



## The Impact of Change Management in the Transformation of Online Graduate Education\*

**Abeni El-Amin**  
Fort Hays State University

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\*Literature review – NOT PEER REVIEWED

This deliberation aims to determine how change management of online graduate education impacts educational curricula. The goal of online graduate education is to connect theory and practice analysis to global workforce needs. Demonstrated is how change management supports innovation in online graduate education. Correspondingly, change management in educational leadership is a critical core competency derived from a student focus, organizational and technological awareness, and matriculation goals, enabling educators to create significant improvements in education environments (Webber & Scott, 2008). Further, education leaders create processes to address organizational problems and technical issues that occur in educational organizations (Baltacı & Balcı, 2017). The ability to convey innovative ideas and processes in online graduate education leads to elevating organizational initiatives (Hosseini et al., 2017). As a result, core competencies are best utilized by conceptualizing, initiating, leading, organizing, delegating, and executing plans when necessitated.

From an organizational perspective, educational organizations have adopted a divisional structure (Manning, 2017). In doing so, have created the kind of structure which generates internal competition where each division and department are encouraged to drive growth by leveraging its resources to sustain, improve, and develop new programs; thereby attracting and retaining students (Kurtz & Berston, 2019). As a result, it is often difficult to agree on the best approach when transforming online graduate education.

## **Literature Review**

### **Transformational Learning Theory**

Transformational learning is a theory of adult learning that utilizes disorienting analysis to challenge students' thinking (Mezirow, 2009). Students are inspired to utilize critical thinking and question their underlying assumptions and beliefs about the world. In perspective, students need to reflect critically and base their understanding of historical, cultural, and biographical context with personal and professional needs. As such, online graduate education programs that implement transformational learning theory progress through various steps to achieve learning goals in a deliberate manner (Kay & Kibble, 2016). For example, instructors must include interactive models, emphasizing several factors, such as environmental, personalities of learners, transformative processes, and transformative learning methods. When these learning modalities are combined, they develop experiences of autonomous learning. Likewise, instructors likely assume primary responsibility for planning, implementing, and evaluating students' learning experiences. Facilitating this kind of learning requires online graduate education programs to assign needs assessments to learners, provide learning resources, identify the best instructional methods, and evaluate strategies to ensure meaningful learning.

### **Leadership Accountability**

Moreover, educational leaders create the vision, establish rules of impartiality, manage the process, and manage risks associated with change management of online graduate education. Leaders must identify stakeholders that can help in the change process. In perspective, Harris (2019) contended that innovation is needed in higher education. Greater attention must be given to stakeholder engagement in this regard. Individuals must be provided with the vision, a work

plan, and opportunities to engage without fear of reproach. This viewpoint is concurrent with Lewin's three-stage model of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing to realize change (Hussain et al., 2018). Concomitant, Kotter's eight-step process for leading change generates a sense of urgency, builds a guiding coalition, shapes a strategic vision and plans, recruits a volunteer army, empowers action by removing barriers, engenders short-term wins, maintains acceleration, and introduces a change to incorporate change management in online graduate programs. Moreover, a good leader is open to both positive and negative critique and uses this information to make decisions (Kotter, 2012).

Given the sizable and complex nature of educational organizations, appreciation, and knowledge of leading change management of online graduate education are essential. For instance, educational leaders are tasked with assisting the organization in a precipitously changing environment (Thoms & Burton, 2016). Hence, a leadership mindset is critical (Ho et al., 2019).

### **Instructive Practices for Online Graduate Education**

While educational organizations are ultimately driven by demand, they also have to deal with economic, technological, socio-cultural, and environmental concerns (Porter & Kramer, 2019). Further, Pardino et al. (2018) found that student retention rates, proficiency with technology, instructor professional development, propitious degree completion, student engagement, expansion of enriched online educational approaches, and student satisfaction and motivation are the base excellent online graduate education.

Additionally, governmental policy and global competition are also chief influences and forces of recruiting, admitting, educating, supporting, and retaining students. As a result, educational leaders' traditional roles have been redefined (Jacob & Gokbel, 2018). Characteristically, educational leaders only had to carry out tasks, plan, provide resolutions, and guidelines set by curriculum standards (Fleming & Koppelman, 2016). Recently, educational leaders are deeply involved in change management's planning process (Buechner et al., 2020). Therefore, an understanding of the institution's direction helps to anticipate potential problems and challenges that arise. The objective is to provide solutions and strategies to predict uncertainty. Meaningful contributions are made in designing a vision for the institution, managing resources effectively, and engaging in dialogues that reflect diverse viewpoints of collegiate members fosters a spirit of transformation (Howard et al., 2019). Keeping stakeholders engaged in the changing demands of graduate students and competitors' tactics is vital to sustainability and profitability.

Evaluation helps educational leaders understand the institution's vision, assets, strategic capabilities, and the expectations of all stakeholders regarding change management of online graduate education. Through deliberate analysis, educational leaders obtain systematic context, clear growth direction, increase the span of independence and accountability of employees, and improve educational organizations' core competitiveness (Harris, 2019). Indeed, the advantages of education management lie in the ability of leaders to incorporate change management strategies such as those of Lewin and Kotter to improve the capacity of educational organizations to work better with its stakeholders, provide excellent student services, expand demand capacity, express

brand awareness, and communicate a commitment to change of online graduate education when needed (Albliwi et al., 2015).

### **Organizational Development**

Paradigms of organizational decision-making are derived from an organizational decision-making strategy to enable educators to create significant educational leadership improvements (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). As a leader in instruction and management, one has become so by establishing processes to address organizational problems and more conjectural procedural issues in educational organizations (Mintrop & Zumpe, 2019). The ability to convey innovative ideas and processes sheds light, which leads to improved online graduate education (Shanker et al., 2017).

### **Innovation in Online Graduate Education**

Interestingly, Hora et al. (2017) examined the role autonomy of innovation and the need for innovation in higher education (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2017; Dimopoulos, 2020). In doing so, they created the kind of structure that provides leaders a way to systematically work through each unit's issues to sustain, improve, and develop new curriculums, thereby achieving organizational change (Lacerenza, Tannenbaum, & Salas, 2018).

Moreover, online learners are typically self-directed and need more autonomy in academic and career settings to be successful (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). For example, some self-directed learners may find course design and curriculum and challenging. For instance, group projects create limitations on time and balance. Many adult learners have robust careers and find group projects distracting from course material (Dizdaroglu, 2017). As such, group projects can detract from learning at the most significant level of effectiveness. Thus, satisfaction in courses with group projects may be minimal.

Additionally, when placed in groups, adult learners should be paired with other students by topic of interest, which is essential for their satisfaction. A survey is an appropriate tool to discover learning and work styles, which helps pair learners with like interest. This maximizes effectiveness in group learning (Buechner et al., 2020). Instructors must provide a focused approach to help students understand the "why" and "how." Similarly, the theoretical components of courses prepare students for the global workforce.

### **Summary**

Notwithstanding, it is crucial to connect the purpose of change management of online graduate education to present realities. Today's educational leadership professional operates in a global environment. The ability to adapt the curriculum to a dynamic internationalized workforce is necessary to remain competitive in an expansive online graduate education environment (Kehus, 2019). For instance, concepts within a specialized degree or career area are applied to interdisciplinary models to understand the global workplace (Vallo Hult, 2017). Finally, online graduate education must connect the values of ethics, virtue, character strength, aptitude, and leadership principles to improve global practices, individuals, and organizations' outcome.

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