



**Bringing about Changes at a Large Engineering College:  
Lessons for Designers and Implementers of  
Large Scale Change Efforts**

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## Bringing about changes at a large engineering college: Lessons for designers and implementers of large scale change efforts

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### Abstract

*This paper outlines a change management program undertaken at Maritime Engineering Institute in India. The intervention came in the form of a focused three month effort where the first author, a professor of OB at a leading management school in India was invited to stay on the campus of the institute to familiarize herself with the organization and the processes, and suggest necessary changes. The paper presents the change management process in detail. The events and happenings during this intervention are discussed in terms of the dilemmas it posed for the consultant and in retrospect for exploring why the change process could not be institutionalized. Lessons from the intervention are offered to help deal with the less obvious and critical issues that can emerge as stumbling blocks in the successful implementation of any change process.*

## **Bringing about changes at a large engineering college: Lessons for designers and implementers of large scale change efforts**

### **Introduction**

The literature of organizational development effort in universities or schools is sparse (Griffin, 2006; Schmuck, 1995; Torraco, 2005; Torraco & Hoover, 2005). Added to this is the difficulty of applying OD concepts used in industry to universities owing to the difference in cultural context and varying nature of issues and needs (Torraco & Hoover, 2005). There is a call for continued research of organizational development initiatives in such settings (Hoover, 2005). This paper is a response to one such call in which the authors describe an effort to restructure an engineering college in India. The authors present the readers both with an account of the problem, process, outcomes and the difficulties faced. Consequent lessons are drawn out for those trying to bring about changes.

The Maritime Engineering Institute (MEI) had been established five years before the intervention began (see Exhibit 1 for organization chart of MEI). Problems had begun to show in the shape of discipline issues among students, faculty members not showing exemplary commitment to their classes, no professional growth of the faculty members, many faculty leaving for similar pay scales elsewhere and deep divisions among faculty members. The situation was made complex with greater competition, both to attract good students, prepare them for their placements at the completion of the program and the consequent need to attract good faculty. In addition, the promoters wished to scale the Institute to the level of a University in the near future and start multiple programs. The CEO, Mr. Pandit on the basis of his ten months in the institute felt that there was a need for an outsider to examine the issues at MEI and suggest ways in which a stronger

foundation could be laid for converting MEI into a University and improve processes at MEI. He hired the help of the first author, for such support. The author entered MEI with the mandate of understanding current systems, suggest and help implement changes where required and feasible. All this was to happen during a limited period of three months during which the author spent full time on campus.

### **About the Institute**

MEI was one of the few privately owned maritime educational centers in India, offering marine engineering and nautical technology degree programs. It was located in a remote rural location. The nearest town was 8 kms away. One large city was located about 30 kms north and another was located around 80 kms south. Thus the campus had to be self sufficient in providing for all the needs of its residents. All faculty, students and critical support staff lived on the campus. The proprietors had spent nearly Rs. 30 crores (around 6 million US dollars) in setting up the Institute.

During the formative years the proprietors had been very involved in the running of the school, however as the Institute grew they expressed their desire to hire professional help in running the Institute. They wished that the Institute be run as an autonomous unit. The promoters had big dreams for the Institute with a vision to make it an internationally reputed school with exemplary teaching, research and consultancy emanating from the Institute. At the time of the intervention they were actively involved in the functioning of the Institute. Recruitment of faculty was done by inviting experts in the area to evaluate the candidates but decision about salary and designation was taken by the promoters. The performance of the faculty was appraised by the HOD's which was then forwarded to the promoters to decide on the annual increments.

## Entry of the OD Consultant

Based on her meetings with the promoters, board of directors, faculty, principal and CEO, the first author agreed to accept the assignment. Although invited by the CEO Mr. Pandit, the author had several rounds of discussion with the CEO and the promoters (Mr. Mukul Keshav and his son Mr. Saurav Keshav), before deciding to take up the assignment and spend three months at MEI. During the initial discussions, the promoters expressed the desire that faculty take full charge of the Institute, start diverse programs, have systems in place for placement activities, create a climate where students develop strong bonds with the Institute and scale new heights for themselves and the Institute in the process. Although not entirely clearly stated at that time, they indicated there were some problems with the academic system at the Institute such as, teachers were not reaching class on time and student indiscipline in classrooms. The author came with the understanding of having to suggest and initiate changes to help MEI improve its performance in its core activity (academics). Before acceptance of the assignment and actual entry into the Institute the author also conducted a half day workshop with the faculty on team work two months before she formally came to stay at MEI. She found the group to be fragmented but the individuals to be interested and enthusiastic. The author also attended one meeting of the board of directors of MEI before her formal engagement started. She found all members of the board enthusiastic about her consulting for the Institute.

Upon entry, the author was given an office equipped with an independent computer, an organization chart, and a list of all the employees at MEI. She was to live in their guest house which was secluded from all other living quarters of the faculty and staff. She asked Mr. Pandit to facilitate her meeting with all the members of the faculty first by way of introduction and then in one-to-one meetings. She spent her first week talking at length to the Principal, Mr. Kumar; Heads of the Departments and the Dean

Placement; and the CEO, Mr. Pandit in understanding the organization, its history, origins, culture, working norms and its structure. Before completion of the first week a meeting was called of all faculty members to introduce the consultant. This was an informal meeting in the faculty area where all faculty just stood around the designated space while the author was introduced. The author was told about the meeting an hour before the meeting was convened. In order to establish trust and also the tone for her interaction with them she carefully crafted her introductory statement. She first introduced herself along with her credentials and reminded them of their earlier interaction during the workshop. Using the framework suggested by French and Bell (2003), of (addressing to the stakeholders questions of who, what, why, how, when of the intervention) she introduced the purpose of her presence as follows –

“I am trying to understand the systems and processes at MEI. I need to understand it from your viewpoint. I will also be talking to other stakeholders of MEI such as students, non-teaching staff and others. What we discuss shall remain confidential. However, I would aggregate the data and present the same to the CEO, the Principal and the promoters. I would use the information I collect to come to an understanding for myself and develop insights for suggesting changes to the system if necessary. I would like to hear from you what is good at MEI, what are your concerns, what have been your concerns at MEI and about MEI. With the help of Mr. Pandit’s office I will schedule personal meetings with you”

In all, 28 one-to-one open ended interviews were conducted with faculty, including the Principal, Dean Placement, 4 HOD’s, 5 senior lecturers, 11 lecturers, 3 assistant lecturers, 3 lab demonstrators, hostel wardens and 52 students (from across the 3 years). The consultant took notes of the meetings in detail and recorded the data from the

meetings in the computer. Care was taken to code the details of the interviewee so that it was not possible for anyone to recognize who said what even if they had access to the computer files. Everyone was assured of confidentiality and if a person said that they wished to make certain comments that were off the record that was respected and no notes were taken and those comments were not stored in any format. In most cases interviews were long and in some cases there were more than one meeting with the same person. In some cases the meetings also became an opportunity to share their personal issues with the consultant.

### **Diagnosis**

On the basis of the interviews and the author's own observation some of the issues diagnosed at MEI are presented below in brief to help the reader understand the situation at MEI to be able to assess the change process and outcomes.

#### ***Divide between marine and non marine faculty***

There was a serious divide among the faculty members themselves. Being a Marine Engineering College it had to follow the directives of the regulatory body, DG Shipping of India, and hire at least some faculty with sea going experience. The mariners were difficult to find and were also quite expensive. Thus, to be able to attract and retain the marine faculty members, they were paid two to three times higher than the other faculty for doing similar work at the Institute. In addition they were allotted better houses. The mariners could support a better living standard owing to the savings from previous jobs. The students related to them better because the mariners could tell them about real-life experiences at sea on board and taught applied (perceived as directly relevant) courses. The mariners were older and thus also likely to be in positions of power at MEI and were perceived to be pals of the principal. The mariners were also

allowed to directly speak to the promoters because in most cases the promoters were involved in finding them and/or were keen to retain them.

The non-marine faculty were younger, inexperienced, and less liked by the students often because they taught more difficult, basic, and theoretical subjects (also perceived as irrelevant and uninteresting). They were paid even less than what was the approved AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education) grade for faculty members in engineering colleges and thus they felt frustrated and upset about being at MEI. They lived in smaller houses and were entitled to fewer facilities. Some of them had been told at the time of joining that they would be encouraged to find applications of their field in the marine industry but for most of them that had not happened. Further, no clear policy guidelines were available for pursuing higher studies or research projects.

### *Climate and Culture Issues*

The overall climate among the faculty was characterized by low motivation. There was unhappiness about ad-hoc personnel policies, high alienation and boredom. The system of reward and recognition was seen as unfair and the feeling was you needed to be seen by the people in power to be rewarded and incompetence was often rewarded by making the work easier for the incompetent person or elevating him/her to a higher position. The faculty worked and operated in watertight compartments. There was little interaction among the marine and non-marine faculty on academic matters or otherwise. The faculty who taught basic sciences did not find out how their subject applied in the marine subjects and those who taught the marine subjects did not find out about the basic subjects that were taught.



### ***Identity of MEI***

There was little clarity among students, faculty or administrative personnel about the nature of the Institute itself. Is it an Academy/Institute/College was asked often? MEI appeared to have multiple influences shaping its identity. There were certain DG Shipping requirements for maintaining student discipline, there were certain industry expectations, and then there were the Institutes', faculty and its promoter's expectations, not to forget the expectations of the students. Within this context a collective understanding of the identity of the Institute and expectations of and from students had yet to be defined. Students and faculty felt pulled in several directions. Sometimes the Institute resembled a normal engineering college, sometimes a military academy, sometimes an apprenticeship institute, and sometimes a liberal arts college.

### ***Role of Principal and CEO***

Mr. Kumar, the principal, was an old friend of the promoters. They had gone to great lengths to get him as the principal of the college at its inception. However, in their discussions with the first author the promoters expressed unhappiness with his style of functioning and they said that he was the bottleneck for the growth of MEI. They said it was because of the inefficiency and incapability of the principal that they had hired the CEO.

Mr. Kumar liked teaching and taught the same number of hours as any other faculty. He was quite uninvolved with most of the faculty members. He had appointed the oldest member of each academic area as the Head of the Department who also over the years had become his friends and he administered the program through them. All decisions about salary and designations were left to the promoters. There were instances when he even went back on the word that was given by him and the expert committee about designation and salary on the insistence of the Keshavs. He was the go-between for

the promoters and the Institute. Mr. Kumar took little interest in the growth of the faculty. There were no plans made for the development of the faculty. The general perception was that if you were seen or heard by Mr. Kumar you got some goodies or else none would come your way. The practice was to micro-report to the Principal.

The CEO Mr. Pandit had joined the Institute some 10 months before the intervention was started. There appeared to be resistance to Mr. Pandit's appointment among the senior faculty. The younger faculty members were rather indifferent to his role/position. Further there was role ambiguity with respect to the roles of Mr. Pandit and Mr. Kumar. The CEO was placed as the head of the Institute; however, the Principal headed the Academic activities of the Institute. They were told that their turfs were separate; however in many instances it was difficult to separate academic issues from non-academic issues. Between Mr. Pandit and Mr. Kumar there was no real reporting relationship and many decisions were either delayed or not taken because of lack of clarity about whose jurisdiction the issue belonged to. Also there was a feeling that Mr. Pandit had been appointed to be the proprietor's man on campus and thus things must be hidden from him. Faculty were told overtly to not raise issues too vocally because all of them needed to keep their jobs. A very palpable difference was visible between the CEO and the Principal. When Mr. Pandit wanted to take any action regarding an academic matter either he was perceived as poking his nose and being out of territory or he was tolerated and some action was taken because he was after all the boss. It started becoming evident that the structure would have to undergo changes for MEI to function more effectively. It must also be noted that Mr. Pandit was about fifteen years junior to Mr. Kumar. Thus the CEO being younger and being the boss was difficult for the Principal in more than one ways.

## Change Management at MEI

The author first presented the findings of her interviews to the faculty in order to check for their validity and thereafter presented them to the promoters. Based on the issues identified, a restructuring of the organization seemed necessary. In addition, the need for improving on the salary levels of non-marine faculty members was emphasized and removing the nine layers of hierarchy among faculty was suggested. It was emphasized that attracting and retaining talented faculty is at the heart of a successful educational institute. The author made a case for restructuring, considering the existing hierarchical nature and the problem of having two heads of the Institution. The author emphasized the need for a more flat structure, more participation of faculty, more ownership towards the Institute, and decentralization in running the academic program.

The promoters, the CEO, and the Principal had long meetings to design and discuss the new structure. The author was present in the meetings and shared information about the structure of various colleges and institutes but did not propose the new structure. Based on their discussion a new structure (see Appendix B) for governing MEI was agreed upon. One key point of discussion was what to do with the Principal, himself? In the meetings it was clearly decided that it was important to have unity of command and the Principal could not be the overall administrator. It was decided in consultation with the promoter and the CEO that he could head and advance the research and consultancy activity of the Institute. Given his interest and profile he was thought to be able to play the role quite well. The Principal was asked to leave the meeting by the promoters when all of this was discussed. The final structure was agreed upon in a meeting between the promoters and the CEO. The author was present at the meeting only as an observer.

The CEO then shared the new structure in a quick meeting with the faculty and also communicated that the nitty-gritty of the new structure would be discussed in a

detailed workshop to be conducted by the author at a later date.

A series of workshops were conducted for the faculty with the consultant serving as the facilitator. The first workshop was on communicating the new structure. The second workshop was to finalize the student feedback form and the third was to arrive at a common understanding of the identity of MEI and consequently expectations from students. In all workshops all faculty were expected to come. Three to four days advance information was given to the faculty for the workshop and the principal's office would make sure that no faculty had scheduled classes during the workshop. The timeline for the workshops is shown in Appendix C. The workshops by and large followed a similar design (large group interventions). For illustration, one workshop design is explained.

### ***Workshop for communicating structure***

The workshop started informally with all faculty having lunch together at the Institute. Beginning immediately after lunch the workshop continued until 8 in the evening. The workshop was divided into three parts. The first part was devoted to simply getting accustomed to the new structure, the second part was to generate questions about the functioning of the Institute in the new system and the third part was for answering of questions and deciding on the future plan of action. The workshop began with opening remarks from the CEO and the author presenting her findings from the discussions. The purpose of restructuring and the new structure were explained in the introduction. The author also explained in detail the purpose of the workshop and its design.

Small groups were randomly formed by counting off from 1 to 5. The groups were asked to generate questions they had regarding the new structure. Each individual was asked to write down his/her set of questions first and then share it with other members of the group. Then the group was asked to write their questions on index cards. They were requested to write one question on one index card each. The index cards were placed

using blue-tac on a large wall. Once all the questions were on the wall, the questions were classified as those related to appraisal and growth of faculty, formation and functioning of committees, salaries and facilities for faculty, teaching at the Institute, hierarchy, operational aspects, well-being of the Institute, and wearing of uniforms. Each group was again asked to answer a set of questions what they thought would be the best way to address the questions given their understanding of the system. Each group presented the answers and discussion followed each presentation.

At the end of the workshop the author summarized that they would need at least two or more such workshops to agree on how to handle students, to discuss the student feedback mechanism, to discuss the terms of references of each committees, to discuss the personnel policies etc. Faculty members were to volunteer for the committees they would like to be part of. Other five workshops conducted over the next two months had similar design.

### **Fallouts of the Change Process**

After the first workshop while working on the other issues, the author was also working on the Performance Appraisal format at the request of the CEO and the promoters. For this she was working closely with Mr. Kumar. On one occasion when the author took the newly designed performance appraisal format to show to Mr. Kumar, she noticed he appeared distracted, although he approved of the form. She came out feeling that he may be planning to leave. Going over the past events in her head, she was sure that he had welcomed the chance to concentrate on research and was happy that there might be some time off for him. But she also realized that he and his wife may also be seeing it as a loss of face. However, before the author had time to discuss this with anyone, Mr. Kumar communicated to Mr. Pandit his intention to resign. Mr. Pandit tried to talk him out of it and later agreed on an arrangement where Mr. Kumar would

commute daily from the nearest town north where he intended to move and continue to teach and do research and consultancy at MEI.

Later when Mr. Kumar called the promoters to discuss his intention to quit his current role, they reacted strongly. The Keshavs told him to hold all plans till they meet him. They called Mr. Pandit and told him they could not let Mr. Kumar go and if they had to bend backwards then that is what they would do. Later the Keshavs also met with Mr. Kumar, urging him to stay. The author found out about this from Mr. Pandit.

The author then spoke to the Keshavs to understand their perspective and also to explain to them that whenever a change process is initiated there is likelihood of resistance and losses. Though they listened they also were very emotional and appeared to be vacillating, alternating between asking her to not get too involved in the change process and agreeing that the new system was good. They also kept asserting that though they had criticized Mr. Kumar, they liked/valued him very much and there was no way they would like to hurt him. They were unable to see that the new arrangement (Mr. Pandit's and Mr. Kumar's) was not hurting and would only strengthen the college.

Once the promoters convinced Mr. Kumar to stay, two senior faculty (close friends of Mr. Kumar) also tended their resignation directly to Mr. Kumar and the promoters. Mr. Kumar then informed Mr. Pandit about the same. The promoters again intervened and retained both faculty by promising them some favors. They did not discuss any of this with Mr. Pandit or the author. Mr. Pandit felt left out and wrote a letter to the promoters asking them to clarify his role and the scope of his decisions. His main thrust was that if he is the CEO could he take decisions at the Institute or not? Mr. Pandit shared the contents of the letter after he had sent the letter to the Keshavs.

The author tried talking to Mr. Mukul Keshav but he was unwilling to listen and was being too emotional. Thus she wrote a detailed letter to Mr. Mukul Keshav and his son about all that had transpired from the beginning of the intervention and attempted to

show them the folly of their interference discussing classic resistance to change and emphasizing that what they were witnessing was just that. She also asked them to write back to her about the letter. They did not communicate back.

Some doubts about the implementation of the system were also surfacing among the faculty. A few faculty members asked the author confidentially if the system was really going to be implemented. On probing she found out that though Mr. Pandit had not told many individuals about Mr. Kumar's resignation, rumors were floating. Some of the senior faculty and their spouses were behaving a little awkwardly. Some of the junior faculty members who had been made chairpersons were being given the cold shoulder at the work front and in the personal front. In some cases there was outright rude behavior shown by the senior faculty and their spouses to the younger faculty. There was also a feeling that if a lot of the older faculty would resign then the promoters would pull back the changes.

### **Reflections on the Change Program /Dilemmas**

During the early days, the promoters were in constant touch with the consultant, impressing upon her their commitment to have the Institute faculty governed. Findings from the initial interviews were communicated to the promoters, who extended whole hearted support in restructuring. As the intervention progressed and the structural changes necessitated a change of role for the principal and less involvement of the promoters, there appeared to be diminishing enthusiasm on the part of the promoters towards the change effort. Their calls to the author became less frequent and they did not even reply to her detailed letter explaining the build up of events towards the restructuring and the need for a reexamination of existing roles. Further when it came time to take hard decisions such as accepting the principal's resignation from his former role and making attendant changes, they developed cold feet.

Much after the author's involvement with MEI, she came to know through informal sources that the CEO had resigned and the Principal had been reinstated in his former role.

In hindsight, there may have been certain issues, if addressed that might have helped the successful implementation of the change effort. These and the authors personal dilemma's during the course of the intervention are discussed next as a means for other consultants to learn vicariously.

### **Consultant Dilemma's during the Intervention**

#### ***Engagement with the Promoters***

The most important issue revolved around the commitment of the promoters. A dilemma that the author faced was the extent to which she needed to engage with the promoters. Even though the promoters expressed their intent of transforming the Institute to bring about changes for it to become world class, they had not prepared themselves emotionally for being less involved in allowing changes to happen. It was easier for the promoters to say that they would like the Institute to be world class and be faculty governed but not so easy to take the necessary steps that would be needed to allow the Institute to move towards that direction.

As the communication waned between the author and the promoters from overtly enthusiastic calls initially from their side to little or no communication and even no reply to her letter, the author too did not take much initiative to establish contact. In hindsight, this may have proved to be fatal to the overall success of the implementation. Greater involvement of the promoters may possibly have eased their discomfort with regard to the changes. The author until very late did not realize that it was necessary for her to work with the promoters at an emotional level to prepare them to initiate/accept change. It was



a mistake to not diagnose and manage the promoter's emotional involvement in the process and outcome.

### ***Involvement in Actual Restructuring***

The question of whether the consultant should get involved in the implementation of changes has been posed before (Juras, Mackin, Curtis & Foster-Fishman, 1997). The author was asked and expected by the promoters to give a new structure for the Institute following her meetings with the faculty and students. She did not wish to do this because that would reduce their involvement and commitment to the new structure. However, as they were thinking about the new structure it was also clear that they had no experience in designing educational institution structures. They were falling back to the traditional university structure with several departments. Thus, she then provided them information about the structures of few educational institutes that ran autonomous programs. This was thought to be useful in aiding their thinking.

### ***Being Friends with Mr. Pandit, the CEO***

The CEO would often stop by the author's office to discuss issues about salaries, structure etc., offer to drive her to the guest house, drop in with his family to ensure her stay was comfortable and invited her a couple of times to his home for dinner/meals. Since he was the formal contact to bring her in, he took it as his responsibility to take care of the author's stay at MEI. Since the campus was a small interrelated community, everyone seemed to know everything about other people. Thus the author tried to minimize social contact with all faculty and also Mr. Pandit. However, the general perception was that she was Mr. Pandit's person on campus. The author wanted to minimize this perception among the community, however it was not always possible because she was living alone and needed logistic support from MEI for several things for

which Mr. Pandit was her contact. This perception of her being close to Mr. Pandit and the suggested changes providing a central role to Mr. Pandit and marginalizing Mr. Kumar might have appeared rigged to several senior faculty. Thus, it might have been better for the change process if the well being of the authors stay was managed by somebody other than Mr. Pandit.

### ***What to do about Important Sounding Information from Informal Sources***

At the request of the promoters, the author met with the Principal's wife Mrs. Kumar. Mrs. Kumar taught a course as visiting faculty. She had also been the tutor/guardian/ counselor for all the students and faculty in the past. Mrs. Kumar was proud to share that she had been doing social service by helping the women spouses of the young male faculty by teaching them to have a life independent of their spouse. She had been the mother figure for the faculty as well. However, she shared that since the past one year she had withdrawn. On probing she said that the CEO's wife was more senior to her in position and it was appropriate for her to take on Mrs. Kumar's earlier role. She was critical of the behavior of the CEO's wife who appeared aloof and independent. The CEO's wife had refused to join their monthly women's social get-together.

She was of the opinion that the promoters were unfair in telling her husband to teach less when that was really what he enjoyed doing. She also felt that her husband was over worked and stressed. She further made a clear allegation that the coming of the CEO had led to a clear deterioration of the situation. Though the author was privy to the feelings of Mrs. Kumar, the author could not mention this in any of her formal reports to the CEO and his family. She did mention to the promoters how she had sensed disillusionment in MEI when she talked to Mrs. Kumar. They totally brushed it aside and said that she was probably in a foul mood. The author in hindsight also realized how the

ill-feelings and misinformation of Mrs. Kumar would have fed into the fear of all the spouses and galvanized them towards insisting their husbands to resist change.

### ***Recognizing Informal Sources of Power***

The author was invited to attend the social get-togethers of the spouses, which she had politely declined, partly because they were during office hours and partly because she did not think it was necessary for her to socialize on campus. She felt remaining neutral was an important aspect of her role. In retrospect, she may have underestimated the huge influence that the spouses had over the culture of the Institute, being such a closed campus. This oversight of the underlying power dynamics (Freedman & Stinson, 2004) within the organization proved to be crucial. Her intent of not being viewed as partisan may have been construed as high handedness, while at the same time, blocking important sources of information for the changing mood and divide between the Principal and CEO. Perhaps a concerted effort to engage with the wives may have signaled early warnings to resistance that could have been addressed.

As the change process was advanced, the faculty's wives started being overtly rude to the CEO's wife and the wives of those faculty who were asked to take on added responsibilities according to the new structure. They were able to influence their husbands to make a cartel and resign to force a roll back. This additional reinforcement to resistance to change had not been foreseen. In hindsight the author feels that if she had spent some time socially with them she would have been able to explain the changes and its consequences a little more. She might have also been able to neutralize the fear that the spouses were feeling. The importance of managing the perception of being neutral was highlighted and so is the importance of being plugged into informal sources of information and power. The consultant needs to constantly balance the two needs and continue to remain neutral and functional.

### ***Drawing Role Boundaries***

In her frequent interactions with Mr. Pandit, the consultant sometimes felt that he himself needed mentoring and grooming for the role he was expected to take on. For example during the first workshop Mr. Pandit lost his cool and had an emotional outburst. She tried to gently mention, both to him and the promoters, that Mr. Pandit also needed some exposure to take on the role. However given that the change process had just been initiated she could not be too upfront of the development needs of the CEO to the promoters as that could undermine their belief in him and neither could she be upfront about it to the CEO since he needed to be confident about his abilities to handle the situation. The author also realized that the role was not to mentor the CEO but she often felt compelled to do it to ensure the success of the change.

An important learning was that the organizational consultants plays several roles all of which may or may not be explicitly stated. The judgment of role boundaries needs to be often made by the consultant to be able to accomplish the task at hand.

### ***Ethical issues around sharing of confidential information***

Having been trained and grounded in social science research and the dynamics of establishing trust, the author was conscious about the need to maintain confidentiality (Fuqua, Newman & Dickman, 1999; Newman, 1993) and not share information shared in confidence. There were several instances when person X would share something about person Y or a situation involving X and Y. It was obvious that if person Y was aware of what/how person X felt about him/her or the situation, the misunderstanding could be resolved. The temptation to play the mediator was stronger when the author could see that enhanced understanding would only facilitate the change process. However, sharing that information would also violate the promise made to person X. A firm grounding in

ethical practices and deep understanding of organizational processes were the anchors to help remaining firm in addressing this dilemma.

## **Conclusion**

Though the change outcome was unsuccessful, the process was rich in providing lessons for consulting proprietary organizations and for consultants of such initiatives (Ruvolo and Bullis, 2003). The need to keep the top management involved and engaged in the change process (Torraco, 2005; Torraco & Hoover, 2005), even if it means changing the initial course of action or slowing the process cannot be overemphasized. In light of some other work that the authors have been engaged in, this need is emphasized more if the top management is also the owner. The need to work with them to let go of control may be higher than the need to work on teams below.

The process of consulting while living at the place has multilayered issues. Living in the place offers the advantage of being a participant observer allowing for a complex understanding of the culture, which has been claimed as extremely important in consulting (Schein, 2003). However, drawing boundaries, sorting useful and relevant from interesting and irrelevant, being perceived as genuinely interested but neutral and impartial becomes more complex when one becomes part of the system. In addition to being lonely and isolated socially the consultant is also cut off from the professional community.

Educational institutions thrive on tradition and continuity and maintenance of the status quo is part of the cultural coding. Bringing about change goes against the implicit code, thus making change more difficult. Hence in hindsight, it is difficult to say that if the author had behaved/acted differently the process might have been successful or not. But the fact that consulting is perilous to self pride and can provide rich learning experiences which have the potential to inform practice gets squarely established. Only

those who enjoy experimenting and failing should venture into helping complex systems to experiment and learn. Constant learning for the consultant by seeking help from the community of professionals (colleagues or accumulated knowledge available in books and journals) is just as important as for the consultant to coax the complex system to learn to unlearn and seek help to grow further.

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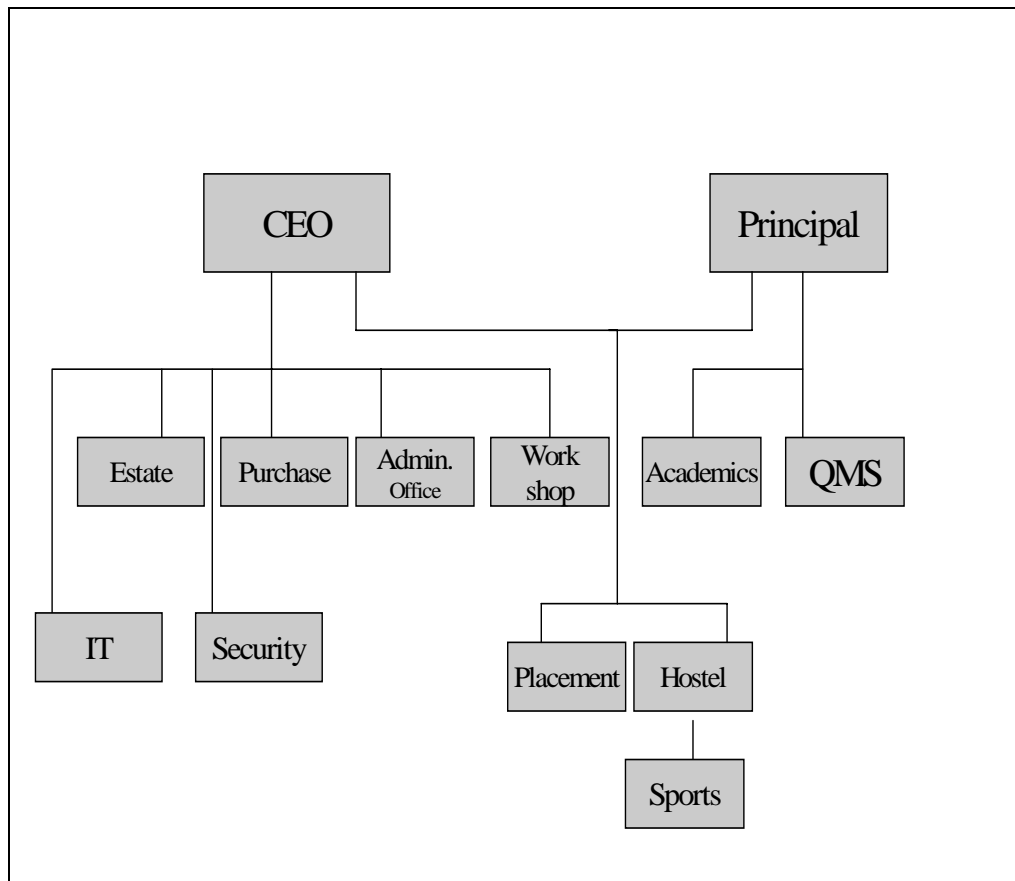
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**Appendix A**

**Exhibit 1**

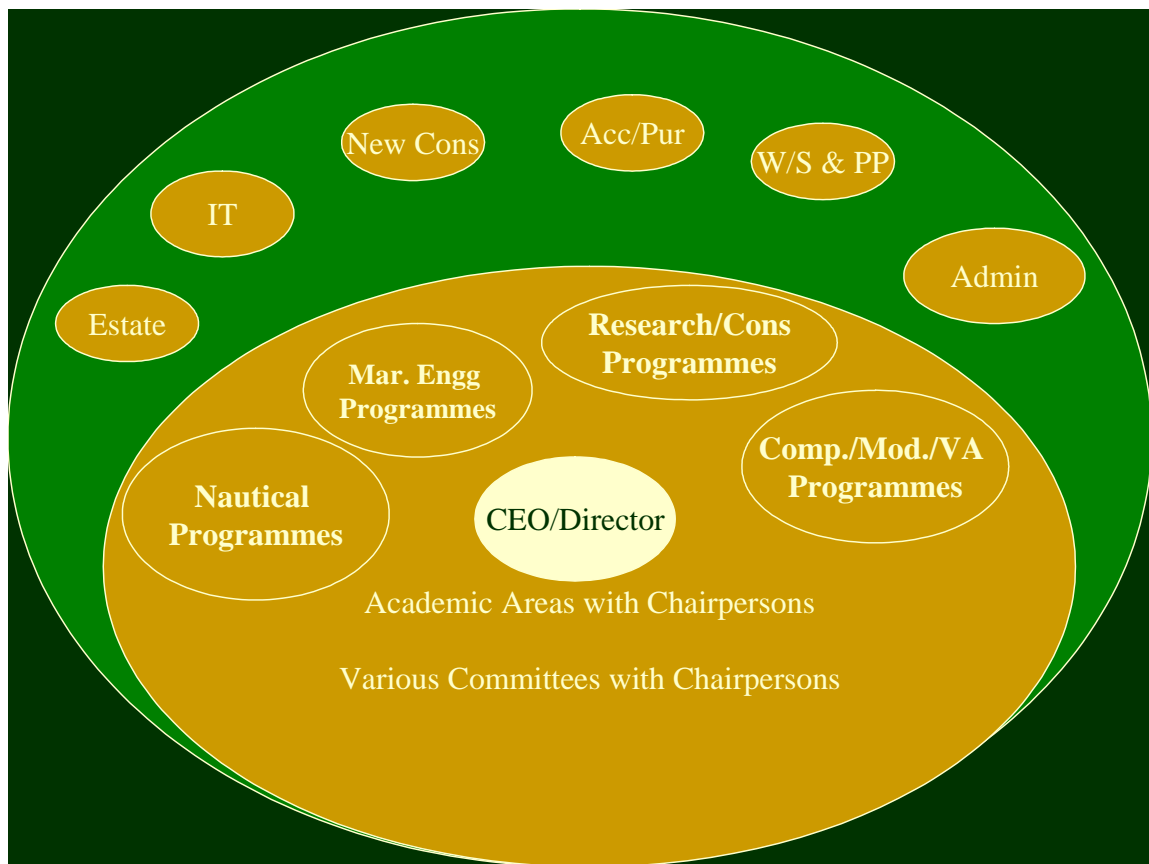
Organization Structure of MEI before the intervention



**Appendix B**

**Exhibit 2**

New Structure



## Appendix C

### Timeline of Workshops

Workshop 1: Communicating new structure -----Week 3

Workshop 2: Finalization of student feedback form-----Week 4

Workshop 3: Evolve a common identity for MEI-----Week 5

Workshop 4: Adopting the terms of reference and deciding academic standards---Week 9

Workshops 5: Discussion of concerns and expectations for the wardens and sports  
instructors-----Week 10

Workshops 6: Discussion of concerns and expectations for the chairpersons of  
committees and support functions-----Week 10

**NOTES**

The names of the Institute and the various individuals have been disguised. However all the events and data are true.