Assignment 3

Educational Administration & Human Resource Development, Texas A&M University

Angela McCormick

EHRD 624: Change Theory

Dr. Rose Opengart

November 29, 2020

All sustainable change initiatives have meaning making structures built into their system. This meaning making is an essential element for the transfer of behaviors and ideas into new values and cultures. The final assignment for the Fall 2020 EHRD 624 Change Theory course is in line with this idea. Through this paper I will examine my personal experience with resistance to change since starting my master’s program in both my personal and professional development, as well as address how I am and will respond to it going forward. Furthermore, I will communicate my plan to integrate the new learning gained through this course into my life to experience actual change. Finally, I will compare the nature of individual change with that of organizational change highlighting key similarities and differences.

In the past two years I have undergone substantial change. I moved internationally, shifted my professional role, and began this master’s program. As with any change, those three external changes could be further broken down into smaller elements of both internal and external transitions. I have felt resistance to each of these. Although I initially embraced the ease with which Choi and Ruona (Choi & Ruona, 2011) exchanged “resistance to change” for “readiness for change,” upon reflection I see it more like driving forces and restraining forces in a force-field analysis (Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2017). I experienced resistance in releasing the competence and significance I had in my former location/role. An active engagement to build readiness for change that targets this resistance is clarifying the vision in the relocation and creating an action plan to gain the needed skills. As we have seen in the text, resistance can threaten overall performance, but also provide constructive feedback for what values are being threatened (Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2017, p. 273). Personal awareness is key as at this point because when our significance, competence, or likeability is threatened we run to our preferred defense mechanism to deal with the threat (Tamm, 2015). I have experienced these threats as I have needed to present myself into a new community, the TAMU learning community, while simultaneously renegotiating my roles and work identities. The terminology of resistance and readiness have been helpful tools in assisting my alignment and diagnosing my reticence with the changes around me.

As far as a plan for integration of the material from this semester into my personal and professional life, I see three key areas: new vocabulary, new tools, and new culture building axioms. Having long lived and worked cross-culturally, my ability to live with heightened levels of uncertainty and an expectation of constant transition is strong. The vocabulary that this course introduced me to however, will significantly aid my capacity to personally process as well as externally communicate needed ideas. The six-fold images of change management, the clear concepts of communication strategies, approaches, even the ideas of readiness versus resistance to change each offers precision that increases personal awareness, minimizes holes in assumptions, and widens the scope of successful brainstorming and implementation sessions. New tools including diagnostic ones like Bolman and Deal’s four-frame model, or the “imaginative development” analysis tool of scenario planning (Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2017, p. 111), even cultivating “the five habits of disruptive innovators” (Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2017, p. 150) have become a wonderful resource for increasing my leadership and capacity building skills. I have marked useful tools particular to my professional role with tabs in the Managing Organizational Change text to quickly access the ideas when needed. Finally, I have chosen to adopt a few culture building axioms that I extracted from the text. The first is from Susan Mohrman and Edward Lawler as presented by Palmer et al. as the need to argue for a “next practice” and a “best practice” perspective in our ever-changing world (Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2017, p. 63). *Next practice, best practice* for me signifies the need to be applying the best of what we know today while seeking what will work better for tomorrow. The other axiom I have pulled from the text is based on ideas from Amy Edmondson and her observations of how organizations respond to failure as Palmer et al. introduce her continuum from blameworthy to praiseworthy failures (Palmer, Dunford, & Buchanan, 2017, p. 84). *Look for praiseworthy failures* in yourself and in others. As a culture building axiom of creating a willingness to try new things as well as being gentle with co-workers and your own self in the process.

In studying change on an organizational level, I was constantly struck by the application possible on an individual level. The scales and the references must be adjusted, but many of the same tools and vocabulary could assist someone in navigating their own personal change, as I have already mentioned personally. The key distinctions I see center on the ideas of trust, unity, and authority. In organizational change these three areas that can be massive time and energy expenditures while on an individual level they are already in place. Another difference that I noted was one of agency. In an organization, one of the roles of a change manager is to increase agency across the company to see the change take hold and reform norms and habits. Ultimately, a change manager might do a poor or stellar job at this role but still not see the results manifest in everyone because each person involved has a holistic life that is impacting the key choices that need to be made along the way. In these cases, a change manager has many options ranging from accepting defeat, to eliminating the problematic employee. On an individual level, the capacity to act towards one’s desired change is a binary success or fail metric. Overall organizations operate similarly to living systems and the interchangeable applications of personal and corporate change strategies should be considered as helpful for both.

Overall, this course has been a rich resource for me personally and professionally. I am thankful for the required opportunity to reflect and capture some of the learning in this final assignment.

# References

Choi, M., & Ruona, W. E. (2011). INdividual Readiness for Organizational Change and Its Implications for Human Resource and Organization Development. *Human Resource Development Review*, 46-65.

Palmer, I., Dunford, R., & Buchanan, D. A. (2017). *Managing Oranizational Change: A Multiple Perspectives Approach* (Third ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education.

Tamm, Jim. (2015, April). First Step to Collaboration? Don’t be so defensive! [Video]. TEDxSantaCruz.https://www.ted.com/talks/jim\_tamm\_first\_step\_to\_collaboration\_don\_t\_be\_so\_defensive