



The Curriculum Improvement Institute is pleased to provide our members with the following research briefing.

PUBLISHED ARTICLE

"A New Paradigm for Educational Change"

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AUTHORS

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RESEARCH FOCUS

Implementing content standards – policy tools and guidelines by which content of the intended curriculum is assessed – in a classroom.

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

The study focuses on why many educational innovations often fail. The authors look at the nature of the change process, examining two orders of change. The first order assumes innovation is assimilated into existing beliefs and is rejected if it does not fit into a current structure. Second order change addresses the existing culture as part of the change process. The authors propose that one reason for the short-lived nature of education innovation is that most do not address the dynamics of second order change. The question the authors try to answer is: Why did these innovations fail?

KEY FINDINGS

- Innovations (initiatives) do not fail because of any inherent weakness in the innovation; they fail due to the basic nature of the change process.
- There are two orders of change: first order change process is more psychological and second order change is more philosophical, coming from within an organization.
- Concern Based Adoption Model (CBAM) is a seven-stage, psychologically-based model whereby innovations must fit within the beliefs and perceptions of the school or district.
- The shared beliefs of school or district groups have a tendency to see themselves as different from, and better than, members of other groups.
- Shared paradigms dictate what individuals perceive and dictate what is accepted and not accepted, which doom some initiatives from the outset. It is not the innovation but the inability of the organization to accept components of the innovation that are not seen as acceptable by the organization.
- Spontaneous changes can be quite dangerous. Paradigm shifts are most effective when the organization understands that existing beliefs are no longer relevant.
- Second order change (permanent) is brought about by interacting with events and situations in a new way, involving both experimentation and commitment.
- Second order change will not occur until those who must institutionalize the change see the need for change, have the skills and abilities necessary to make change, and the administrative support to make it happen.

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To request a copy of this research, "A New Paradigm for Educational Change" email Research@curriculuminstitute.org