

Special Session: Fostering Change

Application and Implications of Palmer's Movement Approach to Change

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Abstract—According to change literature, the multiplicity of levels and structures that exist within an organization makes organizational change a difficult process. Similarly, many challenges face any attempt to foster change in engineering education, due to the various layers that make up the field. Looking at the evolution of engineering education research (EER) as a field and the individual pathways of engineering education researchers, EER scholars have discussed a model for engineering education reform that draws from Palmer's Movement Approach to change. This special session introduces Palmer's approach as a framework to look at reforms that have already occurred, and envision possible paths for action toward desired changes.

Keywords—Change; engineering education reform; movement approach to change

I. GOALS AND AUDIENCE

There are two goals for this session:

Our first goal is to (re) introduce the audience to Parker Palmer's Movement Approach to educational reform [1]. Parker proposed a four-stage model that will be described later. Unlike top-down explanations of change, the Movement Approach emphasizes personal motivation and integrity, and the power of social connection. Thus this approach is consistent with recent findings in emotional and social learning. Though Palmer ideas are decades old, one can find examples of the Movement Approach in contemporary events like the Arab Spring and the Women's March on Washington. Participants will have an opportunity to reflect on where they could implement this approach in their own contexts. Our second goal is to provide an opportunity for participants to meet others with common concerns (stage 2).

The intended audience is any engineering or computer science educator who is interested in being a change agent. We assume the majority of FIE attendees fall into this category.

II. INTEREST OF THE SESSION

A. Why would this session be of interest?

The Movement Approach is a salient model for our time and provides people with a path of action. There is also the opportunity to forge connections with others who share our concerns.

B. How is this session thought-provoking?

The session is thought-provoking because it provides the space for individuals to reflect on how to use Parker's model in their respective contexts. It also provides participants with the opportunity to experience stages one and two of the movement approach.

III. DESCRIPTION OF THE SESSION

This session will consist of four major activities that are described below. Please see the Agenda (Section V) for the detailed timeline.

A. Introducing the model

Parker Palmer developed a model of organizational change spurred by reformers who use "resistance as merely the place where things begin" [1, p. 12]. Smith and colleagues compared change in education to Parker's Movement Approach, extended to educational reform [2]. The model consists of four definable stages that are not mutually exclusive in that these stages normally overlap and can possibly be cyclical. In Stage one, individuals recognize there is an unexpressed part of themselves that they are no longer willing to keep hidden. Parker called this "choosing integrity" or deciding to be "divided no more." In Stage two, these isolated individuals find and draw support from others who have similar concerns.

Parker labeled stage two “corporate support.” As the small groups grow, people become willing to openly express their concerns, thus Stage three is called “go public.” In Stage four the group begins to create a different reward structure. Parker called this “alternate rewards”.

B. Applications of the movement approach

After the Movement Approach is introduced, the session will move into discussion of how the model has been applied. Two of the presenters (Streveler and Smith) were developers of the Rigorous Research in Engineering Education (RREE) workshops held in 2004-2006. These workshops were an early mechanism to expand engineering faculty’s ability to conduct high quality education research. RREE participants have been interviewed about the benefits of their participation and two of the presenters (Pitterson and Ortega-Alvarez) have used the movement approach as a framework for analysis [3]. These findings will provide a concrete example of the movement approach as a lived experience.

C. Interactive networking

Time will be provided for participants to locate other session attendees with similar concerns. This part of the session provides an opportunity for participants to experience Stage 2 of the Movement Approach.

D. How to apply the movement approach

After participants have found others who share their concerns, we will hold a small group discussion around the following questions:

- Where do you want to be “divided no more”?
- Where can you find other people with similar concerns?
- What avenues are there for you to ‘go public’ about your concerns? (See agenda for details).

The small groups will share their ideas with the larger audience.

IV. AGENDA

- 5 minutes - General overview.
- 15 minutes - Introduce the 4 stages.
- 15 minutes - Application - How we used Movement Approach to make sense of RREE interviews.
- 5 minutes – Participants use a 6” x 4” index card (we will provide) that describes the how they would like to be “divided no more” (Stage one).
- 20 minutes – Network time for participants to meet each other – find people with similar interests and exchange contact information. (This is the beginning of Stage two). Participants hand in their index card and email address at the end of the session. We will distribute a list of participants with their interests for follow-up.
- 20 minutes - Implications – how do we help people find each other and go public? How can they find each other?

V. PRESENTERS

Ruth A. Streveler and Karl A. Smith have presented numerous special sessions and have both won multiple Helen Plants awards for outstanding non-traditional sessions at FIE.

Nicole P. Pitterson and Juan David Ortega-Alvarez are rising scholars in engineering education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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REFERENCES

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- [3] N. P. Pitterson, R. A. Streveler, J. D. Ortega-Alvarez, and R. S. Adams, “Voicing the indescribable: Using photo elicitation as a method to uncover belonging and community,” presented at the 2016 ASEE Annual Conference & Exposition, New Orleans, LA, 2016.