

MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE IN THE OPEN PRISON SYSTEM

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INTRODUCTION

Management refers to authority and leadership in any functional organisation. Management can be used synonymously with administration but in different occasions one would seem more appropriate than the other and they have a different focus. Management incorporates both managerial and operative functions. Managerial functions involve planning, organising, directing and controlling whilst procurement, development, compensation and integration are operational functions (Flippo 1984).

Change refers to a shift away from traditional practices. It involves adopting new methods to replace old ones. Change means a shift away from traditional ways of thinking and also ways of doing things.

Managing dialogue strictly involves closely monitoring activities, projects and programmes that an organisation is engaged in to introduce and implement change. Changes should be done tactfully and constructively to avoid hurting the concerned individuals. If changes are made with concerned individuals they can be acceptable and great consideration should be taken on who is to initiate the change, and who is going to implement the programme.

Prisons in Zimbabwe are undergoing a phase of change. This is a change from the traditional way of dealing with prisoners to a more democratic way, the open prison system. The great concern

here is to understand what the motive of those who want to change is and how effective this is going to be. The traditional prison system has not existed up to now as an independent entity. It has existed with the assistance of sponsoring bodies offering financial and technical assistance. Some Aid organisations have even vested interest in the continuation of certain programmes. Under the circumstances mentioned above, opposition or resistance should be expected from staff, prisoners, the communities and sponsoring bodies. One might even realise that staff are interested in keeping prisoners within prison walls just to maintain the status quo and also at times because of political pressure for the retention or rejection of certain forms of punishment and sentence (Flippo 1984). Resistance also might be experienced from the prisoners themselves who because of the institutionalisation syndrome or their involvement in the prison system may have personal reason influencing them to refuse proposed changes.

Prisons are entities placed in the centre of government (Reilly 1979). The Government has high calibre personnel staff whose expertise and interest presently should be to engage in the latest trends and are responsible for training renounced prison officers who should be at the forefront in implementing change for the open prison system. Like in any institutions officers may tend to be conservative forces rather than acting as agents of change and prisons too may be slow to respond, resistant to change making it difficult to implement any changes. Prison officers should be in a position to deal with this.

There are social relationships required for change. Whilst the change agents pursue a number of strategies which have varying advantages and drawbacks, they should remember the significant role played by the prisoners themselves in the creation of plans for change. According to Reilly (1979) strategies for change may vary from explicit coercion to participative involvement. There may be stops at intervals, but prison officers should ensure that enough facilitation, education, manipulation and negotiation are done to satisfaction. The most effective strategies though would involve reciprocal relationships between prison authorities including staff and prisoners. In the process of management change the staff would do well by observing the norm of reciprocity rather than one way flow of suggestions and commands. The role of prison staff should rather be blurred and not as sharp to cause concern. Whilst they make tentative suggestions prisoners too should be encouraged and given chance to contribute and participate in final determinations mainly to neutralise the syndrome that exists specially to those who might have stayed longer in prison.

Greiner (1967) discovered that change agents can only succeed if they utilised patterns that involved sharing approaches. This approach suggests that officers need to encourage participation of prisoners in decision making. Officers may adopt organisational devices to encourage internal acceptance of change before they expect communities to accept change.

Some prisons in Zimbabwe are too isolated from communities and

day to day activities. They may at times be physically near to government headquarters or they may be organisationally close to the centre of power as is the case with the Central prison, they may be out of touch with what goes on outside because they concentrate so much on their little world of prison. There is always even a desire, especially from the prison personnel to be left alone in total seclusion but this needs to be challenged if the total prisons are to be transformed into open prisons. It means encouraging prisons officers to keep close and have continuous contact with the operations of other institutions in order to keep abreast of what is happening in the outside world (Reilly 1979), so that intended moves for change do not suffer, discomfort. The result is that such discomforts may arouse conflict and tension within the prison. There is no doubt that tension may arise as a result of fear that such changes may threaten other officers' jobs. Whilst making strides in formulating strategies for change, a need to reorganise structures existing within prisons is necessary. There is also need to change entrenched attitudes of both society and the prison system, a need to educate all parties about change and administrative reforms so that the agents of change within the system shell off their ineffective traditional practices.

Management of change needs to be intensified first at personnel level. They are the ones to assume some responsibility for the effective introduction of change. They are the ones also expected to intellectually determine change and lay out necessary dimensions of the process before they translate this plan into

action.

According to Flippo (1984), there are two basic approaches that can be adopted when effecting organisational changes. One possibility is to introduce changes in the structure or techniques of organising daily activities in prisons to pressurise on the prisons authority. This can be done by altering the job descriptions of officers, introducing new ways of conducting daily duties or activities and involving prisoners in some manner that will bring objective changes.

The second and more democratic way is related to adopting a therapeutic approach where prison officers are counselled and encouraged to shift away from their traditional practices and strive to be in accordance with proposed changes. Once the culture is changed it is possible to achieve trusting, supportive and authentic participation. If the prison system is to generate more real participation it needs to reorganise the structural area, it should strive for job enrichment, encourage wider spans of control and thereafter decentralise authority. The system would also need to introduce sensitivity training sessions for prison officers to stimulate more individual openness and supportiveness. With open prison introduced the officers may develop sessions with job-family groups where prisoners and families hold discussions with prison staff. This stimulates teamwork and helps in working out interpersonal problems.

The above approaches require a considerable amount of authority

and tactics. Structural changes would require that the personnel move through stages of change which were proposed by Lewin in the 1930s when he studied group dynamics. Lewin realised that for management of change to be effectively done and monitored organisations must be able to first unfreeze the prevailing status quo, be able to move to the new level of change and once that is done, they refreeze the activities of the organisation for the new level to succeed.

UNFREEZING THE STATUS QUO

If the prison personnel together with prisoners are fully committed and fully involved in proposed changes, the impact of change on their behaviour will be fully maximised. For effective changes to take place Flippo (1984) realised from his study that people involved have to ask themselves how appropriate current practices are. If the organisations considers it appropriate to shift away from prevailing practices, the personnel with authority may then command that change be effected and by all means enforce implementation. If the worst is expected, threats, punishments and close supervision can be effected. If negative reinforcements are enforced, there is need for constant and close surveillance because there could also be external forces (communities, society) exerting pressures from the outside environment that are opposed to changes and these could be more powerful than internal forces.

NEW LEVEL OF CHANGE

Once changes are set to take place, organisations should be prepared to deal with any resistance to change. This could be done through:

- 1) **Education and communication:** People must be educated and supplied with more and accurate information if they are to be involved in the implementation of changes.
- 2) **Participation and involvement:** The initiators of change are expected to have accurate information because they are responsible for designing change. If initiators display this strength right from the beginning, participants will tend to be more committed to implement change and integrate relevant information with the change plan.
- 3) **Facilitation and support:** There are some people who might resist support. The authority needs to look at other supportive strategies to ensure that even those who resist even if they have considerable powers are brought under control.
- 4) **Negotiation and agreement:** It is likely that some people or group will lose out as a result of proposed changes and may resist change because of adjustment problems. The prison authority needs to look at other supportive strategies to ensure that even those who resist should be engaged in negotiations so that an agreement is reached.

- 5) **Manipulation:** Sometimes when all possible strategies fail, the authority may engage a manipulation strategy to ensure full participation. This could be a quicker and inexpensive method of management of change but may lead to future resistance once people realise that they have been manipulated.

- 6) **Explicit-Implicit-coercion:** This is quite a speedy method of achieving change and may overcome any resistance. Initiators who intend to engage this strategy must be sure themselves that they possess considerable power because it can be a risky move. It can cause turmoil among concerned parties.

REFREEZING THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ORGANISATION

The last move that can be taken once management of change is in progress and authority think they have the thrust, is to embark on refreezing the new status quo - that is refreezing the new activities they are engaged in. The impact of new change may last to participants. Once a slight problem arises participants are likely to rebel in an effort to return to their previous culture. The prison authority needs to induce changes towards openness among members, they must show empathy towards them and build trust in them.

Changes from the current prison system to the open system may need total redesigning startups in some areas and ^{may} need to

operate in a manner consistent with the new behavioral and participatory model. All other sections participating may then be aligned to reflect the desired model. The good example would be that there would be no uniforms in open prisons but authority would design a living system where officers know which entrance they use and which prisoners use without the public knowing how they operate within the system. If the personnel and interacting systems attune and align themselves to the new changes open prisons may achieve maximum success.

If changes are operationalised fully, success may be achieved and this can be done by:

- a) reducing employee and prisoners alienation within prisons
- b) increasing human and organisational creativity and productivity....
- c) expanding personnel roles with private organisations coming in to help prisons meet the ever increasing social responsibility and
- d) expanding personnel manager roles in redesigning the open prison systems.

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