Readings on Change Management

I have prepared this short reading list in response to a request from Sue Miller (in an email dated 9/11/16). She had been asked to recommend an introductory text on change management, which introduces the literature. etc. In addition to seeking recommendation(s), Sue suggested that it might be useful to come up with a short reading list, since this is an area which the Foundation wants to tap into. Sue noted that many of SWF’s projects actually cohere around the theme of change, but it is difficult to bring them all into a single schema and to unite the different approaches which they represent. It is also difficult to find a comprehensive text.

These recommendations seek to respond to Sue’s request, and also point to areas of particular interest to me.

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Getting started

Making Sense of Change Management (Cameron & Green, 2004) provides a straightforward mid-level introduction. It concentrates on practical points. For an authoritative academic text, I find Developing Strategies for Change (Darwin, Johnson, & McAuley, 2002) still relevant. At the other end of the scale, a Grove booklet on Leading Change in the Church (Snow, 2009) was written by the current Bishop of Leicester when he was a parish priest. For an introduction from a Critical Management Studies (CMS) perspective, see Morgan and Spicer (2009).

Standard approaches

John Kotter’s work from the 1990s, eg Kotter (1996), is too linear for my liking, though I have recently found his schema helpful as a diagnostic aid. William Bridges’ work on transitions, eg Bridges (2003), should also be mentioned: for an ecclesial context, I refer to his work in an introductory chapter in Moving on in Ministry (Harle, 2013). Michael Fullan (2008) is a respected author, originally from the world of education, but now with a much wider canvas.

Complexity approaches

For those of us who wonder whether change management is an oxymoron, authors using a complexity theory frame have much to contribute. One of the earlier books in this field, Facilitating Organization Change: Lessons from Complexity Science (Olson & Eoyang, 2001) is still one of the best: Glenda Eoyang has more recently contributed a chapter to the Sage Handbook of Complexity and Management (Eoyang, 2011).
In the UK, Ralph Stacey and his colleagues at the University of Hertfordshire have produced a number of helpful texts. Patricia Shaw’s work on conversations (Shaw, 2002) deserves special mention, while she and Stacey edited one of a number of collections of work of Hertfordshire students (Shaw & Stacey, 2006). A helpful introduction, combining theory and practice from her experience at the Open University is Elizabeth McMillan’s Complexity, Management and the Dynamics of Change: Challenges for Practice (McMillan, 2008). For a review article on complexity approaches, see Burnes (2005).

Ecological perspectives

I was first introduced to this field by the Dutch management ecologist, Peter Robertson (2005), and subsequently wrote an introductory article of my own (Harle, 2007). The best book in the field is now David Hurst’s New Ecology of Leadership (Hurst, 2012): note that both he and Robertson are also heavily influenced by a complexity worldview. Rowland and Higgs (2008) is also worthy of mention.

It is also worth noting how change management approaches have been weaved in to the broader sustainability agenda (Doppelt, 2003; Dunphy, Griffiths, & Benn, 2007).

Systems thinking

Complexity and ecological approaches are particular representatives of systems thinking, although the term too often imports unnecessary mechanistic images. Tsoukas and Chia (2002) provide a thoughtful underpinning in process terms, while Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers (2005) offer an extended conversation. Keith Elford (2013) has applied a systems approach to change in the Church of England. Rather difficult to categorise is the work of Kegan and Lahey (2009) on immunity to change.

Psychological approaches

In addition to Bridges’ work mentioned above, a number of authors write from different disciplinary backgrounds. Cummings, Bridgman, and Brown (2015) attempt to rehabilitate Kurt Lewin’s early model, while Haslam, Reicher, and Platow (2011) use social identity theory. The psychodynamic tradition is well represented, eg Miller (1993), while I have noted a growing interest in the concept of ‘not knowing’ and ‘negative capability’, eg French (2001).

Power


Appreciative Inquiry

There is now a range of literature on AI, eg Cooperrider and Whitney (2005). Lewis, Passmore, and Cantore (2008) apply the approach explicitly to the change management agenda.
**Change in Churches**

Gil Rendle (1998) provides a practical approach from the respected Alban Institute, while Impey (2010) offers a down-to-earth example of learning in an English congregation. A number of stimulating offerings from outside traditional denominational structures come from such networks as the Emergent Village: Sweet (2008 [1999]) can be taken as representative of this genre. The missional work of Alan Hirsch is worth exploring, eg (Hirsch & Catchim, 2012); in contrast, Alan Roxburgh writes predominantly for historic denominations, eg Roxburgh (2010). *Better Change in Church* (Street & Cuthbert, 2015) is a recent UK-based work, marred by self-publishing of what sometimes reads like an extended PowerPoint presentation. I have offered a chapter on sustaining a process of change (Harle, 2008), while it is perhaps fitting to end this brief review with a Methodist perspective (Beck, 2000).
Bibliography


