Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations



Organization Change: Theory and Practice, By Warner W. Burke (2018) 5th edition, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 454 pages. ISBN: 978-1-50635-799-7

Véra-Line Montreuil

Volume 75, Number 2, Spring 2020

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1070356ar DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/1070356ar

See table of contents

Publisher(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0034-379X (print) 1703-8138 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this review

Montreuil, V.-L. (2020). Review of [*Organization Change: Theory and Practice*, By Warner W. Burke (2018) 5th edition, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 454 pages. ISBN: 978-1-50635-799-7]. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 75(2), 406-408. https://doi.org/10.7202/1070356ar

Tous droits réservés © Département des relations industrielles de l'Université This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit Laval, 2020 (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

érudit

https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

https://www.erudit.org/en/

temps, de la Méditerranée jusqu'à l'Amérique du Nord. Le maillage entre philosophie, économie et politique est adéquatement présenté et vulgarisé. En somme, il s'est agi d'examiner avec un œil neuf ces classiques de l'Histoire occidentale afin qu'ils puissent continuer à nourrir notre réflexion sur la grande question du travail. Somme toute, ce livre constitue un apport comparativement à bien d'autres ouvrages se contentant de prendre le train en marche puisqu'ils limitent leurs analyses aux théories modernes et post-modernes du travail.

Abdellatif Gharyeni

Étudiant au doctorat Département des relations industrielles Université Laval Québec, Québec

Organization Change: Theory and Practice

By Warner W. Burke (2018) 5th edition, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 454 pages. ISBN: 978-1-50635-799-7.

Change management has become critical in today's organizations as their environment is constantly evolving. While there is accumulating scientific literature on leading change, organizations and workers are still confronted with new challenges. W. Warner Burke, a well-known expert on change management, provides with his book (fifth edition) an up-to-date comprehensive and well-structured overview of change management. The author's research expertise and consulting experience also give insights to overcome some practical issues of change. Therefore, Burke's work is an attempt to offer a valuable tool for researchers and practitioners interested in gaining or enhancing knowledge regarding organizational change.

This book aims to discuss the latest research and practice on change management. All sections written in previous editions are retained. However, in contrast to the fourth edition, it has a new chapter on health care and government organizations. The focus on these institutions' realities aims to fill a gap in the field, considering that knowledge of change management is predominantly based on profit-making enterprises rather than non-profit organizations.

The book is divided into seventeen chapters. The overall structure allows the reader to follow a sequential logic. Starting with an overview of its key concepts, followed by a brief history of change, the author sets the stage for an in-depth presentation of organizational change and ends with a summary. Although the book is not organized along these lines, the seventeen chapters can be grouped under seven main themes: a- background and rationale; b- nature and levels of change; c- current research; d- change and organizational models; e- change in the organization as a whole; f- change leadership; and gsummary and integration.

Chapters 1-4: Background and rationale. These first chapters are essentially the background and rationale of the book. They are guite informative as they state the importance of studying change management, the reasons for unsuccessful changes, the history of organizational change in literature and the main theoretical foundations of change. This introduction delineates the topic of the book and provides the basis for the next chapters. However, some selections from the literature are put forward based on the author's expertise and experience. Therefore, these chapters are not intended to cover all viewpoints or research paradigms (e.g. rational, postmodern approaches). The author focuses primarily on mainstream change studies.

Chapters 5-6: Nature and levels of change. This part of the book deals with the nature and levels of change. A clear distinction is made between revolutionary and evolutionary change, with a concise and proper description of each way of viewing change. The author also presents how

change is broken down into three overlapping strata: individual, group and the larger system. These two chapters are one of the original features of the book, integrating both the nature and levels of change in a unified way, which is often hard to find in other books.

Chapter 7: Current research. This section examines the current state of scientific knowledge in change management as well as recent research developments. Change antecedents and outcomes are reviewed. The role of communication is investigated, and the latest change trends are explored. In this chapter, the author also highlights an important nuance regarding the traditional vision of leadership in the context of change. He emphasizes that change leadership is often conceived through an individual leadership perspective or "standalone leader" whereas change leadership should also be conceived as a collective and co-performing phenomenon that is dispersed among organizational members. In this regard, the author highlights power relationships that may exist in the organization and must be taken into account. This chapter is of particular interest to learn about current thinking on organizational change. However, the author seems to be silent regarding future challenges facing the field and practice, such as change saturation, contradictory changes, mid-level management resistance, and unqualified or poorly-equipped change managers. In this line of thought, and to further advance the research, it would be interesting in a subsequent edition to learn the author's viewpoint on these future challenges.

Chapters 8 to 10: Change and organizational models. This section presents models in change management and organizational behaviour. These chapters review both conventional and new organizational frameworks, including Lewin's three steps of change, Vroom's expectancy theory, Argyris' and Schön's theory on congruence and with an emphasis on the Burke-Litwin causal model. Chapters 8, 9, and 10 are central parts of the book. The classification of the conceptual models around "what" (content) and "how" (process), as well as per level of analysis (individual, group and the larger system), allows for a clear clustering. Furthermore, the author does not merely describe the frameworks but also explains how to apply an organizational model.

Chapters 11 to 13: Change in the organization as a whole. This part of the book focuses on the analysis of the organization as a whole in the context of change. In chapter 11, organizational culture change is carefully studied with a case application. As the author points out, this change is among the most challenging and complex to manage. Consequently, a chapter entirely dedicated to this is, undoubtedly, of high relevance. However, the author has favoured a general description of the organizational culture and its components (i.e., values, underlying assumptions and artifacts) without presenting the different existing typologies, which may limit the scope and depth of the analysis. Nevertheless, relying on case applications, chapters 12 and 13 explain how change management differs depending on whether organizations are tightly coupled systems, loosely coupled systems or non-profit organizations (health care and government). These distinctions are certainly of great interest not only for understanding that change can be shaped by organizations but also for guiding change agents in adapting their activities according to the type of organization to which they belong.

Chapters 14 to 15: Change leadership. This section deals with change leadership, with an emphasis on transformational leadership, the difference between managing and leading people, as well as the leaders' functions in the various phases of organizational change (i.e. prelaunch, launch, postlaunch and sustaining the change). The author also sheds light on the unanticipated consequences of which leaders should be aware (e.g., people expected to resist, rather embrace, or champion the change). Given that organizational change is foremost a guestion of managing, leadership appears to be a crucial aspect to consider. Consequently, the author addresses this aspect by explaining the complexity of the leaders' role in times of change. The strength of these chapters is to offer a concrete set of actions for leaders that go beyond conventional ways. The author also addresses, an often overlooked but crucial issue, the leader's self-examination, which implies self-consciousness towards the change itself.

Chapters 16 and 17: Summary and integration. These concluding chapters offer a summary of the different themes of the book as well as a discussion on the Gladwell's Tipping Point, and Lawler and Worley's Built to Change books. A number of future research avenues on different topics, such as momentum, communication, power and politics, networks, rewards and training are provided. The author concludes by highlighting some issues that deserve more attention (e.g., resistance to change, selection and development of leaders, and learning agility). The author's concern with resistance to change is particularly noticeable since, throughout the book, this theme comes up regularly. Furthermore, the author adopts a perspective that seems promising about resistance to change by perceiving it as a resource rather than a barrier: an often narrow conceptualization of change recipients' reactions.

This book is one of the few works that encompass a broad range of change management issues concisely. Burke covers various seminal research studies in change management literature, which makes it particularly useful for students, researchers and practitioners who are new to the field or who want to deepen their knowledge. It is also noteworthy that the book, which integrates the accumulated evidencebased knowledge and includes educational resources, makes the work of Burke an interesting choice for teaching purposes. Some might criticize the book for not offering enough action-oriented toolkits. However, it provides various change strategies, rather than a monolithic prescriptive approach, which can be helpful in adapting change practices to appropriate contexts. The book also succeeds well in integrating theory and research with case applications. Moreover, by consistently sharing the origins of his reflections, Burke helps the reader to make an informed judgment, which makes the reading more interesting and engaging. While Burke places great emphasis on planned change throughout his work, a greater place given to emergent change models in a future edition would be relevant, considering that there is a growing interest in the latter among researchers. This line of research seems indeed promising to understand all permutations within organizations. In conclusion, this book serves its purpose of conveying the most recent scientific and practical findings in change management and certainly represents a far-reaching reference in the field.

Véra-Line Montreuil

Doctoral Candidate in Industrial Relations Département de relations industrielles Université du Québec en Outaouais Gatineau, Québec, Canada

Capitalism in America: A History

By Alan Greenspan and Adrian Wooldridge (2018) New York: Penguin Press, 476 pages. ISBN: 978-0-73522-246-5.

Alan Greenspan and Adrian Wooldridge's history of American capitalism is a notable achievement in both writing and synthesis. It starts with an interesting thought experiment, imaging a Davos conference in 1620 with the various great powers speculating which nation would dominate the world in the coming years. Surprisingly, the two choices which would create the modern world would be the backwater power