CONTINUOUS ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE: Exploring burnout at the organizational level

Sally Rumbles
Department of Human Resource and Marketing Management
The Business School
University of Portsmouth
Portsmouth
PO13DE
Sally.Rumbles@port.ac.uk
Tel: 02392844730
Fax: 02392844037

And

Gary Rees
Department of Human Resource and Marketing Management
The Business School
University of Portsmouth
Portsmouth
PO13DE
Gary.Rees@port.ac.uk
Tel: 0239284
Fax: 02392844037

Abstract:

The last four years has seen many organizations struggle to survive in increasingly, turbulent, surprising and continuously evolving business environments. Continuous waves of change interventions ultimately impact upon organizations and their survival. This paper considers the extent to which continuous changes lead to organizational burnout. Whilst traditional academic approaches to burnout have concentrated typically upon the individual level and sometimes on job burnout, research into organizational level burnout remains limited. Three key areas of engagement, resilience and wellbeing are explored and linked to burnout, with a particular emphasis upon the impact on organizational level. Preliminary research findings are also included within this paper, providing a comparison with the HR function acting in an empty shell manner, as well as exhibiting the "boiled frog" phenomenon. One of the key findings was that many organisations recognised that they had serious concerns about the rate of change and the impact upon the business, very little concern was expressed in relation to their employees and employee welfare. This paper explores these emerging themes, consequences for management and the role and responsibility of Human Resource professionals in managing change and organisational wellbeing. Suggestions for further research and the role of HR are discussed.

Key Words: burnout, change, resilience, engagement, wellbeing, duty of care, HR Business Partner

1. Introduction

The concept of successfully managing organizational change is not a new one, but recently the pace and scope of change has been unprecedented. The global economic crisis has led to organisations traditionally considered as solid, crumbling and liquidating in front of global audiences. Financial institutions in particular have come under increased media scrutiny and face a strong media spotlight due to the way in which they collapsed dramatically and in certain cases, were rescued through Governmental interventions and funding.

Some financial institutions are now undertaking organizational 'stress tests' to assess their durability and survival in a turbulent economic environment. Whilst it may be possible to assess the level and utility of financial capital, can organizations assess whether their human capital is close to burnout? Furthermore is there a relationship between individual and organisational burnout, how might people and organizations become more resilient to change and what implications does this have for the management and welfare of people in organizations and human resource management practice? The role of HR is also explored by considering both the function itself and to what extent HR are the custodians of ethical practice and Duty of Care in organizations.

Attempts to integrate all these concepts may prove difficult, as may be drawing up an integrated conceptual model of how all these key factors integrate both in theory and practice. A comprehensive review of the available academic literature was undertaken which highlights the relevance of integrating these research themes and as a result of this literature review and our initial exploratory research we put forward an integrated conceptual model as the basis for further discussion and research in this field. This paper will explore the context of change, the nature of burnout, employee engagement, resilience and wellbeing and the extent to which this transcends into organizational level and the role of HR in successfully managing change.

2. The context of change

Pettigrew and Whipp (1991) argue that most change management programmes assume that change is an exceptional episode, but in reality, most employees contend with ongoing change, which in effect may dilute the credibility of management demands for the employee to provide maximum effort (or "give one's all"). When change occurs, Gifford *et al.* (2010) argue that employees endure the following set of concerns:

- Loss of organizational or service identity in the case of mergers and acquisitions
- Changes in team structures and potential loss of relationships with colleagues, especially long standing relationships that are seen to be the most productive
- Changes that employees feared might impact upon their ability to do their job or to provide what they see as a good quality of service
- Loss of job security – where there was a threat of job losses, it was often all-consuming and employees found it difficult to see beyond this
- Increased workload and pressure, which could result in normally engaged employees beginning to feel that their good will was being exploited.

But the context of change in the 21st century is ongoing so for employees the context of work is continually stressful and uncertain. Handy (1989) refers to this as "the age of unreason" where organizations seek commitment to and implementation of dramatic, far reaching and continuous organizational change. Stuart (1996) develops this concept and argues that the

'trauma of continuous organizational change' has a significant negative impact on employees which can lead to emotional and physical exhaustion.

So when do organizations become exhausted? Perhaps at the point an organization has reached saturation (Marks 2003), or at the point of inflection, and where performance, output, efficiency etc. plunges dramatically. Marks (2003), argues that multiple waves of change lead to a "saturation effect" within organizations, resulting in a deterioration of performance that emerges from dealing with stress and uncertainty. A report by PricewaterhouseCoopers cited in MacLeod and Clarke (2009) found that nine out of ten of the key barriers to the success of change programmes are people related. Organizations should therefore place considerable emphasis upon the people factors and the employment relationship during times of change and more so in times of harsh economic cost cutting and asset stripping.

Given the managerial license for change within a turbulent economic context, do organizations really need to change, and perhaps change so frequently? Results from a recent survey of over 1500 executives involved in a wide variety of change initiatives indicated that only 38% thought these initiatives were successful and only 30% thought they contributed to the sustained improvement of their organizations (Erwin and Garman 2010). To what extent are organizations changing for change sake? Added to this is an organization's inability to cope with change, which can then lead to individual and organizational burnout.

Abrahamson (2004) posits that there has been negative, not neutral impact upon employee spirit, work team performance and organizational effectiveness resulting from continuous changes and transitions in the workplace. Marris (1986), quoted in French *et a.l* (2011) equates change with bereavement; hence employees need time to recover from changes, and a period of acceptance of the changes. Implicit to this argument is the principle that organizations should not go through continuous changes.

Bruch and Menges (2010) argue that the habit of constant change makes organizations fall into an acceleration trap, which impacts negatively upon performance, efficiency, effectiveness, employee productivity and retention in particular. There are 3 ways in which companies fall into the trap:

1. Employees are overloaded with too many activities, with lack of time to complete their jobs.
2. "Multiloading" – by asking employees to carry out too many kinds of activities, resulting in misaligned work.
3. Perpetual loading by not allowing employees to recharge their batteries, resulting in possible retrenchment.

Bruch and Menges (2010) argue that consolidation rather than expansion is required in order to avoid the acceleration trap. In addition to this, a clear strategy on what needs to be done is needed, and how decisions are arrived at and once completed, "declare the turmoil over." Perhaps a moratorium of change projects will assist in the necessary post change spring clean. The lack of planning and review of organizational change initiatives may exacerbate the negative consequences of continuous changes ultimately leading to burnout.

3. The nature of Burnout

The concept of burnout may associate itself more readily with stressful occupations, such as nursing, fire and rescue, etc., and sometimes associated with individuals and personality types (e.g. Friedman's Type A and Type B personality). If we consider a definition of burnout hinging around emotional exhaustion resulting in the inability to carry out specific tasks or functions, then how can organizational burnout be defined? Is organizational burnout simply an expression of employee exhaustion? Whilst the bulk of the literature rests easily within individual and job-related burnout, this paper focuses more on the organizational level of burnout.

Maslach and Jackson (1981) cited in Jimenez and Villodres (2010) identify three core elements of burnout, namely emotional exhaustion (loss of energy, worn out and powerless), depersonalisation, or cynicism (negative attitude towards others, distancing and irritability) and low personal accomplishment /inefficacy (feelings of incompetence, low assertiveness, low self-esteem, ineffectiveness and cognition focussed on failure). Moreno-Jiminez and Villodres (2010) define burnout as "a state of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion that may arise when a person is involved in situations of high emotional demand over a prolonged period".

Maslach *et al.* (2001) argue that in addition to job characteristics, there are organizational characteristics that affect burnout, such as the lack of social support and/or supervisor support. These authors consider the organizational and management environment in which work occurs, the importance of values implicit in organizational processes and structures, and how these values shape the emotional and cognitive relationship that people develop with their work. The organization is itself shaped by wider social, economic and cultural forces.

Table 1 explores how many of the individual and job related aspects of burnout can be applied across the organization.

Table 1
Five Common elements of Burnout (from Maslach *et al*., 2001)

Maslach's approach	Implications for Organizational level burnout
Predominance of symptoms like mental or emotional fatigue	Organizational malaise/inertia and organization-wide Survivor syndrome
Emphasis upon mental and behavioural symptoms (not physical ones)	Carry out organizational health test (ideally through independent measures and not only self-reporting techniques)
Burnout symptoms are work related	Organizational related burnout symptoms
Symptoms exist in normal employees	Symptoms in 'normal' companies
Decreased effectiveness and work performance occur because of negative attitudes and behaviours	Performance changes across the whole organization, which may be linked to organizational culture.

The organizational causes of burnout include excessive workload, a lack of autonomy and authority, insufficient reward and a growing disparity between personal and organizational values (Maslach and Leiter 1998, Schaufuli and Buunk, 1992). There may be a dissonance between expectations and reality. This could lead to a contagion of burnout.

Furthermore burnout may have a "spill over" effect on people's home lives (Burke and Greenglass 2001) and therefore burnout may relate to broader issues, such as general life satisfaction (Diener *et al.*, 1985). However there is a need for research to move beyond the person environment fit approach; whilst the fit between the individual and the organization remains key to our understanding of burnout so too does the need to understand how the organization fits with the market. Furthermore the relationship between individual and organizational burnout needs to be explored to establish whether organizational burnout is little more than collective individual burnout or a separate phenomenon.

Analogous to this, employee engagement also has organizational level inputs and consequences. Recent researchers such as Bakker *et al.* (2011a) question the link between employee engagement and burnout arguing that engaged individuals' can also be burnout. Thus it is pertinent to explore the concept of engagement in the context of burnout and organizational change.

4. Engagement and Burnout

In the information and service economy of the 21st Century, companies need not only to recruit top talent, but also must inspire and enable employees to apply their full capabilities to their work, i.e. to be positively engaged (Bakker and Leiter 2010). Bakker *et al.* 2011a posit that there is no widely agreed definition of work engagement but there is a broad consensus on two core dimensions - energy and involvement/identification. Thus they define engagement as "the combination of the capability to work (energy, vigour), and the willingness to work (involvement, dedication) (Bakker *et al.,* 2011). Traditional perspectives on engagement suggest that engagement and burnout are either opposite ends of a continuum, with engagement representing the positive and burnout the negative (Russell 1980, 2003, Maslach and Leiter 1997) or an independently positive state (Schaufeli *et al.* 2002) . For example, in the Utrecht Work engagement scale, engagement is defined as the opposite of burnout, however, not feeling burnt out does not mean that one feels engaged (Schfaufeli and Salanova 2011). On the contrary Bakker *et al.* (2011) argue that "over engagement" can also have negative consequences", such as worse performance, poor work-life balance and burnout.

Maslach (2011: 48) suggests that engagement and burnout have multiple dimensions that make these concepts more complex and interesting. Sonnentag (2011) argues that mixing up engagement and burnout measures is problematic for both conceptual and empirical reasons. Sonnentag (2011) explores the temporal aspects associated with engagement and suggests that research should explore the speed of change in work engagement as well as under what conditions does work engagement result in positive or negative work outcomes. In the same way that early signs of burnout can be potential markers for problem areas, would early signs of work engagement be important markers when progressing toward a desired goal? (Maslach 2011).

Engaged organisations have strong and authentic values, with clear evidence of trust and fairness based on mutual respect, where two way promises and commitments –between employers and staff- are understood, and are fulfilled (MacLeod and Clarke 2009). By removing some of the barriers to engagement can organizations improve their working practices and avoid burnout? Research by Alfes *et al.* (2009) identified the following disengaging practices:

1. Reactive decision-making that fails to address problems in time
2. Inconsistent Management Style, based upon attitudes of individual managers leading to perceptions of unfairness
3. Poor communication and knowledge share (owing to rigid communication channels and cultural norms)
4. Low perceptions of senior management visibility and quality of downward communication
5. Poor work-life balance due to long hours culture

Whilst Alfes *et al.* (2009) and MacLeod and Clarke (2009) argue that a wider take up of engagement approaches could impact positively on competiveness and performance, in reality, significant barriers to engagement still exist. For example, the Towers Perrin survey in the UK in 2007 reported that only 29% of employees believed that their senior managers were sincerely interested in their wellbeing; only 31% thought that their senior managers communicated open and honestly; only 3% thought their managers treated them as key parts of the organization and no fewer than 60% felt their senior managers treated them as another organizational asset to be managed (MacLeod and Clarke 2009).

Guest (2002) criticises managers for on the one hand, seeking efficient exploitation of human resources by failing to implement the sort of HRM practices that might engage the commitment of workers or on the other by the subtle use of HRM techniques to support a careful but essentially manipulative management of organizational culture. As a result, workers may feel committed and involved but they do so at the price of greater effort and at some cost in terms of personal stress and the quality of life.

Perhaps then the "dark side" of engagement allows for managerial prerogatives to exploit employees who demonstrate significant engagement (working overtime, exceeding their targets etc.). More problematic is the misconception by management that when highly engaged employees work overtime and do even more than they are expected to accomplish, their superiors are likely to see this as a positive outcome and not a negative one. This would suggest that senior management are unaware rather than exploitative of the fact that over engagement could lead to burnout. For corporate leaders, engagement is a way to 'motivate without money', which they see as a good thing, especially in the current economic climate. But can engagement then lead to employee happiness and wellbeing and do organizations actually care if their employees are happy? (Maslach, 2011)

Economic pressures and uncertain times provide opportunities for senior managers to take "harder" decisions regarding carrying out changes in the organization (Maslach, 2011). Do corporate decision makers really care about employees or are they content with pushing performance to its maximum point, to the detriment of the health and wellbeing of its workforce? To what extent do organizations 'care' about the amount of burnout and stress that occurs during change and can there be an assessment of how much the organizational stress thermometer is rising? For the individual, survivor syndrome can overtake the usual professional expectations that employees have with regard to protecting employee wellbeing at work. If change is to remain constant, and in some cases, increasingly drastic and severe, then how can HR provide the voice of reason to a determined executive and take active intervention when the 'temperature' is rising?

 Pines (1993) argues that the root cause of burnout lies in people's need to believe that their lives are meaningful, and what they do has importance and significance, all key aspects of employee engagement. Communication is inextricably linked to change management, and poor communication can lead to increased levels of stress during organizational change. The importance of meaningfulness is further explored through literature on resilience and organizational resilience.

5. Resilience

Engagement is usually seen as a positive concept, so too is resilience in the sense that resilience is thought to stem from an optimistic nature and the ability to bounce back from hardship. A consistent theme among the range of definitions of resilience is a sense of adaption, recovery and bounce back despite adversity or change. Until recently most of the work in this area has been in the field of psychology and has focused on resilience in individuals. An understanding of resilient individuals is relevant to the discourse about organizational resilience, since actions and interactions among individuals organizational members underpins the emergence of a firm's collective capacity for resilience. (Morgeson and Hofmann, 1999).

Coutu (2002) considers the behaviours that resilient people demonstrate and identifies 3 characteristics; a staunch acceptance of reality; a deep belief that life is meaningful and an uncanny ability to improvise. Werner and Smith (2001) also identify behaviours that can be identified in resilient individuals but more importantly they argue that resilience is a behaviour that can be developed deliberately.

Seligman (2011) who is often seen as the father of positive psychology, reflects, from his 30 years of research, that resilience can be measured and taught and suggests that his 'master resilience training' can teach leaders how to embrace resilience and then pass it on by building mental toughness, signature strengths and strong relationships so that the organization as a whole can become more effective and more resilient.

These characteristics and concepts can be considered within a collective organizational context too. At organizational level resilience can be defined in the same way it is for individuals but with a different focus: it must include not only the individuals within the organisation but also the processes and culture those individuals work with on a daily basis. Organisational resilience looks at how well the organization can adapt to challenges it faces or can 'weather the storm' (CIPD 2011).

Resilience is often defined in passive terms as simply an ability to rebound from unexpected, stressful adverse situations and to pick up where they left off (Balu 2001; Sutcliffe and Vogus 2003; Horn and Orr 1998). This approach to resilience sees it in terms of a reactive rebound-orientated approach that puts emphasis on coping strategies and a quick ability to resume expected performance levels. Organizational efforts are focused on re-establishing a strong fit between the firm and the new reality whilst simultaneously avoiding or limiting dysfunctional or regressive behaviours (Lengnick-Hall *et al.,* 2011).

Increasingly, authors are making the distinction between passive resilience 'the mere ability to bounce without breaking' and active resilience, 'a deliberate effort to become better able to cope with surprise' (Lovins and Lovins 1982 quoted in Wlidavksy 1988). From this perspective resilience involves taking proactive steps to ensure that the organization thrives in the face of adversity (Longstaff 2005; Kanigel 2001) Thus organizations look beyond restoration to include the development of new capabilities and expanded ability to keep pace with and even create new opportunities (Coutu 2002, Freeman *et al.* 2004; Lengnick-Hall and Beck 2003). In fact for many, organizational resilience is seen as thriving because of the ability to capitalize on unexpected challenges and change (Lengnick-Hall 2011). Thus organizational resilience is defined here as 'a firm's ability to effectively absorb, develop situation-specific responses to, and ultimately engage in transformative activities to capitalize on disruptive surprises that potentially threaten organization survival' (Lengnick-Hall 2011).

The concept of organizational resilience has been studied and applied to a number of settings, including hospitals (Mallak, 1998), fire fighting teams (Weick, 1993) and general business and industry (Coutu 2002; Hamel and Valinkangas, 2003). More recently, its focus has been

one of crisis management in response to disasters such as the terrorist attacks in New York and London and whether a causal relationship exists between crisis planning and effective adaptive behaviours, i.e. resilience (Somers, 2009).

However, it is hard to identify resilient organizations and even harder to single out the practices that have contributed to this resilience. Valikangas (cited in Warner 2006) suggests that taking steps towards innovative management practices is important in building resilience to organizational change, particularly when this manifests itself as an unexpected threat. This can be achieved in 4 ways:

1. Building organizational resilience by adapting quickly to rapidly changing circumstances and not avoiding it until it becomes inevitable.
2. Regularly harnessing innovative ideas at every level by encouraging "rule-breaking" innovation from all employees and providing all employees with the "tools" to achieve this.
3. Devising an environment that provides the opportunity for employees to harness their talents and creativity and raise the return on human capital by developing systems that enable people to take the initiative.
4. Measuring current capabilities and develop metrics to track improvement activities.

Sull (1999) argues that organizations lose their resilience through active inertia, whereby the organization is stifled by "blinders", "routines", "shackles" and "dogmas", manifested by strategic frames (the set of assumptions that determine how managers view the business), processes (way that things are done), relationships (ties to employees, customers, suppliers, shareholders etc.) and values (set of shared values that determine corporate culture). The ongoing development of the psychological contract remains vital in ensuring that organizations retain their resilience, and that the successful organizational culture prevails. Lengnick-Hall *et al.* (2011) posit that the role of human resource management (HRM) is vital in helping to create a culture of resilience within organizations by ensuring that clear messages are sent to employees about what is expected of them, how they should interact with one another, what they should and should not focus on, what is rewarded, etc. They make a clear link between the development of organizational resilience to strategic HRM practice and propose that:

> "an organization's capacity for resilience is developed through strategically managing
>
> human resources to create individual competencies amongst core employees, that
>
> when aggregated at the organizational level, make it possible for organizations to
>
> achieve the ability to respond in a resilient manner when they experience severe
>
> shocks. " (Lengnick-Hall *et al.,* 2011)

They argue that HR practices can help develop resilient employees who collectively create resilient organizations. Thus, HR policies practices and activities are the bedrock of a firm's capacity for resilience and for the first time we have a practical framework by which individual resilience can be harnessed for the benefit of the organization.

6. Employee Wellbeing and the role of HRM

The view that people are an organisation's most important asset and that their effective development and deployment offers a distinctive and non-imitable competitive advantage is at the heart of the business partner model of HR, with a emphasis being placed on the contribution of HR work to business and competitive advantage and not on how such work contributes to parity in the employment relationship and the ethical treatment of employees. (Legge 1995; Down; 1999; Keenoy 1999; Harley and Hardy 2004). An embedded assumption is that what is good for business is good for workers (Guest, 2002). Thus the accent is placed on HR practitioners providing cost efficient HR services and strategic advice to senior managers in order to deliver business and competitive advantage and not on how such work contributes to parity in the employment relationship and the ethical treatment of employees including the historical duty of care to employees (Keegan and Francis, 2010). Indeed exhortations for HR practitioners to pursue strategic roles and downplay their historically embedded administrative and employee championing role pose a serious threat to the integrity of HR work and claims to professional expertise (Kochan 2004, 2007; Torrington *et al.,* 2005).

Employee wellbeing is increasingly becoming a business issue with recent surveys by the Business in the community in the UK (Peacock, 2010) and Gallop Worldwide (Rath, 2011) suggesting that promoting employee wellbeing can lead to improved financial performance for organizations and their shareholders. The costs of employee ill health are well documented, for example in the UK the cost of sickness absence due to mental ill health alone is estimated at £28 billion a year (NICE 2009).

The British Psychological Society's (BPS) White Paper on psychological well-being at work (2011) suggests that a more holistic approach to employee wellbeing is needed, focusing not just on the individual but on the context and content of work at organizational level as well. Wellbeing is seen as the responsibility of the organization but the benefits are for both employee and employer. The BPS refers to three particular levels of intervention:

Individual – psychological aspects
Work content – job demands, control, autonomy etc.
Work Context – including management style, organizational justice, workplace support, participation and communication.

This has implications for employee wellbeing and HR policies and practices, which supports the work of Baptiste (2008) who found that the effective implementation of HRM practices by managers can play a key role in developing employee wellbeing at work. Baptiste argues that organizational targets should not just be economic but should involve wellbeing at work as well. Failure to evaluate employee wellbeing at work in terms of improved productivity, reduced sickness absence or other organizational benefits can hinder organizational sustainability. Thus we argue that HR has a key role to play in managing employee wellbeing at work, particularly in times of change.

Faced with a multitude of theoretical perspectives and approaches the authors carried out some preliminary research into organizational change by focusing on four key research questions. Note that in exploring organizational burnout this manifested itself in discussions about stress rather than in its extreme form (burnout).

7.   Our Preliminary Research

In 2010 an initial small scale exploratory research project was conducted using a sample of 100 medium to large companies (100 plus employees) who were located within a 50km radius of Portsmouth University in Hampshire, England.   An e-survey was sent to HR Managers and Directors who were known contacts to the university. The research questions sought both quantitative and qualitative responses by probing the following key areas:

1. The extent to which the organization was aware of their level of organizational stress and potential burnout
2. The extent to which they cared about the level of organizational stress and potential burnout
3. To consider what actions they would take if they were concerned with the threat of organizational burnout
4. To explore whether the "duty of care" considerations entered decisions on change.

Whilst the response rate for our survey was disappointingly low (less than 20%) some interesting findings and analogies were drawn. Whilst over three quarters of companies reported that they had gone through major or drastic change in the last few years, and that these were planned changes, but only a third reported that they had enough time to implement changes effectively. Why is it that companies suffer from the "ready, fire, aim" change approach?

When it comes to measuring stress, about two thirds of companies monitor individuals who report suffering from stress, which contrasts with only a fifth of companies that actually carry out assessments of organisational level stress. To what extent is there a concern that if organizational levels of stress are measured, then organizations have to deal with these reported measures?

Duty of Care should be a relative high strategic agenda item for HR managers and directors, and the majority of companies reported that they operate a Duty of Care Policy, but nearly two thirds of companies argued that Duty of Care is not associated with organisational change. In the UK, the Health and Safety Executive publish their Management Standards for work related stress (2011), one of which relates to organizational change, and how it is managed and communicated within the organization. In our survey, nearly a third of companies believed that the Health and Safety at Work Act sufficiently covers employees during organisational change.

With regards to burnout, over half of the companies reported that burnout had occurred in their organisation and they believed that continuous changes can lead to organisational burnout. In addition to considering employee wellbeing, two fifths of companies reported that they would significantly change or cease a particular change intervention if it had an adverse effect upon employees' wellbeing. Perhaps the most positive survey finding was that when it comes to HR intervening when organizational stress levels are high, all of the respondents reported that HR professionals would intervene. The extent of this intervention would need to be explored further.

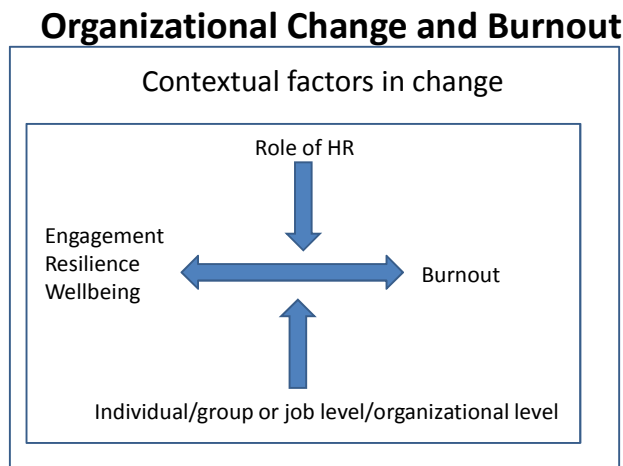**8. Conclusion and recommendations for further research**

To what extent do organizations "care" about the amount of stress that occurs during change and whether there can be an assessment of how much the organizational stress thermometer is rising? Coupled to this is the extent to which management and/or HR acknowledge and take active intervention when the 'temperature' is rising and perhaps reaching critical point. Conversely, is employee engagement a minimum expectation as far as the senior management are concerned?

Organizations may wish to adopt a denial stance, exhibiting the "Boiled Frog Syndrome". When a frog is placed in a pot of boiling water, it will instinctively jump out. However, when a frog is placed in a pot of cool water, which is then heated slowly, it will remain in the water and then be boiled alive. In terms of organizational changes, there is a state of denial that things are "hotting up" and a complacent approach to continuous organizational changes and their effect on employees and the organization.

Alternatively, organizations may hide behind policies, as exhibited by the "Empty Shell Syndrome", a term first defined by Hoque and Noon (2004) with regard to Equality Management. Despite the wide range of policies, procedures and practice, in reality, organizations do little in practice when it comes to accepting the point that there are high levels of burnout in the organization.

Organizations have to firstly have measures of organizational stress, an understanding of the potential for organizational burnout and determine how to get out of the burnout rut by becoming more resilient to change and engaging employees in a positive and productive manner in order to ensure long term success.

Our thoughts on our research findings are conceptualised within the model below.

Organizational Change and Burnout

Contextual factors in change

Role of HR

Engagement
Resilience
Wellbeing

Burnout

Individual/group or job level/organizational level

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We believe that the significant areas for future research lie within how HR as a function, in conjunction with management, take responsibility for ensuring how effective organizational change is brought about, without having a significant negative effect on employee and organizational wellbeing. We question whether the HR business partner model, first identified by Ulrich (1997) has created an 'uncaring and less effective HR profession' in that our research suggests that HR is aware that there are problems with burnout, engagement and wellbeing, but seem reluctant to address them.

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