Applicability of Lewin's Change Management Theory in Australian Local Government

Chowdhury Hossan[1]

[1] College of Business Administration, Abu Dhabi University, UAE

Correspondence: Chowdhury Hossan, College of Business Administration, Abu Dhabi University, UAE. E-mail: Chowdhury.hossan@adu.ac.ae

Abstract

Public sector organisations are now expected to shift policy towards greater competition and to apply private-sector style management practice to the public domain. Around 70 per cent of all change programs initiated report a failure of the change effort. A lack of a valid framework to guide the implementation and management of organisational change is a major reason for the poor success rate of change initiatives. Public sector organisations are increasingly adopting private sector management principles and practices. Many private sector management techniques, applied without appropriate change management techniques have been criticised for creating problems, such as the language of consumerism, the contracting-out culture, and the monitoring and management of performance. Local government (City councils) are typically considered to be resistant to innovation and are relatively inert compared to other forms of organisation. This article examines the 'process' of organisational change. Among other theories, process-based change theories consider change as an on-going process. Thus, change typically occurs in multiple steps that take a considerable amount of time to unfold and efforts to bypass steps seldom yield a satisfactory result. Planned change advocates that organisations move from one fixed stage to another, through a series of pre-determined stages. This article concludes that Lewin's (1951) planned approach to change can still be used to investigate change management in the city councils. Lewin's (1951) models are highly generic. It argues that the focus of the change must be on the behaviour of the group, concentrating on factors such as group norms, roles, interactions, and socialisation processes. Lewin's (1951) models are more relevant to incremental and isolated change projects which are often the case for the Australian local government. The model tends to be more appropriate for organisations, such as city councils, that are based on traditional top-down, command-and-control style of management, with segmented, small units and slow change timelines.

Keywords: Australian local government, change management, Lewin, organisational change, public sector management, TQM

1. Introduction: The 'New' Local Government Context

Public sector organisations are being forced to develop competencies comparable to those of private sector organisations to assist in achieving efficient and effective practices (Andreescu, 2008). As a consequence, public sector organisations are increasingly adopting private sector management principles and practices (Andreescu, 2008; Teicher et al., 2002). For example, several private sector management techniques such as Total Quality Management (TQM), Business Process Reengineering (BPR) and Benchmarking are frequently used in public sector organisations to improve performance (Asim, 2001; Chan & Land, 1999; Halloway et al., 1999; Hwang et al., 1999; Tikkanen & Polonen, 1996). The aim of New Public Management (NPM), one of most notable public sector reform initiatives, is to reform the public sector by applying such private sector change management tools (Mwita, 2000; O'Donnell, 1996).

Public sector organisations are now expected to shift policy towards greater competition and to apply private-sector style management practice to the public domain (Leadbetter, 1997; Hood, 1991). Public sector organisations have been compelled to examine the effectiveness of their management structures, systems, and processes (Andreescu, 2008). These pressures have fundamentally altered the role and focus of the public sector management in many ways (Clark, 2003). However, new policies and institutions aiming to reform public sector without an adequate change management strategy are often criticised for poor coordination or fragmented

services (White, 2000; Dynes & Walker, 1995; Hood, 1991). Many private sector management techniques, applied without appropriate change management techniques, have been criticised for creating problems such as the language of consumerism, the contracting-out culture, the monitoring and management of performance (White, 2000; Stewart & Kimber, 1996). Public sector organisations require effective change management processes to meet the challenges of the NPM environment. Such techniques should be an integral part of management in the public sector (Stewart & Walsh, 1992). Moreover, change management initiatives must balance between the use of private sector management techniques and the core values that underpin the public sector community-based organisations (Hood, 1991).

This article begins by a presentation of different ways that change management theories have been categorised. This is followed by explaining atypical structure of local government–city councils in Australia. Major change management theories applied in Public Sector organisations are discussed in the subsequent section. It then moves on describing the main elements of the theoretical works of Kurt Lewin (1951) that focus on group dynamics. The discussion section concludes by arguing that understanding the dynamics of group behaviour is a prerequisite for individual and organisational change. Therefore, atypical organisations such as local government are still adaptable to early theories of change management. The concluding section presents responses to major criticism of Lewin's planned approach to change.

2. Organisational Change Management Theories

Only a few of organisational change efforts achieve success (Kotter, 1995). Around 70 per cent of all change programs initiated report a failure of the change effort (Balogun & Hailey, 2004). A lack of a valid framework to guide the implementation and management of organisational change is a major reason for the poor success rate of change initiatives (Burnes, 2004). Burnes (2004) criticises current change management frameworks as being a wide range of contradictory and confusing theories and approaches. With only a few exceptions, practice and theory are mostly supported by unchallenged assumptions about the nature of contemporary organisational change management (Doyle, 2002). Edmonstone (1995) argues that many of the change processes have been subject to fundamental flaws, preventing the successful management of change. Moreover, top-down programmatic change often fails to achieve success since directive approaches to change is ineffective in most situations (Higgs & Rowland, 2005). Traditionally, organisational change theories have been categorised according to their topic of interest, such as transformational leadership, organisational culture, chaos theory or complex systems (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). Based on the commonalities in issues and research themes, Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) present a review of organisational change theories which underpin this vast body of research.

The first category of change management theories focus on 'content issues', which largely focus on the substance of contemporary organisational change. Among the notable theories in this group, Burke-Litwin (1992) predicts individual and organisational performance, and Vollman's (1996) model of the transformation imperative discusses the magnitude of the change process. The second group of theories considers 'contextual issues', and consider the forces or conditions existing in an organisation's internal and external environment. External conditions include factors in the business environment, such as changing governmental regulations and technological advances. Internal conditions include facets of organizational structure, such as the degree of work specialisation required to support existing technology, level of organisational slack, and experiences with previous changes (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). Within this collection of research studies, Meyer, Brooks, and Goes (1990) summarise industry- and organizational level changes in hospital industry. Kelly and Amburgey (1991) investigate organisational inertia and momentum in the airline industry, Haveman (1992) investigates legislative and technological changes in the California savings and loan industry, and Fox-Wolfgramm, Boal, and Hunt (1998) analyse the effects of the Community Re-Investment Act (CRA) on two Texas banks.

The third research theme, which is particularly relevant to the current article, examines the 'process' of organisational change, that is, the actions undertaken during the enactment of an intended change. Building on the early work of Lewin (1947), processual theories of organisational change focus on the ways organisations experience change through various phases. Moreover, process-based change theories consider change as an on-going process. Thus, change typically occurs in multiple steps that take a considerable amount of time to unfold and efforts to bypass steps seldom yield a satisfactory result (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). Recent models of organizational change by Judson's (1991), Kotter (1995) and Galpin (1996) are based on Lewin's simple 3-step model of 'unfreezing', 'movement' and 're-freezing' stages [Lewin's work will be discussed in detail later part of this paper]. A particular strength of Judson (1991) is the discussion of predictable reactions to change and methods in each phase, where Judson (1991) presents different methods for overcoming resistance. In contrast, Kotter (1995) places greater emphasis on preparing employees to be affected by the change. Galpin

(1996) stresses the importance of understanding an organisation's culture as reflected in its rules and policies, customs and norms, and how this impacts progression through the nine phases. Armenakis et al. (1999) argue the need to consider creating a readiness for change amongst employees so that resistance is minimised. The Armenakis et al (1999) model incorporates elements of the work of Lewin (1947) and Bandura's (1986) social learning theory.

The change management literature also distinguishes between the types of change being undertaken. For example, the literature distinguishes between 'emergent' and planned change (Burnes, 1996, 2004; Dawson, 1994), episodic (also called discontinuous change) and continuous change (Pettigrew at el, 2001), changes to core and peripheral systems (Hannan & Freeman, 1984; Barnett & Carroll, 1995) and strategic and operational change (Burnes, 2004). The two main paradigms of organisational change theory are the 'planned' and 'emergent' approaches to change. Planned change advocates that organisations move from one fixed stage to another, through a series of pre-determined stages (Lewin, 1951). Such an approach requires the identification of the different stages an organisation will negotiate to move from an unsatisfactory state to an identified desired state (Eldrod II & Tippett, 2002). Lewin's (1947) model of planned change, discussed later in the following section, is a prime example of such a model of change. In contrast, the emergent approach suggests that the change is so rapid that it is impossible for senior managers effectively to identify, plan and implement the necessary organisational responses (Kanter et al., 1992; Bamford & Forrester, 2003). Rather than a series of linear events, the emergent approach perceives change as a continuous, open-ended process of adaptation to changing circumstances and conditions (Burnes, 1996, 2004; Dawson, 1994). Episodic changes tend to be infrequent and discontinuous and occur as organisations move away from equilibrium or change as a result of a misalignment or environmental encroachment (Pettigrew et al., 2001). Discontinuous change is a one-time event that takes place through large, disparate initiatives and is followed up by long periods of consolidation and stillness (Luecke, 2003). In contrast, continuous changes are ongoing, evolving, and cumulative in nature (Pettigrew et al., 2001). Another type of change identified in the literature is the 'transformational' change process. This includes renewal processes involving actors from various organisations to lead the organisation into a totally new state (Ackerman, 1986; Hoogendoorn et al., 2007). Organisations experience change as an ever present feature in their life at both operational and strategic levels (Burnes, 2004). Organisations identify their future strategy and then go through the change management process to achieve that strategy. As a result, organisational change cannot be separated from organisational strategy (Burnes, 2004). Departmental and operational changes are often ongoing continuous changes (Burnes, 2004). Strategic changes are often incremental changes which are concerned with organisation-wide strategies and the ability to constantly adapt these to the demands of both the external and internal environment (Burnes, 2004).

The challenges for management and organisation research are to meet scholarly quality and practical relevance (Pettigrew, 1997). Significant changes have been taken place in management and organisational research in their locus since Pettigrew criticised organisational change literature in 1985 for being largely acontextual, ahistorical, and aprocessual' (Pettigrew et al, 2001, p. 697). Pettigrew (1990) argues that the major weakness of this kind of research is that the area of organisation change merely reflects the biases inherent in social sciences and in the study of the organisation. Recent organisational change research is now examining the pace and sequencing of actions in change processes (Gersick, 1994; Kessler & Chakrabarti, 1996; Weick & Quinn, 1999). However, change management research must still focus on explaining the dynamics and effects of time, process, discontinuity, and context on the change process (Pettigrew et al., 2001). Pettigrew et al. (2001) proposes six interconnected analytical issues for future research in organisational change: the examination of multiple contexts and levels of analysis in studying organizational change; the inclusion of time, history, process, and action; the link between change processes and organisational performance outcomes; the investigation of international and cross-cultural comparisons in research on organizational change; the study of receptivity, customization, sequencing, pace, and episodic versus continuous change processes; and the partnership between scholars and practitioners in studying organisational change.

2.1 The Organizational Structure of Atypical City Council: Australian Local Government

There are three levels of elected government in Australia: Federal Government, State or Territory Government and Local Government. The Federal government has responsibilities for legislation, policy direction and program delivery at the national level (DPCD, n. d.). The Federal Government is responsible for policy development and implementation, particularly in the areas of tertiary education, taxation, domestic industry and foreign affairs. Australia is divided into eight administrative geographical regions referred to as States or Territories. The government in each of these regions has the responsibility for infrastructure and some legislation within its jurisdiction. For instance, the State Government of Victoria has the responsibility for the provision of

certain public services, such as public hospitals, primary and secondary schools, police, and transport for the State of Victoria. Each Australian state government operates under its own constitution, which sets out its power and responsibilities.

Australian local government, being the third tier of the Australian political system, has the power to influence the direction of community environments, service and infrastructure at the local community level (Shackleton, Fisher, & Dawson, 2004). The role of local government in Australia (Called city council) has expanded to include not only traditional areas of infrastructure but is also becoming more influential in formulating policies to meet the community's expectations (Shackleton, Fisher, & Dawson, 2006). The council's structure is characterised by sharp divisional hierarchies. The CEO is the operational head of the council. Council divisions are led by General Managers or Directors who are accountable to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The directors are responsible for monitoring and running business units under respective divisions (See Figure 1 below). The head of each individual business unit plays an important role in providing services to the stakeholders or community. The business unit manager holds a strategic position, involved in both operational level and providing significant input into local policies. Each business unit consists of ten to twenty people, including some coordinators and officers. The structure of Maribyrnong City Council is displayed in Figure 1, and provides an example of such divisions.
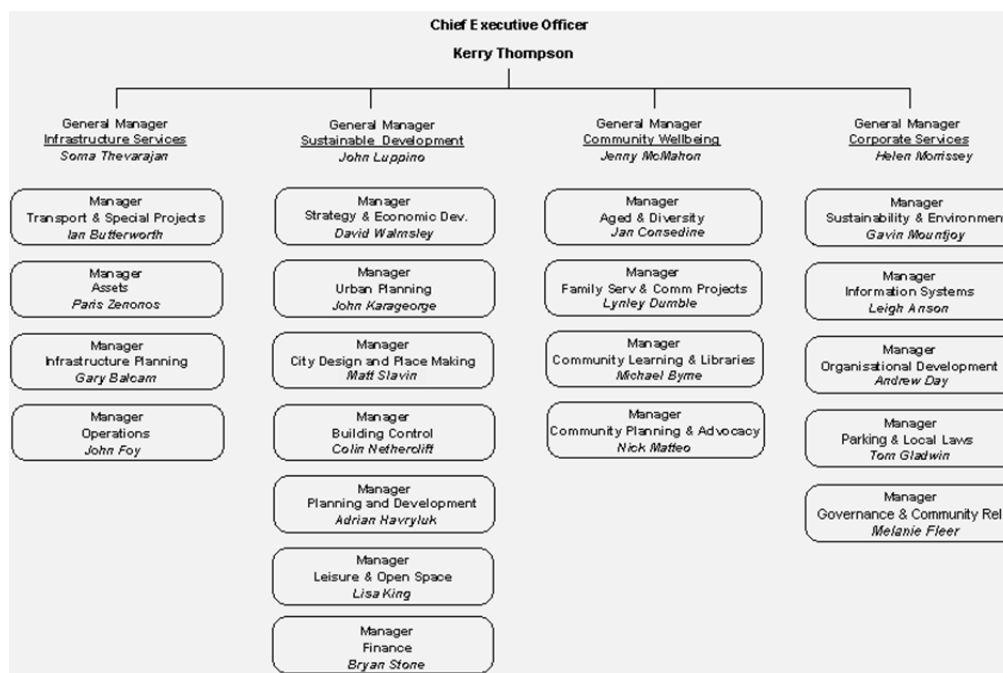
Figure 1. Organizational structure of a typical council

A typical city council will have functional areas devoted to general public services, health, welfare and community services, planning and building services, land use management services, environment services, and infrastructure and asset management services (MAV, n. d.). Though some services require cross business units involvement, business units runs their operations independent of each other. For instance, the finance division is often associated with other business division's transactions.

Up to 80 percent of transactions between the citizens and the government take place at the local level (Shackleton, Fisher, & Dawson, 2004). The high volume of direct public interactions makes local government a central feature of the democratic system of government. As a consequence, local government has undergone considerable changes since the 1980s (O'Toole, 2007; Shackleton, Fisher, & Dawson, 2006). City councils in Australia are characterised by a complex set of demands and organisational features. Councils operate following private sector models where every council runs independently and is headed by a CEO, elected Councillors and paid employees (MAV, n. d.). City councils in Australia are staffed by a combination of paid employees and voluntary leaders (Newnham & Winston, 1997; Trucker, 1997). City councils are typically considered to be

resistant to innovation and are relatively inert compared to other forms of organisations (Newnham & Winston, 1997). If a local community prefers tradition and limited change, it is unlikely that local government will implement rapid changes in their operations (Newnham & Winston, 1997).

2.2 Change Management Theories Applied in Public Sector

An increasing number of private sector management principles and practices are also used in public sector organisations for managing change (Andreescu, 2008; Teicher et al., 2002). New Public Management (NPM) is a generic term for a group of public sector reforms for improving the delivery of public service (Schedler and Proeller, 2000; Mwita, 2000; Hood, 1991). NPM is driven by theoretical frameworks that stem from new institutional economics and organisational theory, with the purpose of reducing red tape and bureaucracy (Barzelay, 1992). New Public Management (NPM) adopts private sector management practices, such as Total Quality Management (TQM) to implement changes in public sector organisations (Mwita, 2000; O'Donnell, 1996). The major features of NPM are 'hands-on' professional management, explicit standards and measures of performance, greater emphasis on output controls, a shift to greater competition in the public sector, and parsimony in resource use (Hood, 1991). However, NPM initiatives fail in delivering the democratic outcomes and some of the community expectations (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000). Moreover, the emphasis on NPM has failed to achieve expected results in some countries such as in New Zealand and Australia (Hughes & O'Neill, 2000; Boston, 1998). Changing administrative culture for NPM in the public sector took a significantly longer time than it was expected (Schedller & Scharf, 2001).

There are many other examples of private sector tools being applied to public sector organisations to improve performance. Total Quality Management (TQM) is one of the premier private sector change management tool being used in the public sector to achieve efficient and effective services delivery (Schedller & Scharf, 2001). The concept of Total Quality Management (TQM) originated in the United States but is widely practiced in the private manufacturing sectors in Japan (Graetz et al., 2002). TQM aims to improve organisational effectiveness with the application of statistical quality control, quality assurance, quality circles and a set of quality guidelines (Graetz et al., 2002; Teicher et al, 2002). However, government sectors are being criticized for emphasizing the technical aspects of TQM and ignoring the humanistic aspect (Teicher et al, 2002). For example, key components of TQM such as the delegation of power, participative decision-making and empowering employees were hardly achieved within the government sector (O'Donnell, 1996). Researchers also argue that public sector organisations perform poorly in the workforce management aspects of TQM (O'Donnell, 1996). For example, some work groups in the public sector were faced with the constant threat of privatisation, cost-cutting and likely job losses (O'Donnell, 1996).

Another private sector change management tool commonly applied in the public sector is 'Business Process Reengineering' (BPR), which aims to eliminate unnecessary work and reduce bureaucracy (Davenport, 1993; Bulter-Cox, 1991; Harrington, 1991). The goal of BPR is to improve organisational outcomes by changing organisational processes (Schedller & Scharf, 2001). However, BPR has faced challenges in implementing information technology in the public sector, especially in process redesign (Hammer & Champy, 1993). Thaens, Bekkers and Duivenboden (1997) also noted several pitfalls of the application of BPR in public sector organisations. While the sole goal of BPR is to improve productivity, public sector organisations are obliged to consider political, judiciary, economic and professional boundaries (Thaens, Bekkers, & Duivenboden, 1997). Moreover, BPR implementations are being challenged in the public sector by the complex regulatory environment, democratic principles of legal equality, legal security, and the rule of law of government agencies (Thaens, Bekkers, & Duivenboden, 1997). It is an essential condition for BPR to define the 'value' of each process and which organisational functions or administrative processes contribute to it. Unlike the private sector, public sector organisations face difficulty in defining the 'value' or 'quality' for many services (Halachmi, 1995; Walsh, 1991). Moreover, public sector organisations cannot ignore marginal clients to serve more profitable clients with better value (Halachmi & Bovaird, 1997). Researchers argue that periodic radical change involving BPR requires a certain mindset which is very different from typical bureaucratic perspectives (Halachmi & Bovaird, 1997). Public sector organisations have external stakeholders, such as citizens, who may be the legal or de facto owners of any given process and may pose obstacles to BPR (Halachmi & Bovaird, 1997). BPR often requires some service disruption which is easier for private sector organisations to negotiate with clients. But in most cases, public sector organisations cannot afford any interruption of their services (Halachmi & Bovaird, 1997).

Benchmarking is another change management tool originating in the private sector which is frequently used by public sector organisations to identify a point of reference for comparison or measurement of their services (Ammons, 1999). Benchmarking is an assessment of performance of an organisation against external criteria for

achieving sustainable performance superiority (Wynn-Williams, 2005; Fong et al., 1998). One of the limitations of benchmarking in the public sector is that its success largely depends on the attitude and proper frame of mind of the employees in accepting criticism (Ammons, 1999). For example, some government officials are very proud and protective of their operations and become defensive and may reject the lessons of a benchmarking exercise (Ammons, 1999). Moreover, benchmarking may lead to a misreading of the cause-and-effect relationships and may impose actual damage on public sector agency if it creates uncertainty or misunderstandings (Davis, 1998). Also, benchmarking in organisations requires the existence of a direct competitor which is often not the case for many public sector services (Wynn-Williams, 2005).

2.3 Lewin's Planned Approach to Change

Lewin (1951) is a pioneer in the study of planned change management. Lewin's (1951) model is still continues to underpin many contemporary change methodologies in organisations (Burnes, 2004a). The key contribution of Lewin's 3-step model is that a successful change project involves three steps: unfreezing, moving and refreezing (Lewin, 1947; Burnes, 2004a). Lewin (1951) also developed the Force Field Analysis model that describes the dynamics of change management in an organisation. This model examines two sets of human factors that occur during the implementation of any kind of change in any organisation. The first are the driving forces which support changes, and the other one is the resisting forces which reduce the probability of the acceptance of the change effort. Resisting forces are mainly comprised of emotional and psychological barriers.

Lewin (1947) suggests that to manage change processes, an organisation must 'unfreeze' its current state into a neutral position so that old behaviour can be unlearned and new behaviour can be successfully adopted. Then change should be implemented by utilising driving forces and minimizing resisting forces. Once change takes place, the organisation will 'refreeze' into the new state as shown in the Figure 2:
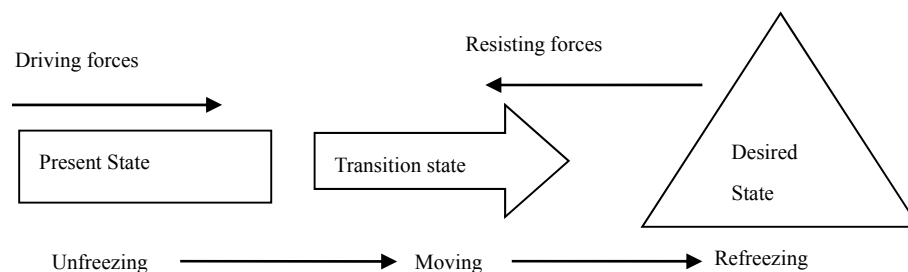

Figure 2. Lewin's planned change approach (Lewin, 1951)

3. Discussion

Change is a constant feature in organisational life. Successful organisations, operating in changing environments, are required to have competency in managing organisational change (Burnes, 2004b). The nature of organisational change could be incremental, punctuated or continuous and change processes can be driven from the top-down, bottom up or as a result of an emergent process (Burnes, 2004b; Quinn, 1980, 1982; Gersick, 1991; Wilson, 1992; Romanelli & Tushman, 1994; Greenwald, 1996; Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997; Dawson, 2003).

Lewin's (1951) planned approach to change can be used to investigate change management in the local government in Australia. Lewin's (1951) planned approach to change is an appropriate way to explain organisations which implement incremental changes, such as changes in city councils (French & Bell, 1995; Burnes, 2004b). Lewin's (1951) models are highly generic. Many researchers attempted to present Lewin's (1947) 3 step model in different approaches (Hoogendoorn, Schurt, Treur, & Jonker, 2007). For example, Lippitt et al. (1958) have arranged Lewin's (1947) 3-step model into seven steps and Kotter (1996) presents an eight step change process model. Table 1 presents how several studies have used similar stages in explaining the change process in an organisation.

Table 1. Popular three stage change models in change management literature

Model	Change Process		
Lewin (1947)	Unfreezing	Changing	Refreezing
Beckhard and Harries (1987)	Present State	Transition State	Future State
Beer (1980)	Dissatisfaction X	Process X	Model
Kanter (1983)	Departure from tradition and crises	Strategic Decisions and Prime Movers	Action Vehicles and Institutionalization
Tichy and Devanna (1986)	Act I	Act II	Act III
	Awaking	Mobilizing	Reinforcing
Nadler and Tushman (1989)	Energizing	Envisioning	Enabling

Source: adopted from Kanter, Stein, and Jick.

One of the key arguments of Lewin (1951) is that human behaviour change, whether at the individual or group level, is a psychological, dynamic process that varies at the different stages of organisational development.

Robbins and Barnwell (1998; 2006) diagrammatically present Lewin's (1951) planned approach to change into as a set of discrete stages. At the outset, any initiative for change in the organisation arises from opportunities and problems existing in the internal or external environment (Robbins & Barnwell, 1998; 2006). The forces initiating these changes must be identified and interpreted by management and act as determinants for new changes in the organisation. An influential organisation member acts as an initiator to respond to the identified change stimuli. These influential people often include senior executives, managers or even powerful lower-level employees and are termed 'change agents' (Robbins & Barnwell, 1998). Change agents play an important role in determining the nature of change management strategies. The process of implementation is presented in terms of Lewin's (1951) Theory of Planned Change. The change can be a one-off occurrence or an ongoing process. In the case of one-off change, the process begins with the 'unfreezing' of the status quo, then moving to a new state and 'refreezing' or consolidating the new state. However, in case of ongoing change, the process omits the refreezing phase. This model provides a basic background for the planned change management process in any organisation. Robbins and Barnwell (1998) acknowledge that successful change improves organisational effectiveness, and the feedback loop in their diagram emphasises the dynamism of the change management process. They argue that change in one area of an organisation will initiate change in other areas.

Lewin (1947) argues that group behaviour can be understood by appreciating the totality and complexity of the situation in which the behaviour takes place (Burnes, 2004a; Back, 1992). Lewin (1943; 1947) maintains that individual behaviour is a function of the group environment or 'field' which is affected when any modification in group structure arises from changes in certain conditions or forces. Lewin (1947) argues that in order to understand individual, group and organisation behaviour and to manage change, it is important to identify, plot and establish the forces that influence change. Lewin (1947) argues that an individual's behaviour is constrained by group pressures to conform. Therefore, the focus of the change must be on the behaviour of the group, concentrating on factors such as group norms, roles, interactions, and socialisation processes (Lewin, 1947; Schein, 1996; Burnes, 2004a; Burnes, 2004b). Lewin (1947) argues that the stability of human behaviour is based on a quasi-stationary equilibrium, supported by complex field of driving and restraining forces. For change to occur, Lewin (1947) argues that the present equilibrium needs to be destabilised (or unfrozen), so that old behaviour can be discarded (unlearned) and new behaviour can be successfully adopted. Increasing the driving forces for change, without addressing existing restraining forces, results in an immediate counterforce to maintaining equilibrium (Schein, 1996). Moreover, personal psychological defences or group norms often make restraining forces difficult to overcome (Schein, 1996). Schein (1996) enhances Lewin's argument, identifying three processes necessary to achieve this destabilising or 'unfreezing' stage of the change process. The first process involves a disconfirmation of expectations or hopes about a certain outcome. This disconfirmation can be thought of as feedback based on data that indicates that the present behaviour is ineffective or not as effective as it could be with a reasonable additional effort (Schein, 1996). Disconfirmation functions as a primary driving force in the quasi-stationary equilibrium, which is 'no change' condition, and leads to a 'survival anxiety' or feeling that without having change, current behaviour will fail to achieve goals (Schein, 1996). Schein (1996) argues that the second element of the 'unfreezing' process is the induction of guilt or survival anxiety, which can be described as the feeling that engaging in learning or the change processes might result in the loss of effectiveness, self-esteem and one's identity. Survival anxiety is the fundamental restraining force to change and often leads to maintaining of the equilibrium by defensive avoidance of the disconfirming information (Schein,

1996). Schein (1996) argues that the final stage of 'unfreezing' is the creation of psychological safety or overcoming any learning anxiety that may exist amongst employees involved in the change process. At this stage, it is important to gain a balance between the amount of the threat produced by disconfirming information and psychological safety. This balance will allow the employees to accept the information, feel the survival anxiety, and become motivated to embrace the change. During the 'moving' stage of the planned change process, one should seek to identify and evaluate all the forces at work, on a trial and error basis (Burnes, 2004a). As an iterative process, this 'moving' stage enables groups and individuals to move from a less acceptable to a more acceptable set of behaviours (Burnes, 2004a). This phase consists of identifying the problem, gathering information about relevant forces, locating or developing alternative solutions and selecting a course of action (Schein, 1996). The final step in the 3-step model of planned change is 'refreezing'. This stage is often characterised by changes to the culture of the organisation and changes to policies and practices for new quasi-stationary equilibrium (Cummings & Huse, 1989). Schein (1996) argues that group behaviour stabilises at a new quasi-stationary equilibrium in this step, with a confirmation that performance is effective. This confirmation can come from task measurements, from responses of others that verify a new level of effectiveness, from social comparison with other units, or perhaps from one's own perceptions and interpretations (Schein, 1996). Employees experience satisfaction and pleasure with new behaviour, which may be reinforced by rewards like increased salary, bonuses, promotion, and greater responsibility (Schein, 1996).

4. Criticism and Responses–Concluding Remarks

There are many criticisms of Lewin's (1951) planned change model. The model is often dismissed as 'outdated' and 'unfashionable' or 'simplistic' (Dawson, 1994; Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Hatch, 1997; Kanter et al., 1992). However, they are more relevant to incremental and isolated change projects which are often the cases for Australian local government (Dawson, 1994; Pettigrew, 1990a, 1990b). Lewin's contribution to explaining individual and group behaviour during the change process is still relevant in local government context(Burnes, 2004a).

Some argue that Lewin's planned approach is too simplistic and mechanistic and, therefore not appropriate for a world where organisational change is a continuous and open-ended process and organisations are subject to more uncertain or turbulent environments (Dawson, 1994; Garvin, 1993; Kanter et al., 1992; Nonaka, 1988; Pettigrew, 1990a, 1990b; Pettigrew et al., 1989; Stacey, 1993; Wilson, 1992). In addition, the model has been criticised for advocating a 'top-down', management-driven approach to change, rather than promoting employee-driven change (Dawson, 1994; Kanter et al., 1992; Wilson, 1992). The model may not be appropriate for organisations requiring continuous innovation for survival (Hock, 1999). However, the model tends to be more appropriate for organisations, such as city councils that are based on traditional top-down, command-and–control style of management, with segmented, small units and slow change timelines. Therefore, Lewin's (1951) models are more appropriate for a 'top-down', management-driven approaches to change, which is similar to the change management processes employed in city councils (Dawson, 1994; Kanter et al., 1992; Wilson, 1992).

Another criticism of Lewin's model (1951) is that in today's dynamic and frequently changing world, Lewin's sequential model may not be applicable (Kotter, 1996; Stickland, 1998). This is because the planned approach is only relevant to incremental and isolated change projects and is not able to incorporate radical or transformational change (Dawson, 1994; Pettigrew, 1990a, 1990b). Hence, the model is relevant only for small scale changes in stable conditions and fails to account for organisational politics and conflicts (Burnes, 2004a). However, most of the change initiatives in city councils are indeed incremental changes rather than radical and transformational change.

References

Ackerman, L. S. (1986). Development, transition, or transformation: the question of change in organization. *OD Practitioner, 18*(4), 1-9.

Ammons, D. N. (1999). A Proper Mentality for Benchmarking. *Public Administration Review, 59*(2), 105-109. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/977630

Andreescu, F. (2008). Organisational Challenges of Implementing E-business in the public Services: The Case of Britain's National Mapping Agency. In G. Garson & M. Khosrow-Pour (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Public Information Technology*. http://dx.doi.org/10.4018/978-1-59904-857-4.ch072

Armenakis, A. A., & Bedeian, A. G. (1999). Organizational Change: A Review of Theory and Research in the 1990s. *Journal of Management, 25*(3), 293-315. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/014920639902500303

Asim, M. (2001). Adopting Quality Management Concepts in Public Service Reform: The Case of the Malaysian

Public Service. *Journal of Labour and Management in Development, 2*(6), 1-20.

Back, K. W. (1992). This business of topology. *Journal of Social Issues, 48*(2), 51-66. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1992.tb00883.x

Balogun, J., & Hope Hailey, V. (2004). *Exploring Strategic Change* (2nd ed.). London: Prentice Hall.

Bamford, D. R., & Forrester, P. L. (2003). Managing Planned and Emergent Change with an Operations Management Environment. *International Journal of Operations and Production Management, 23*(5), 546-564. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/01443570310471857

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Barnett, W. P., & Carroll, G. R. (1995). Modeling Internal Organizational Change. *Annual Review of Sociology, 21*, 217-236. http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.21.080195.001245

Barzelay, M. (1992). *Breaking the Bureaucracy: A New Vision for Managing in Government.* Barkely, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press.

Beckhard, R., & Harries, R. (1987). *Organizational Transitions: Managing Complex Change* (2nd ed.). Reading, MA: Addision Wesley.

Beer, M. (1980). *Organizational Change and Development: A System View*. Dallas: Scott Foresman.

Boston, J. (1998). Public Sector Management, Electoral Reform and the Future of the Contract State in New Zealand. *Australian Journal of Public Administration, 57,* 32-44. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8500.1998.tb01559.x

Brown, S. L., & Eisenhardt, K. M. (1997). The art of continuous change: Linking complexity theory and time-paced evolution in relentlessly shifting organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 42,* 1-34. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2393807

Bulter-Cox Foundation. (1991). The Role of Information technology in transforming the Business: Management Summary (January).

Burke, W., & Litwin, G. (1992). A causal model of organizational performance and change. *Journal of Management, 18*, 523-545. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/014920639201800306

Burnes, B. (1996). *Managing Change: A Strategic Approach to Organizational Dynamics* (2nd ed.). London: Pitman Publishing.

Burnes, B. (2000). *Managing Change* (3rd ed.). Harlow: FT/Pearson Educational.

Burnes, B. (2004). *Managing Change: A Strategic Approach to Organisational Dynamics* (4th ed.). Harlow: Prentice Hall.

Burnes, B. (2004a). Kurt Lewin and the Planned Approach to Change: A Re-appraisal. *Journal of Management Studies, 41*(6), 977-1002. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2004.00463.x

Burnes, B. (2004b). Kurt Lewin and complexity theories: Bdack to the future? *Journal of Change Management, 4*(4), 309-325. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1469701042000303811

Chan, P. S., & Land, C. (1999). Implementing Reengineering Using Information Technology. *Business Process Management Journal, 5*(4), 311-324. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/14637159910297367

Clark, E. (2003). Managing the transformation to E-Government: An Australian Perspective. *Thunderbird International Business Review, 45*(4), 377-397. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/tie.10087

Cummings, T. G., & Huse, E. F. (1989). *Organization development and change* (4th ed.). St. Paul: West Publication Company.

Davenport, T. H. (1993). *Process Innovation: Reengineering Work Through Information Technology.* Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Davis, P. (1998). The burgeoning of benchmarking in British local government: The value of learning by looking in the public services. *Benchmarking for Quality Management and Technology, 5*(4), 260. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/14635779810245099

Dawson, P. (1994). *Organizational Change: A Processual Approach.* London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Dawson, P. (2003). *Organizational Change: A Processual Approach.* London: Routledge.

Denhardt, R. B., & Denhardt, J. V. (2000). The new public service: Serving rather than steering. *Public Administration Review, 60*(6), 549-559.

Dent, E. B., & Goldberg, S. G. (1999). Challenging resistance to change. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 35*(1), 25-41. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0021886399351003

DPCD. (n. d.) The Guide to Local Government. Retrieved December 09, 2009 from http://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/web22/dvclgg.nsf

Dynes, M., & Walker, D. (1995). *The New British State*. London: Times Books.

Edmonstone, J. (1995). Managing change: an emerging consensus. *Health Manpower Management, 21*(1), 16-19. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09552069510084015

Eldrod II, P. D., & Tippett, D. D. (2002). The 'death valley' of change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 15*(3), 273-291. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09534810210429309

Fong, S. W., Cheng, E. W. L., & Ho, D. C. K. (1998). Benchmarking: a general reading for management practitioners. *Management Decisions, 36*(6), 407-418. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/00251749810223646

Fox-Wolfgramm, S., Boal, K., & Hunt, J. (1998). Organizational adaptation to institutional change: A comparative study of first-order change in prospector and defender banks. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 43*, 87-126. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2393592

French, W. L., & Bell, C. H. (1995). *Organization Development* (5th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Galpin, T. (1996). *The human side of change: A practical guide to organization redesign.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Garvin, D. A. (1993). Building a learning organization. *Harvard Business Review*, 78-91.

Gersick, C. J. G. (1991). Revolutionary change theories: A multilevel exploration of the punctuated equilibrium paradigm. *Academy of Management Review, 16*(1), 10-36. http://dx.doi.org/10.5465/AMR.1991.4278988

Gersick, C. J. G. (1994). Pacing strategic change: The case of a new venture. *Academy of Management Journal, 37*, 9-45. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/256768

Government Management Board. (1996). *Benchmarking: Measuring up to the Best Management Briefing 1.* London: LGMB.

Graetz, F., Rimmer, M., Lawrence, A., & Smith, A. (2002). *Managing Organisational Change* (1st ed.). Australia: John Wiley and Sons.

Greenwald, J. (1996). Reinventing sears. *Time*, 53-55.

Halachmi, A. (1995). Reengineering and public management: Some issues and considerations. *International Review of Administrative Sciences, 16*, 329-341. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/002085239506100302

Halachmi, A., & Bovaird, T. (1997). Process reengineering in the public sector: Learning some private sector lessons. *Technovation, 17*(5), 227-235. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0166-4972(96)00123-X

Halloway, J., Francis, G., & Hinton, M (1999). A Vehicle for Change? A Case Study of Performance Improvement in the 'New' Public Sector. *The International Journal of Public Sector Management, 12*(4), 351-365. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09513559910282849

Hammer, M., & Champy, J. (1993). *Reengineering the Corporation: A Manifesto for Business Revolution*. New York: Harper Business.

Hannan, M. T., & Freeman, J. (1984). Structural inertia and organizational change. *American Sociological Review, 49*, 149-164. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2095567

Harrington, H. J. (1991). *Business Process Improvement*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Hatch, M. J. (1997). *Organization Theory: Modem, Symbolic and Postmodern Perspectives.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Haveman, H. (1992). Between a rock and a hard place: Organizational change and performance under conditions of fundamental environmental transformation. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 37*, 48-75. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2393533

Higgs, M., & Rowland, D. (2005). All Changes Great and Small: Exploring Approaches to Change and its Leadership. *Journal of Change Management, 5*(2), 121-151. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14697010500082902

Hock, D. (1999). *Birth of the Chaordic Age*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Hood, C. (1991). A public management for all seasons? *Public Administration, 69*, 3-19. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.1991.tb00779.x

Hoogendoorn, M., Jonker, C. M., Schut, M. C., & Treur, J. (2007). Modeling centralized organization of organizational change. *Computational & Mathematical Organization Theory, 13*, 147-184. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10588-006-9004-5

Hughes, O., & O'Neill, D. (2000). *Public Management Reform: Some Lessons from the Antipodes*. Department of Management Monash University Working Paper Series, Working Paper 69/00.

Hwang, S. D., Choi, Y., & Myeong, S. H. (1999). Electronic Government in South Korea. *Government Information Quarterly, 16*(3), 277-285. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0740-624X(99)80028-8

Judson, A. (1991). *Changing behavior in organizations: Minimizing resistance to change*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.

Kanter, R. M. (1983). *The Change Masters: Corporate Entrepreneurs at Work*. London: Rutledge.

Kanter, R. M., Stein, B. A., & Jick, T. D. (1992). *The Challenge of Organizational Change: How Companies Experience It and Leaders Guide It*. New York: Free Press.

Kelly, P., & Amburgey, T. (1991). Organizational inertia and momentum: A dynamic model of strategic change. *Academy of Management Journal, 34*, 591-612. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/256407

Kessler, E. H., & Chakrabarti, A. K. (1996). Innovation speed: A conceptual model of context, antecedents and outcomes. *Academy of Management Review, 21*, 1143-1191. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/259167

Kotter, J. (1995). Leading change: Why transformation efforts fail. *Harvard Business Review, 73*(2), 59-67.

Leach, S., & Stewart, M. (1992). *The politics of hung authorities*. London: Macmillan.

Leadbetter, C. (1997). *The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur*. London: Demos.

Lewin, K. (1943). Psychological ecology. In Cartwright, D. (Ed.), *Field Theory in Social Science*. London: Harper and Row.

Lewin, K. (1947). Frontiers in group dynamics. In Cartwright, D. (Ed.), *Field Theory in Social Science*. London: Harper and Row.

Lewin, K. (1951). *Field Theory in Social Science*. Harper and Row: New York.

Lippitt, R., Watson, J., & Westley, B. (1958). *The dynamics of planned change*. New York: Harcourt Local.

Luecke, R. (2003). *Managing Change and Transition*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

MAV (n. d.). *Fact Sheet–Local Governments Snapshot*. Retrieved June 3, 2009 from http://www.mav.asn.au

Meyer, A., Brooks, G., & Goes, J. (1990). Environmental jolts and industry revolutions: Organizational responses to discontinuous change. *Strategic Management Journal, 11*, 93-110.

Mwita, J. I. (2000). Performance Measurement Model: A system-based approach to public service quality. *International Journal of Public Sector Management, 13*(1), 19-37. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09513550010334461

Nadler, D. A., & Tushman, M. L. (1989). Organizational Frame Bending: Principles for Managing Reorientation. *Academy of Management Executive, 3*, 194-204. http://dx.doi.org/10.5465/AME.1989.4274738

Nonaka, I. (1988). Creating organizational order out of chaos: Self-renewal in Japanese firms. *Harvard Business Review*, 96-104. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/41166514

O'Donnell, M. (1996). Into the Mystic: Cultural Change and TQM Teams in the NSW Public Sector. *Journal of Industrial Relations, 38*, 241-263. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/002218569603800204

O'Toole, K. (2007). E-Governance in Australian Local Government: Spinning a web around community? *International Journal of Electronic Government Research, 3*(4), 58-75. http://dx.doi.org/10.4018/jegr.2007100104

Pettigrew, A. M. (1990a). Longitudinal Field Research on Change: Theory and Practice. *Organization Science, 1*(3), 267-292. http://dx.doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1.3.267

Pettigrew, A. M. (1990b). Studying strategic choice and strategic change. *Organizational Studies, 11*(1), 6-11. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/017084069001100102

Pettigrew, A. M., Hendry, C., & Sparrow, P. (1989). Training in Britain: Employers, Perspectives on Human Resources, London: HMSO.

Pettigrew, A. M., Woodman, R. W., & Cameron, K. S. (2001). Studying organizational change and development: challenges for future research. *Academy of Management Journal, 44*(4), 697-713. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3069411

Pettigrew, A. M., Woodman, R. W., & Cameron, K. S. (2001). Studying organizational change and development: Challenges for future research. *Academy of Management Journal, 44*(4), 697-713. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3069411

Quinn, J. B. (1980). *Strategies for Change: Logical Incrementalism*. Homewood, IL: Irwin.

Quinn, J. B. (1982). Managing strategies incrementally. *Omega, 10*(6), 613-27. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0305-0483(82)90064-0

Robbins, S. P., & Barnwell, N. (1998). *Organization Theory: Concepts and Cases* (3rd ed.). Australia: Prentice Hall.

Robbins, S. P., & Barnwell, N. (2006). *Organization Theory: concepts and Cases* (5th ed.). Australia: Prentice Hall.

Romanelli, E., & Tushman, M. L. (1994). Organizational transformation as punctuated equilibrium: An empirical test. *Academy of Management Journal, 37*(5): 1141-66. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/256669

Schedler, K., & Scharf, M. C. (2000). Exploring the interrelations between electronic government and the new public management. *A managerial framework for electronic government.* Switzerland: Institute for Public Services and Tourism at the University of St. Gallen.

Schein, E. H. (1996). Kurt Lewin's change theory in the field and in the classroom: Notes towards a model of management learning. *Systems Practice, 9*(1), 27-47. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF02173417

Shackleton, P., Fisher, J., & Dawson, L. (2004). Internal and External Factors Impacting on E-Government Maturity: A Local Government Case Study. *Journal of Information Technology Cases and Applications, 6*(4), 36-50. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15228053.2004.10856053

Shackleton, P., Fisher, J., & Dawson, L. (2006). E-government services in the local government context: an Australian case study. *Business Process Management Journal, 12*(1), 88-100. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/14637150610643788

Stacey, R. D. (2003). *Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics: The Challenge of Complexity*. Prentice-Hall, Harlow.

Stewart, J., & Kimber, M. (1996). The transformation of bureaucracy. *Australian Journal of Public Administration, 55*(3), 37-48. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8500.1996.tb01221.x

Stickland, F. (1998). *The Dynamics of Change: Insights into Organisational Transition from the Natural World*. London: Routledge. http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780203273449

Teicher, J., & Dow, N. (2002). E-government in Australia: Promise and progress. *Information Policy, 7*, 231-246.

Thaens, M., Bekkers, V., & Duivenboden. (1997). Business Process Redesign and Public Administration: A perfect Match? In Taylor, J. M., Th. M. Snellen & A. Zuurmond (Eds.), *Beyond BPR in Public Administration: Institutional Transformation in an Information Age* (pp.15-35). Amsterdam: IOS Press.

Tichy, N. M., & Devanna, M. A. (1986). *The Transformational Leader.* New York, NY: John Wiley

Tikkanen, H., & Polonen, P. (1996). Business Process re-engineering in Finland. *Business Process Re-engineering and Management Journal, 2*(3), 10-25. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/14637159610151181

Trucker, D. (1997). From administration to management. In Dollery, B. & Marshall, N. (Eds.), *Australian Local Government: Reform and Renewal* (pp. 69-88). Melbourne: Macmillan Education Australian Pty Ltd.

Vollman, T. (1996). *The transformation imperative.* Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Walsh, K. (1991). Quality and Public Services. *Public Administration*, *69*, 503-514. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.1991.tb00917.x

Weick, K. E., & Quinn, R. E. (1999). Organizational change and development. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *50*, 361-386. http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.50.1.361

White, L. (2000). Changing the 'Whole system' in the public sector. *Journal of Organizational Change*

    Management, 13(2), 162-178. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09534810010321481

Wilson, D. C. (1992). *A Strategy of Change.* London: Routledge.

Wynn-Williams, L. L. H. (2005). Performance Assessment and Benchmarking in the public sector: An example from New Zealand. *Benchmarking, 12*(5), 482-492. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/14635770510619393

Copyrights