Redesigning the MBA Curriculum: Implementation Challenges

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Change Formula

\[ PR \ (CH) = D \times M \times P > C \]

Source: Professor Michael Beer, Harvard Business School
D = DISSATISFACTION

- DEMAND
- DATA
- DISCUSSION & DIAGNOSIS
- DESIRE
- DIRECTION

M = MODEL / VISION

- MATCHES STRATEGY & VALUES
- MULTIDIMENSIONAL
- MODELING BEHAVIOR
- MODEL ORGANIZATIONS
P = PROCESS
• PARTICIPATION
• PRONOUNCEMENTS
• POLITICS
• PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL
• PROMOTION
• PERSISTENCE
• PLANNING

C = COST / FELT LOSSES
• POWER
• COMPETENCE
• SELF-ESTEEM
• RELATIONSHIPS
• REWARDS / STATUS
• SECURITY
• IDENTITY
Leading Change

(PR) CH = D x M x P > C

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• OVEREMPHASIS ON M
• UNDER EMPHASIS ON D & P

Range of approaches to curriculum change

• From organic, incremental curriculum changes to planned, large-scale design
• From a focus on several unrelated themes to a broad unifying purpose
• From a traditional sequence of courses to a more radical repositioning of topics
• From minor variations on existing courses to novel and innovative course content
• From rigid requirements to greater flexibility and customization
• From loose integration to a tight coupling of courses
• From pedagogies based on large classroom lectures and case discussions to field work, experiential learning, small group activities & 1-on-1 instruction
Curriculum change at UVA Darden

Continuous improvement approach with extensive faculty engagement.
- Discussions between Dean & faculty revealed concerns, which the Dean shared widely
- Dean appointed faculty review committee to lead a facilitated process of data collection & brainstorming
- Two-day, off-site meeting with all faculty and staff resulted in unanimous commitment to revise in particular areas

Curriculum change at UVA Darden

- Faculty review committee proposed 18 major changes, pilots, and new directions
- Examples included:
  • a curriculum designed around competencies
  • integrated curricular & co-curricular activities
Curriculum change at Yale SOM

Large-scale planned curricular changes built around an overarching theme: Integration.

– Identified dissatisfaction with original MBA program
– Secured broad faculty engagement
– Multiple committees: Steering Committee and 6 subcommittees (mainly faculty, especially key opinion leaders, and some students)

Curriculum change at Yale SOM

– Heavy Dean involvement, including 1-on-1 meetings
– Faculty approved reform based on 11-page outline
– Design team: 8 senior faculty, with additional faculty involvement, developed new curriculum after the vote
Curriculum change at Stanford GSB

Large-scale planned curricular changes in sequence, structure, & content of courses.

- Identified dissatisfaction with MBA program
- Review process centered on one 11-person committee with broad authority, leading to final up-or-down vote
- Committee represented “the future of the school,” with each faculty area represented (included tenured faculty, two adjuncts, and two alumni)

Curriculum change at Stanford GSB

- Consulted broadly with faculty, alumni, and students
- Proposal to faculty: no advance material;
  3 hours of presentation & discussion;
  85% approved proposal
- Dean set up and chaired an oversight committee to guide implementation
- Dean tasked an implementation committee with managing and executing the change process
The challenge of change

“Never confuse motion with action.”
(Benjamin Franklin)