

PLANNED ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE: ESSENTIALS FOR CONSTRUCTIVE ACTION

Garth N. Jones

University of Alaska, Anchorage, USA

Keywords: change, doctrine, evaluation, organization, planning, reform, strategy, systems,

Contents

1. Context
2. Organizations: delineations and specifics
3. Context of change intervention
4. Change components and their dynamic relationships
 - 4.1 Assessing the Social-Technical System(s)
 - 4.1.1 Change myth and doctrine
 - 4.1.2 Change goals
 - 4.1.3 Organizations and operational domains
 - 4.1.4 Structuring of change
 - 4.1.5 Application of strategies and tactics
 - 4.1.6. Evaluation of the endeavor

Glossary

Bibliography

Biographical Sketch

Summary

Change is not something unique to human experience. The speed of, and the need for, change in this globalizing world, however, is a unique phenomenon. Some societies have displayed amazing capacities to deal with accelerated change within both its planned and natural forms. Other societies have not been so successful. Regardless, remarkable progress has been made in understanding and implementing planned organizational change (POC) with the objective of minimizing social pain and dysfunctionalisms in achieving greater productivity.

POC is a complex and difficult undertaking. It demands the services of well-trained and educated professionals, especially those in the character of change agent. A proven body of knowledge and practical socio-technology now exists by which to facilitate diagnoses, assessment and systematic implementation of organizational change. Too often the missing element in change is a weak public will which is constrained by inertia and resistance to innovation. In such incidences a strong government presence is necessary in the form of a catalyst, sweeping away antipathies and spreading hope and optimism. POC rests upon positive belief that socio-economic conditions can be made better, and that the curse of mass poverty may be eradicated and a full measure of social justice achieved. In this sense the positive social action concepts of Mannheim and Myrdal win out over the pessimistic ones of Freud and Weber. Organizational affairs can be systematically changed for the benefit of all.

1. Context

Progressive societies are pluralistic and differentiated in character. Innumerable organizations in a complex and dynamic enterprise setting service specific human needs. Using the language of economists, these organizations come into existence because human beings demand products and services to meet their deep psychological needs. Goods and services have the attribute of utility, i.e. want—gratifying power. They are mere instruments to satisfy human needs. Hungry people find utility in food; food hence becomes the instrument for gratification/satisfaction of a basic need for nourishment. The criterion for the existence of any organization is its production of want-satisfying instruments (things). If an organization cannot produce efficiently and effectively those things—constituencies of a given demand/want—then there is no reason for its continued existence. Utility is the *raison d'être* of organizational undertaking. Under free enterprise competition, organizations are constantly being constituted (created) and reconstituted (reformed) and displaced (destroyed). Driven by the introduction of new technology, old organizations fail and new ones replace them. The market, even under constrained conditions, serves as the arbiter of organizational life.

Some societies seem to have an innate capacity to create organizations and foster change and development, whereas other societies seem trapped in inertia and stagnation. Change is often left to the unknown and a belief in fate, with inevitable dire socio-economic consequences.

Evolutionary change is a fact of life and must be accepted. However, too often the results of evolutionary change are costly and painful. There is a better way by which to produce “utilities” and achieve socio-economic advancement. Great progress has been made in identifying elements in change, and for their design and composition in the process of systematic implementation toward specific goal accomplishment. Change need not be a haphazard and precarious affair filled with uncertainties and dysfunctionalisms—a trial and error experience. A proven and useful body of knowledge and socio-technology is available which may be applied in constructive and beneficial ways for facilitating organizational change and societal development.

Within its paradigmatic character for development, planned change as a pragmatic instrumentality has steadily grown and strengthened. It now involves multi-images over a broad intellectual spectrum ranging from machine or mechanical to natural or biological. In their complexities organizations are regarded as organic or living systems where the technical and the social have become integrated into working components and therefore yield higher levels of explanatory knowledge. Organizational change can be carried out in a professional and systematic way.

In dynamic terms the action for change rests upon the premise that some person, group or organizational unit (treated as a behavior unit which functions as a change agent) can work consciously, deliberately and collaboratively toward attaining goals, which have been formulated and planned in advance. The objective is improved performance and operation of an organizational (client) system through the application of appropriate knowledge and socio-technology. The too prevalent condition of disjointed and untimely change may be reduced, and planned order claimed.

2. Organizations: Delineations and Specifics

Organizations as social units may be categorized into two taxonomic classes based upon their origin: natural and artificial. Natural organization emerges out of the basic social nature of humankind such as families, clans, tribes and communal groups. They take on an enduring quality characterized by strong institutional behavior (a rule governing process). In contrast, artificial organizations are deliberately created (constituted and reconstituted) to achieve specific purposes such as armies, corporations, schools and hospitals. They are expendable social units and marked by malleable institutional behavior. Except for the case of religious organization, artificial ones are usually short-lived.

In concept, both classes of organization are treated as open and dynamic socio-technical systems. By this it is meant that there is a continuing process of input, thruput (transformation) and output accomplished by means of some type of social entity. The totality of this activity and the social structure is called an organizational system or simply “organization”. Organizations by character are goal-seeking entities and survive, let alone progress, only as to their success in goal accomplishment. Families dissolve and corporations perish when goals, stated or unstated, remain unsatisfactorily achieved.

By definition the ideal organization is one in a state of optimization where the highest possible utility through social transactions is produced. This situation is only possible in a free and open society, which embodies a free and open market (free enterprise system).

Without going into technicalities, free enterprise is an exceedingly complex system, which is constantly faced with ongoing change and transformation. It has a Darwinian-like character. Organizations are continually being born, transformed, and destroyed.

Especially necessary in this critical circumstance is a healthy or constructive relationship between two kinds of organizational entities with different programmed life cycles, i.e. more permanent-type organizations (basically non-expendable) and less permanent-type organizations (basically expendable). A simple illustration may be found in Californian agricultural enterprise where at harvest time there is developed a working relationship between the farmer and transient field workers. To achieve the goal of harvesting the crop, a temporary organization is established between the two parties, which dissolves upon the completion of the harvest. The farmer's organization continues on, whereas the farmer-transients' organization passes into dormancy or vanishes. In longer time the farmer's organization may be ended at his/her death or dissolved into the form of an urban development. The farmer may fail, with farm assets taken over in bankruptcy court.

To achieve a healthy relationship between the more permanent and the less permanent kinds of organizations requires an extraordinary ethos of personal opportunity incorporated into a mature community/national socio-economic infrastructure. In developing societies this matter is complicated in that socio-economic infrastructure must be created at the same time as productive organizations are being established. A case at point is that no socio-economic progress is possible unless there exists political order

confined within a body of law and an independent court system. Successful organization demands predictability and patterned socio-economic behavior.

3. Context of change intervention

Planned organizational change (POC) is a professional undertaking not unlike the relationship that exists between a medical doctor and patient. Although there may be found in POC situations several kinds of agents such as organizational stakeholders, the most important is the change agent who is a fully fledged professional equipped with the knowledge and means to strategically intervene into the affairs of an organization (client system). Built into this relationship is that these two principal actors involved in the change, the change agent and the client organization/system, will work together consciously, deliberately, and collaboratively. Furthermore, this change relationship will result in improved operation and performance (productivity) of the client organization/system through the systematic application of appropriate social science knowledge and technology. The change effort is designed to lead a program of action and study, and not to provide for a specious description of accomplishment. Involved are mutual goal setting by the two principal actors and periodic assessment toward attainment thereof during the change process, establishment of some type of influence relationships including proper channels of communication between the principle change actors, and institution of rational planning with the capacity of reification and reiteration, and the systematic conduct of administrative action.

Organizational change brought about by radical means of terror, violence, coercive force, and related measures will not be considered in this section, even though these practices have been prevalent throughout the last century in the quest to bring about wholesale socio-economic change.

Seeking how to disaggregate and thereby work with ongoing evolutionary and/or revolutionary configurations of change forces within the totality of POC is mandatory. Natural organizational change is always present, i.e. a situation where no apparent consciousness, deliberativeness, and predetermined goal setting in the process of change has prevailed.

POC assumes that the change can be packaged and delivered over a definite time-line period with clearly demarcated development stages, although it recognizes that changed and organizational adjustment is always a continuous process. Organizational dynamics cannot be stopped; they may be speeded up and slowed down.

In operational terms the final objective sought by the endeavor of POC is a new state of equilibrium for the proper functioning of the organization as an effective production system. Basically, all the significant components of the organization's production system are in support of each other. As a consequence members of the organization find heightened psychic security because of reconciliations of fundamental socio-cultural differences. Built into the change state, if it did not exist previously, is a tendency toward movement of change for development and growth.

Development pertains to improved capabilities of the client organization to meet demands placed on its production system. Growth pertains to increase in size of the production system. Both of these include the three discrete types of organizational output—goods, services and psychic satisfactions.

Involved in a particular change action, in the barest analytical terms, are found seven operational elements: (1) a client organization encompassing when necessary its operational domain (system); (2) a change agent along with other change actors; (3) a change myth and doctrine embraced to a more or less extent by the client organization and change agent and/or other change actors; (4) a set of change goals conceived as final organizational ends; (5) a perceived structuring of change, both as a grand strategy and as an action program; (6) a systematic application of change strategies and tactics; and (7) an authentic assessment and evaluation of the change endeavor. Each of these operational elements in some way or another is inextricably linked to the others in some patterned whole. Only with utmost care is it possible to give attention to one of these operational elements without considering the other(s).

4. Change components and their dynamic relationships

4.1 Assessing the Social-Technical System(s)

Even a simple agrarian enterprise is a complex system. The organizational boundaries in the production process often become difficult to determine where there are usually found multiple resources—agents that introduce and facilitate input of productive factors.

Change dynamics can best be understood in the content of a socio-technical system which lends itself to posing a number of questions such as: (1) What are the strategic parts of the system? (2) What is the nature of their mutual dependency? (3) What are the main processes in the system which link together the parts and facilitate their adjustments? (4) How are higher and/or lower order systems linked together? (5) What are the power and communication centers and patterns? (6) What are the goals of the organizational system? Assessment of the extent and kind of change will determine how well these questions are addressed.

Although not complete, since every POC has its own peculiarities, nevertheless seven change components have singular importance and exist/persist throughout the course of change dynamics. They comprise the elements of POC earlier mentioned within the terms of a socio-technical system.

-
-
-

TO ACCESS ALL THE 16 PAGES OF THIS CHAPTER,
Visit: <http://www.eolss.net/Eolss-sampleAllChapter.aspx>

Bibliography

- Argyris C. and Schon D.A. (1978). *Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective*, 302 pp. Massachusetts, USA: Addison-Wesley.
- Buchanan D. (1999). Politics and organizational change. *Human Relations*. 52, 609-631. [Case study into large-scale planned organizational change.]
- Cherns A. (1976). The principles of socio-technical design. *Human Relations*. 29, 783-792. [Covers the fundamentals of socio-technical systems as to organization change and development.]
- Clark P.A. (1974). *Action Research and Organizational Change*, 172 pp. New York: Harper & Row. [Advances action theory underlying successful planned organizational change.]
- Connor P.E. and Lake L.K. (1988). *Managing Organizational Change*, 192 pp. New York: Praeger. [A practical guide to managing organizational change.]
- Dunn W.A. and Swierczek F.W. (1977). Planned organizational change: toward grounded theory. *The Journal of Behavioral Science*. 12, 135-157. [An award-winning article which strengthens retrospective analysis.]
- Etzioni A. (1975). *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations*, revised and enlarged edition, 584 pp. New York: The Free Press. [Comparative organizational compliance, on power, involvement, and their correlates.]
- Goodman P.S. and associates (1982). *Change in Organizations*, 446 pp. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. [Contains current writings of leading scholar-practitioners with emphasis on people factor.]
- Gross E. (1969). The definition of organizational goals. *British Journal of Sociology*. 20, 277-694. [Advances taxonomy of organizational goals.]
- Hadler D.A. and associates (1995). *Discontinuous Change*, 295 pp. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. [Addresses organizational challenges that top executives face in globalization.]
- Jones G. (1969). *Planned Organizational Change: A Study in Change Dynamics*. 243 pp. London, UK: Routledge and Kegan Paul. [An empirical study of planned organizational change in action.]
- Jones G. (1997). *Creating Successful Organizations*. 124 pp. Anchorage, AK, USA: University of Alaska Anchorage. [A general statement on technical features of planned change in holistic terms.]
- Kanter R.M. (1983). *The Change Masters*, 321 pp. New York: Simon and Schuster. [A classic study in managing organizational change.]
- Lichtenstein B. (2000). Self-organized transitions: a pattern amid the chaos of transformative change. *Academy of Management Executive*. 14, 128-141. [Advances methodology against which internal change can be carried out.]
- Lippitt G., Langseth P. and J. Mossop (1985). *Implementing Organizational Change*, 185 pp. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. [A practical guide to implementing organizational change from a behavioral approach.]
- Lippitt R., Watson J. and Westley B. (1958). *The Dynamics of Planned Change*, 312 pp. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World. [A classic in planned change.]
- Morgan, G. (1997). *Images of Organizations*, second edition, 485 pp. Thousand Oaks, CA, USA: Sage. [Employs metaphor to understand multi-faceted organization.]
- Nadler D.A. and associates (1995). *Discontinuous Change*, 295 pp. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. [Addresses organizational challenges that top executives face in globalization.]
- Nevis E.G., Lamcourt J., and Vassallo H.G. (1996). *Intentional Revolutions*, 287 pp. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. [Advances seven-point strategy for transforming organizations in transitional time.]
- Perkins, D.N.T., Nieva V.F. and E.E. Lawler E.E. III (1983). *Managing Creation*, 279 pp. New York: Wiley. [Confronts challenge of building a new organization with special attention to effectiveness of work and quality of life.]
- Perrow P. (1986). *Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay*, third edition, 305 pp. New York: Random

House. [A survey of complex organizations in holistic terms with emphasis on sociological perspective.]

Raichers A.E., Wanous J.P. and Austin J.T. (1997). Understanding and managing cynicism about organizational change. *Academy of Management Executive*. 11, 48-59. [Discusses how to deal and cope with resistant forces within organizations undergoing change.]

Reger, R., Gustafson J.V. and DeMarie S.M. (1999). Creating earthquakes to change organizational mindsets. *Academy of Management Executive*. 8, 31-46. [Planned change requires initial powerful force to create new favorable change environment.]

Singh J.V. ed. (1990). *Organizational Evolution: New Directions*, 336 pp. Newbury Park, CA, USA: Sage. [Groundbreaking book exploring new direction in organizational evolution.]

Tichy N.M. (1983). *Managing Strategic Change: Technical, Political and Cultural Dynamics*, 345 pp. New York: Wiley. [Comprehensive approach in managing change in large corporations.]

Biographical Sketch

Garth N. Jones holds a Ph.D in Political Science and Economics from the University of Utah, USA. He has held academic positions at several Universities in the USA and elsewhere. Among these are Brigham Young University, University of Southern California, University of Anchorage, all USA and University of Gadjah Mada (Indonesia), University of the Punjab (Pakistan) and Chengchi University (Taiwan). He was a senior Scholar at East West Center (Hawaii/USA) and a Visiting Fellow at the Academie Sinica (Taiwan/RPS). He was a Fulbright Scholar to Taiwan.

His primary research concerns planned development and reform in comparative terms, with experience in south, southeast and east Asia. The state of Alaska (USA) constitutes a special area of interest. In various capacities Dr. Jones has been associated with such international agencies as the U.S. Agency for International Development, the United Nations and the World Bank. Field trips and research has been underwritten by For Foundation. He was the founding Dean of the College of Business and Public Policy (UAA).