MODULE TWO

UNIT EIGHT

The Management of Change

Introduction

A head of a school today faces many challenges. These derive from a range of sources including the admission of children from diverse cultural, economic and social backgrounds; increasing levels of indisciplined pupils and teachers; the introduction of government policies, procedures and practices; and so forth.

Changes indeed call for extensive patience, emotional stability, self-restraint and control by all members in a school environment - pupils, teachers, non-teaching staff, parents, Government officials and communities at large. This unit looks at some aspects of this process of change and examines how you can improve the management of change in your school.

Individual study time: 2 hours 30 minutes

Learning outcomes

After working through this unit you should be able to:
• outline the range of changes in government policies, procedures and practices, with which schools are involved
• describe the nature of the change process and identify the key management functions and tasks associated with effective implementation of change in schools
• provide support and advice for teachers on accepting changes in education to minimise resistance
• promote acceptance and compliance to changes arising out of national policies and practices.

What is change?

In the introduction to this unit we noted a range of sources or pressures for change and the sorts of changes occurring. These include: changes in admission, curriculum, language policies, structural reforms and the technology of education. It is clear that changes can either be imposed on a school from outside or initiated in the school. However, whatever the source of changes, many writers have noted the responses to change. For example:
• 'old attitudes die hard'
• 'tough times never last but tough people do' (Robert Schultz)
• 'when the going gets rough, the tough get going'.

Activity 8.1
(1) What do you understand by change?
(2) Why do you think that response to change is often characterised by the above quotations?

10 minutes

Comments
It is likely that you will have described change using some of the following terms:
• transfer from old to new position
• transformation of old form to new form
• displacement from one place to another place
• substitution of one item with another one
• alteration of something
• promotion/demotion in rank/transfer
• separation/division/loss of parts from a whole
• mutations/evolution/growth of living things
• shifting of alliance/allegiance, loyalty and control.

The key point is that change means alteration from 'what was yesterday' to 'what it is today' and that is often uncomfortable. A change can be temporary where it is possible to reverse to the old position or form. A change can be permanent when it is not possible to reverse to the old position or form, for example, the ageing process of a living thing is an irreversible process, as is the passing of time. Change which takes place in education is often a planned and deliberate attempt to bring about improvement - this is called innovation. The school head has a key role to play in the management of change and innovation.

Role of the head in the management of change
As a school head, you are expected to be influencing results arising from changes instead of waiting to survive the effects and consequences of change. You are expected to manage change.

Managing change and making it 'stick' is a process involving the following important features:

1 Recognise the need to change - starting with yourself.
2 Diagnose current reality by taking stock of 'Where are we today and where would we like to be tomorrow after the changes?'
3 Mobilise commitment to the change amongst those who will be affected by the change in your school.
4 Draw up plans to get there by taking decisions as to appropriate courses of action, implementing plans, monitoring results and giving feedback to the major actors and beneficiaries involved.

Managing change essentially means taking control of and shaping the direction by influencing in some way the outcome of changes. This involves planning to take

action on change.

Planning and implementing change

Your ability to plan for action, to use power and to influence people effectively to bring about change derives from your role as a Lead Professional and the Chief Executive in the school. Your are in a vantage point or high position! You will need to know and understand your school and your role as change agent. This will involve data collection, reflection and analysis, vision and concept-building, formulating a strategy for action, implementing action and monitoring outcomes.

Data collection
• go and listen to new recruits - don't just talk to them
• phone your office when you are away somewhere - this may enable you to know how efficient your institution's switchboard is
• join new people for tea, drink, lunch or sport, etc. - and listen to them
• talk to drivers, porters, tea ladies, subordinate staff to find out how they feel about changes - they hear a lot more than you
• listen to the 'grapevine' - it is rarely wrong
• walk around the school
• smile more often - people will tell you much more.

Reflection and analysis
Think about it, sift it, sort it out and analyse it.

Vision and concept - building
Apply some overall framework to the analysed data in terms of short-term solutions, long-term goals, overall purpose or mission statements, visions and theories about achieving goals, objectives and targets. Formulate strategies for action.

Implementation
Ideas without action are useless. Implementation is translating ideas into action, 'Go out and try' strategies. Monitor events and report on the outcomes. But how best can we implement change? What sort of strategies are most useful? The next activity should help you to develop some practical guidelines concerning the management of change.

Activity 8.2
Think back over the last year and reflect on some of the changes which you or a member of staff have introduced into your school. Identify one change which was generally successful and one which which was less than successful and attempt to draw up a list of reasons for success and failure. You could use a chart like the one shown in Fig 10.

30 minutes

Fig 10 Reflecting on changes

1 The change	
What went wrong	
Possible reasons for failure	
2 The change	
Factors contributing towards success	

Comments

There are many reasons why things can go wrong in introducing and implementing change in schools, and your reasons will probably have included items such as lack of training, shortage of resources, resistance from teachers, etc. A large number of studies have been undertaken into the nature of change and the change process and guidelines have been developed concerning the factors which can contribute towards success. For example, the importance of planning, of good communications, and of ensuring the relevance and feasibility of the proposed change are often stressed. Indeed, what emerges is the key role of management! The school head needs to deploy his or her management skills in planning, organising, directing, supervising and evaluating change. These are the key management functions which we introduced in Unit 1 'Introduction to Educational Management'.

Sources of power

You may remember from Unit 1 that management was described as getting things done through people. In order to bring about change the school head may need to pay particular attention to mobilising commitment to change amongst staff in order to ensure successful implementation. He or she also has access to various sources of power which can be used to influence the direction of change within the school.

Activity 8.3

List the sources of power which are available to you in your role as school head. You can compare your list with that given below.

10 minutes

Comments

The following sources of power may be available to a school head:

Coercive power: To create fear by use of threats or punishment - apply this with care in a democratic society!

Expert power: This derives from special knowledge about education and culture which others may need and do not possess. Respect for, and need for this knowledge can create compliance to change requirements.

Role power: The role of head has rank, status and reputation; these can have a powerful influence on pupils, teachers, parents and the community.

Reward power: The head can indirectly reward teachers financially by recommending them for promotion. The head can promote or demote a child from one grade to another.
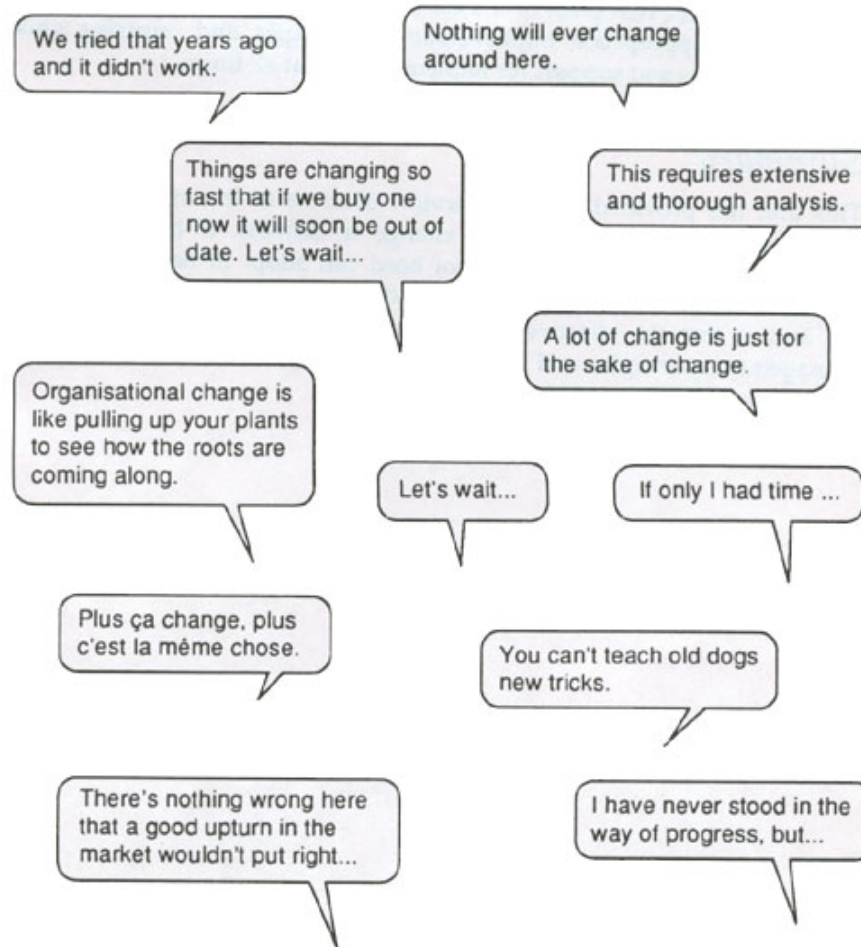
Connection power: This derives from a head's access and network membership upwards, downwards and sideways anywhere in any country.

Overcoming resistance to change
Activity 8.4
The statements below represent some conservative positions which individuals take in organisations. How often have you heard these statements made in your staff meetings? How do you handle such statements?

20 minutes

We tried that years ago and it didn't work.

Nothing will ever change around here.

Things are changing so fast that if we buy one now it will soon be out of date. Let's wait...

This requires extensive and thorough analysis.

A lot of change is just for the sake of change.

Organisational change is like pulling up your plants to see how the roots are coming along.

Let's wait...

If only I had time ...

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

You can't teach old dogs new tricks.

There's nothing wrong here that a good upturn in the market wouldn't put right...

I have never stood in the way of progress, but...

Your ability to handle resistance to change will depend on your awareness of the sources of that resistance. Sources of resistance to change include:
• fear of the unknown
• lack of information
• misinformation
• threats to core skills and competence
• threat to status
• threat to power base
• no perceived benefits
• low trust organisational climate
• poor relationships
• fear of failure
• fear of looking stupid
• reluctance to experiment
• custom bound

• reluctance to let go
• strong peer group norms especially amongst teachers and pupils.

If you study this list carefully, you will realise that the resistance to change formulation can be rather an over-simplification of the reasons why change is not always successful. Whilst there may well be some teachers who will always resist change, the school head can try to ensure that resistance does not develop in the first place or if it does that it is minimal. This can be done by adopting appropriate implementation strategies and ensuring good communications and support for implementation at all times.

Summary
This unit has provided a brief overview of some of the important issues surrounding the management of change in schools. It has explored a number of strategies which a school head can adopt to help bring about change. Change is a complex process and often hard to manage, and what we find is that the effective manager of change is one who adopts the management principles and techniques which have been the focus of the various units making up this Module.