



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

UNEVOC

International Centre
for Technical and Vocational
Education and Training



Leading organizational transitions during COVID-19 and beyond

Promising Practice 2021

Context

COVID-19 restrictions

Mobility restrictions imposed during the pandemic presented opportunities and challenges in creating inclusive, applied, and engaging learning environments within technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions.

Post COVID-19 insecurity

A potential barrier to any post-COVID-19 recovery for TVET staff is the lengthy duration of the pandemic, throughout which they experience significant insecurity, both physical and psychological. This is attributed to direct role changes and the related evolution of expectations.

Managing change

Often TVET leaders are so immersed in the daily implementation of educational administration, there is little time to explore the impact of change and one's own role in leading teams to successfully manage arising challenges.

Objectives

This initiative aims to build TVET leadership skills in times of crisis and change through the use of inclusive practices and tools for planning and transition.

The main objectives are to:

- Support TVET leaders and managers to build resilience to change, and to support their organizational teams in effectively navigating the ongoing challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic
- Show how to minimize the negative impacts of change on organizations/teams by:
 - o being inclusive in the transition process
 - o using people-centred leadership practices
 - o seizing opportunities that arise from the new COVID-19 working and learning environment which aid the delivery of TVET objectives

Overview

Implemented by: Niagara College

Where: Canada

Theme: Training TVET leaders in change management

Status: Programme active since September 2020

Niagara College (NC) is located in the heart of the Niagara region and has campuses in Welland and Niagara-on-the-Lake. The college was established in 1967 and delivers over 100 education and training programmes to more than 12,800 full-time students (including 4,500 international students from over 95 countries) and 15,000 part-time students at two Canadian campuses and its four global campuses.



Leading organizational transitions

This initiative enables TVET leaders to reflect on both personal and institutional change styles and how to integrate change management theory and models into their daily practice.

Throughout the process, they are encouraged to consider change in terms of resilience and progress in partnership with their main learning objectives.

The programme is divided into five modules and firmly places the importance of knowledge of oneself as a leader at the centre of the organizational change process. The modules emphasize the role of TVET leaders as experts in guiding inclusive and intentional transition within their teams.

The modules, which form part of the TVET leaders' organizational development initiatives, are augmented with live learning sessions that encourage global learner engagement and are supported by self-paced presentations, videos, discussion forums, and other resources. Participants also have access to a learning management system with recordings of live sessions plus all learning materials and online spaces for sharing knowledge and resources.

Outcomes and impact

Personal perspectives

An important part of this leadership programme was the preparatory work that participants engaged in prior to joining the live sessions. This preparation involved both theory and reflective practice, and participants were encouraged to complete it prior to taking part in the interactive dialogue sessions. This placed the emphasis on their own personal perspectives, experiences, knowledge, and change performance. Examples of this preparation included: presentations, videos, assessments, reflection questions, change planning workbooks and learner forums. The use of a globally applicable *Change Style Indicator* also allowed participants to explore and deepen their understanding of their personal style in approaching and managing change.

Train-the-trainer

The train-the-trainer component of the programme provided participants with best practice and delivery methodologies for bringing the change materials in the programme to others within their organization. The train-the-trainer sessions provided both group and individual coaching on facilitation and presentation. Trainers were taught how to co-facilitate with programme instructors and to use storytelling as an effective facilitation tool. Train-the-trainer sessions were followed by a debriefing session to cover lessons learned.

Skill and knowledge development

Ultimately, by the end of the initiative, participants developed:

- Fluency in managing change and a new skill set for planning organizational change
- Capacity to support and engage their staff as they navigate the challenges of new learning environments within their institution both during and beyond COVID-19
- Ability to implement inclusive strategies in post-COVID-19 digital/distance and face-to-face learning/working environments
- Knowledge-sharing capabilities to contribute to the global community of practice in TVET leadership and change management

Testimonials

Participants shared personal statements about the impact the initiative has had on them:

"[the facilitators knowledge] had a lasting and positive impact on my personal and professional growth. I am very grateful for the opportunity to participate in these activities, and deeply appreciate Niagara College and the Centre for Professional Development's commitment to my leadership journey in our organization. Kudos to an employer who is firmly a ladder, not simply a step, ahead of the rest!"

"The combination of resources and articles available online, the presentation decks, the opportunities to conduct pre-work, and most importantly the discussions with colleagues and those from other institutions really made this some of the most impactful professional development I have ever had working in the post-secondary sector."

"Love the scheduled pre-work time. The pre-work commitment is just right in its depth and workload. Great and supportive facilitators. Content seems to translate to people around the globe very well."

"The change management training opened my mind to how important it is to ensure proper buy-in from different stakeholder groups within an organization or department. Having an open mind to accept other people's points of view, especially from an inclusion perspective, enables me as a leader to make change sustainable in the ever-changing TVET environment."

Challenges and insights

New learning platforms

To begin with, participants were not familiar with or confident in using the new online platforms. However, NC employees led demonstration sessions on how to use the tools and provided ongoing support to participants if they had questions or issues with the platforms.

Session timings

Due to different time zones, the live sessions were very early or late in the day for some participants and as a result some may have arrived late or missed sessions. Internet connectivity and access was also compromised at times. To mitigate this, NC staff recorded all dialogue sessions and made them available online for participants to access afterward. The facilitators also stayed online after each session to speak to participants individually and provide additional support.

Collaboration

NC recognized the benefits of collaborative working and networking among participants and facilitated communication by posting open-ended questions on the forum. Participants were encouraged to respond to at least two posts per session to aid this. During the live sessions, the facilitators also implemented activities that initiated more communication among participants through the use of breakout rooms where small group exchanges could take place.

The future

This initiative has strengthened participants' vision, knowledge, and skills for change. By providing them with the practical tools, strategies and resources to effectively manage personal and institutional change, the training will have a long-term impact on their institutions.

Learn more

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To learn more about Niagara College, visit:

www.niagaracollege.ca/

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Questions or comments? Contact our team at: unevoc-pp@unesco.org

