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Enhancing Employee Engagement at a Higher Education Institution: A Leadership Development Framework

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Abstract

The low levels of employee engagement at a school within a Higher Education Institution is the Problem of Practice (PoP) addressed in this Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP). The results of an employee engagement survey revealed that faculty and staff yearn for feedback, mentoring, and recognition from their academic managers. The survey also indicated that academic managers lack the necessary skills and time to coach and mentor their direct reports. The principles of interpretive theory, coupled with adaptive and servant leadership are foundational elements of this OIP, and are leveraged to help address the PoP. Studies have shown that the quality of the relationship between leaders and their followers is an important antecedent of employee engagement. The latter is defined as the intellectual and emotional commitment to one's organization which results in discretionary efforts and exhibition of passion for work in the workplace. As such, a leadership development framework is proposed to build leadership capacity of the academic managers. A combination of the Change Path Model and the Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle will guide the implementation of this change in the organization. Once implemented, it is anticipated that the outcomes of this OIP will go beyond enhancing the levels of employee engagement. Arguably, engaged faculty are known to motivate their students, offer them timely feedback, and contribute to their success. The research and recommendations brought forward by this OIP can be adapted and adopted at other schools within the organization, or at other Higher Education Institutions.

Keywords: employee engagement, adaptive leadership, servant leadership, change, leadership capacity, higher education

Executive Summary

Recent employee engagement (EE) survey results at a Canadian Higher Education Institution (pseudonym is Western Polytechnic College) revealed low levels of engagement in comparison to other postsecondary institutions, as well as to the public sector. Faculty and staff indicated that they are not satisfied with the levels of recognition they receive, and that recognition is not consistently applied across the college. Additionally, the results of the survey revealed that employees yearn for more feedback from their academic managers. Interestingly, the survey results indicated that the academic managers do not possess the coaching and mentoring skills to appropriately train faculty and staff. Undeniably, employee engagement has been shown to improve performance and give organizations a competitive advantage.

Furthermore, in a higher education setting, engaged faculty invest more of themselves with their students and play a critical role in their academic success (Carrell & Kurlaender, 2020; Guzzardo et al., 2021). Although there are different and nuanced definitions EE, most scholars agree that it is the intellectual and emotional commitment of employees to their organizations. This commitment results in discretionary efforts and a passion for work that benefit both the employees and the organization (Frank et al., 2004). As such, the Problem of Practice investigated in this Organizational Improvement Plan is the low levels of employee engagement at Western Polytechnic College and the strategies necessary to enhance it. This OIP is organized in three chapters.

Chapter 1 introduces the organization, describes its history, mission and vision, as well as analyzes the external and internal forces that influence its context. The organization structure was described as a hierarchy within a functionalist environment and a dominant transactional leadership approach. To understand the current state of the college, an analysis of some of the

political, economic, and socio-cultural pressures was conducted. Additionally, the change leader's personal leadership position and a theoretical framework—interpretivism—are presented as foundational elements to build on to solve the PoP. This chapter concludes with a leadership-focused vision and an organizational change readiness assessment.

While Chapter 1 describes the '*what* and *why'* about the change initiative; Chapter 2 discusses *how* to strategize, plan, and develop the improvement plan. Chapter 2 presents the combination of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Spear, 2010), and adaptive leadership (Heifetz, 1994; Heifetz et al., 2009; Heifetz, Kania, & Kramer, 2004) as two approaches to inspire the vision and motivation for change. To take the organization to a desired future state where employees are engaged and thriving, the Change Path Model was selected as the most appropriate framework to lead the change process. In addition to the findings of the organizational readiness assessment conducted in Chapter 1, a critical organizational analysis was conducted based on Nadler and Tushman's Congruency Model. This analysis identified gaps that informed the development of three possible solutions to the PoP. Coupled with the Change Path Model, the Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle was chosen as an improvement model to validate change as it is occurring, as well as to identify necessary adjustments. Chapter 2 concludes with ethical considerations as they pertain to the change process.

Chapter 3 discusses and outlines a plan for implementing, monitoring and evaluating, and communicating the change process. A detailed change implementation plan was presented using a combination of the steps of the Change Path Model and the stages of the PDSA Cycle. The plan details how and when the change leader facilitates the creation and delivery of a leadership development program. To monitor the progress of the program, Kirkpatrick's (1994) Four-Level Model is outlined. This model was originally created to evaluate a supervisory training program,

which makes it adequate for this OIP. This chapter also includes a comprehensive communication strategy based on Klein's (1996) communication key principles and is aligned with the steps of the Change Path Model and the phases of PDSA Cycle.

The Next Steps and Future Consideration section discusses the ramifications of this OIP beyond the school within which the change takes place, and outlines aspirations for this change to be emulated across the college and at other post-secondary institutions. The change leader firmly believes that irrespective of the level of success of this change initiative, learning will occur, and lessons will be drawn that will benefit the organization, the stakeholders involved, and the higher education sector to some degree.

Acknowledgements

As I write this section of the OIP, I cannot help but think of the little boy who grew up thousands of miles away, in a coastal city in North Africa. I am certainly proud of myself, but I am forever indebted to the people who chose to support me and most importantly, to forgive me.

My journey at Western has been an incredible voyage of learning and self-discovery. I am grateful to my instructors, who despite a global pandemic and having to deal with their own challenges, steadfastly delivered on their educational mission. I especially would like to thank Dr. Peter Edwards for his professionalism, encouragement, and humanity. Having you as my course 8 instructor, Dr. Edwards, was indeed the salvation I needed at the time. Much gratitude to you.

I would also like to thank my employer for the unwavering support throughout the years. Not only was I financially supported to further my education and enhance my learning, but I was also presented with growth opportunities I never thought were possible. With much gratitude.

I would like to dedicate this doctoral degree to my mother and to my late father. You raised 7 children and made sure they always had a loving and caring home to come back to. I kneel at both of your feet and offer my undying love, respect, and gratitude.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Acronyms

AD (Associate Dean)

AL (Adaptive Leadership)

AAR (After-Action-Review)

BoGs (Board of Governors)

CA (Collective Agreement)

CCO (Communicative Constitution of Organizations)

DH (Department Head)

DoOD (Director of Organizational Development)

EE (Employee Engagement)

F2F (Face-to-Face)

HE (Higher Education)

HEI (Higher Education Institutions)

HR (Human Resources)

HRM (Human Resources Management)

LDF (Leadership Development Framework)

LR (Labour Relations)

LTQ (Leadership Traits Questionnaire)

M&E (Monitoring and Evaluation)

OIP (Organizational Improvement Plan)

PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act)

PoP (Problem of Practice)

PSI (Post-secondary Institution)

SL (Servant Leadership)

TF (Theoretical Framework)

(TRCC) Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

VP (Vice-President)

VPA (Vice-President Academic)

WPC (Western Polytechnic College)

List of Definitions

Adaptive Leadership: A follower-centric leadership approach used primarily by leaders to help their followers accomplish the work they need to do and adapt to the challenges they face (Heifetz, 1994).

Change Path Model: A four-stage model that concentrates on process issues to facilitate change through the following stages: Awakening, Mobilization, Acceleration, and Institutionalization (Deszca et al., 2020).

Employee Engagement: A concept defined as "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances" (Kahn, 1990, p. 694).

Interpretivism: A theoretical framework that is concerned with understanding the world as is and tries to explain it through individuals' consciousness and subjectivity (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Model: An assessment model that focuses on clarifying the meaning of evaluation and offering guidelines how to monitor and evaluate training programs (Kirkpatrick, 1994).

Nadler and Tushman's Congruence Model: An organizational analysis model that examines the relationships between different elements of the organization and checks the levels of their alignment (Nadler & Tushman, 1989).

PDSA: A four-phase model for change that provides a framework for improvement that is rooted in the scientific method. It leverages learning during change and empowers people to act (Moen & Norman, 2006).

PESTE: An organizational diagnostic tool used for planning and strategizing to uncover internal and external pressures (political, economic, social, and technological).

Servant Leadership: An approach to leadership that has service to others inherent in it. Servant leaders have an acute ability to listen, create opportunities, and empower people (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010; Spears & Lawrence, 2016).

Chapter 1: Introduction and Problem

In recent years, organizations realized the competitive advantage of employee engagement (EE) (Lockwood, 2007; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Samdani & Yameen, 2017), and universities and colleges were not an exception. Engaged employees in general exhibit a higher degree of commitment to their organizations, and in the case of post-secondary institutions, it results in the creation of a superior learning environment for students (Barman & Ray, 2011; Guzzardo et al., 2021). Chapter 1 of this Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) discusses the problem of practice (PoP) of EE investigated within the context of a Higher Education Institution (HEI). To ensure its anonymity, the pseudonym Western Polytechnic College (WPC) will be used as an identifier to represent this institution. In this chapter, WPC's strategic priorities will be discussed, as well as its structure and the predominant leadership practices. Additionally, Chapter 1 highlights the change leader's personal leadership position and the theoretical framework through which the PoP is investigated. This chapter concludes with a leadership-focused vision for change and an assessment for organizational change readiness.

Organizational Context

WPC is a post-secondary institution (PSI) located in Western Canada. With an operating budget exceeding $200 million, WPC offers over 300 full-time and part-time programs annually to more than 40,000 students, out of whom close to 6,000 are international. WPC opened its doors in 1964 in response to the 1960 *Technical and Skills Training Assistance Act*. As the economy grew steadily and the need for a skilled workforce increased, WPC gained more autonomy and status, and by the mid-eighties it began to operate under the aegis of the Ministry of Education. The growth of this once-medium size college continued until it merged with another educational institution in the mid-nineties and became one of the largest PSIs in the

province. This longevity and growth begot a large alumni network of more than 190,000 (Western Polytechnic College, 2020).

WPC is a unique and differentiated educational institution with a polytechnic mandate to deliver trades, technology, and engineering programs (College and Institute Act, 1996). The polytechnic model is focused on the practical and hands-on education and is responsive to industry needs (Polytechnics Canada, n.d.). WPC operates on multiple campuses located in various locations and is organized into six schools which are oriented to specific industries and are each led by a dean. This cluster of schools offer programs in the following categories: Academic Studies, Business, Computing, Media, Electrical, Civil and Mechanical Engineering, Construction, Transportation, Health Sciences, and a panoply of other Trades and Technology programs.

As a dean, I lead one of those six schools. For the purposes of anonymity, I will refer to this school in this OIP as School X. The credentials issued by WPC include certificates, diplomas, and degrees up to the master's level. An important component in delivering these credentials is the faculty and staff group who teach in and support the various programs. WPC employs more than 2,600 faculty and staff in its full and part-time studies programs. I use the terms faculty and staff, and employees interchangeably in this OIP, with an underlying recognition that more that 80% of them are faculty members (Western Polytechnic College, 2020). The commitment and engagement of these employees is a critical factor in delivering the quality of education that the students come to expect at WPC. The engagement of employees is important to WPC, so much so that it measures it annually through an employee engagement survey and pursues various strategies to enhance it.

WPC's employees belong to three different bargaining units: One that represents faculty engaged in the technology and engineering programs, another which represents faculty in the trades and technical programs, and the last one represents administrative support staff. Each of these bargaining units is certified under the provincial Labour Relations Board, and functions within WPC in accordance with three separate collective agreements (CA). These CAs are negotiated provincially between the employees' unions and the provincial government. Once ratified, they become legally binding and delineate the rights and responsibilities of faculty and staff. In addition to these CAs, WPC has a management terms and conditions document that governs the management group of employees. The latter group includes the president, vice-presidents, deans, associate deans, directors, and administrative and operations managers.

With multiple campuses serving different parts of the province, the sheer number of its faculty and staff and their different union representation, and the pressures to cater to an evolving industry, WPC with all its complexity, operates within political, economic, and socio-cultural contexts. These contexts greatly influence decision-making and leadership approaches of the management personnel. Outlined below is an analysis of those competing pressures.

Political Context

WPC is governed by a Board of Governors (BoGs), most of whom are appointed by the province's Lieutenant Governor (College and Institute Act, 2020). Accountable to the BoGs is a senior leadership team led by the college president, and an educational council—a body responsible for developing policies and procedures for programs and students at WPC. Each year, the BoGs' Chair receives a government Mandate Letter which identifies the overarching expectations and priorities that inform WPC's policies and programs (Provincial Government, n.d.).

The government expectations as stated in the Mandate Letter are many, and achieving them takes negotiations and buy-in from all stakeholders at WPC, and especially the faculty members tasked to operationalize the educational mandate. The government also expects public post-secondary institutions to meet or exceed their financial targets (Provincial Government, 2020). The expectations of WPC, which are triggered by those of the government, and the multiple actors within the system, including faculty and staff and their unions, make it for an arena rife with political and diplomatic maneuvering.

Economic Context

Funding for higher education has been declining in recent years and despite that, WPC has always managed to dedicate some of its organizational development resources to employee engagement. After more than a year of navigating the COVID-19 pandemic and the budgetary constraints it brought with it, WPC must find a balance between its educational provincial mandate, government and industry expectations, and those of faculty and staff. What is certain is that WPC's success at meeting all those expectations is contingent on a committed and engaged employee population. Furthermore, a college as large as WPC has multiple initiatives, both internal and external, such as operationalizing the educational and strategic plan, the Indigenous plan, the sustainability plan, and the internationalization plan; all of which require substantial organizational budgetary investment.

Socio-cultural Context

Historically, college and university students, faculty and staff were dominated by White males. However, these institutions, including WPC, have become a kaleidoscope of differences in the twenty-first century, in terms of gender identities, ethnicities and cultural backgrounds (Michalski et al., 2017). Engaging such diverse population requires more than a 'one size fits all'

strategy. Different people are motivated and engaged in different ways; each has their own story and in fact their own constructed reality (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). School X offers more than 45 programs, which fall under the responsibility of four associate deans'(AD) academic portfolios. The size of each portfolio determines the number of department heads (DH) managing the day-to-day operations of the programs and it ranges from four DHs to eight. DHs are union members and report directly to the ADs. This multitude of programs and stakeholders breed multiple micro-cultures within school X and arguably makes it challenging for ADs to unify all employees and enhance their engagement within the school and ultimately within the college.

Organizational Structure

Due to its large size, WPC operates in a highly hierarchical environment, with multiple reporting structures as illustrated in Figure 1. It is governed by a Board of Governors, which

Figure 1

Overview of the Organizational Structure of WPC, with an Emphasis on the Academic Portfolio
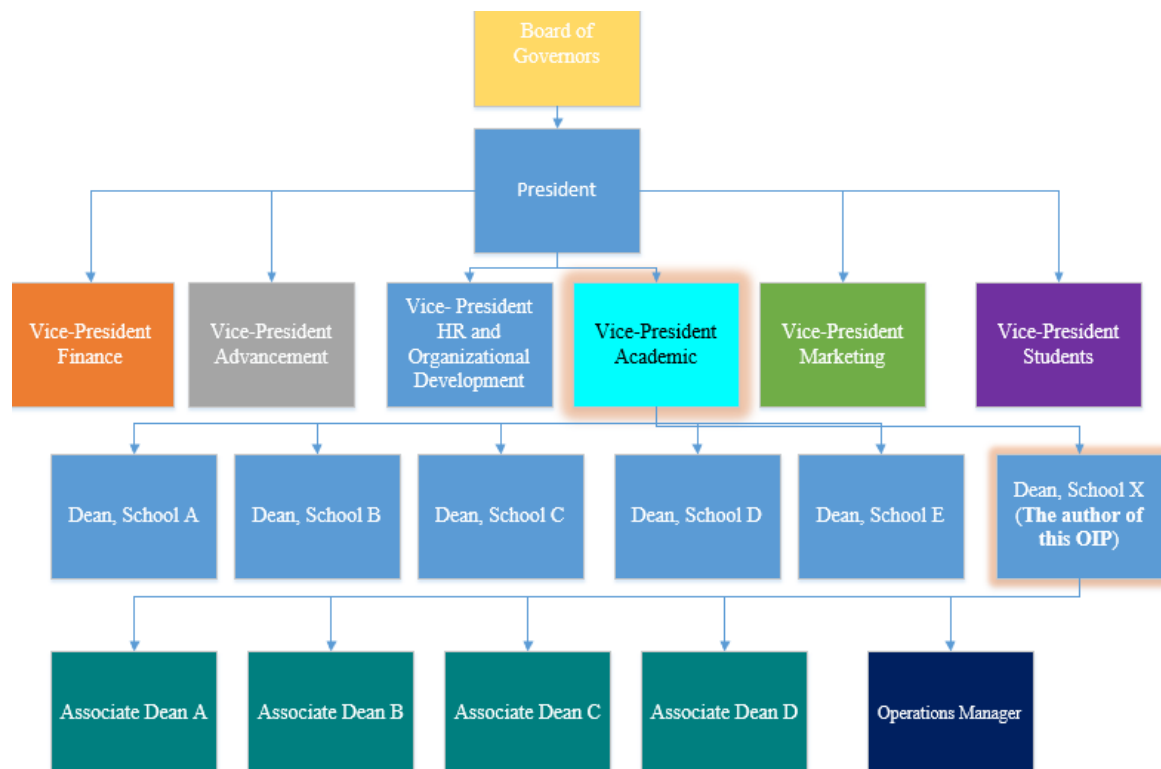
 provides the strategic and financial oversight as mandated by the government. The president, through a senior leadership team comprised of multiple vice-presidents (VP), is responsible for operationalizing the BoGs directives. As dean of school X, I report to the VP academic and I have five direct reports, including four associate deans, and one operations manager. The ADs have more than 200 faculty and 12 support staff as direct reports, while the operations manager has none.

WPC's organizational structure, as illustrated in Figure 1, and its multiple portfolios with independent internal governance, makes implementing wide scale change a challenging task, and engaging employees using a 'one size fits all' approach may not yield the results that the college strives to achieve.

Vision, Mission, Values, Purpose and Goals

In 2019, WPC launched its strategic plan with a renewed vision focused on the value of people empowerment as well as an inspirational invitation to shape the province and its future. This is a notable shift from its past vision statement which had at its heart a message about the province's economy. Vision statements, as Deszca et al. (2020) posit, are the organizational 'North Star' as they provide guidance towards achieving organizational goals. WPC's vision is: Empowering and Inspiring People. Edifying the Province. Pursuing Innovation (Western Polytechnic College, 2019b).

Accompanying its vision, WPC identified a set of core values that are intended to guide its employees' behavior. These values include pursuing excellence, innovation, collaboration, diversity, and engaging with respect. It also declares in its strategic plan that it cares about its people and that it is committed to its faculty, staff, and students. This commitment, WPC believes, will differentiate it as an educational institution, employer, and industry partner

(Western Polytechnic College, 2019b). While employees are arguably energized by the explicit message in these values, and although the term 'engagement' and 'empowerment' are explicitly articulated within them, the employee engagement (EE) levels, as revealed by an internal EE survey results, tell a different story (Western Polytechnic College, 2019a).

Established Leadership Approaches

As can be seen on the organizational chart in Figure 1, WPC's structure lends itself to a transactional leadership. Leaders at WPC are individuals who are committed to the college and to the people they lead. However, the competing priorities and the pursuit of organizational effectiveness, make it challenging for them to be anything but transactional leaders most of the time, despite wishing to be otherwise. This fact, combined with the historic image that educational mangers and especially senior ones, are mostly concerned with production and effectiveness over people, may cause faculty and staff to be reluctant to embrace the overall vision or participate in change initiatives (Blake & Mouton, 1985). This transactional leadership, although praised by some scholars to achieve mutual benefits for the organization and the employees (Burns, 2010), runs the risk of breeding a climate of mistrust and confusion amongst employees (Bass et al., 2003). WPC's vision of empowering people seems to be incompatible with this approach of leadership, and faculty and staff see and live this dichotomy which could potentially cause confusion and potentially disengagement.

The preceding section laid out the foundation for this OIP by presenting WPC's organizational context and a brief account of its history and how it came to be the college it is today. An analysis of some of the political, and socio-cultural pressures was conducted to understand the present state of the college. Vision, mission, and goals were also described along with WPC's structure. A description of the established leadership paradigm within the college

and how it might be affecting employee engagement was outlined. In the following section, a description of my own leadership philosophy and approach will be identified and a case will be made for why they would assist in influencing the desired change.

Leadership Position and Lens Statement

My personal leadership philosophy is undergirded by a set of core beliefs and values that are centered on *the other*, including transparency, care, justice, fairness, empathy, and service. I believe in the power of collaboration and the co-creation of knowledge and solutions. Philosopher John Stuart Mill once said, "[they] who know only [their] own side of the case, know little of that" (Mill, 1956, p. 45). I strive to live by this principle and recognize that the lens I view the world through is coloured by my own story and biased by my own beliefs. I engage in respectful debates and exploration of the truth as seen and understood by many.

Before I became an academic administrator at WPC, I was a teaching faculty in one of its engineering departments. Although my leadership style and approach evolved since then, they still rest on that same foundation of principles I mentioned above. As a teaching faculty, I realized the responsibility that rested on my shoulders; and as an educator, my students and their future were at the heart of everything I did. I also appreciated how the leadership approaches of the school administrators had an impact on me, my peers, and indirectly on our students. When I felt that my academic managers cared about what I did, got involved in understanding my struggles and challenges and coached me through them, I felt empowered and connected to the college's mission and purpose. As I progressed to a department head, associate dean, and now as a dean, my experiences as a faculty member never left me, and the lessons I learned still guide me.

Leadership styles inventories such as the Northouse (2019) Leadership Traits Questionnaire (LTQ), revealed that trustworthiness and empathy are two of my strengths as a leader. I have always been intentional in nurturing these two characteristics, as they represent my inherent character and are integral to the ethical and servant leadership I aspire to achieve. My LTQ also showed that I scored equally high on the 'persistence' and 'determination' traits, both of which are important to achieving organizational goals and driving results. I strive to strike a balance between caring for both the people I lead and the organization we work for. Invariably, an organization cannot blossom and thrive unless its people are recognized and rewarded for their abilities and are provided with a suitable trusting work environment (Blake & Mouton, 1985). As can be discerned from the description of my leadership style, I identify with the core tenets and values of servant leadership (SL) (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010; Spears & Lawrence, 2016). Although I described WPC as a structural and functionalist organization, it is my unwavering commitment to it and to its goals, that leads me to believe that SL is an approach that will help us deliver on our societal obligations as providers and facilitators of learning. Additionally, because WPC is a large complex organization with competing priorities and emergent and unpredictable situations, servant leadership alone would be insufficient. Adaptive leadership (AL), a subset of Complexity Leadership Theory (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007), would supplement my SL approach as I help my direct reports overcome the challenges they will be facing as we work together to enhance employee engagement (Heifetz et al., 2004; Heifetz et al., 2009).

Servant Leadership

I identify with SL because of its human relations orientation, service to others, and authenticity (Spears & Lawrence, 2016). A servant leader is a person who is "a servant first. It

begins with a natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 27). The care and service that leaders provide for their followers, engenders wellbeing and trust. In fact, it is this trust that Macey and Schneider (2008) posited as "central to the network of antecedent conditions" of employee engagement (p. 22). One of the other important aspects of this leadership approach is the ability to attentively listen, create opportunities, and empower people (Spears, 2010). As the academic leader of school X, with enough positional authority, I need to remind myself to remain curious about people's needs, and most importantly remember that I am by default entrusted with the school, faculty, staff, and students. In fact, Greenleaf (1977) views SL as a kind of stewardship of the need and wellbeing of others; and for that reason, being a servant leader should be more than part of one's job, but needs to be their mission, Melrose (1995) further contended.

As one of the three known moral leadership approaches—the other two being authentic and ethical leadership, SL has the potential to produce followers with serving behaviours (Wu et al., 2021). More servant followers will arguably lead to the proliferation of the SL behaviours which include "behaving ethically, creating value for the community, putting others first … [and] helping others grow" (Lemoine et al., 2019, p. 152).

Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive leadership (AL) (Heifetz, 1994; Heifetz et al., 2004; Heifetz et al., 2009) is an appropriate approach to couple with SL due to the fact it is follower-centered as opposed to leader-centered, contrary to what most people think (Northouse, 2019). In fact, at its core, AL is built around three fundamental ideas that are in alignment with my leadership ideals. First, AL relies on a systems perspective, and assumes that causes and effects of organizational issues are not necessarily "closely related in space and time" (Senge, 2006, p. 48) and that most of the

problems that people face are embedded in "complex interactions, rather than independent variables" (p. 2). Second, AL takes a biological perspective, one that takes into consideration that people change and develop because of circumstances that compel them to change and respond positively to future change initiatives (Northouse, 2019). Third, AL has a service orientation, which makes it congruent with SL, that focuses on serving people by helping them identify issues and coaching them to find solutions (Heifetz, 1994). In a way, an adaptive leader is like a developmental coach, in that they remain curious and engage in attentive listening. They provide a safe and supporting environment for their followers to be creative in finding solutions on their own and ultimately change their behaviour and attitudes (Heifetz & Linsky, 2017). Furthermore, one of the characteristics of adaptive leaders is to intentionally create a measured 'dose of tension' in the environment to produce adaptive change that addresses the complex challenges facing the organization (Lichtenstein et al., 2006).

In conclusion, my personal leadership philosophy is tethered to the principles of fairness, justice, service, and a belief that meaning and individual realities are born through complex interactions and relationships that occur in the space between individuals (Lichtenstein et al., 2006). The combination of servant and adaptive leadership will provide me with enough leadership contingency to tackle the problem of practice I describe in the following section.

Leadership Problem of Practice (PoP)

Academic managers—the associate deans, within school X at WPC are not only responsible for the integrity of their academic programs, but also have a role in inspiring and developing their direct reports (Melville et al., 2014). They are integrally involved in the day-to-day administration of their programs, industry relations building, students' affairs, and managing relationships with the unions. Furthermore, with decreasing public-funding from the province,

and heightened competition from other colleges and universities, most post-secondary institutions were compelled to find new ways to govern (Blaschke et al., 2012). Moreover, most have shifted to a business-like style of leadership and management to confront changes in the post-secondary education 'market' (Musselin, 2013). This trend toward the 'corporatization' of higher education and the neo-liberal ideology and globalization had significant influence and consequences on governments and post-secondary education (Giroux, 2002; Hogan, 2010). To emphasize its historical importance, Giroux (2002) referred to neo-liberalism as "the most dangerous ideology of the current historical moment" (p. 428). While I know of more dangerous ideologies than neo-liberalism, I agree with Giroux in that this paradigm influenced economies, governments, and education in ways we are still grappling with to this day. The combination of these organizational pressures, economic and political, and the ambiguity of the concept EE (Shuck & Wollard, 2010), may unintentionally have caused the latter to be less of a priority for academic mangers, despite their good intentions and that of WPC senior leadership team. EE has been defined by many scholars (see, Kahn, 1990; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Saks, 2006), and despite the nuances in their definitions, they all agree that EE is the amount of discretionary efforts and passion for work employees exhibit in the workplace (Frank et al., 2004).

Western Polytechnic College recently released the results of an EE survey it had conducted, and as can be seen in Figure 2, it revealed that the overall engagement score was 41%, a score lower than that of other Canadian post-secondary institutions (PSI) and that of public sector organizations, which were respectively 58% and 62%. Following each EE survey results dissemination across the college, associate deans meet with their respective teams of faculty and staff, discuss the EE results, and devise plans and strategies to increase the levels of engagement. Some past strategies focused on increasing budgets and looking at enhancing

Figure 2

WPC Overall Employee Engagement Score (Western Polytechnic College, 2019a)

Overall Engagement Score

41%

⬇ 21 points 62%
Public Sector (Canada)

⬇ 17 points 58%
Post Secondary Institutions (Canada)

Differences may appear one percentage point higher or lower than expected due to rounding.
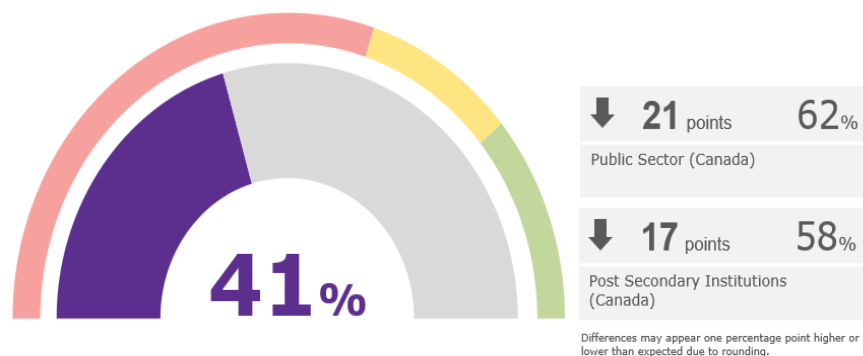
benefits for employees. Although some level of engagement can be achieved by financial incentives and material recompenses, to think that they are a panacea for disengagement would be short-sighted and misleading. Choudhury and Mohanty (2019) crystalized this point as they argued that organizations and their leaders need to be more insightful and creative to arouse and sustain their employees' intellectual potential and help them realize meaning and fulfillment. Despite the bold and explicit message of WPC in its strategic plan—that empowering people is a priority, and despite isolated attempts in previous years to enact some strategies to increase employee engagement, the EE survey results indicate only a modest improvement of 2% over the previous year, and a participation rate of less than 30% (Western Polytechnic College, 2019a).

It might be assumed from the preceding information, that I lay the blame of EE current levels at the feet of the ADs due to their role as the academic managers with the most direct reports of faculty and staff, or that I think they are the results of their negligence or lack of leadership; nothing could be farthest from the truth. ADs are critically important to what we do at school X and at WPC, and their contributions are essential in operationalizing the mission and

values of the college. I, however, believe that there is an institutional lack of understanding of what contributes to EE, and the various means to enhance it. Therefore, as the dean of school X, what strategies should I implement to enhance the low levels of employee engagement?

Framing the Problem of Practice

WPC's principal mission is to educate students and prepare them for challenging and rewarding careers in the industry of their choice (Western Polytechnic, 2019a). O'Meara (2008) argued that engaged and motivated faculty excel at facilitating students' learning and at providing knowledge. However, historically, EE was not emphasized at WPC as it is today; and it has only begun to be an explicit item in its strategic plan for the last five years.

The concept of employee engagement has been a topic of scholarly discourse since William Kahn wrote his 1990 seminal work: Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work. The concept and its associated organizational benefits became an area of interest of many scholars in subsequent years (see Lacy, 2009; Lockwood, 2007; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Saks, 2006; Shuck & Herd, 2012; Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Organizations realized the benefits of an engaged workforce and WPC took note of that as well, hence the annual EE survey it has been administering for the past five years.

As mentioned previously, WPC's vision is: Empowering and Inspiring People. Edifying the Province. Pursuing Innovation (Western Polytechnic College, 2019b). Empowered employees are indeed engaged employees, argued Gruman and Saks (2011). Notwithstanding WPC's bold vision, the reality is quite different in terms of its employee engagement as explained in the leadership problem of practice description. Arguably, the advent of neo-liberalism into governments and higher education (HE) had lasting and reverberating effects on the educational governance models. Colleges and universities became a vessel for economic

development, with less reliance on public funds, and were directed to operate more like businesses and pursue alternate methods of generating revenue (Holmes, 2017).

Neo-liberalism and the advocacy for free market and open competition did not spare higher education and therefore the construct of marketization of education slowly crept in (Jones, 2004). These paradigmatic pressures put tremendous pressures on HEI. WPC, in the pursuit of efficiency, may have found itself responding to these pressures by creating organizational structures that are rigid and inflexible. These structures inherently gave birth to a hierarchical kind of leadership with a managerialism flavor (Jones, 2016), which values efficiency, supervisory skills, and fiscal prudence and responsibility (Kezar, 2018). These values are neither pernicious nor a reflection of any perceived nefarious tactics; in fact, the senior leadership team at the college consists of a group of people who are dedicated, committed, and have the interest of employees at heart. The preceding account about the structure of WPC is merely a general description of the reality of contemporary HEI's predominant organizational environments.

As a senior leader within my organization, I consider myself a steward of WPC's vision, and my goal is to see it come to fruition. However, the current results of the EE survey, as shown in Figure 2, concern me. To gain insights into the factors that may be causing my PoP, I will heed the advice of Kezar (2018) as she argued that "appropriate change agency … means knowing about the context and external environment for change" (p. 5). As such, conducting a PEST analysis will assist me in identifying external and internal factors impacting EE and it will help me mitigate any risks and exploit any opportunities (Sammut-Bonnici & Galea, 2015). I chose to focus on the first three elements of the PEST analysis.

Political

The government mandate letter issued to WPC's Board of Governors (BoGs) communicates and sets out the overarching expectations and priorities that inform WPC's policies and programs (Provincial Government, 2020). The government educational priorities are many and require a high level of commitment and engagement from WPC's employees. Hence the necessity for WPC to strive to move the EE 'needle' in the right direction. In addition to their mandate letter, the government in their latest Service Plan (Provincial Government, 2020), commits to the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRCC), which contains several Calls to Actions relevant to post-secondary education and training, and notes the important role of education in reconciliation.

Against the backdrop of all these political pressures, is the fact that WPC's employees belong to three different unions and their work conditions and terms are governed by three separate Collective Agreements as mentioned before. Although the CAs are negotiated, are legally binding, and delineate employees' roles and responsibilities, the term 'engagement' does not exist in any of the three agreements. This multiplicity of labor agreements, the dearth of an 'employee engagement' language in them, and the governmental and organizational expectations, call for different styles of leadership—styles that can secure buy-in and commitment from employees, their unions, and from WPC's management team, including the senior leadership team.

Economic Context

Although Canada's higher education system is one of the best funded in the world (Usher, 2020), Canadian public educational institutions' funding has seen a decline as early as the mid-1980s (Brownlee, 2018), and WPC has seen its share of these budget reductions over the

decades. Historically, this reduction in funding compelled institutions to find alternate sources of

revenue; and job titles such as business development managers that did not exist in PSIs three

decades ago, are now a norm. Employee engagement will become even more crucial than before

as institutions face these financial challenges and will require buy-in from employees to embark

on non-traditional funding generation initiatives. This economic factor is tightly linked to the

political element because of the dependence of WPC on government funding.

Socio-cultural

In addition to some of the factors mentioned hitherto, it is important to remember that the

goal of higher education is to contribute to a 'grander' goal, which is to improve and sustain

society. Although both faculty and staff contribute to the attainment of this goal, faculty carry a

bigger responsibility in making it possible. Gerpot et al. (2016) stated that the way employees

perceive their leaders and their decision making, impacts their moral consciousness and their

commitment to their organization. To understand what drives their perceptions of their leaders

and WPC and what ultimately influences their levels of engagement, it would be useful to

examine EE through an interpretive lens and describe the artifacts that mold EE at WPC. In fact,

it would be difficult to talk about these artifacts without situating them under the overarching

theme of the culture they are nested in.

As a senior academic leader, and as a past associate dean responsible for enacting

initiatives and strategies for employee engagement, I appreciate that understanding employees'

values, beliefs, and their negotiated and shared culture is arguably the most challenging task for a

leader. Schein (2017) defined the culture of a group as "the accumulated shared learning of that

group as it solves problems" (p. 34). The pattern of that learning and knowledge is taken for

granted and eventually drops out of awareness, which makes it difficult for an outside observer

to decipher. This shared learning and beliefs, Schein contends, can be seen at three levels of abstraction: Artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions. These assumptions form, in a way, a blueprint of employees' behavior and one that determines their resistance or embracing of any change initiatives. The desire to increase engagement will undoubtedly be contingent on carefully navigating the organization's cultural landscape while being mindful that whatever order exists, it provides meaning to the faculty and staff.

The most important artifacts for employees at WPC are the collective agreements that outline their roles, rights, and responsibilities. Faculty and staff belong to three different unions with three separate and distinct CAs. Faculty members also belong to different departments based on their technical and vocational denomination. These departments have sub-cultures that faculty identify and affiliate with because of the communal sense-making it provides. In fact, research has shown that faculty engagement varies by discipline and career stage (Glass et al., 2011). Collective agreements are documents that are negotiated between the province and the unions, and academic managers at WPC have no control or substantial influence on their content. However, managers can use their leadership skills to influence employees and to provide them with a supportive work environment within the boundaries set by the CAs.

Key Organizational Theories

Theoretical frameworks (TF) provide focus to the research design and "yield certain kind of findings [about the world] that are a matter of core interest and priority to [the researcher]" who is seeing the world through the spectacles of that specific framework (Patton, 2015, p. 579). A TF may rely on a single dominant theory or a combination of many theories to bring focus and conciseness to a particular study (Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009). This OIP relies on the principles of Interpretive Organizational Theory.

Interpretive Theory

Employee engagement as a concept and an appellation was first coined by William Kahn. Kahn (1990) defined EE as the "harnessing of [employees'] selves to their work role… [they] express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally" (p. 694). More than a decade later, May et al. (2004) built on Kahn's definition and added 3 dimensions to EE—meaningfulness, safety, and availability. As a leader, it is this notion of meaningfulness and meaning that intrigues me and compels me to look at EE through an interpretive lens. Research has shown that there is a strong correlation between EE and meaningfulness (Oliver & Rothman, 2007), and that most of interpretive schools of thought have this centrality of 'meaning' at their core (Putnam, 1983).

As mentioned earlier, I once was a teaching faculty member at WPC and I have firsthand experience with teaching, developing curriculum, and dealing with students and their expectations. What motivated me then was the feeling of autonomy, psychological safety, and meaningfulness (May et al., 2004)—all ingredients for engagement in the workplace. The interpretive lens, according to Burrell and Morgan (1979), is concerned with understanding the world as it is and tries to explain it through individual consciousness and subjectivity. Employees within school X at WPC interact amongst each other, with the students and the academic managers and peers, and in doing so, they create an "emergent social process" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 28). It is this social process that leads to the construction of their individual realities (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Additionally, Putnam and Banghart (2017) noted that interpretive approaches gained foothold with scholars who wanted to explore the meaning of symbols, values, and beliefs. Interestingly, interpretive theory is congruent with Schein's (2017) different levels of organizational culture mentioned earlier. Similarly, Morgan (2006) also

opined that when we talk about culture, we refer to a construction of reality, one that enables individuals in a group to have "shared values, shared beliefs, shared meaning [and] shared understanding" (p. 134).

Employee engagement at WPC is measured through a survey which has a list of questions to be answered by checking boxes. While there is invariably some valid information to be drawn using this method of EE data-gathering, it remains positivist in nature. Employees at WPC, including myself, are "walking repositories of rules that were taught to us when young and that represent early layers of [our] cultural socialization" (Schein, 2017, p. 41), and it is the measurement of this personal 'repository' and perspectives that is missing in the positivist surveys used to measure EE. In fact, Sambrock et al. (2013) cast doubt on the validity of these surveys, as they asked, "How can responses to an annual one-off self-report questionnaire augment [our] understanding of what it means to be engaged, who and what facilitates this, and why and when an employee engages at/with work?" (p. 176).

Academic managers are not responsible for deciding how to measure EE at WPC nor are they involved in crafting the EE survey questions; this task falls under the responsibility of the organizational development division within the Human Resources (HR) department. Paradoxically, Rousseau and House (1997), as cited in Gould-Williams and Davies (2005), asserted that an "employee does not have a relationship with [any]one individual representing the organization that is comparable to the relationship with [their] leader" (p. 4). Gould-Williams and Davies (2005) contended that when leaders value employees through empowerment, care, and justice; a dynamic of reciprocity takes over, whereby employees feel an obligation to reciprocate "these good deeds with positive work attitudes and behaviors" (p. 4).

An interpretive theory, together with considerations of the cultural intricacies within WPC lend themselves well to investigate employee engagement and its antecedents. As stated earlier, meaning-making is central to EE, but at the same time deciphering it is complex. As such, leaders must play a key role in understanding, and if needed modifying employees' shared meaning, by interpreting and "recreat[ing] aspects of the symbolic system and culture" (Kezar, 2018, p. 58). The next section will discuss questions that explore and address strategies and approaches that might enhance employee engagement at WPC.

Guiding Questions Emerging from the Problem of Practice

Employee engagement (EE) has seen an increased interest from Human Resources Management (HRM) and scholars in recent years (Bakker, 2011; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Saks, 2006). It might be assumed that the correlation between enhanced EE and the organizational competitive advantage is the reason for this interest, or it might simply be a genuine academic curiosity to understand the consequences of employees' wellbeing and flourishing at work. Wilson (2009) argued that highly engaged employees are an asset to any organization, while disengaged ones might be a liability. Irrespective of the causality and consequences, the concept of EE remains an ambiguous one and its definition proved to be contextually and culturally dependant (Saks, 2006). This leads to the guiding question of *what is the definition of EE in organizations in general, and what does it mean in the context of higher education and in WPC specifically?*

Furthermore, based on the principles of interpretive theory and the fact that employee engagement is inherently linked to personal stories, co-created narratives, and sense-making (Weick, 1995), *how much of WPC EE positivist measuring survey data can we confidently use and rely on as guiding material to enact strategies and initiatives to create an engaging work*

environment? As mentioned earlier, different departments within school X at the college host different micro-cultures that are determined by the nature of the field of practice and career stage of the faculty members.

If employee engagement has seen a surge of interest, and its relevance to organizational effectiveness became more axiomatic, research on leadership as one of the antecedents of EE gained momentum in the last decade (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015). WPC's 'raison d'être' is to educate and prepare students for a rewarding and impactful career. As such, the quality of the faculty members and their expertise, as well as that of the talents of the support staff, are the foundation of this endeavor. Keeping these education professionals engaged, supporting them, and providing them with an empowering and impactful work environment might be one way to ensure our students get the quality education they came to expect. Moss (2009) contends that "followers get securely attached and confident in a just world when leaders demonstrate emotional support and provide recognition for [their] contributions, leading [them] to become more vigorous" (p. 243), And as such *what characteristics and leadership approaches should academic managers in school X at WPC exhibit and adopt to enhance employee engagement?*

Moreover, for change to occur and behaviour to improve, there needs to be a desire and willingness to learn and shed some previously held assumptions and beliefs. It is tempting to refer to colleges and universities as learning organizations, because after all they are places for learning. However, as Watkins (2005) argued, higher education institutions are the most difficult context for change because of their structures and institutional assumptions. As we explore ways to engage employees at WPC, learning and unlearning must occur as a collective, and this begs the question of *how can academic managers at WPC learn new leadership approaches in such a way that their individual learning impacts others and the organization in a systemic way?*

This OIP focuses on investigating the low levels of employee engagement at WPC and seeks to find ways to enhance it, but this problem has also implications on students. A lack of engagement, or worse, disengagement of faculty, does not allow for educational opportunities and rich learning experiences for students. In fact, Hannay et al. (2013) as they examined the transformation of a school district into a learning organization, stated that "teacher classroom practices [are] at the heart of school performance" (p. 65). While this statement focuses on schoolteachers, it is just as valid for post-secondary education.

The last two sections of this chapter will articulate the gap between the existing and the envisioned state of employee engagement at school X, based on the organizational context, my personal leadership philosophy, and the organizational theories described in this OIP. This chapter will end by an assessment of school X's readiness to make changes that will contribute to enhancing faculty and staff engagement.

Leadership-Focused Vision for Change

As the change leader, before I begin outlining potential solutions for my PoP, I need to identify the gaps between the current and desired state, outline priorities for change, and identify key change drivers.

Current Organizational State

As a stated earlier, EE levels at WPC are below those of other post-secondary education institutions and those of the public sector. When WPC administers the EE survey, dimensions such as recognition, performance management, manager support, and professional development are measured. The results of the recent EE survey reveal a level of dissatisfaction from faculty and staff. Only 19% feel they receive appropriate recognition for their contributions and accomplishments, and 15% believe that recognition is not applied consistently throughout the

college. When it comes to performance management, only 15% feel that the way performance is managed does a good job of identifying their strengths and improvement areas. In addition, only 19% report their performance is managed in a way that enables them to contribute as much as possible to WPC's success (Western Polytechnic College, 2019a).

Another equally important data set that the EE survey results reveal is how associate deans (ADs)—the academic managers—feel with regards to their ability to serve faculty and staff. When asked if they receive the support to help their followers to improve their performance, only 25% of ADs responded positively. Incidentally, only 17% stated that they have enough time each day to provide feedback and coaching to their faculty and staff. Additionally, 42% of ADs stated they receive effective feedback from their managers on how their leadership styles influences their teams.

Desired Organizational State

One of WPC's goals is to empower people. However, based on the results of the EE survey, it appears that there is a misalignment between what WPC aspires to achieve and what employees are reporting. Based on the data gleaned from the EE survey results, two main perspectives need to be considered when envisioning a future state: academic managers, and faculty and staff. Academic managers in school X are the associate deans, and in this OIP I will use these titles interchangeably. The ultimate future state is one that has faculty and staff feel supported and empowered. An envisioned state would see them reporting that they feel recognized for the work they do, and that their performance is managed in a way that enables them to contribute to the success of the school and WPC. An envisioned state will also see ADs reporting they have enough resources and time to support faculty and staff through coaching and training. Furthermore, in a future desired state, ADs will receive effective and timely feedback

from me, their manager, so they are able identify their strengths and development areas and leverage them to positively influence their teams.

As the dean of the school, I am concerned that despite WPC's best efforts to recognize its employees, faculty and staff still feel either under-appreciated or that recognition is not applied consistently throughout the college. A future state will have the management team in school X investigate ways to recognize employees' efforts, so they are genuinely felt and experienced. Moreover, employees will most likely feel motivated and further contribute to the organization, knowing their work counts toward the greater vision of WPC.

Priorities for Change and Balancing Stakeholders' Interests

WPC's vision is clear in its commitment to empower people and create an engaging work environment. Recently, the president of the college directed the VP of Human Resources (HR) to create a 'People Vision' through which EE will be addressed at the college level. As a dean, it is important to know that addressing my PoP is not only a priority for school X, but the college's as well. As an educational institution, our reputation is measured by the quality of education we deliver. To maximize the educational experience of our students and to satisfy the needs of the industry, having an engaged faculty and staff will contribute towards that goal. Additionally, as a provincially funded college with a provincial mandate, we must meet a series of expectations: (a) making post-secondary education accessible to multiple demographics of the province and implement a student-centered international education; (b) develop and recognize flexible learning pathways, and (c) strengthen the connections between the educational programming and the need of the industry (Provincial Government, n.d.). Without an engaged faculty and staff who feel they are supported by their immediate managers, and the senior leadership, WPC will be challenged to meet the government's expectations.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, faculty and staff at WPC belong to three different unions and operate under three separate collective agreements. While having CAs is helpful, contending with three separate ones sometimes create some issues. One issue is the fact that two of the faculty CAs have different provisions for weekly contact hours with students. While this issue has historical reasons, it is still problematic and might impact EE. As I engage in addressing the PoP, I need to be mindful of these sensitive issues and modulate any actions I take based on the environment within which I operate. Furthermore, close attention needs to be given to how we approach solving the PoP as a management team. ADs carry a lot of responsibility for the academic portfolios they manage and hearing that faculty and staff do not think they are supported or recognized properly might impact ADs in different ways. As the change leader, I need to approach this issue pragmatically, but with finesse and a spirit of encouragement, care, and empowerment. Servant and adaptive leadership will help me support the ADs as we implement a solution for the PoP.

Change Drivers

Although there is not a consensus on how to define change drivers (Kemelgor et al., 2000), Whelan-Berry and Somerville (2010) define them as resources "which are intended to facilitate the implementation of the desired organizational change" (p. 176). Understandably, there is a vested interest by multiple stakeholders to see highly engaged employees at the college, namely the president, the academic managers, the provincial government, industry, faculty and staff, and our students. Although I am the change leader, I cannot "go it alone" and I must identify stakeholders who will support drive the planned change initiative to enhance EE. This is congruent with the concept of 'a guiding coalition' that Kotter (2012) illustrates in his model for leading change. Not only do I need to identify members of the management team who directly

report to me, but also faculty members who are change drivers by nature and believe in the college's vision. Similarly, Kezar (2018) noted that "*political theories* suggest the importance of allies, coalition-building, agenda-setting and negotiation of interests" (p. 139).

Furthermore, understanding the various stakeholders' expected roles in the change, and gaining insights into how they see the PoP and the proposed solutions are critical elements to be considered by the change leader (Deszca et al., 2020). Based on the data from the EE survey results, I will need to engage ADs in conversations about the support they receive from me as a dean, and from the college. We will discuss EE as a concept and its relationship to 'recognition' and find ways to make the latter more explicit, genuine, and impactful. As the change leader, I will work with our finance department to make sure I allocate funds that might be necessary for change implementation. However, before any of the above steps happen, the question to ask is, how ready is WPC for the changes to come? The section below will define what organizational readiness is and will discuss readiness and capacity for change in school X.

Organizational Change Readiness

As school X moves towards the change process initiation, I will need to engage in assessing the readiness for change in the school. Arguably, change readiness is considered one of the most important factors that causes employees to support change initiatives. In fact, change initiatives fail mostly because of 2 reasons, resistance to change and ill-preparedness to change (Rafferty et al., 2013), and unsurprisingly these 2 constructs account for close to 92 % of the conceptual research work done on attitudes towards change (Bouckenooghe, 2010).

Assessing Change Readiness

An organization ability to change is arguably influenced by "previous experiences, managerial support, [and] the organization's openness to change" (Deszca et al., 2020, p.111). It

is also influenced by the emergence of information that questions the status quo (Harris &

Beckhard, 1987). So, what is change readiness? This change construct has been argued to

"comprise both psychological and structural factors, reflecting the extent to which the

organization and its members are inclined to accept, embrace and adopt a particular plan to

purposefully alter the status quo" (Holt et al., 2010, p. 51).

Deszca et al. (2020) readiness-for-change quantitative assessment tool was used to assess

readiness in school X, and out of a score range of -25 to +50, respectively the lowest readiness

predisposition and the highest readiness predisposition, school X scored 34 as can be seen in

Figure 3. According to this tool, any score below 10 is an indication that the organization is not

Figure 3

WPC Organization Readiness
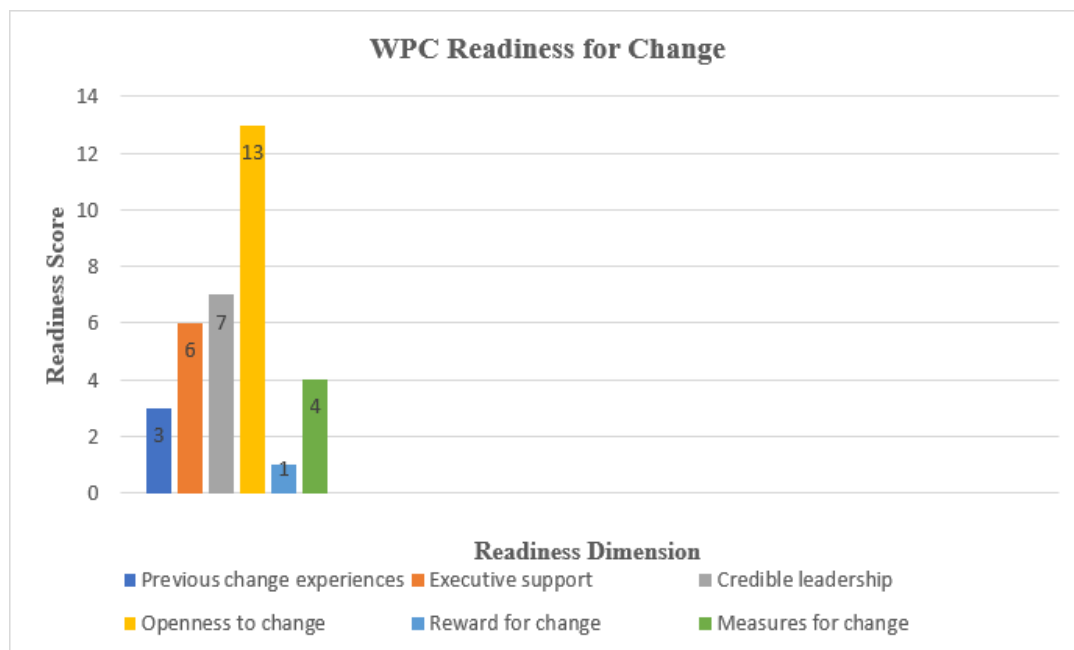
Note. Adapted from "Organizational Change: An Action-Oriented Tool Kit" by G. Deszca et al.,

pp. 113- 115. Copyright 2020 by Sage.

likely ready for change. A score of 34 is substantially above 10 and indicates that the school is well suited to embark on this change initiative. However, by answering the questions in the assessment tool, some improvements were identified that could better ready school X. Change readiness, according to Deszca et al. (2020), is contingent on the following six dimensions: (a) previous change experiences, (b) executive support, (c) credible leadership and change champions, (d) openness to change, (e) rewards for change, and (f) measures for change and accountability.

Previous Change Experiences

In my 14 years as an employee at WPC, as a faculty member, department head, associate dean, and now as dean of school X, I have witnessed multiple change initiatives put forth and for the most part, they were successfully implemented. For many years, all our courses were delivered the old fashion way, chalk-and-board style with all our examinations delivered on paper. 3 years ago, the college introduced a learning management system, which is now widely used across all programs. Generally, the mood of the organization is positive and optimistic, and that does not mean there is no occasional cynicism or negativity; in fact, a healthy dose of those could prove to be a driver for improvements and change readiness (Deszca et al., 2020). School X scored three points on this dimension out of a maximum possible of four.

Executive Support

As the dean of school X, I am leading this change initiative and consider myself its main driver. My success as a leader of the school would be incomplete without having a group of faculty and staff who are engaged in their work and with the students. Although I have many organizational levers at my disposal to use and see this change succeed, this change requires

many 'hands and hearts'. I also have the support of our VP academic and the president of the

college. The school scored six points out of a maximum of seven for this dimension.

Credible Leadership and Change Champions

Armenakis et al. (1993) posited that the effectiveness of any change strategy is dependant

on the change agent wielding it and that attributes such as credibility, trustworthiness, and

sincerity are ones that are gleaned from the change agent reputation. The most senior leaders, the

president and the VPs, at WPC have been direct in declaring that employee engagement is an

institutional priority and they have publicly shown that endorsement through town hall meetings,

intranet announcement, and local departmental events. I believe that employees trust the

executive leadership at the college, although with a healthy dose of caution. The latter is not due

to any historical malfeasance, but mainly due the size of the institute and its structural and

functionalist ethos, which projects the executive leadership, unfairly I believe, as 'out-of-touch'.

This section of the assessment tool also asked about the ability of middle managers to

"effectively link senior managers with the rest of the organization" (Deszca et al., p. 114). The

EE survey results indicated that 58% of middle managers, who are the ADs in this context, feel

they get the support they need to manage their teams, however only 17% of them feel they have

"time each day to provide feedback and coaching to [their] teams" (Western Polytechnic, 2019).

As such, it can be assumed that the role middle managers are supposed to play in linking senior

managers to their teams might not be fulfilled and needs to be addressed. School X scored seven

points out of a maximum of 11 points on this dimension.

Openness for Change

This dimension of the assessment tool is the most weighted of all six and has a maximum

possible score of 20. Understandably, an organization's openness for change would be a major

indicator of its readiness to change. While I indicated that union CAs could ossify relationships within WPC, on the other hand they afford employees the ability to speak their minds and voice their concerns on various issues. They also have within them, mechanisms for conflict resolutions, whereby issues are brought out in the open and resolved in accordance with previously agreed on rules and procedures. However, as much as the structure provided by the CAs helps in addressing multiple issues, sometimes they foster a climate of rigidity which leaves certain issues either unresolved or partially resolved, and their root causes never fully investigated.

WPC is a polytechnic college and is inherently all about innovation. Our close relationship with industry stakeholders keeps the faculty abreast of new and future trends. Faculty have access to a generous professional development fund which allows them to attend conferences, seminars, or take on full-fledged graduate degrees. We also have a separate research fund for faculty who would like to engage in applied research. Additionally, WPC has an International Mobility Fund for faculty who are interested in an exchange program with international colleges and universities. Support staff also have their separate professional development fund, although not as substantial as that of the teaching faculty.

Efforts to enhance employee engagement will be viewed by faculty and staff as an indication that WPC is genuinely trying to make the working conditions better for them. Although not everyone will be as enthusiastic about whatever changes this initiative might bring about, but the majority will be. School X scored 13 points out of a maximum of 20 for this dimension.

Rewards for Change

When asked if they often get positive feedback for the work that they do, 37% of employees responded positively and 31% responded negatively, and when they were asked if recognition was applied consistently throughout WPC, 15% responded positively, while 44% responded negatively (Western Polytechnic College, 2019a). This is a clear indication that the employees feel there is an issue with the way recognition is handled at WPC. WPC, however, has an annual employee excellence award, where employees are recognized for multiple endeavors, such as Research, Teaching Excellence, Going the Extra Mile, Unsung Hero, and Diversity and Inclusivity.

When employees take on new initiatives and they fail, they are not censured or reprimanded in any way; on the contrary, because WPC has a long-term vision, employees have opportunities to persevere and make renewed attempts, whether it is related to an educational technology, research project, new teaching delivery or exams evaluations. School X scored one point for a possible maximum of two for this dimension.

Measures for Change and Accountability

WPC takes employee engagement seriously and to measure it, it administers an annual college wide EE survey. The results are distributed to the senior leaders, discussed, and then disseminated to the college community through a live-streamed town-hall meeting. The director of the organizational development (DoOD) takes the lead role of this initiative and walks the college community through all the data and interprets what it means. Afterwards, each school dean meets with their management team and discusses the results of the survey. Subsequently, each AD meets with all their direct reports of faculty and staff, and together they examine the

data relative to their own areas, and they collectively come up with plans to remedy some of the identified issues. School X scored the full available four points for this dimension.

Competing External and Internal Forces

  Change is dependent on competing internal and external forces within a given system (Deszca et al., 2020; Lewin, 1947). The most notable internal driving forces for this change initiative is its alignment with the vision of WPC and the endorsement of the executive leadership team, including the president. Moreover, faculty and staff at WPC and in school X are yearning for change and want to be engaged and contribute to the institute as indicated by their EE survey responses. However, having three different unions at WPC could present some challenges in terms of buy-in into some of this change sub-initiatives, and that will have to be addressed as part of the readiness strategy.

  The EE survey results as previously mentioned, revealed a certain dissatisfaction with regards to the levels of recognition and feedback employees get from their academic managers. At the same time, the survey also revealed that the academic managers lack the time, the coaching and training necessary to support their teams. This could be a driving or restraining force and it is up to me to make sure it is the former.

  As far as the external driving forces, nothing more than the government mandate and its accompanying budget could be more important in terms of this change initiative. The mandate comes with many expectations, all of which require engaged employees for them to come to fruition. In addition, our relationship with industry and its support to our students and to WPC compels us to enact this change and enhance employee engagement. Engaged faculty and staff benefit the learning experience of the students and in turn the industry that end up hiring them.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 laid out a broad overview of the organizational context and the problem of low levels of employee engagement at WPC. In addition, the leadership position of the change leader was outlined as well as some guiding questions, both of which inform the leadership approaches for leading this change. Leadership, as suggested by Kezar (2018), is not panacea for change, but it is important to not "underestimate its role in responding to unplanned changes and crises, as well as creating intentional changes" (p. 133). As such, the proposed change will require appropriate leadership approaches to change. The next chapter will outline two leadership approaches, as well as potential solutions to the PoP supported by a critical organizational analysis and a framework for leading the change.

Chapter 2: Planning and Development

In the first chapter, I laid out the foundation for the OIP by discussing the details of the PoP and by describing the organizational context within which WPC operates, as well as its readiness for change. Chapter 2 will discuss what needs to be changed and what appropriate change strategies does the change leader have to implement. Adaptive leadership coupled with servant leadership are presented as two approaches for leading the proposed change. Deszca et al's. (2020) Change Path Model will be used as a framework for leading the change process. This chapter will also explore a critical organization analysis to diagnose and assess change, as well as offer some potential solutions to the problem of practice. Finally, this chapter will conclude with some ethical considerations germane to the PoP and to the organization in general.

Leadership Approaches to Change

Employee engagement (EE) is a complex construct; it is tied to individuals' perceptions, their unique ways of looking at the world, and their specific ways of knowing (Valentin, 2014). This complexity and difference in ways of knowing and sensemaking will require an appropriate leadership approach, one that will take these differences into considerations, and act on them in a way that benefits the employees and WPC. However, attempting to adopt one single leadership approach would be insufficient to make any meaningful enhancements to EE. In fact, a broader and expansive understanding and application of leadership is a sine qua non condition for successful change (Kezar, 2018).

As identified in Chapter 1, servant leadership (Gandolfi & Stone, 2019; Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010; Wu et al., 2021), as my natural character inclination, coupled with adaptive leadership (Heifetz, 1994; Heifetz et al., 2009) are two leadership constructs that represent two

viable options to enact the proposed change and enhance EE. Both leadership approaches are congruent with the interpretive paradigm I proposed in Chapter 1.

Servant Leadership

Given my positional authority in school X, it is easier and tempting to choose a leadership approach that is more transactional and centered exclusively on the greater good of the organization. Such leadership approach would compel followers to forgo their own interests for the good of the group (Bass, 1990; Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). In fact, transformational leadership could be such an approach, as it harnesses followers' motivation and enhances their commitments regardless of whether the outcomes are of benefit to them personally (Yukl, 1998). I am taking a different approach, one that focuses on the organization's success and has the followers' interest at its core. As explained earlier in Chapter 1, my leadership style is undergirded by moral principles, and I believe that "the only authority deserving one's allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, [their] clearly evident servant stature" (Greenleaf, 2007, p. 81).

My contact with faculty and staff is limited because they are not my direct reports. However, I need to be intentional in communicating my leadership approaches, beliefs, and values to the entire school. I need to model the way in acting on those beliefs and values (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). This modeling of the way, as contended by Wu et al. (2021), produces followers who would invariably want to emulate the displayed behaviors, values, and beliefs. Those beliefs are grounded in the principles of an ethical stance that values humility, honesty, service, trust, altruism, courage, empathy, and a commitment to truths (Bowman, 2005; Greenleaf, 1977; G.S. Sullivan, 2019).

My direct reports and the school at large will thrive in an environment where those values are lived and embraced, and their engagement and commitment to the organization would increase. Furthermore, SL enables the building of positive relationships between the leader and their followers, which subsequently increases employee job satisfaction and engagement (Barbuto & Hayden, 2011). In his description of SL, Yukl (2002) contended that, as a servant leader, I must attend to the people I lead, and that I need to "stand for what is good and right, even when it is not in the financial interest of the organization" (p. 404). While I agree that I must attend to my followers, I disagree with Yukl's second premise, in that it is not acceptable to put the organization's financial state at risk for any reason. In fact, although Greenleaf (1977) emphasized the social responsibility of servant leaders, not only did he see that as service to the followers but to the organization as well (Spears, 2010).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, SL is an approach that focuses on the needs of the followers' interests. SL is altruistic and noble (Lemoine et al., 2019), but to exclusively resort to it to lead and mange is sometimes unrealistic. This is the reason I chose to couple SL with adaptive leadership, as the latter "stresses the *activities of the leader* in relation to the *work of the followers* in the contexts in which they find themselves" (Northouse, 2019, p. 257).

Adaptive Leadership

Engaging employees will require multiple efforts on multiple fronts and relationship-building between different stakeholders. In a large and complex organization such as WPC with intricate human networks, a different kind of leadership is required—one that is not understood as an authority-wielding concept but rather an approach to leadership that interacts with followers and helps them surmount work challenges on their own (Heifetz et al., 2009). That

kind of leadership is referred to as adaptive, and Heifetz et al. were clear in making that distinction between authority and leadership.

Adaptive leadership is about "mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive" (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 14). This approach to leadership complements the SL as it also has a focus on 'others', with an emphasis on finding ways to challenge them and help them through their own struggles. Relying on the seminal work of Heifetz (1994), *Leadership without answers,* Northouse (2019) illustrates a model of AL comprised of the following components: Situational challenges, leader behaviors, and adaptive work, all of which will be used to drive this change initiative.

Situational Challenges

As an adaptive leader leading the change initiative, I will have to address situational challenges, and these are: (a) technical challenges, (b) technical and adaptive, and (c) adaptive challenges (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Technical Challenges. While complex and important, these challenges have known solutions that are in the toolkit of the leader (Heifetz et al., 2009). One of the dimensions measured by the EE survey asks about the quality of the work environment, technology, information required to do one's job, feedback, and recognition. These are all challenges that a leader at school X could solve because they are within the realm of their capabilities, and they have known solutions.

Technical and Adaptive Challenges. These challenges require the shared contribution of both the leader and the people involved (Heifetz et al., 2009). The EE survey results revealed that employees were not highly satisfied with the people resources available to do the work. While this is a valid concern, a leader might provide an alternate solution, but the employees

must adapt to whatever new situation that required reshuffling or reduction of personnel. EE from this perspective rests on both the leader and the led. The leader, according to Heifetz et al., (2009), must help individuals by engaging them with those tough questions about their behaviors and attitudes and determine what must be conserved and what must be discarded, so to come up with innovative and adaptable ways to resolve challenges.

Adaptive Challenges. These are "central to the process of adaptive leadership … and are problems that are not clear-cut or easy to identify" (Northouse, 2019, p. 262), and they are "often systemic … with no ready answers" (Heifetz, 1994, p. 124). What makes these problems difficult to tackle is the fact that they most often involve and require changes in people's beliefs and values. As the dean of school X, I expect my direct reports to adopt leadership styles that have been shown to improve EE, such as SL and AL, but my authority alone cannot legislate the kind of leaders I would like my direct reports to be.

Leader Behaviors

To become an adaptive leader, one must possess a series of behaviors. These behaviors will provide leaders the ability to help the people they lead to "confront difficult challenges and the inevitable changes that accompany them" (Northouse, 2019, p. 262). Discussed below are the six leader behavior principles required to transition school X to its envisioned state, as identified in Northouse (2019).

Get on the Balcony. This is a metaphor inviting me, as the change leader, to get "out of the fray" and to gain different perspectives amid challenging situations (Northouse, 2019, p. 262). As stated before, people get engaged in different ways and their value systems is influenced by their past experiences (Schein, 2017). As a leader of the school, 'getting on the balcony' untethers me from the environment I am embedded in daily and will afford me a

wholesome picture of what is truly happening with faculty, staff and the managers leading them (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

Identify the Adaptive Challenge. Approaching challenges with the wrong style of leadership is what Northouse (2019) characterized as "maladaptive", and encouraged leaders, in addition to getting on the balcony, to "differentiate between technical and adaptive challenges" (p 263). My PoP is an adaptive challenge because it has no one clear-cut solution, and it involves a multitude of subjective elements as it strikes at the core feelings and thoughts of faculty and staff.

Regulate Distress. Heifetz and Laurie (1997) argue that individuals often look for senior leaders to solve problems for them "but those expectations have to be unlearned [and] rather than fulfilling those expectations … leaders have to [instead] ask tough questions" (p. 125). In fact, Northouse (2019) argued that subjecting individuals to certain levels of stress is part of the change process, which is often beneficial. However, managing that stress so it is not overwhelming is part of being a successful adaptive leader.

Maintain Disciplined Attention. Because this PoP is an adaptive challenge, I will need to be relentless in pursuing tackling it and finding the right answers to it. This will require difficult conversations within our school to facilitate some learning and unlearning (Senge, 2006). Pursuing this change will also require my commitment to maintaining disciplined attention and confronting the tough work ahead (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Give the Work Back to the People. As we start tackling some of the issues that were indicated in the EE survey results, I, along with my management team, will have to engage faculty and staff in addressing them. For instance, saying that the resources to perform a certain task are not appropriate is not a solution. For example, faculty and staff will benefit from

meeting with their peers and managers and come up with some solutions and explain what would be appropriate to perform the tasks and how those tasks could be accomplished differently.

Protect Leadership Voices from Below. Adaptive leadership is about creating a safe space for those who might disagree with me and is about remaining "open to the ideas of people who might be at the fringe" (Northouse, 2019, p. 270). As we embark on this change initiative, I will need to encourage all employees to participate and offer their suggestions and critiques regardless of how they are expressed. In fact, Heifetz and Laurie (1997) argued that "buried inside a poorly packaged interjection may lie an important intuition that needs to be teased out and considered" (p. 129).

Adaptive Work

This work is primarily conducted by the followers, although it is the result of interactions between them and their leaders (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). As the leader of my school, I will need to create a "holding environment … in which [faculty, staff, and managers] talk to one another about the challenges facing them" (p. 127). As mentioned earlier, to enact this OIP's change initiative and resolve the PoP, I will be challenging the notion of leading by authority and I will be challenging the managers who report to me to do the same.

This section outlined the complexity of the concept of EE; a complexity which make one single leadership approach unsuitable to lead a change to enhance it. To tackle this issue, I decided to couple my inherent servant leadership approach with the adaptive one to give this change initiative greater chances of success. The next section will discuss a framework for leading this change.

Framework for Leading the Change Process

In Chapter 1, an interpretive paradigm was presented as the theoretical framework for this OIP, and the SL and AL were combined to offer a leadership perspective to guide and inform

this change initiative. However, to bring in more understanding to this change, it must be framed properly based on the organizational context and the nature of the change itself. This variety of content and context of change sorts the latter into different classifications of organizational responses. It would be helpful at this juncture of the OIP to define what change is, how it varies across contexts, and discuss the place of my PoP within those nuanced definitions.

Relevant Types of Organizational Change.

Deszca et al. (2020) contended that it is important to understand what to change, and that knowing the type of change is as crucial as knowing how to change. So, what is change? I will begin by asserting what change is not; it is not a one occurrence in time that gets looked after and forgotten about shortly thereafter. Kezar (2018) contended that change is not a "singular concept", but rather an evolving and "multifaceted concept" (p. ix). Jalagat (2016) further contended that change is a continuous process and one that often causes other changes to occur. In fact, as Kezar (2018) argued, it is a state of "organizational becoming" (p. ix) as she highlighted the linguistic change that certain scholars are advocating for. Often, change calls for the shedding of the familiar and the comfortable, and that fact generates a sense of loss in people, which sometimes causes resistance, especially in higher education (Buller, 2015). Enhancing employee engagement in school X is not an effort to get rid of anything, but rather an initiative to take school X to its "most appropriate stage of evolution: [greater EE]" (Buller, 2015, p. 31), and that may require challenging some of the deeply held assumptions.

Change has been classified as being a first-order or second-order (Jalagat, 2016; Kezar, 2018). The former is often linear and involves minor adjustments, while the latter addresses "underlying values, assumptions, structures, processes, and culture" (Kezar, 2018, p. 71). While enhancing EE might include some first order changes, I believe that it will mostly involve

second-order changes, or what Kezar (2018) referred to as "double-loop learning" (p. 70). This type of change will require an interpretive look into the culture of school X and consider faculty and staff's sensemaking; the latter being the shifting of mindsets, the altering of behaviours and values through learning and unlearning. Moreover, enhancing employee engagement, being a second-order change, will require greater time and processing (Kezar, 2018). As such, the ability to distinguish between first-order (linear and often incremental) and second-order changes (complex and transformational) is important for a leader because that distinction allows for the deployment of the appropriate change strategies.

Another typology of change considers the ways in which organizations find out that they must change. Some changes are imposed on organizations, some would eventually be imposed, and others are required due to internal tensions as opposed to external ones. These types of change are respectively referred to as reactive, proactive, and interactive changes (Buller, 2015).

WPC is explicit in its strategic plan about its commitment to EE and to its people and follows through by conducting annual surveys to gauge the levels of engagement of faculty and staff. My role as the dean of school X is to act on those results and devise plans and strategies to enhance EE. I view this change initiative as a combination of all three types of change—reactive, proactive, and interactive—but with varying degrees. I am being proactive as I understand that not having an engaged faculty and staff has a negative effect on many other fronts at the college, not the least of which is the quality of the education we offer. I also know that WPC faces external pressures from the government and from industry, and although not explicitly linked to EE, the expectations are very much contingent on an engaged faculty and staff. And last, this change is also interactive because of the internal dynamics of WPC such as, the changing demographic of students and employees, in addition to the union CA arrangements.

Relevant Framing Theories

In Chapter 1, I offered some answers to why change was necessary; however, answers to that question are incomplete if they are not paired with answers to the questions of 'what' to change and 'how' to change it. To accomplish this, enhancing employee engagement in school X must be framed within an appropriate organizational change model. Therefore, because WPC is a complex organization, and because this change initiative is of the second-order, it is critical that I choose a change model that is holistic, supports transformational change, and has a systems perspective embedded in it. Deszca et al. (2020) presented a series of change models to consider, namely Kotter's Stage Model of Organizational Change as well as Lewin's Stage Theory of Change. While both change models serve and continue to serve the business and corporate community, they are not devoid of certain deficiencies.

Kotter's model of change outlines eight steps that, arguably, must be followed in sequence and that overlapping them or implementing them out of order might compromise the success of the change (Appelbaum et al., 2012). Hence this model is too prescriptive and goes counter to what Burnes (1996) had rightly argued—that approaches to change need to stem from the specific cultures of organizations, and that failure to do so, and follow some prescriptive and robotic change model, does not set organizations up for success. Furthermore, Appelbaum et al. (2012) argued that some of the eight steps that Kotter prescribes are not relevant to certain contexts, and that blindly implementing them reduces chances of successful change.

On the other hand, Lewin's Stage Theory of Change, while it served many organizations for many years, has been criticized for being "too simplistic and mechanistic for a world where organizations change is a continuous and open-ended process" (Burnes, 2004, p. 240). Kanter et al. (1992) assessed Lewin's three stages model: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing as too

simple and remarked that "the quaintly linear and static conception—the organization as an ice cube, is so widely inappropriate that it is difficult to see why it has not only survived but prospered" (p. 10). The authors argument is that organizations are never frozen to be refrozen and that they are fluid and always evolving. Notwithstanding, Lewin's change model served and still serves many organizations well, despite Kanter and colleagues' scathing assessment. I do however believe that Lewin's model lacks a very important element of assessment and evaluation at the end of the change implementation, and therefore I chose to apply the Change Path Model suggested in Deszca et al. (2020). This model is less prescriptive than Kotter's Eight Stage Process and has more details and a provision for a summative evaluation as compared to Lewin's Stage Theory of Change. It also recognizes that organizations like WPC are "more surprising and messier than people often assume" (Deszca et al., 2020, p. 57).

The Change Path Model

To plan change, Deszca et al. (2020) suggested four stages of organizational change. In this section, I will describe the change model and discuss it in the context of WPC and my PoP.

Awakening. This stage begins with an identification of existing gaps through a critical organizational analysis, using internal and external data. As was described in the organizational readiness section, I will use the data available to develop a vision for change and communicate it through different channels (Deszca et al., 2020). Disseminating the information regarding the gap of the current state and where we want to be, would create the motivation for change through disconfirmation. This disconfirmation is "any information that shows someone in the organization that some of its goals are not being met" (Schein, 2017, p. 289).

Mobilization. The following stage of the model is Mobilization, and this will be part the implementation plan in Chapter 3. This stage will analyze the different gaps identified in the

Awakening stage and each of these gaps may require a different action plan for change (Deszca et al.,2020), or different gaps can be appropriately assembled in one plan. During this stage I will need to articulate the details of what needs to change and work with the appropriate stakeholders to create a compelling vision for change. It is also during this stage that I must assess the reaction that the change initiative is engendering, whether it is enthusiastic endorsement, cynical resistance, or simply ambivalence (Kezar, 2018). The need for change will be communicated and key stakeholders will be identified, and their strengths and personalities will be leveraged.

Acceleration. During this stage, I need to build a coalition of agents in support of the proposed change. Enhancing EE is not a something I am going to be able to do in isolation. As underscored by Kotter (2012), not even "a monarch…is ever able to develop the right vision, communicate it to large numbers of people, eliminate all key obstacles … and anchor new approaches deep in the organization's culture" (p. 53). I will need to leverage different departments within WPC and executive leaders' greater organizational pull to see the change implemented. As I manage the transition along the path of change, it is important to heed Kotter's advice and celebrate small wins as various milestones are met (Kotter, 2012). Most importantly, I will also have to keep reminding myself of one of the key organizational characteristics: *Equifinality*—a characteristic of open systems that suggests that "different system configurations can lead to the same end…[and] thus there is no universal or 'one best way' to organize" (Nadler & Tushman, 1980, p. 38).

Institutionalization. The final stage of the change path model brings the change initiative to conclusion and involves the assessment of change and the indicators used in that assessment (Deszca et al., 2020). For this change to be successful, new learning will have to occur within school X, and any "new learning will not stabilize until it is reinforced by actual

results" (Schein, 2017, p. 298). It is these results that this stage will monitor and track. The

institute has an annual EE survey that measures EE, but I need to create metrics to measure the

progress of the potential solutions to my PoP as well. This stage will be expanded on in the

monitoring and evaluation section in Chapter 3.

<div align="center">**Critical Organizational Analysis**</div>

This section presents a critical analysis of WPC using the elements of the change

readiness identified in Chapter 1, as well as Nadler and Tushman's (1980) Congruence Model.

This exercise will identify the gaps between the current and future desired state of school X at

the college. An adaptation of Nadler and Tushman's Congruence Model is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Nadler and Tushman's Congruence Model.
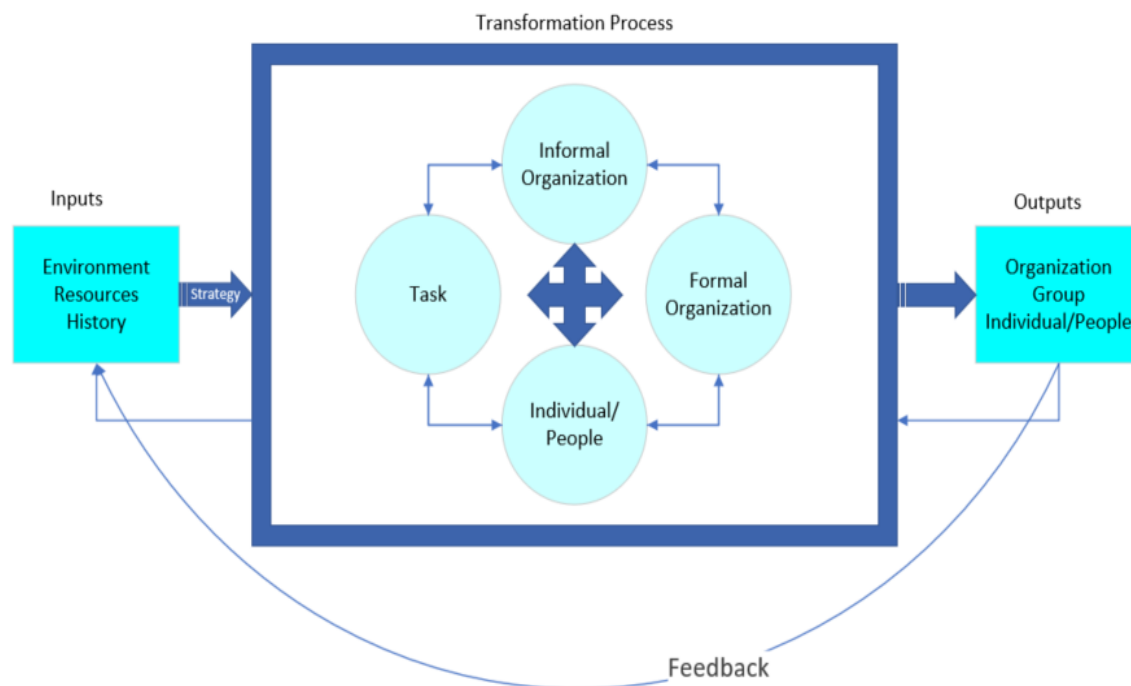
Note. This Congruence Model is Adapted from "A Model of Organizational Diagnosis" by D, A,

Nadler and M. Tushman 1980, Organization Dynamics, p. 47. Copyright American Management

Associations

This congruence model helps with determining the 'what' element of change before engaging in the 'how' (Deszca et al., 2020). It also highlights the importance of alignment between the organization strategy and its environment as well as it emphasises the fit between its internal components. I chose this model for two main reasons. First, it is based on the notion that organizations are complex, open and "sociotechnical systems" that "exist in an environmental context," and second, it is a "behaviour-oriented model" (Burke, 2009, p. 259). This behavior orientation characteristic opens an interpretive window into the implicit and unwritten rules of the informal organization and is in alignment with my chosen theoretical lens—interpretivism.

Arguably, this model outlined in Figure 4 will be beneficial to address my PoP as it examines the inter-relations between different elements of the organization, with people and their behaviours as one of its central elements

Inputs

Nadler and Tushman (1980) argue that every organization exists within the context of a larger environment that potentially influences how it performs. As a publicly funded PSI, WPC submits a yearly Institutional Accountability Report to the Ministry of Education. This report provides a summary of WPC's activities against the provincial mandate and budget letters (Western Polytechnic College, 2019c). The government mandate and budget both determine the resources available to WPC, and that includes faculty and staff, capital equipment, and information technology. Moreover, the reputation and history of WPC as a 50-year-old polytechnic college of choice is a resource as well, although a less tangible one. As a change leader, I need to make sure that enhancing EE and the change strategy are congruent and aligned with WPC's overall strategy. The leadership framework chosen for this OIP is in alignment with

this change as it will not only serve the people of school X, but also challenge and empower them to strive for a work environment where EE is the norm.

Outputs

Outputs, as defined by Nadler and Tushman (1980), are what organizations produce, how they perform, and how effective they are. Our core 'business' at WPC is to deliver an education to students from the province and elsewhere. The link between this core activity and employee engagement is the satisfaction of our students and industry with the quality of education and the contribution to the economy. Nadler and Tushman (1980) encourage us to think about outputs at different levels, and one of them is "the functioning of groups within the organization or the functioning of individual organization members" (p. 43). This validates the need for this change initiative because EE is intertwined with our core 'business' as an educational institution. Deszca et al. (2020) asserted that what gets measured gets improved, and we measure EE levels at WPC through an EE survey which serves as a feedback mechanism that enables adjustments at the input level (Figure 4). The data in the EE results will be expanded on as I propose potential solutions later in this chapter.

Transformation Process

Based on the organizational input, WPC rolls out a strategy, and the success of that strategy is contingent on the alignment between the informal organization, formal organization, work of the organization, and the people (Deszca et al., 2020). In this section, I will analyse each of these elements, identify gaps and propose some solutions.

Task/ Work of the Organization

This element of Nadler and Tushman's Model is highly impacted by the input of external factors and is determined by how the organization responds to these inputs through its strategy. I

mentioned earlier that education is our core activity at WPC, so it is undisputedly the 'work of the organization'. However, the latter is not only comprised of the act of teaching and instructing, but also the "knowledge or skills demanded by the work, the kind of rewards provided by the work … [and] the specific constraints inherent in the work" (Nadler & Tushman, 1980, p. 44). When asked if recognition is consistently applied throughout WPC, only 15% responded positively and 44% responded negatively, and when asked if the technology provided by WPC allows them to be as productive as possible, 36% responded positively and 26% responded negatively. Despite WPC's vision and strategic commitment, the results do indicate a misalignment that needs to be addressed.

Individual/ People

Although, it is WPC that receives the government mandate letter, it is the employees who operationalize it. This element of the congruence model targets "the individuals who perform the organizational task… and [their] different needs or preferences … [and] the perceptions or expectancies they develop" (Nadler & Tushman, 1980, p.44). As stated previously, the EE levels at WPC are lower than those of other Canadian PSIs and public sector organizations. This low level of engagement could have had an impact on students' outcomes, as the latter have been found to have a correlation with how committed instructors are to their students (B. Sullivan et al., 2015). Arguably, the less engaged faculty members are, the less likely they would be willing to go 'above and beyond' their prescriptive role as described in the collective agreements.

WPC is a complex and open system and single events cannot be analysed in isolation from their environment. Faculty at WPC have a higher teaching load in comparison to the traditional universities' allocation of time between research, teaching and community service. In fact, one faculty group at WPC has one of the highest student contact-time in the country, which

is about 25 hours per week, which leaves little time to participate in activities that would potentially enhance their engagement. This is exacerbated by the fact that another faculty group belonging to a different union has 15 hours of student contact time per week. In fact, Nadler and Tushman (1980) argued that one of "the most critical aspects to consider include … the [employees'] needs or preferences [and] the perceptions or expectancies that they develop" (p. 44). Although this situation has historical reasons that stem from the merger of two PSIs with different collective agreements (CA), there might be an opportunity for me as a senior leader to work with our Labor Relations (LR) and explore ways to address this difference in workload, or at least start a conversation about it.

When asked whether their direct manager "inspires [them] to do [their] best work every day" (Western Polytechnic College, 2019a), only 36% of employees responded positively and 29% responded negatively. The employees' opinion on their immediate manager effectiveness showed similar results with regards to their feeling about recognition, feedback, mentoring and performance management. It is recognized that maintaining employee engagement in the public sector is a "tough challenge … in part, due to pay freezes, and shrinking budgets" (Jin & McDonald, 2017, p. 881), however, it is also recognized that the immediate manager plays a key role in keeping employees committed and engaged. The future vision for school X is to have faculty and staff who feel supported by their managers on different levels, whether it is identifying opportunities for professional development, providing regular feedback, recognizing their efforts, or managing performance.

Formal Organization

Deszca et al. (2020) described formal systems within an organization as "the mechanisms that help the organization accomplish its work and direct the efforts of its employees" (p. 74).

One of the most important mechanisms at WPC is the union CAs. These binding documents specify the roles, duties and rights of faculty and staff, such as the maximum weekly workload, students' feedback surveys, lunch breaks, arbitration procedures…etc. The rigidity of these agreements and the relationship between unions and WPC often interferes with the possibility to create engagement opportunities. An envisioned future state includes a dialogue with WPC's LR senior executives and unions leaders to explore opportunities to revisit the structure and the content of the CAs. This will likely require support from our president and ultimately from the government as this will certainly be an item for the next rounds of CAs bargaining.

One of the concerns that was identified in the change readiness assessment is the managers ability to train and coach their direct reports. The change initiative will have to address this concern as action plans are crafted. Arguably, managers' support will likely be perceived as support by the organization, which will in turn motivate faculty and staff to reciprocate by exhibiting greater engagement (Jin & McDonald, 2017). This leads to the next important formal system at WPC—its Human Resources (HR) division, and Deszca et al. (2020) recommend that change leaders, as they embark on change initiatives, leverage formal organizational units such as HR. WPC's HR, with its newly hired director of organizational development (DoOD) will be a resource to leverage as required.

Informal Organization

This is comprised of informal organization arrangements, which are "the informal way things get done, and the norms accepted by organizations members" (Deszca et al., 2020, p. 74). WPC rolls out its strategy and expects its employees to act on its embedded goals and initiatives and to bring them to fruition. Like any organization's strategy, WPC's does not always unfold in a linear fashion as planned because the environment changes sometimes, which calls for a shift

in the strategic direction. With its prescriptive roles and rules, WPC often cannot efficiently

respond to these shifts in time to capitalize on new opportunities. When asked if WPC is quick to

invest in new ideas that will drive future success, only 20% employees responded positively and

33% responded negatively. In contrast, despite the low levels of EE, when asked if they have the

information they need to do their job well, 56% of employees responded positively and only 13%

responded negatively; and this leads me to believe that informal structures and arrangements are

integral to 'getting the job done'. Based on this finding, it can be concluded that there is a fit

between the task of the organization and its informal arrangement. While it a positive thing, as a

leader of the school, I plan "to make explicit [these] implicit norms and behaviours of individuals

and groups" (Deszca et al., 2020, p. 75) and work with the managers to formalize those useful

ones and make sure that any dysfunctional ones are discarded and avoided.

Possible Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice

As discussed in Chapter 1, the PoP that this OIP is attempting to solve is the low levels of

employee engagement in school X at WPC. Building on the envisioned state of school X, its

readiness, and the conducted critical organizational analysis, I will put forward three potential

solutions for this PoP. I will outline the benefits of each one, the limitations, and the required

resources for their implementation. I will then discuss the most realistic and attainable solution in

the context of WPC. Then, a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycle will be presented as a guide for

the process of implementation and monitoring of the change initiative (Moen, 2009).

Solution 1: Maintain the Status Quo

There is an argument that could be made that an overall EE levels of 41% is not as dire as

it might seem. After all, students still enroll in programs at WPC, graduate and obtain

employment. Additionally, our "job applications pressure" for job openings is always high and

people still want to join our college. In fact, when asked if they often think about quitting WPC, 46% said that they rarely do, and 59% of employees said they would not hesitate to recommend WPC as an employer (Western Polytechnic College, 2019a). The question that ensues is why change anything?

By not engaging in any change initiatives to address the PoP, school X and its managers will continue to do what they have been doing for the last few years, and haphazardly address EE in isolation. Managers will continue enacting sporadic initiatives when it is convenient, less costly, and with minimal interference with their most pressing issues. In other words, EE becomes a secondary priority and almost an afterthought. Interestingly, there are organizational clusters comprised of people who are interested in EE and engage with each other at a micro-level, and with time, their initiatives might have a broader effect on the school and WPC's levels of engagement. Additionally, maintaining the status quo means that I will not have to invest in the development of my direct reports, especially the associate deans, and the school's budget will not have to incur the related cost. Moreover, the managers themselves will not have to undergo the challenging task of engaging with the faculty and staff and explore ways of changing their minds about EE and why it is important for them, the school, and for their students.

However, maintaining the status quo will be going against what we know from the literature about the positive effects of EE on organizations (Saks, 2006). Maintaining the status quo will rob us from knowing what we could truly be, and the heights we could reach as an institution of higher learning. In fact, not doing anything assumes that the data presented at the beginning of this section are acceptable and ignores the consequences of having some employees that often think about leaving the college or would not recommend WPC as an employer. What image would they be projecting to their students, industry, and to the entire organizational

community? It is easy to assume that maintaining the status quo saves money and that it has no, or little financial impact on the WPC. While I do not have a specific dollar figure for what a disengaged employee costs WPC, there are clear negative correlations between employee disengagement and companies' bottom line in the form of absenteeism, stress leaves, and the lack of involvement in organizational initiatives (Schaufenbuel, 2013).

As mentioned before, we are in the *business* of education, and our mandate is to deliver a quality one to our students. Faculty play the most important role in attaining that goal, because not only do they provide instruction to students, but must "know how students learn, understand barriers to [their] learning, [and] develop classroom techniques that promote learning" (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005, p. 154). Not having engaged faculty members at WPC, will certainly lower the quality of our program offerings and negatively impact the college's reputation.

Solution 2: Leadership Development Framework (LDF) for Academic Managers

As explained earlier in this OIP, it is the associate deans (ADs) who are tasked to enact strategies to enhance the engagement of their faculty and staff. The EE survey results revealed that only 25% of ADs indicated that they have the training, development, and coaching they need to provide advice to their teams. In addition, only 25% of them indicated that they get the support they need to help people on their teams to improve their performance. Lastly, only 17% of ADs indicated they have enough time each day to provide feedback and coaching to their team members (Western Polytechnic College, 2019a). Incidentally, these data correlate with what faculty and staff reported through the EE survey, in that only 39% of them reported that their AD inspires them to do their best work, 36% indicated that their AD provides valuable feedback throughout the year, and only 31% thought that their AD makes sure that team's successes are celebrated (Western Polytechnic College, 2019a). This latter piece of data can be understood as

faculty not feeling that their contributions matter, and according to Shuck and Rose (2013), employees who feel that way "understandably withdraw their engagement" (p. 346). In fact, in their study on the relation between leadership and EE, Wallace and Trinca (2009) asked "what employee survey feedback tell[s] [us] about the state of appreciation in the workforce", and they convincingly answered, "if you are like most organizations, it's insufficient" (p. 11).

Taking into consideration the role of the ADs, their task to administer multiple programs with thousands of students, maintain industry relationships, and deal with union requests and issues, one would not be surprised by the data mentioned above. In their study on the relationship between leadership behaviors of university middle managers and faculty engagement, Ong and Yaqiong (2018) found that the latter is a direct consequence of the former. Similarly, Wallace and Trinka (2009) argued that when it comes to the drivers of EE, "the leadership of the immediate manager is more important that any other organizational variable" (p. 10). Based on these assertions, I am proposing, as a solution to my PoP, the creation of a Leadership Development Framework (LDF) in collaboration with our HR organizational development department. The goal of this framework is to identify leadership training that will enhance the ADs' leadership skills and identify specific leadership competencies that will assist them in connecting with their direct reports, supporting them, coaching them, and recognizing their contributions. The ADs in my team are a group of individuals who are inherently supportive of EE, but they might "become frustrated if they don't understand what they are being asked to do, or if they don't have the skills to perform new tasks" (Deszca et al., 2020, p. 345). This LDF will provide that training support and enhance the ADs' leadership capacity.

EE as argued at the beginning of this OIP is a complex and subjective construct, and managers need to possess the necessary skills to interpretively decipher what motivates their

teams (Sambrook et al., 2014). While a certain level of EE can be achieved by financial rewards, material benefits lose their potency to achieve results beyond a certain level. Hence the need for organizations to harness their employees' intellectual and emotional capabilities and come up with strategies to satisfy their yearning for fulfillment, recognition, and meaning (Choudhury & Mohanty, 2019). The Leadership Development Framework (LDF) that I am proposing will focus on competencies such as coaching, mentoring, communication, recognition, continuous learning, and feedback-giving. The LDF will be developed with the overarching theme of "service to others" in the pursuit of empowering people and achieving organizational goals. This solution embodies the tenets of the interpretive paradigm, in that it will develop the ADs so they are able to look beyond the visible, be more curious, and to "seek to grasp and elucidate the meaning, structure, and essence of [employees'] lived experience" (Patton, 2015, p. 573).

As the dean of the school, I have an annual budget that covers employees' annual compensations and operational expenses. I will be working with our HR department and especially with the director of organizational development (DoOD), to identify the already available training courses and explore training we might need an external consultant for. The initial cost of a two-day coaching workshop for four ADs will be approximately $10,000. However, it would be naïve to think that a two-day coaching training course will be panacea for all our EE issues. The LDF will be a compilation of different courses targeting specific skills, and coaching will be just one of its foundational courses. Although some of the training courses will be developed and delivered in-house, the cost will be cross charged to my school's budget, and I estimate that it will be around $10,000. In summary, the cost of this solution, including the release time for ADs, will be between $35,000 and $40,000.

This leadership development framework will require my personal involvement and will necessitate dedication of time and energy in making sure that the ADs buy into this solution. As the dean of the school, rolling out this solution and mandating that the managers participate is not a challenge. However, my leadership approach and style are not nested in the construct of authoritarian leadership. Therefore, I will approach this solution from a place of service while resorting to my adaptive and servant leadership to resolve any hesitancy or resistance from the ADs (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Solution 3: An Employee Engagement Committee (EEC)

An alternative to both enacting a leadership development framework and maintaining the status quo is to form a school wide EE committee composed of faculty and staff. Most of EE research studies focused on what organizations can do to enhance it, such as increasing recognition, training managers so they are empowering and supportive (D. MacLeod & Clarke, 2009; Robinson et al., 2004); instead, Crabb (2011) explored an alternate way and asked what can be done at the individual employee level "in order to help [them] achieve the right mindset and attitude for engagement" (p. 28). In other words, Crabb (2011) enquired about what employees' intrinsic elements, when combined with what organizations are doing, will "result in peak performance that benefits both the [faculty and staff] and [WPC]" (p. 28).

This solution requires identification of individuals who are interested in EE and ways to improve it. Once these individuals are identified, their work needs to be formalized, so it is visible and supported by the school. I will meet with the informal leaders of these groups and offer to be a sponsor of their activities and support their release from their duties and fund the costs for substitutes if required. I will also work with their informal leaders to identify required training for them and for others. Additionally, I will offer to support their meetings with catering

and other needed resources such as a facilitator from HR if needed. I will also schedule regular meetings with the EE committee to gather feedback and suggestions for me and for the managers.

The advantage of having this EE committee comprised solely of faculty and staff without interference from managers, is to remove any perceived managerial oversight, and the committee will have a space in which employees can voice their opinions without fear of any perceived retribution. This committee, if supported and nurtured, could be a crucible of a wealth of EE ideas and suggestions that can be disseminated laterally and vertically, i.e., the knowledge generated will be shared with other faculty and staff as well as managers. Supporting this EE committee will require some financial resources to cover faculty and staff release time as well as some training, renting of spaces for meetings, and catering for those events. I anticipate this solution to cost about $15,000 per year.

Recommended Solution

The three proposed solutions all have advantages and drawbacks; however, those vary from one to the other. Table 1 summarizes the solutions, their required resources, and limitations. Maintaining the status quo could be appealing because, a priori, it seems less costly and allows managers to keep focusing on the "important work" of administering their academic portfolios without any added layer of responsibility. However, the price we might pay in school X and at WPC by neglecting to address the low levels of EE could be much higher, as we could be sacrificing employee retention, higher quality education, and allow for cynicism to grow (Kezar, 2018; Loehr et al., 2005).

The other solution presented is the formation of an EE committee comprised of only faculty and staff and have it informally led so it is organic and reflective of the of the views of

Table 1

Possible Solutions to the PoP in School X at WPC

Solution	Required Additional Resources	Identified Limitation
Status Quo	No direct cost to maintain the status quo, however, the cost of inaction would be revealed in the future. The limitations of this solutions are indicative that sooner or later, there will be a cost to the college. This cost could be a lower EE, lower quality of education, and subsequently lower student enrolment numbers.	EE becomes an afterthought, haphazardly addresses Reliance on unorganized 'pockets' of individuals to attain an organizational goal ADs not challenged to change and make a positive impact Risk of faculty attrition Risk of negatively impacting the quality of education Risk of tarnished reputation of WPC
Leadership Development Framework (Recommended)	Coaching training for ADs: $10,000 (2 days for 4 ADs) Internal training workshops: between $25,000 and $35,000 annually for all the ADs	Success is contingent of ADs willingness to change This solution only addresses the leadership styles of ADs. EE has many other antecedents.
Employee Engagement Committee	$15,000 to cover release time, booking of meeting spaces, catering, and some training if needed.	Reliance on faculty and staff to solve my PoP Solution might get political if the unions do not buy-in

employees. This solution, while worthy, depends on employees' willingness to participate and

dedicate time that some faculty might want to otherwise use for teaching and research. As a

result, I would be dependant on the faculty and staff's availability and goodwill to see this

solution solve my PoP. Furthermore, involving faculty and staff in solving an organizational

issue might be seen through a different lens by the unions they belong to. Therefore, union buy-in might be necessary for this solution to work, and that is not something unattainable, but it is uncertain at this moment. Therefore, based on the preceding argument, the solution I recommend for solving my PoP is the launch of a Leadership Development Framework (LDF).

This framework will be directed by me in collaboration with our DoOD and the ADs. The LDF will enable the ADs to support faculty and staff with "focusing their strengths, managing [their]emotions and aligning [their] purpose" (Crabb, 2011, p. 31), all of which will provide employees with the intrinsic ingredients of engagement. Although the financial cost of this solution is greater than that of solution 1 and 3, its benefit will outweigh the costs and will support the vision and mission of the college.

As with any change initiative, implementing the LDF will be faced with challenges in terms of aligning its purpose with WPC's vision, employees' beliefs, values, and the college's overall culture. In the next section, I will be presenting a testing model for my recommended solution.

Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA)

The PDSA Cycle is a model for improvement and one that compels change agents to ask themselves about what they are trying to accomplish, how they will know that their change is in fact an improvement, and finally what further changes could be introduced to solidify the improvements (Moen, 2009). The PDSA Cycle, as Reed and Card (2015) posit, is a process that includes creating a plan, testing it, learning from the testing, and generating new insights and knowledge for the next cycle; these steps are respectively, Plan, Do, Study, and Act.

PDSA (Plan)

At this stage of the cycle, I will present my recommended solution to my direct reports and give them some time to reflect on it. I will also meet with WPC's director of organizational development and present the recommended solution, the rationale behind it, and discuss the required resources for successful implementation. Finally, I will present the change initiative to my manager, the VP Academic, to garner his support. Although I have complete autonomy in how to administer the school and its budget, obtaining the support and validation from my manager is important in seeing this change initiative succeed (Deszca et al., 2020).

PDSA (Do)

This stage of the cycle is when the plan is carried out, feedback is received from the stakeholders identified above, clarifications about the recommended solution are made, and any issues that are raised are captured, discussed, and analyzed (Moen & Norman, 2009). These issues could be tied to resources, human or material, as well as procedural and cultural.

PDSA (Study)

The brainstorming and discussions that occur in the previous phases of the cycle are gathered and analyzed during the study phase for the purpose of making changes to the original assumptions. In fact, the goal of this stage and the PDSA Cycle is to generate new knowledge and to allow project plans to adapt as new learning occurs (Moen, 2009).

PDSA (Act)

Using the learning that takes place during the study phase, the identified changes and modifications are introduced (Moen & Norman, 2009). It is during this phase that we decide to adopt the change based on the feedback and learning that occurred in the previous phases or go through the PDSA Cycle again.

As we embark on implementing the recommended solution of creating the Leadership Development Framework, ethical aspects of this change must be considered and weighed. In the following section I will identify, analyze, and address some of those ethical considerations.

Leadership Ethics and Organizational Change

Leadership is all about managing change, and no change is value free (Barker, 2001; C. MacLeod & By, 2009). Change is also fraught with ethical dilemmas and uncovers competing interests as Kezar (2018) argued. The proposed Leadership Development Framework (LDF) will require the ADs to reconsider the ways they manage, supervise and lead; and that might cause them some levels of anxiety. This anxiety will be caused by the fact that they will have to engage in a new learning process. Schein (2017) posited that this anxiety may potentially generate "fear of loss of power or position, fear of temporary incompetence … [or] fear of loss of personal identity" (p. 291). These are all legitimate feelings and are part of going through the process of change. It is during this time that I will need to intervene as a servant and adaptive leader to help the ADs to regulate their distress by providing an environment where they can feel safe, served, and part of a greater purpose and goal (Heifetz & Linsky, 2017).

As the dean of school X, with organizational authority and access to executive leaders and resources, I acutely feel the pressure to continuously evaluate my actions against my personal code of ethics, so they are seen and felt as fair, just, and caring. My recommended solution has the desired goal of inviting the ADs to embrace new leadership behaviors and ultimately cognitively redefine the way they lead. However, instead of using my positional authority to "impose and coerce; what is required is an approach to change that promotes ethical behavior and allows [the ADs] to change of their own free will" (Burnes, 2009, p. 361). I will be using servant leadership attributes such as persuasion to empathically convince the ADs of the

necessity of this change. Persuasion, according to Northouse (2019), facilitates change without coercion, and instead engages in gentle, respectful, and non-judgemental debate. I will also be using adaptive leadership to encourage the ADs to challenge themselves and question their own beliefs and assumption about leading (Heifetz et al., 2009).

As I embark on this change initiative, I will make sure to answer a key question posed by Kezar (2018), and that is "whose interests are served by [my] change and who loses out?" (p. 28). As the dean of the school, I view my leadership from an ethical, moral, and responsible lens in the service of faculty, staff, and students and my priority will be that no one "loses out". With this aspiration to conduct myself morally and ethically, I think that at this point a definition of what ethical leadership is, would be appropriate.

Brown et al. (2005) defined ethical leadership as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" (p. 120). The first part of this definition, as Brown and Trevino (2006) remarked, refers to a "moral person" and the second part to a "moral manager" (p. 119). By being a moral person as I pursue the change initiative, I will exercise honesty, trustworthiness, and principled decision-making with mainly selfless motivation, and that is arguably consonant with several ethical leadership core tenets. Being a moral manager means that I will be proactive to influence the associate deans by highlighting our moral obligation to create a working environment that is engaging and conducive to the wellbeing of faculty and staff. As we go through the four steps of the Change Path Model, I will make sure that all the stakeholders are reached out to, engaged, and empowered to advance the change.

Kezar (2018) encouraged higher education leaders and change agents to develop what she called "ethical fitness" (p. 25), to help create an ethical approach to change at the outset. Ethical fitness is a metaphor Kezar (2018) used to drive the point that just as "one cannot run a marathon without working out every day … one is unlikely to make ethical decisions … when they do not routinely think about the ethics of decision-making" (p. 26). In addition to developing a personal 'ethical fitness', Kezar (2018) recommends that college leaders follow a change process for an ethical approach to change. Some of the steps in that process are expanded up on below.

Stakeholder Participation and Input

Group decision-making and democratic participatory planning are core tenets of the Change Path Model. To highlight the role of stakeholders' participation in a change process, Burnes (2009) asserted that "successful change could be achieved only through a democratic-participative learning process" (p. 375). Deszca et al. (2020) advocated for an open and ethical change process that allows participants to ask questions and challenge their leaders' initial assessments.

Kezar (2018) further challenges academic leaders and invited them to embrace the cynicism in certain stakeholders as, she argued, they could be the "conscience of the organization" (p. 33). I will make sure that the ADs are made aware of the intention of the change, and I will give them time and space to express their views without fear of any repercussion. I will ask our DoOD to organize and facilitate a meeting where the PoP is presented to the ADs for their feedback and suggestions. Making sure that ADs are involved in the process and listened to, will demonstrate the integrity of the change process.

Full Disclosure of Direction and Vision

Often, change agents neglect to disclose the reasons behind change initiatives and employees are left guessing why change is necessary and how they will be impacted. This point is validated by By et al. (2012) as they found that "there is often a lack of clarity regarding the ethical values underpinning approaches to change and its management" (p. 4). WPC and its executive leadership team are committed to EE and the strategic plan is explicit in stating its importance to the college and to the students. However, it is important that ADs are not seeing my planned change initiative as mere pandering to "yet another institutional goal" that has no concrete benefit in the long run.

Since this change is in a higher education setting, the change plan should ultimately benefit the students and the ADs need to see that link between the two. In fact, Kezar (2018) argues, that "students' interests should be the ultimate interest served through any change initiative because they are the … main focus of educational institutions" (p. 29). As such, the LDF will not be launched until adequate socialization and dissemination of the rationale have been conducted with all the appropriate stakeholders.

Organizational Justice

As mentioned previously, ethics is essentially concerned with one's impact on others (Zhu et al., 2004), and justice is the most important impact on people. Zhu et al. delineated 3 types of organizational justice: (a) procedural, (b) distributive, and (c) interactional. Procedural justice addresses the fair, and consistent organizational processes. Distributive justice addresses the fairness of a manager's decision based on outcomes, and interactional justice addresses the quality of the personal treatment as an employee experiences organizational processes and

procedures. Generally, employees are more likely to accept change initiatives when they are treated justly and fairly, even if they do not welcome the change (Kezar, 2018).

Because of the authority that comes with my role, the structure of WPC being a functionalist environment that relies essentially on transactions, and the often invisible, yet potent effects of neo-liberalism on higher education (Giroux, 2002); faculty and staff might feel that any organizational change is a game of politics and power (Burnes, 2009). As a leader who has been trying to challenge the merits of change by mere compliance, and one who wants to change the leadership paradigm in the workplace, I will make sure to adhere to the ethics of justice, critique, and care (Branson, 2010). In other words, pay attention to the principles of fairness, equality, and individual freedom, as well as be aware of the power play involved as I engage in the change process.

Unlike other industries such engineering or medicine, there is no ethical standard for my profession as an educational leader (Poliner Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2013). The authors proposed a new ethics paradigm for educational leaders and suggested the addition of an ethics of the profession. The latter calls on the educational leaders to "examine their own professional codes of ethics in light of individual personal codes of ethics … and calls on them to take into account the wishes of the community" (p. 20).

Ethics is undoubtedly about how my actions will impact others as I lead the change. In fact, Ciulla (2014) reminds us that ethics is at the heart of leadership, and that it is foundational to any conversation about what it means to be a leader. I chose the interpretive lens to see my PoP through because it is inherently ethical. It recognizes that people are emotional entities as opposed to economic and rational ones (Burnes, 2009), and that their needs are far more complex than what a positivist one-dimensional paradigm might portray them to be.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 identified two leadership approaches—servant and adaptive, as part of a framework to support the implementation of this OIP. Due to the complexity of my organization, the Change Path Model was chosen to frame and assist in leading the change process in school X. A critical organizational analysis using Nadler and Tushman's (1980) Congruence Model was then introduced. Based on the readiness for change assessment and the outcome of the congruence model analysis, three potential solutions to address my PoP were presented. To test and assess the change process as it occurs, the PDSA Cycle was then selected. This chapter concluded by emphasizing the importance of ethics and ethical leadership in the change process. Chapter 3 will address the implementation, evaluation, and communication of the change initiative.

Chapter 3: Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication

The two preceding chapters demonstrated that enhancing employee engagement in school X at Western Polytechnic College will require leadership approaches that are informed by the selected interpretivist theoretical framework, the critical organizational analysis, the chosen change framework, and the available resources. The selected solution to my PoP is a Leadership Development Framework (LDF) for the associate deans leading faculty and staff. Chapter 3 will outline the change implementation plan, a change process monitoring and evaluation, and a plan to effectively communicate the strategy for this organizational change. This chapter will conclude by outlining next steps and future considerations.

Change Implementation Plan

Some research suggests that approximately 70% of change initiatives end up failing (Kang, 2015; Smith, 2002). However, Hughes (2011) argued that this rate of failure which came to be an accepted narrative is questionable. Hughes found that there were not enough reliable data to support such a claim, and that measuring change outcomes is too ambiguous, and context-dependant. This debate does not obfuscate the fact that failure to carefully plan any change initiative invariably leads to undesirable outcomes (Reed & Card, 2015). This implementation plan will outline the strategies necessary to enact my change initiative as well as assign responsibilities to the various stakeholders. Additionally, this plan identifies potential challenges and how adaptive and servant leadership will enable the change leader to navigate the organizational transition.

Goals, Priorities and Strategic Alignment of the Planned Change

At this juncture of the OIP, it is beneficial to reiterate the answer to this important question: What am I trying to solve and accomplish? In Chapter 1 and 2, I offered details about

the low levels of employee engagement (EE) at Western Polytechnic College, and I identified it as a problem to solve within school X. By examining the results of the EE survey and by conducting an organizational analysis, I envision a future state where faculty and staff are more engaged than they currently are.

The EE survey results revealed that, (a) employees do not feel recognized and empowered enough by their managers, and (b) managers themselves do not feel they have the skills to coach, mentor and support their direct reports. Hence, the goal of this implementation plan involves the launch of a Leadership Development Framework (LDF) designed to develop managers' leadership skills in a way that engages employees within school X. Intentional and enthusiastic participation from the managers will be important to the success of this change initiative, which makes inspiring them to embrace this change my priority. This LDF will not only help to develop various leadership skills but will allow for a common language and mindset about leadership and EE—a language that promotes a collective understanding of the issue at hand, unify the team members, and sets us all up for success.

At WPC, EE is an organizational goal, and enhancing it within school X will be a contribution to the greater organizational vision. The clear connection between the success of the change initiative and the organizational strategic goal will invariably lead to buy-in from the associate deans (ADs) and to their enthusiastic participation. The proposed solution and its implementation contribute directly to WPC's vision: Empowering and Inspiring people. Edifying the Province. Pursuing Innovation (Western Polytechnic College, 2019b). The change initiative is also closely linked to three key strategic commitments: (a) Invest in faculty and staff development, (b) Foster collaboration inside and outside of the college, and (c) Empower employees and recognize their contribution.
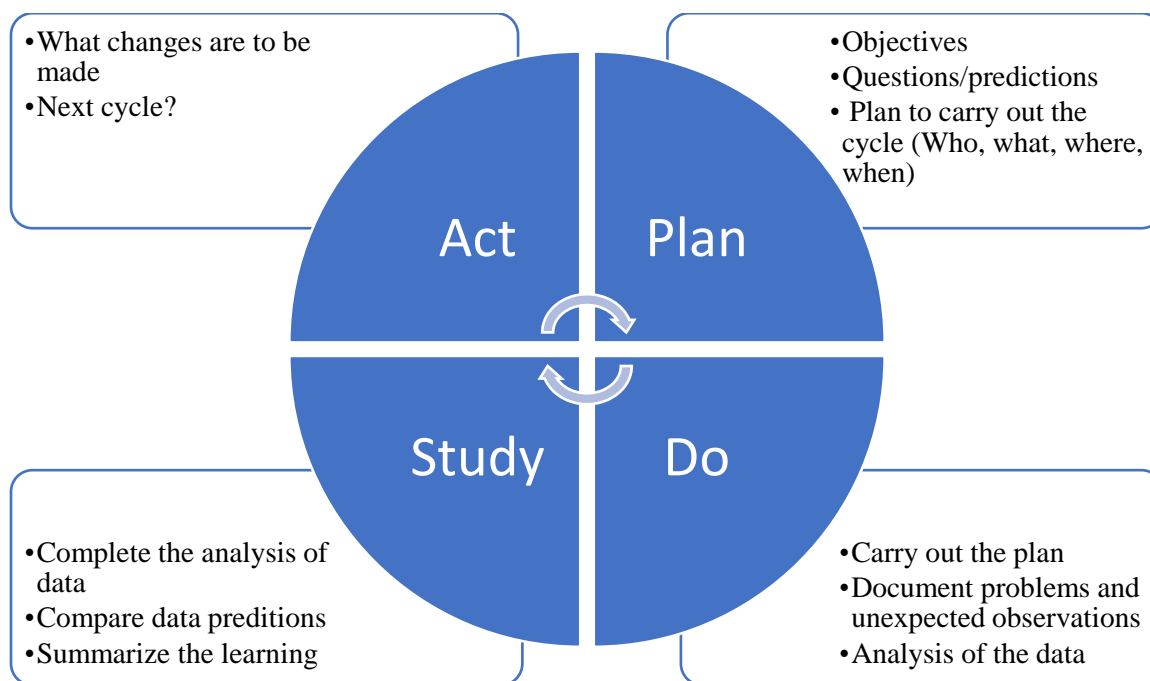
These organizational strategic commitments give the proposed solution and to this OIP validity and relevance. As a change leader, I will also make sure that all stakeholders are aware that our proposed solution to enhance EE within school X may be duplicated in the other 5 schools of WPC, and possibly across the province and the country, making us trailblazers in solving this organizational issue. Additionally, engaged faculty were found to be more involved with their students, offer them timely positive feedback, and help them navigate college challenges; all of which contribute to students' success (Carrell & Kurlaender, 2020).

Implementation Steps

In Chapter 2, I outlined an approach to change based on Deszca et al. (2020), the Change Path Model, and I also identified an improvement cycle, the PDSA, that "focuses on the crux of the change … [and] the translation of ideas and intentions into action" (Reed & Card, 2015, p. 147). The change implementation plan for this OIP will combine and leverage elements of both the Change Path Model, the PDSA Cycle, and the two chosen leadership approaches, servant and adaptive, while resting on a foundation of interpretivist principles. The plan stage of the PDSA, coupled with the awakening and the mobilization stages of the Change Path Model, as well as element of servant and adaptive leadership, will constitute my change implementation plan.

PDSA Cycle: Plan

In 1983, Edward Deming developed the PDSA continuous improvement process, with a goal to not only check for success or failure of change initiatives, but to generate new knowledge to enhance them (Moen & Norman, 2009). The PDSA four stages are summarized in Figure 5. "Plan" is the first stage of the PDSA Cycle. During this stage, the following are identified: (a) Objectives, (b) Questions and predictions, and (c) Plan to carry out the cycle (Moen & Norman, 2009). My objective as the dean of school X, is to enhance the levels of EE through a leadership

Figure 5

PDSA Cycle

- What changes are to be made
- Next cycle?

Act

Plan

- Objectives
- Questions/predictions
- Plan to carry out the cycle (Who, what, where, when)

Study

Do

- Complete the analysis of data
- Compare data preditions
- Summarize the learning

- Carry out the plan
- Document problems and unexpected observations
- Analysis of the data

Note. Adapted from Moen, R., and Norman, C., "The History of the PDCA Cycle." In Proceedings of the 7th ANQ Congress, Tokyo 2009, September 17, 2009.

development program targeting the educational managers within the school.

As explained in Chapter 2, I will be enlisting the support of WPC's director of organizational development (DoOD) in achieving the objective of this change. The DoOD and her team have developed multiple leadership related workshops which are available to WPC's employees. However, as the dean of the school, I carry the weight of this change initiative and will be the person most responsible to guide and direct its implementation. I will first meet with the DoOD and analyze the results of the EE survey. We will then create a draft leadership development roadmap that identifies the necessary training courses of the Leadership Development Framework (LDF), and their related timelines.

The LDF will be a developmental model for ADs and potentially other operations managers. They will be the recipients of the change; and if I hope to enlist their support or at least minimize their potential resistance, I need to capture their perspectives early in the planning stages (Deszca et al., 2020). In fact, not only will the ADs be participating in the leadership development training program, but they will have a say in its content, hence the use of word *draft* in the previous paragraph. They are the ones in close contact with faculty and staff and they can, overtime, bend the curve of EE upwards, and for that reason, their buy-in and support are fundamental to the success of this change initiative.

Change Path Model

Coupled with the Plan stage of the PDSA Cycle, the first two stages of the Change Path Model will be used to strengthen the implementation plan. As can be seen in Figure 6, the Change Path Model is comprised of four stages: Awakening, Mobilization, Acceleration, and Institutionalization (Deszca et al., 2020).

Figure 6

Change Path Model

Note. Adapted from "Organizational Change: An Action-Oriented Tool Kit" by G. Deszca et al., p. 324. Copyright 2020 by Sage.

Awakening. This stage is about validating the need for change and "the degree of choice available [to me] and [my organization] about whether to change" (Deszca et al., 2020, p. 103). It is also during this stage that I need to develop a change vision and engage the various stakeholders in developing a shared understanding of the issue at hand. This is in line with the

interpretive lens which seeks out and considers the multiple ways of being and meaning-making of stakeholders (Berger & Lukman, 1966; Weber, 1922).

The change process, Deszca et al. (2020) argue, "won't energize people until they begin to understand the need for change" (p. 104). To make sure that all the ADs understand the necessity for this change, I will organize a focus group consisting of all the ADs and the DoOD. I will leverage the outcomes of the analysis of the EE survey results that the DoOD and I gathered during the Plan stage and form a convincing argument for why we need to treat EE as a priority in our school. During the focus group, I will highlight the data that points to faculty and staff's need for more recognition, empowerment, and feedback from their managers. I will reiterate the gap between what WPC sets as a goal, and the current state of EE. It is also during this stage that we will discuss the concept of EE and what it means for each person. Employee engagement can mean different things to different people and having an opportunity to discuss the topic openly will help all of us to narrow its meaning to something we can all relate to.

During this phase, I will resort to a mix of servant and adaptive leadership skills to make sure the ADs perceive the initiative as an action of service to our faculty and staff, and ultimately to our students. At the same time, I need to stay focused on the goal of the change, be mindful of any stress it might cause, and allow the ADs unfettered opportunities to offer their feedback. It is worth repeating at this point of the OIP, that the ADs at WPC are the backbone of the college and the work they do is fundamentally critical to the success of our organization.

Equally important during the awakening stage is the need for me as a leader to reflect and gain "a good understanding of [my] strengths, weaknesses, attitudes, values, beliefs, and motivations" (Deszca et al., 2020, p. 108). Lack of self-awareness and a recognition of one's

own prejudices, blind spots, and what Kahneman et al. (2011) dub, the bias creep, likely steer towards a "decision trap" (p. 109).

  Mobilization. This stage takes place after the need for change has been established, and school X academic leadership team—the associate deans, has been awakened. It is during this stage that I need to "make sense of the desired change through formal systems and structures and leverage those systems to reach the change vision" (Deszca et al., 2020, p. 152). As the dean of school X, I am responsible and accountable for the school's budget. As we prepare and forecast our budget for the next fiscal year, we will allocate the funds necessary to roll out the LDF and all its related training workshops. Although I do not need my manager's approval to proceed with this initiative, I will keep him apprised of my plans. In addition, I will ask my manager to make this change initiative as part of my goal-setting and review its outcome during my annual performance review. Doing so will demonstrate my commitment to this change initiative and is one way to hold myself accountable to the outcomes identified in this OIP.

  As with any change plan, there will need to be a plan to manage the transition from the current to the envisioned state. Mobilization inherently comprises steps and tactics necessary to handle many aspects of this transition. These steps will be discussed under a broader transition management plan below.

Transition Management

  I have been an educational leader for a few years, and I understand that change is intrinsically uncomfortable for many, and the levels of discomfort vary from one individual to another based on a variety of factors. This change will not be any different and having a plan to manage the transition to the envisioned future state is critical to the success of this initiative.

Understanding Stakeholder Reactions to Change

The change readiness tool outlined in Chapter 1 indicated that school X is primed for change and that historical change experiences, executive support, the leadership credibility, and openness to change are all factors that will contribute to a relatively smooth transition. However, it is necessary to understand the involved stakeholders' reaction to this change and plan to address it. As mentioned before, the ADs are a group of dedicated individuals, who care about their organization and its goals. Notwithstanding, as a leader I understand that this change might generate feelings of uneasiness for them, mixed with a burden of responsibility and maybe even guilt (Bridges, 1991; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008).

As the immediate manager of the ADs, it is my job to reassure them of my confidence in their abilities and to reiterate that this initiative is for the betterment of us all. One of the ways to proactively avoid any resistance, is to engage the ADs at an early stage. I mentioned that I will be meeting with the ADs and the DoOD to discuss the EE survey results and invite them to comment and suggest ideas on how to further engage their faculty and staff. Early involvement of the ADs is congruent with the importance of ethics in my decision making and an acknowledgement that "successful change could be achieved only through a democratic-participative learning process" (Burnes, 2009, p. 375).

Building a Coalition of Change

Deszca et al. (2020) caution that while there is a specific authority conferred by organizations on certain positions, the occupants of those roles need to strive to be persuasively influential. I am acutely aware of the authors' cautionary statement, and I am cognizant that the onus is on me to persuade the ADs of the importance of the change and engage with them in conversations about EE and how critical their role is in impacting their faculty and staff. My goal

is that these conversations will result in the ADs "owning" the change and in making them excited about a future state where their efforts will be seen and witnessed by many in the organization. These conversations are rooted in the principles of interpretivist theory I chose to examine this OIP through. The ADs' reality and meaning of the current state of EE, and in fact their experiences within the organization, depend on how they individually interpret them (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Putnam, 1983). While having those conversations, I will be attentive to identify any potential adaptive challenges that might stem from difficulties reconciling the intent of the change initiative and the ADs' held values and beliefs (Heifetz et al., 2009).

The director of organizational development (DoOD) is another important ally in this change initiative. One of her goals as the director responsible for organizational development is to create training opportunities to develop the employees at WPC. The DoOD reports to the VP HR and People Development, and the latter treats EE as an imperative that needs to be taken seriously. I will be working closely with the DoOD throughout this change initiative.

Determining Supports and Resources

As mentioned earlier, I will meet with the DoOD and discuss the identified courses and workshops that will be part of the LDF. Currently we have a series of courses already developed, such as: How to conduct crucial conversations, team effectiveness, managing at WPC, maximizing performance, leading and adapting to change, how to give and receive feedback, and coaching workshops. The final LDF suite of courses will be determined relying on feedback from the ADs. The cost of these courses will be cross charged to my school's budget. I am also planning to offer a 360-Degree Feedback to all four ADs. In Chapter 2, I estimated the cost of the recommended solution to be approximately $35,000–$40,000.

Potential Implementation Issues and Limitations

In addition to garnering buy-in from the ADs and softening any potential resistance, the other hurdle I need to be aware of is the fact that the ADs have great responsibilities of managing their academic programs. Each AD has a minimum of 40 faculty and staff as direct reports serving close to 1,000 students. Not only do I need to make sure the ADs are able to extricate themselves from their daily activities, but also make sure we find available common time slots in their calendars. I plan to solve this issue by distributing the schedule of all the identified training courses to the assistants of the ADs and request they book those days and times in advance.

With COVID-19 disrupting every aspect of organizations, budget planning will not be spared. I do not foresee the estimated cost for this change initiative to be an issue moving forward. However, this will depend on how the vaccination plans unfold and whether we will resume face to face instruction soon. International students' enrollment numbers, a major revenue for WPC, have declined for the past year. If we do not resume our traditional ways of learning and teaching, we may be asked by the government to come up with budget savings, and that might hinder the progress of the change initiative. As a leader, I need to be flexible in how I react to any unanticipated events and act accordingly. Furthermore, the PDSA Cycle is inherently built to account for changes that disrupt the original intent, and call for incremental actions, testing and data-informed "recalibration".

Building Momentum: Short, Medium, and Long-Term Goals

The priorities of this change initiative can be categorized into short, medium, and long-term goals. Below is a summary of all three.

Short-Term Goals. As identified in Chapter 2, this change is of a second-order nature—it requires a close attention to how people make sense of their experiences (Kezar, 2018).

Therefore, short-term goals will include the raising of stakeholders' awareness of the PoP. This

will be accomplished through an initial meeting between the DoOD and me, and a subsequent

one which includes all the associate deans. The goal is to openly discuss the PoP, the results of

the EE survey to make sense of them, and to present the LDF as a potential solution. The DoOD

will present the suite of courses available internally and the ones requiring an external

consultant. We will collectively discuss and confirm the courses that will be part of the LDF. The

DoOD will later draft a training schedule based on the chosen courses and workshops.

Medium-Term Goals. As mentioned earlier, the associate deans have a heavy workload.

Once they are aware of the training schedule dates, their assistants will work together with the

director of organizational development (DoOD) to confirm the dates on the ADs' calendars. The

intent is to have the identified courses attended by all the ADs in the six to eight months

following their scheduling. A monthly meeting between all stakeholders will occur to discuss the

effectiveness and value of the training.

Long-Term Goals. Building leadership capacity in school X to enhance EE is a long-

term goal. When employees perceive their leaders as just, empowering, and ethical, they trust

them and further commit to taking extra initiatives to the benefit of the organizational goals

(Samdani & Yameen, 2017). The LDF is one solution to develop those leadership competencies

and behaviours that will enhance EE. After its successful implementation, the LDF will be

presented to the organization for a broad application across other schools at WPC. The short,

medium, and long-term goals are summarized in Appendix A, along with timelines and the

stakeholders responsible for their implementation. Undisputedly, for these goals to come to

fruition, they need to be accompanied by a monitoring and evaluating system. The subsequent

sections of this chapter will outline a comprehensive monitoring and evaluating system that will track the progress of this change initiative.

This section outlined a framework for the change implementation. A combination of the PDSA plan stage and the awakening and acceleration steps of the Change Path Model will serve to validate the change with various stakeholders. This combination will also make sense of the change through the structures within which the PoP is taking place. In anticipation of the inherent reactions that change engenders, a transition management strategy was discussed. And finally, this section concluded by outlining short, medium, and long-term goals. These goals will not be achieved without an effective measurement and monitoring plan. As such, a change monitoring and evaluation process will be discussed in the next section.

Change Process Monitoring and Evaluation

The proposed solution in this change initiative will involve learning and invariably, the shedding of some old knowledge and habits and the acquisition of new ones. Therefore, it is fundamentally important to have a monitoring and evaluating system embedded in the implementation plan. In fact, my ability to understand "the impact of [the change I am] trying to achieve depends on [my] ability to measure such change" (Deszca et al., 2020, p. 55).

To appropriately apply the right tools for change measurement, it is important to understand the difference between monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Gopichandran and Krishna (2013), in their work on an ethical framework for M&E, explained that M&E begin "as a process of monitoring of performance in quantum terms in the initial stages of project implementation and gradually metamorphoses into evaluation of the impact of the programme" (p. 21). The authors further clarified that monitoring is an ongoing surveillance of the activities that are part of a project, while evaluation is an "episodic assessment of achievement again

standard criteria" (p.21). Although the work of Gopichandran and Krishna was a case study in

the health care system, I found their definition of M&E applicable to change processes in general

and meets the notion that monitoring is a formative process, while evaluation is a summative one

(Markiewicz & Patrick, 2015).

The change implementation plan for this OIP, as discussed in the previous section,

combined elements of both the Change Path Model, the PDSA Cycle, and the two chosen

leadership approaches, servant and adaptive. The M&E will be composed of the Do, Study, Act

stages of the PDSA, the acceleration and institutionalization stages of the Change Path Model, as

well as aspects of adaptive and servant leadership. The interpretive paradigm will be a common

thread that is weaved between these phases and processes, and consideration of people's realities

and sense-making will be an important element of the M&E, as it is for this entire OIP. In fact,

interpretation of monitoring and evaluation data can diverge based on the interpreter's world

view, and hence "[this] divergence … can only be understood and discussed in a socially

constructivist manner" (Butler et al., 2013, p. 57).

In the Plan stage, I identified the change aimed at improving employee engagement, "the

'do' stage [will] see [the identified change] tested, the 'study' stage [will] examine the success of

the change and the 'act' stage [will] identify adaptations and next steps to inform a new cycle"

(Taylor et al., 2014, p. 291). The stages of the PDSA Cycle will be combined with steps from the

Change Path Model and infused with the two chosen leadership approaches.

PDSA (Do & Study) and Change Path Model (Acceleration)

It is during the "Do" stage that the change is carried out and the plan is executed (Moen

& Norman, 2009). Although mobilization efforts were part of the Plan stage, some of its aspects

will have to be emphasized throughout the entire change process. Maintaining and sustaining

stakeholders' support is critical to the success of this change initiative. Associate deans (ADs) will be active participants in the initial awareness meetings, they will have access to all the data available, and will engage with the DoOD and me by seeking clarifications and offering explanations and suggestions. As the change leader, I will gauge the level of awareness and buy-in from the ADs by the degree of their involvement and desire to be champions of this change.

To further enhance the ADs' level of buy-in, as part of the acceleration process, I will not just present them with leadership courses that are available and legislate that they enrol in them. In fact, because my change initiative has knowledge and learning at its core, ADs "are more likely to learn and apply that learning when they are motivated to do so" (Harris & Cole, 2007, p. 775). Additionally, Armenakis and Harris (2009) identified five key beliefs that underlie change recipients' motives to support change initiatives. These are: (a) discrepancy—belief that change is needed, (b) appropriateness—belief that change is appropriate for the situation and context, (c) efficacy—belief that change is achievable, (d) principal support—belief that formal leaders are committed to change, and (e) valence—belief that the change recipients will benefit from the change.

I will engage with the ADs in a dialogue and discuss the learning that the LDF will engender and how it will not only benefit school X by engaging faculty and staff but will benefit them as individuals and contribute to their growth. Quantitative and qualitative data gathered from the EE survey will help to make the case for the need for change as outlined in the 'Plan' stage. Deconstructing those data during our initial meetings with the ADs will help us determine which courses to include in the LDF.

Because I have been working with this group of ADs for many years, I know their personalities and I am aware of their capabilities. Hence, I do not have any concerns regarding

my proposed solution; however, I would be naïve to think that I can predict their reaction to this change with absolute certainty. As such, as we accelerate the change, ADs might face situational challenges, and as an adaptive leader, it is important that I recognize and differentiate between technical challenges and what could be much more complex ones—adaptive challenges (Heifetz et al., 2009). My strategy as an adaptive leader is to not shelter the ADs from pressures they might experience but expose them to a bearable amount while regulating any distress. I will provide them with a safe space, direction, and modulate the level of pressure they might feel (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). This approach is not only an exercise of adaptive leadership, but also an ethical way of implementing this change.

Once the courses and workshops have been identified and scheduled, the ADs will be enrolled in them. The plan is to have a foundational coaching course offered by an external coaching training organization, coupled with at least three other courses selected with input from the ADs. The three courses will be delivered in-house by our organizational development team and coordinated by the DoOD.

The "Study" phase will occur as the training is taking place and after the end of each course. Therefore, I need to have an assessment process in place to make sure all the activities are effectively rolled out and that they are meeting the targets and predictions. "Measurements matter," Deszca et al. (2020) contend, "what gets measured affects the direction, content, and outcomes achieved by a change initiative" (p. 271). As a tool for assessing this change, I will use Kirkpatrick's (1994) Four-Level Model.

Kirkpatrick originally created this model to evaluate a supervisory training program, which makes it appropriate for my change initiative. The four levels of the model include: (a) reaction—refers to the participants' evaluation of the training courses, including satisfaction with

course content and the instructor; (b) learning—refers to outcomes of training as being cognitive, skill-based, and affective; (c) behavior—refers to the extent participants change their behavior in the workplace, and 4) results—refers to the results and influence on the organization because of the training.

Based on the definition of M&E provided at the beginning of this section, the first 3 levels of Kirkpatrick's Model will be used for monitoring the change implementation, while level four will be used to evaluate the impact of the Leadership Development Framework on the level of employee engagement in school X. A summary of the change efforts and their related measurement tools are outlined in Appendix B.

Monitoring the Effectiveness of the Coaching Course

The director of organizational development will attend all the training courses and workshops along with the ADs to observe and help with the facilitation. I will abstain from attending any courses with the ADs as my goal is to provide them with a psychologically safe environment to freely express their opinions (Kahn, 1990). In fact, I already attended the coaching training I would like the ADs to take, and I am a certified coach. I found the course to be valuable and hence my recommendation to use it as a foundational one. Additionally, in their study on the relationship between coaching and employee engagement, Crabb (2011) found that coaching skills allow "managers and coaches … to identify the strengths of their employees through open and honest coaching conversations" (p. 30). Furthermore, Crabb asserted that these coaching dialogues allow the "coachee" to utilize their strengths "to become more resilient and find meaning in what they do" (p. 33). It is this quest for meaning in one's work that is central to interpretive approaches to enhancing employee engagement (Sambrook et al., 2013).

At the beginning of the course, ADs will be given a pre-test to check their knowledge regarding the topic, and the results of this pre-test will be compared to a summative test at the end of the course. The coaching course is interactive, with multiple simulations and role-playing scenarios for participants to practice. The ADs will take the same course and will have the opportunity to give feedback about its content, and the instructor effectiveness through an anonymous questionnaire. The feedback we will receive through the questionnaire will check Kirkpatrick's Model level 1—reaction. At the end of the coaching course, the ADs will be assessed on their coaching skills by the instructor through observation of their coaching skills while role-playing, and a written multiple-choice summative test at the end of the coaching course. This will assess Kirkpatrick's Model level 2—learning.

The DoOD will record the results of both the pre-test and summative test and will meet with me to share the outcomes and discuss the overall effectiveness of the course and the value added to the ADs' knowledge. Afterwards, I will organize a focus group with the ADs and the DoOD to discuss the coaching course and give the ADs an opportunity to openly discuss their thoughts, feedback, and suggestions for improvement. Of equal importance, I will use the focus group as a ceremonial opportunity to celebrate the ADs' achievement. They will receive their coaching credential certificates and will be recognized for their efforts. Rewarding change agents with a "pat on the back and positive feedback … after a lot of hard work builds morale and motivation" (Kotter, 2012, p. 127), which in turn builds confidence of change agents and promotes and sustains support for the planned change. The combination of the data from the pre-test, summative test, anonymous questionnaire, and feedback from the focus group will inform me whether the coaching course was effective and adequate. This feedback will therefore inform our decision on how to proceed with the following courses.

Monitoring the Effectiveness of the Subsequent Courses

These courses have not been identified yet because I would like them to be curated with input from the ADs. As discussed earlier, having the change recipients actively participate in the change implementation, recognizing their perceptions, and *meeting them where they are* is critical and a hallmark of the interpretive lens I chose to see this OIP through. Our organizational development department has a series of courses to choose from that could appeal to the ADs and satisfy the criteria necessary to address the concerns we heard from our employees through the EE survey.

Whatever courses we end up scheduling for the ADs, the monitoring of the progress of each course will follow the following process: (a) assessment pre-test, (b) formative assessment throughout the course via discussions and feedback from the instructor, (c) anonymous questionnaire at the end of the course so the ADs provide feedback about the course, its content, and the instructor; and (d) a summative test to assess knowledge acquisition. After each course, a meeting will be organized between the DoOD and the ADs for feedback and a general conversation about the course, its strengths, and areas of improvement. All the data gathered will be assessed and will inform the subsequent course and its delivery.

Monitoring and Tracking Associate Deans' Personal Development

Ultimately, the goal of this leadership development framework is to help change behaviors and acquire new ones that will contribute to enhancing EE in school X. Behavior change is the third level of Kirkpatrick's Model, and measuring it is "more difficult than *reaction* and *learning* evaluation … it requires a more scientific approach and the consideration of many factors" (Kirkpatrick, 1996, p. 58). One such approach I will incorporate is the 360-Degree Feedback. Two of the guideposts Kirkpatrick recommends for assessing training programs in

terms of behavior change are: (a) appraisal of managers by peers, their supervisors, and their direct reports; and (b) comparison of a 'before and after' statistical analysis of the appraisal. Similarly, Armstrong et al. (2000) emphasized the "the importance of developing personal talents and managerial skills in college and university administrators via upward, downward, and parallel evaluation process" (p. 692); an assertion that aligns with the core tenets of the 360-Degree Feedback. This kind of feedback process opens a window of self-discovery, as well as helps to develop leadership skills and managerial proficiency (Armstrong et al., 2000). So not only will the 360-Degree Feedback provide a tracking tool of the ADs' behavior change over time but will contribute to their leadership development as well.

With assistance from the DoOD, I will enlist the services of an external consultant to administer the first round of the 360-Degree Feedback at the outset of the change initiative and prior to any other scheduled courses. I will also schedule a second round after the end of all the training courses, and after the ADs had the opportunity to internalize and apply the learning from the training program. This will allow for two sets of data to compare and assess the degree to which behavior changes were observed by the ADs' peers, direct reports, themselves, and by me, their manager.

PDSA (Act) and Change Path Model (Institutionalization)

Conceptually, the four stages of the PDSA Cycle will be applied at each step of the change process. In other words, each course will be planned, delivered, monitored for its quality and effectiveness. My PoP is the low levels of employee engagement, and the LDF is a potential solution that will make a difference in enhancing it. The goal is that the skills acquired by the ADs as they develop coaching and leadership skills, are sustained and institutionalized. Change becomes institutionalized when it becomes part of the day-to-day practices (Kezar, 2018), and to

achieve that, Kezar argued that "leaders need to help build cultural consensus for the change" (p. 204). It is important that the ADs see value in this development program and that they feel they are part of a greater goal that will serve them, faculty and staff, the students, and the college. For that to happen, they need to see that our change efforts are making a positive impact on faculty and staff levels of engagement, and that the way we measure the latter is legitimate and context-relevant, and not merely an interference (Deszca et al., 2020).

The last level of Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Model is the evaluation of the results and their impact on the organization, and as far as this OIP is concerned, it is the impact on the levels of employee engagement. The results of a new EE survey will be the data required for comparison and evaluation. However, because of the pandemic, Western Polytechnic College decided to defer this year's EE survey until October of next year. My plan is to start the awareness phase three months prior to implementing the change at the beginning of next year. By the time the next EE survey is administered, the ADs will have had completed the leadership development program and had time to apply their learning. The EE survey results will be analysed and compared to the results of the previous survey as illustrated earlier in this OIP. This analysis falls under the Study phase of the PDSA Cycle and the Institutionalization step of the Change Path Model.

Another Kirkpatrick's recommendation to evaluate the fourth level of his model is to use a control group. Having a close working relationship with other deans within the college, I anticipate that there will be interest in participating in this comparative experiment, as they could emulate the LDF in their respective schools if the results are positive in school X.

The use of the PDSA Cycle compels change agents to ask pointed questions about the change process— "What are we trying to accomplish? How will we know if a change is an

improvement? [and] what change can we make that will result in an improvement?" (Taylor et al., 2014, p. 292). As a change agent, I will assess all the data gathered before, during and after the change is implemented, share it will all the stakeholders and analyse it with them in preparation for the "Act" phase.

Although the Change Path Model follows a linear format, it is important that I remember that a complex organization like WPC does not operate in a linear fashion despite its underlying functionalist structure. Complex entities are constantly shifting, and the feedback from the various monitoring and evaluations tools presented herein will help me to identify and to understand emergent issues and act on them accordingly. Also important, is that the initial buy-in of stakeholders is not a one-time event. Stakeholders in a change initiative move along what I call a *buy-in continuum*, and it is my task as an adaptive and servant leader to meet them where they are on that continuum. Not only do I need, when warranted, to "get them to confront tough trade-offs in values, procedures, operating styles, and power" (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997, p. 128), but also "encourage them to use mental frameworks to envision greater possibilities" (Baldomir & Hood, 2016, p. 32).

This section presented an M&E process that combined elements of the PDSA and the Change Path Model, coupled with Kirkpatrick's (1994) Four-Level Model, and a 360-Degree Feedback. This combination offers a holistic surveillance strategy to make sure the change initiative is appropriately tracked and monitored. The next section will focus on an equally critical element of any change initiative—a communication plan. Measurements and evaluations are important, but properly communicating the need for change and its progress is just as salient.

Plan to Communicate the Need for Change and Change Process

The existence of a scholarly organizational theory field specific to Communication is indicative of how vital the latter is in determining organizational health and output. This stream of organizational studies is called "Communicative Constitution of Organizations" (CCOs) and its main precept is that organizations are communicative phenomena and that they are invoked and exist in and through communicative processes (McPhee & Zaug, 2000; Putnam & Nicotera, 2009). The importance of communication becomes even more critical during times of change and serves as the cement that holds the organization together as the change is taking place (Barrett, 2002). Arguably, a good communication plan "persuades employees to move in a common direction … [and] minimizes the effects of rumors, mobilize[s] support for change, and sustain[s] enthusiasm and commitment" (Deszca et al., 2020, p. 349). Deszca et al. further contend that the purpose of a communication plan is to justify the necessity for change, to explain its impact on the stakeholders, and to keep them apprised of its progress and of any required adjustments along the way.

One of the important elements of a communication strategy is to make sure that it aligns with the general stages of a planned change and the related information requirements (Klein, 1996). Klein also outlined some key principles that make a communication strategy more effective:

- Message repetition using multiple media and not just one
- Face-to-face communication because it removes ambiguity and has the benefit of being bi-directional, and allows for non-verbal cues to be picked up
- Leveraging organizational authority because messages sent out by senior managers have weight and an inherent credibility

- Direct managers' support because having one's direct manger's support helps with sustaining the change initiative

- Leveraging the influence of leaders with no formal organizational authority since they have a sphere of influence within which they can persuade others

Furthermore, the focus of communication shifts based on the phase of the communication plan (Deszca et al., 2020). Deszca et al. identified four phases in a communication plan "(a) pre-change approval, (b) developing the need to change, (c) midstream change and milestone communication, and (d) confirming and celebrating the change success" (p. 350).

Change Process Communication Plan

Based on the different phases outlined in Table 2, and for an effective communication plan, I will combine and integrate the steps of the Change Path Model, the stages of the PDSA Cycle, and aspect of adaptive and servant leadership. My communication plan will also be undergirded by the principles of the interpretive paradigm and will take into consideration the ADs' stories and sense making narratives (Weick, 2012). Additionally, the communication plan will be infused with Klein's (1996) key principles of effective communication during change.

Table 2

Change Communication Plan Phases

Phase	Definition
Pre-change approval	Making the case to management for the need for change
Developing the need for change	Creating awareness and explaining rationale for the change
Midstream change/ milestones	Impact of change on stakeholders/progress of the change
Confirming change success	Celebrating small and early wins to sustain engagement

Note. Adapted from "Organizational change: An action-oriented Toolkit", 4th ed., by G. Deszca et al., p. 350. Copyright 2020 by Sage.

Pre-change and Developing the Need for Change: Awakening, Mobilization and Plan

        The pre-change phase of the communication plan is dedicated to enlisting the support and the backing of top management. This phase targets individuals with authority to approve the needed change (Deszca et al., 2020). I am the most senior leader in the school, and as described earlier in this OIP, I do have a school budget that I am responsible to deploy it to run the school in a way that meets the college's goals. As such, I do not have to formally obtain the approval of my manager, the VP Academic (VPA), to proceed with my change initiative. However, professional courtesy and tactful leadership, call for making sure my manager is aware of my intentions, the rationale behind them, and how it aligns with the college's vision and goals. Therefore, I will send out an email to the VPA, with my proposed solution to our low EE levels and all the germane details that led me to my decision. In the same message, I will ask the VPA for a one-on-one meeting to discuss the change initiative and hear his thoughts on the project. I will then gather his feedback, if any, and adjust my plan accordingly.

        Another executive leader of the college I need to have on my side and apprise with my change initiative is the VP HR. She is the person responsible for human resources and organizational development and has the authority to deploy those resources where needed. The director of organizational development (DoOD) reports directly to the VP HR, and if the DoOD is going to assist me with my change initiative, her manager needs to be aware and kept apprised of the resources I will be asking for. I will send an e-mail to the VP HR, and include the DoOD in the e-mail, describing my change initiative, its rationale, and how it will contribute the college's goal of engaging employees, a goal the VP HR is indirectly responsible for. I will also extend an invitation to meet in person, either virtually or on-campus, to further discuss the

change initiative and the potential positive impact it will have on our employees. I will solicit her feedback on my plan and discuss suggestions of improvement.

The director of organizational development will be a critical partner in implementing my change initiative. She is responsible for administering the employee engagement (EE) survey to the entire college through an external consultancy firm. EE and organizational development fall under her organizational duties as delegated to her by the VP HR. Therefore, establishing open communication channels with her will be critical. I will send out an e-mail describing the EE situation in school X and share my plan and solution. I will follow up with a telephone conversation, during which I will reiterate my concern with the current EE levels, and my desire to make the necessary changes to enhance them. I will request a one-on-one meeting to go over the list of leadership training courses available internally. We will then identify a few courses that might be appropriate to address the leadership skillsets necessary for a leader to empower, recognize and coach their followers. I will pay particular focus to courses that help build leaders who are attuned to their employees' needs, stories and sensemaking mechanisms. The list of identified courses will be presented to the associate deans (ADs) for their feedback and comments.

The associate deans are the subject of this change, and the aim is to build their leadership capacity in a way that engages their direct reports. As such, it is critical to pre-emptively involve them early in the process (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). I will send out an e-mail to all the ADs and the DoOD and provide a description of the PoP and the proposed solution. Moreover, it is known that for a communication strategy to be effective, face-to-face meetings (F2F) offer a potent tool to advance change initiatives and to curtail potential ambiguities and confusions (Klein, 1996). As such, I will invite the ADs, along with the DoOD to a F2F meeting during

which I will present the results of the EE survey. The presentation will emphasize the anonymous comments provided by faculty and staff that indicate they need more support, mentoring, and coaching from their managers. I will then provide an overview of the Leadership Training Framework (LDF) and a plan explaining how it will be launched and delivered. As I explained in the change implementation plan section, ADs might have concerns and questions about the LDF, its relevance, appropriateness, and value. My goal will be to neutralize or diminish those concerns by providing credible responses that are grounded in theory and backed by data (Deszca et al., 2020; Kezar, 2018).

It is important that the ADs see and understand the direct line between enhancing EE and our organizational goals. I will engage the ADs in a dialogue about the change and how the leadership training they will be taking will not only benefit the school and the students but will benefit them as individuals and their professional growth. During the meeting, the DoOD will present the available courses and their syllabi, and together we will identify the courses that will comprise the leadership training program. As explained in the change readiness section in Chapter 1, manager's support is critical in any change project, and I will be explicit in expressing my support for the ADs and assure them that I will be present and available along their development journey. In addition, as their manager and the dean of the school, I expect that my message will "carry both practical and symbolic weight" (Klein, 1996, p. 35). However, as I stated a few times in this OIP, although my role comes with 'organizational horsepower', I typically draw on my servant and adaptive leadership to 'get things done' because one cannot legislate their way to excellence, growth, and human flourishing.

To raise awareness around the college about my change initiative, I will engage in a lateral communication with my fellow deans from the other schools. The goal of this

communication is to raise awareness across the college that school X's leadership team will engage in a leadership development program aimed at building leadership capacity as a tool to enhance employee engagement. I will be presenting the Leadership Development Framework at one of our monthly Deans Council meetings. I will invite the DoOD to that meeting as well so the deans could ask clarifying questions to both of us. This presentation is merely an information sharing and feedback-soliciting exercise, and not an approval-seeking process. A summary of the pre-change and developing the need for change phase communication plan is in Appendix C.

Midstream Change and Milestone Communication: Acceleration, Plan and Do

It is during this phase that I will be reinforcing the details of the change plan, clarifying any misconceptions, and persuasively continuing to advocate for the need for change (Deszca et al., 2020). I will be meeting with the ADs and the DoOD to outline the short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals and explicitly explain how we plan to monitor and evaluate them. The meeting will be face-to-face and will be collaborative and collegial. During this meeting I will also share the monitoring and evaluation plan (M&E) with the ADs, so they are apprised of the entire change process. I will follow up with an email summarizing the important elements of the meeting including the M&E plan.

As stated in the M&E section, stakeholders' buy-in changes along a continuum and I must address these fluctuations as they arise. In fact, the midstream phase, and the acceleration step both have managing stakeholders' reactions at their core (Deszca et al., 2020). To avoid potential negative reactions from the ADs, I must be proactively clear and consistent with my messaging (Barrett, 2002; Kotter, 2012), because "poor communication is regarded as one of the main antecedents of resistance to change" (Saruhan, 2014, p. 149). To avoid poor communication, Kotter (2012) encourages change agents to keep it simple, clear, and direct. In a

light-hearted but meaningful statement, Kotter invoked the adage "If I had more time, I'd write you a shorter letter" (p. 92). The message Kotter is conveying is that effective communication is not easy and requires great clarity, conciseness, critical thinking and "more than a little courage" (p. 92).

Another important element of the midstream change phase is the communication of milestones and the celebration of wins. Sharing milestone achievements and change efforts progress not only keeps the stakeholders informed but sustains their commitment and maintains momentum for the change (Deszca et al., 2020; Kotter, 2012). Through emails, face-to-face meeting, and phone conversations, I will communicate with the ADs either as a group or individually. I will acknowledge their commitment and dedication to their development as individuals and leaders and validate the importance of this endeavor to the school and to the college's vision. The DoOD and I will communicate continuously through email, phone calls and face-to-face meetings to 'regroup' and discuss the progress of the leadership training program and identify any required adjustments.

As stated in the M&E section, we will continue to celebrate the ADs' success along the way. At the end of each course, I will organize a meeting with all the ADs, to express my continuous support and to celebrate their successful completion of the courses and to invite them to share their learning experiences. I will take advantage of this meeting to reiterate the reasons for the change and why it is needed, as even "the most carefully crafted [change] messages rarely sink deeply into the recipients' consciousness after only one [single] pronouncement" (Kotter, 2012, p. 96).

The short-term wins and the milestones will also be shared with my manager, the VPA. I have standing one-on-one meetings with the VPA every 3 weeks, during which we discuss all the

academic matters at school X and I receive institutional updates from him. I will use these

meetings as an opportunity to update him with all the achievements and milestones. To enhance

the ADs' commitment and dedication to the change initiative, I will ask the VPA to send them a

direct message of recognition and acknowledgement. Doing so will not only make the ADs feel

good about themselves and sustain their commitment, but it will send the message that the

change initiative is also supported by the most senior academic executive in the college. A

summary of the midstream change and milestone communication plan is in Appendix D.

Confirming and Celebrating the Change: Institutionalization, Study and Act

This phase is about celebrating the successful completion of the leadership training

program and the acknowledgement of the ADs' efforts and commitment to their growth and their

faculty and staff. Deszca et al. (2020) contend that "Celebration is an undervalued activity" (p.

352), and that it is critical to acknowledge progress, sustain commitment and decrease any

potential stress. As explained in the M&E plan, my OIP has multiple milestones that are worth

celebrating; from completing the foundational coaching course to the completion of the

subsequent leadership courses. To celebrate the ADs' successes, I will meet with them, along

with the DoOD, shortly after the end of each course, praise their contributions, and reiterate the

importance of their commitment to the greater good of the college and its mission. I will assume

that COVID-19 pandemic will have been curtailed by next year, and that we can gather in

person. Based on that assumption, I will make sure that the meetings I will have with the ADs

and the DoOD will be catered with a lunch, coffee, and snacks. Deszca et al. (2020) encourage

us to not underestimate the power of small, unexpected rewards to recognize progress, but also

caution us to do it with sincerity.

Although the successful completions of the leadership courses are important milestones, the goal is to solve my PoP and to increase employee engagement levels through the ADs' acquired leadership skills. To reap the benefits of the learning that will be acquired through the Leadership Development Framework, the employee engagement survey will be administered approximately six months after the ADs complete all the training courses. The results of that survey will be compared to the ones from the previous year, and comments from faculty and staff will be analysed by the DoOD and me. Afterwards, I will organize a meeting with the ADs and share those results with them and answer any questions they might have. It is anticipated that the levels of EE will have increased and that faculty and staff report that they receive appropriate, or at least an increased level of coaching and mentoring from their managers. I will also compare the new levels of EE of school X to other schools within WPC which do not have a leadership development program and attempt to draw some insights. The latter action assumes that some of my fellow deans will be willing to participate in a comparative exercise.

I will meet with our VPA to share a comprehensive summary of the change process, its various stages, and their degrees of success. I will initially email him the information and request a follow up face-to-face meeting to go over the survey results and the impact of the leadership development program on the levels of engagement of faculty and staff within school X. I will also share the results of my change initiative at Deans Council and acknowledge the efforts of school X's ADs and their dedication to the college.

Additionally, I will offer my fellow deans to meet individually to go over the change process and what it entails and provide them with assistance should they decide to emulate my change initiative in their respective schools. Lastly, I will share the outcomes of this OIP with the employees of school X—the people we want to engage. I will organize a townhall meeting to

share the results of the EE survey and celebrate the ADs and their efforts. A summary of the confirming and celebrating change communication plan is in Appendix E.

This section presented a communication strategy that had the stakeholders at its core. It makes sure that the case for change and rationale are data-informed and that the change is supported by senior leaders at the college. Furthermore, the need to establish awareness of the change and to paint a better picture of the future was a foundational tenet of the strategy. To remain aligned with the principles of the interpretive paradigm, the impact of the change on stakeholders and their experiences is considered and honored. Additionally, this communication strategy has provisions for celebrating wins and sustaining stakeholders' commitment through my servant and adaptive leadership.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 provides the details of the implementation plan, including the monitoring, evaluation, and a change communication plan. The plan is based on the implementation of solution 2, with the goal to enhance faculty and staff levels of engagement within school X. Principles of adaptive leadership, complemented by my inherent servant leadership style will help me align all stakeholders' tasks and priorities with the change vision. Underneath all the actions I will take, will be an awareness that we all see life and work through our own set of spectacles and that consideration of others' realities is as important as mine.

A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan was created to make sure all the incremental outcomes of the change process are measured through various assessment tools. The results of those measuring tools will be acted up on and the change process adjusted if required. Equally important as the M&E, is a communication plan. I created a communication strategy that customizes the various messages to different stakeholders to build awareness, foster buy-in, and

sustain commitment. I also recognize that setbacks are part of the change process, and that they will always yield opportunities for learning and growth.

Next Steps and Future Considerations

This OIP is a response to address the low levels of employee engagement at a HEI. It analyzes the current organizational state and envisions a future state in which associate deans possess the necessary leadership skills to engage and empower their followers. To achieve that future state, this OIP outlines a change process, a communication plan for the various stakeholders, and a monitoring and evaluation plan. The next steps will be to implement the change.

This OIP is undergirded by a few reasonable assumptions regarding timing, budget, and buy-in. As mentioned before in this document, this change is not linear, and setbacks could be part of the change journey, hence the inherent importance of the monitoring and evaluation processes, as well as the PDSA Cycle. The desired outcome of this OIP is that the leadership development program runs successfully and that the ADs gain skills and competencies that will enable them to create an engaging work environment.

Although this Leadership Development Framework has EE as its goal in the context of this OIP, it could have other positive impacts across the college. ADs will develop skills to thrive as leaders, educational managers, and mentors, and that will be witnessed throughout the organization and beyond. Each AD has multiple department heads (DH) as direct reports, and the ADs will be encouraged to work with the DoOD to create a customized leadership training program for them. The goal would be to enhance the DHs' leadership abilities so they can also laterally influence their respective departments and the faculty and staff they work with.

Regardless of the outcome of this change process, learning will invariably occur, and lessons will be drawn. To identify and codify this learning so we learn from it, an after-action-review (AAR) must be conducted (Deszca et al., 2020). An AAR is an approach that examines the outcomes of a change initiative. Darling et al. (2005) defined it as a "living, pervasive process that explicitly connects past experience with future action" (p. 3). Conceptually the embedded PDSA Cycle in this OIP is intended to be a recalibration tool as the change process is taking place. However, I see the AAR as a summative examination of the entire change initiative, and one that asks the following questions: "(a) what were the intended results, (b) what were the actual results, (c) why did the actual results happen, and (d) what can be done better next time" (Deszca et al., 2020, p. 359).

The learning that will be drawn from the change initiative in school X at WPC will be shared with other schools within the college. This sharing of learning can take place between deans, associate deans, or department heads. At WPC we hold professional days twice a year, and the plan is to present the Leadership Development Framework as a concept to enhance employee engagement. Additionally, the LDF could also be potentially shared with other post-secondary institutions as a case-study to learn from.

It is my belief that this OIP has implications that go beyond employee engagement. This OIP will ignite further conversations about the concept of EE, its antecedents, and consequences. It will also trigger important questions about the way we measure EE at the college and whether a positivist approach of measurement through surveys provides us with enough information about what employees feel and think.

OIP Conclusion

This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) discussed the low levels of employee engagement at a Higher Education Institution, Western polytechnics College. An in-depth critical organizational analysis was conducted and a vision for the future was crafted—a vision where faculty and staff feel empowered and recognized. Based on the organizational context, three solutions were proposed. Through an analysis of trade-offs, advantages and drawbacks, a Leadership Development Framework was chosen as a solution. The choice was based on the premise that employees are influenced by their leaders, and that the quality of the relationship between leaders and followers is predictive of the levels of engagement of the latter (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015).

This OIP is situated in a school within a larger organizational context, and the results of its implementation will be far-reaching. As organizations strive to stay competitive, and since an engaged workforce positively impacts organizational outcomes, it is critical for any organization to recruit and retain leaders who possess the skills and attributes that engage and empower employees.

An equally important revelation that this OIP brought to light for me as a leader, is the way we measure engagement at our college and in general across organizations. As a change leader examining EE through an interpretive lens, and as one who is acutely aware that people seek meaning in their work and in their lives; I ask whether administering an annual employee engagement survey provides us with a fulsome story about employees' experiences at work? Would an autoethnographic intervention be a better measure to qualitatively gather employees' stories? And would such an intervention be even possible in an organization as large as Western Polytechnic College? Whatever we do in the future, Higher Education leaders need to remember

that "the cones in [people's] eyes … might be excited by the colors of the sunset; but sensing that

sunset as 'beautiful' or 'moving' requires more than sight alone" (Hatch & Yanow, 2003, p. 67),

as therein lies the crux of what it means to be human.

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Appendix A: Goals and Timelines

Goal	What	Who is responsible	When (Estimation) Month No.	How and where
Short-term	Raise awareness of the PoP and seek input from stakeholders	The dean (Change leader)	1	- Initial face-to-face (F2F) meeting between the dean and the DoOD - Invite the ADs the dan and the DoOD in a separate F2F meeting
	Identify the leadership development framework (LDF) courses and workshops and cost the ones requiring an external consultant	Dean + Associate Deans + Director of organizational development (DoOD)	2	F2F meeting between all the stakeholders to go over the draft training program and seek input and buy in from the ADs
	Confirmation of the training courses (DoOD	DoOD	2	The DoOD will determine which courses will be delivered in-house and the ones requiring an external consultant
	360 Degree-Feedback for the ADs	External consultant (arranged by the DoOD)	3	The DoOD will arrange scheduling the 360 Degree Feedback and send invoice to the dean

Goal	What	Who is responsible	When (Estimation) Month No.	How and where
Medium-term	Schedule LDF training courses and workshops	DoOD (Through the ADs' assistants)	4	The DoOD will e-mail the training schedule to the assistants.
	ADs attend the training courses	ADs	4- 12	Contingent on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic, the courses could be either online or F2F on-campus.
	Monthly meetings with stakeholders	The change leader, the ADs, and the DoOD	Each month following the start of the first course and will conclude after the last course is taken	Contingent on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic, these meeting will online or on-campus
Long-term	360 Degree-Feedback	External consultant (arranged by the DoOD)	6 months after the last course is finished	The DoOD will arrange for this second assessment after the ADs finished all courses and had time to apply the learning
	The LDF adoption across the college	The change leader	12-18 and beyond	Present the LDF to fellow deans at Deans Council
	Higher employee engagement (EE) levels	The DoOD and HR administer the annual EE survey		As evidenced by the results of the employee engagement survey
	Present the LDF to other colleges in BC and across the country	The change leader		The change leader presents the LDF at the annual National Polytechnics Deans

Appendix B: Proposed Change Efforts and Related Measurements

Change Effort	Measurement Tool	Kirkpatrick's Four-Levels	Who	Month No.
360- Degree Feedback	360- Degree Feedback	Level 3	This assessment will be delivered by an external consultant.	1-3 and (12-13)
Coaching course	-Pre-test: to assess ADs' prior knowledge -Formative assessment: To gauge learning during course -Summative test: To assess learning outcomes at the end of the course -Questionnaire: To assess satisfaction of ADs with the course (Anonymous)	Level 1 Level 2	The instructor of the coaching course will administer and share with the DoOD and the change leader	4-5
Focus Group	Collect feedback from the ADs through an open and safe conversation	Level 1 Level 2	The change leader will organize and conduct the focus group	5
Supplementary courses (3)	-Pre-test: to assess ADs' prior knowledge -Formative assessment: To gauge learning during course -Summative test: To assess learning outcomes at the end of the course -Questionnaire: To assess satisfaction of ADs with the course (Anonymous)	Level 1 Level 2	The instructors of the three courses will administer and share with the DoOD and the change leader	6-12

Change Effort	Measurement Tool	Kirkpatrick's Four-Levels	Who	Month No.
Employee Engagement Survey (School X)	Survey will be administered to the entire personnel of the college, including school X	Level 3 Level 4	WPC hires a consulting firm to administer the survey	18
Employee Engagement Survey of a different school (Control)	Survey will be administered to the entire personnel of the control school	Level 4	WPC hires a consulting firm to administer the survey	18

Appendix C: Pre-change and Developing the Need for Change Phase

			Awakening and Mobilization (Plan)		
Phase	Target Audience	Communication Objective	Key Message	Tactic	Month No.
Pre-change +Developing the need for change	**VP Academic**	Dean keeps VP aware of the change initiative and its rationale	- We need to enhance EE to meet WPC's vision - ADs feel they are not equipped to coach and support their direct reports - Change is possible	- A face-to-face meeting, either physical or virtual - Phone conversation - E-mail	0-1
	VP HR	Keep the VP HR updated and apprised of the change and the involvement of the DoOD	- Need to enhance EE at WPC - Change initiative aligns with College's vision and mission	- A face-to-face meeting, either physical or virtual - Phone conversation - E-mail	0-1
	Associate Deans	- Raise awareness of the low levels of employee engagement - Share results of the EE survey - Communicate the initial vision, aims and goals - Answer the question of 'why' - Answer the question of 'how' - Answer the question: What is in it for me? (Valence) - Invite input from the ADs - Manage reactions	- EE is one of organization's goals - Empowering people is part of our core values - An engaged faculty and staff ultimately serve our students - I am supportive of this change and I have the support of my manager, the VP academic, and the support of the VP HR - WPC will be investing in them by providing leadership training - This training is also a leadership opportunity for the ADs that could impact them personally	- E-mails - face-to-face meetings (focus group) with all the ADs and the DoOD, physical or virtual - One-on-one meeting with each of the ADs as required (physical or virtual) - Phone conversations as required	1-3

			Awakening and Mobilization (Plan)		
		Target Audience	Communication Objective	Key Message	Tactic	Month No.
Pre-change +Developing the need for change	Director of Organizational Development (DoOD)	- Communicate concern regarding the low levels of EE - Go over the results of the EE - Find out the available leadership courses - Seek input and feedback about the change initiative	- The importance of EE - The importance of leadership development program in school X - Enhancing EE in school X through an LDF validates the organizational development department's role within WPC	- E-mails - Phone calls - Face-to-face meetings (virtual or physical) - Focus group with the ADs - Personal text-messages	1-3
	Deans Council	- Raise an institutional awareness - Seek feedback - 'Prime' the other deans for a future comparative experiment request	- School X is taking action to improve EE through leadership capacity development - I welcome thoughts and feedback about the process	Deans Council forum: Face-to- face meeting	3-4

Appendix D: Midstream Change and Milestone Communication Phase

Acceleration (Plan and Do)					
Phase	Target Audience	Communication Objective	Key Message	Tactic	Month No.
Midstream change and milestone communication	Associate Deans	- Lay out the details of the plan - Outline the details of the leadership training framework - Outline and discuss short term and long-term goals - Describe how the change will be monitored and evaluated - Discuss the progress of the change and continue to seek input - Inspire and build confidence - Sustain commitment to the change initiative - Manage reactions	- Feedback on the status of the change is important - Acknowledge the progress made to date - Acknowledge the ADs' commitment to the change - ADs are an integral part of the change - EE is part of the vision of WPC and empowering people is a core value. - Continue to provide support and resources - Share short term wins and milestones	- E-mails - Phone calls - Face-to-face meetings (virtual or physical) - Meetings with the ADs, either as a group or individually (as required)	4-12
	DoOD	- Book all the required training - Assess the progress of the training - Show gratitude to the DoOD for her support - Solicit verbal feedback on the progress of the change - Monitor progress of courses	- Celebrate short term wins - Validate the value of the chosen courses for the ADs or adjust.	- E-mails - Phone calls - Face-to-face meetings: Virtual or physical - Personal text-messages	4-12
	VP Academic	Dean Keeps the VP updated of the change progress	Share short term wins and milestones	- E-mails - Phone calls - Face-to-face meetings: Virtual or physical	4-12

Appendix E: Confirming and Celebrating the Change Phase

			Institutionalization (Study and Act)		
Phase	Target Audiences	Communication Objectives	Key Messages	Tactics	Month No.
Confirming and celebrating the change	Associate Deans	- Celebrate wins - Continue to manage reactions - Validate and appreciate the ADs' commitment - Continue to seek feedback and recommendations for any needed adjustment - Monitoring results shared as soon as possible - Reaffirm the rationale behind the change and the vision of the school and the college	- Acknowledge the ADs and celebrate their accomplishments - Need to keep the momentum - Dean's 'door' always open for feedback and dialogue - We appreciate the efforts to date and are excited the future for the school - Envision post-change success future — faculty and staff levels of engagement increased.	- E-mails - Phone calls - Face-to-face meetings (virtual or physical) - Meetings with the ADs, either as a group or individually (as required)	4-12 12 and beyond
	DoOD	- Sustain momentum so training is successfully completed - Ensure ADs are provided with support and resources - Celebrate wins	- Sustain efforts - Continual soliciting of feedback - Acknowledge progress to date and celebrate wins	- E-mails - Phone calls - Face-to-face meetings: Virtual or physical - Personal text-messages	4-12
	VP Academic	Update with the successful completion of the leadership training program (success assumed)	- Reiterate the importance of the leadership training for our managers - Leadership capacity closely linked to employee engagement	- E-mails - Phone calls - Face-to-face meetings: Virtual or physical	10-12

Phase	Target Audience	Communication Objective	Key Message	Tactic	Month No.
Confirming and celebrating the change	Deans Council	- Update the Council with the successful completion of the change process - Share insights to be used institutionally if desired.	- Celebrate the completion of leadership training program and its impact on our EE at the school level. - Leadership capacity-building works	Deans Council Forum: Face-to-face meeting (virtual or on-campus)	12-18 (and after the EE survey)
	Employees of School X	- Share the tenets of the leadership development framework (LDF) - Share and celebrate the impact of the LDF on employee engagement	- Employee engagement is directly linked to leadership skills - Leadership skills outlined in the LDF can be adopted by anyone regardless of their role within the organization - Celebrate the ADs and their achievement with the people they lead.	Townhall meeting: on-campus or virtual.	18 (or after the EE results are in)

Institutionalization (Study and Act) heading spans the table top.