

Comparative Study: The Kurt Lewin of Change Management

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Abstract— It can be to persuade that the prosperous of change management is crucial to any organization or firm in order to survive and succeed in the present highly competitive and continuously to draw out business environment. However, theories and approaches to change management currently available to academics and practitioners are often contradictory, mostly lacking empirical evidence and supported by unchallenged hypotheses concerning the nature of contemporary organizational change management. The purpose of this article is, therefore, to provide a critical review of some of the main theories and approaches to organizational change management as an important first step towards constructing a new framework for managing change.

Keywords Change Management, Kurt Lewin-3 stage model)

I. INTRODUCTION

Successful change implementation combines decisions that are centered on what are often called “hard” and “soft” areas. The so-called hard areas include project planning, implementing software, and installing new computer networks. The soft side– the people side - involves the decisions and actions designed to help employees embrace new methodology, technology and ways of working. The effects of hard-side decisions are easily observed, measured and adjusted. Because is calmer to measure assess the hard side, it is common for it to get more attention. Soft-side effects tend to be subtler and harder to observe – making them more difficult to measure and evaluate. [9]

The term Change is defined as The Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) is the process of moving from one defined state to another. Change management is the process of planning, controlling, coordinating, executing, and monitoring changes that affect an IT service delivery environment [38].

Change is a critical aspect of every business. The main role of the changers is to help businesses to run continuously in the consistence state and the Information Technology (IT) organizations must be capable of effectively handling change. IT must also be able to keep its infrastructure and services well-aligned with changing business goals and priorities. In today’s fast -moving market, the ability to easily and appropriately handle change is even more important than before; that is why IT organizations need to implement and automate best practices for the entire end to-

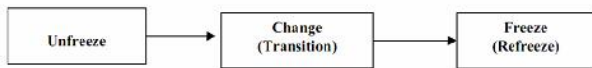
end Change Management lifecycle. Only those IT organizations that embrace this disciplined approach to change management will be able to deliver the operational quickness essential for service excellence [55] [48].

II. WHY CHANGE MANAGEMENT?

Information technology is an integral part of all organizations and it is becoming more critical in business operations. The business strategies, the services and technologies are changing at high rate. The users are requiring best level of services to meet challenging business objectives. All these factors are collectively require an IT environment where changes are controlled and managed at high preciseness. The main objective of the Change management process is to ensure change’s record, evaluation, authorization, prioritization, planning, testing, implementation, and reviewing in a controlled manner [17].

III. Kurt Lewin

Lewin was an altruistic who believed that only by resolving social conflict, whether it is religious, racial, marital or industrial, could the human condition be improved [42]. He believed that only the permeation of democratic values into all facets of society could prevent the worst extremes of social conflict that he had seen in his lifetime [2] Lewin believed that the key to resolving social conflict was to facilitate planned change through learning, and so enable individuals to understand and restructure their perceptions of the world around them. A unifying theme of much of his work is the view that ‘... *the group to which an individual belongs is the ground for his perceptions, his feelings and his actions*’ [2]. As Bumes [8] has shown, Lewin’s planned approach to change comprised four elements: Field Theory, Group Dynamics, Action research and the 3-Step model of change. Though these tend, now, to be treated as separate elements of his work [58], Lewin saw them as a unified whole with all of them necessary to bring about Planned change [1] , Kurt Lewin proposed a three stage theory of change commonly referred to as Unfreeze, Change (or Transition), Freeze (or Refreeze).



Source: www.strategies-for-managing-change.com

Figure no. 1 Kurt Lewin Model of Change

IV. STEP MODEL

Lewin conceived of this as one part, along with Field Theory, Group Dynamics and Action Research, of an integrated approach to analyzing, understanding and bringing about planned change at the group, organizational and societal levels [32]. Lewin believed a successful change project involved three steps:

- Step 1: unfreezing. For Lewin, human behavior was based on a quasi-stationary equilibrium supported by a complex field of forces. Before old behavior can be discarded (unlearned) and new behavior successfully adopted, the equilibrium needs to be destabilized (unfrozen). Lewin did not believe that this would be easy or that the same techniques could be applied in all situations: the 'unfreezing' of the present level may involve quite different problems in different cases. Allport ...” has described the 'catharsis' which seems necessary before prejudice can be removed” [38]. To break open the shell of Complacency and self-righteousness it is sometimes necessary to bring about an emotional stir up [2].
- Step 2: moving. Unfreezing is not an end in itself; it ... “Creates motivation to learn but does not necessarily control or predict the direction” [49]. It is necessary to take into account all the forces at work, and identify and evaluate, iteratively, the available options [2]. This Action Research-based learning approach enables groups and individuals to move to a more acceptable set of behaviors.
- Step 3: refreezing. This seeks to stabilize the group at a new quasi-stationary equilibrium in order to ensure that the new behaviors are relatively safe from regression. The new behavior must be, to some degree, congruent with the rest of the behavior, personality and environment of the learner or it will simply lead to a new round of disconfirmation [49].

This is why Lewin saw successful change as a group activity, because unless group norms and routines are also transformed, changes to individual behavior will not be sustained. In organizational terms, refreezing often requires changes to organizational culture, norms, policies and practices [12].

Like other aspects of Lewin's work, his 3-Step model of change has become unfashionable in the last two decades [26], [17], [20]. Nevertheless, such is its continuing influence that, as Hendry commented: Scratch any account of creating and managing change and the idea that change is a three-stage process which necessarily begins with a process of unfreezing will not be far below the surface [21]. Though Lewin's work has been strongly challenged, this has not prevented parallels being drawn between it and the work of

complexity theorists [28].

Back (1992), for example, argued that the formulation and behavior of complex systems bear striking similarities to Lewin's conceptualization of Field Theory [3]. Similarities have also been drawn between Lewin's approach to understanding and changing group behavior and work on dissipative structures, self-organizing theory and non-linear systems [57], [18]. This apparent common ground will be explored further below, but first the relationship between complexity theories and organizational change will be examined.

V. PLANNED CHANGE AND COMPLEXITY THEORIES

Though there are those seeking to apply complexity theories to organizational change who specifically argue that Lewin's Planned approach to change is unsuitable [51], [53], there are others who take the opposite view [3], [56] [28], [40], [18]. This section will argue that there are significant common ground Between Planned change and complexity theories, by returning to the three issues raised in Table 1. Before doing so, though, it is important to understand Lewin's view of order in organizations: the area where Lewin is most frequently criticized, most have argued that Lewin's planned approach is based on a static, simplistic and mechanistic view of organizational life[43],[45],[27],[44], [26], [19], [50] ,[13].

Table 1. Implications of complexity theories Applying complexity theories to organizations	
Implication 1	There will be a need for much greater democracy and power equalization in all aspects of organizational life, instead of just narrow employee participation in change [27], [5], [23].
Implication 2	Small-scale incremental change and large-scale radical-transformational change will need to be rejected in favour of 'a third kind' which lies between these two, and which is continuous and based on self-organization at the team/group level [7],[6].
Implication 3	In achieving effective change, order-generating rules have the potential to overcome the limitations of rational, linear, top-down, strategy-driven approaches to change [40], [57].

However, as shown earlier, Lewin did not see organizations as rigid or fixed but instead believed that 'Change and constancy are relative concepts; group life is never without change, merely differences in the amount and type of change exist' [37]. He stated that: One should view the present situation-the status quo-as being maintained by certain conditions or forces. A culture-for instance, the food habits of a certain group at a given time-is not a static affair but a live process like a river which moves but still keeps to a recognizable form. ... Food habits do not occur in empty space. They are part and parcel of the daily rhythm of being awake and asleep; of being alone and in a group; of earning a living and playing; of being a member of a town, a family, and a social class, a religious group ... in a district with good groceries and restaurants or in an area of poor and irregular food supply. Somehow all these factors affect food habits at any given time. They determine the food habits of a group every day anew just as the amount of water supply and the nature of the river bed determine the flow of the river, its

constancy or change [34].

VI. KURT LEWIN'S – 3 STAGE MODEL AND JOHN KOTTER – 8 STEPS MODEL

In a successful change initiative is an order. Thus, J Kotter describes the same process of change by going through the eight steps that people need to do to work and otherwise.

The eight steps Kotter talks about are [36]:

- Step 1: determine the urgency of change
- Step 2: form a strong nucleus, leading change
- Step 3: create a new vision
- Step 4: notify all new vision
- Step 5: empower others to act on the vision
- Step 6: create a short-term wins
- Step 7: maintain state of emergency
- Step 8: anchoring changes in corporate culture (strengthen change).[30]

Problem in all eight stages proposed by Kotter is changing people's behavior, not strategy, not systems, not culture. These elements are extremely important, but the core issue is the behavior - what people do and that is how they need to be changed significantly reacting. The above mentioned models (Kurt Lewin's – 3 stage model and John Kotter - 8 steps model) are simplifications of phenomena that serve to create our images of how the world works. Since all models are simplifications, they are all inaccurate to some extent. The most important aspect we need track is whether or not they are useful – whether they help us improve and succeed.

VII. LEWIN AND COMPLEXITY THEORISTS

There appears to be no disagreement between Lewin and complexity theorists on this point. Lewin was a strong and passionate advocate of democracy in all aspects of life and saw the freedom to pursue and test all lines of enquiry as being crucial to achieving the learning which lay at the heart of his Planned approach to change [35], [36], [37], [39] Indeed, Lewin's group-based, iterative, learning approach to change, as most clearly seen in Action Research, bears a close resemblance to the concept of self-organization as espoused by complexity theorists.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This paper has tested the perspective of Lewin's in trim of organizational change from planned methods and the intersection between theories. Lewin's method has been punished over the last 25 years or so for being too mechanistic and having an overly-simplistic view of organizations and change.

The paper initiate by examination the four components which contain planned change, namely field theory, Group Dynamics, Action Research and the 3-Step model, and showing that they provide a rigorous and insightful approach to changing organizations. From the following examination of intersection between theories, there emanated three important implications for organizations in terms of internal democracy, the most remunerative form of change and the role of order-generating rules (see table 1).

In contrasting planned change and the intersection between theories, the first point which was made was the similarity between Lewin's 'similar to -stationary to equalize' view of ingrained within organizations and the intersection between theorists' 'order-disorder' perspective. This similarity between Lewin's and the intersection between theorists' work was strengthened when looking at table 1. This display, firstly, that Lewin's engagement to extending democracy in organizations and his whole approach to change was not only consistent with that of the intersection between theorists but also was similar to the self-organization affirm by them. Secondly, it was clarity that stabilize of Lewin's change attempt —self-organizing groups and teams in organizations—was similar to the 'third type' of change affirm by the intersection between theorists. Lastly, equivalence between Lewin's work and that of the intersection between theorists could be seen in the way that the four components of planned change provided a process of identifying and changing order-generating rules.

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