



UNIVERSITY OF
LIVERPOOL

Action Research Thesis

Investigating Employees Responses to Organizational Changes:
Perceptual Differences between Leaders and Employees in a Dubai-
Based Multicultural Organization

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University
of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration

By

Reda Helal

Student ID (H00042520)

April 2020

Contents

List of Figures	vi
List of Tables	vii
Abstract	viii
Acknowledgements	x
Chapter 1: Introduction	11
1.1. Research Context	11
1.2. Research Aims and Objectives	12
1.3. Scholar-Practitioner Context	14
1.4. Challenges Associated with Bringing About Change in NI.....	16
1.5. Thesis Structure	18
Chapter 2: Literature Review	20
2.1. Introduction	20
2.2. Change Management.....	21
2.2.2. Organizational Change	22
2.2.3. Types of Change.....	26
2.3. Bringing About Change: Factors Influence Employees' Responses	32
2.3.1. Introduction	32
2.3.2. Leading and Communicating Through Change	34
2.3.3. Culture and Change.....	40
2.4. Employees' Responses to Organizational Change	46
2.5. Employees' Resistance to Change	48
2.5.1. Background	48
2.5.2. Employees' Resistance.....	51
2.5.3. Sources and Cases of Employees' Resistance.....	55
2.6. Conclusion	61
Chapter 3: Research Methodology	63
3.1. Introduction	63
3.2. Research Philosophy: Ontology and Epistemology	63
3.3. Qualitative Research Methods	65
3.3.1. Overview	65
3.3.2. Qualitative Approaches: Case Study	66

3.4.	Action Research	68
3.5.	Research Participants and Sampling	73
3.6.	Ethical Considerations	76
3.7.	Data Collection and Analysis	77
3.8.	Conclusion	80
Chapter 4: Results and Data Presentation		82
4.1.	Introduction	82
4.2.	Research Setting Characteristics	82
4.3.	Data Presentation of Employees (E201-E220)	83
4.3.1.	Work Environment	85
4.3.1.1.	Positive: accessible and collaborative	86
4.3.1.2.	Hierarchical and challenging	87
4.3.2.	Change Process	89
4.3.2.1.	Legacy problems	90
4.3.2.2.	Lack of clear direction	91
4.3.3.	Work Culture	91
4.3.4.	Response to Change – Resistance	96
4.3.4.1.	Perceptions of resistance	96
4.3.4.2.	Employees not voicing their concerns	98
4.3.5.	Overall Experience and Recommendations	100
4.3.5.1.	Cultural shift	103
4.3.5.2.	Communication	104
4.3.5.3.	Fear factor	105
4.4.	Data Presentation of Leaders (A101-A106)	107
4.4.1.	Introduction	107
4.4.2.	Work Environment	108
4.4.2.1.	Hierarchical	108
4.4.2.2.	Progressing, yet siloed	109
4.4.3.	Change Process	110
4.4.3.1.	Good but complex	111
4.4.3.2.	Time consuming – not structured properly	112
4.4.4.	Work Culture	113
4.4.4.1.	Diverse, but underlying similarity	113
4.4.5.	Response to Change	114

4.4.5.1.	Covert resistance	115
4.4.6.	Overall Experience and Recommendations.....	116
4.4.6.1.	Communication and engagement.....	117
4.4.6.2.	Fear factor	119
4.5.	Observations and Fieldnotes	120
4.5.1.	Work Environment	121
4.5.2.	Change Process.....	122
4.5.3.	Work Culture	123
4.5.4	Response to Change	124
4.5.5.	Overall Experience and Recommendations	124
4.6.	Summary and Reflection.....	125
Chapter 5:	Discussion.....	127
5.1.	Introduction	127
5.2.	Types of Change in NI	127
5.3.	Bringing About Change in NI.....	129
5.4.	Work Environment.....	132
5.5.	Work Culture	134
5.6.	Communication	136
5.7.	Responses to Change: Inexpressive, Fear and Lack of Trust	138
5.8.	Overall Experience.....	140
5.9.	Areas for Improvement.....	144
5.9.1.	Planning for the Change Process: Communication	144
5.9.2.	Work Environment and Culture.....	145
5.9.3.	Responses to Change	146
5.10.	Summary.....	147
Chapter 6:	Actionable Recommendations and AR in NI.....	149
6.1.	Introduction	149
6.2.	Action Cycles	149
6.2.1.	Cycle 1: Direct Engagement with Leaders and Employees	150
6.2.2.	Cycle 2	152
6.2.2.1.	Bringing about change in NI: leading, communicating and engaging.....	153
6.2.2.2.	Work environment and culture: collaboration and trust	157
6.3.	Areas for Further Action and Research.....	160

6.4.	Summary.....	160
Chapter 7: Reflections		162
7.1.	Introduction	162
7.2.	Reflection on the Process	163
7.3.	Personal Reflection on the Content and Its Influence	165
7.4.	Becoming an Action Researcher.....	168
7.5.	Study Limitations	171
Chapter 8: Summary and Conclusion.....		173
8.1.	Introduction	173
8.2.	Summary.....	173
8.2.1	Thesis Contribution	173
8.3.	Conclusion	176
References		180
Appendix A: Ethical Approval		210
Appendix B: Authorization Letter from NI		211
Appendix C: Interview Questions for Employees		212
Appendix D: Interview Questions for Leaders		213

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Research structure and flow.....	19
Figure 2.1: Considerations for organizational change management.....	25
Figure 2.2: Change model – eight-staged approach	33
Figure 2.3: Sorted approach for successful transformational change	33
Figure 2.4: Conceptual framework of organizational change.....	39
Figure 2.5: Culture web model	41
Figure 2.6: Three levels of culture	42
Figure 2.7: Competing value and culture typologies	43
Figure 2.8: Breaking through employees' resistance.....	53
Figure 2.9: Focus and Intensity of employees' resistance.....	54
Figure 3.1: Spiral of action research cycles.....	68
Figure 3.2: Meta-cycle of action research	69
Figure 3.3: General empirical method in action research project	70
Figure 3.4: Action research in this thesis.....	73
Figure 5.1: Application of organizational dynamics on bringing about change in NI	131
Figure 5.2: What NI employees want from their leaders	143
Figure 5.3: Considerations for NI change management.....	145
Figure 6.1: NI change map	154
Figure 6.2: Workstreams to improve work environment and culture in NI.....	159

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Change characterized by the rate of occurrence.....	28
Table 2.2: Change characterized by “how it comes about”	30
Table 2.3: Change characterized by its scale.....	31
Table 2.4: Organizational change framework.....	36
Table 2.5: Levels of change occurrences.....	37
Table 2.6: Practical approach to lead change	38
Table 2.7: Reasons for employees' resistance.....	60
Table 3.1: Employees' interviews	74
Table 3.2: Leaders' interviews	74
Table 3.3: Observations sessions: Coffee with GCEO.....	78
Table 4.1: Key themes and sub-themes for both groups of participants (employees and leaders).....	83
Table 4.2: Summary and key findings from employees' responses	85
Table 4.3: Summary and key findings from leaders' responses.....	108
Table 4.4: Summary and key findings from observations and fieldnotes	121
Table 5.1: Types of change in NI.....	129
Table 5.2: Areas for improvement based on employee and leader findings	147
Table 6.1: Recommended matrix to bring about change in NI	156

Abstract

This study investigates the perceptions of leaders and employees concerning organizational changes in a Dubai-based multicultural organization, Network International (NI), a Third Party Processor (TPP) specialized in providing payments' technology solutions to banks, financial institutions, and retailers in the Middle East and Africa. The study was conducted between 2018-2020 to produce actionable knowledge to facilitate NI's organizational development triggered by changes in the shareholding structure, which drove new shareholders and the board of directors to reconstitute over 50% of the Network Leadership Team (NLT), with associated changes in structure and operating models. In close consultation with NI leadership and employees, I have investigated these changes, analysed and assessed them, and developed actionable knowledge and recommendations to improve change management in NI and provide guidance to researchers and practitioners concerned with this subject in similar contexts.

Data were collected through face-to-face interviews with six leaders and 20 employees in NI, combined with observations and field notes for triangulation of the primary data points. These data points were then collated, including the transcription of all interviews, and manual thematic coding was applied to analyse and interpret the data to form the findings. The study is grounded on Action Research (AR), wherein theory and practice meet, and actionable knowledge forms a key component of the research. This is an insider action research (IAR) study, due to my dual role as a researcher and full-time employee in NI. The ontological stance of the study supported a qualitative epistemology to study the constructed realities of participant perceptions of social phenomena. Due to the nature of this study and its objectives in investigating the change process inside NI, it followed the single instrumental qualitative case study method, relying on interpretivism and the constructivism framework, explored through the lenses of participants, and dependent on their views.

Based on the data collected in this study, I have developed key recommendations to bring about change in NI factoring the dynamics that influenced the process in three

key areas: the change process, work environment and culture, and responses to change. These recommendations have also highlighted the key factors that affect the change process, such as communication, engagement, leadership, and trust and fear, from structural and behavioural perspectives. In structural/ functional terms, different modes of communication need to exist during the change process, with a focus on the frequency of face-to-face meetings, to reduce potential confusion in multicultural organizations. In terms of engagement, employees from different departments need to be included early in the process, forming an anchor from across the board to facilitate the execution of any initiative, and reducing friction between different departments. Leadership is key in this process, to provide guidance and support throughout the process and improve collaboration between stakeholders.

I have also found that trust, as one of the behavioural factors in this process, needs to be established between leaders and employees and between different departments through transparency and the ability to deliver on commitments. Through the study I have found that fear in NI is paramount, and in the context of Dubai, due to the impact of nativist labour laws and the ratio of expatriate workforce to locals. This particular element needs special attention from leaders of NI and others who operate in organizations with similar contexts (particularly in the GCC), to understand such dynamics and troubleshoot problems to foster a safe and productive work environment. Due to the implications of job-loss in NI/Dubai on employees' lives and their inability to continue living in the country without a work permit provided through their current employer, the fear of losing employment has major implications on how they respond to change, which was mostly passive, and not voicing any concerns. However, statistics in NI show that the attrition ratio is low compared to standards in the financial industry, and on par with peers worldwide. However, these statistics were not properly communicated to employees, which could provide more comfort and confidence and reduce the level of fear. These recommendations and actionable knowledge were extensively discussed with relevant stakeholders inside NI to validate their relevance. This actionable knowledge could also provide guidance and point of reference for other organizations operating in similar contexts across the Middle East, and to other scholar-practitioners who are interested to study similar phenomena.

Acknowledgements

This is to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Ghaith Abdullah, for his superb guidance and insightful feedback throughout the whole process of this thesis. I would like to extend my appreciation to the second supervisor, Prof. Sally Sambrook for her invaluable and detailed comments on my work, which helped me greatly. The appreciation and gratitude is extended to the University of Liverpool faculty members and staff for their support and best-intended endeavours during this DBA journey. I would like as well to thank the members of my researched organization who supported me in fulfilling the requirements of this AR study.

My sincere appreciation goes also to my family, my wife and my daughter who encouraged me to continue putting the required time and efforts and ignited my passion to pursue a dream in achieving this level of professional and academic expertise. Last but not least, I would like to thank and dedicate this work to my late father, in which I would not have managed to come this far without his teachings throughout my life: his legacy continues to inspire me to pursue and produce what could be of value for humanity.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Research Context

The context of this research is my current organization, Network International (NI), a Dubai-based payments' Third Party Processor (TPP) that provides payments' solutions to banks, financial institutions, governments, and retailers in the Middle East and Africa (MEA) region. At the time of starting this study, NI's ownership is split between two main groups: a Dubai-based banking group (51%) and two US equity funds (49%). The US equity funds purchased their shares in a transaction concluded at the back end of 2015. One of the decisions new shareholders took was to make some changes in the leadership structure of NI, which manifest one of the forces that drive organizational change (Beer and Nohria, 2000). The changes started from the end of 2016 through July 2017, with seven new leaders brought on-board, with most of the Network Leadership Team (NLT) being new to the organization and to the region.

During these leadership changes, employees went through stages of uncertainty due to lack of clarity, triggering ambiguity around job security and fear of redundancy, with different types of responses and (notably) resistance being observed. Some were obvious, while others were hidden. The changes in the leadership structure led to the change process, whereby different change initiatives started to occur, reflecting how the new leadership would like to run NI. One of the early observations about the change process is that leadership and employees held somewhat varied views. While the new NLT members were all parachuted in from big multinational organizations operating in different parts of the world, this was their first time to lead an organization or work in the Middle East.

New leaders come with new thoughts and ways of doing things, which might have an impact on employees and the way they do their job. Ideally, employees need to support these changes for it to be fruitful or successful. However, responding negatively or resistance to these new processes and "ways of doing things" could create a challenging position for both leaders as well as the organization, which

could undermine the success of the change process, and ultimately of the organization itself.

According to the latest HR figures, approximately 20% of the NI workforce are locals, with the remainder being drawn from more than 30 countries, including expatriates from the Arab world, Asia (particularly South Asia), Africa, and Westerners. For expatriate workers, losing their job means leaving the country *ipso facto*, as their residency rights are conditional on their employment in UAE labour law, as in the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Accordingly, the risk of losing one's job in NI is bound up with the risk of having to leave the country (and the life one has built). The negative consequences of this are multiplied for those with families and dependents.

Examining the change process from the perspectives of participants can establish an understanding of how employees' respond to changes and how their views differ from those of leaders. One can then draw empirically valid conclusions on the responses exercised during the process. These can be used to identify any form of resistance exhibited during the course of change, or differences between what constitutes resistance for both groups. Once the analysis is complete, recommendations with actionable knowledge can be made to address the problem and provide guidance to other managers or scholar-practitioners interested in this phenomenon. This chapter continues by presenting the research aims and objectives, followed by the scholar-practitioner context, then it ends by explaining the thesis structure.

1.2. Research Aims and Objectives

Focusing on employees' responses and resistance as one of the core challenges to change management, I have found that multiple factors could drive or affect this behaviour. More importantly, I started asking the question of how certain one can be that such behaviour actually comprises willing acts of resistance *per se*. The literature provided many debates around this particular area, shifting from the classical views that classify any act against the change process as resistance (Bovey and Hede, 2001; Hollander and Einwohner, 2004; Giangreco and Peccei, 2005), to the contemporary views where not every "resistance" behaviour of an

employee is actually resistance (Shang, 2012; Ybema and Horvers, 2017; Ybema, Kamsteeg and Veldhuizen, 2018). One of the potential drivers for this resistance could be the multicultural environment, and the cultural differences exist in the organization.

During these changes, many employees felt that they could be made redundant at any point in time: employees complained about the high uncertainty environment. In this milieu, some behaviours started to occur that affected the overall employees' stance towards the organization. The NLT, including the Group CEO (GCEO), did highlight this particular issue/challenge. During some previous sessions I held as part of my Doctoral Development Plans (DDPs) and residency projects for this DBA, I found that most of the leaders consider this as the key challenge to the progress of the organization and to achieve the desired change objectives.

Moreover, as preparatory work for this action research I requested a meeting with the GCEO to grant his permission and take him through the proposed topic. I have shared a drafted proposal for him to go through before our meeting, and the outcome was quite interesting. While I did not anticipate much interaction from him, looking only for his permission to conduct this action research in NI, he came back with detailed feedback and showed great interest in undertaking this activity in the organization, especially with its potential positive impact on the work environment, employees' engagement and the subsequent organizational performance. One of the key points he raised was related to employees' resistance to ongoing changes, and how this action research could assist in getting employees more engaged and in reducing the uncertainty and culture of fear, or at least to better understand the true reasons behind the existence of such phenomena in NI (Holbeche, 2006). Undertaking this action research in NI will not only explore the underlying factors that drive employees to act the way they do, but also get the organization to be ready for future changes that may occur as a result of future shareholders' restructure.

During the residency course of this DBA program (April and September 2018), I undertook research inside my organization focused on investigating leadership changes. This research revealed that uncertainty, lack of clarity, and culture of fear persists in NI. Based on the various discussions with some of the faculty members during my residency in Liverpool around this subject and potential areas for

investigations, I decided to pursue it further to explore the underlying drivers, and then develop actionable plan to overcome these challenges and to help NI in better managing the ongoing changes. The key questions in this action research study are:

- ❖ Investigate employees' responses to change from leaders and employees' perspectives, and identify if there are any perceptual differences between both groups.
- ❖ The impact of these potential differences and what action plan is suitable to overcome challenges associated with employees' responses to changes in NI.

Key objectives corresponding to these questions are:

- Define the type of change occurred in NI and its impact on employees' responses to change
- Investigate if cultural differences (national and organizational) could lead to perceptual differences between the two groups (employees & leaders)
- Deep dive into employees response to change and how surrounding factors could influence these responses
- Develop actionable recommendations & plans based on the findings to overcome challenges associated with employees' responses to change in NI.
- Draw on the developed interventions to generate actionable knowledge for the management practices and disciplinary knowledge.

1.3. Scholar-Practitioner Context

I work in NI as Chief Strategist for the Middle East, where I look after strategic planning for the region, aligning with key stakeholders for certain strategic initiatives to deliver on the committed growth plan for the organization. In my daily job, I meet with different stakeholders from across the organization to discuss and agree on the components of each strategic plan. However, I am not part of the NLT, and accordingly my power is drawn from my ability to convince them with the study and build coalitions to execute the actionable knowledge produced from this study. It is important for me, as well as the organization, to make sure that challenges associated with these changes are well managed. In previous years, especially during my residency conference paper (mentioned above) I engaged with many of

these stakeholders, either through interviews or casual discussions. Hence, all of the prospect populations for this research are approachable.

This could be a good starting point to get them engaged, though the good relationship I enjoy with most employees is key. However, I am aware that any participant can choose not to participate in this study, or even withdraw at any point in time. They know that, and it is clearly articulated when approaching them for the data collection stage through Participant Information Sheet (PIS). The first step of this study will identify the root cause of these behaviours and if the diverse workforce has a role to play – positive or negative – in employees' responses or resistance. That will lead to an action plan derived from the findings, which then will form the basis of the produced actionable knowledge.

This scholar-practitioner context was embedded in the research methods. Conducting this research in my own organization requires certain traits, as it is a collaborative problem-solving exercise (Creswell, 2013) between two stakeholders: myself as the researcher, and employees/leaders as participants (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014), to solve the problem and produce actionable knowledge. The ability to link the findings with action is key to bridge the gap between theory and practice. My position inside the organization gives me access to some data from leaders, combined with observations and field notes, which will assist in triangulating the data points, keeping in mind all the data security, integrity, and confidentiality rules. As an insider action researcher, I have to be aware of such dynamics associated with this type of research (Moore, 2007). I identified the potential participants in the two groups – leaders and employees – to whom I distributed the PIS to create the required awareness and get their consent to start the recruitment process. Once in place, I went through the sampling process to test the designed data collection tool (interview questions) and made sure that it was suitable to achieve its set goal. Interviews were transcribed to allow the data analyses and coding process, to create data points, forming the findings and then the actionable knowledge.

1.4. Challenges Associated with Bringing About Change in NI

The evolution of the technological aspect of the payments' industry had a remarkable impact on how organizations like NI operate (Durand and Khaire, 2017; Lee, Hiatt and Lounsbury, 2017; Seidel and Greve, 2017; York, Vedula and Lenox, 2017; Georgallis, Dowell and Durand, 2018; Malang et al., 2018). However, there are some other factors particular to Dubai that greatly affect the way employees respond to change, such as the composition of the Dubai workforce and national labour legislation. NI workforce is a mixture of expatriates and locals, with expatriates contributing about 80% of the workforce. The expat workforce is only allowed to live in Dubai as long as they have a work permit, which is valid as long as they are employed. The importance of workforce ratio of expat versus local and Dubai labour law is undeniable, especially in relation to this study. Employees' fear of unemployment, which means losing their work permit and eventually deportation is immense. Accordingly, their response to any act that may jeopardize or affect their employment is usually driven by this fear.

While conventional literature argues that fear of uncertainty usually accompanies any change process, the context of the Dubai workforce and the labour law greatly exacerbate this fear, and highly affect employees' responses. During my discussions with the leadership team, one of the key challenges that they repeatedly highlighted was employees' response to change, or as stated, "their resistance to change", which is not essentially the same notion I have noticed when talking with employees. Accordingly, I decided to focus on this particular aspect of the change process, being the focal point but could be influenced by other aspects, such as the size of change, organizational culture and work environment and leadership practice. Scholars argued that people are the most important aspect of the change process (Anderson, 2010; Jaros, 2010; Dutra, Mazza and Menezes, 2014), and managing this aspect would increase the probability of success in bringing about change. Therefore, understanding employees' behaviour, how they respond to change, how this differs from leaders' perspectives, and then bridging potential gaps that might exist between both sides will highly benefit NI.

The Middle East is an emerging market (Caiazza, 2018), and in particular Dubai, as a corridor to multinational and cross-cultural environment in most organizations

(Salas et al., 2018). NI is a good example, with more than 80% of its Dubai workforce being expatriates from over 30 countries (as per latest company's released data). While diversity is advocated as one of the assets in current market conditions, it could add to the challenges in bringing about change (Leavitt, 2014). People from different groups and backgrounds may interpret actions differently, and deal with the change from differing perspectives, thus require different approaches to lead them through the process (Cooper, 2015), which was identified as one of the key challenges. Diversity is not only related to employees' background, values and beliefs, but also the organizational culture and sub-cultures (i.e. the "clan"), which could influence employees' responses and inhibit or limit their engagement (Belias and Koustelios, 2014) and ways of doing things (Kotzian, 2009). People are the most critical factor in bringing about change in organizations (Seemann and Seemann, 2015), and managing their responses to the changes is crucial (Imnaishvili and Taktakishvili, 2013).

As 60% of leaders are new to the organization and the region, despite their previous work in multinational organizations in different parts of the world, the key initial challenge observed was about how employees perceived the new leadership. Leading through change is complex enough, but adding such factors, being new to the organization and the region, could create a compound complexity and require extra efforts from leaders (Voet, 2013; Pandu and Kamaraj, 2016; Onimole, 2017). Therefore, understanding whether leaders are aware of their role in providing the required guidance to this diverse workforce during the process is important in the context of this research (Murtadho, 2013; Belias and Koustelios, 2014). The challenges associated with the change process in NI are a mixture of many factors. On the one hand, there are new leaders with new operating models and ways of doing things that were developed and honed in organizational environments with different prevailing cultural backgrounds, to lead a diverse workforce. On the other hand, the organization's workforce is mostly expats, influenced by Dubai labour law, which engenders intense fear about job security. These dynamics have led leaders to believe that employees are not always engaged or supporting the changes, which will be investigated in this study.

1.5. Thesis Structure

I have structured the thesis in eight chapters, starting with its context and objectives in this chapter, followed by reviewing relevant academic literature in chapter two, presenting the change process, how it comes about, and its dynamics that may influence bringing about change in NI, especially those related to employees' responses. Chapter three presents the philosophical basis of this research, explaining how the ontological and epistemological stances allowed the construction of the problem in NI and viewing it from different lenses. Chapter four presents the data collected, reflecting the views of participants. This is followed by the findings and discussion of these views in chapter five, concerning the changes and how these findings build an actionable plan to improve on the process. Chapter six focuses on the actionable knowledge and recommendations along with the action cycle in NI, followed by chapter seven highlighting my reflection on the journey and presenting the limitations of this study. The final part of this thesis is chapter eight, which presents the summary and conclusion of this study. Figure 1.1 shows the research structure.

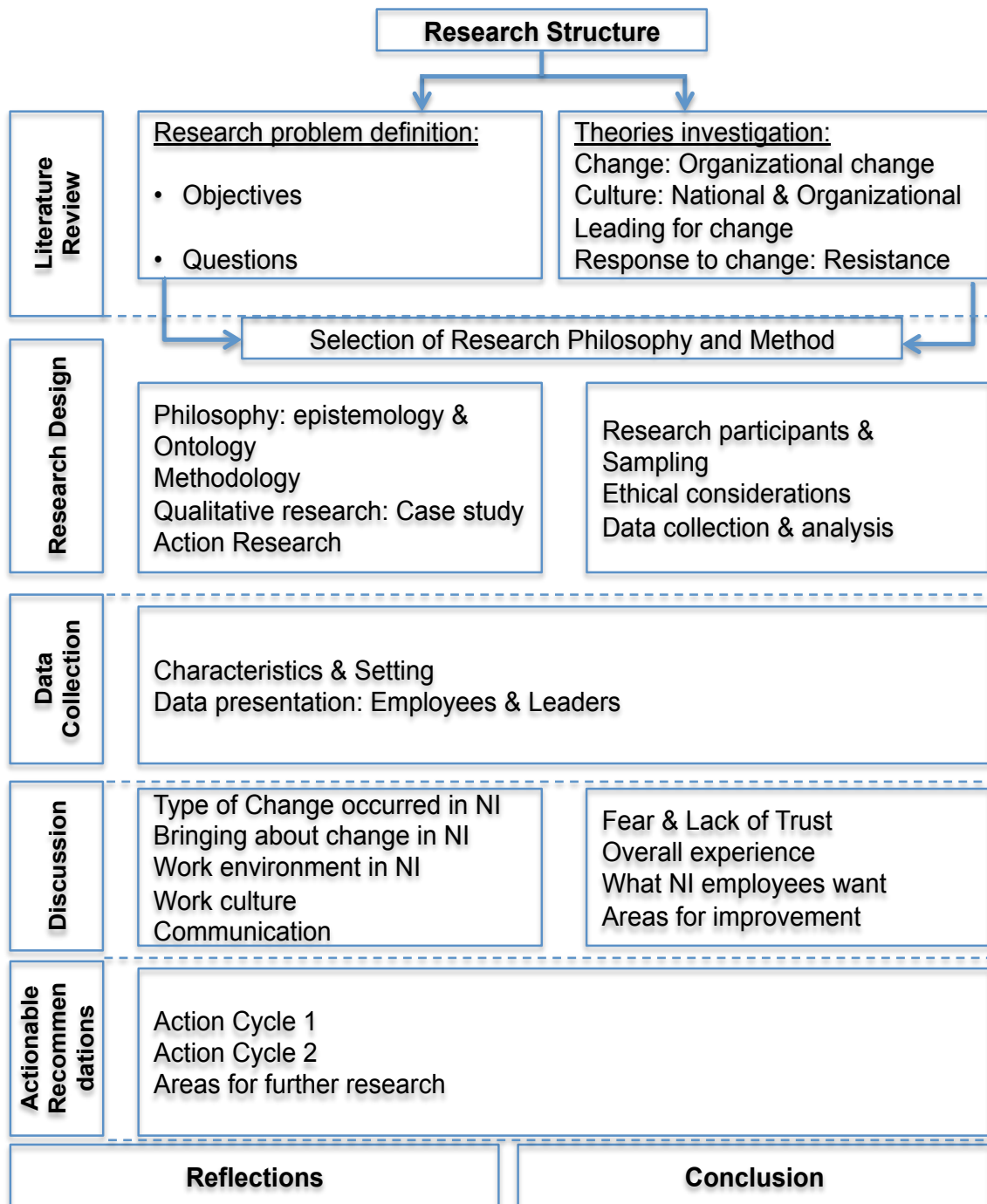


Figure 1.1: Research structure and flow

Source: Author

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Businesses, in general, and financial services in particular, are getting more competitive with increased globalization and market dynamics (Baldwin, 2016; Wilson and Chaudhry, 2017). A recent study estimated that about 47% of total US employment is at high risk due to industrial changes (Frey and Osborne, 2013). In industrial changes, organizational change occurs when business strategies or leadership functions are being altered (Cusick, 2018), which is usually referred to as reorganization or restructuring. An empirical study noted that when a board recognizes the need for sweeping change in an organization, it often starts by replacing the CEO (Anderson, 2010), as in the case of NI. Consequently, new leadership come to the organization, with new practices and operating models, and arguably, resistance starts to occur from those imbued with the established culture of the previous leadership (Anderson, 2008). Following the changes in the NLT inside NI, a series of changes started to occur that cascaded to various aspects, including people. I would not claim that there is an absolute agreement that all types of change in all organizations beget the same response, especially resistance; but there are often discernible trends that can be analysed.

The chapter investigates employees' responses to change and the factors that affect their responses combining academic views with case studies. It starts with an introduction about organizational change enhanced by articulating the different types of change and how they influence employees' responses to change. Employees' responses might be affected by different factors, such as the way it is managed or led, and how national and organizational culture plays a role in this. As the identified workplace problem is related to employees' responses to change, the chapter moves then to a detailed examination of how different responses have emerged and what influences these responses, with a focus on resistance. This particular aspect will be viewed from classical and contemporary viewpoints.

With regard to the selected resources, the study analysed various academic and practitioner perspectives, including textbooks, journals, peer-reviewed articles, and

publications. The keywords were identified based on the objectives and subject of the study: change management, organizational change, change and culture, leading for change, resistance and change, employees' resistance, financial services, Middle East, and Dubai. I relied on contemporary publications to ensure that recent notions about the examined phenomenon were included. The interrogated database ranged from the University of Liverpool (UoL) Online Library to other business and academic website publications, such as EBSCOhost and Sage, amongst others.

While the study is focused on a Dubai-based organization, the search started with a wider scope to equip the study with a solid academic foundation from across the globe; then a funnel approach started to narrow the search criteria to journals with expertise on emerging markets, then the Middle East, and Dubai, which was quite scarce and limited compared to North American and European-focused publications. While I searched the body of knowledge in Arabic (the common language of all Arab countries), there were very few peer-reviewed articles published in academic journals related to this subject in the financial services. This identified a potential literature gap to fill, as I will be planning to translate parts of this thesis into Arabic. There were also some limited materials related to changes in Middle East-based financial services' organizations, and while that has posed an initial challenge, it turned to be an opportunity for this study to assist in filling the gap of scarce publications related to resistance to changes in multicultural financial services organizations within Dubai and the Middle East.

2.2. Change Management

Organizations' competitive advantages nowadays are increasingly drawn from their people, not their products or services (Ulrich, 2002). While all academic and practitioner conceptualizations acknowledge the obvious importance of people and their influence on the change process, this dimension is not always analysed in-depth or factored into the change process from its early stages. Employees, as one of the key assets to any organization, react to the way they are managed or led. One study highlighted that employees prefer to work in countries such as the US because they are well treated by their employers and leaders (Drucker, 2007), and while they may not enjoy the highest pay, they prefer to work there because they are treated as

colleagues (i.e., with a less authoritarian leadership paradigm), which increases their satisfaction level (Voet, 2013).

Modern scientific understanding of the concept of change contributed to and subsequently drew from the fundamental approaches of natural sciences, as manifest in the concept of "survival" in evolutionary theory (Darwin, 1876 cited in Dooley, 1997). Darwin's association of the idea of survival is essentially about the ability to respond to changes in the environment. Beer and Nohria (2000) used Darwin's basics and added that organizations are equivalent to species in natural science, whereby the act of survival in a business environment is seen as the necessity/ ability to adapt or to die. This analogy emphasizes the importance of change and the ability to respond to it, in life, or inside organizations. In this respect, we have witnessed recently how organizations could suffer from falling productivity or significantly lose their market position if they do not anticipate changes or market dynamics, as seen in the cases of Kodak and Nokia.

2.2.1. Organizational Change

The paradox shift in change management theory has developed significantly during the last few years due to entrepreneurial efforts of scholars and practitioners (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013; Costanzo and Di Domenico, 2015; Birkinshaw et al., 2016; Sharma and Bansal, 2017; Smith et al., 2017). One of the analogies used to explain organizational change is that of Kreitner (2004), who compared it to throwing a stone into a still pond, causing ripples to radiate in all directions, with unpredictable consequences. Though the need for change is often unpredictable and is usually triggered by an immediate organizational need, it is necessary to correct some of the past failures (Lewis, 2019). Examples include the aftermath of 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, in which many suggestions for improvement in preventive measures were produced. While change is about making radical differences or a shift from one state to another, it is essential for long-term success, especially in such global market dynamics (Conceicao and Altman, 2011).

Regardless of organizations' size, age, or field, change is a phenomenon that affects all of them (Bouckenooghe, Devos and Broeck, 2009). However, failure in implementing change due to a lack of organizational learning could lead to the failure of the change process (Lewis, 2019). One example is that of BP, which failed to

learn from the experience of its industrial peer ExxonMobil in the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill disaster in Alaska in 1989. BP did not adequately change its practices, leading to a similar disaster in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, which came at a hefty cost (Lewis, 2019). The ability of organizations to change is crucial for their success (Lee, 2011), as it is considered to be one of the great attributes for their monetary and social frameworks (Ikinici, 2014). In other words, organizations could benefit from change if they succeed in anticipating it, but unfortunately many fail to do so (Hayes, 2014), turning the paradox of success into failure (Nadler and Shaw, cited in Hayes, 2014). Change is important as it provides opportunities for the growth of people and organizations (Lewis, 2019), and as it affects employees, there is a need to factor them in early in the process, especially in current increased complexity (Morrison and Croucher, 2010; Whelan-Berry and Somerville, 2010).

Studies show that organizations nowadays are in a constant state of change due to market dynamics (Petru et al., 2016). However, the American Management Association (AMA) reported that less than half of the companies involved in repeated restructuring and downsizing (i.e., a form of change) achieved their expenses reduction goals, and less than one in four increased their productivity (Davos, Vanderheyden and Broeck, 2002). In other words, these organizations did not successfully achieve the desired outcome of their change process. Moreover, 70% of business processes reengineering projects yielded limited or no success (Edmonson and Woolley, 1999). Some of the reasons behind such a low success rate are that many change leaders silently assume that change unfolds in a similar fashion across different settings (Ybema, Kamsteeg and Veldhuizen, 2018), and they don't factor employees' responses from an early stage. I would also add that this low success rate could be due to the lack of a valid framework to drive and implement change, though the wide variety of available academic resources that in some cases contradict each other (Burnes, 2009). The reason is that some published practices and theories are mostly supported by unchallenged assumptions about the nature of current organizational change (Doyle, 2002).

Even though there is a challenge to find consensus between scholars when it comes to frameworks to manage change, there are two key factors that are agreed upon: the pace in which change is currently occurring was never greater (Carnall, 2007);

and the nature of change that is triggered through internal or external factors comes in all shapes, forms, or sizes, and affects organizations of all types (Balogun and Hope-Hailey, 2004). It is argued, however, that small-size organizations with few employees are easier to change as they function in a more efficient way (Seemann and Seemann, 2015), and employees' responses are better managed at that scale. Managing organizational change is highly important, and one of the key tasks of leaders (Senior and Fleming, 2006). Though, I would argue that with globalization, cross-cultural work environments, and shifts in socio-economical trends, leading organizational change is increasingly challenging, hence amplifying the importance of managing employees and how they respond to changes (Graetz, 2002).

Leading change does not necessarily entail driving through the envisioned change initially desired; rather, it must accommodate unforeseen challenges and external developments, mediating and continually reviewing progress, and making adjustments where necessary, to ensure the long-term sustainability (Lewis, 2019). During the change process, the level of awareness increases, which could alter some initial desires. Indeed, Lewis (2019) referred to initial desires at the outset of change projects as being inherently "flawed", which I support, as they cannot foresee the real-life implications and dynamics, especially when it comes to how employees respond to these changes. Additionally, I have witnessed that the initial scope may change, as in NI, and what initially seems to be logical and desirable may later require modification: the process is not static.

Change management is argued to be about the change process itself, including planning, coordinating, organizing, and directing the process in which change is implemented (Spicker, 2012). However, the classic view of change is that organizations look at how they utilize information in relation to people, processes, technology, and partners during the change process (Cusick, 2018). To understand what motivates organizations to undergo any change process, Beer and Nohria (2000) introduced a good explanation through theory O and theory E. In these two scenarios, the driver for organizations to change could be a manifestation of different forces (Holbeche, 2006). In theory E, organizations are forced to apply changes due to economic pressure or shareholders' will. In theory O, organizations go through change due to internal reasons or from within. There could also be other drivers and

considerations for organizations to go through change (Senior and Fleming, 2006): demographic, lifestyle, occupational, employment policy, or operating procedures.

While the change could be externally driven, focused on how an organization adapts and responds to its environmental factors, and increases its legitimacy and chances to survive (Lewis, 2019), its impact may not only reside inside the organization. The impact is extended to the wider community (Hassan, 2014). Furthermore, the information related to the change process radiates to a wider range of stakeholders, internally and externally, and its influences are extended to affect the process and people [Figure 2.1].

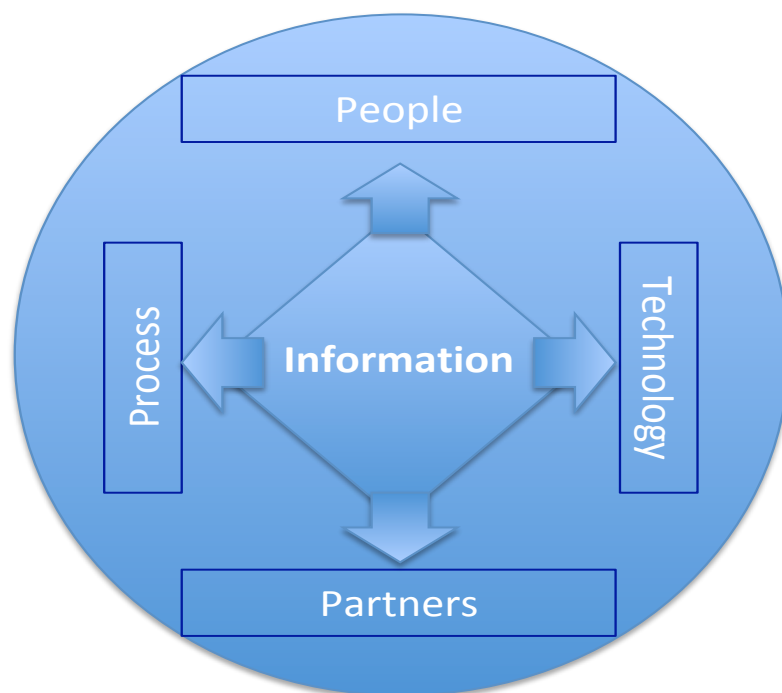


Figure 2.1: Considerations for organizational change management

Source: Cusick (2018, p. 12)

Change management is also about the adoption of ideas, procedures, and behaviours that are new to an organization (Gill, 2014). It is a continuous process aligning organizational direction to the marketplace in an effective and proactive way, through a multi-level and cross-functional approach that comprises a series of interlocked projects (Burnes, 2009). The importance of having organizations ready to deal with changes and pressure is not only to grow or improve performance but also

to continuously be able to survive (Weiner, 2009). However, organizations' readiness is closely tied to how employees respond to these initiatives or how supportive they are to the process. Change is considered to be the challenge to ways things get done (Oreg, Vakola and Armenakis, 2011), which could trigger the feelings of uncertainty among employees and create stress related to fear of failure (Rafferty, Jimmieson and Armenakis, 2013). This undermines employee productivity and, thus, operational efficiency, immediately and over the long term, and in terms of the change process itself, uncertainty and fear of failure could cause resistance amongst employees. Organizational change, nowadays, seems to be inevitable whether organizations are ready to deal with it or not (Byers and Rhodes, 2007). However, to successfully manage change, there is a need to first understand its types or categories, as they directly impact employees' responses.

2.2.2. Types of Change

In the context of this study, examining the different types of change is focused on how they could potentially impact employees' responses to change and the way they behave during the change process. While the generic perception about change is known to be an emergent process (Mirabeau and Maguire, 2014), different scholars viewed change through different lenses, one of which is that of Senior and Fleming (2006). They classified change into three categories based on: the rate of occurrence, "how it comes about," and by its scale. Many change initiatives embrace these categories in different forms, such as total quality management (TQM) and business process reengineering (BPR), among others (Pettinger, 2004). The first category, characterized by the rate of occurrence, consists of key types: discontinuous, incremental (smooth - bumpy), continuous, and punctuated equilibrium (Balogun and Hope-Hailey, 2004). While Reiley and Clarkson (2001) argued that organizations could not improve the performance if they were constantly changing, Burnes (2009) argued that it is vital for organizations that their employees can change continuously. In line with Burnes' view, Luecke (2003) argued that continuous change could then become the routine in its own right. I would argue, however, that corporate realities might scuffle between being constant in one workstream while discontinuous in others.

In the first category of change, rate of occurrence, it is noted that a discontinuous change could be manifested by a shift in organizational strategy, culture, structure, or all of them (Grundy, 1993). That type of change is triggered by either major internal problems or key external shocks (Senior and Fleming, 2006), comprising one-time events that take place through large and widely separated initiatives, followed by a long period of consolidations (Luecke, 2003). The advocates of this type of change claim that it is more cost-effective compared to other types, not requiring costly never-ending initiatives for both people and organizations (Seemann and Seemann, 2015). However, Nelson (2003) rejected this claim, as change cannot occur in a steady state, and it is usually incremental. The steady period between change stages could contribute to the illusion of having a concluded and stable change process. Nelson was not the only one with concerns about discontinuous change, or at least the sustainability of its benefits (Holloway, 2002). However, it is argued that discontinuous change increases the defensive behaviour of employees (Luecke, 2003).

The continuous change is about the eponymous ability to change continuously in a fundamental way, to keep up with the pace of changes taking place (Burnes, 2009). Incremental change, on the other hand, is accumulative and is best implemented through successive and negotiated shifts (Burnes, 2009). These shifts could be bumpy or smooth. Incremental change is about the individual parts of an organization decided to deal separately with one goal or problem at a time. While smooth, incremental change evolves slowly, in a systematic and predictable manner, it is also rare in current and future environmental states (Senior and Fleming, 2006). Bumpy incremental change, on the other hand, is about the period of relative peace punctuated by acceleration in the pace of change. This type of change is equivalent to the punctuated equilibrium (Balogun and Hope-Hailey, 2004). Punctuated equilibrium is built on the assumption that organizations could go through a relative period of serenity that is punctuated by the increased pace of operational change (Senior and Fleming, 2006). Table 2.1 shows the characterization of change by the rate of occurrence.

Table 2.1: Change characterized by the rate of occurrence

Type	Highlights
Discontinuous	Change marked by rapid shift in either strategy, structure, culture or all of them, triggered by internal problems or considerable external shock
Incremental (Smooth - Bumpy)	Either being bumpy or smooth, this type of change is noticed when individual parts of the organization deal with one objective or problem at a time
Continuous	The ability to change continuously in a fundamental way to keep up with the pace of the process
Punctuated equilibrium	This type of change assumes that there would be a period inside the organization of relative serenity punctuated by the ace of organizational changes.

Source: Luecke (2003), Balogun and Hope-Hailey (2004), Senior and Fleming (2006), Burnes (2009)

The second category of change is characterized by “how it comes about” and could be classified into four key types: planned, emergent, contingency, and choice (Senior and Fleming; 2006). However, two main types dominated literature: emergent and planned (Bamfrod and Forrester, 2003). Planned is about the process and how to explain the plan to bring about change in the organization (Eldrod and Tippett, 2002). This approach emphasizes the need to understand the organization through its different states during the change process (from the current state to the desired one), which is not an easy step to accomplish. The planned approach originates from the work done by Lewin (1946) and his three-stage model of change (Bamfrod and Forrester, 2003), upon which many scholars based their planned change frameworks (Bamfrod and Forrester, 2003). Despite many advocates of planned change due to its effective patterns and systematic nature, there is also criticism, especially for its focus on small-scale change and negligence of other variables that may exist during the execution process, especially employees’ response to the process (Bamford and Forrester, 2003).

The emergent approach, on the other hand, gained ground in response to the criticism of the planned approach, as it sees change as a bottom-up (Bamford and Forrester, 2003), voicing notions of those at the lower end of the organization power ladder, and factoring elements such as employees and their responses. However, scholars noted that the emergent approach does not equate to a linear process to implement the change; rather, it is a continuous, open-ended process of adaption (Burnes, 2004). While this approach is praised for its ability to factor the uncertainty

of both internal and external factors (Bamford and Forrster, 2003), it is criticized as being novice compared to the planned type and lacks coherence and diversity of techniques. While Burnes (2004) highly supported this type and claimed that the emergent approach is suitable for all organizations and all situations in all times, I would argue that organizations such as NI require a model that can deal with situational or contingent changes.

The contingency model is about how to change strategies and plans to achieve "optimum fit" in response to changing environmental factors (Dunphy and Stace, 1993). This model highlights changes that may occur during the process and the varied approaches to deal with the execution. Though the contingency model does not necessarily cater to a wide variety of options inside the same organization, it deals with every organization as a unique set of systems and structures. This model assumes that there are no two organizations that are alike, or which face an identical set of variables during the change process. However, like any other model, the contingency model faced criticism due to the difficulty in connecting the structure to performance and its key assumption that people inside the organization or their responses do not have any influence over the situational variables or structures (Burnes, 2004). A choice model is advocated being the model to promote a particular style, and organizations can choose to influence those situational variables. This model is predicated on organizations choosing a model, instead of waiting for external variables to dictate a choice to them, increasing the autonomy of the organization to guide their way forward.

Stewart and Karingas (2003) studied six Australian organizations and the way they managed organizational change and found that the top-down approach was the most commonly used and applied method. Their study intended to examine the effectiveness of different change approaches and their effectiveness in managing people in the process. Their study revealed that both approaches – planned and emergent – could be of a good fit to bureaucratic organizations. The combination of both methods could be effective in bringing about change in such organizations, which is consistent with the findings of Ryan et al. (2008), who argued that planned change should be complemented by other types of change approaches. Other scholars were also supporters of combining planned and emergent approaches in

bringing about organizational change (Sminia and Van Nistlrooij, 2006). Table 2.2 shows the characterization of change by how it occurs.

Table 2.2: Change characterized by “how it comes about”

Type	Highlights
Planned	This type of change is about the decided planned process to bring about change inside the organization.
Emergent	In this approach, it is argued that change occurs in a pace that makes it impossible to effectively identify, plan and implement the required changes.
Contingency	This model is about how to change strategies and plans to achieve 'optimum fit' in response to changing environmental factors.
Choice	This model suggest that organizations could choose own style and promote it to influence situational variable.

Source: Dunphy and Stace (1993), Burnes (2004), Senior and Fleming (2006)

The third category of change is characterized by the scale and could be classified into four types [Table 2.3] (Dunphy and Stace, 1993): fine-tuning, incremental adjustment, modular transformation, and corporate transformation. Fine-tuning change, also known as convergent (Nelson, 2003), is an ongoing change process aiming to match the organization's strategy, structure, process, and people (Senior and Fleming; 2006). It also aims to prepare personnel and includes employees' response as a factor in the change process (Dunphy and Stace, 1993). While the incremental adjustment model is about the distinct modification to management procedures and strategies, without including radical changes, the modular transformation is about the major shifts of one or more units or departments inside the organization, and it can be radical. The fourth type in this category is corporate transformation, where a radical alteration in the organizational strategy takes place, such as reorganization, revised mission or vision, or altered power status.

Table 2.3: Change characterized by its scale

Type	Highlights
Fine-tune	Also known as convergent, is an ongoing change process aiming to match organization's strategy. Structure, process and people.
Incremental adjustment	Is about the distinct modification to management procedures and strategies, without including radical changes.
Modular transformation	Is about the major shifts of one or more unit inside the organization and it can be radical
Corporate transformation	Is about the radical alteration in the organization strategy, such as reorganization, revised mission or vision, or altered power status.

Source: Dunphy and Stace (1993), Nelson (2003), Senior and Fleming (2006)

Different types of change could come about in different forms, affecting organizations differently, especially the way people respond to these types of changes. Moreover, the tension between scholars in identifying the most suitable type for the organization is obvious. Reflecting on these categories and NI, I would say that the type of change that most closely matches its needs is corporate transformation, which is discussed in detail in the findings chapter. One of the key shortfalls I noticed in arguments related to the types of change is the lack of attention given to the influence of some of these types on employees and their response to the process. While most scholars supported or criticized each type based on its suitability to organizations or leaders, they fell short when it came to employees' responses. Additionally, I would also argue that these dynamics are more prevalent in a context like NI and Dubai due to the high number of expatriates' workforce, with their culture and work style that may affect their responses. Therefore, the next section sheds more light on the interrelations between employees' responses and the change process.

2.3. Bringing About Change: Factors Influence Employees' Responses

2.3.1. Introduction

Leaders are considered to be key to unlock the potential benefits of employees during the change process, particularly in the way they respond to these changes or engaging them (Stragalas, 2010). Having a successful change is about managing the process in the short term, to achieve and sustain high-performance goals in the long term (Holbeche, 2006). I believe that leading the change process is important alongside selecting the suitable approach. It is argued that leaders who are not able to lead the implementation process or act effectively during a change may not be able to release their benefits or even survive it (Lewis, 2019). While there are many approaches identified by scholars in bringing about change, Kotter's (2012) eight-staged approach [Figure 2.2] is considered to be one of the most commonly used strategies to lead organizational change, representing an early view into a latter sophisticated model (Cusick, 2018).

Kotter's (2012) approach starts by establishing a sense of urgency, forming powerful coalitions, creating a clear and compelling vision, communicating this vision, empowering individuals to act, creating short-term wins, consolidation of these wins, and institutionalization of new processes to anchor them into the organizational culture. The strength in Kotter's model is linked to 34 real-life organizations in the US (Kotter and Cohen, 2002), which makes it a more practical approach. However, I would argue that Kotter's eight-staged approach is quite lengthy in today's corporate environment and needs an organization that has enough time and resources to combine these elements throughout the process. It is also argued that this process is usually left to consultants and specialists without developing in-house leaders' ability to mediate change (Cusick, 2018). Anyieni (2013) presented a streamlined process that starts with a plan, then goes on to initiation, realization, control, and stabilization, at both the organizational and individual levels. However, Anyieni's approach is more of a framework than a detailed process. Moreover, implementing change requires a coalition between all stakeholders, including employees and leaders, and leaders' support must effectively allocate resources required to drive the process, to increase the likelihood of successful implementation.



Figure 2.2: Change model – eight-staged approach

Source: Adapted from the eight-staged approach by Kotter (2012)

From a practical perspective, Rick (2016) suggested another process to assess and manage the change process [Figure 2.3]. The challenges associated with the change go from the ability to acknowledge the process, options to be taken, resources and requirements, and the time required to move from one stage to another. It is also important to embed the new changes into the system and deliver on commitments to both employees and shareholders. Rick (2016) made an analogy by referring to the change process as "dolphins, not whales", which refers to the process as small stages that need to be well managed, and not one big move that will happen once.

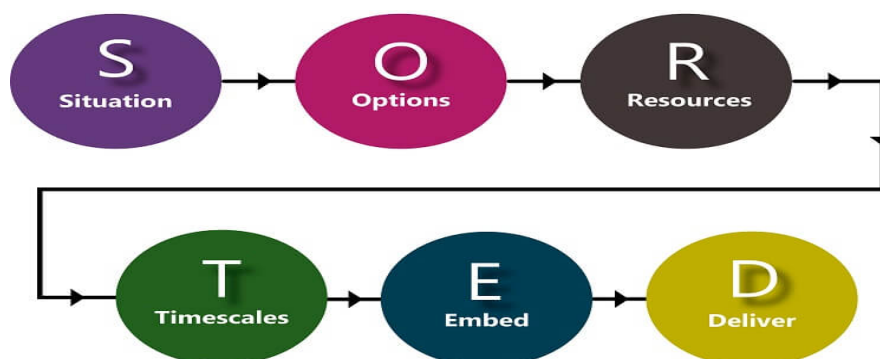


Figure 2.3: A sorted approach for successful transformational change

Source: Rick (2016)

There are, however, widely shared myths about how leaders can best lead the change process, as identified by Hosking and Anderson (2018). For instance, leaders perceive challenges with change as unprecedented turbulence, and a typical response to these turbulences is resistance, denial, or inaction to minimize its impact. Another myth noted by Hosking and Anderson (2018) is related to emotional experience, and how externally imposed turbulences could create overwhelming reactions from employees. Hosking and Anderson's study about financial institutions' leaders challenged these myths, and their findings suggested that leaders should not always perceive unprecedented turbulences as challenging or paralyzing. On the contrary, leaders could act in a way that reduces the complexity of change, especially at an early stage, capitalizing on their ability to influence the process. In my view, these findings were based on empirical investigations conducted in 1987, at a time when corporate dynamics were fundamentally different, including the pace of change, rendering these insights questionable for modern change management contexts, particularly when it comes to the impact of employees' responses on the change process.

2.3.2. Leading and Communicating through Change

The initial planning and designing phase of change is one of the most crucial stages in managing both of the process and People (Erwin, 2009). Dynamic management support provided by leaders is one of the effective tools to manage change (Sidra et al., 2013). However, there could be some factors that hinder leaders from implementing the desired change (Miller and Sardais, 2011), such as leadership dynamics (e.g., power struggles between organizational actors), which can inhibit them from doing the right thing for the organization as a whole (Ybema, Kamsteeg, and Veldhuizen, 2018). Effective change management, however, is about planning and the ability to anticipate a change in advance (Smith, 2006). Being ready for change could help in reducing anticipated resistance to the process and improve on employees' responses (Ionescu, Meruță and Dragomiroiu, 2014). It is also argued that organizational readiness could drive employees to exert greater efforts and display more supportive behaviour toward the change process (Weiner, 2009), though it is not a destination that could be easily reached, being a multi-faceted and multi-level construct assessed at both the individual and organizational levels (Shea et al., 2014). Moreover, the complexity of change proposed affects the level of

readiness organizations need before initiating the process (Pearson, 2011). Nevertheless, strategic change initiatives are considered to be a good opportunity for leaders to prepare and set the plans to communicate the new process (Hargie and Tourish, 2000), which could promote positive responses and increase employees' engagement to change (Bejestani, 2011).

Leading the change process is one of the key success criteria in bringing about change (Liu, 2010; Higgs and Rowland, 2011; Spicker, 2012; Gill, 2014). It is also argued that leadership could influence the change process positively by controlling the information flow and the time to release them to employees (Katsaros, Tsirikas and Bani, 2014). However, I believe that this could be one of the root causes of how employees are not actively supporting or engaged in the process. Moreover, information could be controlled to the extent that employees are not well informed of what is happening (when and where appropriate). Furthermore, successful change requires leadership and communication to be enacted (Higgs and Rowland, 2010).

Organizations should utilize one of the many change management models to understand the change process through its different stages (Rothwell et al., 2015), so it creates the proper planning and communication through the process (Kotter and Schlesinger, 2008). Having the framework is one of the steps to lead the change process, but leaders need to guide the whole process, including employees' responses. Isaksen and Tidd (2006) introduced a framework that could help in bringing about organizational change [Table 2.4], starting with the method and model, then moving to tools, techniques, and processes. While this framework provides a technique or a process, it does not translate these elements into a detailed plan on how to drive the process nor the people.

Table 2.4: Organizational change framework

Method	Focused on the way organizations do things in a particular way
Model	How organizations create structural designs to visualize others as part of the change process
Tools	What instruments organizations need or use to bring about the change process and implement it
Techniques	The technical details required to bring about / implement the change process
Process	Related to the procedures and how the change process is occurred inside the organization

Source: Isaksen and Tidd (2006)

Hayes (2014), on the other hand, presented a framework where understanding the issues or opportunities is the first step, followed by creating the desire to bring about change, and then the implementation. These simplified frameworks could be a good start to visualize change, but I would argue the practicality of such an approach in managing or bringing about change in a complex environment, as they are oversimplistic for such contexts. Laloux (2014) explored the way organizational management responds to the paradigm shift in the evolutionary management approach in relation to change by investigating 20 organizations around the world, working in various industries. The empirical findings of this study revealed that these organizations had several fundamental management similarities despite their diverse businesses and geographies: self-management, wholeness, and evolutionary purpose (Laloux, 2015a; 2015b).

An example of how communication is vital and could turn the paradoxes of success into failure is this apocryphal wartime tale. It illustrates the dangers of problems in communication, with a relayed message transforming from the order “send reinforcements, we are going to advance” to “send three and four-pence, we are going to dance” (Hammond, Keene and Raifa, 2006). Breakdowns in communication undermine the essential purpose of communication, and in the context of organizational change, the change itself cannot be actualized without effective communication, alongside other prerequisite elements (Aladwani, 2001). Empowerment, on the other hand, communicates to employees that the organizations trust their capabilities and views them as an important asset (Wilson and Chaudhry, 2017). Not only that, but it is also argued that the level of trust influence how employees respond to change (Smollan, R.K., 2013). However, it

cannot be assumed that such practice will necessarily work in the same manner in all organizations and for all individuals (Kraimer et al., 2011). I would argue instead that these elements could be utilized as levers to reduce the challenges and eliminate obstacles related to employees' responses to change. As the change could occur at different levels in the organization [Table 2.5], different strategies and techniques need to be developed to deal with these changes (Lashunda, 2010).

Table 2.5: Levels of change occurrences

Individual	Which is related to changing individuals inside ether organization
Organizational	Which is focused on organizational structure and systems
Organizational climate	Directly and only focused on changing organizational climate

Source: Lashunda (2010)

Change leaders need to ensure that key elements are in place, such as Proper communication channels, strong and committed leadership to drive the change, help employees understand the purpose of change, get them to participate willingly, and ready to face change (Hunnebeck, 2016). One of the other important points related to employees' responses to change is that those who are respected by their leaders bring a culture of success and positively support changes; however, employees are not necessarily looking for a heroic figure to lead them (Yukl, 2010). On the contrary, they are looking for someone who deals with them as humans and provides guidance and support. The organization could support the role of the leader in managing both employees and peers by having the proper structure and communication channels (Carnall, 2007).

Organizational change is less likely to succeed if leaders fail to keep employees informed about the change process and the progress of its implementation plan (Kreitner, 2004). In other words, having the correct message alongside the proper communication strategy is key to the success of the process: lack of information increases the tendency to assume that the change is failing or that there is no progress. Palmer (2012) noted that management support is one of the most important factors to successfully implement organizational change, and committed leadership is critical. Leaders' role in this process is not static, as their role varies depending on the stage and complexity of the process (Palmer and Dunford, 2008). They have also noted in their study about leadership and communication during

change that change leaders should act in a certain way to get to the desired destination, such as being active, visible, and committed; having the ability to direct employees; communicate properly, and being willing to institute leadership by example; devoting their focus and time to the process, and providing clear objectives and instructions. They also claimed that without having the above, the process could be highly affected, and the change could be jeopardized or flounder. They also noted that effective leadership should develop rapidly and be sustained during the entire change process. They complemented their views with a practical framework and set of tools to lead the change process. In my view, these four tools [Table 2.6] with their frameworks provide a practical approach to lead and properly communicate the desired objectives to employees.

Table 2.6: Practical approach to lead change

Team charter	This tool is used to have the objective clearly defined in an explicit way and to obtain written concurrence from the sponsor
Calendar test	This tool is meant to determine if the one leading the change is putting the required efforts and attention into the process
Personal audit	This tool is meant to develop the sponsor and members' awareness of what is needed to bring about successful change at each stage
Adopting change roles	This tool is to enable team members and provide assurance to them and information about who is accountable for critical success factors during the change process

Source: Palmer and Dunford (2008)

I would argue that another interesting point in Palmer and Dunford's (2008) study is how they concluded the process by anchoring change into the systems and structures of the organization. Anchoring change is vital and usually forgotten, as the newly introduced set of procedures to both employees and systems require time to settle, especially those related to behavioural and cultural changes. This final step has two key objectives: identify key systems, procedures, and structures that required attention to ensure the success of the change process in the long run, and align those to the desired behaviours and culture of both organizations and people. Failing to achieve those outcomes may result in having the system undercut by the status quo, with employees failing to internalize the changes, or worse – the organization realizing that it lacks the required competencies to sustain the changes.

Due to the importance of this final step in the change process, Palmer and Dunford (2008) provided a method to practically anchor change into the system and structure of the organization. For change to succeed, organizations need to provide resources and ensure that both leaders and employees are well equipped to deal with change, including the emergence of new models and cultural transformation (Knudsen et al., 2009). Workforce diversity also affects the change process (Greene and Kirton, 2011), as explored in the next section. However, orchestrating these factors together in a coherent manner requires good leadership of change. A framework has been developed [Figure 2.4] that illustrates these different aspects, based on the work of Rowland and Higgs (2009) and Valleala et al. (2015). The framework took the context of the researched organization and the factors that affect the process, not in isolation, but rather to properly assist the organization with communication, structure, strategy, and behavioural aspects that are necessary to bring about change.

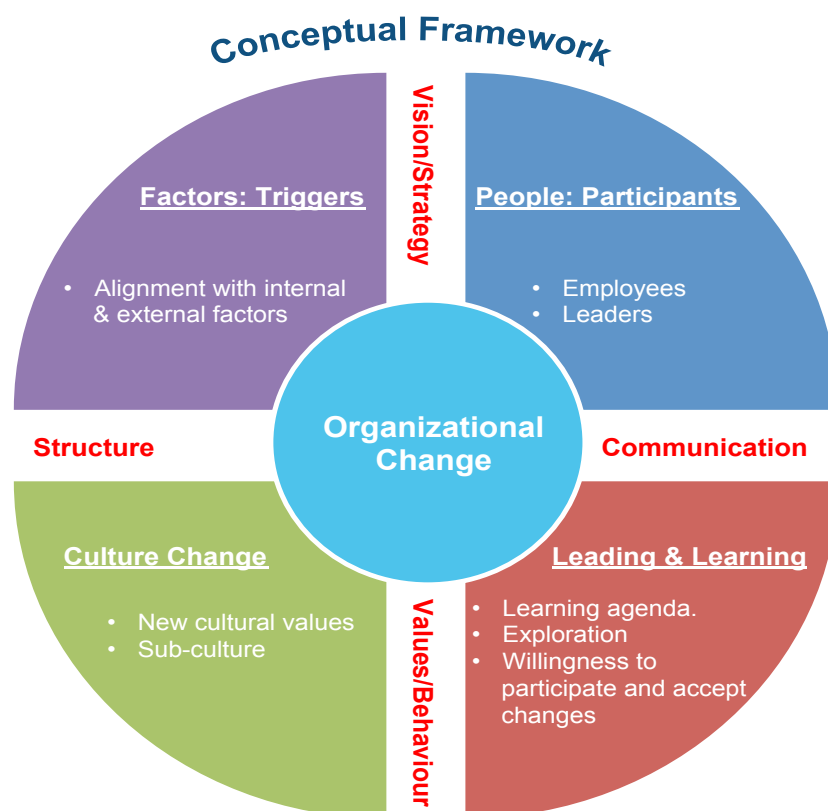


Figure 2.4: Conceptual framework of organizational change

Source: Rowland and Higgs (2009), Valleala et al. (2015)

2.3.3. Culture and Change

The focus in this particular aspect is on how culture (national and organizational) could have an impact on employees' response to change. Bringing about change comes with many challenges, including the organizational and national cultures of employees (Leavitt, 2014) and how they influence the way they respond to the process. Culture in the context of this study is a mix between national and organizational, as there is usually a correlation between organizational culture and people's backgrounds (Lanz and Tomei, 2016). It is argued that organizations should be culturally assessed to define if they are ready to undertake changes due to their impact (Katzenbach et al., 2012). Due to culture's influence on the mental assumptions, values, and beliefs of employees, it guides their actions through appropriate definitions of what behaviour is acceptable in different situations (Hill and Jones, 2010). The classical view of culture is referred to it as the basic set of assumptions that are learned by employees (Schein, 2010). In other words, it is the way things get done in the organization (Lanz and Tomei, 2016).

In this context, people (leaders and employees) internally reproduce what works for them - organizational culture/subculture - influenced by their own set of values and beliefs. In this regard, I would argue that culture is a mixture of national and organizational, whereby leaders enforce the social norms inside the organization, but it is continuously reproduced through its members. Additionally, the tension between the organizational culture, its sub-cultures, and the national culture of employees needs to be considered, as they may influence how employees respond to change. Accordingly, leaders are advised to understand these elements that drive employees' responses to any activity inside the organization, including change, as having a better understanding of these factors could increase the probability of success.

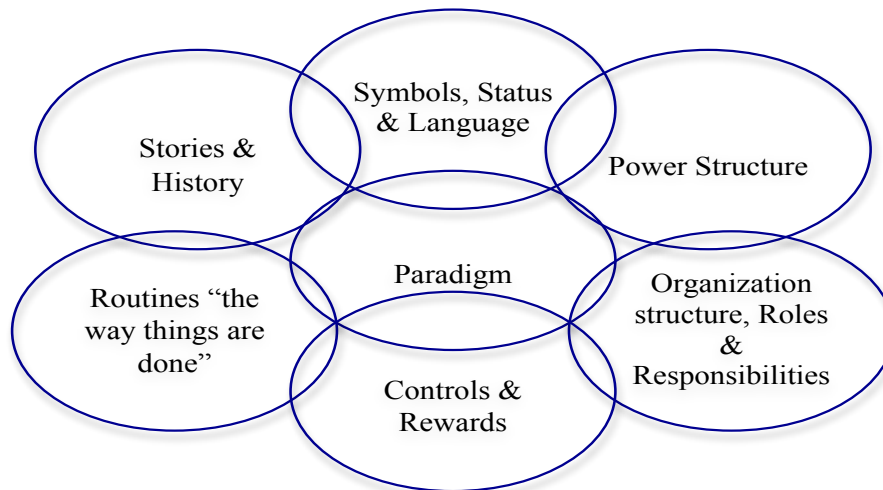


Figure 2.5: Culture web model

Source: Adapted from the work developed by Johnson and Scholes (2011)

Through their culture web model, Johnson and Scholes (2011) highlighted seven aspects to assess organizational culture [Figure 2.5]: stories, routines, symbols, power structure, controls, organizational structure, and paradigms. Paradigm is the summary of observed behaviours in previous elements of culture, or what they called “collective experience”. The strength of this model is that it draws leaders’ attention to the different elements that may impact the behaviour of employees and their level of adaptability to new systems, structures, and methods introduced during the change process. There is a correlation, however, between employees’ behaviour and the structure of the organization (Song, 2009). Schein’s (2010) three-level framework describes how this manifests in artefacts, espoused values and beliefs, and underlying assumptions [Figure 2.6]. For example, to lead a change process, it is essential to first understand if employees would accept/embrace or resist, based on their espoused values or beliefs. Doing so will not only assist in overcoming resistance but in anticipating what would trigger it beforehand. The idea here is to factor the human aspect into the process, especially how employees may perceive the change process and leaders’ actions.

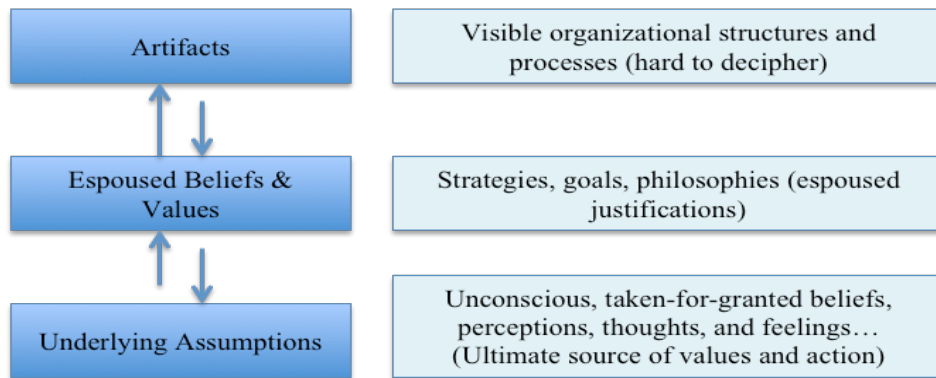


Figure 2.6: Three levels of culture

Source: Schein (2010, p. 26)

Organizational culture does not exist in isolation from the surrounding environmental factors (Cameron and Quinn, 2006; Hofstede et al., 2010). For example, in the Middle East, power distance is significantly higher than in Western Europe or North America (House et al., 2004). This is reflected in the greater prestige of leaders in the Middle East compared to other regions, and the low willingness of employees to voice concerns or question top-down decisions (and their greater readiness to execute top-down orders) (Den Hartog et al., 1999). There are numerous values that can be used to classify organizational culture, including those of Cameron et al. (2012) [Figure 2.7], which includes the following:

- *Clan*, where the organization is more flexible and focuses on internal people.
- *Market*, where the focus is on the external forces and value stability and controls.
- *Adhocracy*, where external forces and the flexibility of the organization are top priority.
- *Hierarchy*, where internal focus and stability of the organization are valued more than all other factors.

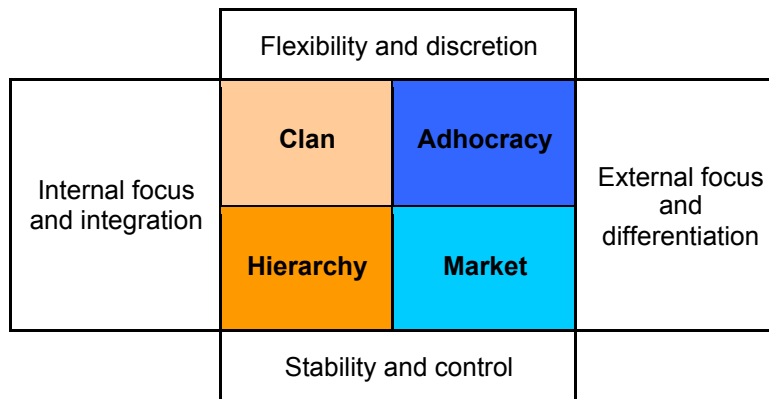


Figure 2.7: Competing value and culture typologies

Source: Cameron et al. (2012, p. 7)

It is argued, however, that employees generally favour clan and market culture, and hierarchy is the least preferable type of culture (Kotzian, 2009). Not only that, but such cultural value is argued to have a direct impact on how employees respond to organizational change or voice their concerns (Ionescu and Profireoiu, 2019). However, I would add that this preference could not be generalized, especially with the highlighted differences between the cultural values that dominate the Middle East and how they are compared to other regions (AIDossari, 2016). Logan et al. (2008), in their book *Tribal Leadership*, identified five stages of corporate culture and how employees go through different stages in responding to changes:

1. Life sucks.
2. My life sucks.
3. I'm great, but you are not.
4. We are great, but they are not.
5. Life is great.

They claimed that third and fourth stages are mostly where employees get stuck in a loop of seeking to gain advantages over other individuals, or to create a preferential situation for their clique groups over others (Logan et al., 2008). Leaders can play a key role in such situations by preparing the workforce and workplace for such changes in alignment with common organizational goals of universal benefit for all employees (Gayathri et al., 2012). It is advised, therefore, that change leaders in

multicultural organizations with a diverse workforce, such as NI, understand how employees interpret certain actions and behaviours to minimize, if not eliminate, potential resistance to the proposed change (Deng and Gipson, 2008). Knudsen et al. (2009) urged organizations to equip both leaders and employees with the required resources to handle cultural changes (Harigopal, 2001), as diversity could affect the organization and the way employees respond to changes (Thamarajakshi, 2001; Greene and Kirton, 2011).

In Leavitt's (2014) study about cultural factors affecting employees' responses, it was noted that during the past 30 to 40 years, there had been an explosion in the use of multinational teams, which is one of the outcomes of globalization. This led organizations to treat diverse workforces as a taken-for-granted aspect of modern society (Nicolescu and Verboncu, 2006). However, being able to lead with a diverse workforce is not an easy task (Early, 2006). A diverse workforce means that a mixture of people with different identities came to work together under the same social system (Nicolescu and Verboncu, 2006; Ionescu, R.E. and Profiroiu, A.G., 2019), in which change may trigger different responses from employees influenced by their different backgrounds (AlDossari, S. 2016). Not only that, but a diverse workforce has been noted to influence the implementation process, especially in technology-led global organizations (Kwon and Nicolaidis, 2017).

In Dubai, the same ethos applies, as the percentage of expat workforce is large. Diversity, however, could be a double-edged sword (Stevens, Victoria, and Sanchez-Burks, 2008). In a meta-analysis of 108 empirical studies on the process and performance of multicultural teams, Stahl et al. (2010) found that diverse teams suffered from increased conflicts, but they were more creative. Nevertheless, team size, dispersion, tenure, and the complexity of the project could alter these findings (Leavitt, 2014). Another empirical study examining how diversity and inclusion coexist in organizations is that of Roberson (2006), which noted that the conceptual distinction between diversity and inclusion inside organizations is not clear. The study also noted that when organizations use the term inclusion, they usually have some blind spots of presupposing the existence of minorities. Furthermore, the organization usually draws on learning from a diverse workforce but does not

necessarily allocate enough resources to encourage or include them in the organizational plan, or to proactively manage the diversity subject.

Another study in the Middle East, conducted by a Danish expatriate in a Saudi organization found that intercultural dialogue and knowledge sharing were perceived as slowing down decision-making, and the time invested in understanding the cultural differences were perceived as wasted time, unnecessarily complicating the path to action (Lauring, 2011). Additionally, Danish managers viewed members of other nationalities in need of a firm management style, due to inherent norms and values that are embedded in their cultures. One of the key barriers that were also found as part of this study is the use of one-way communication; in other words, workers acted in opposition to management, fostering more contempt and distrust among managers, which caused the information to be restricted to those who speak Danish. While the findings highlighted how a diverse workforce could hinder communication channels and the differences in the background could affect the way employees deal with each other, it is argued that there is no clear evidence of international team synergy increasing their effectiveness by sharing insights or knowledge (Ting-Toomey, 2010). Furthermore, it is argued that in some cases, frequent intercultural interactions could reinforce negative stereotypes and polarization of certain groups or responses to the change process (Osland et al., 2000). Therefore, to lead change effectively in an intercultural environment, there has to be a good understanding of contexts and meaning from members of these teams (Leavitt, 2014), and how that may influence their responses to change.

The cultural aspect in the change process could arguably be managed with the use of rituals that exist in organizational systems to reinforce or evoke a sense of belonging (Leavitt, 2014), and to encourage employees in overcoming latent elements of the old systems and positively engage in the change process (Ionescu, Meruță and Dragomiroiu, 2014; Ionescu and Profiroiu, 2019). However, such cultural management is a complex anthropological exercise and is not easily achieved. It also adds to the overall complexity of change, and not all leaders appreciate the value of such in-depth cultural engagement or the impact of managing employees' responses during the change process. Good organizational management, however, should provide crystallized views of what it means to have a good and strong

organizational culture (Nicolescu and Verboncu, 2006), and it should shape or influence the culture itself and enhance employees' experience and engagement during the change process (Nicolescu and Verboncu, 2011; Raina, Rose and Thomas, 2018).

In a recent case study by Lanz and Tomei (2016) about building inter-organizational trust in challenging contexts, they examined the relationship between employees and leaders inside organizations. The study suggested that building a culture of trust in organizations and between employees requires repeated interactions between parties and a strong relationship between those involved in the process (Gulati and Sytch, 2007). This culture of trust could be achieved if conflicts are reduced (Alper, 2008), anxiety is diminished, employees are engaged, and fear is managed (Mesquita, 2007; Tomlinson and Mayer, 2009; Smollan, 2013). Many scholars have also argued that organizational justice is a key ingredient to increase employees' trust (Colquitt and Rodell, 2011; Smollan, 2013). It is also argued that trust could be repaired through curbing untrustworthy behaviours and reinforcing those trustworthy ones (Gillespie and Dietz, 2009). However, I believe that leaders are usually preoccupied with fixing issues related to the change process, systems, procedures, or structure, while one of the most important aspects of the change process is neglected: gaining employees' trust (Smollan, 2013). While organizations try to adapt to changes in the work environment with diverse employees' needs to accommodate the evolution in business and operating models, the adoption process is usually far from being smooth, and the difficulties in managing employees' responses in a diverse workforce are greater than anticipated (Donnelly, 2015). Accordingly, employees' responses to changes mirror all of these factors, as explained in the following section.

2.4. Employees' Responses to Organizational Change

Several studies examined the impact of organizational change on employees (Mathieu, Gilson, and Ruddy, 2006; Arvey et al., 2007; Muhammad, Bal, and Long, 2016), and how it could affect the organization (Appelbaum, Laconi and Matousek, 2007), especially in a complex context with high expat workforce like the Middle East (Raina, Rose, and Thomas, 2018). Involving employees in the early stage of planning for the journey could increase their commitment and steers their efforts

towards the organizational objectives (Whelan-Berry and Somerville, 2010; Alasadi and Askary, 2014). Not only that, but it could positively boost their level of engagement (Yousef, 2000). While employees are increasingly considered as the driving forces of change (Bhatti, Shahzad and Jinnah, 2008), leaders do not usually consider them from an early stage (Appelbaum, Laconi and Matousek, 2007). Some scholars have also argued that no organization can progress with a change without the inputs of employees, especially those front-ending the organization, and in an organization like mine, where business is fundamentally dependant on people and how they perform in their roles (Al-khrabsheh et al., 2018; Aldulaimi, 2019).

Scholars highlighted that organizational change often fails due to people-related factors (Burnes, 2011; Saks and Burke, 2012). The implementation of organizational change depends mainly on the support of employees (Herold et al., 2008). I believe that employees' support and their willingness to take a positive part in the process determine, to a great extent, the potential for change success (Al-khrabsheh et al., 2018). In this regard, it is noted that the support required from employees for the successful implementation of the change process is not only dependant on *what will change*, but *how* the process is managed (Herold et al., 2008). The human side of the change process has attracted increasing interest (Swierczek and Truong, 2009; Prosci, 2017), and it is argued to be the most important aspect, as it directly affects the level of resistance in the organization (Brenner, 2008).

At the beginning of change, employees think about the impact that this process will have on them, and how these new processes will affect their day-to-day responsibilities (Hiatt et al., 2012), which is the case in the researched organization. Most employees perceive change as the process of facing a new or different way of performing their job, which could affect their daily lives at work (Alasadi and Askary, 2014). Employees might not be aligned with leaders' vision due to a lack of interest, or the absence of proper leadership to drive them during the change process (Miller and Sardais, 2011), or due to lack of trust (Smollan, 2013). To address this, I would commend Brenner's (2008) notion that an organization's key stakeholders should show commitment to their work and support the change process for it to be successful, especially leaders' support to employees. The outcome of workplace change is intrinsically and inextricably tied to employees being able to do their job

differently (Hiatt and Creasey, 2012), and assisting employees to respond positively to change will influence their ability to meet business objectives during the change process (Hiatt, 2016). While employees react to change in different ways, ranging from reactive, proactive, receptive to resistant (Del Val and Fuentes, 2003), they may also go through various different stages on individual trajectories during the process, such as anxiety, denials, fear, threat, guilt, disillusion, depression, hostility, gradual acceptance, and moving forward (Kotter, 2008). Bringing about change is about encouraging employees to embrace and accept the suggested changes (Hiatt, 2016), and respond positively to the change process (AIDossari, 2016). Not only that but changing their perception to support change is influenced by how they are trained and prepared beforehand, especially in a Middle East context (AIDossari, 2016).

2.5. Employees' Resistance to Change

2.5.1. Background

The arguments exist in this domain are not about change versus resistance but the coexistence of change and resistance, as argued by scholars (Oreg, 2003; Oreg, Vakola, and Armenakis, A., 2011; Ybema and Horvers, 2017; Ybema, Kamsteeg and Veldhuizen, 2018). Resistance and behavioural responses to change go back to the earlier time of change and change management (Lewin, 1947a; 1947b), but more focus on the subject started to take place in the 1970s as part of organizational management (Kotter and Schlesinger, 2008). During this period, there were many debates around the subject and what constitutes resistance. It is argued that resistance to change is neither good nor bad; rather, it is a natural, expected part of the change process (Bovey and Hede, 2001), and a socially constructed phenomenon generated through the interactions of different parties that are involved in the change process (Van Dijk and Van Dick, 2009). However, there is a relationship between the behaviour and attitude of individuals and any new change process, which could be expressed either overtly or covertly (Shang, 2012), in a destructive or non-destructive way, and either type would affect the change process. A good understanding of these factors in change management may lead to a successful implementation and realization of benefits (Ford, Ford, and D'Amelio,

2008), mainly by attending to people's needs during the change process (Hayes, 2014).

Multiple studies approached the subject of resistance to change, but there is no universal definition of the concept itself (Weitz, 2001). Rather, the term remains loose, and takes an explicit or implicit form, leaving it to readers to extract the definition as per their own understanding (Hollander and Einwohner, 2004). Change activities across the organization happen at different levels, and these dispersed autonomous activities could be a source of disruption (Lechner and Floyed, 2012; Friesl and Kwon, 2017). Employees, however, could respond to these activities either by being supportive, neutral, or resistant. Resistance usually refers to the sense of opposition in the organizational context (Hollander and Einwohner, 2004) or the sense of dissent in general (Giangreco and Peccei, 2005).

Resistance could also be defined as the intentional act of omission or commission (Piderit, 2000). While these definitions and notions tried to define the term, they approached it from a polarized perspective ("either-or", "I omit, or I commit"), which does not do justice to a complex phenomenon with many variables. Historically, resistance is considered to be the behaviour intended to protect individuals from the effect of change as they assume that the change process is a threat, and they need to act defensively. Moreover, it is attributed to hindering or slowing the implementation process of organizational change or keeping the status quo (Maurer and Githens, 2009). However, I believe that the connection between change and resistance is usually constrained by the negative connotation or the classical view of resistance being the harmful act of destruction conducted by individuals who are trying to jeopardize the change process, which is a very short-sighted view that neglects contemporary notions.

The classical view of resistance interpreted it as the loss of control over long-standing work patterns (Long, 2010), due to a lack of understanding of the change process itself. Fundamental principles of physics, however, suggested that resistance is analogous to two Newtonian principles (Burke, Lake and Paine, 2009; Anderson, 2010):

- Every action has an equal and opposite reaction.

- A body in motion will continue being in motion until acted on by another force that will shift the motion in accordance with the vector of that force.

These notions suggest that action naturally produces a reaction (Anderson, 2010). However, it is argued that such notions have “taken us as far as we go” and contributed to the misleading conception that any change is resisted in an attempt to avoid or escape the transformation efforts (Piderit, 2000). These conventional viewpoints projected resistance as a natural occurrence to any change, which is usually negative. More recent scholars advocate a new trend, replacing the physics allegory with a more organic or biological view (Anderson, 2010), perceiving it as a natural and useful component to the change process (Burke, Lake and Paine, 2009). One of the organizational developments professionals used an analogy to better explain resistance during the change process is in terms of resistance behaviour being like a white blood cell attacking a germ (Anderson, 2010). These notions viewed resistance as a healthy companion to the change process, or at least as a not intrinsically negative “barrier” to the change process and leaders’ preferred ways of doing things.

Due to the overwhelming attempts in defining resistance, one could argue that the conceptualized outcome turned to be somehow confused. However, what I can summarize is that there is some sort of consensus that acts of resistance involve individual behavioural and cognitive aspects (Piderit, 2000). While behavioural aspects are about the reactions of individuals in response to change in their surroundings (Goldenberg and Oreg, 2007; Oreg and Sverdlik, 2011), cognitive aspects are about individuals' beliefs and thoughts in relation to these changes. Workplace resistance is about the "local social production involving the discursive participation of different members of the organization" (Prasad and Prasad, 2002).

One of the other perspectives to resistance is about how individuals feel about the change, or what Piderit calls “affective dimension” (Piderit, 2000). In his study, Kotter (2008) observed 100 companies over a decade and noted that obstacles and challenges associated with the change process usually hinder employees from embracing the new process. Another study conducted by Spreitzer and Quinn (1996) included 3000 Ford managers. They discovered that managers blamed executives when it came to resistance to change. These findings resonate with Smith et al.’s

(2017) report on how people in power could be one of the obstacles to organizational change. Therefore, it is important to understand the reasons and causes of resistance, as examined in the next section.

2.5.2. Employees' Resistance

It is argued that in the Middle East, there is a correlation between resistance and change, as there is a lack of transparency and communication between leaders and employees (AlDossari, 2016). Resistance is largely attributed to individuals' behaviours (Mumby, 2005), referring to psychological phenomena attributed to individuals working in organizations. Some argue that this phenomenon is essentially apart from organizational management and organizational change literature, being neither a factual nor descriptive report meant to mirror reality (Hollander and Einwohner, 2004). It is something that does not exist independently from the observer: it is rather the language of the observer observing the phenomenon (Ford and Ford, 2009). While scholars usually take either a sociological or psychological approach to resistance, I would argue that, in some instances, a mixture of both provides a better and more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. This is more germane to potential questions of whether every act of resistance *is* resistance, and whether resistance is always negative in organizational contexts. These two questions can inform the development of my action plan to assist in resolving the problems and deal with negative aspects of resistance if found in NI. They can also provide a better understanding of the phenomenon, which would otherwise be explained by those perceiving resistance as a harmful act conducted by employees aiming at slowing or stopping NI from achieving its goals.

In their empirical studies about employees' responses to change, Coch and French (1948 cited in Paren, 2015) noted that resistance experienced by workers was a motivational problem induced by employees' frustration and anxiety about the change process, which could be entrenched if shared between them and thus turn into a collective attitude. While this study is quite dated, I would argue that it continues to hold a lot of resonance for contemporary organizations and realities. It is also argued that resistance is the outcome of employees' fears, being their "natural survival mechanism" against the threat that may be brought by the new

organizational change into the system (Ford, Ford and D'Amelio, 2008). If employees' personal characteristics are matched to the organization's design, they will most probably choose to stay in the organization and accept changes (Wilson and Chaudhry, 2017). However, if they perceive a disconnect between their own values and those of the organization, they will either resist changes or choose to leave. While the general perception built around resistance is negative, and the negative connotation is usually attached to any discussion around employees' resistance to change, I would argue that not every act of resistance is genuinely driven by such motives as in contemporary notions. Moreover, employees' resistance could show leaders some aspects of the change process that they might have otherwise missed (Paren, 2015).

Collaboration amongst the workforce inside the organization is necessary for the success of the change process, regardless of the hierarchy (Doerscher, 2011). However, as in any human relationship that requires interaction between parties, and resistance occurs as a malfunction in this cooperation (Bovey and Hede, 2001). In a study of organizational change, Fine (1986) noted that resistance is inevitable to change process, and people tend to resist change as it affects them inside the organization. In that regard, she also argued that employees could either support the change or resist and thwart the efforts to implement the change. Similarly, Paren (2015) noted that resistance could help show what might otherwise be harmful to the organization.

I believe that what could be viewed as resistance could have underlying drivers, and not necessarily be an act of refusal to execute a particular process or procedures, but more of genuine concerns towards the events in an endeavour to protect the interest of the organization and its people. While Kotter's (1996) notion in this regard is also quite dated, I would argue that what he assumed is still valid in regard to how involving employees, and keeping them informed, could actually assist in breaking through employees' resistance and potentially increase the likelihood of their positive and constructive engagement during the change process, not only to mitigate resistance to change but to elicit positive, active contributions to improve it [Figure 2.8].

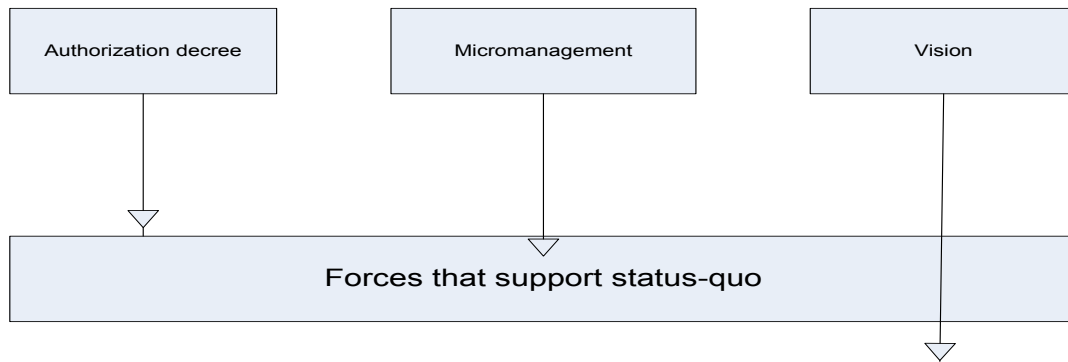


Figure 2.8: Breaking through employee resistance

Source: Kotter (1996)

Employees' responses to change could take different forms, and some of the key aspects to consider when assessing resistance are the reasons, sources, intensity, and focus. Anderson (2010) highlighted that employees' assessment of these aspects is their way to start making sense of the process, and then to act accordingly. While it is more demanding to identify the reasons and sources of resistance, these aspects are complex and interconnected and embedded in the organizational context. While the focus of resistance could be noted in three key aspects (self, other people, and the organization), its intensity could be classified as being latent, awaiting a trigger, and extreme reactions [Figure 2.9]. Resistance intensity, on the other hand, could be a register of the vector and power of the opposing forces (Anderson, 2010). In this regard, resisters could move from the dormant to the passive stage once the change process is initiated, and the intensity escalates (potentially reaching sabotage when the plan becomes more concrete). There is, however, a relationship between the intensity and the size of change; the more targeted area or size of forces, the higher the intensity becomes to match with the progress, but that could vary in some cases based on the context of the organization.

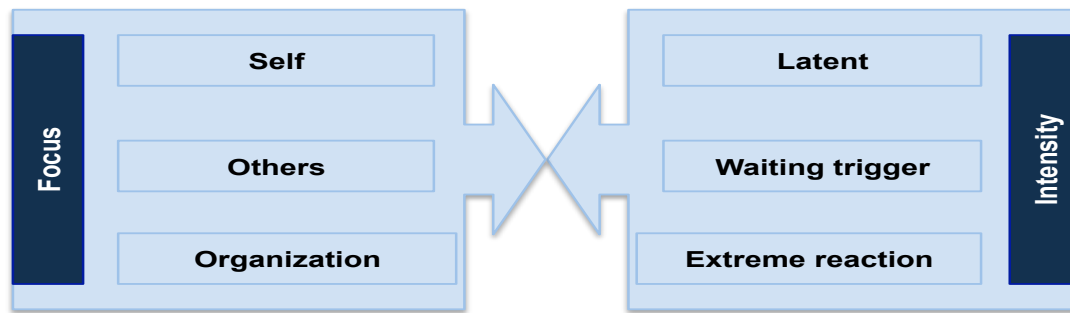


Figure 2.9: Focus and Intensity of Employees' Resistance

Source: Anderson (2010)

Though conventional wisdom considers resistance as a lead to inertia and rigidity by maintaining a particular path (Friesl and Kwon, 2017), contemporary notions have argued that resistance could be a facilitator of change (Mirabeau and Maguire, 2014). Employees may not necessarily resist change in itself, but the way it has been communicated, managed or implemented (Dent and Goldberg, 1999). What constitutes resistance is very much dependant on the evaluation, categorization, and considerations of parties involved in conceptualizing the issue; it is brought to existence through assertion and declaration in conversation (Ford and Ford, 2010).

In the Middle East, there could be some other factors that influence employees' responses to change, and in particular, their resistance (Yousef, 2000; Ali, 2009; Branine & Pollard, 2010; Ali, 2011; AIDossari, 2016). These factors are a combination of cultural and leadership traits that dominate most organizations in the Middle East. While the dominating cultural values are about power distance, uncertainty avoidance, clan, and the hierarchal nature of organizations, leadership is about the high power distance that makes leaders mostly in an authoritarian position, and that affects how and what they communicate to employees. It was also noted that these factors affect the way employees are inexpressive and refrain from voicing their concerns due to the consequences that they might face. Though, no clear correlation between these factors and employees' resistance, some limited researches in this region highlighted the potential impact of such factors, especially with their impact on communication and employees' engagement (Yousef, 2000; Ali, 2011; AIDossari, 2016).

On the one hand, one could argue that resistance could be a reflection of how employees' defence mechanisms function as they typically join an organization to find consistency, role congruence, and comfort of belonging to a group (Anderson,

2010). On the other, there are as many types and reasons for resistance as those investigating it. Additionally, there is a need to differentiate between resistance and the inability to change (Hultman, 1998). I would also argue that there is a genuine qualitative difference between not wanting to change and not able (not having the required skills) to change. However, from several studies across multiple organizations, it is noted that there is a broader explanation of why people respond to organizational change in a certain way (Ford and Ford, 2010), which could widely vary, being subject to multiple factors (as explained above).

I would add that many studies about resistance highlighted change leaders' perspectives and paid less attention to employees. However, both sides are important to comprehensively understand the true composition of this behaviour. It is also argued that employees' resistance gained much attention, with negligible consideration of the effect of leaders' resistance (Friesl and Kwon, 2017). Some scholars argued that top management resistance to change could be one of the sources that affect employees' response to change (Lecher and Floyd, 2012). I would also argue that leaders' resistance could encourage employees' resistance, potentially in covert or implicit ways. The following section discusses the key sources of employees' resistance during the change process in detail.

2.5.3. Sources and Causes of Employees' Resistance

The inherent tensions that accompany the change process and the autonomous activities dispersed by members of the organization could be one of the leading sources of resistance (Hisrich and Kearney, 2012; O'Reilly and Tushman, 2013). In this regard, nine reasons for resistance were identified based on an empirical study by Anderson (2011):

1. *Inertia*: As in many cases (including NI), the board recognizes the need for sweeping change and often starts by replacing the CEO, and as the new leadership comes to the organization with their new leadership styles, one source of resistance is the established culture of the previous leadership.
2. *Reluctance of taking on new work*: One of the common subtractions in fostering change is that new initiatives are heaped on top of the old, without considering the need to remove antiquated realignment of reward or

remuneration policies (Lewin, 1947). Keeping the old reward structures while expecting new behaviours is the common mistake change leaders make (Burke, Lake and Paine, 2009).

3. *Status quo protection*: This relates to preferring existing and known ways of doing things, for various reasons. One key motivation for this is to avoid taking on what is perceived as extra and unnecessary work, whether as a result of the change or the actual change process itself. Asking people to work differently or undertake extra work, usually evokes resistance. As well to avoid laborious tasks, this can be due to the perception in change of implicit affronts to employees' current expertise, training, and performance (Cameron and Quinn, 2006).
4. *The implication that the current system is broken*: Once a change is initiated, there is a connotation that the current system is broken. The suggestion that there is a need to change may imply (as perceived by employees) that employees' old ways need to be improved, or the old way ways of working will not sustain the organization's vision anymore, which can be perceived as an implicit criticism of their personal attributes and performance.
5. *Culture clash*: Organizational change inherently ruptures the old fabric of the organization by modifying the existing culture, which is the glue that holds the organization together (Cooren et al., 2011). It is almost certain that contemplating change without proper consideration of the cultural aspects of the organization can cause the paradox of success, turning into failure (Cameron and Quinn, 2006).
6. *Fear*: There could be many drivers of fear, such as the threat of job losses, uncertainty, or confusion about the process. Alongside these factors, new skills required for the new proposed process as part of the change could also bring some sort of fear. In the researched organization (NI), this could be one of the key elements, especially as most of the workforce is expatriate (related to labour and residency legislation, as discussed previously).
7. *Legitimate concerns*: There could be genuine concerns among employees caused by problems in change designs or plans, and indeed mistakes of

change leaders or agents. These could lead employees to conclude that the new plan will simply not work as proposed by change leaders, often based on their front-line, first-hand knowledge of organizational operations.

8. *Hypocritical or unfair behaviour of change leader/ agent:* One of the key reasons to cause resistance is when employees view the change leader or agents as hypocritical and unfair to the process and people involved in the process. Trust erodes when change leaders/ agents are not in sync with work/ task values or shared decorum, which is an important component in the change process. Misinterpretation of the errors of change leaders/ agents could also lead to this notion, especially if leaders/ agents do not demonstrate otherwise. The burden here is on the change leader/ agent to behave in an ethically appropriate way, as even minuscule actions could become pretexts for resistance.
9. *Damaged relationship and personality clash:* People are the core component of organizations, and their personalities, values, and beliefs should be accounted for as an intrinsic part of the change process (Cameron and Quinn, 2006). Being a member of the same organization does not necessarily mean that you share the same set of values and beliefs as all others, or that your personality is in sync with other members. Differences in language, leadership, working style, or interests could lead people into a mode of resistance, as they simply feel that their values and beliefs are being tampered with or ignored, and these difference could be reinforced between those who do not share the same set of interests, values, or beliefs.

It is interesting that Anderson (2011) also highlighted these considerations with regard to leadership practices and how they affect employees' response to change, as presented previously in this chapter. This also highlights that the classical or conventional view towards resistance is short-sighted, and does not account for the myriad factors that could influence employees' responses to any action inside the organization, including change. Comparing contemporary studies like that of Anderson (2011) to earlier ones, like those of Fine (1986) and Baker (1989) [table 2.7], reveals how the subject developed over time, and the notions that were mostly

attached to negative connotations have changed based on new and emergent findings.

Hultman (1998) provided a good set of sources of resistance that emerge from discrepancies between different factors, such as real and facts, descriptive and evaluative, and predictive beliefs and values. These competing values are similar to the competing cultural values noted by Cameron et al. (2012), but the latter is more focused on the internal organizational cultural dynamics that affect employees during the change process. Though contemporary views provide more updated perspectives, this does not mean that earlier studies are wrong or that the findings of earlier studies do not contain ongoing relevance for the current body of knowledge. In her earlier studies, Fine (1986) examined resistance from a behavioural perspective and identified the reasons for the negative behaviour of employees or for resisting change. While she argued that incompetent management could accelerate employee's resistance, it is also assumed that all resistance is negative and is mostly driven by employees. In this regard, Fine (1986) highlighted eight reasons that could cause resistance:

1. *General uncertainty about the effect of change:* Employees respond well to change when they are kept informed, and management genuinely tries to ease their fears by providing information in advance, fully informing employees, and answering and questions about the process, clarifying its rationale.
2. *Uncertainty about job performance:* Employees fear uncertainty about what is expected of them and how their job performance will be affected. It is often noticed that employees with more experience in doing things in a particular way could resist the change than those who have no or little experience (Sagie et al., 1985). Leaders could reassure employees that they will help them develop the new required skills what exactly will they be doing in the new world.
3. *Employee participation in the change process:* Employees who are not engaged in the process are more likely to show resistance and vice-versa. Participation increases awareness and knowledge, and it could also satisfy

the ego of employees. More importantly, employees feel that they have some control over the process since they are participating in driving or implementing the change.

4. *Social consequences*: Employees fear change when the potential social consequences of the change process are not anticipated or included, as that may affect their values and beliefs.
5. *Failure to prove that change is needed*: When change leaders fail to properly articulate the need for change and convince employees of that, employees tend to feel that the new changes are not required, and they are unwilling to actively participate and engage in making extra efforts to support it.
6. *Failure to commit sufficient resources to the process*: When employees are asked to take on extra work and deliver on the new process without having extra resources, their tendency to resist increases. It is not uncommon to have employees become withdrawn as they experience the stress of the change process (Fine, 1986).
7. *Failure to tie value to change*: Organizational values and culture is important to employees and plays a key role in their day-to-day lives. Failing to anticipate the effect of the change on these factors increases the chances of resistance.
8. *Failure to create a climate conducive to change*: When there is no positive environment accompanying the change process, employees fail to overcome the changing pressure. There has to be a climate where change flourishes, and positive attitudes are built around the process.

Table 2.7: Reasons for Employees' Resistance

Reasons for Employees' Resistance		
	Anderson (2011)	Sara Fine (1986)
Reasons	Inertia: established culture of previous leadership	Uncertainty about the effect of change
	Reluctance in taking on new work on top of existing one without proper rewards	Unclarity of what is required from employees
	Status quo protection and preference to existing rituals	Not engaging employees in the process
	Implicit indications that current system is broken and employees performance and their personal traits is the reason (criticism)	Fear of social consequences of the change process
	Culture clash between leaders and employees	Failure to prove that change is needed
	Fear: from job-loss or uncertainty	Failure to commit enough resources
	Legitimate concerns: initial indications shows that change is not working, whether due to change leaders or change process	Failure to tie value to change
	Unfair behavior of change leaders/ agents	Failure to create positive environment / culture
	Damaged relationship or personality clash between leaders and employees	

Sources: based on the work of Fine (1986) and Anderson (2011).

The reasons for resistance explained above do not present the full spectrum, but they provide a great part of it and shed light on what could triggers employees' resistance to change. While resistance is well researched, scholars may have used the language differently or referred to different aspects of the phenomenon, and it continues to be the "sleeping dragon of a change process" (Janas, 1998). The subject has witnessed contradictory interpretations, referring to resistance as either harmful or useful, based on the notion or the perspective of the researcher. However, investigating the literature, including those investigated the phenomenon in the Middle East, highlighted many of the different aspects and notions discussed in this subject, which is very helpful from both researcher and practitioner perspectives. The existing understanding of the phenomenon may change in the future due to its complexity and the many variables highlighted earlier especially the social and

human-related ones. However, one of the key challenges in NI is to erode or reduce the culture of blame, or at least balance the existing notions by presenting the other side of the story adequately; employees. Not only that, but understanding the underlying drivers for employees' responses in NI will greatly benefit the organization in providing a proper action plan to overcome these challenges if there is a true will from the leadership team, which I believe it exist being allowed to conduct this in-depth study.

2.6. Conclusion

In conclusion, I would argue that organizational change seems to be inevitable, whether organizations are ready to deal with it or not, especially with the external and internal factors that drive and influence the way it comes about. Most organizations are affected by those factors, whether big or small, and on all fronts, involving resources, structures, people, and processes (Jaros, 2010). Change occurs in different forms and has varied effects on organizations, requiring a set of capabilities and equipped leaders to successfully lead its execution. The tension between scholars in identifying the best suitable leadership style to drive each type of change, however, creates confused frameworks, which adds to the complexity of the process. Additionally, differences between scholars and practitioners on how to optimally manage organizational change continue to be an issue, and this study could help in bridging this gap by providing a better understanding combining both worlds by building a hybrid framework based on academic foundations that is acceptable and serviceable to practitioners.

The outcome of change is intrinsically and inextricably linked to employees' abilities to do their jobs differently (Hiatt and Creasey, 2012). Additionally, enabling employees to adapt to changes influences their ability to meet business objectives (Hiatt, 2016). Accordingly, I would say that leading change is about leading employees and encouraging them to embrace and accept the suggested changes. Alongside that, leaders should act in a way that reduces the complexity of change, especially at an early stage, capitalizing on their ability to influence the process positively. Organizational change is less likely to succeed if leaders fail to keep employees informed about the change process and the progress of its implementation plan. In other words, successful communication is key to the success

of change: lack of information increases the tendency to assume that the change plan is failing.

While organizations are busy fixing issues related to the change process, systems, procedures, or structures, other important aspects could be neglected: employees' response to change. Moreover, organizations try to adapt to changes, diverse workforces need to accommodate these changes, and the adoption process is usually far from being smooth; difficulties in managing diverse workforces are usually greater than anticipated, even when consciously planning for it (Donnelly, 2015). Change activities across the organization happen at different levels, and the inherent tensions and conflicts that accompany these dispersed autonomous activities could be a source for disruption (Lechner and Floyed, 2012; Friesl and Kwon, 2017). Employees respond to these activities differently, generally as supportive, neutral, or resistant. There are many factors that affect these responses, and collaboration amongst the workforce inside the organization is necessary for the success of the change process, regardless of the nature of the organizational hierarchy and structure (Doerscher, 2011). Nevertheless, as in any human relationship, mediating this process requires interaction between parties, and resistance occurs due to a malfunction in this cooperation (AIDossari, 2016), which could be a natural consequence in any change process (Smollan, 2013).

In sum, leading through change is a complex process that requires frameworks to be orchestrated by leaders to manage both of the process and employees. Doing so is not an easy task in general, but adding the context of Dubai with its high expat workforce does not make it any easier. However, if the phenomenon is approached with an open mind that does not only perceive resistance from the classical viewpoint that associates it with negativity, then there is a great potential to properly understand the true drivers for these responses, then build the proper plan with adequate resources to lead through the process successfully (Voet, 2013; Pandu and Kamaraj, 2016; Onimole, 2017). While there could be differences between leaders' and employees' perception in regards to responses to change due to the nature of their roles, interests, and power, these differences could be bridged if the true reasons are discovered, discussed, understood, and accepted to create an actionable knowledge an execution plan.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter explains the philosophical underpinnings of the study methodology, explaining its ontological and epistemological basis. It then presents the research design, approach, data collection, and analysis methods. The aim of this chapter is to provide the underlying principles for the theoretical foundations of the research alongside the action research process, capitalizing on the examined resources in relation to the objectives of this study. These elements explain the approach and justify the choice of method, starting with the research philosophy, how the ontological and epistemological stances informed the study, and how different approaches in action research could affect the process. While the ontological and epistemological stances are the ground foundation of the research and its philosophical basis, action research adds the practice element. The chapter examines data sampling procedures and techniques, and the rationale for the instruments used, including their validity, justifications, and reliability as tools of data collection in this study.

3.2. Research Philosophy: Ontology and Epistemology

Research inquiry is guided by set of beliefs comprising paradigms that reflect the way we think about the world, or how we view it. It is also viewed as basic belief system based on ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions. Guba and Lincoln (1994) asserted that there is no way to prove that one paradigm is superior to another, and that ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions are interrelated with inquiry paradigms. There are three key research methods (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods), which offer myriad research tools, but their essential differences lie in ontological and epistemological assumptions. Different epistemologies interpret participants' perceptions differently (Rudman, 2013). The ontological stance in the qualitative approach is usually subjective (e.g. viewing reality as something socially constructed by people's perceptions of phenomena in constructivism), while the quantitative paradigm is considered to be objective (e.g. considering that an objective existent reality exists

and can be studied with experimental investigations to test universal hypotheses, as in the positivist empiricism of the natural sciences) (Tuli, 2010).

The aim of inquiry also differs, from the universality or generalizability of the quantitative paradigm to the particularity of the qualitative. While there is a baffling number of approaches, I will simplify the discussion by stating that from an epistemological perspective, qualitative research usually uses the interpretivist/constructivist theoretical framework, while positivism is used for quantitative methods (Tuli, 2010). The methodological stances also differ from the qualitative to the quantitative approaches. On the one hand, the methodology in quantitative researches has to be objective, and the researcher is assumed to be detached, to be able to test the hypotheses and measure the variables explaining causal relationships between different variable factors (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014; Coghlan, 2019). On the other hand, qualitative researchers could use a subjective methodology, drawing on participants' interpretation of their experience and how they perceive the phenomenon, and the researcher is also a subjective element involved in the investigation, thus dealing with bias is a major issue in this paradigm.

Turning to the specifics of this study, the ontological stance follows the qualitative approach by embracing that there are multiple realities constructed by individuals engaged in the complex social phenomena of NI, and the intention of this study is to examine and report on these realities using participants' viewpoints. Put simply, this study posits that realities are multiple and their construction is based on how employees and leaders interpret the change process (Secker et al., 1995). The epistemological stance in this study views realities subjectively, as I believe that realities cannot be assessed independently (Creswell, 2013; Coghlan, 2019). Furthermore, I work in the researched organization, and consider myself connected to the phenomenon. The key objective in this study is to bridge the gap between leaders and employees in the researched organization through a good understanding of how participants perceived the change process. Accordingly, the study will follow the qualitative research method, relying on the interpretivist, constructivist paradigm (Allwood, 2012; Coghlan, 2019). The researched phenomenon will be explored and examined through the lenses of participants first-hand, dependent on their views and how they perceived the change process.

3.3. Qualitative Research Methods

3.3.1. Overview

Qualitative research method concerns emergent and dynamic phenomena, which can change during research phases (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, researchers adopting this research method cannot isolate themselves from their prior knowledge or background, as explained previously with regard to ontological and epistemological philosophical notions. Qualitative method was selected in this study, ensuring that the phenomenon is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety, allowing for multiple notions to be exposed and subsequently understood (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Qualitative method is preferred in minimizing the impact of the relationship between insider action researcher and the participants, as in this study (Creswell, 2013; Coghlan and Brannick, 2014).

Moreover, as this study is about the notions of employees and leaders, qualitative approach facilitates the exploration within the organizational context, utilizing multiple data points. In this regard, qualitative researches depend on participants' viewpoints, the way they perceive the phenomenon, and how they interpret these perceptions by building a relationship with participants during the research (Ulin, Robinson and Tolley, 2004; Coghlan, 2019). Qualitative research, however, is an umbrella for a range of approaches and draws on a variety of epistemologies (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008; Duberley et al., 2012; Myers, 2012; Symon, Cassell and Johnson, 2018), which is argued to be one of its strengths (Bluhm et al., 2011). It is also essential that one ensures that different realities are presented in a fair way, and not to rely solely on what will warrant the conclusion drawn from participants (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

Criticism, however, is also extended to qualitative research methods, as Creswell (2013) and Borrego et al. (2009) noted, due to its specific nature and lack of generalizability. This criticism capitalizes on the limited number of participants involved in such studies compared to a quantitative method. Furthermore, rigor and relevance are arguably more consistent in quantitative compared to qualitative research (Shah and Corley, 2006). In response to such criticisms, scholars offset some of the factors utilized in quantitative studies to ensure the validity and

“authenticity” of qualitative research, such as ontological objectivity (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) and analytical authenticity (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

In my viewpoint, such measures could be present in qualitative methods if the researcher provided and assisted in developing a range of understanding about the phenomenon to participants. Qualitative research, however, accepts the subjectivity of knowledge produced as the aim in such method is not to replicate the research and the researcher is not usually looking for standardization or to remove their bias (Bluhm et al., 2011). In quantitative research, or positivism in particular, where replicating the study, removing biased views, and standardizing the research are key. However, the quality of qualitative researches is not less than quantitative ones (Savall et al., 2008; Lee, 2014; Pratt et al., 2015). Even within the qualitative method, each approach has a different set of criteria and framework to be followed (Rudman, 2013). For example, transparency and thoroughness may mean different things in ethnography, case study, grounded theory, or participatory research.

3.3.2. Qualitative Approaches: Case Study

Qualitative research method has five approaches (Creswell, 2013): narrative, grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, and case study. The study holds close ties between its philosophy and action as the framework, and philosophical assumptions turned into an action plan. The interpretive framework is used to inform the study (Creswell, 2013), and aims to present details of situations participants experienced, and uncover the realities working behind them (Remenyi et al., 1998).

Case study is preferred in situations that are looking to empower individuals by sharing their views and assumptions about a specific subject forming part of action research (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, it allows researchers, like myself, to overcome what academic researchers used to be criticized for: being focused on theoretical and conceptual issues and neglecting the practical side, especially in management researches (Azhar et al., 2010). Accordingly, I believe that social constructivism is best suited as an interpretive framework, given the associated philosophical beliefs discussed previously. The reasons are related to the multiple realities co-constructed between me and participants, but shaped by them. The inductive method of emergent ideas obtained through interviews, observations, and other data points (Creswell, 2013) is combined with the individual values of participants being

honoured, which sits it apart from pragmatism. Inductive logic is one of the key characteristics of this study, as I will investigate the change in the context of my organization, working with details before drawing generalizations.

Case study involves a real-life contemporary context, in which different tools could be utilized to collect data, including the primary and secondary data collection instruments deployed in this research (Yin, 2009). Case study, as an approach, could be deployed on single or multiple organizations (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). In this study, the focus is only on one single organization, thus single case study is selected (Creswell, 2013). Selecting this sub-approach is backed by a research goal, which is to examine issues concerning my organization (Stake, 1995). Additionally, having access to organizational documents, such as the outcomes of meetings and discussions, along with field notes and observations in the organization, warrants the selection of this approach. Qualitative case study approach is considered to be a good tool to study complex phenomena within their context (Baxter and Jack, 2008), and it provides tools to the researcher to better explore organizational issues. Additionally, but it is argued that it facilitates the research process using a variety of data sources. The strength of this particular point is that one can explore the phenomenon through multiple lenses instead of the dependency on a single viewpoint, which could be altered by the context, time or any form of bias.

Yin (2009) and Stake (1995) have both proposed guidelines for conducting a case study research. However, they used different frameworks (Hancock and Algozzine, 2006). Yin (2009) and Stake (1995) based their approaches on a constructivist paradigm, which claims that truth is relative and dependent on one's perspective (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Moreover, it recognizes the importance of the human factor in the research process, being subjective. However, it does not reject objectivity as a notion. The social construction of reality is the fundamental basis of constructivism (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006), which emphasizes the relationship and collaboration between the researcher and participants. This is considered as one of the advantages of constructivism, as participants get the chance to tell their side of the story, as in this study, and through their stories I can better understand the phenomenon and interpret the actions of participants in this context (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006).

3.4. Action Research

Action research is an iterative process that goes through multiple cycles [Figure 3.1]. However, the action cycle needs to have a clear purpose and context, involving participants alongside researchers in diagnosing, planning, taking action, and evaluating the action (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014) [Figure 3.2]. This study targets two groups – leaders and employees – to examine the different factors that affect employees' responses to organizational changes and the views of each group, especially the paradoxes that may occur between the two due to their different perspectives. Understanding how resistance occurred during the change process through the lens of leaders reveals how they perceive the responses of employees. In return, employees' viewpoints unveil how they perceive the action of the leadership team. Understanding the underlying drivers of employees' responses to change is quite important and that will be emerged from interpreting the data collected during the process, which is more appropriate in this study than having a preconceived hypotheses and then trying to test it. The study will explore the experience of participants during the organizational change journey, focused on their responses and finding patterns and themes that are relevant to the issue relying on participants' experience during the process.

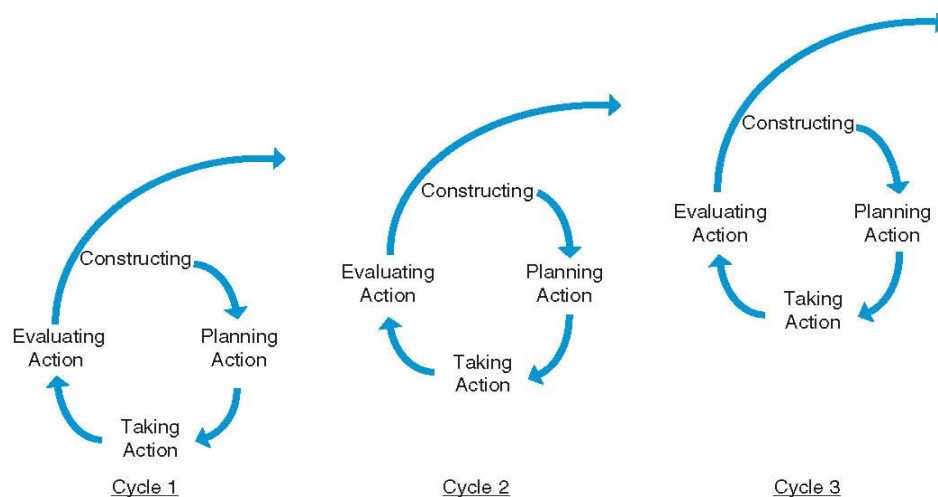


Figure 3.1: Spiral of action research cycles

Source: Coghlan and Brannick (2014, p. 11)

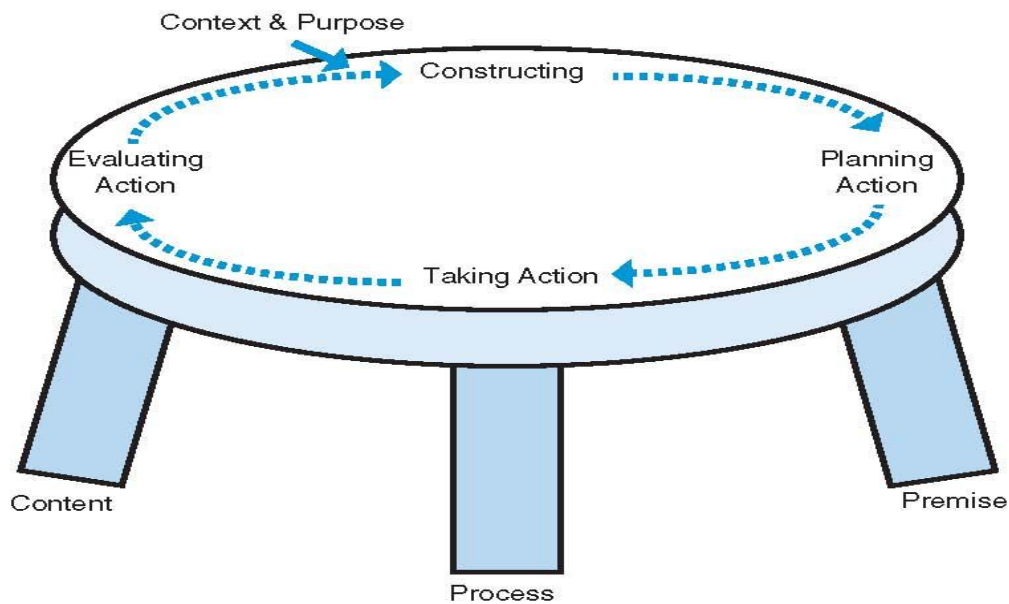


Figure 3.2: Meta-cycle of action research

Source: Coghlan and Brannick (2014, p. 13)

Cycles of actions and reflection on these actions are considered to be one of the key qualities of action research (AR) (Coghlan and Holian, 2015). AR is a process whereby teams/ individuals encompass the research and members of the organization seek to collectively improve participants' situations (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). As simple as it sounds, the process is complex, combining traditional academic research methods alongside practice, enabling researchers like myself to create executable plans to improve the situation or solve the problem. The intention in this approach is to deal with real problems, not theoretical ones, which could then produce materials to assist the organization in managing challenges related to change. Doing so in my own organization, where I have a full-time daily job, is not an easy task, and there could be challenges associated with this activity (Hammond, Keeney and Raifa, 2006).

One of the key challenges is the mindset of leaders and the organizational politics (Coghlan, 2019), as the people involved may not be willing to receive feedback or admit to the findings if they are not coherent with their views. Furthermore, implementing an action plan needs to consider the existing hierarchy, and avoid inciting conflicts. Nevertheless, there are advantages associated with engaging with organizational dynamics in this method, such as understanding if there is genuine resistance or misperceptions, which is essential to develop the right plan. I adopted

this as a mean to overcome challenges related to leaders' mindset, by providing a comprehensive, unbiased explanation for certain behaviours that existed during the process, to streamline organizational efforts and direct them toward the correct path.

Insider action research is argued to enhance organizational capabilities (Roth, Shani and Leary, 2007), through the frameworks and thought process that one can bring as part of the execution plan (Dosi, Nelson and Winter, 2000). My mindset as a researcher is also important due to my role in identifying, planning, and executing the research. One of the benefits in understanding this role is being aware of one's own biases and traps that may occur while conducting research (Moore, 2007), which I will discuss in detail as part of the findings chapter. Undertaking this activity in own organization and going through this journey was as exciting as the challenges highlighted, and somehow starting this process with a good understanding of own biases that may influence the research is liberating (Moore, 2007). Being a full-time employee of the researched organization could maximize the benefit for the organization and the researcher (personally) (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014), as long as the challenges and risks highlighted above are managed. This process is argued to be a good tool to enhance management learning (Lee and Greenley, 2010) as well as problem solving. Coghlan and Brannick (2014) developed a framework to guide action research projects within organizations [Figure 3.3].



Figure 3.3: General empirical method in action research project

Source: Coghlan and Brannick (2014, p. 30)

Coghlan and Brannick (2014) noted that applying action learning in an action research constructs could be achieved through the following steps: involving stakeholders in constructing the initiative, engaging relevant members, collecting and analysing data, planning and acting, and evaluating the outcome. This type of action research method considers the learning throughout the process and adapts to the changes that occur during the action stage; therefore, it is called participative action research (PAR). PAR involves the production of new knowledge evolves from the deployed action and through finding solutions to the problem and improving the lives of participants by creating a better understanding of the problem if not solving it (Robinson, 2018). PAR has another distinguishing characteristic as the research is done “with and by” people rather than “on people” (Kemmis and Mctaggart, 2007), which could have a greater impact on the organizational setting (Herr and Anderson, 2005). Moreover, it emphasizes collaboration between researchers and participants in resolving the studied phenomenon (Bergold and Thomas, 2012), as participants relate to the phenomenon being studied and feel that it touches their real-life experiences and perceptions of reality (Kemmis and Mctaggart, 2007).

However, as with all research approaches, there have been some criticisms of PAR, including that it is conformist to governing policies, driven by the need of limited people who happen to be experts, at the expense of those with less power. Despite such criticisms of PAR, it is also praised for its ability to create collaborative teams (Johnson, 2002), which may evolve in data-driven organizational change and the corporate culture. Furthermore, the collaborative nature of the approach offers an opportunity for theoretical, professional, and organizational transformation (Mcniff and Whitehead, 2010).

Herr and Anderson (2005) supported the usage of PAR in insider action research studies, such as this one, especially if it is tied to an academic degree or if part of the objective is an academic qualification. I believe, based on previous engagement with the organization in earlier projects related to this DBA, PAR sits to be the right approach for this study, as it promotes collaborative behaviour between me and participants through an engaging learning process (Storms, 2013). However, I am also aware that it requires flexibility, reflection, and responsiveness (Coghlan and Holian, 2015), as expanded upon in the chapters presenting findings and reflections.

Action research in this thesis is based on the conceptual framework of Coghlan and Brannick (2014), though adjusted to fit the context of this study. While the details of the action in each cycle are discussed in chapter six, it is worth noting the highlights of these AR cycles as a method in this study. The action cycles took place in two main dimensions: the first is through the engagement with participants (leaders and employees) at the beginning of the project to define/confirm the research topic and objectives of the study; the second is about developing the interventions based on the findings to solve the problem. Some of these actions were done independently such as construction and planning for the research, which is then evaluated and confirmed with participants through a direct engagement. The four steps of the first cycle (constructing, planning, executing, and evaluating) laid the foundation for the second cycle that started post data collection and analysis. The second cycle has two main components: actionable knowledge that is created out of the data generated from the direct engagement with participants along all the activities took place in this research, including intervention. These two action cycles together formed the core AR project in this study and allowed to have the final draft of the thesis as in the below figure [3.4].

Participants' engagement as part of the action is prevalent in both cycles. In the first cycle, employees are engaged in voicing their concerns about the change process and the way it is managed during the interviews and their open discussion with me. Also their verification to the findings post the data analysis stage. Not only that, but their participation in the execution of action plan sits at the core of the AR project, as explained in chapter six. In regards to leaders, they are engaged in reviewing the objectives and the design of the study at the start, and then with their views about the change process during the data collection stage. As with employees, leaders view the findings to confirm the outcome and the conclusions drawn. Moreover, they have to approve the intervention as an execution stage to the action plan.

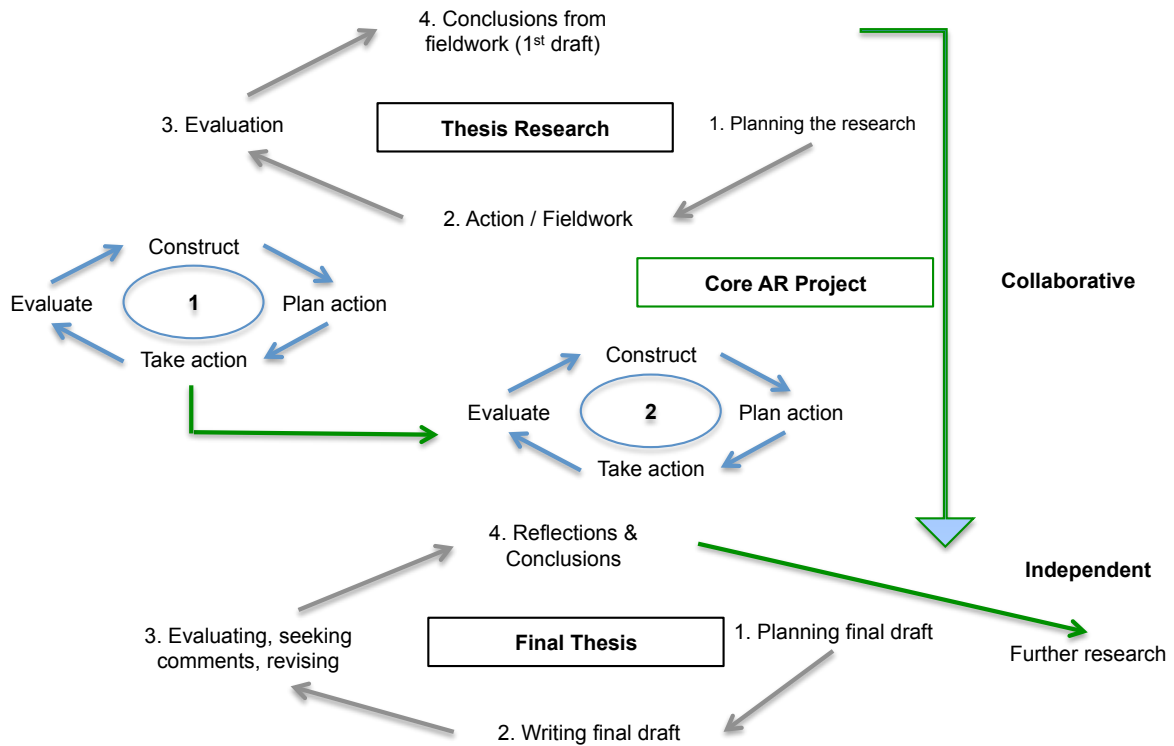


Figure 3.4: Action Research in this Thesis

Source: Based on Coghlan and Brannick (2014, p. 164)

3.5. Research Participants and Sampling

Qualitative research method is mostly focused on relatively smaller populations (compared to quantitative research), to provide more in-depth and meaningful information from participants, alongside its tendency to collect data from the field (Creswell, 2013). Researchers in qualitative research are intrinsically important to the research process and must select from multiple sources of data (Marshall et al., 2013). While the objective of this research is to investigate employees' responses to the change process and how to bridge the gap between employees and leaders' perceptions, the literature suggests that the number of participants in the single instrumental case study could be as low as single digit (Creswell, 2013; Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). However, this study targeted about 60% of the leadership team, and a smaller sample of employees: Group A (leaders: N = 6); Group B (employees: N = 20). This population was calibrated to produce the required information and provides enough content for the research. Participants were all located in the UAE, working in NI, and they were easily accessible and reachable [Table 3.1 & 3.2].

Table 3.1: Employees' Interviews

Employees' Interviews					
Employee Code	Date	Location	Length of interview in minutes	# of transcribed pages	Number of words from transcriptions
E201	16-Apr-19	Dubai	39:41:00	18	5721
E202	16-Apr-19	Dubai	53:41:00	22	8432
E203	16-Apr-19	Dubai	43:22:00	17	6280
E204	23-Apr-19	Dubai	34:38:00	21	6275
E205	23-Apr-19	Dubai	27:18:00	11	3968
E206	28-Apr-19	Dubai	33:58:00	8	3372
E207	28-Apr-19	Dubai	38:37:00	20	6690
E208	28-Apr-19	Dubai	34:54:00	13	3947
E209	29-Apr-19	Dubai	36:06:00	13	5869
E210	29-Apr-19	Dubai	32:09:00	12	3531
E211	30-Apr-19	Dubai	20:28:00	13	4789
E212	30-Apr-19	Dubai	29:34:00	7	2785
E213	30-Apr-19	Dubai	34:27:00	12	3914
E214	01-May-19	Dubai	27:50:00	8	2624
E215	01-May-19	Dubai	42:47:00	19	7914
E216	01-May-19	Dubai	38:05:00	13	5329
E217	05-May-19	Dubai	28:56:00	7	3064
E218	15-May-19	Dubai	21:50:00	8	2362
E219	15-May-19	Dubai	28:56:00	10	3400
E220	16-May-19	Dubai	26:40:00	11	2573

Sources: Author

Table 3.2: Leaders' Interviews

Leaders' Interviews					
Leader Code	Date	Location	Length of interview in minutes	# of transcribed pages	Number of words from transcriptions
A101	26-Mar-19	Dubai	52:27:00	13	6496
A102	28-Mar-19	Dubai	39:50:00	15	6123
A103	01-Apr-19	Dubai	46:02:00	16	7987
A104	21-Apr-19	Dubai	48:11:00	18	7599
A105	22-Apr-19	Dubai	40:41:00	14	6175
A106	30-Apr-19	Dubai	41:35:00	17	6078

Sources: Author

While the number of participants in qualitative researches is usually small, the number of participants varies from one study to another and is highly dependent on the nature of the study (Creswell, 2013; Marshall et al., 2013). The number of required participants may vary between one approach to another. For example, in case study or phenomenological approach the number could be between 5-25 participants, which in grounded theory it could be from 20-30. Though the variance in both sampling and population is dependent on the selected approach, I have ensured that the number satisfies the purpose of the study and provides enough

content to investigate the phenomenon. Selection criteria for employees is based on the following criteria: those who are in the organization for six months or more, and those who have experienced any of the changes took place (whether the changing of the leader of their departments/ function or the direct manager). All leaders were potentially eligible for inclusion, and no one was excluded unless they were not willing to participate, or they decided not to take part in this research (as for employees).

The design of the sampling process was based on two key factors; representation and precision. Representation is about the extent to which the sample represents the targeted populations, while precision is the extent of the credibility of the selected sample. The sampling process needs to follow certain disciplines so that the results can be applied to the population (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). While literature in qualitative research designs and sampling process did not dictate a certain approach, Oppong (2013) presented the techniques to which sampling design could be formulated, noting that qualitative sampling design could be done through three techniques: theoretical, convenience, and judgment. Oppong (2013) noted that the theoretical technique is where researchers select a sample to test a constructed theory, while in convenience technique they decide on the sample based on their convenience regarding the time, efforts, and cost. The convenience technique in my views is not the best, as it solely depends on the convenience factor to the researcher, which carries a lot of bias in itself, and theoretical is more for grounded theory approach, hence both were excluded for this study. However, the third technique for Oppong (2013), the judgmental one, was considered the most recognized and relevant for this research, thus it informed the sampling technique of this study.

I decided to adopt the purposeful sampling strategy (Creswell, 2013), by which I can select the sample based on their willingness to participate, given they meet the criteria and they are in a position to provide meaningful inputs to inform the study. Maximum variation sampling as a mean to execute purposeful sampling allowed me to incorporate as many variations as possible, such as employees and leaders, local and expatriates, male and female. However, I was not primarily looking to collect demographic data, as such variables are not the focus of this study. Purposeful

sampling technique relies on the experience of participants along with my own experience in the studied field (Oppong, 2013), and it is recommended in the sampling design for qualitative case studies (Coyne, 1997).

Adopting the appropriate population and sampling design ensures that the research is set to deal with the many challenges that qualitative researches possess, especially those related to praxis, representation, and legitimacy (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Challenges in praxis are those related to how the results of the research could be evaluated in the context of contemporary and post-contemporary times. The representation, on the other hand, is the ability to authentically represent the experience of participants in the text. Legitimacy challenge is about the validity and reliability of the results alongside the generalizability. Additionally, making sense of these tangible results' trans-contextual credibility was considered for this study (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). These issues are addressed / considered in the findings and discussion chapters, to ensure the credibility and authenticity of this study.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

One of the key elements in this study is the ethical considerations, due to its nature as an action research, relying mainly on participants' views (Creswell, 2013; Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). I developed a participant information sheet (PIS) to describe the process and the purpose of the study, to inform potential participants of the process, their role, what is required, and how the study would be conducted. Information included in the PIS allowed potential participants to have a good understanding of the study to enable them to make an informed decision on whether to take part in the study. Once participants agree to take part in the study, their consent was obtained, scanned, and stored as electronic files in a password-protected personal computer, which, with paper files stored in a locked filing cabinet, was accessible only to the researcher. The informed consent process conformed to the UoL guidelines.

One of the key issues in this regard is participant anonymity and confidentiality (Walford, 2005). During the course of this process, no personal information or identity was collected or attached to any interview. This ensured the anonymity of the

data collected during interviews. Moreover, participants had the choice to end the interviews, or quit the study if they felt uncomfortable at any point during the process, and the data collected would be discarded accordingly. This was also communicated to them in the PIS, and verbally before interviews. After data collection, the analysis relied on thematic coding, not revealing the identity of any participants, and the findings do not classify responses based on gender, length of employment, department, local or expatriate status, or other means that could reveal the identity of participants directly or by inference. The collected data were grouped in aggregate under employee and leader responses.

No potentially vulnerable groups were included among participants, and consents from both the organization as well as participants were obtained before conducting any data collection. Throughout the study, I adhered to the ethical standards of the UoL, and forms related to this process were filled, shared, and approved by the UoL Ethics Board. It was highly unlikely that any adverse events would occur as a result of interviewing participants. Throughout the research process, participants could have revealed some unpleasant experiences or events that they had experienced during the change process, but they had the right to decline to answer questions, pause or terminate interviews, or even withdraw from the study at any time, with the assurance that this would not affect their employment or statutory rights. Moreover, the contact details of the UoL Ethics Department were given to all participants in case they had any ethical queries or complaints, which gave them another layer of confidence and option to express any grievance arising from participation in this study. Ethical approval and authorization forms are shown in Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively. Nevertheless, reflections related to this part of the study and as an insider action researcher is addressed in chapter seven.

3.7. Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative approach relies on descriptive and interpretive data (Allwood, 2012; Coghlan and Brannick, 2014), and the hallmark of case study research is the use of multiple data sources to enhance credibility (Yin, 2003). Based on the nature of this research and the selected method, I decided to rely on interviews as a primary data source, alongside observations and field notes. Similar case study researches relied on interviews, direct and indirect observations and available data sets (Baxter and

Jack, 2008). Moreover, using these tools for data collection is argued to best suit the purpose of such study (Creswell, 2013; Coghlan, 2019).

The observations were mainly collected from my engagement in a monthly session taking place between NI GCEO and selected employees [Table 3.3]. The meeting is called “Coffee with the GCEO”, where invited employees engage directly with the GCEO without their leaders or manager, to voice their concerns and share their feedback on anything related to NI. While these meetings are limited to about 20 to 30 employees at a time, they provide a good platform to get employees’ views on what is happening in the organization including the change process. I have attended six monthly meetings, where observations were noted in my field notes, and then data generated and grouped as part of the data points, which is acceptable in such AR studies (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). These multiple data points, however, are converged in the analysis rather than individually handled (Baxter and Jack, 2008), In other words, data collected from interviews will be analysed, and the data collected from observations and field notes will act as a cross-referencing point in order to triangulate the data. However, the outcome of these observations will be presented under each theme in chapter four.

Table 3.3: Observations’ Sessions: Coffee with GCEO

Coffee with Group CEO			
Date	Locations	# of employees attended	Length of session (~minutes)
Dec-18	Dubai Board Room	30	62
Jan-19	Dubai Board Room	22	59
Mar-19	Dubai Board Room	20	58
Apr-19	Dubai Board Room	20	50
May-19	Dubai Board Room	19	55
Jun-19	Dubai Board Room	18	54

Sources: Author

The study aims to investigate the phenomenon from the perspectives of participants who lived through the change process relying on their views, self-critique, and the observations during the investigation process. Semi-structured interviews were used, with a set of questions to guide the interviewing process, without limiting the conversations to only those listed questions. This gave participants the space and the ability to share and discuss other factors of particular importance to them related to the study but not directly addressed in questions.

As this research is using semi-structured interviews, it gave me some degree of flexibility, relying on a previously identified set of questions to drive the conversation, without limiting it to the identified questions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Unlike structured interviews, which solely rely on a pre-identified set of questions, or unstructured interviews, which are fully flexible and allow free flowing. I conducted face-to-face interviews that were audio recorded and then transcribed, following a coding scheme to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. As there are other data points next to interviews, I conducted minute-meetings, discussions, and periodical review of relevant documents, such as field notes and observations. I also scrutinised these data sources to ensure that the project conforms with the plan.

Due to the nature of this study, its purpose and the researched phenomenon, in-depth interviews provide an understanding of how each group of participants' views related to resistance to the change process. Anderson's (2011) study of "engaging resistance" and Booth et al.'s (2016) "crafting research" were amongst the key sources to develop the interview questions and protocol, alongside Coghlan and Brannick's (2014) general empirical method in action research, and the work of Creswell (2013) and Coghlan (2019). Moreover, Schein's (2013) journal-keeping model (Observation, Reaction, Judgment, and Intervention) was used as a tool for both the interview process as well as to assert and maintain observations and field notes. Questions were designed in English, the common language of NI employees.

Each group of participants (leaders and employees) has a set of questions organized by sub-headings, factoring the key areas of the study: change, culture, resistance, and learned lessons. While the sub-headings are unified for the ease of interpreting, linking and coding the data, each group has its own questions that are more relevant to their specifics. For example, questions for leaders' group are mainly about their perceptions of employees' responses and their ability to deal with that, while in the group of employees, the focus was on their evaluation of the change process, how leaders dealt with the process, and what they would do differently. Appendix C and Appendix D display the full interview questions for employees and leaders, respectively.

In this study, I will rely on an inductive approach where interpreting data is based on participants' perspective as well as my interpretation to both their views alongside the observation and field notes (Madison, 2005). While I considered Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) such as NVIVO, I have found that with this number of participants, I could also use manual thematic analysis (Creswell, 2013). I chose to use manual thematic analysis in order to have closer engagement and immersion in the data, thoroughly reading the texts and having the ability to code based on the relevancy to the study, not based on software-driven keywords. Furthermore, but also reading through the transcribed data multiple times gave me an in-depth, immersive understanding what each participant said, which enriched my understanding along with the data presented.

Non-overlapping and non-repetitive meaning units were created and textually described to present participant experiences (Creswell, 2013). Subsequent grouping of these textual descriptions alongside structural ones presented the core of the phenomenon, reflecting the views of participants and own observations. Yin (2003) and Stake (1995) highlighted the importance of effectively organizing data to analyse and interpret them: merging data in a converged way, being part of the puzzle, with each piece contributing to comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Baxter and Jack, 2008). Additionally, Wickham and Woods (2005) also emphasized that this importance is magnified in qualitative case study researches.

3.8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the philosophical notion in this study follows the social constructivism, where realities are multiple, as seen through the lenses of participants, and my role as a researcher is to report these views or realities as they develop. The study relies on the interpretation of participants' views, and these form a subjective understanding of the changes inside the researched organization. Realities in this regard are multiple and will be discovered through the lenses of participants. The ontological and epistemological stances informed the deployed methods being inductive and it follows the details developed from the data points before arriving to generalization. As the focus is to develop in-depth analysis of the organizational change inside this particular organization through a comprehensive understanding of the views of participants studying their experience relying on interviews and other

data points from the same organization, a single instrumental case study deemed the right approach.

Through examining the different interpretive frameworks associated with the philosophical notion deployed in this study, I have concluded that social constructivism is the most appropriate framework. In social constructivism reality is co-constructed and shaped by individuals; the individual values of participants are honoured, and the approach of inquiry is more inductive, relying on the emergent ideas obtained through interviews, observations, and field notes as data points utilized in this study.

Chapter 4: Results and Data Presentation

4.1. Introduction

The chapter presents the data collected from interviews along with observations and field notes in the researched organization, NI. Following some changes in the shareholders' structure of NI, a decision was made by the board to replace some NLT members. The changes commenced in 2017, where seven new leaders were brought on-board, turning most of the NLT to be both new to the organization and the region. Through the course of these changes, employees faced various challenges associated with uncertainty and a lack of clarity, triggering some fears and ambiguity, mostly driven by the risk of being made redundant or being unemployed. During this period, different types of behaviours were observed, including what some leaders interpreted as resistance: some hidden, while others were obvious.

The chapter starts with the characteristics of the research setting, followed by the main themes from employees, and the sub-themes under each one. The first theme for employees is work environment, followed by the change process, work culture, response to change, and their overall experience. There is then a summary table presenting the key characteristics of each parenting and sub-theme. The following part is then about the data collected from leaders, in which the same structure is followed, ensuring consistency and alignment across the different parts of the chapter. The data generated from observations and field notes is also presented under each of the main themes highlighting the views of employees and leaders. A summary and reflection concludes this chapter.

4.2. Research Setting Characteristics

For ease of reference, the data from both groups (leaders and employees) were kept separate in the thematic analysis. The opinions of participants, through direct and indirect quotes from their transcriptions, were taken. The differences in the opinions of these two groups were also highlighted. However, I refrained from imposing my own opinion during the discussion or the analysis. Each group of participants was given a random code – leaders were giving A (for alpha), and employees were given

E. Leaders' codes go from A101 to A106, and those of employees from E201 to E220. Furthermore, any additional information provided by the employees or the leaders were accompanied and explained in the context of main themes or sub-themes. Interview questions are detailed in the appendices (Appendix C, Appendix D).

The themes addressed in each group were matched to the objectives of this study [Table 4.1]. Key themes were similar for both groups, and for comparative purposes the sub-themes or questions under each theme were suitable to the nature of each group. For example, both groups had the five main themes: warm-up/work environment, views about the change process, work culture in the organization, how they viewed the responses to changes, and their overall experience and recommendations. The key themes are shown below, while the detailed set of questions for each group is included in the appendices. The data produced from the transcriptions of interviews are supported by the observations and field notes that accompanied the process, producing cross-referencing to data points for triangulation. However, they are presented under the themes and sub-themes, not as separate data points.

Table 4.1: Key themes and sub-themes for Employees and Leaders)

S.N.	Themes	Employees	Leaders
1	Work environment	Positive & Accessible	Hierarchal
		Bureaucracy & Challenging	Progressing
2	Change process	Legacy problems	Good but complex
		Lack of clear direction	Time consuming
			unstructured
3	Work culture	Hierarchy - Dependent	Diverse
		Diversity is not really embraced	
		Culture of Fear - Lack of trust	Underlying similarity
4	Response to change - resistance	People don't voice their concerns	Covert resistance
5	Overall experience and recommendations	Cultural shift	Communication
		Communication	Engagement
		Fear factors	Fear

Source: Author

4.3. Data Presentation of Employees (E201-E220)

The interviews for employees was structured in a way that started with warm-up questions to create a comfortable environment, before getting into the core part of

the interview. Interview questions considered the objectives of the study, and accordingly five key themes were developed to evaluate the change process and factors affect it in NI: work environment, change process, work culture, responses to change, and overall experience and recommendations. Each theme had couple of questions that are relatable to sub-themes, linking back to the objectives of the study. The semi-structured interviews left room for employees to voice their own views about important relatable points that were not mentioned in interview questions. Research is sometimes mistaken to be the method for collecting the information and documentation etc., but in fact it is the process of collecting the data, analysing it, and interpretation of the collected data to understand a particular process (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2010). The research followed this specific systematic process based on the pre-defined objectives, and the implementation of the research approach (Walliman, 2011; Lewis, 2015).

In the beginning of each interview, some warm-up questions were asked to the participants to make them feel comfortable and give a smooth start to the conversation, such as their length of service in NI. However, such warm-up question was only present to get participants into the discussion, and was not in anyway a factor in the analysis. The demographics related to participants were not attached to their responses, to ensure anonymity and eliminate potential risk of identifying them based on their gender, age, and ethnicity, without affecting the study. Table 4.2 summarizes the key findings from employees' responses.

Table 4.2: Summary and key findings from employees' responses

S. N.	Themes	Key findings
1	Work environment	Hierarchical
		Challenging
		Improving: moving towards accessible and collaborative
2	Change process	Massive change
		Legacy problems
		Many frequent changes
		Lack of clear direction
3	Work culture	Not acceptable by most
		Hierarchical
		Dependent
4	Response to Change – resistance	People do not voice their concerns
		Lack of trust
		Unadaptable to changes
		Time-consuming
		Fear factors
5	Overall experience and recommendations	Communication challenges - Communication at different levels - Information not flowing
		Beuarucracy and hierarchical work culture
		Organizational culture is not very relatable to all employees.
		Fears of job loss – job insecurity
		Culture shift needs to be considered.

Source: Author

4.3.1. Work Environment

The majority of the employees perceived change as the process of facing a new or different way of performing their job, which could affect their daily lives at work. While employees might not be aligned with leaders' vision due to the lack of interest or absence of proper leadership to drive them during the change process, the organization's key stakeholders show commitment to their work and support the change process for it to be successful. Moreover, workplace changes are intrinsically and inextricably tied to employees being able to do their job effectively. This was manifest in the following responses:

“I had been working with the new management team only for the past two years, or one and a half years to be precise... well, basically 2017, when I moved to the new team. And that was I think when the management also changed”. E201

“A catalyst of change in this organization, a judicial transformation. So, my job has been very challenging because my job is to change existing processes”. E204

Therefore, having a successful change is about managing the process in the short-term in order to achieve and sustain high-performance goals in the long term. Furthermore, leading the change process is as important as selecting the proper process for implementation. Moreover, implementing change requires coalition between stakeholders, including employees and leaders, as leaders’ support will grant resources required to drive the process, which could increase the likelihood of successful implementation:

“NI is trying to do whatever to create a positive work environment to have better, flexible working hours and all that you can do by the book to empower people to make their life easier. But it’s up to the individual leaders to enforce or dilute the value”. E215

4.3.1.1. 1Positive: accessible and collaborative

When employees were asked about their views around the work environment, they highlighted that the work environment is positive, or at least is turning to be more positive compared to before. Participant E211 asserted that :

“I’m not impacted by it. I think there were times within the transition where it felt like I don’t know what is happening”.

Participant E213 claimed that the work environment after the change process was perceived to be positive than it was previously.

“Previously, I was getting to a point where I was feeling stagnated in my role”. E213

One participant expressed in the interview that the change process is positive, and when asked why, the reply was:

“Because we are moving ahead with the time”. E220

Continuing with the work environment theme, some participants highlighted other views about the current set-up in the organization, with most considering it a more accessible and collaborative environment compared to before.

“It is now getting more collaborative... I don’t see a lot of bureaucratic and hierarchical approach”. E203

“We had to make sure that everybody is collaborative and everybody is working towards a common goal”. E212

“... with a change in the leadership, the collaboration increased a lot”. E216

Participant E210 even claimed that the change has brought in a collaborative model. However, one participant felt like people were being compelled to be collaborative:

“I would not say people are very comfortable to collaborate in all cases, but in some instances, they do so because they are forced to collaborate: they are showing that they collaborate”. E214

However, the prevailing view was that the current work environment is shifting towards a more collaborative one and that this is positive:

“Though it takes some time, it is shifting towards this direction compared to before”. E207

4.3.1.2. Hierarchical and challenging

When I asked the participants about the work environment, various responses were received that supported the conclusion that it is hierarchical and challenging in many respects, including bureaucratic aspect.

“It’s a bit of both... However, then when I’m working cross-functionally with other teams, it can be very bureaucratic and quite hierarchical, you generally get your voice heard a lot more...”. E217

“Initially, it was more hierarchical and bureaucratic, but later it was getting more collaborative”. E203

While discussing employees' perceptions about the work environment and if there were challenges within it, different employees had different perspectives. These were viewed as general problems for all service firms by the following participant:

“Within the organization, we do have challenges, I would say... There are challenges around like any service provider... challenges when it comes to service delivery in terms of ensuring that we give the best service to the clients”. E209

Another only considered that the firm failed to highlight the celebration of diversity, which is notable given the large expatriate composition of the workforce:

“... the celebration of diversity was not communicated”. E203

Another participant noted a feeling of increased demand due to new leadership, and ambivalence about the ability to meet new expectations. Some employees felt left behind and outpaced by the change:

“... I think with the new leadership, that means more challenges in terms of higher expectations in the output, and I think some of the staff feel uncomfortable about even meeting those expectations. Especially with new talent coming through, they're trying to change, everybody that comes in is trying to change and make things, put their stamp against the stuff that they're working on and on and not everybody is able to keep up with that journey”. E217

Most of the participants asserted that their work environment is positive compared to before. A participant was found quoting that on a geographical level, the work environment is very segregated and compartmentalized (referred to in this thesis, as alluded to by participants, as “siloes”). Furthermore, it was discovered that sportsmanship disappears when something gets hard with the team. Also, most participants think of their work environment as collaborative but hierarchical. It was observed that many participants thought their work environment was challenging, but mostly accessible, in the sense that they could easily talk to their managers or leaders about their problems. Furthermore, employees at the beginning of the

change thought about the impact this process would have on them, and how these new processes would affect their day-to-day responsibilities

4.3.2. Change Process

In this theme, employees were asked about their views in regards to the change process, if they noticed it around them, or if it affected their daily job, and to what extent. Employees were also asked about their views and perceptions about the changes, whether there was clear direction, or about legacy problems that they perceived to affect it. Some employees were energized and highly receptive to change

“Change was one of the reasons why I joined. I wanted to be part of that change...”. E211

“Massive change, which has been really positive for me as an individual”. E207

During one of the interviews, the participant E219 very clearly outlined that change has never been difficult, expressing: “It happens”, stating that changes in the organization are normal and expected as part of the life-cycle. More nuanced overviews were given by other participants quoted below, whose responses indicated that employees clearly think about such issues profoundly. Some other issues, like legacy problems, were identified to be prominent after conversing with some participants, while others believed that the company itself was clueless about the changes that were taking place. Participants believed that they are themselves part of the change process, and these changes must take place for efficiently running the organization:

“... a lot of the staff maybe not used to such change, so there is a bit of discrepancy in terms of where leadership wants to go and where the staff are and are capable of moving to. They are not very open to change. Equally, I don't feel that necessarily the leadership team knows how to deal with the diversity within the office, or even know how to embrace the different types of skills that a lot of the staff may have, and how to leverage them to the best capabilities. It's a bit of a two-fold. I see issues at the top end, and I also see issues down at the

bottom. It's not so much that the leadership team can't necessarily manage the team, but I think there are perceptions, there's legacy, there's a whole other issue all the way through the hierarchy". E217

"While it was also clear that some of the short-term changes took place in a relatively small, ongoing form of process that can be perceived to be rich opportunity for us. It helps in implementing change and improvement initiatives, especially in complex systems. It was not an easy or straightforward process". E201

"You, being yourself, knowing most of the people around, understanding what happened, I've seen the change process going through multiple stages to where we are right now, but one can't claim that the process was smooth or easy for the vast majority of employees". E210

"This change was a big change, and I could say that it was good, at least for me as a person". E216

"Change is good for both employees and the organization, it keeps us alive and ensures that we are ready for the market, but managing change could make the whole difference, and that will also be for us as employees as well the organization itself". E208

4.3.2.1. Legacy problems

When the employees were asked about the change process, different views were perceived. One of the participants, E202, stated that "legacy problems were clear during the process, and we had to face them". Hence, legacy issues were identified to be prominent after conversing with participants. When asked about whether they enjoy the change and interacting with people in this context, participants replied that:

"I think there are legacy issues within the company. That the leadership team is trying to change the direction of the business very quickly...". E217

“... legacy problems are everywhere and if we have to successfully implement change we have to face them, facing legacy problems is important”. E204

4.3.2.2. Lack of clear direction

One of the highlights during the discussion of the change process with employees was related to how well the organization knows its destination, or at least what employees think about this. One of the outcomes in this area was that some employees felt the organization was “clueless” concerning its change agenda or process.

“... the change process was discerned to be clueless, there was no sense of direction to most employees... not only that but even though everyone has a role to play and to be a big part of the process, they sometimes left clueless”. E211

“The company itself didn’t know where it was headed, there was no clue, and people left wandering for some time, or at least this is how it felt”. E207

4.3.3. Work Culture

One of the key objectives of the current study is to better understand how employees respond to ongoing changes, with a view to aiding in engaging employees and reducing their uncertainty and the culture of fear, or at least to better understand the true reasons behind the existence of such factors in the organization. In this regard, the study revealed that uncertainty; lack of clarity, and culture of fear persists in the organization. When asked about this, most employee participants noted that the work culture is not familiar for most colleagues, who come from more than 30 different nationalities. One participant (E219) asserted that the work culture is simply “good”, while another noted that it was perceived as quite hierarchical:

“They don’t feel like they’re able to speak up because there’s this culture of hierarchy where you are below”. E206

Some participants felt excluded from cliques within the organization, which made them feel excluded, and which undermined their ability to conduct tasks efficiently compared to those within such groups:

“The culture in NI is not very good, the reason is that if I’m not part of a group or belong to a specific one, then it is very difficult for me to interact or get work done easily, or if I was part of this group”. E209

Though the responses were mixed, it was identified that many believed that the culture in NI is hierarchical. Participant E203 highlighted that changing leadership is necessary, but it causes disruption to the business, affects the work environment, impacts the way employees are engaged, and undermines their willingness to take part in achieving organizational goals.

The different façades of organizational culture were discussed, and many highlighted the hierarchical nature of working in NI, or the mix between hierarchical work environment and the improvement coming from some of the changes taking place.

“In terms of culture, I think there has to be more learning and more emphasis on not only embracing culture from... okay, we celebrate different festivals and all these things. Because that is more of what you could say, that’s at the topmost level of culture, festivals, and dress and these things, and food or whatever. I think culture from an acceptance point of view, where you accept people for who they are, in terms of the value of what they bring in knowledge, experience, industry, expertise... All these things. You judge that, at unacceptable level”. E201

Organizational culture essentially comprises the behaviour of a human in an organization, and the meaning, which the people attach to those behaviours. Culture includes the organization’s norms, vision, values, symbols, systems, languages, beliefs, assumptions, and habits. It is further the pattern of such collective behaviours and assumptions, which are taught to the new organizational members with regard to perceiving, and even thinking and feeling. The organizational culture

represents the collective values, beliefs, and also the principles of organizational members:

“If you talk about the culture and our organizational culture in particular, do you think it works in terms of having just capturing adversities or diversities that affected the notion that things were driven? Especially, I’m talking about most of the new NLT, they came for the first time to work in the Middle East or a Dubai-based organization. They hadn’t done international exposure before. They haven’t been exposed to certain cultural backgrounds here. So, was that related to the way things were getting managed, or there was not enough understanding of how am I going to manage different backgrounds or different people? Maybe... that exists in this part of the world... Different than other people or... This was a little bit of... Many questions in one that I keep asking myself when I think about our organizational culture and how it is managed during this change”. E217

“While culture is about a set of interdependent and interrelated parts, they shall at the end in any organization form a unified whole or sum of its parts”. E209

Some participants saw themselves as constituent parts of the whole of the organizational culture, which plays a significant role in the change strategy applied, in terms of whether its parts are in harmony.

“In general, the new leadership comes with new sets of practices and operating models, where you see that their background is different from the majority of employees and that could create frictions or in some cases resistance from both sides around the established culture of the previous leadership and the new culture brought by the new ones”. E220

Additionally, the culture part was examined in relation to the changes and how employees perceive leaders’ actions towards this subject. Some participants felt there was a disconnect between the organizational culture envisioned by the leaders and the culture they themselves experienced:

“Employees’ culture is impacted alongside the organizational one during the change process. That be through the different processes and procedures that get introduced by the leadership team, or the way they function and manage their people”. E210

“Pertaining to the culture of the organization, the leaders believed that the culture of the organization is unacceptable, either to them or to some of the employees, but what I can say is that we never been asked and no one has considered our views in this regard”. E2019

Some participants noted particular ethnic cultural issues encountered in the organization, relating to employees and Dubai’s national culture, as alluded to in the following examples.

“For Muslim employees, in the month of Ramadan, prayer timings might sometimes coincide with the meeting time. And while the organization is a Dubai-based, sometimes we are requested to work beyond the allowed time in this month, and thus it becomes problematic, we sometimes only accept that as we have no other options”. E215

“I’m going to change that. I’m going to try to create a network as a culture... people from 30 different nationalities can relate to it. You don’t have to be a person from a different nationality to find any value, you’re certain like you said, and we’ve had this conversation, every religion has at some level, the same set of values”. E203

These insights show that cultural change in itself is a very complex process that is hard to quantify and predict. In correspondence to this, the extent to which corporate culture can be purposefully changed varies greatly between organizations, countries, and industries. Furthermore, one of the participants (E201) highlighted that changes to culture could be made either as a part of the current change process or as part of specific assignments, asking certain personnel to focus on this important part. However, this did not appear to be a priority for the leadership team at this point in time. Alignment between change strategy and culture is nevertheless essential, and leaders bringing new strategies for developing or managing culture must consider

how it will work, the context of the implementation, and those who will drive the execution. Participant E202 further highlighted that the culture in the organization might include complex elements such as the beliefs and values of people, which may lead to some conflicts. It was suggested that realizing this from the early stage may save the organization a lot of time and resources otherwise wasted by such conflicts after they materialize. The participant also noted that:

“This part usually includes some informal and unwritten rules, where you can only hear about it and get told, but no formal communication is given. You get it from the interaction and communication with your leader, manager or peer...”

“The culture is not that great in terms of if I’m sitting outside the circle, and if I’m looking at people interact, that’s really bad. It is dependent on whether you belong to a specific group of people who really like you...”.

E202

When asked about the same issue, another participant noted culture-related communication barriers:

“The culture is lacking, in a way that... we talk a lot of transference and lot of openness in communication but communicating the real concerns is different as opposed to communicating what I think is right to say”.

E203

This was particularly serious due to the personal way in which much official, professional work gets done in the Middle East (Hofstede et al., 2010), as experienced by participants:

“I’m dependent on the other team to get anything done, and no one would consider that when any challenge is faced”. E202

“... when I’m working cross-functional with other teams, it can be very bureaucratic and quite hierarchical depending on who you are, your grade, who supports you and stuff like that...”. E216

However, others noted substantial positive changes in the culture as a result of the change:

“As an organization, our culture, it is considered to be an open-door culture. This is what I notice. If today I want to reach my CEO, it is so easy for me. The COO, I’m grabbing her on corridors, so it’s much easier”. E207

“I think from the cultural area, I never faced any kind of a problem... this is clear for me, but could I say that this is the case across the organization with every other employee, not sure of that and this is something we need to ensure that we work on and improve”.

4.3.4. Response to Change – Resistance

Some participants highlighted that some NLT members have their own sort of objectives, which are inadaptable by some employees:

“They’re trying to change, everybody that comes in is trying to change and make things, put their stamp... and not everybody is able to keep up with that journey”. E201

Thus, it could also be noted that resistance could occur due to human factors or due to new processes that the system introduced as part of the changes in the organization.

4.3.4.1. Perceptions of resistance

Employees’ responses to change could take different forms, and some of the key aspects to consider when assessing resistance are the reasons, sources, and intensity. It was noted that when an employee reacts in a way that is in opposition to organizational direction, especially during the time of change, it is mostly considered as an act of resistance by leaders. Organizational change involves a multi-authored process, which involves multiple factors, and recent research is not about change versus resistance, but more of a mixture of change and resistance that co-exists. The subject of resistance was directly addressed by some participants, including the following, who felt it was related to new personnel (they spoke in general terms as

though about all new employees, but they could perhaps be insinuating observations about the NLT):

“I think there’s a lot of resistance within the business for whatever reason, whether you’re new or whether you’re existing staff. There’s just this resistance in every way. Somebody who is fairly new, I find that I’d observe resistance from people who have been here for a while because you’re trying... well, specifically, my role, it’s a new role, so if I’m trying to do something, I get pushed back from people that used to do that in particular ways”. E217

“Because some people act in a way that they are coming in and basically saying that you don’t really know what you’re doing, and that’s why I’m here to change things”. E213

That in itself could turn people away from accepting change and promote resistance. Others felt that those that are new to the business or the region should be very open to learning about how things were done previously and whether there are some good learning in that where you can actually take forward. They felt the potential contributions of more experienced employees were not valued due to the hierarchical culture:

“I don’t know if it’s a confidence thing or if it’s something else... this is where the hierarchy comes into play. Those that had been here for a while they’ve got so much in-depth knowledge within the industry within the market, but they don’t feel like they’re able to speak up because there’s this culture of hierarchy where if you are below, I think it’s a VP level... yeah, but you don’t really get listened to”. E205

This clearly explains that resistance to change is neither good nor bad, rather it is a natural, expected phenomenon and rather an integral part of the change process. Participant E210 highlighted that responses to the change could not be isolated from all the other elements that are happening around the organization, including how leaders deal with employees, how leaders deal with each other, how they deliver on their commitments, whether they consider employees as a real asset or just aim to accomplish tasks. All of these questions are asked when people talk in confidence

with each other, but if the answers to these questions are not clear, the responses to change will be mixed.

In that regard, some participants argued that employees could either support the change or resist the efforts to implement it, based on how they have been treated during the process, thus it is up to the organizations and the leadership team to determine employees' response. It is a known fact that change is inevitable as organizations fight for survival and market share, and organizations can no longer rest on their laurels, rejoicing in past successes. By challenging the status quo, they must seek out new opportunities. Participant E211 noted that while employees might not prefer the new work procedures, and they may favour their style of working, they can embrace the new ones if they see a value for them as well as the organization.

One of the participants (E212) highlighted that as the organization starts implementing changes and new program management tools and procedures, many employees start resisting as they do not understand or lack clarity on what is happening. Furthermore, but most of the employees, including managers and supervisors, turned to support any new process or procedure once they saw and felt the value it brought to them and the team. The changes imposed redefined the pre-existing relationship between the new leaders and employees within the organization. Participant E205 also noted that the organization's need for change should be accompanied by creating a sense of urgency for everyone to change, in addition to proper-training and facilitation rendered to employees. Another participant (E208) added that it is advisable that the implementation process is based on a period of six months, to enable employees to more easily adjust to the changes, and to be more comfortable with the new procedures and processes.

4.3.4.2. Employees not voicing their concerns

While different responses were observed, they all fell under this sub-theme, as many participants highlighted that employees do not usually voice their concerns. That could be for many reasons, but most noted one was their fear of losing their job, or a lack of job security, related to most employees being expatriates.

“People are not inclined to voice their concerns towards the change... Although they wish to voice their concerns about the change process, due to fear of job loss, they do not raise it”. E214

Another participant (E219) asserted that the majority of the time, employees respond by not voicing their concerns or hiding them, as they do not have enough trust in fellow employees or leaders to articulate their concerns, highlighting a need for more trust:

“You have to gain employees’ trust for them to speak out or to voice their concern, and to explain to them that you’re here to support them, and to help them change”. E204

Another participant (E201) felt that the process could not be changed, and that if leaders were genuinely interested to hear from employees, they would facilitate a safe environment in which people could voice their concerns. Another participant felt like the hierarchical structure prevented employees from communicating about organizational affairs except with higher levels of management:

“Some people do not want to go and speak to the lower grade people. Okay, it is all about mindset over here. Let me tell you that there are some people whom I’ve faced. Trust me, and they will not speak with you if you are not at a VP level or so...”. E219

Resistance to the novel leadership processes and methodologies creates a challenging position, both for employees as well as for the organization, which eventually affects the growth plans and performance. Additionally, it was noted through participants’ responses that employees are not inclined to voice their concern towards change. Furthermore, to address resistance, trust must be gained, and it must be explained to employees; employees feel that some leaders do not wish to talk to people from the lower hierarchy. This might also create resistance among the employees to adapt to the changes,

4.3.5. Overall Experience and Recommendations

Primarily, this theme is fundamental in this study, since it rendered an overall experience and recommendations. In this regards, majority of participants were concerned to be helpful for future employees, as in the following example:

“I’m going to try to create a network as a culture that... people from 30 different nationalities can relate to”. E203

Mostly, participants were found to maintain communication and coordination at different levels, while also bringing in views pertaining to resources. As per the view of participant E218, resources must be empowered to resolve the bureaucracy-related issues in the organization. Employees may not necessarily resist change, but the way it has been communicated, managed, or implemented. Thereby, any change in the organization is discerned to be inevitable, whether organizations are ready to deal with it or not, especially the multiple external and internal factors that drive and influence the way it comes about. Moreover, participant E220 highlighted that most organizations are affected by different factors during the change process, whether big or small, and in all fronts; resources, structure, people, and processes. Therefore, it is expected from the leadership to be well prepared in advance and to ensure that people are aligned and geared towards this process.

“I’m so happy about the changes, yes. But it takes a longer time to adapt to the changes, especially to make the auditors know exactly what is that, pointing every time what their mistakes are, again. It’s like you know, you are doing a full review of the process”. E206

Hence, it can be discerned that it takes a longer time to adapt to the changes. Participant E201 highlighted that trust must be gained, and it must be explained, especially during the change process, where people do not wish to talk to people from the lower hierarchy in some cases. Moreover, change occurs in different forms and has varied effects on organizations, which requires a set of capabilities and equipped leaders for successful execution. One of the participants (E211) highlighted that leaders sometimes fail to keep employees informed about the change process and the progress of its implementation plan, which makes the organizational change less likely to succeed. In the present world of the turbulent

environment of an organization, change has become synonymous with standard business practices. Additionally, over the past few years, several organizational changes have been perceived to be directed by the top managers.

In this regard, participant E220 asserted towards the end of the interview that with the current leadership change, the attitude of the employees and their experience on the job could be misinterpreted, which could create conflicts and frictions with their leaders. That has to be discussed and sorted in a fair way, not under the power of the leaders or by bullying employees. Doing so would increase employee loyalty and acceptance toward the change process. Furthermore, employees who are reported to be affected by the organizational change are further reported to have a lower level of satisfaction with the job.

Additionally, the individual readiness of employees forms a significant factor. Participant E215 noted in this regard that employees' readiness for change is determined as the extent to which they are psychologically, mentally, or physically ready and prepared to participate in the change process. In addition to this, motivation during the change process, from the perspective of participants, was a major part of driving employees forward and bringing them along this long journey. Clearly, there is a link between individual motivation and organizational performance; put simply, highly motivated individuals perform better. However, change also has an impact on the overall employee motivation if the transformation processes are managed poorly. There is no effect on the motivation of the employees rendered by the change if there is a good work environment, and employees participate in the decision-making process. Furthermore, the information and education have a crucial effect during the change on employees' motivation. All factors are connected and inter-connected in a way that affects how employees respond to the change process.

One of the participants (E210) noted that goal-setting plays a critical role if managed at the beginning of the process, and planning from the early stage will ensure that employees are well informed and that they are ready with the required tools to support the process. However, the participant added that what usually happens is that the change takes place at the top, where goals are set, and some information is then communicated and cascades down, with ambiguity and uncertainty, and employees start to doubt the process. On the other hand, one participant noted that,

to develop employees' motivation during this process of change, leaders need to pay attention, particularly to regular participation and commitment. If companies want to have highly motivated employees, then the working atmosphere should be taken into consideration during the transformation. Furthermore, when employees have a clear understanding of the new leader, then they have a clear personal and organizational goal in their mind, which keeps employees' motivation high.

During the change process, the source of motivation affects the level of participation and commitment. The committed employees are the key factors behind effective and successful change. In this regard, one participant (E204) asserted that employees must have a clear vision of the drivers behind the change. This is primarily due to the fact that human action drives the change in the first place. Unless employees are willing to take the first step towards the change, organizations will not be able to change. Therefore, the motivation of the work is related positively to performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

Therefore, some participants (E202, E206, E217) highlighted that leaders should commit to their subordinates as much time as they can during the process of change. Since the change is often complex and linked with negative feelings, resistance is discerned to be the most common reaction during such a process. Participant E205 highlighted that when an employee leaves the organization, replacing them takes time, and that adds complexity to the change process. So, if we manage to keep as many employees as possible well-informed during the change process, we can ensure that they are both motivated and less keen to find another job outside of the organization.

Participant E206 added that while interacting with expat employees, who account for the majority of the organization's workforce, job loss and fear of unemployment are great, and they drive a lot of reactions and responses to anything, including change. While employees are generally afraid of losing their pride, authority, and power, the tendency for security and job safety superseded all other concerns by far, and clearly this plays a vital role in how this organization, and many other organizations in Dubai, operates in all ways (not just concerning change). Apart from that, employees are usually willing to be active members of the organization, given that they see the value and benefits to them, directly or indirectly, as stated by participant E209.

Employees are mainly comfortable with the current situation and may not see the good in the transformations. A strong resistance may, however, also occur due to the lack of trust towards the decision-making process, as highlighted by participant E201, who noted that every time an employee resists change, it is due to them not being in a position to see change objectively as well. In some cases, no matter what the change would be, people with negative attitudes will resent it, as noted by participant E206.

4.3.5.1. Cultural shift

When the employees were discussing the overall experience, they responded differently, but with many commonalities:

“I think luckily I was shielded from any effect of the changes”. E211

“... helping them – employees – and at the same time they are able to get out”. E202

Participant E202 added that creating a positive work environment helps employees as well as NI to go through changes, “even with the challenges associated with such a complex process”. On the other hand, another participant, when asked about the same issue, noted that:

“I am going to change that. I am going to try to create Network as a culture that... people from 30 different nationalities can relate to. You don't have to be a person from a different nationality to find any value, you're certain like you said, and we've had this conversation, every culture has at some level, the same set of values, and they are somehow related”. E203

Additionally, creating a relatable work culture is very important for employees and for the organization. In general, there is a massive cultural shift that needs to take place, as stated by participant E219. When leaders are empowering the right resources, then the bureaucracy will automatically be resolved, as alluded to in the following extract:

“Before projects are actually initiated or people started working on them and spending time on them, they should go through a process of approval through the NLT, that okay, this is something we are interested in even working on. Like it’s worth it”. E204

4.3.5.2. Communication

During the process of change, communication must be there at different levels, as highlighted by participant E207: “The more communication is there, the more clarity will be there”. This is the time when communication at all levels ensures clarity among the employees. One of the employees stated in the interview that :

“Speak to us. Speak. Tell us what you’re thinking. Tell us what you’re... Give us feedback, and we’ll give you feedback, Weekly meetings, sessions, engage more people”. E218

When participants were asked about the flow of information and communication, some responses were quite distinct:

“Information didn’t go down from plus one – those who report directly to NLT member, that’s for sure. I think they were very useful... To make sure the employees are continuously informed. While when it was asked that whether the communication flows and whether it filters down as it’s supposed to be, the response was discerned to be interesting”. E211

“They need their manager if they’re in that meeting, to translate it into something that they understand. It’s all well and good we do a Leadership Call”. E215

The Leadership Call is a monthly forum where employees from the two levels below the NLT are invited to dial-into a call for an hour to listen to the monthly updates from senior management. While participant E219 stated that there is a challenge with communication, when asked about whether there is a challenge in the communication, the response was:

“A communication comes in, so and so person has joined the organization. So and so person is part of the group... and that is it, we don't get exposed to real information about the company or what really matters to us, such as the IPO process...

“HR plays a very big role. Not only in terms of sending out communications that this has changed in the organization vision, or we also have a new hire, we are moving towards this, we have an employee survey, no that is not the only important thing... It has to be a regular communication, and you really need to share what you're going through between the phases of change”. E219

According to E207, face-to-face communication through meetings is preferable to emails. Also, participants had supportive statements pertaining to this, stating that there are several questions when communication is shared. In order to clear the doubts pertaining to the decision taken and thereby clarify them, we need to have face-to-face meetings to better understand what is happening, or to clear any confusion that could cause ambiguity and fear.

4.3.5.3. Fear factor

In general, if employees identify with the organization, their fear about job security decreases, since they feel secure through the value they provide. However, when there is a leadership change, employees in general fear that they might lose their jobs if they put forward more of their views. It was also noted through the multiple interviews conducted with employees that the specific nature of Dubai and its majority expat population has direct impacts on the way fear exists in the relationship between employees and organizations (E201, E202, E204, E206, E209, E211, E215, E218, E219). Participant E208 noted that employees who may not feel capable of fulfilling their tasks feel very uncomfortable and fearful to lose their employment, especially if they are dealing with a new boss, and the vision is not clear or has not been communicated at all, as in some cases. Another participant (E207) added that there is a very clear notion in the organization that if the leader is not sharing or communicating decisions to staff. This causes uncertainty, fear, and negative emotions among employees, individually and in groups.

In this regard, E205 highlighted the impact of fear on employees and how they react to any change in the organization, especially among the expat community. Another participant stated that:

“Employees are generally afraid that if they say something, it can in return backfire on them... I know in meetings that some people have a lot to say, and their views could be valuable. However, they refrain from voicing their point of concern due to the fear of the consequences or what they could face from their leaders or other leaders if their views are not aligned to theirs”. E213

Moreover, another participant stated that:

“There was also fear of job security from my projects. And, there were challenges from agendas and other hidden factors that drive the action of some people, because every department has its separate agenda, and they’re putting it towards that direction more...

“These bunch of employees fear for the safety of their jobs, especially as all of them are expats, and they support their families... If they lose their job, they will, along with their family, be forced to leave the country if they were not successful in finding another job within a very tight timelines, some weeks or a maximum of months”. E204

Organizational change is often associated with the dissatisfaction or other negatively rendered outcomes. It was noted from many participants that “resistance” must be removed from the change process, and ideally replaced with collaboration and communication. Others noted that change produces confusion in the workplace, rather than resistance *per se*. Organizational change is usually, and sometimes mistakenly, associated with dissatisfaction and negative outcomes. However, if only the negative aspects are the focus of employees, then they will have less energy for participating and contributing to the transformation. In addition to this, while the change is substantial for organizational success, employees, on the other hand, also have a natural need for continuity.

During the interviewing process, employees highlighted the reasons why they responded to the change process in particular ways. In many cases they indirectly indicated, as noted in my side notes and observations, the reasons behind that. For example, participant E213 highlighted that employees usually fear job loss or unemployment in Dubai, due to the automatic revocation of residency status with termination of employment, which has severe repercussions on the whole family, in addition to the employee. Another participant (E220) noted that during the long period of service in the organization and the country, being an expat comes with a lot of risks, and no one would like to put their job at risk, especially with a whole family to support.

This was an essential theme that enabled me to explore and highlight the underlying drivers for employees' responses to change and their perceptions about the process. Primarily, this theme is fundamental in this study, since it rendered an overall experience and recommendations. Also since it does not only put the interviewee in the position of a leader; rather, it also questions about what would they change or do differently in the change process, especially with other employees. It was observed that most participants would help other employees. Also, employees highlighted the need to create a culture that people from 30 different nationalities can relate to. The assessment of this theme provided that most participants would enhance communication at different levels. They also believed that cultural shift needs to take place in the organization. Others believed that if provided an opportunity to be a leader, they would empower resources to resolve bureaucracy and hierarchy.

4.4. Data Presentation of Leaders (A101-A106)

4.4.1. Introduction

Similar to the structure adopted with employees, the interviews with leaders also started with warm-up questions to create a comfortable environment for them to open up and to get them into the main part of the interview. Subsequent questions followed the five key themes: work environment, change process, work culture, responses to change, and overall experience and recommendations. Each theme had a couple of questions that are relatable to sub-themes or codes to evaluate their responses and link it to the objectives of the study, but without limiting their responses to the pre-identified themes. The structure of interviews' questions left

room for leaders to discuss any points not mentioned directly in the questions, but which they felt were related to the discussed topic. Key findings from leaders' responses are summarized in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Summary and key findings from leaders' responses

S. N.	Themes	Key findings
1	Work environment	Hierarchical but progressive
		Collaborative yet siloed
		Innovative but imperfect
2	Change process	Complex
		Time-consuming
		Increases doubt
		Departmentally unstructured
3	Work culture	Diverse, but similar throughout the organization
		Sub-culture pockets throughout the organization
		Mixed
		Improving
4	Response to change – resistance	Prefer to deal with overt resistance than covert resistance
		Disagreement, passive and silent resistance
		Unwilling, unquestioning but mainly inexpressive
5	Overall experience and Recommendations	Communication, engaging, and harmonizing people
		Managing People & inclusiveness
		More cooperation is needed.
		Fear & insecurity should be tackled.

Source: Author

4.4.2. Work Environment

In regards to leaders' response to how they view NI work environment, one respondent highlighted that:

“I think it's innovative in some parts, bureaucratic in other parts, resistant to change in other parts, and collaborative yet siloed at the same time”.

4.4.2.1. Hierarchical

With regard to leaders' views about the work environment in the organization, some noted that the organization was originally:

“Extremely hierarchical... especially coming from a Western work environment, where power distance is not very high, as it is here”.

A103

Participant A105 also highlighted that the work environment is mostly resistant to change, and employees are not ready to get out of their cocoon. Just like the employees, the leaders, too, feel that the environment in the organization is siloed, as noted by participant A104.

4.4.2.2. Progressing, yet siloed

When the leaders were asked to describe the work environment in NI as collaborative, restrictive, innovative, bureaucratic, or otherwise, all felt it was moving forward, but some felt that the point of origin was extremely hierarchical and implied that change was slow.

“So the organization was incredibly hierarchical. It is still quite hierarchical, probably not as hierarchical as it was. There were many items or symbols of higher power and hierarchy in the organization. So it used to be an environment where some of the executive offices were closed to the rest of the employees, and everybody else used not to be able to walk into this particular space or area... Because their badge didn’t work...”

“That has now changed. And no one was ever allowed to have a meeting in the boardroom. That has now changed. Some other simple stuff has disappeared, or has been shifted, or been moved”. A101

Some participants highlighted increasing levels of collaboration across the organization.

“There are pretty good degrees of collaboration”. A102

“It’s always been a reasonably collaborative environment. : A104

“Definitely progressive, it is moving towards a culture of taking accountability for the area you’re responsible for. I would look at it from the lens of how does it feel like a member of the leadership team, and

how does it feel as an organization as a whole? ... I think, as one of the leadership team, we're still on the journey; it's not perfect". A102

The most comprehensive overview of participants' responses was given by the following:

"I think it's... bureaucratic in parts, resistant to change in other parts, and collaborative yet siloed". A103

Most of the interviewed leaders noted that the work environment in NI is quite hierarchical, but progressive and improving. The hierarchical structure was attributed to legacy systems and operational procedures, but they asserted that it is moving more towards accountability. They also highlighted that they look at change from the perspective of the whole organization, rather than their own areas. They noted that they are still on the journey, and while it is not perfect, it is improving, and they perceived evidence of this around the organization. Though they accept that many changes have taken place recently, and they are still not perfect.

4.4.3. Change Process

One of the leaders highlighted that the pace of response is what determines success in dealing with change:

"Winners will be able to adapt, learn and act quickly, losers will spend time trying to control and master change". A103

The participant added that organizations in this era of globalization continuously need to change to compete in the business world. However, the process of change may be initiated due to several other reasons, and has never been simple for any organization. In organizations such as NI, the change can be discerned in the form of restructuring and reengineering. As outlined by a couple of leaders (A102, A105), environmental changes generate a requirement for the adaption of strategic change, as highlighted below:

"Members of the organization cope with change, and they go through different phases starting with denial and resistance, and this is understood being the nature of human being". A106

It was also noted by participant A102 that if change is driven by an economic downturn, individuals expect to see losses instead of anticipating any gain. In this regard, participant noted that:

“Change is generally interpreted as negative by a majority of employees for different reasons”. A104

Such reasons could include that employees would rather be in a known than an unknown situation. Secondly, as change may bring gain or loss to individuals, they may experience loss with more profound psychological impacts. They thus tend to be more content with the existing entitlements in times of change, due to their lack of certainty about their future.

4.4.3.1. Good but complex

When leaders were asked about how they would describe the changes that took place in the leadership team, most of the participants agreed that though it is a very complex process, the change processes have been good for the employees, leaders, and the organization.

“I hope there are at least some indications, but people tend to forget when they’re going through a period of change, visual reminders help. By visual, I mean guys in operations, for example, probably don’t have a clue what I’m held accountable for, and how my personal performance is judged”. A106

It was also asserted by some of the interviewed leaders (A101, A102, A103, A106) that most change processes are time-consuming in implementation. Before the implementation of change processes, employees and leaders must be well informed. It was observed that most change processes attract doubts amongst employees. Moreover, the changes implemented were departmentally unstructured. However, participant A101 highlighted that the nature of change is complex, and in an organization like this, it could become more complex due to the mix it has and the nature of our business, which affords zero interruption. Therefore, we need to be mindful of these facts when we are looking at evaluating this process.

4.4.3.2. Time consuming – not structured properly

Some of the responses in regard to how leaders perceived the changes in NI highlighted the time this process requires to bring about such change.

“It takes longer to break down hierarchical cultures, no matter how diverse the population is from a gender or race perspective if they’re used to operating in a hierarchical organization”. A106

Participant A102 also highlighted that change usually takes time, and in this context, you need to do a balance between keeping business running and keeping employees engaged. Other sets of responses related to the change process were highlighted by some of the leaders.

“Over half the leadership probably changed within two or three months, so that whatever you do, that’s going to have an impact. And then when the new leadership came in under the GCEO’s direction, there were a lot of changes he wanted to make quick, there was a lot of speed, a lot of change, looking back, which was good. But I think, looking back, I wonder if I still think if we did enough to kind of embed all of that change”. A103

One of the leaders elucidated the change process, stating:

“These change processes were just aligning things like we always had a strategy, or we always had different angles, but it was not properly structured under a certain department. Some of the department was not even there before, so there was lots of work to be done, but sometimes it was not connected or properly structured”. A105

Most of the interviewed leaders highlighted that the change processes have been good for the employees, leaders, and the organization. In addition, they have also asserted that most of the changes take a long time, and in many instances, the organization does not have this time to properly plan and execute on all aspects of the change, especially those related to communication and employees’ engagement. Despite their notes regarding the importance of keeping employees informed through

the process, one of the leaders highlighted that the pace of response is what determines success in dealing with change.

4.4.4. Work Culture

This theme is focused on how leaders would describe the diverse workforce in NI, and whether they considered this diversity as an asset or as a liability. This theme also explored if leaders considered such diversity during the implementation of the change process, and to what extent. One participant asserted that for Muslim employees, in the month of Ramadan, their prayer timings might sometimes coincide with the meeting times. The organization works on London based timings, which could be problematic for them.

“So some members of the NLT will argue that the culture requirements are important and that we can’t run some meetings during Ramadan. Well, I get that, but I’m now long-distance in London and have to work for London time in many instances, so the business needs to continue running no matter what, even with the pace of London”. A101

Another leader, A102 said that if given a chance, they would replace some employees with locals, to increase the utilization of local talents, and increase diversity.

4.4.4.1. Diverse, but underlying similarity

When the leaders were asked to describe the diverse workforce of NI, and whether they viewed it as a liability or an asset during the change process, different responses were obtained, including the following.

“The underlying organizational culture is incredibly mixed between Indian, Pakistani, Filipino, Brits, and a few other mixes. Also, there is no real, strong, overarching national culture that you could raise in the organization”. A101

“It’s a very similar culture even though it’s diverse. We haven’t got Canadian, US, West Coast, East Coast, Australians, Japanese, so there isn’t that massive difference in diversity. So there’s diversity, but very similar. So, culture, there’s a lot of similarities. Therefore, you get

20 people in the room, and it might be 14 different nationalities, but actually, the culture is massively similar". A103

"I'm used to working with diverse cultures and genders, and I'm an active promoter of diversity. If you look at the leadership team in my last organization, more than 50 percent were female, many of whom are non-American. Many were people of colour. I encourage that diversity all the way down through my organization". A106

"We're trying to grow the business whilst also putting in place a new culture. Making sure we're much more disciplined from a follow-through and completion and accountability". A105

Most of the six leaders highlighted that the culture of the organization is unacceptable for most people. Most responses pointed toward the hierarchy and bureaucracy in NI.

4.4.5. Response to Change

As one of the key elements in this study, understanding how leaders perceive employees' responses to change is important. In this regard, leaders were asked to share their perspective on how employees responded to the changes. On this note, participant A103 noted that since people do not question the changes, leaders cannot deal or help them with their problems with change:

"People do not talk or question enough what they have been told to do, not only that, but people don't question as much as I would expect... And they probably don't question because they don't feel comfortable for whatever reason, it may not be just fear, but it may be just that they have never done it before". A103

Participant A102, on the other hand, highlighted that most employees did not appreciate the changes that have been made for their own good, as they have not seen many benefits from it. Employees are generally not always motivated enough to embrace change, especially when the goals are just stretched. Participant A103 added that employees further need to know why their performance levels need to be raised, or why they need to "sweat more for the sake of change", or because there

are new leaders in place. It does not make sense to them, and if not well explained, they will not buy-in to the process, and “you start to find some interesting behaviours in place”. In this change, the assumptions are that employees “are capable of improving their actions”, and that they “will further enhance if provided with the training, resources, and motivations” necessary.

4.4.5.1. *Covert resistance*

In regard to the response to change, leaders were asked if employees were receptive, supportive, resistant, or otherwise. Also, leaders were asked about the reasons that drove employees to respond to this change in this particular way. Additionally, they were asked if they encountered any form of resistance from employees during the change process. In this regard, participants highlighted their preference for overt resistance, and lamented the lack of conversation or debate in the prevailing milieu of “silent resistance” (A104):

“I much prefer to deal with overt resistance than covert resistance”.

A101

“At least at the time they disagree with me, they’re not just going to nod, just not do what I’ve told them to do. So at least they told me they disagree with me. And then, as I said earlier, at least they could then go and have a conversation or debate with them to convince them”.

A103

However, one participant offered more palpable overt resistance in response to more serious changes:

“The responses we had got when we were actually trying to kick people out of their offices was also quite a resistance”. A106

So it depends on how you look at it, but there were multiple levels of resistance that observed during the process. However, the obvious one is the best to deal with, as stated by participant A105. One of the leaders highlighted:

“The willingness to engage, the willingness to try something different, the willingness to lift your head above the parapet would undoubtedly

be influenced. If you've been somewhere for a period of time by the experience of that cultural norm, the experience you've seen before...".

A101

Most leaders' views on this related to the prevailing passive and acquiescent nature of employees in the hierarchical organizational culture, as discussed previously:

"People don't question as much as I would expect... And they probably don't question because they don't feel comfortable for whatever reason, or it might be that they have just never done it before". A103

"I've seen them probably, little things, like 'I don't like the new approach of the boss' probably, or 'the way he talks to me', remember the previous boss could've been from a different nationality, and they may not be appreciative but mainly not expressive... Definitely again, culture, diversity, everything comes into place here". A105

It was noted that most leaders prefer to deal with overt resistance than covert resistance. Also, it was highlighted that silent resistance was prevalent amongst the employees. It was also found that passive resistance was most commonly observed. However, most leaders had anticipated these forms of resistance, as they were well aware that changes lead to resistance.

4.4.6. Overall Experience and Recommendations

The last theme in the interviews asked leaders what would they do differently in future changes, or what they would do differently to bring about this change, especially with regard to employees' part of the process. The responses to this question were diverse, yielding the following illustrative contributions about this theme:

"I think I would've gone much faster and I would continue to keep up that pace and constant change". A106

"I think I would have appointed someone at the Executive Committee (Exco) level, even if it's for 12 months or 18 months full-time as the internal change leader". A103

“We need to understand better what people want”. A102

“I think we need to help to define what it is we’re trying to get to or to achieve and take a more inclusive view on that. Then secondly, it is understanding more closely what will motivate people to make that change”. A105

“Leaders need to understand these different elements that drive employees’ responses to any activity inside the organization, including change, as having a better understanding of these factors could increase the probability of success. It was added that it is a known fact that organizational culture does not exist in isolation of the surrounding environmental factors, but what did we do about it, or did we do enough to manage this part... this is one of the questions that I ask myself...”. A104

“Resistance is inevitable in the change process, and people tend to resist change as it affects them inside the organization, but what we can do to change that is something we need to investigate further, and all the other factors associated with it”. A101

4.4.6.1. Communication and engagement

Most responses also highlighted the communication gap and the need to engage with employees as the key areas for improvement in NI. Participant A102 described this as a “huge gap” in communication, and that the current communication channel fell short of addressing employees’ concerns or fear towards the change process (A104). Other leaders cited challenges associated with communication and information flow:

“You have to count on your managers and senior team members to convey the message or filter it down, but you find at the end that many people have no idea about what you are saying, and you end up having a communication gap”. (A105)

This particular aspect seems to be a fundamental challenge in the organization:

“I have to count on my direct reports and leaders to convey the message and to ensure that information flows... I go to people ask them random questions to check if they are informed and if they have an idea about a particular subject that they were meant to be informed about... what I find is that they have not been told and no communications have been done...

“... many people feel that information is power and they shall hold on this power, but we have to keep trying to change that”. A106

During the process of change, this flow of communication is very integral. In response to this, the participant continued to note that:

“It’s hard. Because I can sit here and talk to people, but if people don’t communicate down like they were supposed to... and that communication stops, which is why I will bypass and just go straight to the bottom of the organization and say... ‘Do you know about this?’ And if they don’t know, then I’ll go and tell them actually”. A106

Participant A101 highlighted that be it a leader or an employee, the flow of communication is critical to the success of the process. According to the leader also, the mode of communication is very vital. The flow of information enables communication from top to bottom, and thereby there is a good communication channel between the employees and the leaders. This was seen by one participant as a route to expand the role of the CEO from the traditional top-down, task-based approaches to play a more engaged role in fostering an inclusive organizational culture via improved communications:

“If I’m the CEO, I would know that I have a limited capacity to execute things. One thing I could have changed going back to our question, to engage people and bring a lot more harmony in the same language, not literally but you know what I mean”. A103

Another participant highlighted the need to get more resources from the local market to increase harmony and adaptability:

“I would have replaced or made at least a 40% to be from the local market, Emirates-based. That would have tackled the problems or issues automatically, we wouldn’t have risked what we are today, we do not get any response, and people are immune to everything”.

4.4.6.2. Fear factor

During the course of interviews with leaders, multiple viewpoints were expressed about the fear factor and how they think that this may influence the responses of employees. This aspect has been discussed extensively previously (in relation to concern about employment and residency status, among other factors). The following illustrative examples give an overview of leaders’ responses concerning the fear factor.

“... would be fearful of the fact that no matter how high you ride, you would always be, given a bad signal in a day, and within the day you leave. That’s how it works here, simply. And if you’re a good employee, obviously you’re given two months of spare time, and you’re good to go”. A105

“There is a significant amount of fear in the organization. And that’s a consequence of the market we live in. So everybody here is on a visa, the visa relating to their job, and therefore they are very concerned about losing their job, which is probably over-emphasized in comparison to other markets in the world, or in the region”. A101

“We know about it, it exists here more significantly than any other place we have worked in, is it due to the nature of the country or the labour law, maybe, but the fact that fear is there and we need to be conscious about”. A102

“While fear exists and we know about it, there is only so much that we can do, some people will continue having this type of fear no matter what you do, this is their nature and the nature of expat working in this place”. A104

“We are aware of such factor and we know that it may be greater in this context than its normal weight in other places, that is known to us and we try to keep it in mind, despite the many communications, formal and informal, that we cascade to the organization trying to manage this part of the process”. A106

4.5. Observations and Fieldnotes

As discussed in chapter three under data collection and analysis section, I have relied on Schein’s (2013) journal-keeping model (Observation, Reaction, Judgment, and Intervention) to generate data not only collect data out of the observations and field notes as recommended by Coghland and Brannick (2014). Observations and field notes were classified and categorized following the same approach adopted in analyzing the primary data sources (interviews). The five main themes guided the analysis process and data generated from observations and field notes grouped under each theme. Observations were mainly an outcome to notes drawn from the six sessions attended with the GCEO “coffee with GCEO” as explained in chapter three [Table 3.3] and my personal observations about employees and leaders during the change process along with the side notes from interviews. As explained below [Table 4.4], the outcome of these observations and field notes support to a great extent the notions came out of the interviews, and for the ease of referencing, I have adopted the same approach to elaborate under each theme the outcome for employees as well as for leaders. I will highlight these data points under each of the themes and how they are similar or different based on the outcome, especially when it comes to the overall experience about the changes and recommendations to improve the situation, each from their own perspective.

Table 4.4: Summary and key findings from Observations and Field notes

S.N.	Themes	Employees	Leaders
1	Work environment	Bureaucratic	Challenging - Silo "pockets"
		Silo	Progressing to be more positive
		Challenging but there are some signs of improvement	More collaborative than before
2	Change process	Many big changes at the same time	Time consuming
		No much communications provided	Complex than anticipated
		Lack of clear direction	Unstructured in some areas "pockets"
3	Work culture	Clan - Hierarchy	was very hierarchal but getting more flat
		Dependent - no real empowerment	Sub-culture and pockets exist across
		Diversity not really considered	Diverse workforce with more similarities than differences
4	Response to change – resistance	Not voicing their concerns	Passive - inexpressive - covert resistance
		Fear	Not fully engaged
		Lack of trust	Fear
5	Overall experience and recommendations	High uncertainty	More covert resistance than anticipated
		ambiguity	Fear is paramount and drive most responses
		Better communication is essential	Employees should adopt faster to change
		Learning and development of employees' skills will benefit the process	Employees need to be more engaged
		Break silos - build bridges	Employees need to voice their concerns and take the lead
		Early engagement	Work culture need to be improved - less hierarchy and more flat

Sources: Author

4.5.1. Work Environment

During these sessions with GCEO employees implicitly indicated that the work environment does not support the change process, especially with the bureaucracy and silos that exist in pocket of the organization. That affected them negatively in executing their projects and getting some of the changes done across multiple departments. Though, they have highlighted the slight improvement and how progressive the new leadership team wants NI to be as part of these changes. Yet, it is not fully realized. That was clear in most of these sessions as employees tried to

highlight the challenges to work across teams due to these silos, without an explicit reference to the changes.

I have noted, on the other hand, that leaders' views (especially the new ones) were not different and that they know the existence of these pockets, which they are trying to break. However, the challenges have to do with the legacy leadership paradigm that used to prefer a bureaucratic work environment that the new leadership has been trying to change. Some employees have highlighted these positive changes and the role leaders play in enhancing this particular aspect in NI during their sessions with GCEO. I have also noted that some leaders continue to operate in a bureaucratic manner, especially those from the previous regime. From my personal observations and field notes, I found that there was clearly a change afoot toward a less bureaucratic approach. While most of the NLT is new, there are still some leaders from the old regime, who are accustomed to operating in the bureaucratic style. I know through my discussions with the GCEO that he is trying to enforce collaboration between the new and old NLT members, and also between employees, in which, some leaders and employees have highlighted the progressive changes in this aspect in NI.

4.5.2. Change process

Change initiatives were substantial and happened frequently at different levels; however the communication was not always clear, which resulted in an increased ambiguity and lack of clarity for employees. Not only that, but I have also noted that it affected their responses and leaders perceived them as if they are not willing to engage in the changes, rather than not knowing what to be done. I have noticed during "Coffee with GCEO" sessions that employees were not much aware of most of the initiatives that he is seeking their views on. I have also noticed that in many occasions employees will gossip amongst themselves about some initiatives that was not formally communicated and that created a level of frustration and ambiguity. Not only that, it also increased the tendency to assume that they are excluded and are not very much required in these change initiatives. In which case, that increased the level of fear and uncertainty.

I have observed, on the other hand, that leaders viewed the change processes as complex than they anticipated due to the time required to get employees engaged or

break the silos between some departments, especially if the leaders of these departments are from the previous regime. I have also observed that some leaders usually blame others when it came to unstructured plans to execute some of the change initiatives. New leaders implicitly indicated that initiatives handled by those from the old regime lack proper structure and alignment across the board, especially at the beginning of the change process. I have noted some key differences in this particular theme between leaders and employees, especially the lack of awareness from leaders on how important communication is for employees to perform their duties and engage in the change process.

4.5.3. Work Culture

One of the key observations in this regard across both groups of participants is that they are aware of the hierarchal nature of NI, but the difference on how both groups perceive the level of hierarchy today versus before. While leaders feel that they have achieved a lot in turning the organization around from being very hierarchal to the current state (more of a flat organization), employees feel that it still very hierarchal, especially in some pockets. I have also observed that the nature of some departments have magnified this element, as they have embraced the clan culture over a holistic organizational one, which is also one of the reason for the silos. One of the other differences is about how diverse culture is important to both groups. While employees value their background, as expected, they have highlighted the lack of attention given from the leadership team on celebrating the diverse workforce of NI.

Employees were more concerned about the core values that drive their actions; moreover, I have noticed that differences related to utilization of language have amplified this divisive feeling between employees and leaders. For example what is considered as a joke for a leader who comes from a certain cultural background could be offensive to another. That for leaders did not have much weight to it as they felt that most employees have similar characteristics being expatriates in Dubai. In most of the sessions with GCEO, I have observed that employees from similar backgrounds or nationalities stick to each other, which could be an indication that the organization did not handle well breaking silos and bridging the gaps between diverse working groups.

4.5.4. Response to Change

There are some key observations I have found that could be categorized under this theme. Three key observations that highlighted how employees responded to these changes: fear, lack of trust and passive attitude. As employees are mostly expatriates they have a lot of weight assigned to job security due to its implication on their life and their families. In this regard, the context of NI with its high expatriate workforce and Dubai labour law have led employees to be extra cautious about any action that may jeopardise their job. I have noticed that they mostly embraced this passive attitude and being inexpressive towards most of the initiatives fearing the consequences of voicing their concerns. That has created a lot of frustration to the leadership, as they did not know why there is such a lack of engagement from employees. Though they had an idea of the nature of Dubai and the fear factor amongst expat community, they never anticipated its magnitude.

While leaders complained about employees' lack of engagement, they did not invest time or efforts to understand the underlying drivers (at least at the beginning). I believe the reason is their focus on achieving their financial targets. Leaders only saw a lack of engagement and inexpressive behaviour, and that have baffled them. They have expected employees to resist a bit and then get engaged, as in any other change that they have witnessed before. However, what they have seen in NI is that employees had very different calculation and they would rather be silent and safe in their job than being more expressive, but with a risk of jeopardising their job.

4.5.5. Overall Experience and Recommendations

The observations in this theme is split into two main areas: the overall experience of participants and how they think change could be better managed in the future, which is implicit recommendations. The first part is the overall experience for employees, which is mostly about uncertainty and ambiguity due to lack of clarity and improper communication. Fear is paramount as highlighted by both groups, but employees believe that the organization has a role to reduce this fear, which leaders believe that there is very little to be done in this regard due to the nature of Dubai and the expatriate workforce. My key observations about how leaders view employees' responses to change are as follow: leaders viewed employees as inexpressive, not fully engaged, and exercise covert resistance.

Some of the key points that I have noted from employees in many of the conversations on how best NI could bring about future changes could be summarized in the following points. Employees believe that they need better communication and information should better flow without bottlenecks. They also believe that building bridges between departments will surely enhance their experience through the change process by having more of a collaborative workplace rather than the silos. Another interesting note is how employees could highly benefit for training and learning sessions to develop their skills, especially those required to manage changes. Leaders, on the other side, were more focused on what is required from employees rather than what they could do for employees. I have noted that leaders usually talk about how employees should be better engaged and take the lead during changes and how they should be more expressive and voice their concerns. However, they have not really given any thoughts of how this could happen, or I dare to say that they expect employees to change their attitude towards change by themselves and without much support or efforts from their side.

4.6. Summary and Reflection

In summary, the data collected aimed to deeply and comprehensively understand how both groups, employees and leaders, perceive the changes in NI and their reactions to the different factors impacted the process. While the main data point were interviews, the field notes and observations from the organization assisted greatly to triangulate the analysis. The data produced from my observations and field notes, including my casual meetings with participants during the process, enhanced the generated data and presented under the main themes and sub-themes. The study explored how employees responded to these changes through the key thematic discussions and how different those were from leaders.

It was observed that many participants perceived their work as challenging, but their leaders were mostly accessible in the sense that they could easily talk to them about their problems, more than prior to the change. While the change process should help in improving both the organizational performance and employees' overall experience, the outcome of the data showed some interesting findings on both sides:

employees and leaders. While employees held some varied views on the work environment, organizational culture, and how they regarded the change process, leaders collectively acknowledged the challenging situation, especially in a multicultural organization like NI.

While both groups highlighted their awareness about the challenges associated with the change process, employees noted that these changes could have been managed more efficiently. Leaders, on the other hand, believed that the culture of the organization is unacceptable for most people, and they have been working on changing this aspect, but such fundamental change takes time. Most responses pointed towards the hierarchy and bureaucracy of the organization. While changes are necessary sometimes, they have caused disruption to the business, affected the work environment, and impacted the way employees are engaged and how they should take part in achieving organizational goals. As this study is about employees' responses to change, and resistance in particular, I found that most leaders prefer to deal with overt resistance than covert resistance. Though most leaders had anticipated some sort of resistance, they felt that any engagement from employees was generally lacking. The views of leaders and employees were discerned to be similar in regards to the communication gap, which is discussed in details in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the views of employees and leaders as emerged from the multiple triangulated data points collected and generated from the study (interviews, discussions, observations, and field notes). The chapter goes through the key areas that emerged from the data, highlighting the key findings and areas for improvement inside NI. The chapter starts with the type of change occurred in NI and how it was managed, due to its effect on employees' responses as discussed in chapter two. The focus then shifts to the repeated themes that were noted by both groups and emerged from the data points and how they impacted employees' responses to the change process. These findings are discussed, linked to the academic lenses, and utilized to produce actionable knowledge and an intervention plan to solve the identified problem.

5.2. Types of Change in NI

Due to its implication on employees' responses and how different types of change may affect the way employees respond to change, I decided to start the discussion with the type of change occurred in NI relying on the collected data points. The findings from interviews, observations, field notes and own experience inside the organization are then matched / compared to the models examined in the literature chapter [Tables 2.1-2.3]. Turning to specifics, I reflected on scholars' classifications of the rate of occurrence, how it comes about, and its scale in analysing the type of change that occurred in NI (Nelson, 2003; Senior and Fleming, 2006; Burnes, 2009). Through the investigation process, I found that the change process in NI was a mixture of multiple styles; it was incremental and continuous, happened in a planned manner, and is considered to be a corporate transformation [Table 5.1]. NI level of change is considered to be organizational, as it occurred at a structural and system-level, which conforms to Lashunda's (2010) definition of the level of organizational change. NI went through radical alteration by changing more than 50% of its leadership in a short period, with a new organizational strategy that triggered a new

vision and mission. Participants from both groups asserted that the change was “massive”, in which many changes took place at different levels.

There were no clear communications before the start of the change process about the type of change NI was going to face; therefore, I cannot confirm that the change on the ground was different from what was announced. However, employees knew that the change was going to be massive, as changing the GCEO and most of the NLT meant reinvigorating the work environment and culture, alongside the operating model. NI did not have a change leader to drive the process or to articulate a clear change agenda at the beginning of the process; it was left to the imagination of employees. Employees, however, highlighted that these changes have made the current NI different from what it used to be before, in which the details will be discussed in the hereunder sections.

More than half of the NLT members are new, and major organizational restructuring took place. Some new departments were created (or significantly evolved from previous small-scale activities, such as products and strategy). These conform to Cusick’s (2018) observation that altering the leadership team could affect the scale and intensity of the change process. In addition, I have found that the scale of change in NI played a role in how employees responded to it, which is also detailed in the following sections. While many scholars advocated planned change (Bamford and Forrester, 2003), this was criticized for its negligence to some variables, especially people, which was highly observed in NI: the process did not engage employees from an early stage. While leaders claimed that they tried to engage people though the many challenges associated with that, employees’ accounts did not reflect this.

In my views, employees’ responses were highly impacted by not engaging them from the beginning as they were left clueless. While new leaders were very much busy in finding their ground, those from the old regime were also busy but to see how the new leaders are handling these changes. That created more ambiguity and lack of clarity in the organization. Not only that, but new leaders were not fully aware of employees’ skills, and they needed some time to evaluate those who could take part in this process and subsequently get access to information. The dilemma in this area could be linked to what Hiatt (2016) stated about the challenges associated with the

change process in enabling employees to adapt to change, encouraging them to embrace change and to meet business objectives while keeping the business running. I also found that new leaders needed time to evaluate whom they can trust to be in the inner circle and get access to information, which otherwise were kept to specific group. This resulted in high uncertainty and a lack of clarity, which then reflected on employees' lack of engagement. Employees felt like they were excluded, especially at the beginning of the process, which demoralized them and did not help them face such massive change.

Table 5.1: Types of change in NI

Change process in NI		
Dimension	Type	Highlights
Rate of occurrence	Incremental (Bumpy) & Continuous	As the changes were happening frequently at multiple levels, NI needed to be able to continuously change in a fundamental way to keep up with the new procedures and the pace of newly introduced processes emerged from the newly developed organizational strategy. However, at departmental level, there was a focus on a particular aspect of this change, such as technology focused on platform changes and transformations, products are focused on new products launch, business is focused on the required revenue streams and top line growth, legal on the new audit & compliance frameworks that are critical for the changes.
How it came about	Planned	The change processes were planned following the arrival of the new GCEO and the NLT members.
Scale	Corporate Transformation	Post the changes in the leadership, new organizational strategy was developed and implemented, new vision and mission statements, and accordingly a radical alteration in the whole business plan of NI.

Source: Author

5.3. Bringing About Change in NI

As explained in the previous sections, the changes in NI are considered to be massive, with multiple changes occurring at different levels. Accordingly, employees found it difficult to deal with such massive and intense change, especially at the beginning, where no proper communication existed and uncertainty was high, which had a direct negative impact on their engagement and support to the process. Literature has discussed this aspect, especially the way intense change may alter employees' responses to change (Luecke, 2003). But, I have also found that employees in NI were not mentally ready for such a big change, and they required a lot of guidance from their leaders to navigate through these changes. Though employees might have the required skills to deal with these changes, they needed

their leaders to show some support and direction during the early stages, which did not happen, and subsequently resulted in the way they responded to these changes, especially at the early stages.

Legacy problems were present in the discussions, and in many cases came to the surface in describing previous management styles or operating models, from both employees as well as leaders, each from their point of interest. For example, employees used to be directed and guided in most cases during the time of the previous regime; however, they found themselves being asked all of a sudden to navigate such massive change without much direction. New leaders, on the other side, have highlighted how dependant employees are and considered them not able to change or drive change. Such perceptual differences increased the gap between what leaders expected from employees during the change process and what employees were looking to get from leaders. That again conform to how communications were broken and the way gaps emerged between both groups. I have also found that leaders are looking at employees' adaptation as something that shall always be there, especially in such an industry where there is a need for continuous improvement, which requires continuous changes. Accordingly, leaders felt that the process is much more complex and time consuming than what they initially anticipated. Leaders have also blamed the ill structured process existed in some pocket in the organization, which implicitly means those departments led by leaders from the old regime.

New leaders came with different practices to legacy leadership, especially the autonomous and independent work style, which created some confusion and infused the high uncertainty amongst employees, especially at the beginning of the process. One of the other elements that could have increased the complexity of the change process for leaders, and which they have not put much weight to it is the context of Dubai with its labour law and the percentage of expatriate workforce in NI. These two points have highly affected the way employees responded to the changes, which will be discussed in details in the next section. However, I capitalized on Hayes' (2014) integrative model of organizational dynamics in the literature [Figure 2.8] to form the basis for this framework [Figure 5.1], which fits NI context highlighting key change dynamics in it. To manage the change process in NI, leaders need to consider

internal and external factors that could impact employees' responses and their ability to navigate through the change process. Not only that, but I have found that leaders did not give much weight to some important factors during the change process that were found from the multiple data points as drivers for employees' responses.

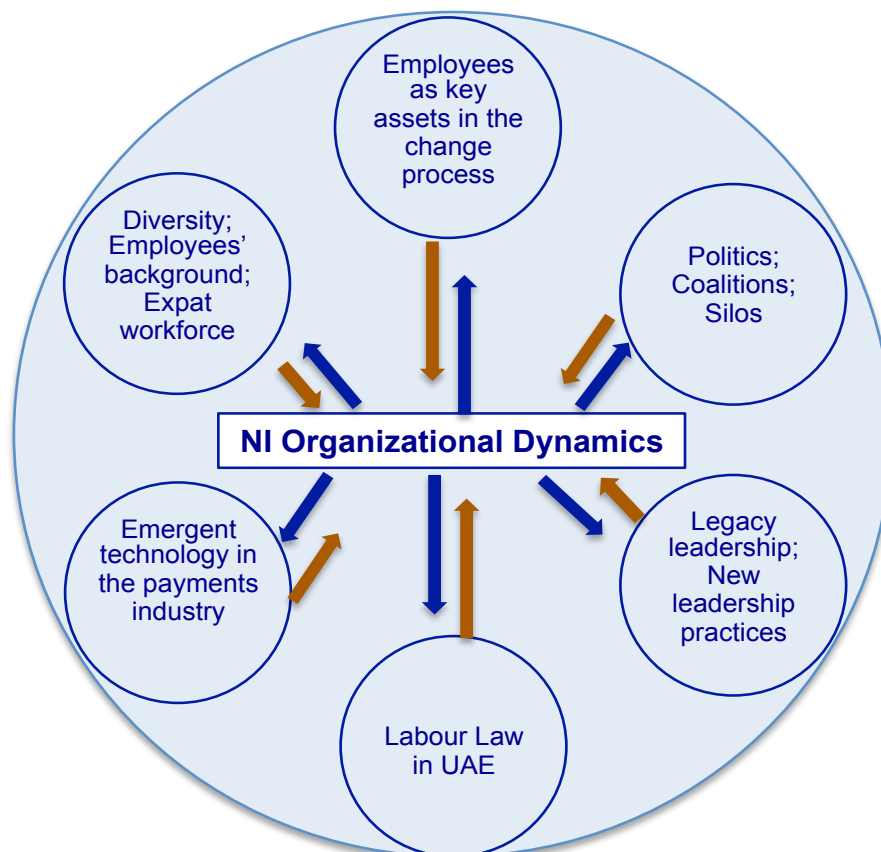


Figure 5.1: Application of organizational dynamics on bringing about change in NI

Source: Author

Factors, such as expatriate workforce ratio and Dubai labour law with its implication on employees' perception about job security, are key in this context and everything is revolving around them. Such external factors impacted the process, by increasing employees' fear. Combining all of these factors in the new framework gave a simple view of a complex process, but more importantly, it opened leaders' eyes to the wider scope that they should consider in future changes, and think holistically with employees' side in mind. The framework was discussed with leaders, which have resulted in some debates at the beginning, but then through multiple discussions, I have succeeded in clarifying the outcome and how beneficial it is to think beyond the

problem and focus on the learning with its potential to enhance future changes. Such framework is considered to manifest actionable knowledge, being one of the objectives in this AR study.

5.4. Work Environment

The collective views of employees regarding the NI work environment showed that it evolved throughout the change process itself, from being very bureaucratic and silo to the early signs of improvement, with some challenges remaining in certain pockets. The legacy leadership used to prefer a bureaucratic work environment, which the new leadership has been trying to change. However, such changes take time, requiring employees to change their behaviours that were associated with the old style. Moreover, some leaders continue to operate in a bureaucratic manner, especially some of those from the old regime. However, my discussions with the GCEO revealed that he is trying to change that and enforce collaboration between the new and old NLT members, and also between employees, but this is taking longer than anticipated. While he did not explicitly specify whether the collaborative approach is a mean to achieve organizational changes or a goal for the organization, I believe it is both. These findings conform to Leavitt's (2014) view, that leading change effectively in organization such as NI requires a good understanding of contexts and meanings among all members.

The data revealed that there is a slight improvement in the work environment, yet, the organization continues to work in silos and no much collaboration exists between departments, which had an impact on communication, or lack of it to be precise. I believe couple of reasons drive this behaviour: leaders from the previous regime are used to function in a bureaucratic environment and the friction between new and old leaders. Nevertheless, these behaviours had some implications on the behaviours of employees, as bureaucratic work environment did not really help in keeping them motivated or engaged, which conform to the views of Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015). Not only that, but as employees were not engaged in some instances due to the level of frustration from such work environment, leaders considered them passive and inexpressive. Though both groups held somewhat similar view about the bureaucratic nature of NI, leaders have not considered such element when they judged employees' responses and lack of engagement. The interesting part is that

both groups were frustrated from the existence of such environment, but blamed the other for part or all of it. While employees were very frustrated as NI's business is progressive and should reflect such evolving industry, leaders were frustrated from what they did not know being its impact on employees' level of engagement and motivation. Leaders also complained from the silos that exist in the organization, especially in some departments or pockets, and employees, likewise, noted the negative role of cliques for those excluded from them. While I know from my role in the organization that there is some sort of an agreement at the NLT level to foster a collaborative work environment, the behaviour and actions of some departments do not reflect such. Accordingly, employees found themselves struggling to get things done in such an environment.

While the findings from leaders did not show huge discrepancies in how they view the current state of affair in the work environment of NI, they differed on the lens they used to view its implication on employees' responses to the change process or communication in the organization. However, I have found that there is a consensus about how NI used to be in the past, and how the current leadership is trying to make it more collaborative. In general, I found that leaders saw the challenges they faced during the change process due to the bureaucratic nature of NI, and though they have not considered it when judging employees' responses to change, they could not deviate from its influence on the change process. Accordingly, they have realized that having a better work environment in NI would be beneficial to them as well as employees, which no one could debate against and it conforms to Al-Haddad and Kotnour's (2015) views.

Despite these challenges, I found some consensus about the progress happened in the work environment between both employees and leaders. For example, employees' access to the senior leadership team along with the executive areas, which used to be exclusive to senior managers and leaders (employees' access cards were formerly blocked in this area). Also, the boardroom of NI used to be exclusive to board meetings, which also changed, with the room made available for all employees to conduct their meetings. These small changes helped in a slight improvement to the NI work environment. While work environment is about the surroundings in the work place that affect employees' response to change, either

positively or else, work culture is the set of value and beliefs that organize the relationship between the members of the organization (Schein, 2010; Lanz and Tomei, 2016), which is discussed in the following section.

5.5. Work Culture

Turning to work culture in NI, I found that both employees as well as leaders have consensus around the hierarchal nature of NI and how it is structured in a way whereby everything moves from top to bottom. Decisions are made at the top of the house, as noted by most employees, and they just need to adapt and fall in line. Further to the hierarchal structure and controls, I found that employees are very dependent in the decision-making process, due to the existed style of previous regime, which new leaders knew about but felt that it will solve itself if they tell employees the organization is required to be flat instead of being hierarchal. Employees did not have much empowerment for couple of reasons; new leader were still trying to figure out what skill sets employees possess, and accordingly they did not trust their capabilities to take important decisions. The empowerment to employees by leaders, claimed to be there, did not exist in reality. Though the hierarchal structure in NI was aiming to create greater controls, it left employees feeling powerless and having no say in most initiatives. I believe the underlying drivers are those indeed highlighted as leaders were not very much aware of the capabilities of their people, therefore they did not trust that they could be fully empowered and take control, or seriously value their potential contributions to the change process.

I have also found that leaders did not consider these factors, at least at the conscious level. While new leaders were focused on finding their ground in this new environment and trying to figure out how to achieve their objectives, leaders from the previous era were also waiting to see how the new leaders would settle in, and the impact of their presence on them and the overall organization. These conditions did not help in creating a healthy culture, especially at the early stages. In return, employees expressed their frustration and how NI culture is not equipped to deal efficiently with the changes, especially when it comes to hierarchy and empowerment. These findings support what Deng and Gipson (2008) noted in regard to the importance of getting leaders to understand employees' perspectives

when leading in a multicultural organization such as NI. Furthermore, this also conforms to Katzenbach et al.'s (2012) argument that assessing culture before starting with the change process is important.

Diversity, on the other hand, was taken for granted, as highlighted by some leaders. Though there are employees from more than 30 different nationalities in NI, leaders did not see much diversity; however, they felt that there were more similarities than differences among employees. I have also noted that dealing with employees without considering their background created some frustration, as the interpretation of some words, phrases, jokes, or metaphors highly differ from one culture to another, and what is acceptable to some may not be so to others. Diversity triggered some conflicts due to some language barriers and misunderstandings, and it did not positively affect creativity, as claimed by Stevens et al. (2008). While the latter argued that diversity will boost creativity, what I found in NI was different, which could be due to multiple reasons: it could be that increased conflicts between this diverse workforce consumed most of the energy that would otherwise have been channelled towards creativity, or that managing diversity was not amongst the priorities of leaders due to their focus on their own agenda. These findings, however, confirm to the outcome of the meta-analysis of 108 empirical studies made by Stahl et al. (2010), in which they noted that diversity in multicultural teams increased conflicts between team members.

Turning to the specifics of the Middle East, I have found that there are some similarities between the findings in this a particular aspect in NI and those highlighted in the literature discussing the work environment in Saudi Arabia (Lauring, 2011; AlDossari, 2016). Diverse workforce added unnecessary complexity to work and complicated the path of action. While Saudi Arabia is more culturally conservative than Dubai, and has a much lower ratio of expatriates compared to Dubai. The findings revealed that diversity triggered complexity and increased the time required to execute action plans in NI, due to the increase requirement in communication and engagement between leaders and employees. It also created some frustration and confusion in many cases due to the language barriers and cultural difference between new leaders (Western Europeans) and employees.

NI's new leadership came with different (and in some ways conflicting) views on existing organizational rituals, which triggered some challenges to create a sense of belonging for employees. Employees who used to operate in a particular way found themselves in the change process required to work as per the new procedures, with more autonomy and independence from their leaders. Though the hierarchal work culture did not provide the platform to support such change. Not only that, but while leaders are aware of the challenges associated with aspect in NI culture, they did not consider its influence on employees engagement or how it may impact their responses to change. Leaders focused on the results, but they failed to dig deeper to understand the consequences of such work culture on employees. Though leaders highlighted that a diverse workforce is an asset, I found that this was not always translated into actions, and leaders did not always act in a way that supports these claims.

5.6. Communication

One of the main factors that link the impact of many of the findings discussed above and associated with NI change process is communication. Hierarchal work culture, bureaucratic work environment and the massive change in NI required good communication channels that could manage the flow of information and keep employees informed about what is happening. This could have directly impacted their level of engagement as highlighted by employees and increased the level of support given to the change process. While leaders highlighted the importance of communicating to employees and engaging them in the process, I have found that the lack of this was one of the fundamental problems that NI suffered from during the change process. In most cases, communications happened in retrospect: employees know about a particular subject, and then an email gets distributed about it *post hoc*. This reactive approach did not give employees positive indications that the organization trusts them or considers them as an important aspect of the process. My interpretation to this aspect is that communication is not only about informing employees, but rather about giving them the signal that they matter and they are an important part of the process. As noted by Deng and Goldberg (1999), employees may not resist change, but rather the way it was communicated (or lack of communication, as in the case of NI).

Employees would rarely know about initiatives before they get to hear about it from other colleagues informally, which resulted in a lack of clarity and increased ambiguity. Employees get the communications *after* events, and they are still left clueless, not knowing what is expected from them, not only that, but they were left feeling lost and not knowing what to do, which was interpreted by some leaders as a sign of covert resistance and lack of engagement/support. These findings are not different to Aladwani's (2001) or Wilson and Chaudhry (2017) argument in the literature that communication is essential to engage and empower employees during the change process. While no one would argue about such, its implication in the context of NI was multiplied due to the nature of its workforce, its work culture, lack of trust and the great level of fear existed amongst expatriate workforce. Due to that, employees felt that they do not matter and their engagement or support to the process is not important, which turned their responses to the passive or inexpressive side. I have found from the findings that keeping NI employees informed could increase the chances of them being engaged and subsequently supportive to the process, which is not different to the notions of Anderson (2010) or Whelan-Berry and Somerville (2010).

While employees complained from the scarce nature of getting to know many things about the process, some leaders highlighted their challenges with the flow of information and how dependent they are on their second and third layers to establish these communication channels and ensure the flow of information, which they later discover does not happen. Such findings do also confirm the silo nature of NI and how lack of collaboration could directly impact the whole process. These also conform to the discussed scholars' views of how timely communication could impact employees' responses to the change process (Cao et al., 2016; Parsells, 2017; Miller, 2012), in addition to its impacts on the ability of organizations to learn during this process (Burke, 2014). Drawing from the literature and reflecting on the findings, I would say that communication is the nucleus of the change process in NI due to its highlighted impact on both the process and people. I found that challenges with communication reduces the clarity required for employees to have trust in the system, causing fear from the consequences of the change process (Kotter and Schlesinger, 2008), especially in the context of NI, which is discussed in the next section.

5.7. Responses to Change: Inexpressive, Fear and Lack of Trust

Throughout the interviews, observations, and field notes, I found that employees were not comfortable to voice their concerns and their most observed behaviour during the change process is being inexpressive. The two main reasons for this are their fear and lack of trust. I have found that fear played a significant part in this process, due to the nature of NI workforce being mostly expatriates and the labour law in Dubai, which makes the ability to live and work in the country conditional on having a valid work permit. This high level of fear drove employees to be mostly inexpressive, and even if they had any problem with the changes, they would rather express their views to their close and trusted colleagues, or remain silent to their leaders in open groups and forums. Leaders expressed their understanding of these factors. However, they have also noted the challenges associated with such behaviour and their inability to deal with what they do not know, especially if its covert resistance. The findings conform to some notions highlighted in the literature regarding the triggers for employees' resistance, and how there is a correlation between them feeling threatened and their responses to change (Paren, 2015; Wilson and Chaudhry, 2017).

While leaders expressed their willingness to deal with employees' fear, this was rendered impossible due to the hierarchical nature of their relations. Not only that, but leaders did not assign much weight to this factor when they evaluated employees' responses to change. Leaders' view was that they could not identify or get to know if employees accepted what they are saying, or if their expressed views were merely said out of fear. Employees are highly sensitive about their job security and the consequences of their actions or voicing their concerns on this, which is undoubtedly a much more potent source of fear throughout the GCC for expatriates. The findings in this particular area conform to the notion identified in a previous study, which found that employees view their resistance as a "natural survival mechanism", due to their fears (Ford, Ford and D'Amelio, 2008).

Moreover, I found that, in some instances, employees had witnessed the negative consequences that happened to their colleagues when they have voiced their

concerns regarding a particular subject in the change process. Even queries can be perceived as an attack rather than constructive feedback, thus employees prefer to keep their heads down, which can enable poor decisions to go unchallenged, and which prevents organizational learning and full utilization of its human resources. The consequences for employees taking a more engaged and proactive role in the organization are (they fear) to be sidelined or to have a bad appraisal at the end of the year. While these are not as severe as job loss, conveyed by them being the prime trigger for their fear, they would rather be silent and safe rather than facing these negative consequences.

The level of fear in NI is a reflection of the surrounding environment and employees' level of fear is also correlated to the level of trust they have, which are influenced by the lack of communication, clarity and high uncertainty. Also, if they trusted that their views would not get them in trouble, they would go forward and voice it. However, employees did not trust that their leaders would positively receive their feedback and critique. Even though leaders highlighted that they are fine with getting to hear all types of views, action speaks louder than words for employees, and they were wary based on instances they had previously witnessed of employees being snubbed or covertly punished for speaking up. These conform to the notions highlighted by some scholars regarding the role of management in fulfilling their obligations or meeting their commitment, which affects the level of trust they have in return (Saunders, 2011).

Moreover, it was highlighted that employees' level of trust is directly affected by how leaders protect the rights of employees in the change process, or how they consider them. With that in mind, employees did not feel that their leaders protect them or that they are considered as a valuable part in the process. On the contrary, they expressed their frustration that the process is usually focused on the leaders' side, and neglects employees. With the examples listed above, I have found that employees did not have enough trust in their leaders and in my view; this is related to how leaders were not able to fulfil prior commitments to employees. Employees highlighted that in many instances, leaders have committed something and later expressed their inability to deliver on these commitments due to out-of-hand factors. Lack of transparency and ill-informed employees created a challenge related to trust

in NI. While in some cases holding back on information is justified due to security or sensitivity factors, it has not helped in creating a culture of trust that is required during the change process, as noted by Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2000).

5.8. Overall Experience

The over-arching views of employees in this regard were very clear; they are not consciously resisting any change; they are neither informed, nor engaged, and they do not know what is required from them. Some academic notions linked resistance to negative action, an act of omission, or being a natural phenomenon in the change process (Piderit, 2000; Long, 2010; Ybema and Horvers, 2017; Ybema et al., 2018). However, the views expressed by NI employees support some other contemporary notions that did not link resistance to negative connotations (Burke, Lake and Paine, 2009; Anderson, 2010). While some employees noted that they might not favour some of the new work procedures imposed by new leadership, they are ready to come along on the journey and embrace changes if they are informed and engaged from an early stage. This conforms to what Kotter (2008) highlighted in his empirical findings from a study investigating 100 companies over a decade, in which he noted that challenges and obstacles associated with the change process could hinder employees from embracing the new processes. The findings also conformed to what Spreitzer and Quinn (1996) highlighted in their study of 3000 Ford managers, in which they discovered that employees blamed leaders when it came to the resistance of change.

Employees in NI did not directly or clearly blame their leaders for their lack of engagement at the beginning of the change process; rather they referred to the ill-structured process and lack of communication that came from the leaders. The key sources of employees' resistance, as highlighted by Anderson (2011), were noted in NI: culture clash, and some legitimate concerns related to job security and high level of fear. Throughout my discussions with leaders, I found that they had an idea of the challenges facing employees during the change process, but not to the extent highlighted in this study.

Though most leaders had envisioned some sort of resistance to the changes, they highlighted that this type of inexpressive behaviour was not anticipated. Leaders

stated that since employees do not question as much as expected, due to their fear or lack of trust, they could not deal or help them in case they have problems. Findings highlighted that leaders claimed to have a preference to deal with overt resistance over covert due to the above-highlighted reasons: the ability to know will get them to deal or tackle that, and without knowing, they would assume that it does not exist. However, employees have witnessed some negative actions taken against those who have expressed some unpopular views. That could not be generalized; yet, it left a bitter taste in employees' mouth. Leaders felt that they could have a sensible conversation with employees who voice their concerns, or even a debate and arrive at a solution, if possible. Though not at all times, an agreement will be reached, but leaders believed that with such engagement the toxic behaviour would be either eliminated or identified. The involvement of NI employees at an early stage could have affects positively their behaviour towards the change since it values their past experiences as argued by Shin et al. (2015). Conversely, employees' later engagement in the changes or inexpressive behaviour is a strong predictor of their negative perceptions.

Conclusively, leaders were not fully aware or considerate of all the factors that might have an influence on employees' responses to change. Conversely, they blamed employees for the lack of engagement, inexpressive behaviour and resistance to change. Leaders needed to understand these different elements that drive employees' responses to any activity inside the organization, including change, as having a better understanding of these factors could increase success probability. Proper communication is critical to the process, along with its mode. The flow of information enables communication from top to bottom and vice-versa. These findings conform to Ulrich's (2002) views on how employees' responses to change are affected by the way they were managed during the process. In addition, the findings support Prosci's (2017) views of how neglecting employees could have negative consequences on the change process. Despite leaders' claims that employees are important to the process, which is also highlighted by scholars (Bhatti, Shahzad and Jinnah, 2008), the study in NI shows that employees were not considered as an integral part of the change process at the early stage and implementing what is right is much more challenging than just stating it.

Employees' overall experience conforms to the academic views that people's perception of the change process could lead to the paradox of success turning into failure (Burnes, 2011; Saks and Burke, 2012). These findings were the base to produce the hereunder figure that summarises the way NI employees would like to be treated [Figure 5.2]. It highlights the key aspects that were reiterated in the data sources, and the visualization itself was discussed with employees to cross-reference its accuracy before I adopted this final version. Additionally, I shared it with leaders to bring it to their attention, and explore the possible course of action to overcome these highlighted challenges. While leaders praised the approach and how it could assist in overcoming some of the challenges related to employees' responses to change in NI, they have not conformed to some points, especially those related to transparency in communication, empowerment and engagement. Details on reflections related to engagement with leaders and how I navigated through these challenging positions discussed in the reflection chapter. Nevertheless, I have decided to support this figure by presenting areas for improvement, which will holistically consider all of these findings and present a plan to overcome them in the following sections, and how it is executed in chapter six.



WHAT NI EMPLOYEES want from their Leaders!!!



1) WE ARE NOT RESISTANT

We just have DIFFERENT VIEWS sometimes



2) WE WANT NI TO BE BETTER

We care & we work more than "YES SIR!" people



3) IMPROVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

SAFE workplace to disagree



4) IMPROVE ORG. CULTURE

Have TRUST in us



5) EMBRACE OUR DIVERSITY

We are DIFFERENT INDIVIDUALS that work towards one goal; support our differences

6) MENTOR & COACH



Let's know how to do it instead of judging our inability

7) APPRECIATE OUR EFFORTS



Let's feel that we matter to the org

8) COMMUNICATE WITH US

Be transparent and don't depend only on your circle



9) ENGAGE US

Involve us from the beginning to take ownership & be aware of what is required



10) EMPOWER US



Give us a true sense of autonomy & empowerment

Figure 5.2: What NI employees want from their leaders

Source: Author

5.9. Areas for Improvement

In this section the focus turns to the actionable knowledge produced from this study and what could be done to improve the change process in NI, and further utilized in future initiatives. Both of the produced actionable knowledge, recommendations and action plans drew on the findings discussed in this chapter and what I believe NI employees need. While it is focused on NI, it could be useful to draw from the generated knowledge when looking at change process in organizations that have similar context. A summary is presented in this section [Table 5.2] that reviews all original themes that were developed and discussed earlier in this chapter and the previous one, however I have conflated them to ensure that the actionable knowledge produced are suitable for the context of NI, as a business-oriented and easy framework to follow and adopt in practice. Moreover, the table is complimented by recommended actions to address identified concerns and challenges.

5.9.1. Planning for the Change Process: Communication

Employees clearly highlighted how critical it is to have a clear sense of direction from an early stage, and to get clear communication of what leaders expect from them. It was noted that engaging NI employees from an early stage is paramount and gives them the opportunity to develop a sense of belonging and share their views. In this regard, I found that employees appreciate a better-structured process with the ability to communicate their views without facing negative consequences. Leaders, on the other hand, require more time, as the pace of change was quite fast, which was associated with a lot of overlapping initiatives that were not properly managed. Capitalized on Cusik's (2018) framework discussed in the literature review [Figure 2.1], and the findings related to NI along with my own knowledge of the organization, I formulated a model of what I believe NI should consider during a change process [Figure 5.3]. In this model, communication is placed at the centre as the focal point impacted by all other discussed factors. The model highlights the key elements for employees and leaders along with the process and technological capabilities that could assist in overcoming these challenges.

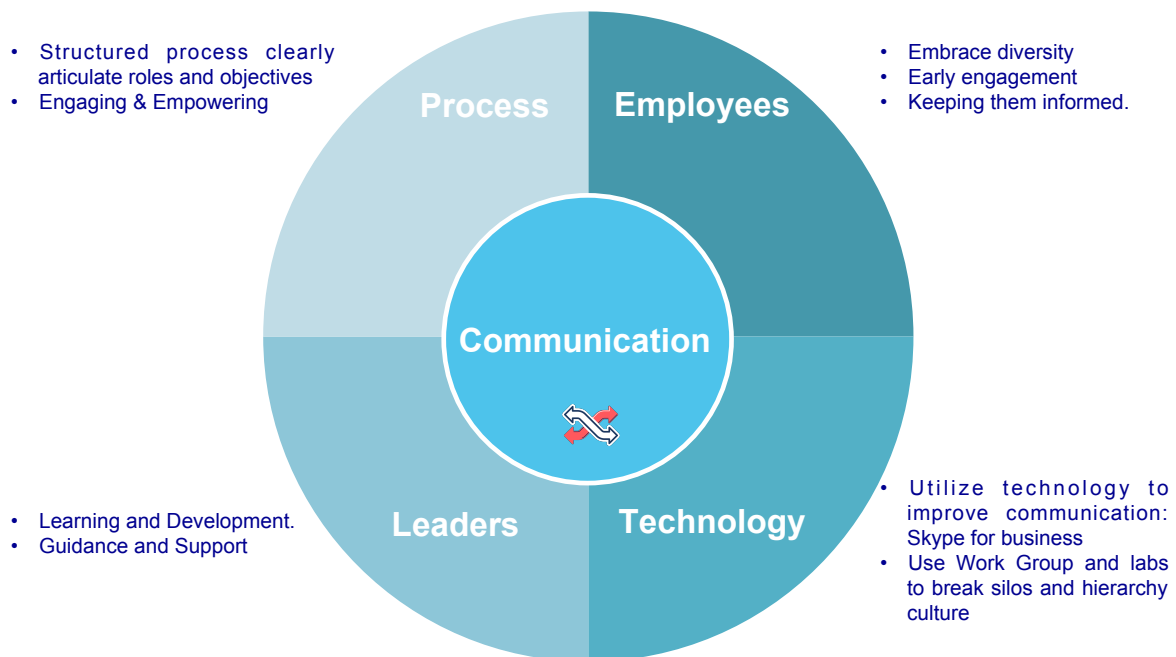


Figure 5.3: Considerations for NI change management

Source: Author

5.9.2. Work Environment and Culture

In regard to the work environment, I would say that creating a positive environment that is cooperative and embraces collaboration is essential in NI. While the accessibility to leaders improved as a result of the change, some leaders still work in silos, as explained in previous sections. Accordingly, their departments are not very collaborative, especially in initiatives that require cross-functional cooperation. Breaking silos, building bridges, and improving collaborations between employees and employees and leaders requires a lot of improvement. The differences in the priorities between employees and leaders are enforced by the objectives of each group, and how these priorities assist them in achieving their personal goals. These highlighted challenges could be addressed through better communication channels to improve the flow of information and break silos, counting on employees who are more positive and committed towards the change process to encourage others and bring them along the journey.

With regard to NI work culture, there were strong beliefs from both groups of participants that it has to be improved. While employees were more focused on inclusion, leaders showed more interest in a balanced work culture and having coherence between different departments. Both groups had consensus that having a flat organization, compared to a hierarchical one, would improve communication and flow of information. One of the other areas for improvement is empowerment, where employees could be trusted to make decisions but also guided by leaders. Diversity is another area, where leaders need to consider and include in the factors that affect employees, especially when it comes to inclusion. Besides inclusion and embracing diversity, there is a need to improve on the culture of trust amongst employees and between them and the leadership. Some of these factors highlighted by scholars (Nicolescu and Verboncu, 2006; Tomlinson and Mayer, 2009; Lanz and Tomei, 2016), due to its direct impact on improving organizational culture and employees' responses to change. However, this study provides an added value by grounding these arguments on such a case study with unique context.

5.9.3. Responses to Change

The study highlighted that NI employees' responses to the change process were mostly passive; employees did not question much, and any resistance tended to be more covert (and indeed, what was perceived as resistance among some leaders was often a mere lack of engagement). The reasons for this are discussed above, and based on the findings I believe there is a great room for improvement. Engaging employees early in the change process could facilitate creating a culture of trust. Not only that, but also by ensuring that information flows, with no bottlenecks. Increasing trust could be generally reached through collaboration and interaction, which Doerscher (2011) highlighted as the key to bridge gaps and to improve the communication between employees and leaders. Moreover, curbing the untrustworthy behaviours and replacing them with trustworthy ones improves this aspect (Gillespie and Dietz, 2009). Table 5.2 shows areas for improvement identified from the findings for employees and leaders and actions to address them.

Table 5.2: Areas for improvement based on employees and leaders' findings

Area	Areas for improvement		Action to address
	Based on employees' findings	Based on leaders' findings	
Change process	Have a good communication channels that goes both ways - top to bottom and bottom up.	Improve the quality of communication channels	Introduce multiple options for communications next to emails; virtual meetings, face-to-face and small town halls
	To have other mediums for communications other than emails: more face-to-face forums and informal interactions.	Solve the bottle necks related to flow of information	Utilize Skype for business across the organizations and increase the usage of technology to create parallel communication channels such as Zoom and Office meetings
	Improve the flow of information to know what is happening in the organization and to reduce the noise and gossips.	Encourage employees to be more engaged	Integrate employees from different departments together to work on a particular change initiative
Work environment & culture	To have a healthy work environment	Create a positive work environment	Create change management forums where employees from a cross the board are directly engaged with different leaders every time to ask any questions related to the ongoing changes
	Ensure that leaders include them in the process - Inclusiveness	Find a way to build bridges between different departments and people and eliminate silo - Harmonizing people	Build more bridges between employees and leaders through informal activities and engagements that are connected to certain change initiatives, such as work-life balance
	NI needs to have a relatable culture to its employees with their different backgrounds	Improve on employees' access to leaders	Integrate employees' side into the process by considering their background and what is acceptable or not when it comes to employees' rituals
	Build a culture of trust	Have a culture of empowerment and hold people account for their actions - true empowerment and accountability	Enforce culture of inclusions and enhance communication between employees and leaders through the identified mediums.
Response to change	Employees need to get more sense of security regarding their job and not to be threatened that they might lose their job anytime	Find a way to manage employees' fear and job insecurity , given the magnitude of this factor for expatriates (majority of the workforce)	Acknowledge the drivers of this fear, share their concerns between employees and leaders.
	To have a safe environment to disagree without fear of risking their job or their progress in their career	Improve the sense of belonging , which will positively impact employees' level of engagement and satisfaction	Clear communication of the acceptable margins of errors and increase the frequency of such engagement
	To engage employees from an early stage in the process	Encourage employees to voice their concerns	Drive the process with transparency, acknowledge the level of fear and increase the frequency of meetings between employees and leaders utilizing the identified options.

Source: Author

5.10. Summary

Employees had challenges to voice their concerns due to their fear of negative consequences, magnified by lack of proper communication that produced high uncertainty and lack of clarity. The majority of the NI workforce are expatriate, and the overriding fear of losing their job, which *ipso facto* means losing their residence in the country and throwing their families into upheaval, drove most of their inexpressive behaviours and their responses to the change process, amongst other factors. As this is an action research focused on the produced actionable knowledge,

I have also suggested areas for improvement capitalizing on the findings of the study and grounded on academic literature, discussed in details in the following chapter. The reason for wielding the views of participants with literature is to create a practical approach, with an academic lens that could compile the best of both theory and practice (or academia and business). The discussions in this chapter highlighted the different notions that employees and leaders held in regard to the changes in NI and what drove employees to respond to these changes in particular ways. Four key areas were highlighted as requiring improvement: bringing about change and its leadership, work environment, work culture, and how to manage responses to change.

The work environment in NI is proven to be challenging and requires much more harmonization and inclusiveness. On the one hand, change is expected to occur continuously in organizations operating in emergent industries, such as NI, yet organizational readiness was manifestly not up to the required intensity and pace to handle change. The NI work culture is mostly hierarchal, and needs to be flattened, at least in terms of everyday operational processes (e.g. prior to the change, employees were physically excluded from many areas of the organization). One of the other key areas in relation to NI culture is the lack of trust and how important it is so employees could voice their concerns, which would in return positively affect their engagement. Responses to change were highly impacted by fear and the context of NI and Dubai. Therefore, one of the key suggested areas for improvement is to manage this particular aspect and try to reduce its impact on employees' engagement. Furthermore, as fear impacts employees' ability to voice their concerns, it is recommended to properly manage communications to bridge the perceptual differences between employees and leaders. Moreover, it is required to have better communication channels, modes of communication, and reduce the dependency on formal channels (emails) to more of a face-to-face or virtual engagement, and improve the flow of information, from the top of the house to the bottom and vice-versa. This is a multidimensional process, in which multiple initiatives are needed to overcome the challenges associated with change. Though it sounds challenging, and indeed it is, there are multiple ways that could improve the process for both employees and leaders, presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Actionable Recommendations and AR in NI

6.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the action and intervention that took place in the study, based on the findings and areas for improvement discussed in chapter five. One of the critical elements in action research study is the practice and how the actionable knowledge produced are utilized to bring awareness and enhance the experience of employees and leaders in NI during the change process. Not only that, but how the findings are linked to the action and subsequent interventions. The action did not start at the end of the study when findings were developed; rather, it started from the beginning, when the topic of the study was initially discussed with the senior leadership team, and the approval was granted to investigate the change process in NI. During this process, I have extensively engaged with both groups of participants to ensure that their views are captured, not only through the formal interview process, but also from the observations and field notes. The study promoted the idea that NI, represented by the GCEO and NLT, is interested in understanding the views of employees and how they could improve future change processes. That reflects the objectives of the study in understanding employees' responses to change, and how to bridge the gap between them and leaders, if any, in such initiatives. The following sections discuss the details of the recommended and executed interventions throughout the process.

I have capitalized on [Figure 3.4] that I developed based on Coghlan and Brannick's (2014) spiral of action research cycles, whereby planning the study in NI, diagnosing the problem, taking action, evaluating the action and then concluding by the data analysis was the first stage. That then led to findings that dove the action research project with the two cycles that included the collaborative action between participants and me and then led to the final version of the thesis. However, a full evaluation of the two action cycles was constrained by the timelines associated with this study and that is also explained and discussed in the reflection of chapter seven. The chapter starts with action cycle one explaining my engagement with both leaders and employees followed by the second cycle. The second action cycle details the

intervention took place based on the agreed action plan between leaders and myself linked to the discussed findings, recommendations and action plans. The chapter then moves to highlight areas for further action and research and concludes with a summary.

6.2. Action Cycles

6.2.1. Cycle 1: Direct Engagement with Leaders and Employees

Planning for the research, diagnosing the problem and selecting the researched topic was done in consultation with leaders, including NI GCEO. As explained in figure 3.4, this part of the study is a mixture between the independent work done by me as an action researcher and the collaborative one with participants. Diagnosing the problem allowed the next step to take place, which is planning for the action to address the problem. Planning for the action took the form of finalizing the objectives of the study based on the identified problem and agreed on the process to achieve these objectives with key stakeholders (leaders), in which I have received their agreement and support due to the approach I have deployed in this research. This approach is about engaging them from an early stage and key leaders were made aware of the studied topic and had the opportunity to share their views before adopting the final one, to ensure that I incorporated their recommendations in my analysis. That allowed them to feel part of the action research study and take pride in how NI is striving to better manage change processes.

This approach granted me the support and approval from an early stage: I received the approval from the GCEO and the HR Office to conduct the study inside NI. I also got the support of the leadership team, which translated into their participation in the interview process. In addition, they also offered their support in spreading the word amongst their teams to increase awareness of the study and invite people to participate (without any coercion, as clearly noted and communicated with regard to voluntary engagement). Execution of the action in this cycle is about confirming the topic and objectives of the study through to the data collection and analysis to ensure that the intervention and proper course of action to overcome the challenges associated with the change process is based on proper investigation and findings.

The selection of employee participants took place in consultation with leaders. However, they did not get to know which employees conducted the interviews, nor their views, as such data was strictly anonymous. The reason behind that was to ensure their continuous support for the process as in the early stage and for them not to feel that I was freely wandering around their departments without their consent, which I did not face any challenges in this regard. These direct engagements with the leadership team enabled me to navigate through the organization and granted me access to employees. Bjorkman and Sundgren (2005) recommended carefully navigating through the organization to build negotiation power for an action, such as this one, requiring careful interaction with decision-makers, which increases the negotiation power required to execute actions.

This first cycle started early in the process, and taking action in this cycle took multiple forms, one of which was through my participation in the monthly meeting with NI GCEO “Coffee with the GCEO”, where invited employees engage directly with the GCEO without their leaders or manager, to voice their concerns and share their feedback on anything related to NI, which was explained in details in chapter four and discussed in chapter five. My engagement with the GCEO were very interesting, and he was extremely open in listening to all types of notes, and in particular to those related to employees’ concerns about the change process. The early engagement with him played an important role in his positive responses to the findings and recommended courses of action, without which, subsequent interventions would have been very challenging.

On the other hand, and during my engagement with leaders, I have noted that certain leaders were more engaged post the data collection than others, especially the Group Chief Strategy Officer (GCSO), Group Chief of Staff (GCoS), and the MD, apart from the GCEO. There could be multiple reasons, but the most obvious observation is that new leaders were more engaged as they wanted to drive change effectively and this study could assist them in doing so. Nevertheless, the outcome of each stage of the process was discussed with them and all of their views were taken into account. For example, at the beginning of the thesis, I have discussed the interview questions with the GCSO, who highlighted some areas to pay attention to, and accordingly I have made some changes to ensure the clarity and relevance of

the final version, especially in terms of avoiding ambiguous language. Additionally, he also supported me during the process by facilitating some of the discussions with other leaders. Having a good relationship with some of the leaders and interacting almost on a daily basis with them enabled me to discuss the findings that were achieved at each stage of the research, particularly following the interviews with employees. Their views added to the overall findings and were helpful in cross-referencing some of the data points explored in this study.

When I started my engagement with employees to explain the research topic and my plans to interview them to get their views on the change process, most of them were highly interested. Furthermore, they have expressed their utmost enthusiasm to come and discuss with me how they feel about the process. Meeting with employees and giving them the opportunity to speak their minds, in many cases from the heart, about how they feel, is considered to be an integral part of an action research study (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014), as building understanding and creating awareness is part of the action cycle. Not only that, but they have also appreciated the safety net provided during these discussions and allowing them to be part of what could be a solution if successful interventions developed based on the outcome of the study's findings, which is discussed in the following section.

6.2.2. Cycle 2

As explained in the introduction chapter, I work in the capacity of Chief Strategist for the Middle East in NI, where I have access to the leadership team, yet I am not a member of the NLT. That has given me the chance to directly discuss the process with respective NLT members along with the GCEO. One of the key considerations in action research, as noted by Coghlan and Brannick (2010), is political power inside the organization, and how careful action researchers should be in approaching the action plan. With that in mind, I had to continually weigh options and carefully assess how to proceed with the process, considering the potential impact on me, on employees, and on the organization. At the end of the day, I would be held accountable if any problem arose from the process. However, with the support and understanding of the GCEO, I found a middle ground where I could share the action plan and recommended steps based on the outcomes of the first cycle, without

affecting my job negatively. The early engagement, as explained in the first cycle, was the foundation to progress further with the interventions and receive the support in moving from findings to execution.

This assisted greatly in mitigating any potential risk for my dual role as an action researcher and a full-time employee in the researched organization (the importance of which is explained in the literature chapter). The fact that the study was discussed at an early stage with the GCEO and approved by him along with other leaders gave me confidence to proceed and convey the findings based on the appropriate methodological choices made, even if they might seem unusual. While the reflection chapter presents the way leaders responded and how I dealt with their different response, overall I was able to communicate the recommended plan to overcome some of the challenges reflecting the findings. These recommended action plans were presented and discussed post the analysis stage, however, not all views were very popular as they presented the views of employees that were not fully exposed to the leadership team before, or at least with such level of details. The evaluation of the findings and the action took place as part of the first cycle, formed the foundation for the action in this cycle, especially the intervention and action plan, in which that will be discussed in the following sections.

6.2.2.1. Bringing about change in NI: leading, communicating and engaging

Diagnosing the problem, as presented in chapter five, led to the construction and planning for action. That was followed by the execution of the action and evaluating it, post the second stage of the spiral of action research [Figure 3.4]. One of the recommended actions that were developed based on the findings is related to how NI should view and manage such change process. The findings pointed out that leaders missed on some of the areas related to change management, in which I capture in this map [Figure 6.1], and in particular learning and engagement. As the map capitalized on the findings, I have discussed it with some of the leaders, where responses varied. Some leaders admitted that such challenges indeed exist in some departments and other defended their position and claimed that they do have such in place, though not to that level of attention to details. The NI change map considers the critical aspects highlighted by both groups in the first cycle. The initiation of the change process determines messages suitable to cascade the objectives of the

process, followed by multiple forms of communication, including face-to-face, and the frequency of these communications. Engaging employees from an early stage is also considered and highlighted alongside a clear articulation of who is leading, who is supporting, and who needs to be informed.

Ideally, all employees should be informed in full of all aspects of change, when and where suitable. Employees' engagement and participation increases their commitment, and can eventually reduce the role of the fear factor, which is key in this context. The cultural shift has to be properly assessed and managed, especially having new leaders who happen to be also new to the region and to the culture of the Middle East. Moreover, as action research is an iterative process that goes through multiple cycles (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014), the fourth part of this map is the learning and modification, in which the feeds are collected after the execution of each cycle, to modify and change when required. The map demonstrates the different aspects that need to be considered in managing change inside NI. However, these parts need to be orchestrated to sum the whole through proper leadership guiding and influencing the behaviours of employees, as noted by Rowland and Higgs (2009) and Valleala et al. (2015).

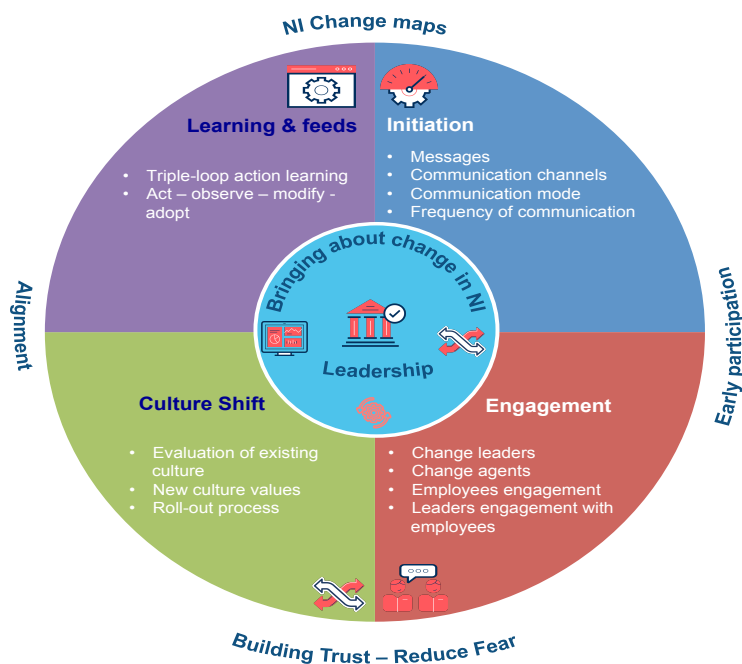


Figure 6.1: NI change map

Source: Author

One of the other developed interventions in response to the findings is the diagram that consolidated what NI employees need from their leaders [Figure 5.2], which was discussed in chapter five. This particular action was well received by both leaders and employees due to its holistic approach characterising employees' side of the story in a visually appealing figure. Leaders have actually praised this summarized visual and discussed the content, which reflected their interest, yet, surprise from how employees perceive some actions from the leadership team. The subsequent intervention in response to this figure was the matrix that summarized the key structural/functional and behavioural points to manage the change process [Table 6.1]. The matrix highlighted the key findings, what could be done to overcome the challenges highlighted in this study and categorizing them in two main areas: functional/structural and behavioural. In the functional/structural area, the focus is on communication, engagement, and leadership. In the behavioural area, the focus is on trust and fear. Each area has got some recommended actions and areas of focus, which was also shared with key stakeholders from the NLT to evaluate the action that could be implemented from these recommendations.

Table 6.1: Recommended matrix to bring about change in NI

Aspect	Functional / Structural			Behavioral	
	Communication	Engagement	Leadership	Trust	Fear
Recommended Action	Blend different types and modes of communication together; face-to-face, informal alongside emails. That will ensure that the message is clear, understood and employees get the chance to voice their concerns in such engagement, if any.	Get employees from different departments together to work on a particular change aspect, where they will facilitate the interaction between the group and their department. That will also help in breaking the silos exist in some pockets across the organization.	Strengthen the existing leadership practices in managing change process and assign specific leaders to drive specific initiatives. This type of transformational leadership would enhance the ability to influence employees positively through the process.	Leaders should be truthful to employees in all cases, and employees should not find out that the information provided were not accurate or in some instance, the information are not shared at all. The focus here is on information that could be shared and not the sensitive ones. Employees should be treated equally, and this message should be repeatedly conveyed to enforce it and ensure that they are trusted being an employee of NI.	HR. should share some statistics in terms of employees retention programs and the percentage of turn-over and how it is compared to other markets than Dubai. That will inform employees and create some basis to build level of understanding that the turn-over in NI is much better than other companies in other regions to compensate the dynamics of Dubai labor law and the nature of expatriate workforce. Also HR. should share with employees how many employees were made redundant each year for the past 3 years or so (few cases) and why they were made redundant.
Area of Focus	Increase the frequency of face-to-face meetings between leaders and employees - like town halls.	Engage employees from across the board	Clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of leaders in the change process	Understand employees' perception of leaders.	Understand the real drivers for employees' fear
	Reduce the dependency on email communication and replace it with other means.	Engage employees early in any change initiative	Improve collaboration between the leadership team	Understand how employees perceive the action of the leadership team	Support employees with high fear and understand their underlying drivers
	Ensure that information flows by assigning a communication lead in each department.	Encourage employees to participate in different change initiatives and compensate them (not financially)	Improve collective decision making process	Enforce culture of inclusion	Create a safe environment in the organization by embracing collaboration and eliminating untrustworthy behaviors
	Create reverse communication channels (downwards to upwards)	Build more bridges between the leadership team and employees.	Enhance the leadership coaching program and link to specific objectives with employees	Create patches of employees to be coached in group by each leader	Communicate the acceptable margins of errors to be done by employees
	Enhance the frequency of communication and its time	Create change management sessions where employees are directly engaged with leaders of change.	Improve the communication between the leadership team	Delegation of authority and rotation of this delegation between highly engaged employees.	Support employees who genuinely trying to innovate, even they were vulnerable to more errors (in non critical areas).

Source: Author

Another intervention that took place was a response to one of the highlighted challenges in bringing about change in NI: communication. Skype for Business was rolled across the organization, to facilitate the communication between employees in different locations and to enhance communication channels, which was one of the key challenges. Previously, employees used to go through a lengthy process to create conference calls or to have access to the bridge number. Employees also had to be physically present in meetings, as the conference call process was not the most convenient communication channel, for either remote or virtual communication. Based on the findings, this suggestion was presented as part of the intervention plan to enhance communication across the organization, in which a Skype for Business

ID to all employees was created so that they do not need to go to any person or through lengthy processes to establish work-related conferences or communications.

6.2.2.2. Work environment and culture: collaboration and trust

In this section, I will discuss the interventions developed to cover the challenges related to collaboration and trust in response to the highlighted challenges in chapter five. One of the action points that took place is the re-branding of a monthly call that used to be called the “Leadership Call”, in which employees report to NLT members get invited to this monthly call and listen to updates about NI. This group of employees is then requested to cascade such updates to their respective departments. The level of participation during the call was getting lower by the month, and the number of employees who asked questions was not as expected, which reflected the overall passive approach employees have towards the change process. I have highlighted the root cause to the GCEO based on the findings, and a decision was made to find a solution. The call structure changed along with its name to “NI Connect”, in which employees get the chance to send their questions to a dedicated email address before the meeting so that they don’t have to ask in front of everybody. They were also given an opportunity to utilize the newly introduced communication channel, Skype for Business, to log onto the call remotely, if they did not want to be physically present in the meeting room during this meeting. This allowed employees to be more comfortable in asking questions and increased the level of participation.

While the findings were the base for all interventions developed in this study, there is a key one that connects most of these together and aiming to address collaboration, learning and work culture and environment. Though the produced knowledge helped in anchoring the actions in my discussion with the leadership team, it added credibility to the study and informed the decision making process, in which leaders got more confidence to follow its recommended interventions. Post the discussions I had with the GCEO and some of the NLT about the findings as highlighted earlier, and despite of their initially varied responses, they have welcomed the developed interventions to assist in overcoming some of the highlighted challenges especially those related to engagement, fear and trust. Moreover, they have encouraged the execution of the three workstreams and what turned to be the pinnacle of the

intervention plan: learning & development, work-life balance, and collaboration [Figure 6.2].

Each workstream responds to one of the key challenges highlighted in the findings and aims to overcome it through the inclusion of leaders, employees and governance process (HR representative). Not only that, but they are intended to increase employees' engagement and encourage them to voice their concerns with better communication and less fear. While it is quite early to assess the outcome of this initiative, the action holds some positive connotations and shows that the organization listens and takes the feedback of employees seriously. The evaluation of these interventions will be based on how they assist in getting employees more engaged, having more employees voicing their concerns and reduced level of fear amongst employees. There will be an engagement survey at the beginning of 2021, in which it will assess employees' engagement and their level of confidence and trust in the leadership and the organization overall. The score will be compared to employees' engagement survey score of 2019, so that a true evaluation of the interventions takes place. Notwithstanding, the continuation of this initiative and its long-term sustainability and outcomes will determine its success. The highlights of this initiative are below, with more information on the objectives of each workstream.

A) Learning & Development / Career Development

Leader: | HR Representative: | Size of Focus Group: 21

Updates on Meeting held November 18, 2019

Focused on Behavioral and Leadership Programs

Questions/Ideas:

- a) What can we do as an organization to enhance the visibility, alignment and business impact of our L&D function?
- b) What can each person do to support & develop such initiatives?
- c) How can employees support their own growth and development within NI?
- d) How do we check with other employees and collect regular feedback?

Action Items / Decisions:

1. The team decided on a meeting schedule, regional coordinators and information custodian for the stream
2. The team identified individual and organizational KPIs for the work stream
3. Team will reflect on and re-evaluate areas for targeted effort and prioritization
4. Next meeting is scheduled on 28th November, 2019

B) Work-Life Balance

Leader: | HR Representative: | Size of Focus Group: 18

Updates on Meeting held November 6, 2019

Questions and Ideas:

- a) What are the actions and measures NI can take to improve everyone's work-life balance
- b) What are the things people can do for themselves to improve work-life balance?
- c) What does achieving a good work-life balance mean?
- d) A robust discussion followed that brought out 12 ideas and suggestions

Action Items/Decisions:

1. A "Confluence" page will be set up
2. A survey is being planned
3. Face-to-face meetings in each location are being planned
4. Follow-up meeting scheduled for 26th November, 2019

C) Collaboration

Leader: | HR Representative: | Size of Focus Group: 23

Updates on Meeting held October 30, 2019

Focused on Building and Maintaining Relationships

Questions and Ideas:

- a) What does collaboration mean to the focus group and to NI?
- b) How do we work as a team? Does the meaning of collaboration change from region to region?
- c) How can we connect with our colleagues and get their views?
- d) A discussion followed that brought out 3 ideas and suggestions

Action Items/Decisions:

- d) Connect with colleagues, conduct 1-2 meetings, get their perspectives to be discussed in the next meeting

Figure 6.2: Workstreams to improve work environment and culture in NI

Source: Author

6.3. Areas for Further Action and Research

Implementing action research in NI is based on the findings evolved out of this study. While action research is highly appropriate to develop learning based on the evaluation of the outcome, it requires time to evaluate action outcomes and then integrate amendments back into a new cycle in the spiral. This has proved to be invaluable to the action research process and change management (Nunes and Pherson, 2003). However, it is also useful to reflect on the holistic approach and define if the developed interventions are sufficient to yield expected results, or if the process requires more time to settle and measure the outcome. It is also important to realize that the generalization of the findings could require more than one single case study to implement parts of the action cycles, or the spiral of the action research model. Scientific facts are usually based on multiple case studies and experiments investigating the same phenomenon under different conditions. Therefore, a future investigation could be required to evaluate the action taken in the above-discussed cycles, and determine if the outcome established is sustainable in NI. Resources, timelines and implications would be assessed at this point to ensure that it reflects the evolving nature of the subject.

6.4. Summary

Interventions were developed in response to the findings of this study, in which the core action research project took place and distinguished this action research from other theoretical ones. Developing an appropriate action plan to tackle the identified problems was necessary capitalizing on the spiral of action research of Coghlan and Brannick (2014), but tailored to fit the context of NI and this study. While the execution of the recommended action plan started on multiple fronts, the initial evaluation of the action shows a positive effect on the overall work environment and employees. However, further evaluation of the outcome of these actions should take place, which is expected to be in the third and fourth quarter of 2020. While the first action cycle took place in the second quarter of 2019, the second cycle took place in quarters three and four of 2019. Engaging leaders from the beginning ensured their support for the process and made them a collaborative partner in this AR study. In addition, having the topic and objectives discussed with them ensured their active participation and reduced the challenges that might have taken place otherwise.

The action cycles have different stages, and while the time constraints of this study did not allow the implementation of all the action cycles and evaluation of their outcomes, I have managed to generate actionable knowledge, develop action plan and interventions in response to the emerged findings and to overcome the key challenges highlights in the study. While the first action cycle was more of the direct engagement with leaders and employees, getting them involved in the process and utilizing their knowledge to cross-reference some of the findings, action cycle two was more about the action plan, knowledge creation and interventions. The action points executed have some positive outcomes and continues to enhance some of aspects in NI, especially those related to fear, trust, through enhanced communication and collaboration in a positive work environment. These actions are well appreciated and recognized from both employees and leaders. However, monitoring the progress and evaluation of feedback is essential to ensure that such interventions are effectively contributing to meeting intended goals, and that they remain sustainable over the long term. Having completed the empirical part of this study, the following chapter presents my reflections on this experience.

Chapter 7: Reflections

7.1. Introduction

This chapter presents my reflection on this action research journey from two perspectives; the first is a reflection on the journey, and the second is its impact on me as a scholar-practitioner. My reflection on the journey did not start at the end when I reached this summative reflection stage, rather I continuously reflected on my experiences from the beginning of the process. Undergoing the different stages enhanced my ability to reflect, and my reasoning process has improved over time. The reflection process hugely affected me in many ways, particularly in terms of how I perceived the study and the knowledge developed; and my ability to receive and look into different perceptions, views, critiques throughout the course of the process. The feedback was logged in each stage in a notebook, which worked as my reference in many instances. The feedback focused on two groups: faculty members, and people involved in the study (participants). I interacted with multiple supervisors throughout the course of this program, and they have enriched my experience to a great extent, not only through their related feedback to the researched topic, but by challenging my thought process and the way I arrived at findings and conclusions.

On the one hand, conscious reflection was challenging in some instances, and required a lot of effort and time to absorb different viewpoints. However, I knew that it is essential for my progress to become an action researcher and reach this point. The feedback I received from participants at different stages of the program improved my understanding of the practical side of the researched topic, especially when participants held varied viewpoints, and in some instances where their input did not conform to the expectations of the examined literature. As noted by multiple scholars earlier in this study, this process of action research is iterative, and requires a flexible and open-minded researcher to receive what evolves throughout the journey. However, actualizing this in the research process is easier said than done, and in many instances I had to stop acting and take time to reflect. That clarified many aspects related to the study, and how its findings could be applicable to other organizations with similar circumstances and contexts. The next section presents my

overall reflection on the process and then the chapter moves on to my personal reflection on the study, its influence, and becoming an action researcher. The chapter ends by identifying the study's limitations.

7.2. Reflection on the Process

This study aims to understand the perceptions of people towards the change process in NI, requiring an in-depth understanding of their views. This was achieved through a qualitative approach, utilizing face-to-face interviews. The selected research methodology and philosophical basis for this study was appropriate for its objectives and context. Participants hold varying views, based on how they perceive the change process, thus there was an evident need to explore different experienced realities, according to the lenses of these participants. Constructing these realities through understanding participants' notions towards the change process in this particular organization required an approach that allowed me to get these views directly from them. To generate this knowledge, I needed a tool to support the acquisition of these different views, without limiting them to a particular set of pre-identified hypotheses. Therefore, constructing these different realities was undertaken by interpreting the views of participants and reflecting on them. This suggested that the appropriate framework to achieve the objectives of the study in the context of NI was through social constructionism, with an interpretive epistemological approach, as explained in detail in the methodology chapter. The investigative process utilized the lenses of participants to view realities, and as it is about a human social interaction between two groups, and how each group perceived the changes and the behaviour of the other during this process, I believe the selected methodology was appropriate and optimal fit for the study.

In the beginning, I was conscious not to be inclined towards a particular viewpoint. Triple-loop action learning came into effect to overcome any potential personal bias or pre-conceived notions towards the change process. This process ensured that the applied thematic coding to analyse the data and interpretation of these data were not based on my own subjective views of the process, which I tried to bracket, rather I sought to rely on participants' direct quotes, verifying the findings with participants and then modifying my analysis if required.

Contextual credibility and making sense of events were amongst the factors to ensure the credibility and authenticity of this study (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). Participants were selected as per the parameters identified in chapter three, and involving a diverse population helped in ensuring that the representation was not based on those with the most heard voice, but rather the opportunity was given to even those who never taken part in any direct discussion with leaders before, as they explained later in their interviews. These reflections and conscious actions assisted me in navigating through the challenges associated with insider action research, as examined in the literature review. In post-interview discussions I also ensured that I discussed the outcomes with individuals to confirm that my understanding and the drawn conclusions were a genuine reflection of their views. This also gave me the chance to hear employees' comments on the findings, eliminating any traces of personal bias. In addition, this gave participants the opportunity to comment and share their views in a trusted and comfortable environment, with utmost confidentiality and anonymity.

Reflecting on this study and the way it is a mixture of the mindset of the people involved in the process and the process itself reveals the interconnectedness of developing the capabilities of both the organization and the people, reflecting the utility of action research (Roth, Shani and Leary, 2007). I started by questioning the suitable approach to deploy, and what approach would best fit the context of the study and achieve its objectives. Though the literature suggests interviews for qualitative researches, as discussed earlier, I also looked at what others have implemented successfully in similar research topics. I also considered the context of NI and Dubai, in which I researched the body of knowledge to assess available resources, but they were scarce, hence I had recourse to many empirical studies conducted in Western cultural contexts, and appropriated action research methods for application in a relatively pioneering context.

I analysed the nature of NI and its people, For example, one of the suggested questions was asking about if employees are being treated differently based on their nationality, especially if it is the same one as their leader. I found that it was better to articulate the question differently, so that it does not trigger sensitivities or influence employees' perceptions of their leaders, and get them to fixate on this particular

aspect. Furthermore, I explored and examined some of the UoL available resources, including successful DBA theses that were published in the last couple of years, to have a better understanding of the different acceptable approaches deployed in such studies.

The involvement of different groups of people representing many of the existing sub-cultures and backgrounds in NI has also played a key role in developing a comprehensive view of what employees think of these changes. Furthermore, it also assisted in balancing the views of employees. For instance, employees with Western backgrounds were manifestly more open in communication compared to those from some Asian or Middle Eastern countries; I was able to observe this difference as I purposively included employees from diverse backgrounds, including Middle Easterners, Africans, Asians, and Westerners. I also consulted with employees from different backgrounds before I designed the data collection tool (interviews), to understand the suitable method to recruit employees and how best I could reach out to those who are more reticent, or who do not usually have a chance to voice their concerns, whether due to their own personal characteristics or because they do not get a chance. I ensured that participants reflected a true representation of NI employees through these measures, to have a diverse pool of participants to mirror the reality of the workforce in the organization.

7.3. Personal Reflection on the Content and Its Influence

Looking back at this particular aspect of the process, I found that employees were interested in taking part in this study and sharing their views. I believe the reasons for this are firstly the trust built at the beginning of the process, by assuring confidentiality and anonymity, and secondly they found a space where they can share their concerns, or vent, without facing any potential negative consequences, with the hope that their voice will be transferred to the leadership team, which happened, and which can potentially improve the situation. The study discussed one of the fundamental aspects of their job and how it could at least be their voice that would reach the NLT. It was crucial to assure them that the study is anonymous, and no threat would occur as a consequence of their participation, which yielded huge benefits in getting them to open up and share their views in a trustworthy environment.

Reflecting on how employees who participated in this study felt after the interviews, I noted that many of them sometimes came to my office to check on the progress of the study, to express their gratitude for being able to take part, and to request a copy of the thesis, all of which are positive signs in themselves. On the one hand, employees showed a great level of interest to see the outcomes of the study. On the other, leaders were cautiously listening to the findings. Looking at the impact of the study on both groups of participants, I feel that they were open, frank, and eager to review the findings of the study. Both groups were very interested to see the recommended course of action, as explained earlier, and some participants actually got involved in the execution plan based on their free will.

Reflecting on the experienced level of interest from participants, I would say that this was very fulfilling, and made me value the impact that such study could have on people and organizations. Though the literature highlighted the importance of turning theory into practice, witnessing this in real life is something totally different, especially in becoming a scholar-practitioner. Coghlan and Brannick (2010) highlighted the risk associated with insider action research, as discussed in previous chapters, yet the benefits of helping my organization to achieve some of its goals outweighed such mitigated risks, conforming to the notion of Dosi, Nelson and Winter (2000). Investigating a topic like this in my own organization is sometimes referred to as getting into the “swampy lowland” (Schon, 1991), or equivalent to eating the forbidden fruit (Moore, 2007). Though these are dramatic views, it was helpful to understand what others have experienced and be ready to face related issues, which was not the case for me due to the taken measures explained in the previous parts of the study.

One of the areas that I have also reflected upon is the way the interviews were conducted, and if I truly managed to be objective and refrain from influencing the views of participants: whether through the nature of the questions, or the way questions were phrased and asked. I paid a lot of attention to this critical part of the study beforehand, and I modified some questions and their structure to avoid influencing the responses of participants, as explained earlier. Though the questions were based on the work of Anderson (2011), as explained in chapter three, I also reviewed them with my supervisor, as he is aware of the specifics of this study and

the developed data collection instrument (interviews), and the valuable feedback I received enabled me to hone the final interview questions. During the interviews, I was conscious to avoid articulating the questions in a way that could steer participants in a particular direction. However, I cannot claim that total objectivity was achieved, albeit my opinions were very limited. On one occasion an interviewee asked me directly about a specific situation that took place in NI, but my response did not influence the way the participant responded. Being neutral throughout the process was required, and I kept this as a guiding principle, but in rare instances where some participants asked me about specific situations, it did not feel normal to refuse to respond, which could have undermined the interviewer-interviewee rapport necessary for full and frank disclosure from participants.

In regard to the data analysis and findings, I limited the process to the direct quotes or views of participants. Being conscious of my own views and putting them in a neutral state during the data analysis was one of the areas that made me feel that I have progressed to become a scholar-practitioner, with areas for improvement, as this is the beginning of this journey. I was aware of my own thoughts and views, which limited the risk of influencing the study and improved the quality of the outcome. I noted them, ensuring that the analysis or interpretation of data were not affected by them. The findings of the study in some instances were different from my pre-conceived views. For example, I was surprised to find that employees highly appreciated having access to their leaders, which I had not previously considered. Employees also highly valued having access to the boardroom, which was restricted for them before, and such examples of the differences between the findings and my pre-conceived views ensured that I was able to neutralize my views to a great extent, bracketing my own experience by acknowledging and cognitively analysing the role of my own personal subjectivity in the action research process.

The data analysis relied on interview transcription that was organized in Word documents and Excel spreadsheets. I utilized manual thematic coding following the evolving themes, ensuring that all views related to each main theme and sub-theme were captured, in order to have a comprehensive understanding. Additionally, observations and field notes provided further cross-referencing data points for triangulation purposes. Even in developing the themes and sub-themes, they were

directly linked to the objectives of the study, and the questions that were identified to achieve these objectives. These different elements ensured that the data analysis process and findings are based on participants' views and notions and not my own, which is one of the key characteristics of PAR.

I have personally evolved through the process, from analysing the data to the production of actionable knowledge detailed in the previous chapter. I have been driven by my self-awareness and conscious reflection throughout all stages of the journey. Before I started the study, I used to see the world from my own lens, viewing what I see and believe as true, without questioning. Furthermore, I only used to consciously reflect on experiences and ideas very occasionally, unlike now. The process has taught me, amongst other things, to properly reflect, consider the views of others, and to search for the underlying drivers that form people's views before jumping to conclusions. However, if I was conducting a similar study like this in the future, I would pay more attention to how I could produce more knowledge that could help wider scholar-practitioners, not only in Dubai or the Middle East.

On the other hand, when producing actionable knowledge, I had to consider other organizations and how other practitioners alongside scholars could benefit from this study. For example, I had to revisit my findings and action plan to ensure that actionable knowledge is included, and it could assist those who are looking for guidance in contexts similar to my organization, or Dubai. There were multiple iterations for this study to arrive to this shape. I consider the process of writing this reflection by itself as part of my evolvment, and a direct outcome of this study. My skills in being aware of my own thoughts and reflecting on what is happening around me have significantly improved during the course of this study.

7.4. Becoming an Action Researcher

The previous sections highlighted how I reflected on the process and the study itself; however, focusing on the personal aspect, and the influence of this journey from my own perspective, is enlightening. One of the key qualities of AR is reflection on the action taken (Coghlan and Holian, 2015), and that requires a collective approach, involving me as an action researcher and participants (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). My journey in becoming an action researcher could also highlight what challenges

one could encounter, and how to address them and keep going. When I embarked on this journey, I used to work in a different organization than NI. I have moved to NI looking after the strategy of the Middle East, and after my move, the changes in NI started to take place. It was a very stressful time as uncertainty was high, often with a lack of clarity in direction and communication. Shortly after I joined NI, my boss was replaced with one of the new leaders that joined the organization as part of the changes that occurred. Combining a full-time job with a DBA study was also a difficult task. However, the knowledge created out of the process and the support I received in many instances from the new leadership team pushed me forward in progressing and reaching this stage, especially in the part related to producing actionable knowledge.

During the course of this journey, I went through some personal challenges as well. I experienced the loss of my father, which was a devastating event. It took a while for me to recover and remember that it was also his dream for me to complete this study. This inspired me to progress and push myself forward to focus on the journey, and remember that I am also fulfilling something related to my father, who was very much waiting to witness the day I would graduate from this DBA. A year back, I was blessed with my first baby, which required a lot of time and attention. In the beginning, I faced some challenges with time management and the level of progress in my studies. However, shortly after that, I have reflected on the whole situation and realized that managing complex, multifaceted challenges is actually one of the prerequisites of becoming an action researcher.

I had to develop the ability to deal with challenges and to dedicate the required time to my studies and my personal life. The study also helped in creating a sense of fulfilment, through the experiences I came across in different subjects, and the actionable knowledge produced as an outcome of this study. In addition, through the journey, I have come to know and interact with fellow colleagues from all over the world with greater appreciation, and sharing their experiences and views enhanced my personal experience and understanding. Through the different stages of the program, residencies in Liverpool, and the direct interactions with colleagues and professors, I have realized the importance of listening to their views and sharing my own experience.

Being an action researcher with a full-time job and a young family has created some challenges. At times, I hit a wall and had doubts about my progress and the whole journey. However, looking at it now, I would not have changed that for anything, or gave it a second thought. The ability to help people in overcoming some challenges that touch their lives is fulfilling, and compensates for all the challenges faced during the course of this process. At this point in time, writing this final part of the thesis, I feel very grateful for this opportunity. Nevertheless, I would not be able to achieve this without the support of my wife, and her understanding of the commitment I made.

I have also realized how great this achievement is and the position I find myself in. Even with all the challenges, efforts, and time invested in this process, I have gained way more than all of that, starting with my own personal characteristics and how I developed my own experience and knowledge. The journey was a great platform for me to master many skills, and to be aware of my own thoughts and biases. It enhanced my ability to combine multiple sources of information, create consensus, and to plan properly in a challenging environment. These are next to the knowledge developed in this subject and the ability to acquire knowledge to progress further in both my academic and my professional paths. Furthermore, it enhanced my ability to process information to create actionable knowledge and recommendations that suits my organization, available to guide others in their endeavours to enhance change process in their own organizations.

Resourcefulness was one of the key traits that got highly developed through the course of this program, as I had to gain the support and approvals of the senior leadership of NI along with my family to achieve my goals. I would not claim that the benefits or the importance of being a scholar-practitioner were all clear at the beginning of the program. I did not also realize how critical it is to balance views of business and academia, to build bridges between the two worlds. However, having this program and conducting this study in my organization proved that academia could assist businesses, and there is more scope for collaboration than conflicts. Moreover, I have also realized that academia could use the knowledge from business to enhance some of the existing theories based on actual findings and realities on the ground.

As an action researcher, I had to deal with my dual role, however, having that clear to me from the start, and with my leaders, ensured the support of the latter, which mediated some otherwise challenging issues. Being in this position provided a comprehensive view of what is happening inside the organization, which was essential for this study, but without posing any professional risk on me. From a professional perspective, the experience from this action research study is undeniable, with the ability to view things differently, how I observed the changes and the views of participants towards these changes, alongside the ability to neutralize any personal biases while researching the subject. The study has allowed me to gain the support of NI leadership to continue being a scholar-practitioner, without having an impact on my professional role inside the organization. My skills, including the ability to analyse, digest, and conceptualize my own findings analytically and critically has significantly improved during the course of this study. These interpersonal skills, alongside several other highlighted professional skills, were a direct result of this program, and have benefited me hugely in my career.

Despite the split in views between academia and business in some of the areas highlighted in this study, the ability to view problems from both the business and academia perspectives is one the benefits of action research, and a direct outcome of the study. This will drive me to pursue further studies in the future, capitalizing on the gained experience and knowledge in this space. Additionally, I noted the value and benefits of being an action researcher with the ability to bridge the gap between theory and practice, which motivates me to continue investing more effort and time in this field. These acquired skills have positively affected my ability to make decisions based on rationale, logic, and reasoning.

7.5. Study Limitations

The study was carried with certain known limitations, especially regarding the scope and context. The scope of this study was limited to participants from two identified groups: 20 employees and six leaders. While that could create some limitations due to the size of the population, and accordingly the findings, a qualitative case study justified this number of participants, and as highlighted in the literature, such numbers are enough to produce meaningful findings and draw on conclusions. Those participants were interviewed, resulting in about 100 pages of transcriptions.

These transcriptions formed the basis of the analysis and the subsequent findings, along with observations and field notes.

While the data processing and analysis were very consciously designed and executed to avoid any bias, the obvious potential for social desirability bias should be noted, especially when using personal interview techniques (Creswell, 2013). One particular finding that emerged from the analysis presented in chapter 4 highlights this. I found that employees felt reticent and unable to query or question peers or superiors in the organization due to their fear of repercussions, based on their previous experiences. Conversely, leaders claimed that they welcomed input from employees, and felt frustrated with employees' passivity and lack of more active engagement. Leaders in the organization are well aware of the new orientation of NI toward a Western, less hierarchical leadership and structural paradigm as part of the change process. They enthusiastically agree with this ethos, thus their responses may embed a degree of social desirability bias, while being unaware of the possible disconnect between this ideal vision and the reality of legacy culture and practices experienced and remembered by employees.

The other limitation of this study is related to the context; the research investigated the subject study in a single organization, which limited the process to its context, as highlighted and acknowledged at the beginning of the process. While the study is limited to NI in an environment where most of the workforce is expatriate, the produced actionable knowledge could be utilized in other Middle Eastern organizations. It could also be applicable to other organizations with similar contexts, especially with the growing globalization of the workforce. Therefore, I would say that the findings of the study could be utilized in other similar contexts or environments globally, and the actionable knowledge produced, along with the findings could be transferable to other scholar-practitioners who are about to study a similar phenomenon. Therefore, I would consider AR if I was conducting a similar study in the future, and I wholeheartedly recommend the approach for other researchers exploring similar contexts. The following chapter provides a summary and conclusion to this study.

Chapter 8: Summary and Conclusion

8.1. Introduction

This final chapter summarizes the different stages of the study and concludes on how the adopted process has successfully achieved the objectives identified at the beginning. Moreover, it discusses the contribution of the study to management practices and disciplinary knowledge. It also identifies the personal skills that were developed and enhanced throughout this journey. The context of this study is my current organization, NI, a Dubai-based payments' third party processor that deals with clients in the MEA region. I decided to undertake this study in NI as a mean to enhance the experience of both employees as well as leaders by examining the change process. The key objectives for this study was to explore the type of change that occurred in NI and how it affect employees' responses to change along with other factors such as organization and national culture. I have investigated the perceptions of both employees and leaders towards the change process, and then produce actionable recommendations that could be utilized to bridge the gaps found in perceptions between both groups. The generated knowledge out of this study is set to contribute to the wider management practice focused on this phenomenon along with disciplinary knowledge in change management.

8.2. Summary

The qualitative ontological stance adopted is premised on the existence of multiple perceptual realities, constructed by human participants in researched phenomenon, namely the two groups of participants. Their subjective perceptions and interpretations were analysed in the adopted epistemology, based on the assumption that social realities cannot be assessed independently of our minds (Creswell, 2013; Coghlan, 2019). Reflecting the nature of this study and its key objectives, it followed the qualitative research method, relying on the paradigm of interpretivism and constructivism. It explored researched phenomenon through the lenses of participants, dependent on their views and how they perceived the phenomenon they experienced. The study's main objective is to assist in overcoming some of the challenges in bringing about change in NI; therefore, the study was grounded on AR.

As a full-time employee in the researched organization with a proper understanding of the problem in terms of its aspects and impacts, I undertook this insider action research study to investigate its underlying drivers properly, which was highly recommended by most scholars. In this case, the study had to follow two parallel paths to combine theory and practice through its action research approach. The key component in the data collection process was face-to-face interviews with both groups of participants (employees and leaders), triangulated with observations and field notes (Madison, 2005). The process utilized an inductive approach, which suits the study relying on the interpretation of these data points. Manual thematic coding and analysis proved its success in achieving the objectives of this study without recourse to computer-aided tools (Creswell, 2013), and this experience increased my engagement with the data. The literature provided a great level of help in defining the effective data analysis and interpretation tools with attention to personal and pre-conceived views, contributing to a comprehensive understanding, as detailed in the previous chapter, which is especially relevant to qualitative case study approach (Yin, 2003; Wickham and Woods, 2005; Baxter and Jack, 2008).

8.2.1. Thesis Contribution

The study contributed to the wider management practices and disciplinary knowledge, especially in the areas of bringing about change in organizations, managing employees' responses or resistance to change and the leadership of change. I have focused my research to investigate employees' responses to change in the context of NI and Dubai, where expatriate and diverse workforce are high, which posed more complications to the change process, especially around fear and communication and how they could alter employees' responses to the change process. Reflecting on the investigated literature in chapter two, I have found that classical views have negative connotations to employees resistance to change and considering employees natural responses to change being resistance. I have also investigated contemporary notions, where different lenses were used to examine employees' response to change or their resistance to change, in which not every act of resistance is driven by refusal or rejection but there could be underlying drivers that trigger such behaviours.

The contemporary notions have tried to provide balanced views to the phenomenon, in which employees' side is valued and added to the mix. The study expanded on such views and provided a clear articulation to what could be the underlying drivers to employees' lack of engagement or support to the change process, such as lack of clarity and improper communication, high level of fear and low level of trust, legacy culture, previous leadership or perceptual differences between leaders and employees. While the examined literature provided a path to investigate the phenomenon from multiple angles, the study contributed to this disciplinary knowledge by confirming the views that not every act of resistance is a pure rejection to the change process, but rather multiple underlying drivers could be the reason for them to behave and act in a certain way. The study proved that employees may be influenced by multiple factors that hinder their ability to engage in the process, and these factors could be internal or external.

In Dubai, the labour law only allows those with work permit to live in the country, and to have such you need to be employed. In NI, most of the workforce is expatriate, and with such law, employees' fear or redundancy is paramount as it influences their life and their families. This external factor increased the level of fear amongst employees and accordingly their responses turned to be inexpressive. Moreover, internal factors have also played a role in having less supportive and engaged employees to the change process. Internal factors, such as bureaucratic work environment and hierarchal work culture along with lack of clarity and communication, have highly affected the level of engagement and support employees have to the process. Employees were not also engaged early on in the process and that gave them indication that they are not valued, which negatively affected their level of enthusiasm. These empirical findings confirm that employees' responses to change are highly influenced by external and internal factors, and if leaders are not well aware of such or they decide not to factor them in their plan, then the paradoxes of success could turn into failure.

In sum, the generated knowledge out of this action research highlights that in organizations such as NI, mediating change necessitates an inclusive and trusting work environment and organizational culture that supports diversity. The change process is more effective if proper communication channels are in place, and the

flow of information is achieved. This is an achievable action within organizations to alleviate employee fears about job security. In the context of NI, and all firms employing a large number of expatriates throughout the Middle East, job insecurity among the expatriate workforce is a major inhibitor of optimum performance, and an intrinsic problem of responsible and humane HR management. While firms can do little to change national policies (i.e. nativist labour legislation), they can improve on communication, acknowledge such fear and share with employees their pain, engage them early on in the process and provide a learning platform to share and enhance the overall organizational ability to face high uncertainty and lack of clarity. Empowering employees within agreed boundaries also establishes a sense of belonging and increases positivity.

8.3. Conclusion

This study has revealed some key findings that require the attention of NI leaders. During a change process high uncertainty requires frequent communication to bridge any potential gaps in the understanding and to ensure that what is expected from employees is well articulated in advance. Adding to that the context of NI with its expat workforce and Dubai with its labour law, more variables brought to the mix, especially those related to fear and job security. These factors were amongst the underlying drivers for employees' inexpressive behaviour and lack of engagement. While leaders assumed that employees' behaviours are a classic case of resistance to the changes, employees, on the other hand, were not considered from an early stage; they suffered ambiguity, no proper communication and high uncertainty along with fear and lack of trust. Employees were not actually aware of what needs to be done and they lacked a clear direction due to the unstructured process, pressure on them to perform with high ambiguity and ill-informed process. Adding to that the type of change occurred in NI and the implication of such massive change on employees' responses.

Through the change process, employees did not voice their concerns, and the fear factor was prevalent amongst the expatriate employees, who form the majority of the workforce. Additionally, they did not have enough trust in the surrounding work environment to voice their concerns. Leaders, on the other side, stated that the change process consumes a lot of time, and lacked a clear structure at the

beginning, which was behind the increase in employees' doubts and uncertainty. NI leaders preferred to deal with overt resistance rather than covert, which is more common. They viewed employees' response to change as passive and unquestioning, and unwilling to join the change journey. Both leaders and employees highlighted the need for proper communication, and leaders acknowledged the need to engage employees and to collaborate more during these times. Overall they acknowledged that the nature of the workforce, being mostly expatriates, is characterized by high levels of fear and a paramount anxiety about job insecurity.

The knowledge generated through this study helped greatly in articulating the true reasons for employees' responses and how expatriate workforce should be dealt with in a context like NI and Dubai. This actionable knowledge was key in this study, grounded on the findings from the collected data points and the investigated literature in this discipline. While AR is greatly concerned with the management practice and managerial implications of produced data and actionable recommendations to enable other managers to utilize such outcomes as guidance in approaching similar phenomena with similar contexts, the generated data added to the existed disciplinary knowledge. For example, the integrative model of organization dynamics (Hayes, 2014) formed the foundation to develop an application of this framework on NI organization change [Figure 5.1]. This framework highlighted the dynamic factors, such as power dynamics and politics, coalitions, legacy problems and leadership, collaboration, diversity, and labour law in Dubai, all of which affected the change process in NI. Another example of how academic literature informed the actionable knowledge produced in this study is Cusik's (2018) change management framework, and how it formed the basis to create NI change management map that combined leaders, employees, process and technology [Figure 5.3].

The combination of multiple academic frameworks to produce actionable knowledge in this AR study is highlighted in chapter six. In regards to NI change map, the model relied on Rowland and Higgs (2009) and Valleala et al. (2015). While this change map is focused on the case of NI, as the context of this AR study, it provides a simple structure that could be followed in comparable contexts and organizations. Though it is not totally new to the body of knowledge, it provides a tailor-made

application to existing framework that could be tweaked to inform leaders from an early stage with what they should consider before initiating the process.

Acknowledging the key challenges in this AR study offers guidance for other scholar-practitioners and organizations applying change and studying such issues. Involving key leaders and stakeholders from an early stage is key to gaining their support and buy-in (i.e. their commitment to the project). This also mitigates potential risks in deploying any of the actionable recommendations or in granting their approval to execute on the produced actionable knowledge or the developed interventions. The dual role of an insider action researcher could also create some challenges, as detailed in the previous chapters, but they can be overcome by striking the right balance between the job role and research function. Nevertheless, I would argue that by managing and mitigating such potential risks, insider action researchers could reap the benefits of such studies academically and in practice. For example, during my engagement with both employees and leaders of NI, I gained more access to areas that were neither visible nor clear to me before, such as the underlying drivers for employees' responses to some of the leadership actions, and how employees think and interpret some of these actions. I had some preconceived notions of what matters to employees, or how they perceive certain aspects of the change process, which I managed to neutralize (as discussed in the reflection chapter). For example employees appreciated having access to their leaders and they valued having access to the boardroom, which was restricted for them before; I had not previously realized the significance of this.

Such examples explain the importance of neutralizing pre-conceived views in insider action research, bracketing the researcher's own subjective role in interpretation, which could otherwise impinge upon the findings. Conducting this study has revealed to me that not all employees who oppose a decision are unwilling to change, nor are they against the organization; in many cases, these employees have valid viewpoints, but due to some leadership practice they do not voice these concerns, which compels them to adopt a passive position. Conversely, I found that some employees are really keen to engage more constructively and actively with the change process, wishing to be a driving part of it, but they never had the opportunity to do so as they were not part of change leaders' cliques.

In conclusion, many lessons can be drawn from this study contributing to the wider management practice and disciplinary knowledge. Understanding the underlying drivers that pin the behaviour of employees during a change process has provided a better version of the reasons for employees' resistance, but in the context of contemporary school of thoughts where resistance does not hold a negative connotation to it. Rather, it should be explained, understood and then acted upon. The classical school of thought did not do much justice to this discipline by claiming that every act of resistance is negative in nature and employees tend to resist any change. Conversely, the study expanded on what is considered as evolving views to employees' responses or resistance to change. This empirical study enhances this contemporary school of thoughts and provided a case to management practice to what could be the drivers for employees' behaviour and their inexpressive behaviour during a change process. The managerial implications of the study are significant, as I have learned a lot about NI, its people, and how employees undergoing such phenomenon would like to be treated. On the personal side, I have developed some of the practices that were at the beginning exclusive to the study, but they then became part of me, particularly with active reflection and reasoning. I have become a better version of the person who started the journey more than six years ago, capitalizing on the knowledge acquired and generated, which I trust would be of a help to the wider management practices to deal with such situations, as well as scholar-practitioners who are looking to research this phenomenon.

References

- Abuznaid, S. (2006). Islam and management: What can be learned? *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 48(1), 125-139. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/tie.20089>.
- Aldulaimi SH. (2019). Leadership Concept and Constructs in Arabic Philosophy. *Journal of Economic Cooperation & Development*, 40(2).
- Al-Dossary A., While, A., & Barriball, L. (2008). Health care and nursing in Saudi Arabia. *International Nursing Review*, 55, 125-128.
- Al-Dossari, Sultan. 2016. Overcoming resistance to change in Saudi Arabian organizations: A correlation study between resistance to change and organizational justice. Pepperdine University, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 10251268.
- Al-khrabsheh AA, Muttar AK, Mahdi OR, Nassar IA, Al S, Abdullah II, P. A. H. B. (2018). The Impact of Organisational Factors on Organizational Commitment at the Arab Bank in Jordan. *Asian Social Science*, 14(7).
- Al-Haddad, S. and Kotnour, T. (2015) 'Integrating the organizational change literature: a model for successful change', *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 28(2), pp. 234–262.
- Aladwani, A. (2001) 'Change management strategies for successful ERP implementation', *Business Process Management Journal*, 7(3), pp. 266–275.
- Alasadi, R. and Askary, S. (2014) 'Employee involvement and the barriers to organizational change', *International Journal of Information, Business, and Management*, 6(1), pp. 29–51.
- Ali, A. J. (2009). *Business and management environment in Saudi Arabia*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ali, A. J. (2011). Leadership and Islam. In B. D. Metcalf & F. Mimouni (Eds.), *Leadership development in the Middle East* (pp. 86-103). <http://dx.doi.org/10.4337/9780857938114.00013>.

Anderson, A. (2011) *Engaging resistance: How ordinary people successfully champion change*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press.

Anderson, L. (2008) 'Reflexivity' in Thorpe, R. and Holt, R. (Eds.) *The Sage Dictionary of Qualitative Management Research* (pp. 183–185). London, UK: Sage.

Anderson, L. (2010) "'Talking the talk": A discursive approach to evaluating management development', *Human Resource Development International*, 13(3), pp. 285–298. Retrieved August 10, 2019 from <http://www.tandfonline.com.ezproxy.liv.ac.uk/doi/pdf/10.1080/13678868.2010.483817>.

Anderson, L., Gold, J., Stewart, J. and Thorpe, R. (2015) *A guide to professional doctorates in business and management*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Anyieni A.G. (2013) 'Effect of strategic planning on the performance of small and medium enterprises in Kenya: A summary review of the literature', *International Journal of Professional Management (IJPM)*, 8(6), pp. 1–10.

Appelbaum, S., Iaconi, G. and Matousek, A. (2007) 'Positive and negative deviant workplace behaviors: Causes, impacts, and solutions', *Corporate Governance*, 7(5), pp. 586–598. doi:10.1108/14720700710827176.

Arvey, R.I., Zhang, Z., Avolio, B.J. and Krueger, R. (2007) 'Developmental and genetic determination of leadership role occupancy among women', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(3), pp. 693–706.

Ashurst, C. and Hodges, J. (2010) 'Exploring business transformation: The challenges of developing a benefits realization capability', *Journal of Change Management*, 10(2), pp. 217–237.

Axelrod D. (1992) 'Getting everyone involved: How one organization involved its employees, supervisors, and managers in redesigning the organization', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 28(4), pp. 499–509.

Baker, S.H.L. (1989) 'Managing resistance to change', *Library Trends*, 38(1), pp. 53–61.

Baldwin, R.E. (2016) *The great convergence: Information technology and the new globalization*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Balogun, J. and Hope-Hailey, V. (2004) *Exploring strategic change*. 2nd edition. London, UK: Prentice Hall.

Bamford, D.R. and Forrester, P.L. (2003) 'Managing planned and emergent change within an operations management environment', *International Journal of Operations and Production Management*, 23(5), pp. 546–564.

Beer, M. and Nohria, N. (2000) *Breaking the code of change*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Beitler, M.A. (2006) *Strategic organizational change: A practitioner's guide for managers and consultants*. Chicago, IL: PPI.

Bejestani H. (2011) 'Improving project change management using leadership spirit', *Business*, 3(3), pp. 302–306.

Belias, D. and Koustelios, A. (2014) 'The impact of leadership and change management strategy on organizational culture', *European Scientific Journal*, 10(7), pp. 1857–7881.

Bhatti, K., Shahzad, I. and Jinnah, M. (2008) 'Impact of employee participation on job satisfaction and perceived organizational performance in banking sector of Pakistan', *Business Review*, 10(2), pp. 170–177.

Birkinshaw, J., Crilly, D., Bouquet, C. and Lee, S. (2016) 'How do firms manage strategic dualities? A process perspective', *Academy of Management Discoveries*, 2(1), pp. 51–78.

Booth, W.C., Colomb, G.C., Williams, J.M., Bizup, J. and Fitzgerald, W.T. (2016) *The craft of research*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Bouckenooghe, D., Devos, G. and Broeck, H. (2009) 'Organizational change questionnaire: Climate of change, processes, and readiness – development of a new instrument', *Journal of Psychology*, 143(6), pp. 559–599.

doi:10.1080/00223980903218216.

- Boularedj, S. and Faouzi, T. (2015) 'Measuring the impact of the financial development on the economic growth in Algeria', *European Scientific Journal*, 11(16), pp. 1857–7881.
- Bovey, W.H. and Hede, A. (2001) 'Resistance to organizational change: The role of defence mechanisms', *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal*, 16(7), pp. 534–548.
- Boyd, N. (2009) 'Implementing large-scale organization development and change in the states', *Public Administration Quarterly*, 33(2), pp. 233–269.
- Branine, M., & Pollard, D. (2010). Human resource management with Islamic management principles: A dialectic for a reverse diffusion in management. *Personnel Review*, 39(6), 712-727. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/00483481011075576>.
- Brenner, M. (2008) "It's all about people": Change management's greatest lever', *Business Strategy Series*, 9(3), pp. 132–137. doi:10.1108/17515630800873366.
- Bridges, W. and Bridges, S. (2019) *Transitions: Making sense of life's changes*. Managing transitions. Boston, MA: Da Capo Lifelong Books.
- Bryan, J. (2009) 'A theory of organizational readiness for change', *Implementation Science*, 4, p. 67. doi:10.1186/1748-5908-4-67.
- Burke, W.W., Lake, D.G. and Paine, J.W. (2009) *Organizational change: A comprehensive reader*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Burnes, B. (2009) *Managing change: A strategic approach to organisational dynamics*. 5th edition. Harlow, UK: Prentice Hall.
- Burnes, B. (2011) 'Introduction: Why does change fail, and what can we do about it?', *Journal of Change Management*, 11(4), pp. 445–450.
- Byers, D. and C. Rhodes (2007) 'Ethics, alterity, and organizational justice', *Business Ethics*, 16(3), pp. 239–250.
- Caiazza, R. (2018) 'Internationalisation strategies of emerging markets firms', *International Journal of Comparative Management*, 1(1), pp. 19–25.

Caldwell, R. (2005) “‘Things fall apart’? Discourses on agency and change in organizations’, *Human Relations*, 58(1), pp. 83–114.

Cameron, E. and Green, M. (2012) *Making sense of change management: A complete guide to the models, tools and techniques of organizational change*. 3rd edition. London, UK: Kogan Page.

Carnall, C. (2007) *Managing change in organizations*. 5th edition. Toronto, Canada: Pearson Education Canada.

Castronova, E. (2008) Arden: Final results. Terra Nova-Blogs. Retrieved August 10, 2019 from http://terranova.blogs.com/terra_nova/2008/07/arden-final-res.html#more.

Chandio, F., Irani, Z., Abbasi, M.S. and Nizamani, H.A. (2013) Acceptance of online banking information systems: An empirical case in a developing economy’, *Behaviour and Information Technology*, 32, pp. 668–680.

Chrusciel, D. and Field, D.W. (2006) ‘Success factors in dealing with significant change in an organization’, *Business Process Management Journal*, 12(4), pp. 503–516.

Cameron, K. and Quinn, R. (2006) *Diagnosing and changing organizational culture based on the competing values framework*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Coch, L. and French, J.R.P. Jr. (1948) ‘Overcoming resistance to change’, *Human Relations*, 1(4), pp. 512–532.

Coghlan, D. and Brannick, T. (2014) *Doing action research in your own organization*. 4th edition. London, UK: Sage.

Colquitt, J.A. and Rodell, J.B. (2011), “Justice, trust, and trustworthiness: a longitudinal analysis integrating three theoretical perspectives”, *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 54 No. 6, pp. 1183-1206.

Collinson, V. (2008) ‘Leading by learning: New directions in the twenty-first century’, *Journal of Educational Administration*, 46, pp. 443–460.
doi:10.1108/09578230810881992.

- Conceicao, S. and Altman, B. (2011) 'Training and development process and organizational culture change', *Organizational Development Journal*, 29(1), pp. 33–43.
- Conner, D.R. and Patterson, R.W. (1982) 'Building commitment to organizational change', *Training and Development Journal*, 36(4), pp. 18–26.
- Cooke, N.J., Salas, E., Cannon-Bowers, J.A. and Stout, R.J. (2000) 'Measuring team knowledge', *Human Factors*, 42, 151–173. doi:10.1518/001872000779656561.
- Cooren, F., Kuhn, T., Cornelissen, J.P. and Clarke, T. (2011) 'Communication, organizing and organization: An overview and introduction to the special issue', *Organization Studies*, 32(9), pp. 1149–1170.
- Costanzo, L.A. and Di Domenico, M. (2015) 'A multi-level dialectical-paradox lens for top management team strategic decision-making in a corporate venture', *British Journal of Management*, 26(3), pp. 484–506.
- Creswell, J. (2013) *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches*. 3rd edition. London, UK: Sage.
- Cummings, T.G. and Worley, C.G. (2005) *Organization development and change*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Cusick, J.J. (2018) 'Organizational design and change management for IT transformation: A case study', *Journal of Computer Science and Information Technology*, 6(1), pp. 10–25. doi:10.15640/jcsit.v6n1a2.
- Darwin, C. (1876) *On the origin of species*. London, UK: Hayes Barton Press.
- David, R.J., Sine, W.D. and Haveman, H.A. (2013) 'Seizing opportunity in emerging fields: How institutional entrepreneurs legitimated the professional form of management consulting', *Organization Science*, 24, pp. 356–377.
- Davos, G., Vanderheyden, K. and Broeck, H. (2002) *A framework for assessing commitment to change: Process and context variables of organizational change*. Vlerick working papers, D/2002/6482/11. Gent, Belgium: Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School.

De Wit, B. and Meyer, R. (2004) *Strategy: Process, content, context – An international perspective*. 3rd edition. London, UK: Thompson Publishing Business Press.

Del Val, M. and Fuentes, C.M. (2003) 'Resistance to change: A literature review and empirical study', *Management Decision*, 41(2), pp. 148–155.

Den Hartog, D.N., House, J., Hanges, J., Ruiz-Quintanilla, S.A. and Dorfman, P. (1999) 'Culture specific and cross-culturally endorsed implicit leadership theories: Are attributes of charismatic / transformational leadership universally endorsed?', *Leadership Quarterly*, 10(2), pp. 219–256.

Deng, L. and Gibson, P. (2008) 'A qualitative evaluation on the role of cultural intelligence in cross-cultural leadership effectiveness', *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, 3(2), pp. 181–197.

Dent, E.B. and Goldberg, S.G. (1999) 'Challenging "resistance to change"', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 35(1), pp. 16–25.

Doerscher, T. (2011) 'Business, streamlining change at the speed of business', *Quality and Participation*, 33(4), pp. 21–25.

Dooley, K.J. (1997) *A complex adaptive systems model of organization change*. New York, NY: Human Sciences Press, Inc.

Doolin, B.: (2003) 'Narratives of change: Discourse, technology and organization', *Organization*, 10(4), pp. 751–770. doi:10.1177/13505084030104002.

Doyle, M. (2002) 'From change novice to change expert: Issues of learning, development and support', *Personnel Review*, 31(4), pp. 465–481.

Drucker, P.F. (2007) *People and performance: The best of Peter Drucker on management*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.

Dubai Statistics Center (2019) Population and vital statistics. Retrieved August 10, 2019 from <http://www.dsc.gov.ae/en-us/Themes/Pages/Population-and-Vital-Statistics.aspx?Theme=42>.

- Dunphy, D. and Stace, D. (1993) 'The strategic management of corporate change', *Human Relations*, 46(8), pp. 905–920.
- Durand, R. and Khaire, M. (2017) 'Where do market categories come from and how? Distinguishing category creation from category emergence', *Journal of Management*, 43, pp. 87–110.
- Dutra, C., Mazza., A, and Menezes, L. (2014) 'Innovation in sustainable products: Cross-cultural analysis of bi-national teams', *Journal of Environmental Management and Sustainability* (JEMS), 3(2), pp. 149–164.
- Early, P.C. (2006) 'Leading cultural research in the future: A matter of paradigms and taste', *Journal of International Business Studies*, 37(6), pp. 922–931.
- Eby, L.T., Adams, D.M., Russell, J.E.A. and Gaby, S.H. (2000) 'Perceptions of organizational readiness for change: Factor related to employees' reactions to the implementation of team-based selling', *Human Relations*, 53, pp. 419–442.
- Elder, L. and Paul, R. (2001) 'Critical thinking: Thinking with concepts', *Journal of Developmental Education*, 24(3), pp. 42–44.
- Eldrod, P.D. II and Tippett, D.D. (2002) 'The "death valley" of change', *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 15(3), pp. 273–291.
- Fine, S.F. (1986) Technological innovation, diffusion and resistance: A historical perspective', *Journal of Library Administration*, 7, pp. 83–108.
- Ford, J.D., Ford, L.W. and D'amelio, A. (2008) 'Resistance to change: The rest of the story', *Academy of Management Review*, 33(2), pp. 362–377.
- Ford, J.F. and Ford, L.W. (2010) 'Stop blaming resistance to change and start using it', *Organizational Dynamics*, 39(1), pp. 24–36.
- Frey, C. and Osborne, M. (2013) *The future of employment: How susceptible are jobs to computerisation?* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Friesl, M. and Kwon, W. (2017) 'The strategic importance of top management resistance: Extending Alfred D. Chandler', *Strategic Organization*, 15(1), pp. 100–112.

Fugate, M. and Kinicki, A.J. (2008) 'A dispositional approach to employability: Development of a measure and test of implications for employee reactions to organizational change', *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 81(3), pp. 503–527.

Gayathri, R.R., Sivaraman, G.G. and Kamalambal, R.R. (2012) 'Employee retention strategies in BPO's: An empirical investigation', *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 3(12), pp. 572–583.

Georgallis, P., Dowell, G. and Durand, R. (2018) "'Shine on me": Industry coherence and policy support emerging industries', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 64(3), pp. 503–541.

Giangreco, A. and Peccei, R. (2005) 'The nature and antecedents of middle manager resistance to change: Evidence from an Italian context', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 16(10), pp. 1812–29.

Gill, G. (2014) 'Executive doctorate in business at USF?', *Informing Faculty*, 2(3), pp. 1–30.

Gillespie, N. and Dietz, G. (2009) 'Trust repair after an organization level failure', *Academy of Management Review*, 34(1), pp. 127–145.

Goldenberg, J. and Oreg, S. (2007) 'Laggards in disguise: Resistance to adopt and the leapfrogging effect', *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 74(8), pp. 1272–1281.

Graetz, F. (2000) 'Strategic change leadership', *Management Decision*, 38(8), pp. 550–562.

Grant, D. and Marshak, R.J. (2011) 'Toward a discourse-centered understanding of organizational change', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 47(2), pp. 204–35.

Greene, A. and Kirton, G. (2011) 'Diversity management meets downsizing: The case of a government department', *Employee Relations*, 33(1), 22–39.
doi:10.1108/014254511111091636.

Grover, V. (1999) 'From business reengineering to business process change management: A longitudinal study of trends and practices', *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*, 46(1), pp. 36–46.

Grundy, T. (1993) *Managing strategic change*. London, UK: Kogan Page.

Guimaraes, T. and Armstrong, C. (1998) 'Empirically testing the impact of change management effectiveness on company performance', *European Journal of Innovation Management*, 1(2), pp. 74–84.

Gulati, R. and Sytch, M. (2007) 'Dependence asymmetry and joint dependence in interorganizational relationships: Effects of embeddedness on a manufacturer's performance in procurement relationships', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 52(1), pp. 32–69.

Hamel, G. (2000) *Leading the revolution*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Hammond, J.S., Keene, R.L. and Raiffa, H. (2006) 'The hidden traps in decision making', *Harvard Business Review*, 84(1), pp. 118–132.

Hargie, O & D. Tourish (2000) 'Communication and organisational success', in O. Hargie & D. Touris (eds) *Handbook of Communication Audits for Organisations*, London: Routledge.

Harigopal, K. (2001) *Management of Organizational Change: Leveraging Transformation*, New Delhi: Response Books.

Harrison, L.M. (2011) 'Transformational leadership, integrity, and power', *New Directions for Student Services*, 135, pp. 45–52.

Hassan, A. (2014) 'Human resources development (HRD) practitioners as agent of organization change'. Paper presented at NITAD Conference.

- Hayes, J. (2014) *The theory and practice of change management*. 4th edition. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hennink, M., Hutter, I. and Bailey, A. (2010) *Qualitative research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Herold, D.M., Fedor, D.B., Caldwell, S. and Liu, Y. (2008) 'The effects of change and transformational leadership on employees' commitment to change: A multilevel study', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(2), pp. 346–357.
- Herscovitch, L. and Meyer, J.P. (2002) 'Commitment to organizational change: Extension of a three-component model', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(3), pp. 474.
- Hiatt, J.M. (2016) *ADKAR: A model for change in business, government, and our community*. Loveland, CO: Prosci Research Learning Center Publications.
- Hiatt, J.M. and Creasey, T.J. (2012) *Change management: The people side of change*. Loveland, CO: Prosci Learning Center Publications.
- Hiatt, S.R. and Park, S. (2013) "'Lords of the harvest": Third-party influence and regulatory approval of genetically modified organisms', *Academy of Management Journal*, 56(4), pp. 923–944.
- Higgs, M.J. and Rowland, D. (2011) 'What does it take to implement change successfully? A study of the behaviors of successful change leaders', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 47(3), pp. 309–335.
- Hill, C. and Jones, G. (2010) *Strategic management: An integrated approach*. 9th edition. Nashville, TN: South Western Publications.
- Hisrich, R.D. and Kearney, C. (2012) *Corporate entrepreneurship*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G.J. and Minkov, M. (2010) *Culture and organizations: Software of the mind*. 3rd edition. London, UK: McGraw-Hill.

Holbeche, L. (2006) *Understanding change: Theory, implementation and success*. London, UK: Elsevier.

Holbeche, M. and Nohria, N. (2000) 'Cracking the code of change', *Harvard Business Review*, May-June, pp. 133–141. Retrieved August 10, 2019 from <https://hbr.org/2000/05/cracking-the-code-of-change>.

Hollander, J.A. and Einwohner, R.L. (2004) 'Conceptualizing resistance', *Sociological Forum*, 19(4), pp. 533–554.

Holloway, S. (2002) *Airlines: Managing to make money*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.

Hosking, D. and Anderson, N. (2018) *Organizational change and innovation*. London, UK: Routledge. doi:10.4324/9781351063623.

House, R., Hanges, P., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. and Gupta, V. (2004) *Culture, leadership and organizations: The GLOBE study of 62 societies*. London, UK: Sage Publications.

Hultman, K. (1998) *Making change irresistible: Overcoming change in your organisation*. Palo Alto, CA: Davies and Black Publishing.

Hunnebeck, L. (2016) ITIL® practitioner: Essentials for organizational change management. Axelos. Retrieved August 10, 2019 from <https://www.axelos.com/news/blogs/may-2016/itil-practitioner-essentials-for-ocm>.

Hurdubei Ionescu, R.E. and Profiroiu, A.G., 2019. Implementation of a New Performance Management System – Driver for the Change of the Organisational Culture in a Telecommunication Company in the Middle East. *Revista de Management Comparat International*, 20(1), 4-13.

Huston, C. (2013) 'The impact of emerging technology on nursing care: Warp speed ahead', *Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, 18(2). doi: 10.3912/OJIN.Vol18No02Man01.

Ikinci S. (2014) 'Organizational change: Importance of leadership style and training', *Management and Organizational Studies*, 1(2), pp. 122–128. Retrieved August 10, 2019 from <http://www.sciedu.ca/journal/index.php/mos/article/view/5336/3115>.

Imnaishvili, N. and Taktakishvili, M. (2013) 'Considerations on the management of intangible cultural heritage of Georgia', *European Scientific Journal*, 2, pp. 373–377.

Ionescu, E., Meruță, A. and Dragomiroiu, R. (2014) 'Role of managers in management of change', *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 2014(16), pp. 293–298. doi:10.1016/S2212- 5671(14)00804-1.

Isaksen, S. and Tidd, J. (2006) *Meeting the innovation challenge: Leadership for transformation and growth*. London, UK: John Wiley and Sons.

Jaffe, D.T., Scott, C.D. and Tobe, G.R. (1994) *Rekindling commitment: How to revitalize yourself, your work, and your organization*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Janas, M. (1998) "‘Shhhhh, the dragon is asleep and its name is resistance’", *Journal of Staff Development*, 19(3), pp. 13–15.

Jaros, S. (2010) 'Commitment to organizational change: A critical review', *Journal of Change Management*, 10(1), pp. 79–108.

Jarzabkowski, P., Lê, J.K. and Van de Ven, A.H. (2013) 'Responding to competing strategic demands: How organizing, belonging, and performing paradoxes coevolve', *Strategic Organization*, 11(3), pp. 245–280.

Johns, G. (1998) *Organizational behavior*. Bucharest, Romania: Economic Publishing House.

Johnson, G. and Scholes, K. (2011) *Exploring corporate strategy*. 9th edition. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited.

Kanter, R.M., Stein, B. and Jick, T. (1992) *The challenge of organizational change: How companies experience it and leaders guide it*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Karreman, D. and Alvesson, M. (2009) 'Varieties of discourse: On the study of organizations through discourse', *Human Relations*, 2000(53), pp. 1125–49.

Katsaros, K., Tsirikas, A. and Bani, S. (2014) 'Exploring employees' perceptions, job-related attitudes, and characteristics during a planned organizational change', *Journal of Business Science and Applied Management*, 9(1), pp. 36–49.

Katzenbach, J., Steffen, I. and Kronley, C. (2012) 'Cultural change that sticks', *Harvard Business Review*, July-August. Retrieved August 10, 2019 from <https://hbr.org/2012/07/cultural-change-that-sticks>

Kiefer, T. (2005) 'Feeling bad: Antecedents and consequences of negative emotions in ongoing change', *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 26(8), pp. 875–897.

Kissane, J. (2008) The marketplace is becoming global: Are you ready for it? [Web log message]. Retrieved August 10, 2019 from http://kissaneasylum.typepad.com/workforce_development/global_work-force/.

Knudsen, H.K., Ducharme, L.J. and Roman, P.M. (2009) 'Turnover intention and emotional exhaustion "at the top": Adapting the job demands-resources model to leaders of addiction treatment organizations', *Journal of Organizational Health Psychology*, 14(1), 84–95. doi:10.1037/a0013822.

Kotter, J.P. (1996) *Leading change*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Kotter, J.P. (2008) *Power and influence*. 2nd edition. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Kotter, J.P. (2012) 'How the most innovative companies capitalize on today's rapid-fire strategic challenges – and still make their numbers', *Harvard Business Review*, 90(11), pp. 43–58.

Kotter, J.P. and Cohen, D.S. (2002) 'Creative ways to empower action to change the organization: Cases in point', *Journal of Organizational Excellence*, 22(1), pp. 73–82.

Kotter, J.P. and Schlesinger, L.A. (2008) 'Choosing strategies for change', *Harvard Business Review*, 86(7/8), pp. 1–10.

Kotzian, M. (2009) 'Leadership and cultural change: The challenge to acquisition workforce retention', *Defense AR Journal*, 16(1), 33–52.

Kouzes, J.M. and Posner, B.Z. (2002) *The leadership challenge*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kraimer, M.L., Seibert, S.E., Wayne, S.J., Liden, R.C. and Bravo, J. (2011) 'Antecedents and outcomes of organizational support for development: The critical role of career opportunities', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(3), pp. 485–500. doi:10.1037/a0021452.

Kreitner R. (2004) 'Organizational change process: A review and synthesis', *Journal of Change Management*, 10(2), pp. 175–193. doi:10.1080/14697011003795651.

Kuhn, T.S. (1970) *The structure of scientific revolutions*. 2nd edition. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Kwon, C. and Nicolaides, A. (2017) 'Managing diversity through triple-loop learning: A call for paradigm shift', *Human Resource Development Review*, 16(1), pp. 85–99. doi:10.17.7/15/3448317690053.

Laloux, F. (2014) *Reinventing organizations*. Brussels, Belgium: Nelson Parker.

Laloux, F. (2015a) 'A future more powerful than hierarchy', *Workforce Solution Review*, 6(2), pp. 12–14.

Laloux, F. (2015b) 'How to become a soulful organization', *RSA Journal*, 3(1), p. 49.

Lanz, L. and Tomei, P.A. (2016) 'Building of inter-organizational trust in challenging contexts: The case of the investment guarantee fund', *Revista Ibero-Americana de Estrategia*, 16(3), pp. 90–110.

Lashunda, M. (2010) *Impact of change management consideration in the implementation of ERP system*. New York, NY: UNDB.

Lauring, J. (2011) 'Intercultural organizational communication: The social organizing of interaction in interactional encounters', *Journal of Business Communication*, 48(3), pp. 231–255.

- Leavitt, S. (2014) 'Cultural factors affecting international teamwork dynamics'. *Journal of Change Management*, 10(2), pp. 175–193.
doi:10.1080/14697011003795651.
- Lechner, C. and Floyd, S.W. (2012) 'Group influence activities and the performance of strategic initiatives', *Strategic Management Journal*, 33, pp. 478–495.
- Lee, B., Hiatt, S. and Lounsbury, M. (2017) 'Market mediators and the trade-offs of legitimacy-seeking behaviors in a nascent category', *Organization Science*, 28, pp. 447–470. doi:10.1287/orsc.2017.1126.
- Lee, J. (2011) 'Aligning organizations for positive change: The role of leadership in matching strategy, culture, and social networks to vital organizational challenges', *Advances in Global Leadership*, 6(1), pp. 71–94.
- Lewin, K. (1947a) 'Frontiers in group dynamics: Concept, method and reality in social science; social equilibria and social change', *Human Relations*, 1(1), pp. 5–41.
- Lewin, K. (1947b) 'Group decisions and social change', in: Newcomb, T. and Hartley, E. (Eds.) *Readings in Social Psychology* (pp. 197–211). New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Lewis, L. (2019) *Organizational change: Creating change through strategic communication*. 2nd edition. London, UK: John Wiley and Sons.
- Lewis, S. (2015) 'Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches', *Health Promotion Practice*, 16(4), pp. 473–475.
- Lichtenstein, S. and Williamson, K. (2014) 'Understanding consumer adoption of internet banking: An interpretive study in the Australian banking context', *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, 7(2), pp. 50–66.
- Lindlof, T.R. and Taylor, B.C. (2010) *Qualitative communication research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lippitt, R. (1949) *Training in community relations: A research exploration toward new group skills*. New York, NY: Harpers and Brothers Publishers.

Liu, Y. (2010) When change leadership impacts commitment to change and when it doesn't: A multi-level multi-dimensional investigation. Doctoral dissertation, Georgia Institute of Technology. Retrieved August 10, 2019 from https://smartech.gatech.edu/bitstream/handle/1853/33856/liu_yi_201005_phd.pdf.

Logan, D., King, J. and Fischer-Wright, H. (2008) *Tribal leadership*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Long, S. (2010) 'The strategic implications of non-technical stakeholder acceptance in high technology system design and implementation', *Human Systems Management*, 29(4), pp. 205–215.

Loubser, G.M. (2014) 'Engaging complexity', *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 35(1), a1316. doi:10.4102/ve.v35i1.1316.

Luecke, R. (2003) *Managing change and transition*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Madison D. S. (2005), "Critical Ethnography: Methods, Ethics and Performance", Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Malang, B.P., Somido, F.C., Bautista, S.C., Bermudo, P.J.V., Yango, A.D. and Galicia, L.S. (2018) Adoption of e-banking technology: Basis of creating network infrastructure and marketing strategies in region 3', *Journal of Business and Management*, 6(1), 23–45.

Manfra, M.M. (2009a). Action Research: Exploring the Theoretical Divide between Practical and Critical Approaches *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction (JoCI)*, 3, (1) pp.32-48

Margolis, P.A., DeWalt, D.A., Simon, J.E., Horowitz, S., Scoville, R., Kahn, N., Perelman, R., Bagley, B. and Miles, P. (2010) 'Designing a large-scale multilevel improvement initiative: The improving performance in practice program', *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions*, 30(3), pp. 187–196.

Mathieu, J.E., Gilson, L. and Ruddy, T.M. (2006) 'Empowerment and team effectiveness: An empirical test of an integrated model', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91(1), pp. 97–108.

Maurer, M. and Githens, R.P. (2009) 'Toward a reframing of action research for human resource and organization development: Moving beyond problem solving and toward dialogue', *Action Research*, 8(3), pp. 267–292.

Mesquita, L.F. (2007) 'Starting over when the bickering never ends: Rebuilding aggregate trust among clustered firms through trust facilitators', *Academy of Management Review*, 32(1), pp. 72–91.

Meyer, J.P., Hecht, T.D., Gill, H. and Toplonysky, L. (2010) 'Person–organization (culture) fit and employee commitment under conditions of organizational change: A longitudinal study', *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 76(3), pp. 458–473.

Miller, D. and Sardais, C. (2011) 'Angel agents: Agency theory reconsidered', *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 25(2), pp. 6–13.

Mirabeau, L. and Maguire, S. (2014) 'From autonomous strategic behavior to emergent strategy', *Strategic Management Journal*, 35(8), pp. 1202–1229.

Moore, B. (2007) 'Original sin and insider research', *Action Research*, 5(1), pp. 27–39.

Moran, W. and Brightman, B.K. (2000) 'Leading organisational change', *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 12(2), pp. 66–74. doi:10.1108/13665620010316226.

Morrison, C. and Croucher, R. (2010) 'Moldovan employment relations: "Path dependency"?'', *Employee Relations*, 32(3), pp. 227–247. doi:10.1108/01425451011038771.

Muhammad, N.A., Bal, M. and Long, L., 2016. Exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect reactions to frequency of change, and impact of change. *Employee Relations*, 38(4), 536–562.

Mumby, D.K. (2001) 'Power and politics', in: Jablin, F.M. and Putnam, L.L. (Eds.) *The new handbook of organizational communication* (pp. 585–617). London, UK: Sage Publications.

Murtadho, A. (2013) 'Communication problem, risk and leadership attributes during technology change initiative on multinational energy company', *European Scientific Journal*, 9(29), pp. 219–236.

Nadler, D.A. (1995) *Discontinuous change: Leading organizational transformation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Nelson, L. (2003) 'A case study in organizational change: implications for theory', *The Learning Organization*, 10(1), pp. 18–30.

Neill, M.S., Linjuan, R.M. and Cen, A.Y., 2019. How communication climate and organizational identification impact change. *Corporate Communications*, 24(2), 281–298.

Neubert, M.J. and Cady, S.H. (2001) 'Program commitment: A multi-study longitudinal field investigation of its impact and antecedents', *Personnel Psychology*, 54(2), pp. 421–448.

Nicolescu, O. and Verboncu, I. (2006) *Fundamentals of organizational management*. Bucharest, Romania: Economics Tribune Publishing.

Nicolescu, O. and Verboncu, I. (2011) *Health state of Romanian management in 2010: Diagnosis and predictable solutions for 2011*. Bucharest, Romania: Pro Universitaria Publishing.

O'Reilly, C. III and Tushman, M.L. (2013) 'Organizational ambidexterity: Past, present, and future', *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 27, pp. 324–338.

Oldham, J. (2009) 'Achieving large system change in health care', *JAMA*, 301(9), pp. 965–966.

Onimole, S.O. (2017) 'Introducing change in organization: Implication for human resource development practitioners', *IFE Psychologia*, 25(2), pp. 383–394.

Oreg, S, and Sverdlik, N. (2011) 'Ambivalence toward imposed change: The conflict between dispositional resistance to change and the orientation toward the change agent', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(2), pp. 337–349.

- Oreg, S. (2003) 'Resistance to change: Developing an individual differences measure', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(4), pp. 587–604.
- Oreg, S., Vakola, M. and Armenakis, A. (2011) 'Change recipients' reactions to organizational change: A 60-year review of quantitative studies', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 47(4), pp. 461–524.
- Osland, J.S., Bird, A., Delano, J. and Jacob, M. (2000) 'Beyond sophisticated stereotyping: Cultural sensemaking in context – Executive commentaries', *Academy of Management Executive*, 14(1), pp. 65–80.
- Palmer, B. (2003) *Making change work: Practical tools for overcoming human resistance to change*. Milwaukee, WI: ASQ Quality Press
- Palmer, I. and Dunford, R. (2008) 'Organizational change and the importance of embedded assumptions', *British Journal of Management*, 19(S1), pp. S20–S32.
- Palmer, J.W. (2012) 'Web site usability, design, and performance metrics', *Information Systems Research*, 13(2), pp. 151–167.
- Pandu, A. and Kamaraj, S. (2016) 'Correlates of organizational culture and social responsibility: An empirical study of college teachers', *Journal of Organisation and Human Behaviour*, 5(2), pp. 14–22.
- Pardo del Val, M. and Fuentes, C.M. (2003) 'Resistance to change: A literature review and empirical study', *Management Decision*, 41(2), pp. 148–155.
- Paren, J. (2015) 'Resistance to change in organizations', *Proceedings of the Multidisciplinary Academic Conference*, pp. 1–9.
- Pearson, J. (2011) *Training and beyond: Seeking better practices for capacity development*. OECD Development Co-Operation Working Papers. Paris, France: OECD Publishing. doi:10.1787/22220518.
- Peters, T. and Waterman, R. (1982) *In search of excellence: Lessons from America's best-run companies*. New York, NY: Harper and Row Publishers.

Petrou, P., Demerouti, E. and Schaufeli, W.B. (2018) 'Crafting the change: The role of employee job crafting behaviors for successful organizational change', *Journal of Management*, 44(5), pp. 1766–1792. doi:10.1177/0149206315624961.

Pettigrew, A.M., Woodman, R.W. and Cameron, K.S. (2001) 'Studying organizational change and development: Challenges for future research', *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(4), pp. 697–713.

Pettinger, R. (2004) *Contemporary strategic management*. London, UK: Palgrave MacMillan.

Piderit, S.K. (2000) 'Rethinking resistance and recognizing ambivalence: A multidimensional view of attitudes toward an organizational change', *Academy of Management Review*, 25(4), pp. 783–794.

Pisano, G.P. (2015) 'You need an innovation strategy', *Harvard Business Review*, 93(6), pp. 44–54.

Prasad, A. and Prasad, P. (2002) 'The coming age of interpretive organizational research', *Organizational Research Methods*, 5(1), pp. 4–11.

Prosci, P. (2017) Making sense of change: Prosci's change management maturity. Retrieved August 10, 2019 from <https://www.prosci.com/adkar/applications-of-adkar>.

Prywes, Y. (2011) 'Organization history (OHx)', *OD Practitioner*, 43(2), pp. 40–45.

Putnam, L., Fairhurst, G. and Banghart, S. (2016) 'Contradictions, dialectics, and paradoxes in organizations: A constitutive approach', *Academy of Management Annals*, 10(1), pp. 65–171.

Rachele, J.S. (2012) 'The diversity quality cycle: Driving culture change through innovative governance', *AI and Society*, 27(3), pp. 399–416.

Raina, C., Rose, E.L. and Thomas, J., 2018. Role of Self-efficacy, Optimism and Job Engagement in Positive Change: Evidence from the Middle East. *Vikalpa*, 43(4), 222.

Rafferty, A., Jimmieson, N. and Armenakis, A. (2013) 'Change readiness: A multi-level review', *Journal of Management*, 39(1), pp. 110–135.

Raziq, A. and Maulabakhsh, R. (2015) 'Impact of working environment on job satisfaction', *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 23, pp. 717–725.

Reichers, A.E., Wanous, J.P. and Austin, J.T. (1997) 'Understanding and managing cynicism about organizational change', *Academy of Management Executive*, 11(1), pp. 48–59.

Remenyi, D., Williams, B., Money, A., and Swartz, E. (1998) *Doing research in business and management, An introduction to process and method*, London, Sage.

Richardson, L. (2000) 'Writing: A method of inquiry', in: Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 923–948), 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rick, T. (2016): A sorted approach to successful transformational change. Retrieved August 10, 2019 from <https://www.torbenrick.eu/blog/change-management/a-sorted-approach-to-successful-transformational-change/>.

Rieley, J.B. and Clarkson, I. (2001) 'The impact of change on performance', *Journal of Change Management*, 2(2), pp. 160–172.

Roberson, Q.M. (2006) 'Disentangling the meanings of diversity and inclusion in organizations', *Group and Organization Management*, 31(2), pp. 212–236.

Roco, M. (2002) *Converging technologies for improving human performance*. Washington, DC: National Science Foundation.

Roco, M.C. (2005) 'The emergence and policy implications of converging new technologies', in: Bainbridge, W. (Ed.) *Managing nano-bio-info-cogno innovations: Converging technologies in society* (pp. 9–22). Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

Roth, J., Shani, A.B. (Rami) & Leary, M. (2007) 'Insider action research: facing the challenge of new capability development within a biopharma company', *Action Research*, 5 (1), pp.41-60 .

Rudman, N.P.C. (2013) 'A critical reflection of self in context – first steps towards the professional doctorate'. Reflective Rothwell, D.W., Lach, L., Blumenthal, A. and Akesson, B. (2015) 'Patterns and trends of Canadian social work doctoral dissertations', *Journal of Teaching in Social Work*, 35 (1–2), pp. 46–64.

Rowland, D. and Higgs, M. (2009) *Sustaining change: Leadership the works*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Ryan, N., Williams, T., Charles, M. and Waterhouse, J. (2008) 'Top-down organizational change in an Australian government agency', *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 21(1), pp. 26–44.

Saks, A.M. and Burke, L.A. (2012) 'An investigation into the relationship between training evaluation and the transfer of training', *International Journal of Training and Development*, 16(2), pp. 118–127.

Salas, V.L., Espina, A., Condeza, F. and Valdez, B.A. (2018) 'Unearthing the organizational culture: A case of some business organizations in Dubai', *International Journal of Scientific and Engineering Research*, 9(5), pp. 1926–1936.

Saunders, M. (2011) 'Trust and Strategic Change: An Organizational Justice Perspective', In: Searle, R. and Skinner, D. *Trust and human resource management*. Cheltenham (England): Edward Elgar Pub.

Savall, H., Zardet, V., Bonnet, M., & Pe'ron, M. (2008). The emergence of implicit criteria actually utilized by reviewers of qualitative research articles: Case of a European journal. *Organizational Research Methods*, 11(3), 510-540.

Schalk, R., van der Heijden, B., de Lange, A. and van Veldhoven, M. (2011) 'Long-term developments in individual work behaviour: Patterns of stability and change', *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 84(2), pp. 215-227.

Schein, E. (2010) *Organizational culture and leadership*. 4th edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Scott, D., Brown, A., Lunt, I. and Thorne, L. (2004) *Professional doctorates: Integrating professional and academic knowledge*. Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.

Secker, J., Wimbush, E., Watson, J. & Milburn, K. (1995), "Qualitative methods in health promotion research: Some criteria for quality", *Health Education Journal*, 54, pp. 74–87.

Seemann, M. and Seemann, T. (2015) 'New perspectives on employee motivation: Balancing the big four', *International Journal of Knowledge, Culture, and Change in Organizations: Annual Review*, 13(1), 1–7. doi:10.18848/1447-9524/cgp/v13/50965.

Seidel, M.-D.L. and Greve, H.R. (2017) 'Emergence: How novelty, growth, and formation shape organizations and eco-systems', in: Seidel, M.-D.L. and Greve, H.R. (Eds.) *Research in the sociology of organizations*, 50 (pp. 1–27). Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing.

Senior, B. and Fleming, J. (2006) *Organizational change*. 3rd edition. London, UK: Pearson.

Seo, M.G., Taylor, M.S., Hill, N.S., Zhang, X., Tesluk, P.E. and Lorinkova, N.M. (2012) 'The role of affect and leadership during organizational change', *Personnel Psychology*, 65(1), pp. 121–165.

Shah, S. & Corley, K. (2006) 'Building better theory by bridging the quantitative-qualitative divide', *Journal of Management Studies*, 43 (8), pp.1821-1835.

Shang, S. (2012) 'Dual strategy for managing user resistance with business integration systems. *Behaviour and Information Technology*. Sep2012, Vol. 31 Issue 9, p909–925.

Sharma, G. and Bansal, P. (2017) 'Partners for good: How business and NGOs engage the commercial–social paradox', *Organization Studies*, 38(3–4), pp. 341–364.

- Shea, C.M., Jacobs, S., Esserman, D.A., Bruce, K. and Weiner, B.J. (2014) 'Organizational readiness for implementing change: A psychometric assessment of a new measure', *Implementation Science*, 9(7). doi:10.1186/1748-5908-9-7.
- Shields, J.L. (1999) 'Transforming organizations', *Information Knowledge Systems Management*, 1(2), pp. 105–115.
- Sidra, A., Zuhair, F. and Noman, S. (2013) 'Role of leadership in change management process', *Abasyn Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(2), pp. 111–124.
- Singh, A. and Shoura, M.M. (2006) 'A life cycle evaluation of change in an engineering organization: A case study', *International Journal of Project Management*, 24(4), pp. 337–348.
- Small, J. and Walker, D., 2011. Providing structural openness to connect with context. *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business*, 4(3), 389-411.
- Sminia, H. and Van Nistelrooij, A. (2006) 'Strategic management and organization development: Planned change in a public sector organization', *Journal of Change Management*, 6(1), pp. 99–113.
- Smith, I. (2006) 'Continuing professional development and workplace learning', *Library Management*, 27(4/5), pp. 300–306.
- Smith, W.K., Lewis, M.W. and Jarzabkowski, P. (2017) *The Oxford handbook of organizational paradox*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Smollan, R.K., 2013. Trust in change managers: the role of affect. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 26(4), 725-747.
- Song, Y. (2009) 'The leadership effectiveness in the process of planned organizational change', *Public Organization Review*, 9(3), pp. 199–212. doi:10.1007/s11115-009-0075-x.
- Spicker, P. (2012) 'Leadership: Perniciously vague concept', *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 25(1), pp. 34–47.

Spreitzer, G.M. and Quinn, R.E. (1996) 'Empowering middle managers to be transformational leaders', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 32(3), pp. 237–261.

Stahl, G.K., Mäkelä, K., Zander, L. and Maznevski, M.L. (2010) A look at the bright side of multicultural team diversity', *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 26(4), pp. 439–447.

Stahl, G.K., Maznevski, M.L., Voight, A. and Jonsen, K. (2010) Unraveling the effects of cultural diversity in teams: A meta-analysis of research on multicultural work groups', *Journal of International Business Studies*, 41(4), pp. 690–709.

Stake, R. E., & Savolainen, R. (1995) *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stensaker, B., Sarrico, C. and Välimaa, J. (2012) *Managing reform in universities: The dynamics of culture, identity and organizational change*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

Stevens, Flannery G., Victoria C. Plaut, and Jeffery Sanchez-Burks. (2008) 'Unlocking the benefits of diversity: All-inclusive multiculturalism and positive organizational change', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 44(1), pp. 116–133.

Stevens, G.W. (2013) 'Toward a process-based approach of conceptualizing change readiness', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 49(3), pp. 333–360.

Stewart, J. and Kringas, P. (2003) 'Change management-strategy and values in six agencies from the Australian public service', *Public Administration Review*, 63(6), pp. 675–688.

Stock, B.A. (1993) 'Leading small-scale change', *Training and Development*, 47(2), pp. 45–51.

Stragalas, N. (2010) 'Improving change implementation: Practical adaptations of Kotter's model. *OD Practitioner*, 42(1), pp. 31–38.

Strebel, P. (1996) 'Why do employees resist change?', *Harvard Business Review*, 74, pp. 86–92. Retrieved August 10, 2019 from <https://hbr.org/1996/05/why-do-employees-resist-change>.

Sturdy, A. and C. Grey (2003) 'Beneath and beyond organizational change management: exploring alternatives', *Organization*, 10(4), pp. 651–662.

Swierczek, F.W. and Truong, T.L. (2009) 'Predicting the relationships between human resource factors and the effectiveness of a change project', *Asia Pacific Management Review*, 14(1), pp. 69–83.

Symon, G. & Cassell, C. (2012) *Qualitative organizational research: core methods and current challenges*. (pp. 426-450). London: Sage.

Symon, G., Cassell, C. and Phil Johnson, Ph. (2018) Evaluative Practices in Qualitative Management Research: A Critical Review. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Vol. 20, 134–154 (2018) DOI: 10.1111/ijmr.12120

Tarhini, A., Mgbemena, C., Trab, M.S.A., Masa'deh, R. (2015) 'User adoption of online banking in Nigeria: A qualitative study', *Journal of Internet Banking and Commerce*, 20(3). Retrieved August 10, 2019 from <http://www.icommercecentral.com/open-access/user-adoption-of-online-banking-in-nigeria-a-qualitative-study.php?aid=62468>.

Thamarajakshi, R (2001) 'Promotion of social dialogue in EPZs in South Asia: Synthesis of country experiences', in A.S. Oberai., A. Sivananthiran & C.S. Venkata Ratnam (eds) *Labour Issues in Export Processing Zones in South Asia: Role of Social Dialogue*, New Delhi: International Labour Organisation

Ting-Toomey, S. (2010) 'Applying dimensional values in understanding intercultural communication', *Communication Monographs*, 77(2), pp. 169–180.

Todnem, R. (2005) 'Organisational change management: A critical review', *Journal of Change Management*, 5(4), pp. 369–380.

Tomlinson, E.C. and Mayer, R.C. (2009) 'The role of causal attribution dimensions in trust repair', *Academy of Management Review*, 34(1), pp. 85–104.

Tuli, F. (2010), "The basis of distinction between Qualitative and Quantitative Research in Social Science: Reflection on Ontological, Epistemological and Methodological Perspectives", *Ethiopian Journal of Education and Science*, 6 (1), pp. 97-108.

Ulin, P., Robinson, E. T., & Tolley, E. E. (2005), "Qualitative methods in public health: A field guide for applied research", San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ulrich, D. (1998) 'A new mandate for human resources', *Harvard Business Review*, 76(1), pp. 124–135.

Ulrich, D. (2002) 'Human resources have to create real business value', *Management Today*. April, 12–18.

Valleala, U.M., Herranen, S., Collin, K. and Paloniemi, S. (2015) 'Fostering learning opportunities through employees participation amid organizational change', *Vocations and Learning*, 8(1), pp. 1–34.

Van der Voet, J. (2013) 'The effectiveness and specificity of change management in a public organization: Transformational leadership and a bureaucratic organizational structure', *European Management Journal*, 32(3), pp. 373–382.

Van Dijk, R. and Van Dick, R. (2009) 'Navigating organizational change: Change leaders, employee resistance and work-based identities', *Journal of Change Management*, 9(2), pp. 143–63.

Vince, R. and Broussine, M. (1996) 'Paradox, defense and attachment: Accessing and working with emotions and relations underlying organizational change', *Organization Studies*, 17(1), pp. 1–21.

Waddell, D. and Sohal, A.S. (1998) 'Resistance: A constructive tool for change management', *Management Decision*, 36(8), pp. 543–548.

Walford, G. (2005) 'Research ethical guidelines and anonymity', *International Journal of Research and Method in Education*, 28 (1), pp. 83-93.

Walinga, J. (2008) 'Toward a theory of change readiness: The roles of appraisal, focus, and perceived control', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 44(3), pp. 315–347.

Walliman, N. (2011) *Your research project: Designing and planning your work*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Weinbach, R.W. (1984) 'Implementing change: Insights and strategies for the supervisor', *Social Work*, 29(3), pp. 282–286.

Weitz, R. (2001) 'Women and their hair: Seeking power through resistance and accommodation', *Gender and Society*, 15(1), pp. 667–686.

Whelan-Berry, K.S. and Somerville, K.A. (2010) 'Linking change drivers and the organizational change process: A review and synthesis', *Journal of Change Management*, 10(2), pp. 175–193. doi:10.1080/14697011003795651.

Wilson, D.C. (1992) *A strategy of change*. London, UK: Routledge.

Wilson, M.S. and Chaudhry, A. (2017) *Can empowerment and organizational support for development stem turnover? It depends on power distance*. New Delhi, India: Sage Publications.

Wolfram, S. (2016) AI and the future of civilization. Retrieved August 10, 2019 from https://www.edge.org/conversation/stephen_wolfram-ai-the-future-of-civilization.

Ybema, S. and Horvers, M. (2017) 'Resistance through compliance: The strategic and subversive potential of front stage and backstage resistance', *Organization Studies*, 38(9), pp. 1233–1251.

Ybema, S., Kamsteeg, F. and Veldhuizen, K. (2018) 'Sensitivity to situated positionings: Generating insight into organizational change', *Management Learning*, 50(2), pp. 189–207. doi:10.1177/1350761808656.

Yin, R. K. (2009) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2011) Applications of case study research. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

York, J. and Lenox, M. (2014) 'Exploring the sociocultural determinants of *de novo* versus *de alio* entry in emerging industries', *Strategic Management Journal*, 35(13), pp. 1930–1951.

Yousef, D. A. (2000). Organizational commitment as a mediator of the relationship between Islamic work ethics and attitude toward change. *Personnel Review*, 29, 625. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/00483480010296401>

Yousef, D. 2000. Organizational commitment and job satisfaction as predictors of attitudes toward organizational change in a non-western setting, *Personnel Review*, 29(5), 567-592

Yukl, G. (2010) *Leadership in organizations*. 7th edition. New York, NY. Prentice Hall.

Appendix A: Ethical Approval

Dear Reda,

I am pleased to inform you that the DBA Ethics Committee has approved your application for ethical approval for your study. Details and conditions of the approval can be found below:

Committee Name: DBA Ethics Committee

Title of Study: "Investigating employees' resistance to leadership changes: gaps between leaders and employees in a Dubai-based multicultural organization."

Student Investigator: REDA HELAL

School/Institute: School of Management

Approval Date: October 31, 2018 (following REC Meeting on October 31, 2018)

The application was APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

1. The researchers must obtain ethical approval from a local research ethics committee if this is an international study
2. University of Liverpool approval is subject to compliance with all relevant national legislative requirements if this this is an international study.
3. All serious adverse events must be reported to the Sub-Committee within 24 hours of their occurrence, via the Research Integrity and Governance Officer (ethics@liv.ac.uk)
4. If it is proposed to make an amendment to the research, you should notify the Committee of the amendment.

This approval applies to the duration of the research. If it is proposed to extend the duration of the study as specified in the application form, the Committee should be notified.

Kind regards,

Antigone Kyrousi

Ethics Reviewer

Appendix B: Authorization Letter from NI



6th August 2018

Mr. Reda Helal
Network International

Dear Reda,


This is in regard to your request for permission to carry out interviews / meetings with our employees and leaders as part of your Doctorate Thesis research program.

We have no objection in conducting your research in the organization. However, we request you to maintain strict confidentiality and data privacy.

Student Name: Reda Helal
Student ID: H00042520
University: University of Liverpool
Program: Doctor of Business Administration

We wish you the very best in your Doctorate studies.

Best regards,


Hend Al Ali
Group Human Resources Officer



Appendix C: Interview Questions for Employees

Interview questions to employees:

Warm-up

1. How long have you been working for NI?
2. How would you describe the work environment in NI during this time: is it collaborative, restrictive, innovative, bureaucratic, or else?

Change process

3. As you are aware, the Network Leadership Team (NLT) went through a series of changes recently, did you notice any change in your unit or your unit structure?
4. Did these changes affect the way you do your daily job in any way? How?
5. What was your personal experience during this change process – positive, neutral, or negative? Pls, explain why did you feel this way.

Culture & Change

(As per the latest HR updates, NI has employees from more than 30 countries)

6. Do you feel that leaders knew how to deal with employees' diverse cultural background during the change process?
 - a. Why do you think so?
7. Do you think your leader tends to listen more to employees who share a similar background with them (such as - education, experience, age group..etc) ?
 - a. Why is so?
 - b. How that made you feel?

Response to Change – resistance

8. During the change process, did you come across some decisions that you did not agree with?
 - a. How did you deal with these decisions – were you receptive, neutral or resistant?
 - b. Do you think these decisions made you uncomfortable or not as supportive as you could be to this change? Why?
9. How would you describe leaders' responses to views that are different to theirs: for example, does your leader give you a chance to express your views, is he / she supportive, neutral, or else?

Overall experience & Future

10. If you were one of the leaders, what would you change or do differently in this change process, especially with employees?

Appendix D: Interview Questions for Leaders

Key questions for Leaders:

Warm-up

1. How long have you been working for NI?
2. Where were you based before joining NI – country or region?
3. How would you describe the work environment in NI - collaborative, restrictive, innovative, bureaucratic or else?

Change process

4. How would you describe the changes that took place in the leadership team?
5. Can you describe how it affected NI?

Culture & Change

6. How would you describe the diverse workforce of NI – is it a liability or an asset during the change process in particular?
7. Do you think the change process considered the different backgrounds of the NI workforce? To what extent?

Responses to Change - Resistance

8. IYO, how employees responded to these changes – were they receptive, supportive, resistant or else?
9. IYO, what were the reasons drove employees to respond to this change in this particular way?
10. Have you encountered any form of resistance from employees during the change process?
 - a. What form of resistance did you encounter - covert or overt, passive or aggressive?
 - b. Did you anticipate these forms of resistance? Why?
 - c. How did you respond to or handled these acts of resistant?

Overall experience & future

11. If we go back in time, what would you do differently to bring about this change, especially employees' part of the process?