

Modelling a Change Acceptance Framework on School Education Reform

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Abstract.

Over the years, there is plenitude of studies in regards to managing change. While the change itself is becoming more volatile in times, scholars are struggling to find new strategies that can help to favour institutional change as change itself is an inevitable norm. Past research reveal disturbing figures of current institutional change failure rate as the rate is still dominant throughout the years. Looking on the education perspective, change in education has created unprecedented ways of how learning can take place. Educational transformation programme and its importance to the teaching and learning pedagogy has faced a wave of change every day and indirectly promotes many challenges. Through the synthesis of secondary data, this research conceptualized two-opposite pole of change resistance and change acceptance while exploring the mediating effect of engagement. Due to limited numbers of study in this area, this research proposed a framework of change acceptance to improve ways of dealing with change holistically. Accordingly, by assessing the components of the proposed framework which contains essential yet proven components of change, the framework will give more insight to relevant bodies in formulating ways to ensure a successful change can take place.





Keywords: Change Resistance, Change Acceptance, Engagement, Education Reform, Concept Paper

Modelando un marco de aceptación de cambio en la reforma de la educación escolar

Resumen: A lo largo de los años, hay una gran cantidad de estudios sobre la gestión del cambio. Si bien el cambio en sí se está volviendo más volátil en el tiempo, los académicos están luchando para encontrar nuevas estrategias que puedan ayudar a favorecer el cambio institucional, ya que el cambio en sí mismo es una norma inevitable. Investigaciones anteriores revelaron cifras perturbadoras de la tasa actual de fallos de cambio institucional, ya que la tasa sigue siendo dominante a lo largo de los años. Mirando la perspectiva de la educación, el cambio en la educación ha creado formas sin precedentes de cómo puede tener lugar el aprendizaje. El programa de transformación educativa y su importancia para la pedagogía de enseñanza y aprendizaje se ha enfrentado a una ola de cambios todos los días e indirectamente promueve muchos desafíos. A través de la síntesis de datos secundarios, esta investigación conceptualizó el polo opuesto de la resistencia al cambio y la aceptación del cambio mientras exploraba el efecto mediador del compromiso. Debido a la cantidad limitada de estudios en esta área, esta investigación propuso un marco de aceptación del cambio para mejorar las formas de abordar el cambio de manera integral. En consecuencia, al evaluar los componentes del marco propuesto que contiene componentes de cambio esenciales pero probados, el marco brindará más información a los organismos relevantes en la formulación de formas para garantizar que se pueda llevar a cabo un cambio exitoso.



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Palabras Claves: Resistencia al cambio, aceptación del cambio, compromiso, reforma educativa, documento conceptual

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Introduction

The expeditious globalization has resulted in many areas to be affected by the needs to change. Among the many areas affected is the education sector. Globalization has created many unprecedented ways of how learning can take place through the vastly changing landscape of technology, demographic, psychological, social and others. In keeping up with the changing landscape, education sector has been gradually changing overtime to ensure learning is relevant and not obsolete. Nevertheless, institutional changes have been reported to have a high tendency of failure due to resistance to change among the stakeholders. In any change related event, it will likely to fail rather than to achieve the change goals (Al-Haddad, S., & Kotnour, T., 2015).

Past study showed that for educational change to be successful, certain factors must be met first (Cohen, D. K., & Hill, H. C., 2001). Additionally, extensive education reform which causes uncertainty often leads to hesitant from the teachers to invest themselves in the implementation (Bryant, J. A., 2015). In today's setting, it has become a norm for organization to undergo change in keeping up with the pace and trend of the ever-demanding environment. Change does not occur in sparse but rather in pattern. As such, research has shown that majority of efforts failed due to numerous reasons of unattended and critical contributor of resistance (Rosenberg, S., & Joseph, M., 2011). Consequently, study believes that more effort should be put in understanding effective ways in dealing with the continuous change in education sector. An extended framework of managing education change is proposed in tandem with past recommendations of a dire need of valid framework in managing change (Rafferty, A.E., Jimmieson, N.L. and Armenakis, A.A., 2013).

Problem Statement

In general, the past and present statistics in regards to organizational change failure rate are still portraying unfavourable figures based on synthesis made from previous studies as shown in Figure 1. This might give some possible indications to change management study that what currently being study is either not sufficient to be applied practically or weak



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framework in addressing change as the figures still showing a dominant inclination towards failure. This was further supported by a research which mentioned that the rate is not getting any better (Michel, A., By, R. T., & Burnes, B., 2013).

The indication of a continuous change failure can trigger a wide possibility of negative outcomes, especially in the education sector. The spillover effect will directly affect the final product which is the student. Those who undergone many changes will experience change fatigue, a condition which resulted in negativity in change among the stakeholders through the depiction of exhaustion, organizational commitment and turnover intentions (Bernerth, J. B., Walker, H. J. & Harris, S. G., 2011).



Fig.1. Organizational Change Failure Rate. Year 2004, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2015.

For many years, the expedition to find a positive and effective change in educational delivery is still ambiguous (Gilbert, M., 2013). A study found that the stress level that both teachers and administrators experience is directly correlated with student success (Bryant, J. A., 2015). Added in the study that the effect on learning outcome was also negative. Distrust within the affected parties; teachers, administrators and state department education will affect how students being regarded. The culture, diversity and unique needs of students should be attended to rather than prioritizing “numbers” on performance report. This negative side of change in educational sector





should not be ignored. Ultimately, the increase in complexity of curriculum will alleviate inattention or disengagement (MacIntyre, A. & Korb, A., 2013; Dent & S. Goldberg, 1999). This strongly suggests that if the change is not well taken care, it could reverse the desired goals backward.

Adding to the challenge, diversity of human context is dissimilar in each individual. Explanation of human behaviour is complex and it must be based on customarily recognized rules of a specific social order (Oreg, S., Vakola, M., & Armenakis, A., 2011). The same implies to education transformation since many of them are unique than the others. Each carry different aspect thus the measurement for each should be different but need to be charted within the same contextual factors that can be easily understood by all stakeholders. Hence, this study calls for a standardize systemic change through the development of the proposed conceptual framework.

Research Objective

This study aims to propose a concept of change acceptance framework in education reform through extended grounded theories and adapting validated frameworks which have been tested empirically in regards to organizational change and education.

Literature Review

The advent of organizational change study can be dated back as early as the 1940s on the first available content on resistance to change (Dent & S. Goldberg, 1999). Study found that organizational change study can be spanned from many areas. Nevertheless, this study will specifically review the two-polar opposite of change; resistance and acceptance.

Change acceptance can be viewed as the opposite pole of change resistance (Coetsee, L. S. (1999). The area of change acceptance study only receives a little amount of attention from the scholars. A 6-decade review of organizational change studies did not find a concrete definition to what change acceptance but the review depicts a number of representations of acceptance in an organizational change (Oreg, S., Vakola, M., & Armenakis,





A., 2011) such as levels of readiness (Madsen, S. R., Miller, D., & John, C. R., 2005), openness toward change (Wanberg, C. R., & Banas, J. T., 2000), proactivity (Hornung, S., & Rousseau, D. M., 2007), organizational commitment (Iverson, R., 1996) and positive reaction (Axtell, C., Wall, T., Stride, C., Pepper, K., Clegg, C., Gardner, P., & Bolden, R., 2002). In addition, a multi-dimensional view of attitudes toward organizational change may offer possibilities of different reactions ranging from positive to negative (Piderit, S.K., 2000).

Meanwhile, resistance to change study is not without scarcity and rich with many differing opinions (Smollan, R.K., 2011). Resistance to change has gone through many evolutions throughout the years. Nonetheless, the various spectrums of meaning converge on one acceptable point in the area of psychological human context. A study defined resistance to change as an attempt to deny the influence and power of their employers through the behavioural display (Smollan, R.K., 2011). The meaning was then extended through the introduction of affective and cognitive constructs (Darryl S., W., 2010). Majority of resistance manifestations are derived from the employees' psychological well-being on how change affecting them (Jos H. P., Marjolein C. J. C., & Thijs H., 2012). This study found that the nomological's net of change resistance is complex through many manifestations of context, factors, antecedents, process, work-related outcomes, reactions and consequences.

Research Methodology

This study was conducted through a review process of secondary data sources from academic journals. The credentials of authors and relevancy of research were the selection criteria for this study. This study complied with the criteria highlighted from a journal editor's comments to what constitutes a concept paper by providing integration of literature, establishing a framework and relationship among the constructs, absence of data but asserting logical arguments, seeks for theoretical development and broaden the scope of thinking on a particular phenomenon (Gilson, L. L., & Goldberg, C. B., 2015).

Results & Discussion

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Based on the review of past research in regards to organizational change, it was found that there are abundant of research on organizational change in general view but not specifically on education change. Adding to the complexity of proposing a framework, there are many differing views on resistance and this was conformed in a past study which found that there is no single cause of resistance to happen (Werkman, R.A. (2009). A formulation of the framework is complex considering the number of causes and relations found in past research on change such as the 20 factors of resistance by Harvey and Broyles (2010), psychological factors (Oreg, S., 2006), active and passive factors (Hultman, K., 2006), dispositional to change factors (Oreg, S, 2006), perception factors (Bovey, W. H. and Hede, A., 2001) and others. The derivation from the review might give some idea on how to manage change properly. It is not applicable for an institution to address everything about change but an organization can manage change in more standardized manner. The taxonomy or grouping itself is lacking considering there are many contributing variables.

Therefore, this study will suggest a grouping of the antecedents into a three-different context which is more manageable consisting of individual, education reform and institution. The three-prevailing contexts will offer wider perspective but falls within a standardized setting. The context is grounded based on the earliest theory of resistance made by Coch and French in 1948 (Ace, W., & Parker, S, 2010). which mentioned that change resistance happens when there are forces which lead to frustration and will directly result to undesirable behaviour known as resistance. Along with the context, engagement is added as mediating variables in the framework which has proven to be beneficial in organization change (Ace, W., & Parker, S., 2010) and is adapted from employee engagement framework (Laake, S. P., 2016. Meanwhile, the change acceptance will be measured with attitudinal components towards change established by Piderit (2000). Thus, the proposed framework from this study is depicted as Figure 2.



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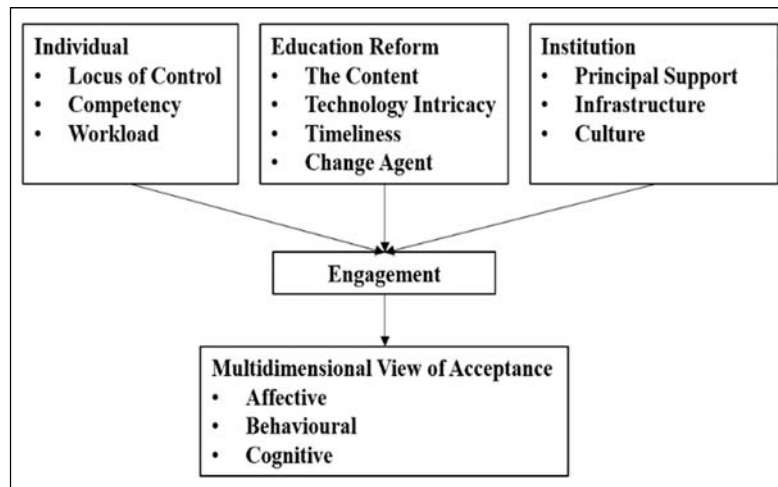


Figure 2: Change Acceptance Framework

This conceptual framework is different than the frameworks made by Oreg (2006) which measures dispositional resistance and Harvey and Broyles (2010) 20 factors. While many frameworks focus on a certain aspect of change, this framework will extend the grounded views into three different constructs; individual, education reform and institution which believe can provide insight for change acceptance to happen. This is also parallel to recent research argument which mentioned that the previous change evaluation falls heavily on human aspect (Heuvel, S., Schalk, R., Freese, C., & Timmerman, V., 2016). The inclination of change assessment towards human aspect alone arguably suggests that the past research fails to address biases in organizational change especially on the change initiative itself and the overall institution change climate whether or not the institution has the foundation to conduct the change in the first place. Addressing the nature of change should be one of the top criteria for every institution to manage when dealing with a change such as the speed of the change, the content of change, the agent of change and whether or not the change involves sophisticated technology. Thoughts should be given in these areas specifically to neutralize a perfect change assumption which is based on evaluation from human alone. In keeping up with the education reform, the elements in the three contexts should not be fixed formatively, instead, the regulating body should identify the most relevant elements that are critical to each context in each education reform reflectively.

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Another crucial construct introduces in the framework is engagement which defined as the extent of the employees to stay motivated to contribute to business success and are willing to apply discretionary effort to accomplishing tasks important to the achievement of states goals (PwC Employee Engagement, 2014). The relevant institution needs to engage the respective affected stakeholders in every education reform especially among the teachers since they will be the one to deliver the education to the students. The “fire and forget” practice in delivering change should be circumvented since this practice will likely to leave a gap for the stakeholders in understanding the change. If the change is something big, it will likely to leave a gap for an individual to interpret it differently as it was found that majority of resistance factors emerged based on how the change programme affecting them (Jos H. P., Marjolein C. J. C., & Thijs H., 2012).

After the previous constructs are assessed, the framework proposed the constructs to be measured against the multidimensional view of acceptance which grounded upon attitudinal dimension theory which comprises of affective, behavioural and cognitive dimension. Although many of past studies used the construct to measure resistance (El-Farra M. M. & Badawi M. B., 2012), the pioneer of multidimensional view herself mentioned that the degree of ambivalence in the three dimensions can give both undesirable and desirable outcomes (Piderit, S.K., 2000). Added that the key to ensure successful change is by paying good attention in balancing the consequences from the constructs. Many studies have viewed resistance as obstacles rather than positive precursors of change. This is why the change acceptance framework is proposed as it is the polar opposite of resistance (Coetsee, L. S., 1999). Such view may directly permit ways to best practice of effective change rather than studying on the obstacles itself.

A. The Contexts

The first proposed context of the framework is individual context which studies particularly on individual or anything that comes from human in regards to change. Human factors affecting resistance is in tandem with the discovery of the previous research (Oreg, S., 2006). This study found



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that there are rich amount of past studies addressing change on human aspects such as 20 factors of resistance (Harvey, T. R., & Broyles, E., 2010), psychological factors (Jos H. P., Marjolein C. J. C., & Thijs H., 2012), active and passive factors (Hultman, K., 2006), dispositional to change factors (Oreg, S., 2006), perception factors (Bovey, W. H. and Hede, A., 2001) and others. The area of resistance and human is not something new but with many different findings (Jorgensen, H.H., Owen, L. and Heus, A., 2009). In the context of education reform, it was found that competency can affect a teacher's wellbeing in reaction to the change (Talib, R., Kamsah, M. Z., Naim, A. H., & Latif, A., 2014). Additionally, disturbed working patterns especially when the teachers were added with additional obligations from the change also will likely to affect them whether to resist or accept the education change. The teachers' degree of resistance is also influenced by the familiarity of the change. This suggests that the magnitude of education reform can significantly influence the acceptance of change among them.

The next context aims to assess education reform or the change programme made on school. In a simple word, this construct evaluates the change itself. In the present date, there are many studies that found change initiative as one of the prominent factors that promote resistance in organization (Rosenberg, S., & Joseph, M., 2011). Poor change content and planning can also lead to resistance (Palmer, I., Dunford, R., & Akin, G., 2009). It is common that when the status quo of employees is challenged, they will likely to resist (Hernandez, S. J., 2016). On the part of educational context, this study found that the teachers were being indifferent when conducting the newly implemented assessment as it was difficult for them (Tan, A. M., 2010). In terms of timeliness, forceful implementation can greatly contribute to resistance which was found that in a case, teachers were vocal in expressing their grievances on time constraint when conducting a new education reform, especially on the students' assessments. Last but not least, a competent agent of change is needed to bridge the education reform to the teachers since it was found that resistance is likely to happen when there is lack of administrative directions (Lohrmann, S., Forman, S., Martin, S., & Palmieri, M., 2008). In a study of school assessment, the teachers mentioned that the trainers did not have the correct understanding of the





education reform itself (Talib, R., Kamsah, M. Z., Naim, A. H., & Latif, A., 2014) as this can potentially lead leave a gap for acceptance to happen.

The third and the last proposed context is institution itself which deals with the school and overall related bodies. For a change to successful happen, the institution needs to have the right climate in order to run the change. This was proven in a study which mentioned that institution can also influence resistance (Lohrmann, S., Forman, S., Martin, S., & Palmieri, M., 2008) aside from the human and change aspect. In addition, an institution needs to have the right infrastructure to support and sustain the education reform. A research found that technical issues for virtual learning in school is one of the main stigmas for a successful implementation to take place (Mahizer, H., & Mohd Azli, Y., 2016). Furthermore, there are even schools that are not properly equipped with proper infrastructure to carry out assessment (Talib, R., Kamsah, M. Z., Naim, A. H., & Latif, A., 2014). Regarding culture, the multiple occurrences of changes in school's policies and procedures will likely to result to change failure (Irvin, J., 2010). Principal support in change is necessary to nurture the change from the start to finish. Past study found that poor leadership, lack of management support and lack of participation on top-down steering are also contributing factors to a successful change to happen (Rosenberg, S., & Joseph, M., 2011).

D. Engagement

Engagement can make employees commit, exert additional effort and desire to stay in the organization and making them motivated to contribute to organizational success and willing to apply discretionary effort to accomplishing a task that is important to achieve organizational goals (Vance, R.J., 2006). More importantly, the review of engagement and work-related outcomes have consistently supported the association for attitudes (Farndale, E., Beijer, S.E., Veldhoven, J.P.M.V., Kelliher, C. & Hope-Hailey, V., 2014). In every education reform, it is suggested that the teachers to be prioritized in terms of engagement as it was proven that this will lead a to higher level of organization performance (Vance, R.J., 2006). Work engagement reflects positive behaviour in one's job (Farndale, E., Beijer, S.E., Veldhoven, J.P.M.V., Kelliher, C. & Hope-Hailey, V., 2014). A study also discovered that employee engagement can overcome change fatigue





(Ace, W., & Parker, S., 2010). In an event of a continuous change or monumental change, engagement can be the right tools to ease the frustration, confusion, distrust, cynicism and discomfort especially when they perceived that the change effort is unfavourable or destined to fail. The study added that the result of the engagement has made the employees renew the sense of purpose regarding change and making them more committed towards the initiative.

D. Multidimensional View of Acceptance

The multidimensional view is an established concept adapted and evolved from one of the earliest concepts from attitude that can be dated in the 1910s. The concept is then put forward by a Katz in 1960, a social psychologist that bring forth the definition of attitude as for how individual evaluate things that happen in his life through the display of favourable and unfavourable manner. After some changes in the definition and theory by scholars, Piderit (2000) which studied both attitude and organizational change theorized that attitude can be measured through three constructs which are affective (feelings), behaviour (behavioural) and cognitive (thinking). The theory addresses resistance rather acceptance through rethinking resistance and recognizing ambivalence. Nevertheless, the author did mentioned that there are much research that fails to take good intentions on the resistors and varying emphases on conceptualizations of resistance. Though many scholars used this theory to measure resistance, there is still a significant concern on how scholars still view resistance as an obstacle and putting the blame more on the human side (Heuvel, S., Schalk, R., Freese, C., & Timmerman, V., 2016) especially on the employees, through many manifestations of factors (Werkman, R.A., 2009).

Therefore, since resistance is the opposite of acceptance (Coetsee, L. S., 1999), this study tries to conceptualize multidimensional view of acceptance through the representation of favourable affective, behavioural and cognitive components. If the past multidimensional view measures resistance through unfavourable responses of three dimensions, this study merely adapts the three dimensions in a favourable narrative. Additionally, this multidimensional theory has been validated by many breakthroughs in organizational change study through many perspectives (Nafei, W. A., 2014).



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Though the exact study of acceptance among the teachers is still vague, there are many representations showing how teachers react to change from different research. For instances, teachers were being indifferent when conducting new school-related assessment (Tan, A. M., 2010), mass online voting to abolish change (Abdullah, N., Mohamed Noh, N., Nik Yusuf, N. A., & Mansor, R., 2013), being vocal in voicing out resentment (Adam, I., 2015) and poor utilization rate of online education content (Mohiddin, U. S., & Khalid, F., 2014). The evidence clearly shows change related attitude which are complied with the multidimensional theory. Since the foundation itself has been significantly validated from the past study as discussed earlier, this study will adapt the theory through another angle in terms of positive attitude.

Conclusion

Compensating change in education can be a daunting endeavour as the high failure rate of change implies many monumental challenges. The portentous change failure figure debatably argues that there is limited valid framework on how we manage change (Rafferty, A.E., Jimmieson, N.L. and Armenakis, A.A., 2013). This is also parallel to an argument which mentioned lack of standards in managing education changes in school (Gilbert, M., 2013). Instead of viewing resistance as obstacles, relevant bodies should view this as a process on more of a positive side and continue building the change credentials. Nonetheless, this study focuses more on the part of implementing change only by depicting the context, highlighting the importance of engagement and multidimensional view of acceptance while assuming the current content of change suits the needs of the students. Teachers need to be a well-recipient of change in order to deliver the education reform to the students. This framework will aid the relevant bodies, especially to the education ministry to regulate change on a wider viewpoint in ensuring successful education reform. Future study needs to validate the proposed framework through quantitative or qualitative aspect in order to strengthen the content discussed. This study only contributes to the theoretical development of modelling a change acceptance framework on school education reform that was built upon past theories and studies.





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