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Organizational Change, Change Management, and Resistance to Change – An Exploratory Study

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Abstract
For any organisation to remain afloat, it must always position itself to competitively struggle for the limited resources from the ever changing and dynamic environment; by not only responding to change but looking out for change. Organisational Change, change management and resistance to change; are tripartite concepts in which no one can be conveniently treated singularly without mentioning the other ones. The methodology adopted in the study is exploratory approach. It examined the literature to present how change management determines the level of change resistance and the eventual organisational change. The paper commenced with the conceptual literature, to the theoretical literature, empirical literature, findings from the literature, the conceptual framework, and the conclusion. Recommendations were made for organisations to avail themselves of the services of experts in human capital management, to handle change implementation programmes for them.
Keywords: Organisational change, change management, resistance to change.

1 Introduction.

There is an almost universal agreement on the importance of change in organisations; and many companies implement new managerial concepts in order to maintain profitability and remain competitive. Some changes have a significant impact on the organisation, but many others have a low impact and are often referred to as management fashions (Luketa, 2012). For organization to stay relevant and competitive, change is necessary (Jorgensen, Owen & Neus, 2009)). Organizational change is the movement of an organization away from its present state and toward some desired future state to increase its effectiveness .

Organizations should adapt and respond to appropriate changes in a timely manner to foster organizational performance. The mere mention of change can generate feelings of nervousness and tension, and as the change begins to take shape, organizational members may feel a sense of uncertainty and confusion. This may be due to the fear of the unknown. Given such realities, it appears unlikely key organizational leaders could underrate the implications that come with change initiatives (Bernerth, 2004).

Change is a regular feature of organizational life and indeed, an inseparable aspect of nature; while resistance is an inseparable aspect of change. This is primarily because people are uncomfortable with the new, the strange and the unknown and they would rather prefer stability even though progress is never attained by being static (Muo, 2014: 96). It is this importance attached to the phenomenon of change and change management that necessitates this paper.

2. Conceptual Literature Review

2.1 Organizational Change

An organization has been described to consist of a group of individuals working together in a system to accomplish the goals of both the individuals and the organization (Muo & Muo, 2014). People perform their roles within complex systems called organizations (Armstrong, 2009). Organization can be described as a group of people working together cooperatively to accomplish an enduring goal of the organization, and through that, achieve their individual goals. To Robbins (2003), an organization is a continuously coordinated social unit, composed of two or more people that functions on a relatively continuous basis to achieve common goals.

Organizations can also be seen as a system of roles and stream of activities designed to accomplish shared purpose. This definition emphasises the importance of organisational structure and processes in pursuit of common goals (Robey and Sales,1994, in Oghojafor, Muo & Aduloju, 2012: 83). Change can simply be defined as the transition to a new or different situation or state of affairs. It implies the shedding off of the status quo for something new or unusual. According to Burnes (2004) change is an ever-present feature of organizational life, both at an operational and strategic level. There should be no doubt regarding the importance to any organization of its ability to identify where it needs to be in the future, and how to manage the changes required to getting there (Todnem, 2005).

Due to complexity of events and rapidity of technologies in the environment, organizations are subject to many pressures for change. Continuous developments and range of triggers force organizations towards change initiatives. Indeed, these pressures on organizations to change emanate from external and internal environment of the organizations. (Yilmaz & Kilicoglu, 2013). The external sources could be as a result of improved technology, pressure from interest groups from outside the organization such as government or competitors in the industry.

The internal source of change could be from individual such as shareholders, management, employees. Globalization, new technologies, culture shifts are some of the factors contributing to the fast-moving environment where organizations develop their activities. As a consequence, organizations have to change more frequently in response to the environment. Irrespective of the source, whenever the need for change is obvious, the management is always faced with the question of how to respond to this change. The dilemma is usually whether to change the objectives and strategies of the organization, or the technology, or human resource, or the organization structure, or the business environment (Olajide, 2014).

It is universally known that the content of organisational change is rather broad. Analysis of literature shows that typology of organisational changes involves the following aspects: changes in management structure, organisational, employee, and management culture changes, strategic changes, changes in human resource management process, which are related to increase in labour productivity and efficiency, development of skills and competences, operational environment reformation changes related to introduction of new technologies to business processes, and systemic changes (Bersenaite, Saparnis, & Saparniene, 2012).

Naoler and Tushman (2000) identified some categories of Change: Radical versus Incremental Change, Reactive versus Proactive change. Radical change according to them, is a change that have an impact on the whole system of the organization and fundamentally redefine what the organization is or change its basic framework, including strategy, structure, people, processes and (in some cases) core values. Radical change or approach is used to address more fundamental problems especially in some situations, such as after a period of flux or unexpected rapid change in the environment. Incremental change on the other hand, is referred to as changes that happens all the time in organizations, and they need not to be small. Such things as changes in organization structure, the introduction of new technology and significant modifications of personnel practices are all large and significant changes, but usually occur within the existing definition and frame of reference of the organization. Johnson (2008) claims that the incremental approach to change is more common and this type of change is commonly used to maximize short term performance. The logic behind the incremental view is that the environment is constantly changing and incremental change being a continuous process is one of the ways to secure the future of the company and improve organizational performance.

Reactive change is characterized as that change implemented in response to some external event and or serious internal operational and managerial problems. Bennis and Thomas (2002) sees reactive change as a change in the organizational policies which is implemented in reaction to the occurrence of an event. This change is initiated due to pressures of external forces. Changes are made in response to a situation and primarily unplanned in nature. Management makes changes to deal with the problem in a quick and routine manner since they do not have time to analyse the situation and prepare a well-conceived plan. The environmental events, various threats and opportunities are reacted to immediately. Proactive change on the other hand, is that change where the organisation is not currently experiencing any serious problems but managers anticipate the need for change to put the company in a better position, or current potential problems. Though this anticipatory approach to change is generally preferable, in practice most companies tend to take a reactive approach, usually as a consequence of the commonly held view that there is no need for change if current performance is satisfactory (Olajide, 2014)).

Other categorisations of change in the literature include, continuous and discontinuous change, incremental change, planned and emergent change, developmental change, Convergent change, transitional change.

Continuous change is the ability to change continuously in a fundamental manner to keep up with the fast-moving pace for change (Burnes, 2004). The difference between Burnes‘ (2004) understanding of continuous and incremental change is that while the former (continuous change) describes departmental, operational, ongoing changes, the latter (incremental change) is concerned with organization-wide strategies and the ability to constantly adapt these to the demands of both the external and internal environment. In an attempt to simplify the categories, Luecke (2003) suggests combining continuous and incremental change and also concluded that a state of continuous change can become a routine in its own right. Advocates of discontinuous change on the other hand argue that this approach is cost-effective as it does not promote a never-ending process of costly change initiatives, and that it creates less turmoil caused by continuous change.

According to Lewin (1946) in Bamford and Forrester (2003), the planned approach to organizational change attempts to explain the process that brings about change. Furthermore, the planned approach emphasizes the importance of understanding the different states which an organization will have to go through in order to move from an unsatisfactory state to an identified desired state. The emergent approach to change is more concerned with change readiness and facilitating for change than to provide specific pre-planned steps for each change project and initiative. Several advocates of the emergent approach have suggested sequences of actions that organizations should comply with. However, many of these suggestions tend to be rather abstract in nature and difficult to apply (Burnes, 2004).

Developmental change is an improvement in the old way of doing things, with the aim of doing more or doing better things. Convergent change on the other hand, is viewed as developmental change because it consists of series of incremental changes. According to Judge and Blocker (2008), convergent change focuses on incremental adjustments to environmental innovations and continuous improvement that optimizes an organizational fit in its environment. In essence, organizations that embraces convergent change are better equipped to maintain excellency in performance and overcome external challenges since it is planned and proactive in approach.

Transitional change occurs when a decision has been made to change what currently exists and to implement something new. It is an implementation of a known state such as rearranging or dismantling old operating methods. This type of change generally occurs over a set of period of time and requires patience on the part of all organizational members. Examples are cases of implementation of new product lines or computerization of the management information system, introduction of new technology among others (Olajide, 2014).

Any successful organizational change endeavours should enjoy the inspiration and commitment of the topmost echelons of organizational leadership (Berngat, et al, 2015)

A large body of diverse literature and research is devoted to understanding organizational change. The concept of organizational change is very broad; consequently, researchers have looked at it from a variety of perspectives. For example, some researchers have looked at the identification of the need for change, studying the precipitating factors and the interpretive processes involved.

Change agents must "rewire" the plane while it is flying if the organization hopes to survive and perhaps prosper in the future. Clearly, this is no easy task when everyone around you is arguing for you to "hurry up" (Judge and Blocker, 2008: 915.)

Organizational change is not only a rational activity but also an emotional one that challenges deep-seated human fears and inspires human hope. Indeed, Kotter and Cohen (2002), argued that change is predominantly about matters of the heart, not the head. Organizations can operate in mechanical ways, but they also comprise living human beings who want meaningful work that allows them to have a life outside of work. As such, by assuming that all organizational change is rational and logical in nature where fear, political positioning, and turf wars rage, one wonders why any change initiative might work.

To many organizations, change comes like a hurricane season. Everyone knows it's coming. It is the same every year. The only thing we don't know is "Who will it hit this time?". To other organizations, change comes like the earthquake. We may never see it coming but have this nagging feeling that it is (Thames and Webster 2009:12). Whatever it is, organizations must prepare in advance, not just react when the environmental jolt is experienced (Rieley and Clarkson, 2001)). That advance preparation is what is called organizational capacity for change. Organizations with relatively high change capacity can successfully shoot the rapids, weather the hurricane, or continue operating during and after a devastating earthquake. Organizations with relatively low change capacity are at the mercy of their environment and much more subject to luck and chance (Judge and Douglas, 2009) .

It has been found from literature that the higher the aggregate organizational capacity for change is, the higher the subsequent environmental and financial performance (Judge and Elenkov, 2005)). In other words, organizational capacity for change is positively correlated with, and is likely to lead to, superior financial and environmental performance. Common sense and systematic empirical research has shown that the more your environment is changing, or is about to change, the more important your organizational capacity for change is (Judge, Naoumova, Douglas, & Koutzevol , 2009).

2.2 Change Management.

The ability to manage change effectively has become crucial. However, literature has revealed that 2 out of 3 change initiatives fail (Caldwell, Chatman & O'Reilly, 2008). It may be suggested that this poor success rate indicates a fundamental lack of a valid framework of how to implement and manage organizational change as what is currently available to academics and practitioners is a wide range of contradictory and confusing theories and approaches (Burnes, 2004). Change management is therefore an important process for organizations in their attempt to reach out to new horizons and new dispensations where they can find more harmony within the environments in which they operate (Bengat, Odenyo & Rotich, 2015). According to Moran and Brightman (2001), change management is the process of continually renewing an organization's direction, structure, and capabilities to serve the ever-changing needs of its external and internal customers. Consequently, organizational change cannot be separated from organizational strategy, or vice versa (Burnes, 2004; Rieley & Clarkson, 2001).

The early approaches and theories to organizational change management suggested that organizations could not be effective or improve performance if they were constantly changing. It was argued that people needed routines to be effective and able to improve performance (Luecke, 2003). However, it is now argued that it is of vital importance to organizations that people are able to undergo continuous change (Burnes, 2004; Rieley and Clarkson, 2001).

Change Management means to plan, initiate, realize, control, and stabilize the change process on both the corporate and the personal level by handling obstacles carefully (Singh, Saeed, & Bertsch, 2012). Change management has also been defined as the effective management of a business change such that executive leaders, managers and frontline employers work in concert to successfully implement the needed process, technology or organizational changes (Korir, Mukotive, Loice & Kimeli, 2012). Change management is a planned loom for the transition of individuals, groups and organizations from existing state to a required future state. Thus, managing a change process is as important as change itself (Olajide, 2014:1).

The impact and consequences of any change initiative on an organization, its employees and working processes depends on the nature and type of changes, but most importantly according to how the changes are managed (Erdogan, 2008; in Abdulahi, 2014).

Change management strategies is essential as organization faces a change in mission, restructuring operations, layoffs, new technologies, mergers, rightsizing and new management to overcome individual resistances, create readiness, commitment and change the mindset and attitudes of change recipients (Abdullahi, 2014).

To lead change successfully, Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) recommended three steps which a manager must follow in implementing change:

Analyse Situational Factors: The manager must try to provide answers to questions such as, how much and what kind of resistance do we anticipate? What is the manager's position relative to resisters—in terms of his power and the level of trust between him and the resisters; whether he has less organizational power than those who may resist the change. Who has the most accurate information about what changes are needed? Whether the manager anticipates needing information and commitment from others to help design and implement the change.

Determine the Optimal Speed of Change: The manager must use his analysis of situational factors to decide how quickly or slowly the change should be implemented.

Consider Methods for Managing Resistance: Research suggests that for those implementing a change programme, there are three inter - related skills (Burtonshaw, 2008). It include transforming skills, mental skills, and skills of empathy and understanding of feelings. Transforming skills talks about where the manager needs to be able to create a supportive risk - taking environment, have self - awareness and self - confidence. He will need to possess the ability to share the benefits that the change will bring and the journey needed to undertake this through visualization techniques. Mental skills requires managers to think holistically and help others to see the big picture. This enables the manager to work with rules of thumb based on action learning. Skills of empathy and understanding of feelings is witnessed through the use of symbols, analogies and metaphors to relate to the change process and will need the ability to tolerate stress and resist confronting every issue. These skills demand use of both left and right side brain techniques.

Burtonshaw, & Salameh (2007), identified five strategies for implementing change. They are directive strategy, expert strategy, and negotiating strategy, educative strategy, participative strategy. In directive strategy, the management can use its authority to impose the changes required and be able to carry them out speedily. However, the dis-advantage of this approach is that it is likely to increase resistance by those involved or even undermine the overall success of the change implementation. Expert strategy is usually applied when a technical problem requires solving, such as the introduction of a new IT system, and as such is better suited to smaller technical or operational change than a wider cultural - change requirement. It is also appropriate that introducing technical changes does not easily lend itself to wider consultation as knowledge of the technical nuances may reside only with a limited number of individuals.

Negotiating strategy according to Burtonshaw and Salameh, involves a willingness to negotiate with individuals and teams affected by the change and to accept that adjustments and concessions may have to be made. Opting for this approach does not remove the management's responsibility for the direction and initiation of change but acknowledges that those affected have the right to have some input in the changes proposed, or that they have some power to resist it if they are not supportive. The advantage of selecting this approach is that resistance to the proposed change is likely to be reduced. However, such negotiation will add to the overall programme and the pre - implementation time may take longer. Changing work practices in return for increased pay and/or other benefits is a classic example of the negotiating strategy. Educative strategy involves changing people's values and beliefs so that they support the change and are committed to a shared set of organizational values. Winning hearts and minds according to Burtonshaw and Salameh, is a complex process that involves a mixture of activities such as communication, persuasion, education, training and selection. The advantage of such an approach, if successful, is that people will be positively committed to the change. In general, this approach typically takes much longer and requires more resources than the previous three strategies described above.

Participative strategy has a number of advantages such as, changes are more likely to be widely acceptable over the other strategies; it promotes an active involvement of people and is likely to increase their commitment to, and enthusiasm for, the change process. Additionally, there will be opportunities for both managers and employees to learn from the experiences and skills of this wide participation. While this has a number of advantages due to the participation of staff, the identified changes are likely to take longer and require additional resources to support the change.

2.3 Resistance To Change (RTC)

No matter how successfully or administratively perfect a proposed change may be, individuals in an organization implement or break the change due to representing a form of influence (Yılmaz & Kılıçoglu, 2013). Even though organizational change generally can be initiated by managers or imposed by specific changes in policy and procedures or arose through external pressures; organizational change is management's attempt to have zrganization members to think, behave and perform differently (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010).

Resistance to both small and large change is one of the important factors that can influence the success of implementing any organizational change, including new technology innovations, new policies, and new organizational structure (Chuang, 2004). Research findings have revealed that change and innovation fail not because the new strategies or goals are inappropriate but rather because organizations are unable to successfully implement them. Capturing the gain from a new strategy or change in process is not simply a function of reallocating resources, providing new technology, or reorganizing units; effective organizational change generally requires that employees and work groups shift the way they do things. In fact, if employees and work groups do not change their behaviours, implementing a new strategy is often impossible.

However, people differ with regard to their perception towards change; some of them may consider change with a lower tolerance. That is, some organizational members embrace change initiatives readily and move it while others fight the change to the death with denying its necessity (Burke, 2008).

Early conceptualization of resistance to organizational change (RTC) can be traced back to Kurt Lewin's (1947) ground-breaking studies of force-field analysis in the organizational development literature. (Bhattacherjee and Hikmet, 2007). Lewin discovered that social system has a tendency to maintain status quo by resisting change and returning back to the initial state.

However, there are a number of misconceptions about what resistance to change is, who resists it and why, what it means to the organisation and why and how it should be managed. Managers need a richer understanding of the phenomenon so that its value can be appreciated and its negative effects minimised (Smollan, 2011:12).

It is generally perceived that resistance to change (RTC) is negative, and that it is the greatest obstacle to the attainment of change objectives (Muo, 2014:96). Some writers have labelled resistance to change a brick wall and a dangerous roadblock to transformation; while others see resistance to change as one of the nastiest, most debilitating workplace cancers (Burke, 2008). To Foote (2001), there is not a more potent, paradoxical or equal-opportunity killer of progress and good intentions. Many managers underestimate not only the variety of ways people react to organisational change, but also the ways they can positively influence specific individuals and groups during a change (Kotter, & Schlesinger, 2008).

3. Empirical Literature Review

Gaylor (2001), examined the effect of higher education and trust on the police officer's level of resistance to change and the effects of participation and communication on trust. The result failed to support previous research, which listed participation as the most important factor, but did support the concept that participation and communication improved trust.

Ismail, Abdullah & Salamuddin, (2006), in their study examined the development and introduction of a new management system, i.e. ISO 9000 based quality management system, in a faculty in a Malaysian university. They concluded that interest can be cultivated, knowledge disseminated and involvement maximized through an implementation strategy that co-opts the staff from the inception of the change initiative.

Singh, Saeed, & Bertsch, (2012), carried out a study to test a theoretical model of factors influencing employee resistance towards change and found out that the implementation strategy adopted played a major role.

Boohene, R. & Williams (2012), investigated the factors that influence resistance to organisational change; and the results indicated that less employee participation in decision making and lack of trust in management contributed highly to resistance.

Austn & Isaac (2012), in their investigation of the management of change in industrial organizations in Port Harcourt, Nigeria; revealed that change management is a great phenomenon that enhances the performance of the industrial organizations, and that if more attentions are given, industrial organizations definitely will have a good standard.

Babalola (2013), in a study on the influence of commitment and job insecurity as predictors of openness to organizational change; found out that commitment and job insecurity contributed significantly to openness to organizational change.

Adeniji, Osibanjo & Abiodun (2013), studied the relationship between human resource management interventionist strategies and organizational change; and flexibility that can make employees more adaptive and receptive to changes. It was found out that relationship existed among human resource management interventionist strategies, and was consistent with organizational change in the studied industry. A model fit was developed to examine the role Human Resource Management Interventionist strategies play in organizational change; by relating study variables such as staffing, fear alleviation, effective communication, developing plan and integrating the existing human resource systems to commitment of employees when change is experienced in organizations.

Abdulraheem, Mordi, Ojo & Ajonbadi (2013), carried out a study on the outcomes of planned organisational change in the Nigerian public sector education institutions. The paper discovered that reforms are easy to formulate but difficult to implement and accompanied by resistance from people.

Ringin & Bello (2013), examined the effects of the change management factors on the Nigerian banks organizational performance, and to explore the implementation level of change management related factors among banks in Nigeria. The results showed that change management factors such as revised reward system, people's involvement, empowerment, training and education were significantly related to overall organisational performance in terms of turnover, profit margin, customer service delivery and operational cost reduction performance.

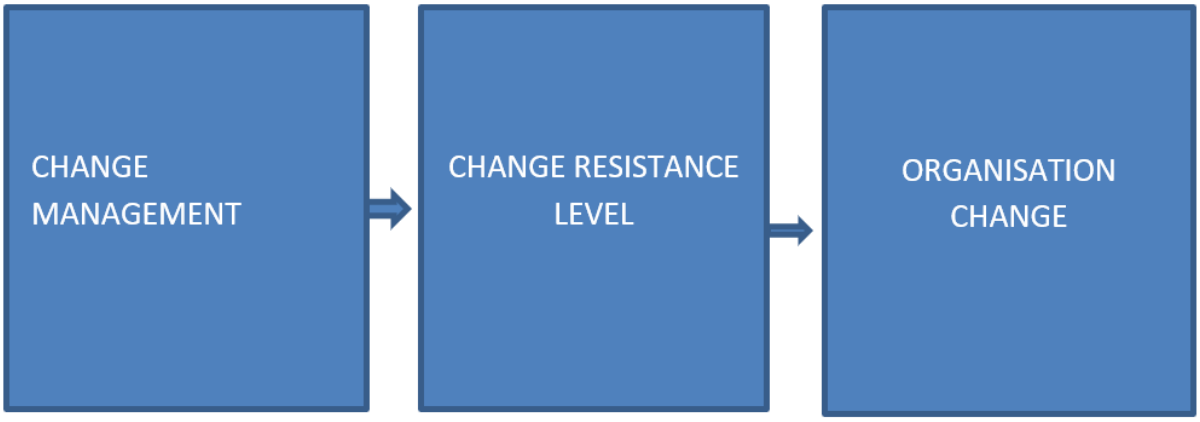
Olajide (2014) looked into the effects of change management on organizational performance of the Nigerian telecoms industries. The result revealed that changes in technology has a significant effect on performance and that changes in customer taste has a significant effect on customer's patronage. It was also confirmed that changes in management via leadership has a significant effect on employee's performance.

Onyango (2014), investigated the causal effects of organization culture on change management using descriptive survey research design. The study found out that organization beliefs/ values as part of organization culture, affects change management. Organization norms was found to have no significant effects on Change Management, while support by top Management was found to have significant effect on Change Management in the organization. These findings are similar to the findings of Ojo (2009), who found out that corporate culture affects performance.

Muo (2014), in a survey of a diverse sample of managers in 5 South-Western States of Nigeria confirmed the perception that resistance is the greatest obstacle to change management, and that the impact of change resistance is mostly negative. Okiiya, Kisiangani & Oparanya (2015), in a study to establish change management practices adopted by Public Secondary Schools in Siaya Sub County; found out that change management practices adopted by the institutions significantly influenced performance.

4. Conceptual Framework

Figure 4.1 Change Management, Change Resistance and Organisational Change Model.



Source: Developed by the author (2016)

5. Findings From The Literature

Coming from the literature reviewed are that:

1. Two out of three change initiatives fail due to the inability to manage change effectively.
2. Participation and Communication of change improved employee trust in the change process.
3. Implementation strategy played a major role in Change acceptance.
4. Organisational culture and top management support have significant effect on change management and acceptance.
5. The type of management practices adopted significantly influenced performance.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations.

Handling of change is a major determinant of organisational success. This is so because organisations must compete for the meagre resources in the environment, but that environment in itself is dynamic and ever changing. The organisation then cannot but be prepared for change at all times. No organisation can be boast of better performance without giving adequate attention to the need for change and the change management process.

Organizational chieftains should be open and consultative about change, encourage those who have issues with the change process to come forward and ensure that negative feedback about proposed change programmes are evaluated and possibly accommodated, where meaningful. Two useful strategies for attaining this objective are building organized disagreement into the change process, and effective use of employee surveys.

In all, it is important to engage experts in human capital management to handle change implementation in the organisations.

It is however suggested that there could be more studies on which other factors (for example family background) would likely affect response of employees to change initiatives.

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