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CONCEPTUALIZING A FRAMEWORK: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT THEORIES

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Abstract:

Although approaches to manage change dated back to as early as human history, managing effective change is still the topic of today's debates. One of the undeniable facts about this is that change per se keeps changing, and so does its management methodology. While this fact comes, on the one hand, to validate the reason why none of the early theories stands relevant across time, it, on the other hand, proves that change methodology is certainly fluid, giving no room for an approach to really last. An effective change is achievable [not] by a prescription, but by a thorough consolidation of the various aspects relevant to change. This paper aims therefore at identifying those [managerial] aspects of change, in hope that they could be used to construct a common base to deal with change. To that end, relevant change management hypotheses, approaches, theories dated back to the 50s are taken for thorough reviews. Results from this digest confirm that to manage change, one must factor in change type, change process, and change elements, and yet, to manage it effectively, one must go further to ensure that all the above factors work well together as they are all symbiotically related.

Key words: *ICT, Change Management, Managerial Aspects of Change, Framework, Theory, Element, Type, Process*

1. Introduction

Although some theory's main principles stay relevant in today's context, they have undergone serious scrutiny, if not at all obsolete. The uncontrollable nature of change caused by lightening speed of technological development and the growing anxiety over cultural dilution at the increase of cross-border management practices has subsequently

proved earlier takes somehow ineffective, and eventually exacerbated the disagreement over what constitutes the best change methodology, even until recently.

Despite these complexities, a great thing is, however, that each of the theories, across time, is making marks, if not for now, but then, in the management sense, and most importantly is complimenting to one another. The compliment makes it possible for researchers to construct, if not a complete change management framework, but a common managerial aspect of change for our contemporary context. To locate the framework, theories categorized into three different time zones—those before the 1990s, during the 1990s, and those new ones—are drawn for analyses in great length and details. These theories are presented in chronological order following by the research findings, discussion and conclusion.

2. Theoretical Development of Change Management Theories

2.1. The Planned Change Approach (Prior to 1990s)

Studies on change started in the field of engineering management (EM) and industrial engineering (IE). It dated back to more than 100 years ago when Frederick W. Taylors (1911), a father of scientific management, introduced his theory for the organization to deal with employees (Al-Haddad, 2014; Ferraro, 2016). No sooner had the first approach come to the management continuum that other theorists such as Juran (1920s) and Shewhart (1931) came in and contributed more to the field (Al-Haddad, 2014). Though the term change management was not discoursed much before the 1990s, other term—organizational development (OD)—had been used, yet shared almost similar meaning to change management (Farias & Johnson, 2000; Worren, Ruddle, & Moore, 1999). The exact term of ‘change management’ was only concretized later in the 1960s and developed since then (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2006).

Though none of the earlier-mentioned literature stated precisely who coined the term ‘change management’ during the time, most of scholars back then, and now, think of Kurt Lewin (1951). His three-step planned change approach was more than famous back then for all organizational managers who viewed changes as an integral part of the organizational development. According to Lewin (1951), the effective change required detailed plans and projection made by top managers. Change had to start from a clear objective supported by detailed planned actions, and with projectable results. Change was attainable through the process of unfreezing, move and act, and then refreezing or termed differently as displacing, reregulating and rearranging (Heifetz, Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009; Sporn, 2001).

Kurt Lewin’s change theory had gained ground in the field of change management for many decades, although it has also been criticized continuously as shown in Burnes (2004). The first criticism is based on the simplicity of the process where organizational change is supposed to be continuous and open-ended process. Second, it is argued that Lewin’s change approach is applicable only to a incremental and isolated type of change while leaving others irrelevant (incorporate, radical or transformational change). Third, Lewin’s change approach was designed to deal only with behavioral change, and last,

while Lewin himself also agreed that change could be initiated from any positions either top, middle or bottom and required the participation of all the three to be successful (Burnes, 2004), the approach is seen to be more top-down and management-driven (Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1992).

Nevertheless, Kurt Lewin's theory and those in the package have remarkably drawn the attention of change managers to the big picture of change management spectrum that incorporates two important managerial aspects of change, that are the type—the planned type of change, and the process—the top-down process of change.

2.2. The Era of Emergent Change Management Theories (1990s)

Technology has gone too far to make things predictable, and hence effective organizational change must expect the change per se (Gardner & Ash, 2003; Orlikowski, 1996). The notion that good planning could mitigate negative change impacts becomes less, if not at all, relevant when institutions are vastly affected by the unprecedented environmental, technological and organizational changes which cannot be earlier prescribed by full-fledged planning (Orlikowski, 1996). This new development has ushered in many new approaches to change, focusing on change accommodation happening rightly on the ground. To the very core of these theories, change is unpredictable, and varies, so do the tactics to manage it. Mitigating an effective change requires not only the ability to exercise the flexibilities, but also the ability to contain them. This is why theories during this time are more concentrating on developing general formula reflected by their step-to-step guidelines to contain the unforeseen consequences of the flexibilities.

Judson (1991), for example, despite being substantially influenced by the work of Lewin, carefully developed a step-to-step model to manage change. Though his five-step model is seen to be rather an extension to Lewin's three-step model, it indeed shows the need to devise a controllable formula to survive the chance of being too much overwhelmed by flexibilities given to frontline/middle managers to confront change. His model dictates five phases: (1) analyzing and planning the change; (2) communicating the change; (3) gaining acceptance of new behaviors; (4) changing from the status quo to a desired state; and (5) consolidating and institutionalizing the new state (Al-Haddad, 2014). Judson's model was reflected by a paradigm-shift model of Simsek and Louis (1994) who proposed the same five steps which include, normalcy, confronting anomalies, crisis, selection, and renewed normalcy.

One year later, Kanter et al. (1992), to challenge Lewin's 3-step model, developed a 10-step commandment. The theory dictates 10 rigid steps which include 1) analyze the organization and its need for change, 2) create vision and common direction, 3) separate from the past, 4) create a sense of urgency, 5) support a strong leader role, 6) line up political sponsorship, 7) craft an implementation plan, 8) develop enabling structure, 9) communicate, involve people and be honest, 10) and the last step, reinforce and institutionalize the change. In 1996, Kotter (1996) proposed another eight-stage leading change method, which is of two steps less than those of Kanter's, for a successful organizational transformation. Largely adopted from Kanter's, Kotter's approach shares a

lot of similarities with that of Kanter's in terms of substances (Kamuti, 2013; Viktorsson, 2014).

In 2000, Hamel (2000) developed the Insurrection Method which incorporates eight steps of change management. According to Hamel, a change process has to start from 1) building a point of view, 2) writing a manifesto, 3) creating a coalition, 4) picking your targets and picking your moments, 5) co-opting and neutralizing, 6) finding a translator, 7) winning small, winning early, winning often, and 8) isolating, infiltrating, integrating. Three years on, Luecke (2003) introduced another method into the stream. The method dictates seven steps to managing change which includes 1) mobilizing energy and commitment by jointly identifying problems and solutions, 2) developing a shared vision of how to organize and manage competitiveness, 3) identifying the leadership, 4) focusing on results, not on activities, 5) starting change at peripheries and letting it spread without pushing from the top, 6) instilling success through policies, procedures and systems, and 7) reviewing and adjusting strategies in response to arising problem.

Although the aforementioned theories were meant to deal with the emergent nature of change, the complexity of step therein is, to many researchers, too complicated to be implementable, and hence one can hardly see any literature, or the application of the approach within institutions (Appelbaum, Habashy, Malo, & Shafiq, 2012). Besides, the extended time span of execution (Penrod & Harbor, 1998), the complexity of the change process itself would give managers a hard time to measure the success level of the institution (Penrod & Harbor, 1998). The many steps also suggest the rigidity of application where managers have almost no freedom to deal with changes, which are now emergent, abrupt and unpredictable.

Regardless of substances, the move to adopting respective processes, reflected therein the theories, clearly suggests the criticality of 'process' in the management of change. Failing to factor this into any change initiative would lead to confusion, and after all a complete failure of change project.

2.3. The Contemporary Change Management Theories

It was not only until 2006 that the researchers could finally reconfirm another emerging managerial aspect of change from a more scientific perspective. Some of the very theorists who famously touched upon this new notion were Wagner and Newell (2006) who pointed to the criticality of understanding the change elements and their interplay within the change spectrum. Unlike their predecessors who were keen to reflect the management framework from the lens of type and process, the theorists were far interested to look into how well change elements—the human, technology and strategy—symbiotically interact with one another at a given time to project a wanted result.

The attention to change elements has in fact been presented in many studies of change. Gardner and Ash (2003), for example, first identified a number of elements to deal with emergent change. The elements include shared stakeholder goals, a clear understanding of the business model, its objectives (strategy), the role of technology within the process, creation of common "IT change management" protocols and conventions, and on-going use of facilitated forums required to support knowledge

integration. In 2003, Luecke also pointed to procedural strategies, which prioritized the importance of leadership and employee's motivation. Change tends to be successful when staff (human agency) understand the importance of it and view the upcoming transformation as the process of development not threat (Luecke, 2003).

Though phrasing them differently, Orlikowski and Yates (2006) also pointed to the elements of change, terming them as making system workable, dealing with materiality, and focusing on practice. To Orlikowski, 'making system workable' is referring to a strategy that focuses on setting common goals for all change stakeholders in the institution. 'Dealing with materiality' touches mainly on the ability to see technology as more than just tools; a notion shared by Bridgman and Willmott (2006) and 'making system workable' focuses on what people do with technologies in practice (what actors at various level within and across organizations are doing with the technology on the ground and over time).

Anderson and Anderson (2011) also casted their supports to those earlier takes, mentioning the criticality of understanding the interrelatedness of content, people and process in the management of change. Although the term 'content', the authors referred, to was largely about 'the various elements of change', technology was indeed one of them.

Figure 1: Change Management Milestones

In sum, all of the above theories clearly presented another remarkable managerial aspect of change—the elements of change—if not as a stand-alone, but as additional criteria for the construction of a change management framework. The differences among them was just the fact that some were more sophisticated just than another.

3. Findings

Back to the 1990s when information communication technology has yet to be vigorous, managing change rested heavily on a 'good planning' devised by 'top-

managers'. Without technology, change was far more predictable and easily mitigated by experienced managers who have clear visions. This is one of the reasons why Kurt Lewin and other theorists back then were more convinced that planned approach was the only choice to manage effective change. The adoption of planned approach to change presents the criticality of not only human roles in the management process, particularly that of top managers, but also that of the top-down strategy reflected by the process of unfreezing—move and act, and refreezing. But more importantly than that was the fact that the pre-1990s theories literally acknowledged the importance of type and process, calling their own as planned type and top-down process respectively.

The year 1990s ushered in a new age bombarded by the ICTs. Theories incubated during this time were overwhelmingly characterized by procedural approach to mitigate changes, which were fast and highly unpredictable as a result of technology. Planned approach to change became less relevant as a consequence, being replaced by emergent methodology that gives importance to front-line managers, over the top ones, in the management of change. Characterized by open, flexible and proactive strategy, this group adopts bottom-up process, giving almost all powers to middle managers, to manage changes happening rightly on the ground. Although these theories were generally meant to challenge Lewin's, which failed to factor in the nature of change under the influence of technology, they did confirm earlier theories of the critical roles played by type and process in the management of change.

Given the uncontrollable nature of change driven by fast technological development, defining what change is all about becomes a challenge. Change could no longer be defined based only on contents and context, previously known as type and process, but instead is understood by the elements that shape it. In the organizational context, for example, change revolves mainly around 3 primary elements; that are, change of human element, which includes capacity upgrade, shift of leadership structure, or staff turnover, etc.; change of technology, which may include the needs to adopt and adapt to new tools, the move to adopt the Information Management System (IMS), etc.; or/and change of strategy, that could cover revisiting customer policies, leadership framework, or even the shift from customary to technology-driven practices. Successfully identifying the element of change is as important as making the successful change itself as managing change requires thorough understanding of not only the elements that shape it, but their roles in the management process. This is why contemporary theorists are more focusing on the elements of change as prerequisites for managing the change itself.

While these later approaches did not discourse much about the roles played by type and process in determining a successful change, they did draw special attention of change managers to the symbiotic relationship of human, technology and strategy in change process. According to these theories, successful change is certainly a result of an effective strategy, which is reflected by smooth interaction of the various elements of change, at a given time.

Table 1: A snapshot analysis of the theoretical development of change management theory

Theories	Elements	Types	Process	Discussions
Lewin's & pre-1990s		Planned Type	Top-down (unfreezing, move and act, and refreezing)	<p>Elements: except technology which was hardly discussed, human and strategy were somehow reflected in those strategies. This signifies that these aspects are main ingredients for all changes before, now and then.</p> <p>Type: given the absent of technology, changes per se were static. The results of change could thus be predicted; the methods to manage change do not vary, and hence planning has a critical role in the management of change.</p> <p>Process: top-down instruction was adopted, and hence, top managers' role is important.</p>
Emergent Theories (the 1990s)		Emergent Type	Bottom-up (process –driven approach)	<p>Elements: though the three elements of change were not specifically touched upon by those theories, technology was seen to be a driving cause for the development of the theories.</p> <p>Type: technology has made change unpredictable, and unforeseen, and hence planned approach to change is no longer applicable.</p> <p>Process: approach to managing change relies heavily on the flexibility of front-line managers to adapt and adopt. But this also brings about big risks to the institution. To mitigate risks, steps were introduced to both guide the practices, and limit the broadness of the managers' liberty.</p>
Contemporary Theories	1). Human 2). Technology 3). Strategy		1). Bottom-up (middle-manager level) 2). The interdependence of human, technology and strategy 3). Open, flexible, and practical strategy	<p>Elements: given the uncontrollable nature of change driven by fast technological development, defining what change is all about becomes a challenge. Change could no longer be defined based on contents and context, but instead, could only be understood by the elements that shape it. Those elements include human, technology and strategy which are symbiotically related (this was not explained by earlier theories).</p> <p>Type: though the theories largely fall into the emergent nature (given the presence of technology), it has yet to rule the planned approach to managing change obsolete.</p>

				Process: rather than concentrating on type, these theories focus more on strategy for managing change. They bet more on the proper use of human, technology and strategy to deal with change at a given time. These strategies relax many of the existing strategies—the planned and emergent streams, from being too rigid to rules and regulations, to be more open, flexible and practical to change situation.
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4. Discussion

Across time, methodologies to manage changes have presented both challenges and opportunities. On the side of challenge, disagreement among theorists has noticeably been strong, which gave no chance for any theory to stand and last. On the opportunity side, their disagreement, if not over a similar aspect, helps complement to one another's loophole. Lewin's planned type of change, for example, was right during his time when technology was not so much impacting our lives, which allowed top managers to plan and manage everything, using their top-down process of change. Emergent theories, on the other hand, give more focus on steps to managing changes, which are driven by technology. Although these theories attempted to contradict the earlier ones on their validity, they simultaneously confirmed many of the earlier held notions including the role of change elements, and the criticality of type and process in the management of change.

With no remarkable objections to any of the earlier takes, the contemporary theorists, including, Al-Haddad (2014), Orlikowski and Yates (2006), Bamford and Forrester (2003) pointed change managers to the new management paradigm which involves the interplay among the various elements of change, particularly the symbiotic relationship among human, technology and strategy in the management of change. The move is seen, rather than opposing to any of the held notions, but complimenting to the loopholes of the earlier theories, making a preliminary framework for change management possible.

From the above literature, a preliminary framework for contemporary change management could therefore be built around three main managerial aspects of change which include change type, change process and change elements. To put it into perspective, when coming to managing change, manager, after having identified the element to be changed, has to decide on the 'type' to be adopted, and then, the 'process' to be moving through. With the right type and process, managers then need to make sure they have all necessary elements—human, technology, strategy, etc.—in hands to drive the whole change process.

5. Conclusions and Recommendation

Despite some limitations, the above syntheses present very substantial findings. Firstly, none of the above-mentioned groups of theory is complete to offer a valid framework for managing effective change. Secondly, in spite of some contradictions, many

of those theories confirmed the validity of one another. And lastly, all of them combined—type, process and elements—could shape a complete framework that lasts for contemporary and future change management practices. Meanwhile, caution shall however be raised on the broadness of each of the above managerial aspects which deserves another investigation into the details in each of them.

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