

Stages in Managing Change in HE

Phase one - creating the climate

- break into the familiar habits of current practice
- create a climate of expectation about the likelihood of and need for change.
 - internally initiated
 - brought about by external pressures
 - the result of positive or negative forces:-
 - external threats and imperatives (quality assessment of teaching; quality audit; professional accreditation; research assessment)
 - internal opportunities (the need to mount a new course or the arrival of a new academic leader).
- prepare the ground for discussion and action towards the desired or necessary change.
 - management intervention (announcing that staff appraisal will take place, for example)
 - by a general raising of awareness (through newsletters, common room discussions, team meetings etc).
- management strategies at this preparatory stage include:
 - identifying and interpreting the range of perceptions and emotions about change (both specific to the change in question and generally about the idea of change);
 - identifying sources and causes of resistance; analysing potential gains and losses, and potential winners and losers;
 - offering explanations and a rationale for change to individuals and groups (in educational, personal and professional terms as well as in economic or managerial terms);
 - and providing texts, data or other stimuli which support the case for change (for example, comparative statistics, circulation of individual research plans or research outcomes, graduate or employer feedback, external examiners' reports, external conferences).
- Note, the problem which is being addressed may not yet be clear or the direction of change not yet obvious.
- benefits of wide consultation among staff in order to gain agreement about the nature of the problem and the range of possible options for change.
- By taking time to define the problem, the range of possible solutions can be narrowed.
- development of a 'vision' or some picture of the looked-for future state. This can serve as a beacon to light the way, as a means of generating initial commitment, as a sign-post to outside interests and as a way of monitoring progress.

Phase two - establishing frameworks and structures

- change may involve creating new structures,
 - for example, a working party or task force (to prepare for modularisation or semesterisation),
 - a new committee (establishing a research or a teaching and learning committee)
 - or a new post (Dean or Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Quality Assurance). Note the importance of choosing an interested, respected and expert individual with a high institutional or departmental profile.

- Systems and procedures may need to be altered or developed,
 - for example, in relation to guidelines and codes of practice,
 - new time tabling or
 - control of curriculum hours,
 - altered reporting lines
 - altered timing of report-backs,
 - establishing new IT systems.
- Key individuals or groups to be involved in the change process will need to be identified, consulted and briefed,
 - i.e., both those who will undertake aspects of the task and those who will be supportive and persuasive about the change (for example, negotiating support from the Dean, gaining the sanction of Senate, locating staff who recognise and 'own' the problem, creating research mentors).
- likely to involve clarifying expectations, constraints, roles and boundaries,
 - for example, assessing what is desirable, possible and deliverable within a budget, a time scale and with existing personnel.
- The expectations of different constituencies may be different and will need to be addressed,
 - for example, full-time and part-time staff,
 - students,
 - the Registry,
 - the senior management.
- Responsibility for detailed planning may need to be delegated and management accountability established.
 - establishing a direction and key targets as well as a framework for action, but then allowing discretion and flexibility over the details of implementation.
 - guidelines for action and of clarifying institutional, departmental and individual expectations and needs.
 - identifying a set of principles or drafting a set of conventions as a framework for action and again, offering discretion over the detail.
 - provide examples of what 'success' or the outcomes of change may look like.

Phase three - developing support and aligning people

- The need to gain support, to manage expectations and to negotiate over resources and time scales
- Senior staff are an important constituency, but so too are the unions, learning support and technical staff, and students.
- It is often necessary to develop different coalitions of interests and to provide widespread and varied opportunities for participation and consultation in shaping the agenda.
- Those who must implement the change will need to have placed their mark on it if ownership and commitment to it are to be achieved.
- using a variety of mechanisms to develop support for change and for neutralising resistance.
 - structural, establishing teams or focus groups,
 - using staff meetings for debate and discussion,
 - identifying mentors to assist in building research, holding an 'away-day'
 - provision of further information,

- examples of success and feedback about the progress of change (for example, student feedback data; initial outcomes of changes in course design).
- The idea of 'planning small wins', or developing a series of intermediate targets where success can be achieved quickly and visibly, may be useful.
- 'psychological' mechanisms,
 - different forms of encouragement and persuasion (positive reinforcement):
 - creating benefits for individuals and groups (eg, economies of scale through collaboration/merger);
 - making it more convenient to conform than to go one's own way;
 - having individual meetings with staff to discuss changes in work patterns;
 - seeking help from individuals/ groups to deal with the problem or issue;
 - offering incentives (e.g., release of time; financial gain - proportions of overheads kept by grant holders);
 - bargaining (e.g., establishing contracts between academic staff and secretaries for the delivery of examination questions);
 - leading by example among those with seniority and influence;
 - appealing to academic professionalism.
 - All these examples point to the need to develop a critical mass of opinion in support of change.
- negative reinforcement tactics
 - using threats (potential penalties arising from quality assessment of teaching, external examiners' reports, loss of professional accreditation);
 - the potential of increased central monitoring;
 - analysing budget use or time use to highlight disparities and inequities;
 - increased pressure to conform (including fining offenders);
 - appealing to rules and regulations (including 'notes on file').
- In practice, the range of approaches used is likely to vary depending on the individuals concerned, the degree of resistance involved, the scale of change and the timescale for implementation.
 - take account of individuals' feelings, reactions, perceptions, attitudes, and values.
 - be aware of the range of experiences of loss that may be evident in individual responses to change, for example, in terms of security, competence, relationships, sense of direction and meaning, territory, status or power. Nostalgia for a golden past (mythical or not) can exert a powerful influence on perceptions and behaviour.
 - the process of managing change can be divided into stages,
 - individual responses to change may occur in phases, from denial through resistance, to exploration, testing and commitment. *To reach the latter stages, individual self-esteem needs to be built up. The creation of a 'can do' environment and sense of capability has to be established first.*

Phase four - building towards implementation

- new policies, procedures and systems will need to be codified,
- staff development may need to be put in train,
- formal endorsement of the changes will need to be sought.
 - note the importance of providing feedback about outstanding issues and about actions taken, incorporating good ideas, disseminating results and good practice, and demonstrating responsiveness. This is particularly important at the boundaries between

levels of management, so that effective links between levels can be maintained. A change at one level is likely to have implications for changes elsewhere in the institution and there will inevitably be certain matters that can only be resolved at another level.

- Public recognition or other rewards for those involved in spearheading or supporting change may be appropriate.
- measure and evaluate progress towards the initial vision (or a changed one)
- For a transition phase case, where the old and the new must run in parallel, it is important to recognise both existing and new contributions and contributors.