



The Evolution of Strategies for Educational Change: Implications for Higher Education

David Hopkins

Abstract

The purpose of this review is to trace the evolution of strategies for educational change and to explore their implications for higher education. This is done in six ways. First, there is a brief description of how the research and practice on organisation development and its strategies and methods began to be applied to education. Secondly, there is an account of the way in which strategies for school improvement developed in light of increased levels of accountability and centralised change in the mid eighties and early nineties. Third, an analysis of the concept of educational change is provided; and this is followed fourthly by an account of the perceived failure of recent centralised educational reform initiatives. The analysis in these four sections lays the basis for the articulation in the fifth, of a more comprehensive framework for school improvement. In the sixth section the contribution of 'networking' to educational change is discussed. In the final section of the review the organisational character of higher education is briefly described and a series of principles for change and development in higher education that derive from the previous analysis are identified.

Key Words

- ⇒ Organisation Development
- ⇒ Planned Educational Change
- ⇒ Institutional Review and Self-evaluation
- ⇒ Strategies for School Improvement
- ⇒ Change in Higher Education.

About the author

David Hopkins prepared this review while he was Professor of Education at the University of Nottingham, where between 1996 and 2002 he served as both Head of the School and Dean of the Faculty of Education. During this time he was also Chair of the Leicester City Partnership Board and a member of the Governing Council of the National College for School Leadership. In February 2002, David Hopkins was appointed Director of the Standards and Effectiveness Unit at the Department for Education and Skills and Chief Adviser to the Secretary of State on School Standards.

Organisation Development and Educational Change

One can trace the development of organisation development (OD) back to the social psychological writings and practice of Kurt Lewin (1947). His emphasis on the influence of the organisation on the behaviour of its members, and the popularisation of 'action research' as *the* research methodology for social action and emancipation, lay the basis for contemporary strategies for educational change.

In the sixties it was Matthew Miles whose seminal paper on 'organisational health' advocated the adaptation of OD techniques to schools. Miles was one of the first commentators to articulate the dynamic between the organisational condition of schools and the quality of education they provide. This insight lays the foundation for much contemporary work in the area of educational change, school effectiveness and school improvement. In the paper Miles (1975:231) describes organisational health as:

a set of fairly durable second-order system properties, which tend to transcend short-run effectiveness. A healthy organisation in this sense not only survives in its environment, but also continues to cope adequately over the long haul, and continuously develops and extends its surviving and coping abilities.

Miles describes ten dimensions of organisational health. His first three dimensions are relatively 'tasky' and deal with goals, the transmission of information, and the way in which decisions are made. His second group of three dimensions relate to the internal state of the organisation and with maintenance needs: more specifically the effective use of resources, cohesiveness and morale. His final set of dimensions are concerned with the organisations ability to deal with growth and change - notions of innovativeness, autonomy, adaptation *vis-à-vis* the environment, and problem solving.

When Miles subsequently analysed schools as organisations against these criteria he diagnosed them as being seriously ill! His analysis presaged subsequent descriptions of the pathology of schools as organisations such as Weick's (1976) characterisation of them as 'loosely coupled' systems.

Miles then described a series of strategies designed to induce a greater degree of organisational health such as team training, survey feedback, role workshops, target setting, diagnosis and problem solving, and organisational experiment. Some of these strategies may have an anachronistic ring to them by today's standards, but there are a number of common themes flowing through all of them that have a more contemporary flavour. These are for example, self study or review, the promotion of networking, increased communication, culture as a focus for change, the use of temporary systems, and the importance of external support.

Of the various OD strategies described in the research literature, survey or data feedback was 'the only treatment associated with substantial improvement' (Bowers 1973:21). When used in the educational context, most OD advocates suggest the use of a survey feedback (SF), problem solving (PS) and collective decision (CD) making design. The links between survey feedback as an OD methodology and the evolving educational strategy of institutional self-review are clear to see.

The publication of OD in Schools (Schmuck & Miles 1971) was the first mature expression of the impact of OD in education. In a later 'State of the Art' paper, Fullan et al. (1980) concluded that OD in schools had 'diffused to a larger extent than we and others had realised'. An example of a well-developed approach to institutional self-renewal based on OD techniques is found in the Handbook of Organizational Development in Schools (Schmuck and Runkel 1985). This work also served to provide insights into what constitutes the school's capacity for problem solving. According to Schmuck (1984:29) it is reflected in a series of meta-skills - systematic diagnosis, searching for information and resources, mobilising collaborative action, 'synergy', and the staff's ability to evaluate how effectively the previous meta-skills were implemented.

Running parallel to the specific application and development of OD techniques was the beginning of widespread research into, and understanding of, the change process and the school as an organisation. The OECD-CERI project 'Case Studies of Educational Innovation' (Dalín 1973), and the Rand Corporation 'Change Agent' study (Berman and McLaughlin 1977) for example, highlighted the limitations of externally imposed changes, the importance of focussing on the school as the unit of change, and the need to take the change process seriously. Similarly, the research on schools as

organisations, of which Sarason's (1982) *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change* is an outstanding example, demonstrated the importance of linking curriculum innovation to organisational change.

Two implications for managing change in Higher Education can be drawn from this brief analysis.

- First, OD approaches emphasise the importance of organisational health as a determinant of effectiveness.
- Second and consequently, any change intervention should be based on an approach that attempts to 'humanise' the organisational context within which lecturers and students live.

Strategies for School Improvement and Restructuring

There was a marked change in the character of school renewal efforts in the late seventies and early eighties. Three influences accounted for this change in emphasis (Hopkins 1994):

- First was an increase in demands for school accountability. In the United Kingdom, for example, the reaction to the pressure for accountability took the form of a variety of local education authority (LEA) schemes for school self evaluation.
- Second was the increased emphasis in the early eighties on school leader development. School self evaluation was at that time regarded as one of the few strategies available to school leaders for introducing innovation and 'renewing' the organisation of the school.
- Third was the international trend towards whole scale national educational reform that began in the eighties. School self evaluation or school based review (SBR) was seen by many as a strategy for implementing external change.

Cutting across these influences was the common denominator of school self-evaluation. At this time it was viewed as one of the few improvement strategies that could not only strengthen the capacity of the school to develop or renew itself, but also provide evidence for accountability purposes and a structure for managing the change process. The OECD International School Improvement Project (ISIP), in particular, took a leading role in conceptualising and disseminating examples of various schemes for school based review (see Chapter Four and Bollen & Hopkins 1987, Hopkins 1987, 1988).

By the mid-eighties the amount of change expected of schools was increasing dramatically. This increase in expectations was also accompanied by fundamental changes in the way schools were managed and governed. Although this went by different names in different countries - self managing schools, site based management, development planning, local management of schools, restructuring - the key idea of giving schools more responsibility for their own management remained similar. The common aspiration of these initiatives was the 'renewed' or 'self managing' school. Although self-evaluation was still seen as a major strategy for achieving this goal, it was now regarded not as simply the initial stage in a cycle, but was spread throughout the process as an integral part of a systemic change strategy.

This review of the development of strategies for school improvement has emphasised its origins in survey feedback strategies for organisation development. It soon became evident that self-evaluation is necessary but not sufficient as the initial step in a cycle, and should re-occur, often in different forms, throughout the process. The experience with centralised change from the mid-eighties onwards, also illustrated that simply devolving budgets, broadening the governance of schools or engaging in planning is no guarantee of authentic school improvement. To be successful, models for school management and development need to achieve fundamental and lasting organisational change. This is the legacy of Lewin's influence. As he pointed out half a century ago, strategies are needed that not only involve cycles of research and action, but also directly address the organisational culture of the school.

The experience of school improvement in the nineteen eighties suggest two further implications for change management in Higher Education.

- The first is the importance of institutional self-review as a major strategy for managing the change process and institutional renewal.
- The second is that there are three commonly agreed aspects to restructuring (see for example, Elmore 1990):
 - changing the way teaching and learning occurs
 - changing the organisation and internal features of the organisation - the so called 'workplace conditions'
 - changing the distribution of power between the organisation and its clients.

A Perspective on Educational Change

The amount of change expected of educational organisations has increased exponentially over the past fifteen years. Yet even this situation is beginning to change. Change is now endemic, it is becoming all pervasive, and unfortunately traditional responses are no longer coping with the situation. The basic problem is that, as Fullan and Miles (1992: 745) point out, our maps of change are faulty. What is required are radically different ways of looking at, responding to, and managing change. New mind sets and lines of action are required to enable survival, and to have a chance of progressing under these complex, less than helpful conditions. The purpose of this section of the review is to provide a perspective on the nature of educational change. The treatment will inevitably be brief, and more detailed discussions are found elsewhere (see for example: Fullan 2001; Hargreaves et al 1998; Hopkins 2001; Joyce et al 1999).

The meaning of educational change

Those innovations or adaptations of practice that intervene in, or modify, the learning process achieves the greatest impact on student progress. Changes in curriculum, teaching methods, grouping practices, and assessment procedures have the greatest potential to enhance the performance of students, and so should provide the key focus for school improvement efforts.

Unfortunately the implementation of those changes that positively affect the learning of students is very difficult to achieve. Educational changes that directly impact on the learning of students usually involve teachers in not only adopting new or additional teaching materials, but also in (Fullan 1991):

- acquiring new **knowledge**
- adopting new **behaviours** (e.g. modifying teaching styles)
- and, sometimes, in modifying their **beliefs or values**.

It is exactly because change is a process whereby individuals need to “alter their ways of thinking and doing” that most changes fail to progress beyond early implementation. It is this phenomenon that Fullan (2001) has graphically referred to as “the implementation dip”. The “implementation dip” incorporates that constellation of factors that creates the sense of anxiety and those feelings of incompetence so often associated with re-learning and meaningful change. This is the phase of dissonance, of 'internal turbulence', that is as predictable as it is at the same time uncomfortable. Many research studies have found however that without a period of de-stabilisation, successful, long lasting change is unlikely to occur (Huberman and Miles 1984).

The three stages of the change process

Besides understanding the change process, educators also need to become more skilled in its use. As Miles (1986) and Fullan (2001) have demonstrated, the change process consists of a series of three overlapping phases: initiation, implementation, and institutionalisation.

1. **Initiation** is about deciding to embark on innovation, and of developing commitment towards the process. The key activities in the initiation phase are the decision to start, and a review of the school's current state as regards the particular change. Matthew Miles (1986) made an analysis of the various stages of school improvement: this is a list of factors that make for successful initiation:
 - the innovation should be tied to a local agenda and high profile local need
 - a clear, well-structured approach to change
 - an active advocate or champion who understands the innovation and support it
 - active initiation to start the innovation (top down is OK under certain conditions)
 - good quality innovation

2. **Implementation** is the phase of the process that has received the most attention. It is the phase of attempted use of the innovation. The key activities occurring during implementation are the carrying out of action plans, the developing and sustaining of commitment, the checking of progress and overcoming problems. The key factors making for success at this stage, according to Miles (1986), are:
 - clear responsibility for orchestration/co-ordination.
 - shared control over implementation (top down NOT OK); good cross-hierarchical work and relations; empowerment of both individuals and the institution.
 - mix of pressure, insistence on 'doing it right', and support.
 - adequate and sustained staff development and in-service.
 - rewards for participants early in the process.

3. **Institutionalisation** is the phase when innovation and change stop being regarded as something new and become part of the usual way of doing things. The move from implementation to institutionalisation often involves the transformation of a pilot project, to an organisation wide initiative, often without the advantage of the previously available funding. Key activities at this stage according to Miles (1986) are:
 - an emphasis on 'embedding' the change within the institution's structures, its organisation and resources
 - the elimination of competing or contradictory practices
 - strong and purposeful links to other change efforts, the curriculum and classroom teaching
 - widespread use
 - an adequate bank of local facilitators, for skills training.

Many change efforts fail to progress beyond early implementation because those involved do not realise that each of these phases have different characteristics and require different strategies for success to be achieved.

On the difficulty of managing multiple changes in times of change

Michael Fullan has over the years been at the cutting edge of thinking about educational change. His most recent work, in particular the Change Forces Trilogy, has reflected on the dialectic between rationality and chaos. The tension between top down versus bottom up change in a situation where change is multi-dimensional and pervasive, was a major theme in the first volume, Change Forces. In this book, Fullan identified 'eight basic lessons of the new paradigm of change' (Fullan 1993:21-22). As Fullan warns however, each lesson is something of a paradox (which should be no surprise), and they should be regarded as a complete set, each benefiting from the wisdom of the other seven.

Figure 1: Eight basic lessons of the new paradigm of change (Fullan 1993)

Lesson One:	You Can't Mandate What Matters (The more complex the change the less you can force it)
Lesson Two:	Change is a Journey not a Blueprint (Change is non-linear, loaded with uncertainty and excitement and sometimes perverse)
Lesson Three:	Problems are Our Friends (Problems are inevitable and you can't learn without them)
Lesson Four:	Vision and Strategic Planning Come Later (Premature visions and planning blind)
Lesson Five:	Individualism and Collectivism Must Have Equal Power (There are no one-sided solutions to isolation and group-think)
Lesson Six:	Neither Centralization Nor Decentralization Works (Both top-down and bottom-up strategies are necessary).
Lesson Seven:	Connection with the Wider Environment is Critical for Success (The best organizations learn externally as well as internally)
Lesson Eight:	Every Person is a Change Agent (Change is too important to leave to the experts, personal mind set and mastery is the ultimate protection)

In many educational systems much of what currently goes on under the label of 'school improvement' is not consistent with the principles and strategies outlined above. For a variety of reasons, many school improvement approaches are little more than a quick fix and expedient response to the demands for change and the setting of targets by external agencies. This is not to excuse teachers, school leaders, and governors from adopting a more authentic position, for, as has been seen, there is much they can do to improve the quality of education without reference to outside agencies. It is to argue however, that the policy context plays an important role in setting the educational agenda, and determining whether school improvement will be successful or not. It is for this reason that the following section of the review focuses on the policy context for school improvement.

The key message from this discussion is that if classroom practice is to be affected then teachers' behaviours and practices as well as their beliefs and understandings need to be addressed. As Fullan (1991:32) reminds us, real change, "whether desired or not, represents a serious personal and collective experience characterised by ambivalence and uncertainty" for the individual involved.

There are a number of implications for managing change in Higher Education that stem from this (adapted from Fullan, 1985:396):

- change takes place over time;
- change initially involves anxiety and uncertainty;
- technical and psychological support is crucial;
- the learning of new skills is incremental and developmental;
- organisational conditions within and in relation to the institution make it more or less likely that improvement will occur;
- successful change involves pressure and support within a collaborative setting.

The Failure of 'Performance Based' Approaches to Large-scale Reform

There is a central irony when considering the impact of educational policy on practice and that inhibits policy initiatives from realising their aspirations. At the time when the community of educational change researchers and practitioners has finally begun to learn something about how ongoing improvement can be fostered and sustained in schools, government policy on education has not taken adequate account of this knowledge about school development. As a consequence, an important source of synergy has been lost and student learning continues to lag behind its potential. In this section, further evidence is cited to support the contention, that in order for government policies to have the desired effect of enhancing outcomes for all students these policies must embrace the implications from the research on educational change and school improvement.

Leithwood and his colleagues (1999) have reviewed the impact of a number of 'performance based' approaches to large-scale reform. They identify seven specific properties of 'performance based' approaches to reform (Leithwood et al 1999:8):

1. A centrally determined, unifying vision and explicit goals for student performance based on the vision
2. Curriculum frameworks and related materials for use in accomplishing the goals set for students
3. Standards for judging the quality or degree of success of all students
4. Coherent, well integrated policies that reinforce these ambitious standards
5. Information about the organisation's (especially the students') performance
6. A system of finance and governance that devolves to the local school site responsibility for producing improvements in system and student performance
7. An agent that receives information on organisational performance, judges the extent to which standards have been met, and distributes rewards and sanctions, with significant consequences to the organisation for its success or failure in meeting specified standards.

This approach to centralised educational change has become widespread over the past ten years. The Leithwood review examines in a comparative manner, five cases of performance-based reform that are well known and have been widely documented – Kentucky, California, New Zealand, Victoria (Australia), and Chicago. On the basis of this review two striking conclusions are reached:

- The first is that on the available evidence there was no increase in student achievement in any case except Chicago, and even that was "slow in coming" (Leithwood et al 1999:40).
- The second is the "the disappointing contribution that performance-base reforms have made to improving the core technology of schooling" (Leithwood et al 1999:61-63). In particular these reforms did not:

adequately acknowledge local context
take the school site seriously
find incentives that work
contribute to significant increases in professional capacity
address and diagnose opportunity costs.

The analysis of 'performance based' approaches and the school district examples are entirely consistent with previous research on the implementation of large-scale reform efforts (Fullan 2000). As we have seen, evidence from the United States of major multi-site research studies such as the DESSI study (see Crandall et al 1982, 1986), and the analysis of a range of restructuring programmes during the 1990s by Stringfield and his colleagues (1996), all point to the same conclusion. Unless central reforms address the context of teaching and learning, as well as capacity building at the school level, within the context of external support, then the aspirations of reform will never be realised.

Although the impact of large-scale reform on student achievement is notoriously fickle, the fact that these reform strategies neglected to focus on instruction and capacity building must have contributed

to their inability to impact positively on student achievement. This research contains two key lessons for the management of change in Higher Education:

- First, although policy needs to support decentralisation, this should be accompanied by systems of rigorous accountability
- There should be a focus on local capacity building and the stimulation of innovation.

A Framework for School Improvement

Our own research on the relationship between student learning, classroom practices and school organisation has occurred within the context of the collaborative IQEA school improvement project (Hopkins 2002). The IQEA research has demonstrated that without an equal focus on the development capacity, or internal conditions of the school, innovative work quickly becomes marginalised. From our experience within the IQEA project we have begun to associate a number of 'conditions' in the school with their capacity for sustained improvement. Conditions are the internal features of the school – the 'arrangements' that enable it to get work done. They have to be worked on at the same time as the curriculum or other priorities the school has set itself. These provide us with a working definition of the development capacity of the 'powerful school'.

At present, our best estimate of those conditions that underpin school improvement efforts, and so therefore represent the key management arrangements, can be broadly stated as:

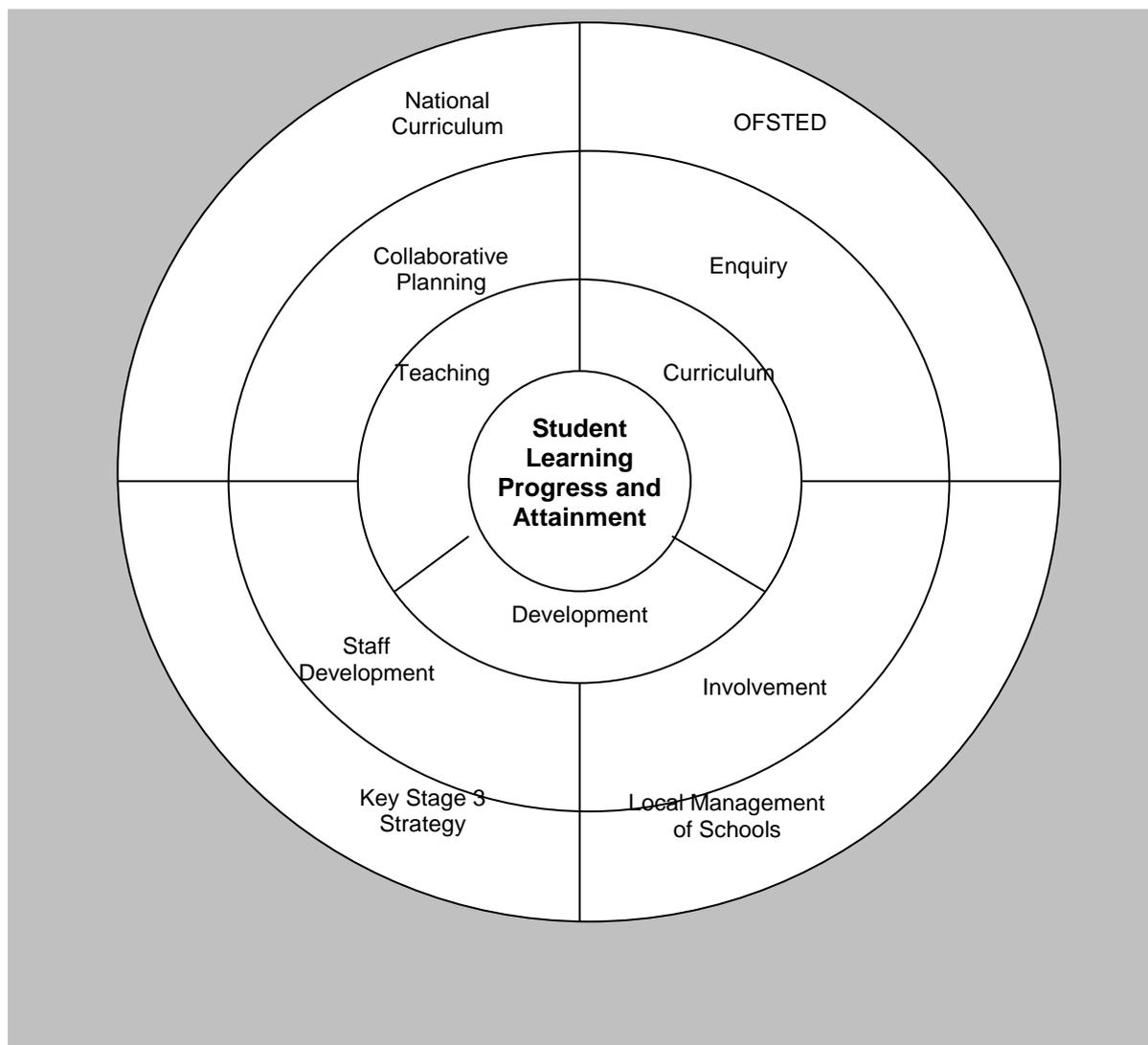
- a commitment to staff development
- practical efforts to ensure the involvement of staff, students and the community in school policies and decisions
- 'instructional' leadership approaches
- effective co-ordination strategies
- attention to the potential benefits of enquiry and reflection
- a commitment to collaborative planning.

One way of expressing this conceptualisation of school improvement is with the image of a series of concentric rings, as in Figure 2.

In the centre is powerful learning – the achievement and progress of students. The next ring is comprised of the essential ingredients of powerful teaching – the 'holy trinity' of teaching strategy, curriculum content and the learning needs of students. Powerful learning and powerful teaching are found in powerful schools; that is schools that have organisational conditions supportive of high levels of teaching and learning. Some of the key elements of these conditions are found in the next ring – collaborative planning that focuses on student outcomes, staff development that is committed to the improvement of classroom practice, regular enquiry and reflection, and the involvement of students in their own learning. In today's educational systems, all of this activity normally takes place within the context of a centralised reform agenda – the outer ring.

When all the circles are pulling in the same direction, then the aspirations of school improvement have much more chance of success. All need to exist in a reciprocal relationship if student attainment is to be enhanced. Unfortunately many teachers and schools feel that change comes from the 'outside – in'; that their role is to implement externally imposed initiatives over which they have little control.

Figure 2: A Framework for School Improvement



A more productive approach to school improvement is to start from the centre of the circle and move outwards. Those schools that appear to be more successful than most at managing school improvement begin at the other end of the sequence - with student learning goals. It is as if they ask, "what changes in student performance do we wish to see this year?" Having decided these, they then discuss what teaching strategies will be most effective at bringing this about, and reflect on what modifications are required to the organisation of the school to support these developments. Finally they survey the range of initiatives confronting the school to see which they can most usefully link with in the effort to adapt external change for internal purpose. Interestingly, it is these schools that appear to be the most effective at interpreting the centralised reform agenda.

This framework for school improvement includes 'human capital', i.e., the skills of individuals, as well as the 'social capital', i.e., the 'professional learning communities'. In other words, the skills of individuals can only be realised if the relationships within the schools are continually developing. The other key aspect of the framework is programme coherence. This is the extent to which the school's programmes for student and staff learning are co-ordinated, focussed on clear learning goals and sustained over a period of time. In this sense, the most effective schools are not those that take on the most innovations, but those that selectively take on, integrate and co-ordinate innovations into their own focussed programmes.

The implication of this framework for Higher Education is that there are four core components of organisational capacity:

1. The knowledge, skills and dispositions of individual lecturers
2. A professional learning community in which lecturers work collaboratively to set clear goals for student learning, assess how well students are doing, develop action plans to increase student achievement, whilst being engaged in inquiry and problem-solving
3. Programme coherence – the extent to which the institution's programmes for student and staff learning are co-ordinated, focussed on clear learning goals and sustained over a period of time
4. Technical resources – high quality curriculum, instructional material, assessment instruments, technology, workspace, etc.

The Role of Networks in Supporting Educational Change

As has been alluded to in earlier sections, in order to achieve system wide reform, the building of local capacity is as important as a coherent national policy. Key elements of building local capacity are often in existence but not well connected with each other, nor are they linked to a capacity-building agenda. As a consequence, there has recently been much international interest in the role of networks in supporting school improvement (e.g. OECD 1999).

There are however various interpretations of the network concept. Although networks bring together those with like minded interests, they are more than just opportunities to share 'good practice'. The following definition of networks emerged from an analysis of effective networks identified by the OECD (quotation and discussion in this section based on Hopkins 2001 chapter 10):

Networks are purposeful social entities characterised by a commitment to quality, rigour, and a focus on outcomes. They are also an effective means of supporting innovation in times of change. In education, networks promote the dissemination of good practice, enhance the professional development of teachers, support capacity building in schools, mediate between centralised and decentralised structures, and assist in the process of re-structuring and re-culturing educational organisations and systems.

The qualities exhibited by such networks are however not easily acquired. A number of key conditions need to be in place if networks are to realise their potential as agents of educational innovation. In terms of school improvement, a number of conditions for effective networks can be identified:

- **Consistency of values and focus** – it is important that networks have a common aim and purpose, and that the values underpinning the network are well articulated and 'owned' by those involved. This consistency of values and purpose also relates to the need for the focus of the network to be consistent with the overarching policy framework.
- **Clarity of structure** – effective networks are well organised with clear operating procedures and mechanisms for ensuring that maximum participation is achieved within and between schools. These structures promote involvement that is broad based, preferably with a whole organisation or systemic focus, rather than being narrow, limiting or particular.
- **Knowledge creation, utilisation and transfer** – the key purpose of networks is to create and disseminate knowledge to support educational improvement and innovation. Such knowledge and practice needs to be based on evidence, focus on the core features of schooling, and are subject to robust quality assurance procedures.
- **Rewards related to learning** – those who belong to networks need to feel that their involvement is worthwhile. Rewards for networking are best related to supporting professional development and the encouraging of learning. Effective networks invest in people.
- **Dispersed leadership and empowerment** – highly effective networks contain skilful people who collaborate and work well together. The skills required by network members are similar to the skill sets associated with effective teams and include a focus on dispersed leadership and empowerment.
- **Adequate resources** – networks need to be adequately resourced particularly in terms of time, finance and human capital. It is not necessarily the quantum of resource that is important, more crucially there needs to be flexibility in the way in which it is deployed.

In line with the argument of this review, networks in education have a key role to play in supporting innovation and institutional development. Accordingly, networks need to be regarded as support structures for innovative institutions, not only in disseminating 'good practice', but also in overcoming the traditional isolation of educational organisations, and to a certain extent even challenging traditional hierarchical system structures. Networks can provide a means of facilitating innovation and change by promoting different forms of collaboration, linkages, and multi-functional partnerships. In this respect the Network enables stakeholders to make connections and to synergise activities around common priorities.

To summarise, Networks have the potential to support innovation and change in Higher Education by:

- Providing a focal point for the dissemination of good practice, the generalisability of innovation and the creation of 'action oriented' knowledge about effective educational practices.
- Keeping the focus on the core purposes of education particular in creating and sustaining a discourse on teaching and learning.
- Enhancing the skill of lecturers and other educators in change agent skills and managing the change process.
- Building capacity for continuous improvement at the local level, and in particular in creating professional learning communities, within and between institutions.
- Ensuring that systems of pressure and support are integrated not segmented. For example, professional learning communities incorporate pressure and support in a seamless way.
- Acting as a link between the centralised and decentralised schism resulting from many contemporary policy initiatives. In particular in contributing to policy coherence horizontally and vertically.

Implications for Managing Change in Higher Education

As is evident from this review, collectively we now know enough about the theory and practice of educational change to successfully improve schools. Those engaged in such school improvement efforts do not just intervene in schools to carry through a particular change strategy; they are also collaboratively researching the process in order to create new knowledge about schools, the change process, and their own practice. More importantly they are increasing the capacity of the school, the heads, teachers and students, to manage their own improvement process.

It is also apparent from the review, that despite the differences in contexts and clients, the educational challenges facing educational organisations across sectors and their solutions remain very much the same. Raising levels of attainment, enhancing the learning repertoires of students and the creation of powerful learning experiences are educational challenges that are independent of the age of students or the nature of the curriculum. So too is the need to prepare and sustain effective and innovative teachers and lecturers, to establish the organisational conditions that support ongoing as well as developmental activities, and to create administrative and support settings locally, regionally and nationally that sustain development and effectiveness at the various levels within the system. Despite the wide variation in setting the response is remarkably similar. Effective teaching and learning is not, it appears, culturally bounded, nor are the organisational settings within which they occur.

There are however some significant differences in scale and organisational structure and culture that differentiate schools from higher education. In particular higher education organisations in terms of Weick's (1976) analysis are potentially far more 'loosely coupled' than schools. Our own research on higher education, in particular Faculties of Education, suggest that as organisations they have traditionally lacked goal focus, are pluralistic, prize individual autonomy and have horizontal decision making processes and authority structures (Hopkins 1984). In addition consensus is difficult to achieve in spite of a superficially friendly work culture. This is because the norm of autonomy precludes, in a majority of cases, communication at anything but a social level. Given this diagnosis what is required are strategies that 'tighten the loose coupling.' Our research on change in Higher Education found that change strategies such as survey feedback and institutional self review showed some promise in confronting and ameliorating these organisational pathologies (Hopkins et al 1984).

This analysis of the organisational culture of Higher Education suggests that strategies for planned change in higher education need to be informed by the implications identified in the previous sections of this review. Taken together, the following principles provide a framework for organisational change in higher education based upon the approach to school improvement taken in this review. That the principles share a high degree of intellectual coherence is also not serendipitous; as has been seen from this review all of the principles are empirically based (adapted from Hopkins 2001 Chapter 2).

In general therefore improvement programmes in higher education should be:

Achievement focussed – they focus on enhancing student learning and achievement, in a broader sense than mere examination results or test scores

Empowering in aspiration – they intend to provide those involved in the change process with the skills of learning and 'change agency' that will raise levels of expectation and confidence throughout the educational community

Research based and theory rich – they base their strategies on programmes and programme elements that have an established track record of effectiveness, that research their own effectiveness and connect to and build on other bodies of knowledge and disciplines

Context specific – they pay attention to the unique features of the educational organisation and build strategies on the basis of an analysis of that particular context

Capacity building in nature – they aim to build the organisational conditions that support continuous improvement

Inquiry driven – they appreciate that reflection-in-action is an integral and self sustaining process

Implementation oriented – they take a direct focus on the quality of instructional practice and student learning

Interventionist and strategic – they are purposely designed to improve the current situation in the educational organisation or system and take a medium term view of the management of change, and plan and prioritise developments accordingly

Externally supported – they build agencies around the educational organisation that provide focussed support, and create and facilitate networks that disseminate and sustain ‘good practice’;

Systemic – they accept the reality of a centralised policy context, but also realise the need to adapt external change for internal purpose, and to exploit the creativity and synergies existing within the system.

Although the principles are based on the analysis of research reviewed for this paper, even the most successful improvement efforts will not necessarily embody all of the principles, and there will be inevitable variation within the principles as well. In particular it is important to realise that most approaches to educational change are insufficiently differentiated to allow institutions to choose or adapt strategies to fit their own particular situation. The principles can therefore assist in the design of context specific strategies for Higher Education institutions following an institutional review process.

When more generally applied to higher education, these principles also fulfil a number of other important functions. They can:

- Define a particular approach to improvement strategies in Higher Education
- Can be used to organise the theoretical, research and practical implications that define educational change as a field of enquiry
- Provide a set of criteria that can be used to differentiate broad approaches to improvement efforts in Higher Education
- Can also be used more specifically to help analyse and define individual educational improvement efforts or programmes
- Contain a series of implications for policy that could enable them to more directly influence the achievement and learning of all students.

As has been argued in this review, the main reason why reforms in Higher Education have not had the desired impact is because they have not been adequately informed by what is known about educational change. The principles of educational change provide a strong argument for Higher Education embracing these strategies to assist in the implementation of its reform agenda. If one issue is certain it is that the future of change in Higher Education requires a systemic perspective, which implies a high degree of consistency across the policy spectrum and an unrelenting focus on organisational learning. Such an approach to improvement efforts in higher education obviously requires a certain degree of confidence. Without it however, the evidence of practice and research clearly suggests that Government and employers will continue to set educational goals for this sector of education that are, on current performance, beyond the capacity of the system to deliver.

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