RESISTANCE TO ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE: A CASE STUDY IN SRI LANKAN CONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION

Sepani SENARATNE¹ and S KURUWITA²

¹ Department of Building Economics, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka
Email: sepani@becon.mrt.ac.lk
² Department of Building Economics, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka

Abstract
Organisations frequently need to introduce changes in anticipation of future problems. Though a change process may be vital there often will be resistance to change processes from the individuals and organisations. Even though resistance to change is common, change initiators generally do not consider managing it effectively in order to make their efforts a success. Poorly managed resistance can wreck an organisation. Accordingly, this study aimed to explore the nature of resistance when implementing a strategic level change in construction organisations of Sri Lanka. Case study approach was used to investigate the research question. A construction organisation that recently implemented change at strategic level was selected to study the nature of resistance. Data collection techniques were semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant-observation. The primary data were analysed by using content analysis and cognitive mapping techniques. The case study findings revealed significant reasons for the resistance to change in construction organisations and how these were handled in the case study organisation. The results and findings reported from this study will enable construction organisations to understand the nature of resistance and manage it effectively for successful strategic change implementation.

Keywords
Construction, Organisational Change, Resistance to Change, Case study research.

BACKGROUND
Management must continually introduce internal organisational changes to achieve the aims and objectives of the organisation more effectively by adapting to new challenges presented by employees as well as by outside factors such as increased competition, advances in technology, new government legislations and pressing social demands. Hence, organisations introduce changes in anticipation of future problems (Hellriegel et al. 1983). Macri et al. (2002) held that what is referred to as change is a consistent set of responses by the different parts of an organisation to the different parts of its environment. In some past studies (Cyert and March 1963; Kraatz and Zajac 1996), change is described as a process of incremental and diffuse elements rather than the result of ‘revolutions’ or traumatic events. Therefore, without executing organisational