

# Reflecting Change in a Changing World: The Human and Spiritual Dimension

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**Abstract:** Various literatures and researches have defined and discussed the importance and urgency of change in businesses nowadays. It has become part of the norms as others may call it. However; in this paper change has been boiled down into two dimensions namely the human dimension and the spiritual dimension apart from the most and already used dimensions of change. The objective of this study is evaluate how change evolved by examining its human and spiritual dimension. It also assesses the perceived and distinguishing difference between these two concepts as supported by literatures and studies. To achieve this, mainly the study utilized the secondary data to establish a concrete justification of the assumptions and claims of the author. The results showed that, there are proven different perspectives between the human and spiritual dimension as applied to change and change management. That difference primarily lies with the fact that in human dimension, change started from the individuals themselves while change is attributed to God himself in spiritual dimension. However; findings are also supported that, both the human and spiritual dimension can be used in corporate setting and their blending can be enormous. Although, not many studies affirmed this result and few studies have tackled the spiritual dimension of change. Because of this reality, the author has recommended that further studies can be done to further confirm its linkage and widen the understanding on how spirituality impacts corporations in detailed extent.

**Keywords:** Change, Human Dimension, Spiritual Dimension, Spirituality, Changing World

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## 1. Introduction

Concepts and discussions about change perhaps remains to be a continuous topic of interest nowadays. Change encompasses different dimensions and it plays great significance to individuals, groups, organizations, companies and even in religious aspect. There are lots of studies about change and its impacts however; many people are still stuck on adapting change and refuse to accept the realities that they are living in a constantly changing environment and the world so to speak. In organizational perspective for instance, the report revealed by United Nations Global-Development Networks (UNDP, 2006) that advocates change to 177 countries indicates that the goals and objectives of the organization is greatly influenced by various forces directly and indirectly. While many studies tackled mostly on organizational change, some areas on the concepts of change may needed to be ironed out in order to shed light on the

many aspects of change. Because of this assumption, this research primarily aimed at examining change and change management with the view of evaluating the human and spiritual dimension. This includes the theories and approaches in discussing how change is reflected in both the human and spiritual dimension and how they vary each other. The main objective of this research is to differentiate the impact of change in relation to the changing world taking into consideration the human and spiritual dimension.

## 2. The Human Dimension of Change

The NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement (2006-2013) stressed that, the common reason for the failure of many projects is by ignoring the change with regards to the human dimensions. This means that, the top management have not taken due consideration the different responses that the people could express which are dependent on situations and circumstances facing the project. Kubler-Ross (1993)

posits that change is circumstantial in nature that reflects different reactions of people according to varied and different situations. Moreover, neglecting the human aspect of change would cause any efforts for improvement initiatives to fail. One of the commonly referred human dimension of change is

the one introduced by Kubler-Ross (2005), the “Change Curve” that emphasizes how the people react when change is implemented. To illustrate, the change curve diagram will provide a pictorial representation of the model which will be discussed in the succeeding sections.

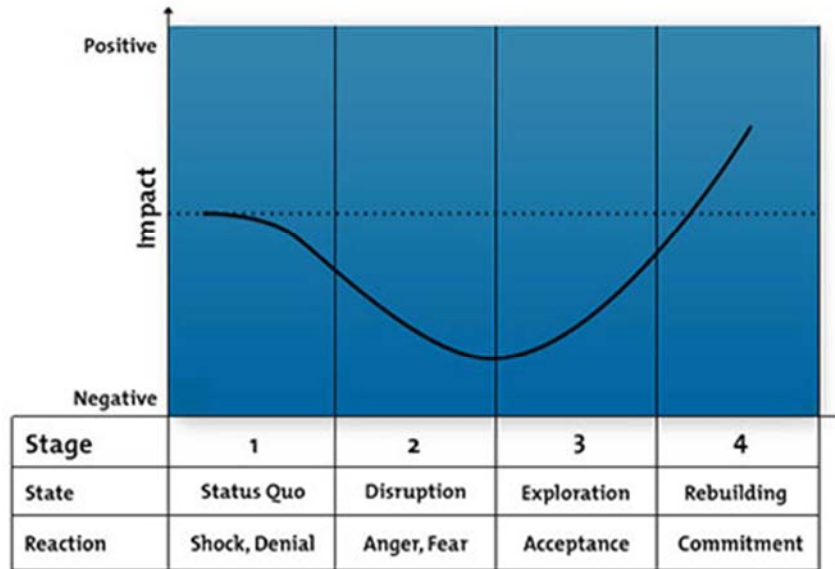


Figure 1. Terms reprinted with the permission of Scribner Publishing Group from *On Death and Dying* by Dr Elisabeth Kubler-Ross.

The model critically consider a sorrowful situation such as bereavement and grief as the point of consideration in order to measure the different responses from people from their actual experiences. Specifically, when a person actually experiences loss of love ones would often underwent difficult situations which according to this author may range from initial shock, denial, anger and anxiety, while eventually lead to acceptance. Similarly, Kotter (2008) explained that change operates within the following aspects: fear, guilt and disillusionment, threat, anxiety and denial, happiness, depression and hostility, gradual acceptance and moving forward. Undertaking or moving towards change regardless of its magnitude is something that usually people would experience and thus, a similar journey for all people. However; the intensity of how that change can be adaptable and its impact to people varies depending on the degree of change which to individuals, the varied reaction matters at the rate of speed that they can adapt such change. According to Cameroon (2008), it is not the organization that will change but the people or the employees working in the organization should adapt and change themselves. He added that, an effective change will generally depend on the managers and leaders’ adaptation and implementation of change which boils down to change management. In other words, change should originate from within (self) in order to experience the benefits brought about by change and achieve the transition process that is favorable both to the individuals and the organization.

### 3. The Stages of Human Dimension of Change

Following the change curve as introduced by Kubler-Ross (1993), the stages of change as described in Figure 1 consists of Status Quo (Stage 1); Disruption (Stage 2); Exploration (Stage 3); and, Rebuilding (Stage 4).

In stage 1, change can be described as a traumatic situation especially that any change effort to the mind of people requires much efforts and challenges that will change their concepts from the state of being in status quo. So, their mental state are being pressed to the situation where change is necessary although however; they still experience denial and shock with sudden realities and situations. Most often, change is always confronted with resistance as many people have experienced how change can painfully strikes them in the start-up stages. Resistance to change as cited in the study of Jalagat (2016) is an implied reaction that encompasses both the individual and organization for fears that change might conflict with their personal interests and will negatively outplayed their comfort zones (Todnem, 2005; Fernandez and Rainey, 2006). This undesirable situation will eventually be aggravated into stage 2 which is the state of disruption because of the strong belief that change will bring negative consequences and outcomes that has installed fear, anger, and resistance of the people’s minds that if not managed carefully might end up to chaotic situation. People believed in this stage that change can cause traumatic

experiences, power loss and prestige and to some extent could loss employment to individuals. While resistance to change is still evident in many people's hearts and minds, the status of change will not progress to the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage thus, stuck on unpleasant and stressful situation.

Furthermore, at some point when the people turn pessimism into optimistic views and reduced their involvement to resistance will give rise to the stage 4 of the change curve which is the exploration that will take into consideration the acceptance of change. This stage is considered a movement from the danger zone in stage 2 into a less danger situation or the moving out of the danger spots and at the same time the turning point for people to slowly discover the significance of change. In other words, this is the point where the top management and their managers or leaders should show support of the needed change. According to Wiggins (2009), change and change management should be well-supported by management being an integral part of individual and organizational success. Considering that people in this stage begin to embrace the needed change, the management's role is to ensure that sufficient trainings, enhancement programs, and any opportunities for individuals to learn how to implement the change in an effective manner and the experiences that change would bring should be taken due consideration. On one hand, internalizing change is not an overnight activity but an action that is also time-bounded and in many cases require considerable period of time to its full realization. So, it seems more acceptable that the managers and leaders as well as the top management should not expect 100% response from the employees but rather set an agreeable period that do not require more pressures on employee's part. Lastly, the fourth stage is the fruit bearing stage or the stage where change efforts are rewarded as a result of the rocky stages experienced just to enable the change a successful one. This is because this stage called the "rebuilding" is the point where the employees have developed commitment necessary to shape the change into success. Reaping the fruits of labor that the individuals and the organization invested to be productive and efficient as an evidence of successful change. The road to change is not easy but through cooperative efforts, change is within range that would also mean that change would become easier to handle the next time around. With proven track records, change would seem to be normal situations that will be perceived to be a recurring event rather than a new problem or activity.

#### 4. The Spiritual Dimension of Change

Change is a necessity whether both in worldly views and spiritual views. In other words, change and innovation forms part in larger extent to both biological and spiritual respects. Many believers believed that change is a process and not like a product that when it is sold, its value is diminished. On the same note, growth is not possible without change. Historical passage from the Holy Book accounted change when God said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and our

father's household and go to the land I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). This change is reflective of Abram's close encounter with God that enabled him to shift from his comfort zone into a totally new place of whom he is considered an alien. The change encompasses not only a transfer of place but a total overhaul of his life that involves his career, dreams and destiny. Human nature dictates that, change is not necessary when everything went well however; spiritually, change should emanate from God who can transform the well-being of individuals such that it can be said that, "He makes all things new" (Revelation 21:5). Similarly, it is God himself that challenges status quo and bring forth entirely new creation or order. The fact is, the universe is created by supernatural God who already knew that the world is changing and will be surrounded by innovativeness and diversity. While God does not change, the world is changing that takes into account the past, the present and the future. Cavin (2011) has merited the spiritual dimension of change by naming it the "New Name Road" that integrated the blending of the heart and spiritual issues cascading down the meaning of change into four aspects namely: fear, comfort, grief and forgiveness. The author pointed out that, change inflected fear to human beings embedded in our human nature however; God is a comforter that is ready to comfort in our times of needs and even in stressful situations and grief. In Christianity for instance, change will not be experienced not unless the Lord God himself do the change as a result of repentance and confession/forgiveness of those sinners and the lost. The word of God has commanded to those who believed that, change is needed for the sake of spreading the good news that eventually overcome the cultural norms into unity of the believers all around the world. The reality is that, change is part of God's plan for all as Driscoll (2009) emphasized that it requires change in cultural forms in consonance with his book outlining the theme: The radical Reformation: reaching out without selling out. Hence, change in spiritual dimension encompasses holy calling which refer to something that human will cannot do but God's will.

#### 5. Reflective Account of Change in Spiritual Dimension

Leadership and change are considered mutually inclusive and are both ingredient of organizational success. In this section demonstrates the biblical perspective of change when God has shown the transformation of Peter from being a change resistor to a change champion where he exhibited the role of change expert. Narratively, it accounts how change is reflected to Peter as God has shown it. It has started when God has chosen Peter to change himself in a way that is not contrary to his values and convictions and made him understand that change is important. This implies that, to leaders change should enable the people to understand the need and urgency of change but it should be done in a diplomatic way. Secondly, God has allowed Peter to

challenge the idea of change as starting point for acceptance. As application, leaders nowadays should consider the fact that people's resistance should be heard and addressed appropriately in order to pursue with the change peacefully otherwise; it will become hindrance to change initiatives. The Lord then allowed Peter to work even experiencing resistance through time which means that leaders and managers should understand that change is not done overnight but takes time to be internalized so that when the people become ready to change, there will be no reservations of doing their tasks. Fourthly, God has enabled Peter under controlled circumstances to effect change while preparing for a total change. This connotes that change processes undergoes experiments and trials before its successful implementation for people to realize how it impacts to them and the organization which is the judgment call of leaders. Change could be better implemented in small setting then moving into bigger ones. Then, God has ensured that the change proposal is well-prepared in anticipation of outright answers to whatever questions that will be brought to the table which can help current leaders to equip and prepare their change plans in a manner that it is anticipative of possible questions and resistance from employees and people who are participants of change. The sixth precedence of change demonstration happens when God did not personally ask Peter to change but letting him participate in the change process with the view of allowing him to see the advantage of new over old ways that can be observed nowadays to relinquish the concept of status quo. Although moving out from comfort zones are risky and challenging, the leaders and managers' role are essential in understanding the flight of employees in the change by letting them recognize their level of participation and acknowledging their hardwork. And, God has empowered Peter to champion the change that would mean that, the key role to change should be initiated by leaders with the full support of the management so that change will be well-initiated and implemented to achieve higher rate of success. Platt (2011) had mentioned that, change is dependent on God's will and as it manifest to people, it will result to a more rewarding experience.

## 6. Harmonizing the Human and Spiritual Dimension to Change Management

Although in the context of this paper there is conflicting views between human and spiritual dimensions of change, a handful studies believed that the blending of these two and other perspective would be relevant in the changing nature of organizations and businesses. Tacey (2004) recognized the need to integrate spirituality in businesses and has reached the level where people consider spirituality as means of behaving more ethically, better human beings, openness to new revelations and moving towards authentic spirituality revolution although this concept has been subjected to arguments and other issues. Apart from being a used to be fashion, the concept of spirituality has gained greater attention

nowadays and has been viewed in relation to change as holistic/ecological/systemic view of reality. Howard and Welbourn (2004) for instance, acknowledge that leaders and managers who are deeply rooted by spiritual values have the commitment to achieve the common vision and enhance their role in the aspect of teaching and aspiring their staffs and employees as a way of encouragement. The essence of togetherness or bringing together into a holistic view of both spirituality and science will give rise into the new paradigm or holistic worldview. According to Emmons (1999), spirituality is conceptualized by many researchers as a newly developed phenomenon but it has seen to be a growing concern by many as it reflects a fast changing condition to both individuals and organizations. While Pargament and Mahoney (2005) have neglected the concept of spirituality, Khisty (2010) acknowledge its importance as it has proven to improve psychological state of people being described as "healthy mental state". The spiritual paradigm which are evident in the corporate world states that "*our spiritual duty is to use our free will to help and not harm others to further their ends*" (Lips-Wiersma and Nikalant, 2008, p.59).

Furthermore, change make sense in both human and spiritual dimension as applied to people and individuals. Organizations begin to rationalize the fact that, the corporate values should be aligned to employees and the society as a changing paradigm and came to realization that organizations exist because of people and that it is the people that contributes to the success of the business (Wagner-Marsh and Conley, 1999). Viewing from spiritual paradigm, employees and individuals tend to be more accountable, conscious and perform more equitable roles. Their attitudes reflect more desirable and acceptable that management consider it ideal and appreciable. Vasconcelos (2010) depicts that there is gradually growing attention on spiritual paradigm to companies and organizations and has attracted people who have been searching for intellectual curiosity and explore the wider understanding on the effects and impacts of spirituality. Moreover, its effect has urged many writers and researchers regardless of religious background to determine the relationship of spirituality into corporate's existence and operations. On similar note, leaders and employees revealed the benefits of spirituality by taking into account the power that reawakens them describing it as something innate in their conduct. This has led organizations to conclude that spirituality has brought many advantages and to nurture such value is more reflective of organizational outcomes. Collins and Porras (1994) pointed out that, leaders who have acknowledge core values and spirituality are able to reflect change practices and procedures that are vital to organizations in their quest to move forward. Understanding deeply the spiritual dimension to change can transform the nature of management tasks into a more ethically and morally-based decision makings.

## 7. Conclusion

In this research, the importance of change is imperative of

how the human and spiritual dimension of change evolves. It is clear from the arguments and supporting literatures that the human dimension of change is distinctly contrary to the spiritual dimension of change. The human dimension strongly emanates from the individuals themselves through a traumatic event and grief that serve as starting point for change to take place while change as perceived by spiritual dimension originates from God himself the only and righteous one who can change individuals. The change that is considered genuine is the change that God inflicts to mankind being the sole change agent that has been demonstrated in the times of Abram. However; although there is conflicting views between the two dimensions, it has been proven in this study the interconnectedness of these two dimensions in the corporate world. Blending these two work alternatively such that organizations can implement change management in a way that both the human and spiritual dimension are applicable. So, it is a known fact that organizations should not only take into consideration the human dimension but also spirituality that even though others considered it as a new phenomenon but has paved the way to an acceptable way of managing the corporate affairs of businesses.

## 8. Recommendations for Further Researches

This research is limited only on the two dimensions where the results will contribute to the generalization of the concepts of change. While reflections and detailed account are given to some extent, more reflective outcomes are recommended to determine the extent of the impact of these two dimensions to businesses and organizations. However; considering that few studies had been conducted in this respect, the results of this study will serve as a good input for further studies especially the spiritual dimension where the researcher experienced difficulty in looking for literatures to support his claims and assumptions.

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