

Chapter II

Change Theory: A Model to Study Technology in Classrooms

One person claims that schools are being bombarded by change; another observes that there is nothing new under the sun. A policy maker charges that teachers are resistant to change; a teacher complains that administrators introduce change for their own self-aggrandizement and that they neither know what is needed nor understand the classroom (Fullan, 2001, p. 3).

How difficult is change? According to those who study change in schools and classrooms, change is something that is always occurring, or things remain the same. As Seymour Papert noted in 1993, if a teacher from the 18th century were to come into a classroom today, most likely they would feel right at home. In many cases students are still sitting in rows, perhaps not parallel rows, but rows nonetheless. There are books and papers around. Perhaps they would not be familiar with the overhead projector, but it would not take long to learn how to use it. Maps still hang on the walls. There might even be a computer somewhere in the room, but it might not be turned on, so no problem there. Making classrooms modern has not meant changing the typical look, feel, and layout of the traditional classroom.

“Constants amidst change...” (Cuban, 1986, p. 1). In education one can always count on change in curricula, practices, policies, procedures, management, and expectations, to name a few. Pressure for change comes from the top-down and bottom-up. And every innovation brought into schools is done with good intentions.

But change is difficult to achieve. And some teachers, who have seen new approaches to teaching come and go quickly over their years as teachers, take a jaundiced view as new ideas come into their schools. Just as they became knowledgeable and perhaps comfortable with the last approach, it is replaced with something quite different, so the learning begins again and the comfort-zone must be reestablished. So for teachers, in particular, the facilitators of change must not only show them how to use the innovation, but prove that it works and solves a problem that is agreed to be a problem.

Little (1993) described what she called five streams of reform. These included reform in:

1. Subject matter teaching (standards, curriculum change, and pedagogical methods)
2. Equity among diverse learners
3. The nature, extent and uses of student assessment, moving toward more authentic assessments
4. The social organization of schooling
5. The professionalization of teaching

Each of these streams has been considered innovations in education practice. This discussion of change in schools cannot be exhaustive for there are books and books devoted just to this topic. Therefore, five approaches to the study of change or reform in schools, especially relevant to the overall topic of this book, will be discussed.

C. Everett Rogers (1962, 1972, 1983, 1995, & 2003) was one of the first to address the processes of innovations becoming accepted into practice, or what he coined as the “diffusion of innovations.” Rogers posited five stages of adoption:

1. Knowledge stage, or awareness of the innovation, but without complete information
2. Persuasion stage, or interest in the innovation, seeking more information
3. Decision stage, evaluation of the innovation mentally before actually trying it out, intending to try it out
4. Implementation stage, trial of the innovation to determine usefulness

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