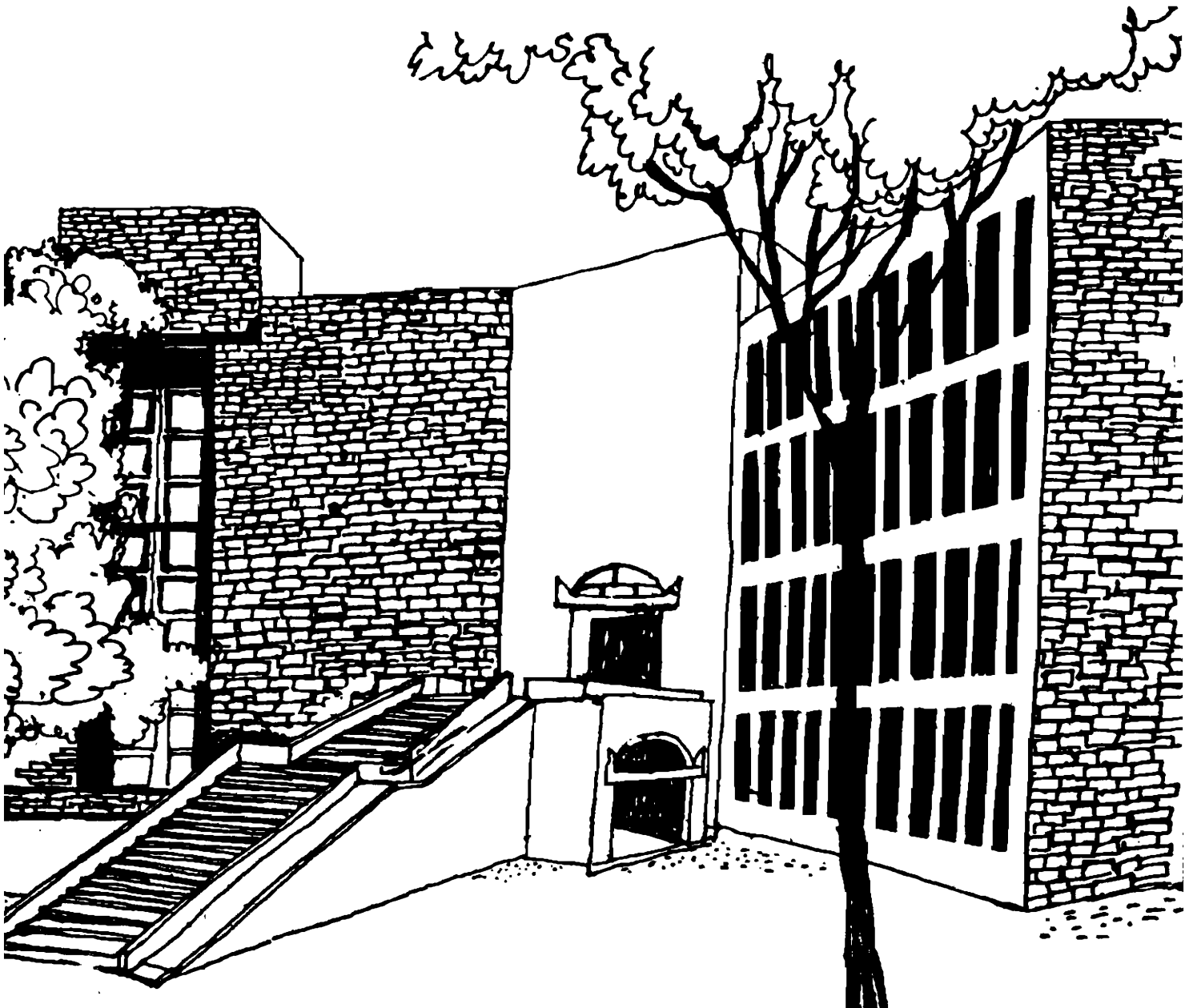




Working Paper



MANAGEMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

By

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W.P. No. 98-06-01 / 145
June 1998

The main objective of the working paper series of the IIMA is to help faculty members to test out their research findings at the pre-publication stage.

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Management of Organizational Change

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Abstract

Management of change in organizations has been one of the most important concerns of professionals in the recent times. A manager, an administrator or a consultant, who wishes to understand the dynamics of change, is most frequently confronted with questions, such as what is the concept of change? How to decide what to change, and then how to change it? What one needs to keep in mind while implementing changes in organizations? There are no standard answers to these questions. Many more such questions are being asked and need to be asked, and scholars have been making efforts to find answers to these questions. The present paper highlights some of the important issues involved in the management of organizational change, and identifies areas of gap in the change management literature which warrant further empirical and theoretical developments.

Management of Organizational Change

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Introduction

Change has been an area of interest to scholars for quite some time. The importance of forces of change and resistance was pointed out way back in 1940s by psychologist Kurt Lewin (Strebel, 1994). However, management of change in organizations has become a matter of significant concern in last few years only.

Change has been recognized as one of the most important conditions not only for growth, but also for survival. "Experience shows that successful companies are those that have initiated change in technology, marketing, or organization, and managed to keep a lead in changes over competitors," says Anders Wall, president of Beijerinvest of Sweden, a consortium of companies (cited in Feltman, 1994). With liberalization and increasing globalization, it has become imperative for organizations to change. The market leaders of yesterday who did not change are nowhere today. Plenty of such examples can be found from various industries--textile, engineering, pharmaceutical, etc. The need to change has been felt by organizations. Organizations in recent times are organizing seminars to help employees understand the need and process of change. Executives are being sent to attend change management programmes to learn the techniques to implement changes in organizations.

It may be interesting to explore what is behind the change "movement." If change is a reality of life, how come its importance was not realized earlier? Now, though lately, when its importance is realized, why is it resisted, and how can resistance to change be dealt with? Is change always painful? What one needs to keep in mind while implementing changes in organizations? These are some of the issues that a manager, an

administrator or a consultant, who wishes to understand the dynamics of change, is confronted with.

Stimulants of Change

Changes in environment have been considered to be factors triggering changes in organizations. Social, political, legal, technological, and economic factors are considered to be the most important factors of external environment causing changes in organizations. Many researchers have suggested that organizations must constantly adapt and change to meet the challenges posed by newer technologies, government policies, and international competition. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) argued that organizations can change to fit environmental requirements, but organizations also have a choice to alter the environment so that it fits the organization's capabilities. Organizations use various tactics, such as merging with other organizations, diversifying, etc. to adapt their environments to them. Child (1972) argued that organizations can adapt proactively by choosing an environment or market they want to operate in. Among the internal factors-- growth achieved due to age, size, variety, and prosperity; need to grow; crisis due to heavy financial losses, leaving of key people, etc. are considered to be the important ones.

Change: The Concept

Before exploring deeper issues related to change, it would be worthwhile to examine what change is, and how organizational change is defined. The dictionary meaning of word "change" is - "making or becoming different; variation; substitution of one for another." Authors have written about change using different terms such as organization development, total quality management, workplace reforms, quality circles, business process reengineering, learning organization, downsizing, and turnaround. Efforts of scholars seemed to be in finding ways or means to make (the organization) different. Does an organization in order to change need to adopt all different ways, e.g., reengineering, TQM, etc., or some of the ways, or a particular way? How to decide what to change, and then, how to change it? There are no standard answers to these questions.

Since change may be considered as “making or becoming different,” one needs to be clear as to “what” in organization is to be made different--its people (their attitudes, values, behavioural patterns, etc.), technology, structure, or processes. Sadler (1992) made a distinction between two kinds of organizational changes. The first kind of change has been described as “reorganizing,” which involves a wide range of decisions on redefining roles, regrouping activities, changing reporting relationships, introducing new system, etc. Reorganizing becomes necessary in organizations from time to time with changes in circumstances. The second type of change has been described as “organizational transformation,” which also involves wide range of decisions affecting structure and systems. The aim of reorganizing is to adapt an existing system to make it more effective in achievement of its goals, whereas the aim of organizational transformation is to alter organization’s fundamental characteristics, and transform it into radically different form, and this kind of transformation can succeed if cultural changes are brought in.

The Change Process

Change has been described as a continuous process involving several stages. These stages have been described using different terms by various people. Many years ago, Kurt Lewin (1947), in his pioneering work on change, proposed three phases of successful change: unfreezing the present level, moving to the new level, and freezing on the new level. The purpose of unfreezing is to get people prepared for change by making them understand the need for change, and also communicating what needs to be changed. In the second stage, change is introduced and implemented. It is this stage where people learn new behaviour patterns. Various mechanisms such as force, rewards, etc. are used to induce change. Once new behaviour patterns are learnt, refreezing is done by providing necessary reinforcements to ensure that the change gets stabilized.

Lippitt, Watson, and Westley (1958) expanded three phases of change as suggested by Lewin. They proposed five phases of change process. These are--development of a need for change (unfreezing), establishment of a change relationship, working toward change (moving), generalization and stabilization of change (freezing), and achieving a terminal

relationship. They found these phases to be proceeding not necessarily in a clear-cut sequential manner but quite mixed up and proceeding in cyclic motion. Greiner (1967) identified six phases of successful change process. Pareek (1982a) proposed eight stages of change--initiation, motivation, diagnoses, information collection, deliberation, action proposal, implementation, and stabilization. The effective management of change according to Beckhard and Harris (1977) involves developing an understanding of the current state (A), developing an image of a desired future state (B), and moving the organization from A to B through a transition period (C).

Paths to Change

The models for inducing change within an organization have been classified by Sashkin (1974) into two broad categories--adoptive models that are concerned with producing specific changes, and adaptive models that are concerned with producing 'changingness', a general state conducive to change. An adoptive model is better if the aim is to get the client change in specified ways to adopt new practices or to use new technologies, etc. However, if the aim is to help client become more adaptable and open to change, an adaptive model is appropriate (Sashkin, 1974).

Change has been looked at as either incremental or drastic. For many years, change was regarded more as an evolutionary rather than a revolutionary process (Greiner, 1967). Stoddard and Jarvenpaa (1995) argued that evolutionary path to change is better than the revolutionary path, and organizations not facing a crisis may actually do themselves more harm than good by trying to implement radical changes in a revolutionary way. According to them, an organization facing a burning crisis may have to choose a costly and risky revolutionary path in order to survive. The evolutionary path promotes change from within, and is managed by current leadership and employees. The motivation for change arises from the desire to do better whereas revolutionary path promotes change from outside--consultants or executives new to organization. It promotes heroism and tough decisions, such as downsizing and cost cutting. However, Goss, Pascale, and Athos (1993) argued that in the present scenario, incremental change is not sufficient for

organizations. "They don't need to change what is; they need to create what isn't" (Goss et al., 1993, p.98).

Kimberly and Quinn (1984) identified three types of transition--restructuring, repositioning, and revitalizing. Restructuring refers to alterations in organization's basic components and their interrelationships; repositioning refers to alterations in the organization's relationships to its markets; and revitalizing refers to changes in an organization's style of operations. A distinction has also been made between continuous transformation and discontinuous transformation. Stace and Dunphy (1995) identified two kinds of continuous transformation: (a) developmental transition, that is driven by collegial culture and accomplished through various quality programmes, such as TQM, and (b) task focused transition, that is driven by top by setting the direction or strategy. Discontinuous transformation has been described as extremely complex involving changes at the micro as well as macro level under the condition of tremendous uncertainty.

Impediments to Change

Most of the existing work starts with an assumption that resistance accompanies change. Further, resistance has been viewed as a negative predictor of change. Implementation of change is thought to be impossible unless resistance is dealt with promptly and properly. Resistance to organizational change has been an issue of concern to those who want change.

Change involves becoming something different than what one is today; moving from something familiar to something unfamiliar. Since, it is a movement or shifting from one state to another, from well-known to something not that well-known; apprehensions, anxieties, insecurities, and fears along with enthusiasm and curiosity are expected to be parts of the change process. Enthusiasm, and curiosity as one hopes the new state to be satisfying and rewarding. And anxieties, fears, and apprehensions as one is not sure how rewarding and satisfying the new state would be. Nadler (1987) argued that since

uncertainty is associated with major organizational change, it makes people anxious because of which they may react to change with withdrawal, panic, or active resistance.

Karp (1995) argued that initiating change is a two-phase process. Phase one is "Presenting the Change," and phase two is "Working with the Resistance" that accompanies almost every change. Most people do a good job in phase one and then stop, not even realizing that phase two exists and that the job is only half done (Karp, 1995, p. 274). Maurer (1996) identified three levels of resistance from least intense to most intense. The least intense level is where people resist to the idea of change itself as they are either confused or ignorant or they have their own ideas, etc. but there is no hidden agenda. The more intense resistance is deeper and indicates that there are other forces at work, such as distrust, bureaucracy, fear of loss, etc. The most intense resistance is the deepest where people do not trust the management and may regard it as the enemy.

Eccles, Nohria, and Berkley (1993) contented that most people are not opposed to change per se. They resist because they are opposed to the particular change or an action being proposed. According to them, people resist specific changes that they find threatening or disagreeable. Change is resisted perhaps because change in recent years has quite often imposed closures, loss of position and benefits, and loss of jobs (Binney & Williams, 1995). People resist to change because of inadequate rewards, lack of involvement in planning, vested interests, lack of trust in initiator, satisfaction with status quo, or if the purpose of change is not made clear to them (Mink, Esterhuysen, Mink, & Owen, 1993). Mink, Esterhuysen, Mink, and Owen (1993) believed that resistance to change is a response to inappropriate management of change rather than the change itself, and suggested to create right climate of change by building trusting relationships, communicating openly, encouraging two-way feedback, addressing individual concerns, and explaining readiness to change.

Since very long, attempts have been made by scholars to identify means and ways to overcome resistance. In fact, since 1940s, researchers have been advising strategies to

overcome resistance. The first systematic study on resistance to change was conducted by Lester Coch and John French in 1948. They found participation by workers in the change process, and explanation of need and nature of change to be extremely helpful in overcoming resistance. From late 1940s till date, researchers have been attempting to suggest ways to overcome resistance.

Pareek (1982b) argued that effective steps to reduce resistance could be taken if the reasons for resistance to change were understood well. Various sources of resistance and steps to be taken to deal with such resistance as suggested by Pareek were as follows: perceived peripherality of change (source)--participation in diagnosis (coping mechanism), perception of imposition (source)--participation and involvement (coping), indifference of the top management (source)--active support from the top (coping), vested interests (source)--fait accompli (coping), complacency and inertia (source)--fait accompli (coping), fear of large scale disturbance (source)--phasing of change (coping), fear of inadequate resources (source)--support of resources (coping), fear of obsolescence (source)--development of skills (coping), fear of loss of power (source)--role redefinition and reorientation (coping), and fear of overload (source)--role clarity and definition (coping).

Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) identified six strategies to overcome resistance. They also placed these strategies along a continuum representing the increasing potency of each strategy: communication, participation, facilitation, negotiation, manipulation, and coercion in that order. They emphasized that an appropriate strategy or a set of strategies should be selected by the manager depending on the level of resistance. More potent strategies, such as manipulation and coercion should be used if resistance is likely to be more deeply rooted. Building an atmosphere where people's resistance to change is reduced, and they start looking forward to change is important. Lippitt (1982) suggested that by being specific about change, showing the need for change, allowing participation of people in planning, trying to retain as many people as possible, avoiding using personal appeal to gain acceptance for change, keeping employees informed about change, addressing employees' concerns about failures and job security, and refraining from

creating high work pressure during implementation of change, leaders can create the climate of receptivity to change.

Implementation of Change

Beer, Eisenstat, and Spector (1990) argued that one of the reasons of failure of most of the change programmes is that they are guided by a theory of change that is fundamentally wrong. The theory states that changes in attitudes lead to changes in individual behaviour; and changes in individuals' behaviour will result in organizational change is wrong. The most effective way to change behaviour according to Beer et al. (1990), is to put people into new organizational context, which imposes new roles, responsibilities, and relationships on them.

Implementation of change has been considered as a multidimensional process, and it starts once the decision to initiate a change programme has been taken. Implementation can be described as institutionalization and internationalization of change. Institutionalization means making the change a permanent part of an organization; and internalization means stabilization of change (Pareek, 1982c). Effective change requires an understanding of both what the change should be and how it should be implemented. The problem solving may turn out to be an expensive trial and error process, if solutions are developed without proper understanding of organizational problems (Nadler, 1987).

According to Kotter (1995), major change in an organization may be extremely difficult if head of the organization is not an active supporter of it. Successful transformations in small as well as large organizations, generally result when not just the chief executive or chairman or president but also a group of few key members come together and share common vision. Implementing change is not possible with a simple individual's efforts. It requires efforts and commitment of many individuals. Pareek (1982a) suggested six main rôles to be performed for successful organizational change, and various different functions to be performed by each role. The six main roles are as follows--the role of corporate

management (chief executive and other top executives), consultant(s), the counterpart, implementation team, chief implementator and the task forces.

Based on observations of a large member of companies trying to implement changes, Kotter (1995) identified eight steps for successful transformation of an organization. These eight steps are as follows: establishing a sense of urgency by examining market and competitive realities, and identifying and discussing crises or major opportunities; forming a powerful guiding coalition by assembling a group with enough power to lead change effort; creating a vision and developing strategies for achieving that vision; communicating the vision; empowering others to act on the vision; planning for performance improvements, and rewarding employees who make improvements; consolidating improvements and producing more changes; and institutionalizing new approaches by articulating the connections between new behaviours and organization's success, and developing the means to ensure leadership development and succession.

Many researchers (Beer, Eisenstat, & Spector, 1990; Glaser, Abelson, & Garrison, 1983; Jansen & Jong, 1996) proposed certain steps or plans for managing effective organizational change. Beer et al. (1990) identified six sequential or critical paths - mobilization of commitment to change through joint diagnosis of business problems; developing a shared vision of how to organize and manage for competitiveness; fostering consensus for the new vision, competence to enact it, and cohesion to move it along; spreading revitalization to all departments without pushing it from the top; institutionalizing revitalization through formal policies, systems, and structures; and monitoring and adjusting strategies in response to problems in the revitalization process.

Strebel (1994) identified eight different change paths by distinguishing between strong and weak forces of change, strong and weak forces of resistance, and balance between them. These change paths were further divided into reactive and proactive change paths. Reactive change paths include resistance, renewal, revitalization, and restructuring; and proactive change paths include corporate realignment, cascading implementation, focused

reengineering, and bottom-up experimenting. Strebel argued that viable change path which successfully adapt the company to its environment could be identified by answering a series of questions about the relative strength of the forces of change and resistance.

Karp (1995) listed eight assumptions that facilitate the process of productive change: (1) change is best facilitated by developing ownership in the change process; (2) change will occur most easily in an atmosphere of enlightened self-interest; (3) people do not resist change, they resist pain or the threat of it; (4) people tend to resist the opposite of change, which is boredom; (5) power is the ability to get what you want, resistance is the ability to avoid what you do not want--resistance is a subset of power, not of change; (6) resistance is best dealt with by honouring it, rather than suppressing, avoiding, or minimizing it; (7) people can best work with resistance from others by first understanding and accepting their own; and (8) change leadership involves helping people to make better choices in light of current realities, and then assisting them in taking full responsibility for making these choices happen.

Nadler (1987) identified three types of problems in the implementation of organizational change, and suggested ways to deal with those problems. First is the possibility of increase in political activities as change poses the possibility of upsetting the power balance among groups. Shaping the political dynamics before the actual implementation of change may help in dealing with this problem. Second problem is of individual anxiety as people are not sure about what is actually going to happen to them and to their jobs. Motivating people through communications and rewards for accepting the change may help. The last type of problem is of organizational control as change may make formal control systems inappropriate during the change efforts, and this problem may be resolved by paying attention to the management of transition state.

Summing-Up

Drucker (1992) argued that the modern organization must be organized for constant change. "Society, community, and family are all conserving institutions. They try to

maintain stability and to prevent, or at least to slow, change. But the modern organization is a destabilizer it must be organized for systematic abandonment of whatever is established, customary, familiar, and uncomfortable, whether that is a product, service, or process; a set of skills; human and social relationships; or the organization itself. In short, it must be organized for constant change” (Drucker, 1992, p.96). It is high time that organizations be proactive in implementation of change. Sadler (1995) found most organizational changes to be reactive in nature. Changes are initiated as a reaction to some event or situation--financial crisis, merger, etc. There have not been many examples of proactive change. Proactive change involves anticipation of need to change, which may be possible by having high degree of sensitivity to changes in the environment or the ability to pick up early warning signals (Sadler, 1995).

Most of the organizations-irrespective of their age, size, and nature are currently at one or the other stage of change management process. Some have just initiated the change process, others have reached at the peak of implementation stage, still others are planning to introduce changes. Failures in organizations are generally very costly. To successfully manage an organizational change, what managers most need to know is to what to change, why to change, when to change, and how to change. And to find answers to the what, why, when, and how to change requires a thorough understanding of organization’s strengths and limitations, and an in-depth analysis of environmental conditions. Careful and detailed planning of change process is highly desirable for effective management of organizational change. Many things which were never anticipated or thought about are likely to occur, no matter how well one plans out a change process. Continuous review of change process is essential to avoid pitfalls. Any change in organization affects people. Even if everyone in the organization does not get affected by a change, some of them do get affected. Involving people in planning about change helps in preparing them for change, and reducing resistance to change.

A number of guidelines and suggestions on management of change have been offered by scholars. Learnings from successful change experiences could certainly help. However,

most of what has been written on organizational change is based on studies conducted on organizations for short periods. There is an urgent need for longitudinal studies to draw appropriate learnings. Organizations might do exceedingly well immediately after implementing a change(or changes). Data on what happens over a period of time would be able to throw light on what worked and what did not, and also why something worked, and why something didn't work.

Secondly, the process of change has been elaborated by many scholars. Not much is known on how to stabilize a change. The chances of failure might become high because of lack of stabilization and institutionalization of changes initiated in an organization. Information based on expanded case studies reflecting issues related to institutionalization and stabilization would certainly help. Thirdly, a number of issues related to resistance to change need further exploration. More specifically, issues such as--whether any change is resisted or some specific changes are resisted; people of any age group resist change or older (or younger) people resist the most; any level (workers vs. management, junior vs. senior managers, etc.) employees resist change or employees of a particular level resist the most need to be addressed in future research to understand the concept of resistance, and to deal effectively with it.

And lastly, there is a need to determine the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of changes introduced in an organization. This would help in deciding 'what' to focus on in the management of change, and 'how' to go about implementing it. Evaluating changes in an organization as a success or a failure is not so easy. Some of the issues that complicate the process of evaluation are (a) whether a change should be considered as a success because it got implemented the way it was planned or it is to be decided on the basis of its impact on the organization as a whole, (b) 'what' to look at in order to evaluate the impact on organization--its balance sheet, people's morale, or something else, (c) whether to look at organization's short-term 'gains' or focus on its long-term 'benefits' in evaluation. These are some of the issues that need to be explored in detail for a better understanding of management of change in organizations.

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