

An Analysis of the Application of Change Management in Organisations

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines “Change Management” as an important technique in organizational sustainability. It deals with forces of change, forms of change, reactions to change, change process and the role of change agents in organisation. The paper explains how change management could be carried out in diverse forms of organisation, such as: public bureaucracies, production outfits, private organisations and even non-governmental organisations. It concludes that any organisation that fails to adjust and adapt to change cannot survive, and recommended employee education, enlightening and mobilization as basic requirements for facing change in organizational processes.

Keywords: Change, management, adjustment, adaptability, sustainability, organisation, employees

INTRODUCTION

Life is a dynamic process and no individual or organization can survive without passing through series of changes. In view of this, change is one basic necessity of existence. Success and failure are consequences of our individual or collective responses to change as we cannot do without one form of change or another. Change generally denotes transformation from one state to another. Literally, it is the act of becoming different. Management entails the organizational process of coordinating resources, systematically directed towards achieving set goals.

Change Management is a structured approach to transitioning individuals, teams and organizations from a current state to a desired future state, with the goal of empowering the employees to accept and embrace changes in their work environment (Wikipedia, 2012). Management of change is very important both to organizational managers and the individual employees in the organization. Change is inevitable and multifaceted. Change can emerge from the organizational internal and external environment, and any organization that fails to accept the dynamic and inevitable nature of change is doomed to fail (Nwachukwu, 1988).

Every organization experiences change. The Psychiatric Hospital which is a health sector organization cannot be an exception. Change may appear in terms of change in management, operational location, organizational structure, business climate, regulatory policy, service line, product line, career structure, objectives – mission and vision, manpower composition, compensation policy and pattern etc. Whatever is the direction or pattern of change, it exerts consequences or impact on the organization as well as the employees. It is in view of the anticipated consequences of change which may be positive or negative that employees always react to change. The very essence of Change Management is to ensure that employees are carried along in planning and designing change programmes, and to ensure that change does not impact negatively on the organization, thereby hindering growth and development in terms of operational effectiveness and efficiency.

FORCES OF CHANGE

The forces are also considered as sources of change. There are two major forces of change, namely; external forces and internal forces (Donnelly, Gibson and Ivancevich, 1984).

External Forces

External forces include market conditions, organizational environment, government policy and programmes, technology etc. The external forces are located outside the organization. They are embedded in the organizational environment. Market conditions like demand is influenced by liquidity level of the economy, guided by fiscal (Expenditure and Taxation guidelines) and monetary policy. Government policy can also cause change in organization, for example Public Service Reform of 2006 with attendant outsourcing and monetization processes culminating in severance and shrinking of workforce. Religious, social and technological environment are also sources of change in organizations. In Northern Nigeria, frequent declaration of emergency by government, changes an organization's work hours.

Internal Forces

These include factors that are located within the organization such as employees demand, organizational processes and interpersonal relations. Malfunctioning of any of the processes may prompt change. Breakdown of communication between employees and management may cause conflict which may result in one form of change or another, for example change in leadership of employee groups (unions) or management team.

FORMS OF CHANGE

There are different forms of change that may take place in the organization, just as there are different sources or forces of change. According to Donnelly, Gibson and Ivancevich (1984), there are four forms of change namely: structural change, changes in nature of work, people change, and technological changes. Another form of change easily observed in organization is change in organization output.

Structural Change

The structure has to do with actions of managers that attempt to cause improvement in performance in terms of altering the standard task structure and flow of authority. Structure of organization reflects existing pattern and network of relationship and communication. It involves changes in departmental arrangement, specification of job content and scope as well as span of control. In organizations like banks and hospitals, can line-staff relationship be changed?

Changes in Nature of Job

Utilization of new methods can cause change in nature of job. Example is the introduction of job enrichment which is the process of improving jobs through developing higher-level skills in worker. Changes in nature of job include, how job tasks are performed, extending job tasks and skills required to perform job task etc.

People Change

This entails effort to alter and improve employee attitude, skills and knowledge for the overall benefit of the organization. The objective is to enhance individual capacity to perform assigned job tasks within organized workgroups. This may be carried out through sensitivity training, and life and career planning.

Technological Change

Application of machine-based techniques to transform resources into products or services, and improve upon the quality of output e.g. robots, computers. There are different types of hospital diagnostic equipment that transform patient care and diagnosis. Some of which were not there before now.

Output Change

Organisation output may be service or product. Any of the outputs named above may change from time to time, resulting in diversification. A psychiatric hospital may move to general wellbeing from mental health. This is a form of service change.

REACTION TO CHANGE

Since change is inevitable in organization and management often deliberately planned to introduce change, employees react to change in different ways, which include principally, acceptance and resistance. When planned change is welcomed or accepted by employees, this situation makes for unity in devising coping strategies for both employees and management and relative stability and continuity of organization despite change. But when there is resistance to change by employees, organization ability to achieve set goals and objectives is hindered.

Resistance

Change involves the unknown, and people are generally afraid of the unknown. Resistance entails rational and irrational behaviour to prevent a state of uncertainty as defined by the employee. Resistance is presented by employee irrespective of position, educational background, experience and exposure; all tend to react negatively to change. Reasons for resistance as noted by Nwachukwu (1988) and Donnelly, Gibson and Ivancevich (1984) include: fear of unknown, personal attitude and habit, financial reason, psychological reasons, misunderstanding and lack of trust, different assessments as well as low tolerance for change.

Minimizing Resistance to Change

Since change is functional and can lead to organizational development (OD) as noted by Kazmi (2002), management in any organization should act to minimize resistance to change in the following ways:

Education and Effective Communication

Adequate awareness and information should be provided to employee before any change is undertaken. Persuasive communication and enlightenment will promote implementation of change, though it is time consuming.

Employee Participation and Involvement

Employee groups and their representative should be involved in the design and implementation of change programmes. Their effective participation will ensure support rather than resistance.

Facilitation and Support

Employees should be supported in terms of ameliorating the impact of change where their ability to cope cannot ensure self-help effort, management should guarantee facilitation.

Negotiation and Agreement

Where it is noted that employee groups have considerable power to resist change, change should be initiated and implemented through negotiation and mutual agreement.

Manipulation and Co-optation

This is a make belief method where the employees are made to feel that change comes from them, when actually not, grapevine strategy may be useful here. This method is deceptive, not encouraged.

Explicit and Implicit Coercion

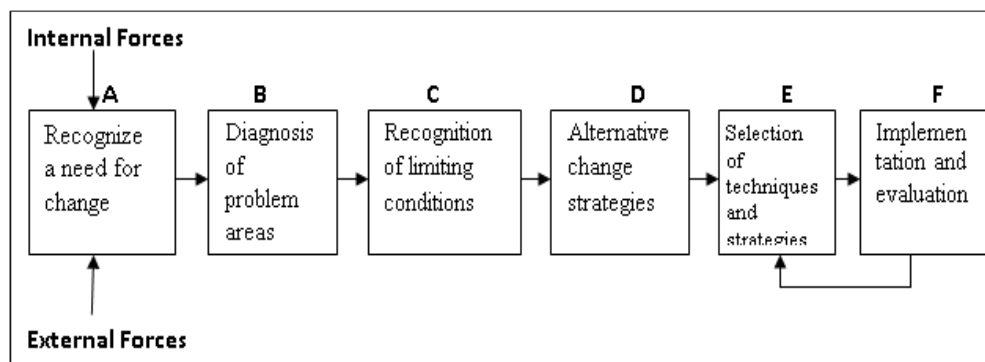
This involves using tactful and outright force to compel compliance to change and reduce resistance.

Gradual Introduction

Change should not be instantaneous, but gradually introduced, probably in a piecemeal system. This helps observe impact of change and provide positive reinforcement. Introduction of change should also be systematically timed.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

In view of the fragile nature of change, it becomes a basic element that must be systematically managed in the organization. Greiner (1967) presented the change management process.



Recognition of the Need for Change

Organization should comprehend the magnitude of change forces in their operation environment. This can be obtained through feedback control system, such as low patronage and declining profit. In hospital, high instability and low patient preference presents need for change.

Diagnosis of the Problem

What is the problem should be considered distinctively from the symptoms of the problem. The organization should think of what to change in order to solve the problem. The issue of change objectives and its measurement should be paramount.

Recognition of Limiting Conditions

Management should recognize certain conditions that exist at the time. Such influencing limiting conditions include: leadership climate; formal organization structure and culture. These conditions should also guide selection and choice of change strategy. It is not only

need for change and diagnosis that should determine change strategy (Fillee and House, 1969).

Alternative Change Strategies

What type of change is the organization focusing on, such as: structural change, change in nature of jobs, people change, technological change, product or service line. The approach to change strategy may be unilateral which refers to an edict from top management describing the change and responsibilities of subordinates in implementing it; Delegated approach in which top management relinquish complete authority to subordinates; and shared approach, which involves the participation of superiors and subordinates in the entire process.

Implementation and Evaluation

The major focus of implementation is the timing and scope dimension. Evaluation entails comparing the result with objectives of the change programme. Evaluation should never be overlooked. Evaluation may be internal, external and on participant reaction.

THE ROLE OF A CHANGE AGENT

A change agent is necessary in initiating and implementing organizational change. The agent may be internal or external. Internal agents are members of the organization specifically hired and trained for strategic management functions. A team of employees can help organization diagnose problems, formulate and implement programmes of change.

An external agent is a consultant who is not a member of the organization, but an outsider hired for this particular purpose. The function of a change agent as noted by Nwachukwu (1988) includes:

1. Setting the agenda
2. Observation
3. Collection of required data
4. Coaching
5. Counselling and guidance, and
6. Assessment and feedback

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Change is necessary both for the individual and organization. No one can do without change. Change leads to improvement of standard in terms of quality of service delivery and product standard. All employers should embrace change because changes that transform the organization will also transform individual employees. In economic language, increased productivity as a result of change will produce increased ability of the organization to pay higher wages or improve employee welfare services. Change leads to expansion which will entail elevation of staff by promotion and recruitment of new staff that may be your brother or sister. Change in technology may lead to overseas training and retraining of employees. However, one look at change, it is good for employees and organization.

In order to derive the benefits of change, management should be cautious in designing and implementing change programmes. Adequate education and communication among others should be followed. In all, management should show the employees what is in there for them in change programme, and be ready to facilitate and support them to attain readiness to utilize benefit of change. The effectiveness and efficiency of change programme should present a balanced benefit for employees and organization.

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