Predictors of Effective Change Management

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Abstract

Many change models have prescribed stages involved in implementing successful change management. The literature review undertaken in this study therefore sought to summarise the models by explaining the predictors of effective change management. Change leadership, communication, employee engagement and employee commitment are key variables in successful organisation change implementation.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations today are facing more change than ever before (Conner, 1992). Change has become synonymous with standard business practice and an organization needs to change in order to remain competitive (Mutihac, 2010).

The fast changing technological environment, workforce diversity, changing customer tastes and preferences as well as cut throat competition are some of the business complexities confronting management today. To overcome these challenges organizations have to change. However, it is computed that at least more than half of all the organisational change programs fail, reach a deadlock, or do not reach the results, which they initially were aiming at (Gravenhorst *et al*., 1999). This therefore calls for sound change management practices at the following key stages:

a) Prior to organization change implementation.
b) During organization change implementation.
c) After the implementation of organization change.

Many organization change models including (Lewin, 1951, Kotter: 1996, Peddle bury *etal*: 1998, Paton & McCalman: 2000) have prescribed the key stages involved in effective change management to improve employee's acceptance of change.

From the models it can be argued that organizational change will be a hapless endeavor without the appropriate leadership, employee engagement, communication to and commitment of individuals. The management of these four variables in the change management process play a pivotal role in the implementation of new ideas in the organizations.

The management of change is key to meeting organization objectives, however many a time, the problem is that some business managers implement change initiatives without adequately taking cognisance of the impact of the aforesaid predictors on employee attitudes to change. This is even more astonishing given that it is well recognized that the success of organizational changes often rests on the motivation and commitment of employees themselves (Armstrong-Stassen, 1998; Kozlowski, Chao, Smith, & Hedland, 1993). All too often, employees are told to accept change programs that they had no input into. The lack of employee participation results in views and concerns going unheard. This leads to no sense of ownership being generated amongst employees which then causes change programs to fail due to lack of commitment. Negative attitudes to change created as a result of non-participation becomes a real challenge for business managers as resistance to change increases. This paper therefore brings to the fore the critical role played by the predictors indicated above in improving change acceptance.

OBJECTIVES

- To analyse literature & establish the variables that are key in effective change management.
- To provide an intergrated conceptual framework for effective change management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organisational change

According to Greenberg and Baron (2002), organisational change refers to planned or unplanned transformations in the structure, technology and / or people of an organisation. In general, the aim of an organisational change is an adaptation to the environment and / or an improvement in performance (Del Val and Fuentes, 2003).

Models in Change Management

The importance of predictors of effective change management has been emphasised in many change models, however this paper focuses on a few models.These models have been chosen for illustrative purposes since we have many change models. The foundation for change leadership literature can be traced back to the early work of Kurt Lewin (1947). He suggested that successful change has to go through three phases; unfreezing, moving to

a new state & refreezing. After Kurt Lewin, a number of organisation change models that prescribed the key stages to be followed in effective change management came into being. Some of the models are shown in table 1.0 below:

Table 1.0: ORGANISATION CHANGE MODELS

Critical Success Factor	Kotter - 1996	Pendlebury,Gouard & Meston 1998	Paton & McCalman 2000
Compelling Need for change	Establishing sense of urgency	Mobilising	Problem description
Visible, aligned & Committed Leadership	Creating guiding coalition	Handling power issues	Visible & tangible senior management
Clarity & Direction of targets	Developing a vision & strategy	Defining vision	Formulating objectives and success criteria
Broad based participation	Empowering employees	Obtaining participation	Participation of those affected
Targeted & effective communication	Communicating change vision	Communicating actively	Communicate openly
Generating Quick Wins	Generating short wins		
Training & Mentoring		Training & Coaching	
Motivating people to change behaviour	Anchoring new approaches in culture	Handling the emotional dimension	consolidation

A look at the three models indicate that leadership, engagement, communication and commitment feature frequently therefore they are considered key in effective change management. These change-implementation models argue that, if change leaders follow their recommendations and execute the proposed strategies, they will be successful in implementing change.

LEADERSHIP & CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Several researchers and popular authors acknowledge that leadership is critical to the success of any change initiative (Kotter, 1996; Bommer et al., 2005; Tyler and Cremer, 2005; Kavanagh and Ashkanasy, 2006; Furst and Cable, 2008).Leaders are known as "Champions of Change"- as it is the top management of any organization who keep the process of change going on and maintaining the operational reliability of the organization (Nadler & Nadler, 1998).

Change management literature has also focused on activities that leaders have to perform in order for change initiatives to come to fruition. Higgs and Rowland (2000, 2001) focused on leadership activities involved in implementing change. They identified five broad areas of leadership competency associated with successful change implementation. These were identified as :

(1) Creating the case for change: effectively engaging others in recognizing the business need for change.
(2) Creating structural change: ensuring that the change is based on depth of understanding of the issues and supported with a consistent set of tools and processes.
(3) Engaging others in the whole change process and building commitment.
(4) Implementing and sustaining changes: developing effective plans and ensuing good monitoring and review practices are developed.
(5) Facilitating and developing capability: ensuring that people are challenged to find their own answers and that they are supported in doing this.

Other researches also support the utility of change leadership behaviours as researchers have outlined a lack of visioning, lack of leadership support, lack of commitment to change for the right reasons, and lack of a guiding coalition as major barriers to successful change (Kotter, 1996; Winumet al., 1997; Ostroff, 2006; By et al., 2008).

Gill (2003) proposed a model of successful change leadership. He stated that successful change requires vision, strategy, the development of a culture of sustainable shared values that support the vision and strategy for change, and empowering, motivating and inspiring those who are involved or affected. Figure 1.0 below shows elements that lead to effective change leadership in an organisation (Gill, 2003).
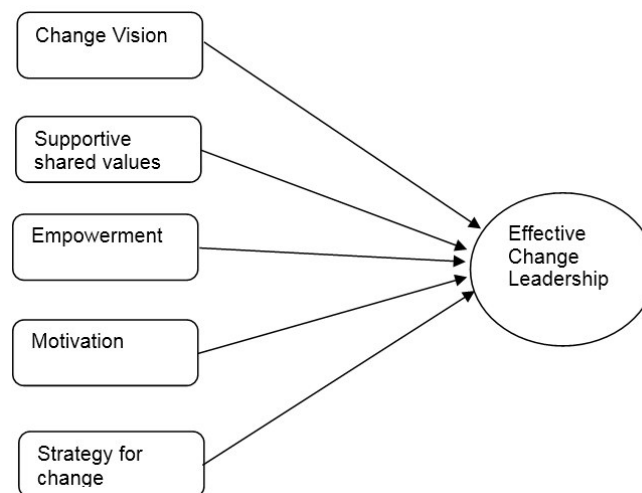
Figure 1.0: A model of leadership for change (Gill, 2003)

For the leaders to be effective in their role as change agents, they have to undertake the five roles in change model above. These are explained below:

Vision

The ability to come up with a vision has been talked about frequently. "*A vision is a mental image of a possible and desirable future of the organization*" (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, in Lyerly, Maxey 2000, P 48).Kotter states that the vision is the ability of a leader to look in to future while aligning the team with that vision, and then make them inspire to get the desired goals concerning that future. Vision is a picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people should strive to create that future (Kotter, 1996, p 68)

Vision plays a key role in producing useful change by helping to direct, align and inspire actions on the part of large numbers of people. Without an appropriate vision, a transformation effort can easily dissolve into a list of confusing, incompatible and time consuming projects that go in the wrong direction or nowhere at all" (Kotter 1996, p7)

Supportive shared values

Gill (2003) citing O'Toole (1995) says that there is a widespread belief among corporate executives in the need to create strong, shared values to unite people in a fragmented world. Effective leadership entails identifying and promoting shared values. Shared values are a key feature of a strong organisational culture (that includes beliefs, attitudes and patterns of habitual   behaviour) that supports a common purpose and engenders commitment to it.Shared values serve the purpose of binding people together creating strong cohesiveness amongst employees.

Strategy for change

Without strategies for change, vision is a dream (Gill, 2003).This means that a vision has to be well supported by strategies. It the leadership of an organisation whose responsibility is to craft strategies to achieve organisation change vision. Effective leadership entails developing, getting commitment to and implementing rational business strategies based on possible future scenarios for the organisation (Gill, 2003). An effective strategy for change entails creating a guiding coalition — putting together a group of people with enough power to lead the change — and getting it to work together as an effective team(Kotter, 1995).

Empowerment

In practice, empowerment is giving people the knowledge, skills, opportunity, freedom, self-confidence and resources to manage themselves and be accountable (Gill, 2003). According to Kotter (2005) empowering people for action in part entails getting rid of obstacles to change, removing or changing systems or structures that undermine the vision, and encouraging risk taking, new ideas and innovative. Empowerment therefore allows people in the taking part in the change process to develop a sense of ownership for decisions they make. This leads to the development of high commitment towards change objectives. As commitment increases resistance to change is reduced. The leadership can also create self-managed teams during change implementation. These teams are empowered to come up with decisions and be able to implement them.

Motivation

Effective leaders motivate and inspire people to want to do what needs to be done. Kotter's 8 step model sixth step

involves creating short term wins. This involves setting targets that are easy to achieve. When employees achieve the targets they have to be rewarded. Rewarding employees for good performance is motivational. Employees will apply much more effort towards the achievement of organisational objectives.

COMMUNICATION & CHANGE MANAGEMENT

The basic reason for change communication is to reduce change resistance in organisations. Communication therefore, is key in effective change management and effective communication is important for both managerial and organizational success (Dawson, 1996; Kreitner and Kinicki, 1995).The empirical picture that is slowly emerging indicates that communication process and organisational change implementation are an inextricably linked processes" (Lewis, 1999, p. 44). Communication strategy can be perceived as a mechanism to clarify the facts to various stakeholders of what is going to change, why, and what benefits they can expect to derive from the change (Kulvisaechana, 2001)

The degree to which employees are able to offer informed input into the change strategy is largely contingent on whether organisations share information through a variety of communication media, and enable workforce participation at the planning and implementation stages (Armenakis& Harris, 2002; Elving, 2005; Goodman & Truss, 2004; Lines, 2004), which allows employees to understand the scope and strategy underlying change plans, and provides opportunities to raise issues they find concerning.Communication during organizational change reduces resistance to change. When resistance to change is low within an organization, the change-effort turns out to be more productive. Poorly managed change communication results in rumours and resistance to change, exaggerating the negative aspects of the change (DiFonzo et al., 1994; Smelzer and Zener, 1992). "This therefore means that a two way communication process is vital in successful change management.

Several scholars have emphasised the importance of communication in organisation change. According to Francis (1989) organisational communication commonly has two goals (De Ridder, 2003). The first goal of organisational communication should be to inform the employees about their tasks and about the policy and other issues of the organisation. The second goal of communication is mean to create a community within the organisation. One of the main purposes of change communication should be to inform the organisational members about the change, and how their work is altered because of the change. This informative function of communication will have an effect on readiness for change (Elving, 2005) Communication to create a community, resulting in commitment with the organisation, trust in the organisation and its management and organisational identification will have an effect on readiness for change (Elving, 2005). This study supports the conceptual model of communication proposed by Elving (2005) as shown below:
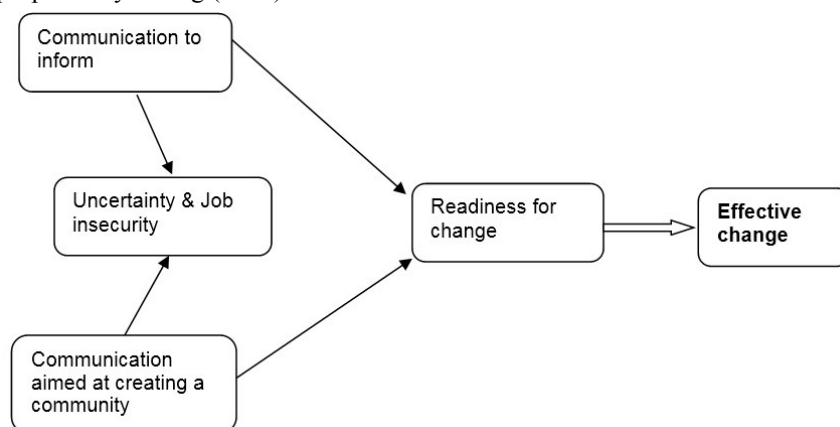

Figure 1.2: Conceptual model of communication during organisation change (Elving, 2005)

Communication to inform

Malek and Yazdanifard (2012) supporting Elvis (2005) stated that communication is used to announce organizational changes and to provide stakeholders with information about the nature, timing, and significance of the change. Meaningful communication informs and educates employees at all levels and motivates them to support the strategy (Barrett, 2002). This is important as positive attitudes to change are vital in successful change programs (Kotter, 1996), as resistance to change is one of the biggest barriers to overcome. Communication of changes are therefore very critical during the process of change management. Prior to the implementation of change the leadership has to explain why the change is necessary and also tackle on the benefits and costs of the change process. During the implementation of the change process the change leadership has to give feedback to all concerned about the progress being made towards the accomplishment of organizational objectives. After the implementation of new initiatives the change leadership has to communicate the new behaviors that support the change programmes to prevent change decay.

Communication aimed at creating community

Communication should be used to create a community which will increase commitment, trust, and identification with the organization and management (Hussain 2013). Weber and Weber (2001) also share the sentiments as Elving (2005) when they stated that higher levels of feedback, autonomy, employee participation and goal clarity would lead to greater levels of perceptions of supervisory support. An organization which involves its employees in the change and takes their feedback seriously can create a platform for open employee participation (Weber & Weber, 2001).This leads to commitment towards change initiatives. Trust results in distinctive effects such as more positive attitudes, higher levels of cooperation, and superior levels of performance (Jones and George, 1998; Mayer et al., 1995).

Uncertainty and Job Security

Uncertainty during change processes is typically about the aim, process and expected outcomes of the change and implications for the individual employees (Buono and Bowditch, 1993). Knowledge is not only a pre-requisite to the ability of influencing the outcomes (Terry and Jimmieson, 1999), but knowledge about the motives for change will also help reducing uncertainty and creating readiness for change. It has often been stated that employees do not fear change but the consequences of change. Communication helps to manage the fear amongst employees in the organisation. Before the introduction of the change, the benefits and the costs of the change have to be communicated to the employees. This helps employees to become better prepared for the change consequences. If the there is no communication a cloud of uncertainty develops and there will be resistance to change.

**EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT & CHANGE MANAGEMENT**

Commitment to change usually reflects an employee's level of attachment to the implementation of new work rules, policies, programs, budgets, technology, and so forth, all of which are dynamic processes (Neubert and Wu, 2009). Change management literature makes a distinction amongst three types of commitment:

Affective commitment is defined as the strength of an individual's identification and involvement with the organisation. It is characterised by a strong belief in and acceptance of the goals and values of the organisation, a willingness to put in extra effort on behalf of the organisation and a desire to remain a member of the organisation (Maxwell & Steele 2003; Falkenburg & Schyns 2007).

Continuance commitment can be defined as the commitment an employee has towards the organisation because of the investments they have made in the organisation and the costs associated with leaving the organisation (Falkenburg & Schyns 2007). These investments could include close working relationships with co-workers, retirement and career investments. *Continuance commitment* is also strengthened by a perceived lack of employment alternatives, which increases the cost associated with leaving the organisation (Stallworth 2004). Employees who possess a high degree of *affective commitment* will remain with the organisation because they want to, while employees with a high degree of *continuance commitment* will remain with the organisation because they have to.

Normative commitment is a form of commitment that is based on an individual's feeling of obligation to remain with the organisation because it is seen as the moral and right thing to do (Meyer & Allen 1991). These feelings of obligation can occur in instances where, for example, the organisation has supported the employees' educational efforts (Williams 2004).

Managers who can get their subordinates to commit to new goals, programs, policies, and procedures may stand a better chance of having these critical business activities successfully implemented (Kotter, 1996) .Jason (2010) in reviewing literature on commitment to change, looked at how various authors (Herscovitch & Meyer: 2002, Conner: 1992, Coatsee: 1999 and Armenakis: 1993) have discussed the factors that lead to employee commitment in organisation change. What all these conceptualizations share is the notion that Commitment to change reflects some kind of attachment to and involvement in the change initiative, which results from awareness of the change, some combination of motivating factors, be they goal congruence, affective affinity, or self-interest, and the mental/physical ability to work on behalf of the change initiative. This research paper proposes a model developed by Armenakis *etal* (1993) to show factors that lead to effective change commitment. The conceptualisation is as shown in figure 1.3 below:
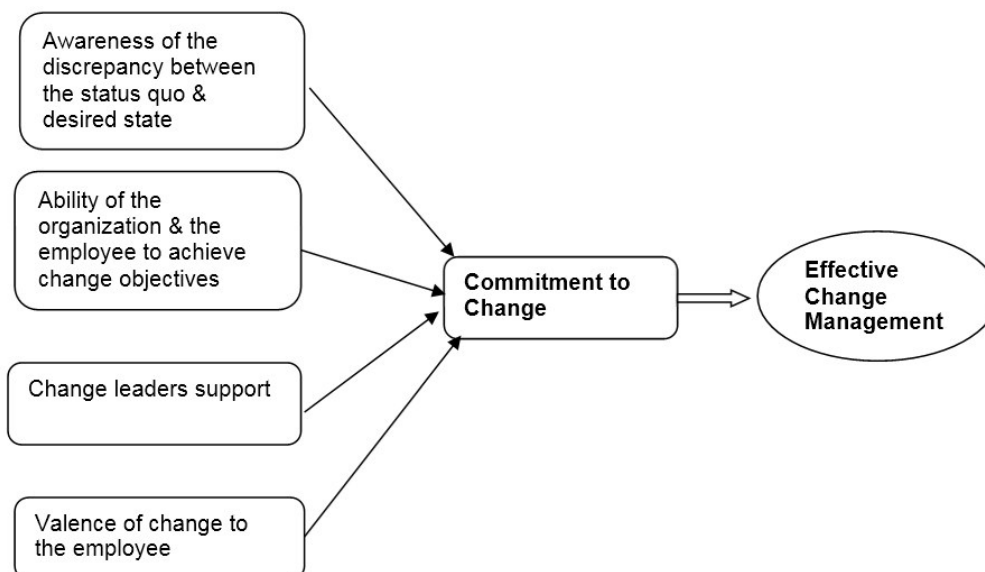
Figure 1.3: Conceptual framework for commitment to change: adapted from Armenakis *etal,* .1993
Awareness of the discrepancy between the status quo & desired state.

Employees get committed to change if they are aware of the reasons why they have to move from the status quo to a desired future state. This understanding is influenced explaining why change is necessary clearly spelling out the benefits of the change initiatives. A lot of effort has to be made to incorporate the employees' views in the whole change programme resulting in the development of affective commitment.

Change leaders support
Change initiatives have to be supported by resources. The change leadership has to provide adequate support to see changes through. The resources can be in the form of capital, human resources, equipment and information. The inadequacy of these in the right quantity or quality negatively affects the achievement of change goals. Change leaders have to make sure the provision of the required resources to elicit the right levels of commitment.

Valence of the change to the employee
Employees are also less likely to resist change when they feel that some value will accrue to them as a result of the change. While many authors refer to this as '*personal valence*' (Armenakis et al. 1993, 1999; Dirks, Cummings & Pierce 1996), a distinction should be made between perceptions that the change is personally beneficial and perceptions that the change will benefit the organisation (*organisational valence*). Employees who believe that the change will benefit both themselves and the organisation are more likely to support the change, whereas employees who do not believe any benefits will result from the change will resist the change effort (Jansen& Michael 2010). It follows therefore that change leadership reward appropriately the employees who achieve change objectives.

Ability of the organization & the employee to achieve change objectives
Commitment to change increases when employees believe that they are able to cope with the change (Armenakis et al. 1993, 1999) and have the skills and abilities to execute the tasks and activities that are associated with the implementation of the intended change (*change confidence*) (Holt, Armenakis, Feild & Harris 2007). When employees' confidence levels are low, or when coping efforts cease, there is a likelihood of resistance to organisational change.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT & CHANGE MANAGEMENT
McEwen (2011) present employee engagement as the affective and cognitive connection employees have for their organization that leads them to exert discretionary effort at work.The policies and practices of employee engagement strive to create an emotional bond between that of the employee and the organization through communication, empowerment, rewards, recognition, and compensation linked to implementation objectives.

In much of the research concerning change management strategies, employee engagement is listed as a primary function to the success of properly implementing a change management initiative. Schmidt & Jackson (2005) state the fourth step to a balanced culture, communication, as "where engagement, ownership, and empowerment are built." .Kotter (2005) in his eight step model indicated employee engagement as critical in attaining change objectives. He talked of communicating the vision (in step 4) and empowering employees (in step 5) as critical stages of implementing change successfully. In Pugh (2005) six change rules he stressed employee

engagement in step II(initiate change through formal discussion & get feedback & participation) and step III(Positively encourage those concerned to give their objections). Price & Chahal (2005) list "communications and workforce engagement" as step number four in their six-step process. Finally, Guy & Beauman (2005) highlight "engagement and alignment" as one of the three main categories for successful change management. Guy & Beauman (2005) also list commitment as the leading component of engagement and alignment. The aforesaid support the view that when employees are engaged organization change can be implemented successfully. Saks (2006) used job characteristics, perceived supervisor support, rewards and recognition and procedural justices as considered factors that could affect engagement levels. His model is as shown below:
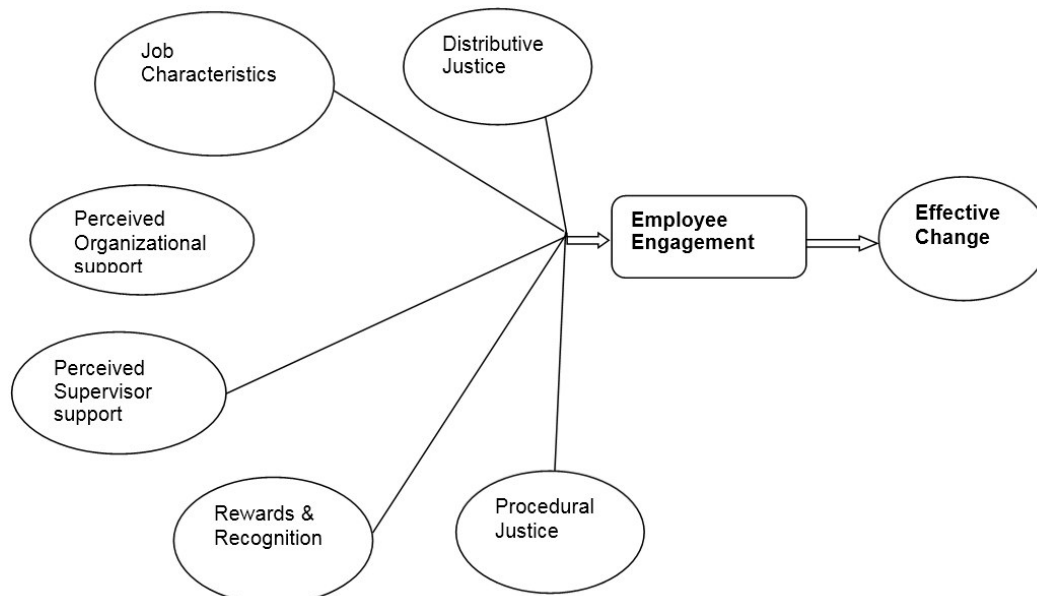
Figure 1.4: Conceptual Model of Employee Engagement (Saks, 2006)

Perceived organisational & Supervisor support
Organizational members feel safe in work environments that were characterized by openness and supportiveness (Saks,2005).Supportive environments allow members to experiment and to try new things and even fail without fear of the consequences (Kahn, 1990).Employees therefore become engaged in their work.

Distributive and procedural justice.
A system of fairness in terms of the distribution and allocation of resources (Saks, 2005).Employees with high perceptions of justice are likely to be positive towards work. Fair and just application of company procedures is motivational.

Job Characteristics
Jobs that offer variety and which also allow opportunities for decision making improve the worker engagement levels. Jobs that are high on the core job characteristics provide individuals with the room and incentive to bring more of themselves into their work or to be more engaged (Kahn, 1992).

Rewards & Recognition
Kahn (1990) reported that people vary in their engagement as a function of their perceptions of the benefits they receive from a role. This means that those employees who receive high rewards are likely to experience high engagement levels

AN INTERGRATED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF EFFECTIVE CHANGE PREDICTORS
From the literature above this study proposes an integrated conceptual framework of effective change predictors. The integrated conceptual framework is as shown below:

Key Success factors in Change management (Antecedents)
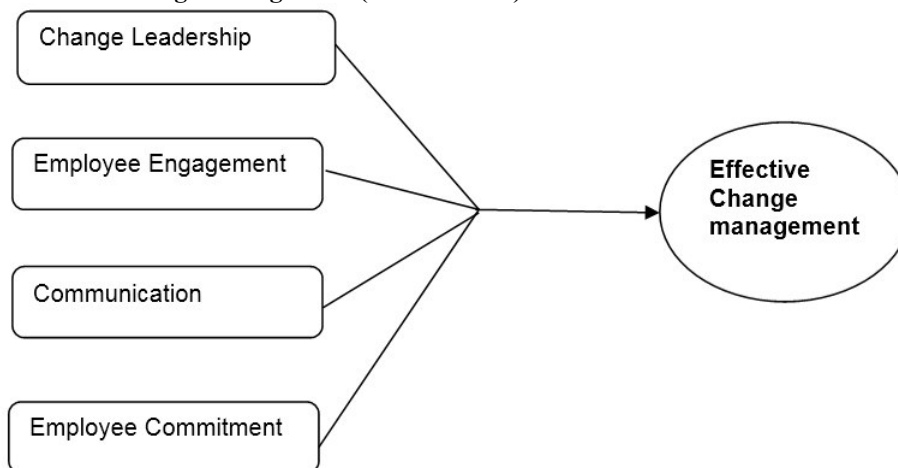
Figure 1:5: The Integrated Conceptual Model: Predictors to Successful Organisation Change

CONCLUSION
From the literature analysed above it is apparent that communication, leadership, employee engagement and employee commitment play a central role in change acceptance. Change managers have to manage the four variables to realise the benefits of change.

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Short Biography

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