

Why is it not Possible to Produce a Blue Print for Managing Organizational Culture Change?

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Abstract

The aim of the literature review is to highlight that there is no universal blueprint for change. The research analyses different change models like the one's formulated by Lewin and Kotter. The study attempts to critically analyse the models and their applications. The research concludes that there is no single model for manage change which can possibly offer a "one permanent solution" to organizational change.

Key Words: Change, Best Practice for Change, Change Management

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“Change is disturbing when it is done to us, exhilarating when it is done by us” (Kanter, 1983).

It has been argued that successful management of change is somewhat critical for any organization in order to survive in the present highly aggressive and persistently evolving business environment. The paper provides an overview of literature review surrounding the idea of culture change and management, whereas the purpose of this paper, is therefore to give a critical review of some of the culture change models along with some practical examples which verifies the applicability of both models, finally the idea of one best way to manage change is also critically analysed in the light of models discussed.

Rapid changes in technology, markets and the world's economy has forced organizations to change radically in terms of not only what they do but how they do it (Furnham, 2005) in order to have an effective cultural change in an organization, each individual must think, feel or do something different, where as managing change is recognized as one of the most difficult challenge faced by all the organizations (Carnall, 2007), whenever we are talking about culture change management we are talking about moving away from the present state towards the future state, in today's business world managers are facing highly dynamic and ever more complicated operating environment (Paton,2000), whereas research shows that organizations are undergoing major change once every three year (CIPD,2007).

From different academics and practitioners point of view it's argued that different organizations preferred different approaches to manage change which nurture from their own existing culture and thus cannot be replaced rather straightforwardly (Burnes,2004) although change is a intelligible attribute of the organizational landscape (Huczynski, 2007), but it does not appears to be any easier to put into practice, and most of the time it fails because of resistance, built in inertia in individuals that actually upset the process of learning and change (Starbuck & Hedberg, 1977), which leads towards loose of market share, loose of integrity on the part of line managers, and possibly employee opposition to future change effort (CIPD, 2007), For change to be successful its rather essential to determine how people ready in the organization are to acknowledge, and implement the change or in other words what is the degree of readiness "a predisposition to welcome" the change is existed among people, in order to completely comprehend the idea of readiness (Beckhard and Harris ,1987 cited in Burke) developed a change formula which is as follows:

$$C = (ABD) > X$$

It's one of the possible way to capture the process of change, and identifying the factors that need to be strongly in place for change to happened, where (C) is change, (A) is level of dissatisfaction with the status quo, (B) is desired state, (D) is practical first step towards the desired state, whereas (X) is the cost of change, the idea that all these factors (A), (B) and (C) must outweigh the perceived costs (X) for the change to occur, let say if an individual whose commitment is needed is not sufficiently dissatisfied with the present state of affair (A), he most probably eager to achieve the proposed end state (B) and perhaps convinced with the feasibility of change (D) which means that the cost (X) of changing is too high and the person will resist the change, and I think there could be two possible reasons to resist first is due to "Parochial self-interest" in which managers did not managed to anticipate change because they consider change from a resource allocation perceptive and think that it affect them in person (Pugh, 1993) and additionally they also viewed culture change as intimidation to power which is one of the most significant source of resistance to change (Zaltman and Duncan, 1997) and second is "Misunderstanding and lack of trust" which is also a relatively common source of resistance, it occur when trust is lacking between the managers.

It's argued that if employees did not trust their change managers/agents it's very much likely that they can resist any change they propose (Lines et al, 2005). This change formula is relatively simple but tremendously accommodating, it can brought in to action at any point in a change process to analyse how things are going and I think if this formula is shared with all people involved in the change process, it facilitates in revealing what various parties need to do make progress. (Burke, 2008).

In change management there are substantial disagreement regarding the most suitable approach to manage change in order to understand the idea of effective change management there is a strong need to recognize different approaches to change

management such as planned and emergent, planned change views organizational change as a procedure that actually moves from one stage to another through a series of planned stages (Bamford, 2003) which means that its possibly designed for centralized organizations operating in a knowable environment, whereas (Lewis,2000) argued that planned change also depends on the idea of communicating it successfully before fundamentally implementing it, so it's not rather applicable to those organization where the focus is short term and no emphasis on communication, I think in order to overcome this issue change agent who acts as a superhuman (Kenter, 1983) would play a phenomenal role, and it's their job to bring together people towards healthier future (Buckingham, 2005), when leadership abilities of a line manager are called in question (Dyer,1985 cited in Brown), they should develop an awareness by (energizing) and also by preparing the ground for getting the unfreezing done through various culture change management initiatives (Carnall, 2007).

Although the planned approach to change is a premeditated process and a product of mindful reasoning (Mintzberg, 1989) but still there are issue in terms of appropriateness of this approach within the business environment that is more and more uncertain (Dawson, 2003), however planned approach to change is about setting objective in advance (Wilson,1992) but in today's world of fundamental change its argued that dimensional change interventions are probably focused on short term results which leads towards increased instability rather than reducing it (Genus, 1998). The idea that Planned change is originated from the work of (Lewin, 1947) who recommended a way of looking at the overall process by improving the effectiveness of the human side of the organization in terms of focusing on performance of individuals and groups (Coram, 2001). He also suggests a methodology for analysing change which is called a field force analysis (Armstrong, 2006). The rationale behind his model is that before any new behaviour can be adopted in actual fact, the old one has to be

abolished, only than the new behaviour is fully accepted (McWhinney, 1992).

He argued that organizational change have three steps, the first step involves unfreezing the present state of affairs which means defining the current state and this step can take many forms and needs to be personalized as much as possible to a specific situation (Allport,1945), whereas the second stage is about moving to a new state through participation and involvement, this step move towards the new desired level of behaviour for instance training managers to behave differently towards their subordinates in order to improve customer services, however the third step emphasized on refreezing and stabilizing the new state of affairs by rewarding success and establishing new standards (Lawler, 1977).

The model is criticized by many Organizational Development Consultants where they argue that Lewin's model is certainly used by managers but as a planning tool rather than an organizational development, OD process (Burnes,2004), some say that the unfreeze become a planning phase , the move turn in to implementation phase, whereas refreeze is a post implementation review (Cameron, 2004). For instance if a group of individuals began to analyse the need to totally alter their recruitment process, or the way they conduct the performance appraisals, than the consultant would tried to work with the group to surface the issues, move to the desired new state and finally reinforce that new state amicably.

One of the biggest assumption of Lewin's model is that organizations operates in unwavering conditions and can move from one state to another in a planned manner (Burnes,2004) which is quite not true in case of XYZ construction (case study in Burnes,2004) although the change was initiated from the top management and it can be translated as emergent and in some respect innovative but when it comes to structural change it was conducted in rather planned manner which presumably illustrate

that organizations tends to use a combination of approaches towards change depending on what is to be changed and the circumstances of the organization at that time in moment (Burnes,2004). Although the underlying assumption in Lewin's model had attracted much criticism but, some argued that if you analysed the three step model it's rather simple in its nature and if you scrutinize alongside with the other basic ground rules of Lewin planned approach, it becomes a relatively more influential approach to manage change (Burnes and Salauroo, 1995).

Lewin's model is also criticized by its emphasis on incremental and inaccessible change due to its incapacity to integrate transformational change (Dawson, 2003), it's relatively significant to recognize the fact that Lewin model is much more focused on behavioural change among individual, groups and at organizational levels however, Lewin's model probably be suitable in some respect as illustrated in the case of "XYZ construction" but, presumably much less applicable to more fundamental change that many organizations have undergone in present times (Brown,1998). The idea that Lewin model by no means saw planned change as being applicable to all change situations and I think it was certainly by no means meant to be deployed in a situation where immediate change is perhaps required (Burnes, 2004).

So, therefore organizations need to be persistently scrutinize their environment in order to respond in a appropriate manner because it's a continuous and open process, whereas the idea of planned approach towards change is extremely unsuitable, however there is a need for rapid response towards external environment as well. The analysis of different criticisms levels made by academics and practitioners are analysed with regards to organizational culture and change management and in response to these a relatively new organizational change approach called an emergent has gained a supremacy in the last few years with an emphasis on the idea of unpredictable nature of change, it actually

views the process of change that unfolds through the interplay of different variables in the organization (Burnes, 2004) which means that it's a process in which a series of individual and collective activities unfold over the period of time (Pettigrew,2001).

One of the basic assumptions of this approach is that all the organizations operate in a vibrant environment are actually requiring continues transformation (Coram, 2001) and its rather true in case of speedy stationers (case study in Burnes, 2004) where the actual accomplishment of partnership approach requires by not involving only those who work for "Speedy Stationers" but also involve employees who work for "UTL" as well, however the development of strategy itself is a kind of partnership with "UTL" for further expansion which constitutes an open ended process, although the initial execution for change was given careful consideration but change tends to be more reactive, and for that reason the whole process of change is treated as emergent in nature (Burnes, 2004).

The emergent approach stresses on widespread and in depth understanding of strategy, structure and culture and how these can function either as source of resistance or as a source of encouragement for change management process (Dunphy & Stace, 1993). It's a rather new conception as compared to planned change as many critics favoured this approach by saying that it's the uncertainty of the peripheral environment that make planned change unsuitable and the emergent change more applicable but, (Bamford,2003) still I think it lacks consistency in some respect.

As most models of change management prescribe a linear approach to manage change which means that following a series of step in a specific order and many critics argued that they lack flexibility to deal with a range of issues that may be experienced during the change process but as far as the emergent change is concerned Kotter (1996) model is one that focuses on the logical sequence of actions with much wider application in terms of

managing culture change and management (Sidorko, 2008). He got eight steps in his model each one of these concerns about successful management of change initiatives in an organization and a part from that all the prescribed steps can generally be translated in to three different phases such as preparation, action and most importantly grounding (Dawson, 2003).

The Kotter's model is one that appeals to many line managers and also somewhat helpful for orienting change management actively (Cameron, 2004), However, from a leadership point of view the model has a phenomenal role to play in terms of facilitating organizational change management by considering three things creating vision, communication and team building (Pieters & Young, 2000), but still there are some concerns about the model itself, the model is criticized by many academics in terms of its applicability in different situations (Collins, 1998 cited in Huczynski) some, argue that the model is more focused on a repeated process for change or in other words its portrayed as a loop of intentional change (Pfeifer et al., 2005). A part from that Kotter's model also does not provide enough evidence on the techniques for evaluating the success of the change which is relatively significant in cultural change (Sidorko, 2008).

The model is also being criticized as viewpoint in some ways as argued by (Coram, 2001), however the eight steps do not really emphasize the need for the line managers to actually follow through with as much energy on last two steps as was essential at the start (Cameron, 2004) , there are also some concerns with regards to managerial competencies required to fully implement the change process, as (Carnall, 2007) argues that there needs to be four main managerial competencies if line managers used Kotter's model for bringing change they are decision making, coalition building, achieving actions and most importantly maintaining trust, if they don't have these attributes then I think there is less probability that they can entirely accomplished the desired culture change in the organization.

Conclusion

Change is a persistent influence, it is an inescapable part of both social and organizational life and we all are subject to continual change of one form or another (Mullins, 2007). One of the difficulties many academics and practitioner have with the change management literature is that it's exceptionally pragmatic (Carnall, 2007). It also lacks theoretical in depth and depicted those steps which in real world are not quite applicable.

The idea that there is no universal (rule of thumb) when it comes to managing culture and change, several critics tried to examine the planned approach (Lewin's Model) and emergent approach (Kotter's Model) and, argued that they focused on different aspects of organizational culture change management and are applicable in relatively different situations. For instance Lewin's model is predominantly aimed at improving team performance and much suitable for stable and predictable environments, whereas Kotter's model tends to focuses on the idea of organizational transformation through constant change and presumably much more appropriate for lively environments which means that although these two models have some advantage and disadvantage, but one thing is sure that these two are fundamentally situational approaches to manage cultural change. It's also viewed that the models are not reasonably effective in terms of their application (Collins, 1998) because of three probable reasons first, they offered oversimplifies presumptions, where they do not consider the distinct situation of an organization, secondly they didn't manage to capture the ever changing nature of culture change management and finally, they also didn't encourage a critical perceptive with regards to what is being changed, "the end result" (Huczynski, 2007).

From the findings one can conclude that there is no single model for mange change which can possibly offer a "one permanent solution" to organizational change, whereas (Sidorko,

2008) also supported the argument by saying that “there is no such thing as a one best way to manage change” but, having said that still I think managing change is not about line managers embracing the idea of “best practice” approach, neither it’s about opting for an approach which presumably match their situation but it’s about two things first, it’s the managerial ability to implement different approach suitably in order to have a best possible match with the culture of the organization and secondly, it’s about the choice in terms of change, situation in which the change takes place and most significantly the choice of most appropriate approach/model adopted for managing cultural change (Burnes, 2004).

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