DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 389 167   FL 023 348

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TITLE   Changing Paradigms. The Project Approach.
PUB DATE   Apr 95
NOTE   12p.; Paper presented at the International Conference
                on Language in Development (2nd, Bali, Indonesia,
                April 10-12, 1995).
PUB TYPE   Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints
                (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE   MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS   *English (Second Language); Foreign Countries;
                *Instructional Effectiveness; *Instructional
                Innovation; Language Teachers; Models; Program
                Development; *Second Language Instruction; Teacher
                Education

ABSTRACT
        During the last 40 years, there has been a great
number of innovations in English Language Teaching (ELT). The method
by which these innovations have been diffused in many parts of the
world has been through the project approach. This paper explores the
suitability and effectiveness of this approach as a model for the
diffusion of ELT innovation, using Havelock's three models of
innovation, Fullan's process approach, and Henrichsen's link model.
It proposes a change of emphasis within project design,
implementation, and evaluation to empower the insider, and suggests
ways in which this might be achieved. The creation of
insider-generated project documents should help to establish a
databank for research and development into the diffusion of ELT
innovation, which would hopefully lead to new innovation. A
historical review of ELT since the 1950s is included. (Contains 14
references.) (Author/NAV)

CHANGING PARADIGMS - THE PROJECT APPROACH

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Abstract

During the last forty years there has been a great number of innovations in ELT. The method by which these innovations have been diffused in many parts of the world has been through the project approach. This paper sets out to explore the suitability and effectiveness of the approach as a model for the diffusion of ELT innovation. It proposes a change of emphasis within project design, implementation and evaluation in order to empower the 'insider' and suggests ways in which this might be achieved.

Introduction

Over the last twenty five years many of the attempts in ELT to diffuse innovation and to change the paradigms within which ELT teachers operate have made use of the project approach.

It is only very recently though that we have seen much of a literature emerge about the evaluation of ELT projects and of the approach itself. The purpose of this paper is (1) to stimulate further debate about what has been learnt so far, (2) to propose paying greater attention to certain factors in the design, implementation and evaluation of ELT projects, and finally (3) to consider the kind of skills and training project personnel require.

1. The pace and nature of change in ELT since the 1950s

The pace of change in ELT over the last forty years has been quite remarkable. We have had, for example, the development of a series of major new approaches: structural; situational; functional/notional; humanistic; communicative; natural; task-based; lexical and now there is talk of post-communicative.

This phenomenon has happened in parallel with an equally remarkable phenomenon, namely the increase in the use of English as an international language. This is obviously not a coincidence. Since the 1950s, and particularly since the invention of communication and information technology in the 1970s, the demand for English has outstripped all predictions. This demand created an ELT industry and, like any new industry, ELT needed a research and development capability. The sources of the research and development were mainly British and American departments of applied linguistics, a discipline which itself is also new.

The result of this research and development has been radical changes. There have been changes in content; methods; techniques; technology; mode; testing and training. Indeed the number and nature of these changes has been such that we can say that the paradigm for foreign language education has shifted. But it has not been a paradigm shift of the Kuhnian type. We have not seen one world view suddenly replaced overnight by a different world view which immediately changes the thinking and the practices of everyone working in that particular field. Instead we have several competing, though some might say complementary, views of the most effective way to teach the language. The ambiguity in the title of this paper is deliberate. The project approach has been used to try to change paradigms as to how English should be taught and ELT teachers trained but the paradigm itself is still in a state of flux.

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The result has been the establishment of an implementation continuum with some teachers and education systems having adopted many of the new ideas, whilst others, for very many different reasons, having hardly been touched by them. In the middle range of the continuum are all of those people who like to describe their position as eclectic.

2.   The introduction and development of the project approach model

In the light of the rise of English as the language of international communication, it is not surprising to find that by the 1970s many developing or newly emerging countries began to make requests for support for the development of ELT in their countries, particularly from bi-lateral aid agencies. They continue to do so. The collapse of the former Soviet Union has led to a plethora of such requests to both bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies. Governments and institutions around the world believe that improving the communication skills in English of key sectors of their population is essential for the social and economic development of their countries.

In the 1970s certain aid agencies, for example. the British Overseas Development Administration, agreed to provide support. British support to ELT overseas up until the 1970s had been the responsibility of the British Council, Britain's cultural agency. The British Council's support model at that time was to provide resources and personnel to existing programmes. A good example of this was the scheme for placing 'lectors' in universities throughout Eastern and Central European universities. ODA decided not to try to replicate the work of the British Council. Instead it channelled the aid money for ELT through the British Council's overseas network of English Language Officers. But the ODA's support model was different to that of the British Council. It favoured support to projects not programmes. So was born the project approach to ELT. The aim was to diffuse the ideas coming out of the centres for research and development in order to make the teaching of English more efficient and effective.

It took several years for the approach to take root. The British Council's Dunford House seminar reports (1979-1992) chart the process. Since the introduction of the approach in the 1970s. literally hundreds of ELT projects in a wide range of countries across the world have been given support. There have been different types of projects for the different education and training sectors:

primary and secondary sector	tertiary sector
textbook/ materials development	language centres
pre-service training	ESP
in-service training	self-access
exams	in-service training
teacher resource centres	graduate programme development

The influence of the project approach continues to spread. The British Council has adopted the approach for the spending of its own funds on ELT. During the period 1991-94 at least sixty new projects were established by the British Council in the countries of the former Soviet Union. In 1992 the World Bank, for the first time in its history, decided to lend money ($18.5 million U.S. dollars) to Hungary in support of

more than 50 foreign language education projects. The European Union has also begun to donate large sums of money for this purpose, especially to the countries in Eastern and Central Europe. Both the World Bank and the European Union have insisted on the use of the project approach.

Even governments that are not in receipt of aid funds have adopted the use of this approach. It is the only way governments and international organizations have found to date to support educational innovation whilst controlling expenditure. As pressure on public expenditure budgets for education increases, it is likely that sponsoring agencies will continue to insist on the use of the project approach.

3. Review of the project approach model for ELT

Based on the profession's experience of the hundreds of ELT projects that have been undertaken over the last twenty years, perhaps we are now in a position to review the approach and to evaluate how successful the model has been in the diffusion of ELT innovations. I will first set out the rationale for the approach. I will then go on to describe some of its key operational features and finally describe some of the criticisms frequently made of the approach.

3.1 rationale for the approach

As mentioned in the preceding section, the major advantage of the project approach to development is that it allows funding agencies to control expenditure. The approach was not invented specifically for ELT. It had been used for a long time by aid and other organizations to organize the funding of capital investment schemes. Funds, for example, would need to be committed for up to five or even 10 years in advance for the building of a new road.

Not surprisingly, therefore, many of the touchstone ideas that underpin the approach and that are constantly referred to in project documentation have a financial ring to them. Accountability is perhaps the most fundamental of these. Linked to this, is the idea of Value for Money (VFM). At both the appraisal stage and at the termination stage the project must be able to demonstrate that it represents good value for money by comparison with other competing projects and not just projects in the education sector. The project must also be able to demonstrate that it is a good investment by showing that it is sustainable.

But you cannot check whether the money has been both properly and effectively spent unless you evaluate. An evaluation system is essential.

Where a project is in receipt of aid funds, the ultimate purpose of the project is to assist with economic and social development. Mechanisms must therefore be found for measuring the social and economic impact of the project. In the last few years it has become increasingly common for an aid organization like ODA to send an economist or sociologist to evaluate an ELT project. They are seen as being the professional groups with the specialist tools required for measuring such impact. The entrance onto the evaluation scene of sociologists has led to an ever increasing emphasis being placed in the evaluation of a project on whether the project is able to demonstrate equity. The project must be of benefit to those sections of the society that, in the opinion of the aid agency, are in most need.

The conclusion I would draw from this is that the project approach is not and has never sought to be a model for the diffusion of innovation. It is primarily a model for the control of expenditure.

3.2 operational features of the approach

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The key theme is specificity. There must be specific:

specific objectives	a specific time-frame
a specific budget for each year of the project	specific types of project documentation
specific reporting procedures	specific measures of evaluation
specific statements of r i s k s and conditions	

3.3 criticisms of the approach

The approach is often criticized by ELT project personnel. One frequent criticicism is that the approach may be suitable for economic infrastructure projects like the construction of roads but that it is unsuitable for projects in education. The impact of innovation in education takes a long time. The project approach operates within too short a time-frame, usually three years, for proper evaluation to be conducted. The evaluation therefore has to concentrate on the number and the price of the 'products' of the project and not the value of the process by which they were produced.

Another frequent criticism is that the approach is too command-driven, too top-down. Project implementers have to work to a blue-print which was not of their devising and which. on implementation, often turns out to have been ill-conceived.

4. Evaluation of the effectiveness of ELT projects

It should be possible on the basis of the numbers of ELT projects that have been completed over the last twenty years to be able to say whether any project or any particular type of project has been a success or a failure and why. Unfortunately this is not possible.

The main problem is that there is so little documentation available. Though we may personally know of lots of undoubted successes or failures, we cannot point to them in the literature. Only a few of the hundreds of projects that we know to have existed have been written up or even recorded as having happened at all. Of those that have been written up, few are analytical. Many are of the 'war stories and romances' variety. Of those that are analytical some have been written in such a way that only an ELT specialist can understand them. There has been very little research conducted and hence there is very little literature on the subject, though this situation recently seems to be improving.

Professionally this lack of documentation has proven disastrous, both externally and internally. Externally it has meant that some of the traditional sponsors of ELT aid projects have become suspicious of a profession that does not monitor and develop its own project performance. Internally it has meant that new project personnel have been unable to learn from past successes and failures. There are still no guidelines available as to what works and what does not work. Such guidelines would have been invaluable to project personnel setting up the new projects in the countries of the former Soviet Union during the early 1990s.

5. Problems commonly associated with ELT projects

Though we may not be able to paint a general picture of success or failure, we have learnt that ELT projects, of whatever type, seem to be susceptible to the same sorts of sets of problems. The most serious set of problems are those connected with the

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burden of proof. How can one demonstrate,for example, the economic value or the sustainability of an ELT project? Perhaps this inability to shoulder the burden of proof is the main reason for the lack of research and documentation. Researchers and project personnel have not yet discovered how to prove to sponsors, at one level, that their innovation has worked and that, at another level, it has produced the kind of economic and social development the sponsor was seeking.

A second common set of problems is related to how, given the criticisms referred to above in section 3.3, one can adapt the project approach to make it more suitable for an ELT project.

The third set of problems is generally viewed as operational. These are problems to do with control; ownership; timescales; resistance; communication and workload. I would argue that they are more structural than operational.

These problems are present in all projects but they often vary in their level of importance depending on the degree of external funding and the presence or absence of foreign advisers.

In the remaining sections of this paper, I will consider a possible way forward to try to resolve some of these problems.

6.   Alternative diffusion models

We have spent very little time as a profession reflecting on how we go about changing a paradigm, diffusing an innovation.
Markee (1993) observes: " The last two decades in applied linguistics have seen the development of a number of language innovations.....All of these proposals have contributed in important ways to an understanding of theoretical issues related to designing innovative language syllabuses. But it is only rather recently that applied linguists have begun to investigate the problems associated with implementing these. innovations".p.229

The conclusion I would draw from the above discussion about the project approach is that it is primarily a model designed to provide accountability for expenditure. It is not. and has never claimed to be. a model for the diffusion of educational innovation. For that we must look elsewhere.

Fortunately there has been a considerable amount of work done over the last thirty years by sociologists and educationalists in the USA into the diffusion of innovation. Their work has mainly centred on innovation in American schools. Their thinking is beginning to make its way into discussions about the diffusion of ELT ideas (Ron White 1988, 1993, (Henrichsen 1989, Stoller 1994).

6.1   Havelock's three models

Havelock (1971) distinguishes between three different models of innovation. The first of these is the research, development and diffusion model (RD and D) which sees change as essentially a rational process. Successful innovation occurs when the implementers realize or are brought to realize the force of the ideas the innovation represents. The Council of Europe projects of the 1970s are cited by Markee (1993) as an example of this model. The concept of 'appropriate technology' is missing from such a model.

The second model he describes is the problem-solving approach. The methodology this model advocates is to derive solutions from classroom research. The 'reflective

approach' to teacher training fits this model and the COT project (Hedge 1994) is an example of this.

The third model he proposes is that of social interaction. This model is based upon the theory that the most critical factor in the diffusion of an innovation in education is social relationships. Designers and imple· .enters must understand the relationships that obtain amongst and between the various stakeholders from the beginning through to the end of the attempt to introduce the innovation .

6.2   Fullan's process approach

Fullan (1991) seems to abhor the RD and D model. He seeks to combine the problem-solving and social interaction models. There are several important lessons we need to absorb from his work. His words speak for themselves and I make no apology for quoting from him extensively:

"Most changes, even the big restructuring ones, have a pacifier effect because they give the appearance that something substantial is happening when it is not."p.352

"One of the basic reasons why planning fails is that planners or decision-makers of change are unaware of the situations that potential implementers are facing. They introduce changes without providing a means to identify and confront the situational constraints and without attempting to understand the values, ideas and experiences of those who are essential for implementing any changes."p.96

If this finding holds true for educational projects in the USA think how much truer it must be for ELT projects that by definition operate in a cross-cultural context.

"Assume that any significant innovation, if it is to result in change, requires individual implementers to work out their own meanings....... effective implementation is a process of clarification."p.106

"The answer is found not by seeking ready-made guidelines, but by struggling to understand and modify events and processes that are intrinsically complicated, difficult to pin down, and ever changing".p.107

"Assume that conflict and disagreement are not only inevitable but fundamental to successful change......Smooth implementation is often the sign that not much is really changing."p.106

"Evolutionary planning and problem-coping models based on knowledge of the change process are essential."p.107

"It is best to start small, experiment, and expand the successful."p.109

"Changing the culture of institutions is the real agenda, not implementing single innovations."p.107

Before one can change the culture, of course, one must first of all be able to understand it.

6.3   Henrichsen's link model

Henrichsen(1989) to my knowledge is the only one of the school of writers about educational innovation in the USA to date who has written about the EFL context.

Interestingly, he does not dismiss the RD and D model but suggests a linking of this with Havelock's other models of social interaction and problem-solving.

7.   Classiying the project approach as a model for the diffusion of ELT innovation

I want now to try to bring together points made in earlier parts of this paper.

I would argue that ELT innovation over the last forty years has been of the RD and D type. The creators of innovation have paid scant regard to the factors affecting implementation. Making the 'technology' appropriate to the context were problems for implementers to deal with. Many ELT project personnel unfortunately have also been so taken by the abstract beauty of the concepts involved or, understandably given their training, felt at such a loss as to know how otherwise to proceed, that they too have ignored the reality of the context in which the innovation is supposed to be diffused.In particular they have not been sufficiently sensitive to the values and priorities of the teachers and trainers they have been seeking to influence. Too often it has been a very top-down process

The result has often been resistance, alienation and failure. This is not surprising. In my own experience. the power of the culture of the school, and especially of the staffroom. often far outweighs the influence of any new set of ideas emanating from outside.

The project approach to the diffusion of innovation is not discussed as a model by Havelock. One could argue that it is capable of fitting any of his models and I would agree. In practice in ELT projects I think it has tended to the RD and D approach which Fullan (1992), Henrichsen (1989), Markee (1993) and Stoller (1994) all suggest usually leads to the kind of operational problems described above in section 5.

The project approach is not going to disappear so we must learn how to adapt it to take more account of what these writers teach us about the process of change and innovation. I believe the model has recently shown itself as being capable of adaptation but we will have to persuade sponsors that the adaptations proposed are viable, that the results will still be measurable, that it will not prove more expensive and that the impact will be greater.

8.   Strategies

8.1   project goals

The only thing that we know is constant is change and. in the modern world, rapid change. The real goal of any ELT project must be to transform the people and the institutions involved so that they are able to adapt and to diffuse not just the immediate innovation but innovations that have not yet even been dreamed of. We should not lock ourselves into the evaluation of products and structures but focus on measuring the impact of the project on the people involved, and that should include all stakeholders. This will mean revising our views on design, implementation and evaluation strategies and our very narrow view of sustainability.

8.2   empowering the 'insider'

If Fullan (1991) has any message for us, it must be that we should seek to transfer power and responsibility for the conduct of a project as quickly and as fully as possible to the 'insiders'. Who is included or excluded by the term insider varies from project to project and can vary from stage to stage within a project. The empowerment of the insiders must be every project's top priority.

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This means:

- identifying project personnel as early as possible and bringing them in to the project at the 'basement' stage.

- ensuring that the insiders are informed that it is intended they will become part of the project team and what this might mean for them.

- providing training in the project approach.

- giving them the central role in the creation of project documents. I would identify these as being: the baseline study; project development plans(including finance); implementation plans and impact studies.

8.3   baseline studies

Projects should not be launched without a thorough investigation of the context. resulting in the publication of a baseline study. The carrying out of such a study will enable the project to be context- sensitive. It will also make it possible to super-impose the context on the new ideas rather than the ideas on the context.

Weir and Roberts (1994) have provided an excellent checklist of the data that should be collected during a baseline study and of the different methods and techniques that can be used. Holliday (1994) has suggested, especially in projects involving expatriate advisers, using an ethnographic approach to get at the essential but rather delicate information required concerning, for example, teacher's priorities, values and attitudes. The same method might also be used for discovering the attitudes of administrators whose support, as many a project has found to its cost, is always crucial.

The baseline study <u>must</u> be carried out by insiders. We have been following this insider approach to baseline studies in the various projects with which we in Lancaster have been involved for the last three years and have found it be very effective. It allows the implementers to work out their own meanings: to identify and assess the stakeholders: to assess the problems and posit solutions: to identify Stoller's (1994) 'zone of innovation': to bond as a project team: to decide who on the team is best suited to carrying out the various tasks involved: to decide what the training needs will be not only for themselves but for all the stakeholders involved: to gain credibility with stakeholders: to develop a communications network with stakeholders: to create a sense of ownership: to provide the team with a basis for formative evaluation and for an impact study.

The end product of the study should be a <u>published</u> document which includes the initial development and implementation plans and a statement of the project team members' responsibilities. One cannot generalize about how long should be spent on the baseline study but in my experience taking the first three months for a project scheduled for three years is sufficient and is acceptable to sponsors.

8.4   a process approach to project planning

If projects are unpredictable then we need a planning process which not only allows for change and variation but expects it. Evolutionary planning by insiders is the key. In my experience, involving individuals in an evolutionary planning process and allowing them to take responsibility for the carrying out of the plan are the most effective ways of achieving transformation of the individual into a change agent. Interestingly. ODA now seem to accept that this process approach to project

implementation is perhaps more suitable to ELT projects than the rigidities of the original blueprint approach.

8.5 impact studies

Many of the Language Centres set up by projects twenty years ago in universities around the world offering state-of-the-art teaching and materials have not changed since, despite the fact that the needs of the institutions they are supposed to service have clearly done so. These projects, though many were lauded at the time, failed to establish a permanent process of renewal. If the goal of a project is to change the culture of an institution so that development becomes a permanent process, then we need to change the range and nature of our evaluation procedures.

Perhaps, as evaluation is always such an emotive and confusing term, we should begin thinking more in terms of impact. Impact studies should bear a close relationship to the baseline study because many of the factors that needing to be investigated will be the same. The method and techniques used will also be similar. What we are really looking for is evidence as to whether the situation described in the baseline study regarding the capability of the institution and the individuals concerned to renew themselves has been changed. We want to see and measure the the impact at several different levels: the individual; the classroom; the institution and, where relevant, the country.

An impact study is a more embracing concept than evaluation and encourages the collection of more qualitative data. It also has built into it the act that any project is bound to have an impact wider than that originally predicted. If the change process is unpredictable then such effects are an inevitable by-product. Celani (1994) reported that, in a large Brazilian ESP project, some of these unplanned for effects turned out ten years later to be of at least as much importance as the achievement of the original objectives. For example, the impact of new teaching methods on the specialist subject teachers.

This brings me to a further point about impact studies. When should they be conducted? In the Brazilian project it took almost ten years for the major impact to be felt. ELT projects typically only have a three year timescale and the sponsors quite rightly will want to know whether the project has been cost effective cver that three year term.

The only solution once again is to hand over control to the insiders.This time the term probably has to exclude the locally based foreign advisers for the later stages of the study as it is unlikely that they will still be available.

An impact study should not be like a summative evaluation. It should be a series of working documents with a formative focus. This assumes that the insiders must have the interest and the resources to carry out this work beyond the date of expiry of the external funding.

9. Selection and training of project personnel

Two ODA English Language Teaching Officers (ELTOs), Michele and Tony Luxon, who have been working on a teacher training project in Nicaragua since 1993, have been keeping a project diary. The parts of it I have seen make for interesting reading. It is quite clear that an up-to date knowledge of ELT and their skills as teacher trainers has been necessary. A person with an MBA would not have been of much use. But it is also clear that the success of the project is also be very dependant on the acquisition by the whole project team of certain types of knowledge and skills which are not normally taught on a typical Master's degree in applied linguistics. The following is a list of just the key skill and knowledge areas: inter-personal; oral and written

communication including, for the foreign members of the project team, in the local language; cross-cultural awareness; an ability to handle project politics; negotiation; team-building; administration; budgeting and marketing.

Project managers and advisers need to have these sorts of skills at the outset and Masters programmes should reflect this. Other project personnel should also be given these skills where appropriate. If they are not, there can be no sustainability. Three project teams we had at Lancaster recently from the three Baltic countries realized this after producing their first implementation plan and immediately requested additional non-ELT related training.

Conclusion

I have set out in this paper the reasons why I believe it is necessary to empower insiders and some suggestions as to how this might be done. I believe that the adoption of these strategies would make ELT projects and the project approach more effective. I also believe that their adoption might help to resolve the problem of the gap that currently exists between the creators of innovations and those responsible for their implementation.

Through the creation of insider-generated project documents of the type described in this paper it should be possible in the future to establish a databank for research and development into the diffusion of ELT innovation. It is hoped that such innovative research would lead to new ELT innovations. If this is to happen then all of us involved in project implementation have a duty to the profession to see to it that information on projects is recorded and disseminated.

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