Chapter 6
Rethinking the Contribution of Organizational Change to the Teaching and Learning of Organizational Behaviour and Human Resource Management:
The Quest for Balance

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ABSTRACT

One of the great attributes of acting as a Human Resource Manager is being reasonable. One may not know what is best for a company but one should be able to identify, reasonably, when in-house fighting and resistance on the shop floor are disadvantageous. While agreeing with the law one must also be aware, again reasonably, that it may be in conflict with itself. One's job is to resolve difficulties to the benefit of all parties – once more reasonably – even when one's emotions are on the side of one of the parties. In short, there is a job to do, but there is a difficulty: doing so successfully depends on being reasonable as well as developing expertise. However, being reasonable is precisely what the scientific method does not support although being an expert could be a desirable attribute. It excludes anything that contributes to a bias, including the bias that trust, fairness and team spirit introduce (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013). The result is well known: the scientific method tends to support commodification, objectification and reification and elicits resistance (Pitsakis & Kuin, 2012; Mahadevan, 2012) even on phenomenon-driven change (Schwarz & Stensaker, 2014). HRM officers do not seem to have done too badly however – albeit without the support of the scientific method (Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008). This does not mean that support would be wasted or impossible. The aim of the present chapter is to explore what it might look like. The result is a series of recommendations, based on a study showing how some

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employees proved able to contribute as experts to their companies even after they had been threatened of being fired due to heavy economic weather. This finding serves as an important lesson, i.e. that there are ways other than the scientific method to turn personal motivations and objectives into resources. These ways include creating an HRM/OB platform for change that helps to link people. They make it possible to create structures that help individuals to achieve 'expert presence', i.e. expertise to deal with difficulties in the workplace in the here and now.

INTRODUCTION

HR Managers need to deal with a variety of practical problems as a result of the implementation of organisational change. Different ways have been adopted in the treatment of the topic in the academic literature and in education. In most studies the authors claim to apply the scientific method. Piderit (2000) for example identified staff attitudes, as positive and negative responses to organizational change, Lewin (1947) proposed the Force-Field Model and Kotter (2008; Kotter & Cohen, 2012) gave us an eight-stage guide. These examples present efforts to elaborate on the way Buchanan and Huczynski (2010) and Huczynski and Buchanan (2013) have looked at the subject. Other approaches include those of Burnes (2004) who advocated behavioural change and Schwarz and Stensaker (2014) who called for greater concentration on the change phenomenon rather than theory-driven change. Romanelli and Tushman (1994) focus on external influences on the way organizations function. Johnson et al. (2006) look closer at the role of culture in determining the successful or unsuccessful change outcomes. Agnew (2005) advocated changing the environment. Paton and McCalman (2008) and Rees and French (2013) focus on the cultural dynamics in the management of change. Additional material can be found in Kanter (2012) who called for organizations (and their managers) to become more competent. Buchanan and Badham (1999) and Pettigrew and McNulty (1995) focus on the important role people, power and politics play in the outcomes of the change management process.

A common characteristic from these literatures is that the debate is one-sided in terms of the addressees and the recipients, i.e., of those implementing change (i.e. organizations/employers/managers/change-agents on the Organizational Behaviour side) and those on the receiving side of the activities and actions (i.e. employees/staff on the HRM side). Usually only one point of view is explored (e.g., Ford et al.., 2008), who looked at the 'change-agent centric' viewpoint). Some researchers advocate for greater focus on change as a phenomenon and what practical forms of knowledge and understanding it could generate (Schwarz and Stensaker, 2014; Eisenhardt et al., 2007) whilst others propound theory generation or reframing (Burke, 2010; Suddaby, 2011; Hodgkinson, 2011). Golembiewski et al. (1976) examined the treatment of the subject from what has been referred to as 'technical' or, if one wills, scientific procedures that tend to objectify participants in the implementation and management of change. Kanter (2012) emphasises the centrality of employee learning, competency and skills acquisition. Other authors (Buchanan and Badham, 1999) focus on power and politicking as mediating variables between success and failure. Finally Piderit (2000) calls for 'ambivalence' in people's attitudes to organizational change.

Piderit (ibid) suggests that a different kind of treatment of organizational change is needed that goes beyond the rather simplified dichotomization of change agents and change recipients. This chapter takes a more complex view of organizational change to see what support is needed. An example would be the work of Kotter (2008) and Lewin (1947) who wish to treat managers as individuals. The type of support

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