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Educational reform and instructional technology: Part III. Evaluation of a model of institutional reform based on innovation diffusion theory

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Abstract

The Training, Infrastructure and Empowerment System (TIES) is a theory-based system designed to bring about a heightened awareness of reform within education institutions through the interaction between continuing professional leadership development and instructional technology. The two major components of TIES in this research project were development of a guiding statement (vision) and policy, providing direction for the institution's use of instructional technology (IT) and establishment of an empowerment system to actualize that vision in strategically-located units within the institution. Qualitative data analysis of interviews representing different stakeholder groups was conducted in 2001. The interviews sought to gain information regarding outcomes based on the TIES Reform Theory (TRT).

Content analysis discovered the importance ascribed to change by TRT in the sociotechnological environment associated with IT was not recognized by the

participants. There was some acknowledgement of the need for a guiding statement (vision) and palpable expressions of support for it, but disparate opinions as to whether such a shared vision existed within the levels of the institution.

The TRT recognizes IT as a disruptive innovation resulting in discontinuous change which has a major influence on the culture of the institution. This in turn calls for different measures of reform from those employed during less disruptive, continuous change. The participants did not seem to recognize or operationalize this distinction and therefore relied on standard change methodologies, such as policies, procedures, and information. Neither administration nor faculty distinguished change from reform; where change is exemplified by increased use of IT within the classroom and reform by new instructional applications which supercede or extend the classroom. It appeared that IT was perceived as a minor change rather than as a disruptive innovation.

One major legacy of TIES was the creation of strategically-located leadership teams, some of which continued to function into year 2001, two years after the formal termination of the pilot project. Several research hypotheses which arose from this study are described.