

Change Management in Agricultural Research Systems

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Topics

- I. Background & rationale
- II. Context & current status
- III. 8 areas where change may be needed
- IV. Change beyond the research organization
- V. Examples
- VI. Practical implications

I. Background & Rationale

- Change management is concerned with how to get from where we are to where we want to be.
- AROs have undergone many *changes* in recent years, but have not always *managed* change very well.
- The purpose here is to identify key areas for change & some possible ways forward.

II. Context / Current Status

- AROs are within larger (governmental) administrative systems.
- “Pipeline” innovation model & mindset persist.
- Multiple stakeholders have conflicting objectives.
- Demands on AROs expand & change.
- Funding is limited & increasingly project based.
- Image/self esteem of ARO is often poor.
- Considerable change; but weak management of change.
- Organizational change is a political process.

III. Potential Areas for Change

1. Strategy formulation
2. Accountability & governance
3. Partnership policies & procedures
4. Priority setting & planning
5. Monitoring & evaluation
6. Incentives for change
7. Administration & finance
8. Organizational arrangements

Capacity Development vs. Change Management

- Everybody wants capacity; fewer want change!
- CD has focused on *technical* areas of research and administration.
- Key “*soft*” areas for CD: communication, participation, facilitation, negotiation, mediation, change management.

1. Strategy Formulation

Basic goals, values & strategies may need to shift from ***doing research*** to ***fostering innovation*** that:

- Reduces poverty,
- Improves food security,
- Improves health & nutrition,
- Manages resources sustainably.

2. Accountability & Governance

- Traditional accountability is mainly to funders
- May need to strengthen the role of partners & potential users (small farmers, market agents, consumers...) in governance bodies & mechanisms.

3. Partnership Policies & Procedures

- Partnering is increasingly prevalent.
- Few research organizations have formal partnership policies that define:
 - Objectives of partnering
 - Main types of partnership (research vs. innovation)
 - Principles & guidelines for selecting partners, decision making, communication, sharing costs & benefits, IPR ...

4. Planning & Priority Setting

- Broadening goals, project funding, & partnering all make planning more complex.
- It's essential to combine stakeholder inputs with cost-benefit analysis.
- Participatory planning exercises can foster collective learning & strengthen relationships.

5. Monitoring & Evaluation

- M&E are usually done for accountability, not learning or improvement.
- Learning-oriented M&E needs to complement accountability-oriented M&E.
- Priorities for change:
 - Formulating & testing validity of change theories
 - Use of evaluation results to improve program design & implementation
 - Impact evaluation

6. Incentives for Change

- Incentives are needed for researchers to work with others: Other researchers, policy makers, service provider, farmers, market agents...
- 2 ways to provide incentives:
 - Human resource policies & procedures
 - Competitive grants for innovative projects

7. Administration & Finance

- Innovation processes are “messy” & unpredictable, posing challenges for traditional, centralized admin. & finance.
- Strategies:
 - Decentralization
 - Semi-autonomous bodies

8. Organizational Arrangements

- Some restructuring may be useful.
- Restructuring alone is seldom the answer.
- New units / functions may be useful for:
 - Boundary management
 - Innovation brokerage

IV. Change Beyond the Research Organization

- It may be difficult for AROs to implement needed admin. / financial changes without reform in the broader national system.
- External bodies may play useful roles in brokering innovation processes that involve AROs.

V. Examples

- **Tanzania**: A client-oriented R&D management approach (CORDEMA)
- **Peru**: A competitive funding scheme to promote innovation (INCAGRO)
- **India**: The “National Agricultural Innovation Project” (NAIP)

VII. Practical Implications

- Investment projects may be useful vehicles for initiating/mainstreaming change.
- They may be especially useful for addressing such issues as gender & empowerment.
- National commitment & leadership are crucial for ultimate success.
- It's useful to manage organizational change via an "institutional project."
- It's crucial to develop local capacity for managing organizational change.
- Cultural change may require many, diverse interventions.
- Broader public-sector reform may be needed.