Educational Leadership and Management

Hairuddin Ali Azam Othman Johdi Salleh

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EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

HAIRUDDIN ALI



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CHAPTER 9

The Images of Change: Revisit the Concept of Change in the Context of Teacher Development in Malaysia

Azam Othman

Institute of Education
International Islamic University Malaysia

The Concept of Change

What is 'change'? According to the Oxford Reference Dictionary (1995), the meaning of change is referred to as 'the act or an instance of becoming or making different'. Change refers to a process of initiating, introducing new ideas, new practices and cultures of the society in an organisation. However, the introduction of change does not necessarily bring positive change.

The introduction of change has the capacity to have positive or negative impacts on the people and the organisation. In consequence, the process of change should be based on thorough study, particularly in terms of its benefits to teachers. A well-planned change might be scrutinised and analysed for its advantages and disadvantages for teachers, students, parents, society and the country. The educational leaders should have faith in gradual change, instead of promoting revolutionary change; this kind of approach may not bring positive change continuously in schools, because change is a journey that should undergo a few stages and may face a lot of challenges at every stage-initiation, implementation, continuation and institutionalisation (Fullan, 1991).

The concept of reform or change stresses the improvement of educational policy and culture in schools (Fullan, 2001). Sometimes it does involve the introduction and transformation of education policy. For example, the introduction of reform in England and Wales under the Education Reform Act 1988 (ERA) involved huge policy change. Therefore, in this article the terms reform and change will be used interchangeably.

The concept of educational change might be viewed as non-linear; it has multiple factors, ramifications and complex systems (Sarason, 1990; Hargreaves, 1994; Fullan, 2001). In the same vein, Sarason (1990) also pointed out that the complexity of educational reform in schools requires educational administrators and teachers to analyse the relationships between different components of educational reform as a big picture. In other words, the analysis of the compatibility of an innovation in the context of a school requires a thorough examination of the links between the contexts of schools, objectives and purposes of the educational system in a given country. For example, in the Malaysian context, educational reform normally refers to the Ministry of Education's efforts to introduce reform and innovation in order to improve, reinforce and increase the quality of education and student learning. In this case, one of the broader aims of introducing the MSS is to change the teaching