

Selected Topics in Business Administration:

Change and Change Management

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§1 THE NATURE OF MANAGEMENT

OVERVIEW

According to Collins (1998: 9), management theory is often depicted as having gone through a number of evolutionary stages of thinking: the classical approaches giving way to the human relations approaches which in turn has been replaced by contingency theory. This has given way to what Barnes calls 'guru theory' (Collins, 1998: 9). Let us now examine in some detail these stages, as their theoretical underpinnings are crucial for understanding the theories explaining change.

CLASSICAL APPROACHES

These approaches can be summarised under a scientific model of management (Collins, 1998: 12-16) based on the following principles:

- Work needs to be scientifically studied: managers need to overthrow the habitual or spontaneous work practices thus take the responsibility for the design and redesign of work on more rational lines.
- Staff need to be scientifically selected: managers need to ensure that staff selected and hired will follow the ways of doing in the organisation and its managers since they know what is best for the organisation.
- Staff conform to scientific principles so as to ensure mutuality and co-operation: managers need to establish the necessary authority for their preferred system of work thereby minimising conflict.
- Work should be divided in separate groups of workers and managers doing the tasks each is best suited for: managers should establish clear lines of responsibility which enables staff to earn more, since being themselves rational economic agents, care less for the content of work rather than its extrinsic rewards.

HUMAN RELATIONS APPROACHES

These approaches can be summarised under a non-scientific model of management (Collins, 1998: 16-18) based on the following principles:

- Staff are emotional: managers need to manage the emotional content of staff and not only their rational content.
- Organisations should be thought as co-operative and social: managers should promote and cultivate group norms in order to tap the potential for increasing output.
- Organisations are composed of informal structures owing to values and norms: managers need to manipulate the formal system of responsibilities and authority so as to cultivate values in the informal system appropriate for high levels of productivity.

CONTINGENCY APPROACHES

These approaches can be summarised under the open systems model of management (Collins, 1998: 18- 20) based on the following principles:

- Business organisations need to adapt to their environment: managers should scan the environment to understand the influences that affect their business.
- There is no best way for the practice of management: managers have to cope with day-to –day contingencies and adopt practices to suit the situation.
- There is a relationship between product, production system and control system: managers need to not only acknowledge that this relationship is unique but also ensure that it functions well for their own organisation.

GURU APPROACHES

Following Burnes (Collins, 1998: 20), the emergence of gurus as individuals looked upon as being the most advanced in management thinking is in itself a way of representing management whose basic tenets include:

- The patterns of competition have changed: managers need to change their control systems to meet new challenges.
- Organisations need to adapt organic structural forms: managers need to be leaders able to counsel and facilitate the work of staff.

CASTING A CRITICAL EYE ON MANAGEMENT THINKING

1 ON THE SCIENTIFIC MODEL

To start with, scientific management has to be placed in its own context. It was applied (in part at least) by Taylor for the purpose of increasing work speed in a large-scale factory production and breaking down craft skills which can be interpreted as an attempt to reduce conflict between members of staff (in Collins, 1998: 15,18). However, given the social context, this is unlikely to have happened.

2 ON THE NON-SCIENTIFIC MODEL

As Collins remarks (1998: 18), the non-scientific model appears to stand in opposition to the scientific model on the surface only. Indeed, both models fail to appreciate conflict within staff or between staff and management since they dismiss it: the former on grounds of a failure to select staff in a scientific manner and the latter in fulfilling staff needs. This means in line with Collins that the non-scientific model did not replace the scientific model: it simply highlighted some aspects that were undermined by the latter model. It follows that it can no longer be attributed to the non-scientific model to have discovered the importance of the human factor: the main purpose of explaining management from a scientific way is to improve the working conditions of staff.

3 ON THE OPEN SYSTEMS MODEL

Following Collins (1998: 20) although the open systems model on the one hand advises against one best way of thinking and doing, implicitly does the same, thus introducing a deterministic view to business organisation. Further, it downplays the fact that managers may use technology as a means to transforming the nature of work thus reducing choice.

4 ON THE GURU MODEL

According to Garrahan and Stewart (in Collins, 1998: 21) the guru model downplays scientific forms of management despite the fact that they are widely used especially that it forms the central component of empowerment associated with JIT and operations or production management in general.

5 WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MANAGEMENT THEN?

Given the above insights and following Child (in Collins, 1998: 22) or Shrivasta (in Whittington, 1993: 31-32), management as a concept refers to three simultaneously interrelated aspects, namely

- An activity, in that managers are employed to do a work.
- An ideology, in that management thinking and doing legitimise and promote particular attitudes towards work.
- An elite social grouping, in that management work is performed by a particular class.

It follows that the nature of management is directed at staff and that it is about control. Given however that work is about co-operation, management approaches are a way to explain or even disguise authority and at the same time commend a degree of commitment from staff (Collins, 1998: 24).

§2 RATIONAL VIEWS ON CHANGE

OVERVIEW

Arguably, rational views on management blend to some degree the principles found in scientific and guru models, albeit summarised in a different typology, which, drawing on Collins (1998: 35), consists in the following types of managers: the hero, the guru, and the student. Let us now look at the above in some detail.

THE HERO

According to Collins (1998: 39-41), heroes have the tendency to give personal justifications whose value and appeal is based on the charismatic authority of the manager, and set the score with

current or previous members of the organisation. However, they do not provide any useful information on management practice and often display a narrow view of the business world.

THE GURU

1 OVERVIEW

The guru, following Huczynski (in Collins, 1998: 41-42), claims no charismatic authority and thus has little insider information to reveal or to ponder over. They do however offer solutions to contemporary problems that rest on having developed and researched new models. Let us now examine some key aspects and key figures.

2 MANAGING CULTURE

Peters and Waterman have argued that successful organisations are those that have learnt to manage and develop a corporate or business culture which displays certain key features (in Collins, 1993: 42-43; in Salaman, 1997: 263-264). In particular organisations need to

- Analyse less and act more (so called 'paralysis by analysis')
- Focus on meeting and exceeding customer expectations
- Value innovation which can be encouraged by dividing the structure into autonomous units
- Consider that people are the most important asset they have
- Have leaders and not managers
- Remain focused on their customers while considering competitors
- Employ skilled and committed staff
- Acknowledge committed staff and reward them with a considerable degree of autonomy and freedom of action thus adopt loose-tight forms of control

In short, to strike a balance between strategy, structure, systems, staff, style, skills, and super-ordinate skills (7-S framework).

3 RESPONDING TO CHANGE

Kanter's concern was to rekindle the spirit of enterprise and innovation for fear that the US economic hegemony is undermined (in Collins, 1998: 45; in Salaman, 1997: 263). In particular she stresses that organisations need to

- Avoid complacency when they are successful
- Adopt non-segmentalist and non-bureaucratic structures
- Focus on quality human resource policies and strategies
- Be fast, flexible and focused
- Develop an intrapreneurial ethos

4 THREATS FROM THE FAR EAST

With Pascale and Athose (in Collins, 1998: 47) the concern is the same as with Kanter's but the focus is different: they account for Japanese competitiveness and therefore recommend a number of suggestions for Western managers to adopt to stay in the race:

- Have the capacity for renewal
- Tap the skills and strengths of employees
- Deal with both the hard-S factors (strategy, structure, systems) and soft-S factors (style, skills, and super-ordinate skills)

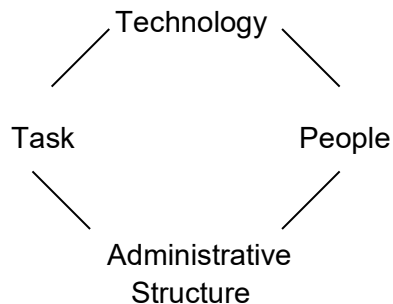
THE STUDENT

1 OVERVIEW

Following Collins (1998: 55), the student is concerned with quick and memorable guidelines for swift action taking, even self-assessment questionnaires thus keeping any theoretical issues to the minimum. Let us now examine some key aspects and key figures.

2 MANAGING TRIGGERS FOR CHANGE

Factors of change are based on Leavitt's diamond representing the internal triggers of change, which are interdependent in that a change in technology is bound to have effects on the other factors, as illustrated (in Collins, 1998: 58):



In a similar vein, external triggers are conceptualised that include changes in technology, politics, society, organisational size and complexity, trans-national relationships, government and the economy.

3 MANAGING GROUP DYNAMICS

The rationale underlying the management of group dynamics is that individual behaviour is a function of group behaviour or field. Thus, Lewin argues (in Collins, 1998: 59), successful change is only achievable where groups discard or unlearn their habitual ways of thinking and doing requiring the application of force-field analyses.

§3 NON-RATIONAL VIEWS ON CHANGE

OVERVIEW

Non- rational views on management blend to some degree the principles found in non-scientific and open systems models summarised in the following typology: the chooser, and the processor: Let us now look at the above in some detail.

THE CHOOSER

The chooser is concerned with plurality and the search of options faced with external and internal pressures in the attempt to achieve planned goals.

1 MANAGING COMPLEXITY

Starting from the premise that responsiveness to change is not a function of leadership vision or management training, Burnes (1996: 342) argues that it is rather a function of change complexity. Thus managers adopt ad hoc policies when confronted with a larger and often hostile environment which is complex, and uncertain. As a result, the goals of any particular rationally-planned method cannot be clearly known since in planning and managing change, managers attempt to match up to the needs of an environment which is poorly understood and changeable. Managing change therefore is an ongoing activity made to align and re-align the organisation with the environment (Collins: 1998: 60).

2 CHOICE MANAGEMENT

Choice management advocated by Burnes (1996: 322) is based on the idea that change management is not about achieving a predictable outcome since the outcome itself is changeable given the complex nature of the change process. But faced with changeable circumstances and environments does not mean that managers are wholly determined by the circumstances: they obtain the necessary resources to challenge their environment by means of three processes (Collins: 1998: 61-62):

- The choice process, when managers weigh up and decide upon the nature and scope of the change and on the appropriate focus of decision-making.
- The trajectory process, when managers consider the past and future direction of the organisation.
- The change process, when managers decide upon approaches for change.

THE PROCESSOR

1 PROCESSUAL MANAGEMENT

Given that both organisations and markets are 'often sticky messy phenomena' (Whittington, 1993: 22), from where short-term and short-lived strategies emerge, business success and comparative advantage is rather a matter of taking advantage of imperfections.

In particular, Pettigrew (in Collins, 1998: 67-68) advocated that these 'messy' aspects of management tend to be obscured and over-simplified by rational approaches to change management. He further has observed that change does not tend to change on a piecemeal basis but in leaps and hence is based on adaptive rationality, the gradual adjusting to environmental changes as markets can tolerate a degree of under-performance, which provides a sense of direction while allowing for flexibility. This is because business entities are made up of coalitions of individuals having their own objectives and biases and who bargain between them to arrive at a shared set of objectives. Once this compromise is settled, it is not difficult to understand that change is suspected as it may set off a period of internal unrest until a preferred way of doing is established (Whittington, 1993: 23-27).

Therefore, only when we can locate organisational change both temporally and contextually, can managers make sense of what activities are required, the opportunities to be pursued and the outcomes that unfold over time. Organisations and the management of change is in this way inscribed in a dynamic perspective involving the management of processes and social levels, be them, individual, group, organisational and societal (Collins, 1998: 70-71).

2 CONSEQUENCES FOR CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Taking these views further, Dawson's processual model highlights the timeframes of change (in Collins, 1998: 72-74), namely:

- The conception of the need to change, that take place at the beginning of the change process and involving an awareness of the internal factors on triggering change.
- The processes of organisational transition, that take place in the middle of the change process and involves an awareness of the moment when the actual process of managing change really commences.
- The operation of new work practices and procedures that take place at the end of the change process and involving an awareness of whether the new ways of doing are setting in.

Further, for Dawson there are three determinants of change namely (in Collins, 1998: 74):

AND TO SUM UP

So far, the discussion on change has evolved around a number of vignettes representing approaches to change management. These, according to Collins (1998: 82) have one common

feature: they are under-socialised models of change since they fail to acknowledge that management is an activity, an ideology delimited by social conflicts and pressures.

§4 N-STEP GUIDES FOR MANAGING CHANGE

MODELS OF CHANGE: THE UNDERSOCIALISATION ARGUMENT

Collins (1998: 82) argues that models of change, as previously presented, fail to acknowledge change as a social activity that involves people from diverse social and cultural groups who tend to interpret issues and situations in different and often quite divergent ways - hence the under-socialisation argument. This is because management as an activity and particularly the management of change is delimited by social pressures that the models do not capture or, I would add, conveniently ignore. The models therefore have a dual function, both descriptive and prescriptive, which explains why Collins calls them n-step guides (1998: 82).

FEATURES OF N-STEP GUIDES

1 THE N-STEPS

Collins (1998: 82) suggests that in looking at the models of change the following steps characterise them:

- Develop a strategy
- Confirm support
- Use project management approach that consists in
 - Identifying tasks
 - Assigning responsibilities
 - Agreeing deadlines
 - Initiating action
 - Monitoring action
 - Acting on problems
 - Ending actions
- Communicating results

2 RATIONALITY

The above shows that models of change for Collins (1998: 84) are rational in that they are based on the assumption that the issue in question is amenable to reason or the operation of formal logic. This means that the problem of change is approached as if it were a problem of formal logic that can be solved if and only if all the various elements of information necessary to solve the problem are made to slot together. Therefore, n-step guides serve the purpose to show the way to solving the problems that change causes.

4 SEQUENTIALISM

The additional feature that Collins (1998: 85) highlights is the sequential nature of change management in that the change problem under consideration has a clearly definable beginning and end. It further implies that managers can draw a line between past and current events and therefore can analyse any change process as distinct from another process.

5 PRESCRIPTION

The final feature that Collins highlights (1998: 86) is the prescriptive tone that n-step guides take as if the method that is being proposed is a tried and tested approach that can optimise the results that managers are looking to achieve.

6 ADDITIONAL FEATURES

Collins (1998: 87-93) also highlights a number of flaws that n-step guides have, in that they:

- Often depict the organisation as co-operative where mutual accommodation and understanding prevails because the antagonistic nature of employer-employee relations is covered up by technologies of control.
- Tend to emphasise some organisational aspects rather than approaching the organisation as a totality, a *gestalt*.
- Undermine the conflictual nature of the employment relationship.
- Undermine the complex and political issues that characterise any changing situation and therefore tend to reduce this complexity into a linear process.
- Attribute to conflictual situations and to resistance to change a failure in communication or a deficiency in employee psychology to cope with change.
- Assume that individuals and workers especially have a degree of practicality, a flexibility to adapt to any changing situation as according to the whims and fancy of management - to which I would add the obverse situation.
- Treat the organisation as an anthropomorphic entity.
- Assume that managers can readily change the way others behave and believe.

AND TO SUM UP

Collins comes to the conclusion that n-step guides are closed systems to change promoting the idea that all the factors that impinge on the change process are under the control of management. While failing to make the distinction between closed and open system, he nevertheless highlights the tendency to view the organisation as a closed system or at least open for the manager since it is the manager's role to control the boundary between the internal and external environments. This however neglects the fact that each individual in the organisation is an open self and therefore an organisation is closed only in its conception.

§5 CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE N-STEPS

THE NEED TO SOCIALISE MODELS OF CHANGE

As the previous discussion has shown, the need to socialise models of change and management is of prime importance if we want to understand and capture the change process creatively and imaginatively. The danger is however that one passes from one extreme to another and adopts an over-socialised view of change (Collins, 1998: 100)

HOW CAN OVERSOCIALISATION BE INTERPRETED?

Collins (1998: 101) seems to imply that the over-socialisation of managerial activities and of change in particular is about the management of cultural change. That is, the management of change is no longer viewed as that of managing a sequentially logical process that is proactive to offset contingencies, but it is deeper as it is about changing the subjective interpretation of change. Therefore, the successful management of change is none else than the ability to create a culture of change. Let us now look at the management of culture change.

CULTURE

1 OVERVIEW

Culture refers to the particular 'way of doing' (Parekh, 1997:165; Shein, 1985: 9; Deal & Kennedy, 1982: 4), of understanding, structuring, conducting and talking about business life that is unique to an organisation thereby making it different from another organisation.

2 MANAGING CULTURE

Since a particular 'way of doing' has effects on the business performance of an organisation, only committed employees can bring about competitive 'excellence' and not structures, procedures and rules are guarantors of organisational success. It follows that when the personal values of employees can be matched with those of the organisation, there are improvements in performance, quality, innovation, and customer relations. In other words, the development of the 'right culture' leads to a more effective organisation (Salaman, 1997: 241-242).

In line then with Collin's interpretation of n-step guides, structures and therefore bureaucracies are 'problematic' and therefore managers need to break away from an obsession to achieve order through regulation so as to hedge risks and variability but which dehumanises workers. Instead, the emphasis is on the management of human resources (Marsden, 1997: 108-109; Collins, 1998: 107). It aims at fostering co-operation, commitment by motivating and giving employees the autonomy to own the responsibility of their actions while governing their conduct in such a way that they perceive the organisation and their work in the same way as managers do (Salaman, 1997: 251-252). Employers then have a new role to play: they need to manage the symbolic aspects of an organisation. This is achieved through meaningful and symbolic practices that put forward

values, beliefs and norms: the construction of specific cultures of production guiding the actions of employees.

3 SUBJECTING CULTURE

Yet guidance must take place through a change in the subjectivity of employees to internalise the objectives and values of the organisation which is the key determinant of organisational success (Salaman, 1997: 237) and this implies changing the fundamental assumptions that people hold about the organisation and change. Employee subjectivity, Du Gay has shown (1997: 294), is then the 'object' to be developed through 'technologies of conduct regulation' and control by the employers, that is, the application of 'government').

4 GOVERNING BEHAVIOUR

Government for Foucault refers to methodical strategies and programmes responsible for the direction and regulation of the behaviour of individuals, thus of employees, according to political and rational 'mentalities' of rule so as to achieve a desired objective (in Rose, 1996: 134). It is a form of power exercised by managers according to what they consider to be the ideal way to interpret change. It follows that n-step guides reinforce the construction of such ideals. This implies on the one hand the application of knowledge by way of mechanisms, devices and regulatory interventions, or soft technologies (Collins, 1998: 107) and on the other the construction of a discourse, a view wherein employees can recognise themselves (Woodward: 42).

A CULTURE OF CHANGE: A BUZZ-WORD?

Cultural approaches draw exclusively on structural-functionalism, a mechanistic view of culture as a precondition for success which gives culture a fixity that is antagonistic to the very nature of change. It follows that that over-socialised models of change have a number of flaws (Salaman, 1997: 264-265), namely that:

- Employees have been exploited since there is a mechanical manipulation of organisational symbols, myths and rituals
- A top-down imposition of desirable cultures makes that collaboration and integration are contrived
- Undermine the emergence of alternative cultures characterised by informal and less deliberate process of development
- The formation of political factions which undermine the management's efforts to construct one big team
- Empowerment of employees may distance them from corporate values to preserve their self-identity
- There is a discrepancy between the preferred way culture has been encoded by the management and the way it is decoded by employees
- Managers may work counter-culturally thus see their actions undermined or prove to be damaging to consensus and employee commitment

§6 A MULTIVEL MODEL

OVERVIEW

Given the flaws that under-socialised and over-socialised approaches have, Collins goes on to construct a multi-level conceptual framework for the analysis of change and its management (1998: 128). To achieve this he blends three layers, namely, Layer 1, the axioms for the study of change, Layer 2, the theoretical frameworks of organisations, and Layer 3, the paradigms of change. Let us now briefly examine each layer

LAYER 1: CHANGE AXIOMS

Collins suggests in line with Pettigrew that change needs to take into account the following factors (in Collins, 1998: 131-136):

1 CONTEXTUALISM

Contextualism or embeddedness implies that change management is constrained by the on-going social relations in that a manager as well as an organisation is part of a network or relationships in the wider society in that these relationships condition and constrain the actions of managers and organisations.

2 TEMPORAL INTERCONNECTEDNESS

Given the impermanence that characterises and defines change, it is important to consider change as a process through time. Considering the axiom of embeddedness, temporal interconnectedness implies that managers and consultants of change cannot shape organisations as they please. Rather, change is an active process where future plans and current processes are variously facilitated and / or constrained by the context, the past history of the organisation and its future goals

3 CONTEXT AND ACTION

Under this axiom it is assumed that there are actors that shape the processes of organisational change. The decisions, which they make, and the policies they choose to pursue shape the process of organisational change. Over time their decisions which actors make become institutionalised and therefore entrenched in policies, customs and procedures to be constitutive elements of the context and thus influence the way actors view the world. This means that the context of change is the sum of previous decisions and policy outcomes

4 COMPLEXITY AND CONTRADICTION

The last axiom assumes that change is about complexity and contradiction requiring reflection on the management of practice by means of the n-step guides but without substituting one to the other. Managers therefore need to cope with change in situ.

LAYER 2: FRAMING THE ORGANISATION

According to Collins there are four competing frames of reference on the nature of society and organisations, namely (1998: 138-168):

1 UNITARY VIEWPOINT

Organisations are essentially co-operative in that they are integrated and harmonious wholes. Thus there is in principle no conflict, as employees understand their common interest whether in the long or short runs. Thus the prime emphasis is on team-building and creating a culture of shared values. The management of change then is about unifying the organisation by levelling out differences.

2 PLURALIST VIEWPOINT

The pluralist viewpoint holds that there is no final or absolute authority in society and organisations, and therefore there are competing interest groups whose consent and co-operation must be secured if the organisation is to function. It follows that conflict is endemic to organisations and the key process, which facilitates change and development. The management of change then is about reaching to compromises.

3 SYSTEMS VIEWPOINT

Arguably a combination of both unitary and pluralist viewpoints can be found in systems thinking whose emphasis is on viewing the organisation to be a complex entity which is interdependent with its environment constantly inter-acting with other entities. Further that organisations are as much detached and different from other entities, as they are dependent on their external environment for their survival. Managing change then is minimising the effects the external environment has on the organisation.

4 RADICAL VIEWPOINT

In contrast to pluralism and systems thinking where power is diffuse, radical thinkers claim that power is asymmetrically distributed in society and hence within organisations as this asymmetry reflects the interests of more powerful groups or individuals in any organisation. Radicals actually take this argument further in claiming that competition that is argued by pluralists is simply held by dominant groups to disguise power inequalities and conflicts. To correct these asymmetries then, management of change need to be a shared process where employees have an equal say as managers.

5 MARXIST VIEWPOINT

Central to Marxist arguments is that relations of possession determine relations of production and that these in turn determine class positions and class relations. Yet what characterises these

relations is conflict and antagonism because the dominant class of managers and owners is concerned with capital accumulation to offset a falling rate of profit, and since relations of production are inherently contradictory, it logically follows that class relations are equally contradictory. The management of change then is about reversing this contradiction.

LAYER 3: KEY ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Taking on from Burrell and Morgan (1979: 23-25), Collins (1998: 169-179) suggests to take a paradigmatic approach to understanding the world we inhabit as this casts some light on the fundamental different questions we raise. Thus a different set of fundamental questions, or ontologies, leads to different ways to conceptualise knowledge and human nature in addition to the ways to solve problems.

For Burrell and Morgan (1979: 23-25), there are four paradigms that emerge in relation to the degree of objectivity/subjectivity and regulation/radical change:

- Radical humanism concerned with contextualising organisations and individuals
- Interpretivism concerned with understanding the world as it is in individual consciousness
- Radical structuralism concerned with emancipation, radical change, and structural modes of domination and contradiction
- Functionalism concerned with consensus, order and determinism

TOWARDS CONSTRUCTING A NEW MODEL: A SURPRISE!

The previous discussion points towards an attempt by Collins to formulate a new paradigm for change. Surprisingly enough although he describes a new model, he does not seek to consider this as a new paradigm (1999: 190) as he thinks that we need to first explore all the possibilities offered by the multi-layer model which is simply a synthesis of existing theories. We therefore need to explain this apparent contradiction and I would argue it stems from falling into a discursive trap.

§7 CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE CHANGE PARADIGMS

DECONSTRUCTING CHANGE THEORIES AND VIEWS

1 THE ARGUMENT

Collins analysis has the merit of criticising a number of models he labelled n-step guides on grounds of either under-socialising or over-socialising change management. Yet, despite the fact that Collins has managed to highlight the benefits from seeing change as a complex and dynamic phenomenon, he has created, I would argue, an opportunity for criticising his own multi-level model. Indeed, what more than an additional n-step guide has he offered? This is because, by accepting in an unproblematic fashion Pettigrew's findings, which he therefore labels axioms, he

tends to reduce some of the uncertainties surrounding change. Not uncertainties in relation to the change process itself but its theoretical interpretation. He therefore sets ground for a rational model bearing all the features he has argued against.

2 SO WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH COLLIN'S MODEL?

Therefore Collins has found himself in a discursive trap: he has used the multi-level model to cast a critical eye on n-step guides but uses the their basic assumptions to construct his model. That is, trapped in the workings of discourses.

3 CHANGE METALANGUAGE

These views on change are a metalanguage (Barthes1993/1957: 114-115) a 'second language in which one speaks about' the management of change, or to be more precise, about the 'semiotic' relationship (Eco, 1988/1980: 35) of change management as a signifier of particular social practices. They are moreover what Foucault has termed discursive formations (in Hall, 1997a: 43-44) in that they direct the systems of representation in place as well as affect our conceptual maps by excluding other ways in which management could be conceptualised (Hall, 1997a: 49). This is because they tend to essentialise and fix difference by separating the normal from the unacceptable thus acquiring an ethical content that fixes social boundaries and establishes power asymmetries (Hall, 1997b: 258). It follows that discourses have material effects and consequences.

4 DISCURSIVE CONSEQUENCES

The consequence is to convince, to entice, and thereby define an identity, a self that cannot exist beyond the discourse. This means that each time that we describe in simple terms a management function or other aspects, it is the discourse that directs our thinking since we choose a particular way of expressing ourselves. We are despite ourselves trapped! Yet this needs to be acknowledged and use discourses as simple n-step guides while knowing that they will never be able to capture the reality of change as it is.

This however does not imply its absence: change is simply there and has to be managed if we want to arrive at some form of tangible result. Therefore we need to approach change from a rational viewpoint while considering that any rational action could be logically changed!

Yet, how do we identify change although we have the experience of change?

By this should be understood that experiencing change over time is not enough for managing change: we need to use a number of tools to identify it, that is, rationally explain its nature. Towards this end McCalman and Paton (1992: 14-15) suggest that we need to start by identifying change.

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