FACTORS THAT AFFECT PRODUCTIVITY AT MEDUPI POWER PROJECT STATION SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – the purpose of the paper is to provide the overview in the factors that undermine overall productivity at Medupi Power Station in the project level.

Design/methodology/approach - The study was conducted by gathering data from a stratified random sample of 240 respondents. The research subjected the publish the findings based on the 120 employees of Medupi Power Station Project (internal stakeholders of Medupi Power Station Project) and an additional 120 external stakeholders of Medupi Power Station Project.

Finding - A learning organisation is necessary to ensure future sustainability. An organisation needs to use adaptive and generative learning to build on its strengths, to streamline its processes, and must be committed to innovation to remain competitive. Organisational learning is embraced and forms part of the organisational culture.

Research limitation/implication – The focus is the implementation of change management to influence productivity on the project. This includes the effective use of communications in communicating changes and adopting an innovative approach improving productivity, and that normally individuals tend to value leaders primarily for their abilities as orators.

Practical implication – It is possible for the project to ensure that better training or enforcement is conducted, to allow employees to be ahead of their work requirements and advancing to the new developmental area. This will be translated inside out, out to the external stakeholders, demonstrating a productive business.

Social implication – Effective communication is essential for the management of change in large institutions, and is closely related to the fundamental principles of good corporate governance. Effective communication is a pivotal tool for outlining the outcomes of change, ranging to negative shift to positive alignments required due to sudden shifts.

Originality/value – The paper provide an overview perspective at the role of effective communication and training in ensuring that change is managed and implemented effectively.

Key words: Medupi Power Station Project, Change management, Communication, Logit analysis.
INTRODUCTION
The key objective of study was to identify and quantify socioeconomic factors that affect the degree to which change was communicated effectively at the workplace at Medupi Power Station Project. The study found that 74% of the 120 internal stakeholders of Medupi Power Station Project who were selected for the study believed that there was effective change communication at the workplace by the management of the company. Based on results obtained from cross-tab analyses, efficiency in communicating change at the workplace was significantly and adversely affected by failure to involve employees in planning for change, reluctance to change, lack of proper channels for communicating change, failure of top management to communicate change frequently enough, low frequency of communicating change at the workplace, and failure to use external communication strategies, in a decreasing order of strength. Effective communication is essential for the management of change in large institutions, and is closely related to the fundamental principles of good corporate governance. Effective communication is a pivotal tool for outlining the outcomes of change, ranging to negative shift to positive alignments required due to sudden shifts.

Organisations are realising that strengthening relations and creating a connection between factions involved has become an order of the day in managing uncertainties, especially within volatile environments that require a lot of project management practices. Neither effective communication nor even instantaneous communication also can mere achieve employees wisdom for change. The benefits of identifying barriers to change that can arise in an organisation after a process of acquisition and how resistance can be managed or arises from. The power station is a vital source of power and energy for all economic sectors of South Africa. The power station needs to produce more power at an affordable cost and improved efficiency. Medupi Power Station provides power to ordinary companies and businesses on a 24-hour basis throughout the year. It is a strategic asset and cannot afford to have employees who are unable to adapt to change and innovation. In this regard, the need for managing changes is a top priority. The rate at which the national economy can grow depends upon the rate at which the power station generates power at an affordable rate. The South African Small Enterprises Development Agency (SEDA) promotes growth and development in small, micro and medium-sized enterprises. To do so, it needs Medupi Power Station to produce power at an affordable rate. Medupi Power Station is a critical contributor to the national economy. Employees could benefit from experiential and vocational training opportunities. The plan also aims to reduce unemployment and poverty in all South African communities by promoting entrepreneurial activities. As such, it has become clear that Medupi Power Station is central to the National Development Plan. The power station endeavours to produce affordable power without polluting the environment. Workplace training opportunities could be used for improving the degree of skills possessed by employees of the power station. Workplace training provides a strong learning environment as it can improve the degree of skills of employees without disrupting their daily activities. Workplace training links training to actual work-related requirement. It is relevant to key performance areas and key performance indicators of employees. It also enables the employer to assess the degree of productivity and commitment of employees while they perform their daily routines at the workplace.

Change management modelling
Communications and organisational communications highlight the role that leaders and the communications department plays in influencing change through communications, which team better and receive well by employees who are better furnished on how to perform their duties through on job training as a protective approach of training. This is to further stress the means in which communications is linked to the persuasion of change management and demonstrating how important for communication to be effective in order to be a means to the end of change management. Communication plays a crucial role in the process of introducing a new strategy or process in the ways in which the business operation is concerned. This is however influenced mostly by business leaders, apart from the communication department being a custodian of communications.

Normally individuals tend to value leaders primarily for their abilities as orators. And furthermore they are viewed as leadership communication as the communication skills of organisational leaders. This entails the understanding of leadership communication and how it directly influences all other management function in an organisation.

**The importance of the three spheres of communication excellence was highlighted as useful:**

Outlined that at the core — the sphere at the canter — is the knowledge bases of the communication department. Surrounding the core is a larger sphere in which the core knowledge base is embedded. This middle sphere represents a set of shared expectations about communication between top communicators and senior managers in organisations. These shared expectations create

The three spheres of communication excellence:

The conceptualisation of the three spheres of communication excellence is highlighted as; points at communications excellence as three spheres, one insider another. These spheres, graphically represent and summarize the essence of structure in simple terms:
linkages between the communication department and those powerful people who run organisations and make strategic decision. The importance of the message originator to take a leadership role in strategic communication and also ensuring that the leaders will work hand in hand with the communications professional in achieving communication excellence, which can be simple achieved by the consecration and implementation of the spheres of communication excellence. This plays a manger role in the quest for communicating change as a means of change management and expectations thereof from the end users, which requires readiness from the end users i.e the importance of training and adoptability to innovations.

The inclusion of the target audiences on the change taking place becomes the order of the day. Because change generally means spontaneity, hence the affected parties need to be informed impromptu, or promptly depending of the nature of change, in this case referring to unplanned change or in the case of planed change; it will require structured change management. That conclusion inevitably points at the strategic importance of communicating timely and effectively at all steps of the change process. As change is a constant in organisations. It also means communicating at all times to the salient stakeholders. Organising and communicating themselves involve ongoing changes. It is prudent to look at the rationale and the need for organisation change and its theories, which informs the intent for unpacking change communication and understanding change.

Small-scale and relatively simple change, typically categorised as ‘hard’ problems, are usually managed within the day-to-day operational management activity. This type of change is not usually referred to as ‘change’ by managers, and the process of managing it is not described as ‘managing change’ or ‘change management’ within organisations. Managers have to consider the many factors involved in a complex and dynamic situation before making decisions that implement actions that will influence the effectiveness, efficiency and ultimately the sustainability of their organisations.

**Planned Change**

Planned changes are implemented with knowledge about the change, and communicating what is expected to happen. It occurs when leaders in the organisation recognise the need for a major change and proactively organise a plan to accomplish the change.

The liabilities of planed change include a high probability of decline, uneven diffusion among business unit, large short-term losses that are difficult to recover, less suitability for opportunity-driven than for threat-driven alteration, unanticipated consequences due to limited insight, temptations toward hypocrisy (when people talk the talk of revolution, but walk the walk of resistance).

The three step model of managing change has been identified as one of the common method that that companies can best identify with when going through change:
Unplanned Change
Unplanned change usually occurs suddenly unexpectedly, due to its sudden occurrence, members of the organisation respond in a highly reactive and disorganised fashion in most cases. Theories of unplanned change mean that change is a force that cannot be always managed or controlled it is triggered by great number of factors and there are numerous theories about the most common triggers *inter alia*; Changing environment, such as increasing competition and changes in economy Business relationships, such as alliances and new business lines Technological development People, such as new entrants to the organisation Understanding what cause an employee to resist or buy in to change notwithstanding change is inevitable so as resistance to change. This will further influence the need to explore how change can be managed, which where change communication and its theories as a form of change management will take a stance.

Organisational change – the forces for change
External forces for organisational change require that organisations transform and change largely because of pressures from the external forces rather than an internal desire to or need to change. In the South African environment, these external forces include a combination of political, economic and social changes, wherein businesses are forced to align their businesses to new realities that stem from those requirements and pressures. In most cases resistance is not a matter of one issue whether it’s internally or externally, it a pile up of uncertainties that causes people to feel reluctant to move to an new environment or to take a different stance on the organisation as required by the organisation model of change that the organisation might be going through. Resistance, where immediate reactions are very subtle, but subconscious resistance remains. It may surface later suddenly or triggered by another change initiative. This kind of resistance is extremely difficult to tackle as the origin of discontent can be difficult to trace. Resistance can also be additive and build on the existing
resistance little by little. As a result any small change can become a major issue, if the piled up resistance resurfaces.

In the quest of disproving or approving the underlying research questions, the study focuses on the above mentioned factors which are assumed to be the major causes of change; that are relevant to the research questions. Resistance to change can furthermore be distinguished at three different levels which were found to be identifiable:

Level 1 resistance is based on a lack of information or on honest disagreement over the facts.

Level 2 entails personal and emotional resistance and manifests because people are afraid that change may cost them their jobs, reduce their control, or cause them to lose face.

Level 3 is associated with employee’s managers or what these managers represent. In these situations, people will resist almost any changes that are suggested to them, as they link “change” and “management” with one another.

Change management is a dicey environment that is influenced by a number of factors, they varies depending on the nature of the mergers and acquisitions and type of change i.e planned or unplanned. The processes in which change is tackled will depend on its nature. The nature of resistances derived from both the planned and the unplanned change and that will lead the change management approach and the theories to assume as turning point key strategies.

This then influence the state of readiness from the receiver of change, which is likely to create dysfunctionality and lack of production, as a result of the effective communication, the nature for change and the state of readiness from the end users. These factors go hand in hand with the end goal of production.

**Turn key point strategies in managing change**

The following factors were identified to be helpful for reducing operational cost as a result of downturn in productivity:

- Ensuring overall efficiency by avoiding duplicate processes and work structures;
- Motivating and incentivising workers by focusing on individual aims and aspirations of employees;
- The provision of skills based and tailor-made training opportunities on a regular basis; and
- Exploring external opportunities as a means of broadening the clientele base in the market.

The Action-Profit Linkage Model for small and newly established enterprises in developing nations is viewed to be relevant. The Action-Profit Linkage Model is a framework that is vital for streamlining activities in such a way that duplicate efforts are removed and the utilisation of resources is optimised. Outsourcing is commonly used as a cost-cutting measure. However, using outsourcing for the wrong reasons could result in the loss of vital skills and expertise. Others argue that outsourcing based on cost-cutting, technical consideration and the need to focus on core activities do not capture the complexities of rationale for outsourcing. That’s where the strong case for in-house training is concern. There are various training deliveries and approaches. The training delivery could be employee-related or programme-related. The programme-related delivery includes on-the-job or off-the-job training using various methods. On-the-job training involves structured job focus on delivery methods that is accompanied by an assessment of the employee while being on-the-job. It happens over time and the immediate supervisors are responsible for the training of subordinates.

Effective training is vital for minimising the cost of teaching vital technical skills. Sustained and
regular training at the workplace is vital for improving operational efficiency. Companies that provide on-the-job skills-based training programmes attract employees with the greatest potential for innovation and productivity at work. This kind of approach allows employees to better comprehend change and effectively implement it. In turn they are most loyal to companies because of the skills-based training opportunities, and that the provision of workplace training programmes becomes a major attraction to new applicants. On the job training is an attractive training because it needs less investment in time and money for materials, training fees and or instructional design. However, on the job training must be structured in order to be effective. The provision of structured workplace training opportunities is defined as the planned process of having experienced employees train novice employees on units of work in the actual work. On the job training has apparent advantages because the training is conducted when the need arises and without demanding additional resources from the organisation. Structured on-the-job training takes less time to conduct and achieves the objectives compared to other training, such as classroom training and other methods of training.

Workplace training opportunities have the following benefits to employees:

- Employees have the opportunity to master basic technical skills that have not been mastered in the past for various reasons;
- Employers have the opportunity to salvage labour cost from employees who underperform due to lack of technical skills;
- Efficient workplace training enables employers to dramatically boost overall productivity and efficiency;
- Workplace training enables employees to build and regain self-confidence and morale at the workplace;
- Workplace training enables employees to rebrand their market image;
- Efficient workplace training enables employees and employers to save the cost of training provided at an outside agency;
- Efficient workplace training enables employees and employers to retain advanced skills that are vital for operation, and internalise them;
- Efficient workplace training enables employees and employers to save the cost of labour-related disputes and wastage of valuable time over issues such as inability to perform according to job descriptions or service level agreements with stakeholders;
- Efficient workplace training enables employers to utilize its human and logistical resources more efficiently; thereby making accountability significantly easier to do;
- Efficient workplace training enables employers and employees to share ideas on routine operational procedures that could be improved;
- Workplace training enables employers to provide efficient services to stakeholders at an affordable cost.

Plan for productivity strategy-led change management

Efficiency in the communication of change at the workplace is significantly and adversely affected by reluctance to change, failure of top management to communicate change frequently enough, and failure to involve employees in planning for change. The availability of an economically enabling environment as well as adherence to the basic principles of good corporate governance are vital for ensuring effective communication about
change at the workplace. Responsible managers are required to communicate change and let employees and stakeholders to know about expected changes. Doing so is vital for boosting morale among employees. It is also helpful for winning the confidence and trust of internal and external stakeholders. The provision of work related and skills based training opportunities are also quite helpful for boosting employee morale and stakeholder engagement. This then requires the organisation to equally prepare for the change to be implemented, as part of the change management strategy-led approach, whether to prepare employees or stakeholders, by means employing mechanisms that will allow the business to operate in a productive manner. There are mainly two responses organisations can implement regarding change management. Either the organisation can move into a reactive state or the organisation can be proactive because of a strong relationship that they have with their risks and change management processes.

These two responses are explained below recommended:

The nature of a change that is resilient or an organisation that is resilient through it risks or through times of uncertainty relates to an organisation that remains stable through turbulent and challenging times. This is an organisation that manages to return to its equilibrium point quickly after it has experienced the impact of the risk. The organisation has managed to implement processes and systems that ensure that any risk, be it identified or unforeseen, can be mitigated. Anticipating risk and employing risk measures that will allow the production of the business to not suffer from the latent risks. This involves a sold risk assessment and environmental scanning in a case of devising a communication strategy that will engage an effective change management implementation. Factors like commitment and motivation at work is significantly associated with training opportunities at the workplace. Overall productivity at work is driven by the degree to which workers are motivated and committed. Motivation factors are factors that lead to satisfaction and motivate employees to work harder. Motivation factors are the ability to enjoy work, getting recognition for work done, and the ability to achieve career growth. In order to motivate employees working in large institutions such as Medupi Power Station Project, it is important to let them feel appreciated and supported by the top managers. It would be wise to adhere to the basic principles of good governance such as transparency, accountability, fairness and objectivity. This could be done by offering employees with the best possible working conditions. Highly motivated workers easily achieve most of their KPAs and KPIs because they experience job satisfaction and have a sense of belonging in the power station.

Effective change management involves a process of top management commitment to building a resilient process. The global challenges that do not only affect the companies but also external role players are the main reason why organisations should manage risks. The importance of managing risks is also to ensure that the organisation learns from the process of change management. Organisations need to build a capability that will enable learning from new experiences. The integrated change management programme is an enabler for organisations to manage their corporate risks as a whole and not in silos, which was the traditional change framework that was used previously. There are questions that organisations need to answer in terms of the
factors that drive the implementation of the change management programmes in their organisations. The companies need to evaluate whether the organisations’ change management programmes create value when these are implemented. The organisations need to assess the determinants that make the programmes successful, as the change management programme has an impact on organisational performance and on corporate value. When the organisations have a better understanding of those determinants like managing change management performance, change management and the use of lessons learned to improve organisations performance, only then can the benefits be realised which will ensure that the programme creates value. Change management is a combination of these factors or determinants and if one factor is missing, the programme might not be successful.

CONCLUSION

The provision of training opportunities to workers remains a key motivation for productivity at the workplace. Equally so without clear and effective communication there is nothing much that can be achieved through training. As the field and the sector develop, the laws and principles that govern the operation of the sector changes, which then lead to production level being compromised due to a number of factors, and mostly lack of what the employees are expected to do in this new environment. That were effective change management methods are empirical, understating the change management models that better suits the nature and the need for change. The view from other researchers is that the importance of learning in the organisation is that it can be used as competitive advantage; which means that it is something that is unique to the organisations when mastered and this cannot be copied. Inter alia; management should provide a short training to its employees about the need for identifying valuable and strategically beneficial changes, and how those changes should be implemented at the workplace. Training enables workers to acquire essential skills, believe in continuous improvement. There is a need to establish a proper system that enables workers to take part in change management and implementation procedures. This process needs to feedback to the change management process in the organisation for continuous improvement. The learning needs to be tailored in order to encourage individual workers as well as groups.

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