

Building an Integrative Framework for Change Management for Digital Transformation in Public Services

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to conceptually examine prominent change management models and evaluate their relevance for supporting digital transformation in public sector organizations.

Subjects and Methods: The research applies a literature review approach by analyzing academic articles, books, and best-practice reports. The data were examined using thematic analysis involving reduction, categorization, and synthesis to identify the strengths, limitations, and gaps in the application of Lewin's Three-Step Model, ADKAR, Kotter's Eight-Step Model, and Beer and Nohria's Theory E and Theory O.

Results: The review indicates that no single framework can universally address the complexity of digital change in the public sector. Lewin's model contributes to building organizational readiness, ADKAR focuses on individual engagement and capability, Kotter underlines the importance of leadership and vision, while Theory E and Theory O stress balancing structural performance and cultural development. Evidence from transformation experiences in Microsoft and Kodak confirms that leadership commitment, organizational culture, and employee preparedness are decisive factors.

Conclusions: An integrative approach that combines complementary elements from multiple models is more suitable for achieving sustainable digital transformation and improving governance outcomes in public service institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Change is an integral part of organizational life. No company or institution can survive without adapting to its environment (Dervitsiotis, 2003; Buchanan et al., 2005). The pressures of globalization, developments in digital technology, shifts in consumer behavior, and increasingly fierce competition mean that organizations must constantly evolve, adjusting their strategies, structures, and work cultures. The challenge is that change is not only about changing processes or systems, but also involves the people within the organization, from leaders to employees who carry out daily activities (Pudjiarti, 2023).

Many studies show that most organizational change initiatives fail to achieve the expected results. The failure rate is often said to be between 60 and 70 percent. As Kotter (1996) revealed, "more than 70 percent of all major change efforts in organizations fail" (p. 4). The causes vary: unclear communication, employee resistance, weak commitment from top management, and a lack of structured planning. This has given rise to the need for a change management model, a

framework that provides guidance on how change can be designed, implemented, and maintained more effectively.

Since the mid-20th century, a number of experts have introduced different models, each with its own focus and approach. Kurt Lewin, for example, presented a classic model with three simple stages: unfreeze, change, and refreeze. According to Lewin (1947), "to bring about any change, the equilibrium has to be destabilized (unfrozen) before old behavior can be discarded and new behavior successfully adopted" (p. 34). Meanwhile, Prosci, with the ADKAR model, emphasizes change at the individual level, with five key elements: awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement (Hiatt, 2006; Antoniadou et al., 2022).

John Kotter then highlights the importance of leadership in guiding organizations through eight systematic steps of change. He asserts that "the single most important factor in successful change is leadership" (Kotter, 1996). On the other hand, Beer & Nohria (2000) introduced the Theory E and Theory O approaches, which question the fundamental orientation of organizations: "Theory E change strategies are based on economic value, while Theory O change strategies are based on developing organizational capabilities"

This difference in orientation shows that no single model is completely universal. Organizations need to understand the characteristics, strengths, and limitations of each model in order to select or combine them according to their needs (Chatman, 1989; Lamontagne et al., 2011). For example, a startup company with a lean structure may be more suited to the ADKAR model, which focuses on individuals, while a large corporation facing cultural resistance may benefit from the clear stages in Kotter's model. Meanwhile, organizations undergoing major restructuring may need to consider the economically oriented Theory E approach, or combine it with Theory O to maintain long-term employee commitment (Beer & Nohria, 2000).

A real-world example can be seen in Microsoft's digital transformation under Satya Nadella's leadership. When Nadella took over as CEO in 2014, the company was under pressure due to changes in the technology market and the dominance of competitors. Nadella not only changed the business strategy towards cloud services, but also shifted the internal work culture from "know-it-all" to "learn-it-all" (London Business School, 2021). This approach is in line with Kotter's model, which emphasizes the importance of visionary leadership and consistent communication, while also reflecting the values of Theory O, which focuses on organizational culture development. Without targeted change management, such a major strategic shift would not have gone smoothly.

Conversely, cases of failed transformation also provide lessons. Kodak, for example, was slow to respond to the shift from analog to digital cameras even though they themselves invented digital camera technology (Galal, 2016). Internal resistance and reluctance to step out of their comfort zone prevented strategic changes from being implemented effectively (Battilana & Casciaro, 2013). From Lewin's model perspective, Kodak failed to execute the unfreeze phase, which involves breaking old patterns and preparing the organization mentally to accept change.

Rosenbaum et al. (2018); Burnes (2007); Bartunek & Woodman (2015) said that, although each model has its own advantages, many practitioners and academics consider Lewin's model to remain one of the most successful and relevant approaches to date. Burnes (2004) states that "Lewin's three-step model is not only the cornerstone of change management, but also provides a foundation for understanding resistance and commitment". Its simplicity makes this model easy to understand and apply in various types of organizations. The success of this model lies in its focus on the human and psychological aspects of change (Marken & Carey, 2015; Maio et al., 2007; Mansell & Huddy, 2020).

The Kodak case serves as a clear example of failure when the unfreeze phase is not executed properly. Conversely, the success of Microsoft's digital transformation under Nadella demonstrates the importance of changing employee mindsets before implementing new strategies, a core principle of Lewin's model. Therefore, despite the emergence of new models with more detailed frameworks, Lewin's model continues to prove its relevance and success as the foundation of effective change management.

Literature Review

Change Management

Change management is a discipline and practice focused on how organizations systematically manage the transition from the current state to the desired state (Stouten et al., 2018; McGraw et al., 2013; Kuipers et al., 2014). The main objective is to ensure that the changes made are not only successful in terms of implementation, but also sustainable and widely accepted by all components of the organization. According to Carnall (2007), effective change is a complex process involving individual, group, and organizational dimensions as a whole, and requires a controlled approach to minimize the risks of resistance and failure.

Change management is becoming increasingly important, especially in today's digital era, where technology and market demands are changing rapidly. Public organizations, particularly in the public service sector, face enormous pressure to transform in order to remain relevant and able to provide efficient and quality services to the community. Therefore, a deep understanding of various change management models that have proven successful is essential to guide appropriate and effective change strategies.

Previous Research

Various studies have reviewed the successful implementation of change management models in various sectors. Research by Latta (2009) reveals that choosing the right model depends heavily on the organizational context and the type of change being faced. Canning & Found (2015); Hon et al., (2014) adds that resistance to change is often a major factor in failure, so models that can accommodate employee communication and participation needs are more likely to succeed. The Lewin, ADKAR, and Kotter models are often the main references in these studies. Lewin (1947) is known for his three-stage approach (unfreeze, change, refreeze), which is simple yet very practical.

The ADKAR model focuses more on individual aspects and readiness for change (awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, reinforcement). Meanwhile, Kotter presents eight stages of change that describe the process of leadership and change communication in detail. Theory E and Theory O, proposed by Beer and Nohria, offer different perspectives between change that is economically oriented (efficiency and financial results) and change that focuses on culture and employee engagement.

Current Literature Gap

Although the diversity of change management models has been widely studied, there is a significant gap in the literature that comprehensively discusses the adaptation of these models, particularly in the application of information technology in the public service sector. Most of the literature tends to focus on the business or manufacturing sectors, without considering the unique characteristics of public services, which are highly dependent on regulations, community participation, and budget constraints.

In addition, there have not been many studies that bring together comparative analyses of change management models in the context of digital transformation and the use of information technology in public institutions, which often face bureaucratic obstacles and strong organizational cultural resistance. Therefore, critically examining these models and developing an appropriate model framework is necessary to bridge this gap.

Proposed Model

Based on a review of the literature and the context of challenges in public services, an effective change management model for information technology implementation needs to combine the systematic aspects of Lewin's Model, the individual focus of the ADKAR Model, change leaders and communication from Kotter's Model, and a balance of values between Theory E (change occurs from the top down) and Theory O (change focuses on culture and employee development). The proposed model is an integration of these three models that emphasizes: (1) Organizational and cultural preparation (Lewin Unfreeze); (2) Individual empowerment and training (ADKAR Knowledge and Ability); (3) Transformational leadership and continuous communication (Kotter

Communication and Leadership); (4) Strengthening positive and value-based culture (Theory O) This model is expected to address the unique needs of the public service sector, which requires a structured, inclusive, and results-oriented approach.

Existing Models

Lewin's model focuses on three main stages: unfreeze, change, and refreeze, which are effective for planned change in various organizations. The ADKAR model is more detailed in terms of the human aspect, which is key to successful change, with five main elements that must be fulfilled in order for individuals to adapt to change. The Kotter model provides an eight-step framework that emphasizes the role of leadership and communication in leading change, from creating urgency to integrating change into the organizational culture. Theory E and Theory O distinguish between change approaches that are oriented toward economic results (E) and change that focuses on people and culture (O), providing a perspective that a combination of both is important for long-term success.

Change Management Model for Information Technology Implementation in the Public Service Sector

In the public service sector, change management faces complex challenges such as bureaucracy, cultural resistance, and the need for transparency and accountability. Therefore, the change model must be able to accommodate both technical and social needs. For example, in the *unfreeze* stage, organizations need to build awareness of the importance of implementing new technologies, overcoming fears and resistance.

In the *change* stage, employee training and mentoring are very important, in line with the ADKAR principle, so that technology users feel capable and confident. Visionary leadership that encourages open communication and collaboration is key, as emphasized in Kotter's model. Meanwhile, strengthening an adaptive culture and continuous learning, in accordance with Theory O, ensures that technology is not only implemented but also embedded in daily work processes.

METHODOLOGY

This article was compiled using a conceptual study approach through a literature review method. This approach was chosen because the main objective of the paper is to analyze, compare, and synthesize various change management models in the context of information technology implementation in the public service sector. The data sources were obtained from secondary literature in the form of books, articles from reputable international journals, conference proceedings, and relevant best practice reports. The literature was selected purposively by considering three main criteria. First, relevance, namely literature that directly discusses change management models (such as Lewin, ADKAR, Kotter, and Theories E and O) and studies of their application in organizations. Second, recentness, prioritizing publications from the last ten years to capture the latest developments, without neglecting the classical theories that form the foundation. Third, contextuality, namely literature that highlights digital transformation, information technology implementation, and the unique characteristics of public sector organizations. The literature analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis approach. The analysis process was carried out in three main stages. The first stage was data reduction, which involved selecting literature relevant to the focus of the study. The second stage was categorization, which involved grouping the literature based on the change management models discussed and their application contexts. The third stage is synthesis, which involves integrating findings from various sources to identify gaps, compare the strengths and limitations of each model, and develop an integrative conceptual framework that suits the needs of the public service sector. With this methodology, the article is expected to provide a theoretical contribution in the form of a critical mapping of change management models, while offering a conceptual framework that is more adaptive to the challenges of digital transformation in public organizations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Critical Analysis of Change Management Models

Change management models have evolved from simple frameworks to more complex and systematic approaches. A critical analysis of the most widely used models provides an overview of the strengths and limitations of each in the context of modern organizations. Kurt Lewin's (1947) three-stage model is one of the early foundations in change management studies. This model assumes that change is linear and can be guided through three steps: unfreeze, change, and refreeze. The main strength of this model is its simplicity, making it easy to understand and apply. Its focus on the psychological aspects of individuals and groups makes it relevant for understanding resistance and the importance of mental preparedness before change is implemented. However, Lewin's limitation lies in its relatively static nature. In the digital age of rapid change, the refreeze stage is considered inappropriate because organizations are required to continue adapting without stopping at a particular stable phase (Burnes, 2004).

The ADKAR model developed by Hiatt (2006) complements these shortcomings by focusing on the individual level. The five main elements awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement create a more personalized framework for change. The advantage of ADKAR is its ability to break down the change process into concrete individual needs, for example through training, communication, and employee empowerment. However, ADKAR tends to emphasize micro aspects, making it less suitable for large-scale changes involving corporate strategy or comprehensive restructuring.

Kotter (1996) offers an eight-stage change model that emphasizes the role of leadership. These stages, ranging from creating a sense of urgency to integrating change into the organizational culture, provide more detailed guidance. Its strength lies in the systematization of the process, making it easier for managers to identify missed steps. However, its weakness is that this model is often considered too linear and does not always reflect the reality of complex organizations, where several stages can occur simultaneously or repeatedly.

Meanwhile, Beer & Nohria (2000) propose Theory E and Theory O as conceptual frameworks that highlight the basic orientation of change. Theory E emphasizes economic value, restructuring, and financial results, while Theory O focuses on culture building and human resource development. This distinction opens up the perspective that organizational change cannot be viewed solely from the perspective of efficiency, but must also consider sustainability through employee engagement. The main challenge of this approach is finding a balance between the two theories, as an excessive orientation toward one side can lead to resistance or sacrifice the sustainability of the organization. Thus, it can be concluded that no single model is entirely ideal. The relevance of each model depends heavily on the organizational context, the type of change faced, and internal and external dynamics.

Relevance of Models for the Public Service Sector

The public service sector has characteristics that distinguish it from the private sector. Public organizations operate within a framework of strict regulations, budget constraints, and demands for transparency and accountability. In this context, the application of change management models must take into account rigid bureaucracy and a conservative organizational culture. Lewin's model is relevant because it emphasizes the importance of the unfreeze phase, which is building awareness of the urgency of change. In public organizations, resistance often arises from employees who are accustomed to bureaucratic routines. The unfreeze phase helps break old habits and prepare the mindset to accept new technologies, for example, in the digitization of administrative services.

The ADKAR model makes a significant contribution at the individual level, particularly in terms of training and empowering civil servants or state civil apparatus. Digital transformation in the public sector often fails not because of technology, but because of the low capacity of individuals to operate new systems. Through the knowledge and ability stages, ADKAR ensures personal readiness, which is key to successful implementation.

Kotter adds the aspect of leadership, which is highly relevant in the public sector. Bureaucratic transformation requires visionary leaders who are able to inspire, communicate urgency, and maintain the momentum for change. Without consistent leadership support, change often stalls midway because it gets bogged down in administrative formalities.

Theory E and Theory O provide a balanced perspective. Public organizations cannot only pursue efficiency and cost cutting (Theory E), as this risks reducing service quality. Conversely, overemphasizing Theory O without considering economic outcomes also has the potential to burden the state budget. Therefore, a combination of the two is necessary so that digital transformation in the public sector is not only technically effective but also socially and financially sustainable.

The case study of Microsoft's transformation under Satya Nadella's leadership illustrates how change management can be successful when leadership, culture, and individual orientation are taken seriously. Nadella not only shifted the business strategy towards cloud services but also shaped a new organizational culture of " " that is more open and learning-oriented. This success can be explained by Kotter's framework specifically the creation of urgency, strengthening of vision, and continuous communication as well as the Theory O approach, which emphasizes the development of culture and human resources. Microsoft's transformation shows that large-scale change requires a combination of visionary leadership, individual readiness, and organizational culture strengthening.

In contrast, Kodak's failure is an important lesson about the risks of ignoring the principles of change management. Although the company invented digital camera technology, it failed to implement the unfreeze phase in Lewin's model, which involves breaking old patterns and preparing the organization to accept change. Internal resistance and reluctance to leave the comfort zone caused the company to lose momentum, eventually leading to its demise at the hands of competitors. From a public sector perspective, the Kodak case provides an analogy about the risks of bureaucracy rejecting digital innovation due to its attachment to old procedures. Without mental and cultural readiness, digital transformation will be difficult to achieve even if the technology is available.

Challenges of Digital Transformation in the Public Sector

Digital transformation in the public sector faces complex challenges. One of the main obstacles is organizational cultural resistance. Civil servants who have long been accustomed to manual work patterns are often reluctant to switch to digital systems. This is exacerbated by the perception that digitization will reduce the need for labor. In addition, rigid bureaucracy often hinders flexibility in adopting new technologies. Lengthy procurement, regulatory, and administrative procedures can slow down implementation. Another challenge is budget constraints, which prevent optimal investment in technology and human resource training.

However, digital transformation also brings great opportunities. The application of information technology can increase efficiency, accelerate service processes, and strengthen transparency and accountability. Digitization also enables broader community involvement through online platforms, thereby improving the quality of public services. In other words, the success of digital transformation will largely depend on the extent to which change management can overcome obstacles while taking advantage of these opportunities. If Microsoft's experience reflects the success of integrating various aspects of change management, then Kodak is an example of failure due to internal resistance.

These two case studies are relevant to the public sector, as bureaucracies often face the same dilemma. On the one hand, public organizations have opportunities similar to Microsoft namely, leveraging digital transformation to improve efficiency and service quality. On the other hand, there is a risk of falling into the Kodak trap, where attachment to tradition, rigid procedures, and cultural resistance actually hinder change. The main challenge for the public sector is to ensure that the unfreezing process is taken seriously: building awareness of the urgency of change, reducing fear of technology, and fostering a desire to innovate. Thus, Microsoft and Kodak can be used as mirrors that show two different directions of the change process: success when change management is applied consistently, and failure when resistance is allowed to dominate.

Synthesis and Integrative Model

Based on the above analysis, an integrative model is needed that combines the strengths of various change management models. This model needs to be tailored to the needs of the public

sector, which demands a structured, inclusive, and results-oriented approach. The first stage is organizational and cultural preparation, which refers to Lewin's unfreeze concept. Public organizations must build awareness of the urgency of digitization and communicate the vision for change widely. The second stage is individual empowerment, in accordance with the ADKAR principle. Training and mentoring must be provided so that employees have the knowledge and ability to operate new technologies, while also being motivated to support change.

The third stage is transformative leadership and continuous communication, as emphasized by Kotter. Public leaders must play an active role in creating urgency, inspiring subordinates, and maintaining the momentum for change. The fourth stage is strengthening a positive and value-based culture, in line with Theory O. Change must be internalized into the organizational culture so that it does not stop at the technical level, but becomes part of the new identity of public organizations. The fifth stage, as a counterbalance, is to consider the economic and efficiency aspects of Theory E. Although the public sector is not a profit-making entity, budget efficiency remains an important consideration so that digital transformation does not burden the state finances. This integrative model is expected to address the unique needs of the public service sector. By combining human, leadership, cultural, and efficiency aspects, public organizations can increase their chances of success in facing the challenges of digitalization.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study shows that change management models cannot be used partially in the context of the public sector. The main contribution of this article is to offer an integrative framework that combines key elements from various models so that it is more adaptive to the complexity of bureaucracy and the needs of digital transformation. Practically, the implication is the importance of building individual capacity through continuous training, strengthening visionary leadership, and balancing results orientation with organizational culture development. Public leaders need to adopt effective communication strategies to reduce resistance and ensure that change is widely accepted. In addition, change management in the public sector must consider budget efficiency without sacrificing the quality of services to the community.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that change management is a crucial element in supporting digital transformation, especially in the public service sector, which is bureaucratic, regulatory, and oriented towards the interests of the wider community. Analysis of various change management models shows that no single model is entirely universal. Lewin's model offers a simple framework that emphasizes organizational readiness, ADKAR focuses on individual readiness, Kotter emphasizes the importance of visionary leadership and communication, while Theory E and O highlight the balance between economic results orientation and organizational culture development. The Microsoft and Kodak case studies further emphasize that the success or failure of change is largely determined by how organizations manage human, cultural, and leadership factors. Thus, the success of digital transformation in the public sector requires an integrative model that combines key elements from various theories. The model must be able to accommodate technical and social needs, maintain a balance between budget efficiency and organizational culture strengthening, and ensure that change is accepted, maintained, and sustainable.

IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical Implications

This article makes a conceptual contribution by proposing an integrative framework that combines the strengths of various change management models. These findings enrich the literature with the perspective that change models should not be used partially, but rather combined according to the organizational context. This study also fills a gap in the literature, which is still limited in discussing the adaptation of change management models for the public service sector in the era of digital transformation.

Practical Implications

Public organization leaders need to play a transformative role, not only in creating urgency for change, but also in maintaining momentum and instilling the value of change into the organizational culture. Empowering individuals through training, communication, and mentoring is an absolute requirement to minimize resistance to new technologies. Change management must balance budget efficiency (results orientation, Theory E) with strengthening organizational culture and employee engagement (Theory O). The case studies of Microsoft and Kodak serve as a mirror for public organizations: the success or failure of digital transformation is largely determined by the extent to which change management is carried out consistently and comprehensively.

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