Change yourself to change your institution: Perspectives on educational change

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Abstract

The main objective of this study is to discuss the perspectives of school change. This study is a theoretical analysis and based on document review. The concept of educational change is described as school improvement. It is one of the ways to address the changing social needs through the technological, political, and cultural change of the school. School improvement or change is to change the school system as a whole for the attainment of better results, but questions arise about how to change, who is to change, and what to change and answers are varied and complicated. The concept of educational change is multidimensional. The perspective of technological change focuses on well-equipped classrooms and the use of information communication technology. The perspective political change fosters on power, authority, and interests of people. The cultural viewpoint asserts that the values, norms, and behaviour influence the organizational performance and unless changing it, the system cannot be changed. School change is necessary for the Nepalese context and in doing so, all the three perspectives technological, political, and cultural are necessary to address. The technological part of the school system is nearly very poor, the party politics in schools is influencing the authority and the school culture is not favourable to address the changing needs of the society. So, all the dimensions are needed to be taken into consideration to change the school system in Nepal.

Keywords: school improvement, technology, school culture, multidimensional, institutionalization

Context of the Study

Human aspirations are being higher and higher day by day due to the advancement of science and technology (Mattheou, 2010). For the fulfillment of needs and aspirations, human has focused himself on educational change and development because school is the formal institution that provides education. To address the changing needs of people education is taken as an important means

and attention is being paid to the school environment. Without changing the school setting, quality education is not possible. But changing the school is not an easy and simple task and the ways for changing the school are multi-dimensional.

We have been hearing comments on the education system from the past and will hear in the future too. Reimer (1973) views the school as dead, Coombs (1968) asserts there is a world education crisis, and Illich (1970) asserts the nature of the school is too much institutionalized and ineffective and there is a large de-schooling society. Such views are too worthy to change the school system but the question arises 'what to change' and 'how to change'? Dalin (2005) presents the dilemma as follows:

> Whether it is a teacher who plans to make changes in her classroom teaching, a headteacher who is working on changes in the organization of the school, a guidance counselor who is working together with teachers to assist student learning, a superintendent who wants city-wide renewal, or a person situated in the political or administrative center who favours reform - all are faced with the same basic question: how can change best be brought about in the schools? (p. 93)

The striking question on changing the school is an important question worldwide either in developed countries or developing countries. Everyone needs change in school but what to change - the structure, the curriculum, the environment, the culture, the value, or the pedagogy? And who is to change - the teacher, the headteacher, the parents, the local body, or the central authority, and how to change - emotionally, rationally, or logically?

The main objectives of this paper are to discuss briefly the concept of change, to discuss the theories of change, and to find out the existing practices to change the school. The study is based on document analysis. I have analysed cultural, political, and technological perspectives on change. In the same way, I have discussed rational-empirical, normative-re-educative, and power-coercive perspectives. Furthermore, I have analysed the models of leadership and paradigms (equilibrium and conflict paradigms) of change.

Perspectives on Change

The terms 'change', 'reform', 'innovation', 'renewal' 'development' etc. are taken as similar terms. In our educational context, change is innovation. The term innovation refers to improvement in the system (Havelock, 1971, as cited in Dalin, 2005), and is related to the technological field and it is "a well-considered attempt at improving practice with respect to stated goals" (Dalin, 2005. p. 94).

The concept of change is well defined by Velzen et al. more clearly in the context of school. They have defined it as, "a systematic, sustained effort aimed at a change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively" (Velzen et al. 1985, as cited in Dalin, 2005. p. 95). It denotes that change is systematic, sustainable, effective, and effortful to attain the ultimate goals of the school organization. Velzen et al. (1985) further states:

> The matter of change, school improvement takes aim at the school as a whole (changes in personnel or in a single classroom don't qualify) - the programmes must be systematic and extend over a period of time. Changes apply to all aspects of the school (structures, processes, and climate). Changes must take account of the many factors related to a specific pedagogical change (circumstances within the organization, personnel, finances, equipment, and use of time) (as cited in Dalin, 2005, p. 95).

There are three views on change - technological, cultural, and political. Technological change refers to the changes in curricula, pedagogy, teaching materials, etc.; cultural change refers to change in values, attitudes, and behaviour. "In the deepest sense of the term, school improvement is a question of values" (Dalin, 2005). And political change refers to policy, planning, and procedure of centralization and decentralization. According to House (1981), technological change focuses on innovation in its elements and effects. The political change focuses on innovation in a specific context like power and influence. The cultural change focuses on situations and contexts and meanings and values. In the same way, technological change is production-oriented, political change is negotiations and conflict-oriented and cultural change is community opinion-oriented. Fundamental principles and assumptions of technological change are systematic and rational processes, political are fractions of experience - conflict, and compromise and in cultural change, participants are viewed in terms of cultures and subcultures as the fundamental principles (Dalin, 2005). The cultural and value-based notion of change is teachers' professionalization and accountability towards their job (Poulson, 1998). Quartz views on cultural aspect three types of norms - pedagogical norms, rational norms, and distributive norms (Quartz, 1996; as cited in Dalin, 2005).

The concept of change, as already told, is innovation. It is multi-dimensional, at least three dimensions - the possible use of new or revised materials/resources; the possible use of new teaching approaches; the possible alteration of beliefs. All three

aspects of change are necessary to achieve a particular educational goal or set of goals (Fullan, 2007).

To change in totality, all these aspects of change should be implemented. Dalin (2005) says "School improvement has only one justification: that it should lead to a better school for pupils and teachers alike - in practice; and in our opinion, it is not all that important how this takes place" (p. 97). The question how to change the total environment of the school is the theoretical perspective, so the perspectives of Chin and Benne (1969), Paulston (1976), and House (1981) are discussed in this study.

Chin and Benne (1969) perspectives on school change

Chin and Benne have discussed three strategies on change - rational-empirical, normative-re-educative, and power-coercive. The rational-empirical view assumes that a human being is a rational being and accepts objective change and when changes take place, he/she accepts it as its advantages. The strength of change is beneficial than the older ones (Dalin, 2005). In Nepalese context, this view of school change is seen applicable and the school head and authorities have to objectify the advantages of the change. If the people see the advantages from the change they easily accept it and become a part of the changing process. The normative-re-educative view is psychological and assumes that individual norms, values, attitudes, and skills are important and should be changed because "Changes in attitudes and behaviour are just as important as changes in products" (ibid. p. 99). It is a problem-solving ability and helps in self-improvement. This view of change seems challenging to apply in limited time. Certain culture, norms, values, attitudes and beliefs are deeply rooted in Nepalese educators and the people. Such entities can be changed but might take longer time and hard effort. The power coercive view of change believes that power or coercion should be used to change the people. For this rules and regulations should be practiced firmly in an organization. And reward and punishment policy should be applied. This view of change is applicable in short period of time but cannot be said that it is beneficial in all school organization because it is better to make a culture of self-directing and self-regulating.

Paulston (1976) views on change

Holland Paulston's overview on theories for social change (1976) is focused on equilibrium paradigm and conflict paradigm.

Equilibrium paradigm

The equilibrium paradigm covers a lot of theories like evolutionary theory, functionalist theory, structural-functionalist theory, and system theory. The evolutionary theory asserts that change is a gradual process that takes place in society as well as in the school and is a natural process. Parson (1950), Emerson (1954), and Durkheim (1956) support this assumption. The functionalist theory says that social components even schoolwork according to social needs and changes occur in society. Different parts of the society work together to fulfill its needs and changes take place. Structural functionalism believes that society is an organism and different functions are done based on mutual understanding, cooperation, and value consensus (Sever, 2012). To attain the goals, social changes are essential and inevitable.

According to the structure-functionalists, innovations in the schools are created to address the social needs. To adopt the needs of the society school system is changed gradually. Dalin (2005) claims, "A need is created in society: the schools are assigned the task of fulfilling that need, the schools adapt structurally, the schools internalize their new function, and society changes gradually on account of the schools' altered educational programme" (p. 101). So, equilibrium paradigm is an evolutionary process of school change. The schools are changed based on social demand. It can be said that it is a demand based change.

In the context of Nepal, social demand of education is too high and the schools are unable to address the social needs. The school policies, plans, programme, and practices are traditional and such traditional systems do not create the equilibrium between the social expectations and school performance. In such situations, schools innovate, explore, and research the society and make changes accordingly.

Conflict paradigm

The base of conflict theory is Marxism and Neo-Marxism, which emphasize "the weaknesses, conflicts of values and conflicts of interests inherent in social systems" (Dalin, 2005, p. 102). It says that schools are to reproduce power for the elite group. According to this mentality, the school system is structured in such a way that the socio-economic structure of society is confirmed. Pupils are trained to accept competition (which, according to this theory, is always unfair), to accept defeat, and to receive rewards - all of which are regulated by the ruling class (ibid. p. 103).

Marxists believe that "educational reforms can only come about with the aid of social revolution since they will always depend on radical changes in the economic and political system" (ibid). This notion of school change depends on political change. This paradigm believes that political ideology, dedication, thought and vision changes the whole system as well as education.

House (1981) perspectives on change

Ernest R. House (1981) gives his views on change in three dimensions namely the technological, the political, and the cultural.

The technological perspective on change

The technological perspective is product-based. It focuses on efficiency and better result. The main aspects of this perspective in the USA began with the Sputnik launching. Many universities, educational institutions, and the government started to rethink the education system and attention paid to technological change. Educators focused themselves on technological reform in the schools. Dalin (2005) says:

> What characterizes this perspective is the belief that solutions to the schools' problems are to be found in 'technologies' whose legitimacy and relevance can be applied in different situations. The important thing here, then, becomes a search for the most effective means of reaching a specific goal. 'The means' are usually regarded as a product, often in the form of teaching aid or a method (p.106)

The technological perspective of change is quite necessary to modernize the school and fulfill the social expectations. If schools were not provided the Information Technology (IT) as a social need, the schools would be the loser. Then the school system would be outdated. The era is based on science and technology and IT is the main interest and need of the society and the students. In such situations, the schools should be changed, the classes should be well equipped, and the teachers should be given trainings and skills. Further questions may arise on the costs that needs for the technological changes as who will pay, who will bear, and who will be responsible. My suggestion is the local governments and school communities have to work for the technological change.

The political perspective on change

Political perspective focuses on authority, power, and interest of people that play vital roles in education. Who and why want to change, whose interests

are addressed by the change, what cost needs in process of change are such questions that have a political background. Notably, resource allocation in schools is a conflicting issue among the different social and political groups. Policies of a particular school, policies of governing bodies, and policies of the society all depend on the political sphere. So to change the school politics plays an important role. Usually, internal and external influences create problems if there is unfair competition and vested interests among the political forces. Dalin (2005) says:

> From the vantage point of the political perspective, external influences are more problematical. The ideological question is this: 'What is fair?' It is virtually impossible to find projects that benefit everyone, and external influence can easily come to mean one-sided influence. The only way of implementing school improvement from this perspective, based on a code of ethics, is to wage negotiations that produce contracts, where compromise plays a natural role. (p. 111).

In developing countries, there is more politics in the educational sector. The issue of change is assessed in different criteria and ideologies and political actors influence the policies of change. Different types of conflicts arise and the concept of change remains in the same place.

The political perspective of change is concerned with the provision of proper rules regulations, authority, responsibility, power, and accountability. To change the schools in Nepalese context, political perspective is more considerable. Existing provisions are not sufficient to change the school system. It is also a question of moral, ethics and values. How one exercises power and authority to change the school is meaningful.

The cultural perspective of change

The cultural perspective assumes that an organization, its members, and society have different values and norms. These values and norms are important to change the school. An individual to school organization employs its own culture and the culture cannot be changed easily. The culture is deeply rooted in different forms and plays vital roles in the performance. The multicultural concept is more complex to address and use it to change the organization. The school development is dominated by elite people's culture (Dalin, 2005). A multicultural society is formed by different values, norms, beliefs, and customs but elite culture plays the main roles in the changing process. Dalin (2005) says:

It is important to understand how norms and values are formed, how the work is structured, how interpersonal relationships are developed and maintained, and how a particular idea for change and renewal is interpreted in the school. The key point is the extent to which the norms and values represented by 'the development' are in harmony with the organization's basic values. (p. 108)

The culture of teachers, culture of school leadership, culture of society, and local culture affect the changing process of the school. Such cultures resist the new curriculum, pedagogy, and even programme implementation (Berman, 1980a, as cited in Dalin, 2005). The ability of the organization to adapt to the change, desires of change, readiness for the change, motivation towards change, etc. are the cultural parts that have a significant impact on changing process. Mainly the culture of ownership and belongingness is the main factor of culture. As Roy Reimer (the former governor of Colorado State of the US) said, "I want everybody to look down the street, and see the school building and say, 'That's ours. We are responsible for it'."(Education Week, 1993, as cited in Dalin, 2005, p. 14).

The main perspective that I would like to focus is the cultural perspective. Culture is that factor which shapes the lifestyle of human (Dhakal, 2013). It is a unification of human activities; it is a belief system and a process of thinking (Ladson-Billings, 1995). What people think how they act and interact, how they perceive their job, how they perform their job, and why they think and do so all are the cultural dimensions. In the same way, the ownership, responsibility, accountability, and authority of the school organization are the cultural tendencies. Without developing well-cultured people, school change is nearly impossible. The feeling of 'our school' and the concept 'we are responsible for it' is a culture of belongingness and ownership that is needed to be developed in the heart and mind of Nepalese people.

In the context of Nepal, to change the school environment all three technological, cultural, and political changes are needed. The technological perspective on change focuses on changing the techniques of pedagogical practices. It focuses on applying modern technological tools and information technology in the classroom. Nepalese classrooms are poorly equipped with such technology and to change the school environment this approach seems useful. The second is cultural perspective and this perspective focuses on changing the culture of the organization. In the Nepalese context, the school leader to school teachers have to change their culture. Cultural change is not to change their religions and customs,

it is to change the thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes towards themselves. The culture of bearing responsibility, accountability, and feeling of pride is to be changed. The third perspective of change is political change. Political change refers to change in the relationship among the different interest groups and stakeholders. The vested interests of different agencies and stakeholders create conflict in the schools and the school environment becomes worse. Thus in Nepalese schools, the political environment is being unhealthy and inappropriate for the school environment and is needed to change.

Theory of School Improvement

Although there are not specific theories on school change, there are different widely accepted perspectives on school change and that is going towards the theory-building process. So Dalin (2005) says that school improvement is possible if we go towards theory building. Among different perspectives, cultural perspective is moving towards a theory-building process.

Hofstede (1991) has studied characteristics of 'national cultures' by studying a uniform company culture in 40 countries and has written Cultures and Organizations (1991). He found that four factors were important for whether a given culture was willing to participate in processes of change.

Acceptance of power differences, or the extent to which a culture accepts the fact that power is unevenly distributed in an organization (and in society).

Degree of individuality, or whether it is expected that the individual or the individual school should take matters into their own hands or whether the group/company/society has (collective) responsibility.

Degree of masculinity, or the extent to which the predominant features of the culture are concerned with money, prestige, a career, and things ('masculinity') as opposed to being concerned with other human beings, the quality of life, expressing emotion, etc. ('femininity').

The tendency to shy away from uncertainty by preparing for a safe career, creating a safety net of rules, monitoring conduct, and making sure that the rules are followed (as cited on Dalin, 2005, p. 123).

The theory of Hofstede (1991) is focused on four dimensions. Acceptance of power differences, degree of individuality, degree of masculinity, and the tendency shy away from uncertainty by preparing for a safe career. If the people accept that

power distribution among the society is unequal, they accept the changes and make the process of change easy. Yet power gaining game remains inside the people. The degree of individuality shows that each person or school has to give freedom to change them. The outer force for change might create fear and uncertainty among them. The degree of masculinity indicates the level of domination. Especially it indicates the extent of male domination for prestige, property, and carrier development. If the changing process ensures that no one will lose their present status they accept the change. Finally, the theory focuses on preparing for a safer carrier. It is the reduction of fears from uncertainty, insecurity, and hesitation. Thus, this theory seems useful to change schools.

The conflict takes place among the different groups who are benefitted and lost from the change, and dealing with the conflicting group is more complicated. Dalin (2005) classified the conflict into conflict of value (pedagogical, social, political, and economic), power struggle (distribution of power), practical conflicts (a problem in implementation clarity), and psychological conflicts (fear of unknown). These causes create problems in changing processes.

The issues of cultural change are related to the socio-psychological domain. When the issues of change rise, people use to think 'what I would get from the change' or 'how I would be benefitted from the change'. The change in the culture of the organization becomes painful to many people because of fear of losing the status or other benefits. But cultural change becomes acceptable if benefits can be ensured.

Leadership Models and School Change

Models of leadership play vital roles in school change because leadership is one of the most important parts that affect classroom teaching and has a great impact on student learning (Bush & Glover, 2014, Day & Sammons, 2016). Bush (2008) asserts, "The relationship between the quality of leadership and school effectiveness has received global recognition" (p.7). He claims, "School leadership effects account for about 3 to 5 percent of the variation in student achievement" (Bush, 2008, p. 7). There is no doubt that school change mainly depends on the school leader who leads the school towards a better result for students as well as the change of the institution. So, a brief discussion is needed on the models of leadership.

The instructional/pedagogical model

One of the leadership models is the instructional/pedagogical model. This model of leadership is focused on the improvement of teaching-learning activities.

Day and Sammons (2016) assert, "Instructional/pedagogical leadership model focuses on establishing clear educational goals, planning the curriculum and evaluating teachers and teaching" (p. 20). It seems that the model is concerned with enhancing teaching-learning activities. The school leader who applies this model is more academic and focuses on students' achievement. Bush and Glover (2014) termed it 'learning-centered leadership'. They claim, "Instructional leadership, and leadership for learning, focus primarily on the direction and purpose of leaders' influence; targeted at student learning via teachers. There is much less emphasis on the influence process itself" (p.5). It clarifies that this model is process-oriented. The process is for school change through academic excellence.

The transformative leadership model

The transformative leadership model is related to building the vision and setting directions, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organization, managing the teaching and learning programme (Day & Sammons, 2016). Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach(1999) claims "This form of leadership assumes that the central focus of leadership ought to be the commitments and capacities of organizational members. Higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals and greater capacities for accomplishing those goals are assumed to result in extra effort and greater productivity" (as cited in Bush & Glover, 2014, p. 6).

The transformative leadership model is to make the teachers and school personnel more committed to organizational goals and make them effortful for higher productivity. It fosters the restructuring of the school culture and transformation of school in totality.

The contingency model of leadership

The contingency model of leadership believes in the context and situation of the school. The school environment is complex and changing and in such a situation, a certain model of leadership cannot success the school leader. The school leader has to follow one or more leadership models to make the organization successful and address the diverse nature of the school environment. Bush and Glover (2014) claims:

> Contingent leadership acknowledges the diverse nature of school contexts, and the advantages of adapting leadership styles to the particular situation, rather than adopting a 'one size fits all' stance. The educational context is too

complex and unpredictable for a single leadership approach to be adopted for all events and issues. Leaders need to be able to read the situation and adopt the most appropriate response (p. 19).

Fiedler (1967) who is known as the father of the contingency model of leadership defines the model "favorableness of a situation" (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993, p. 119). It focuses on the major situational variables that determine the success of the leader. In the school context, political, cultural, economic, social, technological, and religious factors influence the success of the leader. So, the contingency model of leadership is seen as an important model for school change.

The School Improvement in Nepalese Context

Nepal is a developing country and entered a new era after the declaration of the constitution of Nepal in 2015. It has adopted a federal system of governance. There are federal, state, and local levels of government. The major roles for school governance are given to the local government. In such a context school improvement and reform is complicated and problematic because the local bodies have their vested interests.

The public school system is criticized due to poor performance and needs improvement but as works of literature have clarified, technological, political, and cultural factors might create conflict among different multicultural groups and political ideologies.

Specifically, the culture of political actors, teachers, school leaders, and the school community is to be changed. Unless the stakeholders feel the belongingness and take ownership of the school, it is difficult to change the schools. Policies, practices, and implementation levels have to change their existing culture to reform the school. The theory of school improvement is seen as helpful in the Nepalese context to identify the problems in changing process of school and solving the problems that might occur during the process of school improvement.

Conclusion

School change is an inevitable and necessary function for the coming generation and the society. There are different views and perspectives on school change. Velzen et al. (1985) view change as systematic, sustainable, effective, and effortful to attain the ultimate goals of the school organization. Havelock (1971) says change an improvement in the system. Dalin (2005) says it as a question of values. School change is three-dimensional - technological, cultural, and political.

Technological change refers to the changes of curricula, pedagogy, teaching materials, etc., cultural change refers to change in values, attitudes, and behaviour and political change refer to a policy, planning, and procedure.

Chin and Benne (1969) suggest applying three strategies for school change - rational-empirical, normative-re-educative, and power-coercive. The first one asserts that human being is a rational being and works on rationality, the second one claims that human works on his/her psychological satisfaction and the third one emphasizes on rules and regulations. This view is strategic and useful to change the schools. Paulston (1976) suggests paying attention to equilibrium and conflict paradigms. This is a worldview that claims two types of attitudes on change. House (1981) tells to focus on technological, political, and cultural perspectives on change. These perspectives are more practical to school change. The theory of change focused on the cultural paradigm. House (1981) indicates how the culture of the individual, organization, and political culture resist the changing processes or improvement of the school. This view is more focused on cultural aspects of an individual and organization. Hofstede (1991) describes how conflict arises among different interest groups and change takes place and it focuses on conflict resolution for change the schools.

The discussion clarifies that school change is multidimensional and multifaceted. It is situational as well as conditional. Why one theory, perspective, and paradigm is better and other is not is a crucial question and it depends on the situation and the school environment. So, the school environment and the situation determine to follow a strategy, apply a perspective and decide to use an approach. It highly depends on the school stakeholders' desire for change. There are different models of leadership such as instructional/pedagogical, transformative, and contingency. The school leaders must be skilled and trained to practice the models in the real field. All these models of leadership are equally important to change the school but the situation and school environment are to be assessed to apply a certain model.

Finally, the words of Roy Reimer (1993), "I want everybody to look down the street, and see the school building and say, 'That's ours. We are responsible for it'" (as cited in Dalin, 2005, p. 14) are worthy to change the culture of teachers, school head, political leaders, and other stakeholders. Without changing the culture of responsibility and ownership for the school, educational change is nearly impossible. If we just indicateeach other and try to escape from our duties and responsibilities school change will be just a dream. Thus, to change the dreams into reality, cultural change is a must and it should be started from self.

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