

Managing Change in Teacher Education

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Introduction

"Change is the biggest story in the world today, and we are not coping with it adequately" Warren Bennis

Do you agree with the above statement of Warren Bennis?

We who live in the twenty-first century may find it easier to agree with Bennis than our forefathers who lived in the early years of the last century. Even to them change was a reality, though changes would have come more gradually then. Today with advanced technology and free flow of information, change is certainly the 'biggest story'. What is discovered in the remotest corners of earth now reaches us within minutes through electronic media. Rapid transport systems have significantly reduced the time to travel distances. New technological devices enable us to do things which we could not dream of, ten twenty years ago. Amidst these rapid changes we are called upon to think differently and act differently. We have to learn to use new devices, cope with new situations and continuously adjust to changing environments.

Has education taken note of the changing nature around us? Often educationists are accused of resisting change even when change is desirable. Perhaps those involved in education are more comfortable with gradual changes –changes that come through evolution rather than revolution. However twenty-first century demands are not only to cope with gradual change. Sometimes the external environment may demand quick changes and educationists will have to make quick responses. At other times educational managers are called upon to bring about drastic changes, and even act as change agents.

Organizational theorists would agree that often organizations are compelled to bring about change due to pressures that come from both internal and external environments. Internal origins of change are in part self-generated, and in part represent responses to external pressures perceived by members of the organization. Read the following case incident.

Box 1

Mrs X assumed duties as the President of the newly established College of Education in Samagipura. Within weeks she saw that maintaining the newly constructed buildings and the beautiful surroundings was no easy task. Very soon the College was caught up in serious maintenance problems. At one of the frequent staff- meetings, some members of her staff pointed out many lapses in the administration which resulted in poor maintenance. Some of the visitors too who visited the College commented about deteriorating conditions in the physical environment. One such visitor was the Minister responsible for education.

Do you recognize the pressures that are being built around the organization to introduce some change to the way the College is administered. Perhaps you may recognize such pressures on your organization too, to bring about some changes from within.

Pressure for change may also come from the external environment. Ministers of Education, Health, Environment etc, other national bodies responsible for quality of education, competitors in teacher education and public groups are some of the external agencies that may bring pressure on teacher training institutions to bring about change. The national economy, trade unions, religious groups etc. also form part of this external environment. Organizations may view such pressures indifferently, without accepting the challenges positively, or they may see them as genuine opportunities for improvement.

In this lesson you will be helped to examine

- The Nature of Change
- The change Process
- Change Agents and Their Role

You are called upon to read other literature on Management of Change, use internet and visit Websites when possible, as you pursue information on this topic.

Nature of Change

Reflect on your own organization. Could you recognize pressures exerted on your own organization to bring about some change? From where do such pressures come-from within the organization, or from outside?

Fundamental changes make noticeable impacts when actually implemented. Normally they are accompanied by major upheavals and touch the way of life of the organization. The arrival of such changes are noticed not only by the insiders of the organization, but also by those outside, who have a keen interest in the organization. Thus these changes are commented on, discussed, and sometimes, even resisted.

Could you think of such fundamental changes that have been proposed or implemented in the Sri Lankan Education System recently? Why do you think some of these are being resisted? Did they require major adjustments from the members of the system?

The proposed restructuring of schools into two tiers, grades 1 to 9 and 10 to 13, was seen as a fundamental change by those who were used to grade 1 to 13 system. Thus not only those within the 1 to 13 system but those outside, past pupils and parents of such schools, expressed great concern. If implemented the change could have affected the way of life of those within the organization and its stakeholders.

In industrial and business organizations, re-engineering, merger, downscaling and privatization are often seen as fundamental changes. The emergence of Sri Lanka Telecom was viewed as a fundamental change by those within, and the change was resisted vehemently by some. Such resistance was also seen during certain privatization moves which sought to bring in fundamental changes into industry.

Self Assessment 1

- a. Given below are two instances where two Teacher education institutes have been called upon to face change. Consider the two instances carefully and give your responses to the following questions.

I How would you categorize the changes each of these institutions are called upon to face: a) fundamental or b) incremental? Why?

II What factors could prompt resistance to change in each of the two institutes? In which institute could resistance be greater? Give reasons.

- b. Compare your responses with the notes given in Box 2 below.

Institute "A" has been conducting over the years, two-year full-time courses for untrained teachers. As training of untrained teachers is not going to be a requirement in the future due to the new teacher recruitment policy, the institute has been asked to transform itself into a teacher centre with residential facilities to run short courses for teachers in service.. These courses will be more demand driven and client oriented. Thus the majority of teaching faculty will be part-time drawn from schools, Colleges of Education and Universities in the vicinity, according to the requirements of the time. As the number of full-time staff needed will be very small, most of the teaching staff will have to take the option of early retirement or crossing over to the teaching service.

Institute "B" has been conducting three-year full-time courses in pre service teacher training. An investigation has revealed that most of the course content used is out-dated and that the teaching methodologies used are not conducive to learning. The rigidity of courses limits students' subject choices. The institute has been given a year's time to revise course content, train teaching staff in appropriate teaching methodologies, provide more curriculum options and bring in other quality improvement techniques. Failure to bring about the desired change would mean withdrawal of the accreditation given to some of the courses of the institute.

Box 2

It will be helpful for you to refer paragraphs 2 and 3 under the heading 'nature of change' above. Incremental change was said to be taking place more by evolution – amendments to the curriculum, improvement of teaching methodologies etc. Fundamental change, it was stated, could affect the way of life of those within the organization.

The change to take place in institute A seems to be more fundamental in nature, while changes to be made in institute B seem more incremental in nature.

Changes will be resisted more in institute A as the members of that institute face redundancy. The few remaining will have to get used to a completely different way of life. There could be resistance from some members of institute B as well, as they will have to work harder, learn new techniques or could be under greater scrutiny.

However the consequences to be faced by those in institute B are not as drastic as those to be faced by the members of institute A.

Sociologists who have taken a keen interest in the nature of social change have looked at change as a process of diffusion. Paul R. Mort (1958) who was a researcher at Teachers College Columbia University has studied natural diffusion processes especially in relation to change in the field of education. Natural diffusion implies that new ideas and practices arise in some fashion, and spread in some unplanned way. Mort observes that there is a pattern to this unplanned process.

"Educational change proceeds very slowly. After an invention which is desired to spread throughout the school appears, fifteen years typically elapse before it is found in three percent of the school systems.....After practices reach the three percent point of diffusion, their rate of spread accelerates. An additional 20 years usually suffices for an almost complete diffusion, in an area the size of an average state. There are indications that the rate of spread throughout the nation is not much slower" (Paul R. Mort and Donald H. Ross, 1957, p. 181)

Mort also believed that with more financial support, the time lag a school system exhibits in adopting innovative practices could be shortened. However the cost-quality relationship in education and educational innovations has been questioned in later years. We shall return to that issue later.

More recent understanding of nature of change indicates that change need not necessarily be a process of natural diffusion. Peter Drucker (1993) has this to say to leaders of nonprofit organizations today in the face of a rapidly changing society:

"Don't wait. Organize yourself for systematic innovation. Look for changes as indications of an opportunity for innovation. To build all this into your system, you, as the leader of the organization, have to set the example." (p. 12)

Social change can be successfully planned and managed, and this has shown to be true even in the case of individual lives. Marxist political and social theory and empirically based social sciences have fueled and shaped this dynamic concept of social change. This type of thinking relating to social change makes it necessary for us to examine questions such as:

Do the processes of creating a desirable society require creating a compatible education system? To what extent must changes in society be reflected by changes in education systems?

Should educational organization primarily be vehicles of social change? Or should they also undertake the task of preserving and transmitting traditions to younger members of society?

While considering issues relating to management of change in education, you will be constantly challenged by these dilemmas.

The Change Process

Our discussion so far has focused on 'nature of change' and we have seen that change may come in the form of natural diffusion or may be introduced in a planned manner. As a student of management of teacher education you will be more concerned with planned change which has to be managed. Hence while discussing the process of change we shall concentrate more on processes involved in introducing and institutionalizing planned change.

In managed change a change is conceived and introduced by those in authority and is carefully engineered till the change is institutionalized. Managed change needs a change agent or change agents. We shall discuss the role of such change agents in the next section. It may be useful at this stage for you to reflect on some of the changes that came into your own organization.

An example could be taken from curriculum change in a College of Education. Was the change initiated at the College or was it conceived, designed and introduced by an external source?

If later is the case the whole exercise is about managed change. However since the College authorities are part of the process of a managed change activity they will be involved in the management of a change process that has been thrust on them externally.

Do you realize that some of these changes were conceived, planned, and discussed at different levels before they were passed on to your organization? Perhaps the initiation was at the National Education Commission (NEC) or The National Institute of Education (NIE) or the Ministry of Education. Planned change could come out of policy analysis, research or the functioning of think tanks. Referring to this approach Robert G. Owens (1981) observes that "scientific production of new knowledge and its use in daily activities is the key to planned change in education"(p.239). Hence it is very important to have linkages and good communication between researchers and practitioners for initiation of planned change in education.

Some hold the view that often research (invention or discovery of new knowledge) could take place regardless of its applicability to immediate problems. They propose a development phase which will take the responsibility of translating research findings to a product that would be of practical use. Thus in a Research and Development (R&D) model of change, research and development are indicated as independent activities. Figure 1 illustrates this.

Concept of the Research, Development, Diffusion and Adoption(RDDA) Model of Change.

(Robert G. Owens in *Organizational Behaviour in Education*, Pg. 240)

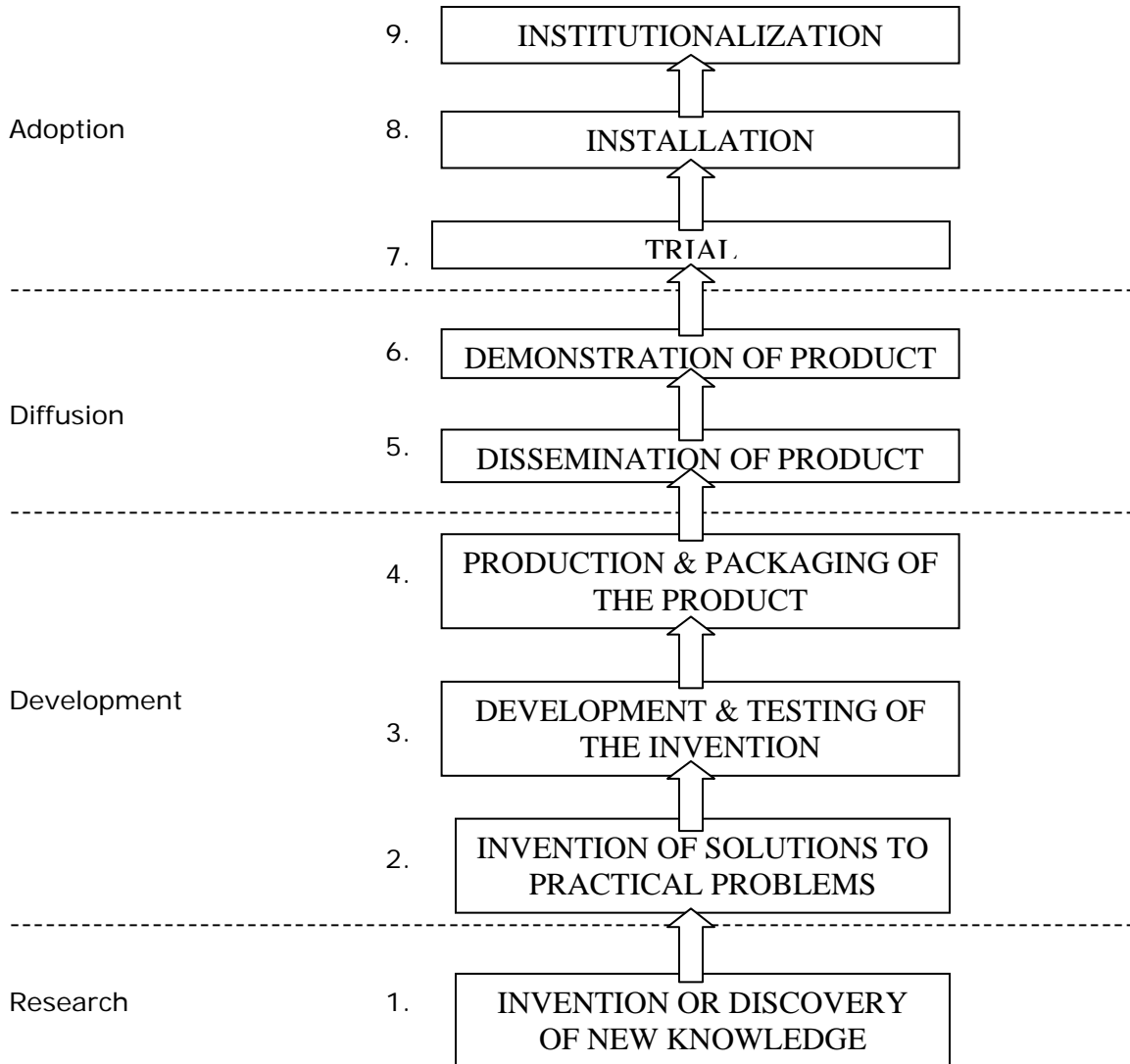


Figure 1 – RDDA Model

Owens in his "Research, Development Diffusion and Adoption (RDDA) model" identifies four main steps (and nine sub steps) in the process of planned change. The need for change is felt during the research stage, but a practitioner steps into translate research findings into practice. Owens uses terminology more familiar to industry to describe the different stages. The second stage, development, involves invention of solutions to practical problems, development and testing of the invention and production and packaging of the product. The third stage is the diffusion stage,

when the dissemination and the demonstration of the product takes place. Finally the adoption takes place which again needs sub stages. These sub stages include-

- i) a trial in which the new product is tested in some limited way,
- ii) installation, a process of refinement and adaptation to local conditions if the trial appears promising; and finally, if all goes well
- iii) institutionalization which means that the innovation becomes an integral part of the system. A test of institutionalization is whether or not the invention continues in use if external support and encouragement are withdrawn.

Self Assessment II

Take the case of a total curriculum change to be introduced either to the school system or to teacher education institutes.

Using the RDDA model, identify the stage through which the curriculum change process may proceed from initiation to institutionalization. Do all stages or only some stages apply in the case of a major change?

See Box 3 if you need assistance

Box 3	
Main stages in RDDA model	Stages that a curriculum change may go through
1 Research	Investigations indicate that the existing curriculum does not cater to the needs of students. Dissatisfaction
2 Development	Need assessment leading to new curriculum concepts. These tested, Draft syllabi, Teacher Guides, Student Guides etc. developed.
3 Diffusion	Master teachers/In-service advisors, trained to try new material with teachers and students..
4 Adoption	Adjustment after taking into account feedback. New curriculum prescribed to all schools. Designers move out. Teachers and students accept and follow new curriculum.

Other models of the change process identify 'vision' as the starting point of change. The vision may come from the leader of the organization or it may be inspired by external forces. From whichever source it comes it will bring a coherent view of the

future that forms an over arching objective for the organization. The vision is inspired by a realization that a change is necessary which will make the future different from the present. The EASIER approach leading to fundamental change illustrates this.

EASIER approach to the leadership of fundamental change (DE Hussey in *How to manage organizational change*, Pg. 53)

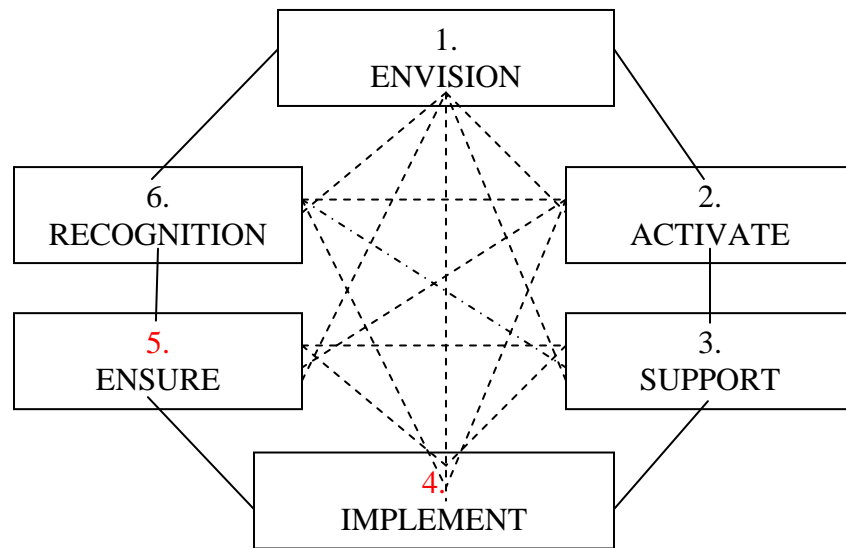


Figure 2

In the 'Easier Approach' the acronym, EASIER stands for:

Envisioning

Activating

Supporting

Implementing

Ensuring and

Recognizing

According to Hussey (1997) the first three elements, envisioning, activating and supporting, are the charismatic and behavioral aspects of leadership. The second

three elements, implementing, ensuring, and recognizing, are the management and administrative aspects which enable the first three to be converted to effective action. There is an assumption in the model that change is initiated by one person, the leader. However the model is valid even when the change is led by more than one person, such as a team.

The first step in the change process, 'Envisioning' requires a leader who has a vision of the future which differs from the present. It is important for this person to think through the vision to ensure that it is both desirable and sound. Defining the vision to the group, articulating it in a way that it has meaning to others, is essential during the initiation stage.

'Activating' the followers is the next step. This would mean ensuring that others in the organization understand, support and eventually share the vision. Defining the vision in a coherent way and communicating it effectively in order to get commitment to the vision are all prerequisites for the success of the change.

'Supporting' involves inspiring the people of the organization, providing moral and practical support and developing a strong empathy with them. To do this effectively the leader should build a base of respect trust and integrity.

The next three steps are managerial. 'Implementing' involves a detailed plan, schedules and instruments, allocation of responsibility, providing budgets, setting up structures, determining policies and setting goals for the change programme. However putting things on paper is not enough. The next step 'ensuring' requires establishing, monitoring and controlling processes to ensure that all actions are taken on time. Corrective steps are taken if needs arise. Both quantitative and qualitative aspects are to be looked into at this stage of the change process.

'Recognizing' could be both positive and negative and involves rewarding those who contributed to the success of the change and the removal of obstacles for the sake of sustainability.

You may now apply the EASIER approach to the curriculum change process you examined earlier. Are there valid steps in this model applicable to educational change?

These reflections will make it clear that any planned change goes through a process- from initiation to institutionalization. As a student of management of change it is important for you to be aware of the different stages of such a process. There are management tasks to be performed during each stage of the process in order to ensure that, a change is implemented effectively. Study of change process helps us to be conscious of the need for management intervention during different stages of the process.

Change agents and their role

While discussing the 'change process' we already came across the word 'change agent'. It was mentioned that in managed change, a change is often conceived and introduced at higher levels of the organization and is then carefully engineered and introduced till the change is institutionalized. In such situations those who conceived the change would need the services of change agents at the implementation stage to work out strategies and procedures to bring about the desired change.

Referring to such change agents who could often be outside consultants, McFarland(1979) says "a change agent's formal role is primarily to plan and initiate changes rather than to implement them. Change agents serve as catalysts, interpreters and synthesists. They often work quietly behind the scenes to promote change" (P.394)

Institutions involved in organizational development (OD) exercises, usually obtain the services of a change agent for a period of time. Such a change agent could bring in greater objectivity and up-to-date technical knowledge to the organization. It is important to get the services of such an external change agent/ consultant during the early stages of planning, including the diagnostic phase. The external change agent will not play the role of decision maker, leaving that function to the manager of the organization. However he/she will help the others in raising relevant questions, seeking critical data, exposing false assumptions and achieving a deeper understanding of the organization- its goals expectations, values etc. To accomplish those tasks those change agents should be skilful in group leadership, communication and interpersonal relationships.

Change agents need not necessarily be brought in from outside. People within an organization may play the role of change agents at one time or another. During the introduction of educational reforms in Sri Lanka, many line managers had to assume the role of change agents as well. A principal of a school working on programmes for better teacher-pupil rapport, or performance appraisal of teachers, is trying to introduce fundamental changes, and may assume the role of change agent at certain times. Hence it is important for us to note that though the change agent is not an implementer, many implementers of change at one time or another play the role of change agent. At such times he/ she is involved in strategies and procedures for bringing about change, rather than implementing.

Evans, quoting four different authors, has prepared a typology of change agents based on their styles of operation. The "white hat change agent" (Havelock, 1969) works through acceptance and relationships, uses democratic processes and has a group oriented behaviour. Such a person works on trust and would have an engaging personality. The "Machiavellian change agent" (Baldrige, 1975) has no bias to democratic procedures, would not want to be too visible or too close to clients. Such a change agent may build coalitions, join external constituencies, use committees effectively and will be target driven. Use of strategies to suit occasions may be the style of operations of the Machiavellian change agent. The other two types of change agents identified, "Hatchet Man change agent" (Hanson, 1979) and the "Organizational Guerilla" (Gregg and Maanen, 1983) may not generally be found in educational organizations.

The 'Hatchet man change agent' is usually an external person brought in for a short period when there is a crisis situation demanding drastic action. The person thus brought in will have loyalty only to the sponsor and no one else, and will shun visibility and concentrate only on the task at hand. Having accomplished the task the change agent will get out of the organization quickly.

The 'Organization Guerilla' will normally infiltrate and work from inside. The intention is to bring about a change in the long run.. Hence there will be a gradual building of cells of support, and networking with diverse elements.

Another type of change agent referred to when discussing managing change is the 'Young Turk'.. Usually this is a young employee anxious to bring about

improvement. Young Turks are usually pushy or persistent and could be put into good use when they have both talent and measures of tact and patience.

Thus in managing planned change specific roles could be played by change agents, whether they are brought from outside or produced from within the organization, The change agent is ultimately responsible for planning and initiating change and facilitating the implementation to bring about the desired change.

Summary

You would have by now realized that facing change is inevitable in whatever field you work in. As a student of management of change in Teacher Education, a more positive approach is required when faced with change. Hence the importance of understanding the nature of change, the change process and the role of the change agents.

Change, it was shown, could be incremental or fundamental. As managers of change we are more concerned with fundamental change which could be planned and managed. In the field of education we are being constantly challenged to bring about desirable changes.

Planned change is normally initiated, developed, diffused and adopted. Institutionalization of change, the final step of adoption, is extremely important when bringing about change. Challenging visions could also lead to planned change and here leadership plays a dominant role.

Change agents have proved to be useful in bringing about desired change.. However a distinction is made between change agents and implementors which require the change agent to play a less visible role. According to the roles to be played the change agent could be an outsider or insider of an organization. Yet all within organizations play the role of change agents at onetime or another.

Outcomes of the Reading

As a result of this reading, you should now be able to:

- Appreciate that change is necessary for the improvement of education in general and teacher education more specifically.
- Differentiate between incremental and fundamental change
- Explain how planned change process differs from natural diffusion process of change
- Describe the different stages of the change process in planned change

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