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MDE-414: Management of Distance Education

(New Course in place of ES-314 : Management of Distance Education)

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MDE-414: Management of Distance Education

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- Unit 1 : Strategies for Management of Change
- Unit 2 : Factors Affecting and Facilitating Change
- Unit 3 : Quality Management in Open and Distance Education Institutions
- Unit 4 : Organizational Mechanisms for Self-Renewal

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

In this fifth and final block of the course on Management of Distance Education (MDE-414), we look at a core issue in the management of any organization or system. We live in a dynamic and evolving world; in this world, perhaps, the only constant is change. There is nothing that remains static for all times to come. When technological breakthroughs and global competition are forcing all organized systems to rethink their strategies, redesign their processes and restructure their systems, changes become inevitable. Organizations are forced to innovate, find newer and better ways of doing their businesses, create new markets and secure their customer base. New products, new markets, new strategies, and new management styles and practices make the world of today and tomorrow.

We have said elsewhere in this course that university management is not necessarily the same as business management. Universities have their own cultures, practices and organizational patterns. They are significantly different from those of corporations or companies, and of governments. The operational objectives of universities are more difficult to measure or quantify; their “outcomes” are still more difficult even to discern. The university is a collegial institution in which teachers provide considerable inputs to governance and management. University leaders and managers tend to come from the scholarly ranks of the academic profession; and universities large extent, are not for-profit organizations.

Education traditionally has been a conservative field. It is notoriously slow to change; in fact, no other system resists changes as much as education does. There was a time when curricular changes and programme/course revision took years, if at all. But, as you have seen in all the previous units of this block, the modern environment is unmistakably forcing changes in education as well. Education cannot remain immune to the breathtaking changes taking place in all aspects of our economic, political and social life. In fact, growing globalization is rapidly contributing to the blurring of the traditional boundaries between education and business. As one of the most effective change agents, education has to play a more proactive role in guiding, managing and transiting through a perennially changing environment. And, in that process, education itself undergoes changes in its design, strategies and organizational patterns. We shall see how this happens in this block. Though a lot of what we have said in this Block is drawn from the world of business management, their relevance to the world of education in general and distance education in particular is unmistakable.

As students of distance education, and potentially the future distance educators, we thought you should have the knowledge and understanding about change, the models of change and how they are applied to distance education institutions. Accordingly, this block has been designed with four units. Unit 1 deals with different models of change with illustrations, wherever possible. Change always faces resistance; as we said, it is more so in the case of education in which the processes and outcomes are more soft and delicate. Various factors that affect change have been dealt along with the ways how the resistance is successfully overcome in unit 2. Quality and change are inseparable. ODL institutions are created as innovations to bring change in respective communities. Unit – 3 dealt with the issues related to quality management in ODL institutions. Unit 4 deals with various mechanisms for self- renewal of an organization and its development.

UNIT 1 STRATEGIES FOR MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE

Structure

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Objectives
- 1.3 Socio-Cultural Parameters of Change
 - 1.3.1.1 Nature and Magnitude of Change
 - 1.3.1.2 Change and the Environmental Paradigm – Three Different Contexts
- 1.4 Mechanics of Change
 - 1.4.1 Phases of Change Management Processes
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- 1.5 Models of Change
 - 1.5.1 Self-initiated Models
 - 1.5.2 Externally Initiated Models
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 - 1.5.4 Leading the Management of Change
- 1.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.7 Check Your Progress: Possible Answers
- 1.8 References and Suggested Readings

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Change as well as resistance to change is attributes of all social institutions and organisations. This general statement is true for education as a social institution as well as for educational organisations – schools, colleges and universities. Further, education is perceived as an instrument of social change. This brings additional burden on education since only a resilient and self-renewing system of education can ensure desirable changes in society.

In this Unit, we shall make an effort to bring the issues and models of organisational change that applies as much to educational institutions as to business and industry. The issues dealt in each section of the unit are:

- The first section that deals with the broad socio-political parameters that determine the process of change in education,
- The second section that deals with the mechanics of change – the structural aspects of the system of changes,
- The third section that deals with various models of change identified by researchers, and
- The fourth section that outlines the processes of change management.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- explain the socio-cultural dimensions of change;
- identify the components of the process of management of change;
- analyse different models of management of change; and
- describe the process of management of change in any organisation.

1.3 SOCIO-CULTURAL PARAMETERS OF CHANGE

Change is an inevitable fact of life. It evolves rather than take shape in fits and starts. Change in education is no exception. Whoever said “People do different things; but wise people do things differently”, hit the nail on its head. Doing something differently is at the heart of innovation. Innovations that initiate and negotiate the actual changes in any system, and the society at large, show a dolphin-like behaviour – leaping above the surface at different places and times. However, innovations are only an instrumentality of change, not change *per se*.

Societies, systems and institutions particularly with long traditions have a tendency to resist innovations and efforts at change. This is both due to self-fulfilling prophecies of the systems with time-tested methods and also lack of resilience to restore the dynamic equilibrium that is always disturbed by new methods, practices and processes. The older the society and the institution, exceptions apart, the more difficult it is to change.

Educational change is integrally linked to the various processes and institutions in society. Within a social framework, various social institutions including education, adopt innovations to change. The evolution of open and distance learning systems in the last three or four decades on a large scale is a significant example of innovations in educational practices. Such acts of innovating are pro-active, reactive or retro-active. In fact, though education has been proclaimed as an instrument of social change (assigned a pro-active role), it has primarily been reactive, and more often, inactive. Nevertheless the core process of education, namely, curriculum design and transaction in the developing countries has remained rather unchanged, at best, or changed only marginally.

As mentioned earlier, if education has to play a pro-active role in ushering in social change, changes within education become a necessary pre-condition, as stagnation stifles social development and change.

1.3.1 Nature and Magnitude of Change

What can happen to educational systems and organisations over a period of time? They can improve, degenerate or remain where they are.

What drives change? Experts classify organisational changes into three broad categories:

- Changes that are imposed on organisations: This type of change nearly always leads to resistance;
- Changes that the organisation decides to undertake: Such changes are often the results of willingness to change and do not face much resistance;
- Changes that one imposes on others: Such changes generate positive response from the change initiator, but leads to a negative response from the targeted organisation.

Whatever is the stimulus, organisations change. Generally, organisational change is prompted by several factors. For instance, response to the needs of new client groups or of a new constituency, or a change in the organisation’s mission, or the introduction of new products and services, or improvement in efficiencies through quality management and introduction of new technologies, require changes in the ways in which an organisation has been functioning. There could also be changes arising from the dissatisfaction of the people in the system. The

sources of such dissatisfaction could be internal strife or unhappiness with the performance, or frustration arising from lack of opportunities for growth. Whatever is the reason, maintaining status-quo where everything else is changing is a near impossibility.

The subject of *change* and change management has been of enormous interest to social scientists – anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists as well as educationists. While the interest in understanding the process of change has been evident for centuries, a definite spurt in research on innovation and change can be traced to the early 60's of the 20th century. Major contributions have come from the fields of agriculture, rural development, medical innovations, cultural anthropology and education.

Diffusion of Innovation by Everett Rogers (1962), *Innovations in Education* by Mathew B. Miles (1964), *Communication of Innovation* by Rogers and Shoemaker (1971), and *Planning for Innovation* by Ronald Havelock (1973) are some of the pioneering works in this area. Their work has been followed by experts and researchers ever since. Significant contributions to the field of studies in Change Management have come from Tom Peters and Robert Waterman of Mckinsey and Company, a consultancy firm and a host of others.

Change occurs naturally as a response to developments in the environment. These developments could be the outcomes of socio-economic and technological changes, planned or otherwise. Educational change can also be effected deliberately through planned intervention – 'planned change' is one of the major schools of thought today.

Change is a responsive process – both planned and unplanned – and can take different shapes. In one form it takes the entire system into its fold. For example, right at the dawn of independence, India embarked on planned development, covering the entire country and all aspects of life. This is a case of planned holistic change. Let us take the example of Eritrea, a newly liberated country. As part of the country's education reforms, the Government decided that part of the summer vacation should be devoted by all students and teachers for national reconstruction with the goal of speeding up the process of development and sensitising the budding youth about the development related problems of the country. Since the programme encompassed all, it is both systemic and planned.

Another form of change is incremental, through intervention in a chosen area of a system. For example, reforms are introduced in the examination system in education without necessarily changing the curriculum and the instructional process. This approach is also called piece-meal social engineering. Modernisation of examination may indicate need for change in the instructional process and change will follow in the instructional system as well. In fact, much of the institutional changes are efforts in piece-meal social engineering.

Check Your Progress 1

Identify the following statements as 'true (T) or 'false' (F), and write your answer in the parenthesis against each statement.

Note: Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

- Innovations are only an instrumentality of change, and not change per se. ()
- The core process of education has changed significantly in the developing countries. ()
- Incremental change is also known as piece-meal social engineering. ()

1.3.2 Change and the Environmental Paradigm – Three Different Contexts

A. India

Indian education, as we noted earlier, is a complex mix of tradition and modernity. It was shaped and developed by the highest levels of scholarship and spirituality as well as by the influence of religious philosophy and thoughts notably of Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. While these traditional influences persist in Indian education, the overwhelming influence of the modern system, introduced in the middle of the 19th century, is very apparent. This system which had the stated objective of supporting public administration has not been able to break free from that objective and become an effective instrument of social change. Much of the present turmoil in Indian education has its origin in this socio-cultural outlook.

The socio-cultural structure of India is a major issue in considering the process of change in education. India with a federal structure and the Indian constitution makes education a joint responsibility of the centre and the states. By assigning education to the concurrent list of the constitution (a list of subjects on which the centre and the states have the power to legislate with the provision that in cases of conflict, the central law would prevail) fundamental changes in the system require a complex interplay of several stakeholders. At the core, national policies are decided by the central government after extensive consultations with the state governments and other concerned stakeholders (universities, research bodies, educationists, professional organisations, industry, commerce and civil society). Wherever legislation is involved in the implementation of the national policy, again the central government takes the initiative and enact laws through parliament. Similarly, the centre enacts laws for the establishment of national level institutions; the states do so for establishing universities and other institutions within each state. The management of the institutions is the responsibility of the governments that establish them. An interesting point to note here is that school education is, by and large, the responsibility of the states with the central government managing only a small number of special schools established by it. Similarly, establishment of universities and colleges is primarily the state responsibility though some universities are set up by the central government with an all-India jurisdiction.

Issues in education are not just about establishment of institutions. There are major issues about the content and processes. While there is a broad measure of understanding about the need for uniformity of content of school education across the nation (the need for social and inter-state mobility among students demands such uniformity), the content of university education is decided by the universities themselves. There are multiple agencies at the central and state levels that deal with education at different levels and various types. We have discussed them in Block 2 of this course and therefore we are not repeating it here. What is significant to note here is that in the establishment of schools, colleges and universities, there is always pressure from local politicians; in determining the curricula, it is necessarily the academics and professional bodies that influence decisions. Indian education is a field of active interplay for politicians, bureaucrats, institutional managers, teachers, students and parents. One has to consider the process of educational changes in India and its management against this multidimensional context.

B. South Africa

The case of South Africa is another interesting example. With the end of apartheid in 1994, South Africa launched several initiatives to reconstruct a fragmented and

deeply discriminatory education system, and establish a unified national system underpinned by democracy, equity, redress, transparency and participation. This social reconstruction had to be linked to economic development in the context of global economies and internationalisation (Education in South Africa: Achievements since 1994; Department of Education, Government of South Africa, May 2001). In the first phase of education reform, the government focused on the development of legal and regulatory policy frameworks to facilitate change, including the establishment of organisations and institutions that created the conditions and structures for effective action for transformation. It was not an easy effort; firstly, the entrenched apartheid structures had to be dismantled to create a unified education system; second, a more equitable system of financing in the context of limited financial resources and mounting demands of national reconstruction had to be established; and finally, a policy framework that gave concrete expression to the values that underpinned the post-apartheid state had to be created.

Dismantling of apartheid structures required integration of divided bureaucracies, merger of institutions, transfer of staff and students and the creation of unified administrative control systems and processes. An equity-driven financing model that ensured fair distribution of resources to end racial inequality and spending patterns based on equality among all communities across the nation was developed and put in place. A sound legislative policy framework for educational transformation was developed as a White Paper in 1995 that took as its starting point the 1994 education policy framework of the African National Congress. The adoption of this policy framework was followed by:

- The National Education Policy Act (1996),
- The South African Schools Act (1996),
- The Further Education and Training Act (1996),
- The Higher Education Act (1997),
- The Employment of Educators Act (1998) designed to regulate the racially divided teaching community and regulating their professional, moral and ethical responsibilities and competencies under one integrated code,
- The Adult Basic Education and Training Act (2000),
- The South African Qualifications Authority Act (1995) that provides for the creation of the National Qualifications Framework, and
- Curriculum 2005 that envisaged replacement of the existing general education system characterised by a racist, apartheid, rote learning model with a liberating, nation-building and learner-centred, outcome-based model.

All this goes clearly to indicate the preparatory processes including the key strategies for the effective implementation of changes in a deeply entrenched system.

C. Eritrea

Let us now turn our attention to another small nation, Eritrea that became independent in 1991 after a long war during which the quality of education had deteriorated considerably. To overcome this crisis, the Government placed education among its top priorities. The major objectives of education in Eritrea are to equip its people with knowledge, skills and a culture that can sustain a self-reliant and modern economy, develop self-consciousness and self-motivation in people to fight poverty, disease, ignorance and all other causes of backwardness. Besides the all round expansion of the system that involved more schools and teachers, better teacher training and recruitment and increases in enrolment, there were several novel initiatives too. For instance, all Secondary school students

above the age of 18 had to participate in an annual summer work programme in which they engage in such activities as environmental conservation, road construction and maintenance, production and maintenance of school furniture, laying power lines and telephone cables, public hygiene, etc. The primary purpose of these activities was to develop good work ethics and social habits, improve national awareness, foster national unity and build self-reliance. University students after graduation were required to complete one year of civil service at a variety of government institutions. A colony so long used to submission, though unwillingly, to the dictates of the rulers, began to stand on its own feet, waking up to freedom, a new-found national identity and dignity.

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.

- a) Changes in socio-cultural outlook are a necessary precondition for educational changes. What is the Indian experience? (Answer in about 40 words)

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- b) What are the main points that are emerging from the South Africa and Eritrea cases? (Answer in about 40 words)

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1.4 MECHANICS OF CHANGE

Changes do not come about automatically; someone has to trigger the changes. That trigger is what drives the change. We have identified some of them in the preceding sections. In education, it could be the governments that seek to define a new vision, change the policy directions and align the education system with the emerging national expectations. At the institutional level, it might be a university that wishes to launch new programmes, new teaching methods and new student assessment processes. How do they go about making the changes? The processes they adopt are what we call the mechanics of change. We shall discuss these processes in the following sections.

1.4.1 Phases of Change Management Processes

One can identify four distinct phases in the processes of management of change. These are:

- Defining the roles and expected outcomes of the change
- Identification of the change priorities
- Defining the strategies for organisational development in terms of the priorities identified
- Management and evaluation of change.

Innovation, we said earlier, is an instrument of change and the process of change is indeed the process of adoption of innovations. But innovations do not happen. Someone has to take the trouble of trying something new, or think of out-of-the-box solutions for problems that plague organisations. When once a new idea (innovation) emerges from within an organisation or outside, it has to be given a go-ahead by those who lead the organisations. That is the starting point or Phase I of the process of managing change.

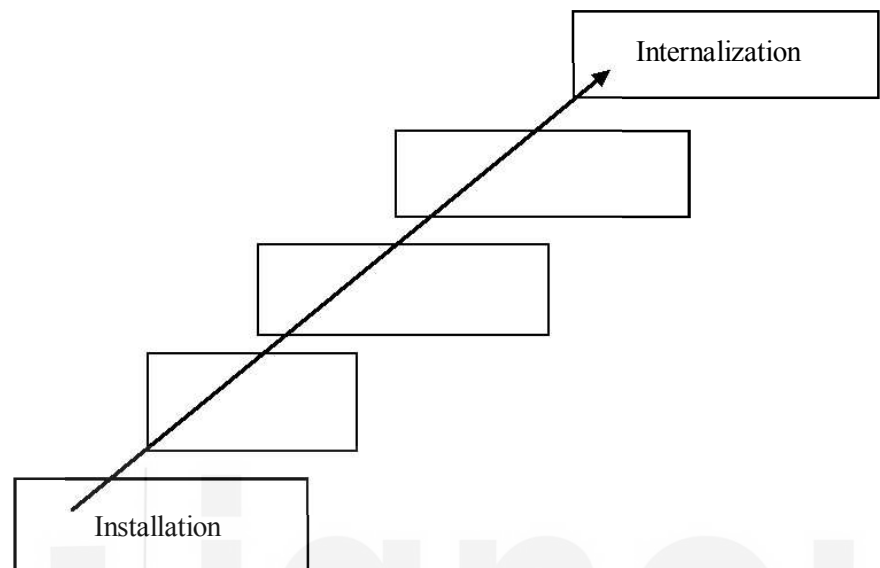
Phase I defines the purpose of the change, the expectations from the change and the preparations for change. This phase constitutes the preparation of a road map to initiate the process of change. This involves, in management terms, the preparation of a project that defines the project objectives, identifies quantitative measures for realisation of the project goals, establishing indicators for monitoring progress (performance indicators), development of monitoring systems and evaluating the progress during implementation, and designation of the team that will implement the project (the team could be from within the organisation or outside). Often, during this phase, it might be necessary to revisit the project objectives, the strategies and the priorities and make necessary changes in them.

Phase II constitutes the stage in which the priorities for implementation are identified. For instance, it might be necessary to have a clear idea about what the current situation within the organisation is in relation to the expected outcomes of change, and assess the gaps to be filled. Hopefully, the project team would consist of people who are knowledgeable in their functional areas, and have a basic understanding of the organisational context for the change, including its strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities. A critical study of these factors, in which the top management is also involved, would yield all relevant data. From a critical analysis of the data so collected, the team can establish the priorities and look for causal connections between different parameters. It would help identify the starting point and move from that stage to the next in a way that can address the objectives of the project fully.

Phase III involves the planning of organisational development activities to address the identified priorities. It is possible that in Phase II, the project team would have found the critical gaps that need to be filled across functional areas and at different levels in the organisation. This process would involve identification of several organisational development initiatives that include capacity building at various levels, preparation of an action plan for the implementation of those activities, and to order their priorities. These activities would comprise several interventions in the areas of human relations, human resource management, techno-structural and strategic interventions.

Phase IV is about sustaining and evaluating the action plan, management of resistance to change and even the possibility of an abrupt termination of the change plan itself. Some simple steps that could take the project team through the final stages of the change process are communication of the action plan to all those involved in steering the change to assure them that they are all on level ground and that the change leaders would provide the initial push in implementing the change. This would involve building teams and securing their support through discussions on the aims of change, budgets, milestones, and such other issues that are crucial to the project implementation. In all these, communication is the key to monitor progress, identify bottlenecks, locate points of resistance and initiate interaction among individuals and groups to direct their efforts towards the achievement of a common objective.

While the four-stage change management process typically provides a practical guide to enduring organisational redesign, it would be useful to place these processes in a more theoretical framework to provide a deeper understanding of the issues involved. From experience, and also from the findings of research studies, we find that the adoption of innovation (change) passes through five stages as presented below:



- Installation/awareness signifies the first implantation of a new idea in the mind of the potential adopter;
- Trial, at this stage, is the mental exercise in terms of assessing the feasibility, preparation for adoption and possible adverse consequences;
- Adoption is the actual translation of the idea at the field level – pilot or full scale;
- Evaluation is the assessment of the process efficiency and impact of innovation; evaluation in this case is not summative, the basic intention being corrective action before final adoption; and
- Internalisation is the mechanism of full integration of the innovation with the system, rendering it out of the ‘zone of innovation’.
- Just as an innovation is installed it generates different reactions among the potential adopters. Researchers have classified adopters in to several categories, namely,
- **Innovators** – Innovators are those who actually innovate the idea itself and try out;
- **Early Adopters** – people who react to a new idea immediately and take to adoption;
- **Adopters** – those who take to adoption, but wait on the fence to see the experience of adoption of innovation by others;
- **Late Adopters** – are the reluctant respondents to a new idea;
- **Laggards** – the confirmed rejecters of innovation.

Generally, innovators and laggards are a smaller percentage and adopters the largest single group in most organised systems.

1.4.2 Some Structural Aspects of Change

The mechanics of change can be presented in several ways. The most frequently used framework and the most acceptable premise is 'change as a function of adoption of innovation'. This framework presupposes a structure comprising:

- One who communicates innovation, say, the Resource System;
- One to whom innovation is communicated for adoption, say, the 'Adopter System';
- Innovation itself; and
- The process through which innovative ideas are transferred, say, the 'Communication System'.

Should we put these elements in the form of a diagram, it would look like one given in figure 2.

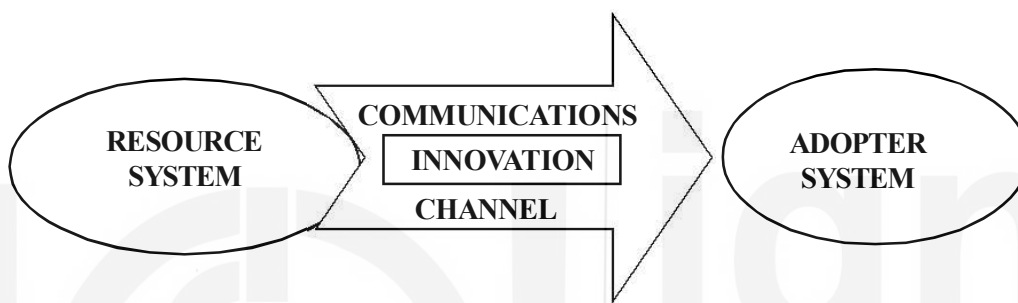


Fig. 2: Elements in Changes Process

There are two other relevant questions. Once an innovation is communicated and the adopter system initiates steps for its adoption, it may find some difficulty. Hence, there has to be a provision for sending problem messages from the adopter to the resource system and a reverse path sending solution messages from the resource system to the adopter system. If we incorporate these elements also in our diagram, it would look like one given in figure 3.

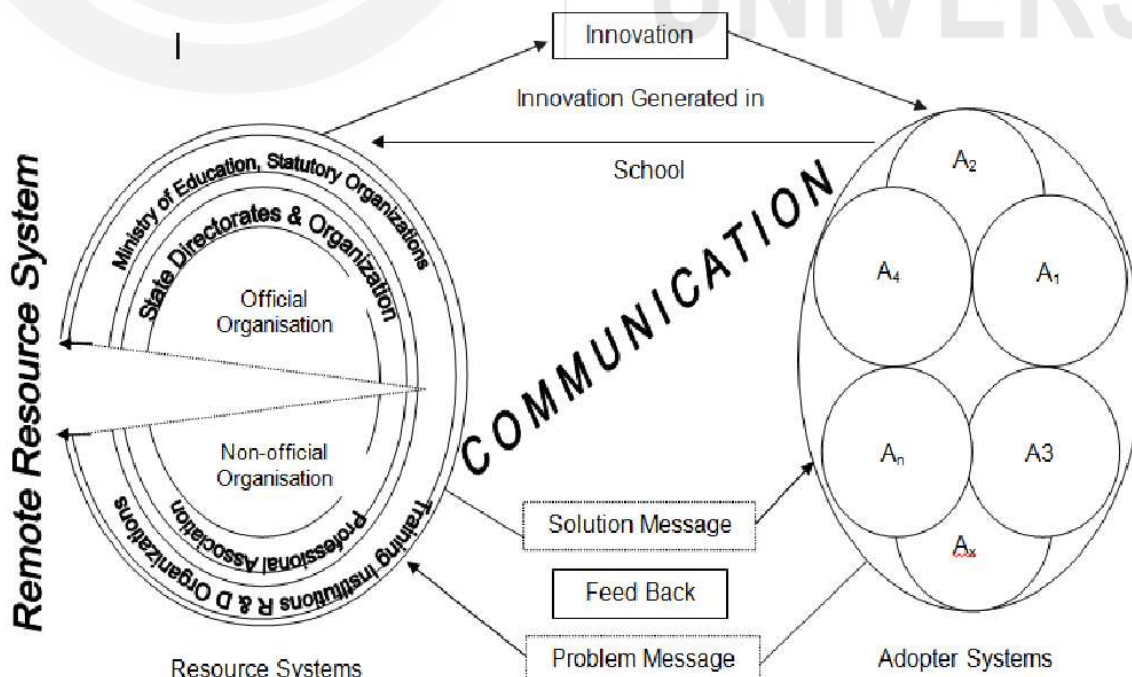


Fig. 3 : Dynamic Model of Innovation Diffusion

At this stage, we shall take a look, in some detail, at the attributes of these four components of the system of change.

a) Resource System

Resource system is an individual or an organisation that acts as the source of innovation and also as the expert source of technology of implementation of innovation. In education, three types of agencies that constitute the resource system are generally noticed. These are:

- Academic/professional bodies- apex level bodies set up for the development, regulation and standard setting in education, research councils and other professional bodies;
- Administrative/bureaucratic systems like the Ministries of Education, State Directorates of Education, etc.,
- Non-formal and non-governmental bodies like Teachers' associations, professional organisations, parent-teacher associations and similar other civil society interest groups.

While there are a large number of agencies that comprise the resource system, there are also significant gaps in their operational areas when it comes to innovative initiatives. For example, standard-setting bodies at the apex are capable of designing, developing and diffusing innovations, but they do not have the power or authority to ensure the implementation of those innovations. Those that have the authority and power like the Ministries and the Directorates of Education do not have the necessary academic or professional competence and credibility to secure the adoption of innovative ideas. The third category of organisations is primarily engaged in advocacy and the creation of environments that are receptive to innovations.

At this stage, it would be useful to examine the basic nature of the resource system. For instance, we need to ask:

- Are the resource systems necessarily organisations?
- Are they necessarily external to the adopting organisations?
- Are they stand alone systems?

The answer is in the negative. Resource systems can be an individual, a group or an organisation; they can be internal to the organisation, and they need not be stand alone systems. For example, an innovative teacher or a group of teachers can act as a resource system for a school, college or university. It does not have to be a specially designated group that can trigger innovative ideas. In fact, a resource system needs to change continuously in order to maintain its credibility with the adopter system. It is not uncommon to see that structurally designated resource systems, wherever they exist, maintain constant linkages with remote systems as source of innovation. For example, international agencies like the UNESCO, UNICEF, etc. act as remote resource systems to national agencies in several countries.

An innovation can bring about change only when it is internalised by the system. To transform an innovation from the stage of awareness to internalisation, the resource agencies need to provide expert support to the process of adoption. However, resource agencies generally consider that their role is largely confined to diffusing innovations to the adopter system. In other words, beyond creating awareness, resource agencies do not yet perceive any specific role in managing the process of change. The professional role of resource agencies comprise process support to the adopting organisation to move from the level of installation to internalisation.

b) Innovation

Innovation is defined in several ways. The most acceptable definition probably is that innovation is an idea or a practice 'perceived to be new'. This definition has an element of relativism in it, and it is necessary. An idea that is new to one may not be so to another depending upon the extent of exposure that an individual or a system has had. However, all innovations are not adoptable or adaptable, nor are all innovations worthwhile. Similarly, same innovation may not be relevant to all categories of institutions, and individuals within institutions. An innovation worth trying in IGNOU, for example, may not be relevant to the Open University in Jordan. Or, an innovation that is now relevant to a state open university in India has already been tried out and internalised at the national open university.

There have been several studies both internationally and in India on characteristics of innovations and their adaptability for ushering in change. Some of these characteristics are:

- Relative change
- Simplicity or complexity
- Compatibility
- Communicability
- Value loading
- Scientific status of the knowledge.

The relative advantage of an innovation as perceived by the potential adopter over the prevailing practice influences to a great extent the adopter's decision. While a minority of the adopters look at the relative advantage from the angle of organisational advantage and scientific status of knowledge, a majority considers relative advantage from the angle of benefits accruing to individuals, e.g. less workload, simpler procedure, etc. On the other hand, innovations that are less communicable, less divisible, more complex and relatively less advantageous are likely to be resisted and are more liable to failure.

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.

Which are the three types of agencies that can act as resource systems and which one among them is effective in designing innovations and why? Answer in about 50 words.

.....

.....

.....

c) Communication

Communication signifies conveyance of the idea or innovation from one party to another through some media. Research on communication of innovation has thrown up significant understanding of its role in its adoption. For instance,

- Difference in status between the communicator and the recipient is a significant determinant of success. The wider the gap between the communicator's

status and innovativeness and the adopter system, the greater is the likelihood of failure in its adoption.

- Community norm is another determinant. The innovation adoption behaviour is directly linked to the norms of the social system in which the adopting organisation or the individual is located. Lack of communication between the adopter systems with the external resource agencies hinders change.
- Whatever be the media, efficient use is the key to success. Demonstration is the most powerful medium. However, it can be most damaging, and can permanently inhibit adoption, if demonstration fails. In cases of innovation, where controversy is likely, oral presentation seems to be more effective.

One of the features of educational planning and management in the developing countries is its relative centralisation. For faster and equitable development, planning including innovations are centrally designed and initiated. The centrally designed innovations as well as those flowing from the academic bodies provide a triangular structure of communication (see Figure 3 below)

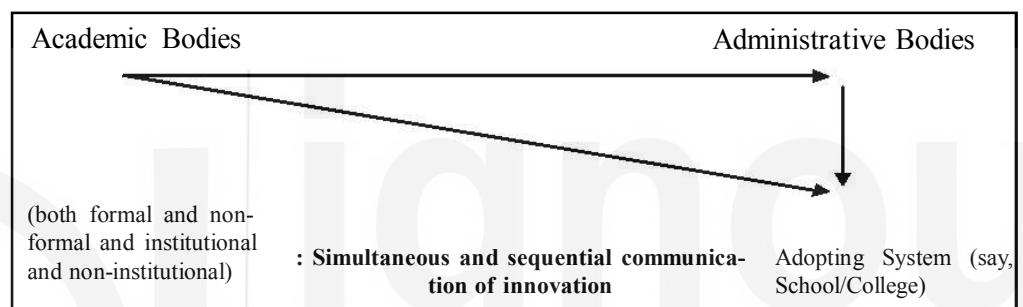


Fig. 4: Simultaneous and sequential communication of innovation

If this is further broken down to central, state and district level authorities, the structure would look like the following figure 5.

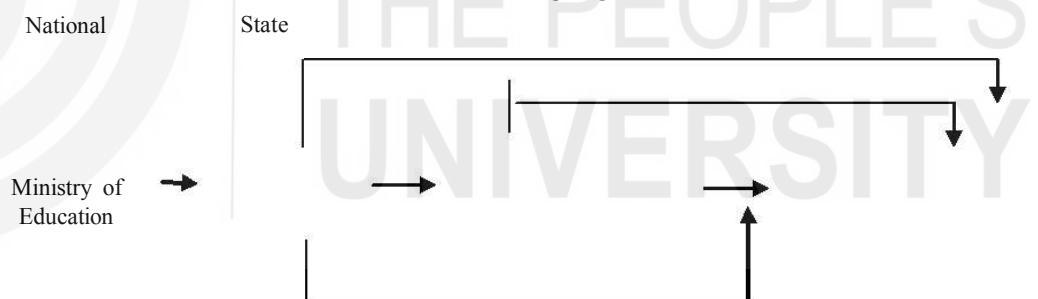


Fig. 5: Hierarchic and unidirectional communication

Because of the typical bureaucratic system of management in centralised systems, the flow of communication is usually unidirectional. One of the basic problems of communication is inherent in the organisational structure of education. As we have seen in Block – 1, all major educational systems comprise multi-layer structures of national, state and local level agencies. This complex structure makes an equally complex flow of communication through multiple channels, some of which may not even have any direct stake in a specific innovative initiative. Unlike the industrial system, education system is yet to develop a communication model relevant and functional to the management of change.

d) Adopter Organisation

Adoption of innovation in education, particularly for qualitative improvements, is the function of the agencies like schools, colleges, universities, etc. However, there is evidence that individuals and small groups play a significant role in the management of change as well as in organisational renewal.

Certain organisational characters like open, paternal and familial climate, linkage with resource agencies and a pro-active administration (Board of Governors/ Executive Council, etc.) have been found to be conducive to change. Several studies have established the key role played by the Head of the institution, especially his/her leadership capability, professional awareness, initiative, and inter-personal relationships, that influences the process of adoption of innovation.

The findings from a wide range research on the characteristics of the adopting system that promotes or resists change, are summarised in the two Tables that follow:

Table 1: Individual Characteristics that resist Innovation

Personality-oriented	Others
a) Conservative attitude b) Sense of insecurity and fear of failure c) Low self-esteem d) Closed mindednesse) Inability to sense needsf) Defence-mechanism – distortion of innovation g) Unwillingness to work – lack of motivation h) Loss of interest i) Inadequate exposure to mass media j) Inadequate contact with change agents and resource agencies	a) Role conflict b) Lack of training c) Absence of clarity of innovation d) Lack of competence e) Non-availability of literature f) Lack of access to guidance g) Work load h) Fatigue from innovation i) Unrealistic time target j) Lower socio-economic status

Table 2: Organizational Characteristics that resist innovation

Organisational			
External	Internal		
	General	Leadership	Small Groups
a) Demand of change in social relations b) Threat on the dynamic equilibrium of the system c) Lack of openness d) Lack of permeability from one layer of organisation to another due to coding systems and system myths e) Localism f) Lack of communication and linkage with resource systems	a) Division of labour b) Hierarchic organisation c) Reward for traditional behaviour d) Interference of higher management e) Organisational climate-closed type f) Physical distance between the sub-systems g) Inadequate financial and physical facilities h) Size of the organisation – small in particular	a) Directive and autocratic	a) Cohesive b) Lack of autonomy and involvement in decision-making c) Peer criticism d) Sense of imposition e) Vested interest

These studies have also shown that most of the adopting organisations, the schools and colleges for example, live in isolation, and do not have any significant linkage with outside agencies. Thus they have little functional input of innovations. Secondly, the principal role perceived by the Heads of institutions is of maintenance rather than change and renewal. The institutes, a very large majority among them, engage themselves in routine activities in a routine manner. Thus their capability for innovation and self-renewal remains unchanged. The situation is further aggravated by lack of, if not the absence of, management training for the personnel administering the institutions.

In effecting changes, management of innovations by the adopting organisations is of crucial importance. Successful management of innovations calls for:

- Planning of innovation,
- Determining objectives for development,
- Identifying innovations,
- Planning resources,
- Providing authority support,
- Building up consensus among the members of the adopting group, and
- Developing linkages with relevant outside agencies and also with the environment.

The adopter organisations do not usually plan innovations. They implement innovations as they come through the pipeline of the administrative channel. Nor does one find very often, an awareness of resistance that may accompany an innovation. As a result, casualties occur without adequate, if at all, contingency arrangements. Further, the adopter organisations within themselves can develop a network where innovations, and experiences accruing from innovations, can be shared. Although there are some evidences, more as exceptions, the models for functional replication are not too many. One of the major problems is the lack of documentation in the form of cases – both of successes and failures – on adoption of innovation and management of change that can be used by others for emulation and replication.

Check Your Progress 4

Identify the following sentences as 'true' (T), or 'false' (F) and answer in the brackets provided against each.

Note: Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

- Difference in status between 'communicator' and recipient is not a significant determinant of success. ()
- In a centralized bureaucratic system of management of education, the flow of communication is usually unidirectional. ()
- The adopter organizations do not usually plan innovation but implement the ones which come through administrative channels. ()

1.5 MODELS OF CHANGE

So far, we have focused our attention on understanding the factors that prompt institutions and organisations to redesign and restructure their functions and

operational frameworks. In doing so, we also looked at the starting point of these efforts, what occasions the rethinking, and in what context and circumstances the need for change is felt compelling. We also tried to understand the processes involved in changes and the ways and tools available for managing those processes. We shall now turn our attention to the ways in which organisations make changes happen, what strategies they follow and what models they adopt.

Research to capture the process of change in a conceptual framework has yielded several models of change. These research efforts have documented behaviour modification models at the individual and organisational change models. These models, identified by different authors can be broadly classified on the basis of the source of change, namely, changes initiated from within or outside. Though these models are not mutually exclusive, we shall list them in Table 3 for easy reference.

Table 3: Models of Change

Self-initiated models	Externally initiated models
Problem solving	Rational-Empirical
Social interaction	Normative Re-educative
Research, Development and Diffusion	Power-Coercion
Organisation development	Systems model

We shall now look at these models to enhance our understanding of the strategies for change and the conceptual framework (models) for those changes.

1.5.1 Self-initiated Models

These are generally institutional models that are relevant to schools, colleges and universities.

The Problem solving model is essentially a need-reduction model where the starting point of intervention is the perceived need for change. Havelock (1973) refers to terms like “client-centred therapy”, and ‘student-centred teaching’ as expressions of need-reduction models. Although the role of external change agents is not ruled out in this model, the need for collaboration and understanding of the institution’s (clients for the external agent) need are two important components. The Organisation Development Model can be one of the practical applications of the Problem Solving Model. As Havelock says, “this model is a general one and could apply to a process inside a single person, or inside a group, an organisation, a community, or society as a whole”. According to this model, the problem solvers may be outside specialists (change gents, resource persons, etc.), but they will act in a two-way reciprocal and collaborative manner, in order to make the interventions effective.

The Research, Development and Diffusion Model is widely followed in the USA. The starting point in this case is research and new products through research. The assumption is that if there is a new product (including new knowledge), there will also be a consumer. Unlike in the problem solver model, consumer need is implicit, and does not have to have to be established through need-reduction research. The progress in the fields of medicine, engineering and agriculture testifies to the evolution of this model. As Havelock says “there is a transformation of knowledge from basic research to applied research and development which goes on in the agriculture-related departments of the land grant colleges and universities. The R&D process is systematically linked o the Co-operative Extension Service,

an elaborate mechanism that diffuses the developed knowledge to the farmers. This system, taken as a whole, seems to exemplify the orderly transition of knowledge from research to development to diffusion and finally to adoption by the consumer” (Havelock, 1973). The more recent case of open and distance learning is another example that illustrates how the results of research on the impact of programmed learning has influenced the growth and development of ODL that depends on self-instructional learning packages diffused through modern communication technologies that can optimise human learning and reach out to large numbers, thus ushering in the age of mass education.

The Social Interaction Model assumes that society, and organisations within that society, are a network of units that have ‘roles and channels of communication with one another through formal and informal associations forming barriers and overlapping connections’. This model does not view society as a system; instead, it gears all the various components towards a common goal and output. The primary focus is on management of change through interaction between and among various stakeholders in the change process. According to Havelock, this approach has contributed a large quantity of empirical data on dissemination and utilisation of knowledge.

The Organisation Development model is a widely used technique in management of change. It comprises six sequential stages of action:

- Organisational Diagnosis (OD)
- Planning for Intervention (PI)
- Allocation of Responsibilities (AR)
- Resource Mobilisation (RM)
- Implementation (IM)
- Monitoring and Evaluation (ME)

Organisational diagnosis often uses SWOT analysis or Survey-Feedback methods. A notable feature of this model is that it is a participatory process in which, from diagnosis to monitoring, people in the organisation are collectively involved.

The following spiral representation illustrates this model in figure 6:

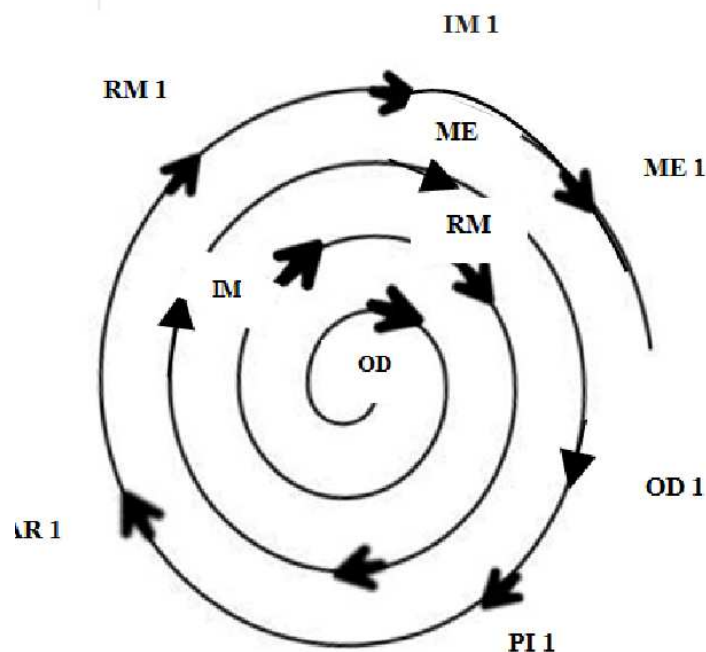


Fig. 6: OD-Spiral Model

1.5.2 Externally Initiated Models

The three models – Power-Coercion, Normative-Re-educative and the Rational-Empirical - have been extensively dealt with by Bennis and others in “Planning for Change”.

The basis of the Rational-Empirical model, a classic approach to Change Management, developed by Robert Chin and Kenneth D. Benne, is based on the assumption that human beings are rational and therefore, are open to reason as the basis for change. Empirical evidence, corroborated with reason, can form the basis of organisational diagnosis and planning for intervention. Research provides a sound foundation for planning for change through this model.

The Power-Coercion model bases itself on the power of “power”. According to Hans Morgenthau, “Power may comprise anything that establishes and maintains control of man over man. Thus power covers all social relationships, which serve that end, from physical violence to the most subtle psychological ties by which one mind controls another”. This model indicates the use of top-down power, rather authority, in the approach to planning and management of change. Innovations in this case are decided at the top and pushed down for implementation. In a larger context, changes in the totalitarian systems illustrate this model. Not only are innovations pushed down, this model also uses coercion for adoption.

Normative-Re-educative model is largely based on the cognitive restructuring concept. The first element is normative – setting norms by demonstration. It assumes that humans are social beings and therefore they always have the inherent urge to conform to social norms and standards. This approach is different from prescription of the power orientation. The second component is re-education of the potential adopters. Setting norms on the one hand, and re-educating on the other, leads to easier acceptance of innovation.

Unlike the Power-Coercion model, both Normative-Re-educative and the Rational-Empirical approaches are diffusion of innovation through creating conviction. These two models are slow to adopt innovations, but are more sustainable and self-renewing. The Power-Coercion model is fast but runs the risk of distortion of innovation and rejection at the first opportunity of change in the power structure.

Yet another approach, the Environmental – Adaptive model, developed by Fred Nickols is based on the assumption that while people are generally averse to change, they adapt themselves to it when left with no choice. In other words, while individually people are quick in rejecting any change that they feel might threaten their settled ways of life, they are as quick to adapt themselves to a new set of circumstances when they find that there are few options available to them. This approach recommends that instead of forcing changes in behaviour, norms and culture, it would be better to create a new set of circumstances and exploit the innate nature of human beings to adapt to the new situation.

What we have discussed so far were the models of change that focused more on the individuals or the various sub-systems within an organisation. Let us now look at the management of change at the system level. A system model of change management is presented in the following diagram figure 7.

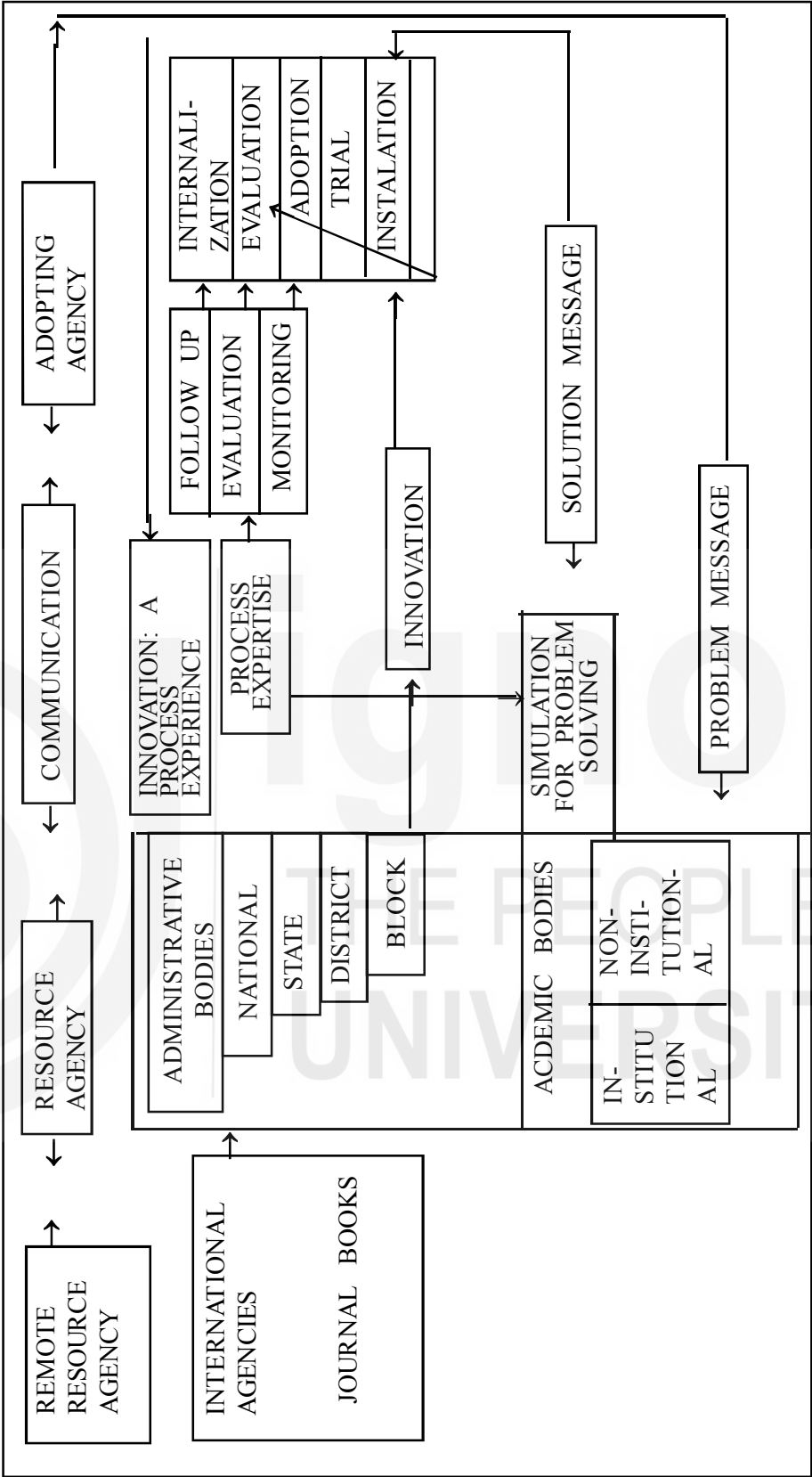


Fig. 7: System Model of Management of change

In the system model, there are four components – remote resource agencies, resource agencies, innovations communication mechanisms and adopting organisations. We have discussed each one of them earlier. Changes are brought about when these systems interact with one another through policy, planning and management processes. Policies provide the basic framework showing the directions of change; planning ingrained in policy translates policy into action plans and management inlaid in planning, actually implements the plan.

1.5.3 Change Management Strategies

The previous sections that tried to identify different models of change also suggested the core strategies around which those models were built. We shall now try to explore those strategies in some detail.

As we have noted, the **Empirical-Rational approach** assumes that although the innate tendency in most people is to resist change, they can be won over by persuading them to accept it by:

- Explaining the genuine logic behind the proposed change;
- Showing them what there is in it for *them*.

If people are convinced on these two concerns, it becomes easier to navigate the process of change. This strategy therefore relies on persuasion as the way to make people accept changes through the instrumentality of:

- Planned and well-managed dissemination of information that clearly conveys the incentives for change;
- Skilful use of communication to sell the benefits of change;
- Emphasis on providing accurate and correct information as well as education and training that inspire people to accept change willingly;
- Focus on people who could be identified as willing to accept change and are influential enough to carry the message effectively to others in the organisation.

The leadership of the organisation has an important role here, buying-in of the people and inspiring them to embrace the change. A meaningful plan for successfully initiating change and taking it through must have the following elements:

- A strong basis for initiating the change;
- Linkage to actual benefits or incentives to be derived from the change; and
- An analysis of the positives and negatives, including the measures necessary to neutralise the negatives.

The more imponderable element of this approach is that while employees may accept the need for change and the rationale behind it, dislocation and transition always bring with them emotional disorientation and problems of adjustment.

The **Normative-Re-educative approach** is one of the most widely used strategies in the preset times. This strategy works through the existing culture; collaborating with people and helping them see new and better opportunities rather than an abrupt transplantation of an entirely new culture on unprepared grounds. This approach calls for a set of strategies that might include

- An honest effort to work in sync with people;
- Identification of problems and remedies;

- Improvements in problem-solving capacities within the organisation;
- Refinement of processes including development of new skills, attitudes and norms;
- Effective engagement with people to minimise chances of resistance.

It should be noted that this approach depends too much on employee cooperation, and that there are too many examples of employees not stepping out of their ‘comfort zones’ to do things differently.

The **Power-Coercion approach** assumes that people are, by and large, compliant and advocates the use of power to secure compliance with threats of sanctions. As we noted earlier, there are different forms of exercising power, and while threats are at one extreme, there are more subtle ways of playing with power. In fact, in both the approaches that we discussed in the preceding paragraphs, power plays a subtle, persuasive role in navigating the change processes. The power softly used in this manner is known as hegemonic power, an internalised form of social control that makes people believe that they are choosing something when they really have no choice. In both cases, the strategy is to use “reason” and “collaboration” to make the change seem like a choice between a better situation and status quo. In other words, the strategy is to make people accept change for a better prospect without necessarily giving them any option. Exercise of authority, subtly or otherwise, in the form of political and economic sanctions, legislation, or other instruments of policy, including “moral” power is a widely used strategy in managing change.

The **Environmental-Adaptive approach** is a variation of the power-coercion strategy that leaves no choice to people except adaption of change. As we said earlier, the difference in approach in this case is the creation of new sets of circumstances and norms in a pro-active manner and leaving them to people to adapt. As people have no choice to accept or reject change, the responsibility of regulating and managing the change shifts from management to the people themselves. In short, the strategy is to make the change, and leave it to people merely to accept or quit.

What is the right strategy for the management of change? The answer is that there is no single strategy that works in all situations. The choice depends on the nature and extent of change. If the changes are radical, an environmental-adaptive strategy might work; in the case of a more or less submissive organisation, empirical rational or normative re-educative strategies will do. If one anticipates strong negative reactions, the power coercion strategy is the way to go.

1.5.4 Leading the Management of Change

Having discussed the theories and practices that guide the management of change and organisational transformation, we shall now look at what the leadership of change management is all about. A recent article in the McKinsey Quarterly by Steven F. Ditcher, Chris Gagnon and Ashok Alexander (1993) entitled “Leading Organisational Transformation” offers some useful insights.

Organisational transformation is aimed at improvements in performance by changing behaviour and capabilities throughout the organisation. Opinions within the organisation might differ on the objectives of change. For example, the Finance Department might want new financial measures; the HR chief might seek a new compensation package and training programmes; the operations chief might want new quality improvement initiatives and the marketing wing might want more customer focus. Development of an integrated transformation approach is the key to organisational change. The three major elements of this approach are:

- Top-down direction setting to create focus throughout the organisation and develop the conditions for performance improvement
- Broad-based bottom-up performance improvement to get people at all levels to take a fresh approach to solving problems and improving performance
- Cross-functional core process redesign to link activities, functions and information in new ways to achieve breakthrough improvements in cost, quality and timelines

These three elements constitute the transformation triangle that offers a balanced, integrated framework that combines separate initiatives into a coherent overall programme. While the top-down approach ensures focus and direction, the bottom-up process provides motivation and momentum, and the core process redesign ensures that function-specific efforts add up and that a critical mass of change is ushered in to make an impact. A quality programme here, a new training initiative there, a new set of internal strategy task force or an executive team-building exercise will not add up. Effective leadership in change management requires purposeful coordination of, and engagement with, the efforts of all three axes of the triangle. We shall now turn to the ways in which each of these three elements functions.

a) Top-down direction setting

First, we shall look at the top-down direction setting process. Clear, consistent and on-going direction setting and culture shaping initiatives are a necessary pre-condition for the successful transformation of an organisation. The leadership has to take concerted efforts to clarify priorities, create energy and signal commitment to change in performance and behaviour through different approaches. These should include:

- Setting the goals with a limited set of quantified targets and clear milestones linked to the vision of the organisational transformation. Vague, generic and poorly defined goals will not inspire confidence;
- An excellent vision statement should reflect broad agreement among management ranks, clearly and compellingly used in decision-making and priority setting;
- A leadership agenda that promises sustained efforts and time from the top leaders that reinforce commitment and compels others to make similar efforts;
- A process design that articulates home grown process development with mutually reinforcing thrusts and clear milestones tied to vision and goals. Multiple initiatives poorly integrated, and occasionally conflicting, could turn out to be counterproductive;
- An effective communication system that includes feedback loops and measurement. Newsletters, videos and other such efforts with little or no focus is no substitute for an effective communication system;
- Training of people in new skills focusing on expected performance improvement rather than primarily technical and management training organised on traditional patterns; and
- Formulation of a series of transaction level measures cascading throughout the organisation and regular review of benchmarks rather than those reflected by the financial accounting system, or those limited only to key functions

b) Broad-based bottom-up approach

Now, let us look at the broad-based bottom-up approach. It involves getting a large number of people in the organisation aggressively and creatively working

for improvement in performance. It depends upon the creation of disciplined processes for identifying opportunities and developing plans to close clearly identified performance gaps. These approaches have to be tailored to specific challenges, skills and readiness to change in given parts of the organisation. For this purpose, methodologies have to be designed for setting appropriate goals and performance objectives, analytical templates have to be developed to guide problem solving, and specific information needs have to be developed by levels and units. In particular, attention needs to be focused on:

- Front-line operations to improve cost, quality and timeliness of given parts;
- Aligning staff functions to activities that increase the value of products and services;
- Identification by the management group of the most attractive performance improvement opportunities and design of necessary processes to exploit them.

Bottom-up initiatives go far beyond the usual pilot testing and implementation. Pilots are always tried at isolated locations. A comprehensive bottom-up approach encompasses intensive problem-solving efforts spread across an entire enterprise. It aims at sustained performance improvements, development of new skills, better readiness for change, and deeper insights into how organisations must adapt to sustain improvements. The process followed in the bottom-up approach involves the development of creative ways to involve people in improving performance and redesigning their work. These are not one-off activities; they involve successive round of efforts to improve performance and build skills.

c) Core process redesign

Both top-down and broad based efforts operate within existing operational boundaries. Opportunities for breakthrough improvements in performance can be addressed only through a cross-functional, core process redesign perspective in which people, activities and information are linked in new ways. The goal is to produce simultaneous dramatic improvements in cost, quality and time by shifting the focus of work and decision making from hierarchical channels to new horizontal flows across functions, locations and organisational boundaries.

It should be noted that all the three approaches by themselves are not groundbreaking. They offer an easier framework to make organisational restructuring acceptable and less painful to all stakeholders. These strategies are:

- **Focused:** Organisations can perform well with less than perfect, but not unclear, strategies. During periods of change, attention tends to shift from tangible performance goals to a general concern for effecting changes in the organisational culture. The best way to change culture is to work on improving performance at all levels and across all functions. We know how counterproductive it is to indulge in mutual recriminations and blame games, as, for example, in management against labour conflicts.
- **Integrated:** Works on all three axes simultaneously, and in ways that are mutually reinforcing; demands attention to shift to the problem and the goal. Strategic focus or direction setting could be top-down, while frontline involvement is bottom-up. When there are multiple inefficiencies across functions, the emphasis will naturally be on the redesigning of cross-functional processes.
- **Balanced:** Gives equal emphasis to each axe. Too much reliance on top-down could attract criticism and cynicism just as too great an emphasis on bottom-up efforts could lead to attention being diffused and focused on activities that might not make any difference. Too much emphasis on cross-

functional processes could lead to solutions that are so complex in design that they might turn out to be beyond the organisation's ability to implement.

- **Team-based.** Teams are critical for all three approaches. With top-down, leadership is essential to integrate the initiatives and lead the processes. In bottom-up, there could be several performance teams working in different parts of the organisation, and in cross-functional efforts, process management teams have to come together across functions.

Check Your Progress 5

Identify the following sentences as 'true' (T), or 'false' (F) and answer in the brackets provided against each.

Note: Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit.

- Innovation is decided at the top and pushed down for implementation in the power coercion model. ()
- Normative re-educative and the rational – empirical models are fast in adoption of innovation. ()
- Planning is an inset in the policy. ()
- In System model communication takes a two-way interactive mode. ()

1.6 LET US SUM UP

This Unit discussed the patterns and mechanics of change that organisations in general (including educational institutions) follow in different contexts and circumstances. In the absence of a body of literature exclusively about changes in the management of educational institutions and organisations, we have gone with the theoretical foundations that recent research finding have provided us in understanding different models of change, the factors that influence changes, and also the processes by which changes get absorbed in the existing systems and their structures. As we have mentioned in Unit 1 of Block 1 of this course, management of education systems also draw upon the wealth of knowledge and experience gained over time not just in the fields of business and industry, but also in the Government, not-for profit organisations and civil society institutions. We hope that this discussion would have given you some insight into the complexities and constraints that managements often confront while attempting to introduce changes in the organisation of the education system, whether in its governance structures or in its curricular and examination reforms.

1.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

- T
- F
- T

Check Your Progress 2

- Indian education is a complex mix of tradition and modernity. The impact of high levels of scholarship and spirituality established over several centuries and the preponderance of modern education which was initially launched to support governmental infrastructure, are the prime movers of educational

development in India. Perhaps, what India needs is a blend of both, and a new mindset that can support an integrated system.

- b) The cases of South Africa and Eritrea reveal that changes at large in society occur only through cultural change, in which 'education' play a vital role. The other issue is that educational change takes shape within the broad cultural canvas of a society.

Check Your Progress 3

The three types of resource systems are: (i) academic agencies, (ii) administrative or bureaucratic agencies, (iii) non-formal and non-governmental agencies. Out of these three, academic agencies are more capable in designing, processing and diffusing innovations because of the academic expertise available with them.

Check Your Progress 4

- a) F b) T c) T

Check Your Progress 5

- a) T b) F c) T d) T

1.8 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 2 **FACTORS AFFECTING AND FACILITATING CHANGE**

Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Objectives
- 2.3 Change Process
 - 2.3.1 Dimensions of Change
- 2.4 Factors Affecting Change
 - 2.4.1 Resistance to Change
 - 2.4.2 Sources of Resistance
 - 2.4.3 Accepting Resistance
 - 2.4.4 Management of Resistance
- 2.5 Factors Facilitating Change Process
 - 2.5.1 Role and Characteristics of a Change Agent
 - 2.5.2 Skills of Change Agent
- 2.6 Organizations and their Orientation to Change
- 2.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.8 Check Your Progress: Possible Answers
- 2.9 References and Further Readings

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

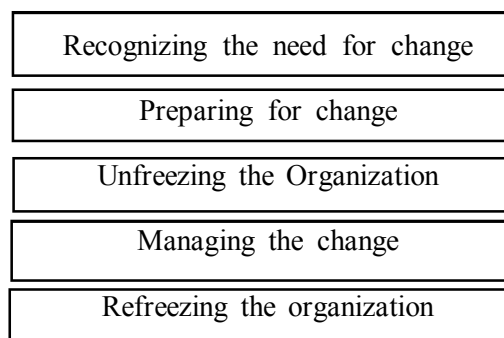


Fig. 1: Operations and the Management of Change by Vic Gilgeocis

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:

- 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 coaxing 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 into 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

- 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.
- Security:** People with a high need for security are likely to resist change because it threatens their feelings of safety.
- 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 • Make expression of resistance safe • Ask all for it
2	Honoring • Listen • Acknowledge • Reinforce Permission to resist
3	Exploring • Distinguish authentic from pseudo resistance
4	Rechecking • 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 and 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.

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UNIT 3 QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Objectives
- 3.3 Quality as Culture
 - 3.3.1 Quality Management and Organisational Change
 - 3.3.2 What is Quality?
 - 3.3.3 Quality Assurance Mechanisms in Higher Education
 - 3.3.4 Quality Assurance Processes in Universities
- 3.4 Quality Management in ODL Institutions
 - 3.4.1 The Imperatives of Quality Management in ODL
 - 3.4.2 What Constitutes Quality in ODL?
 - 3.4.3 The Quality Assessment Processes
 - 3.4.4 Internal Quality Assurance Systems
 - 3.4.5 External Quality Assurance Agencies
- 3.5 Let Us sum UP
- 3.6 Check Your Progress: Possible Answers
- 3.7 References and Suggested Readings

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous two Units, we discussed at length the ways in which organisations change, what drives those changes and how, irrespective of the nature and strength of resistance, organisations do ultimately change. It could be a painful process; it might require persuasion, cajoling and even coercion. Resistance to change is a human reaction; often the fear of the unknown. We mentioned elsewhere that education is notoriously slow to change. It is not just academic orthodoxy that resisted change; education as an area of social activity thrived for centuries within a closed environment, immune from all pressures of competition. Higher education was the exclusive preserve of a few, and this exclusiveness gave it an aura of inviolability. The last half century changed all that; higher education is no more an elitist pursuit. It is mass education now. This process of inclusion, or opening of the doors of higher education to the masses, brought with it a host of issues. The costs and benefits, the relevance of what is taught, the ways of teaching and learning, and not the least, the overall effectiveness of the system, began to occupy centre-stage.

All these brought about significant changes in the organisational culture of educational institutions; the 21st century university is no longer a replica of what a liberal university was about half a century ago. We had mentioned in Block 2, while exploring the world of higher education today, that the university invests more time and effort today convincing its patrons and clients alike about why they should continue to get their support and what they are doing to deserve that support. The measure on which they take their claim is their continuing efforts to maintain high quality in teaching and research. As a genre of a new class of

institutions, not older than half a century, the ODL institutions face greater challenges. At every turn, they have to prove themselves that they are not second to any other when it comes to the question of quality. How do they do it? We shall explore some of the relevant issues in this Unit and how they impact on the organisational culture of ODL institutions.

3.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- analyse the factors that contributed to major changes in the organisation of the higher education system in the last half century;
- discuss how quality came to occupy centre stage in the discourse of higher education;
- explain why quality concerns are specially relevant to open and distance learning institutions;
- examine the mechanisms that should be in place to manage the quality issues in distance education; and
- identify these concerns that impact the organisational culture of ODL institutions.

3.3 QUALITY AS CULTURE

In the previous Units, while discussing the nature of organisations and their values and principles, we mentioned that the culture of an organisation is a determining factor that shapes its responses to changes in its environment and the ways in which it adjusts itself to those changes. We also identified briefly the factors that influence environmental changes; government policies, technological advances, discovery of new products or processes, increasing competition, and so on. One might argue that all these are attributes of a business environment, and that education has precious little to do with it. Not quite; in one form or another, these environmental changes have a significant impact on education as well. For instance, the governments may announce a freeze on its grants to universities forcing them to look for mobilisation of resources from elsewhere; the impact of ICTs on the teaching and learning processes might require new pedagogical tools, discovery of new knowledge might need new skills for its application; the constantly increasing social demand for higher education and training and the never ending efforts of institutions to attract more and better students would call for ways of assessing their performance, and not the least, the questions that potential students and their parents might ask about the relevance and utility of what many institutions have to offer would need some answers. We have found that these concerns have found some popular answers as well; the rating and ranking of institutions on the basis of their performance; the record of placement of graduates in the job market; sponsorship and funding promised by industry; and so on.

At the heart of all these endeavours is what has come to be known as Quality Assurance in education. The factors that we identified in forcing the issue of change on educational institutions are not peculiar to any type of institution or to any particular mode of education delivery. The race is among the traditional institutions, for instance, the top 100 or 500 universities in the world, or in a region like Asia or Europe; the best business school or the best engineering institute; and so on. It is with this kind of competition with the world's long established universities that ODL institutions have to struggle to establish their credibility, their relevance and the quality of their programmes and performance. Having said that,

we should also admit that the constituency that ODL institutions serve is vastly different from that of the traditional institutions, and from that perspective, there is no significant competition between the two types. But it does not follow that the nature of the constituency justifies poor quality; ODL institutions are more under pressure to establish that the quality of what they offer is as good as those offered by the traditional universities. We shall focus our attention in the following sections on how quality assurance has become an issue of the organisational culture for ODL institutions.

3.3.1 Quality Management and Organisational Change

In the previous two units, while discussing the several issues associated with the ways in which organisations evolve and change, we had occasion to look at some of the factors that affect change and also why there is resistance to change from inside. In that context, we also made a brief reference to the organisational culture as a major attribute that resists or supports change. What is this organisational culture? Culture is a difficult concept to define precisely; but everyone knows what it is and most people do sense it correctly. In the context of an organisation, culture is the personality of the organisation, comprising the principles, values, norms and the behaviour of its members towards one another as well as the world outside. Depending upon what the organisation stands for, there could be wide variations in its culture, for instance, a business organisation seeking to maximise its profits would have one set of values while a hospital would have a completely different set. And a university that seeks to shape and develop young minds would nurture its culture differently from both.

Academic organisations generally function in a stable environment. Unlike business organisations, members of the academic community in any institution are not exposed to grave risks arising from fall in profits, loss of market share and obsolescence of its products. Nevertheless, as we said just a while ago, this assumption about stability is constantly being questioned. Today, universities and other educational institutions are under scrutiny; what they teach, how they teach and what contributions they make to meet the expectations of people are all under review. The concerns about the quality of education and training are precisely the issues that education is today grappling with. And when it comes to distance education that started its journey with a handicap that it is a poor substitute for formal education, the issue assumed greater importance. It has to prove itself at every stage; it has to establish that it is just as good.

With the concerns for quality becoming all pervasive in education, both formal and ODL institutions presently invest a great deal of effort and resources to assure their constituents that what they offer is of the best quality possible. They have established mechanisms within their organisations to regularly monitor and assess the quality of their programmes and services, and more importantly, there are also institutional mechanisms outside the institutions at national levels to assure the quality of institutions and their performance. All this has brought a major change in the outlook and attitudes of educational institutions across the world, a cultural change in more ways than one. In what follows, we shall examine the issues behind this concern about quality management and how they have impacted the organisational behaviour of educational institutions, particularly ODL institutions.

3.3.2 What is Quality?

There is no universally accepted definition of quality. According to Mukhopadhyay (2005), “Some have even contended that there is not much use defining quality; for it is essentially relative – what is ‘great’ for one is not ‘up to the mark’ for another. Yet, quality management has attracted human genius all over the world”. It appears from the extensive reviews that the concept of quality and quality

management takes a much different meaning when applied to education. Sallis (1996) traced the growth of quality management from the 1930s through various stages ranging from Inspection, Quality Control, Quality Assurance, etc. to Total Quality Management (TQM).

There are several techniques of quality management. The first technique of quality management was Quality Control. Quality Control in its broadest sense refers to a spectrum of managerial methods for attempting to maintain the quality of manufactured articles at a desired level (International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, 1979). Quality control takes place after the event (Fidler, 1996) and its purpose is the detection and elimination of products that do not match the product specification. In industries, therefore, Quality Control goes through the process of picking up sampled products after production and scrutinising them as per pre-determined quality standards by using several statistical quality control techniques.

The Quality Assurance method involves designing systems to deliver quality before the event (Fidler, 1996). As the title suggests, the emphasis in this technique is on assurance rather than on detection and elimination of products that do not conform to standards. The emphasis in this case is on product design, and the techniques used ensure that the materials, equipment as well as the processes used are of the right quality. Total Quality Management is an extension of the quality assurance approach. The emphasis is not only on managing quality at the input and process levels but in developing a quality culture among all employees. In TQM, customers are the focus. Based on the changing customer needs, TQM anticipates and changes the products to meet the changed needs. Thus, TQM is dynamic and does not lend itself to any definition of quality with any degree of finality. These techniques have given rise to Six Sigma, a quantitative concept derived from the distribution of population in the normal probability curve.

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.

a) What is organisational culture? (Answer in about 30 words)

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b) How academic organisations differ to that of business organization? (Answer in about 40 words)

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3.3.3 Quality Assurance Mechanisms in Higher Education

As we mentioned, distance education had always had to struggle to establish parity of esteem with formal full-time education. While a degree obtained from any traditional university was always considered a privilege and recognition of merit, a distance education degree holder had to establish that he/she too is just as good. This situation arose for a variety of reasons; first, one went to a distance education institution because he/she could not get into a full-time regular institution.

Second, distance education institutions do not insist on rigid entry norms implying that entry is not selective or merit-based. Third, distance learners do not have the benefit of constant interaction and guidance from their teacher and self-study cannot be good substitute for guided tutorials. These perceptions about distance learners place them at a disadvantage. But, on the other hand, it could be argued that a break from studies at some point in life for any reason like the need to earn livelihood, family compulsions or the lack of means to afford higher education at a young age, need not be permanent disabilities to pursue further education at any stage in life. Most people learn from work; those at work are better motivated and would be good learners if only they have the opportunity to pursue further education. Sound though these arguments are, the social perception that distance education is not as good as full-time formal education continues to persist.

It is this deficit in public perceptions about the effectiveness of distance education that prompted many distance education providers to search for answers to satisfy the sceptics. To begin with, the 'fitness-for-the purpose' yardstick was used to establish that a distance education qualification served the same purpose that any qualification obtained through full-time formal studies did. Generally, the measure of the fitness argument was employment. With higher education expanding massively, and unemployment looming large, the fitness argument suffered severely. The issue is no longer about the fitness of any mode of education, but of the processes and outcomes of education itself. Thus the emphasis began to shift to the quality of education per se, and within that larger question, on the content and processes adopted by different modes of delivery of educational services. One of the most significant outcomes of this shift in emphasis was the emergence of Quality Assurance Agencies in education across the world.

In the USA, where there is a long tradition of private universities and other institutions of higher education, the instrument of accreditation was designed to assure the general public about the standing of various institutions and their qualifications. These accrediting agencies were formed on a regional basis; there were also several of them for different professional areas and types of institutions. Their purpose was primarily to ensure that the institutions and their programmes were of acceptable quality, and an accredited institution and its qualifications were recognised throughout the USA for employment or further education or for the practice of a profession. Most of these accrediting organisations were non-governmental associations. In the early 1970s, most of these associations came together and formed what came to be known as the Council of Post-secondary Accreditation (COPA) with the purpose of ensuring the quality of post-secondary education provision. In 1996, the Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) was formed as a successor to all existing non-governmental organisations in the field of accreditation to coordinate the US accreditation process. Presently, the CHEA has over 3000 US universities and colleges as its members.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for higher education in the UK was established in 1997. The QAA's prime concern is to safeguard public interest in the sound standards of higher education qualifications in the UK and to inform and encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. QAA is an independent body funded by subscriptions from universities and colleges and through contracts with higher education funding councils in the UK. All universities and colleges that provide higher education in the UK are autonomous and each of them is responsible for the standards of the awards it makes and the quality of education it provides. Each has its own internal quality assurance procedures. QAA checks how well they meet their responsibilities, identify good practices and make recommendations for improvement. It also publishes guidelines to help institutions to develop systems to ensure students have high quality experience. In the performance of its responsibilities, QAA conducts reviews

of universities and colleges; publishes reports on the confidence that can be placed in an institution's management of standards and quality; provides guidance to universities and colleges on maintaining academic standards and improving quality; investigates causes of concern about academic standards and quality; and advise governments on applications for degree awarding powers from institutions.

Similar mechanisms are in place in several other countries. For instance, Australia has the Australian Universities Quality Assurance and New Zealand has the Universities Academic Audit Unit.

3.3.4 Quality Assurance Processes in Universities

What we have mentioned in the preceding section are all Quality Assurance Agencies functioning outside universities. These agencies perform their functions on the basic principle that maintenance of quality in higher education is fundamentally the responsibility of the universities themselves. The external agencies are primarily reviewing and reporting mechanisms that inform the public and other stakeholders about the state of the quality of performance of individual institutions. How do individual universities then address the task of assuring the quality of their performance? We shall explore this issue in some detail.

In the UK, the QAA is the external agency. The internal Quality Assurance System in the UK universities is based on a model that encourages individual institutions to learn from experience, and each other, continuously. The independent QZA conducted regular reviews, and the Funding Councils reserve the right to withdraw funding where shortcomings are not adequately addressed. The internal quality assurance system comprises several components. These are:

Employer Focus: Universities engage with employers in several ways. They obtain feedback from industry about the performance of their graduates through industrial liaison groups or employer surveys. They also engage with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies involving employers in programme approval, monitoring and review processes through consultation about the curriculum and market prior to development of programmes. These consultations are particularly close in the design and delivery of particular courses, and employers or practitioners are associated with student assessment.

External examining arrangements in the UK are important component of the UK universities quality assurance system. Examiners are typically asked to report on a variety of issues that include: appropriateness of the academic standards set for the awards, the rigours of the assessment processes and their fairness in ensuring equity of treatment, the standards of student performance in the programmes for which they have been appointed to examine, the comparability of standards and student achievements with those of other institutions, and good practices they have identified. The external examiners report to the Vice-Chancellors and their reports are considered by the university and its internal quality assurance committees.

In professional areas like medicine and engineering and technology, there is a system of accreditation of courses. Several Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) are involved in the design, approval, monitoring and review of courses with some universities that have arrangement for joint accreditation and/or validation of awards.

Formal and effective procedures exist in all universities to allow them to judge the effectiveness of their programmes in achieving their stated aims, and the success of students in attaining the intended learning outcomes. These procedures involve the views of external examiners, reports from accrediting bodies, student feedback, feedback from employers, student progress and other relevant data. The QAA checks how the universities maintain their own academic standards and quality.

They review and report on how the universities meet their responsibilities, identify good practice and make recommendations for improvement.

It will be interesting to see how these processes work in the context of any specific institution. For instance, the University of Cambridge has a very elaborate system for quality assurance. The Cambridge University's web site www.admin.cam.ac.uk provides some details of its system in "An Introduction to Quality Assurance and Enhancement at the University". The components of this system include a statement of policy on quality assurance, guidelines for its implementation, procedures for changes to courses, reviews by the General Board, Programme specifications and an annual quality update. The Committee structure includes a Board of Graduate Studies, Colleges, Councils of the Schools, General Board and its Education Committee, Student Masters Committee, Faculty Boards, Teaching Committees, Degree Committees, Graduate Committees, etc. The primary responsibility for teaching provision rests with the individual faculties and departments, each of which has developed its own culture and approach to teaching. Local quality assurance is set within a flexible framework provided by the General Board; this ensures that policies and practices are fit for purpose and relate directly to the academic discipline concerned. Decisions on curriculum, teaching methods and forms of assessment essentially rest with those directly responsible for the course. It is fundamental to the University's approach to the assurance of teaching quality that this local determination of provision carries with it significant delegated responsibility for assuring quality.

The internal quality assurance provision involves a series of measures that include:

- Strategic planning of learning and teaching done annually in terms of course reviews, teaching and learning strategies, available resources and external funding regime and new directions in the study of the subject;
- Reviewing learning, teaching and assessment activities that cover curriculum content and design (at least annually), teaching and learning resources available, admission processes, etc. These reviews would be stimulated by the annual learning and teaching quality updates, reports of the General Board's learning and teaching review committees, and reports of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.
- An internal Quality Contact which is normally the first person with whom the Education section will liaise on all quality assurance matters. The role of this Quality Contact is to receive information from the Education Section about the University's quality assurance and enhancement procedures; disseminate this information to relevant officers or committees in the faculty or department; coordinate any required action and inform the Education Section; and provide information relevant to quality assurance and institutional review to the Education Section.

We have chosen Cambridge, one of the best universities in the world, to highlight the importance attached to quality assurance even by the best universities in the world. More importantly, the Cambridge example provides you with an overview of the ways in which quality assurance mechanisms work as well as the rigours and meticulousness associated with their processes. The significance of this example is that though the processes appear to be elaborate and time-consuming the university seems to have effortlessly internalised these processes and has firmly established them as integral components of its academic culture. And this is what we called the organisational culture. In other words, quality assurance is not just a one-time affair; nor is it some kind of a ritualistic exercise that universities are somehow forced to undertake. When once these efforts are built into the very foundation of a university's being, they become a part of its culture, and an enduring commitment for every member of the university community.

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 main components of Quality Assurance and Enhancement at the University of Cambridge? (Answer in about 50 words)

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3.4 QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN ODL INSTITUTIONS

We mentioned earlier that open and distance learning as a system has survived in spite of several perceptions about its weaknesses. Fundamentally, these perceived weaknesses are only the symbols that separate an elitist system from a mass system. An elitist system is exclusive, highly selective and often beyond the reach of the masses. A mass system, on the other hand, is inclusive, easily accessible and is within the reach of anyone who wishes to be a part of it. In some ways, the quality debate is an expression of the exclusiveness of the formal system as against the open door policy that mass systems tend to follow. For that reason, ODL systems tend to begin with a handicap, reflected in the accumulated social prejudice over several decades, that it can never be the best, and certainly not the best. Perhaps, this is a prejudice that ODL systems will have to learn to live with, though when it comes to the fitness-for-purpose-test, ODL might turn out to be just as good.

It is because of this prejudice that ODL systems have to go that extra mile to prove that they can deliver the fitness criterion at par with many formal institutions. It is important to remember that the best universities in the world are only a tiny fraction of the total number of higher education institutions across the globe and that many of the well known universities in many countries do not even figure in the list of top 500 universities in the world. It does not follow that unless one is among the best, one has no place in the sun. What is important is that to stay in the field an ODL institution has to deliver good quality education and training to the large number of learners that enrol with them and earn their good will.

3.4.1 The Imperatives of Quality Management in ODL

It is not enough to prove the critics wrong; it is even more important that the beneficiaries feel convinced that the time and effort invested in pursuing programmes of education and training through the distance mode were worth the risk. Earlier in this Unit, we mentioned that the client groups of the two systems are vastly different; while the formal institutions generally attract the school-leaving population of the age group 18+, the learner groups in distance education programmes are generally adult learners, most of who might be at work. Life and work would have taught them a great deal though not in the form of structured knowledge; and they could be highly motivated to learn more and catch up with the opportunity they lost early in life. In other words, it would not be fair to argue that learning can take place only in an uninterrupted continuum, and a

break in that continuum would compromise the ability and willingness to learn. On the other hand, it could be argued that age and maturity have endowed adult learners with a seriousness of purpose and their eagerness in looking for opportunities to learn comes from deeper convictions about the need for acquiring knowledge and skills in the fields of their choice rather than filling the early years of young people's lives.

That brings us to the question whether distance education systems can deliver good quality education. Throughout this course, we have dealt with, at length, the methods and practices followed by distance education systems, and we do not want to go over them all over again. What we will focus instead is on the larger issues of assuring the quality and standards of the processes involved in the delivery of education through the distance mode. We are assuming that the methods of delivery are not the only determinants of quality if the programmes are relevant, their contents and curricula are carefully prepared, the learning packages are well prepared and distributed on time, learners are provided all the necessary support services like tutorials, counselling and guidance, and the student assessment procedures are satisfactory. It is these services that we call the delivery services in distance education. The significant missing element from these delivery systems is the engaged classroom and the talking teacher!

Why is the quality of these services so important? As students of distance education, you know that there has to be some mediation between the learners and their institutions and this mediation takes place through the materials (learning packages), the tutorial services (contact programmes, online interaction, satellite delivered video conferences/lessons, or interactive media packages like the DVD) and the level of comfort that learners feel with their institutions while pursuing their programmes. This comfort level depends on a variety of factors like timely response to their problems and concerns, easy availability of learning packages and other learning resources, effective and easily accessible academic counselling, and above all, a friendly and encouraging learning environment. Essentially, all these together constitute the quality of the learning experience for a distance learner. We shall now look at these elements that constitute quality in distance education.

3.4.2 What Constitutes Quality in ODL?

We shall take up the elements listed above in three broad categories of services; Courses, Curricula and Learning Materials; Delivery Mechanisms; and Student Services.

Courses, curricula and learning materials

Various models are used by distance education institutions for developing their courses and programmes. We mentioned that the UKOU follows an elaborate Course Team model in which subject experts, instructional designers, media specialists, editors and graphic artists all participate to develop each course. The development process goes through several stages of reviews and revisions to ensure that the end product is of the best quality. The participation of so diverse a group of specialists ensures that the learners do not feel the absence of a talking teacher while using the learning packages. This model is followed by several universities like Athabasca in Canada and Deakin University in Australia. Some universities like Fern Universitat in Germany and Universidad Estatal a Distancia in Costa Rica follow the Author Contract Model. In this model, the entire responsibility for developing a course is contracted to a single teacher or a group. Variations to this model include course development approaches through specially trained faculty, workshop outputs, text transformation and wrap around materials that use standard text books.

Indian universities also follow a variety of course development practices. From its inception, IGNOU has adopted a mechanism for quality oriented curriculum and course development. A committee of subject experts, media personnel, graphic artists and editors settle the content and structure of each course. The work of this committee is coordinated by a member of the faculty who would be the course coordinator. After the detailed structure is settled, the best teachers and subject specialists in the country are invited to write the course material which is then transformed into the self-learning format. These draft material then go through a stage of content and format editing to conform to the house style and presentation. The graphic artists contribute the illustrations, charts and graphs where necessary. Appropriate elements from the texts are then chosen to make electronic media packages like audio/video programmes and tapes, etc.

As the national university, IGNOU has set the standards for course development in distance education in India and many state open universities and distance education institutions of conventional universities now follow this practice or adopt IGNOU materials for their programmes. Some of these institutions have also developed their own practices. For example, the distance education directorates of conventional universities usually decide their courses and curricula in the same manner as the formal programmes are developed, namely through the faculty/departmental initiatives. There has been little or no attention to the adoption of self-learning styles in the preparation of materials though these institutions are also now recognising the significance of adopting such practices.

Delivery Mechanisms

For any distance learner, the first experience is about what he/she gets as the study materials. These consist of printed materials that include the course specific study materials as well as the study guides, programme guides, manuals, etc. These materials assist the students not just about what to study, but about how to study as well. For several programmes, there are besides print materials, radio and television programmes, and audio/video and satellite-based programmes.

The mainstay of all distance education programmes in most parts of the world is print material. Admittedly, the quality of these materials determines the quality of education provided by most distance education institutions. Instructional science concludes that structured self-learning print materials are pedagogically more efficient and scientific than other forms of material. The fact that most distance education institutions across the world use some form of structured learning materials suggests that the benchmark for the quality of materials is its structural form.

Non-print materials, especially audio/video programmes, are commonly used by all open universities in India. Some of them have in-house production facilities and many acquire them from other institutions. Conventional universities offering distance education programmes do not use much non-print materials. Audio/video materials are a significant component of the instructional system of the IGNOU. As we have said in Unit 1 of Block 4, IGNOU has not just major production facilities; it is also the hub of all satellite delivered instruction for all institutions in India. It would be difficult to make any value judgement on the quality of these programmes; nevertheless, surveys and studies indicate that they are effective in delivering instruction for many programmes.

Student Services

Distance learners need a variety of services and support systems from their institutions to take them through any major programme that can, due to the flexibility of its structure, take fairly long period of time, extending up to as long as eight years. You will agree that it is too long a period to sustain the interest of even the most ardent learner. What keeps them going? First, of course, is their own motivation and determination. But the institutions also have to do their

part. It is this part that we called the student services. It has several components; academic, administrative as well as supportive and encouraging.

The academic support systems comprise the facilities provided for learners to interact with their tutors and fellow students. This is a vital component. Often, distance learners, left to themselves, find it very difficult to wade through the materials and absorb them; they need some help in understanding them. Tutors at study centres perform this critical function. It is not that every distance learner needs such tutorial support; most can study independently. But for those who can look forward to a contact point where they can get guidance, advice and sometimes, effective tutorial support, the learner support system is crucial. Some programmes and courses would require practical or experimental work; facilities have to be provided for it. Similarly, assignments and examinations. Learners need to be sure about how, when and where they can do all these and the ease with which they can access these facilities and services would determine the effectiveness of the support system.

Administrative support services cover a range of functions and services. Beginning with useful and comprehensive information about courses, programmes, their structure, entry requirements, fees to be paid and learner support services available, potential learners need to be convinced about the processes involved in the successful completion of any programme. Once they have enrolled, they need to be provided with all the learning materials on time; it requires setting up adequate production and distribution systems and facilities. If electronic media are in use, learners need to have access to reception centres or play back facilities; satellite delivered programmes could be accessed at homes or specially created reception centres. And finally, audio and video tapes could be supplied for personal use. The technology facilities needed for all these have to be set up and maintained. Besides, student record maintenance is especially important. For institutions that have large enrolments, accurate and reliable information about students, their performance records, fees paid and due, grade cards and certification are all very critical for the quality of the performance of an institution.

A distance education provider also needs to help students with a range of services that might include advice on suitability of specific programmes, how a particular programme can benefit him/her, the manner in which the programme can be pursued in appropriate modules depending upon the learner's convenience, financial help that might be available and the employment prospects on completion of any programme. These learner friendly initiatives bring institutions closer to the learner communities and establish enduring relationships between them.

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 is the basic difference between the target groups of conventional and ODL institutions? (Answer in about 40 words)

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3.4.3 The Quality Assessment Processes

Having identified the core elements of the distance education provision that impact on its effectiveness and quality, we shall now proceed to examine the criteria

by which the quality of the provision is measured and assessed. We shall begin with the programmes/courses and the learning materials.

Programme development processes

All programmes are expected to be developed with a clear objective in view. These need to be explicitly stated in the programme guides. These would include:

- Objective of the programme; special target group, linkage with industry and the world of work; special knowledge/skills to be developed; job opportunities that could be expected, etc.
- The methods of development that could be identified from the quality perspective would be in-house, adopted, adapted, translated or transcreated.
- The structure of the programme: these could include its modularity, multidisciplinary approach, and learning through hands-on training/skill-based, workplace-based training, and/or a mix of these.
- Flexibility of programmes reflected in provisions for entry and exit, time and place and choice of courses.
- Special provisions for horizontal mobility, lateral entry, credit transfer and credit accumulation.

Curriculum Development and Instructional Design

In order to assure the quality of the programmes, distance education providers have to explicitly state the processes by which they have designed and developed their programmes. These processes would include:

- The basis on which programmes were identified (need survey and analysis, sponsored by employer groups, professional bodies, etc. for example).
- Involvement of external experts/agencies in development of programmes.
- The level of the programmes, coverage of content to match the level and the standards of expected outcomes.
- The status of approvals for the programmes from the concerned statutory/regulatory authority.
- The institutions/agencies, if any, that are collaborating in developing the programme.
- Learner-friendly nature of the instructional design and provision for learner support including media support.
- Currency of the curriculum and periodicity of revision/updating.
- Theory-practice integration in the learning style.
- Arrangements for hands-on, practical and work-based learning.

Delivery Mechanisms

The quality of print materials varies widely among distance education institutions. We mentioned in the previous section that each institution presents its print material in a style and format that are unique to it. For instance, IGNOU print materials are presented in a distinct style that reflects not just the structure of the course, but also its contents in a form that is easily captured by the learners. The design of the format is done by education technology experts and instructional designers and the content goes through several rounds of editing to ensure that the house style is maintained. There are in addition illustrations through photographs, sketches,

line drawings, cartoons, etc. The state open universities that are networked with IGNOU tend to follow a similar style. While the final output of the state open universities may not be fully comparable with that of the IGNOU, owing mainly to the inadequacy of resources at their disposal, in terms of the quality of the presentation, instructional design and structure, they are just as good as the IGNOU materials.

As we had mentioned earlier, the picture of the learning materials of the dual mode institutions in India are as varied in style, format and structure as the universities themselves. Traditionally, these materials were no more than expanded lecture notes in differently prepared and produced. With the growth of open university and distance learning system in India during the last couple of decades, dual mode universities also have begun to give great attention to the materials that they prepare and produce. They are now engaged in redesigning their materials and converting them in to the self-learning format. Generally, the quality of print and paper also leave much to be desired.

Non-print materials, as we have noted, are an integral part of the learning materials that IGNOU uses for nearly all of its programmes. IGNOU has its own production staff that consists of producers, editors, camera men, sound engineers, technicians and other technical support staff. It has also set up audio and video studios fully equipped with highly sophisticated equipment. Some of these programmes are produced within the studios and some are shot in the field. Some of these programmes are rated outstanding and have won awards, it cannot be claimed that all the electronic media materials are uniformly of a high quality and are effective. In recent times, several state open universities have also begun focusing on the need to make audio and video lessons and interactive teleconferencing a part of their teaching-learning strategies. Some of them have also set up production facilities and use local television centres and radio stations to broadcast the programmes. The dual mode universities, with some notable exceptions, have not so far gone in for any significant use of non-print materials as part of their learning packages. Nevertheless, many of them use radio broadcasts as a medium to reach out to their students by transmitting recorded lessons through the local stations.

Interactive television is a recent innovation in the distance learning system. We have discussed, earlier in this course, how IGNOU has, with the support of the Indian Space Research Organisation, established a satellite linked network of radio and television transmission system that has the whole country within its reach. This system connects one teaching end, housed in the IGNOU studios, learning ends at different locations in the country. This link presently provides one-way video and two-way audio communication. The audio communication system is supported also by telephone, fax, and now computer communication through e-mail. This facility is also available to other educational institutions.

Student Services

In the previous section, we have dealt with the different elements that go into the provision of effective learner support services that is the backbone of a distance education system. First, there is the tutorial support or academic counselling. It need not be compulsory; only those who need it will avail of these services. Because it is not compulsory, the provision for tutorial support tends to become indifferent and of poor quality impacting on the institution's credibility and quality. Secondly, learner support is not just about the provision per se or about its duration; it is more about what happens during these interactions between learners and their tutors/counsellors. And that has a lot to do with the training of the tutors/counsellors, the intensity of involvement of the learners and their tutors during their interaction, and not the least, the seriousness with which both learners and counsellors approach this provision.

There are similar concerns about the provision of other services as well. For instance, the ease with which learners can access information on a variety of issues ranging from courses, materials, fees, registration procedures, assignments, examinations and grades is typically the hallmark of a friendly distance learning environment. It certainly impacts the quality of the learners' experience as a distance learner. Similarly, feedback on assignments and project work is a crucial element that encourages the learners and eggs them on to better levels of performance.

Having identified the critical elements of the distance education provision that contribute to its quality, we shall now proceed to examine the criteria by which their quality is assessed and the agencies and mechanisms that are in place to assess the quality of distance education. We need to emphasise the point that this unit is about quality management in distance education institutions and its impact on organisational change and renewal and we need to stay with that focus.

3.4.4 Internal Quality Assurance Systems

We began our discussion in this Unit with a reference to the culture of an organisation that allows it to manage the quality of its performance and make changes in its structures and processes to meet the demands of quality management. This organisational feature is very critical to all educational institutions today, and more so to distance education institutions. We have seen how reputed universities that have centuries of traditions behind them are concerned about the quality of their provision, and how they make sustained efforts to assure their stakeholders that they are doing everything in their power and means to ensure that the quality of their provision is not compromised. They do this by building in their existing structures and processes appropriate systems and procedures to inform one another and the outside world about every action, every decision, and every proposal that has an impact on the quality of their provision. These might relate to such areas as curriculum changes, revised assessment procedures, new teaching strategies, provision of new learning resources, and not the least, induction of technologies to enhance the teaching processes and the learning experiences. This is a continuous process that goes on all the year round, year after year and is certainly not a one-off exercise. It is this attribute that we referred to as the organisational culture of a quality-conscious educational institution in today's environment.

Having said that, we should concede that this attribute is not yet part of the universal culture. There are several universities in the developing countries, India included, that consider themselves immune to the concerns about quality. They take shelter under the false notions about their autonomy, arguing that what they do is the best and they do not have to hold themselves accountable to any one for their action or inaction. This argument is based on the premise that as autonomous institutions, these universities always act in the best interests of their students, and as long as there is demand for admission to their programmes that far exceeds their carrying capacity, and there is no threat to their survival, they are not under any obligation to fight competition, or take any special measures to attract better student enrolment or to close any departments or programmes. There are reports of many Indian universities, for example, including some very reputed ones that take years to revise their curricula even for ordinary degree programmes and yet do not feel themselves answerable for such delays or inaction. It is part of the developing country education systems that they are still not fully exposed to any threats from competition, external or internal, and are safely ensconced in their unassailable cocoons.

Distance education institutions, of necessity, cannot afford this luxury. First, they have to establish themselves as serious contenders for a place at par with the

formal system in the educational pattern of the country. Secondly, it is their credibility and the quality of their provision that can earn them that place. And, not the least, most of them still have to establish their legitimacy, and not treated usurpers.

While the formal system, at least in India, is not known to have established any enduring internal quality assurance processes, some of them have submitted themselves to a rigorous assessment of their performance by external accreditation agencies. We shall discuss the roles and functions of these external agencies in the next section. What we are focusing in this section is on the internal processes for quality assurance. It needs to be emphasised here that accreditation of institutions is not a mandatory or compulsory requirement so far in India. It is voluntary and a university or college can offer itself for assessment and accreditation by one of the two national agencies, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) established by the UGC for general education universities and colleges and the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) established by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) for technical education institutions (offering degree and diploma programmes in engineering, architecture, management, pharmacy, etc). We have discussed the roles and functions of these agencies in Block 2 and will not go over them again.

What is important and relevant for the present discussion is a process that has been established for the purpose of accreditation. It involves the preparation of a self-assessment report by each institution that wishes to be considered for accreditation. This self-assessment report touches upon every aspect of programme determination, course preparation, teaching processes, assessment procedures, infrastructure provision, governance system and funding. This self-assessment process, in some ways, builds into the organisational discipline of the institutions some elements of a quality awareness culture. It has an enduring value as it is self-directed and internally nurtured, and yet, it is still not an essential component of the organisational structure of all higher education institutions in India. Gradually, things are changing with increasing competition, many institutions are going for quality initiatives and opting for accreditation.

The apex role of ODL system had gone to UGC from DEC, since then quite a few changes like accreditation of ODL institutions are seriously taken by UGC and related authorities. UGC's thrust to improve the quality of higher education institutions (including ODL institutions) resulted in the scheme of 'Paramarsh' a new initiative for mentoring the non-accredited institutions to enable them get accredited by 2022 (Paramarsh, 2019).

As for distance education institutions, there are concerns about quality, but they are still matters of discussion at seminars and workshops, and very little for action at the institutional levels. As we had noted in Unit 2 of Block 4, the Distance Education Council (DEC), established under the IGNOU Act, had initiated some measures for the accreditation of distance education institutions in the country. These steps also followed the pattern set by the two other agencies, namely, NAAC and NBA. Though the DEC insisted that accreditation was mandatory, in the absence of clear legally binding requirements, the progress on this front has been tardy. The net result of all these has been the clear absence of any visible and enduring quality assurance mechanisms and processes as internal to the distance education institutions and their organisational structures within India.

It has to be noted here that initially even IGNOU does not have any built-in mechanism that assures the quality of all its programmes and services. In some sense, it can be said that IGNOU lives on its own reputation as the lead university at the national level. As we had occasion to say elsewhere, IGNOU had, from its very inception, been able to attract some of the best scholars and teachers in the country to contribute to its efforts and this contribution reflected in the

quality of its learning packages gave the university a head start that a few could match. And with the richness of other resources, both physical and intellectual, including technological, at its disposal, IGNOU does enjoy quite an enviable position, and all that it does turn out to be the benchmarks for others to emulate. As we said in Unit 2 of Block 3, the guidelines for programme development, preparation of instructional materials, provision of student services, student assessment systems and other relevant processes developed by the then Distance Education Council for accreditation of distance education institutions and programmes are all based on what IGNOU has been doing. While the DEC insisted that all universities and institutions offering distance education programmes were mandatorily obliged to secure its approval, IGNOU as a university does not submit itself to any such approval processes. In consequence, there are no recognisable and identifiable quality assurance mechanisms in place in the distance education systems in India. All that can be said is that there are some guidelines formulated by the DEC and the observance of those guidelines reflected the efforts to ensure the quality of distance education in India.

Because of IGNOU's standing in ODL system in the country, UGC gave exception from ODL guidelines formulated by it and asked IGNOU to maintain its own standards. Accordingly IGNOU recently established internal quality mechanisms and standardised, various quality processes that are in place already with the help of these quality measures, IGNOU has submitted itself for assessment and accreditation by NAAC (national accreditation body for both traditional and ODL systems).

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.

What are the main characteristics of IGNOU that distinguishes from others in ODL system? (Answer in about 50 words)

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3.4.5 External Quality Assurance Agencies

While discussing the quality assurance systems in place in the area of education earlier in this Unit, we have drawn attention to agencies like the Quality Assurance Agency in the UK, the Council of Higher Education Accreditation in the USA, the Australian Universities Quality Assurance, etc. These agencies regularly make assessments of the performance of the universities and report their findings to all the stakeholders to inform them of the levels of performance of the universities, their weaknesses, if any, and what they need to do to improve their performance.

What comes out from this discussion is that a system of accreditation, or some kind of an underwriting from an external agency, testifies regularly to the quality of performance of higher education institutions. In other words, these external agencies perform in some form the functions of a watchdog that oversees the performance of the institutions. Together with systems like the obligatory approvals and certification of performance credentials from the professional, statutory and

regulatory bodies in the relevant areas, universities and colleges function under the watchful eyes of several external agencies and organisations. What is more important is that in most cases, there is also a dedicated Quality Assurance Agency/Mechanism in place that routinely performs the function of a quality monitor for higher education institutions.

There are no dedicated Quality Assurance Agencies in the field of higher education in India. As we had mentioned, a system of accreditation of higher education institutions (universities, colleges and technical institutions) was initiated in the early 1990s in India. This initiative was limited in its scope; it did not force institutions to seek accreditation. Instead, the purpose was to introduce quality consciousness as an important element in the performance of higher education institutions by asking them to submit themselves to a rigorous assessment of their performance by their own members. This process was called preparation of a self-assessment report that was subjected first to a peer review and verification and later to a critical assessment and report by a group of external experts. The voluntary nature of this process ensured that there was no pain in doing it, and in any case, nothing was lost by not doing it. On the other hand, there was an incentive for many new institutions; accreditation by a national agency lent prestige, credibility and legitimacy to many of them. The response was not inconsiderable; by 2010, over one-third of all universities and one-fifth of all colleges sought and secured accreditation.

This voluntary process did not however assure quality. Many major universities were reluctant to submit themselves to any kind of scrutiny. There were efforts to link accreditation to the provision of government funding. It did not work; in the context of many imbalances across states and regions, and across communities and special population groups, dispensations of government funding could not be subjected to any single method of regulation. And yet, the idea of accreditation gathered momentum, if only because the huge expansion of higher education provision in the recent past brought in many players of domestic and foreign origins. Finally, the Government of India decided that accreditation of all higher education institutions should be made mandatory through a central legislation by Parliament.

Meanwhile the current processes will continue. But, as the process is voluntary, and the accreditation is for a specified period only, even those who sought and secured accreditation in the first place, are left with no incentive to seek renewal. The only remedy is to make accreditation universal and mandatory.

The case of distance education institutions is no different. We discussed it in some detail in Unit 2 of Block 4. Though the Distance Education Council made an effort to enforce accreditation as a mandatory process, it did not yield any appreciable result. The uncertainty about the legal requirements and the jurisdictional conflicts, put paid to those efforts. Nevertheless, considerable groundwork was done to put an effective accreditation system in place for distance education provision. These include preparation of detailed guidelines and criteria for assessing all aspects of distance education provision and for accreditation of both institutions and their programmes. The process of institutional accreditation covers the following aspects:

- Programme design and development.
- Programme transaction and delivery.
- Student assessment and evaluation.
- Research, consultancy and community engagement.
- Learner support services and progression.
- Infrastructure and learning resources.

- Governance structure and leadership.
- Internal quality assurance processes.
- Innovative practices.

The DEC has also developed similar criteria for assessment and accreditation of distance education programmes. These criteria cover a range of issues concerning several aspects of a distance education programme that include:

- Programme development processes
- Structure of the programme
- Flexibilities with regard to entry, exit, pacing of studies and choice of courses
- Provisions for mobility across programmes and levels of studies, credit transfer and credit accumulation
- Curriculum development processes and instructional design that include participation of external experts/agencies, the extent of their involvement, expected learning outcomes, collaborative arrangements in the development and delivery of programmes, resources available, instructional system, currency of curricula and periodicity of revision/updating, etc.
- Criteria for evaluating self-learning material produced/used that include standard size of a course, styles of its presentation and structure of the materials, use of illustrations, graphics, charts, etc, the pedagogic methods used, self-check exercises for assessing student progress, feedback arrangements, the nature and type of non-print materials used, if any, the media used (audio/video tapes, radio and TV broadcasts, teleconferencing, online interactive instruction, etc.)
- Learner support services that include academic counselling, criteria and methods for selection, appointment and training of academic counsellors, counselling strategies, mechanisms in place for monitoring academic counselling, etc.
- Student assessment and certification processes in place; conduct for examinations, evaluation services, time taken between examinations and declaration of results, access to examination schedules and grade cards
- Administrative services that include availability of and access to pre-admission information with all essential details, methods for student registration and their convenience for students, effectiveness of the systems of communication between students and the institution, efficiency of the systems of production and distribution of learning materials, technology support for management of student records and administrative and financial services.

Now UGC which is playing apex role for ODL system in the country following more or less above criteria, along with some additional ones to suit the changing needs.

3.5 LET US SUM UP

This Block is all about organisational change and the ways in which organisations manage those changes. Our effort in this unit has been to focus on quality of education as a driver of change; a focus that was perhaps not even thought about half a century ago. It was because education has never had so much competition; the elite character of higher education ensured that their position in society went unchallenged. The transformation of higher education into mass education changed all that. At stake are many interests; students and their parents as well as governments that commit public resources for education. What we have tried to do is to bring the issues of quality in education as a central theme in its organisation

and management, and how new structures and processes are evolving to address these concerns. As you will notice, in the history of university education that spans over twelve centuries, five decades are not long enough to establish any enduring traditions. But the trends are clear, and they have a lasting impact on the ways in which education systems and institutions are organised and managed in the coming decades. As these are still only evolving trends, we have not tried to make any value judgements on their impact or effectiveness. All that is certain at this stage is that these trends are irreversible, and they can only move forward in multiple forms and patterns. And, what is the way to move forward? Institutions will have to learn from their own experiences and from those of others and engage themselves constantly in reviewing, modifying and redesigning their structures and processes. Our focus in the next unit will be on the ways in which educational institutions engage themselves in this process of organisational change and renewal.

3.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

- a) Organisational culture is the personality of the organisation, comprising the principles, values, norms and the behaviours of its members within and outside the organisation.
- b) Academic organisations function normally in a stable environment and not exposed like business organizations to grave risks arising from fall in profits, loss of market share, obsolescence of its products etc.

Check Your Progress 2

The main components of quality assurance and environment at the University of Cambridge are a statement of policy on quality assurance, guidelines for its implementation, procedures for changes to courses, reviews by the General Board, programme specifications and an annual quality update.

Check Your Progress 3

Target group of conventional institutions are largely school-leaving population of the age group 18+, the learners group of distance education is largely adults, and some of them might be working and coming to learning with lot of experience and motivation.

Check Your Progress 4

IGNOU was established with dual roles i.e. act as University and act as apex body to promote distance education in the country, though latter role was taken away in the year 2012. The only ODL institution with national jurisdiction, best quality material, effective support services and teachers drawn from all parts of the country are some of the key features for which no institution match.

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UNIT 4 ORGANISATIONAL MECHANISMS FOR SELF- RENEWAL

Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Objectives
- 4.3 A Learning Organisation
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4.1 INTRODUCTION

We have come to the last Unit of the course “Management of Distance Education”. From the previous blocks, you will have learnt a good deal about organisation and management of enterprises, how objectives are set, what strategies are adopted to achieve those objectives, how functions are organised and structured, what processes are developed and how the final outcomes are assessed in relation to the objectives with which it all started. Since management literature is so profusely enriched with business theories and practices, the foregoing discussions would have had a fair share of influence of the business metaphor. Be assured, however, that we are not talking about distance education as a “business” in the narrow commercial sense, but as a larger service that requires organisation and management that is closely parallel to business enterprises.

As in business, so in education. When the activity was initiated, we started with a set of assumptions about whom to teach, what to teach and how, as well as who would provide the resources for the initiative. Over a period of time, all these assumptions would have changed, some very marginally, and some very substantially. Since these assumptions are basic to the organisation’s existence and

survival, it is necessary that the objectives, strategies, structures and processes are all adjusted to the changing conditions. It is this process of adjustment that is often called the management of change.

Changes can occur in many different ways as we discussed in Unit-1 of this Block. There can be upheavals in the environment that can force organisations to change as socialist revolutions did to private enterprise. Competition could change business practices, forcing competitors to improve the quality of their products and services to stay in business, and sometimes even forcing mergers and amalgamations. New technologies could force several products out of the market as computers did to typewriters. How do organisations manage these changes? Some are overtaken by changes, while others anticipate changes and keep themselves always prepared to adjust to change. In this unit, we shall explore some of the ways in which distance education institutions manage changes and the mechanisms that they set up for the renewal of their organisations.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the essential attributes of a learning organisation;
- examine the instruments and processes which are necessary for a distance education institution to establish a knowledge base from its own experience;
- analyse how important it is for organisations to be proactive in responding to changes in the environment; and
- apply the mechanisms that should be in place within the institution to manage changes.

4.3 A LEARNING ORGANISATION

A distance education institution is essentially a teaching organisation. Quite simply, it cannot teach without learning. We are not however discussing here just the content of what it teaches, that requires continuous upgrading and revision but, more importantly, the strategies and the styles as well as the methods and the practices that require to be constantly watched, analysed and redesigned to meet a variety of changing situations. In order to be able to do it, the institution has to be continuously learning from its own experiences, by distilling that experience into knowledge, and applying that knowledge to emerging situations and uncertainties.

The basic attributes of a learning organisation are that it should:

- thrive on change
- encourage experimentation
- facilitate learning from the environment
- facilitate learning from employees
- reward learning.

Tom Peters said, “In a fast-paced, continually shifting environment, resistance to change is often the single most important fact that distinguishes those who succeed from those who fail”. In what follows we shall try to take a look at some of the attributes that distinguish organisations that learn from the successes of others in some detail.

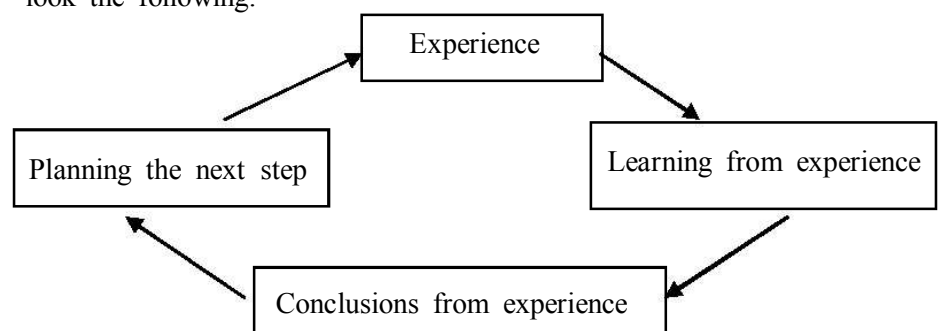
4.3.1 The Learning Paradigm

The world has become far too complex to discover any simplicity in it any more. Uncertainties created by environmental turbulence like competition, new discoveries, and changes in life styles are all contributing to the existing complexities constantly. It is no longer possible to visualise a coherent picture of the future in a long-term perspective. If the knowledge about the future is inadequate, it becomes still more difficult to control the consequences that would flow in the long-term. If these consequences remain completely out of control, one can only imagine the anxiety and the tension that any organisation is likely to experience about its own survival.

Organisations however do not resign themselves to these tensions and anxieties. They engage themselves in sustained questioning, developing new perspectives, searching alternatives, and doing things differently. This exercise will involve re-examination of the basic assumptions on which the current operations were launched, and modify them where necessary, to establish the correct relationship between the organisation and its environment. In order to be able to engage meaningfully in such an exercise, organisations have to consciously cultivate a learning environment within them. In other words, a learning organisation is one in which the set of philosophy, principles and values that inform its people in shaping their attitudes and behaviour to the attainment of its goals is firmly based on their own collective knowledge and wisdom.

The major characteristics of a learning organisation are:

- It thrives on change. Change, as we said earlier, is essentially the willingness to adapt oneself to new ideas, new environments, new processes and new cultures. In order to change, an organisation needs to consider knowledge and learning as well as creativity and innovation as its key resources. Such an organisation would be constantly reframing its goals, looking at problems from different angles, or developing new skills. It can never be static; people in the organisation should continuously adapt to changing circumstances.
- It should encourage its people to engage themselves in problem solving, innovation and experimentation. Experimentation is the key concept behind a learning organisation. There is risk in giving employees the opportunities and responsibilities for experimenting, and it might turn out to be costly. But it is a risk necessary and worth taking without which innovations, the key to change, are not possible.
- Communication of success and failures: Organisations should have systems in place for creation, acquisition and transfer of new knowledge and also for modifications in its behaviour and attitudes reflecting the changes in knowledge and its applications. It is just as important to learn mistakes as it is to celebrate success. The learning cycle in an organisation should be based on regular feedback and assessment of its experience. The cycle would look the following:



- It should facilitate learning from the environment. A learning organisation should keep itself abreast of the happenings in its internal and external environment. Technical and political developments that might impact on the organisation's current and future plans and strategies should be identified and monitored. Internal sources of information could be work teams, departments and affiliated organisations; external sources might comprise consultants, customers and clients or other organisations in the same field. Efficient dissemination of information that can be easily accessed by everyone in the organisation is an important component of the learning process.

No organisation can absorb changes without learning new and better ways of doing, working and organising. It is only through these efforts that new products and processes as well as new techniques and methods are developed; it is these efforts that contribute to improvements in efficiency and productivity; and the success or failure of these efforts will ultimately depend upon the knowledge resource that an organisation creates for itself.

In the field of education, the imperatives of innovation and experimentation are more critical in distance education. After all, the emergence of distance education itself owes much to the innovations of educational planners and managers, and when once it came to be established, the providers of distance education are facing stiff competition both from local as well as global providers. The traditional system itself is absorbing many of the methods and practices of distance education and it would be no exaggeration to say that the 21st century will be witness to a major turmoil in the field of education, with respect to its functions and also the ways in which it functions.

Educational planners and managers cannot remain oblivious of these developments. Another significant consequence of this development would be that no single provider will be able to meet all the learning needs in a given society or territory. Learners will have to approach several institutions to satisfy their needs. A proactive education system will anticipate these changing patterns of learner needs and prepare itself with the creation of collaborative and networked learning environments rather than letting their potential learner groups scout for information and facilities.

4.3.2 Education-Environment Relationship

Earlier in this course, we have had occasion to look at the many factors in the environment that have an influence on the planning and management of the distance education system at the macro level, or distance teaching institution at the micro level. While examining these factors, we had talked about the changing demographic profile of learners with respect to their age, gender, occupation, income levels, place of occupation, etc. At another level, we also considered the varying needs to be met: the need for widening access to promote social justice, promotion of equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education, improving productivity through skill development and technology upgradation, induction of new technologies, etc.

With the emergence of new learner groups, and new learning needs, new learning styles and preferences also emerge which require different pedagogic methods and techniques as well. The potential of new communication technologies provides both a challenge and an opportunity to the instructional system designers. Educational providers cannot get away from these realities.

Still more complex is the challenge that education systems across the world are facing today, the challenge of diminishing resources. This is assuming almost the proportions of a threat. Governments are finding it increasingly difficult to provide all the resources that education systems need; within the education system itself there are competing claims as in the case of primary education against higher education; and when funds are somehow mobilised, there are problems of putting

together the intellectual resources required for teaching. As a consequence, educational resource mobilisation, which has traditionally been a responsibility of the governments is progressively getting diversified, and with several private providers entering the 'market', the methods of organisation and management of education are also changing significantly.

Yet another, and perhaps more serious, challenge that educational providers today have to confront is the problems arising from the globalisation of education. We had discussed the many facets of globalisation of education in Block-3. The most significant among these is the growing competition. Educational institutions today have to compete with not just domestic providers, but, on an increasing scale, with cross-national providers as well. While global providers help widen access, arguably there are also commercial interests at play. There are instances of cross-border providers of education exploiting the markets in the developing countries where good quality education is in short supply, and the demand for places is very high. Governments and educational institutions have to insulate their domestic systems from this exploitative environment; ensure that cross-border education is regulated, its quality and credibility are assured and that the health of the domestic systems is not endangered.

These environmental challenges will have a decisive impact on education. As we have said earlier, education cannot afford to be overtaken by these changes. It has to anticipate, and prepare for the change. It is in this preparation that the qualities of a learning organisation will be severely tested. How do the educational institutions prepare for this change? We mentioned in the previous section that, when the future is uncertain, in fact, when there are no ways of knowing the future with any degree of accuracy, it is not possible for an institution to put in place structures and processes, or systems and procedures that can control future events. In cases like this, it is only the knowledge and experience gained from the working of the institution itself that can be of any help. It is imperative, therefore, that systems and procedures are established by organisations to internalise their experience, convert it into knowledge and share it widely within the institution.

How does a distance education institution go about this task? A checklist of items that could have an impact on the relationship between the institution and its environment is given below:

- The demographic profile of the students enrolled
- The demographic profile of potential students by analysing the backgrounds and nature of enquiries of those who seek information about courses and facilities, etc.
- The proportion of learners from the assumed target groups who have actually enrolled
- The patterns of retention and drop-outs
- The changes, if any, in the occupational patterns and levels of the alumni
- Training and retraining needs for new job markets
- Emerging skill development needs for the introduction of new technologies
- Patterns of resource allocation for education
- Globalisation and competition in education
- Strengths and weaknesses in the existing system in facing new challenges
- Availability of competent personnel (teaching and professional)
- Directions of national economic development.

What we have mentioned above are only illustrative indications. The important point to be emphasised here is that a distance education institution, if it has proactively to manage environmental changes, should have in place a system that will constantly monitor all relevant information (internal as well as external) and evaluate the impact that any change in its current assumptions that govern its operations will have on its future. It will then have prepared itself in substantial measure to respond to any change and manage it well.

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.

- a) What is a learning organization? Write two important characteristics of such an organisation? (Answer in about 50 words)

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- b) How environmental changes affect education and what preparations are required by educational institutions to face these changes? (Answer in about 50 words)

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4.3.3 Search for Alternatives

It is an established fact that success often depends upon doing things differently. It is a natural tendency to follow the beaten track – it is safe, there is no risk, and in any case, everyone else is doing it. In traditional education, based entirely on class-room centred, face-to-face interaction, the methods remain substantially the same; there can only be marginal or incremental changes. Teaching aids may be used to supplement oral transmission, but they do not substitute class-room instruction. Slides, charts, graphs or audio and video tapes may be used to support teachers' efforts at communication; the teacher still remains centre-stage. But not so in distance education.

In distance education, there is a significant substitution of the traditional role of the teacher. Face-to-face interaction, if at all, is limited and takes place at different locations and with different sets of teachers for the same course. This substitution factor offers several alternatives to choose from. For instance, a large number of part-time tutors recruited locally at the study centres can offer tutorials to students registered on the same course. Alternatively, a single teacher at a central location can reach all students at several locations, synchronously or asynchronously, through the medium of one or more communication technology devices. Satellite-based communication technologies offer opportunities for establishing virtual class-rooms at various locations using multimedia transmission facilities. Interactive videos and Internet chats have now become very common. What method is eventually used is a judgment of the management depending upon its own assessment of the effectiveness of the medium, its accessibility and availability to learners, its cost and also its appropriateness to the environment. Whatever the initial choice, with improvements in technologies and their applications, the management has to

engage itself in continuously looking for more effective alternatives if it has to satisfy the remote learners.

A distance education institution has several other important functions to perform; the production and distribution of learning materials being the most important among them. In this case also, there are several options available to the management. These are:

- in-house production
- outsourcing all production functions
- just-in-time production
- large scale production and warehousing
- contracting out all distribution functions
- centralised distribution
- decentralised production and distribution.

The choices are many. But the issue is how the management chooses one method or another or a combination of methods?

We have referred earlier to the significance of the Management Information System (MIS) in the context of the issues in planning and management of distance education institutions. It is the effectiveness of the MIS that will ultimately provide the feedback on the performance of current operations, their costs, their strengths and weaknesses, and also the opportunities that new methods will offer.

4.3.4 Collective Wisdom in Problem Solving

Organisations routinely handle large volumes of information. A distance education institution has to deal with a mass of information on all aspects of its functioning. It has to collect, collate and analyse demographic data to assess the potential market for its programmes; it has to survey and analyse trends in economic and industrial development and analyse the employment data to estimate the needs of various employment sectors and assess the existing and emerging manpower needs; it has to assess the training and retraining needs of the industry in terms of levels and professional/technical/vocational categories; it has to evaluate the response to programmes on offer from students, employers, the professions, and so on; it has also, almost regularly, to monitor information on technologies and their applications, new and emerging thrusts in social and economic development, public policies, and the like. There is a bewildering variety of sources from which a dynamic institution meets its information needs. This information duly processed and stored is a critical component of the knowledge base of the institution.

An institution does not create knowledge just for accumulation only. It applies that knowledge in its operations which in turn generates new experience. From a critical analysis of this experience, it draws lessons. In other words, knowledge is also a structured form of distilled experience. This knowledge is purely internal, and owned entirely by the institution.

At this stage, it is important to remember that an organisation or institution is essentially the people who comprise that organisation or institution. Knowledge that any institution owns is, therefore, the knowledge of its people. It is not enough to accumulate knowledge and own it; what is made of that knowledge, and how, is still of greater importance. It is the application of its knowledge by an institution in solving its problems that makes for wisdom. This is a crucial process in a learning organisation – distilling knowledge from information and experience and applying that knowledge to make wise choices.

We had mentioned earlier in this section that organisational survival depends in a large measure on the processes for free flow and sharing of information among the people within the organisation, and the systems and procedures that are in place to enable them to participate effectively in its management. It is this approach that makes for the strength of an institution - drawing upon its collective wisdom in problem-solving and decision-making.

Check Your Progress 2

Identify the following statements as True 'T' or False 'F' and mention against each statement.

Note: Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the Unit.

- a) In traditional education teacher still remains at centre-stage. ()
- b) Satellite-based communication technologies offer opportunities for establishing virtual class-rooms at various locations using multimedia transmission facilities. ()
- c) In order to be effective, the MIS need not provide feedback constantly on the performance of current operations. ()
- d) An organisation or institution is essentially the people who comprise that organisation or institution. ()

4.4 HOW DO ORGANISATIONS LEARN?

We have just said that any organisation is a collective of its people. This collective is not however a loose conglomeration of disparate elements; it is nearly always structured formally around sets of coherent functions that help the organisation achieve its goals. In structuring an organisation, generally, functions are defined, roles are specified and boundaries are demarcated. This structure makes most organisations reflect varying degrees of complexity depending upon the extent of interdependence of functional units, most of which often perform their roles as though each one of them is autonomous of the rest. Even when roles are defined and jobs are specified, there is a natural tendency among people to look at their roles and tasks independently, and not from the perspective of the organisation as a whole. Since functionally, most of them occupy the same levels in the hierarchy of the organisation, coordination of their performance becomes essential. It is this horizontal coordination of performance that turns out to be a serious challenge to the management of many organisations.

Several organisations establish mechanisms, formally or informally, to ensure this coordination. Whatever forms this mechanism takes, it is an important element in the organisation's structure. The essential purpose of this instrument is to encourage Unit Heads to consider their individual problems and challenges as those of the organisation as a whole, and to bring to bear on the search for their solutions the entire knowledge and wisdom of the organisation. In order to foster and develop such a culture, it is necessary that organisations foster a climate of respect and concern for persons with established reputation of performance, and from whom there are high expectations. Wide dissemination of information throughout the system especially at the horizontal levels promotes equality of relationships and facilitates informal interaction in facing problems and challenges.

4.4.1 Problem-solving Approach and Mechanisms

A distance education institution could face a variety of problems both in its current operations as well as in its future tasks. For instance, the enrolment could be much below or above the expected levels, there could be failures in the production and distribution systems, and there could be challenges from other providers.

We discussed earlier in this course the organisational structure of a distance education institution and the issues in its planning and management. In that discussion, we considered at some length, the roles and functions of the units in charge of planning and development, internal coordination, and the management information system. All these three centres are crucial to the institution's knowledge resource base. They create knowledge, disseminate it and in solving current problems, they can also transfer this knowledge to any other operational centre. In other words, these centres should help create an atmosphere in which any problem or challenge is perceived within the organisation as something that the whole organisation has to grapple with, and in so doing, the unit immediately concerned with the issue should feel that it has the backing of the whole organisation in addressing it.

It is this approach to problem-solving that we discussed earlier in this section as the application of collective wisdom in addressing any issue. It has however to be admitted that this approach is not something that can be taken for granted; it has to be cultivated and practised. It is only then that a sense of participation would develop and through it, the more essential commitment of all concerned to the survival and growth of the institution. At the core of this approach is willingness to share information, frequent exchange of views and experience, and above all, mutual respect and collegiality, among all functionaries who constitute the system.

4.4.2 Integrating Internal Knowledge and Experience with Functions

In the discussion on the organisation and structure of a distance education institution, we had occasion to explain that it consists of three major systems, namely, course development and production, delivery of programmes and services, and organisation and management. We had also seen that each of these major systems has several sub-systems, each of which with a set of specific functions devolving on it. The initial design of the structure of a distance education institution will necessarily be based on our knowledge of the ways in which institutions elsewhere are functioning. As the new institution's operations get under way, it begins to generate experience. It has to be remembered that the objectives of a distance education institution, the ways of its working and the attitudes and behaviour of the public including those in authority as well as the potential learners, are all conditioned significantly by its environment. It follows therefore that a distance education institution has to be constantly alive to its environment and should be willing to look at its own functions, processes and practices with a view to improve them and make them effective and relevant.

There are many ways in which an institution can obtain this feedback from the environment. We had discussed in the previous Blocks the usefulness of systems for evaluation of programmes as well as institutional performance. We had also explained the need for surveys and studies about the acceptability of the graduates in the job market, the employers' attitude towards the qualifications awarded by the institution, and the response from other institutions to its efforts at resource mobilisation, and so on. You will be wondering why all these issues which were already discussed at some length are again and again brought back into focus. The answer is simple. We discussed these issues earlier in the context of

functionality of current operations; we are now referring to them in the context of the needs of the future. Perhaps, what we set out at the beginning may have delivered; perhaps, they may not have. Whatever the outcome, do we persist with these structures and processes? Or, do we look at them again in the context of contemporary needs and future changes in direction? Yes, a dynamic organisation needs to do it. That is how a learning organisation conceives the initial design of its structures so that knowledge and experience gained from its current operations can be drawn upon to modify and improve its future activities.

To refresh your memory, we may recall a few instances we discussed earlier that would illustrate how experience can inform the desirability or otherwise of systemic changes. Here are a few examples:

- Centralisation or decentralisation of certain operations like admission of students or distribution of materials;
- Combining coherent functions like admission with student record management or maintenance of assignment evaluation records with examination records, even though they were separately organised initially;
- Setting up appropriate mechanisms to deal with emerging issues like quality control, cost analysis, evaluation research, and so on.

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.

How does the problem-solving approach work in a Distance Education institution? (Answer in about 50 words)

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4.4.3 Induction or Development of New Technologies

There is no getting away from the fact that information and communication technologies are integral to distance learning systems. Since developments in these fields are taking place at a breathtaking speed, no system can at any given point of time, feel confident and secure that it has inducted the most modern technologies into its operations. The technologies used are not ends in themselves, but there is no denying the fact that distance education is driven by technologies. They are used to augment opportunities and widen access; they can make learning more efficient and flexible; they can also enrich the learning experience.

A large variety of technologies, of varying degrees and levels of sophistication is now available and are used in distance education in the developed and developing countries. We have already discussed the concerns that would influence the choice of any one or more technologies in a given environment. The point is that in a rapidly changing technology environment, the choice once made does not stay for all times to come. In the induction of new technologies, or in moving from a lower level of sophistication to higher levels, the management has to be guided by two important considerations. First, it has to settle for those technologies that are compatible with the environment in terms of availability, accessibility, cost and user friendliness. Secondly, the management has also to anticipate and prepare

the environment for absorption of new technologies. In this latter case, the distance education institutions are also functioning as change agents for technology induction and upgrading to meet the future needs.

It is not surprising that in today's world, highly successful distance education systems are also managing very specialised communication networks. They are developing and using many varieties of interactive software to enhance the effectiveness of the teaching-learning environment. The management of any distance learning system has to be alert about these developments and should be constantly endeavouring to develop or acquire new technologies for its survival.

4.4.4 Innovations and Experiments

The primary focus of a distance education institution is the creation of an effective learning environment. The development of such an environment is the function of several factors ranging from institutional policies on programmes and their delivery, students and personnel, to the methods and practices in the delivery of various services. Unlike the established class-room based education, distance learning is still an evolving system and there is no single approach or strategy that makes learning effective for distance learners. As we have seen earlier, distance learning programmes have their own unique characteristics, the most important among them being flexibility in structures, processes, methods and practices. It is this flexibility that permits a distance education institution to innovate and experiment continuously.

Innovations and experiments do not take place in an environment devoid of initiative and risk-taking. Innovation is not a chance happening; it is a continuous process consciously sustained. We demand new technology, new ideas, and we want change. But seldom do we realise that change also destroys the stable state. Innovation leads to changes in the attitudes of people, and their value systems. From this point, we fear innovation, and discourage it. Innovation involves uncertainties and risks. It is not an orderly, risk-reducing process. Nevertheless, a dynamic management process can still anticipate the uncertainties and convert them into manageable risks. This is a fundamental issue in the management of innovation.

It would be appropriate at this stage to look at some factors that might still inhibit innovations in distance education. The education system is still conditioned in a substantial measure by the standards and values that tradition has shaped over centuries. It is not surprising therefore, that at every stage of its evolution and almost in every activity and process, there is a preoccupation with parallels in the conventional system which, more often than not, tends to hold back initiative and enterprise from distance education.

Preparing people for an innovative enterprise is not an easy task. Innovation often exposes the inadequacy of established professional authority. It demands that all participants in the innovation process learn a great deal more than what they already know. This learning always cuts across the immediate professional concerns of the personnel involved. This process demands that each participant give up his/her stereo-typed view, and become willing to listen to each other. Sometimes this could lead to mutual frustration. This can be avoided only if all of them are willing to test openly the nature and appropriateness of the assumptions that they have of themselves, and of each other, against an equally open examination of what innovation demands from them. This is the essence of a truly innovative process. It is through such interaction among the participants in an innovative endeavour that they can jointly discover themselves, and their potential for effective collaboration and team work which indeed is one of the core competencies of a distance education institution.

4.4.5 Monitoring the Environment

In the section on education-environment relationship (4.3.2), we discussed at some length several environmental factors that can influence the functions and working of a distance education institution. While discussing these factors, we have also drawn attention to the need for constantly monitoring these factors in order to be able to proactively respond to emerging change in the environment. Without again going over these factors, we pause for a brief moment here to look at the instruments and mechanisms that should be in place for this activity.

As we mentioned earlier, a distance education institution interacts with the environment in many different ways. Its own structures, as we noted earlier, make provision for involvement of external experts in the consideration and decision on several issues of policy, programmes, strategies, and so on. This is a valuable source to feel the environment. The interface with governments is another major opportunity to assess the environmental factors that could have an impact on the institution. These might be reflected, for example, on the funding pattern or making greater provision for education and training in specific sectors. For instance, if the government policies envisage a major expansion in school education, the institution should be ready to augment its facilities for teacher training, if such facilities are already available, or create them quickly if they do not exist.

In the best of times, it is not an easy task to assess the future needs for education and training in any society. The complexity of factors involved in the exercise is indeed bewildering. Nevertheless, there are trends and indicators available from a variety of sources. If these can be monitored systematically and fed into the system, considerable spadework would have been done to prepare the institution to take on new and additional responsibilities in education and training at relatively short notice. Some suggestions follow:

- It is now common for most governments to prepare long-term perspective plans for economic development. A forward-looking distance education institution would be critically looking at these perspective plans to identify the major growth areas, the order of magnitude of expected growth, the existing employment pattern in the concerned sectors, the projected need for additional human resources to meet those needs, etc.
- Once the areas and their training needs are known, it should be possible to break them up into different branches of specialisation and the infrastructure required to organise them. This is a major exercise that institutions should continuously be engaged in.
- Globalisation and competition are major environmental influences on distance education. Communication technologies provide access to anybody anywhere in the world to any institution anywhere. Logically, therefore, the best institutions can force the bad and the poor ones out of the 'market'. It is therefore, necessary for every institution to develop certain core competencies and a competitive edge in terms of quality, relevance, or any other parameter, if it has to survive.
- 'Collaboration and networking' is going to be the new paradigm of educational provision. A forward-looking institution should be able to transform competition into collaboration and cooperation by consolidating its areas of strength and striving for excellence in its own core competence.

This list can be long. But the question that remains is who in the institution should be doing all this. That is why distance education institutions, unlike the traditional universities, emphasise planning and development and create structures within its organisational set up for performing the development function.

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.

Innovation and experimentation is unavoidable in Distance Education institutions – why? (Answer in about 50 words)

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4.5 ORGANISATIONAL RENEWAL

These days we hear a great deal about management theories and practices. Classical theories of management are all being rewritten. Management literature is replete with new jargons; downsizing, outsourcing, process reengineering, core competencies, system integration, value addition, globalisation, the list is endless. What do all these signify? *Change*, in one word. When rapid changes are taking place around you, you cannot stand still and watch helplessly. You have to adjust to the changes, reposition yourself at some point of advantage so that you are not overtaken by changes. It is this process of adjustment, the transformation of an adversity into an advantage, that management of change is all about.

You cannot change and still remain the same. Every change signifies something new, something that was not there in the first place. You might have started doing things differently, you might have shed some flab, you might have integrated several operations or decentralised some. What you do, and how you do it, will depend upon your perception about your strengths and weaknesses, and about the opportunities and threats that any change in the environment might offer. It is this process of assessing the strength, weakness, opportunities and threats that Management Science calls the SWOT analysis, an essential tool for management of change and organisational renewal.

4.5.1 Building Core Competence

Core competence as a concept was first used by Prahalad and Hawel in their article “The Core Competence of the Organisation” in the Harvard Business Review (May-June 1990). While this article identified core competence as knowledge of one or more technologies, and the concept has been widely in use since then, a precise definition of core competence has remained elusive. It has been argued that core competence is always discovered retrospectively, and is no more than a description of the success or failure of an experiment. In an article “Is your Core Competence a Mirage?” in the McKinsey Quarterly in February, 1997, Coyne, Stephen Hall and Patricia Gorman Clifford proposed the following definition “a core competence is a combination of complementary skills and knowledge bases embedded in a group or team that results in the ability to execute one or more critical processes to a world-class standard”. According to them, core competences are of two kinds:

- Insight/foresight competences that enable an organisation to discover or learn facts or patterns that create first-mover advantage. These include technical or scientific knowledge that produces inventions; proprietary data like

behavioural patterns and credit-standing, knowledge about organisations/ individuals; creative flair in inventing successful products; superior ability for analysis and inference, etc.

- Frontline execution competences arising from the quality of an end product or service according to the activities of the frontline personnel. This competence is the unique ability to deliver products and services that are consistently near the quality of the best products and services available in the market.

How do we assess core competences? The article proposes four key questions. These are:

- Are our skills truly superior?
- How sustainable is the superiority?
- How much value can the competence generate in comparison to other economic levers?
- Is the competence integral to the organisation's value proposition?

Hopefully, most successful organisations have some positive response to each of these questions. If the answers are negative, they would have to focus on building their core competences for survival.

What is the core competence in distance education? Open and distance education has slowly, but surely, emerged as a strategic means in the provision of education and training. New communication technologies are providing more effective tools to governments, educational institutions, business establishments and other public and private agencies to reach out to large numbers at relatively lower costs. In this new environment, the real challenge before the management of education is going to be the development of a new pedagogy for technology-mediated learning and teaching.

In an earlier Unit in Block-3, we discussed some of the competencies to be developed in distance educators in the context of the staff development needs. We had listed several areas in which it is necessary to get the staff trained. This list is long and possibly, no single institution can develop all the competence in all the areas. A little proficiency in most of them will be adequate enough to get an institution started. But, in the long-term, as institutions face new challenges of several kinds, posed by new technologies, competition, new needs to be met, or new resources to be mobilised, they will necessarily have to do a SWOT analysis and concentrate more on their strengths and develop competencies that can seize the new opportunities and convert them to their advantage.

A key area of competence that distance education has to develop is the creation of a distance learning environment. It involves the integration of open and distance education technologies with the learning environment of the actual and potential learners. Creation of this environment depends on several factors:

- the technological means currently available to the institution and the levels of their sophistication;
- the scope for technology upgradation including the availability of both hardware and software for such upgradation;
- the accessibility of the technology and its user-friendliness;
- professional competence in designing instructional systems using the available technologies, keeping also in view the styles and preferences of learners, the need for interaction and access to learning resources;

- networking the resources for design, development and delivery of programmes and services.

Distance education institutions cannot afford to ignore these areas of competence in the future. Strengthening these areas continuously is a pre-requisite for their survival. We hope that a better understanding of core competences in distance education that we described in this section will enable you to focus on strengthening them.

4.5.2 Motivating and Encouraging People to Work with New Models

We have already discussed the significance of innovation and experimentation as a tool for organisational learning and knowledge creation. However, it has to be emphasised that innovations do not happen by chances or in a vacuum; organisations have to make innovations happen. In the final analysis, it will depend on what value the organisation as a whole attaches to its people innovating on the processes, products and services. Motivating and encouraging people to work with new models are crucial to promoting innovation. Involving people in brainstorming, collectively thinking through issues and problems as they arise, helping people to continuously think and clarify their vision about their roles vis-a-vis the vision of the institution, making them analyse their mental models by presenting them to others so that they become more open to be influenced by their peer groups, are some of the means that could motivate people to experiment with new ideas and concepts. However, it has to be borne in mind that there is no single magic formula that can bring about innovations.

Most organisations, at one time or another, would be facing problems. The larger picture that these problems pose is reflected in falling profits, declining market share, losing subscribers in the telecom business, for example, or passengers in the airlines industry and declining enrolments in institutions of education. The evidence is irrefutable, but those in the organisations would seldom admit that there was anything wrong with the performance of the roles assigned to each of them. They would argue that each of them is doing his/her best; that perhaps, something has gone wrong with the infrastructure; that more equipment and facilities needed to be added; and very often, that other departments or units did not play their role. Everyone would accept that there is a problem, but would insist that it is not in their domain. It would be hard in such cases to transform the organisation if attention is devoted only to fix some hardware here or modify a system there. It is in situations like these that motivating employees and encouraging them to work differently assume importance. While employees assume that they are focused on their work, it is important to drive the point home that customer satisfaction is the key to success in any enterprise. For instance, a telephone subscriber would not be interested so much in the state-of-the-art nature of the equipment his/her company boasts of as near zero call drop rates; or airline passengers would not feel excited about the high-tech hardware used by the airline if his/her flying experience is unsatisfactory.

As we said, people in most organisations do not want to talk about themselves; it is a blame game that goes on all the time. Successful leadership is about getting people hold the mirror before themselves and asking how you as a leader are going to address the problem; how you are going to be seen as the person who always takes good decisions, always delivers, and shows progress. Indeed, it is a question of organisational culture, and it does not change or evolve in the short run. But, in the end, organisational transformation is more about changing the culture of the organisation. And the key to that process of transformation is motivating people to look at themselves and reflect on what changes in their attitudes, values and behaviour are necessary, and encouraging them to focus on small, but real improvements in their performance that will all add up.

Distance education itself is the outcome of innovations in class-room teaching that was traditionally the only system of education. If education is conceived as the outcome of interactive teaching-learning processes, distance education is another method of the same process. The principal difference is that the class room is substituted with a complex system that involves many players who play different roles. It is possible to visualise a continuing evolution of this system and infinite variations of its processes as new technologies become available, and new models of collaboration and networking become possible. To the extent an institution creates conditions in which its people can experiment with new and different ways by varying the processes, with their feet deeply rooted in their environment, we are likely to see much greater creativity and innovativeness in distance education technologies.

4.5.3 Information Technology Applications

You will notice that in this section, and perhaps all through this unit, there is a great deal of repetition of what has already been discussed. This is inevitable because we have exhaustively discussed management theories and practices in distance education in different contexts and perspectives. What we are now doing is to look at them again from the point of view of rethinking strategies, restructuring organisational models, reassessing the achievements and reformulating goals to achieve the institution's mission.

It is not necessary to go over the crucial role that information plays in this exercise. Enough has been said already in this unit as well as in the previous blocks on the role of information in the larger context of planning and management. Suffice it to say here that there can be no review, no revision, and no renewal unless the people in the institution know what is being reviewed, revised and renewed. If this has to be carried out as an informal exercise, all the participants in the process should have the relevant information and to make that possible, the MIS should be effectively organised within the organisation.

Decades of use of Information Technology across business, industry and education have still not made it an integral tool for driving good performance in most organisations. For instance, the link between spending and performance is not clear, if not problematic, for most organisations. It is still not uncommon to see organisations hiring a high-profile CIO (Chief Information Officer), invest huge amounts of money on IT infrastructure and sit back hoping for the best.

In most cases, IT began as a support function, leading to one-dimensional management approach. However, technology-enabled products, interactive communications and an “always on” information environment have brought IT centre stage with critical implications for business growth and customer engagement. Further, IT applications in management processes like thin and lean management techniques have brought down cost, reduced waste and improved productivity. IT now plays two distinct categories of roles in management: first, applying lessons from the production processes, namely, distribution, standardisation and simplification that drive efficiency, optimise delivery and lower unit costs, and second, helping organisations respond more effectively to changing needs and gain a competitive advantage through promoting innovation and growth.

This approach goes beyond just relabeling functions and includes broader areas of leadership, governance and organisational changes. Organisation leaders have to engage with IT in new ways. For example, IT standardisation and consolidation increase responsiveness and cost effectiveness. And, IT will help support innovation with skills to deliver IT-enabled capabilities and services quickly spurring growth (Roger Roberts, Hugo Sarrazin and Johnson Sikes: Reshaping IT Management for Turbulent Times; McKinsey Quarterly, December 2010).

Distance education systems, as we have said all along, require IT more as a partner than a mere tool. As distance education products and services are getting more and more IT-enabled (interactive communication, Internet-based instruction, satellite-delivered live video-conferencing, etc.), IT has become the key to the future of distance education.

4.5.4 Team Building

Most organisations work in teams, especially at the top levels. In many cases, however, top management teams do not work as well as they could. A dysfunctional team at the top can slow down, derail or even paralyse the functioning of the organisation. Research surveys and case studies identify three important steps for setting up top executive level teams. These are:

- It is the Chief Executive's responsibility to determine the membership of the team. The key to getting the composition right is in deciding what contributions the team as a whole, and its members as individuals, must make to achieve the organisation's performance aspirations. Periodic review of the team's performance, and reconstitution of the team when necessary are essential to ensure cohesiveness and a sense of purpose among the members of a team
- The tasks assigned to each team should be only those that they can do. In other words, the purpose and focus of each top team should be those areas of work that benefit from the top team perspective. For instance, clear distinction should be made between work the teams should do themselves and those that they should merely monitor. Getting involved in the supervisory responsibilities of individual managers can only create dysfunctionalities in the organisational processes.
- Team dynamics and processes are just as important. Top teams should ensure "productive collaboration" among its members. There could be opposing views in addressing particular challenges; there could be external interventions like changes in government policy that could unsettle an organisation's existing primacy; there could be new competitors. In addressing these challenges, top teams should move with a sense of direction and accountability. Correcting dysfunctional dynamics requires focused attention and interventions.

Distance education as an activity is essentially a team effort. We have seen from the previous Blocks that almost at every stage of design, development and delivery, it is the function of teams of people – academics, professionals, managers and administrators – that makes distance education the dynamic system that it is. At this stage, it has to be remembered that traditionally education is a one person effort of the teacher. Not surprisingly, teachers do not work in teams; perhaps they may not even have much respect for team-work either. It is against this background that one has to consider the importance of team-building in distance education.

Academics have to play a major role in distance education, but they have to do it in conjunction with a large number of others from professional, techno-managerial and administrative fields. Building cohesive and purposeful teams of people drawn from different fields of competence is by no means an easy task in the best of times. Training and orientation can play some part in this respect. But ultimately it is the working ethos of the institution, the totality of its philosophy, principles and values, and the environment in which it functions that will determine an institution's team building potential.

4.5.5 Systemic Thinking

A system is an entity which maintains its existence and functioning as a whole for some purpose through the mutual interaction of its parts. Systems thinking

is your ability to do things as a whole (or holistically) including the many different types of relationships between the many elements in a complex system. “Systems thinking is a sensibility – for the subtle interconnectedness that gives living systems their unique character” (Peter Senge: The Fifth Discipline; The Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation: 1990). The purpose of systems thinking is to manage the rapidly growing complexity of today’s worlds of business and technology. It focuses on the whole, not on its parts, and concentrates on the interfaces and boundaries of components, on their connections and arrangement, on the potentials of holistic systems, to achieve results that are greater than the sum of its parts (Howard Smith and Peter Fingar: Business Process Management: The Third Wave; 2002).

We have said at several places in this course that distance education is a complex and large system, comprising several major sub-systems each of which has many components and constituents. Any effort at piece-meal changes in distance education methods has therefore, to be avoided. The consequences of a minor change in one part of the system can have serious consequences for other parts; they can lead to dislocation of schedules, delays in output flows, and dysfunctionality of processes. It is therefore, imperative that planners and managers of distance education systems think through all consequences that any change can lead to a complex and independent system of several variables.

It has to be reemphasised that management of a distance education system is not about applying a set of rigid theories on education; it is more about continuously evolving good practices that can offer the right solutions to problems and situations as they arise. It is therefore, of great significance that ‘good practices’ are documented and shared with several institutions so that in course of time a body of knowledge gets developed which can be drawn upon by distance education practitioners especially in the less developed, and the developing countries. The role played by International Organisations and agencies like the International Council of Distance Education (ICDE), The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and several Distance Education Associations and Institutions in many countries in organising international conferences to exchange views and experience is of great value in this context.

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.

What are the major components that are to be addressed in bringing about change/organisational renewal in DE institutions? (Answer in about 50 words.)

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4.6 LET US SUM UP

This Unit completes the course on “Management of Distance Education’. As we have pointed out repeatedly in this course, the emergence of distance education is a stage in the evolution of the contemporary education system. This process of evolution signified continuous assimilation of changes in what exists, shedding

some elements while absorbing others. This process, in the final analysis, is the function of changes which become inevitable due to several reasons. We thought it worthwhile to bring together the issues and concerns associated with changes in education and their management. The relevance of this theme for distance education is significant, as in a short span of about six decades we have seen spectacular changes in the methods and styles of distance education. Contrast this to the ever slow process of change in the traditional university education system that has now a history of over twelve centuries. It is in this context that we thought it useful to discuss the theme of change in education as a management concern even if the discussion turned out to be too theoretical. We have tried however to bring the focus back on distance education in this last unit while considering the methods and practices that distance education institutions follow in attempting organisational restructuring and renewal.

We hope that you would have found this discussion interesting and useful.

4.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

- a) A learning organisation is one which continuously questions its existing practices, develops new perspectives, searches for alternatives and tries to do things differently, to face new challenges and to adjust itself to changing conditions.

The two characteristics of a learning organisation are:

- (i) It considers knowledge, learning, creativity and innovation as key resources
 - (ii) Follows a holistic approach which integrates problem solving, innovation and experimentation.
- b) Environmental changes consist of changing demographic profile of learners, need for widening access for promotion of social justice and equal opportunities, improving productivity. These changes force educational institutions to anticipate new challenges, and prepare themselves to face and solve them with the help of knowledge and experience gained from the working of the institution.

Check Your Progress 2

- (a) T (b) T (c) F (d) T

Check Your Progress 3

In a distance education institution, there are certain critical organisational units like planning and development, management information and internal coordination that become knowledge centres. As and when problems arise in any unit in the organisation, these knowledge centres help transfer relevant knowledge to the concerned unit and help it in solving the current problems.

Check Your Progress 4

A distance education institution has to create an effective learning environment for its diverse learner groups in varied locations. There is no single approach or strategy that can respond to this need. A Distance Education institution has to continuously endeavour to do so through its policies, programmes and their delivery, and use of advanced technologies. These efforts are possible with the help of innovation and experiment in these institutions because of their flexibility in terms of its procedures and operations.

The major components to be focussed by any Distance Education institution in its organisational renewal efforts are: building core competence through training; motivating and encouraging personnel to work with new models; MIS for effective information flow and sharing team building, systemic thinking. (Not piecemeal changes).

4.8 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

(Given below are the titles of a few books/journals which have been used to prepare this Block. It is NOT suggested that you should go looking for these books to study them in original. If you can manage, you may look for a few titles, but they are not obligatory for completing the course successfully).

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