Transformational change: role of leadership essay

Business, Management

Transformational Change: Role of LeadershipIntroductionChange is inevitable in any organization. Changes in organizations take place in many dimensions, for example where an organization transforms its general strategies for success. Another form of change that can take place within an organization is where the organization adds or eliminates an important section or practice (Helfat et al.

2007). A change can also take place where an organization wants to alter its nature of operation. These are some of the ways through which change can take place within an organization. Every organization evolves through life cycles, going through various changes. For the development of any organization to take place, it needs to undergo various changes at different points in their growth. The topic of organizational change is one that has been greatly researched and a lot of literature written.

There are two basic types of changes: incremental/continuous change and discontinuous/transformational change. Continuous change is basically on the points where the organization is in equilibrium. This kind of change is basically involved with ' doing thimgs better.' Transformational change on the other hand is the kind of change that takes place in the time where the organization is in disequilibrium. This is the change of the organization to a new state (Burke 2002).

This is the kind of change that is the focus of this paper. Transformational changeTransformational change is a transformation in the culture of an organization that comes about through the changes in fundamental strategies, and processes that are the firm has employed in the past. This

kind of change is felt by the entire organization and is endorsed over a period of time. It is a state of transformation, not a not a mere extension or development. This is the kind of change that is not continuous and this is why it is also referred to as discontinuous change.

This kind of transformation is usually bold and compelling not just an improvement of what is usually done. Transformational change is a kind of change that requires a new kind of innovation and team-working (Mudacumura 2000). It should be one that is exciting and reveals passion and creativity from the members of the organization. After all this is accomplished, it is a fact to claim that there is a state of change, a real transformation. For this to be achieved there is need to alter and expand the restricting mindsets in which the organization operates. There are existing attitudes, viewpoints, underlying principles and logics that should be altered and expanded. In transformation change, it is crucial to analyze how people view their challenges and opportunities and the ways they consider in handling them. This change is usually a collaborative one (Burke 2002).

Transformational change is basically defined by what it is not. It is not transitional change or continuous change (Landau 2005). Transitional change in an organization works in restoring certainty in the prevailing ideas about the organization and the market.

This is basically making minor strategic changes to maintain the status quo. Transitional change does not handle the breakdown of deregulation, free trade and emergency management. This is where transformational change

becomes critical. It utilizes the breakdown in the mentioned factors to justify fundamental changes.

Transformational change comes in to rectify the organization where things are not running the way they should. It is this kind of change that calls for the creation of fresh notions that change people's comprehension of the market and the economy (Conger, Spreitzer and Lawler III 1999). Organizational leadership need to be aware of the fact that transformational change is crucial just as regulation is crucial to protect people and government to ensure the welfare. Transformational change does not take place any time or on impulse. It only takes place where the prevailing set of ideas that operate in establishment of order and stability are no longer operational. It is the kind of change that is aimed at seeking a new organization of organizational elements so as to operate differently or work on a different thing (Bradford and Burke 2005).

Transformational change is triggered by the environment or by the new needs in the environment. As a result, transformational change takes a definite sequence. The first step in the sequence is unfreezing. This is the process that is required for the restraining forces to be unfrozen for the purpose of maintaining the status quo. Any factor that threatens the status quo of the organization is a force that calls for transformational change.

The second step in the sequence is moving the organization to a fresh state. As already established, transformational change is not mere change of the existing system, but a complete shift to a new state. The third step in the sequence is freezing to accommodate the change. For the change to be

successful it needs to be fully institutionalized into the organization (Bradford and Burke 2005). On the other hand Rapid continuous change, which is the opposite of transformation or discontinuous change, takes place in redirecting what is prevailing into a new route. The process of rapid continuous change also takes three steps in a sequence.

The first step in this sequence is freezing. This is done so as to take stock, recognize patterns and highlight what is taking place. The second step in the process is rebalancing. This takes place where the history is reinterpreted, the best practice is identified and amplified and patterns are re-sequenced. This ensures that the practice and patterns open out devoid with fewer obstructions. The third step in the sequence is unfreezing.

This is carried out to go back to improvisation, translation and learning (Lebrasseur, Whissell and Ojha 2002). The role of transformational leadershipIt is very difficult to manage change, but some leaders seem to be good at it than others. These leaders are able to manage change in such a way that they survive and come out victoriously. It is possible for a leader to disappear in a case where a change takes place under poor management and planning. This is where the leadership requires being equipped with the capability to manage change. The secret behind change management is teambuilding. Changes will be successful where the leaders are able to identify the best team for the purpose. After the team is identified, it is crucial to challenge, motivate and empower it (Burns 1978).

In transformational change the concept of transformational leadership comes up. Transformational leadership is all about implementation of fresh ideas.

Transformational leaders change themselves; they are always flexible and adaptable. Transformational leadership has the capability of transforming those around them.

They encourage supporters by operating as role models, and motivating through inspiration. Transformational leaders have the role of inspiring intellectually and focusing attention towards the needs and objectives. They are the drive behind transformational change (Burns 1978). The purpose of leadership is to transform management strategies and processes.

Their role is inspired by the fact that changes need creation of new systems and later institutionalizing the established approaches into the organization. For management of change to be enacted within any organization, there is need for proper leadership. Eisenbach, Watson and Pillai (2009), claim that transformational change and transformational leadership cannot be alienated. According to the authors transformational change depends on transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is needed is necessary for changes to be enacted in an organization successfully. Their role in transformational change is undeniable.

They are the initiators or managers of the transformational change (Pielstick 1998). The initiator and manager of transitional change is the transitional leader. In transformational change, the transitional leader is the key mover. This is basically the reason why transformational change is referred to as executive-led transformation.

This is as opposed to the rapid continuous change where the role of the leadership is to make sense of the change that is already taking place. In this case the leadership is not the initiator of the process. Transformational change is a planned process that requires a lot of leadership and management (Bass 1985). A transformational leader works in transforming the entire organization together with its people in order to operate towards the set goals. A transformation leader is one whose focus is transformation and looking out for the interests of the entire organization. Transformational leadership utilizes various approaches to enhance motivation, drive and performance of the others within the organization.

This is necessary in transformational change since it requires collective efforts. It is important to connect their sense of identity with the identity of the entire organization. In transformation change, it is crucial that the leadership operates as the role models to the others, recognize their strengths and weaknesses, challenge them to own their roles, and assign them roles that are in line with their capability to optimize their performance (Bass 1985). Factors in implementation of transformational changeImplementation of successful change within any organization is not an easy task. A lot of writers have come up with a lot of information on the issue. There are also a lot of firms that help organizations to enact successful changes.

A lot of approaches have also been developed to assist them in dealing with this problem. One of the approaches is the one developed by BMG, to assist organizations in developing sustainable change. In this model, there are six

factors that are crucial in the successful implementation of transformational change. The factors are: shared vision; accountability; stakeholder involvement; tools and skills; enabling behavior; measures and processes (Pielstick 1998). Shared visionTransformational change is geared towards a common vision.

This is the phase where the leadership is meant to come up with a clear view of the incoming state. This is in line with the idea that transformational change is a change to a new state. The leadership should be in a position to develop and make available an inspired view of this. This is also where the leader should motivate the others to operate towards the shared vision. Every person is able to operate easier, and with greater commitment where there is guidance from a common vision.

This is the initial point of the transformational change. Where this phase is omitted, the entire process is bound to fail, since all the other steps cannot take effect. All the other factors of successful change are bound to suffer without this step (Pielstick 1998). AccountabilityIt is the duty of the leadership to be accountable for the effort towards the change.

Accountability on the part of the leadership is essential every step of the way until when the change is implemented. Accountability in this case is all concerned with action. There is need to participate, communicate, commit resources, share the vision before commencement of the process and be committed to the change. The leader should be a doer, and it is only through his actions that his commitment to the change can be evident. The leader should commit to the change with the whole of his heart and not his head.

Leadership accountability is a crucial factor in transformational change (Bass 1998). Stakeholder involvementIt is important in transformational change that the leadership understands who the stakeholders are. It is also critical that the level of support from the stakeholders is identified.

Any effect on the change whether positive or negative from the stakeholders needs to be understood. This is done through what is referred to as the Stakeholder Management Plan. This plan is a comprehensive task that is worth the time and effort. This is due to the fact that it is important to understand, support and establish a two-way communication with everyone involved to come up with a successful transformational change. Without proper understanding, support and communication, the project cannot work. Effective communication takes place where there is use of suitable language to the audience and the correct balance of rationality and emotions (Pielstick 1998).

Tools and skillsJim Collins in Good to Great argues that what makes the difference between good and great leadership is that great leaders practice the basics constantly and extraordinarily well. The basics in this case are the factors, three of which have already been discussed; establishing and delivering a motivating vision, accountability on the part of the leaders and stakeholder involvement. Another fundamental to transformational change is effective communication. In order to be effective in communication transformational leaders require understanding of personal communication styles. They should also be in a position to identify resistance and work

towards overcoming it. There is also the need to use language that is suitable to the audience.

There is need for transformational leaders to be able to communicate effectively. This is a crucial element in the success of transformational change. Tools like Stakeholder Management Plan are important in the process of coming up with the change. There are very many tools that are crucial in the process that are very important. There is need for the leaders to identify the tools that are critical for the change to take effect. The tools need to be made available for the success in leading and managing the change. There is also the need for the leadership to become masters of the tools (Bass 1998).

Enabling behaviorThe real change takes place at the behavioral level. The only way to maintain the change is through modification of the infrastructure of the organization such that it is in a position to support the change. This can be dome through re-alignment of job descriptions, measurement systems and performance management plans. There is need to bear in mind the fact that people react differently to change (Kouzes and Posner 1999). This is the reason why it is necessary for the leadership to offer support, education and training for the change to be successful. It is not possible for the change to take place without availability of trained stakeholders. The leadership must be in a position to identify and strengthen suitable behavior in the stakeholders.

The leadership must provide an avenue for recognition of success and delivery of feedback on the progress. The leadership should also recognize

the fact that people move along the transformation curve at varying speeds. Where this is fully understood, the leadership is able to work in unison with the stakeholders to ensure that the change takes place effectively (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe 2001). Measures and processesThis is the last factor among the factors to successful enactment of transformational change. There is need to identify how performance is to be measured in the organization. It is under this factor that the leadership needs to identify the approaches to be used for the purpose.

The measurement means to be used should be in line with the change that is to be enacted within the organization. There is thus the need to evaluate the existing measuring tools and processes like the metric track processes and financial performance. Transformational change calls for the leadership to evaluate all these and re-align them with the current tools and system so that they can accommodate the change (Bass 1998). Benefits of transformational changeIt is evident from transformational change literature that change is inevitable. Organizations that are to exist in the market for a long time go through a series of changes. Transformational leadership is always in a position to anticipate the need for change within the organization. Organizations whose leaders are quick in initiating changes in response to changes tend to be more successful than those that initiate changes late.

There are many benefits that are accrued to any organization that responds to changes early by enacting changes. Moving early towards fulfillment of a

need within the organization allows the leadership enough time to plan. Proper and effective planning is crucial in making changes to work.

Where an organization moves late, it does its planning in as rush leading to poor changes that are likely to fail (Bradford and Burke 2005). Transformational changes require people to collaborate and work as a team. Where the organization responds fast to the needs that require enacting changes, there is sufficient time to involve everyone. Where a system is created and tested, there is room for it to be redone if need be. Where transformational changes are enacted in time, there is the possibility of testing the changes and work on them once more until they are fully and successfully operational. Moving early towards enacting changes, allows organizations greater changes to control the market and technological changes. All organizations are out to gain a competitive advantage over their competitors.

This is possible where an organization is able to take advantage of any factor that can give it an edge over the competitors. Moving early in enacting transformational change is one of the factors that can offer an organization competitive advantage over its competitors. All these are the benefits that are accrued from transformational change which takes place early and in a planned manner (Eisenbach, Watson and Pillai 1999). ConclusionTransformational leadership is generally defined as a process where leaders and workers are involved in advancing to a higher degree of drive and motivation. The transformational leadership establishes substantial change in people as well as the entire organization.

This kind of leadership is not founded on give and take relation, like in the transactional leadership, but on the personality and capability of the leader. The leadership under this approach makes transformational changes through energizing visions and challenging objectives. They are identified through being moral examples in working towards the goals of the team and organization.

The leader comes up with a challenging and attractive vision, in working together with the workers. After establishing the common vision, they connect to a strategy towered its accomplishment. The vision is usually translated by the leader into actions. The leadership is supposed to express assurance, decisiveness and hopefulness in the vision and its accomplishment. The vision is usually realized through little planned steps and little successes towards its achievement. This is the essence of transformational leadership as put forward by Burns (1978). References: Alimo-Metcalfe, B. & Alban-Metcalfe, J.

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