



Managing Change in Educational Organization: A Conceptual Overview

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ABSTRACT

The current globalization era has forced all organizations including educational organizations not only to continue reassessing their practices, but also to develop and enhance the culture of change and innovation. This is necessary to keep them in a dynamic and competitive position. Since change is initiated in response to the emerging needs in an organization, managing change can be considered as planning innovative implementation in order to address organizational needs and sustainability. However, managing the process of change is a crucial task for improving the quality and systematic delivery of teaching and learning in educational organizations. This paper reviews related literature on the concept and understanding of change in educational organizations. Moreover it highlights management strategies and functions for successful implementation of the change process in educational organizations.

Keywords: Educational Change, Change Management, Educational Organization.

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INTRODUCTION

Due to the current competition and globalization of markets, managing change becomes increasingly important for most organizations, including those in educational settings. In such a context, many organizations would face problems unless they went through change (Beer & Nitin, 2000). Moreover, some even believe that in this ever changing society there are two options for organizations: either change or die (Cao & McHugh, 2005; Robbins & Coulter, 2005). Such a statement underscores not only the necessity of change, but also the importance of managing its process effectively and efficiently.

Educational organizations are among those undergoing much change in the world; hence information on how to direct and manage this change is critical. Implementing change in educational systems can occur in different ways. Many researchers have noted that instituting change is very different from leading and managing it. For one thing, traditional educational settings need to be changed in order to integrate technology advances in education (Harris, 2007, p. 316).

Because of the essential role of change management, the literature on this subject has grown rapidly in the recent years. Many researchers have differentiated between the aspects of change with management of the change. The effectiveness of change management in ensuring the success of organizational change programs has been mentioned in previous literature (Beer & Spector, 1994; Crowe & Rolfes, 1998; Marjanovic, 2000). This differs from the idea that change is a chaotic or random incident rather than a predictable and planned process that can be managed (Salisbury, 1996). However, from Fullan's (2001) point of view, change is a process and not an event, thus it has to be planned and managed carefully. It is not enough just to have a great idea or solution, the more essential element is how to implement it. No matter how sound the proposed change may be from a logical or theoretical standpoint, successful change implementation requires skilful management (Salisbury, 1996). However, differences exist between the aspects of change and management of the change.

In this paper a conceptual overview is presented in order to highlight the key elements in managing change in educational organizations. Hence, this paper starts by addressing the concept of change in education and follows by discussing organizational change and development in education, educational change management and its functions as well as other information related to managing change in educational organizations.

CONCEPT OF CHANGE IN EDUCATION

The current globalization era has forced all organizations to continue reassessing their practices in order to bring about some changes. Now, change is a vital aspect to organizational growth and survival and is inevitable. For that reason, organizations are required to develop and enhance the culture of change and innovation to keep them in a dynamic and competitive position.

Generally, change is the aspect of making something look new or transforming something from the old form to a new one (Harris, 2007, p. 317). In an educational organization, the idea of change and innovation is about high performance and high quality of education. For that reason, educational organizations in many countries are beginning to see the benefits of change that force them to use a new and innovative approach that brings about small and large scale change in different schools especially universities (Fullan, 2001, p. 43). For example, the increased advancement of technology has brought about a lot of changes in all aspects of life in recent years. In educational settings, technology has resulted in many changes and improved performance of both students and teachers (Paton & McCalman, 2000).



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Change in education has been defined differently in the literature. While Harris (2007) considers change as the main reason to incorporate the aspect of advanced technology in education (p. 316), Rogers (2003) and Carlopio (1998), for example, describe change as “adoption of an innovation” when the desired goal of change is to improve the status quo. According to Fullan (2001, 2007, 2010, 2011), educational change is much more than what people realize and consider. It is not a linear nor a simple alternative, but it means altering and reforming the culture and values of the educational system. Change can also be considered as the key aspect of transforming the education system from the conventional form to a new form (Harris, 2007, p. 317). Nonetheless, all these scholars agree that the purpose of change in educational organizations is often improvement and sustainability that would result in enhancing the learners’ outcome. Therefore, knowledge and understanding of how educational change should be directed and managed is an important task.

Review of the previous studies (Blanchard, 2007; Fullan, 2001, 2003, 2007, 2010; Fullan et al., 2011; Kennedy, 2011; Senge, 2006; Tucker, 2011; Uys, 2007; Whelan-Berry et al., 2003) indicated that although the outcome of change in educational organizations may differ from non-educational organizations, the assumptions about the change are similar, namely:

- the conditions for change have to be right
- change does not happen overnight, it needs time and preparation
- the success of change very much depends on the management’s skills to arrange, direct, guide, and monitor the process from initiation stage to the end
- change has to be planned from various aspects regarding the main goals and objectives
- In context of a fundamental change implementation, all the parts and units of the organization will be affected by the new alterations.

Organizational change, as stated by Fullan (2001, p. 43), is the process of moving from the present or current operational phase into the next and advanced functional phase. The process of transforming from status quo to the new changed situation is often problematic with obstacles and barriers. To ensure that the new change is well led and managed is critical (Mourshed et al., 2010).

According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2003), the common barriers in educational organizations affecting the change process include: inefficient leadership and leadership strategies, ineffective communication with parties involved in change implementation, unclear processes and procedures concerning specific and general goals, lack of involvement of all parties concerned or involved in change management, employee resistance, and improper or ineffective resource management (p. 23).



Organizational Change and Development

Nowadays all organizations regardless of size or type or location are undergoing change, either on their own initiatives or due to their needs. In the current globalization, organizational change is considered an element for sustainability and competitiveness (East, 2011).

There are different perspectives on organizational change and development. It may be seen as a concept of systems thinking, where the connections and integrations between all members including administration and management as a whole system are considered as the key elements for successful organizational change and development (Olson & Eoyang, 2001). In this regard, focusing only on “top-down control,” rather than sharing views and ideas, does not work. However, within a system framework, it is assumed that organizations are made up of communities and that change and development happens through collaboration. Thus, in such a changing system, building communities in an organization needs an effective tool that creates connection between the various parts but also removes obstacles (Dietz, 2004).

On the other hand, Livne-Tarandach and Bartunek (2009) focused on organizational change and development as a complex phenomenon, and paid attention to the need to “capture diversity of voice and action” for effective change management (p. 25). In a complex system such as education, there are “deeper and richer perspectives” on organizational change and development, in order “to explore multiple stakeholders’ perceptions, cognitions, emotions and sense-making regarding ongoing process of change” (p. 25). Hence, sustaining effective change and development in an educational organization requires an integrated, planned and emergent participative change. Likewise, Bamford and Daniel (2005) who emphasized the participative approach in educational change and development noted that even though in establishing a new organizational structure the key element is a directive and planned change; this is not enough unless there is a shared, collaborative, and participative approach.

Worren et al. (1999) described “Change Management” as the most effective and efficient discipline to ensure the success of organizational change and development. They suggest that change management discipline, with its wide range of intervention strategies on human performance, works as an efficient tool in helping employees to face the new targeted performance faster. Thus, in such a context, human resources, directly or indirectly, would be able to manage and organize the change process more efficiently.

From the Carr et al. (1996) and Sullivan et al. (2002) views, identifying effective strategies for managing sustainable change is essential for successful organizational change and development. In the context of educational organizations, these strategies can be considered as part of a continuous process for improvement, renewal and transformation in the system.

In addition, the way organizations learn how to renew themselves on a continuous basis in order to develop the practice of organizational resilience has been named as “improvement-driven” by Carr et al. (1996). In this regard, the concept of improvement-driven can be defined as the conclusion of the key areas for success of organizational change and development which are characterized by strong visionary leadership. In this regard, visionary leadership consists of management’s efforts for ensuring the continuous process of improvement and alignment for organizational members as well as organizational goals and objectives. Moreover, it also includes promoting innovation, encouraging and fostering extensive cross-level and cross-functional communication and more importantly institutionalization of the new alterations and organizational values as the key elements for change and development (Carr et al., 1996). In terms of achieving organizational goals and values, Richards et al. (2004) focused on the need to understand and be aware and responsive to the nature of markets in response to the new changes in the environment as a whole.



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In the context of organizational attempts at change and development, Senge (2006) gives more attention to the concept of “learning organization”, and describes it as the need for all organizations in order to prepare their systems for the change implementation. He describes the learning organization as:

“...organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together” (p. 3).

Senge (2006) names elements such as systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, building shared vision, and team learning, as the effective disciplines to innovate learning organizations. He suggests that to build a learning organization environment, organizations have to improve their quality, and strategic alliances through forecasting and careful planning. However, despite their different goals, all organizations try hard to respond quickly to external change and development to improve and also to seek the most appropriate ways to achieve long-term success (p. 4). Finally, for a learning organization, to be more flexible, effective, and productive, “adaptive learning” should integrate with “generative learning” which enhances the capacity to create new change and development (p. 14).

Similarly, Fullan (1993) also describes the learning organization as the main focus of change and development in educational organizations and suggested the need to pay more attention to the “Change Forces” in order to interact with the environment. The learning organization came about as the result of new circumstances which have been created from recent remapping of the world, emergence of new players on the global scene and technology explosion. To survive in such complex and dynamic circumstances, organizations have to learn how to deal with the new situation and how to manage change for better results (Carr et al., 1996; Fullan, 1993; Senge, 2006). Thus, in this context the main purpose of organizational change and development can be defined as moving forward to the new approach that will bring positive and satisfactory results.

Organizational culture and climate are the key elements for organizations and have high impact on the change and development process (Ashkanazy & Jackson, 2001; Sinangil, 2004). Moreover, one of the keys to success in facilitating organizational change is the type of climate or culture being developed (Hall & Hord, 2001, p. 194). This is because organizational culture consists of values, management style, organizational communication patterns, human resources, and context and so on. Hence, different aspects of the organizational culture in terms of operation, engineering, and executive approach need to be aligned (Schein, 1997).

In conclusion, the above reviews indicate that to achieve and sustain the change goals and objectives, along with creation of right leadership and management disciplines and processes, we need to consider some key elements including organization structures, culture, competencies and capability for human performance as well as organizational sustainability. To achieve these would require appropriate change management strategies and policies for facilitating the complex change process (Kennedy, 2011; Levin & Fullan, 2008).

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

Educational change needs an effective management strategy (East, 2011; Levin & Fullan, 2008). In the last twenty years, educational change and reforms in many countries were aimed at addressing both quality and equity through strategies focused on improving the whole system by “raising the bar and closing the gap” for all. Although the move toward educational change in different countries has had different vision, policy and strategies, most of them were similar in attempting to improve their educational systems. According to the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2004) in Europe, for example, the results of PISA (Program for International Students Assessment) have had more impact on policy than have examples from the



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USA or UK, and in New Zealand it guided substantial decentralization strategies and choices compared to Canada, Japan and Korea where the move was more focused on educational system competitiveness.

From Fullan's (1993, p. 3) viewpoint the strategies and elements for successful change include the following:

- The ability to work with polar opposites: imposition of change vs. self-learning ; planning vs. uncertainty; creative resolution vs. problems; vision vs. fixed direction; groups vs. individual; centralizing vs. decentralizing; personal change vs. system change.
- Dynamic interdependency of state accountability and local autonomy
- Combination of individuals and social agencies
- Internal connection within oneself and within one's organization and external connections to other and to the guiding environment

However, Levin and Fullan (2008) believed that these strategies attempt to integrate high support and high challenge in order to increase the capacity at all levels of the education systems to engage in and pursue continuous improvement. As a result, they regard "change strategies" as one of the main elements for the world's governments and educational decision makers to increase the potential to create lasting improvement in a broad range of student outcomes. Although this may not be easy, the existence of examples with some success shows that a considerable amount has been learned over the last ten years about how to create meaningful and sustainable improvement in student outcomes through strategy change (East, 2011; Levin & Fullan, 2008). Nevertheless, an important challenge for educational policy makers is to consider the importance of the needed time to improve motivation in the system. As Levin and Fullan (2008) claim, previous experiences of educational change suggest that unless a reform strategy addresses the motivation question over time (e.g., in the first year, second year, etc.) it will fail.

For effective and efficient change in the education system or any other systems, we need to consider issues such as building morale and motivation. Because these issues are complex, it is necessary for large scale change to pay attention to a combination of other key aspects of motivation such as capacity building, resources, peer and leadership support as well (East, 2011; Ellsworth, 2000; Levin & Fullan, 2008).

However, for Levin (2005) and Ellsworth (2000) the key point is that any strategy which starts with attacks on the existing system is unlikely to produce lasting positive results. Besides, previous studies show that attempts to motivate and reward people for taking action in educational reforms are relative to key improvement goals and sustainability of the new environment (East, 2011; Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan, 2001; Levin, 2005; Levin & Fullan, 2008).

Levin and Fullan (2008) also name "multi-level engagement and strong leadership" as another key strategy for sustainable change. They suggest that this strategy can enhance learner outcomes as well. In addition, since real reform requires sustained attention from many people at all levels of the education system including leadership, therefore, if enough leaders across the same system engage in permeable connectivity, they change the system itself (Fullan, 2011).

With regard to Fullan's suggestion, Barber (2007) argues that key leaders at various levels are similar in how they understand and express their strategies. It means that leadership at all levels is mutually strengthening their strategies with other stakeholders in order to create a shared vision in a way that Barber called "guiding coalition". Similarly, Levin and Fullan (2008) also suggest that shared vision and ownership are the outcomes of a quality



process rather than a precondition. Thus, building this kind of common understanding requires efficient and effective two-way communication between the leadership and members of the system.

Importantly, as Levin and Fullan (2008) emphasized, strong leadership does not just emerge, it needs to be developed and cultivated. Thus a key part of any successful improvement strategy should be the potential of effective leadership development. For example, reform programs should pay careful attention to building teacher leadership at the school level besides supporting effective leadership in stakeholder organizations such as teacher and other unions and parent groups, since these partners are also vital to sustainable change.

According to Reeves (2006), some planning is certainly necessary, but the size and prettiness of the planning document is inversely related to the amount and quality of action, and in turn to the impact on student learning. Similarly, Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) also emphasize this theme when they talk about planning as a substitute for action. Therefore, the goal of leadership is to proliferate the engagement and partnership necessary for sustainable reform (Levin & Fullan, 2008).

As Hiatt (2006) suggested, the most commonly cited reason for change project failure is the problem related to the people dimension of change. The findings of his research show that effective people management for change requires managing five key goals, namely:

- Awareness of the need to change
- Desire to participate and support the change
- Knowledge of how to change and what the change looks like
- Ability to implement the change on a day to day basis
- Reinforcement to keep the change in place

Management Key Functions and Organizational Change

Being an effective manager is not easy given the many different critical tasks involved. In the context of organizational change, planning, organizing, guiding/leading, and monitoring are the essential tasks any effective management should undertake (Recklies, 2001). Accordingly, the management process can be defined as making balance and stability among the four main functions which are the key to organizational change success. To have better understanding about these functions each of them is elaborated as follows:

Planning

In the management process, planning is the first function which also is the most critical element for change management. In line with the importance of planning, some (Bateman & Snell, 2007; Robbins & Coulter, 2005) suggest that the difference between a successful and unsuccessful manager depends on their planning procedure. Planning involves logical thinking through the organization's goals and establishing an overall strategy to achieve those goals. Through planning, managers are able to develop a comprehensive set of plans for the future. Those plans would guide them in integrating and coordinating the organization's work. Therefore, planning for an organization is like a blueprint to foresee the possible problems, which helps management to decide on effective and efficient decisions to avoid the issues while guiding the organization to achieve desired goals. Planning is also about addressing two key questions; "what is to be done", and "how is it to be done". Since planning is the first



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step in the management process, it has an essential effect on the other steps. Proper planning will facilitate the other steps as well. Based on planning, managers would be able to state a clear vision and mission. Finally, through planning managers clarify the organizational values, objectives and goals as well as the strategies for getting the work done (Bateman & Snell, 2007).

In their research on management's functionality, Robbins and Coulter (2005) emphasized the differences between formal and informal planning; their results show the main difference is that in formal planning specific goals are set for a specific period of time. These goals are written formally and have been set from shared ideas of organizational members. Accordingly, a specific action program would be considered in order to achieve the goals. Defining the path to go through all the steps of planning is a critical managerial task. Moreover, setting goals, establishing strategies to achieve them and developing a set of plans to integrate and coordinate activities are the essential tasks needing careful and accurate planning. Correspondingly, the benefits of planning for organizations include; providing direction to move forward; reducing uncertainty in decision-making; preventing waste of time and money; and setting the standards used in controlling (p. 158).

Organizing

Robbins and Coulter (2005) define organizing as the process of creating an organization's structure which is mostly about the formal arrangement of jobs and responsibilities within an organization. In fact, organization and organizational structure are among the management topics experiencing the most change during recent years (Robbins & Coulter, 2005).

According to Bateman and Snell (2004) to reach the objectives outlined in the planning process, organizing the organizational structure is an essential task for management. In this regard, organizing can be defined as assigning organizational members with their relevant tasks or responsibilities in order to develop the planned goals which will be corresponding with the organization's values and events. The essential knowledge for managers is how much they know the employees and their capabilities to use the most valuable organizational resources (Robbins & Coulter, 2005). Hence, this is accomplished via many methods such as staffing, work division, training, resource identifying, and organizing work groups (Bateman & Snell, 2007). In conclusion, to achieve personal success that leads to organizational accomplishment, the management provides required direction for the staff. In such a context, managers are in charge of keeping communication lines open between departments to prevent any issues from forming.

Guiding

Guiding is the third main function of management which is defined as administrative attempts to lead the organizational structure based on the forecasted plans and objectives (Bateman & Snell, 2004). In the literature (Allen, 1998; Bateman & Snell, 2004; Judge et al., 2002; Kirkpatrick & Lock, 1991; Robbins & Coulter, 2005) the concept of "guiding" has been defined as similar to "leading" when management attempts to direct the organization through the planned goal. For example, Robbins and Coulter (2005) define guiding as an essential activity for leadership to persuade members towards achieving organizational goals. In other words, the responsibility of leaders would be to influence and motivate organizational activities to move forward in line with a desired goal, as well as to guide themselves to the duties and responsibilities assigned during the planning process (Allen, 1998). However, the critical element of "guiding" for organizational leadership is to be involved in



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interpersonal characteristic of a manager's position that includes communication and close contact with team members (Bateman & Snell, 2007).

Guiding an organization is all about motivating employees to accomplish the organizational goals and practice certain values; hence regular and open communication with the organizational members would ease the guiding process. Accordingly, the major part of guiding is to discover innovative means to explain existing problems for the members, and allowing them the leeway to deal with situations. In this regard, giving guidance can be done both individually and within groups (Allen, 1998; Bateman & Snell, 2007).

In conclusion by referring to Robbins and Coulter (2005) some characteristics essential for management associated with leading an organization include drive, desire to guide, integrity, honesty, building trust, self-confidence, intelligence, knowledge, and vigor.

Monitoring

Monitoring is the final stage in the management process which is closely related to evaluation and assessment. Robbins and Coulter (2005) define monitoring as management's critical action to ensure that organizational activities are being accomplished as planned. Hence, the main attempt in the monitoring phase is to correct any disorders which prevent the organization from achieving its desired goal. Importantly, managers would be unable to know if the organization is performing correctly as planned unless they enforce the monitoring and evaluation process. Continuous monitoring is the perfect approach for management to prevent any possible problems in future. Moreover, the monitoring function will help management to identify problems in the early stages, hence to control them and avoid possible chaos. Therefore, even if the organization is performing accurately all managers should be concerned with the control function (Robbins & Coulter, 2005).

Bateman and Snell (2007) emphasized the essential role of controlling in enhancing organizational performance; they suggested that the main criterion for success is to determine how well the monitoring function has facilitated goal achievement. This is because monitoring is the process that guarantees organizational plans are being implemented accurately. No doubt managers who get more help and cooperation will be more successful in their monitoring task.

In conclusion, the literature highlights that the four functions of management are the key elements in organizational success. In order to attain the desired goals and objectives, we need to develop all the functions in an effective, efficient way to best suit the organization's activities.

CONCLUSION

Managing change is a planned approach in dealing with different types of changes. In an educational organization dealing with the changes, as well as defining and implementing procedures and technologies to benefit from changing opportunities is the main responsibility for managing change. Moreover, managing change in an educational organization differentiates between the conception of change cycles and seeing change as consequences of the interaction of various change principles (Hayes, 2002). Since change is initiated in response to organizational needs, in this context change management can be thought of as planning and sensitive implementation in order to address the needs. Therefore, the responsibility of management during the change process is to consult and involve the people affected by the changes, and also to direct and lead the process systemically (Kotter & Cohen, 2005; Uys & Sieverts, 2001).



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As explained in this paper, there are different ways of thinking about the concept of organizational change management. Regardless of types of change, and phases of the process of change, the systemic viewpoint to the concept of change as a whole is very important in realizing change management (Uys, 2007). The human elements in the change management process are crucial in securing successful implementation of any plan for managing change in educational organizations. Therefore, change management is a multi-dimensional task in various aspects of management, technology, culture and leadership style. Handling such a complex and interrelated issue requires a suitable model by which the entire process of change management moves step by step toward an objective in a systematic and sustainable manner.

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