

International Journal of Applied Management Education and Development

Volume 1 Issue 3

A light gray world map is centered in the background of the page. The title 'Change Management In Higher Education: Top-Down or Bottom-Up?' is overlaid on the map, positioned over the Atlantic and European regions.

**Change Management In Higher Education:
Top-Down or Bottom-Up?**

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ISSN 1742-2639

Abstract

This paper aims at exploring and identifying the key forces and system dynamics underlying the implementation of methods and practices to initiate and sustain strategic change in a higher education institution. In particular, it explores the potential differences in efficiency between change initiatives imposed by the *top* management layers and those that seem to grow from within the *lower* workforce levels, with a special focus on the people management issues involved. Organisational mindset stemming from a particular governance structure, communication of the change vision and ethics and culture management within a political environment prove to be the major enabling or disabling factors. A mixed research methodology was employed to minimise the risk of validity, reliability and subjectivity issues. An in-depth case study was compiled from a close examination of a UK university Department of Sport and Recreation Services, which was in the process of remodelling its Marketing Strategy. The author hopes that the case findings will supplement the existing understanding of organisational change processes by supporting a critical combination of *top-down* and *bottom-up* approaches to change initiation and reinforcement.

Keywords: organisational change, people management, governance, communication, politics, ethics management, culture management, top-down, bottom-up

Background and Scope of the Study

Initiating, implementing - and more importantly – sustaining change has undoubtedly become one of the most critical factors for efficient, as distinct from effective, management of business with a view to leveraging the following benefits from it: a) revenue acceleration and profitability growth, b) re-engineering of key processes, c) outsourcing of core functions, d) integration of technology and systems, e) enhancement of customer satisfaction and f) build-up of new markets. Enabling and/or disabling factors connected with change implementation projects have been studied and documented in various research and consultants' reports (see for example Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Pfeffer, 1998; Guest and King, 2001; Block, 1987; Cooper and Sawaf, 1997). Consensus prevails that focus on issues like communication, employee empowerment and satisfaction and committed leadership are ways to enhance performance of organisational change implementation. Despite the effort involved, however, an estimated 50-70% of re-engineering projects do not succeed in producing the intended results (Hammer and Champy, 1993) and in less than one third of the US and British companies engaged in Total Quality Management (TQM) programmes were tangible performance benefits gained (Ashkenas et al., 1995). Harvard's John Kotter, in a study of one hundred top management-driven 'corporate transformation' efforts, concluded that more than half did not survive the initial phases (Kotter, 1995).

Based on these realisations, the author of this paper aspires to challenge the existing change management practices in organisations by claiming that a major reason for change implementation failure is neglecting people-related issues and employee satisfaction in the workplace through the use of top-down approaches. To this end, action research was conducted in the Sport and Recreation Department of a UK university, which lasted approximately 6 months. The particular area was chosen due to its topicality, in view of the current urge towards proactive change that is being

propagated by the regulators in the UK Higher Education sector (Lambert, 2003) and the researcher's long-standing interest in this sector as an educator. Moreover, the department served the purpose of the subject to the study well as it was in the process of totally reshaping its structure and activities, not to mention the history of constant changes it had been subjected to in the last 10 years. Last but not least, the Higher Education sector in the UK presents the researcher with a formidable challenge, as it is renowned for its tight hierarchical structures and enforcement of top-down, management-driven strategies (Dearing, 1997).

Literature Review

Over the years, much of the literature on change management has been derived from the practice of Organisational Development, which has been defined as 'a system-wide application of behavioural science knowledge to the planned development and reinforcement of organisational strategies, structures and processes for improving an organisation's effectiveness' (Cummings and Huse, 1989:1). However, it has attracted criticism in that it is too manipulative and is concerned mainly with incremental rather than large-scale radical change. The task is further complicated by the content or subject matter of change management, which is drawn from psychology, sociology, business administration, economics, industrial engineering, systems engineering, and the study of human and organisational behaviour. The latter is of particular interest in this study as organisations are, in essence, social systems. To change anything requires the co-operation and consent of the groups and individuals who are involved, for 'it is only through their behaviour that the structures, technologies, systems and procedures of an organisation move from being abstract concepts to concrete realities' (Lewin, 1958:69). Therefore, as Caudron (1996) put it, a successful change is dependent upon focusing the majority of attention on employees, as the implementation of new processes and technology are easy compared to the people issues involved. The verification of the latter constitutes a major challenge for the researcher in this project.

Various schools of thought were developed around change management theory, the three most central ones being: the Group Dynamics school (1969), the Individual Perspective school (1974), and the Open Systems school (1987), each placing emphasis on the roles of the group, the individual and the environment respectively (Senior, 1997). Accordingly, distinct models were devised by Lewin (*The 3-Step Model of Unfreezing-Moving-Refreezing*, 1958), suggesting a *top-down approach* from senior management. Quinn (1980) argued that organisational change should be *incremental*, so that relevant environmental information can be gathered, shared, assimilated and internalised by employees, who thus become more confident in providing the change impetus for the organisation. Scott and Jaffe (1987) stressed the importance of recognising the *emotional impact* of change on people. Carnall (1990) followed with *The Coping Cycle model* analysing the stages people go through during the transition period, placing a particular emphasis on *internalisation* of change. A classification of change management was presented by Burnes (1992), which proposes that it is the *focus* of the change project, whether it is to initiate alterations at the individual, group, inter-group or organisation level, which determines the theory and techniques to be applied, and the degree of involvement necessary from those who will experience the change. It is the consideration of these factors that will eventually lead to Implementing Strategic Change, defined as 'the reshaping of strategy, structure, and culture of an organisation over time, by internal design, by external forces or by simple drift' (Grundy, 1993:19).

The focus in many change initiatives, as well as in the literature, is primarily on creating and designing optimal solutions for innovative ways of doing business. The main emphasis lies on pioneering and designing the change process, whereas actual implementation of solutions in practice is often considered as a mechanistic task of executing the plans. Hence, a lot of organisational effort and resources are allocated to developing and planning, but the targets are seldom achieved. Problems emerge in the implementation phase as developed methods, concepts and processes are put in effect in the real business environment, which are regarded as a total failure of the initiative and a reason for redevelopment to begin afresh. Reger et al. (1994) state that change never comes easy and when change initiatives fail to show positive results in the immediate future, managers become frustrated and move on to the next idea instead of learning from mistakes and redeveloping the implementation approach to better suit the particularities of the organisation. Senge (1999) suggests that to understand why significant change is so elusive, we need to think less like managers and more like biologists.

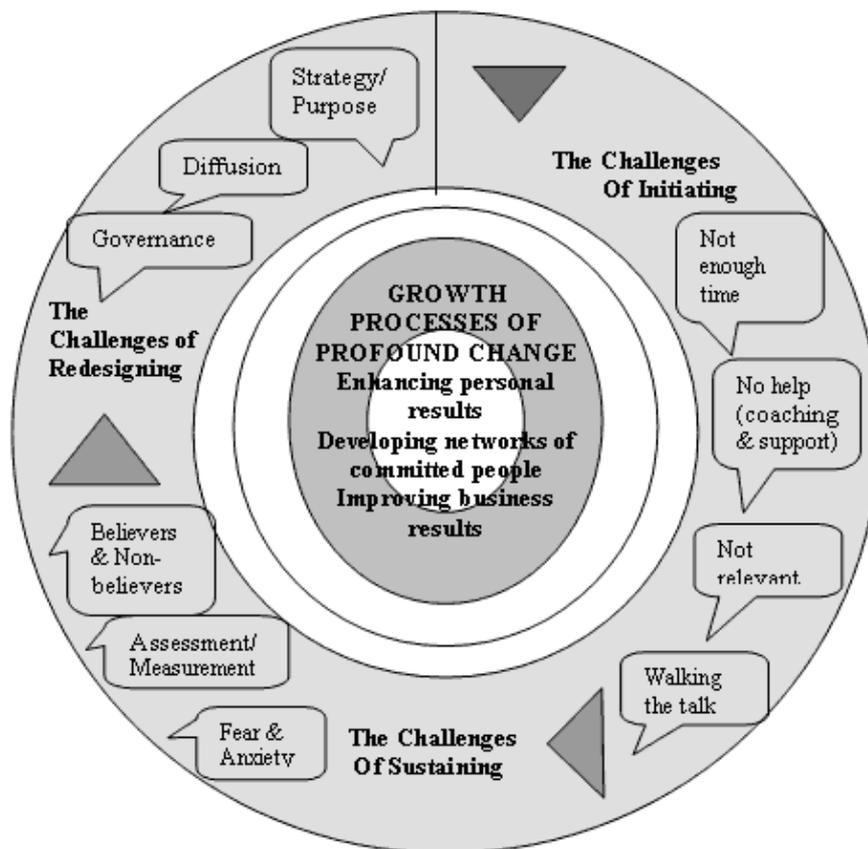
Historically, we have witnessed a shift from the post-industrial Revolution, machine-like image of a company to a more humane, learning organisation which is identical to 'a living organism and an embodiment of nature' and essentially revolves around inter-personal relationships (Senge, 1990:18). Senge (1999) further developed this metaphor by suggesting that nothing in nature starts big and that change is like a seed, which starts small and, through cultivation, becomes ripe and supplants the old. Consequently, change should spring from the *lower levels* of the organisation and emerge as *self-generated* rather than compliance-oriented, necessitating a shift from the traditional, hero-archetype of manager to a *facilitator-mentor* one. He uses the term 'profound change' to describe organisational change 'that combines inner shifts in people's values, aspirations and behaviours with 'outer' shifts in processes, strategies, practices and systems' (Senge, 1999:15). The foundations had thus been laid for the principles of the learning organisation embodied in Senge's (1990:9) *Five Learning Disciplines*, a set of practices for building learning capabilities in a changing organisation. Ten years and several research projects after that, Senge (1999) identified the *Ten Distinct Challenges* – sets of forces that oppose profound change – as well as three growth processes that sustain such change, depicted in Figure 1. The organisational limiting processes naturally represent the 'homeostatic' forces of industrial-age organisations and, according to Senge (1999), it is the understanding and management of the interplay between the limiting and growing processes that leads to developing systemic strategies for sustaining profound change.

Some theories of organisational change emphasise the political nature of change management (Buchanan and Boddy, 1992; Dawson, 1994, 2003) as opposed to the rational considerations. They revolve around the significant issue of change resistance: how to secure all organisational members' commitment or at least support of the change implementation. While recognising the invaluable verity of the theories, the author questions the underlying assumption that change resistance is invariably counter-productive and thus to be eliminated. Instead, she poses the following question: how much would organisations have benefited if all business process re-engineering projects, organisational reshuffles and information technology (IT) revamps had been implemented *without* any change resistance? In a complex business environment it is neither natural to expect that all members fully comprehend 'the bigger picture' of change nor realistic to take it for granted that they can identify with the change initiator's intentions (Hamel, 2001). Therefore, a certain amount of resistance and the accompanying discomfort should be considered healthy giving rise to differing viewpoints used as food for thought to be recycled rather than disposed of. It is precisely these last two analogies about reframing change and innovation as well as the interplay between reinforcing and limiting

processes, based on Senge's proposition of the *Ten Challenges of Change* (see Figure 1), which centre on the *individual* resistance behaviour patterns, that the researcher is intrigued by and wishes to further explore in this case study. In particular, the author is keen to tap onto employees' preconceived assumptions and emotions about change – the challenges – and verify the extent to which they are conducive to creating pockets of good practice.

Change initiatives often claim to be aiming at creating a flexible and responsive organisation, where decision-making devolvement to employees thrives and continuous learning and improvement is fostered (Pollalis, 1996). Kanter et al. (1992) state that the current trends of organisational change adaptability and environment sensitivity is becoming a universal model for organisations, especially for larger ones. These organisations are structured into relatively few levels of formal hierarchy and loose boundaries among functions and units breeding employee empowerment and entrepreneurship. Change implementation as a mechanistic execution of plans and elimination of change resistance is not aligned with this trend, which implies a paradox between the target state of many organisational change efforts and the means of achieving it. The intent of this research is to contribute to solving this paradox of aspiring to develop flexible organisations using inflexible means. The key objective will be to provide an insight into staff attitudes towards change stemming from managerial prerogative and develop a *problematique* on strategic change implementation based on direct employee involvement. The author's constant point of reference throughout the study will be people management skills, as an integral part of a manager's portfolio of qualities and the *sine non-qua* element of an organisation.

Figure 1. The Ten Challenges and Three Growing Processes of Profound Change (adapted from Senge, 1999:28).



Methodology

The examination of the staff's assumptions and feelings about the imminent change over a period of 6 months meant that a qualitative research rationale became a critical methodology. A qualitative approach was adopted because this study sought not only to describe but also 'to identify whether employees and managers are aware of...[change]...issues and explore how they achieve their resolution' (Andriopoulos, 2003). An inductive research approach was initially adopted in that Senge's model of The Ten Distinct Challenges (1999) was used to form a research objective to be explored by means of an action research design involving focus groups, in-depth interviews and observational methods. A deductive logic subsequently emerged as the appropriate to follow through the administration of a quantitative instrument, such as a questionnaire, to validate the theory-building process. The observation material recorded meticulously throughout the study – and the author's active participation as an employed change agent - provided a wealth of data in relation to informal meetings, processes and discussions on the change project and served to confirm the findings from the focus groups and interviews. The study sought to investigate the following objective: Change, and innovation as its final product, are effectively sustained within an organisation when they are spearheaded by those people in the organisation who will be directly involved in them. The following were the research questions around which interview questions were structured to be answered by interviewees:

- Which are the key forces and system dynamics that underlie the initiation and sustainability of strategic change in a HE institution?
- What implications does a specific mindset of pre-conceived assumptions have for organisations that seek to undergo change?
- What is the psychological impact of change on staff attitudes and to what extent does it direct the interplay between reinforcing and limiting processes?
- What are the differences in efficiency between top-down and bottom-up change initiatives and their implications for people management?

Data Collection

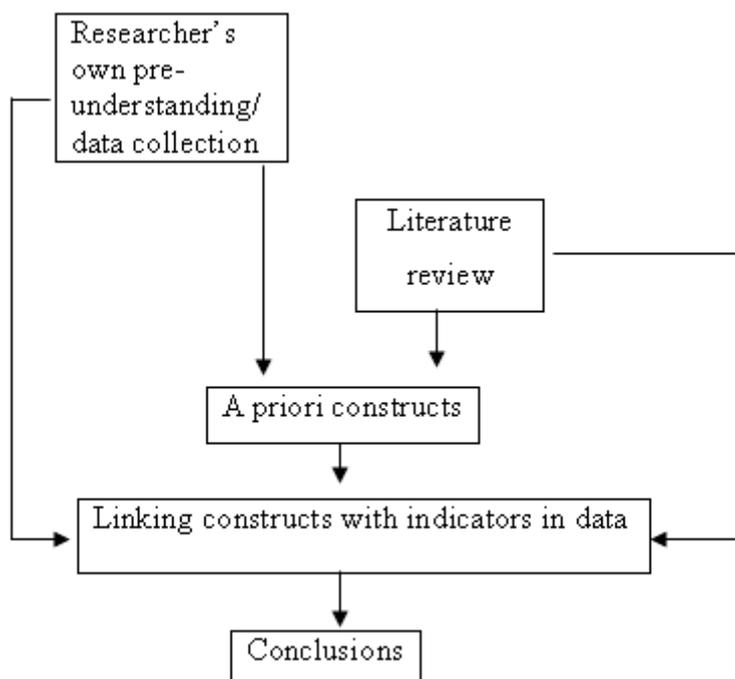
The procedure adopted was to begin with focus groups (one for management and one for junior staff with 7 members each), which led on to the development of a more detailed set of questions to be discussed in the subsequent interviews (30 participants in total – 16 one-to-one interviews). A comprehensive observation diary was kept, which was used to validate much of the primary data collected during the focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Moreover, two CIPD certified consultants - highly experienced in managing change programmes – were interviewed on the same themes to provide a more hands-on perspective and secondary source of data to the research. The questionnaire used in this study was originally developed by the Canadian Institute of Stress (Selye and Toffler, 2002) and tested in ninety-three organisations as part of individual research programs to gauge staff's predisposition for change (see Appendix 1). It was adopted by the author for its suitability in tapping on people's tacit assumptions and opinions about their workplace – and measuring their commitment to change - and subsequently modified to suit the purposes of this study. Two separate questionnaires were administered – one for the Director to rate his staff and a second for the employees to rate themselves – for comparison and contrast purposes. Next, due to the department's particular nature of being an organisation per se within a larger organisation and its

interdependence, a second questionnaire was given to the Director – this time asking him to rate himself as an employee of the wider University organisation.

Data Analysis

Being an embedded single case study, the unit of analysis is the case itself. Thus, the analysis of data resembles one of the alternatives proposed by Yin (1994), where information of the individual embedded cases is scattered in different parts of the report, according to a structure based on the issues under investigation. All discussions and interviews were transcribed and a series of themes and sub-themes was developed, which were then written up as annotated 'summaries'. The overall evidence and findings collected were subsequently cross-checked and validated with the observation material. After defining the research constructs, the systematic analysis was about discovering explicit indicators concerning each construct. It is characteristic in analysing the data of this research that multiple indicators relate to a single construct measure, as Eisenhardt (1989a) also notes when presenting the process of inductive theory building. To ensure the validity and reliability of the inferences, the attempt in the analysis is to link each indicator of a construct measure to an explicit data source. The author's own understanding gathered through participant observation was mainly utilised for selecting the indicators and their explicit value of evidence from the vast data, as well as discovering connections between individual and seemingly separate issues that are linked, for example through being indicators of the same construct. Figure 2 concludes the data analysis process of this study.

Figure 2. Data Analysis in this study.



The evidence gathered from the analysis of questionnaire responses (see Appendices 2-4) came to support and strengthen the interview results and a comprehensive synopsis is presented in the following section.

Findings

1. Sport & Recreation Services – The Case for Change

Sport and Recreation Services, a relatively young department in terms of years of operation and human capital, seems to be fraught with a heavy legacy of imposed - and frequently unsought for - change and autocratic governance from its line management. Given the turbulent history of mismanagement of the department, it has managed fairly well to increase its turnover and customer base in the last two years, currently being on top of its budget and exceeding the revenue target set by the University corporate financial body. However, the department's status against the whole of the University organisation is a neuralgic factor, which, according to the director's statements, debilitates its scope of operations.

'We're becoming involved in so many projects to create a more influential element. We've managed to be informed like we've never had in the last ten years. I've taken a subtle approach and used our reputation and word of mouth. I managed to see the Vice-Principal and there's a meeting with the Principal next week. We've gone a long way, but it's hard and taking a very long time to build up. So, it's a good time, but a flip of the coin (referring to another line management change)...and it could all be gone!'... (Director)

This also constitutes a major impetus for change on the part of the department which, after having been subjected to autocratic and inconsistent hierarchical whims, aspires to enhance its profile working towards the creation of a more powerful impact on the University's long-established regime.

'We've had our nails on the edge of the cliff for a really long time...We've managed to scramble back to the top and things are going really well now. It's moving really quickly. We have an income generation target, which is fairly substantial now. We are becoming a more important aspect of the University business.'...(Acting Assistant Director)

There is no clear-cut identity of the department consolidating its status within the University organisational boundaries and thus directly affecting budget allocation. It is interesting to note that, although the department is labelled as a non-academic service on the University organisation chart, half of the staff interviewed thought it was academic and the other half were certain that it was academic-related.

A second, but equally important, external factor that necessitated change for the department was the publication of the National Sports Council Annual Review in 2002, directing that University Sports Councils and Physical Education departments should be integrated, as they are both working towards the same cause and serve the same customers. The current relationship between the Sports Council and the Sport and Recreation Department is one of a long-standing rivalry, although they are both situated in the same office area.

A third factor identified as a critical disabling factor in the department's vision to deliver a higher quality of service concerns the type of industry to which it belongs. As a University department, it falls under the Higher Education non-profit industry, but as a sport and recreation service it shares many features with the for-profit Leisure industry, which is characterised by highly casualised workforce. The seasonal character of the sport services and the traditional characteristics of service and leisure employment, throw into question the HRM formula for 'mainstream'

businesses of long term investment in training and employee involvement *for all the workforce* (Storey, 1996) in constantly upgraded facilities. From a purely business point of view, a more likely scenario is the flexible firm model (Atkinson, 1984), whereby the employer deliberately divides employees into an indispensable 'core' and a disposable 'periphery'. However, at Sport and Recreation Services, these peripheral workers (sports attendants and fitness instructors) are the public face of the department to the customer, charged not only with fulfilling menial tasks, but also with establishing empathy and creating a fun, happy atmosphere. Furthermore, the uncertainty about the pace and sustainability of economic recovery in the Higher Education sector renders the department reluctant to overcommit themselves by taking on large numbers of full-time employees. Last but not least, the increasing pace and declining cost of technological change make it unlikely for any one set of skills and facilities to last the workforce a lifetime. The serious question then arises: how far is the department consciously differentiating in its management style between core and peripheral workers creating thus a wide 'divide' between them? And yet another one: how can management square the circle of employing an insecure, low-commitment workforce and offering reliable customer service? Observations and data gathered during this research support the existence of a wide 'split' between sports attendants and teachers – breeding distrust and low-involvement on the part of the former. Thus, budget constrictions due to the department's status in the overall governance structure of the organisation and the dilemma of casual staff resourcing defeat the Director's purpose of expanding facilities to provide better customer service.

'The difficulty we have is with so many casual staff and a high turnover in operations staff. To keep them updated is a nightmare, it's very time-consuming. But, I believe even the permanent ones will be the last to know and that will never change, because they're not part of the actual decision-making. Because of the very nature of their position, they will always be undervalued'...(Director)

2. Behind Closed Doors: A Secretive Culture

Ignorance and floundering about the purpose for change were abundant, even amongst the management team who were supposed to have better access to information. Apart from the initial brainstorming session, which comprised only the three teachers of the department, there was no follow-up meeting to build on the issues from the former. The researcher's suggestion to form cross-departmental quality circles was met with enthusiasm, but was not adopted by the management. The weekly meetings on the level of management, teachers and operations staff teams dealt with day-to-day issues, whereas the context, content and process of change hovered somewhere in the background. Despite the author's original intention of having mixed focus groups from all layers of staff to allow for plurality of opinions, this was not feasible due to reluctance on the participants' part.

'Afraid is not the right word. Not interested, yes. What I find myself saying quite often now is: this is my opinion because my conscience makes me say this, so I'll say it, but you're the boss. There's definitely no debate, no interaction. We (sports attendants) don't see the point. Totally disinterested'...(Supervisor)

3. It's About Communication...

Impaired communication channels and dissemination of information systems within the department were found to be major disablers of initiating and sustaining transition

within the department. Top-down, management driven communication policies do not allow for a wider platform of communication to be established for the employees to air their opinions.

'It's always the same three people that make decisions, without asking others, in five seconds. There are no questions, no reflection. And whenever people are assigned to rectify a problem, you can guarantee it's going to come up again. Attendants are faced with mismanagement and bad decisions. When I think of the amount of energy and resources wasted on decision-making and making rules, not for management and teachers, but only for sports attendants, it really frustrates me.' (Teaching staff)

Opaque human resource procedures in communicating the need for constructive feedback and assessment of employee roles and responsibilities have led to an increase in job dissatisfaction and employee disengagement. The latter was evidenced from both senior and junior employee responses indicating a rise in the average number of scores in the third part of the questionnaire – the disengagement factor (41.5 - see Appendix 2). Chronic Stress scores were significantly lower (21.3), which was expected due to the relatively relaxed and informal atmosphere prevailing in the department when compared to other departments in the University.

4...And about Ethics and Culture...

Ethics in the department are influenced more by the group ethics system – organisational culture – than by the sum of the individual persons' ethics system. The higher Devitalisation and Disengagement scores in responses (25.4 and 41.5 - see Appendices 2-4) supported the rest of the evidence, namely that emergent behaviour of employees in groups is heavily influenced interactively by the status quo, the leadership style and the historical background factors of the department. Job segregation practices, lack of trust, development of closed circles of 'confidants' and irrelevant reward systems have led to a perpetuation of feelings of resignation, undervaluing and reduced awareness of job responsibility and contribution to tangible business objectives.

'I don't understand how he (the Director) can be so different outside the workplace. It's like he's two different people. I don't know, I'm confused...I kind of like him more when we're out of the office'...(Teaching Staff)

5...And About Commitment

The disparity between the Director's and his staff perceptions of their attitudes and ideas about their roles in the department - indicated by the Director's higher deviation of scores in the Disengagement variable (29 - see Appendix 2) – demonstrates the existence of a commitment gap in the department. Even allowing for the higher commitment levels experienced by the management staff, the Director is portrayed as 'walking a loner's path' pursuing his own agenda and vision and failing to connect his staff to the purpose of the change initiative.

'Our people manage to deliver. What I would have liked to have more of is that, when there are issues to be resolved, there is greater understanding of the bigger picture'...(Director)

This is further evidenced by the Director's lower score than the employees' average number of scores in the same variable, when asked to rate himself as an employee of the University (31 – see Appendix 4). This shows him as being more committed

than anybody else in the department in pursuing the departmental cause. It also throws the University's capacity for interconnectedness with its executives into serious doubt and poses a significant challenge for establishing a departmental – if not organisation-wide – business case for change. The evidence - even the data from research evaluation form with respondents explicitly stating that being asked for their opinions boosted their sense of self-importance - suggests that all employees in the department need to see the focus on key business needs and be encouraged to understand how they fit in the 'bigger picture', how they can contribute and how they will benefit.

'Personally, I'm completely demotivated. To create fairness and encourage motivation, you need basics of honesty and respect from your boss. Any praise would be good for me, but only if I felt that honesty and respect from my boss was genuine. If I respected the manager's opinion and agreed with him on principle, I wouldn't need any extra motivation to work better'...(Sports Attendant)

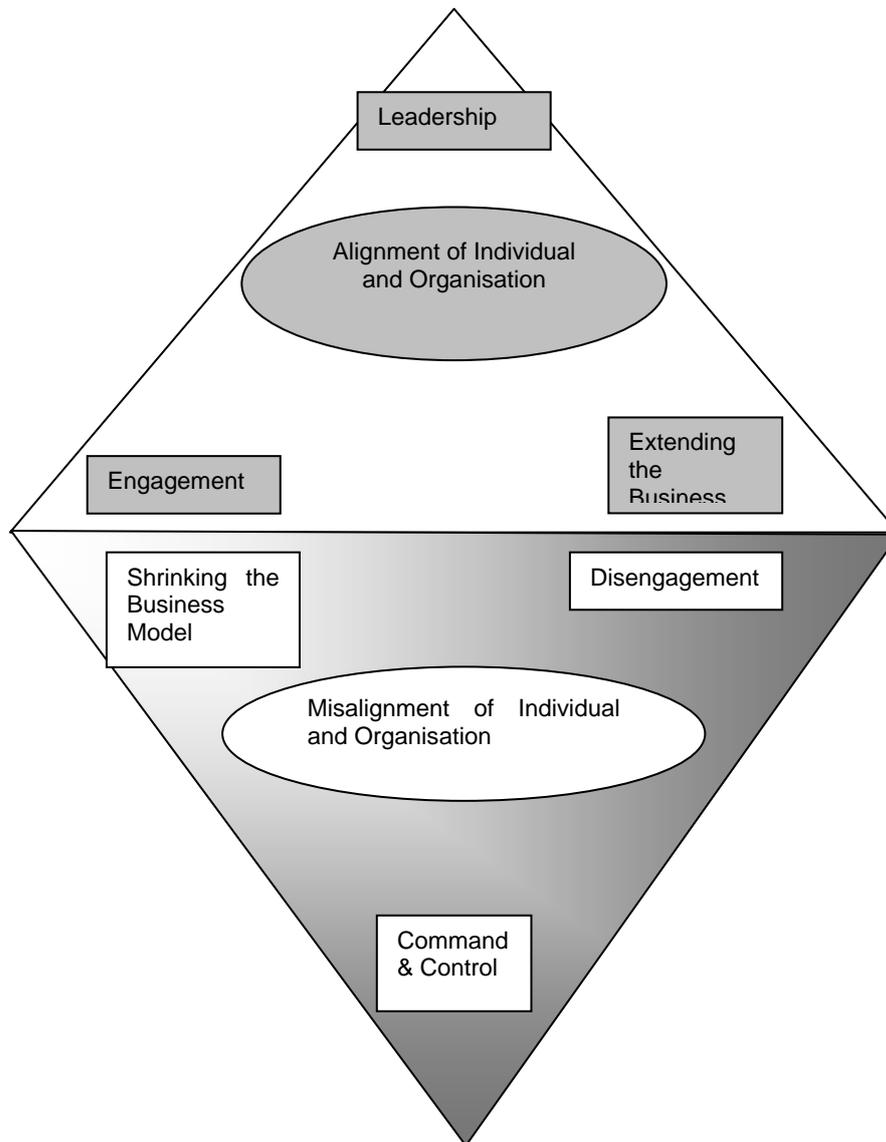
Discussion

A Story of Central Governance, Secrecy and Insecurity

In the search for establishing the key forces and system dynamics underlying change implementation in a university department, *governance structure* proved to be critical in directing the results obtained. Hierarchical structures breed hierarchical behaviours, while secrecy and oppression of individuality in organisations engender distrust, indifference and misalignment of the individual and the organisation. Secrecy, fear and anxiety abound between the two departments - according to the interviewees' statements and the author's observations - and compose an additional challenge to sustaining profound change in line with Senge's (1999) findings in researching organisations (see Figure 1 previously).

The following diagram (Figure 3) captures the essence of the structural mechanism needed in an organisation, which aspires to distribute power and decision-making to more local levels with a view to initiating and sustaining effective change from the bottom layers of an organisation. It represents the four critical elements of an organisational change campaign: at the edges of the 'transformation triangle' are the three types of collective activity, namely *fostering new types of leadership*, *extending the business model* and *engaging the organisation* (Shell Oil Co.: from Senge, 1999). At the centre is the personal work: *aligning individual* aspirations and attitudes to goals and vision of the *organisation* as a whole. Juxtaposed in mirrored mode is the author's diagrammatic perception of the current situation in the department, as evidenced and corroborated by the data collected and analysed. Organisation in this triangle refers to both the University and the department itself, as it was indicated by the data that methods and practices from the former would be reflected in the latter. Command and control mechanisms, for example on the part of the University, will dictate similar centralised governance - and thus affect the alignment levels - within the department itself.

Figure 3. Top: The Transformation Triangle depicting ideal organisational alignment. Bottom: The Transformation Triangle as evidenced by the study (adapted from Senge, 1999).



In an attempt to draw a parallel between the strategic visions of the department in this study and the wider organisation, i.e. the University, their strategic objectives were isolated from a long list of visionary and institutional objectives and juxtaposed to reveal the following common elements: 1) emphasis on personalised and customised service, 2) empowerment enhancing participation and support, and 3) contribution to a community cause. At face value, both missions seem to set the appropriate climate for the three growth processes of profound change to thrive in: 1) Enhancing personal results, 2) Developing networks of committed people, and 3) Improving business results (Senge 1999). However, in practice the real story unfolds in a different way – as will be explained further on – reinforcing thus one of the challenges to initiating profound change presented by Senge (1999): *walking the talk* (see Figure 1 previously). The wider organisation, in which the department operates, is keen on employing a market-orientated approach to attract and competitively maintain custom, emphasising cost-effective use of resources, democratic management procedures and appropriate financial controls. Moreover, it is committed to enhance its brand name, therefore placing itself under the ‘brand name’

typology of Universities (CVCP & HEFCE Report, 2000), through more targeted investment and disinvestment, according to the needs of the economy, market demand and areas of expertise and strength. However, the author's hands-on experience in the department, in the dual role of the researcher and employee, and the evidence presented in the previous sections illustrate the reasons why the above aspirations do not seem to have filtered through the whole organisation.

The data collected and analysed in this study – albeit inconclusive on a discrete-point scale - is believed to have corroborated Senge's (1999) findings as far as the overall disabling factors of initiating and sustaining on-going change are concerned. Its most significant contribution is considered to be the facilitation of access to the intricate nature of employee pre-conceived ideas and attitudes about change - which can make or mar a change outcome – and are usually neglected in the quest of organisations and stakeholders for speedy growth and profitability. Senge's (1999) mention of mechanics and gardeners touches on one of the most important, but least recognised, factors in change – the metaphors that people use to describe their work. Typically, those metaphors are unconscious, but can be recognised in the language people use when speaking of a situation (Morgan, 1993). The author would like to pursue the claim that it is not sufficient to say that 'gardeners' are needed rather than 'mechanics'. Some people perceive their role as gardener as tending a field of identical corn plants. If all of them are given the same nutrients and care, they will produce a large crop of high-quality, but identical, corn. Another person might perceive their role as tending a huge botanical garden, where each plant must be treated in a unique way according to its needs and the intended outcome. The key, the author believes, is in the way an individual interprets a metaphor and its entailments.

The overall data collected in this study – indicating a rather generalised tendency for inhibition when speaking about change -makes a strong case for the idea that metaphors are one of the primary ways in which people think. Until some serious attention is paid to those metaphors – and the ways in which they both enable and inhibit perceptions and behaviours and thus affect the outcome of change – through further research, the author is not sure organisations are going to see the depth of change they aspire to implement. Only when the importance of what so often remains unarticulated - what Taylor (1985) calls 'a tacit background of assumptions, practices and abilities' - is made explicit through critical researching and reflection, can we begin to embark on understanding what drives successful change. It was Senge (1990:43), after all, who noted that 'the quality of our thinking affects the quality of everything we do' and managers of change continue to grapple with challenges that require clear and cogent thinking. In striving to do this, they are not always well served by the existing management theories. The issue here is that further research is needed to help managers make better sense of and think more effectively about their employees and their responsibility towards them, such as encouraging creativity, learning from experience, thinking realistically about motivation and fostering community.

A further aspect with regard to community and the person-centred philosophy of work - so central in Senge's work – that needs clarification is the actual mechanisms of interdependence between what he calls 'the primacy of the whole' and 'the community nature of the self'. The findings in this study indicate that organisational politics within a structure driven by management prerogative hold a pivotal role and a catalytic effect in determining the development of an ever-changing and constantly improving community of work. Organisational politicking has generally been under-researched and evaded by theorists and managers alike, mainly because of concerns about image. The processes of initiating and managing organisational

change more often than not result in conflict and resistance, requiring political engagement of all staff involved in response (Dawson, 1994). The findings in this study raise questions about how managers themselves construe ethical behaviour and the extent to which their moral autonomy is influenced by organisational values. The tentative conclusion can then be made that governed as they are by the market or laws of economics, the amoral organisations are likely to transform their members into individuals without moral standards, thus jeopardising the entire 'community' ideal. The specific organisational culture, thus, and the potential deviations from its departments' culture must be addressed and aligned in such a way that misunderstandings, conflict and distrust are eliminated (Hall, 1995). It becomes increasingly urgent, therefore, to examine not only the history of an organisation – what happened in the past – but also its members' representation of what happened, to gain a proper understanding of the forces that drove the particular place it occupies in the world today and determined the mindset of its people. Further study is also required into the social responsibility of organisations and their members - both within their inner and outer communities of the world– and redefinition of the role of managers to include, apart from leadership, issues of personal ambition and risk taking.

In reviewing the past and current change management concepts, it becomes critically important to consider the particular setting in which this case study was developed, namely a University, which indicates certain differences from the corporate environments from which these concepts were imported. Most of these corporations can produce an understandable profit and loss statement, organisation chart and mission statement, all driven from the top. In a university, it is more complex to dictate process transformation top-down, due to its cultural inability to move monolithically. In this case, directives and authority may work in its administrative and student services, but most of the restructuring effort of a university takes place in numerous, widespread and sometimes loosely-coupled deans' offices, departmental offices and administrative offices of large research units. The author's point is that the tools that are effective to induce change in these diverse administrative settings – though sharing many similarities - may differ from those that work in corporate cultures. Many administrative functions in a university are loosely coupled to the authority structure, but are rather tightly coupled to the policy structure, which embodies an impersonal type of authority. All of this changes accountability and governance compared to the concepts borrowed from other settings. In fact, administrative staff in academic units show great loyalty and commitment to excellence in research and teaching and accountability seems to be defined as alignment of decisions and transactions within a local departmental level. This accountability can become so highly localised – as evidenced in this study (even allowing for the somewhat lower commitment levels) – as to minimise regard for institutional-level mission statements and policies that are not supportive of local goals. Total alignment, then, across the various departments becomes secondary to the localised sense of mission.

Conclusion – Top-down or Bottom-up?

This article focused on making sense of employees' attitudes and feelings to change imposed by management prerogative and investigated the implications of top-down and bottom-up change management strategies as regards their efficiency in sustaining innovation in a higher education organisation. A single in-depth case study was compiled within a university department incorporating primary data to record the changing experience as it was emerging. The results indicated that organisational mindset stemming from an autocratic governance structure, misalignment of the change vision and ethics and culture mismanagement within a political environment were the major disabling factors to sustaining a proactive propensity to change.

What is needed for a dynamic restructuring in universities, the author claims, is further research into a governance infrastructure that is results-orientated rather than means-limited; devolving decision-making rather than concentrating it; aligning the sub-units of the organisation rather than segregating them; and combining top-down and bottom-up approaches. These approaches are opposites in terms of their attributes, but not in terms of objectives. In a university that wishes to compete in a highly unstable and ever-changing higher education arena – both nationally and internationally - a *bottom-up* must accompany a *top-down* approach for four reasons:

- Top-down restructuring is a management-driven process that is not necessarily consensus-seeking. In the particular culture, such a process would alienate employees further if not accompanied by a bottom-up process that empowers individuals, who need to feel like stakeholders with something to gain as well as to lose.
- Holistic viewing of a system can reveal structural changes that extend beyond localised levels of transactions.
- Many staff feel overworked and under-appreciated due to overly bureaucratic and irrelevant policies or processes.

Both top-down and bottom-up perspectives are needed – reflecting synthetic and analytic mechanisms – in order to inform culture and process transformation.

Biographical Note

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Appendix 1: WORKFORCE QUESTIONNAIRE

"IMPACTS OF CHANGE EVALUATION" TOOL

QUESTION How "Untrue" or "True" do you believe each of the following statements is about you? Use the following rating scale.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Totally Totally
Untrue True

Rating
(0-10)

I. Chronic Stress

- _____ 1. You are frequently irritable or difficult to get along with.
- _____ 2. You often feel tired.
- _____ 3. You spend a lot of time and energy on worry and the rumour mill.
- _____ 4. More minor health problems (e.g. colds, flu, headaches) are occurring.
- _____ 5. Pessimism is your frequent response when future workplace changes are discussed.
- _____ 6. You have a hard time staying focused on the work you are doing.
- _____ 7. You often seem to over-respond to small issues, or to under-respond to important issues.
- _____ 8. You often feel you are working under unreasonable pressure.

II. Devitalization

- _____ 1. You feel you rarely get the recognition you deserve for your work.
- _____ 2. You find it difficult to stay as motivated by your work as you would like to be.
- _____ 3. You feel you spend more time in complaining about obstacles and difficulties in your work than in finding solutions.
- _____ 4. You frequently feel it is impossible to find a satisfying balance between conflicting demands or priorities at work.
- _____ 5. You find too little opportunity for enjoying casual time with friends at work.
- _____ 6. You feel that pressures at work are interfering with your family or private life.
- _____ 7. You are slow to let go of "the good old days", of "how things used to be better around here than they are now".
- _____ 8. You feel that some of the important parts of your job do not get enough of your attention due to urgent or "firefighting" demands on your time.

III. Disengagement

- _____ 1. You sometimes resent how you are treated by the company.
- _____ 2. You often feel that no matter how well you do your work, nothing you do will be judged as good enough or will be acknowledged at all (by senior management).
- _____ 3. You believe that many of the company's decisions that affect your work are short-sighted or inconsistent.

- ____ 4. You do not take the pride you used to in this company as a "fine employer to work for".
- ____ 5. You do not feel the sense of loyalty to the company that you used to.
- ____ 6. You often feel you personally are paying too high a price for the company's success.
- ____ 7. You often think you would leave the company if you were offered a comparable job elsewhere.
- ____ 8. You do not see your long term work future as being with this company.
- ____ 9. You do not think your manager gets the most out of your potential.

SCORE TOTALS I. Chronic Stress _____
II. Devitalization _____
III. Disengagement _____
Total _____

Interpreting your scores: The higher your scores on each of the three I.C.E. factors, the more that factor will be a barrier to your success in implementing the planned organisational change program.

SOURCE: Adapted from the Canadian Institute of Stress / www.stresscanada.org

APPENDIX 2. QUESTIONNAIRE ANSWERS

I. CHRONIC STRESS									
Question Number									Total
Respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1	0	2	1	2	8	2	0	0	15
2	3	7	5	2	5	3	3	3	31
3	2	4	2	0	4	1	6	0	19
4	2	5	8	6	0	0	5	5	31
5	0	4	2	1	6	0	1	1	15
6	1	5	1	1	2	5	3	1	19
7	1	6	1	0	1	8	1	1	19
8	0	4	3	0	7	7	0	0	21
9	3	5	2	3	5	1	2	1	22
10	4	4	2	0	2	2	5	2	21
Director	11	3	5	2	1	5	2	7	27
Director*	12	1	5	2	0	0	2	1	16
Consult.**	13	2	3	5	5	9	2	9	40

II. DEVITALISATION									
Question Number									Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
	2	6	4	1	0	0	1	1	15
	3	3	2	3	4	3	2	6	26
	5	8	2	5	0	0	4	3	27
	5	8	2	7	2	5	0	10	39
	2	1	0	1	1	4	2	1	12
	7	5	8	7	1	1	3	10	42
	8	8	5	1	5	0	1	1	29
	5	6	6	0	0	7	0	0	24
	2	6	3	3	1	1	1	4	21
	2	4	3	1	2	3	0	4	19
	3	3	2	2	8	3	2	8	31
	2	1	1	1	6	3	0	8	22
	7	7	8	8	5	3	8	10	56

III. DISENGAGEMENT										
Question Number									Total	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
	1	5	7	2	10	1	10	10	10	56
	5	3	5	3	3	2	2	2	2	27
	8	5	6	4	3	3	8	8	8	53
	3	0	10	4	6	5	5	2	8	43
	4	2	6	2	3	0	0	10	10	37
	5	5	5	5	5	1	5	5	6	42
	9	5	5	5	5	1	10	2	10	52
	10	7	10	6	8	0	2	7	10	60
	6	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	5	22
	4	0	6	3	5	1	2	2	0	23
	5	2	5	3	3	2	2	2	5	29
	1	1	5	2	2	3	2	8	7	31
	8	6	8	8	8	6	7	5	4	60

SCORE TOTALS
86
84
99
113
64
103
100
105
65
63
87
69
156

	I. CHRONIC STRESS	II. DEVITALISATION	III. DISENGAGEMENT
Director	27	31	29
Employees	21.3	25.4	41.5

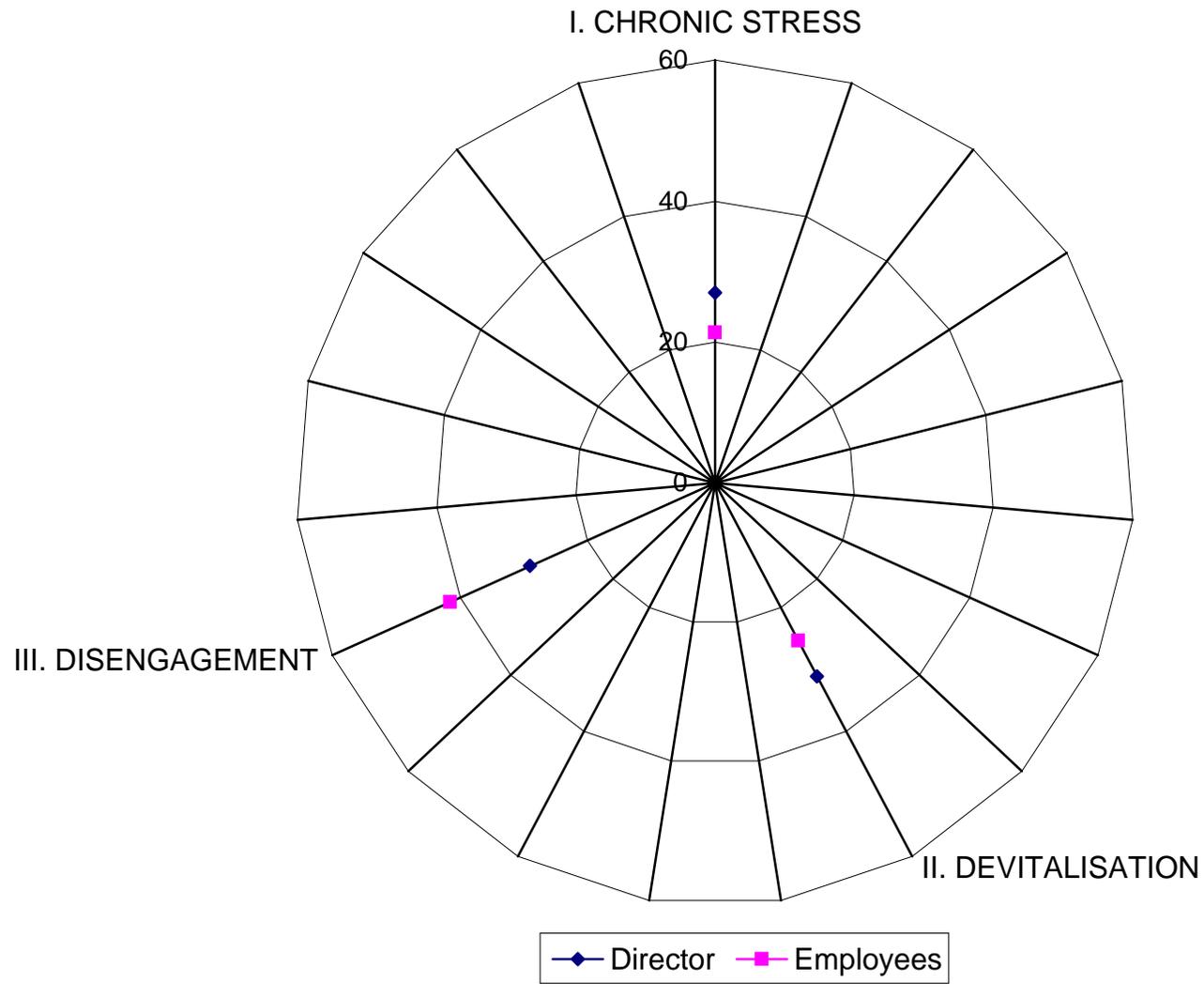
Average number of scores per factor

	I. CHRONIC STRESS	II. DEVITALISATION	III. DISENGAGEMENT
Employees	21.3	25.4	41.5
Director*	16	22	31

* Director rating himself as an employee of the University.

** Only one Consultant responded rating staff from her experience with change programmes.

APPENDIX 3. RADAR CHART DEPICTING DEVIATIONS BETWEEN DIRECTOR AND EMPLOYEE AVERAGE SCORES



APPENDIX 4. RADAR CHART DEPICTING DEVIATIONS BETWEEN DIRECTOR* (AS AN EMPLOYEE) AND EMPLOYEE AVERAGE SCORES

