

BOOK REVIEW

Warren G. Bennis, *Changing Organization* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), pp. ix + 223.

The author, Warren G. Bennis, is now (1966) Provost of the State University of New York at Buffalo. He joined the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1959 and was Professor of Management and Chairman of the Organization Studies Group at the Alfred P. Sloan School of Management at the Institute. Prior to 1959, Professor Bennis taught at Boston University. He was invited to lecture at Harvard University in 1957-1959. He was Visiting Professor at IMEDE, Management Development Institute, Lausanne, Switzerland, 1961-1962; and in 1964-1965, he was Visiting Professor and MIT Project Director at the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, India.

He is the author of over 75 articles plus many books on group and organizational behavior. His knowledge and experience in this area resulted in his serving as a consultant with numerous private and government agencies, among them: The Department of State, The American Management Association, the Space Technology Laboratory, Aluminium Company Ltd., and the General Electric Company. Also, he is a trustee of the Foundation for Research on Human Behavior and is on the board of Directors of National Training Laboratories.

This book by Bennis is a compilation of ten of his articles and speeches concerned with various aspects of organizational change. It is a difficult book for readers who do not have adequate familiarity with behavioral science literature. The author states in his preface that, "This book of essays approaches the problem of change from many different angles, all of which focus on the cause and consequences of change in **organizational** behavior. In a way, I suppose, those essays reveal my favorite intellectual preoccupations; (1) the problems of change, (2) how they effect human organizations, and (3) what the behavioral sciences can do about directing the rate, shape, and consequences of change."

The book is divided into three parts; part one deals with the evolution of organizational development and the second deals with planning and controlling change. Bennis ends his book with an epilogue discussing the behavioral science approach to organizational studies.

Bennis writes that, "the burden of this book rests upon the premise that this form of organization (bureaucracy) is becoming less and less effective, that it is hopelessly out of joint with contemporary realities, and the new shapes, patterns, and models -- currently recessive -- are emerging which promise drastic changes in the conduct of the corporation and in managerial practices in general." Throughout his analysis, Bennis, however, does not make it clear what new shapes, patterns, and models he means to propose. Under the claim that "Democracy is inevitable within organizations," he devotes a chapter to discuss his own values which include:

1. Full and free communication, regardless of rank and power.
2. A reliance on consensus, rather than on the more customary forms of coercion or compromise, to manage conflict.
3. The idea that influence is based on technical competence and knowledge rather than on the vagaries of personal whims or prerogatives of power.
4. An atmosphere that permits and even encourages emotional expression as well as task-oriented acts.
5. A basically human bias, one which accepts the inevitability of conflict between the organization and the individual but which is willing to cope with and mediate this conflict on rational grounds.

I agree with Bennis on the point that "it is the *spirit of inquiry*, a love of truth relentlessly pursued, that ultimately creates the objectivity and intelligent action associated with science." Nevertheless, it may be impossible to this proposal when there are certain cultural constraints. I believe that Bennis might get some idea from India about the Oriental values concerning submissive, non-aggressive behavior. This kind of behavior is a big obstacle to the "spirit of inquiry."

While the author tries to convince us that democratic management is inevitable, I doubt its universality. Even Bennis himself could not prescribe any organizational structure which will lead or guide the course of actions to achieve the ultimate goal of democracy. I also agree that democratic management could be the most efficient one under certain conditions; but I wonder how we would achieve this concept if we are not sure what would be the appropriate means.

Bennis discusses many processes of change: planned change, indoctrination, coercive change, technocratic change, interactional change, socialization change, and natural change. He prefers, however, planned change in which T-group or sensitivity training is emphasized.

The author devotes considerable attention to T-group training which is a method designed to change individual behavior. This is based on the idea that if we can change individual behavior, the consequence will produce organizational change in the same direction. Argyris¹ explains the method of T-group training: "Basically it is a group experience designed to provide maximum possible opportunity for the individuals to expose their behavior, give and

¹Chris Argyris, "The T-groups," in Harold Lazarus, and E. Kirby Warren, (eds.), *The Progress of Management* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 267.

receive feedback, experiment with new behavior, and develop everlasting awareness and acceptance of self and others. The T-group also provides possibilities to learn the nature of effective group functioning. Individuals are able to learn how to develop a group that achieves specific goals with minimum possible human cost.

It is in the T-group that one finds the emphasis on the participants' creating and diagnosing their own behavior, developing distributive leadership and consensus decision-making norms to protect the deviants, and, finally, sharing as much as possible all the information that is created within, and as a result of, the T-group experience."

To support his T-group approach to the process of organizational change, Bennis reasons; "When it comes to implementation of organizational change, most practitioners seem to overemphasize the importance of intellectual *understanding* or the *information* status of intended change. Now, as I have said, information and understanding are necessary but not sufficient components for inducing change. More is required if the change is to afford important human responses. For human changes are bound up in self-image and its maintenance and the complicated context of the social life and groupings which help to define and give meaning to the individual's existence. If intended change is perceived to threaten (or enhance) the self-image, then we can expect differential effects. If an intended change is perceived as threatening the social life space of the individual, then safeguards must be undertaken which insure new forms of gratification and evaluation."

The most difficult part of this book is Bennis' epilogue. His final words, however, impressed me greatly and they would encourage those who would like to see advancement, prosperity, and achievement. "The remarkable aspect of our generation is its commitment to change, in thought and action. Our educational system should (1) help us to identify with this adaptive process without fear of losing our identity, (2) increase our tolerance of ambiguity without the fear of losing intellectual mastery, (3) increase our ability to collaborate without fear of losing individuality, (4) develop a willingness to participate in social evolution while recognizing implacable forces. In short, we need an educational system which can help us make a virtue out of contingency rather than one which induces hesitancy and its reckless companion, expedience."

The approach Bennis stresses in his book may be quite difficult to implement. There is serious question whether sensitivity or T-group training is really effective as a training device. Odiorne² is a prominent opponent of T-group training. He describes a negative experience: "Not long ago a large engineering company in the midwest was prevailed upon by a consulting firm to bring a group of their research executives to a ledge in Wisconsin for sensitivity training. The leader of the session had no prior training in the conduct of such sessions.

²George S. Odiorne, "The Trouble with Sensitivity Training," in Harold Lazarus, and E. Kirby, (eds.), *The Progress of Management*, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; Prentice-Hall Inc., 1968), pp. 269-270.

During one horrible week-end he broke down the barriers of formal courtesy which had substituted quite successfully for human relations in this successful lab for many years. People spoke frankly of their hostilities. At this point they went back to the lab, their dislike laid bare, with no substitute behavior being provided. Chaos immediately took over. People who had worked in good-mannered pomposity for years, turning out patents and papers at a prodigious pace began to engage in organized politicking to get square. Senior scientists quit in droves and a major purge took place. Candid observations made up at the lake hung heavy between colleagues..." And then he asks "This is training?" In addition, Odiorne gives several postulates of training such as, "In good training the desired terminal behavior can be identified before the training begins," and "The learning is under control," which sensitivity training by definition does not do.

Katz and Kahn³ severely attack those who correlate individual behavior with organizational change when they write, "The study and the accomplishment of organizational change has been handicapped by the tendency to disregard systemic properties of organizations and to confuse individual change with change in organization variables. More specifically, scientists and practitioners have assumed too often that an individual change will produce corresponding organizational change. This assumption seems to us indefensible." So, in addition to T-group or sensitivity training, Katz and Kahn propose other approaches, i.e., information, individual counseling and therapy, influence of peer groups, group therapy in organization, feedback, and systemic change.

Lippitt *et al.*⁴ propose planned change via client system and change-agents. They do not even mention sensitivity training. The role and qualification of change-agents are their prime emphasis. It seems to me that this approach would be more universally applicable than sensitivity training.

One point that Bennis should have considered is "pseudo-effectiveness," to use Argyris' term. Argyris⁵ defines pseudo-effectiveness as a state in which no discomfort is reported but in which, upon diagnosis, ineffectiveness is found. In my opinion, the importance of pseudo-effectiveness ought to be recognized.

Despite the many criticisms which can be made about Bennis' book, I think it is worthwhile to recognize his proposals as a means of planned change in organizations. More empirical research, however, should be conducted in order to find out applicability and validity of such means, especially for Thailand, where different beliefs and culture may be major obstacles.

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³Daniel Katz, and Robert L. Kahn, *The Social Psychology of Organization* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1966), pp. 449-450.

⁴Ronald Lippitt, Jeanne Watson, and Bruce Westley, *The Dynamics of Planned Change* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1958).

⁵Chris Argyris, *Integrating the Individual and the Organization* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1964), p. 132.