used to understand educational changes is the systems perspective framework proposed by Vanlommel and van den Boom-Muilenburg (2024). This framework offers a comprehensive and holistic approach for analyzing, planning, and implementing educational changes by incorporating multiple sources of evidence such as research findings, teacher experiences, student data, and professional expertise, it attempts to ensure that interventions are both contextually relevant and evidence-informed. It also evaluates multiple interconnected elements including the system's readiness and capacity for change as well as its alignment with cultural and structural factors to provide a comprehensive model for understanding and implementing reform effectively.

Synthesis of theoretical frameworks

By integrating multiple theoretical frameworks and models to explain the intersection of teacher burnout, educational change, and the role of leadership, it becomes evident that implementing educational reform is like a double-edged sword. While it is designed to enhance the quality of education and learning environments, it increases the risk of teacher burnout if it's not managed properly. Institutions and policymakers will be able to design and implement more effective and less stressful educational reforms by understanding how these theoretical frameworks interact with each other to mitigate burnout risks and develop sustainable reforms. In fact, by integrating all these theoretical frameworks and models, we realize that sustainable educational reform is highly dependent on balancing job demands with resources, involving all stakeholders especially teachers in decision-making, and cultivating leadership that supports teachers' well-being and resilience.

Conclusion

In this critical literature review, I explored the intersection of teacher burnout, educational change, and the role of leadership in the context of post-secondary institutions. This intersection presents a dynamic, complex, and multifaceted challenge in higher education that needs to be appropriately addressed from the lens of multiple frameworks and theories. As illustrated in this review, leadership styles have a significant influence on instructors' well-being, especially in times of institutional change. Transformational leadership is the most effective approach to fostering engagement and motivation among followers and teachers. However, research suggests that it has been shown to yield both positive and negative effects on burnout, depending on how it is applied (Khan et al., 2020; Seltzer et al., 1989).

The theoretical frameworks and models discussed in this review, including the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, the transformational leadership theory, the social-cognitive perspective on burnout, change theory, and the systems perspective framework, all highlight the significance of a nuanced, comprehensive, and holistic approach to the intersection of burnout, change and leadership strategies that balance institutional tasks with instructor's well-being and satisfaction. In other words, since each framework offers distinct but interconnected insights into challenges and potential solutions, examining post-secondary burnout in the context of educational change through multiple frameworks provides a nuanced understanding of the key factors contributing to and mitigating burnout and stress levels among instructors.

One of the models discussed above was the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (Demerouti et al., 2001) which highlights the balance between job demands and resources, meaning that high demands imposed on instructors lead to higher levels of stress and burnout. In other words, teacher burnout is a result of an imbalance between job demands and resources.

Therefore, sufficient resources including support, autonomy, and professional development can mitigate negative experiences among instructors and enhance motivation. This framework underscores the significance of institutional resource allocation in maintaining sustainable educational change. Without these resources, prolonged stress can lead to job emotional exhaustion and disengagement and a negative impact on teachers' well-being and instruction effectiveness.

Apart from the role of institutional support and job resource allocation, instructors themselves have an important role to play in their stress management. Drawing from the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), an important psychological dimension to understanding burnout is teachers' perception of change whether as a threat or a challenge to be dealt with. According to this model, if they perceive it as a threat, they are more likely and vulnerable to burnout. This highlights the necessity for institutions to foster a culture of resilience, where change is viewed as a new opportunity for growth and professional development, rather than a top-down threat and burden. In this sense, providing support, communication, and coping mechanisms can enable teachers to learn and develop adaptive strategies in times of educational change.

One of the most important aspects in understanding burnout is the role of leadership which is critically examined through transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985). Based on this framework, an effective leader can inspire, motivate, and support followers and instructors in times of navigating change and reform. However, research also suggests that we have to be cautious in applying transformational leadership in various contexts as it sometimes leads to excessive demands and unrealistic expectations imposed on teachers. This highlights the

importance of striking a balance between motivating teachers and setting realistic workload expectations to prevent burnout while fostering innovation and engagement.

An important insight from the change theory (Fullan, 2007) is the necessity for including instructors in decision-making and change processes. This framework demonstrates that teacher burnout is more likely to occur when the educational change is designed and implemented in a top-down approach, meaning that teachers are excluded from the change processes. Therefore, resistance to change is often a natural response to a lack of agency and top-down implementation of strategies that fail to consider teachers' insights and experiences. Thus, meaningful change should incorporate instructors' voices to ensure that reforms align with their needs and capacities to prevent disengagement, frustration, and emotional exhaustion.

Instructors' self-perception in their ability to adapt to change is another important insight gained from the social-cognitive perspective on burnout (Schwarzer & Greenglass, 1999). Based on this perspective, when teachers experience self-doubt in their abilities and also lack control over educational change, they are more likely and vulnerable to burnout and role conflict. Therefore, the institutions need to prioritize teacher empowerment through developing confidence-building initiatives, professional autonomy, and clear communication about educational changes.

Lastly, the systems perspective framework (Vanlommel & van den Boom-Muilenburg, 2024) suggests a comprehensive understanding of educational change by integrating multiple levels of influence and evidence-informed approaches in aligning institutional policies with cultural, structural, and environmental factors to ensure successful and sustainable implementation. Therefore, a multidimensional and evidence-based change initiative needs to be

planned and implemented in order to prevent teacher burnout and promote long-term and sustainable educational reform.

In conclusion, these theoretical frameworks together emphasize that while educational change is necessary for the educational landscape, it must be approached with a strategic balance between job demands and job resources, supportive leadership, teacher involvement, and systemic alignment. Institutions and educational leaders must recognize that teacher burnout is not just an individual issue but it is a structural challenge as well that requires informed and well-supported interventions. By applying these insights that are gained from multiple theoretical frameworks, educational organizations can foster resilience, engagement, and well-being among instructors, to ensure that educational changes lead to meaningful and sustainable improvements rather than stress and exhaustion.

Implications and Recommendations

Given these insights from several theoretical frameworks, a multi-stakeholder approach is required to address burnout among instructors in post-secondary institutions and recommend initiatives to improve their teaching experiences.

Implications for Leaders

Adopt a balanced leadership approach

When leadership is combined with participatory decision-making and support structures, it becomes the most effective style of leadership which is known as transformational leadership (Gill et al., 2006). According to Boamah (2022), teacher burnout can be reduced through transformational leadership practices, especially those that promote a supportive workplace culture, enhance job satisfaction, and clear communication.

Integrate mental health initiatives into institutional policies

Apart from leadership style, organizations should offer more accessible mental health resources, peer support programs, stress management, and coping strategies training sessions to help staff and instructors cope with new job demands (Wu et al., 2021). These initiatives may include counseling services, yoga and meditation classes, physical exercise membership and other work-related professional learning communities (PLCs) to provide individualized feedback and peer support.

Promote workload equity

Sometimes post-secondary instructors experience burnout due to heavy workload, uneven distribution of work, excessive bureaucratic tasks, and unrealistic and idealistic expectations. Therefore, educational leaders can help reduce burnout by setting more realistic expectations, transparent workload policies, and reducing unnecessary bureaucratic tasks.

Implications for Instructors and Staff

Develop self-regulation and coping strategies

Based on the insights gained from Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998), post-secondary instructors and staff need to work on their ability to cope with new changes, adopt cognitive reframing and time management strategies, and seek social support to protect themselves against burnout.

Engage in professional development opportunities

Post-secondary institutions should provide professional development opportunities such as training on resilience, leadership development, and effective change management to build a supportive environment and prepare instructors for institutional transformations (Guthrie et al.,

2021). Therefore, instructors should participate in and attend the professional development sessions that are offered in their workplace to help mitigate the risk of burnout in the future.

Advocate for collaborative leadership

Now we all know that educational leaders should incorporate post-secondary instructors and faculty members in the decision-making and change processes. Therefore, instructors through actively participating in the change processes, feel more valued and heard in shaping new policies and structures and this has a positive impact on their well-being and reduces resistance to change and burnout levels.

Implications for Policy Makers and Higher Stakeholders

Redefine performance evaluation criteria

Faculty members and instructors in post-secondary institutions often experience burnout due to overemphasis on research, publication expectations, and student evaluations. In order to prevent the negative effects of this on their burnout, policymakers and higher stakeholders within the universities should consider holistic and multidimensional evaluation methods that prioritize their mental and physical health and job satisfaction as well as instruction quality and balanced research productivity.

Foster a culture of well-being

Policymakers within post-secondary institutions should foster a culture of well-being among the instructors, faculty members, and staff. As Boamah (2022) suggests, they should move beyond individualistic approaches to burnout and adopt structural interventions such as improving job layout, fair compensation, creative and engaging work environment, and sustainable career paths for instructors.

Encourage participatory change management

As Fullan's change theory (2007) highlights the importance of engaging educators in the decision-making process, policymakers need to engage faculty members and instructors as much as they can, rather than imposing top-down changes or policies. In this case, instructors do not feel alienated and detached in the educational change processes, instead, they feel like active participants in this process who are responsible for making positive changes to improve the quality of education.

Final Thoughts

The concluding remarks and implications of this capping project highlight the urgent need for post-secondary institutions to reconsider and critically think about their leadership styles and strategies in the context of burnout and educational change. Leadership cannot be approached in a one-size-fits-all manner; instead, post-secondary institutions must adopt adaptive, inclusive, and evidence-informed approaches that consider the well-being of the instructors as well as institutional goals.

In addition to offering useful insights and suggestions to establish a more sustainable and encouraging academic environment, this review contributes to a broader discourse including organizational health, teacher resilience, and leadership effectiveness. Future reviews and studies can further explore the different leadership styles and their effects on job satisfaction and burnout among post-secondary instructors. In addition, qualitative research by focusing on the voices and lived experiences of post-secondary instructors can also offer valuable perspectives on what supports or hinders their ability to adapt during educational changes.

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