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MANAGING CHANGE: CONCEPTS AND APPROACHES

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The difficult challenge that always confronts higher education institutions in their efforts to innovate programs, policies, structure, culture, and the whole educational system as needed, prompted leaders and teachers to understand the basic concept of managing change in educational institutions. A clear perspective on the concept of change and its approaches will provide a viable foundation for school development and effectiveness.

Since change is indispensable to the sustainable growth of every organization, particularly of educational institutions, this paper will attempt to discuss the essentials of change. It will also suggest some methods on how to identify possible areas of change in which the administration and other school personnel can work collaboratively. Recognizing that personnel, organizational culture, and leadership functions can be some of the factors to hinder change, this paper also endeavors to identify some suggestive methods on how to effectively implement change. In order to maintain positive results, a change model is proposed with some personal insights from the viewpoint of the writer.

The Essentials of Change

Change is vital to the existence of every institution. Without it, any institution will not continue to exist for long. An educational institution needs change in “response to the demands” of the stakeholders; particularly the parents and students (Spencer & Pruss, 1993). These demands include academic matters, school facilities, and services. Students need comfortable dormitories, well-equipped laboratories, variety and abundance of nutritious food in the cafeteria, classrooms conducive to learning, and adequate books and instructional aids. Furthermore, they demand quality instruction superior teachers a relevant curriculum meaningful religious and social programs, and good discipline. The school has to cater and respond to these endemic demands for the satisfaction of its

April 2000, Vol. 3, No. 1

customers. They need to be committed to their satisfaction so that the school can continue to fulfill its role to the community.

Not only students have pressing demands. Teachers and other nonteaching staff have needs that the school must address. These may be needs for recognition, academic upgrading, higher wages, comfortable housing, or work promotions. To respond effectively to these different kinds of needs requires wise planning and commitment to initiate planned or unplanned change. Along with these internal demands are also the external requirements of governments and institutions of higher learning. There are government policies that need to be considered for the continued accreditation and recognition of the school. The church educational system also demands that schools reach acceptable standards to maintain accreditation. And as the school considers these internal and external demands, a fast-changing technology places additional pressure upon the school for immediate upgrading and modernization--to make the school more competitive in its services.

If the school is true to its mission, change is inevitable. As the school reviews and adapts its mission to the changing needs of the constituency, change becomes part and parcel of the administrative process. The school will venture to create new programs, involve more people in strategic planning and implementation, and continue to assess its program of services to ensure quality service. This is only possible if everyone in the school shares the philosophy that change is a divine mandate. Furthermore, the school can only truly appreciate its true impact and advantages if everybody welcomes change as a continuous and spontaneous process in the educational system.

Identification of Change Need

It is a fact that the school is saddled with various tasks in addressing the voluminous needs of stakeholders. However, some of these needs are not immediate and a priority at the moment. Thus, a wise and competent leader must be adept and discerning enough to understand and identify the most urgent needs requiring immediate attention. There are several helpful methods for identifying priority change areas. One is by way of consultation or a survey of the department supervisors and the staff members. One advantage with this group is once they are given opportunity to be involved, they are not only willing to point out areas of immediate concern, but they are also willing to suggest how to address it and to support the projected innovation. Furthermore, with the valuable information on hand, the top management can have a better perspective on the needs of the institution. Through these data, management can formulate plans and measures appropriate to the needs of the institutions. Change is most welcome if its impact

is nonthreatening. If change jibes with the needs of the institution and workers, it becomes the strength and power of the institution to cope with its challenges.

Another important method is by observing the behavior of the people in the work place or department. Workers wanting change can not hide their behavior. They tend to manifest a behavior that signals the top management for such a need. Thus, it is important that management should be cognizant of the behaviors of the workers and find time to analyze them. Furthermore, management should find time for visiting the workers in their workplace for better understanding of any known problem or need.

The best method of identifying needed change is by collaborative effort between the management and the staff. In this method, the initiative comes from the administration, allowing members to participate in the identification of the real change need. The management involves more committed and responsible workers in the analysis of the problem, formulating alternative solutions, implementation of the program, and in the evaluation process of the change (Kirpatrick, 1988). When personnel are partner to the change planning process, effecting the change is easier. Collaboration is a divine strategy for success. God ordered Moses to allow the chosen and responsible elders to collaborate with him in addressing the needs of the wandering Hebrews. The counsel of Jethro for a more comprehensive involvement and participation of responsible leaders in the leadership process made Moses successful in introducing innovation and change. The same principle was advocated by Jesus Christ when He invited His disciples to assist Him in meeting the needs of people.

The change planned must be carefully diagnosed by the management or by a designated committee. In analyzing, the administrator (president or manager) must understand the driving and restraining forces. Driving forces are the calculated positive result of the change. Restraining forces are the negative impact of the change. To diagnose is to understand the causes of some negative conditions in the operation of the institution. Furthermore it studies some indicators for a need of change. These indicators may include low enrollment, excessive absences of both faculty and students, fast turnover of teachers, excessive mis-communication, manifested negative behavior, etc. (Cribbin, 1981). And administrators should grasp the full significance and meaning of this information to help them address the needed change.

Factors Causing Resistance to Change

Once the area of needed change has been identified, another challenging job for the administrator is to find out some factors that might cause resistance to the planned change. Educational institutions must study carefully these areas relative to their strengths, so that they can establish measures for handling these obstacles to prevent their becoming a hindrance to the expected change. Research shows that people usually are resistant to change under the following conditions: when it is perceived to lower status or prestige of the worker, causes fear, affects job content, reduces authority or freedom, disrupts established work routine, rearranges formal and informal group relationships, is forced upon them with no explanation, or because of mental and physical lethargy (Wilson, 1983).

On the part of the institution, there are also other institutional elements that need to be considered in reducing resistance to change. These elements are; structure, infrastructure, educational system, core capabilities, individual capabilities, and culture. Structure refers to the institution's work processes, reporting relationship, department boundaries, and the ways the job are designed. Infrastructure includes the technology that is used to transfer inputs to outputs. The system refers to human resource systems and practices, communication systems, and administrative control system. Individual capabilities refer to the knowledge, skills, and abilities found in each employee group. And the culture refers to the values, norms, assumptions, and beliefs that are prevalent within an organization. The first five of these elements determines the culture of the institution. If these elements are not modified to support the projected change, the institution will be experiencing resistance (Recardo, 1995).

Leadership style also plays a very important role in resistance to change. The literature shows that leaders who are aloof from employees; do not clearly communicate; and do not provide personal, emotional, and material resources to employees are prone to meet resistance in the change process. When leadership style does not support or provide a positive atmosphere for change, the change process is also adversely affected.

Another equally important factor of resistance to change is the spirituality of the worker. People whose spirituality is weak have the tendency to entertain doubts and hesitancy to whatever good programs or innovations the institution is planning to undertake. People with high spirituality are more committed to undertake change. They are more cooperative and willing to support the program so long as these changes are not contradictory to their spiritual values, beliefs, and practices.

Diffusing Resistance: Suggestive Strategies

In diffusing resistance to change, the administration should focus on three components. These components are the personnel, the architecture or the elements of the organizational culture, and the leadership style and functions.

Personnel are the most important aspect of the institution. These people have their personal needs, values, and assumptions that must be considered. Change must satisfy the basic and psychological needs of the employee. Change must also protect and correspond to their values and assumptions. Any planned change which ignores the context of the personnel's needs, values, and assumptions will be ineffective. Jesus's model of change was based on the needs of people. He cast out demons, fed the multitudes, healed the sick, and performed miracles in order to meet their individual needs. In the same manner change must be people oriented, respecting their values and assumptions, and filling their personal needs. Involvement and participation should always be encouraged in order to make a positive change.

Personnel Participation Strategy

In order for a change to be comprehensive, the administration must employ the direct participation strategy. This is a strategy in which an individual or group is involved in the selection or formulation of the goals and methods to be employed in effecting the desired change. This strategy considers the participation of workers in the planning, decision-making, and problem solving process. Here the input of the workers is valued and respected. Once these workers are involved in the planning process, the administration through a change agent may formally or informally translate the personnel's commitment into actual behavior. And once this behavior pattern is accepted and has gained acceptance in the group, others will also follow, especially if the influence of a formal or informal leader is strong.

Organizational Structure Strategy

The institutional culture should also be considered and designed to provide support for change. To ensure better acceptance of proposed change, the following suggestions adapted from Recardo (1995) are very helpful.

1. ***The institution must create a clear vision of the change.*** Change should be done not for the sake of imitation, or for the sake of change. It must have reasons that are beneficial to the institutions in general and to the personnel in particular.

2. **Administration must make change a priority.** Change must be the priority of the administration and they must lead the change process. Administrators must act as role models and demonstrate their commitment personally. They must also communicate their expectations, and hold people accountable for success.
3. **Institutional flexibility essential.** The institution must be willing to modify some elements of the organizational culture such as department boundaries, reporting relationships, information technology, performance management, administrative policies, physical layout of office spaces, and required employee competencies.
4. **Institution should create a communication strategy.** This strategy should accomplish three objectives: (a) communicate the desired future state, (b) solicit employee input during the design process, and (c) identify employee concerns and unresolved issues during implementation.
5. **Pilot the initiative.** The administrator must pilot the initiative to demonstrate a quick success. This should be done in order to measure the validity of the change and for the advantage of the leaders to demonstrate needed performance in a shorter time.
6. **Address needs of losers.** The institution should develop procedures and practices to equitably address the needs of the losers. Most change projects create three distinct groups of people: the winners, the unaffected, and the losers. For the winners and those unaffected, their concerns must be integrated into the overall implementation plan. For those who are adversely affected, it is important to develop special procedures or policies to equitably address their concerns.
7. **Foster cascading commitment.** Effective change requires that individuals assume the roles of champion and missionary. Champions are people who are in position to mandate change, while missionaries are those who actively help make the change happen. These missionaries are informal group leaders that have strong influence. It is also important to remember that individuals from affected groups should be involved in the planning, design, and implementation of any initiative.
8. **Modify performance measure and rewards.** Behaviors that need to be rewarded include adherence to directives, maintenance of the status quo, high performance, co-operation, efficiency, and other forms of intangible

recognition. Without significant modification of these criteria, the wrong behavior and performance are rewarded.

9. ***Link the old to the new.*** Allow losers to express their grief and loss. Avoid bad-mouthing the past. Bad-mouthing will only foster defensiveness in those who either designed or maintained the old way of doing things.
10. ***Provide timely education.*** The identification and delivery of education is an integral part of any well-conceived change initiative. The education must be conducted from the top down in a manner that it focuses initially on conceptual and strategic aspects of the change.
11. ***Supply adequate resources.*** The resources can take the form of money, facility, equipment, or access to key people. It is frustrating to be asking someone to do something and not providing timely and sufficient resources. An initiative that has inadequate resources signal either a lack of support or poor project management.
12. ***Walk what you talk.*** Do not give a wrong signal. All actions and directives must contain the administrators' commitment for the planned project or change. If there is a gap on what the management says and what it does, the greater the distrust. If employees can detect this inconsistency, the employee can perceive that administrators are not sincere of the change.
13. ***Be courageous to replace key individuals.*** As a last resort, it is sometimes hard to reassign personnel who either do not have the needed skills or personal attributes or who choose not to support the initiative. Be honest to confront them but assure them of your support.

Transformational Leadership Strategy

Lastly, the leadership style and functions have significant bearing on the smooth implementation of change. Literature suggests that in order to achieve life-long change, a leader must be transformational. The transformational leader builds man's need for meaning, focuses more on missions and strategies, identifies and develops new talents, releases human potential, leads out in new directions, models love, and aligns organizational structures to the need of personnel. The goal of transformational leadership is "to transform people and organizations in a lateral sense—to change them in mind and heart; enlarge vision, insight, and understanding; clarify purpose; bring about changes that are permanent, self-perpetuating and momentum building" (Covey, 1991, p. 287).

Methods of Change

There are various methods that administrators can choose in implementing change. Below are brief descriptions of a number of these methods. Administrators may integrate one or two methods in implementing change.

1. **Technological method.** This method pertains to the organization's production process. It is aimed at improving either the organization's quality or quality of output. Such change involves new equipment or techniques. The work design is job rotation, job enlargement, job enrichment, and work modules. It is with the concept that changing technology means changing the way in which the organization's output is produced.
2. **Structural method.** This method modifies the organizational structure by modifying the roles of the people. Change in the organization is achieved by horizontal and vertical differentiation of the employees' role. The administrator here serves to create and nurture a whole new set of roles.
3. **Managerial method.** This refers to the efforts of the manager in effecting change by means of reward. The administration rewards positive behavior and reinforces it until the desired change is achieved. This is otherwise known as behavior modification.
4. **People methods.** This method effects change through education and training. The organization has to upgrade people by means of formal schooling, seminars, in-service, colloquia, and other methods. This is with the idea that when people are informed, there is corresponding change (Connor & Lake, 1988).
5. **Management by objective.** This method involves everyone in the organization. Each employee is asked to define clearly what he intends to achieve in a given period of time. These include personal and organizational goals. He has to discuss this with his supervisor. As soon as they agreed, a timetable is set, and a continuous interview has to be done with another supervisor. The employee has to periodically report the progress of the projected change.
6. **Survey feedback method.** This is a system of initiating change based on a questionnaire to gather information about the organization, with interpretation usually provided by an outside consultant. After discussion of the survey information in meeting between managers and their subordinates, employees are encouraged to participate in planning corrective actions for problems revealed in the questionnaire.

7. **Organizational development.** It is a long-range approach to change basic ways an organization operates. It incorporates a wide variety of training and personal development of systems for improvement. It is designed to improve the climate, health, and effectiveness of an organization. It is a systematic approach to redirect the energies of people in organizations to more effective behavior (Costley & Todd, 1987).

Change Model: Positive Step by Step Approach

A systematic approach is necessary to ensure effective implementation of any intended change in the organization. The writer incorporates other approaches from different authors and make a contingent and relevant approach in initiating and implementing change.

1. **Determine the need or desire for change.** This can be done by asking ideas or suggestions from school staff and students or from people coming from outside who have the concern for the school. The personal observation of the leaders can also be potential source of information about the need for change. The best is when leaders and staff can collaborate together in finding out the needed area for change and work for effective implementation and evaluation of the change process and result.
2. **Involve everyone to lay tentative plans for the change.** A leader must invite everyone to participate in making a program for change. The program must include the following: (a) reasons for change, planning and the implementation of the project; (b) identification of those people who will be affected by the intended change; (c) a comparison of pre-change and postchange organization structure; (d) outline of the analysis impact of the changes on the institution; (e) budget, or money involved; (f) analysis of the competencies of management to execute change program; (g) identification of the driving forces and the restraining forces which will facilitate the change process; (h) the setting up of a small but flexible team whose responsibility will be to drive the change forward; (i) the time plan; and (j) the communication strategy (Spencer & Pruss, 1993).
3. **Analyze the probable reactions.** It can not be avoided that in every proposed program for change, there will always be a reaction. Giving time to analyse all reactions is an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the program and to revitalize the resources.

4. ***Make a final decision.*** As soon as the reactions are already analyzed and all possible inputs are considered, then the final decision has to be made to make it formal and binding. This can be done by the administrator alone, if time is so limited and it bears consensus endorsement. It can be done also by organizing a problem-solving group. The administration can call the staff together and make the decision (Kirpatrick, 1985).
5. ***Establish a timetable for the change.*** This is to ensure that the plan is implemented.
6. ***Create a climate of change.*** In this stage, it is necessary that the administration will develop a climate of trust between management and the staff. The change agent gradually strengthens his relationship with people of influence.
7. ***Communicate the change program.*** Here the administration should start communicating the reasons of the proposed change and convince them of the benefits of the change, both to the organization and to the workers.
8. ***Courageously and patiently implement the program of change.*** It requires courage and patience to launch the program, especially if there is resistance. But constancy of purpose and patience will make the difference.
9. ***Develop intervention strategies.*** This is important in case there are new problems that crop up. In case it is for individuals, build skill in conflict resolution, negotiation, coaching, and career guidance. If it is for group, work on role analysis, team building, and meeting management. And if it is for the system, you will need to examine structure, job, and performance standards (Borden, 1987).
10. ***Monitor and evaluate the program.*** Monitoring and evaluation are really important for a life-long effect of the change. Evaluation of the program can help redirect the change to a desired result.
11. ***Always seek the guidance of the Lord.*** The change agent needs divine wisdom and guidance. This can be made possible only through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the change agent must commit himself to God (Gangel, 1997).

Conclusion

Change is vital to the existence of every educational institution because its mission is to provide quality service. Continuous development is a necessity to achieve excellence. In delivering quality service there are pressing demands from the students, parents, employees, and other stakeholders that need to be addressed. In response to these demands, the administration must involve employees and students in identifying the priority area for change. Both internal and external sources for change should be considered for comprehensive perspective of the planned change.

In order to effect productive change, internal and external factors resistant to change should be identified and strategies should be developed to diffuse them or otherwise lessen their impact on those who are affected. Different perspectives on methods of change must be studied to serve as guiding approaches in implementing change. A systematic approach to step-by-step implementation of desired change must be adopted in order to make the change effectively.

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