

Chapter 2

The Nature of Planned Change

Learning Objectives

- Describe and compare three major theories of planned change.
- Introduce a general model of planned change that will be used to organize the material presented in the book.
- Explain how planned change can be adopted to fit different contexts.
- Critique the practice of planned change.

Chapter Outline and Lecture Notes

2-1 *Theories of Planned Change*

Conceptions of planned change, called “theories of changing,” focus on how change can be implemented in organizations. This chapter covers three theories of changing. Figure 2.1 compares the three planned change models.

2-1a Lewin’s Change Model

Lewin conceived of change as modification of those forces keeping a system’s behavior stable. A particular set of behaviors at any moment in time is the result of two groups of forces: those striving to maintain the status quo and those pushing for change. To change, one could increase the force pushing for change or decrease the force maintaining the current state. Lewin viewed the change process as three steps: (1) unfreezing, (2) moving, and (3) refreezing.

2-1b Action Research Model

The classic action research model focuses on planned change as a cyclical process in which initial research about the organization provides information to guide subsequent action. There are eight main steps.

- Problem identification
- Consultation with a behavioral science expert
- Data gathering and preliminary diagnosis
- Feedback to a key client or group
- Joint diagnosis of the problem
- Joint action planning
- Action
- Data gathering after action

2-1c The Positive Model

Lewin's theory and action research are both primarily deficit based in that they focus on the organization's problems and how they can be solved. The positive model focuses on what an organization is doing right. The process is called appreciative inquiry (AI). It involves the following five phases.

- Initiate the inquiry
- Inquire into best practices
- Discover the themes
- Envision a preferred future
- Design and deliver ways to create the future

2-1d Comparisons of Change Models

The models overlap in that their emphasis on action to implement organizational change is preceded by a preliminary stage and is followed by a closing stage. They differ in whether the approach is focused on what is wrong or what is right, the degree of participant involvement, and the focus of change. The comparison is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

2-2 *General Model of Planned Change*

The three models of planned change suggest a general framework for planned change which is shown in Figure 2.2. The general model identifies the steps an organization moves through when implementing change and specifies the OD activities needed to effect change. The four sets of activities are:

2-2a Entering and Contracting

Entering an organization involves gathering initial data to understand the problems facing the organization or to determine the positive areas of inquiry. Once this information is collected and problems are discussed, organizational members develop a contract or agreement to engage in planned change.

2-2b Diagnosing

The diagnosis stage focuses on understanding organizational problems, including their causes and consequences, or on collecting stories about the organization's positive attributes.

2-2c Planning and Implementing Change

In this stage, the participants design interventions to achieve the organization's vision or goals and make action plans to implement them.

2-2d Evaluating and Institutionalizing Change

In the final stage, the effects of the intervention are evaluated and a plan is made to ensure the change persists.

Application 2.1: Planned Change at the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority

This application describes a planned change process at a government organization. This case offers student the opportunity to identify and understand how each step of planned change is manifested in the application. It also describes how the plan evolves and adjusts during the transition, particularly in the planning and implementation activities.

2-3 *Different Types of Planned Change*

Although the general model of planned change suggests that OD is a straightforward process, most OD efforts do not proceed according to a neat timetable or preset sequence of events. The application of OD in a particular organization or situation requires adjustments in the process of planned change. This section suggests that three dimensions are particularly important.

2-3a Magnitude of Change

Planned change efforts can be characterized as falling along a continuum ranging from incremental changes to fundamental changes.

2-3b Degree of Organization

Planned change efforts can vary depending on the degree to which the organization or client system is organized.

2-3c Domestic versus International Settings

Change attempts must take culture into consideration.

Application 2.2: Planned Change in an Underorganized System

This application describes a process of planned change in a situation that is underorganized. That is, the stakeholders do not regularly interact with one another, and yet each has an interest in solving a particular problem. Ask students how this situation differs from traditional, formal organizations and if these kinds of situations are increasing or decreasing in frequency. In fact, more and more OD is being practiced in underorganized settings. The formation of strategic alliances is but one topical example.

2-4 *Critique of Planned Change*

2-4a Conceptualization of Planned Change

Planned change is thought of as an orderly, rational process but each situation is different and the context must be considered.

2-4b Practice of Planned Change

Change is often times needed but how the change takes place can vary. There are many methods which can be used to facilitate change.

Summary

Theories of planned change describe the activities necessary to modify strategies, structures, and processes to increase an organization's effectiveness. The action research model focuses on planned change as a cyclical process involving joint activities between organization members and OD practitioners. Planned change theories can be integrated into a general model. Four sets of activities—entering and contracting, diagnosing, planning and implementing, and evaluating and institutionalizing—can be used to describe how change is accomplished in organizations. The general model has broad applicability to planned change. It identifies the steps an organization typically moves through to implement change and specifies the OD activities needed to effect change.