Book Review

Managing Change A Critical Perspective 2ⁿᵈ Edition

Girish Mangleek [1]

Author : Mark Hughes
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The first edition of this textbook was published early in 2006 titled as Change Management which depicted organisational change as a thing with a specified boundary. Since then a lot of changes have taken place continuously at a fast pace in all the spheres of life and keeping those changes in mind the author has come back with the second edition of the book titled managing change which depicts organisational change as an ongoing process without clear boundaries. So the changes happening continuously can be viewed in a new perspective.

The major high light of this new edition is probably the most tangible change is in terms of the title, changing from Change Management to Managing Change. The new title is believed to better indicate the dynamic and continuous nature of changing. The second edition iscertainly an enhancement to the previous book ensuring a breadth of coverage of managing change.

The book has a total 366 pages out of which 295 pages are devoted to the text divided into 20 chapters and remaining pages are dedicated to Appendix, References and Index. The textbook is divided into five major parts: Introduction; External and Internal Change Contexts; Managing Change; Developments in Managing Change; and Conclusions.

Part 1 Introduction

Chapter 1 introduces the debates that make managing change so fascinating, yet simultaneously so contentious. In this chapter managing change conundrums are discussed which highlights the ongoing change process. Any serious study of managing change needs to clarify the subject of study and this is achieved through Chapter 2 on Organisational change classifications. The study of organisational change is necessary to clarify and classify organisational change. The Chapter on organisational change classification helps in understanding of

[1] Associate Professor, Vaikunth Mehta National Institute of Cooperative Management, Pune-7

organisational change in terms of what is known and what is unknown about a particular change. Managing change in an organisation can never be separated from the past of the organisation. Chapter 3 on History and organisational change focus upon the historical legacy that informs and misinforms understanding about organisational change. The readers of the book will get a fair understanding about organisational change and also about popular management ideas to familiarise understanding about organisational change.

Chapter 4 introduces and explains paradigms and perspective and theories which give a clear view of the theory and practice of managing organisational change.

Part 2 External and Internal Change Contexts

The unique nature of both external and internal organisational contexts is the focus of part 2. Chapter 5 with a heading on why organisation change explains the concept of why organisations change and why it is required. It highlights the concepts of triggers and drivers of organisational change and also explains the role of environment mainly economic environment which necessitates change in the organisation.

Chapter 6 of the book deals with organisational design and change and identifies major challenges that organisation design has to address and also discusses the development of organisational design theories and different organisational forms. The author has defined organisational design as the process by which managers select and manage aspects of structure and culture so that an organisation can control the activities necessary to achieve its goals.

The chapter 7 of the book focuses upon relationships between strategy and change. The study of strategic change raises challenges to the study of managing change The chapter explains that there is neither consensus about how to effectively manage/explain change, nor there is consensus about manage/explain strategy to change.

Groups and teams play an important role in managing change. The chapter 8 of the book focuses upon groups and teams within the process of organisational change. It helps readers in understanding major organisational group and team theories and involvement of groups and teams in organisational change.

The chapter 9 discusses the involvement of individuals in processes of organisational change. It has been explained that organisations change are implemented through their members and even collective activities that take place in organisation are the result of an amalgamation of the activities of individuals. Change is an ongoing process and is relevant to everyone who is influenced by individual differences and perceptions.

Part 3 Managing Change

This part features the activities that have been considered integral to managing change. The chapter 10 of the book focuses upon the role of leaders and leadership with specific reference to organisational change. The book clearly differentiates between leading and managing change in organisational context and offers practitioners/managers an eight step process for creating major change. The author has specifically established that managing change in isolation may be insufficient, without considering leading change.

Chapter 11 of the book deals with how change messages are conveyed and helps in understanding the potential barriers and blockages and also availability of different options of the process of communicating change. The reader gets a fair idea about the concept of corporate communications and why, where, what, when and how to communicatechange. The concept of change communications is very aptly discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 12 of the book titled "Resistance to Change" defined resistance and reasons for resistance. Occurring and manifestation of resistance and approaches to managing resistance are introduced and discussed in the chapter. It also explains how resistance to change initially appeared irrational and problematic and how to overcome resistance for achieving the goal.

Chapter 13 focuses upon organisational culture sometimes also referred as corporate culture and practicalities of changing such culture. Cultural change attempts to change how employees think and feel about work, its purposes and priorities. The perceived benefits of cultural change include competitive advantage, conflict reduction, coordination and control. It apprised readers about national cultural differences, reasons for managerial interest in organisational culture, understanding different theories of organisational culture and manageability of cultural change.

Chapter 14 is about organisational learning and the aim of this chapter is to evaluate the contributions of organisational learning and learning organisations to manage change. Organisational learning and learning organisations are differentiated and discussed in terms of their implications for managing change. Learning and changing are closely related, with learning informing processes of changing and changing informing processes of learning. In spite of such close relations the organisations encounter difficulties in resolving issues arising due to organisational change.

Part 4 Development in Managing Change

Chapter 15 is about power, politics and organisational change, the author has explained the dynamic nature of power, politics and organisational change which are closely related. It has been expressed in the chapter that involvement in managerial work means being involved in power and politics, as the managerial role involves managing power both in terms of exercising it and in being subject to it.It is must for managers to understand the role of power and politics in achieving changes in the organisation.

Chapter 16 on "Ethics and Managing Change" states that changes introduced in the organisation in an ethical manner are easy to introduce and accepted by the people, which can benefit the individual, their organisation and largely to the society. Ethically managed change can be introduced by acknowledging employee expectations which will be having a longer lasting impact on the changes introduced.

Chapter 17 on change agents and agency is incorporated in the book by the author as the discussion of change agents and agency is an integral part of any book on managing change. Change agents play a number of different roles in the change process at different levels and the role of change agent is regarded as one of the most important factors in effecting change. Change agents are responsible for directing, organising and facilitating change in the organisation. The term change agency is often favored over change agent as it signifies a group rather than a single individual, overseeing the change process.

As a further extension to the above topics chapter 18 focus upon HR involvement in managing change. The author had discussed the rationales for HR involvement in managing change;various theories of HR involvement in managing change etc. This chapter very well signifies the role of HR in managing change in the organisations.

To understand managing change thoroughly we must take account of the ongoing technological changes taking place inside the organisation as well as the relationships between technological change and organisational change. Chapter 19 of the book deals this issue very well. The readers of the book gets a fair idea about the term technology, differentiate theories of technological change and understanding the concept of technological determinants and social determinants.

Part 5 Conclusions

Chapter 20 draws together many of the themes and debates featured in the book through a broad overview of managing change in terms of three

significant managing change themes: time dimensions, outcomes of managing change and the study of managing change. This chapter specifically concerned with the strengths and weaknesses of studying managing change, opportunities for development and threats to the continued study of managing change.

To sum up the above referred book develops an advance understanding about managing change from a critical perspective. Encourage an appreciation of managing change at different levels and Provoke debate in terms of understanding the past, the present and the future of managing change. This book facilitates in developing understanding about organisational change at different levels ranging from the individual, groups, teams and the whole organisation. The author has made an effort to establish that past and present have a profound influence upon organisational change.

Extensive literature review of managing change research gives an opportunity to the reader for exploring managing change in greater depth and develops deep understanding of the subject.

At the end each chapter defines key terms and the structure of the chapter which orients the reader about the learning outcome of the chapters read. Research cases of famous organisations that have been published in leading academic journals developed by undertaking original research guides the readers about how change is being managed in real. The concluding commentary draws together debates featured in the managerial approaches and critical perspectives sections.

The case studies which have been developed specifically for this textbook and given at the end of the chapter offer an opportunity to test the understanding and also ensure the potential application of theories to realistic change scenarios. The discussion questions offer an opportunity to discuss the contents of the chapters. The chapters conclude with key readings, suggesting books that are very relevant to the issues discussed in the chapter.

To sum up the textbook offers a detailed coverage of managing change topics and debates. It develops advance understanding about managing change at different levels with a critical perspective and develops understanding about the past, the present and the future of managing change. The book is must read for the practicing managers as well as for the management students.

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