RETHINKING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE FROM A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE: A REVIEW OF CHANGE MANAGEMENT AND CROSS-CULTURAL MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Since the majority of organizational change management theories, tools and models were developed in the western world and, specifically, United States, and United Kingdom, it is evident that these theories are not applicable outside these realities as they are. The strategies proposed for communicating, introducing, and managing the change are ineffective in specific cultural contexts and multicultural organizations.

In this paper, the most relevant studies of cross-cultural management are intersected with significant change management models to propose a framework of extant theories which can help managers define the best change management approaches focused on multicultural organizations and, consequently, adaptable to any country.

Keywords: Cross-cultural change management - Change management framework - Cross-cultural and change management review.

INTRODUCTION

Current phenomena like fast technological change, lower market barriers and globalization have brought to increasing competition among businesses in the last thirty years (Kotter, 1995). This generated, for companies all over the world, the necessity to improve their flexibility and capability to adapt to changes in the environment in which they operate, in order to survive and keep up with competitors (Kotter,1996) (Todnem By, 2005). Therefore, it is now undoubtedly fundamental for firms to be able to manage changes in the best way possible.

The phenomena mentioned above have also pushed companies to operate in multiple countries and different cultural settings (Binder, 2007). Besides, due to the presence of consistent migration flows of various nature, multicultural organizations, in which people from different ethnicities and religions work together, have become very common indeed. An effective approach to managing these diversities is essential, even when introducing organizational changes, not only to reduce eventual misunderstandings and conflicts among employees but also to make the most of the possible contribution that different perspectives and

ways of thinking can provide to a company (Wildman, Griffith & Armon, 2016). In particular, organizational changes may be harder to achieve within multicultural organizations because cultural barriers usually increase resistance to change from employees.

Starting from the first theories, back in the 40s, 50s, and 60s, managing the individual transition of the personnel has been a central topic of organizational change management (Lewin, 1947; Lippit, Watson & Westley,1958). Not by chance, according to many change management scholars, one of the main issues when introducing an organizational change, concerns the resistance from the personnel: it has a great impact on the success of a change process, and, if not correctly managed or prevented, it even causes its failure (Hayes, 2018; Hiatt, 2006). It is, therefore, right to assert that a large part of change management theories focuses on soft aspects and the "human side" of change rather than on hard organizational elements, like structure or processes.

Moreover, some individual transition models, like Kübler-Ross (1969) or Adams, Hayes, Hopson (1976) transition Curve, applied in the field of organizational change, consider exclusively people and not organizational elements.

Change management theories were developed mainly in the United States (Kotter, 1996) (Hiatt, 2006) (Bridges & Bridges, 2017) (Beckhard & Harris, 1987) and the United Kingdom (Dawson,2003) (Hayes, 2018) (Oakland & Tanner, 2007), and their application outside these realities is not obvious. Cross-cultural management studies (House et al.,2004) suggest that the strategies adopted to incentive the employees, create acceptance and modify people's behavior have different levels of effectiveness if applied in cultural contexts dissimilar from the American or British ones.

Many change management scholars agree that each individual should be considered unique and different from all others (Hiatt, 2006). Sometimes, reactions towards change may be unreasonable and inexplicable, and even using the best approaches cannot fully dissipate any irrational resistance (Kotter, 1996).

However, knowing the customs, ways of thinking, traditions and traits of a culture or possessing cultural empathy helps to interpret the behavior of individuals (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). Consequently, this kind of knowledge can also help to understand the reactions of people affected by an organizational change and to plan the future courses of action aimed at reducing resistance.

Nevertheless, many change process theories, which offer a variety of methods to conduct a change process, have developed a series of common traits and approaches to be followed. It should also be noted that a cross-cultural approach to change management has already been proposed by Gladden (2018), who suggested a way to culturally tune change management, and Kirsch, Chelliah & Parry (2011,2012), who identified six drivers of change and differences in the way change is managed across countries linked to divergence in cultural dimensions (Hofstede,1980).

Concerning the methodology adopted, shared change management methodologies are analyzed in the light of cross-cultural management. In addition, a new framework, which needs to be empirically proved, will be provided, on the basis of both most relevant change and cross-cultural management theories. It is important to point out that the components or "steps" of this framework are not necessarily all sequential.

Considered cross-cultural concepts are the cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede (1980) (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010) and expanded through the Globe framework (House et al.,2004), and cultural intelligence (Earley & Ang, 2003), intended as "individual's capability to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity" (Ang &. Van Dyne, 2008).

The above mentioned cultural dimensions are *uncertainty avoidance*, *performance orientation*, *assertiveness*, *future/long-term orientation*, *humane orientation*, *tight/restraint* vs. *loose/indulgent*, *gender egalitarianism/masculinity*, *power distance* (vertical vs. horizontal cultures), *collectivism* vs. *individualism*.

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is a multidimensional concept divided into *Metacognitive* CQ, *Cognitive* CQ, *Motivational* CQ, and *behavioral* CQ. CQ has been proved as a useful trait for leaders and managers to guide and manage multicultural organizations, but also for employees and supervisors in order to operate successfully in multicultural teams.

DEVELOPMENT OF A NEED FOR CHANGE AND A SENSE OF URGENCY

For most of change process models, the first phase or at least one of the early steps is devoted to the development of a need for change inside the organizational units affected by or involved in change processes. The strategies adopted to fulfill it are often quite similar.

Production of a business diagnosis in order to identify what needs to be changed

The process of organizational change starts with the identification of opportunities that must be caught, internal issues that must be solved or external threats that must be neutralized. However, some authors argue that the main driver for change is the external environment (Oakland & Tanner, 2007). External phenomena such as the introduction of new regulations, new competitors, or modifications in market rules may produce new threats or opportunities that push companies to adopt new ways to operate in order to continue to thrive.

The diagnosis, which sets up a change process, may be conducted and shared at the same time by people belonging to different hierarchical levels, in order to reduce resistance to change (Beer, Eisenstat and Spector, 1990), or be developed, and then communicated by the leadership (Kotter,1996).

Change management scholars have proposed different frameworks for identifying issues that affect business performances: some of them look more within the organization (Weisbord, 1976; Waterman, Peters, Phillips,1980) while others take more account of the external environment (Burke & Litwinn, 1992). Moreover, strategic management tools that help in conducting assessments on the external environment, such as SWOT or PEST Analysis, could be used to identify a need for change (Hayes, 2018).

All these kinds of instruments conduct an analysis of current organization operating conditions by considering a series of organizational factors: people are usually considered in terms of skills and abilities, and, therefore, the impact of the cultural background of the personnel on the use of these tools seems very limited.

However, approaches based on the development of a joint and shared diagnosis of issues or opportunities, which give rise to an awareness of a need for

change, such as the ones from Beer et al. (1990) and Luecke (2003), seem harder to pursue, because of the remarkable diversity of people's perspectives.

For example, people who belong to cultures with a low level of future orientation may have a different capability to catch and identify opportunities that will bring benefits in the future, compared to high-future orientation cultures.

Effective communication

One of the most important aspects concerns communicating and explaining the need for change effectively both to employees and external stakeholders (Kotter, 1996; Hiatt, 2006; Bridges & Bridges, 2017).

For this reason, it is fundamental to choose the best communication channels and the most suitable figure to convey the message (Bridges, 2017).

The person should have a high level of credibility in the eyes of the personnel and the stakeholders (Kotter, 1996) and have a relatively close working relationship with the individuals affected by change (Hiatt, 2006). Concerning the personnel, the supervisor or boss of the single employee is usually preferred, instead of a top manager (Hiatt, 2006).

However, studies of cross-cultural management demonstrated that employees or, more in general, individuals who belong to specific cultures have different preferences concerning the communicator and the way a message is transmitted (Hofstede, 1980) (Gannon & Newman, 2002), with different outcomes in terms of communication effectiveness.

From this perspective, for example, people who belong to cultures that have a vertical and *high-power distance* culture, consider as not authoritative or even weak top managers who bother explaining to low-level employees the reasons for a change process, with the consequence of credibility loss. In this case it would be undoubtedly better to let the direct boss or supervisor do the communication.

Or, again, in a collectivist culture, people pay more attention to the status of the person with whom they are interacting (Kashima & Kashima, 1998), and choosing the change communicator accordingly is even more important.

Concerning the communication channel, Hiatt (2006) argues that it is fundamental to choose the best communication channel possible, which is usually face-to-face dialogue, and not over-communicate the message because it creates more resistance instead of acceptance. On the other hand, Kotter (1996) and Bridges & Bridges (2017) agree that it is essential to choose the right communication channel; still, they assert that it is important to repeat the message multiple times, using diverse communication channels to ensure that the message reaches the individual.

Depending on the kind of cultures, studies offer evidence of different level of effectiveness: if employees belong to a collectivist culture, they will be less satisfied when receiving a message through email compared to individualists, because they will not have access to the context in terms of gestures, eye contact, body placement, and distance between bodies (Gannon & Newman, 2002), which is very important for them. *Collectivists* and *less-assertive* cultures prefer indirect, "face-saving" communication, while *individualist*s or *assertive* people tend to be more direct, clear, and explicit.

In a large organization, it is often not convenient, in term of cost and time, communicating messages about organizational changes through face to face

dialogue; however, if the organization is composed mainly by the collectivists, face to face communication is the best way to avoid ambiguities and resistance to change.

To sum up, considering that people who belong to specific cultures prefer a so-called high-context communication rather than a low-context communication or vice versa (Hall, 1959;1976), is helpful when choosing the best communication channel and approach.

Moreover, societies which take for granted the existences of disparities among people, in term of power, status, and role in the society, have different preferences in term of ways to communicate. In organizations where a culture with a high level of power distance prevails, there is usually a lack of informal communication (Hofstede, 2001), and therefore formal communication is preferred compared to low power distance contexts.

Having a good knowledge of verbal and non-verbal/behavioral communication norms is particularly important within *restrain/tight* cultures: every deviation from the societal norms makes individuals upset (Gannon & Newman, 2002) and bring to increased resistance to change.

Changing the performance evaluation system and making a crisis or opportunity loss visible

A strategy often proposed to increase the need for change and sense of urgency concerns modifying the performance evaluation systems (Kotter,1996). In fact, one of the reasons for a high level of complacency and inertia depends on that: sometimes, the goals are low and too easy to reach, or in other situations, the results monitored are simply not relevant. In particular, this holds true for cultures that are strongly *performance or achievement-oriented* because there is a greater emphasis on results and feedback systems. People from these cultures develop a sense of urgency easily because they feel time as limited and non-renewable. Societies with low-performance orientation or ascribing cultures tend to view feedback and appraisal as judgmental and discomforting, value more who you are (e.g., gender, age, social and family connections, education) instead of what you do, and develop less easily a sense of urgency.

Assertive cultures tend to develop a sense of urgency easily (Den Hartog, 2004): they expect to demand and challenge targets, are more competitive and think that it is correct to reward performance. They believe individuals have to control the environment, they value performance evaluation systems, and competing with the others.

Moreover, cultures with low future orientation or high present orientation "may not be influenced by warnings that their current behavior may have negative outcomes in the future" (Keough, Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999) and show incapacity or unwillingness to plan a sequence to realize their desired goals (Ashkanasy, Gupta, Mayfield & Trevor-Roberts, 2004) compared to cultures with high future orientation. However, being people who belong to low future orientation cultures more focused on immediate concerns (Ashkanasy, et al., 2004), it is still possible to create an awareness of the need for change, provided that the performance evaluation systems shows the existence of a present problem.

MANAGING RESISTANCE OF EMPLOYEES AND MANAGERS

Resistance to change is often very hard to reduce or prevent and may still be present even at the end of the change process. In fact, some individuals do not ever reach the highest commitment to a change project (Conner & Patterson, 1982).

The emotions experienced by individuals during significant changes in life and job, like denial, rage, and depression, have been identified by Kübler-Ross (1969) and Adams, Hayes, and Hopson (1976). These human emotions may cause resistance and, although they are common within any culture, their trigger may be different, depending on the cultural background, the kind of change, and the expected results. Moreover, depending on cultural habits and norms, not every culture may express these emotions.

The kind of change introduced

Many change management authors (Kotter, 1996; Hiatt,2006; Bridges & Bridges, 2017; Hayes,2018) agree that there will be different reactions and levels of resistance depending on the nature of organizational change introduced.

In particular, Hiatt (2006) and Bridges & Bridges (2017) argue that the more is the effort required and the negative outcomes for the single individual, the more he or she will be resistant to change. However, these negative outcomes are usually not very precisely described, but concern in general changes in salary, and the amount or kind of work to be devoted to the change process. Hiatt (2006), in its ADKAR, takes into account also the weight of the individual's situation and intrinsic motivation, however, cross-cultural interpretative keys are not considered.

Keeping in mind cultural dimensions is here very important. Collectivist people are usually more interdependent and integrated into the group they belong to and are likely to engage in group activities while individualists are less interdependent and integrated into a group and are likely to engage in activities alone (2004). Considering these aspects can help to forecast resistance reactions: Asking collectivists to change the team they work in may create much more anxiety and reluctance within them rather than in a group of individualists.

The higher the amount of change required, the higher will be resistance from people with a high level of uncertainty avoidance (Kirsch, Chelliah & Parry, 2012).

The kind of expected results

Another fundamental aspect is making visible the connection between positive results and the change process introduced. Change management scholars argue that if a change process does not produce any visible benefit, it will lose strength and probably fail, with a return to the initial condition (Lippitt et al., 1958; Kotter, 1996). Sometimes people are not even aware of the achieved outcomes and begin to believe that the chosen targets are not being reached, with the consequence of increased demotivation (Lippit et al., 1958). Positive results should be visible and reachable in a short time, not only to furthermore reduce resistance towards change but mainly to keep the need for change and sense of urgency high (Kotter, 1996).

Since collectivists give more importance to the wellbeing of the group they work for (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010), they appear

more inclined to accept changes that produce benefits for the group or organization they are part of but not directly for them. Their personal goals are usually more aligned to the ones of their group (Triandis,1990), compared to individualists. In other words, individualists are more sensitive to changes that bring direct benefits to them or their job.

Producing quick wins in a period of less than six months appears particularly necessary for cultures with a high level of *uncertainty avoidance*: the further the results seem distant, foggy and uncertain, the more there will be doubts, anxiety, and resistance to change. However, considering that *future orientation* values are positively correlated with *uncertainty avoidance* values (De Luque & Javidan, 2004), people with a high level of *future orientation* appear more willing to make present sacrifices in order to achieve future essential results, as long as there is evidence of their usefulness.

VISION AND LEADERSHIP

Recent organizational change theories have stressed the relevance of leadership (Kotter,1996; Hayes,2018; Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010; Luecke,2003), compared to older models. In particular, from a change management perspective, leaders play the main role in developing a vision of the desired end state, communicating it, motivating and inspiring others for its realization (Kotter,1996; Hayes,2018).

However, it is right to point out that leadership is culturally contingent, and the status and influence of leaders vary considerably across countries (House et al.,2004; House, Wright & Aditya, 1997).

Concerning the vision, change management scholars argue that usually the vision of a successful change project is not precisely defined but rather given only in broad terms for multiple reasons: some assert that the vision should not be too detailed because single organizational unit managers must have enough freedom of choice regarding its implementation in their work unit (Kotter, 1996), others claim that the vision is only gradually shaped especially because there is a high level of uncertainty in the first phases of the change process (Bridges & Bridges, 2017).

Considering the cultural dimension of *uncertainty avoidance* and *future orientation*, if the employees of the organization belong to a culture with a high level of uncertainty avoidance and/or *future orientation*, a not well detailed or too loose vision may increase the level of anxiety and resistance to change.

In this case, the vision should aim, more than usual, to reassure the personnel about the future of the organization, which should be not only desirable but also detailed, well planned and apparently achievable with a high level of security, if the suggestions given by the leadership, top managers and middle managers are followed. Leadership-based models see the process of change as top-down, where the leaders develop long term strategies, and the employees, middle managers, and supervisors implement and adapt to them. Often these models also include the involvement of middle managers and business unit managers in adjusting the vision and the strategies by considering all the organizational units affected (Kotter,1996). Especially if the organization is large, the leadership often is not fully aware of how things work inside single or specific organizational units.

Nevertheless, asking help from lower-level members of the organization is not always easy and convenient for leaders: in societies with a high level of *power-distance* or *assertiveness* like *India* or *China*, employees and middle managers may see as not credible or worthy of respect a leader who asks them for support. Moreover, when the level of *power-distance* is high, the personnel may not be helpful for the decision-making process because it gives answers that please the manager, but are not necessarily correct, as a form of respect.

LEADERSHIP STYLE & TRAITS

According to most recent theories, leadership has a fundamental role in producing and promoting an organizational change., even when the process is not top-down, like in the model from Beer, Eisenstat, and Spector (1990) or its Luecke's adaptation (2003).

Firstly, the presence of a leader with high cultural intelligence (CQ) helps significantly drive employees, who belong to different cultures towards adjustment processes (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). In particular, cultural intelligence helps to identify the best leadership style, ways of communicating and motivating the personnel, and,in general, increases the odds of success of specific change projects.

The knowledge of cultural habits (*Cognitive CQ*), personal motivation and the ability to motivate others in culturally diverse settings (*Motivational CQ*), the capability to act in a way deemed acceptable by people belonging to specific cultures (*Behavioral CQ*), and to reflect on cultural differences (*Metacognitive CQ*): all these traits are essential for managing in different cultural contexts.

In addition, the GLOBE study (Dorfman, Hanges, Brodbeck, 2004) has proved the existence of correlations between the preferred leadership style and cultural dimensions. This is important when choosing the best leadership style to be adopted for successful organizational change implementation.

For example, *collectivism* has been associated *with team-oriented*, *Charismatic/Value-based*, and *humane-oriented* leadership, while individualists seem to prefer an *autonomous* leadership style (Gelfand, Bhawuk, Hisae Nishi & Bechtold,2004). *Participative* and *charismatic* leadership styles are more common in societies with a high level of *gender-egalitarianism*. (Emrich, Denmark & Den Hartog, 2004). Alternatively, again, societies with a high level of *power distance* <u>values</u> adopt more *Humane- oriented* and *Self-protective* leadership and less *charismatic/value-based* and *participative*, while societies characterized by a high level of power distance <u>practices</u>, are more correlated with *Team-oriented* and *Self-protective* leadership and less likely with *Participative* leadership.

In conclusion, despite being often suggested, top-down leadership approaches do not always seem effective depending on cultural dimensions. It is, therefore, better to consider these aspects before choosing the leadership style.

CREATION OF A CHANGE TEAM OR CHANGE "COALITION"

Another commonly suggested practice concerns the institution of a group of people directly responsible for the promotion and support of the change process (Bridges & Bridges, 2017; Hiatt, 2006; Kotter, 1996).

This team should usually be composed of key people who belong to different hierarchical levels and organizational units, and believe in the change project. The members of this coalition should also have a good level of credibility among the employees to promote organizational change effectively inside the affected organizational units.

If the organization is multicultural, the creation of multicultural teams is important to plan effectively the actions to be taken. Managers should be able to understand and forecast reactions from the employees and to plan correctly successful interventions even if the personnel belong to specific cultures different from their own. People with a good level of cultural intelligence can improve relationships and performances of a group. If the individuals involved in a project have never operated in multicultural teams or in culturally diverse settings, they should receive some training aimed at developing their cultural intelligence (CQ). In particular, Cognitive CQ, which concerns the level of knowledge (habits, ways of communicating, etc.) of cultures, can be developed through training and reduces misunderstandings and help interpret reactions. The same applies to Behavioral CQ, which concerns the capability to behave in a socially understandable and acceptable way within specific cultural settings.

In addition, Motivational CQ is also very useful here. In fact, it can help the manager or supervisor stay motivated while motivate others toward working in a multicultural team.

Metacognitive intelligence is also important, but it is the harder to develop because it entails the capability to independently acquire knowledge about a culture through direct contact and enables the individuals to understand cultural aspects not necessarily transmissible through training.

Another potentially useful way to improve team performances is the use of a collective or shared leadership style, in which people who belong to different cultures rotate or distribute the role of leadership depending on the actions to be implemented (Zaccaro & De Church, 2011). In this way, diverse perspectives can help identify the best way to operate based on the cultural backgrounds of the individuals affected or involved in each change management action. To favor collective leadership practice, it is recommended to encourage the development of leadership qualities in all team members (Wildman, Griffith & Armon, 2016).

CHANGING PEOPLE'S WORKING BEHAVIOR THROUGH TRAINING, REWARDS SYSTEMS, AND SUPPORT

Achieving successful organizational changes always implies employees and managers modifying their working behavior and changing ways to operate. If that doesn't happen, the introduction of new procedures or methodologies remains only formal and not effective and real.

The establishment of new processes often requires the development of new skills and knowledge, and therefore, providing the required training is

fundamental. However, if a person is resistant and not willing to change his or her behavior, training is not an effective solution at all.

Many change management models suggest multiple solutions like asking for help to an external change agent (Lippitt, Watson & Westley,1958; Kolb & Frohman, 1970), using rewards systems based on the individual's performance (Kotter,1996) or even giving psychological and moral support (Hiatt,2006).

The performance evaluation system and tied reward system must take into account the cultural background of the employees. The performance evaluation system is essential to monitor and verify the adoption of the desired behavior, but also to give coherent rewards to the personnel. On the other hand, the rewards system may prove useful to incentivize people to change their working habits and practices. Nevertheless, evidence collected in cross-cultural management research shows that all these kinds of actions have a different impact depending on the cultural belonging and should be adjusted consequently.

Coming back to the cultural dimension of *individualism* vs. *collectivism* (Hofstede, 1980; House et al.,2004), it has been demonstrated that collectivists are more perceptive towards group performance evaluation rather than individual, compared to individualists. Collectivists (e.g., Japanese) see themselves as more dependent on the group they are part of and therefore they are more interested in achieving good performance with their group than alone. Individualists (e.g., Americans) prefer to do a good job at an individual level. The same holds for the rewards system: collectivists are more responsive to rewards tied to group performances.

Assertive individuals seem more influenced by performance evaluation systems rather than *non-assertive*, and they accept rewards systems based on performance evaluation (Den Hartog, 2004).

Even the trainings are more effective with collectivists when provided through group workshops or collective activities rather than for individualists.

Concerning the thematic of performance appraisal systems, another important factor concerns the level of performance orientation of the business cultural contexts. Societies that have lower performance orientation tend to use performance evaluation systems more focused on integrity, loyalty, and cooperative spirit, while societies with higher performance orientation emphasize achieving results.

Some organizational change theories are based on the presence of an external change agent. The duties of the agent consist of supporting individuals who experience difficulties and the organization as a whole when introducing organizational changes (Lippit, Watson & Westley,1959; Kolb & Frohman, 1970). The change agent is usually someone competent in the field of psychology and human behavioral science but also has good knowledge of the client organization and its operating environment. However, if the organization is multicultural or operates in a different cultural setting compared to its background, the concept of cultural intelligence (CQ) can prove essential again. In fact, it may be useful to support individuals and organizations in understanding and managing resistance but also to help leaders and managers identify the best courses of action. The knowledge of staff culture (Cognitive and Metacognitive CQ) is a key for change agents to understand the underlying reasons for resistance to change or predict reactions to peculiar situations.

SUSTAINING THE CHANGE

One of the first and most common issues acknowledged by change management literature concerns making the change lasting. Already Lewin asserted back in the 40s that "A change towards a higher level of group performance is frequently short-lived, after a "shot in the arm," group life soon returns to the previous level." (Lewin,1947).

Many authors have, therefore, devoted part of their theories to that topic (Lewin, 1947,1951; Lippitt, Watson & Westley, 1958; Kotter,1996; Hiatt,2006; Schein, 1996).

The strategies proposed concern using reward systems (financial rewards, public acknowledgment, etc…), keeping visible both the good results achieved and the cause-effect relationship with the change process or anchoring new methodologies to organizational culture. The first two were already analyzed because they are essential also to ensure commitment during the early steps of change processes and to reduce resistance, while the latter seems more important at the end, to make the change permanent.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Organizational culture can be defined as "the basic tacit assumptions about how the world is and ought to be that a group of people are sharing and that determines their perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and their overt behavior" (Schein, 1996).

Change management scholars often take organizational culture into account because it is the key to explain many situations of resistance to change (Schein, 2010), but also because it is an element that must be coherently modified, in order to make changes stick and lasting (Kotter, 1996). In fact, if the members of an organization do not change beliefs that guide their behavior, they will not sustain considerable behavioral change (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010). However, changing the organizational culture is one of the most difficult issues to deal with, and that is the reason why Kotter (1996) suggests doing it at the end of the change process, only after the desired results have been achieved.

Understanding organizational culture is, therefore, fundamental to plan effective change management interventions: if a change is not in line with the culture of a company, it will almost inevitably fail (Bridges & Bridges, 2017).

Cross-cultural management studies can here prove useful again. Cross-cultural management scholars (Brodbeck, Hanges, Dickson, Gupta & Dorfman,2004) have demonstrated that organizational culture reflects or is highly influenced by the operating environment and context. For example, a company founded in Japan and composed mainly by Japanese people will usually have an organizational culture that reflects societal values and practices.

However, things get more complicated if the company is composed of more than one culture. In this case, it is possible that all the cultures contribute together or that one or more culture prevail on the others to shape the organizational culture (Schein, 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, the proposed framework builds a bridge between the shared approaches of significant change management models and cross-cultural management theories. Specifically, by intersecting two different fields of research, we suggest that a cross-cultural approach to the management of organizational change is fundamental to achieve durable and effective change in multicultural or not American/British realities. Therefore, change practitioners must take into account the impact of the cultural factor when operating in culturally different settings because the suggestions given by most relevant change management models are not applicable in every cultural context, and need, at least, to be culturally tuned.

However, this work remains limited.

On the one hand, the framework here presented is a work-in-progress not yet empirically tested and, therefore, proposes only a partial number of approaches for implementing organizational transformations. On the other hand, the advice provided could produce useful reflections in those subjects who work or research in the field of organizational change management within different cultural contexts.

Moreover, as for cross-cultural management studies, the risk is to fall into stereotypes. Although it has been demonstrated that there are relevant differences between cultures in terms of cultural dimensions, it is also plausible to identify people who do not reflect the majority of their society: for example, it is possible to discover individualists within a mainly collectivist culture and vice versa.

Furthermore, in the same fashion of the management models on which this work is based, the consideration of the external environment is omitted. This limitation is intentional because its contemplation is outside the purpose of this paper while recognizing the external environment being one of the main drivers of organizational change.

In conclusion, we suggest that proposing and empirically validating new change management approaches, which consider cross-cultural management theories, like the framework here presented, can reduce the high number of organizational change failures.

By encouraging these different kinds of methods, we give a contribution to the field of change management and, in particular, to the cross-cultural management of organizational change.

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