



ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE READINESS AND INDIVIDUAL CHANGE READINESS: A CONCEPTUAL PAPER

Twinkle M. Trivedi

Research Scholar (Indus University)

ABSTRACT

Change is the only constant reality of life and is observed not just in our personal life but also on the professional front. But do all of us know how to deal with change? No. Managing change and learning to adapt to it takes time, energy, efforts and training and this is the reason why several learned individuals around the globe have come up with properly structured and defined models to manage change. In this paper, we shall go through what change management is and about the various popular change management models that have been effectively and successfully been applied to businesses and industries with the aim of dealing with transition and change

KEYWORDS : change management, learned individuals

Organizational change is a consistent part of an organization's culture for those that expect to retain or maintain a sustained competitive advantage. Understanding the theories of change is essential. Change helps organizations successfully navigate and facilitate growth. Selling change and its benefits to the organization begins at the top, and the learning organization is an essential component. Change agents operate at all levels of the organization. Listening to concerns is important, because organizational change is personal. Change agents help resolve objections to change and help encourage alignment. Effective project management skills are helpful when implementing change. This includes evaluating the success of the project against success measures and attaining key milestones.

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Organizational change is both the process in which an organization changes its structure, strategies, operational methods, technologies, or organizational culture to affect change within the organization and the effects of these changes on the organization. Organizational change can be continuous or occur for distinct periods of time.

Lewin's change theory:

Lewin developed a unified change theory based on four distinct elements; Field Theory, Group Dynamics, Action Research and the Three step model of Change. All have been criticized and all are necessary to bring about planned change.

Lewin viewed the social environment as a dynamic field which impacted in an interactive way with human consciousness. The theories are useful to the OD practitioner in understanding that by adjusting elements of the organizational environment then particular types of psychological experience predictably ensue. In turn, the person's psychological state influences the organizational environment.

Lewin first introduced the idea of Group Dynamics in relation to the study of the interaction of complex intra- and inter-personal forces in the operation of group behaviour which determine the groups character, development, and long-term survival.

Group Dynamics is concerned with determination of laws underlying group behaviour and studies a group's formation,

structure, interaction and behavioural processes while looking at the group functioning.

Lewin was well known for "field theory". He was perhaps even better known for practical use of his theories in studying group dynamics, solving social problems related to prejudice, and group therapy (t-groups). Lewin sought to not only describe group life, but to investigate the conditions and forces which bring about change or resist change in groups.

In developing the Field Theory approach, Lewin believed that for change to take place, the total situation has to be taken into account. If only part of the situation is considered, a misrepresented picture is likely to develop.

The field theory proposes that human behaviour is the function of both the person and the environment; this means that an individual's behaviour is related both to their personal characteristics and to the organizational situation in which they find themselves.

Lewin's three step model of change is related to Field Theory. The three step model states that organizational change involves a move from one static state via a progression shift, to another static state. The model, is also known as Unfreeze-Change-Refreeze

- **Unfreeze:** The first stage of the process of change according to Lewin's method involves the preparation for the change. This means that at this step, the organization must get prepared for the change and also for the fact that change is crucial and needed. This phase is important because most people around the world try to resist change, and it is important to break this status quo. The key here is to explain to people why the existing way needs to be changed and how change can bring about profit. This step also involves an organization looking into its core and re-examining it.
- **Change:** This is the stage where the real transition or change takes place. The process may take time to happen as people usually spend time to embrace new happenings, developments, and changes. At this stage, good leadership and reassurance is important because these aspects not only lead to steer forward in the right direction but also make the process easier for staff or individuals who are involved in the process. Communication and time thus are the keys for this stage to take place successfully.
- **Refreeze:** Now that the change has been accepted, embraced and implemented by people, the company or organization begins to become stable again. This is why the stage is referred to as refreeze. This is the time when the staff and processes begin to refreeze, and things start going back to their normal pace and routine. This step requires the help of the people to

make sure changes are used all the time and implemented even after the objective has been achieved. Now with a sense of stability, employees get comfortable and confident of the acquired changes

Kotter's change management theory:

Kotter's change management theory is one of the most popular and adopted ones in the world. This theory has been devised by John P. Kotter, who is a Harvard Business School Professor and author of several books based on change management. This change management theory of his is divided into eight stages where each one of them focuses on a key principle that is associated with the response of people to change.

Stages

- **Strategy** – Strategy is the plan created to get past the competition and reach the goals. This is the first stage of change according to McKinsey's 7-S framework and involves the development of a step-by-step procedure or future plan.
- **Structure** – Structure is the stage or attribute of this model that relates to the way in which the organization is divided or the structure it follows.
- **Systems** – In order to get a task done, the way in which the day-to-day activities are performed is what this stage is related to.
- **Shared values** – Shared values refer to the core or main values of an organization according to which it runs or works.
- **Style** – The manner in which the changes and leadership are adopted or implemented is known as 'style'.
- **Staff** – The staff refers to the workforce or employees and their working capabilities.
- **Skills** – The competencies as well as other skills possessed by the employees working in the organization.

Benefits of this model

- This model offers ways and methods to understand an organization and get a deep insight into the way it works.
- This model integrates both the emotional as well as the practical components of change that is something that is important to create ways to enable employees deal with transition easily.
- This model considers all parts to be important and equally worth addressing and thus does not leave out some aspects that may be of importance.
- This model also offers directional factor to organizational change.

Disadvantages of this model

- Since all the factors are interrelated and interdependent on one another, the failing of one part means failing of all and this is the greatest disadvantage of this model.
- This model is complex as compared to the others and differences are not focused upon in it.
- Organizations that have used this model have experienced more cases of failure, and this too can be considered as one negative associated with it.

What is organizational readiness for change?

Organizational readiness for change is a multi-level construct. Readiness can be more or less present at the individual, group, unit, department, or organizational level. Readiness can be theorized, assessed, and studied at any of these levels of analysis. However,

organizational readiness for change is not a homologous multi-level construct. That is, the construct's meaning, measurement, and relationships with other variables differ across levels of analysis. Below, I focus on organizational readiness for change as a supra-individual state of affairs and theorize about its organizational determinants and organizational outcomes.

Change readiness is the ability to continuously initiate and respond to **change** in ways that create advantage, minimize risk, and sustain performance.

Readiness for organizational change:

Readiness is one of the most important factors involved in employee's initial support for change initiatives. Although the concept of readiness may have been first introduced by Jacobson (1957), the foundation of readiness as a unique construct has been embedded within several theoretical models of the process through which change unfolds.

Based on Lewin (1947) foundation which has three stages of progression for any individual i.e. unfreezing, moving and refreezing Armenakis et al. (1993) proposed a model for creating readiness. They proposed that readiness was a precursor of resistance and adoption behaviour.

Assessment of readiness for change:

One of the steps in model given by Armenakis et al. (1993) was assessment. This step is intended to determine how ready for change employees are before organizational changes implemented. This assessment enables leaders to identify gaps that may exist between their own expectation about the change initiatives and those of the other members. If significant gaps are observed it may result into resistance and it may hamper successful change implementation.

According to Backer (1995) individual readiness for change is involved with people's attitude and intentions regarding extent to which changes are needed and their perception of individual and organizational capacity to successfully make those changes. Readiness is a state of mind about the need. It may change due to changing circumstances like type of change introduced, culture of the organization, characteristic of potential adopters and change agents. Hence interventions to enhance readiness are possible.

Dimensions of Change Readiness:

Change can occur under condition of low readiness but the probability of success is reduced which may further leads to low motivation towards change and resistance. One of the factors necessary for an organization to implement change is readiness for change. According to Hinkin (1998) the four dimensions of Readiness for change are Appropriateness, Management support, Change efficacy and Personal Valence.

Change readiness has been defined as "beliefs, attitudes and intentions regarding the extent to which changes are needed and the organization's capacity to successfully undertake those changes" (Armenakis et al, 1993). In organizational change literature change readiness is the most prevalent positive attitude towards change.

Affective and cognitive components of attitude have been identified as proximal antecedent of the overall evaluative judgment that is an attitude (Weiss, 2002). Both theoretical and empirical studies support the distinctiveness of the cognitive and affective elements of an attitude and overall evaluative judgment.

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