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Why do organisational change programmes fail?

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Abstract: Many organisations have found it difficult to implement organisational change successfully. This paper using a systematic and meta-analysis review of the literature published between 1980 and 2011 explored the major reasons for organisational change failure. Unsuccessful change programmes were attributed to insufficient education and training, employees' apathy, inadequate management support, poor leadership, inappropriate organisational culture, inadequate resources, poor communication, inappropriate planning, insufficient customer focus, and lack of a monitoring and measurement system. Change-programme implementation and its impact depend on the ability of managers to adopt and adapt the change programme principles in their organisations. A well-designed, wisely adapted and well-implemented change programme helps managers achieve desired results. Identification of those factors that contribute to change success or failure enables change leaders to develop effective strategies for enhancing the chances of achieving desired outcomes.

Keywords: organisational change; failure; obstacles; successful implementation.

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1 Introduction

Technology advancement, global competition, economic pressures, complex business environment, and the changing needs of customers force managers to change their organisations' structures and procedures to be competitive. Managers regularly apply organisational change programmes such as restructuring, reengineering, downsizing, merger, acquisition, and total quality management (TQM) to reduce operating costs, improve performance, and enhance efficiency.

Bain and Company (2013) using a survey on 1208 executives in various countries in 2013 identified the top most used management techniques and tools for organisational change (Table 1). Managers in Asia-Pacific and North America countries used the highest number of techniques and tools. Companies in Asia-Pacific mostly used customer relationship management. Business process reengineering (BPR) was mostly used in Latin America. Employee engagement programmes were the top of the management tool kit in North America.

Table 1 The usage of management techniques and tools in 2011

<i>No.</i>	<i>Techniques and tools</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1	Strategic planning	43
2	Customer relationship management	43
3	Employee engagement	43
4	Benchmarking	40
5	Balanced scorecard	38
6	Core competencies	36
7	Outsourcing	36
8	Change management	35
9	Supply chain management	34
10	Mission and vision statement	33

Although the implementation of change programmes improved the productivity of some organisations (Abas and Yaacoob, 2006; Caccia-Bava et al., 2005; Karia and Asaari, 2006; LeBlanc et al., 2004; Prajogo and Sohal, 2003), its application in practice involved many difficulties. The existing literature contains many reports of change programmes failure (Mourier and Smith, 2001; Miller, 2002; Singels et al., 2001). Some researchers found a failure rate of between 50% and 70% for organisational change programmes (Balogun and Hailey, 2004; Beer and Nohria, 2000; Raps, 2004; Sturdy and Grey, 2003). Some others reported a failure rate of 80% or more (Kearney, 1992; Witcher, 1993; Zairi et al., 1994).

For instance, Schaffer and Thompson (1992), in a study of 300 electronics companies in the USA, found that 63% of them failed in their change programmes. Only 10% of those change programmes were successful. According to Sturdy and Grey (2003), although 90% of organisations applied changes, 66% of them were not successful in achieving their objectives. Mourier and Smith (2001) in a study of 210 American manufacturing and service organisations that implemented various change programmes found a 25% success rate. Another study on Fortune 100 companies that initiated change programmes between 1980 and 1995, found that only 30% of them realised an improvement in their performance (Pascale et al., 1997).

Several authors and researchers reported failure of downsizing programmes in meeting managers' expectations. A study on Fortune 100 companies that initiated downsizing strategies between 1983 and 1995 showed that the profit of 25% of them decreased after downsizing and 44% were merged, acquired, or declared bankruptcy eventually. Only 18% of those companies achieved higher profitability after downsizing (Chitwood, 1997). In another survey of 1005 downsized companies, 21% could increase return on capital employed (Bruton et al., 1996).

Burrows (1992) reported a 95% failure rate for TQM programmes. According to Crosby (1992), about 90% of TQM programmes implemented in US failed. Kearney (1992) claimed that 80% of TQM initiatives failed to produce any tangible benefits. Some other researchers reported a failure rate of 60-70% for TQM initiatives (Becker et al., 1994; Brown, 1993; Hutton, 1992; Jacob, 1993; Hubiak and O'Donnell, 1996). Some reported 20-35% improvement in productivity after implementing TQM programmes (Benson, 1993; Eskildson, 1994; Harari, 1997).

Similarly, BPR projects did not succeed as expected and failed to produce desired results (Al-Mashrai and Zairi, 1999; Davenport and Short, 1990; Hammer, 1990; Short and Venkatraman, 1992; Wastell et al., 1994). Bryant (1998) cited a failure rate of 80% for BPR programmes. Revenaugh (1994) found the failure rate for BPR projects as over 50%. Wellins and Murphy (1995) have predicted that 70% of reengineering efforts are doomed to fail from the start.

Although the findings of some of these studies might suffer from methodological weaknesses, the increasing number of studies reporting failure rates at times above 70% gives cause for concern. The continuing failure rates of organisational change programmes created significant challenges for change leaders. Hence, the authors attempt to identify barriers that must be overcome for successful implementation of organisational change programmes. The results will help organisations in planning better organisational change designs and strategies.

2 Methodology

2.1 Purpose and objectives

The main purpose of this study is to identify obstacles to change programmes implementation. The aim is to get a better understanding of why such organisational change programmes fail so frequently.

2.2 *Design and method*

It was decided to use a secondary research to review the literature on organisational change implementation to identify factors that inhibit successful implementation of organisational change. Comparing the findings of these studies and analysing further the reasons for the failure of organisational change contribute to developing a sustainable model of organisational change.

A secondary research can be done in three ways: narrative review, systematic review, and meta-analysis. In this study, systematic and meta-analysis of the existing research studies on barriers to organisational change implementation between January 1980 and December 2011 were undertaken. 'Meta-analysis' means analysis of analyses (Glass, 1976). It refers to the statistical synthesis of the results of a series of studies. The purpose of meta-analysis is to understand what we know and integrate our information into abstract, general, causal, and relational form (Willson, 1981). It provides valid and reliable knowledge for evidence-based decision-making by critical evaluation and synthesis of multiple primary researches.

Ten electronic databases were searched, including PubMed, Directory of Open Access Journals, Ebsco research databases, Elsevier science, Emerald, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, Social Science Citation Index, Social Science Research Network and Web of Knowledge. In addition, journals such as *Journal of Organisational Change Management*, *Journal of Change Management*, and *International Journal of Strategic Change Management* were searched for articles not yet indexed in the databases. The reference lists of the retrieved books and articles were also used to identify additional academic sources. The final step was a general internet search using Google, Yahoo, and AltaVista search engines to find further information. Keywords included 'organisational change', 'implementation', 'failure', 'barriers' and 'obstacles'. Selection was restricted to:

- those written in English
- published between 1980 and 2011
- using an empirical approach (quantitative or qualitative)
- identified barriers to implementing the change programme.

The authors reviewed the titles and abstracts of all identified studies and compiled a list of 'possibly eligible' studies. The authors then read and assessed all the identified documents and extracted the related ones onto a data sheet. An academic expert in organisational change assessed the process of literature review and the outcome and confirmed them. The primary literature search identified 1713 publications focused on change implementation in organisations. The abstracts were further reviewed for those studies that identified organisational change barriers, which excluded 1530 publications. The remaining 183 were then retrieved for the full text documents to evaluate their methods and findings. Finally, 56 empirical studies reporting organisational change barriers and obstacles were reviewed. The literature review process is depicted in Figure 1.

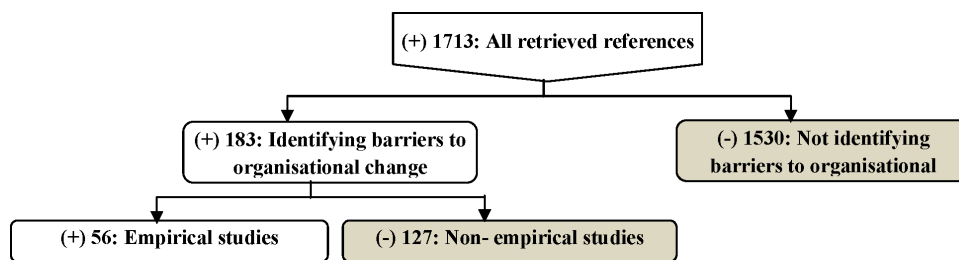
The empirical studies were conducted in 26 countries. Thirty-two studies were reported in developed countries and 24 in developing countries. A questionnaire survey

was used as the main method of data collection in 41 studies. The rest of studies (15) used case study approach and interviews for collecting data.

Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were used in this study. Content analysis was used to describe and explain the reasons for the failure of organisational change programmes documented in the existing documents. Open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) were applied to the data to detect and code reasons for organisational change failure, organise them into logical and meaningful categories, make connections between and among categories, explain the link between categories, and develop a theory from the relationships found among the categories. NVivo software (version 7) was used for qualitative data analysis and retrieval.

In addition, SPSS software (version 11.5) was used to provide descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, Means and Standard Deviations. *T*-Test was used to test the significance of occurrence of change programmes' inhibitors in developed and developing countries. Regression analysis was used to determine which obstacles were perceived as significant in organisational change failure.

Figure 1 Literature review process (see online version for colours)



3 Results

3.1 Qualitative study

Overall, 55 barriers to successfully implementing a change programme were identified in this research (Table 2).

Table 3 shows the 10 most frequently mentioned reasons for change programme failures in literature. Insufficient education and training was the most frequently mentioned reason for change management failure and was cited 32 times.

These barriers to change-programme implementation were grouped as following: strategic barriers, structural barriers, human resources barriers, contextual barriers, and procedural barriers (Table 2). Human resource problems were the most frequently mentioned reason for change management failure followed by strategic problems (Table 4).

Strategic problems are significant barriers to the change-programme implementation and have the most negative impact on its success. These barriers are mainly related to management and leadership of the organisation. Inhibitors like poor management, deficient leadership, and lack of strategic planning are grouped in this category. The human resources barriers are those obstacles that are related to the human factor such as staff shortage, employee resistance to the change, and inadequate human resource management practices. The structural obstacles are related to the structure, systems,

and resources required for implementing the change programme (e.g., inappropriate organisational structure and lack of resources).

Table 2 Change barriers

<i>Strategic barriers</i>	<i>Human resources barriers</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unjustified change • Change adoption barriers • Unrealistic expectations • Deficient leadership • Poor management • Lack of top management support • Lack of management understanding of the change • Lack of top management involvement • Lack of middle and frontline managers' involvement • Middle management resistance • Management turnover • Inappropriate planning • Lack of a vision and clear direction • Lack of constancy of purpose • Conflicting goals • Drive for short-term results • Experience of previous failed change initiatives • Lack of government support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of employee involvement and participation • Lack of employee commitment • Lack of employee motivation and satisfaction • Lack of employee interest • High employee turnover • Employees' resistance to change • Low employee education level • Employee shortage, increased work load • Lack of training and education • Incompetent employees • Inadequate empowerment at all levels • Lack of recognition and reward for success • Fear of losing job • Lack of union cooperation
<p><i>Procedural barriers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of expertise to implement the change • Inappropriate model for implementing change • Inappropriate methods for implementing change • Lack of process focus • Lack of customer focus • Lack of suppliers' involvement • Lack of measurement • Bureaucracy and paperwork • Ineffective corrective actions 	<p><i>Contextual barriers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate organisational culture • Lack of team orientation • Lack of employee trust in senior management • Problem solving mindset • Poor ineffective communication • Difficulties in changing organisational culture • Lack of innovation • Political behaviours • Diversity of workforce
	<p><i>Structural barriers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate organisational structure • Not providing required physical resources • Lack of financial support, cost of implementation • Lack of (or limited) information systems • Lack of organisational flexibility

Table 3 Prioritisation of reasons for change programme failure

<i>Change barriers</i>	<i>Frequency of occurrence</i>	<i>Prioritised rank</i>
Insufficient education and training	32	1
Lack of employees involvement	31	2
Lack of top management support	30	3
Poor leadership and management	28	4
Lack of an appropriate organisational culture	27	5
Inadequate resources	21	6
Poor and ineffective communication	17	7
Lack of a plan for change	15	8
Lack of customer focus	14	9
Lack of a robust monitoring and measurement system	12	10

Table 4 Change barriers' categories in organisations

<i>Change barriers</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Human resources barriers	116	2.07
Strategic barriers	111	1.98
Contextual barriers	60	1.07
Procedural barriers	56	1.00
Structural barriers	36	0.64

The contextual barriers are those difficulties arising when an appropriate culture is not developed to achieve the highest potential from implementing the change programme. This category includes lack of creativity and teamwork and communication problems. Major procedural problems that organisations may encounter during the change-programme implementation tend to be as follows: complexity of processes, bureaucracy, lack of customer focus, lack of supplier partnership, and lack of an evaluation and self-assessment system.

Unjustified change

The reason for adopting an organisational change is a critical factor in its success. An organisation should not adopt a change initiative as a defensive mechanism as it was forced by the situation or because other organisations are using it. In this case, their understanding of the change programme and their commitment to and involvement in the change programme would be low and they would abandon it very soon (Beer, 2003). As a result, employees will lose interest and faith in the change programme. Managers should justify the need for implementing the change programme. They should explain the reasons for implementing the change programme and its benefits to employees and make sure that employees understand the urgency of the change programme.

Change adoption barriers

The change programme will not succeed unless the organisation is ready to change (Yang, 2003). An organisation should be generally healthy before implementing the change programme. If an organisation has significant problems such as an unstable funding base, poor leadership, poor employee morale, and serious tensions between managers and employees, change-programme implementation should be delayed until favourable conditions exist. It is likely that implementing change programmes at this time will result in even greater organisational problems.

Unrealistic expectations

Organisations should be realistic about what to expect from their change programme (Huq, 2006; Jun et al., 2004). The effectiveness of a change programme depends on the appropriate implementation of an effective model in a supportive environment. Managers cannot expect miracles from their change programmes. It is a process to solve the problems. An appropriate change model should be applied appropriately to solve the problems. Hence, realistic targets should be established.

Deficient leadership

Change is most likely to fail when driven by ineffective leadership (Cummings and Worley, 2005; Mourier and Smith, 2001). According to Shortell et al. (1995), command-and control-based leadership was the main barrier to the TQM successful implementation in organisations. Leaders have a critical role in leading the change programme, developing and communicating a vision, motivating employees to participate in the change programme actively, and overcome resistance and conflict (Pasternack and Viscio, 1998). Organisational change requires effective leaders, who apply different styles of leadership in different circumstances (Goleman, 2000) to inspire, motivate, and empower employees to accept the responsibility for the organisational change, develop their skills and knowledge to enable them to do their tasks effectively and efficiently.

Poor management

Hrebiniak (2006) in a study of 243 managers who were involved in the process of change implementation found lack of managers' ability to manage change and reduce resistance as the major obstacle to the change programme. Many of the obstacles hindering change programme such as lack of a clear vision, poor planning, ineffective strategies, poor organisational culture, poor communication, inadequate resources, and employee resistance to change are linked to how effectively the change programme is managed. Ineffective managers create more stress for employees who are applying the organisational change. Top management is responsible to plan for and lead the organisational change. The reasons for ineffective management could be poor selection methods, lack of training and development, and lack of support from above (Longenecker et al., 1999). Therefore, experienced and competent managers should be recruited to lead organisational change programmes. They should be trained adequately in change management theory and practice to be able to inspire employees to apply the changes and achieve organisational goals.

Lack of top management support

Top management commitment is the most important factor in the success or failure of change initiatives (Hansson and Klefsjo, 2003; Paper et al., 2001; Talib et al., 2011). Srinidhi (1998) argue that lack of top management involvement is the most critical barrier to strategic quality management implementation. Low management commitment and involvement can result in failure in as many as 80% of firms (Atkinson, 1990; Jaehn, 2000). Top-management involvement in the change programme helps establish a sense of urgency of the change programme (Hansson and Klefsjo, 2003). Top management's limited experiences and training in organisational change programme are major obstacles to their active participation in the change initiative. A lack of knowledge about change programme, management turnover, and ineffective communication between management and employees are the main reasons for the low management commitment to change programme (Soltani et al., 2005; Psychogios and Priporas, 2007).

Lack of middle and front-line managers' commitment and involvement

Middle managers can act as barriers to the successful implementation of a change programme (Adebanjo and Kehoe, 1998; Ennis and Harrington, 1999; Glover, 2000). The change programme will fail without middle managers' support and involvement. Middle managers may see that the change programme cost them status, power, and recognition. They may not let employees take responsibility (Venkatraman, 2007). Lack of involving middle managers in change initiatives makes them resist the change programme and react with suspicion and uncertainty (Harrington and Williams, 2004; Jacobsen, 2008). Top management should involve middle managers in designing and promoting change. Middle managers, due to their position, can contribute greatly to change-programme implementation by converting organisational goals, objectives, and strategies into detailed departmental objectives and operational activities, explaining the principles of the change programme to the front-line employees, and ensuring their commitment (Baidoun, 2003; Oakland, 2000; Wimalasir and Kouzmin, 2000).

Management turnover

Management turnover is another important barrier to successful implementation of a change programme (Mosadeghrad, 2005). Management turnover increases the chance of subjective management, leading to unfavourable outcomes. Managers may avoid taking risks and making radical changes because they are afraid that it may cost them their jobs (Soltani et al., 2005). Managers cannot plan for the long-term and have to maintain the status quo. The job security of managers encourages long-term planning and their commitment to pursuing long-term objectives. They would develop more long-term and strategic goals and take more risks in achieving the goals.

Inappropriate planning

Lack of planning and vague and unclear goals and objectives are responsible for the failure of organisational change programmes (Mourier and Smith, 2001; Talib et al., 2011). Newall and Dale (1991) concluded that lack of detailed planning prior to the introduction of TQM was a key reason for its future difficulties in eight UK-based companies. Poor planning produces poor performance. "Those who fail to plan, plan to

fail” (Longenecker et al., 1999). Planning for change in terms of goal setting, staffing, determining policies, tactics and action plans, and defining roles and responsibilities are crucial for change management success. A plan should be viable. All managers and employees should approve the plan and be committed to its implementation (Land et al., 1989).

Lack of vision and clear direction

Lack of vision and direction reduces the front-line managers’ and supervisors’ willingness to take risks. This adversely affects innovation, and problem-solving activities (Longenecker et al., 1999). Top management’s desire for change is not enough. Managers must develop and build a shared vision for the organisation (Senge, 1990; Kotter, 1996). Employees expect managers to create a vision of a better future for them and communicate it effectively to them and work together towards its achievement (Hoag et al., 2002). Managers have to articulate a clear vision and communicate it to employees, inspire them to apply the changes in the structures and the processes, and manage the change programme effectively and efficiently (Kotter, 1995).

Lack of constancy of purpose

According to Preiss et al. (1996) lack of coordination between change initiatives like BPR and TQM and companies’ strategy was a reason for those programmes’ failure. Deming (1986) believed that lack of constancy of purpose is a deadly disease for organisations. Senior managers must provide constancy of purpose through developing and sustaining a long-term vision of the changes necessary to succeed. Everyone in the organisation should concentrate on the change objectives.

Conflicting goals

Conflicting goals are common in most organisations. Different departments in an organisation may have different goals and objectives that might be in conflict with each other. These conflicting demands and expectations affect the daily operations of the organisation and consequently negatively influence organisational change. Managers and employees should identify the areas of conflict and resolve them. Reducing conflict requires strong visionary leadership, clear direction, and effective mutual communications (Longenecker et al., 1999).

Drive for short-term results

Organisations have to develop long-term plans to complete a major transformational change. They cannot obtain satisfying results by skipping some steps (Kotter, 1995). The process of adapting and institutionalising a change programme is a difficult and long-term process. It can take an organisation several years to create a supportive organisational structure and culture and change the values and attitudes of its people to participate continuously in the change programme process (Beer, 2003; Dale et al. 1997).

Experience of previous failed change initiatives

Employees' attitude towards an organisational change can be influenced by their previous experience of organisational changes. The history of change is related to employees' commitment to and involvement in the change programme (Reichers et al., 1997). If organisational changes have failed in the past, employees lose trust in organisational-change effectiveness and look at other future change programmes with more scepticism. As a result, they will be reluctant towards new change programme (Roberto and Levesque, 2005; Schneider et al., 1996). Employees' positive experience with previous change programmes encourages their commitment.

Lack of employee involvement and commitment

Employees are either the key to a successful change programme or obstacles to its success. Lack of employees' participation and involvement in formulating the change programme and its implementation is one of the most important inhibitors of organisational change (Jones and Seraphim, 2008; Salaheldin, 2003). Lack of employees' involvement results in their lower commitment to the implementation of change programme and as a result, the programme will fail eventually (Hellriegel et al., 2001; Soumyaja et al., 2011). Successful change programme is highly dependent on the level of employees' involvement and commitment to the goals of the change. Change needs everyone in the organisation to understand her or his role in the change process and to make change happen. Otherwise, employees will withdraw from the change programme. Managers should develop employees' attitudes, competencies, and motivation (Snape et al., 1995; Soltani et al., 2005; Wilkinson, 1992).

Lack of good human resource management

The human factor is a fundamentally important aspect of the implementation of a change programme in organisations. Many change programmes fail because of they pay too little attention to the human factor. Implementing organisational change will result in more demands on employees and more work pressure. This is often caused by the organisational changes, new relationships, and responsibilities (Parker and Slaughter, 1993; Walston et al., 2000). Human resource systems must support the change programme through the development of the necessary motivation, attitudes, and the competencies (Snape et al., 1995; Soltani et al., 2005; Wilkinson, 1992). Ahire and Golhar (1996) revealed that human resource management is a key factor in successful implementation of quality management by empowering employees to make quality-related decisions, ensuring a supporting infrastructure for full employee participation, and training employees in technical and management aspects of their roles in quality management.

Lack of education and training

Poor education and training are also obstacles to the development and implementation of change programmes (Gatchalian, 1997; Huq and Martin, 2000). Successful implementation of change programme requires managers and employees to have the appropriate knowledge, skills, expertise, abilities, and attitudes. Employees' learning capacity is a crucial factor that facilitates the success of change. Training and education

have important roles in developing employees' capabilities and securing their commitment towards achieving the objectives of organisational change.

Lack of employees' motivation and satisfaction

Lack of employee motivation is one of the main reasons for the failure of change programmes (Cater and Pucko, 2010; Mosadeghrad, 2005; Storseth, 2004; Pun and Jaggernath-Furlonge, 2012). Highly motivated and satisfied employees will have positive attitudes towards the change programme and are more motivated to support organisational change (Judge et al., 1999; Schweiger and DeNisi, 1991; Wanberg, 2000). Employees' motivation and job satisfaction are positively related to their commitment to their organisations (Mosadeghrad et al., 2008; Wu and Norman, 2006).

Employee shortage

The implementation of a change programme will result in more work pressure on employees (Parker and Slaughter, 1993; Walston et al., 2000). Newall and Dale (1990) found employee shortage as one of the main reasons leading to the failure of TQM initiatives. Enough employees should be recruited to implement the change effectively. Managers should examine the extra workload which organisational change may create. They should provide a well-balanced work schedule for employees to reduce their job stress.

Employee turnover

Organisational change can influence employees' decision to leave the organisation (Morrell et al., 2004). In particular, when employees' work patterns are changed and they were asked to do more work for less benefit, they may consider leaving the organisation. Jun et al. (2004) in their empirical study identified "high employee turnover as a prevalent TQM barrier in the Mexico's Maquiladora industry. Job security is related to employee's commitment to the organisation and also his or her positive attitude towards organisational change" (Morris et al., 1993). If turnover is avoidable following the change implementation, managers should assure employees that the change programme brings benefits for them.

Lack of employee empowerment

Inadequate empowerment at all organisational levels is another reason for change programme failure (Al-Khalifa and Aspinwall, 2000; Salegna and Fazel, 2000). Empowerment enhances employees' self-esteem and their ability to participate actively in the change programme. In addition, managers should provide the necessary resources for employees to assist them in decision-making (Ahire et al., 1996).

Lack of an effective recognition and reward programme

Lack of monetary incentives and non-monetary rewards to support the change programme and failure to design reward systems to link employees' earnings with achievement of the organisational change objectives are obstacles to employees'

commitment to and involvement in change programmes (Brown et al., 1994; Cenek, 1995; Cole, 1995). Successful change-programme implementation requires committed and well-trained employees who participate fully in change management activities. Managers should recognise and reward employees appropriately to reinforce their participation in the change programme. Managers should link employees' compensation and reward systems to the accomplishment of organisational change objectives to encourage employees' participation in the change programme (Allen and Kilmann, 2001). An appropriate reward-and-recognition system can also be used to change the culture of organisation towards a compatible and appropriate culture for the change (Juran, 1988).

Employee resistance to change

Employees' resistance to change is the major reason for the failure of organisational change programmes (Bhat and Rajashekhar, 2009; Oakland and Tanner, 2007; Pheng and Teo, 2004; Landaeta et al., 2008). The reasons for employees' resistance to change may include fear of losing jobs and related benefits, personal uncertainty, group pressure, perceived loss of control, lack of knowledge of the nature and impact of the proposed change, communication difficulties, and the lack of adequate planning (Alas, 2007; Carter, 2008; Self and Schraeder, 2009). Albrecht (2010) in an attempt to identify organisational factors affecting employees' attitudes to change found that change information, involvement with change, and trust in senior management accounted for over 50% of the variance in employees' cynicism towards change. Managers should understand employees' reaction to organisational change and spot their resistance to be better prepared and apply appropriate strategies for overcoming it. Managers should encourage acceptance to change by removing employees' fear and mistrust through initiating trust-building activities.

Inappropriate organisational culture

Organisational culture is a crucial factor to a successful change programme. Organisational culture influence organisational change through forming employees' and managers' attitudes towards change (Alas and Vadi, 2006). Organisational culture should change to sustain the benefits of organisational change. This involves building and enhancing trust, motivation, cooperation, and innovation through job security, teamwork, support and equitable compensation. A change in organisational factors both soft (i.e., shared vision and values) and hard (i.e., systems and structures) is needed to change the culture of an organisation. Revision of organisational policies, continuous training, employee participation initiatives, enhanced communication, modification of evaluation and reward systems and top management support are necessary for a change in organisational culture (Ghobadian and Gallear, 1997). Cultural change has been found to be a major problem in implementing change initiatives (Beer, 2003; Mandal et al. 2000; Tata and Prasad, 1998). Cultural variables are found responsible for more than 50% of the variance in TQM implementation (Carman et al., 1996; Mosadeghrad, 2006; Wakefield et al., 1993). It is very difficult to change organisational culture due to its deep-rooted nature (Sempene et al., 2002).

Lack of teamwork

The most useful way to encourage employee participation in change programme is using teams. It is very difficult to implement the change without teamwork and employees' participation (Longenecker et al., 1999). Complacency in teams will inhibit change progress. Everyone in the organisation must work together to apply the changes throughout the organisation. Teams need managers' support, training, a mission, a time frame for completing projects, committed and accountable members, and a nurturing environment to be effective (Paper et al., 2001).

Lack of employee trust in senior management

Organisational change can result in lower employees' trust in management. Those managers who consider more shareholders over the stakeholders and do not empower employees will lose their employees' trust (Appelbaum et al., 1999). Organisations should adapt to their employees' needs during the implementation of the change programme (Brousseau et al., 1996). This enhances employees' trust in management. Information about change and involvement in change directly influence employees' trust in top management team (Albrecht, 2010).

Problem-solving mindset

In some organisations the general approach to organisational change is problem-solving. Managers and employees wait until the problem happens; then they try to solve it using a change model (Cummings, 1995). This incremental approach to change depresses employees. It also results in minimal organisational learning and limited organisation's capacity to adapt. If employees plan for the desired situation and change the organisation accordingly, they would be more motivated and committed (Weisbord, 1992). Senge (1990) suggests managers to define a shared and agreed vision for the future and asks employees to move towards achieving the desired objectives.

Poor and in-effective communication

Longenecker et al. (1999), using in-depth interviews with 50 managers, concluded that poor communication is the most important reason for organisational change failure. Similarly, in Sebastianelli and Tamimi (2003) study, poor inter-organisational communication was a highly rated obstacle to successfully implementing a change programme. Ineffective communication delays the process of organisational change and leads to conflicts and damaged relationships between people (Paper et al., 2001). Effective communication is important for the success of change programmes (Al-Zamany et al., 2002; McGreevy, 2009; Paper et al., 2001). It affects organisational culture and contributes to the overall effectiveness of the change programme (Nordvang et al., 2008). Every aspect of the change programme should be discussed across levels of the organisation (Claver et al., 2001).

Inappropriate organisational structure

Many studies have confirmed that failures of change programme adoption originated from poor fits in the organisational settings (Al-Khalifa and Aspinwall, 2000; Bayazit,

2003; Douglas and Judge, 2001; Pun and Jaggernath-Furlonge, 2012). Mechanistic, bureaucratic, and authoritative structures impede successful change implementation. The success of change programme depends on its fit with organisational structure. A suitable infrastructure is required to support change initiatives. This includes the determination of activities to be performed, allocating the related responsibilities and authorities to the right people, and defining communication channels. Organic structures with low centralisation and formalisation are more useful for implementing organisational change (Jabnoun, 2005; Moreno-Lozon and Peris, 1998; Tata and Prasad, 1998).

Lack of resources

Change involves cost, effort, and time. Failure to provide adequate resources to support change programmes is another cause for their failure (Mourier and Smith, 2001; Sebastianelli and Tamimi, 2003; Sila and Ebrahimpour, 2002). Allocating necessary resources are essential for change programmes to be continued effectively. Those companies struggling financially will not be able to sustain the benefits of change programmes.

Lack of (or limited) information systems

Today's business environment is characterised by change. In this climate, actions must be anticipatory and adaptive. Consequently, the successful implementation of a change programme needs information system support to create information and knowledge for management decisions. Credible and reliable data are critical to decision-making. Managers should provide necessary information systems for employees and encourage them to collect, analyse, and use accurate, timely, relevant, and objective data in their decisions.

Incompetent change agents

The interaction between change agents (internal and external) and the rest of the employees who have to implement the change programme can be a key blocker to implementing the change programme effectively (Andrews et al., 2008; Balogun, 2003; Caldwell, 2003; McWilliam and Ward-Griffin, 2006; Rouleau, 2005). Change agent plays a critical role in the adoption and successful implementation of the change programme. The most important role of a change agent is to obtain personnel involvement in the change process and getting them committed to taking relevant actions. Thus, the acceptance of the change agent by other employees is very important. Organisations can use internal change agents or external consultants for implementing the change. Change agents knowledge in change management and experience in successful implementation of the change programme can assure staff that the programme can work.

Ineffective or inappropriate model of change

The success of an organisational change programme depends on the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the change model. A practically and theoretically sound model of change should be used to guide managers in implementing the change (Okumus, 2003). Some of the problems of organisational change can be attributed to the content of the

change model itself (Siegal, 1996). A poorly designed or vague model of organisational change limits implementation efforts. Good implementation cannot overcome the shortcomings of a bad model of organisational change (Hrebiniak, 2006).

Inappropriate techniques and tools for implementing the change programme

Appropriate techniques and tools should be used for implementing the change programme. Techniques should support basic principles and core values of the change programme (Hellsten and Klefsjo, 2000). The change programme model, its techniques and tools should facilitate the process of effective planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Lack of proper process management

Emphasis should be placed on improving the processes rather than on blaming employees (Deming, 1986). Determining the initial and critical processes, clarifying the standards, and monitoring activities are helpful for the success of change programme. A variety of techniques can be utilised to execute process design, process control, and process improvement. Processes should be defined and designed in a way to meet functional requirements and customer needs. Organisational operations should be standardised to ensure the reliability of outcomes. Standardisation and developing guidelines help employees to maintain focus on predetermined specifications and requirements. Continually improving processes as a strategic priority needs to be part of all operations and of all employees' activities in an organisation.

Lack of customer focus

The failure to build customer expectations into daily organisational activities is another reason for change programme failure (Jun et al., 2004; McGreevy, 2009; Ngai and Cheng, 1997). Peters and Waterman (1982) recognised learning customers' preferences and meeting their needs differentiate 'excellent' companies from those that were not. Customers' needs should be integrated into the design and development of products and services.

Lack of suppliers' partnership

Fifty percent of an organisation's quality non-conformances are due to defective in-coming materials (Crosby, 1992). Poor quality of products results in extra costs for organisation (Juran and Gryna, 1993). Organisations rely on their suppliers who provide the material and services required for producing products and services (Hoyle, 2006). Organisations should develop a long-term cooperative partnership with their suppliers (Thornber, 1992). Managers should measure their suppliers' performance regularly and provide them feedback (Krause, 1997).

Lack of an evaluation and self-assessment system

Evaluating the progress of the change-programme implementation itself is necessary. Management must continually monitor change programme to assure that it is fully

institutionalised throughout the organisation. There is a need to know the strong and weak parts of the change-programme implementation. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of processes, providing good feedback, and an effective reward system are the most important factors in success of change programme.

3.2 Quantitative study

Correlations between change-implementation obstacles are displayed in Table 5. The most co-efficiency was between strategic and contextual ($r = 0.463$), and human resources problems ($r = 0.403$). It was expected that those strategic problems leads to a culture which is not receptive to organisational change which in turn result in lack of employees' interest and commitment to and involvement in the change programme and eventually their resistance to the change.

Table 5 Inter-correlations between change barriers

<i>Change barriers</i>	<i>Strategic problems</i>	<i>Human resource problems</i>	<i>Contextual problems</i>	<i>Procedural problems</i>
Human resource problems	0.403**	–		
Contextual problems	0.463**	0.314**	–	
Procedural problems	0.195	0.130	0.158	–
Structural problems	0.131	0.191	0.011	0.045

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Poor leadership was related to lack of employees' interest in the change programme ($r = 0.286$), lack of training ($r = 0.295$), poor communication ($r = 0.272$), and lack of employees trust in management ($r = 0.283$). Lack of top management commitment to and involvement in the change programme leads to poor planning ($r = 0.304$), insufficient training ($r = 0.290$), and lack of employees' empowerment ($r = 0.270$), which results in lack of employees' involvement in and commitment to the change programme ($r = 0.303$) and inappropriate organisational culture ($r = 0.334$). Poor planning was related to difficulties in developing an appropriate organisational change ($r = 0.320$). Lack of constancy of purpose was related to unrealistic expectations ($r = 0.281$) and ineffective communication ($r = 0.286$).

Regression analysis showed that lack of top management commitment to and involvement in change programme, poor leadership, lack of planning, management turnover, and unrealistic expectations were the main strategic barriers to the change programme. Lack of employees' commitment to and involvement in change programme, insufficient training, lack of motivation, and employee shortage were the main contributors to human resource barriers. Poor communication, organisational politics, and lack of team orientation were the main contextual barriers to the change programme.

Overall developing countries reported more human resource and structural problems than their counterparts in developed countries (Table 6). *T*-Test showed significant differences in human resource ($p = 0.049$) and structural barriers ($p = 0.043$) in developed and developing countries.

Table 6 Change barriers in developed and developing countries

<i>Change barriers</i>	<i>Developed countries (N = 32)</i>		<i>Developing countries (N = 24)</i>	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Human resources barriers	60	1.87	56	2.33
Strategic barriers	64	2.00	47	1.95
Contextual barriers	38	1.19	22	0.91
Procedural barriers	37	1.16	19	0.79
Structural barriers	15	0.46	21	0.87

Insufficient training and education, lack of top management support, poor leadership, inadequate employees' involvement, inappropriate organisational culture, poor communication, lack of customer focus, and poor planning were the most mentioned barriers to successful change-programme implementation in developed countries. In contrast, employee resistance, lack of training and education, lack of top management support, poor leadership, inappropriate organisational culture, inadequate resources, lack of recognition and reward, and lack of government support were the main barriers to change programme respectively in developing countries.

British organisations reported more problems with insufficient training and education, poor leadership, lack of top management support, and poor communication. However, American organisations found poor leadership, insufficient training, lack of employees' involvement, lack of top management support, inappropriate organisational culture, and lack of customer focus as the most important reasons for the failure of organisational change programmes.

Manufacturing companies reported more difficulties in change-programme implementation than service-based companies (Table 7). *T*-Test showed significant differences in strategic barriers ($p = 0.049$) in manufacturing and service companies. Insufficient training, employee resistance, lack of top management support, poor leadership, inadequate resources, inappropriate organisational culture, and lack of customer focus were the main barriers to successful change-programme implementation in manufacturing companies. On the contrary, inappropriate organisational culture, insufficient training, employee resistance, lack of top management support, poor leadership, lack of mechanisms for measuring organisation's activities, and inadequate resources were the most mentioned barriers to change-programme implementation in service companies.

Table 7 A comparison of change barriers in manufacturing and service companies

<i>Change barriers</i>	<i>Manufacturing (N = 35)</i>		<i>Service (N = 21)</i>	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Human resources barriers	74	2.11	42	2.00
Strategic barriers	79	2.26	32	1.52
Contextual barriers	40	1.14	20	0.95
Procedural barriers	37	1.05	19	0.90
Structural barriers	24	0.68	12	0.57

It is interesting to note that organisations reported less strategic and contextual problems in 2000s than 1990s. However, more structural and human resource problems were reported in 2000s (Table 8). *T*-Test showed significant differences in human resource barriers between 1990s and 2000s.

Table 8 A comparison of change barriers in 1990s and 2000s

Change barriers	1990s (<i>N</i> = 24)		2000s (<i>N</i> = 31)	
	Frequency	Mean	Frequency	Mean
Human resources barriers	42	1.75	70	2.25
Strategic barriers	52	2.17	55	1.77
Contextual barriers	26	1.08	33	1.06
Procedural barriers	24	1.00	31	1.00
Structural barriers	12	0.50	24	0.77

4 Discussion

The reasons for the failure of organisational change programmes addressed in the literature can be categorised into three main groups:

- ineffective or inappropriate model of change
- ineffective or inappropriate method for implementing the change programme
- inappropriate environment for implementing the change programme.

A model of change consisted of two components: values, concepts and principles (soft factors) and techniques and tools (hard factors) for implementing those values and principles. The right techniques and tools should be applied to institutionalise the basic principles of the change programme. A sound model of change should provide a clear and rational link between its soft and hard factors.

Furthermore, the change model should consider changes in all three interrelated components of the organisation (e.g., structure, processes and culture) to provide long-term sustainable results. Changes in one aspect of the organisation results in demands for change in other aspects of the organisation. Isolated change efforts are likely to fail (Kanter et al., 1992). For instance, procedural changes may have little effect if there are incompatibilities between organisational structure and culture and the principles and core values of the change programme.

Successful change programmes focus on both strategic and operational issues (Oakland and Tanner, 2007). A change programme should be practiced at four levels: individuals, groups, organisation, and surrounding environment levels (Ferlie and Shortell, 2001) to have lasting effects. Therefore, the change model should be comprehensive and consider a holistic change in the whole organisation at different levels.

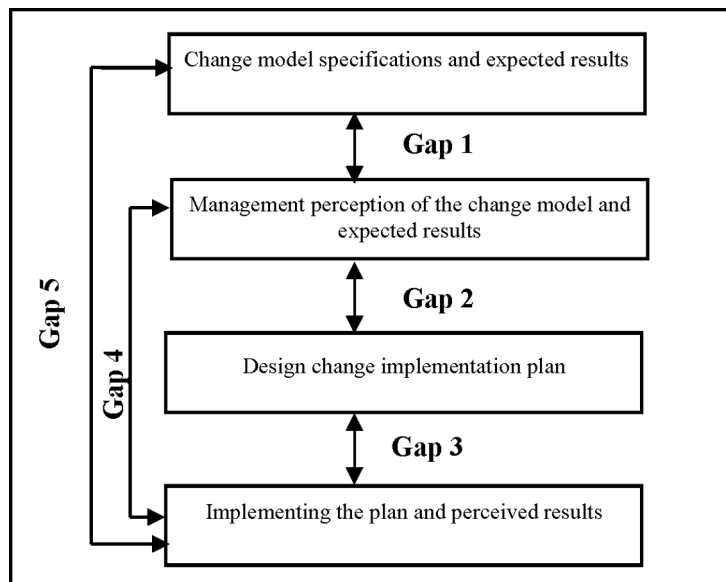
Many of the failures of change programmes are attributed to the methods of implementation. Many managers failed in implementing change programmes because they used techniques and tools that were not compatible with their organisational culture (Claver et al., 2003; Lemak et al., 2002; Lewis et al., 2006; Young and Wilkinson, 2002).

Appropriate techniques and tools should be used to operationalise and institutionalise organisational change strategy.

Organisational change programmes will not succeed unless rooted in a supportive environment. To succeed a change programme requires supportive visionary leadership, appropriate organisational culture, and structure.

The researcher found a total of 55 blockers to organisational change reviewing 56 empirical studies. A gap model was developed to examine factors that affect the success or failure of a change management model. Figure 2 shows the gaps that organisations should manage and minimise if intended benefits are to be achieved from their change programmes. The model illustrates five types of gaps: information-related gap; plan-related gap; implementation-related gap; and perceptions-related gap; and expectations-related gaps.

Figure 2 A gap model for change model implementation



Gap 1 is the gap between management perception of the change model and the actual specification of the change model. It shows the distance between what the change model contains and what managers think the model is. Proper education and training help narrow this gap. Gap 2, management perception-plan gap, shows the gap between management perception of the change model and the plan designed to implement the model. Education and training and involving more people in the process of planning the change programme help narrow this gap. Despite careful planning, a change initiative can still fail. Gap 3, plan-implementation gap, shows the gap between what the plan says for implementing the change model and what actually has been implemented. Getting involved employees, sufficient education and training, visionary leadership, cultural change, and providing the required resources help narrow this gap.

Gap 4, perceived results/manager's expected results, is the gap between perceived results of implementing the change model and managers' expected results from its implementation. Proper planning and implementing and monitoring the change

programme help narrow this gap. Finally, Gap 5 is the gap between perceived results of implementing the change model and the actual change model's expectation of the results. Adopting a right model of change and adapting it to the organisation, proper planning, implementing, and monitoring help narrow this gap.

The model proposed in Figure 2 helps explain why change initiatives succeed or fail in practice (Gap 3). Change does deliver better performance when an appropriate model of change is appropriately implemented in a supportive environment. This can be shown in the following equation:

$$\text{Effective change model} + \text{Effective implementation method} + \text{Supportive environment} = \text{enhanced performance.}$$

Variables identified in this study are connected by arrows indicating the sequence of influences resulting in process improvement and enhanced customer satisfaction. Many of the obstacles identified in this study that hinder change efforts are leadership factors, or are strongly influenced by leadership. Top management involvement and support through setting goals, training, creating an appropriate culture, and allocating resources improves employees' satisfaction, which leads to their motivation and commitment to their organisation that, in turn, will affect perceived outcomes resulting from change.

Some critical factors are essential for a change programme to be successful. Visionary leadership, planning carefully for the organisational change, getting the major stakeholders involved, building a supportive infrastructure and organisational culture, communicating effectively the objectives of organisational change, and handling conflict and resistance carefully are all necessary to succeed in organisational change (Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3 Factors affecting the success or failure of organisational change (see online version for colours)

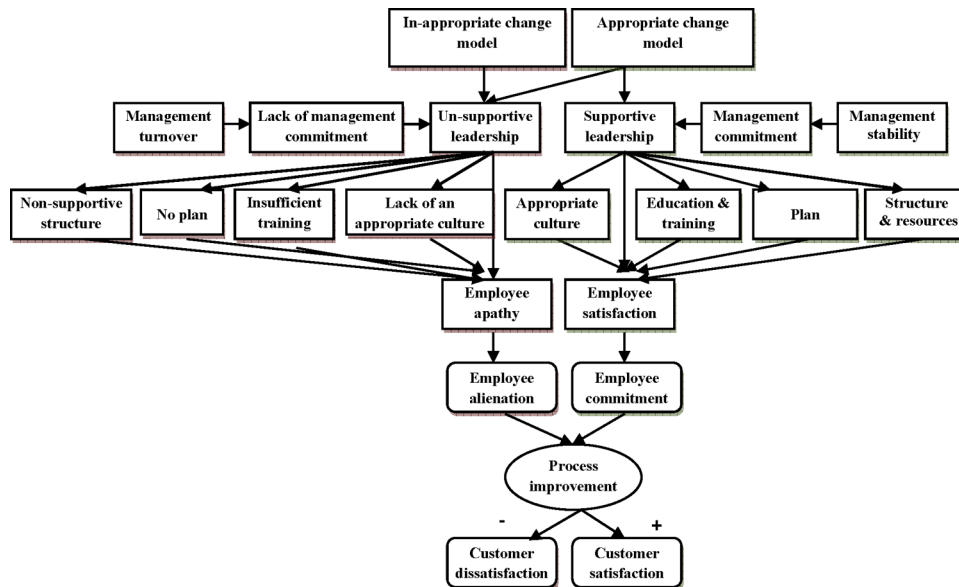
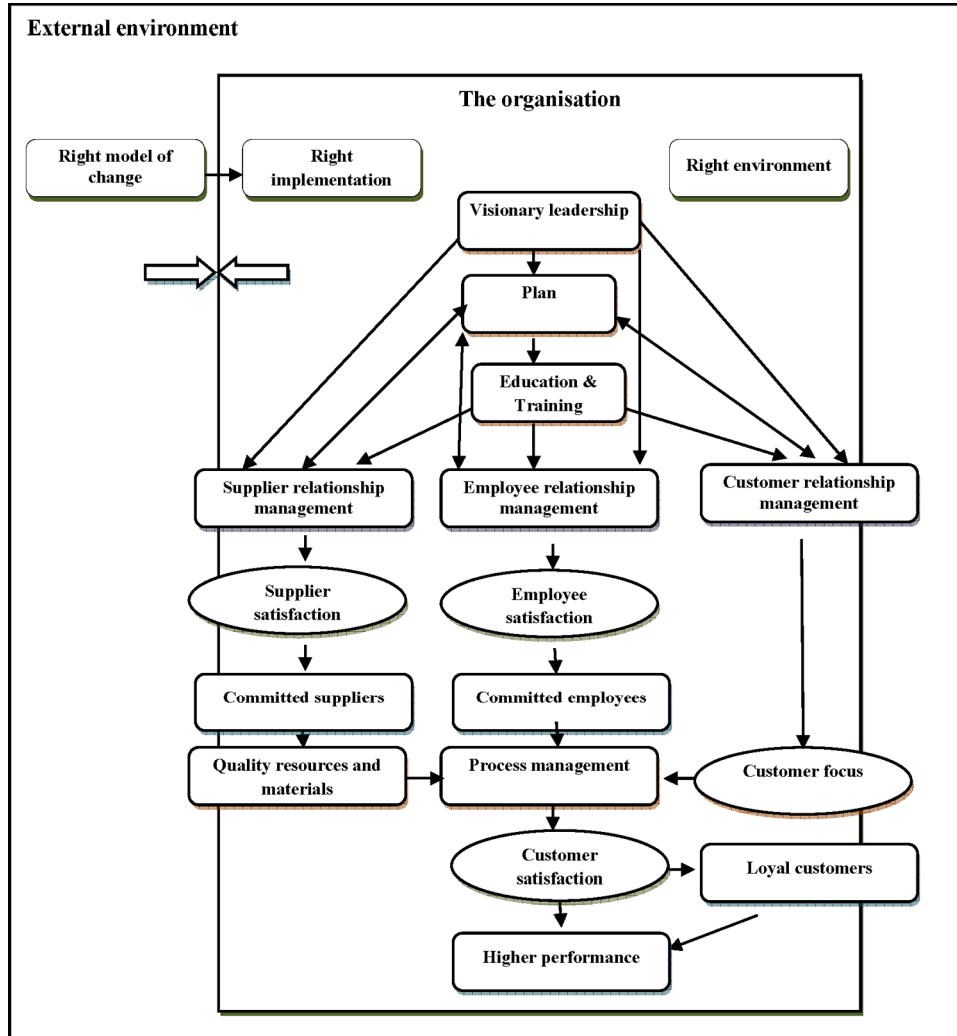


Figure 4 Factors affecting the success of change programme implementation (see online version for colours)



5 Conclusion and implications for managers

Due to the complexity of internal environment and dynamics of the external environment, companies find themselves in nearly continuous change. Consequently, many organisations apply various change programmes to meet the demands of internal and external environments. Despite the potential benefits of organisational change programmes articulated by gurus and consultants, these benefits are not easy to achieve in practice. Despite investing money and time in organisational change, the majority of them failed to produce sustainable positive changes in organisational performance. They did not deliver the desired and expected results.

In the interest of contributing insight into the theory and practice of organisational change and change management, this paper has been guided by this main research question: *What are the barriers to implementing change programmes successfully in organisations?* The study employed a systematic and Meta-analysis approach to explore the most important barriers to the successful change-programme implementation cited by literature review and to identify strategies that help managers to overcome those barriers in managing their change programmes.

The review research uncovers the main impeders to successful implementation of change programmes in organisations. Unsuccessful change programmes in organisations were attributed to a lack of top management support, insufficient education and training, in-appropriate organisational culture, employees' apathy and resistance, poor leadership, poor communication, lack of financial support, and lack of a plan for change.

Managers need to be aware of and address these barriers if the change programmes are to have a positive impact on organisational performance. These perceived barriers could be overcome by willingness to change, and strong leadership emphasising planning, training, and developing an appropriate structure and culture. A change programme does deliver better performance when an appropriate model of change is appropriately implemented in a supportive environment (i.e., supportive infrastructure, appropriate leadership and appropriate culture).

This study was an attempt to identify the main obstacles to the organisational change programmes across the world since 1980. Consequently, it provided direction and guidance in developing strategies for an effective change-programme transformation. These are theoretical contributions of this study to the change management literature. From a practical point of view, the findings of this study provide managers with a practical understanding of the factors that are likely to facilitate or obstruct the change-programme implementation. A thorough understanding of these factors will increase the probability of the change programme success by predicting and avoiding those barriers during the change-programme implementation. Managers can use the findings of this study as a benchmark for their own change-programme implementation and will be able to develop better strategies to avoid some of the problems identified here.

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