



Problems and prospects of management of change in English language teaching and learning

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Abstract

There is no exaggeration when it is said that 21st century belongs to the countries like India who are developing at a rapid pace by offering low-cost and highly professional labour market. However, this opportunity that globalization has offered us requires talent pool only if we train our students in language proficiency and job related skills. Furthermore, it is widely accepted fact that a person with excellent English language skills attracts intellectual superiority, reliability and more respect than his or her language-wise unskilled counter-parts. Therefore, the change in English language teaching and learning should not be neglected and be managed at first place before the existing disordered state of English language education does more harm to the individual in particular and to the state at large.

Keywords: Management, Change Management, English Language Teaching and Learning

1. Introduction

There are four main building blocks of change in English language education: curricula, methodology, textbooks, materials and examinations. There must be interlinked to create a solid foundation for meaningful education. Success in managing change in these areas would produce observable changes in learning. Management of change in English language teaching has failed to produce sustainable development due to a top-down approach, though what we need is bottom-up approach. Change requires change in mind-set. This is the basic prerequisite in the management of change. However, this can happen only when those involved begin to feel the need to embrace change. Else, time, as a great leveller, would sweep us to the wayside. This research focuses on the issues mentioned above.

The following issues have been taken up for consideration: understanding the nature and concept of 'change'; the change in English language teaching; what is there to be managed; how it can possibly be managed; how differently can it be managed; what kind of change management strategies are needed; learners' and teachers' attitude and perceptions towards change; and a clear assessment on all these areas of concern. This research paper would help our students, teachers, syllabus developers/designers and policy makers to learn and to bring about changes in themselves and ensuring the management of change in English language studies this way.

2. Change and Management

Change is a systematic process and is the alteration of status-quo. The most successful organization will also lag behind or collapse if they don't keep the pace with changed environment which is always dynamic in nature. Any organization should keep on monitoring the environment, both external and internal, by finding innovative and creative ways of utilization of resources which would help the organization to get immunity to survive in the new environment. There are sources for change coming from both external and internal sources and awareness of these sources help decide any organization to carry out change.

Therefore, change can be defined as planned alteration of structural relationships and roles of people in organizations. Change is procedural and structural activity and to manage change any organization has to keep the main features of change in consideration.

3. Change Management

Change management is a complex process and does not take place instantaneously. It demands well thought planning and efforts on the part of management. Change management is a systematic approach to deal with change which can be done from both the levels of organization and the individual. Therefore, change management involves various major activities such as:

Defining and instilling new values, norms, attitudes and behaviours within an organization.

Building of consensus among all the stakeholders on changes designed for them to answer their needs and on the challenges that they may face.

Planning, testing and implementing the change into all the branches of an organization.

3.1 Let us discuss the problems and prospects of management of change in English language teaching and learning

i. Identify and understand change and its process

The first thing to manage change is to identify and understand change and its process. For that, we need to have a close look at the present day state of teaching and learning of English that takes place at ground level. As discussed earlier, English language teaching has witnessed several changes over a period of many years and at present we are at such a juncture that we need to manage these changes effectively to tap the potential of students and make them employable across the sectors. Earlier these changes were either not recognized or were not managed though identified. Management of these changes would help students to involve themselves in the process of English language learning which can cater to their needs.

For sustainable change management in English language studies it becomes very important to take into consideration those consistent changes which were overlooked or neglected earlier. As we understand, there are four main aspects of change in English language education: curricula, methodology, textbooks, materials and examinations. We need to ascertain the changes prevalent in all these four areas, followed by the management strategies required to deal with them at every single stage of its management process which would in turn help decide the level of change required. Therefore, it becomes very necessary to find out the needs of students and recruiters to observe changes in them.

ii. Redefining the role of students, teachers, society, and decision-makers

Change management in English language teaching and learning requires identification of the role of students, teachers, society, and decision-makers in educational institutions at tertiary level and in the state. Change management requires clear-cut understanding of the roles of all the stakeholders involved in the change process and we are of the opinion that the changes in English language education have not been managed because of the state of misunderstanding and confusion among all these stakeholders about their roles in the process. This leads to unclear objectives and misguided responsibilities of themselves in the process. It seems that all the stakeholders have failed to comprehend the cooperative and collaborative nature of change management which goes into the solid foundation of any change process. Both Weimer (2002) and Wilson (2005) suggest that the students should be taught to realize and understand their roles in the change management process that goes parallel with their learning of language. Students should be allowed to make decisions about their learning process. Learner-centred teaching approach should be adopted to share powers with students to make them identify and realize their roles in the learning process and the changes that they can initiate to manage their roles. Encouragement of students' active participation in the learning process would help both teachers and students to comprehend their roles better. Therefore, a teacher has to become a learning partner for students rather than learning authority and thus a teacher has to change his/her role from purely didactic to facilitative.

Liberalization of powers in the learning process always realizes not only the true roles to perform but also the determination of the roles for its further development. Therefore, it is expected that teachers encourage students to take responsibility of their learning both inside and outside the classroom. Both students and teachers have to break off from the tradition of assumptions where teachers assume that as they are teaching, students must be learning while students assume that as they have read the texts, memorized facts and secured grades, they have learned something.

Society and decision-makers need to redefine and reengineer their roles in the change management process of English language education as their only role is not to make a decision or to pass a verdict on the teaching-learning process. The teaching-learning partnership while making decisions should be at the centre of flexibility, which can be done by encouraging learners and teachers to have their say on what is being decided for them. As a matter of fact, the decision makers should involve students, teachers and

employers to participate actively in the decision-making process. Promotion of cooperative and collaborative approach in decision-making would enable decision-makers in educational institutes at both the tertiary and national level to better perceive and operate their roles as change agents.

iii. Review and revise appropriate teaching methodologies and techniques

The sustainable change management demands review and revision of appropriate teaching methodologies and techniques and an amalgamation of some of the practically applicable and partially successful ones to foster greater learning. It should be understood that among all the stakeholders of the change management process in English language education, it is a teacher who has the responsibility of leading the change process. It is a teacher who can decide the course of change undertaken at grass root level i.e. classroom and, therefore, a teacher's role as a change agent becomes of primary importance for any change manager.

We must accept the fact that the lecture method in 21st century education stands at cross-roads where it is identified as out-dated method as it doesn't offer ample opportunities to a teacher to facilitate the challenges and opportunities that modern students bring to the classroom. With a passage of time, the wide spread globalization has changed the needs of students in different streams they are studying in. Needless to say that this globalized world has posed many technological challenges to the English language education along with other disciplines of life. Therefore, it becomes of prime importance for teachers of English to reinvent the appropriate methods and techniques in order to keep the students' interest intact in the learning process. With the changing perceptions of English language teachers need to adopt and adapt to newer ways to accommodate the needs and expectations of modern learners.

Teachers of English language need to produce new teaching materials and the other teaching and learning resources. We believe that teachers need not only to adopt appropriate teaching methods and techniques but also he or she must be capable of generating, developing and designing his or her own teaching methods and techniques. Moreover, teachers need to understand the requirement of collaboration and cooperation with teachers of other subjects. There should be the mutual development of scientific temper among teachers which would help them in committing oneself to the development of new approaches.

It should also be noted that teachers are in tremendous pressure to adopt to new methods and techniques and therefore we believe that teachers are required to change their views, perceptions and opinions on English language teaching and to lay more emphasis on students' ability to use the language by making them ready for their autonomy and by preparing them for their accountability to their own learning process. Teachers of English need to improve their own language proficiency which would enable them to undergo required and appropriate changes in their teaching approaches. Changes in pedagogy cannot be achieved without understanding of the context in which teachers and students are expected to work. All the stakeholders in this change management need clearer insights into their needs of pedagogical changes. This clear understanding on pedagogical needs would fetch positive effects that will determine changes to curriculum content and examination

and assessment systems. Effective collaboration of all these would decide the nature and course of change not only on teaching and learning activities and but also on students' attitudes to learning.

iv. Understanding teachers' role and scope in the change management process

No better understanding of teachers' role and scope in the change management process can be achieved in isolation and therefore teachers need to collaborate and cooperate with other equipped teachers. Teachers need to reflect constantly on teaching method of comparing and contrasting it with to that done by better equipped teachers observed teaching their learners to find gaps. This is a result of thoughtful consideration of the fact as teaching of English needs more partnership and collaboration in its management.

The purpose here is to observe how other better equipped teachers go about their everyday practice of teaching English, their attitudes to this teaching and the challenges and threats they face. It is also to be observed the methods of expert teachers on how these expert teachers 'do' English language teaching in local contexts. Thus, by comparing and contrasting the methods that to with the expert teachers the following aspects of teaching of English practiced by them should be observed while managing the change. These aspects are:

To observe what policies and syllabus documents are being practiced at state, national and international level as well.

To make inquiries into major methodologies adopted to map the challenges faced by them. To gather better understanding on other teachers' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities and how they manage it effectively. To compare and contrast the local solutions exercised to position the pedagogical issues and how far and how well these solutions resonate globally.

v. Implementation of four skills vis-a-vis listening, reading, writing and speaking

Change management in English language teaching and learning requires implementation of four skills vis-a-vis listening, reading, writing and speaking as per level of students with a view to improving their future prospects irrespective of sector they may seek to serve.' This emphasises the integration of four language skills in teaching of English language studies. This assimilation of all the four language skills is a prerequisite for comprehensive training in English. Needless to state that proficiency in English cannot be attained by learning of a single skill as it would not make students competent enough in English since every language skill has its own importance and role to play in the comprehensive development of English language.

Our syllabi and teachers focus more on reading and writing skills neglecting listening and speaking skills as these latter skills are not the part of their targeted training. Students lack exposure in all the four language skills. The changed workplace has its own specific challenges to offer to students operating in it and therefore it becomes essential to provide students with an integrated development of the required language and language-related skills to prepare them to face identified and unidentified workplace challenges as well. It is a known fact that with the advent of technology, increased interactions with multi-cultural and

multi-national business houses across the globe require not only written but also communicative competence.

We need our future personnel to be able to communicate in English to the levels that would train themselves further and enable them to participate fully in nation's economic and social activities and opportunities. However, it should also be noted that teachers are unable to focus on listening and speaking skills with these out-dated textbooks and syllabi which don't profess of these expressive skills. It needs special mention here that new syllabi can't be put into practice without developing of appropriate materials which constitute integrated development of all the four, listening, reading, writing and speaking, language skills. Therefore, to initiate change in this area it should be understood that all these aspects of English language education are strongly interwoven with each other and would shape the fabric of change management process in English language studies.

4. Conclusion

'One-size-fits-all' approach to managing change is highly ineffective as education is different with its own structure, culture, challenges and needs. This research paper proposes common success factors for change and actions to address them. Change is perceived differently by every individual which is the very nature of change. It could be an opportunity for some whereas a loss of time and threat for others. Therefore, the fundamental characteristic of management of change is to keep changing to remain relevant.

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