

Managing the Change Process and Resistance to Change in Educational Institutions

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Abstract: *Whether newly established or mature, organizations that include educational institutions such as schools, colleges and Universities, need to maintain their vitality by changing and innovating experiences. Change is not infrequent or special but simply a way of any organization's life and adjustment processes. It facilitates sustainability and competitiveness of the organization within the business fraternity. Change varies in degrees such that it may be radical or incremental and its timing may be reactive or anticipatory. A combination of these gives four basic types of change: radical reactive, radical anticipatory, incremental reactive and incremental anticipatory Change triggers resistance resulting from fear, vested interests, misunderstandings or cynicism. Resistance to change may be reduced by involving all organizational members in planning and implementing change, enhancing communication about proposed changes, educating employees on the value of change or offering incentives like promotions in line with the anticipated change. Through proper planning, organizations can comfortably make it through the three stages of change and several approaches maybe used. Change requires purpose driven leadership for success to be achieved. This paper discusses organizational change and the management of the accruing resistance to change in educational institutions. Leaders in educational organisations determine the future prospects of their organizations. Hence, they require a clear understanding of the technicalities expected on how and when to plan and implement change and ways of dealing with the anticipated resistance.*

Introduction

Change is an alteration of an organization's environment, structure technology or people (Robbins and DeCenzo, 2008). It is an organizational reality which is part of every manager's job. Change may be viewed as any transformation in design or functioning of an organization (Peters, 1988; Rue & Byars, 2000) that is aimed at improving performance for organizations to stay competitive. Change is in the mainstream of the education and training systems. This can clearly be seen from Higgins' (2008) argument that there are challenges in education and training and change is the only way of addressing the issues.

The challenges facing higher education in the twenty-first century are vast. The growing demand for accountability, increasing costs of a college education, and the implementation of distance and alternative types of course delivery, are all contributing to the questions: Are students receiving quality education? Are students prepared for employment after graduation? Do graduates possess the skills that the employer desires? Universities attempt to ensure positive answers to these questions through a variety of avenues including formal accreditation at the institutional and programmatic levels, as well as informal, internal evaluation (p.2).

Change management entails thoughtful planning and sensitive implementation, and above all, consultation with, and involvement of, the people affected by the changes. If change is forced on people, resistance is a normal expectation and thus problems arise. Change must be realistic, achievable and measurable. These aspects are especially relevant to managing personal change process. Before starting an organizational change it is important that the following questions are adequately addressed.

- a) What is to be achieved with this change, why, and how will it be known that the change has been achieved?
- b) Who is affected by this change, and how will they react to it?
- c) How much of this change can be achieved with the available resources, and what parts of the change will require assistance from outside the organization?

Change management has two distinct but related meanings. The first meaning refers to the making of changes in a planned and managed or systematic fashion. The aim is to more effectively implement new methods and systems in an ongoing organization. The changes to be managed lie within and are controlled by the organization. However, these internal changes might have been triggered by events originating outside the organization, in what is usually termed the environment. The second meaning of managing change is the response to changes over which the organization exercises little or no control. Both types of change require purpose driven leadership.

Purpose-driven leadership is a constructive leadership model that challenges an organization to: define its purpose, maintain integrity, encourage character, prevent burnout and sustain vitality. The model incorporates 'best practice language' and the tools needed to foster a meaningful discourse. As school leaders strive to define, defend, and sustain the school's purpose, the purpose-driven leadership model not only builds leadership capacity, but also serves as a catalyst for positive school [change] reform (Holloman, Rouse and Farrington, 2007, p. 437).

Today's world, be it in business or education is highly competitive. The way to cope is to reshape to the needs of a rapidly changing world and the expectations of the key stakeholders (Robbins and DeCenzo, 2008). Resistance to change is a dead-end street for you and the organization. Students and parents unlike/like?all other customers in the business world are not only demanding excellent service, but are also demanding more. If you do not supply it, your competitors will. No single organization can survive on the very first principles and cultural underpinnings in which it was established. There is a need for a change to either improve or totally overhaul. It is thus important that managers are clear on how and when to plan and implement change. This paper offers guidelines on planning, implementing and managing change in educational institutions. It also highlights principles towards time management. It is argued that educational institutions like all the others should plan for and implement timely changes.

Types of Change

Broadly change may be classified into three categories (Cole, 1995; 1997; Rue et al, 2000). The categories are listed below with particular real life examples enumerated.

- a) **Technical change** resulting from technological advancement in type of equipment used and production processes. In an educational set up, this may be change due to the acquisition and use of advanced technological gadgets such as the digital data projector instead of overhead projectors. In addition, there is the acceptance that scientific calculators may be used for the national examinations in the science courses in secondary schools.
- b) **Environmental change** triggered by non-technical factors that occur outside the organization like rise in demand of particular products. Education and training are highly influenced by the forces in the wider society such as the work expectations, employer requirements and the technological applications at the workplace. For example, due to the examinations cheating in Kenya, it is mandatory that all students should surrender their mobile phones before entering the examination rooms.
- c) **Internally triggered change** like alteration of institutions policies. An example of this kind of change may be as it was witnessed towards the end of the 1990s where the module II studies were introduced within the national universities. The change was triggered by most factors that are within such as the supplementing of payments to the service providers, improvement of the University infrastructure and the need to provide higher education to a wider range of the qualified Kenyans.

The three types of change can further be classified into two categories on the basis of their occurrence. The two are reactive and anticipatory changes. Reactive change occurs when an organization is forced to change in response to some event in the internal or external environment (Rue et al, 2000; Chabra, 2005). Reactive change could be incremental (on-going) or radical (major adjustments). On the other hand, anticipatory change occurs when managers make organizational changes in anticipation of up-coming events or early in a cycle of new trends (Rue et al, 2000; Chabra, 2005). For an organization to stay ahead of its competitors, it has to constantly fine tune its policies and practices, introduce technological advancement techniques and set new standards for customer satisfaction (Badawy, 1993). Anticipatory change is usually incremental. Education and training institutions need to anticipate, initiate and manage change of whatever type and category.

In Kenyan education and training institutions, massive radical change occasionally occurs in its structure and frameworks. More often than not, change occurs in small incremental steps. Radical change takes time to complete and requires more planning, involvement and training. It may be triggered by decline in performance, a major mismatch between the set goals and the actual achievements, political changes or appointments of leaders and significant personnel changes. In Kenya, such radical changes have resulted from the numerous commissions that have looked at the national education and its organization. Incremental change is an ongoing process with small changes occurring routinely. The cumulative effect may be to transform the organization totally (Badawy, 1993). Lack of management visibility and support, inadequate management skills and employee resistance to change are some common barriers to managing change (Mintzberg, 1983; Handy, 1993). Rue and Byars (2000) cite Lewin's (1948) three-step model for implementing successful change as: -

- a) **Unfreezing** –manages plans and prepares its members for transformation, objective being to convince them on the need for change. Unfreezing involves the change agents outlining the need for change to the extent that members within the organization relax their already formed positions and ways of work organization and performance. Old ideals and processes must be tossed aside so that new ones may be learned. Often, getting rid of the old processes is just as difficult as learning new ones due to the power of habits. It is the stage where the already formed ideas are held loosely in a way that they are abandoned. It is the stage at which change is appreciated and accepted. During this part of the process there is a need to provide just a little bit of coaching to facilitate the unlearning. A lot of cheerleading and emotional support is required to break the old habits.
- b) **Transitioning** -change implementation stage. There is assimilation of new information and exposure to new concepts. The steps to the new ideals are learned by practicing. Involvement facilitates faster and long term acquisition of the skills and attitudes. Although there will be confusion, overload and despair, there will also be hope, discovery, and excitement. This period requires a lot of coaching as they are learning and just a little bit of cheerleading due to the affect of arousal overloading.
- c) **Refreezing** - change is solidified and stabilized. It involves constant monitoring of the intended outcomes and providing support for new behaviour to minimize a relapse. The new processes are now intellectually and emotionally accepted. What has been learned is now actually being practiced on the job. A little bit of coaching is required and a lot of cheerleading is used to set up the next change process. It is continuous process improvement (Rue & Byars 2000).

All the three model stages are passed through in each of the organizational change levels that are involved towards growth. There are four main changes throughout growth of organizations similar to product life cycle (Sagimo, 2002; Robbins and DeCenzo, 2008) Education and training institutions are not unique in this aspect and ideally must follow the following steps. First is the formative period - This is when a new organization or a section of the organization is just getting started. Although there is a founding vision (the purpose of the organization), there are no formal definitions. This is just as well because normally there is a lot of experimentation and innovation taking place.

These changes of creativity and discovery are needed to overcome obstacles and accomplish breakthroughs. Such formative stages are encountered in the starting of new colleges and University campuses. Second is the rapid growth period where the direction and coordination are added to the organization to sustain growth and solidify gains. Change is focused on defining the purpose of the organization and on the mainstream business. The third stage is the mature period in which the strong growth curve levels off to the overall pace of the economy. Changes are needed to maintain established markets and assuring maximum gains are achieved. Finally is the declining period that entails a rough ride. For many organizations it means down-sizing and reorganization. To survive, changes include tough objectives and compassionate implementation. The goal is to get out of the old and into something new. Success in this period means that the

four periods start over again. Evaluation of the key strengths and domains of the institutions must inform the next reengineering strategy.

For some organizations the four periods of growth come and go very rapidly, for others, it may take decades. Failure to follow-through with the needed changes in any of the four growth periods means the death of the organization. In Kenya, some schools and campuses are experiencing problems resulting from the inability to re-engineer their missions and mandates. This requires realignments and being responsive to the market demands and the needs of the clients. In some cases the failure is emanating from the organization's inability to deal with the resistance to change.

Resistance to Change

Change programs are hardly implemented absolutely as per the blue print. People react in unexpected ways and sometimes areas of anticipated resistance fall away with changes in the environment. Effectively managing change requires continual re-assessment of its impact and the organization's willingness and ability to adopt the next wave of transformation. There is a need for real data from the field to support information and decision-making processes. Managers of change process should then make the adjustments necessary to maintain momentum and the drive for results. This is key strategy in dealing with the resistance to change.

Resistance to change may result from four main factors. First is the fear of the unknown. This result from the fact that people involved in the change may not be aware of the impact of the change they are being involved in. People always want to feel secure and have control over change. Second are the individuals' vested interests. People with interest in maintaining things as they are often resist change. They may not necessarily divulge their reasons for the opposition but will resist change in order to continue benefiting from the status quo. The third reason for the resistance to change is misunderstanding which occurs when people don't understand the implications of change. They will generally tend to resist the change. Finally there is cynicism. This occurs when employees believe that managers implement change for their own good and not out of sincere or noble reasons (Rumelt, 1982; Moss, 1984; Talwar, 1994).

How to Reduce Resistance

In order to reduce the resistance to change educational leaders and managers should use the change management strategies. Generally speaking, there is no single change strategy (Robbins and DeCenzo, 2008). One should adopt a general or what is called a "grand strategy" but, for any given initiative a mix of strategies serves best..

- a) Spell out clearly new direction for institutions and respective implications. They should get employees to discuss their feelings and problems openly; communication should be clear and effective.
- b) Involve members throughout the change process since voluntary participation is known to lead to commitment. This will require a lot of teamwork. All departments involved should work together towards a common goal.
- c) Educate employees on the need and benefits of the proposed change.
- d) Offer incentives where necessary like issuing promotions or financial benefits.

- e) Strive to build trust between themselves and the employees as this would ease acceptance to change.
- f) Avoid use of threats and intimidation.
- g) Encourage negotiations; this will enhance employees feeling of involvement in change implementation.
- h) Always schedule sensible time plans so as to be able to monitor and rate success or failure (Peters & Waterman, 1980; 1982; Badawy, 1993; Rue et al, 2000; Robbins and DeCenzo, 2008).

The strategies to be used are governed by the amount of resistance. Strong resistance argues for a coupling of Power-Coercive and Environmental-Adaptive strategies. Weak resistance or concurrence argues for a combination of empirical-rational and normative-re-educative strategies. Another factor governing the choice of strategies is target population in which large populations argue for a mix of strategies, something for everyone so to speak. In addition, the stakes govern the strategies. High stakes argue for a mix of all four strategies. When the stakes are high, nothing can be left to chance. Also time frame is another force. Short time frames argue for a Power-Coercive strategy. On the other hand, longer time frames argue for a mix of empirical-rational, normative-re-educative, and environmental-adaptive strategies. Added to the fold is expertise in such a way that having available adequate expertise at making change argues for some mix of the strategies outlined above. Not having it available argues for reliance on the power-coercive strategy and finally dependency where it is a classic double-edged sword. If the organization is dependent on its people, management's ability to command or demand is limited. Conversely, if people are dependent upon the organization, their ability to oppose or resist is limited. Mutual dependency almost always signals a requirement for some level of negotiation (Robbins and DeCenzo, 2008).

Planning for Organizational Change

Planning ensures a smooth process of change thus ease in management. It entails the following steps: -

- a) **An assessment of the environment:** Environmental factors responsible for change include customers, technology, competitors, workforce, globalization and stakeholders like workers unions. Organizations may become aware of changes as they occur by having environmental scanning activities like holding meetings and discussions with competitors.
- b) **Determining the performance gap:** This is the difference between what the organization wants to do and what it actually does. It enables the manager to provide clear answers to the question on what could be lacking in the organization.
- c) **Diagnosing organizational problems:** Diagnosis helps to identify nature and extend of problems before taking action. It provides a clear understanding of the reasons behind the gap in performance.
- d) **Articulating and communicating a vision for the future:** Successful change is mainly guided by a clear vision for the future. To communicate manager's vision, messages should be sent consistently and repeatedly through organizational channels by credible sources as

chance of listening and believing in them is higher. The use of write-ups in the company's magazines, memos, videos and speeches is highly recommended.

- e) **Developing and implementing a strategic plan for change:** This should be the blue print for action. Each department in the institution should develop a more focused plan based on the overall strategic plan. This should then be adopted only after considering the full range of alternative methods for fostering change each with its implications.
- f) **Anticipating resistance and taking action to reduce it:** Resistance can be in form of criticism, malicious compliance, sabotage, insincere agreement, silence, deflection or an in-your-face defiance. However, some resistance may be useful. Employees may act as check balance mechanisms to ensure that management plans and implements change well. If justified, resistance may lead managers to rethinking thus enhance proper decision-making.
- g) **Making a follow up plan:** Managers need to monitor employees' and customers' satisfaction, development of new products, status of market shares and profitability so as to assess their short and long-term consequences. They should monitor the speed, degree and duration of improvement aligning this to the set organizational goals and the timetable established in the strategic plan (Badawy, 2000; Rue et al, 2000).

Implementing Change

Educational leaders and managers may utilize the following methods in the process of implementing change. They should be used in combination as seldom can significant change be based on only method.

- a) **Technology-based method:** Attention is focused on workflow, production methods, materials and information systems. With improved information technology, it is becoming increasingly easy for institutions to build links with customers, suppliers, producers and distributors (Torrington & Hall, 1998).
- b) **Organizational re-design method:** It emphasizes internal structural changes like realigning departments, changing who makes decisions, merging or reorganizing departments maybe due to the influence of new technology. It may involve changing the structure that would entail configuring the distribution of authority, responsibility and control in an organization by downsizing it (Talwar, 1994).
- c) **Task based methods:** This concentrates on changing specific employee's responsibilities and tasks. It may be done by:
 - i. **Job simplification,** to involve the scientific analysis of tasks performed by employees in order to discover procedures that produce maximum output from minimum input. However, it leads to a low employee commitment and high turnover.
 - ii. **Job enrichment** to involve changing job specifications that broaden challenges to tasks required thus increase productivity. It humanizes an organization by

encouraging individuals to grow and push themselves towards working (Rue et al, 2000).

- d) **People oriented method:** This method includes activities aimed at improving individual competencies, attitudes and performance levels by treating them with dignity and respect, behaving genuinely and communicating openly (Koontz & Heinz, 1990; Badawy, 2000).

Discussion

For the continuous improvement of any organization, its leaders must become passionate about change. Change must become the norm of the organization (Robbins and DeCenzo, 2008). In this vein, managing change and dealing with its implications are essential skills and predispositions for any educational manager or leader. Moreover, these skills must be updated gradually as change keeps occurring. Koontz and Heinz (1990) agree that organizations need to adapt change if they are to remain as competitors to other organizations and if they require meeting the changing needs of the society. It is possible to have an overhaul change or gradual. Rue and Byars (2000) refer to this as radical or anticipatory changes respectively. The latter is the most common in education and training set ups. Either way, change needs to be planned if it has to be successful. Lewin offers a practical model consisting of three steps for implementing change and form a wonderful basis for analyzing change at the organizational level.

However, people are known to often be hesitant about change. This could be due to fear of the unknown or fear that skills and expertise will be rendered redundant to name a few. There is a need to consider both internal and external forces that create a need for change (Robbins & DeCenzo, 2008). Involvement of all employees in planning and implementation change and educating them on need for change eases acceptance to change. Messenger and Allen (1994) argue that sticking to a proper time plan can reduce resistance along with implementing change in logical paces and ensuring that changes proposed are necessary. Any change implemented should be monitored to assess its validity and sustainability. It is appropriate for managers to combine various approaches to change in implementation process. The approaches as organizational redesign, people oriented, technology based and task based methods (Koontz & Heinz, 1990; Badawy, 2000). Time management and strategic planning also play a critical role in the running and continuous existence and improvement of any organization.

Recommendations

Change is any transformation in the way an organization functions or is designed. It is aimed at improving performance so that the organization stays ahead of its competitors. Proper strategy, attitudes, planning and timing are mandatory if the set goals are to be attained. There is a need for thorough setting of the long and short term goals, developing positive attitudes of the leaders, planning of the daily, weekly or even monthly chores in order of priorities and sticking on this plan to the letter. The use of well articulated and collectively developed visions, missions and core values; diaries, report sheets, blank papers and binders should assist. In overall, Education and training institution should see change as a basic requirement for meeting the organizational goals and thus should strive to have effective and efficient management of the changes and the related resistances.

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