

Conditions, Strategies and Barriers to Change

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Introduction

We continue to examine further aspects of the theme “Managing Change in Teacher Education” in this lesson. In the last lesson we discussed

The nature of change

The change process

The change agents and their role

We saw that we live in a rapidly changing world where new knowledge and new technologies compel us not only to cope with change but also to manage change so that we could make the best in the environments we are called upon to live and work. We also saw how change is initiated and implemented and we recognized the need to plan change when working as educational managers. The processes involved in planned change were discussed in detail and the different roles the change agents have to play were examined briefly.

In this lesson we will discuss

Conditions for effective management of change

Strategies for effective organizational change and

Barriers to change

9.1 Conditions for effective management of change

You may have noticed that when some changes are introduced to systems or organizations, the change is taken on board fairly easily or even enthusiastically. On other occasions a change introduced externally will be resisted and even rejected. Could you think of instances when a change was easily adopted by your organization and a change was vehemently resisted? What reasons led to the acceptance of one and the rejection of the other? After you have reflected on what happened in your own organization, read the two instances recorded in Box 1 and Box 2.

Box 1

When Mr. X assumed office as Principal of school A in January 2003 he noticed several areas that needed immediate attention. His observations revealed, among other things, following short-comings:

- Some teachers reported late to school regularly
- Though school had received instructions that teacher appraisal should commence in January that year, no serious attempt had been made to introduce and implement teacher appraisal.
- Curriculum implementation was unsatisfactory and there was very little awareness among teachers of recent educational reforms.
- There was almost no opportunity for students to get involved in co- curricular activities and school premises were put into no use after formal school hours.
- Parental dissatisfaction was evident and there was very little parental and community participation in school activities.

At the end of the first school term the Principal summoned a special meeting of the full staff, which included lunch, to discuss school matters. There was general agreement that school A was not functioning satisfactorily and that school improvement is a shared responsibility which needed greater commitment of all concerned. However teachers raised several issues that needed the attention of school administration. Public transport was unsatisfactory, causing lot of hardship to students and teachers using such transport. No one had discussed teacher appraisal programme or new education reforms with the staff and steps taken to implement these were considered as attempts to harass teachers by bureaucrats. There no facilities for students and teachers within the school such as drinking water, proper toilets, cafeteria for refreshments and allocated places for co-curricular activities. There was no recognition or encouragement of innovativeness and creativity. Responsibilities had not been delegated and leadership among students and teachers was not encouraged.

The Principal asked the teachers to work with him jointly to improve matters giving priority to students who should be prime beneficiaries in all what they plan to do. The staff divided themselves to several groups, appointed leaders and agreed to meet on their own to work out their plans. The plans were to be discussed at a full staff meeting at the beginning of the second term and implementation was to take place without delay. The Principal himself became a member of some groups and undertook to chair a small group of senior teachers which will look into administrative and financial issues, plan structural changes, and liaise with parents and officials when required. When the staff met on Day I of second term the plans were presented, discussed, amended where necessary and all agreed to test them in the school during the term ahead.

Second term saw many innovations in the whole school. Many student and parent meetings were held either to obtain views or to disseminate information. Community help flowed in and there was much enthusiasm among parents. Officials took a special interest in the school and resources were made available when required. Resource persons were made available to discuss education reforms and teacher appraisal. Teacher awareness contributed to greater commitment and higher performance.

When the staff met at the beginning of the third term to take stock of what had taken place so far there was general agreement that things had improved and the school was now in apposition to undertake planned change with definite goals to reach during the next few years. School was to develop a mission statement and produce a medium term plan and annual plan with goals, targets and activities for year 2003 during the next few months.

Box 2

Mrs. Y. was a senior teacher of a large and popular school in an urban area. She was committed to her work and was involved in many co-curricular activities apart from normal class room teaching. Recently, having passed the examination held for the recruitment of teachers to principal's grades, she was appointed the head of a Type 1 C school in a rural area. She accepted the post with enthusiasm, determined to make her new school one of the best in the area.

On assumption of duties in school B she looked around her new school and realized that things were not up to her expectations. Though quite a number of children in the vicinity enrolled at grade 1 level, retention rate was very low. Many kept on leaving during the primary cycle culminating with the departure of all children performing well at the grade 5 scholarship examination. The secondary level teachers were a disgruntled lot, complaining of lack of basic facilities, parental disinterest and the nature of students they get after the "best" children leave for so-called popular schools. There were hardly any co-curricular activities in the school and O/L results were poor.

The new principal was quite forthright with her remarks at the first staff meeting held soon after school on Friday after the assumption of duties. She remarked that all children have the potential and it was up to the teachers to discover such potential and help students individually so that they will develop to their full capacity. She stressed the importance of a rich curricular programme and said that all teachers should get involved in two or more co-curricular activities. Co-curricular programmes should go beyond school hours and should lead to exhibitions, competitions, drama etc. she remarked. She invited teachers to volunteer for co-curricular activities and said that she will leave a book in her office so that teachers could indicate their preferences.

Mrs. Y waited for a week but no entries could be seen in the book she left in the office. She approached a few teachers individually and, they all had good reasons for not getting involved in the principal's plan. Some were traveling from far and had to "catch" the only bus that was available to go home. Some were not in good health and were doing their best under difficult circumstances. Some were approaching their retirement while others were disgusted with a system that had treated them unfairly, denying them the promotions they deserve, giving them punishment transfers and depriving to serve in popular urban schools.

After a month with no signs of willingness to change among pupils teachers and parents, Mrs. Y realized that introducing change to an established system is no easy task...

Self Assessment

Reflect upon your experiences of a change that was accepted and a change that was resisted. Compare your experiences with the two cases listed above. With the insights gained list out conditions

A) that would facilitate the introduction and implementation of change

B) that would obstruct the introduction and implementation of change

As you read the sections that follow you may find other reasons that contribute to the success of management of change

Conditions for Change

Some writers stress the importance of consultation when introducing change to any organization. Two main reasons are given for this:

- a) the value of contributions organizational members with skills and experience can make to the design of improved arrangements;
- b) the capacity of members to resist change or to subvert the operation should they not be convinced of its legitimacy;

There are also ethical aspects for adopting consultative and participatory practices when introducing change. It is quite legitimate for those affected by change to get involved in the decision making processes that affect their way of life. However for participative approaches to be most effective there are certain conditions that should be present. Firstly, there should be underlying agreement about the objectives of the change, even though there may be differing views about the ways these objectives are to be reached. Secondly no one party should have the monopoly of knowledge or power so that there can be genuine and open discussion on ways of bringing about the desired change. Taking into consideration the views expressed by many writers John Child (1988) presents the following summary of conditions which favour the use of the participative approach:

- There is no definite time limit on when the reorganization has to be completed- the situation is not urgent and the organization's survival is not at stake;
- Management anticipates that it will require information from members of the organization to help design the change, as well as their commitment in order to make the new organization operate effectively;
- The need for change is not widely or clearly recognized throughout the organization;

- The members of the organization expect to be involved in discussions prior to any change-this has become part of the organization's culture;
- Some resistance to be proposed reorganization is anticipated but is not likely to challenge the underlying objective of the proposal;
- The power of the initiator of the reorganization is limited vis-a vis other groups, without being wholly constrained.

(John Child, *Organization, A Guide to Problems and Practice*, 1988, Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd. London, p. 291)

In the absence of such conditions it is likely that managers will use a top-down directive approach to change.

Other conditions for effective implementation of change found in the literature include:

The support and understanding of the top- management. If a change is to be introduced covering the whole school or education system it is important that political leaders and the high level administrators explain the reasons for the change and its importance for the school system at public forums attended by those affected. Similarly changes introduced at provincial levels should have the support of the top management of those provinces. Unless such support is visible those at the lower levels will not attach high priority to the implementation of the change.

- There should be careful diagnosis of the existing situation in the organization in order to ascertain the nature and the level of the problem and isolate the features contributing to it.
- There should be good discussion on why the change is needed and what lines of action are to be taken with all groups that are affected. A willingness to adapt in the light of such discussions is important.
- Training and personal development requirements connected with the change should be satisfied before rather than after implementation of the change.
- Attention should be given to the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the change and its effects. Feedback obtained should be used for suitable modifications.

Successful implementation of a change will lead to its institutionalization (assimilation of the change into the organizational structure). After exploring the process of institutionalization of change in several organizations Mats Ekholm, et.al. (*Lasting School Improvement: Exploring the Process of Institutionalization*, 1987, OECD, page 236) present a few 'key variables' which contribute to successful implementation and institutionalization of innovations. These are:

- The nature of the innovations "innovations which are substantial, of high quality, central to organizational purpose, and reasonably well-fitting are more likely to get institutionalized"
- The internal context- "when a school is innovative, receptive, and supports collaboration among professionals: when its structures and procedures are well integrated, with enough human and financial resources to manage change, and when there is a felt need and pressure exerted by an advocate for the change" institutionalization of a change is more likely.
- The external context – " it should be reasonably stable and pressing for the innovation---the innovation is a good "fit" externally as well as internally".
- The change process- key factors include "leadership that is stable and skilled, with a clear vision and using good coordination mechanism, active interaction and participation by users of the innovation, vigorous mobilization and reinforcement through administrative and peer support, careful following of the innovation's progress and adaptation of it, and development of ownership through widespread, rewarding use, strong, sustained technical assistance, and direct effort to stabilize the innovation via widespread, good quality implementation, removing the old while embedding the new, and allocating routine resources to support the change permanently."

For reflection:

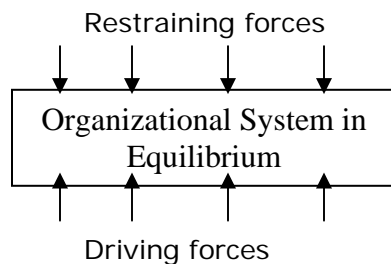
Do you find support for your own thinking on conditions necessary for successful implementation of change in the literature?

Were there conditions in "School B in Box 2 above which were not quite favourable for the implementation of the change initiated by Mrs. Y?"

9.2 Strategies for effective organizational change

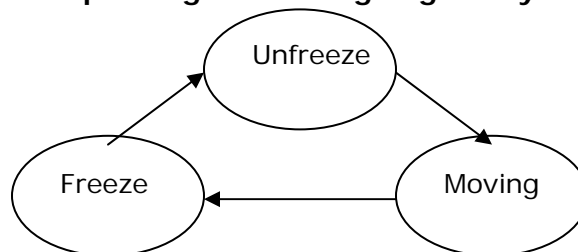
Very often it is observed that though changes are initiated with a great deal of enthusiasm, implementation meets with many obstacles. Changes can be disturbing to those who are affected and this would lead to considerable resistance to change. Force- field analysis developed by sociologists such as Kurt Lewin (*Field Theory in Social Science*, New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1951) provides a useful background to understand this concept. In this analysis organizational status quo is described as a state of equilibrium resulting from the balance between two opposing sets of forces, 'Driving forces' provide the drive to change while 'restraining forces' oppose change, preferring to remain unchanged (See figure1 below):

Figure 1: Force field in equilibrium



Using this analysis Lewin has worked out a three- step change strategy with the notion that in order to effect organizational change, it is necessary to break the equilibrium of the forced field. Hence the organization must be unfrozen. Now it is possible to introduce change, to move the organization to a new level. To prevent the organization from slipping back to its old ways the third step is necessary, that of refreeze. This is also referred to as the institutionalization process which ensures long- range retention of the change. Figure 2 illustrates this three-step change strategy.

Figure 2: A three-step change as an ongoing life cycle of an organization



From this discussion you will gather that to move an organization to a new level, the driving forces will have to be increased, which would also mean the weakening of the restraining forces. You will also know from your experience that however much the educational administration struggle with plans, structures and technologies to bring about organizational change, it is only the human sub-system that has the ultimate capability of bringing about successful change in any organization. We will now examine this further by looking at views put forward by Bennis, Benne and Chin (*The Planning of Change*, ed. Warren G. Bennis, Kenneth D. Benne, and Robert Chin, New York, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969) on strategies for implementing change.

Warren Bennis, Kenneth Benne and Robert Chin posit that there are three major "Strategic orientations" that are useful in planning and managing change.

1. Empirical-rational
2. Power-coercive strategies
3. Normative- re- educative strategies

An *empirical rational strategy* is clearly illustrated in the RDDA model discussed earlier. These strategies are based on the concept that change can be fostered by systematically inventing or discovering better ideas and making them available to institutions. The assumption here is that people are rational and will follow their self-interest if there is good communication of sound information.

Mc Farland (1979) quoting from "*Managing major change in Organization*" (Floyd C. Mann & Frankling W Neff ,1961) says that "Possible strategies for dealing with change could be suggested based on managements estimate of the meaning of the change for the individual in relation to the individuals estimate of the impact of change on himself" (*Management, Foundations and Practices*, Dalton E. Mc Farland, Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1979, page 396). The figure below indicates the circumstances under which additional information about change is required when participation is essential, and when neither information nor participation would be useful in introducing change.

Strategies for Managing Change

Management's Estimate of Impact of change on Individual

| Estimates as incompatible with individual's personal goals | Don't know | Estimates as compatible with individual's personal goals |
|--|---|--|
| When finding (A) support and acceptance: Start scaling down expectations to realistic basis so that disillusionment is not destructive | When finding support (D) and embracement: Provide individual's with knowledge that course of change is not fully predictable | When finding embracement (G) and support: No problems except to maintain favourable definition of change |
| When finding (B) Resistance: Beginning to review objectives and give information to reduce ambiguity | When finding (E) Resistance: Provide full information about necessity for change as seen by management Share control in putting change into effect | When finding (H) Resistance: Increase information about change to reduce ambiguity |
| When finding (C) Opposition: Review change objectives Change objectives or personnel (change would have to be made in period of power imbalance in favour of management) | When finding (F) Opposition: Provide full information Share control in putting change into effect | When finding (I) Opposition: Increase information about change and its implementation Recognise that climate of trust is unfavourable Identify and publicize how steps being taken are compatible with individual goals Distinguish this change with others in the past |

Table 1

Power-coercive strategies differ significantly from empirical-rational strategies in that there is a willingness to use sanctions to obtain compliance. Sanctions may be political, financial or moral. In the power-coercive point of view, rationality, reason, and human relations all are secondary to the abilities to effect changes through the exercise of power. Many point out that such use of power in education can be counter-productive. Both empirical-rational and power-coercive strategies of change share two assumptions: a) that good ideas are best developed outside of the organization and, b) that the organization is the target of external forces of change.

Self assessment

Think of a change that was pushed into your organization/ to your teacher education system, from ~~top~~ above because it was considered 'a good idea' .What was the reaction of the recipients? Describe briefly giving reasons. To what extent would your reasons agree with the views expressed in the section above.

As opposed to the other two sets of strategies outlined earlier, *normative-re-educative strategies* for change are based on the notion of bringing about change in organizations by improving their own problem-solving capabilities. This requires shifting the normative values of the organization's climate from those usually associated with hierarchical organizations to more creative, problem-solving norms. The organization will now be involved in organizational self-renewal. The idea of self-renewal is more attractive to those involved in bringing about change in educational institutes. Organizational self-renewal postulates that effective change cannot be imposed on a school or any other educational organization. The aim is to develop an internal capacity for continuous problem-solving. Much of the knowledge needed to plan and carry out change in educational organizations is possessed by the people in that organization. Thus people in the organization come first when planning and implementing change using normative-re-educative strategies. There is general agreement that no single strategy would be presented to educational institutes seeking to bring about change. In fact all strategies described so far are complementary rather than competing. However as both education and change are complex subjects one should refrain from presenting simplistic strategies to bring about change to educational organizations.

9.3 Barriers to change

Barriers to change could surface as restraining forces during implementation of change (See figure1, Force field in equilibrium) It is well known that whatever a change is introduced at least some members of the organization will feel uncomfortable. Often people develop vested interests, rigidities, habits and preferences that tie them to existing arrangements and any threats to these arrangements will make them uneasy. To others change may even pose threats. It may affect their status, future, and could even cause redundancy. Research has shown that employees resist changes which they perceive to affect "hygiene" factors such as "their job security, payment and status differentials, working conditions and methods". Among managerial grades, resistance to change may come from "line managers" when change packages are planned and introduced by "specialists" who claim to have superior knowledge having access to research (*Organization, A guide to Problems and Practice*, John Child, Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd, London, 1988, pages 283-284).

Self assessment

You have already listed, after analyzing your own experience, some of the conditions that obstruct the introduction and implementation of change. When going through the case storey in Box 2 you may have come across other causes for resistance to change. Are you now in a position to obtain greater insight into what causes resistance?

Let us have another look at the case story of Mrs.Y and analyse the causes for resistance to the intended change. Mrs. Y had planned what the school 'B' should be all by herself without any consideration for the feeling of the staff. Would some of the intended changes make life uncomfortable for the members of the staff? Would it mean that their way of life be affected from now on? From the point of view of teachers they were doing their best amidst difficult circumstances. Intended changes would mean that they will have to make many sacrifices. However Mrs.Y has not considered the difficulties teachers had raised at the staff meeting. Resistance to change under such circumstances could be easily understood.

Barriers to change are also associated with other factors than resistance from those affected. The National Academy for Academic Leadership at its January, 2000

workshop *"Leading Institutional Change: A National workshop for College and University Teams"* had brainstormed on the subject of barriers to change (see web pages/Barriers to Change.htm) The resulting list of potential barriers is reproduced below:

- A tendency to mandate change from the top
- Organization-wide initiatives that lose sight of individual units
- Overwhelming people with too much at once
- Operating from wrong cultural assumptions
- The desire for instant success on the part of the leadership
- Appropriate resources not available
- Change by memo with no discussion, no ownership
- Comfort with the status quo
- Constant reinforcement (celebration) of ' how good we are' so why change?
- A reward system that doesn't match reality
- Some people thrive on chaos and don't want issues solved
- Competing cultures: trustees, students, faculty staff, each thinking they "own" the institution and not agreeing in fundamental areas
- A culture that supports working individually
- A "public" image that does not fit with reality internal to the institution
- Comfort with going it alone
- An organizational structure that does not facilitate cooperation, that encourages competition

- A habit of critique faculty are more comfortable critiquing than working together
- Lack of knowledge on the part of leaders about team building, conflict resolution, the change process etc.

You will notice that some of the above barriers are closely related to the reasons for resistance to change in school 'B'. Thus we may surmise that some barriers are associated with resistance from within the organization. However you may have also noticed that there are other barriers which are not directly related to the feelings of the members within. These may be related to structures, resources, know-how, leadership and even the external environment such as political climate and policy level decisions.

If you look back on education reforms in Sri Lanka that were initiated in the late 1990s you will be able to gather many examples of barriers for implementation arising, not due to the feelings of people within organizations, but due to other factors mentioned above. Could you think of some such instance from your personal experience? Teachers who were very enthusiastic about some of the curriculum and assessment reforms may have found over crowded classes a barrier. Principals trying to improve infra-structure to facilitate better teaching and learning would have found some existing financial regulations a barrier. Some of who were eager to accommodate changes may have found unsupportive line-managers. Many such examples could be found if we look around.

Thus barriers to change are to be anticipated when implementing change. However as managers of teacher education you should know that resistance could be met and barriers could be overcome. If you look back at the previous section on "Strategies for effective organizational change" and if you recollect some of the things you learnt under "Leadership" you will realize that management is really about getting things done in spite of barriers.

Summary

There are certain conditions under which management of change will be more effective while there are other conditions which are not favourable for managing change. Hence managers should be aware of different strategies for organizational change. Some suggested strategies stress outside intervention while others call for organizational self-renewal.

Barriers to change are due to be anticipated when introducing and implementing change. Sometimes barriers come from within in the form of resistance from members of the organization. Barriers will also come from external environment or other areas not related to member dissatisfaction. Managers are called upon to overcome barriers in the process of implementing change.

Outcomes of the Reading

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

- Differentiate between conditions which are favourable to change
- Select suitable strategies under prevailing conditions for effective implementation of change
- Identify barriers to change and overcome such barriers using suitable strategies

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Strategies for Managing Change

(+) (-) Management's Estimate of Impact of change on Individual

1a 2 a

| | | | | | | | |
|--|----|----|----|-----|--|--|---|
| The Individual's Estimate of Impact of Change on Him | 1b | 3a | 3b | (-) | When finding support and acceptance: (A) Start scaling down expectations to realistic basis so that disillusionment is not destructive | When finding support (D) and embracement: Provide individual's with knowledge that course of change is not fully predictable | When finding embracement (G) and support: No problems except to maintain favourable definition of change |
| | | | | | When finding Resistance: (B) Begin to review objectives and give information to reduce ambiguity | When finding Resistance: (E) Provide full information about necessity for change as seen by management Share control in putting change into effect | When finding Resistance: (H) Increase information about change to reduce ambiguity |
| | | | | | When finding opposition: (C) Review change objectives Change objectives or personnel (change would have to be made in period of power imbalance in favour of management) | When finding Opposition: (F) Provide full information Share control in putting change into effect | When finding Opposition: (I) -Increase information about change and its implications -Recognise that climate of trust is unfavourable -Identify and publicize how steps being taken are compatible with individual goals distinguishing this change with others in the past |

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1 a. Estimates as incompatible with individual's personal goals; enhancing (compatible with goals) | b. Estimates as self- personal |
| 2 a. Don't know; Don't know; | b. |
| 3 a. Estimates as compatible with individual's personal goals; Estimates as self-destructive (incompatible with personal goals) | b. |

Table 1