Chapter 4 – Classifying Theories of Organisational Change

The Paradox of Continuity and Change

- There is the debate on whether we view organisations as generally stable entities consisting of identifiable objects, resources and structures of control and coordination or whether we view organisations as fluid entities in a constant state of flux, that consist of processes of 'becoming'.

- Theories of change often take as a starting point a notion of fluidity or stability and then develop a focus of interest in developing a particular theoretical explanation of change.
    - i.e. punctuated equilibrium theory view stability as the normal state of play but recognises that organisations can experience major shocks within their business environment that necessitate major change
    - i.e. chaos theory assumes a continuous dynamic interplay between forces that create a constant state of flux within which organisations achieve temporary periods of stability

- **Van** argue that many alternative approaches for studying organisational change stems from the philosophies of Heraclitus and Democritus.
    - Flux – Process – Heraclitus 'They view reality as a process and regarded time, change and creativity as representing the most fundamental facts for understanding the world'.
        - Upon those who step into the same rivers different and ever different waters flow down
    - Stability – Varience – Democritus 'pictured all of nature as composed of stable material substance or things that changed only in their positioning in space and time'

- The paradox of change is captured in the epigram: *The more things change; the more things stay the same*.

Classifying Theories of Change: The Conceptual Terrain

- **By** focuses on three main characteristics of change.
    - <u>Rate of occurrence</u> (incremental, continuous, discontinuous change)
    - <u>How it comes about</u> (theories that generally views of change as emergent and those that emphasize planned change models)
    - <u>Scale of change </u>(range along the continuum from fine-tuning to corporate transformation)

- **AI** provide a roadmap of the change management literature. They use fourfold classifications comprising:
    - <u>Change types</u> – scale of change (small to large change) and the duration elements of change (occurring quickly or happens over a longer period of time)
    - <u>Change enablers</u> – host of factors that can enablers change, such as leadership, training, employee involvement and so forth
        - Authors suggest that *knowledge and skills, resources and commitment* are the three keys to securing successful change
    - <u>Change methods</u> – prescribed sequence of steps and procedures to follow, such as those associated with the Deming cycle (plan, do, check, act) and/or six sigma.
    - <u>Change outcomes</u> – used to capture the consequences of change. Forward to two main categories: