
UNIT 2 FACTORS AFFECTING AND FACILITATING CHANGE

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

You must have heard the maxim “change is the only constant in life”. It is a law of nature that all living things are subject to. Flora and fauna, animals and birds, and homo sapiens, all grow and change over their lives and evolve to become different. These changes are inevitable; there are also changes that are deliberately designed, carefully planned and systematically executed. What we are talking about managing change is about this process of making changes in a planned manner.

We experience rapid changes in our day to day life. Very often, we do not feel comfortable with all these changes; yet, we live with them. Over time, we begin to do things differently, and as our comfort levels increase, we turn out not just to welcome but to advocate change more positively and forcefully. In the case of organizations, it is not possible, or wise to wait for changes to happen; it is necessary to make them happen. Educational institutions are no exceptions to this rule, new and different ways are emerging by the day that challenge the established methods, be they the methods of teaching and research, the processes of learning and evaluation, and indeed the whole process of education and its management. Teaching today means responding more sensitively to changes in technology, and incorporating them in the teaching strategies that will help individuals and economies invent and apply knowledge, rather than merely memorizing them.

In the previous unit, we discussed the philosophy of change in great detail, including the theoretical foundations of the processes involved in successfully managing them. While discussing these issues, we had also referred briefly to some factors that might stand in the way of implementation of changes. One key element that can jeopardize even the best designed change management process is resistance from

people who are expected to be participants in the process of change. In this unit, we shall focus our attention on those factors that are critical to change, but are nearly always the most significant source of resistance. In doing so, we shall also address some of the issues involved in managing that resistance and the factors that could facilitate the processes of change.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the process of change;
- discuss various factors that affect the change process;
- identify resistance factors and the sources of resistance;
- analyze the mechanisms for managing resistance in the change process;
- examine various factors that are responsible for the success of change;
- analyze the role and characteristics of the change agent; and
- examine the skills required of the change agent.

2.3 CHANGE PROCESS

The dictionary meaning of change is to make or become different, and all its grammatical variations like alter, modify, metamorphose, transform, and so on.

What is change in the organizational context that we are discussing here?

- Change underlies a qualitatively different way of perceiving, thinking and behaving to improve over past and existing practices.
- Change may be incremental or radical.
- Change can be seen as continuous and intrinsic to an organization or as extrinsic and discontinuous.

The main objective of organizational change is to find new or improved ways to use resources and abilities to improve an organization's position in the environment. In the last 10 years, over half of the fortune 500 companies have undergone major organizational change to allow them to better manage their resources and environments. In India we can take the examples of how successfully Wipro and Godrej managed the change in their product line.

The Change Process

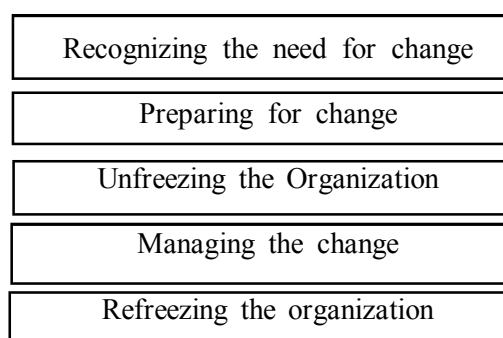


Fig. 1: Operations and the Management of Change by Vic Gilgeocis

2.3.1 Dimensions for Change

Change in any institution affects its human resources, functional resources, technology and innovation and organization as explained below:

Human Resources

Human resources are an organization's important assets. It is people in the organization that advocate change and it is possible that they both ensure and enable changes to take place. That is, there will be people, both managers and workers who implement changes and others in the organization who will be influenced by those changes. Their total involvement in any change process is the vital ingredient for success. Because human resources are at the very center of the change, the way an organization changes and restructures its human resources is the key to improving organizational effectiveness.

Functional Resources

Every organization needs to develop procedures that allow it to manage the particular environment it operates in. An organization can improve the value that its functions create by changing its structure, culture and technology. Alterations in the functional structure motivate the people to perform better.

Technology and Innovation

Technology gives an organization an enormous capacity to change itself in order to exploit market opportunities. New technologies are the catalyst that helps foster effective operations and organizational change. Successful change requires innovations like the introduction of something new, a new method or new device or a better idea.

Organization

Through the design of organizational structure and culture an organization can harness its human and functional resources to exploit technological opportunities.

2.4 FACTORS AFFECTING CHANGE

Change, as we noted earlier, involves movement from one stable state to another. However, it might take some time and effort before a changed situation reaches its equilibrium and stability. What are the factors that influence change? In the previous unit, we have provided a brief overview of the circumstances that drive change, ranging from developments in the environment and reformulation of the vision and mission of organizations to enlarging the market, launch of new products and services and adoption of new technologies. Irrespective of the nature of the urge for change, reaction to organizational change initiatives manifests itself in several forms, from passivity or indifference to non-cooperation or even strikes and violence. What causes these reactions? Research documents several causes ranging from fear of job loss due to induction of technologies, inadequate skill development to cope with new technologies, loss of comfort at the work place, fear of losing power and control, mistrust of change initiators, possible threat to the bargaining power of employees' union, etc. These have been grouped into three distinct categories: radiant causes relating to technology induction, psychological causes reflecting the fear of the unknown and sociological causes that reflect the group dynamics operating in most organizations. We shall now look at these causes in some detail.

Radiant Causes

Resistance to changes caused by technology induction is generally prompted by the following factors which are known as Radiant causes:

Management of Change

- The change in technology is administratively less feasible,
- Costs of change are high,
- Leads to skill downgrading or other undesirable conditions, and
- Requires extra efforts to learn and relearn.

When there is change in technology in an organization, often there will be resistance from the employees/workers. Because they are so used to the existing ways of doing things, they fear that any change in the way they work will lead to discomfort of many kinds. There is no better example that explains the nature of this resistance than the reservations against the introduction of personal computers at the workplace in many Indian organizations some three or four decades ago. Employees thought they would lose their jobs; unions feared loss of their bargaining power; many felt uncomfortable with the thought of having to go for training and learning new skills after years of experience on their jobs! And yet, when computerization did actually take place in railway reservations, banking, postal services, and so on, both employees and consumers experienced a new level of comfort and indeed new levels of efficiency and satisfaction. Gone are the days when people queued up for long hours at the railway reservation counters, bank tellers and post office windows for buying a ticket, withdrawing small amounts of cash or just buying postal stationery! More importantly, what an exciting sight it is to see the employees, young and old, keying away the details on their desk tops and disposing of their work in just as little time as it takes to tap 15-20 buttons on their key boards! There was nothing of the devils that were predicted; nobody lost jobs and many got trained on the job.

What provoked the initial resistance? It was nothing more than the lack of awareness. It follows that before significant changes are introduced in the work patterns, the employees should be taken into confidence and conditions created in which the level of resistance is minimized, if not eliminated.

Psychological Causes

In the previous unit, we discussed in some detail the role of innovations in the change process. People who have introduced innovations in one field or another know what type of psychological factors crop up during implementation. The major ones are:

- Lack of appreciation or tolerance,
- Conflict between the employees and the management,
- Fear of the unknown or uncertain outcomes of the change,
- Lack of trust in others,
- Need for security, and
- Desire for maintaining status quo (existing positions and prestige).

Whenever there is a change, the first reaction from those likely to be affected is “fear” to accept it, unless, of course, the change involves moving to a higher position, better remuneration, higher status and the like. It is not uncommon to see that most people resist even a routine transfer from one station to another as it involves dislocation in family life, children’s education and perceived difficulties in adjusting to the new environment. These are all mainly psychological reasons that prompt people to resist change.

There might be some false impressions set in the mind that change outcomes are not positive, and an insecure feeling that change is not good or comfortable. For example, in a university when any examination reforms are contemplated, the immediate reaction is negative both from the students and teachers. It should be noted that in this case the initiators of change are mainly teachers themselves,

and yet not every teacher would be happy to belong to the initiator group. It would, therefore, be necessary to build some consensus among teachers in the first place before attempts at examination reforms are pushed. If there is a consensus among teachers, it is easier to take students into confidence and secure broad based support to the proposed changes. The absence of such consensus building often leads to stiff resistance and it is not unlikely that those against the change might even canvas support from groups of students to thwart attempts at any reforms at all. It is important for initiators of change to secure a broad acceptance of their proposals to ensure success in their efforts. Even after securing a broad measure of acceptance, it is necessary to design an appropriate strategy to execute the change proposals. Any effort at implementation of acceptable change coaxed by an unacceptable strategy could result in negative attitude towards change.

Sociological Causes

Every organization has to operate in a society, and therefore, various sociological issues that influence the society are reflected in the functioning of the organization as well. We had discussed in some detail the dynamics that influence different groups in different contexts in attempting organizational transformation. For instance, there could be groups that initiate changes; groups that accept change; groups that resist change; and groups that oppose change. There is a complex mix of causes that govern the attitudes of each of these groups. Those who initiate change premise their moves on the betterment of the organization and the attainment of its goals; those who accept these initiatives feel convinced that the change is for the better, but do not have the strength and power to join the initiator group; those who resist change fear the loss of their influence and authority; and those who oppose changes are not, in any case, influenced by reason or ideals. These factors can be grouped in to four categories:

- Vested interest of some social groups and employees to continue in their present positions,
- Desire to maintain the existing formal and informal relationships,
- Narrow outlook of the employees and others in society, and
- The conflict between the social group values and the values of the proposed change that is likely to bring new power alliances within the organization.

If change is not suitable to group norms, or deviates from what is expected, then there is resistance. If change is not acceptable to the entire group, each individual starts showing resistance, at times out of fear from other members of the group. Individual or group resistance notwithstanding, acceptance of change by the larger society plays a major role in implementation of the change. For example, till a couple of decades ago, correspondence education was looked down upon by society as a second rate and second chance education mainly for dropouts. However, that situation has undergone a big change: today, the social attitude to distance education is very positive, and with that, the demand for distance education programmes and courses has been increasing from all sections of the society.

2.4.1 Resistance to Change

In the previous unit, while discussing the structural aspects of change (sub-section 1.4.2), we mentioned that a major characteristic of the adopter system (an organization that is preparing for change) is resistance. Resistance to change is not a new phenomenon. It is an inevitable response to any change. In education, reforms and changes are an international trend and in the past three decades or so, there have been numerous good ideas, experiments and reform efforts, both major and minor, in many education systems around the world (Cheng, et al., 2000). The policy reforms in the educational sector typically concerned with

curriculum reforms and organizational restructuring. However, these reforms failed to deliver the expected improvement in student learning due to resistance from various corners.

Why do education reform initiatives fail? As we said a short while back, by nature, people often fear the unknown. They tend to defend the status quo, particularly if they feel that their security and status are in danger.

Changes are resisted mainly on the following grounds:

- Non-involvement of the stakeholders (mainly teachers) in designing change,
- Non preparation of the organizational community (teachers and students) to live up to the changed situation,
- Lack of provision for equal sharing of the rewards and benefits of change, and
- Non-inclination on the part of management to positively motivate and take the employees and workers (teacher, parents and students) with them in implementing change.

Zaltman and Duncan (1997) defined resistance as any conduct that serves to maintain the status quo in the face of pressure to alter status quo.

Resistance can be overt, implicit, immediate or even deferred.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.
ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

Which of the three factors, i.e. radiant, psychological and sociological, according to you, affects the most in the case of a distance education institution while implementing change and why? Answer in about 50 words.

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2.4.2 Sources of Resistance

Resistance can come from two major sources, individual and organizational.

Individual Resistance

- i) **Habit:** Human beings are creatures of habit. Everyday for making hundreds of decisions we rely on these habits or programmed responses. But when confronted with change this tendency to respond in our accustomed ways becomes a source of resistance.
- ii) **Security:** People with a high need for security are likely to resist change because it threatens their feelings of safety.
- iii) **Economic factors:** Fear that changes will lower one’s income. Changes in job tasks and established work routines also can arouse economic fears if people are concerned that they won’t be able to perform new tasks or routines with their existing knowledge and skill standards especially when

pay is closely tied to productivity.

- iv) **Fear of the unknown:** Changes create ambiguity and uncertainty about what would follow. For example, many of us know that transition from school to college is a move that brings us to face a whole new and uncertain system.

Organizational Resistance

- i) **Structural Inertia:** Organizations have several features that perpetuate their structure. These include governance pattern, hierarchy, power allocation, heterogeneity of power centers, appointment of the chief executives, and so on. These are built in mechanisms that ensure stability, also known as structural inertia. The organizational transformation process often confronts resistance from this inertia. The new education reforms process initiated by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) of the Government of India that envisage an overarching regulatory mechanism for all sectors of higher education in place of the several statutory bodies currently operating for particular fields like general education, technical education, teacher education, legal education, etc., may face resistance of structural inertia.
- ii) **Limited focus of change:** Organizations consist of several interdependent subsystems. Change in a subsystem without modifying or introducing changes in other subsystems is not likely to work. We had discussed the system model of change management in the previous unit (1.4.2). Successful organizational transformation demands systemic thinking on the part of the initiators of change, whether or not they are from within the organization or from outside. Limited changes in one or two subsystems tend to get nullified by the larger systems.
- iii) **Group Inertia:** While discussing the change management strategies in unit 1, we mentioned several approaches to implement any organizational transformation design (1.4.3). All these approaches seek to work on the behavioral patterns of individuals and groups within organizations. Some of them may respond to logic and reason, some may go along because of fear of authority, some might respond to peer pressure and some might be willing to accept change if they are convinced that the organization would take the responsibility for their training and retraining. At the core of these strategies is the assumption that groups within organizations are unlikely to go with any significant changes that impact on their perceived roles in the organization. These group loyalties are often so rigid and uncompromising that response to change initiatives is nearly always negative.
- iv) **Threat to expertise:** Each specialized group in any organization assumes that it is their contributions that make the organization succeed. For instance, the product design group might legitimately claim that their design is behind the success of their product, the sales group might argue that without their marketing strategy, the product may not sell the way it does. The HR group is likely to claim that it is their recruitment, training and compensation policy that made the organization the dynamic entity that it is while the Finance Department would consider that but for their innovative management of the finances, the organization would not have made the profits it did. While there could be no immediate threat to any of these core groups in an organization in the event of any change, even marginal departures from the existing role equation is likely to upset the existing equilibrium leading to significant resistance from one or more of these groups.
- v) **Threat to established power relationships:** As we mentioned earlier, all organizations have their own hierarchies and power structure. Any organizational transformation might involve redistribution of decision making

authority and the perceived power equation that goes with decentralised or distributed decision making. Similarly, any new resource allocation patterns can also lead to resistance from the long-established custodians of organizational resources.

2.4.3 Accepting Resistance

Resistance is usually seen in negative terms. The proponents of change are unhappy with resistance shown by some persons or groups. The general experience suggests that in many cases resistance plays a positive role, for example, individuals and groups had not resisted attempts at indiscriminate urbanization of rural areas, or mining in forest areas, we would have been poorer in our ecological heritage. In the flush of enthusiasm, the proponents of change do not see the negative (and often unintended) consequences of their change initiatives. Resistance helps to bring to the notice of the change initiators the impact of their action on society and nature as well as the likely difficulties in the implementation of the change. So, resistance at least gives a warning which, if heeded, can ensure better implementation of change.

Resistance to change is like dissent. The value of dissent is to stimulate the individuals and the groups to consider many factors they may otherwise have overlooked. It also helps to generate alternatives. Resistance may bring to the attention of those involved in introducing change various factors that are likely to disrupt the basic cultural fabric, or threaten the core values of the groups concerned. The earlier attention is paid to these concerns the better it is for the change programme.

Resistance may also point out flaws in the process of implementing change. If a change is forced on an organization from outside or by a community external to it, the change is not likely to be “owned” by it. Similarly, there could be resistance to change from within communities if there is no “ownership” of the change by the communities themselves. Such resistance is evidence of the fact that the process of change has not been participatory. Resistance may, therefore, be helpful in focusing attention on some aspects that were neglected by the change planners, threats to the core values and life styles, unintended disturbances causing problems, “bad” process of introducing changes, etc, for example. Taking such a positive approach to resistance Karp suggests a four step approach to resistance as shown in Table 1. This relates to bringing out resistance (surfacing) by encouraging people to express resistance’ giving importance to it as reflected in listening and acknowledging; exploring the reasons of resistance to learn what can be done; and rechecking after analysis if the resistance is still substantial.

Table 1: Four Step Treatment of Resistance adapted from Karp, 1988

1	Surfacing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make expression of resistance safe • Ask all for it
2	Honoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen • Acknowledge • Reinforce Permission to resist
3	Exploring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguish authentic from pseudo resistance
4	Rechecking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probe

A good planner or administrator of change would study the resistance in all its dimensions as explained above and manage the same for effective implementation of change.

Check Your Progress 2

- Note:** i) Space is given below for your answer.
ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

What are the major consequences of resistance, when one looks at it in a positive way? Answer in about 50 words.

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2.4.4 Management of Resistance

Managing resistance involves using resistance as a positive force of the change process, preventing resistance and coping with it.

Kotter A Schlesinger (1978) suggested 6 approaches for managing change.

1. Education and Communication
2. Involvement and participation
3. Facilitation and Support
4. Negotiation and agreement
5. Manipulation and Cooption
6. Explicit and Implicit Coercion.

Watson (1969) has suggested some ways of reducing or preventing resistance. These related to ownership of change, nature of change, and the process of changing.

Ownership: Resistance is likely to be low if the change is perceived as necessary and is suggested (owned) by those affected by it, and when it has the top management support.

Nature of Change: Resistance is likely to be less if change is seen as reducing problems and burdens, conforming to the core values of the group, offering new and interesting experience to the group, and not threatening autonomy and security.

Change Process: Resistance can be reduced by joint and agreed diagnosis of the problem, consensus on the broad design of change, listening to: objections (and learning from them), periodical review and feedback, development of high interpersonal trust and cohesive teams, and openness to revision.

Various sources of resistance and the possible mechanisms to cope up with that resistance are summarized in Table 2.

Table-2: Sources of Resistance and Coping Mechanisms

Sources of Resistance	Coping Mechanisms
1. Perceived peripheral nature of change	Participation in diagnosis
2. Perception of imposition	Participation and involvement
3. Indifference of the top Management	Active support from the top Management
4. Vested interests	Fait accompli
5. Complacency and inertia	Fait accompli
6. Fear of large scale disturbance	Phasing of change
7. Fear of inadequate resource	Support of resources
8. Fear of obsolescence	Development of Skills
9. Fear of loss of power	Reorientation
10. Fear of overload	Role clarity and definition

Coping strategy to be adopted may also depend on the situations. Maheshwari (1991) suggests six strategies, each of which would work in specific situations. These are – education and communication, participation and involvement, facilitation and support (e.g. training in new skills), negotiation and agreement (e.g. modify details), manipulation and cooperation, explicit or implicit coercion.

Any change agent who is capable of identifying in advance the potential or likely resistance factors will be in a position to take preventive measures while planning the change process. This preventive step reduces the forces of resistance paving the way for smooth implementation of the change process and achieving the expected outcomes.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

What measures would you take, as the Head of a Distance Education Institution, to plan and implement changes which will have large scale disturbances/dislocations in the institution? Answer in about 50 words.

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2.5 FACTORS FACILITATING CHANGE PROCESS

Managing change successfully is one of the tasks faced by today’s organizations. A number of individuals are involved in implementing, facilitating and stabilizing the change process in the organizations. Those who manage these changes could be from within the concerned organizations or from outside as consultants. They

are known as the change agents or change leaders who provide invaluable contribution to the successful change process.

Change agent is “A professional Person who influences innovations, decisions in a direction deemed desirable by a change agency” (Roger and Shoemaker, 1971). Change agents are individuals who use their knowledge of the change process to influence decisions thereby ensuring desirable change.

In a landmark study of organization change, based on a review of 18 case studies, Larry E. Greiner found (Patterns of Organization Change, Harvard Business Review, May-June, 1967) that the more successful change attempts involved six major steps:

Pressure and Arousal: This is the initial stage that indicates the need to shake the power structure at its very foundation. Without this shake-up, the top management is unlikely to be aroused sufficiently to accept the need for change. The pressure could come from either external forces like competitor breakthroughs or stockholder discontent, or internal events like interdepartmental conflict, decreased productivity, or a union strike.

Intervention and Re-orientation: Pressure does not necessarily guarantee action by the top management. It often requires intervention by an external force. This step usually involves bringing in a newcomer, an outside consultant, who has a more objective view point, can appraise organizational needs, and can reorient the thinking of top management by getting them to re-examine their practices and procedures, thereby helping them to define the real problem.

Diagnosis and Recognition: This stage involves the existing power structure at all levels, in collaboration with the newcomer or consultant, helps the organization do a better job of “seeking the location and causes of problems”. In the more successful cases of organization change, a shared rather than a unilateral or delegated approach to locate problem areas seems to have ensured better results. In the unilateral approach, the top brass makes the decisions; in the delegated approach, top management delegates, but remains involved.

Invention and Commitment: With the identification of the problem areas, the search for solutions starts. Generally, the temptation is to try old solutions to new problems. In this fourth phase, what is required is the invention of new and unique solutions that have commitment from the power structure. Here, the newcomer in close cooperation with the top management and other staff try to develop effective solutions to problems, using the shared approach to obtain full commitment to the implementation of the new solution. Successful change approaches involve intensive searches for new and innovative solutions which depend on the collaboration of many people who provide their own solutions. In his study, Greiner found that none of the less successful attempts at change, reached this stage and that rather than commitment, there was serious resistance to the proposed changes. (In other words, the reactive forces became stronger than the proactive forces).

Experimentation and Search: The successful change approaches used “reality testing” to determine the usefulness of the solution prior to the introduction of large-scale changes. In this phase, both the specific decisions taken in the previous phase (solutions), but also the underlying pattern of decision-making (shared power), were tested to establish their validity. In other words, the decision-making process was tentative rather than final. Further, all the successful change studies reported that the concept of shared power ensured that the change process did not confine itself to the major decision areas, but encompassed a large number of minor decision areas as well and at all levels of the organization.

Reinforcement and Acceptance: Successful change leads to clear improvements in organizational performance, with corresponding support for change from all levels of the organization. This positive impact of change, particularly as it involved a sense of participation and experimentation testified to its reinforcing effect and secured the support and encouragement and reward for those who continued with change efforts.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.
ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

Larry Greiner has identified, on the basis of studies on organizational change, several steps that would ensure successful management of change. Discuss those steps briefly and their significance to the process of change. (Answer in about 50 words)

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2.5.1 Role and Characteristics of a Change Agent

Change agents come from a wide variety of backgrounds. The role of change agents depends upon the people involved, the organization and the problem or crisis at hand. For example, education is an instrument of change, and teachers are its principal agents. In the education system, individual educator is a critical starting point because the leverage for change can be greater through the efforts of individuals. Today, the teacher who works for or allows the continuance of the status quo is doing a great disservice to education. With so much change taking place in societies, in the environment, in knowledge and its applications, education cannot remain static. Purposeful change is the new norm in teaching. Each and every educator must strive to be an effective change agent. For that an educator should acquire four capacities:

Personal vision building because it connects so well with moral purpose contending with the forces of change.

Spirit of inquiry which is the engine of vitality and self-renewal. Inquiry means internalizing norms, habits and techniques for continuous learning.

Mastery, both in relation to specific innovations and as a personal habit, is essential to be effective at change. New competences and know-how are required for better understanding and judging the new routes to greater effectiveness.

Collaboration is essential for personal learning. It involves the attitudes and capacity to form productive mentoring and peer relationship, team building and the like. In a larger context, collaboration involves the ability to work in organizations that form cross-institutional partnerships for the purpose of introducing change.

Generally, change agents are said to perform seven roles in the change-process (Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971).

- They analyze the situation and outline the need for change on the part of their clients. The clients system is made aware of the importance and benefits of the intended change.

- They establish a 'change' relationship with them. The clients feel that the change can be effectively brought about with the help and support of the change agents.
- They are able to diagnose the problems faced by the client and list the possible solutions. Also they are able to anticipate the problems likely to be faced by the client during the change process and after its completion and suggest ways and means of minimizing and remedying them.
- They make the clients feel the need for change without thrusting it on them. They make the clients understand the relevance and necessity of change and secure their acceptance.
- They prepare a blue print of action for implementing the change. The support of the client system is enlisted for translating the planned change into an action plan and minimising the resistance to change.
- They stabilize change and prevent discontinuance. A change moves the organization/institution towards a newer equilibrium that, unless it is helped to stabilize itself, is likely to revert to the earlier state of instability. The change effort fails, however well planned and executed it may have been. The client system is made aware of the importance of this fact and thus the new behavior finds commitment to see the change process successfully through.
- They achieve a terminal relationship with clients. No change agent can continue to be associated with a change effort too long. At some time, during the change process, the client should feel confident to take over and maintain the change effort. That is the opportune time for the change agent to terminate relations with the client system.
- This ensures non-dependence on the change agent as the client system must carry on the on-going activity with confidence.

2.5.2 Skills of Change Agent

Empathy: The skill of understanding the feelings and thoughts of another person. Like most skills, it can be learned by most people and is not really a personal characteristic of the change agent. Empathy leads to improved communication and understanding between the change agent and the employees.

Linkage: The change agent has to establish close collaboration with the client system and its leadership team as well as the employees in the organization to ensure that all participants are linked to one another as equal participants in the change process. The greater this collaborative involvement (the stronger the linkage), the more likely are the chances of success.

Proximity: The change agent needs to be accessible to all. Increased proximity obviously makes it easier to develop collaborative linkages.

Structuring: The change agent should have the ability to clearly plan and organize activities with respect to the change effort. When the change effort is outlined and presented clearly, it is more likely to be understood and is more likely to be effective. A clearly organized change effort also facilitates implementation of the change approach in a straight forward step-by-step fashion.

Openness: The degree to which the change agent is receptive to ideas, needs and feelings is important. The preceding four factors can all facilitate the development of such openness and, when absent, they can effectively hinder the development of openness between the change agent and client.

Energy: The intensity of the effort that the change puts into the change process is vital for success. It is not unusual to see “spread thin” efforts across many activities simultaneously giving rise to operational problems that demand all of the energy for addressing peripheral problems. A well thought out plan and a strategy that focuses all efforts on its implementation is what it takes to make the change successful.

Synergy: The positively reinforcing effects that each of the preceding six factors has upon one another is the key to success. Synergy means the whole is more than the sum of its parts. The more favourable each of the preceding factors, the more synergy there will be for the success of the organizational development effort.

The various skills that a change agent ought to possess are classified under three broad categories: cognitive skills, action skills and communication skills. The basis for classification is the list of change agent skills suggested in the organizational development (OD) literature of the NTL Institute of Applied Behavioral Science, U.S.A. include the following:

Cognitive Skills

Self-understanding

The change agent should be able to analyze and comprehend his/her own motivation in perceiving a need for change and the desire to bring about a change. He/She should be able to determine his/her own strategic role in the light of the given context and his/her abilities to manage that context.

Conceptualization

- The change agent should be able to determine the possible units of change.
- Every change tends to influence other sub-system, the related positions, roles and members. The change agent should be able to foresee these inter-relationships and visualize how a particular change is related to other possible changes either for the present or the future.
- He/She should clearly define objectives of the intended change.
- He/She should conduct an anticipatory exercise in carrying out a stepwise plan.
- He/She must be capable of eliciting and eliminating alternatives and provide for replanning and assessment at later stages.
- He/She must be able to anticipate the barriers and/or resistance to change and devise ways and means of overcoming both.
- He/She must be able to anticipate the degree of favour for the intended changes among the clients.

Evaluation

The change agent should possess the skills of assessment/evaluation. He/She should be able to assess the client group in terms of its nature, expectations and internal dynamics. He/She should be able to use the appropriate methodology to obtain feedback about the client’s problems, expectations and the felt need for change as well as the utility of the evaluative measures. Specifically, the required skills of evaluation are:

- Determining the size, character and structural make up of the client group;
- Determining the degree or extent of the felt need for change;
- Using diagnostic instrument such as survey, rating scales, observation schedules, etc., appropriate to the problem;

- Evaluating the problems, causes, etc., objectively and not in terms of one's own likes and dislikes;
- Diagnosing causes of failure as well as success as the case may be;
- Identifying the methods of change which the clients believe are appropriate.

Action Skills

A change agent plays the roles of a consultant, counselor, facilitator, trainer, etc.

As a counselor, he/she should possess the skills to:

- Make catharsis possible if it is seen to be a starting point for a change process (Catharsis refers to giving an opportunity to the client to give vent to his/her feelings, in other words 'unburden his/her heart');
- Help the clients examine their attitudes, expectations and motivations;
- Deal with the client's ideology, myths, values, etc., wisely and effectively (Any intended change should be in consonance with the client's expectations, value system, etc. Otherwise, resistance to change efforts is bound to develop at one or the other point of time. The change agent should orient the change effort in such a way that it fits with the client's frame of reference);
- Clarify the nature of relationship and inter-dependence between the client and the change agent.

As a Facilitator, he/she should be able to:

- Raise the level of aspiration of the clients (these aspirations, however, should be realistic. The change effort should be perceived to have a reinforcing value for the client's increased aspirations);
- Develop an awareness of the potentialities of the change among the clients, and thus their positive expectations from the change;
- Create among the concerned a willingness and a sense of responsibility to participate in the change process;
- Encourage the clients to use a step-by-step plan and also a time frame for the change process.

A consultant is required to:

- Make a step-wise plan (the change plan has to be outlined in a number of stages or steps, one leading to another rather than something that indicates drastic action);
- Make use of appropriate techniques to arrive at group consensus;
- Examine decisions in terms of their 'pros and cons';
- Evaluate the progress made at each of the stages of implementation and determine what has been achieved and what has yet to be achieved;
- Build and maintain morale and team-spirit of the clients while the change is taking place.

The change agent, as a communicator is concerned with spreading relevant information and the ultimate adoption of the change by the client's system. For this, he/she should have the necessary persuasive skills to enable the client system realize the need for change and the importance of the change to organizational effectiveness. Since the flow of information must follow a multi-step path, the

consultant should be able to positively influence the opinion of leaders at different organizational levels. His/Her ability to communicate effectively can be assessed in terms of the extent to which he/she is able to enlist the client’s support for the intended change and create in them the eagerness to participate in and implement the change effort.

To be a successful communicator the change agent should:

- Be clear about the goals and objectives of each of his/her communication plan or activity;
- Develop his/her communication plan in a way that it is consonant with the client’s needs, attitudes and beliefs;
- Be persuasive enough to minimize the possibilities of rejection without giving the feeling of forcing or driving his/her ideas on the clients;
- Obtain feedback to determine the effectiveness of his/her communication from time to time; and
- Make strategic use of informal communication networks so that the formal change efforts are supported by all and not resisted by anybody at all.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i) Space is given below for your answer.

ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

Briefly describe the roles and the skills of change agents. (Answer in about 50 words)

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2.6 ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR ORIENTATION TO CHANGE

Whether industrial or educational, all organizations/institutions do not show the same orientation towards change. As we said earlier, there are several factors that influence changes in an organization; and there are several factors too that contribute to make a success of the change effort. Basing on the few broad parameters, the organizations/institutions can be categorized into two – i) less oriented to change and ii) highly oriented to change. These are:

- i) Organizations/Institutions less oriented to change seem to be characterized by:
- A simpler technology;
 - Status quo in their internal environment in which personal relationship among members are generally highly valued as ends in themselves;
 - A closed system with a minimum of interaction or liaison with outside organizations or people;
 - Stereotyped roles with more or less rigid patterns of inter- and intra-role behaviors – consequently individual members lack the ability to emphasize or see themselves in differing roles;

- A stabler external environment or greater control over it;
- A greater degree of horizontal and/or vertical specialization of jobs and formalization; and
- Lack of favourable orientation to change

Educational institutions, particularly the conventional types, come under this category.

- ii) On the other hand, organization/institutions which are highly oriented to change are characterized by
- Technology that is complex and likely to change or improve from time to time;
 - Rather unstable, or relatively less stable, external an internal environment;
 - An open system with a greater degree of interaction with external organizations and people;
 - Business – like social relationships among the members – the relations are purpose-oriented rather than emotional and are effective;
 - Less of formalization and horizontal and vertical job specialization;
 - Individual members high on empathy as they can see themselves in differing roles; and
 - Basically proactive approach with a positive orientation towards change.

Distance Education Institutions with high technological inputs and greater degree of interaction and openness are highly prone to change.

To reiterate further, the following major factors have to be kept in mind by any planner, administrator, teacher or any one who wants to introduce change and succeed in the effort:

Communication: It is important to communicate the proposed changes to all concerned stakeholders before implementation, and also after they are implemented, so that there are no distortions in implementation. This will make the changes effective.

Participation: People at all levels should be involved in implementing change, particularly in distance education institutions where team work is an unavoidable and crucial component. This brings about commitment from all sections otherwise it leads to withdrawal and resistance.

Perception of the Leader: Unless the leader is clear about the objectives and the method of change, and is committed to its implementation, others would not take the change effort seriously.

Benefit Analysis: Employees always look into costs and benefits, when any large scale changes are proposed to be implemented. They may fear that the costs of change may lead to a cut in the spending on their welfare. If employees are taken into confidence and reasonable assurances are given about the benefits of change, they may support the change effort without reservation.

Top Level Management: Top Management has to be convinced that change is introduced only when everybody in the organization is concerned and ready. Top managers who feel that they know everything about the organization without bothering about others' attitude and concerns will not be successful in the change effort.

Trust: Before the change is implemented trust has to be built up with regard to security of jobs and other benefits which are essential to overcome resistance and fear in the minds of employees. This has to be done by top management or change agent or by both.

Involvement of the unions: Most of the problems with regard to change implementation is from the unions in case of industrial organizations and teacher/employee associations in educational institutions. For any change to be effective, their involvement is a must, then the change can be implemented successfully.

Early Success: If change is initiated on large scale, then it will take some time for them to adapt to change. Once they are adapted in phases, success will be more certain.

The success of change also depends on whether it is individual-based or team-based. Secondly, a flexible plan is required. A number of alternatives should always be made available when change is initiated in the organization.

The ultimate success of any change effort is not just its implementation alone. A change once implemented should be evaluated after some period. If the results are positive, change efforts have to be consolidated and finally measures have to be initiated for internalization of change in all components of the organization/institution.

Check Your Progress 6

- Note:**
- i) Space is given below for your answer.
 - ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit.

Describe briefly, in about 50 words, the attributes required of a leader of a Distance Education Institution facing considerable problems from stagnation, competition and consequent demoralization among teachers and students.

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2.7 LET US SUM UP

Change, as we said earlier, is the essence of all challenges in the new millennium. Our education systems need change, rethinking and reengineering. As we have said repeatedly, education systems are generally very conservative and are seldom excited about making changes. Be they their structures, patterns of governance, curricula and examinations, educators and administrators are not easily persuaded to consider and make changes in their methods, practices and styles of teaching, learning or running of institutions. Resistance is the major issue that one encounters in the implementation of changes in education. In overcoming this resistance and facilitating the change process there has always to be an initiator behind the effort.

In this unit, we have dealt with all major issues relating to resistance with relevant examples wherever needed. We also discussed the roles and responsibilities of change agents. The implementation of change is itself a complex process and requires a great deal of attention. We hope all educators will recognize the

importance and need for change and will dedicate themselves to the task of reforms in the education system and to the creation of unlimited opportunities for all people. On this optimistic note, we would like to end the unit.

2.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

The most likely factor that can affect change in distance education institutions is psychological. The main reason for this is that personnel involved in a distance education institution belong to a variety of backgrounds: teachers, computer professionals, media persons, academics, support staff etc. Implementing any change in an organization with such a complex mix of key personnel is not going to be easy because there is likely to be lack of appreciation of the role of each category, leading to mistrust, and possible conflict, among themselves and between them and the management.

Check Your Progress 2

A change agent who looks at resistance in a positive way can turn it to advantage in many ways. For example, the change agent i) can use it as a source of information on likely hurdles which can come in the way of implementation of change, ii) based on this information, can plan, design and manage the change processes for smooth execution, and iii) in the absence of any resistance surfacing, the change agent/management would not be aware of potential impediments to change after it has gone a long way with change. Resistance also gives expressions to the expectations of the employees/beneficiaries from change, and also the likely negative impact on them.

Check Your Progress 3

As head of the institution I would take the following two major measures to implement change which is likely to lead to large scale disturbances/dislocations in the institution: (i) Involving employees at all levels in the discussion on the subject of change to be implemented, conveying my plan and accepting their constructive suggestions so that together, we arrive at an agreement on implementation; (ii) preparing a detailed plan for implementation of change in a phased manner and develop a manner implementing change of such magnitude in phases, in such a way that the impact of change is not sudden disturbances, but a gradual and smooth transition.

Check Your Progress 4

The major steps identified by Greiner are: (i) Acceptance of change as a response to pressure from within or outside; (ii) Intervention by a newcomer, possibly a consultant, who can assess the organizational needs and persuade the top management to rethink their practices and procedures; (iii) diagnosis of the problems and identification of their causes jointly with the stakeholders; (iv) finding effective solutions through a shared approach that will secure full commitment and support in implementation; (v) assessment and evaluation of change through reality checks; and (vi) reinforcement of the impact of change through rewards and encouragement to those who support change.

Check Your Progress 5

A change agent is the catalyst that effectively manages the change process; in order to perform this role, he/she should be able to persuade/convince the client system to accept the importance of the need for change; identify the

problems jointly with the client system and search for their solutions in consultation with the stakeholders; prepare a blueprint for action and develop a strategy for its implementation; facilitate the change process and withdraw from the scene when the success of the process is established. The skills required to perform these roles include empathy with the client system, competence in collaborative efforts, ability to structure and organize a change plan, receptivity to ideas and suggestions, ability to focus on the issues at hand and synergy with the people involved in the change processes.

Check Your Progress 6

There could be several reasons for a Distance Education Institution to stagnate and feel demoralized. When enrolment shrinks, and public confidence declines, it is time for the institution to sit up and think. As the Head of the Institution, I would engage the faculty, professionals and staff in brainstorming the following critical issues: (i) Programs and courses: Are they revised and updated, are they relevant to contemporary needs, do they offer the knowledge and skills that help students in the job market? If the answers are not positive, establish a consensus to review the programs and courses and introduce those that have a market; (ii) Undertake a similar review of the learner support systems and introduce changes that attract students and retain them on their chosen programs; (iii) Consider what technological innovations can be introduced, given the resources and ease with which students can access them to make teaching and learning more effective; and (iv) establish creative cooperation, collaboration and networking with other institutions regain the lost ground and move forward.

2.9 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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