

Chapter 3

Active and Passive Resistance to Organizational Change: A Case of Entrepreneurship Minor Program in a Public University

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ABSTRACT

Today, almost all organizations (private or public, small, medium or large in size etc.) need to change. However, organizational change efforts are not always successful for various reasons. Active and passive resistance to organizational change is one of these. In this chapter, efforts to form an entrepreneurship minor program in a public university and some reasons for active and passive resistance to it are examined. For this examination, data was mainly collected from one-to-one and semi-structured interviews which were mostly conducted with the vice deans of various faculties and from the participative observation of one of the researchers. In addition, some documents about the program were examined.

INTRODUCTION

Many internal and external factors force organizations to change. Educational organizations are no exception. Educational organizations, particularly universities, compete with each other to attract the best students and academics and to raise funds. Therefore, they have to go through change to maintain legitimacy. However, sometimes organizations may not see the results they expect from the efforts of change as those implementing the changes often encounter both active and passive resistance from various internal and external stakeholders. In this study, a change project in a public university and resistance towards it is examined. The aim of the study was to clarify the reasons for this resistance.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-8487-4.ch003

This study is of some importance as studies on organizational change (particularly in educational organizations) often focus on absolute free will and the findings of this study show that the senior management of an educational organization may not be able to exercise absolute free will to establish a university-wide entrepreneurship minor program because of resistance to change. Therefore, to the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to link together the concepts of entrepreneurship education and resistance to organizational change.

A brief review of literature will be presented on organizational change and resistance and entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education in the first part of the study. In the second part, the main focus of the study will be explained. Then, the methodology will be explained, including the context, data collection and analysis, followed by the findings of the study. Recommendations will be made for future study, focusing on points missing in literature. Finally, the conclusion will be made including originalities and limitations of this study.

BACKGROUND

Organizational Change and Resistances toward It

Today, “Organizational Change (OC)” and “Change Management (CM)” are very popular topics. A search of the internet with the keyword of “Change Management” gives almost 6,700,000 hits. In a similar vein, CM is counted as one of the most important competencies which employees should possess. For example, CM is ranked among principal competencies which experts of human resource management should have (Stewart & Brown, 2008). If it is so important, what is OC?. When the extensive literature on OC is examined, it is fair to say that there are various definitions of OC. For example, according to Davis and Newstrom (1989), OC is an experienced differentiation in a work environment. Rampersad (2004) links OC with learning and unlearning, as a process in which individuals and/or organizations learn new things and unlearn the old ones. OC is often conceptualized as a journey rather than an arrival point (Beaver, 2003). In effect, change is a multilevel concept. It can be considered at different analysis levels in the field of management and organization such as levels of department, organization and population. However, this study focuses on an organizational level change to a great extent.

OC efforts may have different antecedents. For example, an OC can stem from some developments in political, economical, demographical, physical, legal, technological and social elements of the external environment (Reitz, 1977). In addition, there may be some internal reasons for change. These factors may be primarily managerial or technological. These internal pressures can also be related to human factors (Reitz, 1977). An OC effort may have positive or negative consequences for the organization. OC with largely positive consequences are generally called “Organizational Improvement” (Abrahamson, 1996). These consequences can be stronger financial performance, higher customer and employee satisfaction, more efficient processes and more innovation and more productive employees. For example, Guzzo, Jette and Katzell (1985) focused on studies which were published between 1971-1981 and endeavored to increase human performance in organizations. This meta-analysis which included 11 studies, indicated more productive human performance. Similarly, increased financial performance in British Airways after a cultural change, from “a bureaucratic and militaristic culture” to “a service oriented and market driven

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