Managing Change Processes

1. Introduction

Organisational change is a well-known phenomenon, in order to survive organisations have to adapt themselves regularly to be able to meet the demands of the changing environment. This is true for private sector companies trying to meet the changing demands of clients and facing the competition of existing and emerging competitors. It is true for government departments in case major political changes took place, or political decisions led to different government services to the public. It is also true for development organisations (governmental and non-governmental) facing changing donor and government policies as well as a changing socio-political environment.

In dealing with organisational change it is important to consider the need and results of organisational change as well as the dynamics of change processes. Concerning the need and results of change we raise questions as: What is the actual situation and what is the desired situation? What are the requirements for change? Answers to these questions are yet the first step of the change process. Change processes are often difficult to be understood and are felt to be rather unpredictable. Basic challenges in change processes include how to motivate for change, how to overcome possible resistance, and how to manage the transition process ensuring commitment, so that the result is improvement and not chaos. A well-planned change strategy is needed to ensure that change leads to actual improvement of the organisation.

Talking about change, we deal with change on three different levels: the content of change, the process of change and the role of the change agent.

Content
This refers to the “what”, the subject of change. The subject of change is indicated in the proposal (e.g. through a logical framework), resulting from a thorough analysis of the organisation and its context. In the planning the purpose of the change is indicated as well as the overall objective of the change, the results to be achieved and the activities to be undertaken. The content of change is not dealt with in this syllabus, but has been dealt with particularly during the organisation and training need analysis.

Process
This refers to the “how”. When we are going to implement the change, in other words when we are going to carry out the activities indicated in the logical framework resulting to the purpose of the change, we have to consider the consequences of these activities, the effect on the people involved, the hindrances we might encounter on the way, the people who will carry out these activities, the order and time schedule of these activities, etc. We have to organise the process of the change. We can develop a change strategy in order to plan and organise the implementation of change.

The role of the change agent
This refers to the “who”, who is managing the change process. What is the role of the change agent, the one who has the major responsibility for the change process, who takes the lead in the change process, organises the implementation of change.
Often the ones who read this syllabus are the change agent, or the manager of change. So, what is your role? What are you supposed to do and to pay attention to?

This syllabus attempts to assist in improving the understanding of change processes in terms of steps and conditions and by providing a number of guidelines for management of such processes.

2. The change process

If we look at a change process\(^1\) we can define four major phases. Each phase has key elements that will be dealt with in the next chapters of this syllabus. The four basic phases and the related key elements are the following:

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<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Key elements</th>
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<td>Creating awareness and willingness to change</td>
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<td>- purpose / vision</td>
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<td>- supportive power and faith in the realisation</td>
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<td>- communication and information</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- building coalitions</td>
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<td>2. Organising the transition</td>
<td>Creating commitment to change</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- transition plan / a clear process</td>
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<td>- expectations management</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- assessing readiness</td>
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<td>- analysing resistance to change</td>
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<td>- work through teams, create ownership</td>
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<td>3. Implementing change</td>
<td>Developing the ability to change</td>
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<td>- offer supportive means</td>
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<td>- develop momentum</td>
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<td>- create short term wins</td>
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<td>- identify and address hindrances</td>
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<td>4. Consolidating change</td>
<td>Institutionalise new approaches</td>
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<td>- prevent that ‘old’ behaviour reoccurs</td>
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<td>- develop procedures and co-ordinating mechanisms</td>
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3 Motivating change: 1st step of the change process

3.1 Change drivers

One of the first elements in a change process is to create a basic awareness on the problems and opportunities among key actors in the organisation. It is in the first place important to convince the whole organisation of the necessary to change, to establish a sense of urgency. Such need for change, such reason to change or something that triggers a change process are so-called change drivers.

Change drivers can be identified by scanning the environment, looking at the changing demands of the clients, analysing the developments of possible competitors and collaborators and by surfacing dissatisfaction in the organisation with the present state.

\(^1\) Compare also with the change phases of Lewin: unfreezing, change, refreezing and the Learning cycle of Kolb: doing, reflecting, thinking, deciding
The reason for a new planning proposal could be considered as a change driver as well. Change drivers imply the following:

- major developments breaking with the past
- problems that keep on popping up
- new ways of dealing with the situation

Examples of change drivers can be the following: A new policy of the ministry of education to form School Governing Bodies, in order to have more participation of parents and the community; a school strives for a higher pass rate of students; resources are drying up and a school has to look for new ways of financing the school.

Change drivers may be different for various groups and people within the organisation. It is useful to identify these differences and to take them into account when developing an action plan. Where for the organisation the change drivers are often external (growing demand, reduction of finance, government policy change, etc.), for individuals the change drivers may be related to the working conditions (salary and benefits, challenge, working situation etc.). Matching organisational change drivers with individual change drivers is a major issue in making change processes work.

In various cases change drivers, like e.g. an unsatisfactory present situation, are already there for some time, but have not received adequate attention. Creating awareness on those factors may be part of a strategy to establish a clear drive for change. Through this process of creating awareness, the initial change drivers may change in strength.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities that can be used to identify or to create awareness on change drivers:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• new policies / regulations</td>
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<tr>
<td>• results of monitoring and evaluation</td>
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<td>• comparing performance with other organisations (indicators)</td>
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<td>• comparing performance with past periods</td>
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<td>• documenting/reporting problematic incidents</td>
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<td>• public pressure to express the need to address a certain issue (e.g. gender)</td>
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<td>• thematic meetings, workshops, discussions with individuals, floating new ideas</td>
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<td>• training/courses</td>
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3.2 (Re-)defining the change purpose, creating a shared vision

Apart from a change driver, it is also necessary that staff and management define what the major focus is of the intended change: what is to be achieved? For example, is it a simple change to make procedures faster, or does it go deeper, addressing the culture of the organisation? Is the change focused on the improvement of products and services, or is the change only internally, creating another division of tasks the target group will not notice? The identification of change drivers helps in developing a vision of the future, but it should often be based on, or complemented by an adequate analysis (e.g. SWOT analysis) of the present situation.
For an organisation a change process should contribute to its capability and performance, which is mostly reflected in the quality and the quantity of the output and the utilisation of resources (inputs). It should be realised that most internally oriented change processes (changing the structure, improving systems, improving culture, etc.) should actually also lead to improved performance. An example of the purpose of a change process for a school could be better management of the school in order to achieve higher pass rates of students.

3.3 Sufficient supportive power and faith in the realisation

Whatever their benefits to the organisation, changes are not likely to succeed if there is not enough supportive power. Management of the organisation has to show its commitment by providing concrete support. If not, it will affect the trust in the change process. A powerful coalition of staff, some managers and other stakeholders (board members, donors etc.) may also provide sufficient support to convince others about the necessity of the change process. It is useful to note that sometimes support from outside (target groups, donors) is essential for the success of the change process. Ultimately, management has to show its determination to the implementation by drawing conclusions for staff that does not co-operate.

Staff and management should not only have a shared vision, a realistic picture of the future, a powerful supportive coalition of stakeholder, but they should also belief that it is possible to reach that state and that the organisation is willing and capable of getting there. It requires a certain level of skills and abilities, commitment and a certain degree of willingness to take risks.

3.4 Clear communication and information

Change implies uncertainty, as the future can never be fully predicted. This uncertainty will even increase if there is no adequate information about the direction and the route. Clear communication and information is necessary to avoid rumours that could mislead staff (and management) in managing the change process. People may refuse to co-operate in a change process in which they expect hidden agendas contrary to their own benefits.

3.5 Building coalitions

In the process of convincing others about the necessity of change and the applicability of the vision, coalition building is an important component. A powerful coalition to support persons with a vision or dream is a necessity to let dreams become true. The assurance of the support of key individuals and groups determines whether or not the operationalisation of a vision will have impact.

4. Organising the transition process: step 2 of the change process

4.1 Developing a transition plan

It is not sufficient to know what the organisation is heading for, there should also be an idea about how to get there.
It is necessary to develop concrete ideas on the change process, the steps to follow in order to get closer to the future state. This requires an operationalisation of the vision: creating clarity about essential details, developing a shared understanding while diminishing differences in interpretation, getting a clear understanding of the impact on various stakeholders and making a transition plan. The elements for the transition plan can be derived from the logical framework. This does not imply that all steps should be completely spelt out. There should be at least a broad plan and clarity and consensus about a concrete first step in the right direction.

4.2 Assessing the readiness of people

Based on an analysis of the reactions of different stakeholders on the information about the planned change, the actual and potential readiness of people can be identified. In this respect it is important to realise that people often need time to get used to a new idea. They need the time and the opportunity to disengage from the present state. Readiness for change can be assessed with the use of the instrument “Self-Diagnosis: rate your readiness for change” (separate MDF document).

4.3 Expectations management

Another important element is the availability of information versus the existing expectations. The following table may be useful in assessing the situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fully</td>
<td>Informed pessimism (Doubt)</td>
<td>Informed optimism (Confidence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badly</td>
<td>Uninformed pessimism (Scepticism)</td>
<td>Uninformed Optimism (Hope)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen that pessimism can be based on bad information or on low expectations. The first requires improved knowledge on the plans, the second an improved plan. It can also be seen that optimism is not necessarily positive if it is based on limited information. There can be unjustified expectations, which may be counterproductive at later stages, turning into informed pessimism. It can be concluded that it is important to keep expectations realistic by providing sufficient relevant information, developing a realistic picture of the future.

4.4 Analysis of the resistance to change

One of the most difficult components of a change process is how to deal with resistance. Therefore, it is useful to analyse the type of resistance you can expect. We can distinguish expressions of resistance, reasons for resistance and ways to deal with resistance. We can imagine that in schools the principle and teacher might have initial resistance to the obligation to install a School Governing Body. In the syllabus “Resistance to change" this is dealt with (separate MDF document).
4.5 Working through teams, creating ownership of the change process

It is important to involve various stakeholders in the process to share ownership. Change requires creativity in problem solving. Creativity can only emerge when people feel responsible. Teamwork where people from different backgrounds complement each other, stimulating each other to find answers to bottlenecks can be a very powerful tool in change processes. It prevents that the burden is put on the shoulders of just one manager getting all the blame and criticism, while the others wait for him to fail.

5 Implementing change: step 3 of the change process

5.1 Offer supportive means

An important issue in developing a change strategy is the way people should be supported in the change process. Different groups and persons may require different support, based on their readiness (see the learning cycle) and the way in which the intervention takes place. Possible interventions supporting and enhancing changes may include advice, training, facilitation of participation, compensation and instruction. In the syllabus “Resistance to change” support activities are described more elaborately.

5.2 Developing momentum

Stakeholders should get confident and have faith that the change can and will be done. It is therefore often necessary to set examples that can be followed by others. Using this type of leadership behaviour can generate energy in support of change. In addition, organisational change requires that people creatively look for solutions for existing problems. Empowerment of others to act on the vision developed and encouragement of initiative, risk-taking and non-traditional ideas will increase the organisational capacity to deal effectively with emerging problems.

5.3 Planning for and creating short-term wins

People involved in a change process need tangible results to remain confident that the process will work out positively. Creation of such short-term benefits can assist in keeping up the spirit with increased credibility. This may clear the way for additional, further reaching change efforts. Setting milestones not too far is a method to create such results. The recognition and rewarding of employees involved in improvements when reaching a milestone contributes to creating a feeling of achievement.

5.4 Identifying and addressing hindrances

There are always unforeseen aspects in change processes. The future is never fully predictable. As such a change process requires build-in feedback mechanisms to know whether or not the process is on track and what bottlenecks are encountered. There still may be barriers from past experiences, unwritten rules that have to be discovered and addressed, negative side effects that were not foreseen, crucial dilemmas that have to be solved, the resources allocated to different units involved may not be effective etc.
Addressing bottlenecks and hindrances effectively often requires strong persistence and perseverance, but is necessary to maintain and further increase the credibility, which is required for consolidating the changes.

6 Consolidating change: step 4 of the change process

This should be the rewarding phase of the change process. In this phase we can harvest the results of our previous efforts. If the major hindrances and bottlenecks are solved, operations can be smoothened by starting the fine-tuning of relations and balances between staff, systems, structures and policies. At this stage it will often be important to let all major and minor contributors feel that they have achieved something substantial (‘making everybody a hero’).

6.1 Monitoring of change

The change agent has to monitor the change progress (content) and the attitude and behaviour of the people involved. Is the organisation going the right direction towards the vision and is the desired future becoming reality? Are the people involved sowing supportive attitudes and desired behaviour? What are the successes achieved? It is important to monitor the new achievements and to share it with the people and even celebrate these successes.

If new external factors occur that influence the organisation corrective action might be necessary. When people fall back in 'old' behaviour constructive feedback is needed.

6.2 Organise integral change

An organisational change will affect the organisation as a whole. If the level of intervention of the change is focussed on one of the elements of the organisation (think IOM) it will affect other elements of the organisation. For example when the focus of change is the structure of the organisation, it will also affect the systems and procedures, the organisational culture, the management style etc. It is therefore important to imply other elements in the change plan and monitor on it. In other words organise the embeddedness of the change in the whole organisation.

7 Roles in a change process

Besides the role of the change agent, who is responsible for a change process, two other major roles can be distinguished in a change process: the change sponsor and the manager. The change sponsor is the one who is responsible for the contents and the final results. The manager can be the change agent or the sponsor or both, depending on the organisation and the scope of the change. All three roles are necessary in each process and it is useful to make a deliberate choice about who to involve in each of these roles. It may determine most of the success.
7.1 The role of the change agent

A change agent is a person who has a major responsibility for the change process. The change agent can also be called the process owner. The change agent is not necessarily a stakeholder, but could be assigned temporarily to assist in the improvement of the organisation, department or unit, sometimes called the interim manager.

A change agent has four main roles:

- Managing the creation of a vision;
- Managing faith in the transition;
- Managing emotions, mobilising people to support and act upon the vision;
- Managing the time and energy that is put into the transition process.

The role of the change agent depends to a large extent on his relation with the other stakeholders. As such the other stakeholders should have faith in the change agent. He should be committed to a widely accepted solution and should have sufficient personal skills to influence the human side of change.

Below the main roles of a change agent are described, including some related guidelines:

1. Managing the acceptance of a vision
- Facilitate the creation of a clear and acceptable picture with positive and realistic expectations;
- Allow room for participation;
- Leave choices open;
- Share information to the fullest extent possible;
- Look for and reward pioneers, innovators and early successes to serve as models;
- Address interests.

2. Managing Faith
- Avoid obvious ‘losers’ from the change, but if there are some: be honest with them from early on;
- Make standards and requirements clear: tell exactly what is expected of people;
- Repeatedly demonstrate your own commitment;
- Offer positive reinforcements: let people know that they can do it.

3. Managing Time & Energy
- Allow digestion of change requests, getting accustomed to the idea;
- Help people feel compensated for the extra time and energy required;
- Divide a big change into familiar and manageable steps.

4. Managing Emotions
- Minimise surprises;
- Allow expressions of nostalgia and grief related to the past, then create excitement about the future.

7.2 The role of the sponsor

The sponsor is the stakeholder who bares the final responsibility for the change is highly responsible for the change itself. He can be called the change owner. The sponsor has four major characteristics:

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We use the masculine form for writing purposes, but persons referred to could also be women.
1. **Sufficient Power:**
   - Power to legitimate change;
   - Prepared and able to monitor;
   - Consequence management: Prepared to reward and punish/show displeasure.

2. **Sufficient Motivation:**
   - A sufficient degree of pain with the present situation;
   - The commitment to pursue the task knowing that a personal, political, or organisational price may be paid for implementation.

3. **Sufficient Understanding**
   - of the impact of change on the organisation;
   - of the impact of change on the target group involved;
   - of the full scope of the target group involved;
   - of the resources necessary for implementation.

4. **Ability and willingness to Support:**
   - Ability and willingness to show support in public;
   - Ability and willingness to meet with key individuals to influence them;
   - Capacity to demonstrate sustained support for the change in case of short-term disadvantages.

### 7.3 The role of the manager in change processes

In change processes managers can perform both the role of the change agent and the role of the sponsor, depending on which role is most effective, the availability of other potential agents and sponsors and their own ability and skills. In relation to change processes two concepts are important for a manager: empowerment and the creation of an enabling environment for learning and change.

Some major guidelines for managers in order to empower and to create such an enabling environment are included in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rules to encourage change</th>
<th>Rules on how to stifle change</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being a coach as a spider in communication web</td>
<td>Being a supervisor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobilising others to self-organise</td>
<td>Organising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating decision making in team</td>
<td>Forcing decisions, deciding yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivating others to utilise their problem solving capacity for common goals</td>
<td>Telling others what, when &amp; how to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Striving to win-win situations</td>
<td>Avoiding or forcing conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receptiveness to new ideas</td>
<td>Suspicion on ideas from the ‘bottom’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having an attitude to learn new things</td>
<td>Attitude of knowing everything</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creating respect by giving the example.</td>
<td>Demanding respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on praise, honouring those who deserve it</td>
<td>Emphasis on criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ample information and warnings</td>
<td>Secrecy and surprise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steering with feedback</td>
<td>Steering with rules and regulations</td>
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### 8. Conclusion

This syllabus has provided phases in organising a change process, the key elements for each phase and guidelines for the different roles of the change agent, the change sponsor and the manager.

To conclude we would like to make the following remarks:

- Change cannot be forced. It is a process and not a sudden switch or push of the button. Experience and practice, often including trial and error, is required. There is no instant recipe that always works;
- Change leads to insecurity and thus creates always a certain resistance. While resistance may not be appreciated, it may be a safeguard against over-hastened decisions. It forces to think twice and often instigates improvement upon plans;
- Change does not follow a fixed manual and rarely follows the planned logical route. Even the best change plan will be influenced by external, uncontrollable turbulences of technological, economical and political character over which we do not have much power.

The above remarks do not mean that we should not plan change, but that any change plan should have a certain flexibility and that we always have to be alert on the specific aspects of that particular situation of these people in this organisation. Successful change requires creativity in dealing with problems, solutions, the transition process and the roles that are being carried out by key-actors.