**Strategies for Managing Change**

**L7: Hard Systems Models of Change**

The Process through which change comes about in two different approaches to change:

(1) Change approaches most appropriate for situations of hard (difficult) complexity where

people issues are low.

(2) Change situations involving issues of organisational politics, culture and leadership

characteristics by soft (messy) complexity.

**Hard Systems of Change**

There are many ways by which changes in organisations have been described; from changes like fine-tuning and incremental adjustments to the more drastic frame-breaking or discontinuous changes.

In the fine-tuning and incremental adjustments, the changes affect only one part of an organisation, while in frame-breaking or discontinuous change almost every aspect of an organisation’s life is affected.

Changes that can be quantified and resolved such as fine-tuning and incremental adjustments or discontinuous changes are known as “HARD COMPLEXITY”. However, those changes that are difficult to measure and resolve, they are known as “SOFT COMPLEXITY” OR “MESSY SITUATIONS”.

The method that is used to plan and implement changes in hard situations is known as the HARD SYSTEMS MODEL OF CHANGE (HSMC). There are three phases in this method.

1. Descriptive Phase: It involves describing the situation, determining the nature of the problems and then setting the objectives to enable the change to take place. The objectives are written in measurable terms.
2. Options Phase: It involves coming out with options to achieve the objectives, selecting and evaluating the available options by comparing them against the performance standards or measures set in the objectives.
3. Implementation Phase: It involves developing the strategies to carry out the chosen options, carrying out the strategies to being about the change and monitoring the results.

Barbara Senior has pointed out that within each of the phase has its own stages, for example in the descriptive phase there are three stages, the options phase has three stages and the implementation phase has only two stages.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Stages within the hard systems methodology of change | | |
| Phases | Stages | Actions appropriate for each stage |
| Description | 1. Situation summary 2. Identify objectives and constraints 3. Identify performance measures | * Recognise need for change either to solve a problem or take advantage of an opportunity. * Test out others’ views on the need for change. * Using appropriate diagnostic techniques, conform the presence of hard complexity and a difficulty rather than a mess. * Set up objectives for systems of interest. * Identify constraints on the achievement of the objectives. * Decide how the achievement of the objectives can be measured. |
| Options | 1. Generate options 2. Edit options and detail selected options 3. Evaluate options against measure | * Develop ideas for change into clear options for achievement of the objectives. * Consider a range of possibilities. * Describe the most promising options in some detail. * Decide for each option, what is involved, who is involved and how it will work. * Evaluate the performance of the chosen options against the performance criteria identified in stage 3. |
| Implementation | 1. Develop implementation strategies 2. Carry out the planned changes | * Select preferred option(s) and plan how to implement. * Involve all concerned. * Allocate responsibilities. * Monitor progress. |

Characteristics of Hard Complexity

1. The changes must be able to be quantified and best ways can be worked out to achieve the changes such as fine-tuning and incremental adjustments and discontinuous changes.
2. The changes can be enacted and done speedily since they involve certain parts of the organisation and most members of the organisation at all stages in the change process. This refers to the unitary relationship that exists among the people in the organisation, in the sense that the people share common interests, values and beliefs and agree upon the ends and means and act in accordance to agreed objectives.
3. It is applicable for designing and implementing organisational change in difficult or hard situations.
4. The method used to solve hard complexity is known as HARD SYSTEMS MODEL OF CHANGE (HSMC)

Characteristics of Soft Complexity

1. The changes cannot be quantified such as organisational culture, power and leadership style.
2. The change cannot be resolved quickly because it involves people who have different interests, values and beliefs and they get emotional especially those who implement the change.
3. The method of designing and implementing organisational change is the Organisation Development (OD) approach. It involves redesigning of the organisation’s systems at many levels of the organisation and change the organisation’s environment to remove the problem e.g. strategy, structure and processes – individuals and groupings, cultural changes, power and leadership styles.
4. The problems cannot be resolved by a course of action or be solved by a scientific method or tool.
5. The method used to solve soft complexity is known as the SOFT SYSTEMS MODEL OF CHANGE (SSMC).

When to use HSMC

HSMC has limited application.

1. It is most appropriate for situations of hard complexity.
2. Whenever and wherever possible, those people who are likely to be affected by the change should be consulted as early as possible.
3. Support from senior management is essential for any but most localised, operational types of change.
4. Not appropriate for messy complexity where political issues, people’s culture , leadership style are involved. These take time to change.
5. HSMC cannot solve changes involving organisational development i.e. ongoing changes involving most parts of the organisation and most of its members at all stages in the change process.
6. HSMC can be used in situations where it is possible to quantify the change objectives, if not completely, at least to a certain extent and to work out the best ways to achieve them.

Characteristics of HSMC

1. It is a method that is applicable for designing and implementing organisational change difficult or hard situation, such as involving changes like fine-tuning, incremental adjustments or frame-breaking and where the changes can be quantified and best ways can be worked out to achieve the changes.
2. The changes can be carried out and completed speedily on the fact that only certain parts of the organisation are involved in the change.
3. Most of the members of the organisation are involved in the change process based on the concept of unitary relationship that exists among the people in the organisation. The unitary relationship stipulates that people in the organisation share common interests, values and beliefs and agree upon the ends and means and they act in accordance to agreed principles.

**Review Assignment 7**

1. What are the characteristics of HSMC?
2. Identify three situations where application of the HSMC could prove useful. Then identify three situations where it would ‘run into difficulties’. Justify your categorisation.
3. What are the possible issues that should be considered when using the HSMC?

`