The Relevance of the Seven Premises Discussed by Fullan's Change Theory in Higher Education in Malaysia

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Abstract: This is a review study related to seven core premises discussed by Fullan in Department of Languages, Centre of Languages and Human Development, Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM). Those premises are a focus on motivation capacity building with a focus on results; learning in context; changing context; a bias for reflective action; tri-level engagement and persistence and flexibility in staying the course. This study provides a picture for a real scenario which stresses change theory is important in driving education reform. The literature survey shows it is significant to the current scenario happened in UTeM. The suggestion is all the stakeholders need to take up challenges in ensuring the successful education system reform in the higher learning institution for the long term sustainability development goals.

Key words: Teaching and learning, education change, education reform, higher education institution, change theory

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia has been liberal with funds used for educational purposes including the fund allocated especially for higher education institutions. It is because the government's policy in education, particularly higher education is to bring it in line with the country's manpower planning and to provide the country with the right and adequate supply of trained manpower to keep pace with economic growth 2030 in future (EPU, 2016). In Malaysia, education is the biggest challenge for the government and education to make year 2030 become a reality. How to produce well equipped citizen with education is always a question which is needed to be answered. The objective of the curriculum is to make the learner become a functional, independent and socially successful individual. This is what is needed by the society especially in the work place. According to Fullan (2006), change theory is important in driving education reform if people have a deep knowledge on how it works in getting desired results. There are three important issueswhich are flawed change theories, theories of action with merit and prospects for future use of change knowledge discussed by Fullan (2006) in the article titled "Change theory, a force for school improvement". Standard-based district-wide reform initiatives, Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and frameworks that focus on the development and retention of quality leaders are discussed.

Fundamental theme to be investigated: Fullan (2006) listed out 7 core premises that underpin the use of change knowledge such as a focus on motivation capacity building with a focus on results learning in context changing context a bias for reflective action; tri-level engagement and persistence and flexibility in staying the course. All these are the fundamental theme to be investigated in this study (Fig. 1).
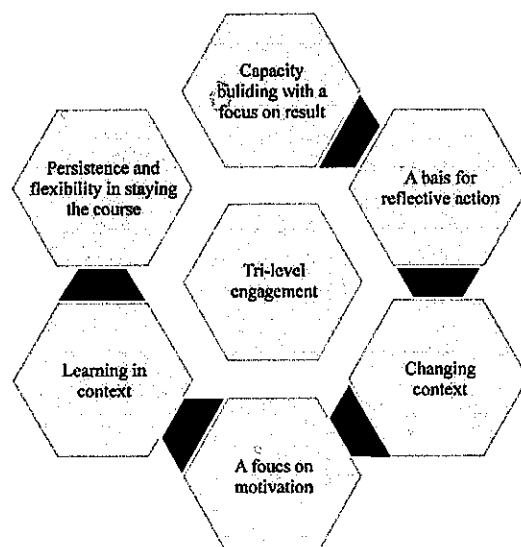

Fig. 1: The seven core premises discussed by Fullan (2006)

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Background of the study

Problem statement: Higher education institutions in Malaysia have the responsibility to make our country's national goal become a reality. In education, approaches to enhance teaching and learning are always the issue of academicians. Academicians always play major roles in the process of change, especially on the change of curriculum and pedagogy. Education reform is a phenomenon in education. Curricula in all institutions of higher learning are often reviewed and revised to ensure they are in line with latest developments in educationreform and innovation so that, upon graduation their students are resilient to compete at the global level. There are changes in the way we teach and learn. Teachers and students are required to work within a new environment. There is a need or urgency to improve the quality of education, close the achievement gap and equip students with 21st century knowledge and skills (Ladson-Billings, 2006). The main objective of this assignment is to review literature related to seven premises discussed by Fullan (2006) which shows the relevance in higher education.

Research objectives: This review study is important in gather information to provide a picture for a real scenario which is change theory is important in driving education reform. As education reform also happened in higher education institution this study aims to investigate the relevance by Fullan (2006)'s discussed premises in UTeM, the higher institution which the researcher is attached with.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research questions: The research questions of this study are: to what extend "a focus on motivation"discussed by Fullan (2006) show the relevancy in Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka? To what extend "capacity building with a focus on results"discussed by Fullan (2006) show the relevancy in Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka? To what extend "learning in context"discussed by Fullan (2006) show the relevancy in Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka? To what extend "changing context" discussed by Fullan (2006) show the relevancy in Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka? To what extend "a bias for reflective action" discussed by Fullan (2006) show the relevancy in Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka? To what extend "tri-level engagement" discussed by Fullan (2006) show the relevancy in Universit iTeknikal Malaysia Melaka? To what extend "Persistence and flexibility in staying the course"discussed by Fullan (2006) show the relevancy in Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka?

Table 1: Main article used asseven premises in theory of changes

Article	Author	Title
Main	Fullan (2006)	Change theory a force for school improvement

Table 2: Selected articles used as comparative practitioner material

Authors	Title
Fadeeva and Mochizuki (2010)	Higher education for today and tomorrow: university appraisal for diversity innovation and change towards sustainable development
Blackmore and Kandiko (2012)	Strategic curriculum change in universities: global trends
Ben	Reinventing higher education
Rena (2010)	Emerging trends of higher education in developing countries
Gagne and Deci (2005)	Self-determination theory and work motivation
Dornyei (2000)	Motivation in action: towards a process-oriented conceptualization of student motivation
O'day et al.(1995)	Building capacity for education reform
Hammond and Richardson (2009)	Teacher learning: what matters?
Fullan (2006)	Why teachers must become change agents
Stephens et al. (2008)	Higher education as a change agent for sustainability in different cultures and context

Data collection: Seven themes which are a focus on motivation; capacity building with a focus on results; learning in context; changing context; a bias for reflective action; tri-level engagement and persistence and flexibility in staying the courseare emerged from main reacher written by Fullan (2006) for investigation (Table 1 and 2).

Data analysing: Contrastive analysis is used to compare and contrast the selected article with the seven premises discussed in the main article written by Fullan (2006).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Discussion on the relevance of the core premises in own context/ background
Background information of this study own context: The researcher is currently attached with Department of Languages, Centre for Languages and Human Development, Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka. This department offers Foundation English, Technical Communication, Technical English, English for Professional Communication and Foreign Languages (Malay, Arabic, Mandarin, Japanese, German and Korean). Subjects such as Foundation English, Technical Communication, Technical English and English for Professional Communication are compulsory for the diploma and bachelor degree programmes. The third language subjects are offered to students as a value added elective subject to learn foreign languages.

The relevance of the core premises discussed by Fullan (2006) in the researcher's own context which is Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka

Premise 1 (a focus on motivation): Fullan (2006) claimed that if one's theory of action does not motivate people to put in effort, improvement is not possible. There are several key aspects of motivation including moral purpose; capacity; resources; peer and leadership support and identity. In Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka there are two yearly events called university academic award and excellent service award. The purpose of these events is to reward UteM staff who has outstanding performance throughout the year. This is an example of motivation to motivate UTeM staff to put in effort in their work. Therefore, this kind of motivation is important to improve academicians' performance in the classroom. It is concerned by Stephens *et al.* (2008) that in many education systems the current faculty promotion system only fosters and rewards a narrow disciplinary focus and incentive.

Premise 2 (capacity building, with a focus on results): Most theories of change failed because they are weak on capacity building. According to Fullan (2006), "capacity building is any strategy that increases the collective effectiveness of a group to raise the bar and close the gap of student learning.". In the event of 'a meeting with vice chancellor 2016 UTeM', the chancelor delivered speech to all the UTeM staff in the main hall. The chancellor believes all the staffs have their own ability to contribute to the university. The chancellor wish to raise the graduate's employability rate to 80% he believe that the UTeM academicians also can transform to be better to achieve the goal.

Premise 3 (learning in context): Darling stressed the importance of teacher's learning by pointing out that teacher must learn in order to help young people learn the more complex and analytical skills they need for the 21st century. According to Hussin *et al.* (2010), teacher's view of self (Hussin *et al.*, 2015) is also important to ensure their professionalism in student learning. These four dimensions needed to be evaluated from time to time because it will directly impact a teacher ability to teach.

Elmore as cited in Fullan, 2006) pinpointed that most education reform failed because there is no opportunity for teachers to engage in continuous and sustained learning about their practice in the setting in which they actually study, observing and being observed by their colleagues in their own classrooms and classrooms of other teachers in other schools confronting similar problem. Unfortunately, in UTeM, the academic staff are only evaluated by students but not evaluated by the superior on teaching. Besides, they are not observed by the colleague in the same team teaching as well. Sherin cited in Darling *et al.* (2009) suggested that teachers can videotape their teaching to open to peer review. Perhaps this can be done by UteM academicians as self-evaluation method.

Premise 4 (changing context): The institutions of higher education have to change because it needs more innovation for today's need. There is a need of curriculum changes and innovation especially in this new era with the fast growth of communication technology which has changed the way we search information as well as the way we interacted with others (Blackmore and Kandiko, 2012). Fadeeva and Mochizuki (2010) showed the need of the education reform change in the Higher learning Institution (HEIs) as follows: university has the role in service to the industrial mass-producing society with a massive intake of students that are to take functional place on the producing and consuming conveyer. The structure of higher education such as UTeM should be evaluated to assess challenges and opportunities for an enhanced role as a change agent. UTeM is a MTUN University (Malaysian Technical University) in order to grow fast, collaboration UTeM with other MTUN University should be build. Fortunately UTeM is doing well in this area. This is lateral capacity building as suggested by Fullan (2006) which allows same category of university learn from each other.

Premise 5 (a bias for reflective action): Fullan (2006) conclude that people learn best through doing, reflection, inquiry, evidence, more doing and so on. Fullan (2006) is supported by O'Day *et al.* (1995) by saying "the most actively reforming schools in their sample of research displayed a sense of collective commitment and responsibility for students and a set of cultural norms that stressed on-going reflection and improvement." Reflective actions can be fostered through autonomous motivation as mentioned by Gagne and Deci, 2005; Hussin *et al.* 2015) that 'autonomy motivation or intrinsic motivation means endorsing one's actions at the highest level of reflection.' For example, people will engage in a task because they have interest on it. This premise discussed by Fullan (2006) shows the relevance in the researcher context. Every academician in UTeM should own these characteristics which are learning through doing, reflection, inquiry, evidence, more doing and so on. UteM always organized executive talk or motivation course for academic reflection purpose.

Premise 6 (tri-level engagement): According to Fullan (2006), tri-level *refers to school and community*, district and state. Mutual interaction and influence must be promoted within these three levels to get the system changed. Collaborations with colleagues, parents, community agencies, business and others are the example of productive collaborations. University, community and state are three level bound together. Therefore, every *decision made by the vice chancellor of the university is* influenced by the community and state. UTeM has put in effort to establish a good relationship among these three levels by realising long term collaboration effort need to be built among these 3 levelfor a better future. Besides, vice chancellor of the university also work out for relationship building between university and industry such as Infenion, Samsung, Proton and others.

Premise 7 (persistence and flexibility in staying the course): Persistence and flexibility as a strong resource in staying the course because education cannot be reformed overnight, furthermore there is plenty of self-correction and refinement built in along the process. All the stakeholders in UTeM should not give up easily but always seek for a room of improvement from time to time. Continuous professional development program which is known as CPD program in UTeM is a good example of programe to encourage a lifelong learning among UTeM staff. This is an example of "room of improvement" as discussed by Fullan (2006).

CONCLUSION

According to Fullan (2006), the use of change knowledge does not represent quick fix. Many leaders must grasp knowledge for its use to spread and be consistent. Observing and improving classroom teaching proved to be the most intractable aspects of getting at continuous improvement.

There are three things going for the increased use of change knowledge. First, people will be more receptive to alternative strategies which are more clear and promising. Change knowledge will become clearer. How it works and why it works are more evident. People will aware that valuable results only can be seen after a period of time. In the future there will be more system thinkers because knowledge will be actively shared by many people.

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