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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Print and electronic media are replete with news of insecurity around the world. The insecurity is as a result of tribal and religious conflict, political unrest, armed robbery, terrorist attack, gender violence, child labour and infrastructural inequality. These problems have caused uncertainty, due to dwindling investment and a potential financial recession. The impact of these problems on the economy is dire.

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MANAGING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR: LESSONS FROM BABCOCK UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

Angela E. NWAOMAH

Change, it is commonly said, is inevitable and so is a constant part of life. But organizational changes are not easily welcome by employees, despite the good intentions that may have caused them. This paper therefore studies an organizational change, the University Management Information System (UMIS), introduced in the recent times for more efficient student records management. The paper shows that employees received these changes differently. It concludes by suggesting ways Babcock University leadership can successfully introduce and implement changes.

KEYWORDS: Change, UMIS-University Management Information System, Babcock University, Unfreezing, Re-freezing.

Introduction

An organization is seen as a collection of people, with consciously coordinated efforts brought together under 'able' leadership towards achieving common goals. The success of any organization depends to a very large extent on the interpersonal relationship existing in that organization. Successful leaders, therefore, establish good inter-personal relationship with their subordinates.

However, one of the challenges to organizational leadership, interpersonal relationship and growth is organizational change. Fullan (2001) views change as a double-edged sword. Its persistent speed is hard to adjust to, yet when things are disturbed, we can find new ways to move ahead and create breakthroughs that are not possible in stagnant societies. When asked how they feel about change, people often describe anxiety, fear, danger, loss, and panic, as well as excitement, energy, exhibition, risk taking, and

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improvement. For better or for worse, change arouses emotions, and when emotions intensify in an organization, leadership is key for addressing change.

Change, is often said, is the only thing that remains constant in organizations. Change often takes place incrementally but it can take the form of a transformation for any organization.

Mullins (2010) also affirms that the nature of organisational change is an inevitable and constant feature. It is an inescapable part of both social and organisational life and we are all subject to continual change of one form or another. Change is also a pervasive influence and because of its pervasive nature, change at any one level is interrelated with change at other levels. At the individual level there could, for example be a personal transformational change where circumstances have not changed but because of some emotional or spiritual happening, the individual was transformed or changed. This transformation may have some effect on their behaviour and actions at work and relationship with colleagues.

Organizational change can be initiated deliberately by managers, it can evolve slowly within a department, it can be imposed by specific changes in policy or procedures or it can arise through external pressures. Change can affect all aspects of the operation and functioning of the organization (Schein, 2004).

Types of Change

There are three types of change according to Armstrong (2009).

- 1. Strategic Change:** This change is concerned with broad, long-term and organization-wide issues involving change. It is about moving to a future state that has been defined generally in terms of strategic vision and scope. It will cover the purpose and mission of the organization, its corporate philosophy on such matters as growth, quality, innovation and values concerning and strategic goals for achieving and maintaining competitive advantage and for product-market development.
- 2. Operational Change:** This change relates to new systems, procedures, structures or technology that will have an immediate effect on working arrangements within a part of the organization. But its impact on people can be more significant than broader strategic change and it has to be handled just as carefully.
- 3. Transformational Change:** This takes places when there are fundamental and comprehensive changes in structures, process and

behaviours that have a dramatic effect on the ways in which the organization functions.

The Forces of Change

According to Mullins (2010), an organization can perform effectively only through interactions with the broader external environment of which it is a part. The Structure and Functioning of the organization must therefore reflect the nature of the environment in which it is operating. There are factors which create an increasingly volatile environment, such as:

- Uncertain economic conditions;
- Globalisation and fierce world competition;
- Political interests;
- Scarcity of natural resources;
- Rapid developments in new technologies and the information age.

All of these refer to Political, Economical, Technological and Socio-Cultural factors.

Further, in order to help ensure its survival and future success, the organisation must be readily be adaptable to the external demands placed upon it. The organisation must be responsive to change. Other major forces of change include:

- Increased demands for quality and high levels of customer service and satisfaction;
- Greater flexibility in the structure of work organization and patterns of management;
- The changing nature and composition of workforce; and
- Conflict from within the organisation.

The Change Model

Stickland, as quoted in Oghene (2007: 73) argues: "The problem with studying change is that it parades across many subject domains under numerous guises such as transformation, development, metamorphoses, transmutation, evolution, regeneration, innovation revolution and transition to name but a few." One of the earliest change experts, Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist, developed a three-step model of change. These are unfreezing, changing, refreezing stages. These are briefly discussed below.

- 1. Unfreezing-** altering the present stable equilibrium that supports existing behaviours and attitudes. This process must take account of the inherent threats change presents to people and the need to motivate

to attain the natural state of equilibrium by accepting change.

2. Changing/Moving- developing new responses based on new information.
3. Refreezing- stabilizing the change by introducing the new responses into the personalities of those concerns.

This theory is adopted by this paper to study a significant change in the student information management system that Babcock University administration introduced in the desire to provide quality services for its students and stakeholders.

PART ONE: Background (The Unfreezing Stage)

Proving a Rationale

Before the approval of private universities in 1999 by the Federal Government, the Nigerian universities system was funded by the state and federal governments. One major problem associated with the large student population was the issue of information management. This situation challenged the management of information in the universities, especially as it concerns student's records. For instance, it was difficult establishing the exact student population of universities, registration processes were a nightmare, student data capturing and storage was very challenging and results were hardly submitted by teachers soon after examination and students hardly knew their results, until sometimes at the final year. Further, parents and guardians scarcely saw their wards' results slips except on demand. These problems, however, were expected to be solved by the private universities which would depend largely on tuition paid by the students and are thus expected to offer quality service to the public and the various stakeholders.

Since information is critical in education, it is through it that an educational institution relates with the public. It is thus a bridge between the institution and the public-parents, industries /organizations and other stakeholders. Good information management practices form a foundation for sound educational practices and optimum outcomes (JISC INFONET, 2007).

But Babcock University, one of the first private universities, which has been known for high performance, had challenges with regard to its students' information management. First, Babcock began with the manual registration exercise and eventually migrated to the NU-Solution Registration Software. But this option, which was used for about five years, did not provide the results expected especially with growing student population. For instance, it was difficult establishing the exact number of registered students, some

students were studying and receiving grades at the end of the semester without registering for these services, student statistics supplied to accrediting bodies by the Bursary, Registry and Student Affairs, most times did not agree and parents/guardians were also complaining about not receiving the results of their wards, while some students, who either had no active studentship status or were performing poorly, were alleged to be manufacturing results slips to deceive their parents and guardians. Thus, the expectation of high quality information service delivery to parents, guardians and stakeholders, was lacking. Parents mounted pressure on the management especially that they have a forum-the Parents Consultative Forum (PCF) through which they can air their views to the management and the university was sometimes embarrassed by the poor student information management. These issues raised a big management challenge. It was management's view that an organisation's lack of On-line method of relating with its stakeholders did not necessarily translate into poor performances by the organisation or its component units but also largely questions its integrity. Because of this the management decided for a change in 2007

PART TWO: The Changing Stage

Challenging the Status quo

The real issue had to do with determining the nature of the change sought. Since the primary mission if a university revolves around student's information management, from admission to post-graduation, it was necessary to carefully seek an information management system that would meet the needs of the university. Babcock University desired a system that would:

- i) ensure the information provided about a student is complete, accurate and appropriate;
- ii) ensure delivering those information sources to stakeholders in a timely and appropriate fashion.;
- iii) ensure both students and parents have access to information (students' results) at all times;
- iv) guarantee, at least to a very high level, that only students who are duly registered can attend lectures and earn grades at the end of the semester

This decision for change led the management to introduce the University Management Information System (UMIS). This requires the use of information communication technology (ICT) for service delivery. This was resisted by teaching and non-teaching (units directly involved) staff of Babcock university and students, although the aim of the management was to

establish an information management system that essentially covers the entire student life cycle from Admission to Alumni as follows:

- **Admission-** this process identifies tracks and monitors the admission workflow, from student application until the acceptance/ confirmation process. This also includes online sale of admission forms and admission screening exams.
- **Registration-** an online registration and settlement system. Automatically all the required registration processes such as residence selection, payment, course selections and approvals are on-line. This process optimizes statistical analysis for accurate information on student enrolment.
- **Learning-** defines information relating to academic offering including courses, study areas (majors, minors etc). timetabling, units, classes, their activities (lecturers, tutorials etc.) and their awards.
- **Grading-** enables the university to create/ maintain/ amend/ transfer assessment parameters, scores and records for students on each programme/ course in the system so student could have access to their grades online.
- **Graduation-** maintains a detailed searchable record of graduates. Also activation of online application/ request for transcript and getting the transcript sent to designated organizations/Institutions without the graduate personally or their proxy visiting Babcock University.
- **Alumni-** a detailed database of Babcock university alumni with online information features.

Perceived Problems of the Change Decision

There were mixed reactions and resistance by staff to this change introduced by the University administration. Some reasons were given for their reaction which include;

- To use the UMIS-University Management Information System will require transferring students' data /result from the old result system to the new which would be lots of work for some units of the University especially the Registry department.
- Teachers will need to enter students result themselves online as against what was the practice where a department's secretary inputs the results of students into the system.
- Not many employees had personal computers.

- Epileptic internet services would pose delays for results production. These were excuses given as bases for resistance to the change.

From observations and interactions the researcher made in sections of the organization, it was discovered that for many, the above reasons were not the main factors for resistance to the change but there were some common reasons for individual resistance to change which include the following:

- **The Shock of the New** – Some people are suspicious of anything that they perceive will upset their established routines, methods of working or conditions of employment. They do not want to lose the security of what is familiar to them. They may not believe statements by management that the change is for their benefit as well as that of the organization; sometimes with good reason. They may feel that the management has ulterior motives and sometimes, the lower the protestation of management, the less they will believe (Armstrong, 2009).
- **Habit** – People tend to respond to situations in an established and accustomed manner. Habits may serve as a means of comfort and security, and as a guide for easy decision making. Paper correspondence, is what people are used. To propose change to habits, especially if the habits are well established and require little effort, may be resisted. However, if there is a clearly perceived advantage, for example a reduction in working hours without loss of pay, there is likely to be less, if any resistance to the change, although some people may, because of habit, still find it difficult to adjust to the new times.
- **Inconvenience or Loss of Freedom** – Some thought the change is likely to prove inconvenient, make life more difficult especially for those without personal computers and internet connections in their offices.
- **Economic Implications** – People resisted the change because it was perceived as reducing either directly or indirectly their pay or other rewards requiring an increase in work for the same level of pay or acting as a threat to their job security e.g. the office assistants whose job is to deliver the paper correspondence from one office to another may become redundant and if students can submit their data on-line.
- **Competence Fears** – Some faculty...

- **Fear of the Unknown** – Changes which confront people with the unknown tend to cause anxiety or fear. Many major changes in a work organisation present a degree of uncertainty with the introduction of the new technology or methods of working, an employee may resist promotion because of uncertainty over changes in responsibilities or the increased social demands of the higher position (Piderit, 2000).
- **Face of Lack of Support**- Lacking important support from direct supervisors and/or Organization not having the correct e-Resources to properly implement the changes.
- **Lack of Confidence**- Lacking in personal confidence that things, once changed, really will be better than before.

Overcoming the Resistance to Change

Schein (2004) points out that resistance to change is one of the most powerful drivers of human behaviour, and the key to dealing with it effectively is to understand both its physical and emotional components. Most organizational leaders make two fatal errors when dealing with resistance.

First, they underestimate the strength of current patterns that employees are comfortable and familiar with.

Second, they underestimate what will be required to change those patterns and deal with automatic, though sometimes subtle fight or flight responses that occur when employees interpret changes as threats.

According to Armstrong (2009) our brains are hard-wired to do three things: match patterns, resist or fight any threats to survival, and respond first with emotion over logic. Our neural pathways and amygdalate are the key players in these reactions. The amygdalate is an almond-shaped piece of the brain that triggers the 'fight or flight' reaction. The brain has two amygdalate, and they play a fundamental role in ensuring our survival.

Therefore, the only way to overcome this resistance is for the management of Babcock University to convince employees that the changes or new initiatives would enhance their ability to 'survive'. If the employees are not convinced, they may not comply with the changes for a while but will soon fall back into the old way of doing things. Their older, established neural-pathway patterns are simply more hard-wired than the new ones.

Piderit, (2000) also add that in overcoming resistance to change – involvement in the change process gives people the chance to raise and resolve their concerns and make suggestions about the form of the change

and how it should be introduced. The aim is to get 'Ownership' – a feeling amongst people that the change is something that they are happy to live with because they have been involved in its planning and introduction – it has become their change.

People and Change

In order to minimise the problem, the management of the organisation under discussion has to note the following points about people and change.

- Strong resistance to change is often rooted in deeply conditioned or historical reinforced feelings. Patience and tolerance are required to help employees in these situations to see things differently, bit by bit and gradually.
- Certain types of employees – The reliable/dependable/steady/habitual/process-oriented types – often find change very unsettling.
- Employees who welcome change are not generally the best at being able to work reliably, dependably and follow processes. The reliability/dependability is directly opposite character traits to mobility/adaptability capabilities.
- Certain industries and disciplines have a high concentration of staff who need a strong reliability/dependability personality profile, for example, health services and nursing, administration, public utilities and services; these sectors will tend to have many staff with character profile who find change difficult.
- Age is another factor. Erik Erikson's fascinating Psychosocial Theory is helpful for understanding that people's properties and motivations are different depending on their stage of life. For instance. Older professors might likely resist change than younger teachers who seem more familiar with ICT.

The more management understand people's need, the better they will be able to manage change.

The Change Leader

Not everyone welcomes change. Leaders should be mindful of people's strengths and weaknesses. They should take the time to understand the people they are dealing with, and how and why they feel like they do before they take action.

Heifetz (1994) cited in Fullan (2001:2) accuses organisations of looking for the wrong kind of leadership when the going gets tough: "In a crisis ... we call for someone with answers, decision, strength, and a map of the future, someone who knows where we ought to be going – in short someone who can make hard problems simple ... instead of looking for saviours, we should be calling for leadership that will change us to face problems for which there are

no simple, painless solutions – problems that require us to learn new ways.” Heifetz argues that we should look at the role of the leader as “Mobilizing people to tackle tough problems” so leadership is not mobilizing others to solve problems they already know how to solve but helping them to confront problems that have not yet been addressed successfully.

Wright (2000) supporting Heifetz's argument of the role of a leader states that one of the components of leadership is understanding change. It is essential for leaders to understand the change process. Moral purpose without an understanding of change will lead to moral martyrdom. Moreover, leaders who combine a commitment to moral purpose with a healthy respect for the complexities of the change process not only will be more successful but will also unearth deeper moral purpose.

The change leader sees change as an opportunity. He/she looks for change, knows how to find the right changes and knows how to make them effective so as to help his or her organization gain competitive advantage. The Vice-Chancellor of Babcock University provided this leadership to enable the functioning of the UMIS.

Management and Change

CONCERNS OF EMPLOYEES	RESPONSE FROM LEADERS
Information	Communicate
Question: What do you plan to change?	Face to face with employees during meetings, one-on-one, through letters, e.t.c.
Personal	Assurance
Question: Will we survive? Where will we fit?	Others have done – we can too! We will be better off! We will have a place for you!
Implementation	Repetition
Question: How will it be accomplished?	Discuss implementation process repeatedly
Impact	Reality
Questions: What will be the results? How will they benefit us and the organization?	Give people the facts. Cast the vision for what can be. Discuss the benefits of change.

PART THREE: CELEBRATING THE CHANGE (THE REFREEZING STAGE)

Benefits of the Change

The whole essence of change is to improve organizational performances and increase customers' satisfaction. The University Management Information System (UMIS), when fully utilized, has the capacity to provide modern student information management services and adds more value to the organisation and its workforce in the following ways:

To Babcock University

- Encourage the university to improve on its power supply. Babcock University invested massively on its power supply system by migrating to the National Grid of the Power Holding Company of Nigeria and acquired two giant generating plants. These two provisions ensured that the University has uninterrupted power supply.
- The University also upgraded its internet facilities which help to improve productivity and increase efficiency by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with GLO Mobile Telecommunication Company to provide a 40 bandwidth internet service to the school. This was a significant improvement from the 4 bandwidth it had. There are also plans to further upgrade and expand the internet facilities in the University to continuously equip faculty, staff and students to function maximally in their work and study.
- The seamless networking between the Bursary, Registry and Student Affairs made it impossible for students who did not register to earn grades. Further, it became easy to monitor the registration process and provide fairly accurate students' statistics.
- Students with disciplinary problems can easily be tracked by the Student Affairs and disabled from registration.
- Lecturers could monitor student registration for their courses and personally upload their results to the UMIS platform, thus minimizing possible manipulations of grades.
- It ensures accuracy in course registration by students making it difficult for un-registered student to earn grades.
- Enables the management get constant/ instant feedback or input from stakeholders on how to improve services at different units of the university.

To Stakeholders

- Instant responses to students' request through the report sequel (online help desk-facebook) when students lodge complaints as regards registration and grade issues
- Promptness in correspondence to parents through online contacts made available to give progress report (academic report- students result, disciplinary report, etc.) of their wards/children.
- Provision for on-line transcript request and delivery.
- Improve responsiveness to on-line verification of Babcock university graduates transcripts and certificates upon request by labour employers/institutions.
- Constantly make use of the online help desk for quick correspondence between the registry department and its public.
- Students could have access to their semester's results on-line right after Senate approval without having to wait for result slip.

These online services are to eliminate delays and enable the students, staff, public/stakeholders have access to needed information without having to leave home/ location at any hour of the day which in turn assist the University management for faster communication and decision making.

Conclusion

Change is a capability, both of companies and its officers, for the first place where change happens is in the minds of the organization's leaders and managers. Beyond this, change skill includes both the design of flexible organizations and the education of flexible people. The 'inertialess' company can turn on a penny, stopping one thing and starting another in response to the twists and turns of their external context.

Change is more than capability; it is a competitive advantage and means survival. Thus, the introduction of the University Management information Services (UMIS) to provide and manage student records at Babcock University has to a very great degree impacted positively on its system.

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