

Change Management in a South African Municipality: Can it Work?

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Abstract: The business environment is ever-changing, and even companies with dominant market share needs to keep up with these changes. Not all change initiatives prove to be successful. Numerous obstacles have been highlighted in literature such as a lack of communication and poor support from management. This study, therefore, set out to identify the different factors that affect the successful implementation of change management initiatives in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. The study followed a quantitative method, and the primary data was collected by means of an online questionnaire through SurveyMonkey. The data was analysed via SPSS software and presented in graphs and tables for easy interpretation. The results and knowledge gained from this study will add to the existing body of knowledge in the discipline. It might also assist municipalities to effectively identify and quantify factors that affect their ability to manage constructive change at the workplace. All ethical requirements were considered during the study. The outcome of the study indicated that managers seem to be unaware of the benefits and principles of change management. Organisational structures and processes were found to be key contributors to the employees' resistance to change. The participants also displayed uncertainty whether communication, employee readiness for change initiative, leadership, and resources were fully addressed in the implementation of change management. The study therefore recommended that the city presents awareness sessions to all city employees including managers on the change management models, the principles of change management as well as the benefits of implementing such models and principles in the operations of the City of Tshwane. The study further recommended that the city provides the required resources for the implementation of change initiatives, and fully address the requirements for communication and employee readiness for change initiatives.

Keywords: Change initiatives, Change management, Leadership, Forces of change, Resistance to change, Readiness for change

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Change is a constant issue that organisations are facing, brought about by internal or external forces. It occurs when the organisation realises the ineffectiveness of areas such as business processes, training and development of employees, recruitment and selection procedures, and method of appraisal. These aspects can be referred to as triggers of change (Robbins & Judge, 2019). Change is unavoidable, and organisations must be flexible to survive and remain relevant in their specific field (Franklin & Aguenza, 2016:25).

1.2 Motivation for the Study

It is worth noting that the failure rate of organisational change implementation ranges from 28% to 93%. The public sector is known to be more resistant to change. The awareness of this resistance motivated this study to determine the factors that affect the successful implementation of change management initiatives in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of the study is to identify factors that affect the successful implementation of change management initiatives in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. The specific objectives of the study are the following:

- To determine the level of awareness about the principles and potential benefits of change management among managers working in the City of Tshwane.
- To identify the factors that affect the successful implementation of change management initiatives in the City of Tshwane.

1.4 Research Questions

To reach the objectives of the study, the following research questions must be answered:

- What is the level of awareness among managers within the City of Tshwane regarding the potential benefits and principles of change management?
- What are the factors affecting the successful implementation of change management initiatives within the City of Tshwane?

2. Literature Review

Organisations worldwide are forced to embrace change due to acquisitions, globalisation, mergers, new processes, new technology, and outsourcing. It is not an easy phenomenon to handle but cannot be avoided. It is critical for leaders to manage these changes for the success of the organisation (Malek & Yazdanifard, 2012:52; Khaw et al. 2022).

2.1 Forces of Change

The forces triggering change within an organisation are external as well as internal factors. External factors cannot be controlled by the organisation. Internal factors, on the other hand, take place within the organisation. It is often due to development and innovation in the manufacturing process and added value to the product. Rizescu and Tileaga (2016) proposed that it should bring specific results and should have the following characteristics:

- Relative advantages
- Impact on social relations
- Divisibility
- Reversibility
- Complexity
- Compatibility
- Communicability
- Time

Various types of change have been identified based on the source of the change as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Types of organisational change

Category	Type	Description of change
Depth or extent	Strategic	Modification to the structure of the organisation e.g., the vision and mission
	Non-strategic	Also refers to as operational changes Aims to improve the performance of the organisation
Origin	Planned	Intentional actions Ensure that the organisation adjusts to its needs
	Emergent	Unintentional changes Cannot be predicted Organisation did not prepare for these changes
Timing	Developmental	People and process orientated Improves the processes and skills
	Transitional	Incremental in nature
	Transformational	Radical in nature
Intensity	Incremental	Mostly routine and continuous Small in nature Adjusts business model to adapt to operational environment
	Radical	Investigates the thorough review of all organisational aspects
Level of analysis	Macro-evolutionary	Changes the relationships of the organisation with its environment
	Micro-evolutionary	Internal to the organisation such as culture or size
	Revolutionary	Influences the distribution of power, including the power relationships Changes the control of resources

Source: Aravopoulou, 2015

2.2 Change Management

The successful implementation of change depends on the activities followed by management to implement the change in an organisation. According to the WHO and PAHO (2019:4-7), effective change management should display specific core elements as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Core elements of change management

Element	Purpose
Governance and leadership	Communicates the need for change. Reduces confusion and resistance. Supports change.
Stakeholder engagement	Ensures stakeholders are engaged with change. Requires a stakeholder management plan.
Communication	Should be done on time. Should be provided continuously. Requires a communication plan indicating type, frequency, and recipients of communication.
Training and education	Builds new skills required by change. Enables employees to implement change. Enhances understanding of the need for change.
Workflow analysis and redesign	Enhances understanding of current performance procedures.
Monitoring and evaluation	Determines level of implementation.

Source: WHO and PAHO, 2019:4

Employees will be more motivated to accept change if they are ready for it. This can be achieved by causing employees to become uncomfortable with the current status. The resistance to change will also be recognised during the process of preparing the organisation for change. This resistance can be minimised by creating a new vision for the future of the organisation that is desirable, feasible, imaginable and flexible (Ryerson University, 2011:5).

Change is all about moving from the old to the new. The transition can be achieved through establishing change management structures, planning, and committing to activities that need to be carried out. Once the implementation of change is underway, it is important for the organisation to maintain the momentum by providing adequate resources and building a support system for the change agents (Fusch et al. 2020).

2.3 Steps of Workplace Change Management Process

Naslund and Norman (2022) reviewed the different models for change readiness and proposed the following six steps. These steps are all interrelated and should not be implemented in isolation.

- Establish clear vision and goals for the change effort,
- based on a thorough problem analysis,
- leading to an accepted need for the change,
- including top management commitment and support,
- as well as change recipients' (future users') support and
- for best use of organizational resources.

2.4 Change Management Models

To guide the implementation of change management initiatives, it is important for the organisation to consider the previously developed change management models.

2.4.1 *Lewin's change management model*

Lewin stated that the change of forces stabilises a system's behaviour. The set of behaviours are based on two forces, namely those maintaining the status quo and those pushing for change. When these two forces are equal, a state known as quasi-stationary equilibrium is reached, and current behaviours are maintained. This state can be changed by increasing the one force while decreasing the other. Lewin's model of change management consists of three steps, namely unfreezing, moving, and refreezing (Hussain et al., 2018).

During the 'unfreezing' process the forces maintaining the status quo are reduced. The members of the organisation are motivated to accept the change by explaining the difference between the desired behaviour and the current behaviour. The organisation is then moved from the previous state to the new desired state.

Once moved, 'refreezing' is implemented. This the new state is maintained through supporting mechanisms such as organisational culture, rewards, and structures (Hussain et al., 2018).

2.4.2 Kotter's Eight Step Model

Kotter (1996) expanded on Lewin's three step model to bring a more detailed approach for implementing change. Each step aimed to address a common mistake that managers make while initiating change:

- Establish a sense of urgency by creating reasons why change is necessary.
- Form a guiding coalition with enough power to lead the change.
- Create a vision for change to direct the change and develop strategies for achieving change vision.
- Communicate the change vision throughout the organisation.
- Empower others to act on the vision by removing barriers to change and encouraging risk-taking and creative problem solving.
- Plan for, create, and reward short-term wins that will be able to move the organisation towards the new vision.
- Consolidate improvements, reassess changes, and make necessary adjustments in the new programmes.
- Reinforce the changes by demonstrating the relationship between new behaviours and organisational success.

2.4.3 The ADKAR model

ADKAR stands for awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement. This model was developed by Jeff Hiatt. Awareness is created by encouraging employees to believe that change is needed. This is done through establishing and communicating the vision for change. To stimulate desire, the change vision is implemented, and different mechanisms are put in place to enable employees to participate in the change.

2.5 Factors Affecting the Implementation of Change Management Initiatives

The failure rate of organisational change implementation differs for various fields. Generally, it ranges from 28% to 93%. Errida and Lofti (2021) highlighted the lack of a clear change vision, insufficient leadership skills, poor communication, low commitment of stakeholders, and the absence of monitoring system as significant barriers to successful change management. Sung and Kim (2020) on the other hand identified certain strategies that are used for implementing change initiatives successfully. These include:

- Clear strategies and visions.
- Communication among members.
- Education and training to help stakeholders implement new behaviours, concepts, skills, and techniques in a new management system.
- Employee engagement and personnel systems/practices.
- Leadership behaviour.
- Organisational structures.
- Participation and mutual cooperation of all members of the organisation.
- Reinforcement for continuity.
- Role playing.

2.5.1 Communication

Communication is a key component to both the development and implementation of change initiatives. Sharing information consistently is important especially when there are uncertainties about the changes and when the implementation will take a long time. Organisations might need to adapt the vision and culture to effectively implement some changes. It is essential for management to communicate the changed vision and related objectives.

Effective communication will assist to determine employees' responses to change, reduce potential fears, and encourage the establishment of social support systems among employees. It will also provide feedback channels during the process.

2.5.2 Employee readiness for change initiatives

The implementation of change initiatives will be more effective if employees are involved in both the planning and organisation of the process. It will assist them with embracing the process rather than to resist it. Since employees prefer to maintain the familiar way of doing things, they might resist the change. Zafar (2014:238) identified the following common reasons why employees resist change:

- Lack of communication is one of the major reasons why up to 20% of change initiatives fail.
- Lack of required knowledge, skills, and resources.
- Unawareness of change objectives lead to 17 % of change initiative failures.
- Unsupportive organisational structures, as well as the failure to define the hierarchy levels needed for the implementation of change.

Resistance to change can be limited through the development of change readiness through the following actions:

- Education and training.
- Facilitation and support.
- Implicit and explicit coercion.
- Negotiation and agreement.
- Open communications.
- Participation and involvement.

2.5.3 Organisational structures, systems, and processes

There are two types of organisational structures, namely simple/flat and matrix. A simple structure is characterised by high flexibility and an ease of flow of information. A matrix structure, on the other hand, is rigid with tight controls. This type of structure brings specialists together and provides easy access and sharing of resources (Gupta, 2017:375).

The positive and negative attitudes of employees towards change, based on the two structures, can be seen in Table 3:

Table 3: Combination of structure and employee attitude towards change

Attitude	Matrix	Flat
Negative	High resistance to change	Anxiety, frustration, and little resistance to change
Positive	Acceptance of change with a fear of challenge or motive of learning	Highly accepted because of equal/greater participation

Source: Own compilation

2.5.4 Leadership

Strong leadership commitment is needed for successful change. A transformational leadership style has been identified as effective in reducing resistance to change . It has the ability to instil pride and faith while inspiring and empowering groups (Mansaray, 2019:28). Management could avoid crisis during the implementation of change as follows:

- Accept that change is a process.
- Assess risks and motivate employees.
- Create and communicate a vision for change.
- Consolidate improvement and keep the change going.
- Enable employees to act on the change vision.
- Implement change step by step.
- Plan and establish short-term wins.
- Reinforce the new ways of doing things (Stanleigh, 2008:37).

Giauque (2015:91) concluded that it is crucial to ensure that adequate resources are provided for middle managers to be able to tackle organisational reforms and changes. Education and training are key factors in enabling organisation members to respond to a changing environment.

3. Research Design and Methods

The quantitative research design was the preferred design for this study. It allowed the researcher to determine the research objective aligned with the online data collection method. Lastly, it allowed the researcher to use the deductive approach to confirm the theory on the different factors that affect the successful implementation of change management initiatives using the collected data.

3.1 Population and Sample of the Study

The total number of employees in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality is 19 829 (City of Tshwane, 2019:195). The number of employees that were eligible to participate in the study were 377. These are the employees that have either planned and or implemented change initiatives in the City of Tshwane.

The sample of the study was calculated using online SurveyMonkey sample calculator (SurveyMonkey, 2020). At 95% confidence interval and at 5% margin of error, the sample of the study was found to be 191 employees, this sample was selected through a stratified random sampling method. The strata used was the designation of the employees which were group heads, divisional heads, directors, deputy directors, functional heads and change management champions. A response rate of 70.6% was achieved.

3.2 Data Collection

A SurveyMonkey link to the questionnaire was distributed via email together with the information leaflet and informed consent. This approach assisted to limit the potential biases.

3.3 Data Analysis

The analysis, dissemination, and interpretation of the survey data were conducted through the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Both descriptive and inferential statistics were computed. The descriptive statistics were determined first to reveal the distribution of the data within the different demographic variables identified. The inferential statistics were computed to determine the level of relationship amongst the factors as well as to determine if there is a difference in perception amongst the research participants based on their different demographical information.

3.3.1 ANOVA

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to detect differences between the experimental groups. The independent variables in this study, also known as factors, were the perceptions of the participants on communication, employee readiness for change initiatives, leadership, awareness by management, and resources. The dependent variables were the demographical information of the participants.

NOVA was used to determine the variation in the perceptions on the five factors due to demographical variables. The critical value was set at 0.05 and the calculated p-value was used to conclude whether the null hypothesis should be rejected or accepted.

3.3.2 Pearson correlation coefficient

Correlation is used to estimate the strength of the relationship between two variables, as well as to study if there is an association between them. Correlation coefficient was used in the study to determine the strength of the relationships between factors that are crucial for the successful implementation of change management initiatives in the organisation.

3.4 Quality of the Research

According to Saunders *et al.* (2019), a valid questionnaire assists the researcher to achieve accurate data that measures the concepts that the researcher is interested in collecting. A reliable questionnaire on the other hand will assist with the consistency of collecting data.

participant bias was prevented by allowing the participants to complete the questionnaire on their own. In terms of the researcher bias, the researcher did not participate in the study and did not influence the answers of the participants of the study. To assess the appropriateness of the questions posed to the research participants as well as test the reliability of the survey instrument, Cronbach's alpha coefficient analysis was employed.

The validity of the study was ensured by adapting an existing questionnaire developed by Wambua (2017) for a similar study conducted in the public sector of Kenya.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Adherence to ethical norms and standards is critical when conducting research since it supports the aims of the research.

The researcher obtained approval from the Faculty of Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee to conduct the study. Permission was also obtained to collect data from the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. The questionnaire was accompanied by an information leaflet and informed consent to ensure voluntarily participation.

The collected data was treated with anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher did not engage in any activities aimed at identifying participants' personal information, for example, name, surname, or IP address.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

The descriptive statistics provided an overview of the distribution of the participants based on gender, educational level, level of position or function in the City of Tshwane, years of working experience in the City as either responsible for planning and/or implementation of change initiatives, and lastly, type of work that participants do in the city with regard to change management. The results showed that more females participated in the study and most participants had a NQF level 7 qualification. Management was adequately represented in the study, with a 59% response rate and the participants were mostly involved in change initiatives for 6 to 10 years, with a response rate of 45%. Those involved in the planning and implementing of change initiatives were also outnumbering those not involved in these activities.

Most of the participants had 6 to 10 years work experience in the city. The results on the perceptions of the participants regarding the five factors were also presented. The overall average perception ranged from 2.74 to 3.14, with perception on employee readiness obtaining the highest average, followed by awareness by management. Communication and leadership obtained lower overall average scores, which were 2.94 and 2.74, respectively. This shows that the participants were not sure if all the factors were fully addressed during the implementation of change management initiatives in the City of Tshwane. The inferential statistical analysis was conducted via ANOVA and Pearson correlation coefficients.

The ANOVA results showed that there were no significant differences on the perceptions of participants on five factors based on the demographical profiles. The Pearson correlation coefficient indicated that there is a moderate to strong correlation amongst the five factors, namely awareness by management, communication, employee readiness, leadership, and resources. The p-value indicated that there is a correlation amongst the five factors.

To determine the awareness by management Section E of the questionnaire was directed to management only (divisional heads, directors, deputy directors and functional heads) As indicated in Table 4 the average number of responses from these managers was 78.

Table 4: Awareness by management

Question	N	Mean
Employees are aware of the change management policy of the city	80	2.76
Employees are aware of how change management principles can assist the city to achieve its goals and vision	80	2.89
Employees are aware of the city's vision and goals	79	3.27
Employees are aware of their roles and responsibilities	79	3.39
Employees are aware of their change management champion	80	3.11
Employees understand how the change initiative will assist the city to achieve its goals and vision	80	2.96
Communication about the change initiative/s is sent to everyone affected by change initiative/s	80	3.49
Perception on Awareness (overall average)	78	3.1264
Valid N	78	

The managers mostly agreed that communication about the change was sent to all who would be affected by the change, with a mean value of 3.49. This was followed by the opinion that employees were aware of their duties and responsibilities, with a mean value of 3.39 and the statement that the employees were aware of the city’s vision and goals at 3.27. The overall average of the responses was 3.1264. This is an indication that there is uncertainty about the awareness of the benefits and principles of change management among the managers.

Table 5 shows the Pearson correlation values and p-values amongst the five dimensions. The Pearson correlation values ranged from 0.382 to 0.680, showing a moderate to strong relationship amongst the variables. Further hypothesis testing was done to determine if there is correlation amongst five factors. All the p-values ranged from 0.000 to 0.001, which is less than the critical value of 0.01, indicating a significant correlation amongst the five factors.

Table 5: Correlation results amongst the five factors

	Perception on employee readiness		Perception on leadership		Perception on awareness management		Perception on resources	
	PC	PV	PC	PV	PC	PV	PC	PV
Perception on communication	0.478	0.000	0.680	0.000	0.574	0.000	0.522	0.000
	Perception on communication		Perception on leadership		Perception on awareness management		Perception on resources	
Perception on employee readiness	0.478	0.000	0.531	0.000	0.490	0.000	0.382	0.001
	Perception on employee readiness		Perception on leadership		Perception on communication		Perception on resources	
Perception on awareness by management	0.490	0.000	0.566	0.000	0.574	0.000	0.570	0.000
	Perception on employee readiness		Perception on leadership		Perception on awareness management		Perception on communication	
Perception on resources	0.382	0.001	0.619	0.000	0.570	0.000	0.522	0.000

*PC = Pearson correlation

*PV = P-value

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study aimed to understand factors that affect the successful implementation of change management initiatives in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. The recommendations provided are meant to assist management on actions that they need to take to improve the successful implementation of different change management initiatives in the city.

5.1 Conclusion by Objectives

The first objective was to determine the level of awareness about the potential benefits and principles of change management among managers working in the City of Tshwane.

Seven statements were included in the questionnaire to specifically investigate the awareness about the potential benefits and principles of change management among managers. The mean scores for these variables were between 2.76 and 3.49. The overall mean score of 3.1264 confirm that the managers were not agreeing nor disagreeing that they were aware of the principles and benefits of change management.

For the second objective, which was to identify the factors that affect the successful implementation of change management initiatives in the City of Tshwane, the study found that the employees of the City of Tshwane agreed that both organisational structures and processes are responsible for the employees’ resistance to the

implementation of change initiatives. For the other factors, namely communication, employee readiness for change initiatives, leadership, and resources, the results of the study found that the employees were not sure if the requirements under those factors were fully addressed during the implementation of change initiatives.

6. Recommendations

To improve on the level of awareness of the potential benefits and principles of change management amongst managers in the City of Tshwane, it is recommended that awareness sessions on the change management models, principles of change management as well as the benefits of implementing such models and principles in the operations of the City of Tshwane be offered to all employees of the City of Tshwane, including managers.

The following recommendations are aligned to research objective 2:

To fully meet communication requirements, the following recommendations are made:

- The vision and goals of change initiatives should be clearly communicated to all affected employees.
- Managers should ensure that communicated messages clearly articulate what changes will be brought by the change initiatives to be implemented.
- Managers should use effective mechanisms to communicate the vision and goals of change initiatives.
- More effort should be put in place to ensure that employees that are affected by change initiatives clearly understand both the vision and goals of the change initiatives.

To fully meet employee readiness for change initiatives requirements, the following recommendations are made:

- Managers should clearly communicate what changes will be brought in by the change initiatives. This will assist with obtaining the required support to implement the initiative from the affected employees.
- Managers should implement effective remedial actions to address resistance to change initiatives by employees.
- Managers should put effective processes in place that will allow employees to voice their perceptions about the change initiatives to be implemented and should address such perceptions effectively.
- Managers should understand the root causes from both the city's structures and processes that are responsible for employees' resistance to change initiatives.

To demonstrate commitment towards the change initiatives to be implemented, top management should do the following:

- Be at the forefront about communicating the vision and goals of the change initiatives.
- Consistently monitor the implementation of change initiatives and effectively remove obstacles and address challenges that might be encountered by the project team.
- Provide required guidance, resources, and support to the project team implementing the change initiatives.

To fully meet resource requirements, the following recommendations are made:

- Managers should appoint knowledgeable employees to implement change initiatives.
- Managers should avoid moving employees between projects.
- Managers should give project teams enough time to implement change initiatives.
- Managers should provide effective training required to enable employees to implement change initiatives.
- The City of Tshwane should appoint leaders to drive change throughout the organisation. These leaders should not be expected to perform roles outside of their normal responsibilities. They should be allowed to focus on and remain dedicated to the change process as suggested by Jones *et al.* (2004).

7. Contributions of the Study

The study contributes to the understanding of factors that affect the successful implementation of change initiatives in a local government sphere. It also adds to the body of knowledge on change management.

8. Limitations of the Study

The results of the study gave neutral results, and this might be due to the 5-point Likert scale that was used. Perhaps the 7-point Likert scale might have given better results. The format of the questionnaire also did not allow participants to indicate any other issue/s that might be affecting the successful implementation of change initiatives in the City of Tshwane.

9. Recommendations for Future Research

This study looked at the factors affecting the successful implementation of change management initiatives in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. One cannot reach the conclusion if these factors are affecting the successful implementation of change initiatives in other metropolitan municipalities. It is, therefore, recommended that a similar study be conducted in other metropolitan municipalities to compare the results. The results should further be compared to the private sectors to determine if the factors that affect the successful implementation of change management initiatives are the same for both public and private sectors.

10. Conclusion

This study aimed to determine the level of awareness amongst managers of the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality on the potential benefits and principles of change management, as well as to identify factors that affect the successful implementation of change management initiatives in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. Managers were found to be unsure of whether they are aware of the potential benefits and principles of change management. The city's structure and processes were found to be responsible for employee resistance to the implementation of change initiatives. The study also found that the requirements for the other four factors, namely communication, employee readiness for change initiatives, leadership, and resources were not fully addressed in the city during the implementation of change initiatives. Although the study faced some limitations, the objectives have been met and recommendations to managers in the City of Tshwane as well as for future research have been presented.

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