Framework and Core Dimensions of Organizational Change Management

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Abstract

Background: Change is ubiquitous in organizations, and so is the need to understand it deeply and efficiently guide people through the evolution using frameworks and processes tailored for anticipating and addressing increasingly complex challenges. Volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA), combined with rapid technological advancements and shifting market conditions arise, and the change must swiftly be adopted if the organization wishes to survive in the long run. Evaluating the numerous layers that make up OCM and the methodologies to best examine disruption compared to adoption and adaptability to fruition are among the objectives this research sets forth...

Methods: This work explores the evolution of organizational change management from 2018 forwards through contemporary literature reviews, the development of phenomena within the field, and existing theories. Dissecting, analyzing, and integrating, along with synergy within the relations of outlined components within the OCM structure that make up the dimensions of the framework are the focus of this exploration.

Results: The research identifies "Diagnosing the Need for Change and Assessing Readiness" as the primary phase of a process, outlining where focus and resources must lay. "Planning and Designing the Change" aids vision creation alongside objective planning as the research suggests.

Conclusion: Effective application of OCM principles and processes results in greater adoption of new initiatives, less adverse impacts, improved organizational agility, and achievement of strategic goals. This study improves our understanding of OCM as a strategic capability to cope with uncertainty and sustain success.

Organizations can actively manage transitions and cultivate adaptive workforces by embedding OCM into their fundamental philosophy.

Keywords: Organizational Change Management, Change Dimensions, Change Leadership, Change Models, VUCA, Organizational Transformation, Strategic Change.

1. Introduction

In today's climate of constant change and uncertainty, organizational change has become a continuous necessity rather than an episodic event for businesses looking to grow and remain competitive (By, 2021; Hayes, 2022). This nonstop business environment, which includes technological interruptions, new market requirements, and globalization, is best summarized by the acronym VUCA, representing Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Schoemaker, Heaton, & Teece, 2018). Change is recognized as a need, but managing change has proven to be a global issue as leaders and managers struggle to shift organizational culture. Change efforts fall short of expectations and do not produce the results intended because, most of the time, the organizational and social factors at play are oversimplified (Stouten, Rousseau, & De Cremer, 2018).

One important focus of these challenges is preparing, equipping, and supporting individuals, teams, and whole organizations to change with a focus on emerging as a useful disciplinary Divergent Organizational Change Management (OCM). Even though OCM models and frameworks abound, integration is lacking so that one singular and contemporary understanding can serve both academics wishing to expand the theoretical knowledge and practitioners seeking to improve their change processes—and this is what motivates the current study and its exploration of the foundational theory and effective core dimensions of OCM.

Accurately defining the problem is the central goal of the research which is to provide an accurate outline and thorough review of the multiple dimensions that construct Organizational Change Management. More precisely, this research intends to:

- Propose the primary interdependent components of a refined OCM model from literature contemporarily and historically.
- Analyze the implications and constructs of each dimension on theory and practice.
- Describe how interdependence is achieved among the core cited components in relation to successful and sustainable transformations within the organization.

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oundational elements of OCM, allowing organizations to more efficiently navigate their ability to activate and enhance their change competencies. As referenced in the introduction, this study is intended to promote further understanding of how OCM can be leveraged as a strategic tool in managing disruption, uptake and use of the new ways of working by employees, and the pursued organizational objectives while developing resilience in an environment of uncertainty.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a brief description of the developing concept of OCM; Section 3 describes the process used in the literature-based inquiry; Section 4 offers the identified dimensions of OCM and discussion; Section 5 discusses the findings with implications for practice and limitations; and Section 6 concludes the paper providing a summary and future research suggestions.

2. The Evolving Concept of Organizational Change Management (OCM)

The notion of Organizational Change Management (OCM) has changed more recently from earlier, mechanistic models to recent frameworks focusing on the human aspect of behavior and organizations (Burnes, 2020; By, 2021). In a world often described as volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA), the need to handle change is no longer a choice but an essential part of competence to remain viable and successful (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Schoemaker et al., 2018). OCM is about managing the "people side" of the change to achieve a required business outcome. It is concerned with the application of structured methods to help individuals, teams, and organizations shift from a current state to a desired future state, so they can enable and realize strategic objectives (Creasey, 2019; Hiatt, 2006).

OCM is more than just tools or checklists; it is a discipline that applies to integrating leader behaviours, communication, stakeholder management, training, and process re-engineering, in a manner that makes movement through a transition safe, effective and efficient. Cameron and Green (2019) identify "successful change management" refers to "helping individuals, teams and organizations to make successful personal transitions leading to the adoption and realization of change." This means understanding what change means, how to anticipate resistance and, if necessary, how to extinguish it, and creating a workplace where employees are not only willing but capable to implement new ways of working.

3. Methodology

Within the methodology section, this article utilizes a literature review approach to analyze the theoretical framework and key components of the existing literature

related to Organizational Change Management (OCM). The literature review process is focused on collating existing knowledge from multiple trusted sources, to directly address and analyze Organizational Change Management.

In terms of the literature selection criteria, the included literature were primarily those published since 2018, but did reflect some limitations for foundational or key "classic" works. The literature primarily included peer-reviewed academic journal articles, change management literature including books, reputable industry reports (e.g. Prosci reports) or frameworks on change management, and established theory. The key search terms used in academic databases (e.g.: Scopus, Web of Science, ABI/Inform, Google Scholar) for OCM included "organizational change management", "change leadership", "change models", "resistance to change", "sustaining change", "change implementation", and "organizational transformation."

The review process included the following phases:

- Identification: Finding articles, books and reports using the relevant search terms.
- Screening: Reviewing the recognized literature to determine the relevance against the study objectives. This included only works that were concerned with OCM frameworks, processes, dimensions or models.
- Eligibility and Quality Assessment: Evaluate the selected papers for quality and trustworthiness.
- Data Extraction and Synthesis: Systematically extract the key concepts, definitions, models and empirical evidence around the core dimensions of OCM. The authors used a thematic analysis approach to identify phenomena describing common themes to help structure a combined framework of core dimensions of OCM. This included recognizing similarities and differences in theoretical approaches or practitioners' models to draw a unified understanding.

The exploration attempted to identify the core dimensions in OCM frameworks, and explore the way that they interact to create successful and sustained organisation transformation, rather than to critique or compare individual frameworks or models in exhaustive detail.

4. Core Dimensions of Organizational Change Management (OCM)

Organizational Change Management is a broad process, consisting of a number of interconnected dimensions or phases. These various dimensions are called by a variety of names depending on the models used (e.g. Lewin, Kotter, ADKAR®, McKinsey 7-S) including any number of specific stages or elements, however, the general dimensions

remain consistent. In this regard and based on current literature (e.g. Cameron & Green, 2019; Hayes, 2022; Hughes, 2021; Prosci, 2021), the key dimensions of Organizational Change Management are as follows:

4.1 Diagnosing the Need for Change and Assessing Readiness

This first dimension involves an analysis to diagnose the necessity of the change and understand whether the organization is ready to proceed with change.

- Identify Drivers and Urgency This involves scanning the external environment (e.g. changes in the market, new technology, competitive pressure, regulation PESTEL analysis is relevant here) and the internal environment (e.g. declining performance, inefficiencies, low morale, misalignment to strategy) to help to identify compelling reasons for the change (Cummings & Worley, 2019). Creating a sense of urgency is key (Kotter, 2012).
- Determine Organizational Readiness This includes evaluating whether the organization is ready and able to change. This includes looking at leadership commitment, employee perspective and past history of changes, cultural receptiveness to change, available resources to change, and skills and knowledge in place (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Holt, Armenakis, Feild, & Harris, 2007). Although many organizations will look at the change in a range of perspectives, many use readiness surveys (Lindeman, 2019), focus groups and, stakeholder analysis.
- Determine Change Problem/Opportunity Describing in concrete terms the change that needs to happen and the vision of the desired future state gives a place to begin some forward planning (Nadler & Tushman, 1989, the congruence model, although was presented in 1989 is still a relevant model).

4.2 Planning and Designing the Change

Once a thorough diagnosis has taken place, this dimension will help you develop an overall plan and design for the change initiative.

Developing a Clear Vision and Objectives: Describing a clear vision of the future state and specific Meaningful, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) objectives for the change establishes a clear purpose and sense of urgency (Kotter, 2012). The vision must demonstrate the advantages of the change for the organization and its employees. • Selecting a Change Model/Approach: Selecting a suitable change management model or framework (e.g., Kotter's 8-Step Model, Lewin's 3-Stage Model, Prosci's ADKAR® Model, appreciative inquiry) will help guide the

overall process (Cameron & Green, 2019; Hiatt, 2006; Stouten et al., 2018). This often depends on the nature of the change, its extent, and complexity.

- Developing Change Planning Documentation: This includes the plans for communicating about the change, engaging with stakeholders, developing sponsorship, on-boarding training, resistance management, and allocating resources (Creasey, 2019). It is important to identify the key stakeholders and understand the degree of influence and impact of those stakeholders (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997, and still relevant in stakeholder theory).
- Designing Interventions: This includes designing the actual activities and interventions to support the change initiative, such as workshops, team-building activities, process redesigns, or structural changes (Cummings & Worley, 2019).

4.3 Implementing the Change

his dimension is the "action phase" where all planned change strategies and interventions are enacted and put into practice; this will often have to manage significant human and organizational complexity.

- Communication and Engagement: Ongoing, clear, and two-way communication will be essential during the implementation phase for keeping employees informed, developing buy-in and managing communication (Goodman & Truss, 2004; Klein, 2021). The steps to engagement are about mobilizing employees into the change process.
- Resistance Management: Resistance to change is, of course, a natural reaction for many people and will need to be anticipated and handled with empathy and through purposeful, deliberate actions. Active listening, addressing resistance, highlighting the benefits, individuating support, and able to bring resistors along in the process, can all go a long way in managing resistance (Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008; Oreg, Vakola, & Armenakis, 2011).
- Training and Support: Providing the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources, together with systems and procedures for employees to operate productively in the new environment is also essential. This might include formal training, coaching, mentoring, and/or support mechanisms that are easily accessible (Hughes, 2021).
- Enabling Action and Removing Obstacles: Leaders need to allow employees to act on the vision and remove obstacles that may impede the progress made; this may include changing systems, structures, or processes that do not adequately support the new way of working (Kotter, 2012).
- Building Short Term Wins: Building upon visible short-term wins helps keep the momentum going; it strengthens the new behaviors, and displays the change is possible.

4.4 Sustaining and Embedding Change (Institutionalization)

Effecting change is one thing, but ensuring it continues to live on in the normal work of the organization is quite another.

- Reinforcing New Behaviors and Processes: This requires aligning the reward structure, performance management and organizational culture to the new desired behavior(s) so that new behaviors may be encouraged and sustained (Beer, Voelpel, Leibold & Tekie, 2005; Schein & Schein, 2017).
- Monitoring, Evaluating and Adjusting: The process of change must be continuously monitored, feedback must be gathered continually, and the evaluation continues with adjustments made against stated objectives. Adjustments prompt improvements (Hayes, 2022). Data collection and analysis is important here.
- Embedding Change into the Culture: There needs to be a continuous measurement of the degree to which the change is embedded into the culture or the organization's normal "the way we do things around here," (Cameron and Quinn, 2011, for this current time; Schein and Schein, 2017) which means that new values, beliefs, and norms become practices for daily action.
- Continuous Learning and Improvement: Organizations should ensure that they learn from and take inventory of every change effort to determine what worked most successfully and what could be improved in specific regards to future changes, establishing a learning culture of capable organizational change to improve capabilities (Todnem By, 2005).

4.5 Change Leadership

While leadership can often be a theme that can be blended with other aspects, it is increasingly being acknowledged as its separate and overarching dimension, which is critical to the effective delivery of change.

- Advocating for the Change: Leaders should, by their actions and communications, make it clear what they are advocating for and will inspire individuals to commit (Gilley, Gilley, & McMillan, 2009; Higgs & Rowland, 2011).
- Creating a Guiding Coalition: Successful change leaders must also create an influential coalition that supports their change effort (Kotter, 2012).
- Behave as expected: Leaders should be seen to "walk the talk" when modelling behaviours and attitudes they expect from others both during and after the change (Groysberg & Slind, 2012).
- Support and Understand the human effect: Effective leaders must understand the human effect of change and provide psychological safety, support and empathy to employees, as they are dealing with uncertainty (Edmondson & Lei, 2014; Huy, 2002).

- Create a Culture that can handle Change: Strategic change leaders aspire to create a culture of resilience and adaptability that reflects the value of continuous improvement and innovation (Oreg & Berson, 2019; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018)

5. Discussion

This comprehensive examination of current OCM literature illustrated an identifiable and corporeal process of the change process with five dimensions - diagnosing the need and readiness, planning and designing, implementing, sustaining and anchoring, and leadership of change. The identifiable dimensions are strongly aligned with recognized change models, for example Kotter's 8-Step model with notion of urgency, vision, communication, empowerment, short-term wins and anchoring, and the ADKAR® model by Prosci with its emphasis on individual awareness, desire, knowledge, ability and reinforcement. The intention of the dimensional lens is to elaborate the concepts and approach them via a more expansive lens that recognizes their processual and interdependent nature.

The dimension "Diagnosing the Need for Change and Assessing Readiness", as the first dimension performatively distinct from the others, reinforces the recognition of new and evolving ways for organizations to proactively manage the change process and their performance. An understanding of both the external drivers (e.g., marketplace, technologies), and the organization's internal capacity (e.g., leader commitment, employee perception, organizational receptivity) is essential before undertaking any transformational endeavor (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Holt et al., 2007). This kind of diagnostic rigor prevents organizations from having poorly conceived changes adopted, or underestimating the extent of support and resources required. The "Planning and Designing" dimension moves beyond just the planning logistics to include initiating a compelling vision and deciding the strategic direction. The literatureof change management is consistent with needs that organizations have a clear "why" and "where to" to feel mobilized and directed (Kotter, 2012). Moreover, forming a model of the change, choosing it carefully, and then mapping out detailed sub-plans (communication, engagement, training), indicates the systematic and strategic aspect of OCM today (Creasey, 2019).

"Implementation" is a particularly "people" stage. Again, effective communication, authentic engagement and empathetic approach to resistance were seen again as critical factors for success (Ford et al., 2008; Goodman & Truss, 2004); these are a million miles apart from almost every earlier management change perspective and reflect a growing body of theory and understanding about the psychological and social dimensions of change. Supporting people with adequate training is not "admin": it is

empowering their agency and developing the capacity to deal with the new state (Hughes, 2021).

he domain of "Sustaining and Embedding Change" acknowledges a well-known challenge of many change initiatives - the inability to sustain change. We know that to institutionalize new behaviours over the longer term, it is vital to align the organization's systems, especially the rewards system and culture, with desired behaviours (Schein & Schein, 2017). This domain also emphasizes the importance of continuous monitoring and learning, driving a shift from OCM as a distinct project to OCM as an ongoing organizational capability (Hayes, 2022). Fundamentally, the worthy separation of "Change Leadership" as a separate domain acknowledges the all-pervasive nature of leadership influence across all stages. Strong leaders take on roles as advocates and champions of change and building cohorts of support, modelling new behaviors, being empathetic, and establishing a supportive culture that builds adaptability and resilience (Oreg & Berson, 2019; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018), which transcends management to inspirational and transformative leadership.

5.1 Practical Implications

There are many practical implications from these findings for managers, leaders, and OCM practitioners:

- Holistic perspective. OCM must be viewed holistically and acknowledge that all five dimensions are equally important and interrelated. Any OCM effort can be jeopardized if an organization overlooks one of its dimensions.
- Leverage understanding of diagnosis and readiness for change. Although investing considerable time upfront in drawing out the diagnosis for change and assessing the organization's readiness for change is resource intensive, it is much better for the organization than spending resources later on trying to fix a failure.
- Prioritizing for people. OCM is primarily about people. People become engaged because of unified approaches to communication, engagement, training and resistance. These processes help to deal with the human side of change.
- Develop change leadership capability. Organizations should develop change leadership capacity at all levels for ensuring that change takes place, rather than simply at the executive level.
- Plan for sustainability. In planning change, organizations should consider how the change can be sustained and embedded in the culture and systems of the organization.
- Continuous improvement. OCM should be seen as an organizational capability that can be continuously improved upon and enhanced through evaluating learnings from their experiences with changes in the organization.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

Although this study provides a comprehensive literature review, there are limitations. First, because it is a literature-based study, there is no new data collected, rather a synthesizing of existent knowledge. These documented practices will vary in terms of generalizability in different organizational contexts, industries, and cultures within each of the dimensions. Secondly, although we aimed for contemporaneous literature (after 2018), OCM is multifaceted and forever evolving and new knowledge and models continue to come forth. Finally, the study offers a high-level overview of core dimensions; the specific tools, techniques, and implementation depth within each dimension will vary based on the individual change initiative.

5.3 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research could take the framework further by:

- Empirical studies to test the synergistic nature of the five dimensions and their relative influence on successful change in diverse contexts.
- Investigating the challenges and best practices of implementing each dimension in digitally transforming organizations, or in particular industries.
- Researching the enhancements that emerging technologies (e.g., AI, big data analytics) make to each OCM dimension.
- Refining more contextualised models of change readiness that better articulate cultural and contextual issues.
- Investigating the competences for change leadership in VUCA environments..

6. Conclusion

In summary, Organizational Change Management is an essential practice for organizations that are looking to make sense of the modern world, and achieve their strategic objectives. This research shows that OCM is not simply a reactive process, but a proactive, structured process with several important dimensions: diagnosis of the change case and readiness for change, planning and design, implementation that is flexible and empathetic, sustaining and institutionalizing change, visioning and supporting change leadership. These dimensions are interconnected and act together to successfully lead an organization through change. The diagnosis of the case for change, and the readiness of the organization to change is the foundation for effective and successful change interventions that are tailored to the organization. The planning and design phase of organizational changes presented is the conversion of the diagnosis of the issue to vision, objectives and strategies action. The added value of planning and

design is the clarity and coherence about the change. Eligibility of any change strategy however is the successful execution of the implementation phase. Implementation requires a considerable amount of skill; including effective communication, stakeholder engagement, resistance management, and empowering the organization to enact plans and strategic objectives- to transform behaviors and ways of working. Sustaining new ways of working - whether it is operational, behavioral, or organizational forms, is important in order for changes to be absorbed and institutionalized.

Importantly, change leadership is at the core of the practice, and drives the entire effort, advocating for the vision, establishing trust, and creating a change-productive and change-competent culture. The study illustrates that, ultimately, a holistic and performed OCM process enables organizations to not only successfully implement particular initiatives, but also to build organizational resilience overall, create a culture of ongoing improvement, increase employee engagement and well-being, and to pursue and attain sustainable competitive advantage. By embedding these OCM practices and principles into their philosophy and practice of OCM, organizations can more successfully navigate transitions, minimize disruption, and thrive within an ever-changing context.

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