

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE APPROACH: REASONS AND STRATEGIES OF MANAGING EMPLOYEE RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

The aims of this study is to investigate various approaches to organizational change, reasons and strategies of managing employee resistance to change as one of the most challenging task of a leader in an organization. The study used an extensive review of related literatures that include concepts, theories and models relevant to organizational change. The study shows how stakeholders responsible to a change apply change theories and models and co-opting employees in changing their negative attitudes, removing that fear of distrust and resistance to change towards embracing a proposed management change ideas. The study reveals that change cannot just happen and become successful without involving key stakeholders whether supporting or not supporting the change idea. It is believed that all stakeholders in an organization has role to play in making a change desire successful.

Keyword: Managing change, Employee resistance, Change approach, Unfreezing, Freezing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Most employees developed anxiety and fear on hearing management decision to change, which in turn affect their productivity and performance on job. They go further to have fear on their job security (Silva et al. 2020). This is because, they may likely lose something in their possession without predicting the positive impact of the change to them and the entire organization in the future (Rafferty and Jimmieson 2017). As such, the management of an organization are saddled with the responsibility of removing the fear of unknown and distrust among employees right from the onset of its proposed change plan.

Change is defined as an action or process that brings new things and sharpen the direction and influence the overall goals and system of an organization Tamunomiebi and Enefiok (2021). This definition emphasised that organization that adopt to changes are most likely to survive and overcome competition. Researches shows that 70% of organizational change fails with only 30% success rate due to the fact that new things contradict the common knowledge and technical know-how of employees (Prokesch, 2009).

As business environment is ever changing due to technology and changes is customers fashion, life style, taste and preference, it has become necessary for organizations to embrace changes in order to improve productivity, promote employee performance, as well as changing the behaviour and attitudes of employees and re-enforce organizational values and culture (Leana and Barry, 2000).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Palakh, et al., (2018) states that the most crucial factor toward change implementation is assessing the organizational current reality that include history, current needs, current technology, employees competences, inventory of resources and factors that led to the change needs desire. In a situation where the current reality does not match with the organizational capabilities, it is advisable that the change program and its implementation should be suspend until a better position emerged.

Most organizations find it difficult to achieve results and grow by introducing new technology, method or technique due to employee dislike to change (Reiley and Clarkson, 2021). Employees lost interest in their job when routines is maintained over time (Luecke, 2017). It was emphasised that employees contribute best to the overall corporate goals as a result of their interest in new techniques (Burnes, 2009).

Scholars and various researchers categorised organisational approaches to change in different ways. They include John Kotter's Eight (8) step of change model, Kubler-Ross change curve, Kurt Lewin's change model, planned and emergent approach, McKinsey Seven (7S) model, and Situational and Contingency change models The most commonly known methods used by many organizations are planned and emergent approach (Stance and Dunphy, 2018; Weick, 2020; Wilson, 2020). The planned approach emerged to have dominated the field of organisational change approach between the 1950s to the early 1980s found in (Burnes, 2009).

2.1 John Kotter's Eight (8) Step of Change Model

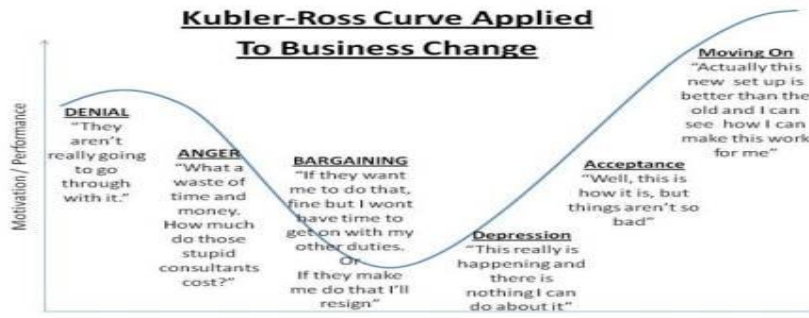
John Kotter in his books titled 'Leading Change' (1979) describe a good model for managing organizational change and employee resistance. The model contain eight (8) step to organizational change with each stage reveals a key identified principle relating to employees approaches and response to successful change program where by people see the need for the change, feel the need for the change and then accept and implement the change. Kotter's eight (8) step of change model is summarizes below Palakh, et al., (2018).

- 1. Increase urgency** - Inspire people to move, make objectives real and relevant.
- 2. Build the guiding team** - Get the right people in place with the right emotional commitment, and the right mix of skills and levels.
- 3. Envisioning**- Get the team to establish a simple vision and strategy, focus on emotional and creative aspects necessary to drive service and efficiency.
- 4. Communication**- Involve as many people as possible, communicate the essentials, simply, and to appeal and respond to people's needs.
- 5. Empower actions** - Remove obstacles, enable constructive feedback and lots of support from leaders reward and recognize progress and achievements.
- 6. Create short-term wins** - Set aims that are easy to achieve - in bite-size chunks. Manageable numbers of initiatives. Finish current stages before starting new ones.
- 7. Continued Focus** - Foster and encourage determination and persistence - ongoing change - encourage ongoing progress reporting - highlight achieved and future milestones.
- 8. Sustaining the Change**- Reinforce the value of successful change via recruitment, promotion and injecting the change into the organizational culture.

2.2 Kubler- Ross Change Curve

Studies reveals that, management of organization can use Kubler-Ross change curve (1969) in the cause of implementing organizational change (Burnes, 2009).

Figure 1: Kubler- Ross Change Curve



Source: Kubler- Ross Change Curve (1969; Savolainen, 2016).

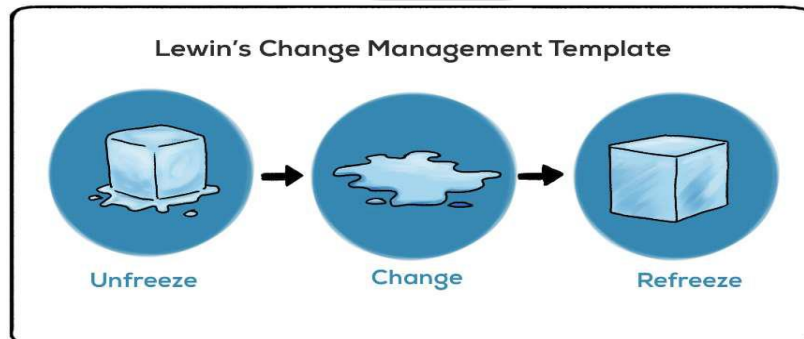
Denial means some key stakeholders usually opposed the change need. This is because people naturally shows resistance to change. Anger means many stakeholders would usually critique the idea, shows resistance and will try to cripple the change project. Bargaining means management usually try to convince its key personnel, the aims is to convince them to understand the goodness of the change instead of developing negative attitude against the new change. Depression means stakeholders against the change at this stage gave up because all effort to cripple the change project prove aborted. By acceptance means the critics usually agree to support and take an active part in the change process. Whereas moving on means the critics usually begins to appreciate the change project.

2.3 Kurt Lewin’s Organisational Approach to Change

The Kurt Lewin (1951) divided organisational approaches to change into four stages (Okenda, et al., 2017) as follows;

1. **Group Dynamic:** In this approach Lewin's opinion states that changing the group attitudes is difficult unless the momentum among the group members is clearly identified and recognised (Bargal et al., 2012).
2. **Field Theory:** This approach requires a thorough understanding of the group attitudes and behaviours before you are able to carry them along the required change need (Back, 2017).
3. **Action Research:** The needed organizational change should be given considerable attention toward its accomplishment by understanding the circumstances that called for the change so that an appropriate action would be choosing among the various possible courses of actions (Okenda, et al., 2017).
4. **Three Step Model:** Kurt Lewin proposed that before a change and new action can be adopted, the initial behaviour should be discarded which involved unfreezing, moving and refreezing and this is called Kurt Lewin’s Change Model. Hussain et al. (2018; Bartunek and Woodman 2015; Alas and Sharifi, 2002; in Donal and Nworie, 2022) states that a successful change therefore, involves three steps of unfreezing the present level, changing and moving to the new level and refreezing the new level. This model of change recognises the need to discard old behaviour. Kurt Lewin’s Change Model is explain from the diagram below.

Figure 2: Kurt Lewin’s Change Model



Source: Donal and Nworie, (2022).

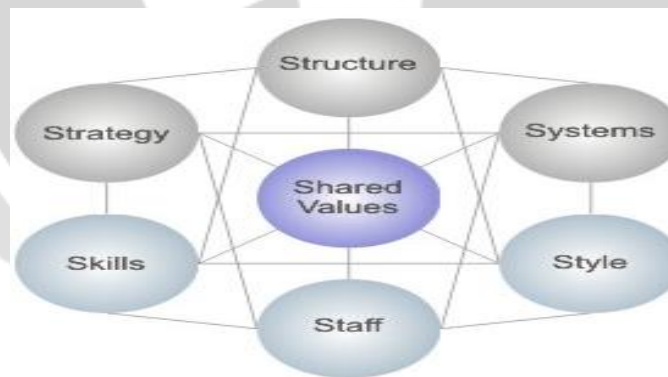
2.4 Planned and Emergent Approaches to Change

In Lewin opinion, planned change is used to develop employee's performance and efficiency on the job through syndicate group behaviour (Burnes, 2009). A planned approach is a model required to be used for a successful change programme to enable organisation move gradually from one stage to another (Bullock and Batten, 2015). Planned change approach does not take into consideration certain circumstances that might require urgent attention to some specified change projects. This is because, the method was unable to offer room for interactive sessions and further discussion with some stakeholders about the change need (Kanter et al., 2012).

Emergent approach to organisational change highlights that people do not perceived change as immovable factor rather a non-stop approach worth accepting and embracing new things happening in certain situations (Dawson, 2014). Burnes (2009) states that emergent change concern with addressing unpredicted change that appeared to be a significant threat to the organisation, unlike planned approach that tried to address predetermine change situations where details design and guidelines are provided.

The emergent approach emphasises that extensive understanding of system, style, strategy, structure, skills, staff and share value is necessary to evaluate and analyse their possible impact on corporate existence and how they might affect organisational change. Structure means the division of an organization and the impact of change on organizational activities must be taken into consideration. Systems means a set of things working together as parts of a mechanism or an interconnected network, a complex whole which must be revive to actualize the change plan. Style means a particular procedure by which something is done which must be align with the organizational change objectives. Staff means for a change to happened, responsibilities must be enhanced in the whole organization. Skills means the ability to manage time effectively, prioritize tasks, set goals and develop system for achieving those organizational change goals. Strategy means systematic plan of action that must be taken to realise the change dream by co-opting those against the change and ensuring the change plan works well in order to achieve organizational long term objectives whereas shared value that include attitudes, beliefs, and individual differences shall be resolved so that the interest of the organization is superior to individual interest. They are called McKinsey Seven (7S) model.

Figure 3: McKinsey 7's Model



Source: Low and McKeown (2016).

2.5 Situational and Contingency Change Models

The dissatisfaction of both planned and emergent approaches led to the birth of situational and contingency change models Stance and Dunphy, (2018) whose argues that "situational" or "contingency model" is the most suitable approach needed by managers and their organisations. The approach focused on one's ability to apply various strategies to different situations happening to business dynamics for better results. It was believes that planned and emergent approaches relied on the idea of 'one best way for all'. Whereas, contingency or situational approaches rely on 'one best way for each' hence are the most suitable approaches to organisational change. The contingency approach to organisational change discovered in the theory assumes that practice and routines of corporate body rely on business dynamics 'internal and external variables' (Stance and Dunphy, 2018). It's argued that every

organisation has its different forces affecting its operation, unique values and practice and therefore, face different challenges from one another (Stance and Dunphy, 2018).

2.6 Reasons behind Employee Resistance to Change

Psychological

There are emotional reason surrounding employees whenever the word change is mentioned by the management of an organization. These emotional factors include fear and anxiety, negative perception, and losing of status quo Julia and Veroica (2008).

Materialistic

Employees dislike to change is associated to the possibility of losing financial and economic benefits, losing of comfort zone and possibility of losing job especially where current change is not compatible with their skills or knowledge Tamunomiebi and Enefiok (2021).

Capabilities

In a situation where employees skills and expertise knowledge is obsolete, resistance to change is the only defence mechanism. At this juncture, employee would be ready to ensure that the change plan is not successful (Burke and Ghada, 2014).

Fear and Uncertainty

The outcomes of the management change plan would be a key influence in the mind of employees. Therefore, the fear for unknown in the work place and consequences of negative outcomes to their job security is of crucial consideration (Wenhe, 2011).

Distrust in the Management

In a situation where there are significant percentage of trust between employees and their management, the fear of change tend to be insignificant and vice versa. That is employees assess and evaluate the impact of change in a different ways from the angle of management point of view Morrison (2015).

Self Interest Cantered

Employees perceive that the new system, structure or technology may diminish and relinquish their power, position or control in the work place. Employees would be eager and ready to accept change when they feel that they have some degree of influence, and would move a step ahead of their current financial, economic and social position. Their best interest is of paramount importance to an organizational change plan (Jansen, 2012).

2.7 Strategies of Managing Employee Resistance to Change

According to Cullen, et al., (2014) states that discarding accumulated employees believe, behaviour, attitudes is quite difficult than changing the entire system, process or technology in an organization. In every change plan, innovation or technology in a business dynamics, there would be those that are willing to adapt or resist in the case may be (Hutchings and Quinney, 2015). Most managers or leaders in various institutions has a significant fear of employee's resistance to change and are unable to use employee's resistance as a learning tool in managing subsequent organizational change (Ali, et al., 2016). Ahsan, et al., (2010) argued employee's knowledge and experience has significant influence in their ability to adapt the current system, innovation or technology introduced in their working place. Hansen, et al., (2015) states that, the management of an organization should anticipate the positive and negative impact employee's resistance and device possible ways toward motivating and encouraging employees to overcome fear, anxiety associated to change through a careful and systematic action plan in an organized manner. This make organization remain healthy and competitive, as emphases by (Cullen, et al., 2014). Below are strategies to use by managers towards managing employee's resistance to change Tamunomiebi and Enefiok (2021).

Negotiating and Motivation

It is clearly understood that most employees lose something of value in relation to change. As a result, negotiation is key in order to control their resistance power to the organizational change plan (Jukka, et al., 2011). The result was emphases by (Bernard, 2011) who states that negotiation help employees to be satisfied and motivated. The incentive to be negotiated may include salary increment, bonus and allowance to compensate their fear and anxiety associated to the organizational proposed change program (Burke and Ghada, 2014).

Collaboration

Not only employees involvement in decision making but they should be ask to contributes in goal settings and the possible ways of realizing the change needs. Collaboration with employees can be done through training, workshop, consultation, meetings and focus group which control employee's action and would be willing to sell or advertise the change idea to those challenging the organizational change desire Julia and Veronica (2008).

Compensation and Reward

Employee's unwillingness to support organizational change plan cannot be control without clearing the word 'what is in for me' a sustaining reward system over a long period of time Mejia-Morelos, et al., (2013). The compensation and rewards system promote productivity, creativity, team work, high morale and loyalty among employees towards achieving the desired change result (Jorgensen, et al., 2009).

Employees Involvement in Decision-Making

Decision making involving organizational change usually affect employees directly or indirectly. Therefore, a good management of organizational change must encourage employee's participation in change decision making process (Burke and Ghada, 2014). When employees are involve in organizational decision making process, they tend to contributes to the best of their abilities towards achieving the desired change goals of an organization (Esther and Mike, 2015).

Communication

Organizational vision and mission must be clear to employees which help them to understand any critical decision to be taken by the top management including organizational desire towards implementing change. This can be enriched through effective communication and training that lead to the promotion of employees readiness to change (Paton and McCalman, 2011).

Employing Coercion

According to Julia and Veronica, (2008) the fastest way towards the implementation of an organization change plan is the application of coercion. Organizational change desire could be introduced, implemented and imposed with or without employee's collaboration, negotiation, decision making, reward and compensation. This approach is appropriate when employee's support to a change program proof aborted and they expressed negative attitudes or show negative resistance to the organization change decision (Julia and Veronica, 2008).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used an extensive review of related literatures such as concepts, theories and models relevant to organisational change. They include current literatures in the area of the study, the Kurt Lewin change model, McKinsey 7's model of change, John Kotter's Eight (8) step model, Kubler- Ross Change Curve, Planned and emergent approaches to change, Situational and contingency change models.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Managing change is considered as 'the practice of ever changing corporate trend, system, structures and competencies to match with dynamic changing desires and wants of its current and future customers'.

5. RECOMMENDATION

The study recommended that for any change to happen and become successful, the management of an organization should remove fear of unknown and distrust among its employees in order to stimulate and boost their morale towards embracing the new system, technique or technology.

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