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ABSTRACT

Four aspects of educational administration which are relevant to the introduction of new instructional technologies into school systems are discussed. Section I presents a planning change model whose main phases are research, development, adoption and implementation. After this, the following major administrative responsibilities are outlined: 1) setting the climate and making policy for instructional change; 2) collecting information and making decisions; 3) providing resources; 4) informing the community; and 5) coordinating the overall program. Section III identifies lack of time, a shortage of technological expertise and institutional inertia as the most serious problems which the administrator must overcome. The final portion of the presentation offers a series of hints for implementing change. Among these are: 1) the alignment of the goals of instructional technology with those of the entire school system; 2) the continuous communication of progress to administrators, via reports and demonstration site visits; 3) the involvement of students, parents and other citizens; and 4) the generation of sufficient data to validate the need for change. (PB)

MARKETING INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGIES TO SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

-- A VIEW FROM THE INSIDE

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to discuss one major component of the educational environment that affects the implementation of proven instructional technologies--the "administration" component. What this paper is concerned with is how to effectively implement proven instructional technologies. Assuming, as a given example, that a particular instructional technology has been shown to be learning effective and desirable, how do we work with the administration of a school system in implementing this technology. The latter implying that the technology is one that creates the type of humanistic learning environment that we are striving to promote in public education.

Following this brief introduction, the paper is divided into four sections, the first dealing with a brief presentation of a planning change model so that we can identify the major phases of implementing any instrumental innovation in public education. The second section deals with the identification of the responsibilities and duties of the administration component within this change model. The third section is concerned with some of the problems and issues that the administration component must overcome in order to deal effectively with the implementation of technology based instructional programs. The last section lists some observations that I call "helpful hints from experience" that will help you as an innovator and promoter of instructional based program to overcome some of the problems identified in the earlier sections.

PLANNING CHANGE MODEL

Within the limited scope of this paper, I will not attempt to review the vast amount of literature that exists today on the various components of the change process. But for purposes of this paper, I will provide one such planning change model which identifies the procedures for processing an application of instructional technology from basic research to systemwide utilization. The change model in figure 1 (page 3) shows 4 phases: RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, ADOPTION, and IMPLEMENTATION. In the model, the last two phases ADOPTION and IMPLEMENTATION are viewed as the prime responsibility of local school

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system, while the RESEARCH and DEVELOPMENT phases are the functions of other components in the educational community. The model implies that there is a strong logical flow from the production of knowledge and research phase to the utilization of knowledge in the implementation phase.

The primary objective of the research phase is the basic advancement of knowledge on the process of learning and associated areas of instruction. The major objective of the development phase is to identify the critical needs and problems of education and to apply the available research knowledge to formulate problem solutions of national or regional significance. Thus, the outputs of the development phase are materials, techniques, processes, and other instructional innovations. The function of the developmental phase is thus the engineering, production, packaging and dissemination of validated instructional systems or techniques.

The primary responsibilities of the adoption phase are to identify the critical instructional needs of the local school district, to develop performance specifications, to match these specifications against the available technological problem solutions, and to disseminate the solution within the local school system. Thus the adoption phase adapts and modifies products intended for regional or national use to the needs and problems in the local situation and promotes their diffusion in the local school district. It receives feedback on the effectiveness of its program from the implementation phase.

The ultimate benefactors of the application of educational technology are thousands of local school districts. Therefore, the major objective of the implementation phase is to prepare for, install, and utilize, on a widespread basis, the effective technologies and innovations demonstrated in the adoption phase. The implementation phase is not merely the end point of the process of utilizing educational technology, but rather that the people involved in the implementation phase also make contributions to other phases in the change process.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF ADMINISTRATION IN THE PLANNING CHANGE MODEL

Given this brief background on the change process this paper will discuss ways of helping to bridge the gap between the adoption and implementation phases of the model; and in particular to identify the responsibilities of the administration component in this process. At this time, it might be appropriate to identify the various levels of administration that will be referred to in this paper.

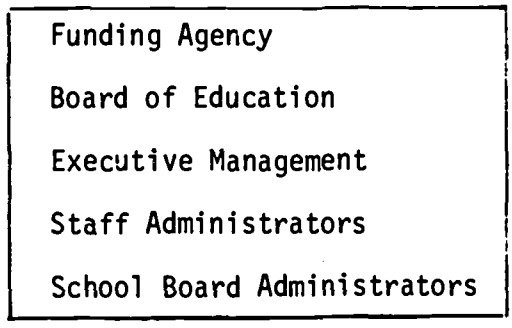

Fig. 2. Levels of the Administration Component

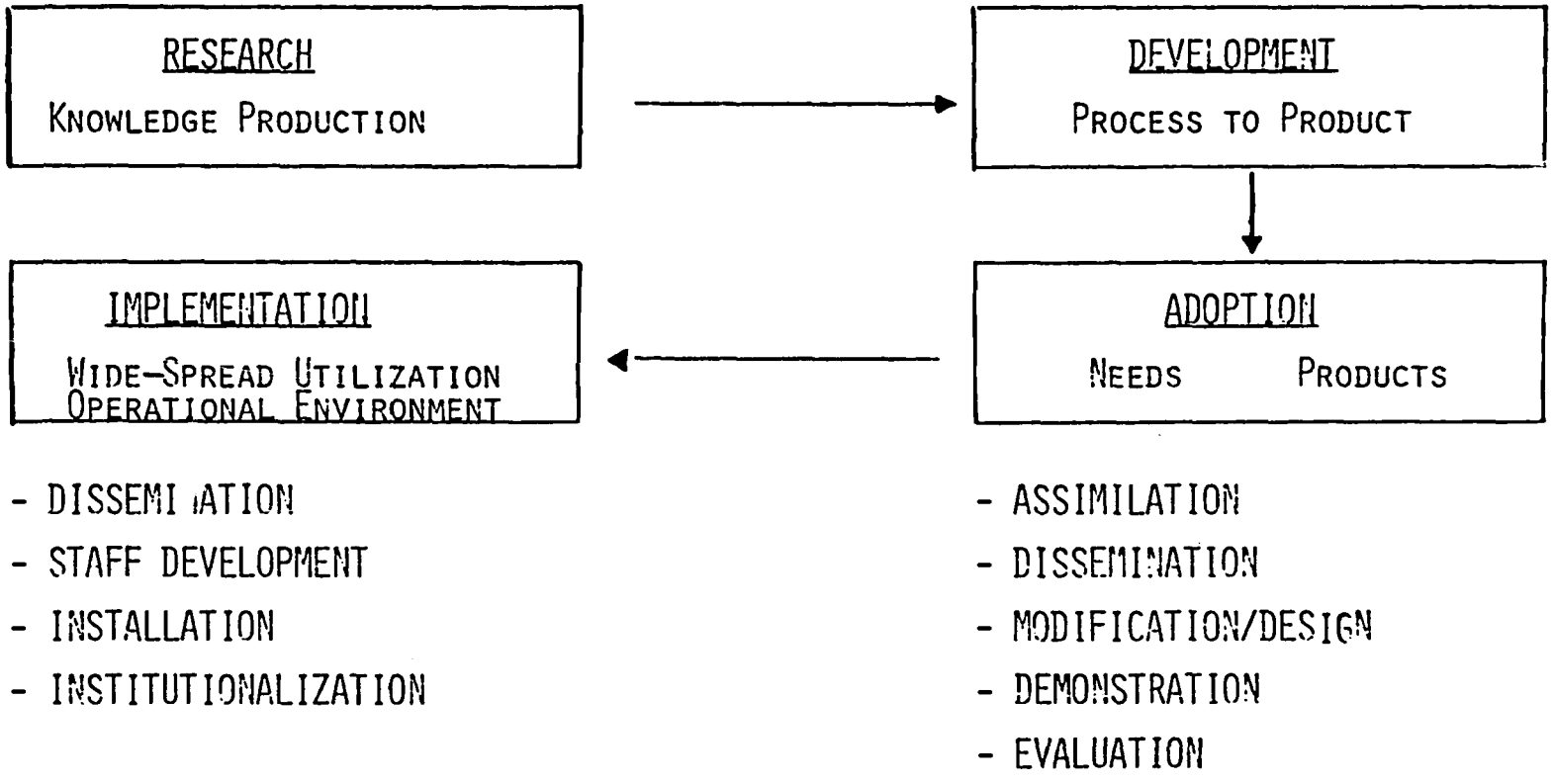

Fig. 1 - PLANNING CHANGE MODEL

At the bottom of the administrative bureaucracy is the large number of school-based administrators. These are principals and assistant principals that work with implementing instructional innovations on a day-to-day basis. The next level up contains the staff administrators who perform the various coordination functions of the various staff organizations within the school system. The executive management team of a public school system consisting of the superintendent, deputy, and associate superintendents, represent the decision-making body of the school system. Next up the administrative hierarchy is the elected or appointed Board of Education, and sitting at the top is the funding agency. In Montgomery County, Maryland, the funding agency is the County Council. In your state it may be the local school board has the authority to raise funds, it may be regional, county, municipality or even the state.

Probably the single most important function of administration is to set the policy and direction of instructional change and the implementation of instructional technologies. I think it is the responsibility of administration collectively to set the climate and to provide an environment for change. Administration must play a key role in encouraging and supporting the demonstration and implementation of technology based programs.

A second major responsibility is that administrators at the various levels in the system represent the decision-making authorities. As such, they must be responsible for collecting necessary information upon which to base decisions concerning the various steps in the adoption and implementation process. In connection with this decision-making responsibility, administrators are the resource providers. They are the ones that make the decisions concerning the investment of monies for new instructional technology programs. They must be willing to provide some of the extras that are needed to initiate and maintain new programs; such as teacher release time, extra materials, cost of dissemination, etc.

Another function that the administrators carry, for the most part, is the interface with the community outside of the school system. They are responsible for carrying the message to the public to gain support for new technology applications in the classroom. In this connection, they are responsible for those political decisions that affect the allocation of resources and impact the rate of new innovation implementation in the school system.

Last, most mundane but certainly of importance, is the responsibility that the administration component holds for coordinating all of the support activities that are necessary to insure the successful implementation of a new program.

PROBLEMS TO OVERCOME

The intent of this section of the paper is to identify a noninclusive list of problems that must be overcome in order to allow the administrative function to more effectively perform their duties and responsibilities. In other words, what are some of the roadblocks that hinder the administrative component from completing their duties and responsibilities. I'm sure you have seen examples of administrators that are too busy with the day-to-day problems of running their system and carrying out their current responsibilities to pay proper attention to new and innovative programs. Administrators are

often too busy putting out fires to participate in activities of long-range planning and monitoring of innovative activities. Consequently, the first obstacle that has to be overcome is simply a commitment of time on the part of the administrator. He must stop reacting and start leading when it comes to innovative instructional programs. A second concern that most administrators have is that they don't possess sufficient knowledge about instructional technologies in order to appropriately monitor their implementation. There is a continual need to provide inservice training in skills and knowledge of instructional technologies to personnel at all levels of the administrative bureaucracy.

Probably the most concerning problem that has to be overcome in order for an administrator to effectively function in promoting the implementation of new technologies is an inherent in the political organization of the school system itself; and that is a lack of REASON and ABILITY to change. This is the problem of overcoming the tremendous massive inertia that exists in public school systems. As you will recall from the previous section, I think that one of the most important responsibilities that an administrator requires is providing the climate and motivation to overcome static inertia. Unfortunately, we as practitioners of the new instructional technologies, have not provided to the administrative component sufficient evaluation data, and cost benefit analysis which they can use in the decision-making process. I am convinced that today any substantial change from the present modus operandi of the schools that costs additional dollars is going to be tough to obtain. Even if it has been demonstrated to be more effective in the learning environment. I think our administrative component lacks sufficient implementation strategies upon which to make the kinds of decisions that we would like to see made.

HELPFUL HINTS FROM EXPERIENCE

The question that we are really addressing here today is that: given an effective, demonstrated, viable, and desirable instructional technology how do we move from the adoption phase to the implementation phase. The following observations are provided from personal experience of working towards the implementation of instructional technologies, such as computer-assisted and computer-managed instruction, at both the university and public school levels.

Observation 1. It is advantageous to align the goals, objectives, and student target populations of the instructional technology that you are trying to implement with the high priority assessment needs that have been identified for the school system. It will assist in your marketing effort if the technology you are attempting to implement addresses the curriculum area or student target population that is a high priority need for the school system. For example, reading or other basic skill areas as a curriculum content, or special education, or underachievers as a particular student target population.

Observation 2. I would certainly recommend that you encourage administration to periodically visit the demonstration site of your technology program. Arrange visits of administrators so that they can justify leaving their office by scheduling their visits to coincide with another need to go to that particular school or area.

Observation 3. Provide periodic brief, informal progress reports during the demonstration activities. These reports should very quickly give management a clear, concise picture of progress, and make reference to additional detailed documents if further investigation is desired by the reader.

Observation 4. Students, parents, and lay citizens should have an opportunity to respond to the needs of the instructional technology programs. These groups of people coupled with school staff not directly affiliated with the technology program have a tremendous influence on management. Unsolicited letters and requests to administration for the technology program from groups of people that do not have a vested interest in the program have a positive influence on decision makers. For example, it is often far better to have school based staff, students, and parents say we want CAI or CMI in our school rather than to have the CAI Department say that the school system needs CAI. The CAI department or organization, however, should be prepared to respond to questions as they arise from this initiated interest. Time spent laying the groundwork for solid public relations work will be well worth the investment of resources in the long run.

Observation 5. It is extremely important to give to the management organization sufficient justification for making changes. The implementation strategies, the data, the cost figures, etc. are important to that decision-making process.

In conclusion, I believe that the one issue that has to be overcome in order for CAI or any other instructional technology to have a significant impact on improving the quality of instruction in schools is our inability to provide decision makers with the reason and ability to implement change.