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ABSTRACT

Although the efficacy of educational innovation has basic implicit assumptions, this paper argues the need for contextual conditions such as curriculum, resources, teacher competence, and educational infrastructures as a point of departure for predicting the potential success of a proposed innovation. A discussion of the fundamental dynamics of change is followed by an examination of two educational projects that were not entirely successful. The paper concludes that an incremental approach to change is the effective way of ensuring the success of an innovation and its acceptance by teachers and administrators. This minimizes the chance that the innovation will be contrary to sociocultural practices of a society. The projects examined were related to foreign language acquisition in selected schools in the South Pacific and Australia. LOTE (Language Other Than English) and CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) methodologies are discussed with particular emphasis on the characteristics of CLT. (RIB)

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**How can chapaati be transformed into bread?
Or how innovation can founder on the rock
of established practices.**

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Paper presented at the Third UNESCO-ACEID International Conference
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How can chapaati be transformed into bread? Or how innovation can founder on the rock of established practices.

Francis Mangubhai

INTRODUCTION

The effectiveness of any innovation, be it in education or in other fields of human operation, can be judged by whether the innovation can be sustained over time and therefore likely to achieve its objective(s), or whether it cannot be sustained because of any number of factors that might militate against it, not the least of which is that it goes against the established patterns of behaviour in a society. There are a number of assumptions that remain implicit whenever innovations are discussed and they need to be made explicit. They are: (1) the innovation represents progress, however that is defined by those in power; (2) a particular innovation will lead to development and this is generally assumed to be economic, (3) an innovation in education will lead to a better acquisition of certain types of knowledge which are implicitly or explicitly valued in the society. In other words, the very word *innovation* has acquired a positive connotative meaning, almost a mantra, that simply needs to be evoked in order to lead one into some sort of paradise. [A quote from developmental education journal]

In this paper I want to argue that for any educational innovation to be effective and sustainable it needs to be built upon the current contextual conditions. It needs to take as its point of departure the current situation as it relates to curriculum, resources, teacher competencies, educational infrastructure and so forth. These facets of the educational system need to be critically evaluated at the time that an innovation is being considered in order to derive an understanding about where the whole system is at a particular point in time. Such information, in turn, will assist in answering the question whether the proposed innovation is likely to have any of its claimed impacts upon the educational scene.

In order to make the type of judgements suggested in the previous paragraph one needs to understand the dynamics of change. After a brief discussion of the

dynamics of change, I will look at some facets of two educational projects that were unsustainable, in the sense that the objectives of the programme were not fully realised, not because the objectives in themselves were deficient in any way, but because they did not take into account sufficiently the level at which teachers were operating. I want to argue in this paper that educational innovations can only be sustained and achieve the goals they espouse if the goals are such that they reflect an incremental improvement over the previous goals. In other words, if the distance between the two goals is vast then the innovation is likely to fail. A corollary to this is that innovations should be built upon present practices which in turn are extended through the innovations.

HOW DOES CHANGE TAKE PLACE?

Many years ago Beeby (1966) in a classic of its time on developmental education proposed a framework for educational systems consisting of four stages, from *Dame School Stage* to the *Stage of Meaning*. My interest is not in discussing these stages or arguing for or against their validity but in pointing out that Beeby's view of educational development is an evolutionary one, that school systems go through stages of development. In arguing for these stages Beeby has emphasised the importance of change based upon the previous stage. Just as a fly cannot go from the larva stage directly to a fly, so educational systems cannot be changed from *Dame Stage* to the *Stage of Meaning*, without going through the intermediate phases.

While Beeby presented a broad framework based upon his considerable experience of developed and developing school systems, recent work on educational change has delved into the processes of change and the meaning of such change. This section of the paper will draw upon Fullan's work on educational change. I want to begin with a caveat: we should not confuse change with progress - a point that was made centuries ago by Petronius (AD 66) when he wrote:

We trained very hard, but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form up into teams, we would be reorganised. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganising and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress, while producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation.

In discussing the meaning of educational change Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) make the point that in such discussions one should question the implication that innovations are taken for granted. Rather, a number of important questions that are related to the “sources and consequences of change” should be addressed: “What values are involved? Who will benefit from the change? How much of a priority is it? How achievable is it? Which areas of potential change are being neglected?” (p. 27). The answers to these questions would provide a good guidance to delineating the meaning of a particular change.

It is important to remember that educational innovation is multidimensional; it affects materials, teaching approaches and in some cases it can lead to the possible alteration of beliefs (Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991). All three will be discussed further as they have a direct relationship to the examples of innovation that will be mentioned later in this paper, starting with the third one first.

An innovation may require of teachers, administrators etc a possible alteration of beliefs due to, say, the pedagogical assumptions and theories underlying new policies or programmes. Some teachers may believe that learning is best achieved if students are sitting in rows facing the whiteboard and are learning from the teacher, whereas a new programme may be built upon the pedagogical assumption that learning takes place best when students are directly involved in activities designed to develop a concept. If this assumption is made more manifest for teachers there is a dissonance created which teachers can resolve by gradually incorporating the new belief into their system of teaching, or by rejecting the spirit of the new pedagogy and attempting to carry on as if the change in programmes has been made at a somewhat superficial surface level.

Such a pedagogical clash was evident in the example that follows. It is taken from personal experience during the lifetime of a two year project on the use of books in primary schools (Elley and Mangubhai, 1983). As researchers, we made regular visits to the experimental schools. On one such visit to an experimental school, the teacher of the class took me aside while students were involved in silent reading of

story books of their own choice and said, "What these children require is not story reading but a good dose of phonics." Here was a teacher involved in a research project in which the rationale for the program in which students read silently everyday in their second language had not been internalised. Instead, his approach to reading in the classroom was half-hearted at best, for reasons which he was able to articulate quite well. In the post-test, his class, as expected, did not do well. He had allocated time for students to read silently in the class but his own inclinations convinced him that it was a waste of time for his students, giving further credence to Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) thesis about self-fulfilling prophecies.

Beyond pedagogical beliefs, there are other socioculturally-developed beliefs (and value systems) that may influence the choice of aspects of the innovation are actually incorporated into teachers' pedagogies. Let me give you a couple of examples to elaborate on what I mean.

Over 25 years ago there was a UNDP Project in the South Pacific to develop curricula in a number of key areas for grades 7-10. The main thrust of the exercise was to provide curricula and materials based on them that were more relevant to the students of the South Pacific. In social sciences the study of geography and history of Britain, Australia and New Zealand was replaced by sections that dealt with the local geography or history. So far so good, because this aspect of the innovation was largely at the surface level, or what Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) have called "first order change". The problem with the innovation lay at another level, a deeper level, called "second order change" by Fullan and Stiegelbauer. This change required students to be active learners, approaching knowledge critically. It required teachers to provide classroom conditions in which students could learn to become more critical. But this innovation had failed to take into account the established practices in the society. Polynesian societies are hierarchical and there was at that time little questioning of why these patterns existed or why they existed in the form they did, or why certain things were done in a particular way and not in another. One knew one's place in the society and acted accordingly. For teachers and students to question this social structure was tantamount to a form of social treason. The result

was that teachers treated the critical approach to social science in such a 'transmissive' way that the objectives of the curricula could not be achieved except very indirectly. Students did social science but were not encouraged to be critical. The result was that even though these students picked up more relevant knowledge compared to previous generations of students they did not internalise the more transformative aspects of the curricula. Here, then, was an innovation that did not realise all its goals though it did provide for the first time curricula that dealt with the immediate environment of the students. It did not succeed in all its goals, especially, the higher order goals, because it required both the teachers and the learners to behave in ways that were inimical to the ways that their society operated¹.

[[[Thaman from Directions]]]

The second example is taken from the field of second language learning and teaching which illustrate that educational innovations operate at two levels, surface and deep. The first example is taken from some work that was done by Ballard and Clancy (1988) on how some students approached their writing tasks for university assignments in an Australian university. One Japanese postgraduate student when interviewed about the structure of his written answer on the question of comparing and contrasting the economic theories of two Nobel prize-winning economists, Samuelson and Friedman, could not bring himself to say anything negative about either economist's theories. Instead, he tried to delve into their personal history to show how two renowned economists could espouse such different views about economic matters. He was, in a sense, following the dictates of his sociocultural upbringing where one tried to harmonise conflicting views rather than accentuate them by pointing out the precise differences between them. It was not the case that he had not been exposed to the demands of western essay-writing in a university setting. He had been, but the deeper change that was required of him was too dramatic so that he chose to (or, perhaps, could not do otherwise) follow the pathway, mapped out by his cultural grounding, to try to reconcile the conflicting viewpoints of two eminent people.

¹This is not to be seen as a plea for not changing. In fact, the South Pacific societies have changed dramatically in some aspects over the last 25 to 30 years because inevitably they have been drawn into the global economy and the hegemonic cultural forces that have emanated from the United States of America. Changes are likely to accelerate in the future as satellite TV links bring in more outside values into the Pacific sitting rooms.

The argument so far has been that in order for innovation to be effective it has to be accepted by teachers and administrators. For this to occur, the changes have to be such that they are acceptable. One way of looking at this is to formulate the current knowledge, beliefs, etc of teachers as *i*. The best chance for a change to occur and for an innovation in education to succeed is to ensure that the change is incremental so that we have *i + 1* and not *i + 3* or *i + 5*. Admittedly, the concept of *i + 1* is difficult to operationalise but it would seem to me that good teachers constantly face this challenge and succeed to a large extent.

The next section of the paper discusses two educational innovations in two different parts of the world and how their less than total success can be related back to the discussion in the first part of this paper.

INNOVATION 1: AN EXAMPLE FROM THE SOUTH PACIFIC

In late 1977 the present writer was asked to prepare an outline of a curriculum for Forms 3 and 4 (Grades 9 and 10) in the area of English as a second language and then to write materials based on it. Prior to this, textbooks written in Australia, New Zealand or England were used. An added impetus to this project was that there was a textbook written locally for Year 11 and textbooks written for Grades 1 through 8. This project would therefore plug an obvious gap in the ESL materials used in Fijian secondary schools.

Without going into the operation of a monitoring committee that was formed or the trials that were carried out at selected schools representative of schools generally in Fiji, it is sufficient for our purposes to note that the courses for the two grades were written, trialed and revised by the end of 1980 so that schools could begin to use the Grade 9 materials from the beginning of 1981.

The presentation of grammar in this course was based on Wilkin's (1976) functions and notions, rather than the traditional categories that teachers and students had

hitherto been used to. In addition, each unit of work had a section at the back which could be used to extend better students in a class. The comprehension passages were longer than students were used to. This was done in order to make them complete in themselves, rather than use extracts which tend to be used in many reading comprehension textbooks. The units themselves were organised so that the reading section led into talk about the theme of the unit, which in turn led into writing. It was recommended that teachers use mistakes made by students in their writing as input for grammar lessons. Generally, the emphasis in this course was on language usage, rather than an emphasis on learning about the language.

Nine years later when an evaluation of the course was carried out, Benson (1989) reported that over 80% responded that the functional/notional approach to grammar was effective. Benson, however, queried whether teachers really understood the principles behind this approach and therefore questioned what teachers really meant when they said it was effective. Benson's scepticism was probably justified because by contrast a significant number of teachers thought that the coverage of grammar was inadequate and that there should have been more grammar taught, meaning more traditional grammar taught. As part of the evaluation Benson also observed classes using the course and reported that there was a gap between the aims and intentions of the programme and the way it was actually translated into classroom activities.

One of the salient findings of this evaluation was that teachers' understanding of the aims and objectives of the programmes differed significantly from those of the writers of the programmes. This situation existed despite the number of inservice courses that were run for the teachers when these programmes were introduced nationally. The programmes for the two grades had incorporated some of the current thinking in applied linguistics to make it theoretically as effective as possible but what the authors of the programmes failed to realise was that teachers' understanding of the principles of second language learning did not match theirs. The gap between the two was too big, or to put it in terms used previously, the programme exhibited $i + 3$ (or 4, etc), rather than $i + 1$ understandings, and hence its

actual implementation in class was going to be less than effective a hundred percent.

Another example of inertia in the system was evident in the ways that many teachers used the materials that were designed for the more able in the class. For some reason that I have not been able to fathom, many teachers in Fiji believed that textbooks were instruments that needed to be covered from cover to cover, regardless of whether the material was suitable for their particular class. There were a number of other features of the course materials that proved to be problematic for teachers, suggesting that these innovative programmes were not sustainable in terms of achieving their goals fully. The programmes and textbooks continue to be used even today, but it is not likely that they would be used in the ways that original authors had intended that they should be used..

It might interest the audience to know that the author subsequently became a consultant to the ESL curriculum development for Grades 9 and 10 in Tonga and here, at the behest of the teachers' workgroup which wrote the materials for the course, a section on teaching grammar in the traditional manner was incorporated. It was suggested that if the materials were too different from those they had been used to, they may reject them. The inclusion of grammar exercises of the type they were familiar with did help in getting teachers to accept the new course better. Another change that was made was to under produce the materials for a grade year so that teachers had to produce their own supplementary materials using the course materials as their models. This was done after it was found that teachers in Fiji tended to cover every page of the textbook even though the materials were specifically written for the better students and were optional.

At this stage one might say that innovation is problematic for developing countries but more developed countries can better handle changes. It is true that many more teachers in developed countries are better able to translate the aims and objectives of the programme in their classrooms but that cannot be said of all the teachers. I

next want to turn to an innovation in foreign language or LOTE teaching² in Australia and present some observations from a recent project that I have been involved in.

INNOVATION 2: AN EXAMPLE FROM AUSTRALIA

Since late 1980s there has been both a Commonwealth Government and State Government initiative to increase the range of foreign languages (LOTEs) taught in schools and consequently to increase the number of students studying them. To this end the Commonwealth Government identified 14 priority languages in Australia. In the state of Queensland, five were initially chosen: Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese, French and German, but later two more were added, Italian and Korean. Much Commonwealth and State funding has gone into providing in-service courses for teachers, sending teachers to study in the country where the language is spoken and so on. The methodology that has been emphasised in all in-service and official documents has been communicative language teaching (CLT) methodology.

This methodology has been emphasized at in-service courses so that when teachers are asked how they teach their particular LOTE, they invariably state that they use CLT methods in the class. Observations in the classroom reveal that the interpretation of what is communicative language teaching varies widely. In essence, CLT has become a buzz word to which almost all LOTE teachers subscribe but there is considerable variation in the understanding of this term.

To try to determine what teachers understood by CLT method and how they operationalised these understandings in the classroom, a project was set up in the Centre for Language Teaching Methodologies at the University of Southern Queensland. The project is in two parts, the first part focusing on primary LOTE teachers and the second on secondary teachers. Within each part there are three phases: data collection through a questionnaire, a semi-structured interview of

²In Australia the foreign languages programmes are called LOTE, which stands for Language Other Than English.

selected teachers, and videotaping of the teaching of these teachers in classroom. Only the data from the first phase of part A of the project will be used here.

In order to understand what is happening in the classroom, or what is likely to be happening in classrooms, it is necessary to look at some characteristics of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which has been summarised in Table 1. The list has been derived from discussions in literature on this topic. In the CLT approach to second language teaching, there is a greater emphasis on language used for communication rather than language used in classroom to practice the

Table 1: Characteristics of Communicative Language Teaching

- Emphasis on language use rather than language knowledge.
- More attention is given to fluency and appropriacy than to structural correctness.
- Classroom exercises depend upon spontaneity and trial and error by learners.
- Promotes interpersonal rather than intrapersonal interactions.
- Group and pair work are effective learning modes. These modes are most effectively rendered in small classes.
- It uses authentic materials.
- For the development of communicative ability there needs to be an integration of form-focused exercises with meaning-focused experience.
- Emphasis on tasks that encourage the negotiation of meaning between students and between students and teachers with the goal of making input comprehensible to participants.
- The teacher oscillates between the roles of facilitator and director transmitter.
- The teacher sets an environment that is interactive and not excessive formal.
- A commitment to using the target language as a medium of classroom communication.
- It is learner centred.
- Methodology is geared not only to competence but also to the expectations of those participating in the learning process.
- Learners seem to focus best on grammar when it relates to their communicative needs and experiences.
- Emphasis on successful communication, especially that which involves risk taking.
- Emphasis on learner autonomy and choice of language, topic and so on.
- A communicative classroom seeks to promote interpretation, expression and negotiation of meaning - implying learners are active.
- Context is important in interpreting the meaning of a text (oral or written).

structures of the language. For genuine communication to occur students (and the teacher) have to exchange information that one or more party may not know. For example, an exchange like:

A: What is your name?

B: My name is Rejjeli.

is not very communicative because A probably knows the name of his/her fellow student. However, if A were to go to Rejjeli and ask her who her favourite authors were, then the information given by her to A would probably be new to A. Another feature of this method is the use of small groups or pairs for communicative activities.

Phase I of the study has collected data through the use of a questionnaire using a Likert scale. The data show that many teachers think that groupwork or pairwork wastes a lot of time and that they are unable to monitor student behaviour when they are involved in groupwork or pairwork. With regard to error correction, almost 90% of the respondents said that error correction was a waste of time, but then on another related question about whether students should get their language correct from the very beginning, almost 58% agreed with that statement. Such apparently contradictory beliefs cast some doubt about whether teachers have internalised only some aspects of CLT and that error correction, which is almost reflex action on the part of a teacher, is carried out more than is advocated in the CLT approach to teaching a LOTE. Similarly, when teachers' role in CLT classroom was explored, two-thirds of the teachers thought that the teacher as an authority figure was a thing of the past but they also subscribed (97%) to the view that teachers' role is to impart knowledge.

The results of the survey show that some teachers' understandings and beliefs about communicative language teaching are different from those discussed in literature or advocated by the Department of Education. This situation has arisen because teachers have been asked to make a big change in their language teaching methodology without the understanding that a number of factors may militate against the more widespread use of this methodology in classrooms. One such factor is that for a teacher to be truly communicative in classroom s/he needs

to have a high level of proficiency in the LOTE. Some teachers do not feel comfortable with their own level of proficiency in the LOTE and therefore do not venture outside the more tightly controlled teacher dominated class.

After almost 10 years of communicative approach to LOTE teaching it is still not clear whether students are more communicatively able when they leave school. It is true that the new policy has resulted in a number of different LOTEs being studied and the number of students have increased, especially at the primary level, but there is no evidence that the ability of the students to communicate in a LOTE has substantially improved. It seems to me that here was an innovation that might have become somewhat unstuck because the changes that were demanded of teachers were too dramatic.

I have discussed these two innovations in two different parts of the world briefly but they are indicative of the fact that innovations in a developing country or a more developed country are predicated on the amount of change that is required of the system to cope with the innovation. They illustrate what was claimed earlier in the paper that innovations can founder either because they require too great a change of a system, or aspects of the innovation go against the sociocultural practices of the society.

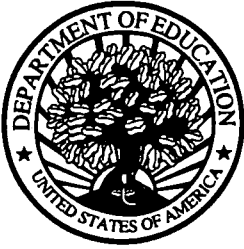
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