



A STUDY ON ORGANIZATIONAL REFORMS AND MANAGERIAL CHANGES IN PUBLIC SECTOR UNDERTAKINGS

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Abstract

Organisations in the public sector are frequently seen to be resistant to change. Many public sector organisations aim for capacity, or the ability to complete tasks, rather than change, or a new approach to existing tasks. Due to the unpredictability of their results and the difficulty of precisely defining them, the adoption of increasing use of appropriate change management strategies and methodologies in development cooperation will frequently encounter resistance. Although the research indicates that change and capacity are interwoven, many development practitioners view them as separate concepts. Therefore, it's critical to comprehend which elements of the current situation can be altered in order to facilitate capacity building. Determining the dangers and the ways to mitigate them, as well as the boundaries of change management activities, are crucial.

Introduction

The first and most obvious meaning of "change management" is that it refers to the process of managing change. Managing change is a word with at least two meanings. One definition of "managing change" is making changes in a planned and managed, or systematic, method. External events may also cause organizational transformation. As a result, the second definition of change management is the response to changes over which an organization has little or no influence (for example, a quick increase in oil prices, devaluation of the national currency, civil upheaval, new legislation, and so on).

The understanding of the requirement for timely adjustment to external events gave rise to the notion of the "learning organization," which is capable of constant adaptation to a changing external environment. Finally, change management refers to a field of professional practice as well as the body of knowledge that has developed inside and around it, primarily as a result of private sector experiences.

There are many models for change management: business schools offer instruction in its theory and practice and consulting firms offer a variety of services to facilitate change. This body of knowledge focuses on change within a single organization. For current purposes, it is very important to set the boundaries of what this paper is addressing: It is assumed that change is imminent – either as planned change, or imposed, or stimulated in other fashions such as by a crisis; it focuses on organizational change management processes and the lessons learnt and practices analysed in this regard; and once the need and rationale for change has been established, it goes about suggesting good practice from above, to affect change in public sector organizations.



The preceding statement purposefully eliminates a large area where change frequently happens, namely the cultural or environmental dimensions of change. This is done intentionally to 'boundary manage' the scope of this study. However, this does not imply that they are not recognized. The report acknowledges that, for example, the difficulty of HIV/AIDS prevention and care is virtually entirely a result of behavioral and socio-cultural change

Top-down change management: Based on the assumption that if managers plan things properly, change can be executed smoothly. The only obstacle comes from resistance of some employees; hence focus is on changing the culture of an organization or the 'way we do things around here'.

Transformational change management: Relies on transformational leaders setting a personal example and challenging people to think 'outside the box' and innovate, while providing a safe environment for doing so.

Strategic change management: Based on a certain recipe and are in contrast with the top-down models in that they aim to introduce a new behavior at work, allowing people to witness the benefit for the organization and, thus, based on the evidence, internalize the change in their 'ways of working'. Each of these approaches can be effective, depending on the situation although it is generally accepted that the first category is often the category that fails the most. All approaches highlight the importance of leadership, communications and involving people in the change process. Thus, the key challenge for organizations is to match the model to the context.

Change management in development is not understood

The issue of organizational and institutional change is accorded relatively light treatment in practical development situations. There is little grasp of the issue and not even the language to articulate organizational change issues. Conversely, insufficient understanding of the development context, in particular, the constraints embedded in bureaucratic systems, organizational culture and the structure of human interactions can be a stumbling block to change management processes.

The civil service of Afghanistan needs a rationalization of its incentive structure. It currently has seven different salary scales depending on who the salaries are meant for (returning exiles; expatriates; lateral recruits from Universities) and who is paying the bill (for instance, specific donors support salary supplementation schemes in select ministries)³. It needs to harness the motivations of exile Afghans wishing to return and contribute to the building of their nation, and balance that with that with longer term salary reform. This is a highly complex and highly political process. Therefore, defining a clear (and better yet, inspiring) vision for the change initiative in the relevant public sector organization, and how it impacts the larger development goals of the country is a necessary place to start.

Change management is unguided

Institutional/organizational change is hard to conceptualize for public sector organizations and harder to apply. Codification of empirical knowledge to guide the operational manager becomes a huge boon to this process. Organizational leaders tasked with managing change are engaged in 'a great venture of exploration, risk, discovery, and change,

without any comprehensive maps for guidance' (Senge, 1999). A mapping of change management process steps, and ensuring it is consulted on, widely disseminated and agreed to, is key to its relevance and effectiveness. Beyond a mapping of steps, guiding the process step-by-step is critical to its success, with internal champions playing the primary role and facilitated by process facilitators as required.

One of the most intractable challenges that UNDP face is that of finding experts, be they national or international, that have skills in mentoring and facilitation. While consultants who can produce technical "deliverables" are required, there is also a need for those development practitioners and consultants with skills in the areas of process facilitation for coaching, leadership development, management development and change management training. This is an area of capacity development expertise, and can be teamed with the needed sector or theme-specific technical expertise. In Timor Leste, UNDP's support to capacity development in the civil service is actively building in a system of measuring performance of both technical experts and counterparts that goes beyond the assessment of hard deliverables and focuses on skills of mentorship, transference of capacity and facilitation of change.

Change management results are unpredictable

Change management exercises are highly unpredictable in terms of what they achieve. Experts agree that most change projects fail. Pascale (1999) suggests this is the case for 80% of change programmes. Management experts' opinions converge on several causes that can derail change efforts. What we do know is that change management shifts roles and capacities of different actors, which in turn shifts the existing bases of power.

Building in risk assessments and accounting for such initial instability, while managing its boundaries through managing people's expectations and concerns, is a necessary part of organizational change strategy. Putting in place clear and consistent messages regarding the change process, regular and open stakeholder consultations, airing of grievances, and putting in place feedback and learning mechanisms to enable adaptation during the course of the change process have been essential to those more effective change management processes.

Change management isn't supported

Failure to motivate or convince leadership and middle management of the need for change often leads to the unraveling of a change process, and certainly does not enable the sustainability of even early results. A key result could be one that requires a cross-departmental response that needs the buy-in of all. The Planning Commission of Bhutan, for example, needs a unified M&E framework and reporting format aimed to facilitate results outcomes for all its divisions – strategic planning, statistical data bases, monitoring etc.

It needs to move out of the currently prevailing myriad of M&E frameworks – one for each division. The need here to focus on facilitating teams and cons for introducing such a system change within the organization. The early identification, and addressing of, the sources of resistance to change (in other words, facing up to the reality that change produces winners and losers), is a must-do action. Doing so also involves addressing the values, norms and cultural aspects of stakeholders that are relevant to the change effort, both inside and

outside the organization. Bringing in the organisations clients, where possible, to be a part of the process is useful in this regard.

Change Management outcomes cannot be sustained

It is often difficult for leaders and managers to persevere and maintain focus on the change initiative. Where this is seen to be working, a focused effort to nurture the change environment and reward incremental successes is evident. As shown above, the summary distilling of lessons and addressing the gaps in Change Management, show how this contributes to capacity development, and when amiss can detract from organizational capacities essential for public sector development. From the lens of the capacity development practitioner, the missing link in the above situations is often the lack of adequate understanding and know-how of managing change in organizations.

Investments in capacity development – in training, coaching, mentoring, leadership development, incentives, and client responsiveness and so on – are essentially founded on weak ground unless these are accompanied by organizational change of the kind discussed here. Developing leadership skills, clarifying roles and getting stakeholders on board are all necessary for successful change interventions. However, paying attention to soft aspects of organization, such as culture, is also indeed as these factors are often paramount determinants of the real direction and pace of change.

Managing Change: Tools and Methodologies in Implementation

Knowledge and experience of managing change comes not only from organizational development but also from socio-economic research findings and development experience in the areas of social change, communications, community development, agricultural extension, participatory approaches and social mobilization, needs assessment and other related disciplines. A framework is proposed, from a wide-ranging trawl of the state of the art in change management from the private sector and allied literature from the public sector like in Public Administration Reform (PAR), combined with the empirical experience of UNDP in supporting change management, often in challenging development or post crisis conditions.

Successful change management strategies attempt to improve planning processes so that results will be defined that are acceptable to stakeholders, are achievable and sustainable. They attempt to improve implementation processes in order to strengthen local leadership and ownership of results among all stakeholders. Drawing on these principles, a four stage change management process is being increasingly used by UNDP's work in this field.

Change, irrespective of what causes it (internal entropy/external stimulus), how it is undertaken (planned or imposed) and what combination of techniques is used (hard system change or soft system change), is about two broad processes: a) managing the environment of change; and, b) executing the change itself. Through the methods and resources employed in their implementation, the aforementioned categories are further elaborated in the pages that follow.

Creating the momentum for change:

Some methods analysed in application, for motivating change include:

Advocacy activities - Change management activities may attempt to influence the development agenda by providing direct support for advocacy activities on globally or



nationally agreed positions, such as, human rights, gender equity or HIV/AIDS prevention. Advocacy activities are also common at the sectoral level in motivational campaigns for, inter alia, family planning, the use of mosquito nets, staying in school, and getting children vaccinated. In the organizational context, this would include sharing the rationale for change openly and transparently with key stakeholders, mainly employees. Addressing Gender-Based Violence: Many NGOs have launched programs to promote changes in attitude and practices related to gender norms and violence against women, both within the work place as well as in communities. The few that have been carefully evaluated suggest that such advocacy campaigns, using organisational or community-level approaches, can be effective in changing violence-related attitudes and behaviors. “Edutainment” – using radio and television to promote changes in attitudes and behaviors – has worked well for other issues and is now being tried for violence prevention⁵.

Visioning: This activity enables stakeholders to review fundamental questions in order to generate a vision for the future. Visioning is “a strategic planning process, there are four fundamental questions: ‘Where are you now? Where are you going? Where do you want to be?’ and ‘How are you going to get there?’⁶ Visioning seeks to create consensus and commitment among all stakeholders to a vision for the future. Defining a vision and having a broad consensus on goals and values to guide organizational change is an essential step in systems change. It is critical to building support for change among stakeholders and within the organization itself. Such visioning can precede a change management exercise. These can even be the alignment of longer term vision and values a key component of coalescing guiding coalitions for change.

Higher Education in Tanzania: Following the decision to embark upon a process of self-renewal and reform, the university undertook two tasks to lay a firm foundation for the programme's implementation, namely: gathering data on the university in order to give the community a broad awareness of its strengths and weaknesses; and drafting a corporate strategic plan to guide the reform process. After intensive debates, discussions and consultations, the University Council approved the Corporate Strategic Plan in August 1994. The document, which touches on all aspects of the institution, covers the basic concepts, aspirations, goals, objectives and philosophy underlying the envisaged reform process. Its five sub-themes are: Mission, objectives and functioning; Corporate set-up (ownership, autonomy, governance and administrative structures); Inputs (management styles, policies, planning, finance, backup services, personnel and student welfare); Outputs (principles underpinning academic activities such as undergraduate and postgraduate studies, research and consultancy). Although the strategic plan was not prepared by planning professionals, it accurately captured the vision, sentiments and wishes of a broad spectrum of people concerned about the future of the institution.

Facilitation of change

Methods studied for guiding change processes include:

Process Consultation

This is the engaging of individuals to facilitate change processes. A process consultant enables “learning by doing” and thereby facilitates organizational learning in contrast to the

normal practice in consulting, the production of “deliverables”. Learning, including making mistakes, nurtures the stakeholders’ sense of ownership in the changes and the change process¹². Process consultants seek to build trusting relationships with their clients, constituencies for change and consensus on the direction of change. They start with whatever problem the organization is addressing at the time in order to gain experience and build trust. They identify, endorse and promote leadership in the various stakeholder organizations that will “own” as well as lead the change process. Such ownership is essential for sustainability. Change that is locally owned is sustainable; change that has been prescribed by outsiders usually isn’t. Process consultants allow the change process to move at its own pace on the basis of the stakeholders’ readiness for change rather than arbitrary plans and schedules. Nevertheless, process consultants can structure the change process by focusing on decision-making. This entails sequencing activities so as to logically lead to decisions; ensuring open processes to maximize the flow of new ideas and engender commitment from stakeholders, and empowerment of leaders to exercise their powers.

Consensus-building exercises: As options for change emerge, there is a need to build consensus so that decisions can be taken and the change process can move forward. Consensus building activities build constituencies for change to ensure momentum for change is not dissipated in in-fighting among stakeholders about details. These activities can also overcome resistance to change and entail opportunities to discuss or ascertain real v/s apparent agendas.

Leadership: is the key component of successful change. Leaders are in a position to bring passion and conviction for change and increase organizational performance through strategic thought, building partnerships and facilitating changes in organizational culture. Public agencies also need political champions who provide long-term support on the public policy agenda and guide reform. The Asia Young Leaders for Governance: This programme is an initiative aimed at creating a critical mass of young change makers in the region who work in government or whose work supports good governance. By reaching ever-increasing numbers of young leaders in pivotal organisations, the programme aims to create the momentum for change in favor of good governance in a range of important organisations in each country. Typical alumni of the programme include Members of Parliament, civil servants, human rights lawyers, Election Commission staffers, Mayors, journalists and NGO activists. The participants are trained in thematic modules e.g. corruption, as well as functional, cross-cutting skills modules like negotiations, systems thinking and cross cultural communications.

Communications about change. Methods and tools commonly used include:

- Multi-media communications activities - Factual information and stakeholder positions should be communicated widely to all concerned parties. Stakeholders have a right to know the facts and to be assured that the change process is proceeding in a transparent manner. Communications activities could include, for example, information dissemination through mass media, such as newspapers, radio, television and the Internet and informational presentations for interested groups.
- Interactive communications and public outreach – This includes surveys, report cards, TV and radio discussions - provide officials with the opportunity for presentation possible

solutions, for sharing of information and for dialogue with stakeholders. Other two-way media or activities – focus group discussions, hotlines, Internet chat rooms, web-sites – can be used for obtaining ideas and feedback from stakeholders.

- Measuring and celebrating progress - Much of the change management process has uncertain outcomes; hence monitoring their impact presents a challenge. Strengthening organizational performance and focusing on process indicators of change can ensure celebrating early wins, create learning and ensure continuous support for change. It is important to recognise that both short-term “wins” and longer-term reform are important. Capacity development initiatives must reinforce progress and allow for corrections where needed which makes the measuring and reporting on progress important. The designing of a results-based framework in this regard is important.
- In 1994, the citizens of some areas of Bangalore, India rated their service providers on report cards. In 1999, the same exercise was carried out and improvements and failures were recorded and discussed in the media. Much had changed between the two report cards. The most important change was that the service providers and clients had evolved a culture of discussion and dialogue for jointly exploring the challenges relating to service delivery in Bangalore.

Guiding Principles for UNDP in Facilitating Change Management

The construct in the preceding section is a useful one to organize change efforts around operational work on capacity development. There are however, certain issues that need to be flagged for constant review and learning, and these form the basis of UNDP's approach to managing change in organizations and institutions. So we come full circle, to where we began with lessons learnt.

Change is political

In many UNDP programme countries in the world, the boundaries of pushing change and reform are set by what is acceptable at the political level. In many countries for example, human rights and rights based programming has to be couched in language like ‘inclusive governance’. Understanding the context of change is therefore of utmost importance. Organizational change should begin with an assessment of the change landscape and the organization's position in it. Assessments should consider, inter alia, the organization's current capacity, performance, leadership, systems, services and stakeholders and the interplay of these in the wider institutional context. DFID, a strong advocate of the ‘Drivers of Change’ approach, conducted an analysis of the context in Bangladesh for identifying key drivers of change. The following list of nine potential drivers of change is the result – the media, civil society (including NGOs, community organisations, business associations, independent research and advocacy centers and professional associations), Bangladesh's development partners, reform-minded public servants and the Bangladeshi Diaspora.

A major implication of this line of argument is that technical competencies for reform often need to be matched by awareness of what is acceptable in the local context, sensitivities and knowledge of what should be reasonable expectation in a given context. UNDP Country Office local staff often plays these role vis-à-vis policy advisors, technical assistants or external consultants. They act as a sounding board for the feasibility of ideas, constructs and



others proposals. The Laos GPAR (governance and public administration reform) programme, a successful model of context sensitive innovation, is one of UNDP's oft-cited success stories.

The process of managing change must include frequent and innovative attempts at building consensus, demonstrating benefits, dialoguing and communicating.

Change is normative

Change efforts are significantly normative in nature. Positive change is driven by coalitions of aligning interests, soft systems like motivation, ethics and pride and fundamental transformational issues starting with individual transformation in attitudes, values and behavior. There is significant literature covering most of these areas. UNDP's Leadership for Transformation initiative on HIV/AIDS drew on the work of Ken Wilbur and others to demonstrate that change occurs primarily in the individual realm. ECDPM's recently concluded work linking capacity, change and performance suggests, inter alia, that often the task of leaders is to provide a 'protected operating space' in which change, innovation and capacity development can happen. Applying a systems thinking filter to managing change would suggest that the best that a UNDP manager/advisor/practitioner can do is to anticipate, as accurately as possible, the virtuous (or reinforcing) loops that change processes set off and offset the vicious (or dampening) loops.

The amazing impact of micro-credit interventions on women's empowerment in Bangladesh is a perfect example of an unanticipated spin off that sets off a virtuous cycle of benefits. Cultural and value issues often dictate change outcomes. It is striking to see that Afghanistan has attracted back the large number of exiles that have committed themselves to making a change in the country. In other words, the ability to engineer and construct change through shop floor processes, while valid, still remains somewhat limited in its reach and most change occurs more in the realm of behavior, ethics, values, soft-systems incentives and so on.

Coalitions of aligning interests is a pre-condition for change

Creating a critical mass that agree on a roadmap for change is key. As argued elsewhere in this paper, change happens when 'guiding coalitions' or a critical mass of champions coalesce around the felt need for change. These may be associations of convenience or of bona fide conviction. Be that as it were, the necessity of these coalitions remains an undeniable fact of change management. In 1991, when the economy of India faced a sudden unanticipated shock through the rise on oil prices and the drying up of repatriation from Gulf-based workers of Indian origin owing to the first Iraq war, the possibility loomed large of the country defaulting on her loans for the first time ever. This stimulus created an amazing coalition for change – ranging across the political spectrum – and ushered in fundamental reforms in the Indian economy which laid the foundations for the high growth rates that the country is seeing now.

The creation of a change coalition must be accompanied by an agreed roadmap for change. In other words, co-creating a plan to achieve the shared vision or the common goals for changing the organization is essential for successful change. In combination, these serve to create the alignment of interests for change. Development of a coalition for supporting

institutional reform, particularly when facing adversity or opposition, requires an understanding of the logic and concerns underpinning different stakeholders' positions. Managing opposition to change often requires a combination of incentives and facilitating processes that enable entrenched interests to see their own benefits within a milieu. Incentives can sometimes be of a financial nature but are most often non-monetary. Financial incentives carry with them the associated risks that organizations will buy the substance but not the vision of change. Nonmonetary incentives, such as creating opportunities to learn, developing merit-based systems that reward performance and enabling a creative working environment are often more powerful. Adequate and appropriate incentives could bring about significant change in attitudes and increase overall organizational performance.

The issue of incentives in public sector organisations can get somewhat fuzzy because they can, and often do, struggle with defining and measuring their targets, which contributes to change efforts becoming elusive. There is therefore an important rationale for strengthening local capacities for visioning, planning and results definition.

Embedding change messages in social and organizational culture

Prescribed change is likely to be resisted the most. It is therefore important to evolve language and methodology for change that is consistent with norms and values more generally but also with the culture of the organization [which tend to be interconnected categories]. The consultants working on the reform of the Karachi Water Board found that conversations entailing sitting informally with employees and joining them for cups of tea was a more effective platform for discussing and affecting change. Change coalitions and roadmaps are beset by challenges of organizational culture. It can take a while for staff to come to terms with changes in the culture of their work place – ‘the way we do things around here’. The organizational culture in many developing countries is based on hierarchy, command, and duty and patronage, with little incentive for staff to be creative and innovative. Capacity development for change, therefore, needs to pay attention to aspects of organizational culture as indeed these factors are often decisive determinants of the real direction and pace of change.

Over time, organizations must build a deeper understanding, update strategy, and become better at managing change. Hence, organizations need to conceptualize organizational change as a relatively normal phenomena and, as a continuous process, not something to approach with trepidation. Helping organizations to manage their knowledge more effectively and change into learning organizations will enhance their understanding of change and increase their capacity to internalize change quickly, thus enabling adoption of continuous change process.

Communicate, communicate, and communicate around change

Change must be communicated at all stages. In the conception stage, communications for inclusion ensure that stakeholders buy in and are less likely to become potential resisters of the change process. Communication also helps to dispel uncertainties and mitigate the potential threat it poses to those that see themselves as likely to be impacted by the change. This also implies that all stakeholders must be afforded the opportunity to input into the design of change – or at least, as much as is practically feasible. The other aspect of



communications is also a key one. Once change processes have been undertaken, a process of sharing, communicating (even advocacy) around its outcome and implications with all stakeholder groups is important. UNDP and UN country team staff have a key role to play in communicating change practices, building consensus and coalitions for change, and then enabling the change through process facilitation, negotiation, conflict management, analytical skills, advisory skills and specific change management methods, is clearly a critical input. In many countries, where the UN that has the credibility and trust of counterparts to be able to suggest transformational change and work with the government to affect such on a day to day basis, UNDP and UNCTs need to ensure the mix of skills in this field, to enable them to facilitate such change management processes.

Conclusion

Last but not least, change management describes a field of professional activity and the body of knowledge that has developed around and within this topic, primarily as a result of private sector experience. There are numerous approaches to change management: consulting firms provide a range of services to support change, and business schools teach the theory and practice of change management. Change inside a single organization is the main topic of this collection of knowledge. One for the objectives of this article, it is crucial to establish the following parameters: It assumes that change is coming soon, whether it is planned, imposed, or prompted in other ways, like by a crisis. It focusses on organizational change management procedures, lessons learnt, and practices examined in this context. After establishing the necessity and justification for change, it suggests best practices from above to influence change in public sector organisations.

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