Change Theory Notes

The literature on organizational change is voluminous. In spite of the volume, many scholars have noted that, in the restricted sense of the term, there is no viable general theory of change. Most frequently attention has been given to:

1. The nature of change
2. Types of change
3. Forces for and against change
4. Change processes and strategies
5. Phases of the change process
6. The change event
7. Managing change

The Nature of Change

Organizational change is usually defined as an alteration in the status quo of the system that affects the goals, persons, technology, and/or structure of the system. It may be

1. Planned or unplanned
2. Anticipated or unanticipated
3. Brought about by forces internal or external to the system
4. Evolutionary or revolutionary
5. Desirable or undesirable

There are four assumptions regarding change:

1. Change is inevitable (growth is optional, KTD)
2. Change is essential to organizational survival
3. Change may take any one of a variety of forms
4. Uncertainty is going to be with us as well as change

Types of Change

Warren Bennis proposed the following types of change:

1. Indoctrinational
2. Coercive
3. Autocratic
4. Influential
5. Interactional

6. Emulative
7. Natural
8. Planned

Forces for and against Change

It is often assumed that change takes place when an imbalance occurs between the sum of the restraining forces and the sum of the driving forces. Such imbalance unfreezes the pattern; the level then changes until opposing forces are again brought into equilibrium.

Many organization change models have been influenced by the significant theoretical work of psychologist Kurt Lewin. In his *Force Field Theory,* he developed a technique called "force field analysis", which is a method for diagnosing causal relationships in life space. Lewin's theory identifies two forces in the environment:

1. driving forces- those forces pushing in a given direction which tend to initiate, promote, and sustain change
2. restraining forces-those forces tending to resist or decrease the driving forces

Lewin identified three steps involved in moving the point of equilibrium or in achieving change:

1. unfreezing- realizing the need for change
2. changing-period of moving/conversion
3. refreezing-fixing new forms of behavior

Internal to the system there are numerous forces acting for and against change. The internal forces of resistance can be grouped into two categories:

1. those that operate within the individual personality
2. those that operate within the social system

Changes that take place in one part of the system will tend to induce further changes in other parts of the system.

Change Processes and Strategies

Organizational change may proceed from the top down or the bottom upwards and may occur in two fundamental ways:

1. by discarding members who exhibit outmoded patterns of behavior and attitudes and replacing them with new members who behave and think in ways specified by the proposed change, or

2. by retaining the original members and altering their behavior and attitudes in accord with the proposed change

There are two ways of looking at the change process:

1. Changing towards vs.
2. Changing from

Consideration has to be taken of the change "influencers" which include the following:

1. Characteristics of the innovation
2. Manner of the introduction
3. Timing of the introduction
4. Characteristics of the personnel who must make the changes
5. Structure, setting, money available, training
6. Degree of acceptance

Phases of the Change Process (A Model)

The phases of the change process include:

1. The development of a need for change
2. The establishment of a climate for change
3. Clarification and/or diagnosis of the problem/area in need of change
4. Examination of alternatives/establishment of goals and intentions of actions
5. Initiations of the change: turning intent into practice (e.g. pilot project)
6. Evaluation and modification of the change
7. Generalization and stabilization of the change

Success criteria for the change would include:

1. Adoption and continued institutionalized use of the change
2. Use of portions of the change
3. Improved attitudes and skills
4. Diffusion to other systems
5. Publications

The Change Agent

Most processes of change advocate change agents, either internal or external. Havelock identified four basic roles (which are not mutually exclusive) that a change agent may play:

1. a catalyst (serves to upset the status quo, reduce system complacency, and energize the problem-solving process)
2. a solution giver (provides an appropriately timed solution in an acceptable form)
3. a process helper (serves as an expert on the "how to" of change by providing assistance in the various stages of problem solving)
4. a resource linker (involves assisting the identification and use of resources both within and outside the system)

Havelock also suggested the following activities, in successive stages, of the change process for a change agent:

1. Assist in defining problems and acquiring resources that might be helpful with solutions.
2. Assist in generating alternatives and deciding on an appropriate solution
3. Help generate and develop behavior supportive of the proposed change
4. Assist in maintaining the change and begin to attack other needs in a similar manner without the change agent

Steps in Managing Change

1. Define the change and be aware of its full scope
2. Identify situational factors such as:
   a. amounts and types of resistance
   b. commitment level
   c. time and stakes involved
3. Develop a change strategy:
   a. be sure to give explanations
   b. allow for participation
   c. provide support
   d. use persuasion and power
4. Implement and monitor the change, remembering to carefully consider the feedback from all levels